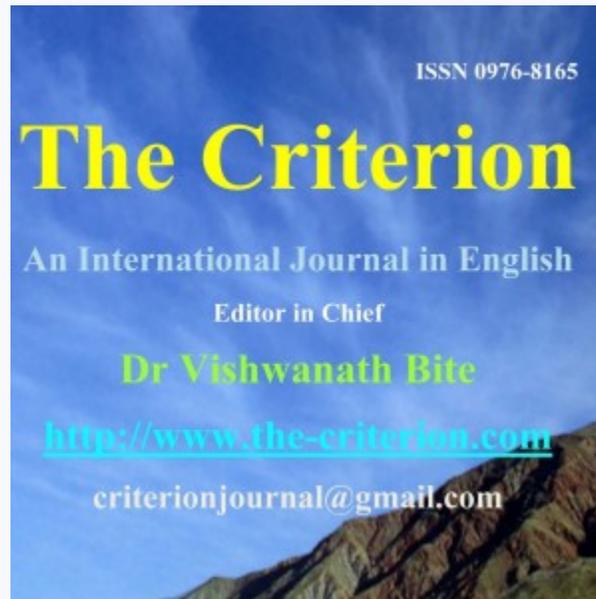


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## **From Mutiny to Mutinies: A Post-colonial Study of Naipaul's Indian Trinity**

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Since 1857, the date of the first official mutiny in India, the nation has perceived various socio-political, cultural, economic and historical upheavals, and the upturns have not only affected the nation and its discourse but at times the globe. Race, moment and milieu have always been the primary source of literature and their glimpse are very much apparent in every field whether it is science, religion or philosophy. India has been the acreage of great men like Lord Ram and Lord Krishna as is ostensible in Hindu mythology but the fact is that they were required in their respective eras. Mahatma Buddha, Mahavir Jain, Swami Vivekananda, M K Gandhi, was born in the period when the very institutions of societies were crumbling and collapsing. They were desperately required since they brought revolutionary and drastic changes in the aura of mythology, religion, science, philosophy or their respective fields. They came forward not only to kindle and enlighten the mind of common folk but also to serve the humanity. This, due to the above-mentioned luminaries and their accomplishments and impacts on the societies, has attracted the world travellers from time to time.

Travel writings are considered as a genre of literature, but the fact is quite different. Travelogues are the reflections and replications of contemporary socio-cultural and ethnic societies in which they were inscribed. However, with the elapses of time their purposes were manoeuvred intentionally. Earlier travelogues were used to be informative but in the colonial period, colonizers distorted and manipulated the very objective of these writings for their own advantages. They were projected in such a way that the settlers could easily prove the 'otherness' of the colonized. The culmination of the West's fictive dramatization of the East begins in travelogue mixed with fantasy, such as those by Marco Polo. Historians of medieval trade now tell us that Marco Polo was not the medieval backpacker as we always thought, but a fellow invented by the West to fulfill its thirst for palatable understanding of the mysterious East. Switching centuries, from him to Naipaul via inescapable filter of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, have beheld that the twentieth century reincarnation of Marco Polo was none other than V S Naipaul, an invention of the West to fulfill its prejudiced and deliberately fantastic understanding of the East. Foreign visitors visited our country at regular intervals, and produced plethora of travelogues<sup>1</sup> on India's contemporary socio-political, cultural, historical, economic, religious and even architectural edifice. Eighteenth and nineteenth century travellers have been successful in not only watching the nation silently and applauding wherever required but also produced the televisual commentary, critique and discourse on it.

## I

This paper studies the 'nation' from an emigrant's perspective. By questioning the identity of India, beyond geography and place, the point of view of the emigrant helps to broaden the framework within which India is defined. Through a meticulous reading of V S Naipaul's trilogy on India, it will be argued how his worldview strikes on ambivalent relationship with his experience in India; how emotions of tenderness and pleasure vie with the zeal and short sightedness of a colonialist. In the present paper I intend to explore and explicate V S Naipaul's Indian trinity, comprising *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), which gives the odysseys of the nation's postcolonial insurgencies, at times insurmountable, which not only wounded once, twice or thrice but million times and even then India has been washing the blood stains from her delicate *aanchal*.

While the travellers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, pre-empting colonialism, often found beauty, richness, fertility and virginity, the postcolonial contemporary traveller is quick to spot ugliness, disorder and banality. In the nineteenth century, the bounty of the discovered world was to be praised. Today, the absence of civilization and progress is regarded as a major disappointment and therefore the unruly and unwilling 'Third World' has to be treated with derisiveness. For Naipaul India is a problem not only with his buried past "...when I felt India only as an assault on the senses" (*The Overcrowded* 46), but also with his neurotic feelings of the present "...India as an ache, over for which one has a great tenderness, but from which at length one always wishes to separate oneself" (51). That is why his visits to the country have been attempts as much to get grips over its reality as to come to terms with his own past. In 1962, he feels so cut off from this past that he almost abandons the hope of ever being able to dig it up or make sense of it. That is why he fancies himself as a "colonial without past, without ancestors" (*An Area* 274).

The postcolonial discourse of the nation has brought forth several issues to the fore. The discourse used by the postcolonial travel writer is constantly evolving and is not directly opposed to the colonial discourse. The postcolonial world has been affected by travels in many respects; the countries in question were discovered, explored, conquered, or settled by the people who came there from Europe. Displacement is an experience particularly associated with the postcolonial conditions, which for many individuals, entails a history of transportation, migration, expatriation, diaspora or exile.

Naipaul is a writer of brilliant techniques that he used in transforming the travelogues into texts, especially postcolonial texts. His travelogues are not merely an

almanac of his physical visits but also disseminate its colonial past vibrantly as Barbara Korte opines:

If travel is of special pertinence to Britain's former colonies, the travel writing produced in these parts of the world has been practically ignored by scholars until recently with the prominent exception of V S Naipaul. (*English Travel* 152)

Among the post-independence travellers to India, V S Naipaul has a special place because of his curious love-hate relationship with the country. It is a strange predicament, mainly a tension emanating from Naipaul's desire to remain apart from the mainstream tradition of the country visited. Resultantly, he inscribes some sensitive travel writings that are impressionistic, emotional and erratic and his first book on India, rather controversial. The paper is a candid account of Naipaul's feelings that the vast, mysterious and agonized country has aroused in him and he promulgates his irritating and irksome thoughts in Indian trilogy in a way to discover a postcolonial India—India that is suffering in the hands of its postcolonial leaders who are still in the clutches of colonial tools. The paper studies Naipaul's experiences chronologically as he has expressed in his treatise on India.

## II

### *An Area of Darkness* (1964)

Naipaul has been in India a much longer time and travelled much more extensively. Yet, the impressions of his first visit as recorded in *An Area of Darkness* are journalistic and lack depth in some areas of observation. Naipaul journeys India, for the first time, with the professed aim of discovering his Indian identity. It has always been significant for a writer to establish a district identity, especially when s/he is an outsider or wants to be considered one. This leaves a mark on his writings. To quote from his Acceptance Speech at the first David Cohen Literature Prize awarding ceremony:

I have always felt the need...to establish the identity of the writer, the narrator, the gatherer of impressions: To make the point that, whatever association came with the language, this English language traveller in the world was not English but colonial, and carried different pictures in his head. (*SundayObserver*)

His first visit to India in 1962 was undertaken as a quest for his roots in the country from where his grandfather had migrated to Trinidad as an indentured labourer, at the beginning of this century. He first visited Bombay and found that it was not what he had expected. He hated being part of a crowd at Church gate station and craved for preferential treatment, something that he had always got-in Trinidad and England. But here in India he found no special attention from Indians. He kept himself seeing the film posters that seemed to divine from a cooler and luscious world, Naipaul writes:

...Cooler and more luscious than the film poster of England and America, promising greater gaiety, and ampler breast and hip, a more fruitful womb. (*AnArea* 43)

Naipaul's observation is based on his assessment of the Indian characters as romantic, emotional and exotic, which is typical Western orientalist bravura. His comments on most socio-political events of the day were peripheral. The Chinese attack on India in 1962 shook up the entire country. Naipaul was in India at that time but did not feel concerned about it. Nehru's greatest blunder, ill-equipped war against the Chinese, makes Naipaul angry and turns him bitterly satiric in his chapter on Emergency. He was then in India and saw the hollowness everywhere in the land, a total misfit in a modern world. Naipaul was quite upset on the failure of Mr. Nehru. ShriAurobindo had already warned Mr. Nehru regarding Chinese invasion, but Nehru was careless about the land saying that that is 'the waste land.' Naipaul heard many rumours in Calcutta. He writes:

...according to bazaar rumour, Chou-En-lai had promised the Chinese people as a Christmas present. The Indian Marwari merchants, it was said, were already making enquiries about business prospect under Chinese rule; the same rumour had it that, in the south the Madrasis, despite their objection to Hindi were already learning Chinese. (264-65)

But these are peripheral like his comments on the Kashmir. He made no attempt to explore the psyche of a nation jolted out of its post-colonial euphoria, bordering on a sense of invincibility.

Apart from above-mentioned contemporary post-colonial events, the other aspect of India that Naipaul encountered in his visit was the caste system, especially as manifested in professional skills. From the sociological point of view such situation are common in societies undergoing rapid socio-political changes. The rigid hierarchy of the caste system in India, which he condemns, therefore, disturbs Naipaul, "...in India caste was unpleasant; I never wished to know what a man's caste was..." (29) as dissolute and dissipated that propagated a kind of separatism. Naipaul writes, "Class is system of rewards. Caste imprisons a man in his function" (76).

There is some truth in this observation though one notices a strong urge in Naipaul to say something sensational that would appeal to the western reader. His view on reservation of jobs was similarly biased and in the context of sixties, showed a definitely Brahmanic way of thinking that would be considered offensive today, "Reserving government jobs for untouchables helps nobody. It places responsibility in the hands of the unqualified..." (82). The aforesaid views have authenticated Naipaul as a colonial mimic and have been successful in portraying him as a postcolonial predictor who foretells and compares the destiny of India to that of Trinidad saying that "Yesterday the mimicry was Mogul, tomorrow it might be Russian or American; today it is English" (55). The entire experience is deeply personal one and Naipaul himself behaves like a fussy, grudging and tight-fisted foreign returned guy<sup>2</sup>. It is true that today he is English and this is the reason why he looks at India from an occidentalist's eye in proving its age-long civilization as wounded. *An Area of Darkness*, much inspired by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, conveys the acute sense of disillusionment of Naipaul, capturing the whole crazy spectrum of India.

### III

#### *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977)

The abovementioned book is V S Naipaul's second thesis on India which documents the political insurgencies of the decade of 1970s. As a post-colonial traveller who was unable to establish an Indian identity and had given up the attempts after his first visit to this country, Naipaul held the view that India should sever all connections with the past, which is understandable. After his first visit to India, Naipaul realized that the country was not and could not be his home. Yet he could not reject it or remain indifferent to it. When Naipaul revisited India in the said decade, he could find that this country takes much time to understand even after the departure of the British. However, Naipaul is not appeared with the independence of India. He expects something else. What he beholds, in post- independence India, he writes in these words:

But Independent India, with its five-year plans, its industrialization, its practice of democracy, has invested in change. There was always a contradiction between the archaism of national pride and the promise of the new; the contradiction has at last cracked the civilization open. (*India* 8)

In the course of his post 1962 visits to India, Naipaul conceived himself with ethnographic analyses of India, at the same time keeping a distance from the ordinary person most of the time, talking mainly to those in authority and power, like an IAS

Officer in Bombay , the commissioner in Rajasthan, among others. He never tried to meet ordinary Indians on an equal footing until recently, always judging them based on standards borrowed from the West. The judgment of Naipaul is not confined to the people only but to culture, civilization, religion and politics also.

However, to Naipaul, India was not a socio-cultural alternative. For him at that point of time, India— a ‘third world’ country, without a sense of history, without a racial sense —had to break off all ties with its past in order to get the best out of its present, which, according to Naipaul, would progress as understood in the Western context. Naipaul criticizes a prince who had travelled outside India. And that prince always wishes to compare India with the western world. Unquestionably, he criticized westerners who consider India an alternative and was quite contemptuous about them. That is why Naipaul says that India should be judged in Indian way:

The world outside India was to be judged by its own standards. India was not to be judged. India was only to be experienced, in the Indian way. (90)

I can surmise that nobody writes like VS Naipaul. His visual descriptions of ordinary people always hit the nail on the head. His central theme is the vibrant, pulsating, intellectual Hindu civilization. After the initial burst of optimism following independence, India has faced one obstacle after another, turning inward, revealing ‘a wounded civilization’, a stilted and stiff culture who does not know herself any more or what made her great. Using his own method of analysis, V S Naipaul may not be an ideal person to do this analysis because like Gandhi and Nehru he studied outside India. But unlike them he seemed to be on the other side of the country. His passive support to Emergency, imposed on the country by Indira Gandhi government: “...Mrs Gandhi, that formidable lady in New Delhi, who had done a de Gaulle on the Congress...nationalized the banks... ‘de-recognised’ the princes... intended to change the constitution” (*The Overcrowded* 110) which was criticized not only by political activists but also by writers, media stalwarts, social reformers and so on. Salman Rushdie too denounces the very act in his *magnum opus Midnight’s Children* (1980) in these words “Emergency heralded the beginning of continuous midnight which would not end for two long years” (*Midnight* 612).

Naipaul further holds that Hindu India invited conquests and finds that this drawing upon the Hindu past in the present times has led to the creation of a new sense of identity. One can, of course, come to an agreement with Naipaul. Mohammad Gajanavi attacked and looted Somnath temple in Gujarat, Bakhtiyar Khilje destroyed and burnt Nalanda University and its library and Babar made Babri Masjid after destroying Rama temple in Ayodhya. Naipaul tries to cope with such movements in India which are trying to take revenge with its past. Naipaul considers the demolition of

Babri Masjid in Ayodhya is true and justified and he declared that his observations in *India: A Wounded Civilization* is valid. He saw the demolition as a very small part of the vast change in the Hindus' idea of themselves and as an attempt to retrieve their identity of the pre-Islamic period. He saw in it the seed for a greater "Intellectual" of India provided it was kept safe from the hands of the fanatics in an interview with Dilip Pandgaonkar Naipaul confesses:

The people who say that there was no temple there are missing the point. Babar, you must understand, had contempt for the country he had conquered. And his building of that mosque was an act of contempt for the country. In Ayodhya the construction of a mosque on a spot regarded as sacred by the conquered population was meant as an insult. It was meant as an insult to an ancient idea, the idea of Ram, which was two or three thousand years old... (*TimesofIndia*).

The travelogue can be seen as a critique of blindness of Indians to the 'real' world that prefer to live and judge themselves and others through the myopic glass of perceived high culture of 'centuries of rich civilization'. But the problem is that after being settled in the Western country most of the Indians start thinking and comparing the nation on the touchstone of the West. And they, sometimes, seem to be the recalcitrant of India and the country craves and cries for her ungrateful son(s).

#### IV

#### ***India: A Million Mutinies Now (1990)***

Naipaul's third book on India, *A Million Mutinies Now* leaves his account of postcolonial impressions. This book stands closest to the idea of home coming for Naipaul. It marks Naipaul's surfacing after a long quest amongst the now diminishing ripples of socio-political and cultural paradoxes of India. He sees a million mutinies breaking out in the margins: mutinies of castes, of class and of gender. Compared to *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*, the title of the latest book is less negative. But the use of word mutinies indicates that Naipaul's writings still have strains of the colonial discourse, though, by and large, they can be considered as the works of a postcolonial writer. To quote from Naipaul:

What the mutinies were also helping to define was the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and humanism of the values to which all Indians now felt they could appeal. And—strange irony—the mutinies were not to be wished away. They were part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, and part of its restoration. (518)

Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is his great tour de force. And he has very beautifully painted the postcolonial picture of India. While in Bombay, Naipaul visited Muhammad Ali Road with Nikhil Laxman, a journalist, his first impression of the area as described in his book, captures the claustrophobic atmosphere which gives a ghetto insularity that infuses the dwellers with a sense of security. Naipaul sensed it as a very sensitive subject in Bombay. He noticed that everybody should survive in his/her community if he or she is from minor community. After seeing the *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* of Muslims in Bombay, he reminds his own situation in Trinidad. Naipaul recollects "I felt that if I had been in their position, confined to Bombay, to that area, to that row I too would have been a passionate Muslim." (31)

Political upheavals and separatist movements have perturbed India from time to time in post independence era. Naipaul was also in the mood to paint such movements and upheavals. Though he was not there but he collects all the pieces of information from people, newspapers, and gazetteers and so on. For the first time, when Naipaul visited India in 1962 he was not aware with political setup. But during the course of second visit he depicted the period of Emergency very skillfully. In the third visit he was vigilant and curious and enough about such movements which created digressions in day to day life of Indian people. The chapter 'After the Battle' is Naipaul's documentation of the movement in the Indian social fabric that occurred in the 1960s and 70s. This movement marks intellectual confusion of the times when the old ideologies were set aside and a search was on for a new set of ideologies to live by. This coupled with economic crisis accentuated the confusion of those times.

Thus, Naipaul seems very much on the side of India. His response is totally positive. He talks in support and favour of India and its mutinies. The excess he sees now felt to be excess in India. The mutinies were helping to define the strength of the general intellectual life. Mutinies not to be wished away as were part of the beginning of a new way for many millions a part of India's restoration.

The compassionate narrative vision in this book enables Naipaul to capture the theme of India collapsing, mutinying and reaching after a final integration. It is his ability to look for the sense of life in a mutinous spirit order that is a significant aspect of Naipaul's writing. Even in the midst of apparent chaos, he sees a semblance of continuity, coherence and harmony. Thus, the million mutinies<sup>3</sup> come to symbolize the dawn of a post-colonial society for Naipaul. The new attitude expressed in this book brings to light a new Naipaul with 'a central will, a central intellect, a unifying idea' suggesting that the conflicting components of his identity are not to be wished away as they have been responsible for his growth and restoration and achievement of the particular truth he had in his mind all through.

**Notes:**

1. Since time immemorial, India has attracted many foreigners by its culture and civilization, trend and tradition and its flora and fauna. I would like to mention a few travellers of ancient and medieval India who not only delineated the contemporary events of the country but also provided the base for the researchers and archaeologists of today. The travellers were no less than Megasthenes, visited India in reign of Chandragupta Maurya, threw the light on the contemporary culture and society in his book *Indica*. Fa-hien, a Chinese traveller, visited the reign of Chandragupta II and he penned down about the society and culture of Madhya Pradesh. Huen-Tsang, educated at Nalanda University, visited in the regime of Harshvardhan, wrote a travelogue known as *Si-U-Ki* in which he described 138 countries. Muslim Imperialism in India properly started when the Turks stepped on the scene of history not before. One of the most remarkable episodes of this time was the journey and long sojourn in India of one of Islam's greatest intellects, Al-Beruni, forever known as the master, philosopher, mathematician and astronomer of great repute, had accompanied Mohammed Ghazni down to the Punjab. Having settled there, he proceeded to make a thorough study of Sanskrit and Hindi literature, and has left to us a penetrating description of India in his famous work, *Tahkik-i-Hind* (An Enquiry into India).
2. When Naipaul visited India at that time he was 30 years old who criticises the loss of his 'imagined world' without bothering to delve deeper into the reasons for it. This plundered country was struggling to fight with its colonial past and tackling some enormous problems at hand.
3. 'Ism(s)' in India have played a vital role in wounding its civilization in the contemporary era. However, isms like Naxalism, Maoism, racialism etc. have appropriated themselves claiming their acts as devout but their means are detrimental. Neither school of thought has gained anything except widening the wall of parochialism and instigating communal disturbances. Indian politics is totally accountable for encouraging these mis/deeds.

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## Hope and Despair: A Carnavalesque Study of Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*

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The main concern of Vonnegut's novels is to attack a set of beliefs that men surrender themselves to, thereby, causing misery to themselves. The significance man attaches to artificial constructs like race, nationality, even national dogma, forces man to snap the common thread that links all people. For a broader readership who felt conventional fiction was inadequate to express the way in which the common man's life had been disrupted by radical social changes of the postwar era, Vonnegut wrote novels structured in more pertinently contemporary terms, bereft of such unifying devices as conclusive characterization or chronologically organized plots. As a counterculture hero of the turbulent 1960's and a best-selling author among readers of popular fiction (in the three decades after), Kurt Vonnegut is at once more traditional and more complicated than his enthusiasts might like to believe.

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (1922 - 2007) was born to a descendant of a prominent German-American family. His father was an architect and his mother was a noted beauty. Both spoke German fluently but declined to teach Kurt the language in light of widespread anti-German sentiment following World War I. In 1943 Vonnegut enlisted himself in the U.S. Army and took part in the Battle of the Bulge, Belgium, where he was captured by the Germans as a Prisoner of War (POW). Though he has German roots, he was forced to work at a factory in the city of Dresden. On February 13, 1945, when Dresden was firebombed, Vonnegut and the other POWs survived because they were in a meat locker of a slaughterhouse. The scene of senseless misery and mass destruction at Dresden played a key role in Vonnegut's development of pacifist views and his experiences as a soldier had a profound impact on his writings which reflect the helpless human condition through which he emphasizes the role of chance in human actions. All of his fourteen novels are filled with topsy-turvy, carnivalesque images and races of his own invention.

This paper offers a carnivalesque interpretation of *Cat's Cradle* which deal with the human degradation caused by religion and science. The novel has a story-writer and a narrator as characters; and, also has a subtitle, *Cat's Cradle – The Day the World Ended*. Vonnegut conceals a complex texture beneath a deceptively simple surface using the carnival features of parody and the dehumanization projected through war. His use of contradiction and uncertainty as fictional devices represents a significant technical innovation.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of "carnavalesque" refers to a source of 'liberation, destruction and renewal'. The origin and meaning of the

carnavalesque can be best understood by analyzing the concept of the carnival. In the carnival, social hierarchies of everyday life are profaned and overturned by normally suppressed voices and energies. Thus fools become wise, kings become beggars; opposites are mingled (fact and fantasy, heaven and hell). Official seriousness quite often is a mask that conceals pious pretensions and false authorities. Carnival tries to secure this freedom by celebrating and valorizing all that is low, in the process subverting all that is high and holy. Bakhtin likens the carnivalesque in literature to the type of activity that often takes place in the carnivals of the popular culture which sought a release, a freedom from all that is official, authoritarian and serious.

*Cat's Cradle* (1963) was Vonnegut's first novel to draw serious critical attention. This apocalyptic satire on philosophy, religion, and technologic progress centers on a chip of Ice-Nine capable of solidifying all water on earth. The novel exemplifies Vonnegut's blend of scornful and humorous satire and his use of narrative deflections to examine contemporary life by showcasing the state of the world and humanity. Vonnegut introduces a religion called "Bokononism," which parodies all religions and to propagate the belief that well-meaning lies are more helpful to humanity than absolute truths. The novel begins on a typical carnivalesque note:

Nothing in this book is true.

Live by the *foma* (harmless untruths) that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy. (*Cat's Cradle*, 5)

Vonnegut juxtaposes science and religion and characterizes the institutions constructed around them as destructive and dehumanizing. The novel exhibits a realistic world where the lies of religion serve a better purpose than the truth of science. This juxtaposition of truth and lies and their inversion serve the topsy-turvy nature of this carnivalesque world.

According to Vonnegut faith is not rooted in religion, but in man himself. Vonnegut believes that writers can influence people's ideas profoundly. Vonnegut also parallels religion's attempts to explain the origin of the earth with his Creation story. "In the beginning," he writes (referencing the book of Genesis) "God created the earth and looked upon it with his cosmic loneliness" (265). God then "created every living creature that now moveth" (265) out of mud. One of these creatures was Man. Man then inquired what the purpose of this creation was. God's answer is "I leave it to you to think of one for all this" (265). Vonnegut is playing with the human belief that there must be a purpose for everything. This is what leads people to espouse religious beliefs in the first place. Religious people have tried for centuries to determine "the reason for all this" and have developed elaborate answers. Yet, if we are to believe Bokonon, all of it is "foma" and life doesn't require a purpose.

As a direct witness to the bombing of Dresden as a soldier during World War II, Vonnegut was left with haunting memories of the senseless misery and mass destruction of war which get clearly reflected in *Cat's Cradle*. Right at the beginning, the reader is warned: "Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be

founded on lies will not understand this book either” (16). Rightly so, Bokononism, the religion Vonnegut introduces in the novel is based on lies which in the carnival lens is unmasking of truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks.

One of the major themes of the novel is the tension between the community and the individual. The various images of science and religion function as a representation of a shared culture and its values and simultaneously isolate the reader and narrator from these cultural distinctions because the narrator revises the traditional, communal interpretation of the sign. The novel is akin to carnival's element of parody. Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*, looks closely at sixteenth-century parody which conceptualizes the theory of the carnival. Bakhtin's discussion of carnival and parody invites an evolution of parodic texts. Based on which the themes of the individual's isolation and involvement with the community are highlighted.

The narrator in *Cat's Cradle* is John who intends to write a book called *The Day the World Ended* chronicling the events in the lives of well known individuals on August 6, 1945, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. In the process the first person he contacts is Newton Hoenikker, the son of Dr. Felix Hoenikker, 'one of the so-called "Fathers" of the first atomic bomb' (16). When Newton - Newt - replies, he reveals information about his past years and his family. Newt's mother had passed away leaving Angela, her unattractive six-foot daughter, in control of the family. As it turned out, his father never paid much attention to the family, and especially held little or no interest in the bomb itself on the day the bomb was dropped. On that day, Newt was standing around his father's study and finds him playing with a loop of string. He sees his father twisting it around his fingers in the shape of a cat's cradle. He approaches little Newt and,

...went down on his knees on the carpet next to me (Newt), and he showed me his teeth, and waved that tangle of string in my face. 'See? See? See? He asked. *Cat's Cradle*. (*Cat's Cradle*, 21)

Newt, having never really received any attention from his father sees his ugly, cigar-reeking face up close and gets scared and runs outside. "...my father was the ugliest thing I had ever seen," (21) writes Newt to John. This particular episode in the novel recalls Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque realism of carnival that presents men,

who are ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of 'classic' aesthetics, that is, the aesthetics of the readymade and the completed ... They are contrary to the classical images of the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriac of birth and development. (*Rabelais*, 25)

In *Cat's Cradle* there are three personas at work simultaneously: Vonnegut, the author; Jonah, the narrator; and, Bokonon, who writes books on Bokononism. All three are aware of the fact that 'lies told for the sake of artistic effect...can be, in a higher sense, the most beguiling forms of truth,' and vice versa (Reed, 125) as stated in the editor's note of *Mother's Night* [another of Vonnegut's books]. Lundquist's work

*Kurt Vonnegut* details that Vonnegut influences the reader to question not only the novel's realism, but reality itself:

This is just the point implied by Vonnegut's cosmic irony with its continuous laughter at systems and philosophies and its paradoxically pragmatic attempts at dealing with the new view of reality. (88)

Vonnegut here comments on the meaninglessness of human pursuits because the world does not learn or benefit from experience from the senseless misery of war and other human constructs.

The cat's cradle also the title of the novel becomes a leitmotif of life in general in the novel. Vonnegut introduces the "cat's cradle" as a metaphor for different interpretations of life. Just as Newt says, "A cat's cradle is nothing more than a bunch of X's between somebody's hands" (165). The story travels from the home turf of Vonnegut's imagination—Ilium, New York—to San Lorenzo where a religion based on 'lies' called Bokononism is practiced, when a sense of doom (in the form of Ice-Nine) overtakes mankind. Newt had an older brother Frank Hoenikker who had left them on the day of his father's funeral and was never heard of again. Newton in a way becomes the protagonist of the novel as his life and actions are discussed throughout the narrative. The three Hoenikker children are each in possession of their father's invention: “

Ice-Nine – It was blue-white. It had a melting point of one-hundred-fourteen-point-four-degrees Fahrenheit. (*Cat's Cradle*, 50)

Felix Hoenikker's invention of Ice-Nine was created to address the military's need for a way to get through mud quickly while on the battlefield. Ice-Nine, effectively freezes any liquid with which it comes in contact, and the invention could be heralded as a great success for Science and a considerable asset to the U.S. military. But the truth is that, this 'creation of science' will destroy a nation's water supply and will ensure its eventual demise. Contrary to the general belief that Science can address itself to all human problems, Felix and Frank Hoenikker's experiences as scientists reveal that scientific knowledge does not provide sufficient answers. Ironically, Science is frequently exploited to create human problems, and scientists like the Hoenickers usually do little to prevent this because they are too concerned with discovering truths to weigh the consequences of their discoveries. This mingling of the established truths and lies is a subversion of the established norms.

Vonnegut attacks and exposes society's flaws while questioning its intelligence and this is evident in the conversation between John and Dr. Von Koenigswald:

“I agree that all religions, including Bokononism, are nothing but lies.”  
...I will do anything to make a human being feel better, even if it's unscientific. (*Cat's Cradle*, 179-180)

Society has placed many impediments like religion and science in man's growth in the name of protecting its members from the unknown. Vonnegut attacks science and religion with equal intensity and counters the established thinking through his counter-religion of Bokononism, a religion of "shameless lies"(16). Newt summarizes religion best when he compares it to the cat's cradle "Religion! . . . See the cat? . . . See the cradle?" (150). Towards the end Bokonon realizes the futility of religion in one's life and thinks of an alternative book he could write discarding the Books of Bokononism:

If I were a younger man, I would write a history of human stupidity; and I would climb to the top of Mount McCabe and lie down on my back with my history for a pillow; and I would take from the ground some of the blue-white poison that makes statues of men; and I would make a statue of myself, lying on my back, grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who. (*Cat's Cradle*, 231)

Vonnegut depicts Bokonon as a holy wanderer finding nothing but junk, lies, and idiocy, he talks about the creations of humanity and their attempts to convince themselves and others of the importance of their pursuits. Bokonon laughs when he thinks of these fools, because human pursuits will never matter, and it will never even matter whether he laughs or cries. Here, the parody of religion represents "forms of the mask" (*Rabelais*, 39-40).

Vonnegut presents religion as more useful and less dangerous than science, despite its paradoxes and shortcomings. In the novel, religion is beneficial not because it conveys some truth about the world, but rather because it gives people elaborate lies in which to believe. Bokonon's lies prove more liberating than the Hoenikkers' truths, because his lies have the means for making men feel better about their lack of purpose and destitute existence. The technological advancement leads to the destruction of human race because of science's frequent disinterest in humanity's survival. Vonnegut attempts to show that humans' temptation to control life, death, and nature has led to advances like the atomic bomb and other novel ways of bringing death in exchange for power.

The multiplicity of searches, utilising either religion or science, brings on the realisation of the complexity of moral and aesthetic experiences. Bokonon's, and eventually John's, answer to this complexity which affects the individual's ability to choose a course of action, is ironic detachment. There is a motivation during carnival time to create a form of human social configuration that 'lies beyond existing social forms' (*Rabelais*, 280). Thus Bakhtin's carnival theory can not be reduced to terms such as anarchic or irresponsible. It is, in fact, a diverse tactic, one that may be implemented and sustained wherever there is a dominant regime. Not only does *Cat's Cradle* cast doubt on the usefulness or wisdom of searching for truths, and our

traditional ways of doing so, but the idea of self determination and the ability of a person to control their destiny is questioned.

Everything happens "as it was supposed to happen", and that no chasing of destiny will ever fulfill our desires, even if we catch what we are chasing (76). This phrase is repeated as a refrain throughout the book. John gets Mona, and is not satisfied; Frank is offered the Presidency, and doesn't want the responsibility that goes with the power; all three Hoenikker children buy what they dream of with Ice Nine, and none are happy. So we might as well live as best as we can in the moment we are in, and laugh. As the book continues, the almost inescapable conclusion is that in Vonnegut's world we must be aware of the lies and truths that we are choosing to accept, that "the primary criterion for choosing a philosophy of life is pragmatic: not whether or not it is 'true,' but whether or not it works" (Mayo, 28).

The nature of the novel gives one a feeling that one is 'reading' rather than immersing oneself unselfconsciously in the text, making us recall Bakhtin's observation that Rabelais set his story in "the immediate foreground of his images is the world he had lived in and the people he closely knew" (*Rabelais*, 445). Just as we become used to the idea that we are reading about the writing of a book *The Day the World Ended* that turned into another book *Cat's Cradle*, we are again introduced to another set of fictional books - *The Books of Bokonon*. Then Papa Monzano and Frank Hoenikker get a brief look-in with fictional ghost-written statements, and then Philip Castle's fictional book on San Lorenzo. And so it goes typical of the carnival features of "exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness [which] are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style (*Rabelais*, 303).

Vonnegut appears to be a man very much in touch with what he sees as the basic ridiculousness and meaninglessness of life, the universe, and everything. *Cat's Cradle* dissects many of the institutions that we hold sacred, that give our lives structure and meaning and stability. In many ways, this novel is an exercise in pulling aside the curtain and revealing the Great and Powerful as nothing more than a con man with some gadgets, a man who ultimately has no more useful knowledge about the meaning of it all than do any of the rest of us. The novel completes a full circle with the end connecting to the beginning where the novelist reiterates that nothing in the book is true. Vonnegut's excellent technique and unique style are unbelievably powerful. This thought-provoking text and incredibly-well developed characters are not to be forgotten either.

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## AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF ROBERT FROST'S SELECT POEMS

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Literary eco-criticism is motivated by environmental activism and focuses principally on representations of the physical environment, especially of nonhuman nature. The dualistic separation of human from nature, promoted by Western Philosophy and culture as the origin of environmental crisis, demands a return to a monistic, primal identification of human beings and ecosystem. While nature is not a subject, it has a language of its own. It has been talking to us and its natural signs portend danger and perhaps catastrophe. Whatever happens Nature will go on without us. And so, we are the ones who must act wisely to sustain and value the present living ecosystem and our position in it. In my paper “An Ecocritical Reading of Robert Frost’s Select Poems”, I have made an attempt to read some of the select poems of Frost on the basis of the above mentioned views. Robert Frost, though not a high priest of Nature like Wordsworth or a Pantheist like Emerson or Thoreau, is a person who has a deeper understanding of nature. Being a true realist and a strong advocate of individualism, Frost saw man as learning from nature, the zones of his own limitations. Conversely, Frost saw man becoming more “ego-centric” due to his preoccupation and less “eco-centric”. Neither a radical nor conservative, Frost searched for an ideal reconciliation between the opposing claims, of the individual and the group and also between man and nature. Thus nature, to him, was at once harsh and mild and man’s relation to nature, as to his fellows, is both “together and apart”. His poems have overtones of deep ecology which offers a philosophical basis for environmental advocacy which may, in turn, guide human activity against perceived self-destruction.

Frost’s poems create a memorable impression by the overwhelming presence of nature. Mountains rearing high above man’s head, valleys curving to man’s inquiring eye, roads, open or leaf-strewn, crowded trees, dense dark woods, hills of snow caving in heavily, tufts of flowers and many more – this memorable world of Robert Frost is all-pervasive and constant. But Frost’s vision expands beyond its focus upon man and society. He uses nature as a background to reveal his concept of the human relationship to this planet upon which the human race is destined to live out its days. Rural scenes and landscapes, homely farmers and the natural world are used to illustrate a psychological struggle with everyday experience faced by men but met with courage, will and purpose to keep moving on.

The principle champions of nature and interpreters of things natural in the nineteenth century were Emerson and Thoreau and they had been called Frost’s “intellectual and spiritual god fathers” (21). “The stars”, declared Emerson, “awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence” (5). And he also avers that all things are symbolic and the

seasons provide analogies with human life. Those familiar with the poems of Frost can hear the echoes of these principles ringing loud and clear in his poetry.

Nature, according to Frost, is at once 'together and apart' with the human workings. And this unflinching honesty in revealing the facts between man and nature becomes the recurrent theme in Frost's nature poetry. And as John F. Lynene avers, "it is this that he sees the basis of man's power and indeed of his spiritual being" (145). Moreover we can understand Frost's philosophy of nature and man in his remarks to John F. Lynen thus, "Man can never find a home in nature, nor can he live outside of it. But he can assert the reality of his spirit and thus can exist independently of the physical world in the act of looking squarely at the facts of nature" (146).

Though it is commonly acknowledged that Frost considered nature as a separate and independent entity, he was far too much like Emerson, visualizing man always cradled within nature, totally immersed in environment. Nature, to him is an open book with lessons of mutability which is taught by repetition of days, seasons, years etc. Man learns his limitations, and his lessons for survival from nature. But at times, out of his unquenchable desire, he tries to break the decreed limits of nature. Frost in one of his poems talks about the peach tree, being carried perhaps too far north to survive the intense, cold of winter and hints at the farmer's passion and nature's will thus, "Why is his nature forever so hard to teach/that though there is no fixed line between wrong and rights/There are roughly zones whose laws must be obeyed" (155). Thus Frost feels, that, man learns quickly that he cannot range beyond what his own physical nature permits, and that he is inevitably guided towards his destination by some force that keeps working on man. This inevitability is brought out in his poem "The Road not Taken" where man recognizes to his sorrow that he cannot travel both roads being one traveler, and also learns not only that choices must be made but that his decisions also will prove irrevocable. Time, space and capability set the zones within which nature allows man to harvest. "After Apple-Picking" too brings out the same theme, where the harvester finds himself blocked from success, before his plan is carried out, by winter's approach and physical weariness. "I am overtired/of the great harvest I myself desire" (400). Thus nature imposes her zones dragging across man's path, roadblocks. But out of his failure man learns painful lessons from nature. And, of course, if he is willing to accept the pain and gain profit, he obviously will have moments of happiness and rejoice in his life:

May something go always unharvested  
May much stay out of our stated plan  
Apples or something forgotten and left,  
So smelling their sweetness would be no theft (156).

Frost often emphasized in his poems, the contrast between man and nature as well as the conflicts that arise between the two entities. He recognized the harsh facts of the natural world and viewed these opposites as simply different aspects of reality in his poetry. Frost saw nature as an alien force capable of destroying man, but he also saw man's struggle with nature as, a 'heroic battle,' As Lynen says:

Man's physical needs, the dangers facing him, the realities of birth and death, the limits of his ability to know and to act are shown in stark outline by the indifference and inaccessibility of the physical world in which he must live. (150)

Frost in accord with this statement considers nature essentially as a symbolic philosopher and guide disseminating subtle and secret lessons of life to mankind. His poems, thus, puts man to the test and thus brings out his true greatness. His poem

“To Earthward” showcases this:

When Stiff and sore and scarred  
I take away my hand  
From leaning on it hard  
In grass and sand  
The hurt is not enough:  
I long for weight and strength  
To feel the earth as rough  
To all my length. (150)

In his “Two Tramps in Mud Time” he mirthfully chats about the genial April weather but he intervenes in between to offer advice too as:

Be glad of water, but don't forget  
The lurking frost in the earth beneath  
That will steal forth after the sun is set  
And show on the water its crystal teeth. (412)

Thus in his poems the love of natural beauty and horror at the remoteness and the indifference of the physical world are not opposite but different aspects of the same view.

Frost uses nature as an image that he wants us to see or a metaphor that he wants us to relate to on a psychological level. The most lucid interpretation of Frost's lyric, perhaps, is that based upon the Emersonian pattern of natural analogies, “things admit of being used as symbols because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part” (56). The predominant image of darkness recurs like a major theme in most of his poems. Dark woods, mixing fear and desire, typify the great concern of man for knowledge of the unknown that awaits him. They do their best to suck him in. Frost uses nature in his poem “Desert places” to express the thoughts and feelings of the speaker who sits in his room looking outside into a dark snowy night. The last two lines of the poem formulates the thesis of the entire poem, when the speaker realizes that he is not worried about the places outside but is scared of his own empty lonely places in his mind, that causes distress in his life. By ‘home’ the speaker is referring to his own mind which is a much more dangerous place than the woods or outer space. The poem “Stopping by woods on a snowy Evening” reproduces a scene almost identical to “Desert places”. Here the traveler is enticed and mesmerized by the black trees. The horse in the poem is confused and wants to keep going. But the traveler with his “promises to keep” has a ready rationalization for withstanding the bait” (169). He does not need to look far to find misery and loneliness.

Snow, is yet another traditional symbol employed by Frost to depict his thoughts of the eternal. For Frost, all seasons lead out from winter. The poems could not exist without winter and its flood of white snow. It stands a symbol for the paradoxical life-in-death without which spring can never awaken. His poem "The Trail by Existence" puts forth the religious connotations of this snow:

The light of heaven falls whole and white  
And is not shattered into dyes  
And binding all is the hushed snow  
Of the far-distant breaking wave. (166)

Frost, like a true environmentalist reverts and revels in water, the elixir of life. Like Eliot, Frost equates water with fertility and vigor. In his "West Running Brook" the stream is presented as an emblem in which a young couple recognize the running water as completing the triumvirate of their marriage. It becomes the stream of life for them.

It is from that in water we were from  
Long, long before we were from any creature  
It flows between us, over us, and with us.  
And it is time, strength, tone light, life, and love. (409)

Water, from whatever source or by whatever means we receive it, is, of course, very essential and necessary to man. Frost's dedicated concern for the preservation of water becomes apparent through his words, "We love the things we love for what, they are" (161). Here he refers to the brooks. Frost's clarion call to his readers, being an enthusiastic ecologist, to participate in the form for tending the fount of life, water, is vividly showcased in his epigraph for *A Boy's Will*. In "The Pasture" he invites:

I'm going to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
And wait to watch the water clear, I may  
I shan't be gone long – You come too. (162)

Frost, while highlighting the inevitability of preserving nature for the well-being of our future generations, poignantly and vehemently explodes on man's depredations, that degrade the sanctity of nature. He points out the callous nature of man in disposing of a brook's "immortal force" by running roughshod over it with his houses, curbs and street, throwing the brook, "Deep in a sewer dungeon." Frost talks about man's irresponsible playing with bonfires which is equally destructive, as with man's perversity in toying with gunfire. In his "Range Finding" Frost conveys the ominous upheaval of the entire ecology caused by shells as its poison spreads over hill and pasture like a creeping fog. Bill Mackibben in his "The End of Nature" has discussed about the imminent threat for nature thus:

Nature is not merely threatened by the possibility of apocalypse, but in some sense already beyond it, for if nature is inflected as wilderness, the very thought of human interference is enough decisively to contaminate its purity. (106)

Frost, thus being a realist to the core, uses nature as a vibrant and educative tool to lay bare the secrets and the inner workings of man's mind, only with a view to transforming him into a better human being. Frost's nature poetry thus contains "decipherable dimensions beyond physical nature" (164). His affinity towards life and the universe as a whole can be summarized thus:

The universe may or may not be very immense.  
As a matter of fact there are times when I am apt  
To feel it close in tight against my sense  
Like a caul in which I was for and still am wrapped. (164)

At the outset, Frost's poems give us an impression that he considers nature and man as two separate entities, but a deep and a close reading of his poems reveal to us the enigmatic subtlety and inseparability of man and nature.

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## COMPARATIVE STYLISTICS

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Comparative imagination and dialogic modes of thinking are necessary for the comparative cultural study of postmodern writer's style. We live in the age of terror and translation, interculturalism and internationalism. The greatness of the work of art will be measured by not only its local, to use Edward Said's concept, "worldliness" but by the quality and richness of its intertextuality and internationality. Consequently, the traditional formula that "style is the man" falls short in the analysis of the complex international and intercultural textuality. As style is constructed by innumerable elements outside that man; the formation of the stylistic identity of that man largely depends on both intrinsic as well as extrinsic ingredients. At the same time, this individualistic French dictum cannot explain adequately how innate nativism of Indian four caste-Varna hierarchical stereotypes of castealization shapes the styles of Indian writers born in different castes. Not only style but also the man himself is structured by culture and society. To use the famous phrase of SHU-MEI SHIH, "comparative racialization", should be linked with Indian "castealization in literature" to gain better comparative perspectives on Occidental and Oriental styles. In Western literature color consciousness is exhibited in imagery and symbols. Similarly caste consciousness is revealed in the structure of the literary feeling itself. U. R. Anantha Murthy's *Sanskara* and *Bharahiipuram* display how only insider can portray a specific sub-culture/caste group realistically. It needs particular local color, language register and style. The central theme of his *Bharahiipuram* is determined by the rigid frame of caste-varna frame of reference. The provoking event of the *dalit's* entry into the temple of lord Manjunatha is at its center. It is depicted through the experiences of the London returned English educated Brahman protagonist Jagannatha. It is colored not only by the author's autobiographical experiences, his nativism and leftist cum Gandhian ideology but also by the technique and style of John Fowles' *A Maggot* (1985). A peculiar caste conflict and its tormenting consciousness are innately computerized in the files of Indian consciousness in the brain. The novelist depicts the protagonist's 'stream of consciousness' in the ironic style as follows:

Labyrinthine streets. Incapable of creating anything. Sewerless streets which had multiplied with the growing frame of Lord Manjunatha. If untouchables were to refuse to carry headloads of human waste out of the town for a week, the stink would pervade the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Manjunatha. Jagannatha's body shook in utter disgust. Why was it that the shop lined streets with Brahmins and merchants had not produced a single thing of beauty?... (translated from Kannada by P. Sreenivasa Rao, 98-9).

It is a cultural paradox that the first temple entry revolt was led by the Brahman Sane guruji in Maharashtra, but no novel was ever written in Marathi. U. R. Anantha Murthy's Kannada *Bharatipuram* depicts the problem of temple entry for untouchables. Only cultural materialism can further explore the stylistic nuances of such style. The local elements of structures of feelings are

more dominant in regional language writings. To the other extreme the Indian English literature exhibits more complex international intertextuality in its style. Salman Rushdie is known for “chutanifying” Western literary tradition and his famous phrase “writing back to the empire” has become a key concept in the postcolonial theories. Now the style is studied in terms of semiotics of culture and cultural hybridity. The rich intertextuality of international interculturalism can be found in the last paragraph of Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995:432-34):

As for me, I went back to the table, and wrote my story’s end...

*At the end of this tombstone are three eroded letters; my fingertip reads them for me. RIP. Very well: I will rest, and hope for peace. The world is full of sleepers waiting for their moment of return: Arthur sleeps in Avalon, Barbarossa in his cave. Fin MacCool lies in the Irish hillsides and the Wonn Ourboros on the bed of the Sundering sea. Australia’s ancestors, the Wendjina, take their ease underground, and somewhere, in a tangle of thoms, a beauty in a glass coffin awaits a prince’s kiss. See: here is my flask. I’ll drink some wine; and then, like a latter day Van Winkle, I’ll lay me down upon this grave stone, lay my head beneath these letters RIP, and close my eyes, according to our family’s old practice of falling asleep in times of trouble, and hope to awaken, renewed and joyful, into a better time(italic original).*

The Indian reader used to the traditional rhetoric of figures of speech, rhythm and other stylistic devices finds the stylistic games and subversion of the technique of grand style in postmodern writing very difficult to understand. It needs to be analyzed in the present contexts of its configurations in globalization. Hence “comparative stylistics” should be studied as an integral part of interdisciplinary cultural studies, and made more relevant to differentialist theories to counter the homogenizing forces of globalization. In fact, all cultures are translational and comparative. In the age of new computational schema of stylistics in machine translations has revolutionized the traditional concepts of style. As mentioned above, “style is the man” is the half truth; and it should be noted in terms of structuralism that both are “structured” by innumerable forces. Thus, “style is the dress of thought” is also the half truth. It is claimed that we have a rich tradition of rhetoric in Sanskrit; but it severely suffers from colonial amnesia and alienation from its own people. The history of its decline can be further traced in the colonial twin process namely Anglicization and Sanskritization. The latter was soon overpowered by the first; and it is one of the glaring colonial paradoxes that one of the indigenous elite Hindu intellectuals, Vishnushastri Chipalunkar, eulogized alien “English” language acquisition as seeking and drinking the “milk of tigris” and described himself as “Shivaji of Marathi language.” This acceptance of the superiority of the master’s language does not represent the Prospero-Caliban complex like the black aesthetics. On the contrary, it displays the brown man’s trick of “emperor Jone’s” use of “invisible bullets” to dominate his own community. The metaphor of Shivaji’s sword is a contradiction in the colonial contexts and exposes hidden aspects of intra-cultural colonization. The research works on the impact of English on the prose style in the nineteenth century Indian literature display varieties of imitations and networks of influences. The caste/class hierarchies can be traced in its degree of

Westernization of styles of narratives. This is the colonial irony which exhibits sample cases of the process of internalization of the model of the white rulers to maintain native cultural hegemony. In contrast, the “black Afrikaners” used the slogan “black is beautiful” and used Creole English as a cheap goat milk to subvert and resist the domination of English. As pointed out above, it was post-Independent non-resident Indian Muslim Salman Rushdie, who wanted to “chutnify” the whole English literary and linguistic Western tradition, gave a new slogan, “Empire Writes Back”, which was ignored by the less informed elite Hindu literati. Hence we need an independent theory of “Otherness”, which I have expounded in a separate research paper.

The same unending tradition of using/ misusing alien aesthetic theories to maintain indigenous cultural hegemony continues till today. It is the Vedic tradition which shuns “comparison” totally; and this can be confirmed by reading the recent book by Milind Malshe and Ashok Joshi that introduces recent Western literary theories in Marathi, one of the constitutionally recognized major Indian languages. So we need a new comparative dialogic imagination for application of comparative stylistics without any mechanical catalogue of traditional binary oppositions. Racially “man is comparison”. Fanon said “some streets are more comparative.” All statements made in particular style are based on comparison. Shakespeare’s famous metaphors “world is a stage” or life is a tale told by an idiot” cannot be read without comparing human life with a play. All knowledge and conceptual understanding begins with comparisons. The early philological comparative study such as P.S. Deshmukh’s *The Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature* (OUP, 1933) shows how the semiotics of culture was developed since the rise of *Brahman Granthas* and *Manu Smriti*. That cross-pollination of Oriental and Occidental linguistic and literary elements is lost sight of in binary opposition’s stage in the colonial conflicts. The comparative stylistic studies of the Oriental and Occidental literary traditions have mostly lingered at the stage of “parallels” and “analogies”. But the Indian Sanskrit aesthetic and stylistic theories have not been effectively used in practice since the colonial contact with Europe. The comparative cultural study, say, of stylistic presentation of rituals in Greek and Sanskrit drama might open new vistas for comparative semiotic investigations on the global scale.

My dozen comparative studies, both in English and Marathi, have demonstrated how we are dependent on the Western theories and concepts. On this background, the prose styles of the Indian novelists, belonging to different castes, creeds, cultures, regions and religions, should be compared to gain new perspectives on the culture conditioned comparative and dialogic imagination of Indian writer. Style has been traditionally defined as the “manner of linguistic expression in prose or poetry”. In Sanskrit it is described as “rasatmak wakyam kavyaaha” (the sentence full of *rasa* is poetry”. The similarities in “rhetoric” developments in East and West are traced by the analogy studies. However, the basic difference is that the Asian traditions of style are more lyrical, emotional and mythopoetic, while Western mostly rational, logical and argumentative. Both laid emphasis on diction, syntax, and various kinds of figures of speeches. New linguistic and other theories have brought about a sea change in the concept of style. For

instance, Northrope Fry hoped to bring scientific precision in its analysis and differentiated “demotic style” (rhythms and associations of ordinary speeches) from “hieratic style” (elaborative, separated from ordinary speech). Meanwhile Michael Bakhtin’s theories revolutionized the conceptual thinking in such a way that the traditional descriptive terms such as “pure”, “ornate”, “simple”, “rustic,” “sober” etc became a suspect. Style was also classified according to periods and the zeitgeist (Augustan/British/Bhakti,renaissance),texts(biblical/puranic-mythological/),traditions (metaphysical,Islamic-Parsi),movements(romantic,Pre-Raphaelite,dalit-rural,modern), institutions (scientific, Constance School, Vedic), individuals (Milton,Kalidas) and so on and so forth.

Such kinds and elements described above deal with the decorative surface features of writings. Instead stylistics today proposes basic decisions or assumptions developed by the author concerning series of complex relationships. Does he write or invisible forces get something written? Does he write with the “left “hand at day time and with the “right” at midnight? Even period or political speech style demands not only structural but also cultural investigations. The new developments in stylistics since the 1950s are not only based on linguistics and philosophy but also on various kinds of interdisciplinary elaborations, computational schemes of stylistics in translation, discourse analysis, deconstruction structuralism etc. In this context M.H. Abrams (2004:306) observes:

Stylisticians who aim to replace or supplement the qualitative judgments of literary scholars by objectively determinable methods of research exploit the ever increasing technological resources of computers in the service of what has come to be called **stylometry**: the quantitative measurement of the features of an individual writer’s style...

Simplifications and fitting features in formula for memorization is the salient feature of Sanskrit stylistics. Even today we stop with qualitative or quantitative determination of Aurobindo’s use of symbols in *Savitri* and dalit writer’s over use of the image of sun in poetry. It is a “fingerprint” of style of a single text or class of texts, for example, in most of the superficial parallel studies of African –American and dalit literature. Sometimes too much emphasis is given on the relation between, say, distinctive features of Raja Rao’s style and traits of his Hindu-Brahminical metaphysics of psyche. Similarly the author’s attitude towards world and the method of organizing experience are linked with his style. Gandhian prose style is a typical illustration of this kind. Linguistic or literary studies of style are run of the mill methods. Sociological and Marxist interpretations of the period style are many. However semantic-aesthetic and emotional functions of style in the text are less studied comparatively. Thus interdisciplinary pluralistic approaches have expanded the vistas of stylistic studies in which we have to increase the literacy of using stylometers

As a comparatist and postcolonial culturalist I propose that comparative stylistics is more relevant in the age of anglocalization. The recent dominant trend of the popularity of translated

texts in India has bred more hatred of the caste/culture group determined indigenous literatures. The fears of death of local languages and cultures have left us in an uncertain chaotic condition. It is reflected in the different styles of our writers belonging to different castes/creeds, regions and religions. For example, the e-mail message structure and subversive style of Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* has turned the protest in dalit literature topsy-turvy. The state based revolt of *dalits*, which was over patronized for political correctness by the highest caste/class critics, is turned upside down by Ashok Thakur's murder by ungrateful Halawai only for money. Here is an example of the use of no-aesthetic prose text in business management in the novel for adding not only a new stylistic device but for transforming it into the aesthetic property:

**HOW DOES THE ENTERPRISING DRIVER  
EARN LITTLE MONEY EXTRA**

1, When his master is not around, he can siphon petrol from the car, with a fulllel. Then sell the petrol...

4. As he gains in experience and confidence and is ready to try something riskier, he can turn his master's car into a freelance taxi. The stretch of the road from Gurgaon to Delhi is excellent for this; lots of Romeos come to see their girlfriends who work in the call centers... (229).

This matter of fact plain style prepares us to accept the faithless *dalits* gruesome act of innocent loving master simply for money. A reference to Romeo brings in the international intertexts. It enriches the intercultural intertextuality. The advance comparative studies of differences in similarities of different languages and cultures might help us in differentiating stylistic devices at deeper levels. Process of translation begins with translation itself. Translation has occupied a central place in comparative studies today. Traditional boundaries of literary as well as linguistic analysis of poetic style have disappeared. Of course, comparative stylistics has its own limitations, like other disciplines, but it is more rewarding in the global village. Monica Dorothy (2008; 49) starts discussion of her theory of comparative stylistics as follows:

One of the most essential contributions to the theory of translation ought to come from a theory of comparative stylistics, if it were not for the terminological paradox, we could call comparative stylistics a "grammar of style", determining universal parameters of style, which have their values set differently in different languages...(emphasis added).

From the broad perspectives in the foregoing discussion, the "grammar of style" of Indian writers is different from those in Anglo-American literary traditions. This is an attempt to end too romantic subjectivity and pseudo-universalism in conventional stylistic studies. The objectivity can be introduced by comparing stylistic variations in translations. Apart from such controversies without which there can be no progression, we are concerned here with the danger of being fully appropriated/assimilated/ acculturated by the dominant Anglo-American postmodern styles. A comparative study of prose style of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Günter Grass, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai will explain some aspects of the historiographic metafiction.

Writing in a foreign language, especially in English, is an unconscious socio-political act of translating Indian reality mainly for the implied alien reader. Comparative investigation of the survival of indigenous stylistic features on equal footing with the Western ones might reveal that the latter are privileged by the Indian comprador class. On the contrary the Chinese resist them by immediate translation of the alien text into Chinese and discuss it on their own grounds. But Indians invite the “foreign hand” to defeat their own rival culture groups. This is one of the reasons of our failure in developing a specific “internal stylistics” of Indian languages. Such important component of the “computational schema of stylistic translation is developed by the Canadian theorists. Chrysanne Dimarco and Graeme Hirst (2008:149) argue:

The main feature of the schema is that the translation of style, according to our definition, requires three distinct bodies of stylistic knowledge: French *internal stylistics*, French-English *comparative stylistics*, and English *internal stylistics*. The internal stylistics of a language tells us how to choose syntactic structures and lexical items to express a particular aspect of style, such as clarity or economy. From comparative stylistics, we can gain understanding of when the target text should express different style from the source text and when the style should remain the same.

What is the nature of *internal stylistics* of Indian English? It is certainly different from French *internal stylistics*, because it is determined more by the first Indian language of the author. For instance, *internal stylistics* of R.K. Narayan and Mulkraj Anand can be distinguished on the ground of their mother-tongues Kannada and Punjabi as well as their sub-culture groups. Here we can hardly use the model of French-English *comparative stylistics*, because there is the possibility of the presence of Sanskrit- bhasha *comparative stylistics*. Abhitabh Ghose’s *Suitable Boy* displays Hindi- Sanskrit –English *comparative stylistics*. The nature and scope of this internal stylistics depends on the author’s degree of Westernization and knowledge of classical languages. This “innate” double bind can be traced in V.S. Naipaul’s fiction also. The reasons for dislocation of Indian internal stylistics are too many to be discussed here. But K. Krishnamurthy has pointed out some of them as follows:

Sometimes it looks as if Indian poetics has suffered more at the hands of scholar-specialists of the present century than by the traditional commentators in Sanskrit of the past who did not lay any claims to the modern-historical perspective. Unlike Aristotle, who has been much studied in the West, Bharata suffered undeserved neglect at the hands of Sanskrit theoreticians as well as modern Indologists, because the attention of one and all is turned to Bharata’s central idea of *rasa* to the utter neglect of his over all vision of the entire gamut of poetry, drama, music and dance as embodied in the almost unknown key concept of *Lakshna* which underlies all his other concepts and which constitutes his contribution to aesthetics of fine arts...

Apart from the unending debate on revival and application of Sanskrit/ bhasha “aesthetic norms today, it is more interesting to study internal as well as comparative stylistics with reference

to some sample texts selected at random. For example, the Second Chapter of Anita Nair's *The Better Man* (London: Penguin, 1999:13) opens as follows:

**The Reluctant Native**

Once upon a time Mukundan had a life that in no way resembled the hell he had been exiled to. As a government employee as his working years had been spent in the living quarters painted for him. The rent had been negligible and the comforts many. When a fuse blew, he called the electrical department. If it dripped, the civil work men fixed it...(13)

**One –screw loose Bhasi Stakes His Claim**

The Partner grunted back and asked abruptly, 'are you troubled by piles?' 'What?' Mukundan burst out in surprise that slowly turned into rage. He wondered if the man was mad or drunk. What sane man would dare presume such liberty in their first meeting? And that too with a prospective client. (87).

Both passages show salient traits of Anglicization and Sanskritization. They also exhibit the tug of war between the alien and indigenous elements in the narrative. "Once upon a time" is the Indian age old convention of opening the tale. The Indian expressions such as "featherly", "and that to with", "one-screw loose" and the simplifies meaning of the plant "Lajjalu" instead of a difficult Sanskrit term for it show how Indian writers in English make conscious adjustments in choice of native words and phrases. In contrast to this the Latin term for the same plant is quoted and italicized carefully. The sentences beginning with "if", "when", "then" or phrases such as "in order to", "such as" and clauses demonstrate the samples which M. H. Abrams describes as "hypotactic style" in the western writing. They specify the 'temporal, casual, logical and syntactic relations between members and sentences.'(304). On the whole, the Western rational mode overpowers the rustic lyricism which is the part of aesthetics of regionalism. The novel is set in the rural part of Kerala. The higher degree of enculturation in Kerala in this novel also speaks volumes for impact of Western 'culture and imperialism'.

It is interesting to juxtapose Basavraj Naikar's hagiographic *Light in the House* (2006) with Nair's above cited novel. It is set in a village in Karnataka. In a way it is a 'bildungsroman' based on the life of a nineteenth century Muslim Sufi saint Sharif Saheb. His secular Brahman guru finally makes him his spiritual heir. This unity in diversity was to be presented in the foreign tongue. It needed a different "paratactic style" in which the members within a sentence, or else a sequence of complete sentences are put one after the other without any expression of their connection. The Western terms and expressions do not suit the Indian culture specific words and concepts. See how Naikar faces problems in finding equivalents for guru's "baithak", "anubhuti",etc.

Govindabhatta was sitting on the platform outside his house. He suddenly felt a longing to see Shari Saheb. He, therefore, called him, "Shari, O Shari, please come here quickly." Shari Saheb was not around physically. But nobody knew that there was telepathic

communication between the two... Govindabhatta opened his eyes gently and asked him, “Elder brother, did you call me? Babdibhatta said, “Yes brother”.. “Don’t you know, this man has been obsessed with that Muslim fellow Shari day in and day out...(75).

This is a simple narrative technique without any stylistic experimentation. Dialogues are more than necessary but least dramatized. Amplifications and simplifications are intended to help the alien readers. The address words in Kannada for relatives have no equivalents in English. “Elder brother” is used for “dada” or “bhau” .These amplifications obstruct the flow of the narrative. His style becomes clumsy and “un-English” compared to Nair’s more sophisticated and anglicized style. However, Naikar has used more indigenous elements than Nair. Nair’s narrative is tinged with the few shades of Western postmodern style.

To the other extreme, we have the fine samples of distant diasporic nativism and of hybrid post- modernity. For some scholars postmodernism is a formal and stylistic category. This new aesthetic formation and employment of a parodist mode of self conscious representation has got greater momentum in the new millennium. It has become the style of our age. It breaks the traditional rules of form and content. It asks for transformations of critical assumptions. It presents culture as continually mutating entity. While commenting on postmodernism and postmodernity Simon Malpas (2007:31) argues:

These sketches of the different versions of postmodernism are merely a starting point, and must be developed if proper grasp of what is at stake in the postmodernism is to be attained. A discussion that focuses entirely on the stylistic features of postmodernist culture without investigating the social contexts from which it emerges is too crude to be particularly to be helpful to any serious critic of either postmodernism or postmodernity. It implies, for a start, that artistic style can be divorced from its historical and political contexts: that works, of contemporary art, architecture, literature or culture can somehow be separated from the radical transformations taking place in the world at present, and past artistic experimentation can turn its back on reality to become tied up only with self-reflexive question of form...(31).

Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) shows the emergence of new formal features and post- modern style. These transformations are connected and with the emergence of a new type of social life and SEZ cultural structures in India. They have shaped the spirit of current Indian novel. Nair’s novel published in the same year is more modernist than Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*. It is not a metanarrative that breaks the “Great Divide” between high art and popular culture as in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*. Desai’s novel with its playful style, its mixture of the popular and subversive references, parodies and fragmentary narrative structures might be taken as an example of postmodernism. Its international canvas provides a greater scope for hybridization of stylistic devices, cultural amalgamation and, to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts, “carnivalization and heteroglossia” as follows:

“Where is Gautama?” he had to ask.

“Where is Gaum”

“Where is Gauna?”

“Don’t you know?” The Guyanese man said.

“Indians everywhere in Guyana man.”

“Indians in gaum. Everywhere you look particularly Indians.”

“Trinidad?”

“Trinidad full of Indians !! Saying-can you believe?” (21,22).

Desis against Pakis.

Ah, old war-

Where else did the words fly with an ease that came from centuries of practice? How else would the spirit of your grandfather rise from the dead? (23).

The foregoing extracts quoted from three novels demonstrate how stylistic variations are determined by our socio-cultural variations. So a central place should be given to style in theoretical study of culture. Theorists have concluded that stylistic variation constitutes a crucial nexus between individual and the community, between the linguistic and social. They focus on the relation between variation and the speaker’s place in the world. John Rickford and Penelope Eckert write:

Style is pivotal concept in the study of sociolinguistic variation. Style variability in speech offers the possibility of observing linguistic change in progress (Labov, 1966). Moreover, since all individuals and social groups have stylistic repertoires, the style which they are recorded must be taken into account when comparing them (Rickford and Knox, 1994:265). Finally, style is the locus of the individual’s internalization of broader social distributions of variation (Eckert 2000).

We understand the relation between variation and social parameters, including class, caste, gender, ethnicity, social networks, local categories, and ideology. Naikar’s third person narrative can be characterized as “stigmatized”, end as the result of casual and unmonitored speech. Desai’s first person narrative may be seen as “prestigious” end as the result of more formal, careful speech. Thus novelist’s stylistic activities are therefore ‘directly connected to the speaker’s place in, and strategies, with respect to, the socio-economic hierarchy’ (2). The notions of prestige, vernacular, audience influence, orientation and attitude to addressees, relation between register and social dialect, identity dimensions, identity performance etc are pivotal to the comparative study of style. Anthropologists view style as “distinctiveness: the culture and ideology of linguistic differentiation.” The distinctiveness of the prose style of the above mentioned novelists is further ascertained by their different classes/castes, sects, religions, cultures and other hierarchies to which they belong by birth. The base of this plurality of style can be explained with reference to some comparative observations made by Lachman M. Khubchandani. His comparison of the Indian “organic” plurality and the European “structural” pluralism is more relevant in tracing the network of international interliterariness and interstylisticness. He has devised the “plurality square”:

homogenizing organic, homogenizing structural, differentiating organic, and differentiating structural. He states:

India, China, and Japan present typical cases of stratificational pluralism; the United States and Latin American countries can be identified as examples of 'liberal' pluralism; Switzerland, Belgium and erstwhile USSR typically 'corporate' pluralism. Recent trends in India, Canada and the United States point to the process of favoring corporate pluralism (20).

In this respect Naikar's hagiography displays Karnatakian organic plurality in the local boundaries. Nair's regional fiction expands its range in Kerala. Desai's internationalism exhibits "recent trend of corporate pluralism".

More stylistic and other differences can be revealed by studying comparatively the postmodern style of Arundhati Roy. Her first "devastating" novel *The God of Small Things* can be well understood only if the reader is acquainted with the styles of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Günter Grass and Salman Rushdie. She has depicted the story of an internationalized Syrian Christian family in Kerala. It is richer in cultural hybridities, literary intertextualities and linguistic heteroglossia. Elsewhere I (see Patil 2005, 95-112) have examined its folkloric intertextuality. Rachel's family goes to receive Chako's British wife Sophia. This dramatic scene is full of parody, satire, superstition, farce and comedy. See the cultural carnival at the air-port:

'My aunt, baby'. Chako said.

Sophie Mol was puzzled. She regarded Baby Kochamma with a beady-eyed interest. She knew of cow-babies and dog-babies- yes. (She would soon point to Rahel a bat boy) but *aunt* babies confounded her...

'D' you know who Ariel was?' Baby Kochamma asked Sophie Mol. 'Ariel in *The Tempest*?'

Sophie Mol said she didn't....

..She wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indi-British Behaviour Competition (145).

Roy's literary allusions and intercultural intertextualities of various kinds remind us of similar literary-stylistic carnivalization in Rushdie's fiction. Roy's literary competence can be judged from her lyrical, dialogic and lively pen-portrait of the Kathakali Man:

The Kathakali Man is the most beautiful of men. Because his body is his soul. His only instrument. From the age of three it has been planned and polished, pared own, harnessed wholly to the task of story telling. He has magic in him, this man within painted mask and swirling skirts (230).

He becomes a Regional Flavor.

In the Heart of Darkness they mock him with their lolling nakedness...

Rahel (no Plans, no Locusts stand I), her back against a pillar, watched Karna praying on the banks of Ganga...(231) .

Juxtaposition of Joseph Conrad's famous novel, the *Mahabharata* and Kathakali, use of half spoken words, clauses, puns, parody, subversion, unexpected new coinages etc., are salient features of Roy's postmodern style. All these samples explain how "culture is difference". Its variability and potentiality is revealed when it enters into contact with another. It gives rise to various conflicts. In Roy's novel cross-culture encounters are many and setting moves from Bengal-Assam to Kerala. Cross-breeding of various kinds also gives rise to varieties of hybrid styles. It is a continuation of Rushdie's trend that challenged the Levician British "Great Tradition" of fiction. It is more interesting to compare his style with that of V.S. Naipaul

Rushdie is a Muslim NRI-immigrant, author living with the 'Fatawa' of death hanging on his head. Western scholars have not explained his rich inheritance of stylistic devices developed by the *Arabian Nights*, *Sailor Sidbad's Seven Adventures* and *Panchatantra*. Naipaul's Brahman roots were explored only after he received the Nobel Award. This Caribbean writer certainly displays the "cultural difference" but never resists the European tradition. This is the secret of his success story. Their debates on religious and other issues concerning India reveal their culture conditioning and ideologies. See how Rushdie discusses "the religious nostalgia agenda" in his *Moor's Last Sigh* (1999:338):

'Zeny, you're a Marxist', I pointed out.' The speech about a True Faith ruined by Actually Existing bastardization used to be young guy' standard song. You think Hindus Shikhs Muslims never killed each other before?'

'Post-Marxian,' she corrected me.' And whatever was true or not true in the question of socialism, this fundo stuff is really something new.'

Raman Fielding found many unexpected allies... Hindus, Muslims and Catholics on the verge of violent communal conflict...(338).

Compare this subversive yet multicultural and dialogic style with Naipaul's anti -dialogic, less comparative and traditional superiority complex colored tone of style in his *A House For Mr. Biswas*. The snake killing scene in it exhibits Naipaul's own 'inheritance of loss':

'Say Rama Rama Sita Rama and nothing will happen to you'. Mr Biswas said. Anand repeated the words, faster and faster... (282).

But these are negligible remnants of, to use his rival Derek Walcott's phrase used for Indian culture (which Naipaul condemns) "the epic culture". So Naipaul's literary style displays maximum characteristics of British language, culture. It can be described as an assimilative aesthetics of distant nativism (see pp. 318-9).

In contrast to Naipaul's modernist style, Rushdie's postmodern style is richer and vision much wider and comprehensive. The number of characters representing innumerable religions, countries, cultures etc., in his *The Moor's Last Sigh* is so big, like Marquez's *One hundred Years*

*Solitude*, that it is impossible to remember all of them. His use of other arts such as film, painting, sculptor, as well as sciences has added new dimensions to his style. It cannot be analyzed by simply listing images and symbols. It needs to be studied in terms of semiotics of culture. Let us see how he introduces the character and event with the master strokes of his style:

She was of Japanese origin, but spent much of her professional life working at a resort of paintings in the great museum of Europe. Out of the blue, Vasco Miranda had called her at the Fundacio Joan Miro in Barcelona-saying only that she 'came highly recommended'- and invited her to visit him in Benegeli to examine, and advise on, certain palimpsest-paintings he had recently acquired... When she arrived at the little Alhambra, bringing with her the tools of her trade, as he had expressly requested she should be shown her his own Moor and the x-rays of the portrait below, and asked her if it would be possible to exhume the buried painting by removing the top layer (420).

Such complex sentences and multi cultural references make the postmodern style more difficult to understand in terms of modernism. A comparative cultural approach deciphers its philosophy of conflict, not universalism but particularism, contextual difference and variability. Claire Kramsch argues:

Consider, in fact, the differences among people due to such factors as age, gender, social class, family history, regional origin, nationality, education, life experiences, linguistic idiosyncrasies, conversational styles, human internationalities. Given these differences and the enormous complexity of human relations, communication in general and, a fortiori, communication in a foreign language should be all but impossible. And yet, more often than not, we do understand one another, however imperfectly, however imperfectly (Intro.1).

In order to provide wider grounds for comparative stylistics, let us compare a single alien sample text to this corpus. Keith Gandall's *Cleveland Anonymous* (2003) is his very first novel which represents the 'melting pot' pluralism of American culture. It is rather difficult to imagine this "enormous complexity of human relations," hybridity, a complex family history, sex with step daughter/step sister, violence, adventures and magic realism in contemporary Indian fiction. His postmodern paratactic style holds our attention in the opening paragraphs of the novel:

We lost our virginity on the bank of the Cuyahoga the day the river caught fire. As far as I knew, It was the first river to catch fire in the history of the planet. What you might call a major geological event. It was the earth's virgin aquatic blaze. The ancient elements of Fire and Water impossibly mixing in Cleveland in the summer of 1969

I was there with Mary Jane. She was my foster sister. It was Sunday. Nobody was around. We were down by the steel mill. This was where we used to hide from our step father. Now he was gone, but we still came here. We were sort of playing "Huck Finn". We didn't actually have a raft, but we had a lot of imagination. We were both slaves to something we couldn't name. The river made us feel free, even though it was polluted and full of dead fish (1).

'The river catches the fire' is not the statement merely decorated with modernist imagery. The clauses such as 'the earth's aquatic blaze' and river "polluted and full of dead fish' contribute much to the over all structure of magic realism in the novel. It depicts the theme of incest and disability. We can hardly imagine such bold exposure in Indian fiction albeit there are reports of incest trials in the civil courts in India. One sub-section in Chapter number three ends as follows:

*If you get into that tub, you we'll be crippled for life, says the voice.*

There is a thirteen –year old girl in the tub. I give a start. How many hallucinations can fit in the tub? Her breasts are small, the size of plums, and her hair thick and yellow like dandelions. Her fists are clenched and her teeth bared. Her face scarred with tears. *If there is nothing wrong with your back now, then what about Maria?*

There is a knock on the door, and it opens. I turn around. A woman with a black crewcut is in the doorway. Something falls in the pit of my stomach.

"Sorry", the woman says and disappears (40).

This unlikely combination of the clean, crisp prose of Ernest Hemingway and the playful haunting magic of Marquez can be compared with its Indian postmodern counterparts cited above. Sam and Mary Jane are Jewish kids growing up in Cleveland during the '60s. The fire becomes the defining moment in their lives when Jane disappears and Sam is struck by disability. The action covers 24 years. The protagonist's of Marquez, Grass, Rushdie are also struck by disability. The jacket cover of *Cleveland Anonymous* explains:

Gendal's urgent prose successfully represents the staccato pulse of a world people can no longer comprehend. In his story, rhythms of madness dominate. Slowly the reader realizes that these rhythms might be the ones that make the most sense at the start of our new century.

This shows how the concepts such as "author's personality and individual style," "the zeitgeist of style"," rhythms and emotional equivalence", "pure aesthetic experience", etc, which were very popular in aesthetics of modernity, are now challenged on various grounds. Now a predominant awareness shows that style could be more fully accounted for text-immanent linguistic explorations. Genre- wise comparative stylistics is another area also shows efficiency of stylistics in literary studies. The researchers have studied comparatively the achievements of the second year undergraduates in the experimental group undertaking stylistic approach and of those undertaking language based approach. They arrived at a conclusion that the linguist analysis is more useful in study of poetry than prose. Style means the ways in which language is used in particular genre, by a given person for a particular purpose. The distinguishable features of prose style can be detected. Poet's experiments with language are more interesting than those of the prose writer. Aesthetic effects in poetry cannot be separated from the creative manipulations of particular linguistic code. Japanese "hyku" poems and Ezra Pound's imagist poetry use different

language codes. In prose, that creative manipulation is seen more in characters, themes and arguments. Metaphor in poetry shows how everyday language is different from language of poetry. Culture conditioned stylistic devices make all the difference.

But we do not delve deep into controversies over the purest forms of linguistic stylistics. What we are concerned with here is the comparative literary stylistics of Indian fiction and especially with its comparative cultural analysis. Ronald Carter's observations more relevant in this regard:

A distinguishing feature of work in literary stylistics is the provision of basis for fuller understanding, appreciation and integration of avowedly literary and author centered texts. The general impulse will be to draw eclectically o linguistic insights and to use them in the service of what is generally claimed to be fuller interpretation of language effects than is possible without the benefit of linguistics, in general, the analysis will be multileveled and not confined to the kind of single-level rigorous exemplified by much work in linguistic stylistics, indeed, it is argued that style itself results from simultaneous convergence of effects at a number of levels of language organization (Intro.d.7).

I believe that the fictional discourse is also a "social discourse" determined by our culture in a peculiar way. The umbrella term "discourse stylistics" may be used to analyze a dialectical interrelationship between first ad second languages and social structures. The foregoing discussion has made it clear that comparative stylistics takes us beyond the traditional concerns of stylistics with aesthetic values. It leads us towards its concern with social and political ideologies encoded in texts. So labeling an author as "a maker of style" is a half truth. There is no easy one to one correspondence between words and what they refer to "objectively" in the world. Edward Said's concept of "worldliness of text" throws light on the stylistic affiliations of the text. The use of word is historically determined. In Michael Foucault's words our knowledge and beliefs, theories and practice are discursively produced. Hence not only poetics but also politics of culture is equally important in cultural products with certain trademarks and specific styles. Style also adopts political stance. Human knowledge, beliefs, theories etc, are not universal as humanitarians believe. Their origins are traced into socio-semiotics. If we scrutinize comparatively a few more sample texts from Indian regional languages, the significance of comparative stylistics will be more validated. It will reveal how 'meanings' are always discursively produced as well as it is a part of image building cultural industry. Bringing socio-historical and socio-cultural comparative stylistics with scientific stylometer to the center of interdisciplinary cultural comparativism is our main preoccupation here.

The effect of anglocalization on Indian stylistics is a separate topic for research. A comparative study of Bharati Mukherjee's style in *Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and Aravind Adiga's style in *The White Tiger* (2008) will display bring our the effects of Anglo-American Project of modernity on the first and of the electronic age of globalization on the latter. This lies beyond the scope of this study. Finally some characteristics of postmodern style should be noted for removing

the layers of modernism which have blinded the Indian followers of American New Critics. The postmodernism of style, deregulation, decolonization, hybridization, disruption and dislocation are bound to influence all cultural products. There are no more securities and continuities of “Great Tradition” of novel. The revolutionary changes have taken place in attitudes to literary style. For example, Simon Malpas writes:

For Jencks, postmodernism is the style of our age, and particularly contradictory one at that. From global politics of fashionable cuisine, postmodernism is present in all aspects of contemporary culture, and particularly in art. Because of this ubiquity it is difficult to categorise according to a simple set of rules or attributes...(11).

This is why there is a greater need of developing advanced comparative cultural stylistics to study “online literatures” and machine translations. This is a challenge of new Web literature and writing its history in the digital space.

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## Comrade Kirillov : a Critique of the Communist Strain in the Composite Mind of Raja Rao

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A close look at the fictive output of Raja Rao would reveal that all his novels are concerned with the different autobiographical facets of his composite mind and culture. Rao's mind is not the mind of a partisan. It is next to impossible to pin him down ideologically. Was he a Gandhian? Was he a liberal? Was he a Vedantic? Was he a romantic? Was he a rationalist? Was he a nationalist? Was he a cosmopolitan? Was he a communist? The honest answer would be yes and no. He was all this but not exclusively so. His mind and culture were essentially syncretic and synthetic.

The penultimate novel, *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), as K Sharma points out is "a purposeful critique of communism".<sup>1</sup> *Comrade Kirillov*, actually an Indian named Padmanabha Iyer, seems to be the Marxist alter ego of the novelist. The epigraph of the novel reveals that the treatment of theme and the portrayal of the protagonist are directly derived from Rao's fascination for Dostoevsky. Rao's Kirillov has Dostoevsky's Kirillov as prototype. He has many of the traits of Shatov and Kirillov of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. The author used the protagonist to present a satiric picture of pre-Independence and early post-Independence Indian political scenario. Employing the narrative device of the witness-narrator technique, Raja Rao also makes references in this novel to the Theosophical movement, Gandhian Buddhism and Vedantic philosophy. But what distinguishes it from other novels is that it has two witness-narrators and not one. The first and main witness-narrator is 'R' (Raja Rao himself) who is a true Vedantist and a Gandhian. The second is Irene, the Chek wife of Kirillov. These two witness-narrators are complementary to each other and help the reader to comprehend the meaning of Kirillov's life and his ideological persuasion. What is extraordinary about this novella is that unlike the earlier novels it does not attempt to present any sustained mystic parallels. But some of them have been employed with a view to highlighting, modifying and expounding the salient traits of the protagonist's mind. The use of myth and symbol serves as an aid to understanding not only the theme of the novel but also the proper comprehension of the various characters in their respective situations.

As suggested earlier, in the portrayal of the theme and characters Raja Rao seems to have been influenced in this tenuous work of fiction by the great Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881). Dostoevsky's Kirillov is an atheist. Raja Rao's Kirillov, too, considers God as "the fiction of the lazy".<sup>2</sup> While he professes his interest in communism in common with Dostoevsky's Kirillov, he shares with Shatov the love for his national heritage which is reflected in his recitation of Sanskrit verses from Indian classics. His deep inherent love for India is of a piece with Shatov's fervent love for Russia. It is obvious that Rao's Kirillov is a composite of his Dostoevskyan namesake and Shatov.

In one of his letters to Prof. MK Naik, Raja Rao has gone on record, saying, “The use of Kirillov from Dostoevsky is to show how one is a prisoner of ideology”.<sup>3</sup> The Indian Kirillov is a clear parallel to the Russian in being something of an irresolute character. MK Naik very rightly points out that these “numerous affiliations between *The Possessed* and *Comrade Kirillov* should not.... make one hastily conclude that Raja Rao’s sole aim in the novel is to offer an ironical portrait of an Indian communist on the line of the expose of Russian radicalism in Dostoevsky’s novel”.<sup>4</sup> There is a considerable difference between the Russian and the Indian novels in terms of the treatment of theme. The Indian Kirillov maintains his faith in communism while the Russian loses his faith in Russian radicalism. The theme of *Comrade Kirillov* is indicative of the disapprobation of communism as it is represented by an Indian. Kirillov’s adherence to communism vis-à-vis his attachment to Theosophy and Gandhism reveals him as something of an ideological muddle. Raja Rao has deftly employed a unique artistic technique of presenting a single personality cleft in two—Kirillov and ‘R’—by exaggerating the typical aspects of a vertical Brahmin in ‘R’ (actually Raja Rao himself) and of an ‘inverted’ one in Kirillov. Arguably, Kirillov may be an externalization of a suppressed element existing in Raja Rao’s own mental make-up which has deeply inspired him during his stay in France to be closely associated with the Socialist movement in Paris, particularly with French trade union leaders and Trotskyites. But unlike Kirillov, Rao never turned a Marxist. Their logics belong to different dimensions, but their sentiments converge on the point of identity. Besides his innate love of Sanskrit and India, Comrade Kirillov has visited the ashram of Sri Raman Maharishi as did Rao. Kirillov’s personality is a strange mixture of contradictory elements whereas Raja Rao (‘R’), a cousin to Kirillov as described in *Comrade Kirillov* is a staunch Brahmin upholding the unmixed values and ideals of an orthodox traditionalist. In Raja Rao’s personality the saintly metaphysician and the progressive liberal are not at loggerheads as they are in that of Kirillov. Rao is endowed with the perfectly balanced attitude of a highly enlightened intellectual who can arrange the things in his mind in their right places even as he visualized them in the right perspective linking them to some metaphysical truths.

Notwithstanding Kirillov’s ideological commitments not being quite marked by categorical convictions, the novel remains a parody of Indian protestations of communism. Padmanabha Iyer is a typical South Indian Brahmin who displays his great interest in the metaphysical tradition of India. As he himself points out, “P is an inverted Brahmin”.<sup>5</sup> This seems to be supported by Naik when he observed, “While his intellect subscribes to Marxism, his heart obstinately continues to wear its Brahmanical sacred thread though he hates to admit the fact”.<sup>6</sup> Kirillov is deeply rooted in the Brahminic culture of his land and the narrator R. is very right when he points out that his Indianhood would put an end to his faith in communism. R ridicules Kirillov’s communist stance because he possesses Brahminic habits and the compassion of a Catholic priest.

Like Raja Rao himself, Comrade Kirillov is an ambivalent character. As he says, “I know only one God, and that is the common man. I know only one worship and that is the Party meeting. I know only one morality and that is a classless society”.<sup>6</sup> He has a profound love and reverence for India and for all that is poetically grand in the Indian tradition. He loved India “with a noble, delicate unreasoned love”.<sup>7</sup> The novelist says further:

**...Kirillov was an Indian, and he had peculiar reactions which no dialectic could clarify. He could almost speak of India as though he were talking of a venerable old lady in a fairy tale who had nothing but goodness in her heart, and who was made of morning dew and mountain honey”<sup>8</sup>**

A modern educated Indian is a victim of a crisis of identity. It is this crisis that accounts for the ambivalence in Kirillov’s character. In fact, ambivalence may well be said to be the keynote of his character. Both the narrators—‘R’ and Irene – focus on this particular trait in Kirillov. The Novel begins with R’s description of his personal appearance. His face is “ancient and enigmatic”<sup>9</sup> and “his coat flapping a little too fatherly on his small, rounded muscles of seating”<sup>10</sup> and his tie has “a praterplus-parenthetical curve, as though much philosophy had gone into his its making”<sup>11</sup>. The complexities of his mind and thinking have been made apparent by these descriptions of the narrator who calls himself a bundle of opposites. ‘R’ finds Kirillov childlike in certain ways:

***He was so like a child, was Kirillov, when it comes to simple things.***<sup>12</sup>

As Irene writes in her diary, “P can sometimes, as all childlike people, be boringly banal”<sup>13</sup>. “P’s illogic is so astonishing”<sup>14</sup>. The narrator has rightly summed up his character as, “the Sadu of communism”<sup>15</sup>

Intellectually, he is an ardent Marxist, but emotionally he is a true Brahmin, taking meticulous care of his sacred thread. But he hates to acknowledge these contradictions. Kirillov’s Character is a study of a person who is caught in powerful ideological subtleties and the complexities of modern world and is torn between intellectual pursuits and his emotional undertow. He adores all that is noble and good in Indian thought and life and rejects unhesitatingly all that is obsolete and otiose. He rejects even Gadhijee because “non-violence is a biological lie”<sup>16</sup> and observes:

***“Your Gandhi is a kleptomaniac... Ask your Gandhi to read Freud —he would be the wiser for it”***<sup>17</sup>

But rather paradoxically, he cannot tolerate even a single word spoken against Gandhijee, though he himself uses more severe words about him than Churchill might ever have done. He was proud of his heritage. But if Irene spoke of India, “She was silenced by his ecclesiastical look”<sup>18</sup>. He simply remarked, “What do you know Irene”<sup>19</sup> Though he leaves for Moscow and then for Peking, he sends his son to India to know his rich cultural and spiritual heritage, so that his love for India and her spirit may live through Kamal.

Rao proclaims his protagonist to be an “inverted Brahmin” probably in the sense that as a Marxist, and quite unlike a true Brahmin, he has placed the material ends of life over the spiritual. As a true spokesman of India and all that is best in Hinduism, the protagonist remains a simple and unified personality. But the hold of an alien ideology on his mind causes all the complexity in his character. The equation in his case is reversed, as he

uncritically receives what the West has to give to a rational and inequisitive mind, changing the Brahmin into an anti-Brahmin. Yet the conflict between honesty of mind (the intellectual loyalty to Marxism) and honesty of being (the emotional pull of being a Hindu) continues. In the conflict lies as revealed through Irene's diary, the Marxist danger, especially to an ancient people like the Indians.

Undoubtedly, the crux of Kirillov's character as well as the theme of the novel rests in the dangerous position of an Indian communist who after all remains a mere convert to an alien ideology preserving in his subconscious his deep rooted affiliations to an age-old cultural heritage. As such, instead of remaining a twice born, like many others of his type, he becomes a thrice-born leftist who despite all his logic and sense of history, can never suppress the twice-born altogether.

It should be clear by now that the dichotomy of Kirillov's mind derives directly from the irreconcilable immiscibility of his political ideology and spiritual predilection. The persistent note of cynicism is conveyed through the violent grouping of heterogeneous ideas, mundane and spiritual. For the communist God is negation. For the Hindu, on the other hand, it is communism that is annihilation. To quote the narrator himself:

*And once you have fed the Indian millions and given them nice houses to live in, and railways for their monthly holidays, and sanatoria for their sick, and maternity care for their mothers, and the Dnieperstock for the electric illumination of India-what then, brother, is to become of your despair, your emotional upheavals, your metaphysical yearning, your God ward beckonings?<sup>22</sup>*

He seems to be everything adding up to nothing. His simultaneous allegiance to Marxism and Gandhism appears to be the outcome of a conflict in his subconscious mind between his communist affiliation and his love for Indian identity. His criticism of Gandhi is an offshoot of his proclaimed loyalty to the communist party which found in Gandhism a formidable challenge to Marxism in the pre-Independence era. The narrative obviously offers an ironic portrait of an Indian communist who is torn between his emotional attachment to the spiritual values of India and his political persuasion.

The incorporation of Irene's diary goes a long way in highlighting the theme of Kirillov's inward conflict which is only partly revealed in the main part of the novel. It makes the novel a powerful character study and adds to it a psychological perspective. The conflict that seems to torment him is between assertive idealism and innate emotionalism. Through the diary Rao builds up a unique thematic design and uses it in a way that the two warring aspects of the hero's self are brought out into sharper relief.

That the communist strain in the mind of Raja Rao was too much of a strain for him to carry into a fictional fulfilment and fruition is evident from the restlessness dogging the mind of Comrade Kirillov right till the end. Very much like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Comrade Kirillov is find himself to be homeless at home, belonging neither to this world nor to that—

something of an intellectual Trishanku. The best way to comment on the cleavage in the mind of Kirillov is to quote the author himself: “The main point in this novella is to show how one can be sincere and honest—and yet fundamentally dishonest”.<sup>23</sup>

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13. *Ibid.*, P. 103.
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16. *Ibid.*, P. 34.
17. *Ibid.*, PP. 35-36.
18. *Ibid.*, P. 58.
19. *Ibid.*, P. 58.
20. *Ibid.*, P. 119.
21. *Ibid.*, P. 119.

22. *Ibid.*, P. 40.
23. Raja Rao's letter dated July 29, 1981, addressed to MK Naik quoted by Naik in his *Raja Rao*, P. 148.

## **TWO OF A KIND: THEMATIC, IDEOLOGICAL AND AESTHETIC CONVERGENCES IN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN LITERATURES**

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In her inaugural lecture entitled *The Nature and Functions of Literature: The Comparatist's Perspective*, Aduke Adebayo (2010) convincingly enunciates and exemplifies the tenets and utilitarian functions of Comparative Literature. To her:

The advantages of studying and practising Comparative Literature are many...In studying and practicing Comparative Literature, the comparatists gain a better understanding of the phenomenon called Literature. We are able to appreciate the unity and universality of mankind through Literature. Any national literature therefore becomes a part of a larger whole. The scholar of comparative literature ...gains a more balanced view, a truer perspective than is possible from the isolated analysis of a single national literature, however rich in itself (32).

Using the foregoing theoretical assumptions, an attempt is made in this chapter to compare two seemingly unrelated literatures – American and African literatures. In the main, the study explores the significant relationship between American and African literatures. This is with a view to gaining a better and more profound knowledge of their thematic, ideological and aesthetic thrusts. There is a sense in which it can be argued that literature, across ages and the regions, reflects or refracts human ideas, beliefs and societal norms; it is also used to discover human ways of understanding life and significant differences. Thus, the task of this paper is to argue that although separated by geographical barriers, American and African literatures share more thematic, aesthetic and ideological convergences than divergences. Both of them share similar universal global themes, including: love, coming of age, identity, good versus evil, perils of power, triumph of adversity, redemption, revenge, warfare, courage, death, sincerity and disillusionment.

It is axiomatic that a people's literature evolves out of their individual and communal experiences. In the works of American and African writers, there is a harmonious interplay of history and social realism. Although African literature is more shaped by social, political and intellectual factors than American literature, certain socio-political themes still recur in both literatures. For instance, like African literary works, some American works deal with American experience in a pan-American or hemispheric context. Such include Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* (1990), Madison Bell's *All Souls' Rising* (1995). However, the tension that the realities of African societies generate leads to the urge to convey socio-political themes to the readers in

unmistakable terms. In a like manner, there was a literary explosion in America during the post-World War era. Among the most famous American war novels are Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). African writers have also dwelt on the issue of "the civil wars that have plagued the African continent in the post-colonial period, from the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo that started soon after independence in 1961 to the one in the Sudan that, in a sense, is still raging because it involves the horrible events in Darfur, have had a variety of causes" (Eustace Palmer, 2008:13). African literary texts that dwell on the problem of wars in the continent include Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*, Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

One of the enduring ideological signifiers of African literature, whether oral or written, is socio-political commitment. It always reflects or refracts the happenings in the society which produces and primarily consumes it. According to Jaya Rao (2002), "truthful and fruitful human experience forms the basis for written expression in any branch of literature" (1). In the main, African writers always prioritize what may be loosely referred to as "Litterature Engagee", that is, literature serving as the recorder and interpreter of the socio-political activities in its enabling milieu. In the first stage of its existence, it concerned itself with the issue of cultural nationalism, whereby African culture, mores, traditions and the like were glorified and eulogized. This was the era of 'paradise on earth', and the temper is best reflected in the Negritude writings of Leopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, Leon Damas, Aime Cesaire, Tchicaya U'Tamsi, David Diop and Barrage Diop. This phase was closely followed by the age of 'Paradise Disturbed', the age of colonialism in the continent. African literature, at this stage, was marked by political and cultural revolution. This temper is found in the writings of Hamidou Kane, Camara Laye, J.P. Clark, Eskiah Mphahlele, and others. African literature at this stage was also used as an anti-colonial weapon. In the third and the current period, African literature is inward-looking, chronicling, lampooning and satirizing the foibles, misdeeds and misgovernance of the ruling elite. Satire dominates the writings of this period, and it is well reflected in the works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, T.M. Aluko and Wole Soyinka.

In an insightful essay, entitled "The Social Functions of the African Novel", Aduke Adebayo (1987) succinctly enunciates the nexus between literature and life in the African novel:

The relationship between society and African literature in general and the novel in particular can be visualised along two lines: how literature has constituted itself into a model of analysis and synthesis of social reality, and the effect of literature on society. Since its beginnings, the primary role of the African novels has been to elucidate historical and social phenomena. Thus, the literary historians have divided the existence of written African literature in European languages (spanning less than a century) along historical lines of colonial, pre-independence and post-independence literature. And indeed, African writers have history (an eventful and tumultuous one) at their doorstep, and their novels display a

deep historical awareness. They dramatise moments of history rather than individual destiny, since they see history as a collective working out of a people's destiny (297).

To the contemporary African writer, the hope of regaining paradise as a result of independence has been castrated. The bourgeoisie is conceived as the major enemy of the political and social freedom of the masses; it is the class of the predators. Seven conflicts can be identified as parts of the thematic preoccupations of postcolonial African literature. These are the clash between Africa's past and present; between tradition and modernity; between the indigenous and the foreign; between individualism and community; between socialism and capitalism; between development and self-reliance, and between Africanity and humanity. Also included in this taxonomy of the thematic preoccupations of postcolonial African literature is the critique of social ills, including corruption, economic disparities and the rights, migration and roles of women. In the same vein, racism as a theme in African American literature and apartheid as a theme in South African literature converge in their protest form. Protest against Apartheid is found in the works of South African writers, including Dennis Brutus, Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard, Alfred Hutchinson and Arthur Nortje. Protest is appreciated by both white Americans and African American artists. Actually, the African American's image has even been projected by many white American novelists and poets, including Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Vachel Lindsay, William Faulkner and Eudora Welty. African American writers who prioritize the depiction of the image of their race include Williams Wells Brown, Charles Chesnutt, Langston Hughes, Robert Hayden, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brook, Toni Morrison and Richard Wright. LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka), in a 1962 address to the American Society for African Culture, insisted that the job of the Negro writer was to portray the emotional history of the black man in the United States: as its victim and its chronicler. He as a dramatist has taken his own advice. The black man is the victim in his plays, most especially *Dutchman* (1964) which dwells on the themes of race and racism, and he, himself, with an increasingly strident voice, is the black man's chronicler and, perhaps, America's chronicler.

The theme of cultural pluralism is also shared by both literatures. According to Doris Abramson (1969):

In real life and in the literature that purports to reflect that life, most American Negroes belong in one of the two categories. There is no doubt that the swing toward cultural pluralism in the 1960s is a reaction by Negroes for not being let into white society in earlier decade (3).

There are four ways by which African Americans and black South Africans sought to advance themselves to improve their lot: through the ballot box, education, migration and emigration, and economic nationalism. These various approaches are reflected in individual black man's problem of being assimilated into or revolting against the dominant white society.

The society thus becomes a love/hate object for the characters, like Richard in Wright's *Black Boy* (1945) and Michael Adonis in Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* (1962). Justifying the preoccupation of African American writers with the theme of protest, Richard Wright (1969) opines:

If the expression of the African American Negro should take a sharp turn, then you will know by that token that we are suffering our old and ancient agonies at the hands of our white American neighbours. If, however, our expression broadens, assumes the common themes and burdens of literary expressions which are the heritage of all men, then by that token you will know that a humane attitude prevails in America towards us (105).

The foregoing, therefore, reveals the impossibility of applying universal standards for analysing African American writings. This assertion is critically argued by Richard Gilman (1968) in a review of Elderidge Cleaver's *Soul on the Ice* (1968):

Negro suffering is not the same kind as ours. Under the great flawless arc of the Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, we have implicitly believed that all men experience essentially the same things; that birth, love, pain, self, death are universal; they are in fact what we mean by universal values in literature and consciousness. But the Negro has found it almost impossible in America to experience the universal as such; the power, after all, is conferred upon the individual, or rather conferred for him by his membership in the community of men (25).

Therefore, in African American writings, there is no euphemism of the expression of experiences and vision. Since the writers are estranged from the mainstream of American life, socially and culturally, they deploy their imaginative prowess on protest. This same temper is seen in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965) where the emerging African elite are at war with their society. Aduke Adebayo (1996) confirms the thematic and structural convergence in African and American literatures by arguing that Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Sembene Ousmane's *Le Docker Noir (The Black Docker)* (1956) "are two novels which have demonstrated thematic and structural similarities even though they are products of two black authors from two different social milieux, the former being set in America, while the latter is set in France" (74). Also, Robert Frost's basic themes include man's life, dealing with the individual's relationships with himself, with his fellow men, with his world and with his God. Likewise, anti-Apartheid South African novelists clearly show an unceasing concern with their past, the traumatizing effects of colonialism and the legacy still left by the Apartheid reign. The South African literary scene, in fact, abounds with the novels featuring traumatized individuals who strive for closure and struggle to leave their past behind, but are

persistently 're-visited' by their past in the forms of flashback, nightmares, and other psychosomatic symptoms.

American and African literatures also share the thematic thrust of depicting the socio-cultural and spiritual importance of physical environment. Most of the writings are very earthly and close to nature, almost in the genre of Romantic poetry. For instance, in Robert Frost's poetry, there is the overwhelming presence of nature- in the mountains that rear high above man's head; in the curve of valleys; in the leaf-strewn roads; in the crowding of trees, singly or in dense dark woods, blooming of tuft flowers, brooks that race downhill, and in the happy description of seasonal change (Uma Maheswari, 2008). The following verses provide an illustration of this claim:

Look down the long valley and there stands a mountain  
That someone has said is the end of the world.  
Then what of this river that having arisen  
Must find where to pour itself into and empty?  
I never saw so much swift water run cloudless  
(“Too Anxious for Rovers”).

In Frost's poetry, nature is depicted as a dual phenomenon. It is a benefactor of human beings, and there is also much in the nature against us. Therefore, to Frost, nature is both a friend and foe to human beings:

There is much in nature against us. But we forget:  
Take nature altogether since time began,  
Including human nature, in peace and war,  
And it must be a little more in favour of ma.  
Say a fraction of one percent at the very least.  
Or our number living wouldn't be steadily more,  
Our hold on the planet wouldn't have so increased  
(“Our Hold on the Planet”).

The connection between literature and the earth's current environmental crisis is also a veritable theme of African literature. A few contemporary African writers also dwell on their physical environment of their society by foregrounding nature as a major part of their subjects. For instance, Niyi Osundare's poetry incorporates broadly conceived ecological thinking. He has a keen awareness of the ecological nature of his milieu by representing the natural world and applying a range of eco-centric concepts as tropes in his poetry, including nature's growth, uses of energy and resources, balance and imbalance and symbiosis. Osundare's "They too are the Earth" dwells on the importance of the earth for the masses. Earth is used as a metaphor where filths, injustice and man's inhumanity to man are satirized. He apparently pitches his tent on the side of the masses. In "Forest Echoes", one of the poems in *The Eye of the Earth*, Osundare eulogizes the nature thus:

The rains have kept their time this year

(Earth has [finally] won the love of the  
(sky). Trees both with backward sap and leaves  
Leaves grab a deepening green from the  
scanty sun (3).

Like Frost, Osundare depicts the binary character of the nature. It is portrayed as an amalgam of growth and decay. His poetry dwells on the features and functions of rain, earth, sky, sun, tree and many other ecological materials.

Among the major themes which are common to both American and African literatures is the journey from innocence to awareness. In such works, characters encounter experiences that change them in some significant ways. By the end of the novel or play, such characters become different persons than they were at the beginning. This theme finds expression in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) where Kambili and Jaja gain awareness after their visit to Auntie Ifeoma's family in Nsukka. They metamorphose from docility to activity and from ignorance to awareness. This bildungsroman experience is similar to that of Santiago in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and Biff Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949). However, in *Purple Hibiscus*, the metamorphosis is ultimately rewarding because the characters are strengthened by their struggle. However, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, the transition is ruinous because the old man is destroyed by the experience he goes through.

The theme of disillusionment is also common to both American and African literatures. For instance, the American dream is a motif in American literature. Dream is shown to be little more than an illusion; it is hollow, deceptive and even destructive. For instance, in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953) and *Death of a Salesman*, Frederick Douglas's autobiography and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), the protagonists have their hope dashed. Their expected American dream does not materialize. In some American literary works, the idea of suffering leading to failure and illusion is a motif. Examples include Pecola's suffering and self-hatred in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eyes* (1970), and invisibility in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Also, in Meja Mwangi's *Kill me Quick* (1973) and *Going Down River Road* (1976), the protagonists are disillusioned as their hope of a better postcolonial Kenyan society is castrated. This is also similar to the fate of Baako, in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments* (1970). In such works of unaccomplished dream, the evil that each protagonist struggles against is very often his/her own society – its rigidity, prejudices, constraints, limitations and its cruelty.

The United States is one of the most diverse nations of the world, so also are many African nations. Therefore, American and African literatures are likewise dazzlingly diverse, eclectic, constantly evolving and multicultural. New voices are arising from many quarters, challenging old ideas and adapting literary traditions to suit the changing conditions of the national lives. In fact, American and African literatures have become democratic and heterogeneous. This is mostly reflected, in varying degrees, in the postmodernist features of some contemporary American and African literatures, which exhibit fragmentation, collage and

hybridity, use of various voices, scenes and identities. They question external structures, whether political, philosophical or artistic, and they tend to distrust the master-narratives of modernist thought, which they see as politically suspect. Instead, they mine popular culture genres, especially science fiction, spy and detective stories; they, thereby, become, in effect, archaeologists of pop culture. These features permeate Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), a quintessential American postmodernist text. In this novel, what confronts the reader is an array of imaginative and adept mixture of both postmodern and realist strains. According to Haidar Eid (2008):

Despite its postmodernity, the novel does not adopt an anti-mimetic attitude, but rather question---aesthetically and ideologically---the postmodern logic behind the rejection of mimesis, or realism, by applying the principle of mimesis to a different "realty" from that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1).

Therefore, *White Noise* can be described as a realist postmodern text that uses the character, Jack Gladney, to depict the contemporary world as one replete with fear of death, alienation, estrangement, toxin and family disintegration. It should be asserted that rather than reveling in postmodern depthlessness, DeLillo's fiction pursues realism. Postmodern tenets are also used significantly by postcolonial African novelists, including Ben Okri, Biyi Bandele, Dambudzo Marechera, Syl Cheney-Coker and the like. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), for instance, employs some of the basic tenets of postmodernism, including mixing of genres, cross-cultural boundaries, intertextuality, and parody.

Another significant common motif in American and African literatures is the problems inherent in modern cities. Such works portray loneliness and addiction in the cities. They also dwell on city-induced conflicts, such as cowboy versus the Indian; the farmer/settler versus the outlaw; the rancher versus the cattle rustler; oilman versus ecologist; the developer versus the archaeologist, and the citizen activist versus the representatives of nuclear and military facilities. Jane McInerney's *Story of my Life* (1989) is a good example of such works. Jhumpa Lahiri also focuses on the consequence of city habitation: the younger generation's conflict and assimilation in *Interpreters of Maladies* (1999) and in her novel, *The Namesake* (2003). The theme of Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is also a by-product of living in modern cities, most especially human and material waste and disillusionment as a result of such wastes on two planes – national and individual. It reveals the selfishness and greed in the conception of wars. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is Ernest Hemingway's response to the World War 1 and individual tragedy within the larger picture of greater tragedy.

Closely related to the theme of city trouble is that of crime/violence. Violence characterizes postcolonial Africa (Jean-François, Bayart 1993; Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, 1999; Achille Mbembe, 2001, and Toyin Falola, 2009). Africa is a continent that has been wracked and bedeviled by many coups, military dictatorship, autocratic rulers, civil wars, collapse of economies, grand-scale corruption and internal state of anarchy. As a result, "in this

political and social chaos, youths have been implicated either as victims or perpetrators in some forms or another given that some estimates suggest that they make up 80% of the continent's population" (Niebuhr, 2002:37). Therefore, violence is a veritable source of African writers' thematic preoccupations. For instance, some African writers have dealt with the twin theme of crime and violence in their works. This is noticeable in Kenyan creative writings, particularly the ones set in the 1970s, 1980s into the 1990s. In fact, the prevalence of crime and violence in postcolonial Kenyan works parallels a history of crime and violence that is generally attributed to the youth in postcolonial Africa. We have appreciable examples of the narration of neocolonial problems of crime and violence in the works of John Kiriamiti, Meja Mwangi and John Kigia. According to Tom Odhiambo (2007):

The prevalence of juvenile delinquents in their works and the related acts of violence and criminality could be read as indictors of the failure of the postcolonial Kenyan State to 'include' their young men (and women) into the mainstream of society--- there is a correlation between marginalization of the youth in society and their adoption of anti-social behaviour as strategies to access material resources (134).

Belief in the existence of an active evil (the devil) and in a sense of determinism (predestination) is another common thematic concern of American and African literatures. For instance, this is reflected in Nathaniel Hawthorne's prose works, including "Young Goodman Brown", *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of Seven Gables* (1851). In African literature, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) and Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl* (2005) offer veritable examples of the thematization of the belief in the existence of an active evil in the contemporary world. In such works, the protagonist is in a state of alienation because of self-cause or societal cause, or combination of both. This is the fate of Okonkwo and Ezeulu, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) respectively; King Odewale in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1968) also experiences a similar fate. In these works, pride, the hubris of the protagonists, is treated as evil. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* (1832), Robin signifies physical pride, while Goodman Brown, the eponymous hero of "Young Goodman Brown", represents spiritual pride, and Rappaccini, in "Rappaccini's Daughter", is the trope used for intellectual pride.

It is valid to assert that contemporary American literature is a literature of commitment, the writer being a conscience of his/her people. Like its African sibling, the contemporary American text can be productively interpreted only when it is placed against the background from which it emanates. This accounts for the relational quality and dependent nature of American postmodernist texts on their contexts. Actually, American and African literatures are products of the cultures and of the social and political circumstances that produce them. They are, therefore, complex expressions of their enabling contexts, as well as indications of the values and worldviews of the societies in which they are composed. Thus, both literatures reflect

and refract particular issues and experiences. Like African literature, American literature also dwells on various forms of conflicts in the societies. Langston Hughes' poem, entitled "I, Too, Sing America", substantiates this claim:

I, too, sing America

I am the darker brother  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh  
And eat well  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes  
Nobody'll dare  
say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen",  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed-

I, too, am American (from *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*,  
edited by Arnold Rampersad, 1994:46).

This is a poem about racial discrimination; it envisions a better future for the African Americans. As a conscience of his society, he foresees a future when African Americans will be seen as partners in progress by white Americans. It is inspiring to see how he pushes aside the fact that African Americans are subjugated and dehumanized, knowing that one day, African Americans will be empowered. Indeed, the poem is prophetic as the emergence of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States of America, in 2008, confirmed.

Similarly, Ernest Hemingway expands American fiction's social spectrum to encompass both high and low life, and his works, including *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), *For whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Sun also Rises* (1926), are connected to the naturalist school of realism. Likewise, Edith Wharton, in *The Age of Innocence* (1920), deals with the upper-class, Eastern-seaboard society in which she had grown up. Stephen Crane also depicts the life of New York City prostitutes in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). Similarly,

Theodore Dresser, in *Sister Carrie* (1900), portrays a country girl who moves to Chicago and becomes a kept woman. Cyprian Ekwensi, the Nigerian novelist, shares similar thematic concerns with these American writers in his *Jagua Nana* (1961) and *Jagua Nana's Daughter* (1987). Indeed, African and American writers are influenced by socio-historical realities; they both recognise, though in varied ways, the importance of narrating the various aspects of their national experience. Therefore, both literatures could be studied with the intention of fairly assessing them as reflections of the peoples' peculiar position and persistent problems in the societies, most especially their position in the political, social and economic status in their individual milieu. However, it should be stated that American literature has more 'transgressive' texts than African literature. 'Transgressive' texts refer to modern and postmodern texts, involving a fusion of the physical and metaphysical worlds, a preponderance of images, repetition, rhythm of words, non-linear narratives and non-closures. Contemporary American and African works mingle realism and fantasy, and they fuse the personal and the political. This tendency is noticeable in Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart* (1978) and *The Miss Firecracker Contest* (1980). This is also the case with the novels of many African writers, including Ben Okri, J.M Coetzee, Biyi Bandele and Helen Oyeyemi. Hence, Adeleke Adeeko (2002) opines that:

At this moment, African texts that are circulated internationally deal with topics that are easily assimilated into large global concerns, like feminism and transnational migrations and their repercussions in the politics of multiculturalism. Works that deal with national issues like development, social dislocation, problems of democratic institutions, and so on will have to be written in post-modern styles with which cosmopolitan critics can easily identify in order to enter the international circuit (317).

However, Adeeko is not oblivious of some efforts by African writers to participate in the global trends of postmodern, postcolonial and feminist writings. For instance, he identifies, among many others, Tsitsi Dangremba *Nervous Conditions* (1989), Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) and Biyi Bandele's *The Sympathetic Undertakers and other Dreams* (1991) as feminist, postmodern and postcolonial texts respectively.

Therefore, the fact that American and African writers act as the conscience of their individual societies cannot be gainsaid. They are spokesmen for the feelings of their generations. Their heroes offer a reflection of a moral code arising out of a cult of innocence, love, alienation, and redemption; they often form a particularly adolescent troupe of spiritual non-conformists, tough-minded and fragile, humorous and heart-breaking. They are also forced to compromise their integrity with a pragmatic society. Specifically, the average character of a committed American writer is alienated due to his/her peculiar off-centre vision which sensitizes and distorts his/her sense of truth in a false world. For instance, Justin Horgenschlag's *Heart of*

*Broken Story* (1924) and *The Inverted Forest* (1924) dwell perceptively on the theme of alienation.

According to Emerson (2003: xxiv), literature is “a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, and by which we may move it.” Various African critics also hold a similar view. According to Wole Soyinka (1968), the artist has always functioned in African society as the recorder of the mores and experiences of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time. To Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1981), literature is, of course, primarily concerned with what any political and economic arrangement does to the spirit and the values governing human relationship. Chinua Achebe (1973), in his essay, “The Role of a Writer in a New Nation”, opines that:

One of the key motivations for producing African literature was to restore the moral integrity and cultural autonomy of all the Africans in the age of decolonisation. The fundamental theme of African writing was that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many Africans all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this they must regain now (8).

It should however be stressed that there is a sense in which it can be claimed that American and African literatures have very similar, but contextually different, tone; that is, both literatures diverge in tone, “the totalising effects of a work of art, the peculiar ring or accent of a work that moves the reader” (B.M Ibitokun, 1988:35). However, they both offer a plausible criticism of life as they see it from varying perspectives. This allies with the claim of Matthew Arnold (1958) that art is the criticism of life. For instance, in Gerald Robert Vizenor’s *Chancers* (2000), there is an imaginative chronicling of some of the socio-political realities of contemporary American societies, including nationhood, hybridity, mobility and cyber identity. In the main, *Chancers* dwells on the truism that in contemporary American societies, peoples must shun authenticity, which is an illogical myth, owing to the contemporary realities arising from globalization, multiculturalism and transculturalism. Thus, it is suggested that Americans should move beyond victimization and the attitude of victimhood. Also, Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) is one of the first of the current wave of transnational literati in the United States. Two thematic threads dominate her stories: gender and domestic issues. There is a juxtaposition of relatively dark and light stories. In “The Third and Final Continent”, the reader comes across issues that are germane to migrancy/exile, such as family bonding, affirmation of the positive effects of migration, home, cultural hybridity, mixed identity, and broken relationships (family, matrimonial, and community). In this story, however, migrants have easier time than they have in some other settings.

Postcolonial African literature is also preoccupied with the themes of identity, hybridity and transculturalism. The issues of identity, multiculturalism, hybridity and transculturalism are

motifs in postcolonial African fiction. Examples include Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl* (2005) and Mark Nwagwu's *Forever Chimes* (2007). With the postcolonial theorisings of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and Edward Said providing the theoretical basis, the two novels are shown to share a common thematic feature: identity formation in a multicultural society. Both novelists, like many other contemporary American and African writers, prioritise cultural pluralism to envision enduring experience and consciousness of mixed racial, ethnic and cultural identity - a possibility that has long remained repressed in most precursor postcolonial African novels. Multiculturalism is envisioned for enrichment of cultural outlook, while transculturalism is recommended as a quintessential weapon for uniting peoples across races, ethnicities and cultural divides.

In American and African writings, there is an amalgam of existential and essential issues. One comes across the existential themes of death, dread and bad faith, the 'death' of God, the non-existence of an 'other' world, the fact of human responsibility for all value systems, and the like. Hence, in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), the issues of slavery and freedom are imaginatively depicted. It also depicts how race, gender and power are constructed in African American literature. Time, space and meaning interact in such a way that we have a Manichean dichotomy between permanence and impermanence, as well as spatial and a-spatial. In fact, there is an oppositional interaction of feeling, knowing, remembering, and re-memory of horrific moments in human life. The events portrayed in the text are traumatic and emotional. They imaginatively capture what it means to be unable to protect one's family in the face of external aggression and what happens to those who encounter aggression. In fact, it is also an emancipatory narrative that dwells on what it means to lose one's inalienable freedom, and it chronicles the existential pangs of suffering, memory, poverty and excruciating psychological condition in American societies. Thus, Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) partakes of the recuperation and re-writing of the history of African American struggle. It offers an ingenuous re-writing and encoding of the history of American slavery and the oppositional agency of African American slave women. Indeed, Toni Morrison, like many other African American writers, writes in the realist tradition in a distinctive poetic and deeply evocative prose style.

Similarly, African literature dwells on the themes related to the existential pains in postcolonial Africa. Examples include Ala Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948), Albert Lithuli's *Let my People Go* (1962), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments* (1970), J.M Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1982) and *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1973) and Meja Mwangi's *Carcase for Hounds* (1974).

Many contemporary American writers, including Bret Easton Ellis, Dave Eggers, Chuck Palahniuk, and David Forster Wallace take a knowing, self-conscious, sarcastic, and condescending attitude towards their subjects. Don DeLillo exposes the foibles of the contemporary period in his milieu in his text, *White Noise* (1985), through the postmodern strategies of ellipsis and indeterminacy. These satirical comments are, however, found in the margin of the text. In the main, he dwells on social, economic, political and environmental

issues. In his narration, the postmodern city is depicted as bedeviled with a bewildering amalgam of environmental problems, including “the ventilating system, the paint or varnish, the foam insulation, the electrical insulation, the cafeteria food, the rays emitted by micro-computers, the asbestos fireproofing ...” (35). Also, Allen Ginsberg, in his *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), dwells on the plight of the masses and the downtrodden. This claim supports that of William Carlos Williams (1956) in the introduction to the poems: “This poet sees through and all around the horrors he partakes of in the very intimate details of his poems” (8). In “Howl – For Carl Solomon”, for instance, the reader hears an elegy:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by  
Madness, starving hysterical naked  
Dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn  
Looking for an angry fix... (1956:9).

Therefore, although contemporary American literature is slightly different from African literature in style and ideological orientation, its landscape is as bleak as that of African literature. It is thus possible to surmise a relationship between the dark vision of Ayi Kwei Armah, Nuruddin Farah and Dambudzo Marechera and American writers like Allen Ginsberg, John Grisham, Stephen King, Dean Koontz, Tom Clancy and Michael Crichton.

Traditional beliefs, most especially the conception of and attitude to death, are common thematic threads in American and African literatures. The Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria believe that “Aye ni oja, orun ni ile” (The world is a market, the heaven is the home), meaning that man’s stay in this world is highly ephemeral. The belief of most Africans about death indicates that binary oppositions are an essential component of their structure. That is why living/existence is equated with the market that is always ephemeral and transient, and the heaven/hell is linked with home, a permanent place of abode. This belief is espoused in Chinua Achebe’s philosophical/psychological story, “The Madman” (1972), and Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975). Dellilo’s *White Noise* also dwells on this philosophy. Two attitudes to death (Jack Gladney’s and Babette’s) are noticeable in Dellilo’s novel. This is analogous to the attitude of the king’s Horseman (Elesin Oba) and that of his son (Olunde) in Soyinka’s *Death and King’s Horseman*. Also, Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1989) is replete with taboos, superstitions, linguistic appropriation and traditions similar to African’s.

The trio of J.P Clark, Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo, in their initial stage of writing, were accused by the likes of Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike (1980), in their book, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, as being Euro-modernists, and , therefore, employed obscure, craggy, and far-fetched images in their poems. They were accused of sacrificing their indigenous African sensibilities in pursuit of obscurantist Euro-modernism. However, later, they started to write in accessible, but not simplistic, language. Niyi Osundare, a Nigerian poet, in his pragmatic definition of poetry asserts that “poetry is man meaning to man” (*Songs of the Marketplace*, 1983:3). A similar trend is noticeable in contemporary American literature whereby the hitherto hieratic obscurity, difficulty and quaint anachronism now give way for plain discourses, the commonplace and a naturalistic

aesthetics. For most of contemporary American writers, including Thomas Pynchon, Tim O'Brien, Don DeLillo, Paul Auster, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, Cormac McCarthy, Raymond Carver, John Cheever, Joyce Carol Oates, and Anne Dillard, the world exists only through our understanding of it, and the prime medium of that understanding is everyday language.

Transition from preoccupations with the private issues to the public concerns is also a shared thematic/ideological experience between American and African writers. For instance, initially, African poetry was predominantly quasi-autobiographical, centering on individual writers' experiences. However, now, the private is given public colouration; the local is globalized, and the personal is depersonalized. Correspondingly, from the 50s, or so, till present, American poetry has shifted focus from the private to public realm. The self is now subsumed by a poem's voice. This tendency was perhaps heralded by Ginsberg's *Howls* and Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959). Actually, this is a turning point in American poetry, whereby private life is put on public view.

The issue of gender conflict is also a common motif in American and African literatures. For instance, Maxine Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* treats similar gender issues that recur in African feminist discourses, as we find in the works of Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangremba, Ama Ata Aidoo, Flora Nwapa, Nawal El Saadawi, Seffi Atta and Nadine Gordimer. Fearless girls, wise women, and beloved sisters are common motifs in African narratives. In fact, the etiological tales and myths that populate Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* recall to mind the heroic exploits of African great women like Moremi, a great Amazon in the politics of Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba race. In fact, Moremi's redemptive exploit has served as a thematic repertoire for many African writers, most especially Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* (1983). The myth of Fa Mu Lan (a woman who took her father's place in a battle) that is reconstructed in Kingston's text is similar to that of Moremi. In a similar vein, *The Woman Warrior* can be described as a tribute to womanhood. It chronicles the plight of the deprived, humiliated and abandoned women. A narrator in the story comments about the status of woman/girl-child in the society being narrated thus: "girls are maggots in the rice. It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters" (16). This is also a thematic concern in most African feminist narrations.

Furthermore, African literature is handcuffed to rearward-looking historicism (Afropessimism). It is often trapped at the embryonic stage of 'what has happened' or 'is happening', with a little or no focus on 'what can happen', to use the oft-quoted Aristotelian phrases. The urge to use literature as a weapon of political criticism makes most African writers shy from transmogrifying the historical events into global/universal issues which should actually serve as a raw material for their writings. However, in most American writings, it is noted that there is an attempt to make the actual abstract, to localize the global and globalize the local. This is mostly revealed in the works of African American writers, including Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Alice Walker and Amiri Baraka. Thus, American writers also reflect and refract historical issues, including the Great Depression, capitalism, civil rights movement, war, consumerism, and issues of race and gender.

It is convenient to conclude that this paper carries out a comparative exploration American and African literatures by dwelling on the nature of the relations between both literatures in the specific contexts of ideology, themes and aesthetics. It is revealed that this is a wide field that deserves serious attention, with a view to foregrounding the genetic and contact relations between both literatures. Also, the discussion has revealed the issue of influence between both literary cultures as well as the typological affinities of literary forms, ideology and themes in both literatures. Another significant discovery of this study is that American and African literatures have had their growth and expansion both in style and range of subject matters in all their varied aspects of drama, poetry and prose. Indeed, Aduke Adebayo's (2010) theoretical pondering that Comparative Literature assists the critic in appreciating the unity and universality of mankind through literature is valid.

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## Exoticism in L. H. Myers' *THE NEAR AND THE FAR*

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The Anglo-Indian Literature is no less interesting today than that it was during the British Raj in India. The Anglo-Indian Fiction, in the words of Bhupal Singh; an Indian scholar, 'describes the life of English men in India'.<sup>1</sup> It covers the revelation of writers on discern India. There is an extensive as well intensive narration and observation on India in their fiction opus. Such composition is pertinent to contemplate over the social milieu and cross-cultural exchange of British-India during 'Sahibs' Ruling in the Post-colonial period. Their calligraphy is not mere recording of the British-Indian affiliation. However, it is an augment of the writers' idiosyncratic perspective on British life in India with a deliberation. Apart from such eking out there is outlandish prospect on India in Myers' *THE NEAR AND THE FAR* (1929).

L.H. Myers' (1881-1944) who is a contemporary of Edward Thompson and E.M. Forster, an Anglo-Indian novelists. In the novel, he has used India of 16<sup>th</sup> Century as a background for fiction of every sort to view on Indians. In his 'Introduction' to **The Root and The Flower** (1984) Penelope Fitzgerald has pointed out "Myers wants us to look at his world of appearances and beyond it. Appearances cannot be dismissed as and illusion, for no illusion can be created except by reason."<sup>2</sup> And here an attention goes on his word of 'Appearance'. It is to be noted here that Myers is desperate in appellation of experiences and sentiments from that of Anglo-Indian novelists such as John Masters and Paul Scott. He is exterior to the tradition of Anglo-Indian Literature as neither his visitation India not doled out the predilections of those novelists. Besides his India is a unique formation of artistry which is ill-matched with other Anglo-Indian novelists' depiction especially the great King Akbar's reign. The present novel which has come out of such context, an any Indian may ask what kind of account 'authenticity' is there in presentation on India? And here Myers is fully weird from other Anglo-Indian novelists as well. Inna Walter very clearly points out the difference between Myers and other Anglo-Indian writers:

*...the difference between Myers and other major fiction writers who chose India for their canvas must be made clear. while several British and Indian novelists chose to write about India before and after Independence to portray Indian life delineating a picture that was a romantic or historical, critical or merely fictional, Myers clearly states in his Preface to the Indian novels that his intention is not to portray the Indian mode of life either historically or romantically, but to make use of the novelist's prerogative to make what he liked*

*of certain geographical and historical material and to censure the life and manners of his own age though the fictional device chosen.*<sup>3</sup>

The present paper further attempts to denote Myers is not fair towards both in portrayal Indians and British in idealistic manner. His 'myriad' exoticism appears in the novel. Its mark is also to focus on Indians are Orientals and British are Occidentals and added to denote 'Occidental' is much nobler. The term in this context of Edward Said's 'Occidental' is right one.<sup>4</sup>

THE NEAR AND THE FAR, the first tetra logy in **The Root and the Flower**, deals with Rajah Amar, the Raja of Vidyapur, who believes in Buddhism; marries Helen, a girl in Caucasus religion. Jali is their son. They have invited by the Emperor Akbar to attend imperial Durbar.

Myers' encounters the Western with the Eastern to understand the meaning of life. And for it he shows Rajah Amar of Vidyapur marries Helen, a Caucasus girl of eighteen years and gives her name Sita. It sees in:

*There it was that the Rajah had met and married her. (Helen with an oriental grace and the daughter of a Georgian prince, who exiled, had found a refuge in Persia) It had been the romance of his life and the wonder of it flashed over him now...now in these moments when by some vagary of imagination he found himself gazing at her detachedly with the eyes of a stranger. 5*

Myers tries to show Rajah's inability to understand her being as an oriental. Though he is very close to her, he looks as if she is foreigner yet.

Rajah Amar and Sita are living together as husband and wife even though they are far away from each other spiritually and religiously. Myers' revelation is to insinuate the east and west can not really encounter. And this perspective reflects in the following lines:

*Ten years her senior, he felt himself old enough to be her father. If she had the gift of innocence, he had a faculty for experience of their ancestors already resting somewhat heavily upon them. He could not reproach her, if after all these years, in spite of their love, they were still, spiritually, wide apart. In his religion, as he well knew, he stood aloof, not only from her but from nearly all his contemporaries. 6*

Here calls to mind the lines from Rudyard Kipling's **The White Man's Burden**:

*Comes now, to search your manhood  
Through all the thankless years,  
Cold-edged with dear-brought wisdom,  
The judgment of your peer.*<sup>7</sup>

Myers', then, has pointed out that after many years Rajah rediscovered the doctrine of Buddha in its authentic purity but Sita, who had been christened as Helen; has not the penetration of Eastern religion. It reveals in: Sita had never been able to understand it (Buddha and its doctrine). 4 Myers further depicts Gokal who is a pundit lives in openly in concubine with Gunevati, the yogini of the Vamchari which is against the principles of pundit. It notices in: *This big, sedentary pundit had a talent for humorously exploiting his own foibles,...* .8

There is a view of novelists that the ruler, Akbar, is not performing his duty as father. It reflects through : 'Akbar was a bungler; he had never learnt how to deal with his children'9 Myers' exoticism finds further in Akbar's preoccupation with religion. It mirrors in:

*Akbar had been a good Moslem, but his friends had seen him first questioning, then rejecting, and finally oppressing the faith... At Fatehpur... Sikri a special Hall had been built for religious debate, and here he collect ... every variety of fantastic belief. and then he would make them talk. by Allah! How they talked! And what had come of it all ? Nothing!... Akbar had recently thrust forth upon the world... a new religion, forsooth... the Din llahi, a miscreant that would be negligible were it not so powerfully fathered. 9*

Myers accessorially concerns with Hindu people's religious orgy. It bares in:

*For years he (Akbar) had known that in hundreds of temples and secret meeting places religious orgies were being held with a frequent accompanied of human sacrifices... In every village, in every city, in the palace itself he could sniff the sickly taint. Saktism! Thuggee! The worship of the Female Principle Kali, the Goddess of Birth and Death! Her power, against which Akabar warred,...* 10

Muslim religion is additionally pointed out as a folly. In the discussion between Amar and Gokal, Gokal ponders: 'The Din llhai will fail in the end because it is a folly'.14

Myers' alien view towards Indians divulges through the conversation among Gokal, Amar and Sita. Gokal tells Amar trusts in Hindu religion-the Upnishad and its ideals. It appears through Sita's restoration against it:

*'You can read many of my thoughts'. 'Don't you then also know that I shall never be able to accept Amar's view of life ?' 'I, myself, do not accept it',...*11

Myers' deals supplemtrily with Sita's living in Akabar's India which brings her back to the past and can do duck. It exposes Sita's outlandish in those days. It exhibits:

*The country through which they were now passing did actually remind her of*

*the Caucasus. Its torrents and flowery meadows, its heavy efforts and cool, dewy nights-these bought back not only the memories, but the actual feelings that had been hers in early days. She thought of her parents and their friends, of all the old life that wars and disasters had broken up. It seemed very far away now; and yet that dimness and distances were still home. Memory revived made the civilization into which she had been transplanted seem outlandish again. 12*

There finds the moral without sense in behaviour of Sita. Myers' has not spared to reveal even the nature of Sita [Helen] who had grown up in Western Culture. The protagonist Amar abominates her which denudes in the following words:

*She was quite without character, intelligence, taste or moral sense. 'then how lovely she must be ! Thought Sita, and she sighed, for she was not unlike other women in her inability to decide whether the value which men set on mere beauty was a matter for laughter or tears. 13*

Myers' has made Indian to confess his tawdriness to Sita. It comes to know from the duologue between Sita and Hari:

*'You are right, no doubt', said he at last 'and I am wrong. But I was born wrong'. 'I'm sorry you are depressed, 'she returned, in her rather drawling, rather expressionless voice. 'You feel, 'suppose, that there is no mystery left in anything, that all feeling is stale, that life is an open book which you have read over and over again. And you think that your mood is permanent. Suffering always has as Feizi says, the nature of infinity'.14*

Myers' has deliberately differentiates his religion from Indian and attempted to put its impressiveness. It catches out in Hari and Sita's conversation where Hari affirms:

*'Your business now, surely, is to look, not for happiness, but for something deeper out of which happiness will spring'. Hari gave a shrug. 'Christianity', suppose !'. Looking into the distance Sita smiled to herself. 'You might do worse'. 'I am very well aware that I could not possibly do better'. Returned Hari. 'Your Christianity, at any rate, is charming'.15*

Myers' has more attempted to expose Hari is menial and off beat to love Sita which brings to light in the below lines:

*'You have grown so accustomed to my adoration', he said, 'don't you think you may miss it a little when we part ?' Her answer was made quite lightly. 'my dear Hari, I shall miss you very much,. 'I was not suggesting that. i said you would miss being made love to'. 'now why' 'She questioned in a voice completely changed, 'why do you go out of your way...? 'he shrugged. 'Lets us look the truth in the face. i have*

*been making love to you'. 'No, no!' she cried. they were standing beside the little bridge when this was said, for their hour had just run out. A few deep moments of indecision passed over them. They were looking at one another intently. And then Sita turned and took the path up to her house.16*

Indians prefer to live in illusive world and it is for them truth in life. For example, it is espies from the parley on actuality between Mabun Das, the admirer of Prince Salim and Hari Khan:

*'What do you mean by reality, my dear Mabun ?' oh, I am no philosopher. By reality I mean Maya – the phenomenal world, illusion, if you please to call it so. but for us illusion alone exists ;we live in it; it is our life; let us accept it ?17*

Myers had never visited India and he was at no time involved with the Indian political scene. We can say that in his exoticism satire is directed against both the British and India.

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## Margaret Atwood: Twenty-Five years of Gothic Tales

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Nothing is more difficult than to understand the dead, I've found: but nothing is more dangerous than to ignore

them. (*The Blind Assassin* 508).

It may seem paradoxical that with all Margaret Atwood's sex experiments with different narrative genres and her emphasis on women's fictive autobiographies ('life writing') that her novels have always contained prolonged negotiations with the dead. For her female protagonists, the personal quests have been haunted by ghostly voices and by efforts to unearth secrets repressed in their private lives or hidden in the collective social memory, while the novelist herself has returned again and again to traditional generic forms like Gothic romances, women's popular romances, dystopias, historical novels (to name but a few), renovating old genres but always acknowledging those traditional frames of reference. Not ignoring the dead while writing about the living – indeed, looking into the past in order to understand the present – has been one of the most significant characteristics of Atwood's novel writing career. Those imperatives would seem to be at the basis of the creative process for Atwood and for her heroines, and in this essay I shall focus on the ways that Atwood has resurrected and refashioned Gothic conventions over the past twenty-five years in four novels: *Lady Oracle* (1976) *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996), and *The Blind Assassin* (2000). Looking into the changes over this period, we may observe Atwood's shape-shifting capacities as she reworks the favorite techniques and motifs of Gothic haunting to construct postmodern contemporary texts which engage with shifts in cultural mythology, especially in relation to questions of femininity and feminism, but also in relation to shifts in Canada's myths of nationhood and identity.

To describe the paradigmatic female Gothic plot as 'a narrative of disclosure and reparation' where 'the weight of the past... may be escaped only when its secrets are brought to light through the process of discovering connections between past and present' (Williams 171) serves to highlight important elements of history and the uncanny which characterize the genre. To define contemporary Gothic (often called neo-Gothic) by its emphasis on female subjective experience, characterized by 'excess' and by women's desire for 'escape' points to the central thematic of Gothic fiction and to its transgressive narrative structures (Becker 21-39). Both these definitions however are in danger of neglecting the dimension of ironic humor which distinguishes Atwood's Gothic tales and ferocious delight with which her duplicitous storytellers conduct their negotiations, not only with the dead but also with the living. (These include the characters within the text and also the readers who are outside the action but very much within

the text, for Atwood never forgets that ‘the process of reading is part of the process of writing, the necessary completion without which writing can hardly be said to exist’ (Atwood, 1982: 334-57). Joan Foster in *Lady Oracle*, Zenia in *The Robber Bride*, Grace Marks in *Alias Grace*, Iris Chase Griffen in *The Blind Assassin*, and Atwood herself are all identified as sibyls, witches, liars, supreme plotters; by the end (with the exception of Joan) they have disappeared – into death or into the text – and only their voices remain.

Gothic fiction is obsessed with secrets, with what is buried or hidden or unspeakable. It would be only half true to say it is obsessed with death; rather, it is haunted by the fear of the undead, a dread that what seems to be dead and buried might not be dead at all, but always ready to spring out, or to speak out, in some monstrous and unpredictable form. Gothic motifs might be summed up as figuring ‘the unspeakable and ‘live burial’ (Sedgwick 4.5), or as imaging something which is ‘deeply familiar but which has become alienated through repression’ (Freud 363). Gothic might be said to inhabit the borderline territory of the Uncanny where what is familiar threatens to collapse into unfamiliar spaces or black holes, generating a high level of anxiety and suspense. Unsurprisingly, as several recent commentators have suggested, the scariest Gothic place is the home, which becomes an ‘unhomely’ haunted house as the separation between inside/outside is eroded (Becker 19-20; Bhabha 9-18). If the domestic place of home, which replaces the traditional Gothic castle or ruined abbey, is the dominant architectural metaphor in contemporary Gothic fiction, then the split self with its dark doubles is the pervasive bodily image for psychic repression and alienation. The ghosts figure the secret life of memory, and life writing with its retrospective emphasis produces haunted texts, in a process which Terry Castle has aptly called ‘the spectralization of the other’ for the dead continue to have a subjective reality (Castle 125). This collapsing of boundaries between what is real and what is imagined would account for the Gothic fascination with transgression as these fictions negotiate border crossings between dreams and waking, sanity and madness, life and death, in narratives which shift continually between realism, fantasy and nightmare. It is to this territory of Gothic romance that Atwood always returns, from her early water color paintings of the late 1960s where similar knights in armor with hidden faces peer at damsels dressed in red, right up to the present.

We might see *Surfacing* as a ghost story set in the Canadian wilderness, while *The Handmaid’s Tale* has traditional Gothic motifs as well, in classic female fears of imprisonment and sexual violence, and in *Cat’s Eye* the protagonist Elaine Risley searches incessantly for Cordelia, her vanished childhood playmate and tormentor, replaying in memory their game ‘Lie down, you’re dead!’, trying to resurrect the absent other, her doppelganger. There are very repetitive patterns here, which after all is what help us to recognize a literary genre. The same old stories are being retold in new contexts as Atwood challenges traditional generic limits: ‘We’re going to turn it upside down, we’re going to move it so it includes something which isn’t supposed to be there, we’re going to surprise the reader’ (Ingersoll 193).

Atwood surprises the reader by turning Gothic upside down in four different ways with her refashioning, crossing traditional Gothic with satiric versions of women’s popular romance in *Lady Oracle*, with fairy tales and contemporary social history in *The Robber Bride*, with

nineteenth century historical fiction and Victorian melodrama in *Alias Grace*, and in *The Blind Assassin* appropriating a dazzling range of discourses from twentieth century social history, science fiction, modernist female romance and American detective pulp fiction of the 1930s and 40s.

### **Lady Oracle**

*Lady Oracle*, which opens with a voice speaking from beyond the grave would at first appear to be a traditional Gothic text, though as we read the opening paragraph it transforms itself into a Gothic parody. We discover that the speaker is not dead after all:

I planned my death carefully, unlike my life, which meandered along from one thing to another, despite my feeble attempts to control it ... I wanted my death, by contrast, to be neat and simple, understated, even a little severe like a Quaker church or the basic black dress with a single strand of pearls much praised by fashion magazines when I was fifteen ... The trick was to disappear without a trace, leaving behind me the shadow of a corpse, a shadow everyone would mistake for solid reality. At first I thought I'd managed it. (*Lady Oracle* 7)

This is a fictive autobiography told by a woman called Joan Foster, who is a novelist and a poet, and she tells her life story in different versions under different names. Of course, her stories never quite fit together, for there are always multiple images of herself being projected. Not only does Joan write Gothic romances but she also tries quite disastrously to construct her real life like a Gothic plot with herself as the victim. Indeed this novel opens not in Canada but in Italy, the classic territory of Redcliffean Gothic romance. Her elaborately contrived plot does not work, and the main interest lies in tracing the many ways that Joan's anxieties and fantasies are figured out in her Gothic bodice rippers, which are not escape fantasies as she claims, but rather her own complex negotiations with her personal past and with the memory of her dead mother.

However, before going any further into Joan's Gothic plots, we need to look at the novel title, to see what it tells us about Joan as a woman writer who faces the challenge of finding a voice to speak for herself. And what does she say when she does find her voice? The most significant thing about an oracle is that it is a voice which comes out of a woman's body, associated with hidden knowledge, danger and death, but it is not her own voice. Thinking of the Delphic Oracle, it is the voice of the god Apollo or earlier the voice of the Earth Goddess speaking through the body of the priestess who is herself in a trance. The role of the prophetess or the storyteller is in danger of being reduced to the role of hysteric. Joan presents herself as uncomfortably close to this model, for she refuses to take responsibility for what she writes. The very name *Lady Oracle* is not her choice; it is given to her by her male publisher.

When she becomes a celebrity, she begins to feel certain paranoia about her media persona. She starts to feel like one of her own tormented Gothic victims:

It was as if someone with my name were out there in the real world, impersonating me, saying things I'd never said but which appeared in the newspapers, doing things for which I had to take the consequences, my dark twin, mirror reflection. She was taller than I was, more beautiful, more threatening. She wanted to kill me and take my place, and by the time she did this no one would notice the difference because the media were in on the plot, they were helping her. (250-51)

This double identity is a threat, but it also provides Joan with a kind of escape, for she cannot be defined by any statements made in her name, and her identity is always changing. Is she Lady Oracle the poetess? Is she Lousia Delacourt (Joan has appropriated her dead aunts name) the Gothic novelist? She is also Joan Foster (the name given by her mother), but whether she is named after Saint Joan or the American film actress Joan Crawford she is not sure. In fact, these assumed names which can be put on and off like costumes constitute nothing less than a set of aliases for a woman who has a very insecure sense of her own identity. Joan is a very slippery subject who writes costume Gothic because she is afraid: afraid of the past (imaged by the ghost of the Fat Lady in Pink who walks the tightrope) and of her mother (who always seemed to the child like a triple headed monster in her dressing table mirror), she is afraid of her father (who had worked for the French Resistance during the war and who Joan thinks may have murdered her mother), she is afraid of losing her husband's respect, and she is also afraid of being found out! As Joan asserts, 'I wanted to forget the past, but it refused to forget me; it waited for sleep, then cornered me' (216). Even her staged death and escape to Italy does not free her, and increasingly her writing begins to look like another failed escape attempt.

Joan is trying to figure out her own life through her Gothic plots, and in the end she has to walk right into one of her stories to find out who she is. Going into the Gothic maze, Joan has to confront four of her fictional heroines who all claim to be the one character, just as she has to confront her mother's ghost and just as she has to confront the villain reaching for her throat who turns out to be – unsurprisingly – the figure of her husband. This scenario of Gothic violence exists only in the world of Joan's imagination and is interrupted when she is terrified by hearing real footsteps. Has her husband come all the way to Italy to get her? Or is it a murderer? And are they the same thing? Once translated into the realistic genre, such terror becomes comic, for the man whom Joan fears has come for her life is a reporter who has only come to get her life story, which is the novel we have just been reading. She decides to give up on Gothic and to write science fiction instead, on the (erroneous) premise that 'the future is better for you.'

### **The Robber Bride**

*Lady Oracle* is a Gothic entertainment, a Canadian's romance with Europe which she fancies as an exotic and sinister escape from her home territory of Toronto. Twenty years later, with *The Robber Bride*, Atwood is writing about a very different Toronto, a multicultural city of the 1990s in an urban postcolonial Canada which is no longer isolated but part of the globalized community – much more interesting and rather more threatening. *The Robber Bride* is a mutant

form of Gothic romance, caught in that ‘postmodern paradox of complicity and critique’ which Linda Hutcheon describes as characteristic of Atwoods fiction (Hutcheon 146). The Gothic plot is turned upside down here for the novel is structured around the adventures not of a villain but a villainess who may or may not be died, who seems to be a figure out of nightmare, and who transgresses the borderlines between realism and fantasy. This is the Demonic Women of the title, Zenia, the Robber Bride herself, who has come all the way from central Europe to torment innocent Canadians. If it were possible, Zenia could be Dracula’s daughter, for this is a story about the Un-Dead, with all the trappings of magic mirrors, shape changers, split selves and dark doubles, transgressions and betrayals, with the final defeat of the villainess when her body is burned up and her ashes scattered over the deepest part of the Lake Ontario. The novel is like a fairy tale, but it is also like history, giving us a combination of different kinds of evidence: social documentary, private memory narratives and imaginative reconstruction. (Atwood is very keen on probing the secrets hidden within history, as shall be seen in *Alias Grace* and *The Blind Assassin*).

Who is Zenia? She is there in the title of the novel, and it is her story which focuses the narrative. How does this traditional Gothic villainess survive as such a powerful force in a novel about contemporary Toronto? I think that Atwood has taken on Dr. Frankenstein’s rule here, reassembling parts of old legends and fairy tales together with late twentieth century neuroses, to create her female monster who strides through three Canadian women’s stories wreaking havoc on their lives in this neo-Gothic tale which combines social history, detective thriller, and the family romance plot.

Zenia is the focus for all these women’s stories: she is necessary to them whether she is alive or dead. She has three different versions of her life story which she tells each of the three friends in order to gain their trust, and then she robs them of their money and their men. At least this is what her friends say, for Zenia never tells her own story in her own voice. She is a very transgressive figure with shifting life stories which seem to reflect the desires and fears of each woman. Is she real or imaginary? The answer is that she is both, for Zenia is the archetypal nomad, migrating from one story to another, operating on the borders between the real and the supernatural, so that all three protagonists see very different versions of Zenia in her recurring appearances in their lives between the 1960s and the early 1990s, and we as readers can never decide how to interpret this shape – shifting figure with her multiple identities. Maybe she is nothing but a mirror image or a magic mirror like the one in the Snow White fairy tale, which makes visible something which is ‘deeply familiar but which has become alienated through repression’ as Freud would remind us. Zenia is threatening not because she is European (though her immigrant status highlights her dimensions of otherness) but because her appearance is associated with the uncanny: she represents the return of the repressed for these three women. She is their dark double, appealing directly to their unspoken fears and desires, just as she reflects fantasies of femininity from which women suffer as well as men:

You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur. The Zenias of this world have studied this situation and turned it to their own advantage; they haven't let themselves be moulded into male fantasies, they've done it themselves. They've slipped sideways into dreams, the dreams of women too, because women are fantasies for other women, just as they are for men. But fantasies of a different kind (392).

Atwood is echoing Simone de Beauvoir here; she is also challenging feminist thinking about gender identities and relations between the sexes, drawing attention to the ways that fantasizing affects women's concepts of themselves. She is always the Other Woman, representing the otherness within themselves which these women cannot acknowledge but which is necessary for self-definition. Atwood is using the Gothic villainess to highlight the way fantasy works, as fantasies of desirable femininity come back to haunt these middle-aged middle class women in Toronto in the 1990s – one a successful business woman, one a professor of military history, and one a New Age shop assistant. These are the women's social identities, but their life histories reveal that all three of them are split subjects who have cast off the traumatic memories of unhappy childhoods and who have reinvented themselves even to the extent of changing their names, to fit the adult versions of their personalities. But as Atwood remarked at the beginning of *Cat's Eye*, 'Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away' (*Cat's Eye* 3). Identity is always multiple, a dynamic construct of remembering and forgetting, where what is lodged in the unconscious might under certain circumstances rise through dreams to the level of consciousness. Again this is form of negotiating with the dead, as the protagonists confront ghostly selves who may turn out not to be dead at all. Though all three women are beset by insecurities, the knowledge of the shadow selves within subjective identity is most keenly realized by Charis. She has survived a childhood of physical and sexual abuse and has carefully reconstructed her fragile identity as a peace-loving New Age mystic by metaphorically dumping her old damaged self into the lake:

Still inside her head, she walked to the shore of Lake Ontario and sank the leather bag into the water. That was the end of Karen. Karen was gone. But the lake was inside Charis really, so that's where Karen was too. Down deep. (265)

Through Zenia's interventions in their lives these women are forced to recognize that their repressed 'dead' selves are too dangerous to be ignored, and that like the Robber Bride herself they have to be engaged with in order to make space for personal development. This psychic drama is a 'raw war' – remembering Tony's Freudian slip in her first conversation with Zenia (129) which she later recognizes as the decisive moment in their friendship, when Tony revealed to Zenia her own vulnerability.

Zenia is linked to a marauder, a guerilla fighter, a vampire, and a rattlesnake. As a betrayer and a death dealer, she is a very dangerous presence and she has to be destroyed again

and again. In the end, all three women reject her and she commits suicide. Or was she murdered by Charis's dark undead twin Karen? Might Zenia have died anyway from a complication of disorders, ranging from cancer to drugs to AIDS, all of these possibilities continue to circulate around Zenia's drowned body.

It would seem that Zenia has finally gone and that her story can now be turned into history, 'because she is dead, and all of the dead are in the hands of the living' (461). However, even as the last part of her story is told, Zenia's fragmented body is being transformed, so that the 'broken mosaic' re-emerges at the end as a beautiful Cretan statuette: a 'woman with her glazed pottery face' who 'does nothing but smile' (470). The enigma of Zenia (Who was she? Was she entirely destructive, or was she also instructive, and possibly courageous as well?) cannot be solved, any more than the enigmas of history. The memory of Zenia like the collective memory of history is already there, waiting to be pieced together and reinterpreted by the living in their negotiations with the dead. She remains un-dead like the vampire of the old Gothic tales, as she continues to derive her existence from the neuroses and desires of others. She is always the face in the magic mirror, reminding women not only of what they lack or have forgotten but also of what they need most:

The story of Zenia is insubstantial, ownerless, a rumour only, drifting from mouth to mouth and changing as it goes. As with any magician, you saw what she wanted you to see; or else you saw what you yourself wanted to see. She did it with mirrors. The mirror was whoever was watching, but there was nothing behind the two-dimensional image but a thin layer of mercury (461).

The riddling questions remain: 'Was she in any way like us? Thinks Tony. Or, to put it the other way round: Are we in any way like her?' (470)

### **Alias Grace**

These same questions might also be asked of *Alias Grace*, Atwood's Gothic novel about nineteenth century English-Canadian history. She turns back to a celebrated criminal case for this is the story of Grace Marks, the sixteen-year-old Irish servant girl who, with her fellow servant James Mac Dermott, was accused of murdering their employer Thomas Kinnear and his Canadian housekeeper Nancy Montgomery (who was also his mistress) at Kinnear's farm outside Toronto in 1843. Grace was not hanged for the murders though Mac Dermott was. Instead, she was imprisoned in Kingston Penitentiary and incarcerated for a period in Toronto Lunatic Asylum; she was finally pardoned in 1872. Grace Marks left Canada and went to live in the United States, where possibly she married and changed her name. At this point she disappears from official records.

The crucial question is: Was Grace Innocent, or was she guilty? She steadfastly claimed that she could not remember what happened on the day of the murders, so to this day the case is open to speculation. Why would Atwood choose to write about a story like that? She has given

us a persuasive answer: 'The lure of the Canadian past, for the writers of my generation, has been partly the lure of the unmentionable... the mysterious, the buried, the forgotten, the discarded, the taboo.' (Atwood 1977: 19)

Looking into the story, we see how it contains all the classic Gothic ingredients: unspeakable secrets, murder, sex and violence, criminality, and a heroine who may be criminally insane or a split personality or a hysteric, or maybe even innocent. The fascination of such a heroine as Grace is intimately bound up with nineteenth century anxieties about women's true nature: are they angels or are they lying devils? And which is grace? Victorian ideals of femininity were linked to domesticity and asexuality; but what happens when a figure like Grace Marks challenges those ideals by supposedly engaging in forbidden sexuality (possibly with her employer or with her fellow servant) and in violent crime? Grace's story fascinated late nineteenth century readers, as Atwood tells us in her afterword: 'The Kinnear-Montgomery murders took place on July 23, 1843, and were extensively reported not only in Canadian newspapers but in those of the United States and Britain. The details were sensational '(Alias Grace 5.37). Her story clearly fascinates Atwood, who has written two earlier versions of it: *The Servant Girl* (1974) for CBC Radio, and an unpublished play *Grace* (1978-79). We might say that she is still trying to 'understand the dead' just the three protagonists in *The Robber Bride* continue to try to understand Zenia long after her death by telling stories about her.

In *Alias Grace* it is Grace who tells the story while she is still in prison to a young American psychiatric doctor from Massachusetts, Dr. Simon Jordan. He is engaged in the study of early versions of psychotherapy and traumatic nervous disorders. It is Grace's voice, disembodied and out of context which startles the reader's attention in the polyphony of voices with which the novel begins. The reader is quite bewildered by the broken pieces of contradictory historical evidence which are offered in the opening pages: newspaper reports of the trial, an extract from Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings*, snatches of poetry, a page from the Kingston Penitentiary's Punishment Book, and among them Grace's Gothic nightmare of Nancy Montgomery's murder;

Then up ahead I see Nancy, with her hair fallen over and the blood running down into her eyes. Around her neck is a white cotton handkerchief printed with blue flowers, love-in-a-mist, it's mine ... and then Nancy smiles, only the mouth, her eyes are hidden by the blood and hair, and then she scatters into patches of colour, a drift of red cloth petals across the stones. (6)

This shocking image of a female victim whose body is bruised, broken and bleeding is reported by Grace as a recurrent nightmare. It makes the reader wonder right from the start about how innocent Grace is to dream a thing like that. Is this the Gothic return of the repressed where traumatic memory resurfaces in uncanny repetition? Maybe; but the last sentence of this opening section makes us suspension, for Grace adds: 'This is what I told Dr. Jordan, when we came to that part of the story.' Is this just another tale that Grace has made up to please the doctor, who is trying to lead her toward remembering the event of the murders in order to restore her to psychic health and to solve the riddle of her guilt or innocence, possibly with the practical result of

gaining Grace's release from prison and making his own medical reputation. Do nightmares prove anything? The novel refuses to give a definite answer, and as Atwood said to me, 'I've put in everything I know, and Grace claimed not to remember.' Dr. Jordan is ultimately defeated in his quest for Grace's secret, just as Atwood fails to uncover that secret nearly one hundred and fifty years later.

Is Grace suffering from a split personality disorder? Or is hers a case of hysteria? Both these diagnoses were popular within the context of mid nineteenth century psychiatric medicine on which Atwood draws for her construction of identity here. Her Afterword cites some of the textbooks on the unconscious and dreams, on hypnotism and on spiritualism, which constitute her frame of reference (though of course she cannot avoid writing within her own contemporary post-Freudian frames of reference as well). Atwood's Gothic representation of the split self corresponds to Victorian theories of divided consciousness, a model of mind shared by the two doctors concerned with Grace's case. Dr. Jordan works via the association of ideas, whereas Dr. DuPont (of whom more later) works via a direct appeal to the unconscious through hypnotic trances, both of them being concerned with therapeutic cures designed to reclaim repressed memories and to heal the psyche. DuPont cites the medical authority of the Manchester physician James Braid who developed his new theory of Neuro-hypnotism in the 1850s and was an important influence on Jean-Martin Charcot's work with hysterics in the Salpêtrière women's hospital in Paris from the 1860s. If Grace's nightmares do not prove anything, nor do her repeated assertions of traumatic memory loss. On the other hand, she may have been telling the truth, for she was prone to lapses of consciousness under shock and during her time in prison she was sufficiently unstable (and possibly mad) to be confined to the lunatic asylum for seven years. Again the questions arise: was she a consummate actress (as her enemies and her lawyer believed), was she innocent, or was she mad? In the novel, her comments on madness sound very like the paranoia described by Joan in *Lady Oracle*:

Gone mad is what they say, and sometimes run mad, as if mad is a direction... But when you go mad you don't go any other place, you stay where you are. And somebody else comes in. (37)

Grace is certainly haunted by ghosts – Nancy's and also the ghost of her best friend and fellow servant Mary Whitney, whose death from a bungled abortion caused Grace's first amnesiac attack. Grace asserts that on many occasions she was heard Mary's voice in her dreams, but whether she is saying 'Let me out' or 'Let me in' Grace cannot be sure. Again we see that Gothic transgression of boundaries between inside and outside, between the living and the dead, which is figured through the image of the dark double. Indeed, Mary apparently proves her undying friendship to Grace in what is surely the most bizarre scene in the novel, when Mary's voice speaks for Grace in the neuro-hypnotism episode (Chapter 48). In a scene which bears strong resemblances to nineteenth century melodrama, Grace is put into a hypnotic trance by Dr. DuPont, and at last she speaks out to an audience in the parlour of the prison governor's

wife; but she speaks in a voice which Dr. Jordan is sure is not her own; 'This voice cannot be grace's; yet in that case, whose voice is it?' (465)

So, what is happening here? A traditional Gothic reading would see this as a case of spirit or demonic possession, while a nineteenth century medical reading would see it as symptomatic of 'double consciousness,' the voice of split personality. But there is also a third possibility, which Dr. Jordan wonders about: 'He may have been shown an illusion, which he cannot prove to have been one' (472). This interpretation would fit with Atwood's ironic deployment of Gothic conventions, and if we remember that Dr. DuPont is none other than Grace's old friend Jeremiah the peddler who has always been her protector, then we may agree with Simon that this is a theatrical performance. Jeremiah is a charlatan and a trickster, who succeeds in helping Grace to prove her innocence or at least to keep her secret. The voice is not Grace's, nor is it the voice of the dead Mary Whitney, and I shall leave my readers to divine whose voice it is from a close reading of the text. (The answer is in there). What this scene does offer is a dramatization of Atwood's Gothic construction of female subjectivity where the conscious self is displaced by its dark twin. There is a similar process enacted in *Lady Oracle* and also in *The Robber Bride*, where the voice of the other comes closest to figuring what is 'unspeakable' through a transgressive speech act.

Fascinatingly, Grace never speaks out herself about her part in the murders, though she does offer a version in another medium many years later when she is free and a married woman living on a farm in Ithaca, New York. Several critics have commented on Grace's skill at quilt making and on the quilt patterns which are such a distinctive feather of the novel (Vevaina 64-74 and Rogerson 5-22). Having always had to follow other people's patterns, grace is at last free to design her own quilt, which needless to say, has some significant variations from conventional patterns. Her *Tree of Paradise* design contains not only a serpent but she makes the quilt as a memorial to her two dead friends, Nancy Montgomery (whom she is supposed to have murdered) and Mary Whitney (her own 'alias'), piecing fragments of their clothes together with her own, 'And so we will all be together' – perhaps in Paradise at last, though who can say? Certainly the story does not tell, though Grace's pattern does suggest a fund of memory beyond amnesia, and she does say to herself very near the end, 'If I wish to commune with the dead, I can do it well enough on my own' (529).

The mystery of Grace remains. As Atwood has found, 'Nothing is more difficult than to understand the dead' for though 'the dead are in the hands of the living' (*The Robber Bride* 461) history is never self explanatory but there to be interpreted as we wish and according to contemporary psychological and ideological needs. The past does not yield up all its secrets and Grace is like Offred when her story is disinterred along after Gilead has fallen and she is dead, and Offred is in turn like Eurydice, the figure out of classical myth who 'slips from our grasp and flees' (*The Handmaid's Tale* 324).

### **The Blind Assassin**

It is from Atwood's latest novel *The Blind Assassin* that the head quote for this essay is taken, for I believe that here Atwood leads her female protagonist further into the Gothic maze than ever before, just as the novelist represents negotiations with the dead more explicitly than she has ever done. This is again a Gothic version of Canadian history, a kind of sequel to *Alias Grace*, covering the history of English Canada from the late nineteenth through the twentieth century. Published at the beginning of the new millennium, it offers a retrospective view of some of Canada's major crises and its changing social and political ideologies over the past century. There would seem to be no necessity for making this into a Gothic tale, except that Atwood chooses to tell history through the genre of fictive autobiography. The story teller is an eighty-two year old woman, Mrs. Iris Chase Griffen, who was born in small town Ontario in 1916, the middle of the First World War, and who finishes writing her life story just before she dies in May 1999. It is Iris who is haunted by the past, and it is through her duplicitous telling that the uncanny voices of the dead speak out.

The first thing that strikes the reader is the title, which could be that of an eighteenth century Gothic novel or a nineteenth century melodrama or even a 1930s pulp fiction detective thriller on B-grade movie. Somebody gets killed, but the killer cannot see the victim and nobody sees the killer. The second striking thing is the death opening, spoken (or written) by Iris: Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge. The bridge was being repaired: she went right through the Danger sign. The car fell a hundred feet into the ravine (1).

Here is another bruised and broken female body, in a curious reminder of the opening of *Alias Grace*. But who is responsible? To that there is no answer, though the mystery seizes the reader's attention. There are no less than three suicides in the first twenty pages – Iris's sister, Iris's husband, Iris's daughter. Is there any connection between these deaths? Iris did not see any of them; she is only the survivor who tells the story years later, when the dead are 'in the hands of the living.' Yet there is so much unexplained that we have the uneasy feeling that this is another of Atwood's Ontario Gothic mysteries. There is so much in this novel which is deliberately hidden (Laura's notebooks hidden in one of Iris's bedroom drawers, photographs hidden in old books, Iris's locked steamer trunk). Unlike Grace Marks, Iris is not in prison for murder; as a member of the old Anglo-Canadian Establishment and the widow of a prominent Ontario industrialist, she belongs to the class which is beyond reproach. The only sentence she awaits is death from old age and at the end of the novel she dies of a heart attack. It is against that final silencing that Iris writes her memoir, which she leaves as a legacy to her granddaughter Sabrina who is away traveling in India and who does not return till her grandmother is dead.

It is a very complicated plot, for there are really three stories here: there is Iris's memoir, which contains her sister Laura's posthumously published novel called the *Blind Assassin* – and which contains a pulp science fiction story about a *Blind Assassin* told by the anonymous woman's lover in that novel. It is like a box of magic tricks and we only discover the key to connections very near the end. I do not want to spoil Atwood's surprises to the reader by revealing what happens, but I will say that Iris's story is a very Gothic tale which is part

confession, part private memoir and part public memorial (like the War Memorials from the First World War which litter the novel). Filled with ghosts and ghostly voices, this novel is Iris's tour of the Underworld of classical mythology, her way of negotiating with the dead:

What did I want? Nothing much. Just a memorial of some kind. But what is a memorial, when you come right down to it, but a commemoration of wounds endured? Endured, and resented. Without memory, there can be no revenge. Lest we forget, Remember me. To you from failing hands we throw. Cries of the thirst ghosts. (508).

Iris also answers another question: Why write down all this personal and family history? She writes obsessively and her memoir is full of references not only to handwriting but also to writing hands – often surrealistically dismembered hands or moving fingers, endlessly tracing out the lines of the past. A dismembered hand appears in the crucial hidden photograph.

The photo has been cut; a third of it has been cut off. In the lower left corner there's a hand, scissored off at the wrist, resting on the grass. It's the left hand of the other one, the one who is always in the picture whether seen or not the hand that will set things down. (517).

Indeed there are two versions of this photo, one of which Iris has and a different version which belonged to Laura. In the original photo there were the two sisters with the man they both loved sitting between them. Iris claims to be telling the truth about the scandals and guilty secrets within Canadian high society that she knew in the 1930s and 40s, and she certainly makes the reader think again about the myth of Canadian respectability. But is Iris a reliable narrator? Atwood's female narrators have never been good at telling the truth. Are there things which Iris has deliberately hidden from the reader? Do we ever find out who the Blind Assassin is? In many ways Iris's memoir begins to look, as self-consciously fabricated as Grace's Tree of Paradise quilt. By the time we (or Sabrina) read this, Iris too is a ghost, for the novel includes her obituary and she has become a disembodied Gothic voice, speaking from beyond the grave, from the written pages; 'But I leave myself in your hands. What choice do I have? By the time you read this last page, that – if anywhere – is the only place I will be'. (521).

Iris has eluded the reader – like Grace Marks, or Zenia, or Joan Foster, or the Handmaid. Life stories like history represent 'the lure of the unmentionable,' for these novels are not written only to entertain but also to unhide what has been hidden or repressed, to expose cultural fictions and lies through the artifice of fiction writing. Something close to home that seems to be dead and buried might not be dead at all. I shall end with Atwood's advice to readers about stories and story telling, where the scariest thing about the truth is that it is infinitely elusive:

The true story lies / among the other stories....

The true story is vicious / and multiple and untrue after all.

Why do you / need it? Don't ever ask for the true story (True Stories II)

**Note:**

1. This analysis of *Lady Oracle* and *The Robber Bride* is a summary and development of material in my book, Margaret Atwood (Macmillan, 1996, 65-8). For another extended discussion of *Lady Oracle*, see Susanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions*, 199, 151-98).
2. For discussions of identity in *The Robber Bride* from a non-Gothic perspective, see Janet Beer, 'Doing It with Mirrors: History and Cultural Identity in *The Robber Bride*' and Mari Peepre, 'Searching for Zenia: Time, Space and the Mystery of *The Robber Bride*' in *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 13.2 (1998): 306-16 ad 317-26.

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## POST-MODERNIST DRAMA – SOME TRENDS

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Before one thinks of post-modernist trends it's not out of place to think of modernism first. One cannot but think of Peter Faulkner's caution that one should use it with care and precision. In his book on Modernism he says "Modernism is a term now frequently used in discussions of twentieth century literature - indeed, of all forms of twentieth century art. Like all critical terms, it needs to be used with care and precision if it is to help our understanding of the works it is applied to".<sup>1</sup> The term modernism meant a more specific association with experimentation in the arts. It is definitely difficult to define the critical terms such as 'Modernism' and 'Post-modernism' because they defy all definitions and categories. When the term modernist (preferred to the adjective modern) has been applied to the vast variety of works in all the arts it is difficult to arrive at any exactness. To think of a common definition one can say that anything that is connected with the twentieth century, anything that has dissociated itself from the 19th century assumptions, ideologies, and concepts can be termed as modern. Particularly after the traumatic experience of the two wars, the western man felt as though the world was shattered to pieces and every artist - be a painter or a musician or a poet or a dramatist or a novelist - tried to reconstruct the world. He also tried to give expression to personal isoteric view of life. The modern writer wants to express something which he felt; that he cannot express. There seems to be a number of impediments to him, including the medium through which he wants to express. This result in the modern writer feeling helpless that the more he tries to express the greater he feels that it is a 'raid on the inarticulate'. Referring to this, Peter Faulkner says "that modernist writers fail to see man socially and historically and so make his alienation, which is a social process, into an absolute. They offer -a totally subjective vision, leading to 'the attenuation of reality' in Joyce, Kafka, Musil, Faulkner and Beckett inevitably accompanied by 'dissolution of personality' .... Kafka's angst is seen as 'the experience 'par excellence' of modernism,".<sup>2</sup>

Recent criticism accepts modernism as a highly significant form of art (we hear expressions like 'modern painting', 'modern poetry', 'modern drama' etc.) attempting to render the very depths of modern experience in some acceptable form or the other. Like the other forms of art modern drama attempts to portray modern man's experience, doubts, uncertainties. Modern drama as Bradbury and Bigsby put it, is "a major achievement which belongs to our experience,

our doubts and uncertainties, our ways of perceiving an achievement stylistically radical and novel, and likely to be regarded as quite as exciting, important and innovative as that of any previous period".<sup>3</sup>

The complexity of modern drama is such that it is very difficult to comprehend it in its fullness. Modern drama is definitely different from the old type of conventional drama. One finds a number of play-wrights, each experimenting in one's own way. As a result the plays that emerged from the hands of these writers reflect the multiplicity of experience that these writers felt in their hearts. As a result, one finds an intriguing variety in modern drama, leading to all sorts of names. The modern drama is called kitchen-sink, neo-realist, drama of non-communication, absurd drama, comedy of menace, dark-comedy, drama of cruelty, comedy of exhaustion. As John Russell Brown points out "no cap has fitted for more than a year or two; none has been big enough for more than one or two heads; and often the caps seem more suitable for the journalists who invent them than for the dramatists on whom they are thrust".<sup>4</sup> Modern man in general, particularly during and after war seems to have undergone an inexplicable, agonizing, harrowing and traumatic experience. After the Wars it appeared as though the values that people cherished seemed to be disappearing may be because the social condition of people was very bad due to unemployment and other reasons.

Dramatists like Pinter, Wesker, Osborne, Arden, Tom Stoppard and Edward Bond tried to give expression in their plays, to their own understanding of the times and their own share of despair and distrust, a legacy which every modern man shared after the Wars. The complexity of the experience of modern writer contributed to the complexity of modern drama. Sometimes one wonders what all this modern drama is; whether the modern dramatist has any purpose at all. John Russell Brown feels that "there has been no manifesto from the new dramatists, no proclaimed and commonly agreed program". It's very difficult to expect any proclaimed manifesto from these modern dramatists because they come from varied backgrounds and want to express their varied experiences and hence one cannot expect them to have a commonly agreed programme. Many of these modern dramatists try to project society in which they lived. For example, Osborne in his *Look Back in Anger*, though subscribes to the conventional structure gives expression to his rage and helplessness at the happenings around him in his society. He is angry and defiant. But he also seems to be recreating the half conscious pressures under which his mind bogged down.

Another aspect which one cannot forget is the stress on language, for example a dramatist like Pinter who is a new phenomenon with his unusual type of dialogue which is used more as a smokescreen rather than a clean glass to look through. He aims perhaps more at obfuscation rather than clarification. The modern dramatist is concerned with manipulating not a language of enlightenment but a language of obfuscation; not a language of social progress but a language of existential survival; not a language of communal faith but a language of divisive, strategy. The words of his plays are intransigent and intransitive they can not be transferred to other levels of meaning, be they philosophical, ideological or allegorical".<sup>6</sup>

The words like modernism and post-modernism can not be avoided particularly when one tries to analyse post-war drama. The influence of European drama on the post-war dramatists and their experimentation with expressionism, surrealism, existentialism and marxism, with a variety of ups and downs, successes and failures, cannot be ignored. As Tim Brassell rightly observes "a variety of successes and failures, the tides of expressionism, surrealism, existentialism and marxism (to name only the main ones) have washed through the European theatre ..... it's now clear that the European authors, with their bolder approach to stagecraft, to character, to theatricality, to the whole treatment of ideas on the stage, did in time, have a radical effect on the developing consciousness of an important number of our more original more formally adventurous British playwrights of the '60s and '70s including Arden, Bond, Pinter and Stoppard"<sup>7</sup>. One discerns two contrasting and opposing views that seemed to have shaped the post-war drama. One is the Brechtian world-view stressing the importance of man's role in society, second, the view of the theatre of the Absurd which felt man as a psychological out-cast from society. When the values that sustained the 19th century appeared to be fading out, it has become increasingly difficult to the playwright to present his ideas other than through formal characterization and other more open theatrical methods. In the case of novel, the 'medium being fluid and protean adapted itself successfully "to the endless stream of socio-cultural change, from Hardy to Forster to Woolf to Joyce to Beckett to Fowles".<sup>8</sup> The Absurdist theatre and the Brechtian theatre, one heavily existential and the other highly Catholic try to present man in different perspective each opposing the other and each contrasting the other. The influence of Brecht can be traced on the 'Post-Anger' playwrights such as David Hare, David Edgar, Howard Brenton, who reshaped the drama "into a new, hard edged school of social (often socialist) realism".<sup>9</sup> The main theme running across this post-war drama is "a sense of the nightmarish abyss that underlies our precarious existence".<sup>10</sup>

Though it is very difficult to assess the contemporary drama, still one perceives certain trends. For example the drama of Osborne, Wesker and others in 1950s was political, and it was a theatre of anger and revolt. To put it in the words of Bradbury and Bigsby "in fact much of the protest was reformist rather than revolutionary in spirit, and much the same might be said of the form of the plays, though they did contain a powerful reaction against the way theatre had become fixed as an anodyne and middleclass institution. But it was in many ways a very traditional drama, realist or naturalist in spirit, that emerged, taking much of its energy from the social range it attended to and the new social experiences it explored".

Soon this theatre of anger and revolt is replaced by a new type of drama called the Absurd drama influenced by the continental theatre of foreign playwrights like Brecht, Artaud, Sartre and others.

It's very difficult to draw a line between modernism and postmodernism. One overlaps into another. Post-modernist drama reflects also a sense of cultural dislocation. The anger expressed in modern drama is not against injustice of the society but at the vacuousness of one's own life. The old dead England could not be replaced by a new one. The issues beneath the

carapace of class and behind the caul of imperial pretensions have been exposed. The cultural uncertainty, the depletion of energy, the disruption of moral forces, the disintegration of society, the disjunction between language and action and the decay of the world in general have been focused at in this drama. The post-modernist drama makes certain references to cultural alarm and one finds incoherence both in theme as well as in utterances being projected through the disjunction of language and action. As Patrice Pavis feels "despite the thematic incoherence of its utterances, the post-modern 'work' maintains a certain coherence in its enunciation; and it often retains great simplicity, even naivete, and as its organizing principle a certain harmony that organizes the work 'at least at its vanishing point,'".<sup>12</sup>

The characters in the plays of Beckett, Pinter and Stoppard make one believe that people have lost their identities or at least their contours. The human being appears no longer as an individual but he is more a machine. The modern play such as "an avalanche of discourse which no longer claims to be linked to a visible action in the world, an inheritance which pours out into its heirs without giving them the choice of accepting, rejecting or selecting the best of it" Post-modernism is generally equated with depoliticization of art and it is incoherent.

Tim Brassell, referring to an essay of John Barth says that he, "referred to parody and travesty (albeit somewhat disparagingly) as two of the manifestations of the new approach which he sees as dominating the post-war literary vanguard".<sup>14</sup>

The modern writer becomes bold enough to reject existing artistic conventions and in its place tries to create something new by re-trying, subverting, transcending and transforming even the very same artistic conventions which he rejected earlier. This research to revive new versions out of the conventional forms is what distinguishes post-modernism from modernism. Referring to the idea of Barth and approving it Tim Brassell says "for Barth, this search to revive new versions of traditional forms is what separates post-modernism from modernism. The relevance of these comments to Stoppard's work may already be apparent from our consideration of his novel which, though uneven, contains many of Barth's post-modernist characteristics. They are still more relevant to Stoppard's plays, especially *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. And since Barth places Beckett (whose work first appeared during the 1930s) firmly at the tail-end of Modernism, a question that may usually arise -- without delving into the complex realms of contemporary critical theory -- is whether Stoppard's plays might, in their own unique way, represent a step past Beckett into the vanguard of our Post Modern theatre".

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## Derrida's Deconstruction of Jean-Luc Nancy

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In *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*, Derrida brings together many phenomenological themes. I will discuss the condition of possibility for phenomenology in this paper as iterability, difference and the quasi-transcendental. Derrida discusses his notion of aporia as fundamental to his conception of phenomenology. Thus while Jean-Luc Nancy privileges touch and deconstructs Christianity, Derrida demonstrates that his position is quasi-transcendental, neither intuitionist as Husserl nor corporeal as Jean-Luc Nancy and Merleau-Ponty would have it, neither Christian nor non-Christian, but a space between. Indeed Derrida argues that Jean-Luc Nancy, in privileging corporeality and touch, shares much in common with Merleau-Ponty.

Derrida argues that while Jean-Luc Nancy seeks to deconstruct Christianity and thus deviate from it, one can never be certain that there is no transcendental beyond. (Derrida, 2005. pp. 64-65) Derrida thus again posits undecidability and unpredictability as the only certainties one has. Derrida argues that the spirit of Christianity, while being purged from Heidegger's text through his destruction, haunts it, just as Christianity haunts the text of Jean-Luc Nancy. A reversal of metaphysics and spirit, only repeats it as a ghostly double of the text that returns to haunt it. Derrida also argues that unless Christianity can be adequately exemplified by the empirical manifestations of Christian culture, deconstruction of Christianity itself remains an infinite task as Christianity is a faith in things unseen and spiritual rather than its concrete manifestation in Christian culture. Derrida thus demonstrates that Christianity remains undeconstructible in its concrete manifestation because it is about a transcendental beyond that exceeds the empirical rather than that which can be adequately represented by the empirical.

Derrida asserts that it is impossible to determine if Psyche is extended as she "knows nothing of this" and "nothing of herself". (Derrida, 2005. pp. 44-45) Derrida argues that psyche is characterized by paradox- she is tangible and yet untouchable. Psyche cannot be reduced to touch, as this is a simple reversal of the phenomenological reduction, a reduction of the intelligible to the sensible. Whereas metaphysics is characterized rather by iterability, or the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical. Psyche is not separable from touch or reducible to it, psyche can only be mediated through touch. Psyche's extension marks an aporia and paradox where the sensible and intelligible are conjoined through the passage of difference, hence it is insufficient to lapse into transcendental idealism like Descartes and Husserl or empiricism like Levinas, Blanchot, Ricoeur, Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty. This thesis has argued that truth is neither transcendental or empirical, but quasi-transcendental, the difference between the transcendental and empirical which enables the thought of both. Psyche is not reducible to extension, nor is psyche reducible to pure mind or spirit as a disembodied consciousness. On the occasions that Husserl performs the phenomenological reduction, disembodied mind translates into an absurdity. Psyche has to be incarnated in extension and body through iterability, it knows no existence separate from this corporealized and mediated state.

Derrida demonstrates that there is no fundamental difference between Nancy and Descartes in their arguments as each reduce phenomenology to either mind or body when it is actually the mediation of mind and body. (Derrida, 2005. p.57) Derrida argues against Descartes that the mind is reducible to one part of the body in his theory of the pineal gland. Derrida argues that Nancy's inversion of mind into a spatialization as body is just as contradictory as Descartes' reduction of mind to one point in the pineal gland. Both are reductions. Derrida argues for a quasi-transcendental nature of truth as something between an improbable pineal gland and a mouth before speech, instead of privileging either mind or body, Derrida argues that truth is neither but the mediation or iterability between mind and body. A reduction of mind to body or body to mind translates into an absurdity as the transcendental has to be mediated by the empirical. This paper has argued that iterability and signature enables concepts and the ideal to come into being, only in and through the real through repetition with a difference. It knows no existence outside this mediated and iterable state as there is no difference between the transcendental and empirical. Phenomenologists have created an aporia by separating the transcendental and empirical when there is no difference between them and the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical, just as the empirical is the necessary trace of the transcendental that brings it into being and does not exist outside of it.

Derrida observes the paradox that Freud would affirm transcendental intuition rather than negate it as is traditionally supposed. (Derrida, 2005. pp. 44-45) Derrida goes on to note that extension as described by Kant is not a purely empirical concept, after subtracting empirical qualities from the object such as impenetrability, hardness, colour. There still remains the intuitive qualities that form empirical objects such as extension and figure. Derrida thus observes that Kant detaches from empiricism the intuition of extension and figure which is not reducible to empiricism but precedes it, yet in this detachment, removes essence from its exemplar which lands metaphysics in an aporia, without organs, without objective knowledge. Extension is thus 'not touchable through the senses' – it is not an empirical but an abstract quality, yet is not separable from sense. Derrida argues for the conjunction of the transcendental and empirical- the transcendental is not separable from the empirical- and this prevents the reduction of phenomena to pure illusion, as Berkeley discovered, without leading us to the paradoxes that Berkeley's absolute idealism entails in reducing phenomena to pure subjectivism. Derrida would argue that the transcendental is only enabled through its iteration as the empirical. The aporia of metaphysics is thus resolved by this positing of the quasi-transcendental, which is the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical. The ideal is nothing outside the real. Concepts are irrevocably mediated, only existing through iterability and signature.

Nancy begins by considering the fact that Christianity can be reduced to a religion of flesh and blood. Nancy pronounces this an easy task, but Derrida implies that it overlooks the transcendental and otherworldly aspects of the religion by reducing it to something corporeal and empirical. Derrida describes this expulsion of spirit from Christianity as paradoxical : creation without creator, without principle and end. Derrida describes the body as a prosthesis- technics and a technical appropriation of the "phenomenological" threshold of the body proper. As body is technics and prosthesis, it seems contradictory to describe it as its own rejection where one separates mind and body and reduces Christianity to a religion of

flesh and blood. As Derrida argues, it leads only to paradox, aporia and madness – the rejection of spirit is a madness and impossibility for Christianity which is based on such a notion of spirit and otherworldliness.

Derrida further outlines the paradox of Christianity as a religion of flesh and blood- of creation without the creator, and the impossible. (Derrida, 2005. p. 57) It is a madness of flesh excised from spirit, in a reduction of Christianity to the material. Derrida terms this “corpus of sense and thus in all sense, but without possible totalization”, a madness because Christianity excised from spirit and the transcendental beyond is a paradox and impossibility. It is simply not conceivable. As Christianity is essentially an otherworldly and spiritualized religion, it is impossible to conceive of a material Christianity or a Christianity separate from the transcendental beyond that it is essentially premised upon. A materialized Christianity is a madness as it overthrows the fundamental assumptions about the religion- that a transcendental beyond exists and determines the sphere of the empirical. Derrida’s intervention is not that Christianity is an impossibility but an impossible possible enabled through differance and iterability, Derrida does not dispute the transcendental but only argues that it has to incarnated or mediated through the empirical in order to come into being.

Derrida demonstrates the undecidability of truth in a climate of religious pluralism. It is impossible to decide between Christianity and Islam, or Judaism; even as a globalatinization of Christianity has taken place and Christianity has become the universal religion. Derrida argues that non-Christian culture and Christian culture are the same rather than mutually exclusive or different. Religions are interchangeable, and the universalization or globalatinization of Christianity does not entail its Absolute status as truth. The transcendental of Christianity is not determinable as the absolute in a climate of religious pluralism because with the effacement of the transcendental signified comes democracy, the absolute status of one religion over another remains something that cannot be determined and undecidable.

To elaborate further on mediation, touching is a paradoxical activity because it conjoins the sensible with the intelligible and links the touchable with the untouchable. (Derrida, 2005. p. 161)The sublime can only be expressed through the finite in thinking, thus rendering accessible the untouchable and unthinkable. Imagination enables the possibility of the impossible, possibility auto-affecting its essence of non-essence by bringing the transcendental into being through iterability and mediation. Imagination thus enables the thinking of limit which is otherwise unattainable, a thinking of the impossible, a mediation of the transcendental in the empirical through iterability and signature.

Derrida argues that his emphasis has been on exemplariness and mediation. He has emphasized the example as symptom of metonymy, a part that stands for the whole, a figurality and a figural substitute which supplements the whole that he has been talking about in elaborating Nancy’s philosophy of touch. (Derrida, 2005. pp. 188-189)Touch can only be exemplified through the metonymy of hand as it knows no other instantiation, just as the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical it displays itself in as we have been discussing in earlier chapters.

Derrida further elaborates his philosophy of iterability and mediation, eidetic intuition is always tactually filled in. (Derrida, 2005. pp. 188-189) Hence touching is no longer a cause amongst others as it conditions these eidetic intuitions and is coextensive with them. By

metonymy, touch is a substitute for sensory faculties, which Husserl has bracketed out in his eidetic reduction. While Husserl privileges intuition as the experience of the present, Derrida argues that touch is precisely what enables the experience of presence in general. Husserl's intuition has to be mediated through the senses in order for presence to be experienced, this is what he has omitted in his phenomenological reduction.

Derrida again emphasizes mediation as he cites Husserl trying to examine a heart sensation. This heart sensation is a phenomenological localization which is distinct from the intuition of extension. As Derrida notes, Husserl seems embarrassed to admit the affective warmth the heart sensation connotes as it would imply mediation and contradict everything his solipsistic transcendental reduction reduces phenomena to in negating the movement of iterability and mediation. Derrida emphasizes that this mediation is a tactile localization. Derrida notes this as an experience of touch with touches the untouchable, feels through bodily surfaces, and thus can only be enabled through mediation of intuition in sense, or repetition of the transcendental in the empirical.

Derrida examines the debate between Merleau-Ponty and Husserl: (Derrida, 2005, pp. 191-192) Merleau-Ponty argues that experience has to be incarnated in the flesh. Husserl, with his purifying reductionist tendencies, would never concede to his. As Derrida appropriates Merleau-Ponty, meaning is figurative and metaphorical, rather than idealism or existing in a transcendental solipsistic vacuum devoid of mediation, embodiment, incarnation or iterability. Derrida argues that Merleau-Ponty inverts and reverses Husserl only to repeat Husserl. While Husserl and Merleau-Ponty take on positions which seem directly antithetical to each other- truth is rather quasi-transcendental, or the space between transcendental and empirical. Derrida argues that Merleau-Ponty reappropriates Husserl's intuitionism of the ego into an Other directed and intersubjective phenomenology of corporeality. Derrida argues that this substitution of ego with Other is a repetition, no substitution is possible, rather if substitution takes place it is the substitution of non-substitutables as a paradox, of unique egos and unique others, this is Nancy's paradox of the singular plural. Derrida argues that self is not reducible to Other just as the Other is not reducible to the same. Yet these are related through repetition and iterability. Self is a function of the Other as the same and repetition rather than being wholly Other or wholly distinct, as Derrida argues with his notion of auto-affectation, relation to self as other is the foundation and condition of possibility for relating to Others.

On incarnation, Derrida notes that the word *leibhaftig* turns up in both Husserl and Heidegger, (Derrida, 2005. pp. 254-256) and yet paradoxically their philosophies do not embrace its implications- incarnation implies mediation rather than entailing a privileging of transcendental idealism for Husserl or empirical anthropologism like Heidegger. Incarnation implies the mediation of the transcendent in living flesh, it is the bridge between transcendental and the empirical as the transcendental has to be incarnated as living flesh in the empirical in order to exist through iterability, it knows no other form of existence. While eidetic intuition is separable from body or flesh, it knows no existence outside of it as it has to be incarnated in the empirical to come into being, just as Husserl's history is the incarnation of the condition of possibility of the transcendental rather than something reducible, contingent and accidental. Incarnation implies iterability- it is not an intertwining of mind with body like Merleau-Ponty who is more interested in embodiment and corporeal

living conditions of perception, but a mediation of the transcendental in the empirical which is the condition of possibility for metaphysics and thus phenomenological thought. Phenomenology has failed to recognize this necessity of incarnation, or iterability, and the space between the transcendental and empirical which mediates both as the quasi-transcendental as its very condition of possibility.

Derrida argues that divinity and logos is expressed and incarnated in the empirical – God is incarnate through his Son as man. (Derrida, 2005. pp 254-256) Divinity and grace from the Father can only be concretely manifested through acts of love exchanged between humans and Christ. Chretien acknowledges this when he speaks of veiling, mediacy, and the immediacy of human touching. According to Aristotle, man is a tactile being, man experiences divinity and the transcendental through touch and empirical acts of love. Through his discussion of incarnation, Derrida further highlights iterability as the condition of possibility of transcendental genesis. Transcendental has to be incarnated through the empirical through repetition with a difference, the transcendental knows no existence outside this incarnation or iteration.

Derrida argues that philosophy is constituted by non-philosophy, or differance. (Derrida, 2005. p. 292) It is the experience of the tactile, for example in kissing, that constitutes divinity and transcendental experience. It brings into communication two beings through auto-hetero-affection, for example, through the meeting of eyes, speech and the declaration of love, all concrete manifestations of love. Paradoxically as we have examined before, the authentic philosophical act is suicide: the condition of life is death as its limit, philosophy is determined by non-philosophy, love is constituted by acts of love. Through all these run the notion of mediation and the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical. This is the quasi-transcendental nature of truth- presence has to be bifurcated a priori through absence and determined by non-presence in order to come into being. Non-presence, or differance, is the condition and source of philosophy rather than its shadow.

Derrida notes that metaphysics has been characterized by the thinking of limit from Aristotle, Hegel and Kant and philosophy, through mediation, brings about the thinking of the impossible, the inclusion of outside in the inside, conjoining the untouchable with the touchable, the thinking of the intangible. (Derrida, 2005. p. 297-298) To touch is to gain access to what otherwise remains a limit and a border, and to transgress to the other side, much like deconstruction transgresses philosophy with its thinking of aporia and the delimiting of limit, to render accessible and make possible what had been previously impossible, deconstruction is the thinking of the impossible possible. While Nancy argues that touch is finitude, Derrida argues that touch is a thinking of transcendence because touch renders accessible the untouchable, renders tangible acts of love as the impossible mediated into the possible, with kissing and the touching of eyes. Derrida affirms the paradox of translation and iterability of the infinite in the finite with Nancy's work, as he has done with so many of the phenomenologists we have been reading in this thesis. Derrida affirms the aporia of metaphysics that the untouchable is rendered only through touch and intangible love is rendered only through physical or embodied acts of love. This aporia translates as iterability, or the mediation of the transcendental in the empirical.

In this paper we have discussed Derrida's extensive exploration of phenomenology in *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*. Derrida's position is that phenomenology is caught in an aporia, between Christian and platonic and Non-Christian and material thought, while Derrida negotiates the differance between these as the space of truth and the condition of possibility for both. As this paper argues, truth is neither transcendental nor empirical but quasi-transcendental, a space between the transcendental and empirical which enables the thinking of both. Truth is the differance between Christian and Non-Christian thought rather than localizable to either because transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion. Truth is thus the mediation between transcendental and empirical, Christian and non-Christian thought, occupying a space between rather than belonging to either side.

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## An Ecocritical Commentary on the Posthuman Condition in Margaret Atwood's Fiction

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This is the age of mechanical gadgets and virtual reality. Machines seem to have become an extension of our bodies and brains. Organ transplant facilities and considerable progress in biotechnology have practically obliterated the boundary between the self and its (biological and mechanical) other. It is in this context that Hayles had written *How We Became Posthuman*. She had characterized the “posthuman” as a view that “[f]irst... privileges informational pattern over material instantiation,... [s]econd, ... considers consciousness... as an epiphenomenon... [t]hird... thinks of the body as the original prosthesis... [f]ourth... configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines” (2-3). Taken together, they suggest that the human body and individual consciousness are by no means unique and historically privileged over the present machine-bound life that we have. Hayles had written: “In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals” (3). While we seem to have proof of such existence every day in our computer-dependent lives, the ethical implications of such existence for both the human and the natural world are hotly debated in ecocriticism, the study of the nature, extent and significance of environmental and ecological degradation represented in literature. Literature also serves to reflect various contending eco-ethical standpoints and warn us about the impending disasters of our own creation.

Margaret Atwood, the renowned Canadian poet and novelist describes an author's work in the present age as making an attempt to warn the world against destruction of ecological relations in such a way that it might result in the disappearance of life from the face of the earth. She repeatedly expresses her terror of such an outcome in her writing, both fictional and non-fictional. Atwood has used the image of a tent to write about an author's responsibility to reflect the vulnerability of human beings. The tent that she describes shelters the author in the midst of a “vast and cold outside... a howling wilderness” (*Tent* 143). This tent is made of paper. Therefore, in an age when we work incessantly with the computer and even feel, with a rather posthuman enthusiasm that it is an extension of our existence, she evokes the days when the classics in world literature were written and printed on paper.<sup>1</sup> I feel that by mentioning a paper tent as an author's refuge, Atwood seeks to remind us of the close relationship between the inner and the outer spaces in an individual in terms of a way of living in respect of life itself. An author must work conscientiously within the parameters of the self-chosen vocation:

“You know you must write on ... the paper walls, on the inside of your tent... it must tell the truth... but this is difficult to do because you can’t see through the paper walls”(144). The author feels exposed and yet continues to exercise the only mode of resistance known to her through her writing, warning and teaching mankind about the power of evil surrounding us. In “The Tent” therefore: “Wind comes in, your candle tips over and flares up, and a loose tent-flap catches fire, ... but you keep on writing anyway because what else can you do?”(146)

Atwood wrote her first published novel *The Edible Woman* (1969) in 1965. It is the story of Marian MacAlpin, who had got engaged to Peter, a lawyer who continued to boast of his talent in handling the gun:

So I let her off and Wham. One shot, right through the heart.... So I whipped out my knife... German steel, and slit the belly and took her by the hind legs and gave her one hell of a crack, like a whip you see, and the next thing you know there was blood and guts.... All over me, what a mess, rabbit guts dangling from the trees, god the trees were red for yards....(81)

It will be noticed that the gun and the knife (again machine-made) act as means of an extension of Peter, thereby reminding us of the discourse involving posthuman existence. This man proves himself to be totally unconcerned about the ethical implications of an act of obliterating any life-form and uses the mechanical extension of his body to perpetuate violence.

Marian resisted Peter’s violation of a peaceful existence. Her body, almost involuntarily, began a sustained campaign against violence, by refusing food. Marian observed that Peter was relishing his rare-done beef-steak. Immediately, she was reminded of his story about rabbit-hunting. Then she looked down at her own plate, and suddenly began to view it as “a hunk of muscle. Blood red. Part of a real cow that once moved and ate and was killed.... Of course everyone knew that. *But most of the time you never thought about it...*” (*The Edible Woman* 191) (My emphasis). At the same time, so far as an anticipation of a posthuman kind of violence is concerned, a forgotten story in that day’s newspaper resurfaces in her mind.

The young boy who had gone berserk with a rifle and killed nine people before he was cornered by the police. Shooting out of an upstairs window.... he wasn’t the kind who would hit anyone with his fist or even use a knife. When he chose violence it was a removed violence, a manipulation of specialized instruments, the

finger guiding but not touching, he himself watching the explosion from a distance;  
the explosion of flesh and blood. It was a violence of the mind, almost like magic:  
you thought it and it happened. (190)

Though the 1960s were probably too early for Atwood to articulate her feelings about the human cultural environment that fostered such 'removed violence', in terms of the television and the virtual world of video games, yet the resonances are clear to us in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, aware that we are of the destructive possibilities of a machine-dependent posthuman existence.

In "How We Became Posthuman," Hayles asked: "What are we to make of the posthuman?... The terror is relatively easy to understand. 'Post,' with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that the days of 'the human' may be numbered." In an indiscriminate use of machines today, without giving a thought to what might happen tomorrow if the mechanical culture reaches its logically perceived end in terms of destruction of mankind itself, man has sown the seed of his own annihilation, it seems. And as Hayles reminded us: "From an evolutionary biologist's point of view, modern humans, for all their technological prowess, nevertheless represent an eyeblink in the history of life...." It appears that the only way to ensure the sustenance of life, even in, or precisely because of, the posthuman existence, is adoption of an eco-ethical way of life by human beings in general, and by men who derive a vicarious pleasure from mind-controlled machine-inflicted damage upon both human and nonhuman 'other' life, in particular .

Ecofeminism<sup>2</sup> proposes that man usually views nature, frequently referred to as a female entity, as important only for what she produces or as a repository of important resources to be extracted from her bowels. Similarly, women are expected to accept exploitation and reproduction as their lot unquestioningly. Ecofeminism tells us that it is traditional to view this world not only as anthropocentric (which means putting human beings at the centre of the universe and viewing nature and every other life-form in terms of either their utility or ability to harm human beings) but as androcentric (which means putting not all human beings, but man only at the centre of the universe, with nature, women, children and all other life-forms at his disposal). Peter's behaviour in the novel appears to be an expression of such androcentric behaviour. Marian seeks to resist this by aligning herself to the greatest possible extent, with nature in such a way that it appears that she cannot tolerate the thought of destruction of other life-forms even for her own sustenance.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the story she begins to eat again in altered circumstances, but the important idea is that in the meantime, Atwood has presented a clear fictional estimate of the violence related to the use of machines in the modern world.

Atwood's next novel, *Surfacing* (1972), has an unnamed female protagonist-cum-narrator returning to her childhood forest home in Quebec in search of her missing father. She dives into the lake near her house to find that her father has drowned there. But the crucial point is that, as she surfaces, she realizes that actually she has dived into her past. She gradually withdraws from the human society and interpersonal relations, recedes into the forest, stops eating processed food and seeks to merge herself with the trees and the natural way of life. At this point, the readers realize from ill-articulated comments that she has viewed herself for all the intervening years as a criminal against that same idea of life as, earlier there, when she had been seduced by her married teacher and left pregnant, she had been compelled to abort. Since she is a woman, she had felt guilty of murder, as she had had to decide to take away the life of the foetus. Coral Ann Howells, in *Margaret Atwood*, tells us: "By the end, the narrator's perceptions of her relation to the world have changed so that she is ready to leave the wilderness to return to society.... This very human-centred position is one that Atwood characteristically adopts... where reverence for life... [is a] primary value..." (25).

The Surfer's return to the wilderness of her native countryside denotes a process of initiation into a self-aware, humane and ecologically conscious existence.<sup>4</sup> John Skinner comments that in *Surfacing* "[the] very first sentence refers to the white birches dying by the lake.... Pollution, in turn, is as much cultural as environmental, and a gas station displays three stuffed moose, dressed in human clothes and wired to stand on their hind legs" (255). As in *The Edible Woman*, so in *Surfacing*, a woman's personal, human emergence of an eco-ethical consciousness is symbolical of the crucial act of human conscience that might yet serve, in a positive way, to sustain the fragile relationship between ecology and human life harmed grievously by man himself.

Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, is set in the Republic of Gilead in the future in the geographical space that is now the United States of America. In this dystopia, a mono-theocracy had been created. Women were without any rights there and they were assigned various roles determined by their reproductive status. Women who could neither reproduce nor act as housemaids with robot-like efficiency were sent to the colonies where "they spent their time cleaning up... toxic dumps and radiation spills. They figure you've got three years maximum, at those. Before your nose falls off.... They don't... give you protective clothing" (312-313). In other words, the totalitarian regime of Gilead had effectively made divisions within humankind. Brutal strength and ratiocination were abilities that were to be considered as set apart for the upper-class male of the species. Women were denied any right to have an intellect and even a physical existence except for one that would be useful to the state in some way. Fecundity (as in purely animal and vegetative life), and robotic labour, for various classes of women, had become the precondition of bare survival. The reason due to which the civilization of the future in Gilead would be like this is relevant to our discussion of sustenance of life on

earth. Atwood had appended to Offred's account, the 'Historical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*', apparently a partial transcript of a Symposium being held in 2195, with the desire to look at the history of Gilead. I believe that through it, Atwood indicts the contemporary politics, culture and rampant environmental destruction that is endangering the planet.<sup>5</sup>

Need I remind you that this was the age of the R-strain syphilis and also the infamous AIDS epidemic...? Stillbirths, miscarriages, and genetic deformities were widespread and on the increase, and this trend has been linked to the various nuclear- plant accidents, shutdowns, ... as well as to leakages from chemical-and biological warfare stockpiles and toxic-waste disposal sites... and to the uncontrolled use of chemical insecticides, herbicides, and other sprays.(378-9)

Destruction of ecological balance due to man's greed and violent nature made women barren and the Handmaids had to suffer the consequences of such atrocities in Atwood's fictional work. A similar phenomenon is observed in some parts of the contemporary world as well. This makes Atwood's fiction a critique of both our culture and the androcentric politics of exploitation of human and non-human lives and the environment, prevailing today.

It is not only women that note and register a protest against anything that harms the bios, sometimes children do so too. In *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Atwood shows the young boy Jimmy and his mother questioning the excesses of the futuristic use of science and technology, paradoxically claimed to have been done in the name of saving mankind. The novel gives us a view of what happens when man begins to tamper with nature and morality in search of immortality. We read early in the novel that

Jimmy's father worked for Organ Inc Farms.... [h]e'd been one of the foremost architects of the pigoon project....The goal of the pigoon project was to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs in a ...pig host – organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, but would also be able to fend off attacks by ... microbes and viruses, of which there were more strains every year.... [t]hey were perfecting a pigoon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time....It was much cheaper than getting yourself cloned for spare parts... or keeping a for-harvest child or

two stashed away in some illegal baby orchard.(22-23)

Jimmy's mother was a brilliant microbiologist in the same organization trying to stop harmful microbes from causing damage to these perfect organs created in pigeons. But she had resigned when she had come to understand the commercial objectives, behind such scientific research, better. Jimmy's father did not.

Young Jimmy, as a school-going child, learned to use scientific and technological inventions, as he believed, to good use. So, when the family moves to a new residence in the protected Compound of the father's new company, NooSkins, a subsidiary of the gigantic HelthWyzer, Jimmy had "hidden a tiny mike in the living room... so he could listen to stuff that was none of his business. He'd put the mikes together in the Neotechnology class at school; he'd used standard components out of the mini-mikes for wireless computer dictating" (55-56). In the posthuman world, it is the prior human attempt to extend its existence through machines that has grave repercussions. Jimmy extends his existence through the machine, no doubt, but the lesson that he learns by eavesdropping on his parents is one of ethics in the regulation of relationship within bios. Jimmy's mother protests when her scientist husband begins to celebrate the success of a project for creating neuro-cortex tissue so necessary to stroke victims. She argues that it is not right to generate hope of survival and health first and then to exploit people for maximizing profit and power with it:

"... You hype your wares and take all their money and then they run out of cash, And it's no more treatments for them. They can rot as far as you are concerned. Don't you remember the way we... wanted to...[make] life better for people – not just people with money...you had ideals, then."

"Sure," said Jimmy's father in a tired voice. "I've still got them. I just can't afford them." (56-57)

Atwood takes care to note the woman/ mother's ethically correct scientific concern and pits it against the man's abuse of science and technology and lack of ethical and humanitarian concern for the sustenance of life in the poor 'other' within the technologically advanced state of civilization represented here.<sup>6</sup> Jimmy's mother leaves them soon after. She goes to the 'pleeblands' or cities *not* protected from pollution, the rising level of sea-water, and the land going barren in such a drastic way as to cause acute scarcity of food that resulted, in its turn, in riots and diseases against which, citizens there, could not buy protection. She turns into an ecological and environmental protester and courts police-beatings and arrest voluntarily in order to be able to tell the world about where its masters were leading it to and at what cost. It is significant that he never forgets

the values and ecological ethics that she has inculcated in him. Hence he could never accept his father's values. Jimmy's mother's resistance to the excesses perpetrated in the name of a scientific regime reminds me of Offred's act of resistance of another life-denying regime in Atwood's earlier novel.

Jimmy grows into a psychosocially maladjusted boy who, with his friend Glenn, begins to live in the virtual world of television shows and internet games. But even in that virtual world, games would remind him of his mother's ethical concern for life-forms. The boys had started playing

Extinctathon, an interactive biofreak...game... *Monitored by Maddaddam. Adam named the living animals, Maddaddam names the dead ones. Do you want to play?... pick one of the two chatrooms – Kingdom Animal, Kingdom Vegetable....*

The *it* would be some bioform that had kakked out within the past fifty years...

what had snuffed it.(Pollution, habitat destruction, credulous morons who thought that eating its horn would give them a boner.) (80-81)

The stage is set for the extinction of human beings too as a consequence of Glenn/Crake's (Crake being the name of the extinct bio-form chosen by Glenn for himself in the Extinctathon game-site) reaction to the collective folly and crime of mankind in causing environmental degradation and ecological destruction. When Crake grows up and turns out to be a genius, he works on and creates a new race of human beings who would be innocent vegetarians and indestructible. Genetic splicing and bioengineering were combined to create the Crakers in the Paradise project. The unrealistic-looking lines along which the work might have progressed, is found to have been replaced by the only reality other than death in the novel. For instance, the bobcats, a species created earlier in order to keep the exploding rabbit population under control, begin to attack the Craker children. But Crake had again managed to anticipate such exigencies and empowered the Crakers to heal themselves by means of collectively organized therapies derived from an amalgamation of technological (ultrasound) and animal existence:

Crake had worked for years on the purring. Once he'd discovered that the cat family purred at the same frequency as the ultrasound used on bone fractures and skin lesions and were thus equipped with their own self-healing mechanism, he'd turned himself inside out in the attempt to install that feature. The trick was to get the

hyoid apparatus modified and the voluntary nerve pathways connected and the neocortex control systems adapted without hampering the speech abilities.(156)

Atwood's choice of word to describe Crake's attempt to 'install' the self-healing features on to the human bio-forms that he creates, indicates a clearly technoscientific existence. It is significant that along with the creation of this human species, Crake had created the BlyssPluss. We learn from Jimmy, dubbed Snowman, that this product had wiped out the human species as we know it now:

...the end of a species was taking place before his very eyes. Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species.... Homo sapiens sapiens , joining the polar bear, the beluga whale... the long, long list....

Site after site, channel after channel went dead. A couple of the anchors, news jocks to the end, set the cameras to film their own deaths – the screams, the dissolving skins, the ruptured eyeballs and all. (344)

The technoscientific and destructive human culture goes virtually extinct (except for a few eco-ethically aware survivors who were trained to anticipate and battle against the man-made pandemic, in Atwood's recent novel, *The Year of the Flood*, along with the Crakers who look like human beings but are with abilities that are not available to mankind in the present state of science in the real world, that is, something that makes them simultaneously more as well as less than human beings like us). But even at the end it is the television and the computer that are seen to remain important. As Jimmy/Snowman notes after the debacle: "I have gone through the computer of... Crake. He left it turned on – deliberately, I believe – and I am able to report that the JUVE virus was made here in the Paradise dome by splicers hand-selected by Crake...and was then encysted in the BlyssPluss product..."(346) and as expected by him, was used by all humans of sexual abilities, and therefore resulted in a global spread of infection leading to death.

*The Year of the Flood* (2009), the companion-novel to *Oryx and Crake*, reflects two opposing ways of life. The dominant one depends on the use of science and technology for genetic splicing and cross-species generation, and results in loss of human identity (as in the case of pigeons with human organs and even human intelligence in them). An ethically aware minority of the population resists this technoscientific culture. In *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben had declared that human beings "are no longer... a species tossed about by larger forces" because now mankind seems to have usurped the position of the creator and arbiter of life-supporting and life-denying forces by

controlling nature in such a way that “now we *are* those larger forces” (xviii). Today most of us are aware that human activities have the greatest effect on environment and ecology. Yet, with the emergence of the ability to control the fate of less advanced human beings and environmental and ecological factors, man has consciously chosen to ignore the great responsibility that emerges with accumulation of great power.

In *The Year of the Flood*, a tiny group of people, or God’s Gardeners try to lead a natural way of life. They do not choose to use any scientific or technological product. They foster life and all bio-forms. It is they who had given shelter to ecowarriors like Jimmy’s mother. They represent a world in which the manmade waterless Flood that had as catastrophic an effect on the human and nonhuman life on earth as at the time of Noah, simply would not have taken place. The dominant cultural pattern in this world, however, was one that had its origin in genetic engineers working with Jimmy’s father. It was this world view that seems to have inspired man to transcend the limits of nature. However, the process had only succeeded in bringing about the destruction of all. This kind of a future is not limited to the pages of Atwood’s novel. Donna Haraway has alerted us to the significance of the posthuman, cyborg condition that we are a part of right now in the real world. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin quote her to reveal the situation. They seem to feel optimistic, initially, about a possible mitigation of the harmful effects of the androcentric culture in a posthuman world:

For Haraway, the recent discoveries of biotechnology, especially those associated with the Human Genome Project, afford the possibilities of an exciting new ‘cyborg vision’ in which ‘miscegenation between and among humans and nonhumans [will increasingly be] the norm’.... ‘The promise of the genome’... has the creative capacity to trouble genre as well as gender.... (205)

In Atwood’s novel the position of woman and nature is not revised and they do not receive due respect except in the shelters created by God’s Gardeners. Rather, it seems as if the sexual abuse of Oryx, Tony and Ren and the techno-cultural abuse of nature co-exist as the norm in their society. And Crake’s disgust with the technoscientific human culture results not in the lifestyle nurtured by God’s Gardeners whom he knew from his childhood, but in the creation of a new species of disease-resistant, childlike human beings and the sudden global infection and extermination of the rest of mankind. In *The Year of the Flood*, the few human and non-human beings that accidentally escape the disaster luckily and temporarily, are shown to struggle to survive in a virulent, androcentric culture of loot, rape and arson. Huggan and Tiffin do not mention this novel. Yet, their explanation of the significance of Haraway’s ideas of the posthuman world, I feel, remains extremely pertinent to my discussion as well:

Haraway's posthuman utopianism is tempered by her awareness of the dangers of the new biologically oriented technologies, their potential to be enlisted in the service of fresh forms of exploitation and domination in a scientifically recolonized world. Hence her ambivalent reading of the cyborg (cybernetic organism) as a figure of both domination and resistance.... (206)

Atwood seeks to posit a world where both ecology and human existence face grave danger. Anthropocentrism in general and androcentrism in particular denote a lack of awareness about the potential dangers awaiting man and nature. Human activities and decisions might prove to be suicidal in the long run. I believe that what we learn from the fictional world of Margaret Atwood is that it is only an eco-ethically aware and caring human culture that can ensure continued existence of life on earth.

#### Notes

1 If we follow N. Katherine Hayles in *Writing Machines*, then even the printed literary works would signify not only paper but also the printing machine as essential to the creation of literature, thereby signifying the posthuman existence through this machine in the earlier days too. She laments that this man-machine relationship has not been ordinarily recognized earlier by authors of literary works: "...especially in literary studies, there has traditionally been a sharp line between representation and the technologies producing them... literary studies has generally been content to treat fictional and narrative works as if they are entirely products of the imagination" (19).

2 In the Introduction to *Ecofeminism*, we read:

Ecofeminism... grew out of various social movements – the feminist, peace and the ecology movements – in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Though the term was first used by Françoise D' Eaubonne it became popular only in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked off initially by recurring ecological disasters. The meltdown at Three Mile Island prompted large numbers of women in the USA to come together in the first ecofeminist conference – 'Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties' – in March 1980, at Amherst. At this conference the connections between feminism, militarization, healing and ecology were explored.

(13-14)

3 Ynestra King, one of the organizers and spokespersons for the first conference on Eco-Feminism in March 1980 had written:

Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing. For us the snail darter is to be considered side by side with a community's need for water, the porpoise side by side with appetite for tuna, and the creatures it may fall on with Skylab. We are a woman-identified movement and we believe we have a special work to do in these imperiled times.(10)

4 In *Ecofeminism*, Maria Mies wrote:

Industrial civilization's promise was to enhance life by dissecting all symbioses, biological and social, as well as the symbiosis which the human individual as such represents. These symbioses are also called ecological systems: the interdependence of humans, animals, plants, but there is also the social ecology of people living together, of men and women, children and parents, older and younger generations.

Industrial civilization and its science and technology have disrupted these ecological and socio-ecological systems. The whole was dissected into its elementary parts, which then were recombined in the construction of new machines. But life is not the sum of elements put together.... (142)

We also learn from the same discussion that

What is usually omitted from this discourse on nature is the direct and structural *violence* which has accompanied the process of modernization right from its beginning until today. This violence is not accidental, it is the structural necessity, the mechanism by which Nature, women and other colonized parts are separated from the 'whole', that is, the living interconnectedness or symbiosis, and made into

an object, or the 'other' [to be consumed, and by implication, destroyed in the following manner].... The car drivers who flee from the overcrowded cities into the hills and the countryside destroy those landscapes, and forests where they want to find unpolluted nature are destroyed by the fumes from the car exhausts.( 144-5)

What the Surfacer gradually becomes aware of is the relatedness of the way in which her body and trust on the one hand, and on the other, the water, virgin forests and natural resources of her native countryside had been consumed and polluted by unscrupulous men.

5 Ynestra King had written:

We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by military warriors, as feminist concerns. It is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies and our own sexuality, and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way.(10)

6 Ynestra King wrote:

Wherever women acted against ecological destruction or/ and the threat of atomic annihilation, they immediately became aware of the connection between patriarchal violence against women, other people and nature, and that: In defying this patriarchy we are loyal to future generations and to life and this planet itself. We have a deep and particular understanding of this both through our natures and our experience as women. (11)

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## **The Pivotal Role of Dictionary in Translation.**

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### **Introduction:**

A convenient and valuable source of linguistic information is a standard dictionary. It is easy to use, and, if used intelligently, very informative. Essential to any study of words is the effective use of dictionary. Far from being a dull dry reference book, the dictionary is a vast storehouse of interesting information about an infinite number of useful word tools. It is endlessly intriguing when it is properly used, and it is invaluable to any vocabulary student. As you learn how to use dictionary properly, you will find your efforts bring a rich harvest of new ideas and words. The bilingual dictionary is useful when to have exact equivalence of a word in Malayalam. A dictionary contains important facts far beyond simple definitions and guides to pronunciation and spelling.

### **Organization of the Dictionary:**

Unabridged dictionaries are comprehensive in their explanations and descriptions of words, containing thousands more entries than the more commonly used desk dictionary. Most bilingual dictionaries do not contain the detailed information that may find necessary for translation. Introductory material in front of the dictionary this explains the information the book has to offer. If some of it seems too scholarly for you to understand, read on and at least find out what it is mainly concerned with and what you can expect to find in its entries.

The table of abbreviations, which is most likely to be found inside the front cover of your dictionary. To save space, dictionaries necessarily use many abbreviations, and these are explained in the table. Most bilingual dictionaries do not have appropriate abbreviations in Malayalam translation of various entries. An appendix gives information about list of biographical and geographical names. Other information often found in the appendixes of a dictionary includes tables of interpretations of various specialized symbols like those connected with mathematics, chemistry, music, chess, medicine, and pharmacy; a dictionary of colleges and universities; a table of weights and measures; a dictionary of English given names, and so on. Most bilingual dictionaries lacks update terms from medical, business, computer and technical field. It also lacks separate quick reference table of countries, states, state capitals, area zip codes, presidents and more.

**Entries arranged in the dictionary:** (Agnes M, Webster's new world college dictionary: new millennium fourth edition.)

The dictionary lists all main entries capital (include single word) in strict alphabetical order in addition, sets them in large bold fall type, extending slightly into the left Margin.

- **Guidewords:**

Two guidewords appear at the top of each page showing the alphabetical range of the entries on that page. The first main entry word and the last main entry word on a page serve as the Guide Words for that page. The dictionary follows strict alphabetical order for saint and it when they appear as part of proper names other than two names of canonized persons. The listing of canonized persons is in alphabetical order by their given names, which appear in bold space. The designation saint follows in lightface type either directly after the comma or at the beginning of a numbered sense within a proper name block. Augustine 2(-,) one. Saint early Christian church father... St. Au-Gus-tine (...) [...] support in NE. flag...

- **The main entry word:**

The dictionary lists all main entries in strict alphabetical order and sets them in large boldface type, extending slightly in left margin. In respect to translation, it helps for finding correct word through alphabetical order. It includes single words hyphenated and unhyphenated compounds, proper names prefixes, suffixes, and abbreviations .Some entries are alphabetized in special ways.

- **Biographical entries:**

The dictionary uses only the last name in arranging names in alphabetical order. If there are two or more persons with the same family names, this dictionary lists them in a single entry block in alphabetical order by first name. The dictionary does not include names in Parentheses in alphabetizing. Biographical and geographical names that look the same are in separate entry blocks. Given names, family names, names in mythology, names of biographical persons and places geographical names are entered separately from biographical entries.

The dictionary lists biographical entries under the name by which the people are best known. Nickname or birth name may be given else were in the entry block. Ellington (...) Duck (born Edward Kennedy Ellington). The entry typically includes birth and death dates, terms of office dates of reign, etc. When date is uncertain, a question is used. Anderson (...) ... 3 Margins 1897? -1993 ...

- **The Geographical Entry:**

Many geographical entries contain popular figures taken from official census reports or from estimates this dictionary rounds off figures to the nears. World cities with a large population or of historical note are entered. A Reference supplement – In the back of this dictionary contains many useful charts regarding nations of the world, us states. The dictionary also lists some ABBREVIATIONS as trademark or service mark. PX service mark Post Exchange.

- **Homographs:**

Homographs are main entries that have same spelling.

- **Alternative spellings & variant forms:**

The dictionary lists alternative spellings in various forms, as main entries: that implies that both spellings occur equally or almost equally, often and that neither one is more correct or to be preferred.

ax<sup>1</sup> or axe.

While translating any document it helps for adjusting appropriate word.

- **Cross references:**

some entries in the dictionary consist simply of a cross reference to another entry having the same meaning, with the cross reference shown in small capitals.

**Curb roof 1. MANSARD ROOF 2. GAMBREL ROOF.**

- **Parts-of-Speech Labels:**

Dictionary uses the labels for the parts of speech traditionally used to classify words in English grammar. If entry word has more than one Parts of speech, long dashes introduce each different part of speech in the entry block.

**Square (....) n. [....]—vt... --... adj...--adv...**

- **Etymology:**

A better understanding of language generally comes from knowing how words are related to other words in English and to words in other Indo European Languages. Dictionary helps how these words are related as fully as possible and takes the etymologies back to the Indo European Base where possible, either directly or cross-reference.

- **Usage labels:**

People use language in different ways depending on, for example, where they grow up, how old they are, depending on the situation in which that person uses the words or the purpose for which they are used. It helps for translation of exact word in respect to language.

- **Idiomatic Phrases:**

Translation of idiomatic phrase is very important for literal meaning. The dictionary has idiomatic phrases entries under the key word in the phrase. The key word is the word obviously being used in a way that does not agree with its usual or literal meaning. Webster's new world college dictionary, new millennium fourth edition, Michael Agnes, Bilingual dictionaries are not just designed for the translation purpose but it has variety of characteristics. I.e. guide words, main entries, part-of-speech labels, inflected forms, etymology, definitions, usage labels & notes, field labels, biological names, idiomatic phrases, synonymy and guide to pronunciation.

Thus, dictionaries are designed to serve the needs of a particular segment. For example – people whose native language is not English but who want help in understanding and using English. Dictionaries for non-native English speakers are often written with simplified defining vocabulary, and they have to give special attention to common usages and to typical grammar patterns- information that a typical native speaker does not need.

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## Human Relationships and Moral Goodness in Iris Murdoch's Novels

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Among the philosophers and novelists of the last half-century, Iris Murdoch is remarkable for her preoccupation with the conception of morality. In her fictional and philosophical work Murdoch can be regarded as a great supporter of the perspective of the ordinary human being. Her novels show her characters in different lights and in various degrees of moral goodness. In Iris Murdoch's novels human relationships are main link with reality. Whereas her plots or individual episodes reach into fantasy, symbolism or allegory and fit ingenious patterns, she achieves the contingency, which she considers so important for novel writing, by putting her characters at the mercy of real enough pitfalls of human situations of personal involvement. They are orchestrated by the author, but not much differently from the randomness of events in the backdrop of real life throbbing in animation. Iris Murdoch's inventiveness does in no way allow her situations to slip into clichés (an idea that has been used so often that it no longer has much meaning and is no more interesting). The reality is thus very much our human reality – not only with the details of life-styles, attitudes and problems we encounter today, but also with an undercurrent of unanswered questions that stare us in the face, as old as mankind.

Iris Murdoch's commitment to the problems of human relationships had already been shown in her early book on Sartre, where she pointed out Sartre's lack of interest in this aspect of the human situation:

“Sartre by-passes the complexity of the world of ordinary moral virtues .... The novel, the novel proper that is, is about people's treatment of each other, and so it is about human values”.<sup>i</sup>

Iris Murdoch's interest in human relationships may best be seen in the light of her moral philosophy. The cited quotation amply illustrates the link she sees between moral philosophy, human relationships and it is not by chance that she elucidates many of them through relationships between people. The concepts of internal struggle as a moral activity, of freedom and of love all share one important pre-requisite, which is

attention -- attention to the surrounding world and particularly attention to other people.

The philosophical thought of Iris Murdoch proposes that no ethical tradition has ever adequately fashioned a picture of human beings as they truly are. In the course of her career this was what she sought to illustrate through her works in philosophy and literature – texturing a personal vision of man’s morality.

William Van O’ Connor wrote that like Sartre, Murdoch views man as a:

“Lonely creature in an absurd world ... impelled to make moral decisions, the consequences of which are uncertain”.<sup>ii</sup>

Iris Murdoch’s view is that morality has everything to do with our concerned responsiveness. Iris Murdoch also calls it “Loving attention” – to other particular individuals, where this responsiveness involves an element of particularity not reducible to any form of complex universality.

“In Iris Murdoch’s writing personal relationships are the principal setting in which this moral endeavor takes place. ... The moral task is not a matter of finding universalizable reasons or principles of action, but of getting oneself to attend the reality of individual other persons. Such attention requires not allowing one’s own needs, biases and desires regarding the other person to get in the way of appreciating his or her own particular needs and situation.”<sup>iii</sup>

Because one’s love for the other person is inextricably woven with the importance of that person to one’s own life, seeing the other in herself – distinct and separate from oneself – is, as Iris Murdoch emphasizes, a difficult task, and she is correct to emphasize the domain of personal relations as a moral domain.

Heather Widdows wrote:

“Murdoch’s moral vision could perhaps be expected to take into account her vision of people and the world which comes through her novels and which she enacted in her life. .... Her novels, as her philosophy, reveal her perennial preoccupation with goodness and what makes people good and evil, as well as exploring the nature of religion in a secular world.”<sup>iv</sup>

Iris Murdoch’s wish is that philosophy should once again present picture of the whole of human life and provide succour and insight to all. She believes that:

“In the erosion of religion and the elevation of science, something essentially human has been “lost”; a phrase we will encounter often as we discuss her moral vision.”<sup>v</sup>

Iris Murdoch started to publish theoretical texts before fictional ones; therefore it is important to begin by giving her account of linguistic analysis and existentialism both of which she was initially attracted to but she rejected later. Her simultaneous rejection of linguistic analysis and existentialism has been shown in her essays like, *The Existentialist Hero* (1950), *The Novelist as, Metaphysician* (1950), *Nostalgia for the Particular* (1952), *Vision and Choice in Morality* (1956), and *Metaphysics and Ethics* (1957), as well as *Sartre: Romantic Realist* (1953).

*Under the Net* which first introduced Iris Murdoch as a novelist represents an image of the private will, of various private wills, with a moral and philosophical significance. In this novel the net is not seen as something which is at least initially a trap, through which one tries to escape its meshes. It is seen as something thrown over truth, underneath which we must creep in order to get at the precise situation. Iris Murdoch in *Under the Net* shows that she is a realist and an extremely rapid and prolific writer, and in her novel she wants to address the real and important problems making an effort to understand human ideas and situations and the way to tackle them best. This is why Iris Murdoch is not only recognized as a most productive and influential 20<sup>th</sup> century British novelist, but also a powerful intellectual as well as an original theorist of fiction.

*Under the Net* represents two quests shown by its hero or narrator Jake --for Hugo and for Anna. At the end of the book, Jake, having found both the objects of his search, has found out more about reality and about his own relationship to them. In the end of the novel Jake comes to know much more about his own limitations and his affinity to them. About the novel, A.S.Byatt writes in *Degrees of Freedom*:

“The novel could be described as a philosophical novel very precisely since there is clearly a very conscious attempt to pattern. The events in Jake’s story are in terms of ideas of freedom, of philosophical approaches to reality, to what we know and what we can not know.”<sup>vi</sup>

In her novel, *Under the Net*, she tries to infuse philosophy with the image constituted by the story. Iris Murdoch observes that a novel should be “an art of image” and not merely to be an instrument of analysis and reflection.

The rejection of Existentialism by Iris Murdoch operates along somewhat different lines from that of objective language. Iris Murdoch proclaims that existentialism provides us with an image of self in the modern world -- a world without God is understood to be contingent. The self becomes the sole arbiter of value, competing against other selves and their values. All have to rely on their selves as sources of meaning as there is no external guarantor of the "correctness" of any particular one. Given this situation, the individual may have two stances:

(a) courage and action, or

(b) despair and inaction.

If he chooses the former he will find himself engaged in constant battle with other selves who also want to assert their value; choosing the latter will leave him only in a state of agony and frustration. Murdoch points out the inadequacies of Existentialist philosophers since they present a shallow view of human nature -- "a simplified and impoverished inner life," Iris Murdoch considers that novels written under the impact of the philosophies lack a genuine conception of love and freedom showing a "pointlessness of life".

*Under the Net* is a philosophical myth dealing with the question --how do we experience reality, or what is real in our experience? The characters are grouped round this -- Hugo with his simple nostalgia for the particular; Dave with his concern for logical analysis of words and rigid moral philosophy; Lefty with his subjection of everything to political expediency. Mars represents animal vitality; Anna conveys the experience of reality through pure or impure art; Sammy wields money; Sadie's aim is to use other people. The contrasted worlds of business and art, silence and speech, isolation and society: all of these are patterned, introduced, reflected upon, and used in the story as if a dream allegory would have used them.

Such conditions create tribulations. Therefore the individual will cope with his understanding of the world as contingent, by indulging in the consolation of self deception, as in the case of Jake and Misha Fox. Such self-deception will fulfill their yearning for logical necessity in the order of the world. In Sartre's representation of the world, value - including moral value - is created through a process that starts with reflection followed by choosing an action. It is through his choices that the individual makes, and he also confers meaning on the world around him. *Under the Net* is philosophical fable, using a proliferation of characters and dramatic incident -- either farcical or tragic, to convey the central theme.

In *Under the Net* the theme is concerned with necessity and danger of concepts, forms in thought and action, in the worlds of art, politics, of morals and of love. In *The Flight from the Enchanter* the social theme is involved. The novel refers to the proper and improper use of power, personal and public, playing comic and bitter games, with various forms of enslavement and emancipation, sexual, financial, bureaucratic and military. Murdoch does not agree to the "imaginative solipsism" of Sartre's individual, that she describes as a function of the alienation of the self from the environment, and criticizes Sartre's inability to see emotion as a creative force, and also his view of the imagination as a tool of self-deception but these two novels are close to Iris Murdoch's work on Sartre, in the sense that they take up lightly but profoundly the Sartrean issue of relationship of the individual, and of the art to political structure and ideals. The central figures of both novels -- Jake and Rosa Keepe, are Sartrean in the sense that they move through a society, unreal and alien without the consolation of a rational universe. The virtue of these figures lies in understanding their own contingency and not in the contingency of the world.

We can say that these novels ask Sartrean questions but do not offer Sartrean answers. Sartre's hero agonizes and contemplates in a lucidly tortured solitude. These first two fantasies of Iris Murdoch are a kind of meaningful games with Sartrean universe. Jake tries an internal monologue but discovers that the world is full of other people whose views, *though* he has misinterpreted, yet can learn. Rosa fails in observing individual life and the needs of Nina, but they are they are very much there to be observed and Rosa can as well learn. There is no adequacy in any single view of the world in the novel where everyone is always offering epigrammatic views on the nature of society, reality or human suffering.

According to Iris Murdoch philosophy and novel writing is complementary but at the same time finds philosophy very alien. Philosophy, Iris Murdoch believes, as a counter natural activity that goes against the bent of the human mind, whereas art goes with the bent of human mind.

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## PROVERBS IN POLITICS

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Present research explores a number of proverbs employed in speeches of several well-known politicians of today and also looks at the specific use of proverbs and their pragmatic function.

It is a well-known fact to the scholars interested in proverbs that the perfect definition of a proverb is considered to be one of the debatable points in modern paremiology . This is partly caused by the fact that the proverb has been studied by different sciences such as anthropology, art, communication, culture, folklore, history, literature, philology, psychology, religion, and sociology . On the other hand, the definition of a proverb is difficult as it contains a number of essential genre elements some of which are shared by other representatives of paremias such as maxims, aphorisms, riddles, short fables, etc.

Paremiology mainly deals with collecting and classifying proverbs and investigating their socio-historical significance . In Turkey and in other Turks living lands, a great deal of books, brochures and articles, more than 700, have been published about more than 10.000 proverbs uttered by the people and transformed from generation to generation. (**Turkish Proverbs and Phrases,1992**)

The research has shown that there are a few definitions of a proverb which deserve attention. Below I cite a few of them :

**Archer Taylor** who published over one hundred further articles and books considers that

‘A proverb is something which is short but not always. A proverb is something which is true but not always. Everybody knows what a proverb is’. (**Taylor, 1962** ).

Let’s see the following Turkish proverbs to verify Archer Taylor.

1- ‘Time is money ‘ – ‘ Vakit nakittir ‘

2-‘Varlığa güvenilmez’ – ‘No Trust in wealth ‘

3- ‘Zenginliğine övünme bir kıvılcım yeter,güzelliğininle övünme bir sivilce yeter’ – ‘ Do not boast about your wealth ,one sparkle can take it away ; do not be proud of your beauty one pimple will take it away ‘

4- ‘Dost sanma şanlı vaktinde dost olanı ,dost bil gamlı vaktinde elinden tutanı ‘ – ‘Do not count as a friend he who befriends you in prosperous times , but count as a true friend he who protects you in sorrowful times ‘ .

The accuracy of the proverb and its efficiency in short form is stressed out in the following two definitions : **Levi-Strauss** defines the proverbs ‘ Le proverb ne peut mentir (the proverb cannot lie) (**Levi-Strauss,1968**) and ‘A Proverb in the hand is often worth a thousand words’ (**Horace Reynolds,1959**)

‘Kadın deniz gibidir ‘ - ‘ A woman is like the sea ‘

‘Ateşle ateş söndürülmez ‘ - ‘ Fire can not be extinguished with fire ‘  
 ‘Yaşat ki yaşayasın’ – ‘Let live so that you may live ‘

The proverb has anonymous content and the inspiration of the proverbs came from the folks' encountered events , have been adopted and transferred to future generations so as to give them guidance, advice.

“Marriage works wonders.” [Nikahta keramet vardır.]

“The father’s blessing takes effect, and a mother’s sigh.” [Atanın duası tutar, ananın ahı.]

In the proverbs we observe the general attitude of the whole mankind and the similarities is caused by the psychological, emotional needs of the people and the definition by **A.KABAKLI** shows the possible resemblance of them : ‘ One nation’s view to every kind of social and individual problems can be seen in proverbs ; however almost all nations have similar meaning proverbs. Regardless of what nationality they are , the thought of the people is undoubtedly combined in the same point many times ‘ . (**Ahmet Kabaklı:1994**)

1-BbavSvis piriT simarTle RaRadebso – BbavSvis piriT simarTle RaRadebso Truth is poured out of the child's mouth . ( Georgian )

2-Kkai Svili dedis gulis vardiao – Kkai Svili dedis gulis vardiao A good child is a rose of his/her mother's heart. ( Georgian )

3-Ağaç yaş iken eğilir -A tree is bent while it is green. ( Turkish )

4-The just shall live by faith – Adil inançla yaşar ( English )

5-Truth will come to light – Güneş balçıkla sıvanmaz ( English )

The proverbs give lessons and they are based on the experiences of older generations, while the idioms are used to depict an event, or a situation in which one finds herself / himself.

In proverbs, experiences are told the listeners as a guide to the possible future events because their intention is to teach people ,so in the following definition this feature of them is mentioned : ‘The proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning” (**Neal Norrick,1985**)

The definition which really deserve attention is by a Turkish paremiologist **O.A.AKSOY** :

‘ Proverbs are collection of quotations which express the experience and knowledge the society formed from yesterday to today in an exact , short and certain judicial form.The accuracy of a proverb is admitted by the people and they are the largest judiciary at the time of dispute ‘ show how their independent meaning sums up the situation and gives an influential contribution to the whole context.

(**Aksoy 1998: 15**).

Not only the message conveyed in the proverbs takes our attention but also the way it expresses the message which is both vivid and memorable and It is called **metaphorical language** which is one of the most common features in the definitions of the proverbs. According to **Manana Rusieshvili** “The proverb is a verbal form well-known to the language community, which laconically (within the boundaries of a sentence) and metaphorically expresses a deep, well-known, archetypal knowledge accumulated by the nation and mankind in the process of exploring the universe and reality . (**Rusieshvili 2005** )

As a summary to the definitions , It can be said that ‘ ‘ The proverb which are locally mentioned at that time but reached to the level of universal usage is a reflex of the folk to their encountered events , containing wisdom for the future generations ; apart from the accuracy , the poignancy makes them easily remembered and repeated’.

In the modern world, it can be thought that the use of proverbs and their usefulness have decreased due to some earlier traditional and folk elements in them. They inevitably come to mind as prefabricated verbal units and help us in oral speech and written word. Although the frequency of their use (and existence) may differ among people and contexts, proverbs are a significant rhetorical force in various modes of communication, from friendly chats, powerful political speeches, best-seller novels, and the influential mass media. Proverbs occur in wider contexts such as everyday conversations, newspaper editorials, advertisements and accompanying pictures and cartoons. Proverbs are outstanding philosophical pieces spoken and written in their own languages.

Proverbs can be a kind of verbal weapon which is sometimes difficult to argue against. Because they are colourful linguistic formulas , politicians choose the opportunity to speak to people in a way that combines colloquial language with political messages. Powerful politicians make frequent use of proverbs and proverbial expressions in their speeches because the serious meaning of a proverb and its usage by an intelligent politician strengthens his argument with the emotions of traditional wisdom. The use of proverbs by politicians definitely gives proverbs a certain vitality and those proverbs help them be a cheer leader. Thus, the pragmatic function is to persuade people to believe in honesty and importance of the message. Obama’s two books *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and *The Audacity of Hope* (2006 ) are filled with proverbial language, and his approximately three hundred speeches during his steady move towards the presidency of the United States help us see how he bore efficiently and used those time tested wisdom in order to convince the world for a change. (W.Mieder 2010).

**President Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan** has certainly proven themselves to be a magisterial communicator, elevating their countries’ political discourse to new rhetorical heights .It is a considerable interest to take a look at how these two leaders are communicating with the world at large .They are both in constant communication with the leaders and the people of countries throughout the world.

President Obama in Egypt Cairo ‘ A new beginning ‘ speech states unequivocally that he is guided by the proverb “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” that is commonly referred to as the “golden rule” for human conduct. And he is also giving verse from the Holy Koran : "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." . Promising the muslim world “to put oneself into somebody else’s shoes” and “to see through someone else’s eyes”. He repeats the proverbial expression “to give (lend, extend) someone a hand” that has proven itself to be a leitmotiv in his many speeches.(Mieder 2009b: 230-231)

When he traveled to Ankara ,Turkey to address Turkish Parliament on April 6, 2009 again repeated his fundamental belief stressing cooperation between Turkey and the United States, he returned to his “lending a hand” proverbial metaphor meaning extending a hand to developing countries ,a hand to those Palestinians who are in need. He also gave examples from an old Turkish proverb: “You cannot put out fire with flames.” Turkish original is

“Ates atesle söndürülmez” which usually is rendered into English as “Fire cannot be extinguished with fire”, with a possible English equivalent being “Revenge is a dish that should be eaten cold” (Yurtbasi, Metin,1993)

Using the meaning of the proverb “People will judge you on what you can build, not what you can destroy” and stating quite similarly “The future must belong to those who create, not those who destroy.’

President Barack Obama in a press conference with President Felipe of Mexico said:

“It’s progress that calls to mind a Mexican proverb that I’m told says ‘tell me who you walk with and I will tell you who you are.’ Mr. President, the United States is proud to walk with Mexico.” In this case Obama makes a successful attempt to modify the structure of the proverb according to his needs.

In China ,journeyed to the Great Wall in November 2009 and came up with a Chinese proverb to express his true feelings and repeating "Consider the past and you shall know the future". <http://www.obamaspeeches.com>

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan is also good at persuading the crowds and showing how important he is in the democratic history of Turkey for getting % 49 of voters in 2007 ,leading Turkey to the more civilized world,giving a great power to its hands, controlling the policy rather than being part of the game. As a person who reads much and has a knowledge of the religion Islam and Holy Book Koran ,good at speech and choosing the right word in the right time both in the foreign policy and domestic policy.

At the opening ceremony of a gene bank in Ankara He used a Native American proverb :

‘Only after the last tree has been cut down ,only after the last river has been poisoned,only after the last fish has been caught ,only then you will find that money cannot be eaten‘.

He said that 'business as usual', will mean food shortage, a poor world with filthy air and sea , land covered by more roads, airports, bigger industrial farms and cities and more wars in the future. He challenged to fight against ignoring problems of global world and motivated them to make a difference , help to create a fairer sustainable world rather than consuming much and carrying on buying, wasting without any care towards the obvious risks in the future . He gave the message that we have to if our beautiful planet is to survive with all its wonderful life and variety.

Prime Minister Erdogan responded with a Corum ,Turkey proverb to the Opposition party : ‘The croaking of the frog doesn’t make the river muddy ‘ ‘ kurbanın vakvağası ırmağı bulandırmaz ‘ meant that they would go on investments and service for the citizens although having been opposed by the opposition who is really small in number.

The Turkish proverb ‘Su akar ,Türk bakar’ - "Water flows, Turkish looks' was criticized by Prime Minister Erdoğan in order to attach importance to global warming and climate change problems which has increased and It is not time to watch the river flowing but time to make bans or investments in water technology as a country rich in water because water is becoming as important as oil reserves.Uttered the new version ‘The water flows , The Turkish makes ‘ ‘Su akar ,Türk yapar ‘

Criticizing the Civil Unions for not obeying the rules of demonstration and accusing themselves for their demands to decide where to celebrate the day in the most international

main square of İstanbul , He used the proverb : ‘If the feet become the head,It is the end of the world ‘ ‘ Ayakların baş olduğu yerde kıyamet kopar ‘ <http://www.gazeteler.com/>

Mardin ,Turkey Proverb ‘No roasting from the head of a bird ‘‘Kuş kafasından kavurma olmaz ‘ was also a reply to oppositions for the percentage of the votes they got in the former elections and also criticizing them for not analyzing the reasons of the investments and not producing solutions, changing the proverb ‘ They can’t be the leading party ‘, for they have no vision and enough votes’. <http://www.gazeteler.com/>

Analysing the conflict between Israel and Palestine,the Prime Minsiter gave an interview to a French journal. After being asked for his strict attitude towards the problems there, he reminded that Israel didn’t facilitate the peaceful atmosphere there and It wasn’t time to close eyes to the persecution although both countries have military and economical cooperation but It was time to accept the conflict made by Israel; meant to be partners but that was the reality : ‘ Dost acı söyler ‘- (The real friend tells the bitter truth.) <http://www.gazeteler.com/>

Prime Minister Erdoğan said that the world of today allocates 1 trillion dolars only to defense industry per year and Prime Minister’s speech continued as follows: ‘ If the half of the money were spent for the undeveloped countries, the world would go to less conflict and to the civilizations alliance as we did with Spain.We believe one of the oldest cultures of the world , Africa will definitely be developed with the help of all countries because there is a proverb ‘Moving water does not rotate the mill’. <http://www.haberler.gen.al/>

Prime Minister in an official visit to Greece after the economic crisis there , in order to illustrate the importance of the trade volume between the two countries which should be increased to \$ 5 billion, he used the proverb ‘ Neighbour needs a neighbour's ashes’ . <http://www.radikal.com.tr/>

As it is clearly seen ,when we take the time and place of the proverbs used by these two politicians into consideration, we inevitably see that they are especially gifted in adding a folkloric touch to their political rhetoric that these specifically chosen and perfectly fitting statements help to make their utterances so appealing to people everywhere.

The above analysed proverbs occurring in the speeches of the political leaders once again show the ‘magic’power of a proverb- the politicians use it to make their speeches more open, honest and persuade their listeners to believe in the message they try to pass on.

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## SOUL-BODY CONCEPT IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF R.K.NARAYAN

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R.K. Narayan has a very strong background firmly fixed on the Vedic injunction. Narayan never fails to extol the Vedic perspectives in his novels. How he impregnates the essential concepts of Vedic philosophy into the sequence of events in his novels are indeed worth admiring. In the most expected places Narayan inserts the profound philosophy which provides the reader with a sudden insight into the concept of 'WHO AM I',

The question 'Who am I' is the basic principle on which the entire Vedas is built. One who is a 'jnani' or scholar, in whose mind this question arises, is considered eligible to pursue the study of Vedic literature which includes the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharvana), 108 Upanishads, 18 Puranas, the Itihasas and Brahmasutra. In 'Brahmasutra' the philosophical treatise on the Upanishad, the first verse says,

'atato brahma jijnasa'

which means an inquiry into the knowledge about the self, which again is "who am I". The answer to this profound question is the prime subject of the entire Vedas as already mentioned. One who has cherished this question in his mind is rightly motivated to pursue the ultimate reality of life-becoming aware of the self.

This profound question is being repeated on many occasions in the novels of Narayan. Srinivas is one of the main characters in the novel Mr. Sampath. Narayan portrays Srinivas as quite philosophical. After his graduation he spends years reading the Upanishads and not in the least bothered about earning a livelihood. The mystic purity of the Upanishads, which in terms of human existence means restrained and regulated life becomes Srinivas' dominant passion in life.

When Srinivas approached the old landlord for a house, the old landlord asked him, "Who are you?"

"It is a profound question." [replies Srinivas]. "What mortal can answer it?" (Sampath 9). While he thundered against municipal or social short coming a voice went on asking, "Life and the world and all this is passing-why bother about anything? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother?" (30)

This statement is the natural conclusion for his questioning mind and he has to find an answer for question.

His interest in the Upanishads leads him to ask, “Is it right to be family centered”. He says that every activity in this world is centered on false ego [I am this body-(i.e) My] and real ego [I am a soul--(i.e) I]. While he was reading Upanishad he was totally absorbed in it. All his domestic worries and all these questions of prestige seem ridiculously petty.

“My children, my family, my responsibility must guard my prestige and do my duties to my family-who am I?”(13)

Srinivas considers this to be far more serious a problem he has to face. These are meant to encourage gradual development of self realization.

The Vedic wisdom advises how to live and get rid of the material entanglement. The chance for spiritual realization is offered in the form of the Upanishads, which are the part of different Vedas. Thus reading few lines from Upanishads, Srinivas involves himself in deep inquiries above his own self which is the beginning of self realization.

“Till I know ‘who I am’ how can I know what I should do?”(13). Narayan is at his best when he deals with it for he has got a very strong foundation of Vedic literature. The same idea is very much echoed in Narayan’s A Tiger for Malgudi, which is considered to be a very profound work by almost all the critics. This novel is about a tiger possessed of the soul of an enlightened human being who tells the readers the story of his life.

For example the master who is the chief protagonist is questioned by someone among the crowd.

“Who are you?”

The master replies- “you are asking a profound question. I’ve no idea who am I! All my life I have been trying to find the answer. Are you sure you know who you are?” (Tiger118)

Being steeped in the Vedic philosophical attitude to life, in the acceptance of self realization, Narayan reflects his own response to the deeper needs of life. Thus he is in search of real identity “Who am I”.

The inquiry of Vedanta Sutra “Who am I”-I am a spirit soul.

This can be understood very easily from Srila Prabhupada’s teachings found in the Topmost Yoga System ‘I am’ not this body, because at the time of death the body remains-although everyone cries, “Oh the poor man is gone!” the man is lying there. Why do you say he is gone? He is lying there! At that time we can come to our senses, the body is not the man. The real man is gone-that is the soul (9).

When one understands that he is not his body and is a spirit soul, he comes to his real ego. In the Vedic literature [Bṛhad-aranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10] it is said, “aham brahmasmi”, (I am a spirit soul). The quality of a spirit soul is explained in Bhagavad Gita as follows.

avinasi tu tad viddhi  
yena sarvam idam tatam  
vinasam avyayas yasya  
na kascit kartum arhati.

(That which provides the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.) (96)

This verse more clearly explains the real nature of the soul, which is spread all over the body. Anyone can understand what is spread all over the body. It is consciousness. This consciousness is the symptom of the soul.

In Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna says soul is the maintainer of the body.

antavanta ime deha

nityas yoktah saririnah

anasino 'prameyasya ...

(The material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end.) (98-99).

The material body is perishable by nature. It may perish immediately or it may do so after a hundred years. It is a question of time only. There is no chance of maintaining it indefinitely. But the spirit soul is so minute that it cannot even be seen by anybody. In the Vedanta Sutras the living entity is qualified as light because he is part and parcel of the Supreme light. As sun light maintains the entire universe, so the light of the soul maintains this material body. As soon as the spirit soul is out of this material body the body begins to decompose: therefore it is the spirit soul which maintains this body.

The same idea retreated in *The English Teacher*. The novel is undoubtedly the most personal and autobiographical of Narayan's novels. It is a direct result of the agony of Krishna's losing his wife, whom he loved very dearly. The novel is indeed based on the need to understand and realize life and death which are two different states of existence where two entirely different systems of values exist. There is certainly a deliberate contrast in the novel between the visible bodily world of human being and the invisible world of spirit and dead.

He establishes the universal truth that the fulfillment of man's desires and aspirations is limited very much by forces outside the control of the human will. There are certain facts of which death is the most obvious which no aspiration and no force of man can conquer. There is a sort of stubbornness in the stuff of experience which frustrates and resists the human desire. This idea of fatalism as well as helplessness gets more affirmed when the doctor says – "What can we do? We have done our best" (Teacher 94).

Narayan here drives home the point that the human body is perishable, whereas the soul is eternal. Narayan establishes this fact while talking about how Krishna succeeds in communicating with the spirit of his wife. Here the readers of Narayan get the answer to the question which his characters like Srinivas and the Master ask the question 'Who am I'. Narayan had a definite idea about human problems like birth, death, old age and disease which cannot be conquered by any living entity.

While talking about the loneliness and separation, which is caused by the sudden death of his wife, Narayan, the master craftsman, puts the same idea that the soul – the maintainer of the body which is not perishable by nature. He says there is no escape from loneliness and separations.

"Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends ... we come together only to go apart again. It is one continuous movement. They move away from us as we move away from them. The law of life can't be avoided. The law comes into operation the moment we detach ourselves from our mother's womb. All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law or to get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. The fact must be

recognized. A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false” (177).

One can come across the same idea repeated in A Tiger for Malgudi which may be considered to be the masterpiece of Narayan.

“No relationship human or other association of any kind could last forever. Separation is the law of life right from the Mother’s womb.” (Tiger 174)

Bhagavat Gita confirms this idea:

na jayate mriyate va kadacin

nayam bhutva bhavita va bhuyah

ajo nitya sasvato yam purano

na hanyate hanyamane sarire

(For the soul there is neither birth nor death at anytime. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever – existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.) (101-102)

For example in The English Teacher Susila, who is no more, tries to send a message to her husband through a medium. This proves that her physical body is destroyed but not the soul.

“This is a message for Krishna from his wife Susila who recently passed over .... She has been seeking all these months some means of expressing herself to her husband, but the opportunity has occurred only today, when she found the present gentleman a very suitable medium of expression. Through him she is happy in another region, and wants him also to eradicate the grief in his mind. We are nearer to each other than you understand. And I am always watching him and the child ...” (Teacher 106)

It is quite distinctly stated in all Vedic literatures and especially in Bhagavad-Gita that death is not an end:

jatasya hi druvo mrtyur

dhruvam janma mrtasya ca

tasmad aparihaye rthe

na tvam socitum arhasi

(One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament). (110-111)

This piece of thought is very clearly substantiated in the The English Teacher as well as in A Tiger for Malgudi. We find Krishna lamenting over the sudden demise of his wife. At that time Krishna was not aware of the fact that death is not an end of life. Krishna comes to know about this reality when his wife communicates with him and enlightens him about the fact that the soul is eternal.

Krishna tries to gather more information about the life after death. He confirms from Susila’s spirit that the soul never perishes. Though Susila is physically no more Krishna experiences her presence by his side on the bed and converse with her and when she leaves him in the early morning he utters the following words, “We stood at the window, gazing on a slender, red streak over the eastern rim of the earth. A cool breeze lapped our faces. The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy – a moment for which one feels grateful to life and death” (Teacher 184)

While acknowledging the fact that any artist is bound to improve in his art as he gains experience, the researcher is inclined to conclude that the realization about the law of life Narayan gained out of loneliness caused by the separation of his wife played a greater role in bringing about a great change in his philosophy of life and his ability in creative writing. Indeed this realization has not only touched the recesses of his mind and soul, but also ignited a sort of enlightenment in Narayan which can be confirmed from the fact that the novels which follow The English Teacher show a maturity of mind, art and tightness in structure. The analysis of the novels like Mr. Sampath, The Man Eater of Malgudi and A Tiger for Malgudi may hold testimony to this view. This realization would have helped Narayan to create characters like Sampath and Srinivas in his novel Mr. Sampath which follows immediately after the The English Teacher. One finds Sampath being very materialistic right from the beginning of the novel. But Srinivas view everything in larger contest of time which is cyclical.

In Mr. Sampath, the quest for self realization is the main theme. When one analyses the characters like Sampath and Srinivas in Mr. Sampath one may be tempted to believe that Narayan would have had the same line of thought in his mind. Sampath is completely materialistic and he always runs after sense gratification. He does not find time to pose and think for a moment anything about self-realization. Perhaps that may be the reason why Shiva. K. Gilra says, "Sampath and Margaya uproot themselves from their traditional ethos to run after illusions of material success". (40)

One may find from the beginning how Srinivas is dripping away even from his family life and going towards the quest for self-realization. This can be understood easily from the conversation between himself and his elder brother.

His brother asked, "What exactly is it that you wish to do in life?" Srinivas flushed for a moment, but regained his composure and answered: "Don't you see? There are ten principle Upanishads. I would like to complete the series. This is the third."(Sampath12)

Through Narayan depicts Srinivas as a totally different character from the other characters in the novel, he faces the same kind of mutual crisis just like any other man who is caught between worldly duties and the quest for self realization.

He asked himself, "Family duties come before any other duty. Is it an absolute law? What if I don't accept the position? I am sure, if I stick to my deeper conviction; other things like this will adjust themselves." (33)

Though Srinivas is the script write for the film 'Burning of Kama' about the success of which everyone is very speculative, one may find Srinivas being very much balanced by understanding the meaninglessness behind the mad rush for worldly things. Perhaps that may be the reason why he is not at all disturbed when the attempt for the film making got completely wrecked all on a sudden.

After a long silence of seven years of the publication of The Painter of Signs in 1976 one can hardly disagree with the verdict that Narayan is at the peak of his creative originality in A Tiger for Malgudi. Like all fables, A Tiger for Malgudi tells a good story. As the story proceeds one is made aware of much more clarity in design and intersection in the narrative momentum. In an unusual prefatory introduction, Narayan reveals how he came to write this novel. He had read newspaper report of a tiger faithfully hermit during the Kumbhamela festival and speculated on its possibilities for a novel. He writes," It also occurred to me that

with a few exceptions here and there, humans have monopolized the attention of fiction writers.”(Tiger 7)

He then emphasizes the moral basis of this novel. “Man in his smugness never imagines for a moment that other creatures.....I made a tiger the central characters in a novel”(7-8). Like Narayan’s other central characters, the tiger too, experiences fear at first but eventually triumphs over it. The tables are turned and the population melts out of sight as the tiger roams the street of Malgudi. Raju witnessed the cowardice of mankind. Their sense of insecurity and the irrational dread of losing their assets lie behind this behavior. The tiger takes refuge in the headmaster’s room of a local school and the door is bolted on the outside with the unfortunate head master trapped in the attic. The tiger’s redeemer arrives none other than the master who admonishes the crowd for using words such as ‘beast’ and ‘brute’ for the tiger.

“They are ugly words coined by man in his arrogance.”(118)

When their attempt to shoot the tiger fails, again due to the psychic aggressive powers of the master, he succeeds in subduing the tiger and walks away with the animal at the heels.

The religious aspect takes over from the moral and the social on the next stage of the tiger’s life is one of the gradual transformations, equivalent to the Hindu ashrama of sanyasa. It is here that Narayan perfects the theme of renunciation and creates a real sanyasi in the Master, instead of the earlier fake Sadhu Raju, the guide. The master is neither animal trainer, nor is he an ordinary man. Once a respectable and prosperous man of the world, a man of property, and one who had taken an active part in the politics he gives up everything. Like Siddhartha he renounces the world because of an “inner compulsion,” in order to merge his could with the universal soul and attain the spiritual insight of a mystic. (38)

The tiger, ferocious in nature is calmed by the power of the Master’s suggestion alone. He stands head and shoulders above humanity in general and is a symbol of the perfection that man can reach through the pursuit of ancient wisdom.

“Life or death is in no one’s hands: you cant die by willing or escape death by determination. A great power has determined the number of breaths for each individual, who can neither stop them not prolong ... that’s why God says in the Gita “I am life death: I am the killer and the killed...” (142)

The first lesson the tiger learns is that it is not a tiger. It must learn to transcend the self – a lesson that does not come easily to man. As old age advance, Raja learns to appreciate the companionship of the forest animals. Self realization can only come through acceptance rather the rejection.

In spite of the fact that the world around Narayan changed at a fast phase, his novels maintained the slow phase, which he had developed since the 1930. Narayan is deeply rooted in tradition and religion. In his novels the conflict between tradition and modernity is very common, but in the long run, he holds to the deep rooted tradition.

Though he maintains objective detachment from his themes and characters, a close scrutiny reveals his Indianess: and even detachment is an essentially Indian quality. This is reflected in the character of Srinivas in Mr. Sampath. It appears that Narayan believes that society is not man-made by choice; it is a part of the universal order. Therefore if one wants to appreciate his work, one must understand his view of man’s life relation to the cyclical universal order and his attachment to the wheel of existence, which is purely Indian.

According to the Hindu philosophy in which Narayan's faith is unshakeable as evident in his novels, this mundane world is not the real world and so is ultimately insignificant. Being essentially Hindu in his attitude, custom and practice, Narayan views every phenomenon as illusion (maya). Through characterization Narayan filters the unique Hindu philosophy. The lives of his major characters revolve a particular obsession which may be ambition as in Srinivas of Mr. Sampath, A Tiger for Malgudi, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, the main characters prove to be truly Indian in spirit as they strive for their true identity. Srinivas in Mr. Sampath is a classic example. As he experiences Ravi being exorcised, he experiences the necessity on a person's part to achieve true identity. This realization frees him from the shackles of involvement in the mundane world.

As R.K. Narayan acquired the universal truth from the Vedas that the soul is eternal, he developed the character of Krishna in The English Teacher and made him realize at the end that death is not an end. The realization is that only the body of his wife Susila perished and he could communicate with the spirit soul which is eternal.

The same idea is reinforced in A Tiger for Malgudi. According to Narayan the tiger and the Sannyasi were brothers in the previous life, which amounts to prove that the soul is eternal and only the body is changed.

#### CONCLUSION

Narayan proves to be very victorious in characterization by portraying characters like Srinivas, Master, Tiger and Natraj who are the product of the true Vedic spirit. The novels The English Teacher, A tiger for Malgudi, The Man-Eater of Malgudi and Mr. Sampath become all the more popular among the Indian readers for this philosophy of life which is a part of the mass consciousness of the Indian people.

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## Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich like Us*: A Thematic Analysis

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The novels of Nayantara Sahgal deal with a wide gamut of themes ranging from personal dilemma and problems, joys and sorrows fulfillment and frustrations of female protagonists to the political upheavals that India has experienced since Independence. Her proximity to political power has enabled her to project the kaleidoscopic view of the political changes in the country. She indeed is the ring-side view of the happenings behind the political and bureaucratic curtains.

*Rich like us* portrays a nation which once embraced the hallowed Gandhian ideals and which in modern times has repudiated with a vengeance, as it were, Gandhi and all that he stood for in his life and politics. M.K.Naik observes that the real test of political novel is in its preservation of the

integrity of its fictional values of the ensuring that politics permeates the work either in the form of ideas and ideology or in respect of setting action as genuinely non-political literature.”<sup>1</sup>

*Rich like us* is set in the 70s when the sacrifices and visions of the freedom fighters had been all but forgotten. It is complex novel with plurality of narrative voices and enigmatic ending and does not end itself to simple straight forward interpretations and characters. Judged from this norm *Rich like us* can be considered artistically successful novel.

The story of the novel is silhouetted against the backdrop of the Indian socio-political ethos, its economic disparities, rampant corruption, the hoary past with the cruel tradition of sati and the political upheavals of 1975. Sonali Ranade, an upright civil servant in the Ministry of Industry is pitted against the contemporary bureaucratic regime. Sonali heroically fights the malice in the bureaucratic hierarchy which has seeped to the core and corroded the Indian society and its long cherished values. While most of the Indian novels in English portray the stereo-typed versions of Indian womanhood. Sonali in *Rich like us* is made of quite a different stuff. A top notch at the IAS competitive examinations. She has the intellectual strength to rebel against hackneyed thoughts, outdated customs anachronistic rituals. She knows and lets the world know that she is not

out for an arranged marriage and the consequent life of intellectual inertia. Her destiny is, elsewhere. After completing her studies in India she goes to Oxford for higher studies. Her rebellion against society is not merely a passive ideological resistance; it is a concrete manifestation of carving a new image in a new purpose to Indian Womanhood. She has inherited her values and ideals from her conscientious who was an ICS officer in Colonial India. With an admirable rare courage Sonali refuses to grant permission to open the fizzy drink Hapyola factory to Dev the spoilt son of Mona and Ram. She rebels overtly and fearlessly against the bureaucratic set up. Patriotic, committed and honest that she is Sonali suffers a rude jolt when she gets her transfer order. Instead of receiving appreciation for having done her duty with a sense of patriotism, she is victimized by the bureaucratic system.

Ravi Kachru an Oxford educated officer is an ardent supporter of the clannish dynastic succession, (p-31). He replaces Sonali as joint secretary and thus Sonali's destiny comes to a dead end. After the death of her father she has none among his survivors who can measure and understand her deep sense of agony and isolation.

The alienness of what had just happened, the midnights knock at mid day, for no reason. I could understand paralysed me, until I realized that nothing new or shattering had happened after all. No malign fate had singled me out for punishment. The logic of June 26<sup>th</sup> had simply caught up with me (p-32).

Sonali feels bitter and frustrated that the society she lives in rates those in power higher and more important than the honest and upright officers. She feels completely alienated and her sense of rejection reacts with a determination not to 'grovels and beg favours and act like a worm instead of a person.' (P-37) The strength of Sahgal's novel is in her honest upholding of human values. Sonali feels more human and less bureaucratic when she talks from Rose to her desk before she bids farewell to her office. Later in the story Sonali's sympathetic and an understanding friend Rose loses her life in the hands of her stepson Dev's hired goon. The tragedy reflects the bitter truth that women in India are mercilessly murdered by her own relatives when it suits them whatever reasons. Sonali's great grandmother met with a similar fate in 1905. Rose's untimely death leaves Sonali bereft and lonely. Sonali and Rose share certain ideas and basic human approach to love its problem. Rose lends meaning to other people's life even after death. As a case of Beggar whom she used to feed and who finds meaning and purpose in life.

Nayantra Sahgal invests reality as a springboard to realize her vision of fulfillment in the life of her characters. Her novel Prove that the theme shapes the form and the form of her novels is bright with the real life becomes inseparable in her fiction. She explores the

spirit of freedom through the consciousness of heroine, and its significance in the lives of other less important characters like Kishorilal. *Rich like us* can be described as what, John Barth calls the “literature of replenishment” Sahgal tells the story and looks at life at least in the present novel, from two planes of view. One is the Omniscient author’s and the other is Sonali the heroine’s. The novel is admired for its creative innovation and optimistic vision of life. Her story is told in the third person by the authorial narrative voice and in the first person in the voice of the heroine. By the artistic alternative of the focus between these two points of view are the two angles of the vision, the novelist projects a social-political reality at two-levels the level of the masses and the level of the individual. This symbolizes two classes into which the character in the novel seems to fall naturally. The technique of twofold vision enables Sahgal to portray vividly the two Indias-the India of the rich western educated, ruling elite, and Bharat the India of a poor toiling mass of humanity which has been denied the fruits of India’s independence. The two Indias do not complement each other; rather they are in sharp contrast with each other and with unbridgeable gulf between them.

The novels make use of some editorials and letters written to the editors of the newspapers as a form of Historical evidence. One of them is an editorial of the Calcutta gazette of the 7<sup>th</sup> Dec’ 1829 which expresses supreme pleasure and celebrates the Act of Abolition of the cruel right of sutti passed by Lord William Bentinck. The English administrator is applauded for his reform which has ended “a system demoralizing in its effect on the living, a revolting system of suicide and murder.”(p134), Sonali discovers yet another instance of suttee which dates back to 29<sup>th</sup> Dec’ 1929 as recorded in the Bombay Courier .By quoting these documents the novelist juxtaposes the dead past with the living present bringing both into sharp focus of contrast.

Sonali, instead of commenting on the observations of these news items just shifts the focus of narration of her father’s heroic efforts to avenge his mother’s murder. It reflects her insight into the human spirit and its usage for justice and freedom in her present context. She juxtaposes the acts of injustice and cruelty of the past with those in the emergency regime of contemporary times. As an administrator she may be passive, but this technique of fusing the past with the grim present provides a ray of hope. she comments; “ not all of us passive before cruelty and depravity. He (her father) had not been nor the boy in Connaught place.”(p152).

Thus, Sahgal in *Rich Like Us* use the historical facts to enrich the form and content of her narrative. Sonali feels relieved at the end when Ram’s old flame Marcella offers unstinted help and hope to Sonali’s clouded future. She and Brian, her husband encourages Sonali to take up a research project on seventeenth and Eighteenth century India. Politics and the way in which historical forces and the individual interact and how major historical events shape individual lives have always been of interest to the creative imagination since the

Greek and Roman epics and the Mahabharata. As Orwell wrote elsewhere, “there is no such thing as genuinely non-political literature.”

*Rich Like Us* is set in the 70s when the sacrifices and visions of the freedom fighters had been all but forgotten. It is complex novel with plurality of narrative voices and enigmatic ending and does not lend itself to simple straight forward interpretations. As Jasbir Jain observes, “*Rich Like us* offers no easy, solutions to mankind problems on the contrary it challenges all known solutions . . . finally *Rich Like Us* is the about the complex nature of reality.” The implicit suggestion of the novel that personal feeling for others on a human and humane level can lead to redemption of a kind. There is certainly no conventional poetic justice in the novel. It is not a story where virtue is rewarded and vice punished but one of glorification, the courage and the good, attributing to them a kind of redemptive power even in death.

The politically committed character in the novel finds himself unable to sustain his Marxist ideals when faced with the real world. Ravi Kachru, when at oxford, was a committed communist. Sonali, the western educated part narrator says:

Even when we did not agree with him he was the inspiration of all us radicals and we never did understand why instead of throwing in his lots with the commitments after Oxford changed his mind and joined the civil-service as I, in search of another kind of involvement had already decided to do. Within a few years Ravi is making his way up there hierarchy, and when the Emergency comes, he is one of Mrs. Gandhi’s favorites. The “higher-up”.(p-176)

By the end of the novel, he falls from political grace but finally attain maturity to be honest on a personal level. After Ravi’s Plea to her of his continuing love, Sonali finds that:

This admission of waste, of years gone and opportunity lost, filled me with a sweet relief. Isolated from all that had happened outside our private creation it had the wonder for me of broken ends mending, Kachru becoming Ravi again, of friendship resuming, of love having been really love and not a mistake he had been trying to forget.(p-261)

Thus the strong political commitment of a young man is projected as merely a phase on the path to maturity.

Sonali himself has a set of ideas which are rudely shaken by the events of 1976. her Marxist commitment had been different from that of Ravi’s:

Our heart beats quite differently over our discovery of it(Marxism), his for humanity, mine for small actual conscience pricking images giving me a scratchy inner lining of anxiety (p-110).

Already Sonali's commitment is closer to reality, and she refuses to be carried away by ideology. later she says that:

Only the cloudiness commitment, like the perfect relationship, could be knocked sideways with a feather. It was doubts and uncertainties that kept things alive and kicking (p-261).

Her strong sense of service receives a blow when she is reverted from her responsible position in the civil service because she refuses permission for a preposterous proposal, requiring the import of more or less an entire factory (p-29).

The unknown proposal to her had the blessings of her superiors. Despite her feeling that she was pretending the Emperor's new clothes were beautiful', it is implied that she would have acted in the same way even if she had known that the proposal had high political backing. Being impossible for her to continue working in such a corrupt environment, in any case:

The emergency has finished my career, but suddenly I did not want a career in the crumbling unprofessionalism that bowed and scraped to a bogus emergency. (P-36) Her father's stern decision not to compromise with dictatorship is regarded by Sonali as: him at his strong and positive best. (P-175) Through grief stricken at his death, she condemns 'suttee' for its cruelty, I saw a world revealed by strangely enough it was not the evil in it saw . . . . . Not all of us are passive before cruelty and depravity . . . . . And I fell asleep to dream of heroisms whose company I was scarcely fit to keep. (P-152)

The obvious message is: individual acts of bravery, to save one's loved ones or even oneself from death, degradation or disaster are always worth doing whether one succeeds in meeting or achieving one's ends.

Rose, the London-born second wife of a rich businessman, could be seen as epitomizing this ideal of redemption through personal courage. She risks marrying Ram despite knowing about his being married and comes to India along with him. She saves Mona, Ram's first wife from suicide and inspire of their initial antagonism, soon develops friendly terms with her. The crippled beggar completely neglected by the family is also helped by her. Her outspokenness and cockney bluntness-the principal characteristics makes her unpalatable to her step son-Dav. Though Ross- a brave women yet is doomed by her honesty and her invidious position in Dav's household after her husband is incapacitated by illness. Her position as virtual widow leads to her death arranged, as 'sati' usually is, by her husband's relatives and partly motivated by the same economic reasons. Sonali following Rose's murder. And Kishorilal, who is at first prepared to renounce his political allegiances to obtain his release from prison, finally refuses to be released and leave his young cell-mate behind. The brave, the incorrupt, the outspoken in face of evil are admirable and inspiring, although they may not be rewarded either in this

life or any other. It is certain that there is no religious orthodoxy propounded in Rich like Us.

An over dramatic and somewhat ridiculous Hindu rites e observed by Mona. Hinduism is not capable of explaining evil and hence rejected by Sonali's grandfather. In an interview Sahgal said that, 'Mortality is ingrained deeply in every one of us, thought may vary in details. The idea of individual morality seems to underpin her writing in Rich like Us.

Colonialism or Colonial Consciousness is another important aspect in the novel that requires to be defined. In 'Orientalism' Edward said highlights the limitation imposed on a nation by colonial consciousness. One perceives oneself through the eyes of other and judges one by their standards by measuring oneself against their yardsticks. It is extracted that colonial consciousness consists of two stages. One of acceptance of the imperial model and the other turning away from it both having dependent and imbalanced relationship. The third and final stage is a moving away from these secondary positions to a position of critical identification of one's own culture, of being in position to sift and to criticize, a stance which is marked by an adult maturity. This transition to the post colonial awareness is characterized by an ability to step outside the given and to reject the simplistic division of the 'good' and 'bad' and to forge an independent identity. This novel is remarkable for its non-emotional treatment of matters which had carlier forced the writer into position of political partnership. This is attained by the gently irony, the humor and the distance. The peculiar depiction is made of Dev's treatment of his wife Nishi and his step-mother Rose. Women like the colonial people are treated with indifference or with ruthlessness. Similar to the colonial word, their decisions governed by the need to survive. Very often they are a long succession of compromises and sacrifices, a constant pushing of the I into the background. As opposed to this, men ride roughshod over the women's emotional requirements and reject long term solutions if short-term gains are in sight. Though it seems to be an over-generalization, yet mostly the men are found to be the exploiters. Divorce may be a way out for women, but bigamy is the rule for men; for instance- Ram having two wives in Rich Like us.

It was always Sita who had to pray to be swallowed by the earth, and always a woman who had to climb her husband's pyre and be burned alive (p-67) This was a part of second relationship and as much colonial as the political relationship and as much colonial as the political relationship was with Britain especially during the world wars when order had to be obeyed and not decisions independently arrived at.

In a Colonial situation any act of defiance is viewed as treason and the punishment for it or any act of questioning is death. Moral principles, concepts or right or wrong are waved aside in view of political expediency or goals. Such a situation is brought into being during the Emergency as described in Rich like Us. Sonali is demoted and removed from her position in the ministry, and Ravi Kachru angles his way into the corridors of power.

Rose is murdered and Dev gets away with the act of forgery. No longer it is a question of right and wrong but increasingly one of power vs. powerlessness. It is a repeat act and an eye-opener at that *Rich Like Us* sets out to analyse the Indian heritage which is not all bliss and not all same. The bits of evil which surface here are not all the result of a colonial aftermath . . . . they are bits of the Indian Heritage with its ratio, class-system and caste-division, and with India's inability to generate and persist in a native morality. The Gandhian episode begins to appear not as a continuation of a tradition, but a flash in the pan which was now over.

Rich Like Us is important for more reasons than one: it comments on the political situation which has colonial overtones, it analyses the flow in the native tradition and it justifies the moral struggle so important and significant for survival of the human being.

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## Postcolonial Subalternization in the Plays of Girish Karnad

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In the postcolonial theory subaltern studies occupy significant place; it derives its force from Marxism and Post-Structuralism. Subaltern studies is primarily concerned with socio-cultural and historical aspects of the society incorporating the entire people that is subordinate in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office, or in any other way. It is the subject position that defines subalternity. Even when it operates in terms of class, age and gender, it is more psychological than physical. The lack and deprivation, loneliness and alienation, subjugation and subordination, the resignation and silence, the resilience and neglect mark the lives of subaltern, even when they resist and rise up, they feel bounded and defeated by their subject positions. They have no representatives or spokesperson in the society they live in and so helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential part as human beings. The subaltern has become, M.H. Abrams has remarked “a standard way to designate the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse and internalized by colonial peoples who employ this discourse”(237). Subaltern is a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin terms for “under” (*sub*) and “other” (*alter*). A recurrent topic of debate is how, and to what extent a subaltern subject, writing in a European language, can manage to serve as an agent of resistance against, rather than compliance with, the very discourse that has created its subordinate identity.

Antonio Gramsci used the term first to denote subordinate position in terms of class, gender, caste, race and culture. And it was popularized by Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak’s essay entitled “Can a Subaltern Speak?” (1985). She has used the term for the colonized / the oppressed subject; working class, blacks and the women whose voice has been silenced. Spivak has, observes B.K. Das, “laid stress on ‘gendered subaltern—that, women, who are doubly oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy in the Third World countries” (143). G.N. Devy considers that the most important issue she has raised is the “Subalternization of Third World literature” (221). “Worldling” of the “Third World” in Spivak, observes Pramod K Nayar, “is the process through which the local population was persuaded to accept the European version of reality for its modes of understanding and structuring its social world” (192). In 1970s Subaltern studies began in England and subsequently English and Indian historians collectively worked on the subject. Oxford University Press, New Delhi brought out *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (in three volumes) edited by Ranjit Guha and 8 volumes were added later. In 1888, *Selected Subaltern Studies* was published by OUP, New York and Oxford edited by Ranjit Guha and Spivak with a forward note by Edward Said. In the early 1980s a group of intellectuals known as Subaltern Studies group successfully attempted to write a historiography that was different from the colonial one. The theories of nationalism, identity and ethnicity come in for

close scrutiny. Asian colonial history owed much to Spivak and Ranjit Guha's energy, Lodge and Wood acknowledge, "in deconstructing imperial accounts of 'native' rebellion and customs to allow other voices freer play" (414). Gyan Prakash explicitly links the subaltern studies project with Postcolonial studies in its combination of Post-Structuralism, Marxism and archival research. The focus is on the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office. It looks at "history from below", that is the history of those common people (tribals, lower classes /castes and women) that have been silenced in accepted histories of the nationalist movements which is elitist –dictated by the dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous. Leela Gandhi explores the mechanism of the Subaltern Studies group which,

Sketched out its wide- ranging concern both with the visible 'history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity' and with the occluded 'attitudes, ideologies and belief system...Subaltern Studies defined itself as an attempt to allow the people finally to speak within the jealous pages of elitist historiography and in so doing, to speak for, or to sound the muted voices of the truly oppressed (1-2).

Time has changed. Both the colonized and the women have now spoken. B.K.Das rightly remarks in this regard: "the subaltern in the colonial era have become intellectuals in the postcolonial period...thanks to the writers of the Third World countries who write in English today. And literatures in English by the Third world writers have gained acceptance among the Anglo-American intellectuals today. It is in this subaltern studies have acquired a new dimension (146-147).

Karnad's deep-rooted humanism allowed him to give voice to the silenced majority through his plays. The plays of Karnad abound with subalterns especially women and lower caste people subjected since ancient time by patriarchy or upper hierarchy of the society. Karnad has not only exposed their subalternity but also fused energy in their lives so that they can speak; shifted their position from "margin" to "centre". *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala*, *Tale-Danda*, *The Fire and the Rain* etc. amply exemplify the above notion. Devayani, Sharmishtha and Chitrlekha in *Yayati*, Kapil and Padmini in *Hayavadana*, Rani and Kurudavva in *Naga-Mandala*, lower caste people in *Tale-Danda*, tribals, Nitilai and Vishakha in *The Fire and the Rain* Mahout in *Bali: The Sacrifice*, Chandrawati in *Flowers*, Malini in *Broken Images* and Rahabai in *Wedding Album* display subalternity of the class they represent. Karnad as a cultural administrator goes beyond this and attempts to provide them their due space and defy the traditional hierarchies prevalent in Indian society. The paper endeavours to analyse Karnad's handling of the subaltern issue and remedial measures suggested in his plays.

*Yayati*, the first play of Karnad which is based on the myth of Yayati in the Mahabharata is highly relevant as far as the socio-psychological study of women is concerned. Devayani, Sharmishtha, Swarnlata and Chitrlekha are generic; represent the subalternity of woman in masculinist society where she is identified as "other", "non-man", or "second sex" despite her high position in the society. Karnad doesn't adhere to traditional glorification of the son's 'self-sacrifice' rather raises question against this. Devayani, the Queen has to endure every sort of

humiliation and becomes insane; Swarnlata is tortured by her husband's unfounded doubts of infidelity, insults and finally deserted; Sharmishtha is an easy prey of Yayati's filthy sexual gratification. Though Chitrlekha also faces similar conditions, she emerges as a new woman who boldly challenges the decision of Pooru and false rhetoric of Yayati. She doesn't allow Pooru to enter into her bedroom—who accepts the curse of his father for his moral transgression and becomes old: “I will not let my husband step back into my bedroom unless he returns a young man” (61) and frankly elaborates the reason of her marriage to Pooru: “I married him for his youth. For his potential to plant the seed of the Bharatas in my womb. He has lost that potency now. He doesn't possess any of the qualities for which I married him. But you do” (65-66). Yayati abuses her for these piercing words, “whore” (66). She defies everything i.e. kingdom and high reputation of Bharat dynasty and wants “room” for herself. She smiles defiantly and swallows the poison and dies. She prefers to die rather than yield before old conventions and assigned roles set for woman. Her death endorses new woman's quest for emancipation. Sharmishtha precisely explains the condition of women, “A woman dead (Chitrlekha), another gone mad (Devayani), and a third in danger of her life (Sharmishtha)” (68). Jealously and racial conflict also weakens their lot. The play reinforces the centrality of women. Aparna Bhargva Dharwadker rightly comments: “the most remarkable feature of *Yayati*...is its quartet of sentient, articulate, embittered women, all of whom are subject in varying degrees to the whims of men, but succeed in subverting the male world through an assertion of their rights and privileges” (Introduction: *Collected Plays, vol. One*, xvii).

Padmini and Kapila define subalternity in *Hayavadana*. Padmini is unlike of Rani of *Naga-Mandala*. She belongs to a family of leading merchant of Pavana Veethi of Dharampura. Though, in the play she enjoys commanding position, she is close to the spirit of Cleopatra of Shakespeare, succumbs to Dionysian tendency and indulges into cuckoldry. She camouflages love of Devadatta, his poetry gets new charm and vitality. She is so fascinating that Devadatta finds her “beyond my wildest dreams” (14) and swears “if I ever get her as my wife, I will sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra...”(14). Even Kapila finds “Yakshini, Shakuntala, Urvashi, Indumati—all rolled into one” (16) and warns Devadatta, “She is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel” (19). While talking to Padmini Kapila rightly says: “I know what you want, Padmini. Devadatta's clever head and Kapil's strong body”(38). The fact is soon discovered—her temptation to Kapila's muscular body; she is real Padmini of Vatasayana:

PADMINI: [*Watching him, to herself*]. How he climbs—like an ape. Before I could even say ‘yes’, he had taken off his shirt, pulled his *dhoti* up and swung up the branch. And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back—like an ocean with muscles rippling across it—and then that small, feminine waist which looks so helpless.... He is like a Celestial Being reborn as a hunter.... How his body sways, his limbs curve—it's dance almost.... No woman could resist him. (25-26)

Devadatta senses her leaning towards Kapila but he feels helpless. Devadatta and Kapila represent Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies respectively hence Padmini's hunger for Kapila

is very outcome of her own nature. But in the temple of Kali, after Devadatta and Kapila's sacrifice, she is so much embarrassed to see the melodramatic scene and frightened to sense the sarcasm of people, anticipating people would blame her for both deaths. She instantly decides to kill herself. Transposition, no doubt, was a very frightening experience to her, yet she felt she had the best of both the man: "My Devadatta comes like a bridegroom with the ornament of a new body.... It's my duty to go with Devadatta. But, remember I'm going with your [Kapil's] body"(41), "fabulous body—fabulous brain" (43) and "male smell" (43) express her nymphomaniac ecstasy and lust for sexual gratification. Even Doll I and Doll II comment on her psychic reactions—dreams, phantasies and reveries in which Kapila figures "climbing a tree!", "dived into a river" (50) symbolically let loose Padmini's suppressed sexual desire and hunger for Kapila. Soon she is disillusioned and finds herself, like Devadatta, Kapila and Hayavadana a victim of "mad dance of incompleteness" (57). Even after marriage, she can't resist herself and goes to the forest with her son and enjoys extramarital sexual relation with Kapila cuckolding her husband for four or five days. In a duel Devadatta and Kapila exchange forgiveness and kill each other. Subsequently, Padmini finds herself nowhere. She suffers from alienation and perplexing situation erupts. She is abetted to perform *sati*—for the sake of the glory of her son or she couldn't live without Devadatta and Kapila: "Kali, Mother of all Nature, you must have your joke even now. Other women can die praying that they should get the same husband in all lives to come. You haven't left me even that little consolation" (63). Padmini's practice of *sati*, comments Bhagavatta, "it would not be an exaggeration to say that no *pativrata* went the way Padmini did" (63). Female Chorus justifies Padmini's misdemeanor: "Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?.... I have neither regret nor shame" (64). Karnad attempts to give due space to women in human society where she is marginalized since time immemorial. Her plays present evolution of women and quest for better position in the world.

Kapila, the son of the iron-smith Lohita, is "dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds which require drive and daring, in dancing, in strength and in physical skills he has no equals" (92). His physical features and traits of the personality mark-off his social identity and inferior position in the society contrasted with Devadatta's "comely appearance, fair colour, unrivalled in intelligence.... Only son of the Revered Brahmin Vidhysagara...felled the mightiest pundits of the kingdom in debates on logic and love, having blinded the greatest poets of the world with his poetry and wit...apple of every eye in Dharampura" (2). Devadatta and Kapila represent two opposite extremes—one soul another body. Their friendship is exceptional, "One mind, one heart" (2). Despite his closeness with Devadatta, there is always a deep-rooted feeling in Kapila's mind that he belongs to lower caste. He doesn't dare to sit on chair with Devadatta rather sits down on the ground happily. Even Devadatta satires his profession: "What do you know of poetry and literature? Go back to your smithy—that's where you belong," (13) reminds subalternity of Kapila. He is an easy target of Padmini's lust. His arguments in favour of body, after exchange of heads, are declined instantly in *Vrihadkathasaritasagara*, but Karnad doesn't

accept solution offered by Vikram rather ridicules such an easy answer to a serious problem. Kapila's arguments too get place in the play. Here, the playwright has shifted subalterns to the central position. The passing reference of Hayavadana's mother and Hayavadana's anxiety enlarges the subaltern world.

Karnad's *Naga Mandala* is a sociological study of Indian women ; richly textured dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka usually narrated by women while feeding children in the kitchen. It not only exposes the ugliness of a society where woman is considered "second sex", "other", "subject", "non-man"---women are taught in the process of being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology—e.g. male superiority; and so conditioned to derogate their own sex and to cooperate in their own subordination. Patriarchal dominance has prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibility. The play also suggests remedial measures and slaps the orthodox society by an act of reconciliation between Rani and Naga.

Karnad was well acquainted with feminist ideologies and the havoc wrought by patriarchal ideologies in Indian society. *Naga-Mandala* appears to be a battleground where ideological conflicts, power relations, and the struggle for identity have been dramatized effectively. In *Naga-Mandala* Rani—the female protagonist, and Kurudavva—the other female character, both are generic, represent the extreme physical torture and mental trauma, struggle for their identity as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. Four Flames, Story, and the Man also reflect the sufferings and exploitations of women. Rani is treated in a slavish manner, imprisoned like a caged bird, neither she is allowed to talk to outsider nor outsider is allowed to do the same. Despite her chastity and fidelity, she is forced to face the Naga Ordeal. Appanna (Rani's husband), Naga (Cobra), Dog, Mongoose, Three Village Elders and the orthodox society have been used as the forces of subjection. Karnad has treated 'eternal—triangle' unlike of G.B.Shaw. Shaw in *Candida* gave a different twist to 'eternal—triangle' where *Candida* is a New Woman and finale brings the impression that conjugal love must be fostered and glorified whereas Karnad exposes the hollowness of male- chauvinism. Rani's acceptance of Naga as her own is a curt reply to the question of extra-marital relation in which only males are allowed to go freely, even after getting married, to concubine (as Appanna does) whereas the yardstick of morality is imposed upon women. J.D.Soni judiciously comments that Karnad in the play tries to "fuse artistically dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity" (76). Prologue introduces Four Flames, which are animated, symbolic representations employed to report the sufferings of women.

The tragic sufferings of women are extended to other female character—e.g. Kurudavva, who is an example of wisdom and philanthropy. Nobody in the society has eyes to see Rani's laceration at the hands of her philandering husband, but blind Kurudavva alone can see the truth. She extends motherly love and care to Appanna as well as to Rani. She is also the victim of orthodox society where the role of a woman is subservient and marginalized. Except her son Kappanna, there is none to look after her. Even the Village Elders treat her cruelly and unsympathetically while she has lost her only son. *Naga-Mandala*, Karnad commented, express:

A distinctly woman's understanding of the reality around her, a lived counter point to the patriarchal structure of classical texts and institutions. The position of Rani in the story of *Naga-Mandala*, for instance, can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband only in two unconnected roles—as a stranger during the day and as lover at night. Inevitably, the pattern of relationships she is forced to weave from these disjointed encounters must be something of a fiction. The empty house Rani is locked in could be the family she is married into. (Introduction to *Three Plays: Naga Mandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq*. 17)

Krishnamayi attempted to redefine the insurgent female psyche in an androgenic milieu and concluded: “Gender equality still remains a myth...the discussion of the relationship between man and woman have been prescribed by man not by woman. Man who is ruled by the mastery-motive has imposed her limits on her. She accepts it because of biosocial reasons.” (64-65)

The play *Tale-Danda* endeavours to highlight the subjection, role, upsurge, and revolution of subalterns (i.e. lower caste). Under Basavanna, a social reformer of the 12<sup>th</sup> century assembled a congregation of poets, mystics and social revolutionaries and philosophers formed the *Lingayat* faith, giving impetus to courageous questioning and social commitment. The abolition of caste, equality of sexes, rejection of idol worship, repudiation of Brahminism, and of Sanskrit in favour of the mother tongue i.e. Kannad; were the main tenets of subaltern revolution. The resentment reaches its climax when Madhuvarsa, a Brahmin gives his daughter Kalavati in a marriage to an untouchable—Sheelvanta. This last act opposing caste hierarchy, not just in theory but in practice also, brought down upon the wrath of orthodox; the movement ended in terror and bloodshed. The playwright wants to suggest whenever such important issues are not considered seriously and solutions offered by these thinkers go unheeded, disastrous results would follow again. *Tale-Danda* draws its story from the life of Kannada saint Basavanna who resisted ideologically against the prevailing evils of caste hierarchy. Explosive situations after the official endorsement of Mandal Commission Report and Mandir issue in 1989, motivated Karnad to concentrate on subaltern issue. And the historical context, deeply implanted in his mind, which proved catalyst to the plays of Karnad was predominated with, Karnad himself explains: “...tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of the political freedom was achieved” (Introduction to *Three Plays: Naga-Mandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq*.1). Drawing our attention to the genesis of the present, the play illuminates the endemic affliction of the caste and class politics infecting our body politic in the medieval period of history. It was the strong sense of history, which has nurtured in Karnad a dominant will for social justice, a sincere compassion for the socially oppressed and subaltern. Karnad's astute transformation of the metaphysical into the contemporary dimensions and history into trans-historical perspective is, not linked to the Western philosophical matrix, but, Vanashree Tripathi comments, “playwright's understanding of a long tradition of humanism in India...since the earliest periods” (25).

The play reveals, in the name of Varnashrama Dharma, lower caste people are socialized to internalize the reigning superiority of upper caste. Mallibomma though adopts *Lingayat* faith, can't think to enter Jagdeva, a Brahmin's house. King Bijjala tried to ascend to higher Varna from barber to Kshatriya but failed:

For ten generations my forefathers ravaged the land as robber barons. For another five they ruled as the trusted feudatories of the Emperor himself. They married into every royal family in sight. Bribed generations of Brahmins with millions of cows. All this so they could have the caste of Kshatriya branded on their foreheads. And yet you ask the most innocent child...what is Bijjala?...instant reply will be barber. One's caste is like the skin on one's body. You can peel it off top to toe, but when the new skin forms, there you are again; a barber – a shepherd. (14-15)

Among subalterns tribals, shepherds, cowherds and low caste untouchables figure. Resistance has two forms: ideological and physical. It was *Lingayat* faith (Shaivistic) in sharp opposition to Brahminical faith; (better known as Sanatan Dharma) founded on humanitarian grounds, open to all groups, austerity in living, trying to crumble the wall of untouchability, exposing rigidity and discrimination in traditional faith. They rejected anything “static in favour of the principle of movement and progress in human enterprise” (Preface to *Tale-Danda*). They tried to come out of caste venom and religious fanaticism. The devotee of the faith was called *Sharana*. Mallibomma (a tanner by birth), Kakkaya (skinner), Haralayya (cobbler), Kalayani (Haralayya's wife), Sheelvanta and King Bijjala are *Sharanas* from lower caste. Jagdeva, Basavanna, Madhuvarsa and Gundamma are *Sharanas* from higher castes. This ideological resistance touches climax when Sheelavanta, a cobbler is married to Kalavati, a Brahmin; and immediately violent reaction starts. Antagonistic forces are *vis-à-vis* to gain power – hence hegemonic war begins. Physical resistance of *Sharanas* comes to dismal end. It was a conflict between deep-rooted orthodoxy and new, and innovative ideas. The movement was not matured enough. Even Basavanna doubts the success of the marriage—i.e. hypergamous (*Pratilom*); it (movement) went into young hands of Jagadeva- a violent revolutionary who kills King Bijjala and finally commits suicide. *Sharanas* lost their drive, mutual differences and in-fights, prompt reaction from orthodox Brahmins against *Sharanas* led by young Sovideva; Basavanna's resignation from the movement and power politics brings failure to the subalterns' resistance.

The violent reaction of Brahmins suggests even now subalterns are no match to defy the exploitation and discriminating behaviour of the orthodox Hindu society. Basavanna also anticipates:

Until now it was only a matter of theoretical speculation. But this – this is real. The orthodox will see this mingling of castes as a blow at the very roots of varnashrama dharma. Bigotry has not faced such a challenge into two thousand years. I need hardly describe what venom will gush out, what hatred will erupt once the news spreads. (38)

He adds further: “we have a long way to go” (39) “we are not ready for the kind of revolution this wedding is. We haven't worked long enough or hard enough”(44). Damodara Bahatta, Queen's priest and Manchanna Karmita, a Brahmin adviser to the King represent Hindu

fanaticism and strongly plead for conformity with Vedic tradition—a measure to suppress subaltern revolution:

Civilization has been made possible because our Vedic tradition controls and directs that self-destructive energy. How large-hearted is our dharma! To each person it says you don't have to be anyone but yourself. One's caste is like one's home – meant for one's self and one's family. It is shaped to one's needs, one's comforts, and one's traditions. And that is why the Vedic tradition can absorb and accommodate all differences, from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. And even those said to be its victims have embraced its logic of inequality. (56)

Sovideva, the Prince wins the game of power politics exploiting the Hindu Braminical sentiments; but subtly used to perpetuate Vedic traditions. With the coronation of Sovideva the triumph of the oppressor rings loud. Sanskrit chanting from ancient scriptures denotes the re-stabilization of caste order at least for the time being till another revolution.

M.K.Nayak has criticized the play because, he considers, “It fails to offer solution to the problem” (45). Pranav Joshipura has also expressed the similar view: “...instead of deliberating on how to abolish the Varna system, Karnad presents it in a startling manner without any solution...to treat an age-old problem without suggesting any solution raises serious doubts about the capacity of a writer” (69). Karnad who extends the tradition of Henrik Ibsen and G.B. Shaw obviously leaves it to the audience to decide; yet he gives remedial suggestions through Basavanna's speeches. Basavanna's doubts, concerns and embarrassment regarding subaltern revolution clearly reflect playwright's concerns. Vanashree Tripathi judiciously comments:

*Tale-Danda* highlights the neglected portion of history that has immense bearing on the history and politics of contemporary times. Focusing on the class, caste, and gender configurations in A.D.1166, the play proves the subterranean and insidious motivations driving the diverse caste groups in complex power equation” (28).

[She further observes *Tale-Danda*] a thesis play that intends to revive upon the Indian stage the age old debate on the virtues and vices of casteism ...an endeavour to do justice to history—a stark reminder of our past, of the struggles and movements that bestowed upon us the freedom to think and question. The play is an invitation to look at ourselves—our empty present and our futurelessness. ( 91-92 )

Sharanas lived a life of contradiction because of their mixed identity. They had taken on their new sharana identity without shedding off their old one completely, so that the ones from the upper castes still looked down upon those from the lower castes and those from the lower castes could not forget that they were untouchables and detestable. Rupalee Burke finds Karnad a playwright with a difference whose motive behind playwriting is to catch the

Pulse of the socio-cultural-historical-political facets of India and Indian life...his plays have always aimed at providing message in the contemporary context....In *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda* Karnad employs history to comment on the pathetic and corroded state of Indian modern day politics, and through which he engages in an intellectual debate of our time. (105-107)

Basvanna's vision of egalitarian society and spiritualized politics was the vision of Karnad himself, expressed by Bijjala:

Basvanna wants to eradicate the caste structure. Annihilate the varna system. What a vision! And what prodigious courage! And he has the ability. Look at those he has gathered around him: poets, mystics, and visionaries. And nothing airy-fairy about them, mind you. All hard-working people from the common stock. They sit together, indifferent to caste, birth of station. (15)

"*Tale-Danda*", Karnad acknowledged in an interview, "is not necessarily an attack on caste. It is a question of 'Why', why is it that some of our problems seem perennial"(138). He raises many questions and few oblique suggestions provides but more are left to the audience to think and get them resolved. He is rightly called the 'cultural administrator'. Y. Somalata's observation of *Tale- Danda* is remarkable:

In this play, Karnad discovers the vital relationship between contemporary society and literature...adept in choosing the dialectical opposites such as tradition and modernity; conservative and reformist; spiritual and physical; ideal and pragmatic; constancy and flux for unfolding a logical sequence in poetic terms...centrifugal and centripetal forces of change and resistance are directed against caste order in Hindu society. (137-138 )

Vishakha and Nittilai belong to two different socio-cultural backgrounds in *The Fire and the Rain*. Vishakha is the wife of Parvasu, a Brahmin, and daughter-in-law of Raibhya, a learned ascetic whereas Nittilai hails from a tribal community. Despite cultural polarities, both experience similar socio-psychological taboos and restrictions and feel bounded. For Nittilai, subjection is more intense—apart from patriarchy her inferior position in social hierarchy deteriorates her standing in the society. Though the play is based on C. Rajgopalachari's prose retelling of the *Mahabharata* especially the myth of Yavakri in Vana Parva, Karnad constructs a story of passion, loss, and sacrifice in the contexts of Vedic rituals, spiritual discipline, social and ethical differences between human agents, and interrelated forms of performance still close to their moments of origin, yet the treatment of feminine world, images of women, their subjection and changing status is not less remarkable. Vishakha, an archetypal character and Nittilai, Karnad's invention symbolize the subalternity of women that has been highlighted by the playwright exposing the ugliness in our society restricting their place and creativity in human society.

Vishakha loves Yavakri but his decision to get knowledge directly from gods initiates him into ten years' penance leaves Vishakha helpless, alienated—"sick of silence" (141) and deeply frustrated. Subsequently, she is married to Parvasu who offers up Vishakha's life, first to his sensual appetite and then to his lust for fame:

VISHAKHA: The night of the wedding, my husband said to me: 'I know you didn't want to marry me. But don't worry. I'll make you happy for a year.' And he did. Exactly for one year.... Then on the first day of the second year of our marriage, he said: 'Enough of that. We now start on our search' .... He used my body, and his own body, like an experimenter, an explorer. As instruments in a search. Search for what? I never knew. To be the Chief

Priest of the fire sacrifice... in all seven years he hasn't come back... I have become dry like tinder. Ready to burst into flames at a breath. (123)

The meeting of Vishakha with her former lover Yavakri infuriates Raibhya who grabs her by her hair and start beating and kicking her. She is condemned as “whore” (127) and “bitch” (138) thereafter left to be handled by her husband. She is an easy prey to Raibhya's anger over his rejection as the Chief Priest by the king. He creates *Brahma Raksha* to kill Yavakri. Vishakha is bold and acknowledges her meeting with Yavakri before her husband candidly. Nittilai, a tribal girl of 14 loves Arvasu, a Brammin of 18. Both work in a troupe. She is exposed to face the world and know how cruel and ruthless it can be. Only Andhak appreciates their love; the elders of Nittilai's tribe are anxious to interrogate Arvasu. Hers is a romantic love, a world of teenage phantasies ignorant from caste and cultural distinctions. On the contrary, Raibhya condemns her as “savage” (126). When Arvasu fails to appear before Council of tribal Elders; they decreed, “Nittilai will marry another boy—of our own tribe” (135). She is handed over to a tribal boy and married against her wishes. She has no say. Her protest touches climax when she runs away from her husband, family and everything for the sake of love. But, as an Indian married woman, she doesn't want to cuckold her husband. She transcends from petty sexual gratification and romantic love and develops pious relationship with Arvasu:

NITTILAI: Arvasu, when I say we should go together—I don't mean we have to live together—like lovers, or like husband and wife. I have been vicious enough to my husband. I don't want to disgrace him further. Let's be together like brother and sister. You marry any girl you like. Only please, Arvasu—spare a corner for me. (153)

Nittilai's brother and husband chase her like hounds. She is frightened of their evil designs. She is offered a ghastly death despite her innocence: “the husband pulls out a knife, grabs Nittilai by her hair and slashes her throat in one swift motion. He then lets her drop.... She lies there, her eyes open, bleeding, dying like a sacrificial animal” (172). The killing of Nittilai endorses still today patriarchy and long established social conventions are strong enough to crush women's liberty or any kind of adventurism. But the quest of the woman for emancipation has started. The play also presents sudras and tribals as subalterns in Varna hierarchy.

In *Bali: The Sacrifice* Mayhout, a low-caste, elephant keeper of the King is always haunted by his inferior birth and ugly looks hence feels alienated in the world. His reaction is a natural outcome of his long subjugation and humiliation: “People mock at Mahouts. Call us ‘low-bor. But where would all your princes and kings be without us, I want to know. What would happen to their elephants? No elephants. No army. No pomp and splendor. No processions. No kings! Ha!” (80). He, like Kamil is dark-complexioned but muscular that tempts women to have mating with him. He is a good singer. He had plenty of women to seduce. Even Queen succumbs to this temptation and cuckolds her husband King. *Flowers* exposes the social mentality against womenfolk—the body of the woman is always a target of man's hungry, lustful eyes; plots to exploit her sexually and make her an easy prey. Even the holy Priest, unnamed in the play coddles his wife and feasts his eyes and indulges in filthy sensual gratification with Chandrawati, a courtesan. The Priest's wife knows everything, but she has to tolerate passively. Malini of

*Broken Images* brings home the idea that subalternity emanates at home when Manjula Nayak, the only character of the play who writes stories in Kannada, but for the sake “fame, publicity, glamour...power” (265) prefers writing novel in English. She indulges into plagiarism and secretly publishes a novel out of Malini’s fragments. Radhabai of *Wedding Album* represents subalternity of the maid.

Karnad has great concern for the caste or gendered subalterns in his plays and he has brought them from margin to centre through his plays. His plays are the medium where through he raises socio-political and cultural problems prevalent in Indian society and calls upon us to discuss and evolve a common consensus rather than provide a ready made answer to the problem.

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## Narration and Intertextuality in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

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“I am the name of the sound  
and the sound of the name.  
I am the sign of the letter  
and the designation of the division.”

(“The Thunder, Perfect Mind”, *The Nag Hammadi*)

“The persona of the novel is mysterious, and it is not always apparent whether it is the narrator/ persona talking or remembering events, or whether it is one of the characters.”

(Ward Welty 226)

*Jazz* is told by contradictory, multiple narrative voices. Instead of giving the reader one omniscient narrator, Toni Morrison chooses to use two narrators: One gossipy, overtly hostile voice which presents itself as omniscient; admitting only towards the end of the text to have based all of its' conclusions on what it can observe (*Jazz* 220-1); And another narrative voice which often follows closely on the heels of the first, makes no claims to complete knowledge, involves no insults to the characters, yet is involved in framing most of their conversations, thoughts and feelings. Both the open 'flourish' of the first narrator on the one hand, and the “complicated and inaccessible” insights of the second narrator, on the other hand, concurrently comprise the jazz music of *Jazz* (1). To create an omniscient narrator who is both first-person and third-person omniscient is jazz-like because this combination “symbolize an incredible kind of improvisation” (Micucci 275). We can say that Morrison draws upon jazz music as “the structuring principle” for *Jazz*. The novel is told as if it were playing a jazz composition. “A disembodied narrator slips easily and guilelessly from third-person all-knowingness to first-person lyricism, without ever relaxing its grip upon our imagination” (Gates 53-54). The narrator behaves like a jazz musician. In an interview with Lynn Neary of WNPR, Morrison herself declares that she does not want her reader to “get any comfort or safety in knowing the personality of the narrator or whether the narrator is indeed a man or a woman or black or white or is a person at all...” In fact, she manipulates gender coding in speech patterns and in style.

The first narrator merely describes the lives of the characters and assumes their thoughts and feelings (*Jazz* 220). It mistakenly speculates about the predictability of the characters while they were in fact “busy being original, complicated and changeable” (220). As Charlie Parker is quoted as saying, “music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live

it, it won't come out of your horn" (Cone 5). The silence, then of the marchers, and the second layer of narrative in *Jazz*, comes "out of the horn" of the characters of the text more than does the first (5). While employing a similar form, the content and tenor of the first narrator betrays its admitted position as an observer. Paula Gallant Eckhard identifies the music itself as the novel's narrator:

Like a jazz performance, [the narrator] creates a montage effect in its storytelling. It improvises on itself, utilizes the language of music and syncopated rhythms, and sings classic blues themes of love and loss [...] Music, language, and narrative come together in *Jazz*, and their interplay provides the real dynamics of the text. (11)

Carolyn M. Jones argues that *Jazz* is "a site of multiple voices" (494). Yet the implications of such multiplicity have been largely unexamined. The novel begins with the voice of this 'narrating I': "Sth, I know that woman. She used to live with a flock of birds on Lenox Avenue. Know her husband, too" (*Jazz* 3). When readers encounter this first sentence, they accept it as the voice of the narrator. The knowledge of Violet, 'that woman' to whom it refers, and of her husband, Joe, whom it also claims to 'know,' proves to be cosmetic and in fact erroneous (3). The narrator knows neither Violet nor Joe. Yet, its' layout of the basic story does provide the motif for the novel and open the opportunity for the improvisational additions of the rest of the band.

Caroline Rody says that in *Jazz* Morrison plays "with the convention of the omniscient speaker" (621). In most literature, the omniscient narrator is a naturalized convention. But, in *Jazz*, the omniscient narrator's knowledge and power are undermined by the "force of desire, specifically, the desire for human relationship" (622). *Jazz* humanizes and therefore problematizes the all-knowing omniscient narrator. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. points out in his review of *Jazz*, the multiple and self-contradictory omniscient narrative voice is "indeterminate: it is neither male nor female; neither young nor old; neither rich nor poor" (54). The narrator collaborates with the writer, as Rody states, it is "[a] voice that evokes its partnership with a writer—who may fall asleep after supper though she had promised to get back to the writing—is one that insists on its separate identity, even its personality, while indicating too its dependence on a relationship with a creative counterpart" (626).

The novel is a multifaceted narrative evolving from the early-twentieth-century migration to New York of a seemingly uncomplicated southern couple. They appear to join the hundreds of thousands of black people who left rural areas for urban areas, the South for the North, between 1890 and 1930; that migration led in part to the Harlem Renaissance. Violet and Joe Trace are thus expecting to improve their economic condition just as other migrants so hoped. The unexpected stresses of the city, however, complicate their lives.

The narrator's voice introduces the three main characters, Violet, Joe and Dorcas and establishes the City in 1926 as the setting that determines the course of events in much the same way that the harmonic structure of a tonal musical composition proscribes the possibilities for melodic variation:

Do what you please in the City, it is there to back and frame you no matter what you do. And what goes on its blocks and lots and side streets is anything the strong can think of and the weak will admire. All you have to do is heed the design—the way it's laid out for you, considerate, mindful of where you want to go and what you might need tomorrow. (*Jazz* 8)

Although it is obvious that Violet, Joe and Dorcas bring altogether unique elements into the story, the narrator exercises unrelenting control over how much of their personal stories will be revealed. The result is a blend of interacting voices:

Paradoxically, the jazz narrator reflects both a single entity and multiple ones. It speaks in varying tones and rhythms that convey the presence of different voices in much the same way that a jazz performance is rendered through multiple instruments. The voices play off one another and individual differences are sometimes apparent. At the same time, the voices are blended within the text to give the impression of a single entity. (Eckhard 13)

The opening section for the second narrator begins at the bottom of page nine. While the majority of the correctives to the initial presentation of Joe and Violet occur throughout the text, the presentation of their response to the presence of Dorcas, the dead girl's photograph in their home, is corrected by the second narrator without reference or attention pointed to the erroneous conclusion of the first. The first narrator claims that "both [Violet] and Joe looked at [the picture] in bewilderment" (*Jazz* 6). The second narrator, however, provides both Joe and Violet's differing perspectives of the photo, and the setting and motives for their viewing of it. "If the tiptoeer is Joe Trace [...] then the face stares at him without hope or regret [...] Her face is calm, generous and sweet. But if the tiptoeer is Violet the photograph is not that at all. The girl's face looks greedy, haughty and very lazy" (12). It is significant that one of the earliest indications of the questionable reliability of the first narrator centers on Violet and Joe's perspectives and responses to the photograph of Dorcas, Joe's murdered mistress. Whereas the first narrator assumes that both Joe and Violet share the same response to it, 'bewilderment,' the reality of their varied interpretations of her face, Joe's reading of the photograph as "calm, generous and sweet," and Violet's view of it as "greedy, haughty and very lazy," indicate the misunderstandings possible in the interpretation of a photographic image (12).

Each voice in the book, including the narrator's, gives readers a different perspective of Dorcas. Violet, "who never knew the girl, only her picture and the personality she invented for her based on careful investigations," see Dorcas as both a rival and a daughter (*Jazz* 28). For Joe,

Dorcas is his lover, “his necessary thing for three months of nights. He remembers his memories of her. [...] he minds her death, is so sorry about it, but minded more the possibility of his memory failing to conjure up the dearness” (28). The narrator describes Dorcas as having a questionable reputation: “I’ve always believed that girl was a pack of lies. I could tell by her walk her underclothes were beyond her years, even if her dress wasn’t” (72). But in contrast and complement to these readings, Dorcas’ own words give readers a picture of a immature but typical young woman, who is concerned with relatively superficial things: “Joe didn’t care what kind of woman I was. He should have. I cared. I wanted to have a personality and with Acton I’m getting one. I have a look now. What pencil-thin eyebrows do for my face is a dream” (190). Her peer Felice describes Dorcas as a brave person who was willing to stand up her friend: “When some nasty mouth hollered [...] we stuck our tongues out and put our fingers in our noses to shut them up. But if that didn’t work we’d lay into them. [...] it felt good fighting those girls with Dorcas. She was never afraid and we had the best times” (201). Each one of these excerpts, and there are many more, tells readers more about Dorcas. She is a much more complicated person than the narrator would have readers believe, and she means something different to each of the characters. Rather than being presented with an ‘accurate’ picture of the character by a narrator, readers learn more about Dorcas from the other characters and the most when all of the voices are considered.

This early concentration on the distinction between the two narrators’ readings of the Trace’s responses to Dorcas’ photograph, evokes the import of another photograph; the photograph of the young lady “shot by her sweetheart at a party” the sight of which inspired Morrison to write the book, *Jazz* (Van Der Zee 84). Viewed in the manuscript for *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, “Morrison protected the seedling of this story line” of a young lady who would not reveal the identity of her assailant; “Tomorrow, yes, I’ll tell you tomorrow she said” (Gates 53). The character of Dorcas in the text parallels that of the anonymous young lady. Although knowingly wounded by Joe’s silent weapon, Dorcas refuses to reveal his identity or to be taken to the hospital: “They need me to say his name so they can go after him. Take away his sample case with Rochelle and Bernadine and Faye inside. I know his name but Mama won’t tell” (*Jazz* 193).

The narrator of Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* describes the plot of the character Joe Trace’s life. Similar to the superficial reading of the first narrator, both Joe and Violet are initially consumed with their physical attraction to each other. While their libidinous response is typical for new lovers, they never seem to mature past that point into a deeper knowing of each other or to an emotional intimacy which matches their physical ardor. Hence, Violet is ignorant of the reasons for Joe’s eventual migration to the City after fourteen years of refusal and resistance to its lure. “Violet never knew what it was that fired him up and made him want...to move to the City” (*Jazz* 107). Joe, in turn, is unaware of what causes Violet’s eventual silence and sexual withdrawal. “Over time her silences annoy [him], then puzzle him and finally depress him” (24).

Morrison chooses to depict both Violet and Joe as wounded souls with, “sadness at [their] center [...] the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home” (*Beloved* 140). The “desolation [...] at [their] center” (140) stems from the impact of a central trauma, an incident which occurred in childhood when they were “too young to say No thank you” (*Jazz* 211). All the other episodes that stem from the pain of this trauma, or somehow remind Joe and Violet of it, continually serve to debilitate them until they choose to confront it and talk it through. “Joe’s murder of his young girlfriend and Violet’s stabbing of the corpse as it awaits burial indicate the powerful eruption of their unresolved pasts into the present” (Matus 122). The darkness at the center of this trauma has no sound; it is silent, like the marchers. It therefore, constitutes the foundational rhythm, if you will the core layer of rhythm of the complexity of *Jazz*. “It lays underneath, holding up the looseness like a palm” (*Jazz* 60). Morrison calls this central trauma, “inside nothing” (38). Joe, unaware of Violet’s *inside nothing* believes that he alone carries an inner void, never sharing with Violet his own story. Thus, both Joe and Violet are in need of healing.

Abandoned at birth by his mother, Joe is adopted by the Williams family in response to the plea on his behalf for “one of the women to come...and take [him]” (*Jazz* 170). Although Joe is loved and well treated by the Williams, his stepmother “never pretend[s] that [Joe] is her natural child” (124). When he realizes, at a young age, the distinction that she makes between him and the other children, he asks about the whereabouts of his parents; she replies that his parents “disappeared without a trace” (125). However, when Henry Lestroy, a man known for his hunting skills, selects Joe and his stepbrother Victory, to be his apprentices, Joe is indirectly told the truth. His mother had not “disappeared without a trace;” she was, in fact, the local wild woman whom Joe and Victory “were speculating on what it would take to kill [...] if they happened on her” (*Jazz* 175). Henry Lestroy ended their banter with “low fire galvaniz [ing] his stare [...] then he looked right at Joe (not Victory) [...] You know, that woman is *somebody’s* mother and *somebody* ought to take care” (175).

Silent, lurking, present but absent, with a baby-girl laugh yet a woman, Wild is the personification of contradictions. Although Joe makes three attempts to connect with his mother, each one results in frustration due to her silent response. He only smells her presence during his first accidental encounter with his mother. Whereas Wild continues to remain hidden, the nearness of her breathing, during his second deliberate attempt encourages his request, “Is it you? Just say it [...] You my mother?” (178). Wild’s response, “indecent speechless lurking insanity,” infuriates Joe, driving his maniacal work habits (179). During Joe’s third and final attempt to connect with Wild, when he locates and enters her burrow, he finds her things all “mixed up” with Golden Gray’s solidifying in Joe the *inside nothing* he carries from then on (182). It is Wild’s “rejection of him [...] that marks Joe for life” (Mbalia 626).

Wild is the avatar of the *inside nothing* that Joe and Violet carry. A living picture of the assault on African-Americans in general, and women in particular, Wild bears on her body the “traces of bad things; like tobacco juice, brine, and a craftsman’s sense of play” (*Jazz* 171).

Silent but saturated with experiences, present but ignored as if absent, larger than life but unable to be confronted, the impact of the *inside nothing* in both Violet and Joe's lives becomes wild. Joe seeks to suppress his "speechless, lurking insanity" by working manically after his second encounter with his mother (179); but he also "bust(s) out just for the hell of it" by "shooting his unloaded shotgun at the leaves" near to where his mother was (181).

Since during their first meeting Violet and Joe talk from evening into to the early morning, they each unwittingly help each other through the most difficult portions of their day. Although Joe's pain drives him to activity, Violet's response to her mother's suicide drives her gradually to increasing depression and withdrawal. Insomnia spurred by her seeking to resist the pull of the well was draining her emotional resources. Though surrounded by family support, only her grandmother, True Belle's, urgings to earn money picking cotton during an abundant harvest, shook her from her home. It is during her time in Palestine that she meets and latches unto Joe; she then becomes, literally overnight, the aggressive, vocal, determined woman that Joe believes he knows. However, just as Joe pours himself into work to distract him from the pain he carries, Violet pours all of her into Joe determined to do and bear anything to be with him.

Dealt with as adults, faced together and not in isolation, Joe and Violet are able to handle and overcome sharecropping, beatings, death threats, and even extreme poverty at the initial stage of their City life, the "flesh-eating rats on West Fifty-third" (*Jazz* 127). Violet's silence and her "sleeping with a doll in her arms" has a far more significant impact on Joe than any other of his adult experiences and clearly demonstrates some tacit devastation in Violet (129).

After fourteen years of resisting all of the stories told them of the wonders of the City and why they should come, "abruptly, he changed his mind" (*Jazz* 106). He chooses to leave the area having, finally, abandoned all hope of ever connecting with his mother. On his third attempt to find her, he confronts the tangible reality of what he perceives as her rejection of him. She lives with someone else, the Golden Gray of True Belle's stories. "A green dress [...] a doll, a spindle, earrings [...] a pair of man's trousers with buttons of bone [...] a silk shirt, faded pale and creamy" (184). Rody points out that one of the purposes of Golden Gray's story is "to parody the absurd abstraction of narrative omniscience" (632). The story of Golden Gray is not only purely fictitious in its details, but one that is eventually revised by the narrator himself: "Now I have to think this through, carefully, even though I may be doomed to another misunderstanding. I have to do it and not break down. [...] I have to alter things" (*Jazz* 161). Jones supports the interpretation of Golden Gary's subplot: "the narrator is also consciously shaping the story, shaping it" (487).

Thus, Joe and Violet's departure from Virginia in 1906 marks his decision to bury any hope of the acquisition of his phantom dream. Giving away "every piece of his gear but one," his gun, Joe chose to lay aside the vestiges of his connection with the woods and place all of his hopes in the City, looking to it as his concrete hope (*Jazz* 107). Only after both Joe and Violet

have acquired some financial stability, through Violet's hairdressing and Joe's two jobs, Violet's personal cracks begin to appear. Joe did not know about Violet's "public craziness", but he is aware of her personal misery: her "mother-hunger" (108). "Violet was drowning in it, deep dreaming [...] just when her nipples had lost their point, mother-hunger had hit her like a hammer. Knocked her down and out" (108). "Mother-hunger" drives Violet to begin sleeping with a doll, "a present [...] she bought herself" and "hid [...] under the bed to take out in secret when it couldn't be helped" (108). She refuses to allow Joe near her and stops speaking to him, unsure of when "the anything-at-all" might "begin in her mouth" (23). She mistakenly assumes that "the business going on inside [her] was none of [her] business and none of Joe's either" (97). Violet's silence, stillness, and sexual withdrawal, occurring after they had acquired their vision of the American Dream, eventually break through Joe's emotional barriers.

Driven from his wife's side, primarily by her silence, Joe sees in Dorcas, the concrete vision of his long suppressed phantom hope. During the brief affair Joe has with Dorcas, he tells her "things he never told his wife" about the details of his *inside nothing* (*Jazz* 36). Dorcas fills his *inside nothing*, "just as he filled it for her, because she had it too" (38). When Dorcas, therefore, seeks to break off their relationship for a "chance to have Acton," a young man her age, Joe becomes desperate (189). Violet became anxious at the thought of losing Joe due to her "craziness," similarly Joe panics at the prospect of Dorcas' abandonment (22). Violet's resulting silence effected Joe's withdrawal and his obsessive attempts to reconcile with Dorcas that produce his creation of a permanent schism: he hunts Dorcas and kills her. Joe's murder of Dorcas and its aftermath, Violet's attack on Dorcas' dead body, is the main Misery of the novel.

Violet reaches out to Dorcas' aunt, Alice Manfred, because she "had to sit down somewhere [...] and thought [she] could do it [t]here. That [Alice] would let [her] and [she] did" (*Jazz* 82). What develops between them is the type of relationship that they both need in order to heal the *inside nothing* that they both carry; spiritual connection of platonic intimacy. Alice at first refuses this dialogue claiming "I don't have a thing to say to you. Not one thing"; and that refusal is not surprising, given that Violet is seen as a meaning-changer, somehow in control of the signifying process. She has gone from being Violet to 'Violent'—as the women on Lenox Avenue put it after her attack on Dorcas' dead body—from violated to violator, and by interrupting the funeral, she had "changed the whole point and meaning of it" (75). Alice's expectation is that Violet will behave in some way which corresponds to her worldview, in which Violet has been 'othered': that she will either apologize or "deliver some of her own evil" (80), for "Alice Manfred knew the kind of Negro" (79). In fact Violet does neither, but becomes "the only visitor [Alice] looked forward to" (83). Both Violet and Alice provide a space for each other where they are able to be and to be loved. "When Violet [...] came to visit something opened up [...] the thing was how Alice felt and talked in her company. Not like she did with other people [...] No apology or courtesy seemed required or necessary between them" (83). Violet's relationship with Alice serves to move her to the place in her journey that Joe had reached with Dorcas before her death; speaking about and confronting the pain of their

respective central traumas. Joe and Violet together are able to move together to the final phase of healing, sharing.

Although the expression of and confrontation with their respective central traumas was an essential portion of their journey to healing, both Joe and Violet needed to work out the problems in their own relationship to provide for each other what they sought in others; relational intimacy. Since Joe killed the one who helped him emote some of the pain he felt concerning his *inside nothing* and Alice Manfred moves back home, Joe and Violet need to move to the place where they could support each other. Communal aid comes in the form of Felice (a name that means 'happy'), Dorcas' best friend. She provides the view of Dorcas that both Violet and Joe need to move forward, and she serves as a mediator between them. She introduces the topics of conversation and asks the questions which illicit the type of responses they both need to hear from each other. And it is also with Felice that Joe and Violet share their gifts. Violet shares her clarity: "She doesn't lie Mrs. Trace. Nothing she says is a lie the way it is with most older people" (*Jazz* 205). And Joe his 'light': she sees in him the something that makes "[you] feel deep—as though the things [you] feel and think are important and different and [...] interesting" (206).

Even though at the novel's end they cleave to each other, they cling, in part, as a means of coping with the ongoing grief of their respective traumas. Joe continues to grieve over his murder of Dorcas and his maternal rejection: "Lying next to [Violet] [...] he sees through the glass darkness taking the shape of a shoulder with a thin line of blood. Slowly, slowly it forms itself into a bird with a blade of red on the wing" (*Jazz* 225). Violet also continues to struggle with the pain of dual losses; her mother's suicide and her father's abandonment: "Violet rests her hand on [Joe's] chest as though it were the sunlit rim of a well and down there somebody is gathering gifts [...] to distribute to them all" (225).

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## Writing as Resistance: A Study of Wilde's *De Profundis* and Aurobindo's *Tales of Prison Life*

Marie Josephine Aruna

Prison writing, a literary genre in itself, has often been considered as an act of political resistance. Oscar Wilde and Sri Aurobindo though belonging to different countries were implicated by the same power, that of Imperial England, but were incarcerated for various reasons. Wilde was imprisoned for his outrageous behavior of openly exhibiting his gay sexuality while his Indian counterpart was sentenced for his supposed involvement in a political conspiracy against the British Raj. Another marked difference between the two literary pieces is that *De Profundis* was penned by Wilde during his tenure in the Reading Gaol whereas *Tales of prison life* was born after Aurobindo's release from the Alipore Jail. However, as creative writers, the two men refused to succumb to the external power that was bent upon destroying them both physically and mentally, rather they turned inward into their being indulging in a sole-searching spiritual exercise. That which started off as writing resistance, ultimately led the two men towards the sublime heights of wholesome transformation and realization of the Godhead, from whence they drew their inner strength. Both Oscar Wilde as well as Aurobindo were meted out the severest of punishment, that of solitary confinement capable of breaking up the spirit of a person due to mental isolation, lack of light, lack of proper food and water, including lack of human company. This study is an attempt to offer the range and width of the nature of their experience and expression in the solitary cell which urged them towards writing, a means that enables to resist and subvert power from within.

Sri Aurobindo wrote his *Tales of Prison Life* in retrospect, so that he has been able to envisage the greater purpose of his prison life and therefore begins his essays saying, that in spite of being confined for a whole year in a solitary cell with no human connection, almost like a caged animal-

And when I would re-enter the world of activity it would not be the old familiar Aurobindo Ghose. Rather it would be a new being, a new character, intellect, life, mind, embarking upon a new course of action that would come out of the ashram at Alipore... It would have been more appropriate to speak of a year's living in a forest, in an ashram or hermitage ... The only result of the wrath of the British Government was that I found God. (1-2)

To Aurobindo, then, after only a short period of a wavering mind that questioned the reason for his worldly sufferings, the larger purpose of Vasudeva is revealed to his more mature mind. For Wilde, on the other hand, suffering is dreadful, immobile and paralyzing. It is characterized by infinity contributing to a sickening situation –

With us, prison makes a man a pariah. I, and such as I am, have hardly any right to air and sun...To revisit the glimpses of the moon is not for us. Our very children are taken away. Those lovely links with humanity are broken. We are doomed to be solitary... (*De Profundis*)

Both Men make reference to their noble birth, though Wilde confesses with candour that he himself was responsible for his downfall, that he ruined his position in the world as a symbol of the art and culture of his age. He is remorseful right from the beginning of his essay thereby seeking refuge in humility. He who was acknowledged as ‘the lord of language’ writes –

What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character...I ceased to be lord over myself...I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility. (*De Profundis*)

Solitary confinement has not turned him insane, but to confess with astonishing frankness the hidden truths about his wayward life and thereafter to accept and acknowledge that to surrender in humility to the infinite Christ is the means to defend himself against the Crown and also the feeling of bitterness against the world. When suffering renders an ordinary man helpless that drives him to understand life itself as meaningless, realization dawns on Wilde that even his suffering is not without meaning. That the last hidden quality of his nature remains to be humility is a means to the treasure that urges him towards self-discovery, ‘the starting point for a fresh development’. He concedes that this realization has come at the most appropriate moment in his life as he says, “It could not have come before, nor later... one cannot acquire it, except by surrendering everything that one has. It is only when one has lost all things, that one knows that one possesses it” (*De Profundis*).

Sri Aurobindo expresses a similar feeling when he writes about the rude sense of deprivation that was thrust on him by the British Government.

But hereby bound to the wheels of an iron law, subservient to the whim of others, one had to live deprived of every other contact. According to the proverb, one who can stand solitude is either a god or brute, it is a discipline quite beyond the power of men. (*Tales of Prison Life 40*)

He realizes that god was teaching him a few lessons. One was to make him understand the state of mind in which prisoners condemned to solitary cells are forced

towards insanity, and therefore to reform the prison system towards humane approach. The second lesson that Aurobindo was to learn would be to attain mental poise that would remain unperturbed even for twenty years of solitude. And the last most important purpose was to make him realize that “complete self-surrender (Atma – Samarpana)” would lead to perfection and realization of the Lord. From then on, Aurobindo remained untouched by the sorrows of solitary imprisonment, as he points out, “The sufferings seemed as fragile as water drops on a lotus leaf” (*Tales of Prison Life* 43). He therefore firmly believes that God has deliberately brought about such a situation or experience that in turn transforms him through the extraordinary power of prayer.

For sometime Wilde wallows in self-pity arriving at the conclusion that his is a lost battle, as there is no religion that might come to his help. He professes that he would rather commence a new creed –the ‘confraternity of the faithless’. He is dejected because reason or logic too does not help him. Wilde gradually allows acceptance of change and contemplates on the ‘ethical evolution of character’. He writes,

I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes shredded into oakum till one’s fingertips grow dull with pain, the menial offices with which each day begins and finishes ... the dreadful dress that makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame–each and all of these things I have to transform into a spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into spiritualizing of the soul. (*De Profundis*)

He mentions casually about the two great turning points in his life. One, when his father sent him to oxford, which brought him glory and fame in the literary world and the next was when he is sent to prison, where he learns the lesson of suffering which is no more a mystery as preached by clergymen but rather a revelation. Sorrow, according to him is the supreme emotion that man is capable of; for it is only in suffering that the soul of man could attain perfection. He begins the day by going on his knees and washing the floor of his cell. For sometime prison life with its ‘endless privations and restrictions’ had made him rebellious. Rather than break his heart, it turns his heart into a stone. He soon realizes that “the mood of rebellion closes up the channels of the soul, and shuts out the airs of heaven” (*De Profundis*). In the passing phases of his life he had tasted every kind of pleasure –“I threw the pearls of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes. I live on honey comb”. But just as he had tasted one kind of pleasure, he had to taste the other half of the secrets that the garden of life had to offer. At this juncture, he sees an

intimate and immediate connection between the life of Christ and the life of the artist. He learns the lesson that it is sorrow that abides forever.

In talking of Christ, Wilde discusses at length on the sympathy and the nobility of carrying on His shoulders the sufferings of others as His own. In his Christ like acceptance of all his sufferings, Wilde in a humbled state, is able to perceive the soul, or the divine spirit in every other aspect of life. Sri Aurobindo's troubled mental listlessness caused him agony but in repeatedly reciting the mantras of the Upanishads sees god in every form. Just as Wilde as an artist observes or even searches for a mode of existence in which 'soul and body are one and indivisible' (*De Profundis*), and suggests of "a spirit dwelling in external things and making its raiment of earth and air", so does Aurobindo impose the idea of Brahma on all things he perceives –

Men, cows, ants, birds are moving, flying, singing,  
speaking, yet all is Nature's Play, behind all this is a great  
pure detached spirit rapt in a serene delight... it seemed  
God himself was standing under the tree, to play upon his  
lute of Delight... The manifestation of these emotions  
overpowered my whole body and mind... The hard cover  
of my life opened up and a spring of love for all creatures  
gushed from within... (*Tales of Prison Life* 43)

Unlike Wilde, Aurobindo describes in detail the court proceedings of his trial, of the witnesses, of the behaviour and attitude of the police, the magistrate and the lawyers; He remains unperturbed throughout the entire trial because of his faith in god with the understanding that he was brought into the prison house only for his own good. At one instance, he humorously draws comparisons from literature to describe the conduct of the case, -"Just as Holinshed and Plutarch had collected the material for Shakespeare's historical plays, and in the same manner the police had collected the material for this drama of a case. And Mr. Norton happened to be the Shakespeare of this play" (55). In looking at the entire situation with detachment, Aurobindo saves himself of the mental trauma that otherwise would have destroyed his spirit. In other words, Aurobindo took refuge in the humorous free play of his creative imagination. In recollecting his prison life, Aurobindo points out to the strange fact that in spite of the hardship that he underwent; he does not feel anger or sorrow but laughter. The thought about the odd prison uniform, the manner of treating him and his companions like thieves or murderers, "to keep them like animals in a cage, to give them food unfit for animals, to make them endure...thirst and hunger, sun, rain, cold...but ... I was not annoyed" (*Tales of Prison Life* 21). Whereas Wilde's writing involve more of self-introspection into his own person, however, he too expresses the desire to reform the prison system like Aurobindo – "The prison style is absolutely and entirely wrong. I would give anything to alter it when I go out" (*De Profundis*). At the same time, like Aurobindo, Wilde too does not fail to recognize the spirit of humanity that pervades

among other prisoners and prison officials, well beyond the totalitarian regime of the prison system. Both men do express similar feelings about this positive aspect of humanity, that prevent them from hating or carrying bitterness in their hearts once they are released from prison.

Like Wilde, Aurobindo too lays emphasis on self surrender –“There cannot be complete freedom unless we surrender ourselves to God, being fully free from desire and giving up egoism” (*Tales of Prison Life* 15). To take refuge in god has been his motto. His gradual submission to god gave him the right kind of vision. While Wilde’s thoughts are more oriented towards the meaning of the life of Christ and its relation to that of the artist and art as such, Aurobindo orients his yogic and spiritual expertise toward the freedom of his country along with its people. With Aurobindo’s yogic bent of mind, given his cultural background and spiritual training, he visualizes Vasudeva in a vivid and forceful expression. The high walls of the prison symbolized for him the presence of god’s abode. He describes his experience in such a way –

I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell,... It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my friend and lover... I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I look at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened soul and misused bodies (*Tales of Prison Life*, 11- 12).

In the beginning the agnostic and atheist in him ruled over him. But after his solitary confinement, trials and tribulations, Sri Aurobindo realizes Vasudeva who answers his doubts, doubts and questions of an agnostic and skeptic. In his one year of seclusion, Aurobindo obtained Spiritual enlightenment. He realized the supreme cosmic God had in all His splendour and beauty. He emerges as an enlightened yogi, acquiring a deeper perception of life and experience, enhanced by a spiritual understanding of things.

Oscar Wilde, on the other hand, probes into the significance of pain and sorrow, and after much deliberation chances upon Christ, the supreme example to be followed both in life and art. An atheist like Aurobindo, in his early years, Wilde gradually comes to understand about the power of love, of which Christ is the message. Once he understands that love and sorrow are two sides of the same God his attitude towards life and suffering changes. He has his mystic vision of Christ which he obtains after a conscious effort and constant striving. His mental development and evolution of character is a gradual process that inspired him to create *De Profundis*,

which served to re-establish his eminent position as an artist. He happened to find his lost glory. The intense beauty and the music of the words, the poetic imagery, and the flowery language of this prison composition, are all witness to his potential as an artist with true aesthetic sense.

Suffering, to both these writers, appears to be a mode of attaining perfection in one's life. Wilde in *De Profundis* and Aurobindo in *Tales of Prison Life*, both refer to the context where Christ takes children as examples for their elders to follow. It is interesting to note that the two men concede that children are closer to the kingdom of God. Wilde expresses his desire to write on two subjects one is Christ as the precursor of the romantic expression in life, the other is the artistic life considered in its relation to conduct. In His attitude to life, to people, to sorrow, to morality and in His capacity for love, Christ is made a romantic. Wilde writes that there is something unique about Christ and that he is an exception –“He is just like a work of art. He does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into his presence one becomes something” (*De Profundis*). Wilde sincerely hopes that his art in the future will be set on a deeper note, of greater unity of passion and directness of impulse. As he says, “not width but intensity is the true aim of modern art”. Wilde Aurobindo leave the prison a much enlightened man, Wilde is reconciled to his situation, accepts his sufferings as part of the purging up of his soul. Christ has made him realize that the spirit alone was of value. In all humility he concludes that it is only by going to prison he has understood the values of the soul, the qualities of love and suffering that can shape the spirit of man to perfection. He submits himself to nature towards the end, writing, “Nature whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide... she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole” (*De Profundis*).

Both Aurobindo and Oscar Wilde in their creativity have enjoyed absolute freedom of the mind, show resistance that with the help of imagination overcomes the claustrophobic and confining nature of the prison cell. They were able to wield the power of the pen over the power of law that judged and punished. Prison writing has awakened their souls to a deeper faith, both in man as well as in the Divine. The art of writing itself has helped them to get rid of the overwhelming despair and agony of being confined within four walls. Though physically incapacitated, their minds draw strength from their inner being with the help of its awakening to the vision of God. Their minds refuse to cow down to the imperial power, to the pain and humiliation inflicted upon their selves as is apparent from the references made by the two men to the prevailing conditions of the prison, they, however, emerge benefited in spirit and love through their writings. In constructing the history of the British system of punishment, they have inadvertently recorded their own version of the gross misuse of power of those in authority, from their own personal experience. Writing comes to their rescue, and unlike the other prisoners, Wilde and Aurobindo resist authority from

within in terms of writing, which is at once a source of liberation of the spirit as well as resistance of power.

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## **Power Grammar: A Paradigm for Literary Texts and Postcolonial Writings**

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“... power is present in the most delicate mechanisms of social exchange: not only in the State, in classes, in groups, but even in fashion, public opinion, entertainment, sports, news, family and private relations, and even in the liberating impulses which attempt to counteract it”. (Barthes 460)

### **I**

Power, as a term surfaced in people’s dialogues and speech or as a common word used here and there, in Robin Tolmach Lakoff’s words is:

... vibrant, the very word conjuring up images of strength, force, action. Whether positive or negative, those images are strong. Power is physical: it changes reality, it gets things done or undoes what exists. It creates effects that can be seen, felt, and measured. Power is the engine of the 747 that lifts the behemoth off the runway; it is the "plow that broke the plains"; the firing squad; the nuclear bomb under discussion at the conference table; the parent who can give or withhold the keys to the car; the boss who can hire or fire at whim. All of these operate to change reality for better or worse. We may admire power or resent it, but we can see its operations and feel its physical effects on us. (12)

Or it may be approached and appreciated linguistically as:

embodied in the lives of people with very real bodies saying things to each other, in their actual languaging, which includes uttering explanations, commands, dismissals, threats, promises as well as giving indications of acceptance, obedience, compliance, submission or agreement. (Krippendorff 101-132)

Thus it “arises in languaging, can be contested in languaging, can be overcome in languaging and is, thus, embodied in the languaging among real people”. (Ibid.) And consequently, in a language-based frame of mind, language “ represents power since perception, cognition, and social relations are all mediated by the discourses prevalent in culture.” (Baidon 87) Incidentally, power can be wielded over human beings as well as over dead matter or non-human things. In the modern world, many of the changes and transformations are the result of power over matter that in turn is the upshot of science. Power exerted on humans can be either directly, or by direct physical one over the body. The case in point is when one is imprisoned or killed, and then power is at work both

physically and directly. A body is, further, under power when punishment or reward is used as elements of inducement. One may also be influenced by the power over opinion for which propaganda is an appropriate example.

Sundry social organizations and institutes exert different forms of power depending on the target and the way of achieving exercise of power. The military and the police employ coercive power over the body while some commercial and economic institutes exercise power over individual by use of punishment and reward, or premium. Social organizations like churches, schools, hospitals, and political institutes tend to influence over opinion and to grapple with masses' gray-matter. Incidentally, one should notice that the law is another important derivation for power in communities. Therefore, power of the Law is the coercive power of the State having more complexities. Law is a set of regulations that is exercised by the State in order to deal with its own citizens.

The theory of the role of the State in the works of Liberalism usually views legislative power in terms of limitation on the State's ability to employ justifiable force regarding behavior justifications. Consequently, it does not conceive the exercise of power as coercive in nature, because power is limited by legality where to be justly exercised. On the other hand, liberals consider power as coercive that limits individuals and demarcates in all cases so that they may not freely plump for any proceedings. Power and authority are necessarily not synonymous. James Harrington (1611-1677), the seventeenth-century political philosopher, distinguishes *de facto* power meaning the possession of power as a matter of fact with *de jure* authority meaning authority by right or by means of justification. Harrington reveals that power without authority is a salient feature of the modern form of Government, corresponding the *de facto* possession of power by a sovereign, someone who finds it unnecessary to answer to the individuals and citizens falling under his or her jurisdiction so that s/he reigns without the authority of their approval or consent.

Incidentally, one can distinguish two typical forms of power run in the political history of human societies. One is traditional power and the other is naked power. Habit is a basic and fundamental force of traditional power so that it does not find it necessary to justify itself from time to time. This power is much or less under the shadow of religion or quasi-religious beliefs. It can also be called power of assent, for it is supported mostly by public opinion. Naked power usually employs military as its tool. Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great could change the course of history by their military powers and armies. The whole Roman Empire yielded to Christianity by the force of tyranny. This military power relies on wealth or fanaticism. With traditional and naked powers, there is sometimes revolutionary authority that is the demand of the majority of population. Furthermore, this revolutionary authority is not necessarily exercised by forms of naked power. It asks for the popular support than the military force or tyranny. The Reformation in Europe was successful in replacing the Catholic Church just by public assent than by force. The Chinese Republic was proclaimed in 1911, but the apathetic public did not

support parliamentary constitution so that some military governors brought unity to the country by the help of nationalism. Iranian Revolution in 1979 is an example of the revolutionary power that depended upon a large population of the country united by a new creed, sentiment, and desire.

Power of individuals can be distinguished from power of organization or institution, although the two are interrelated and joint. An individual gains power in one way, and an organization attains power in another way. A party may be on top of one community while some individuals of other parties control the public and exercise power over population. A prime minister selected by his political party might have acquired power within an organization but not the nation. Different forms of social and political organization give power to different types of individuals so that different states of society appear. One form of power of individual is the hereditary power. Here, incidentally, the admired and approval qualities are not acquired from outside but are from leisure and inevitable superiority. Monarchical and Aristocratic powers are examples of this hereditary power where qualities like king's divinity, blue-blooded aristocrat, courteous behavior, and knightly chivalry are emphasized. In our own age, plutocracy is largely hereditary against which some Socialists raise their voice and work.

In the course of history, as pointed out before, power took variegated forms and modes depending on power holders and the subjects over whom power was enacted. Returning back to earlier ages of human's life and career, one comes across two traditional powers widespread in man's communities and societies. Indeed, in order to come to terms to more modernistic and new-fangled configuration and silhouette of power, and to essay at unlocking the convoluted lines of power relations, an enquiry into the archives of human interactions and nature seem crucial. Incidentally, if Marx found wealth and Freud distinguished sex as key to human nature, power is transformed into a stimulus for not only man's nature but also for both wealth and sex as well. That is why in his meticulous searches and probes, Michel Foucault, the French prominent thinker, threw some archaeological and genealogical approaches to some social agencies and human habits. Therefore, although a study of some forms of earlier authorities seems old-fashioned for modern man, if not tautological, two seminal and vigorous forms of power should be touched upon; namely ecclesiastical and monarchical authorities. Interestingly, if a chessboard, of the famous pastime, is a microcosm of a big scenario for a battle where hierarchical powers of 'King' and 'Bishop' are in action, it signifies, initially and remarkably, the rooted loci of sovereignty circulated in epochs of human history, the realm of real life as well.

Generally, the echelons of both the king and the pastor have been in a volatile situation in power structures. There were occasions, however, when one arrived at a tendency to develop into the other. A king's desire to own both his sovereignty and sacredness and the clergyman's choice of ruling some provinces are the cases found in the history of man. The Caliph led Muslim's people and was also a religious figure in the

world of Islam. Today in Iran, the supreme leader of Shiite is a clergyman who is called Ayatollah, both responsible for the most important political and social decisions and for masses' spiritual problems.

In its most primitive shape, a priest, it is believed, to enjoy both religious and magical powers by the help of these strengths, was either able to create a disease or remove it. This so-called medicine man who was able to connect with some supernatural beings, whether by some magical spells or some religious words or hymns, is believed to do good or harm persons. Hence, later great religion commanders over the public had their development from this more simple form of suggestion and control over others. The priest caste could acquire class and power by the laity's respect for the wise and older members of the community. This is the case for those more old religions that are not derived from some founders, but, in fact, return back to the savage and primitive communities where the so-called priest caste was not obviously differentiated. Furthermore, with the passage of time and the development of societies, this class of religious figures occupied a specific rank and dignity among the populations, and consequently a substantial status in the community.

From eleventh to thirteenth centuries, in most of the European countries, it was the Pope who ruled and not the king. Within this time, the Church, being educated and informed, showed a higher civilization. The kings were busy with the feudal system and the threat of anarchy in the State. By preaching disdain for the mundane, the priests could achieve superiority over the monarch. Being wealthy and powerful, they were endowed with the public advocate and protection which gave them motives to vie with the kingly power. The reasons for this perhaps might be enumerated thus:

First, the Papacy was not hereditary, and was therefore not troubled with long minorities, as secular kingdoms were. A man could not easily rise to eminence in the Church except by piety, learning or statesmanship.... Secular sovereigns might happen to be able, but were often quite the reverse; moreover they had not the training in controlling their passions that ecclesiastics had. Repeatedly, kings got into difficulties from desire for divorce, which, being a matter for the Church, placed them at the mercy of the Pope. ... Another great strength of the Papacy was its impersonal continuity.... by far the greatest strength of the Church was the moral respect which it inspired. (Russell 51-52)

Hence, it is not a claim that in the course of history, the victory was mostly with the theological power than the secular one. Incidentally, it had been the king's prudence and forethought to voice a reverence for the ecclesiastics and to appeal to them at the time of quandaries. The substantial liaison between Ghajar kings and the clergymen in Iran proves the king's thoughtful policy in adopting such a decision to reinforce and fortify his monarchal pillars and to balance the power relations in the country.

As for king and the kingship's evolution, one should remember again the prehistoric and the primitive epoch of man's life. The king is one with the highest echelon on the top of the power's pyramid, and while having his most own will-power, the fate of his people, whether with legitimacy or none, is in his hands. He is the commander with a God-like figure who makes decisions about the substantial issues of nation or the country, at the time of war, peace or chaos. In the primitive societies, he may meet some sacredness so that his *mana* is so strong that no laity can look at him. In the present day, among some preposterous groups or guerillas, there is one commander-in-chief who is only visited by limited members for collecting decrees and orders; Mullah Mohammad Omar in the newly established belligerent military group of Taliban in Afghanistan is the case in point. Going back to the prehistoric eras, one views two secular and religious chiefs in the savage communities by whom, it is assumed, power balance is fulfilled like the Mikado in old Japan.

Before the establishment of a government and a supreme king, people's cardinal affairs were organized and regulated by some customs, and it was later that "migration and foreign invasion are powerful forces in the destruction of custom, and therefore in creating the need of government". (Russell 56) History acknowledges that kings were mostly usurpers or foreign invaders. That is why dynasties have short lives and do not last forever. Generally, the new king succeeds to the throne within some religious ceremonies so that it is legitimized by devotional agencies. Indeed, the pastoral power is confirmed, sustained, and secured in such crucial rituals. Whether kings voiced the want of an ecclesiastic or not, royalty viewed it as a cardinal support for the royal family. Charles I knew this fact and voiced it by 'No Bishop, no King'.

## II

"A Man can never be oblig'd in Conscience to submit to any Power, unless he can be satisfied who is the Person, who has a Right to Exercise that Power over him. If this were not so, there would be no distinction between Pirates and Lawful Princes, he that has Force is without any more ado to be obey'd, and Crowns and Scepters would become the Inheritance only of Violence and Rapine." (Locke 240)

Precursors to the Modern period who argued about the essence and nature of power in sociological discourses are political thinkers such as Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke (1632-1704), and Machiavelli (1469-1527) who discussed power and its attributes in details. Later thinkers commented on the ideas and works of these early theorists. For example, Clegg (1989) discusses with Hobbes and Locke to come across an account of power as capacities. It seems that the various approaches declared by Hobbes, Locke, and

Machiavelli and also later related definitions of more modern thinkers, all are an attempt to render an account of power corresponding in the construction of the social. Therefore, the works of these theoreticians can be marked as precursors of Modernity. Throughout their writings, Hobbes, Locke, and Machiavelli did not simply focus on definitions of power, rather they emphasized the results of power, its relation with subjects, issues connected with exercise of power, freedom, and responsibility. For Hobbes and Locke, the difference between subjectivities and the social, nature and passion, and man, most especially, as a social animal in a social formation are of vital significance.

For the first time in the seventeenth century, Hobbes commented on the issue of order and voiced that “all subjects exchange a degree of personal power of social stability in a social contact with the Sovereign”. (Westwood 8) According to Macpherson (1962), Hobbes endeavoured to think and write based on the religion, social, economic, and political issues of his time. As social philosopher, Hobbes used to be fanatical, extremist, and frankly speaking an atheist at the time when religious and moral issues were not questioned. For him, the social does not merely refer to the sovereign or the concept of order but also with the problem of civil society. Hobbes’s political theory is not a very consistent one. His theory is a reference to the citizenry in early capitalism i.e., “a collection of human atoms that struggle daily for survival in a world where there is a scarcity of material goods”. (Skirbekk 187) He reveals that the state exists for the individuals and that without the citizens it has no value. Hobbes may not be called a liberal if liberalism is meant to support tolerance. Hence, there is the possibility to trace liberalism back to Locke (Latin: *libertas*, ‘freedom’). If liberalism is defined in terms of the notions like individual, contract, and state, not by moral values, then Hobbes might be judged as a predecessor of Liberalism. In other words, Liberalism (liberalist) deals with individual, contract, and state while liberality (liberal) attends to moral and positive attitude in favor of tolerance and juridical freedom. For that reason, Hobbes can be called a ‘liberalist’, not a liberal, while Locke can be envisaged as both a liberalist and a liberal. Based on these definitions and terminology, one can trace some interesting connections between ideologies at different stages of Modernity. Broadly speaking, the first stage included early capitalism marked by a hard struggle for survival and the need for a monarch (Hobbes’s thoughts). Next stage came across a more established capitalism in which the citizens think of inviolable rights *vis-à-vis* the Sovereign or the absolute King (Locke’s idea). The last stage copes with an established private capitalism and laissez-faire liberalism (Adam Smith’s notion). In all these three phases of liberalism, individual and the state are viewed as synonymous, but a changing view is present in the human nature, that is from self-preservation, through inviolable rights, to pleasure and profit.

Power as right and capacity results in the necessity of a Government. Therefore, Government is constituted based on some people’s and organization’s expectations to observe the operation and practice of some laws. The rest of the community obeys these laws, enacted by some political members, where most of the citizens consent on the

holders of the power. But consent alone is not enough for the efficiency of a sovereign power. It requires the right and the capacity as supplements in order to be effective and trustworthy. According to Locke, a right that is achieved through some obligations and pressures will lead to coercion. In fact, such a political power is not invoked by right so that the consequences would be tyranny and despotism. Locke also reveals 'Law of Opinion or Reputation' that is:

A dispersed form of social regulation independent of direct central control...the idea of such a dispersed form of regulation underlies both Lukes' and critical theory's arguments concerning an illegitimate and insidious power that affects the very thoughts and desires of its victims, thereby preventing them, and the society in which they live, from attaining the condition in which social life may be properly governed on the basis of their consent. (Hindess 140)

In his book *The Prince* (1513), Machiavelli deals with ethnography of power as it is built and re-built in the system of relations in the palace. It is not absolute and does not rely on the prince or monarch. Power is employed to increase and highlight those strategies that produce a wider scope of action. Machiavelli offers us an important part of the exercise of power, which is the role of violence through military metaphors. Machiavelli's theory is a doctrine of the mechanics of Government. He presupposes that man is an egotistical creature who has a full desire for things and power. As resources become limited, conflict is inevitable. Because of the individual's demand for protection against the aggression and invasion of others, the State is constituted. Anarchy is on the rise when law is not enforced efficiently; therefore, it is the task of all absolute rulers to provide security for the people. Rulers should not forget that human beings are evil and they must be rigid and cynical to protect people's lives and properties. Machiavelli makes a distinction between two groups, one who works to gain power and the other who has already gained power. He regarded the ancient Roman republic and Switzerland in his day as examples of pure and uncorrupted ones where people governed themselves. But he views Italy as a society where a state should be created. In such a society, a strong and rigid Prince seemed necessary. Machiavelli's notion of power and its exercise are not immoral or amoral but are moral in so far as the aim is to hinder chaos. Therefore, the goal is a powerful and proper state or the best possible one where citizens can trust the Prince.

While Aristotle regarded politics and ethics as a unit, Machiavelli viewed politics and ethics as different concepts; for him the end justifies the means in politics. These means are manipulative and can be beyond moral evaluation but the ultimate goal is to achieve peace and order. According to Machiavelli, it is the Prince's will which reveals law and morality and the ultimate aim is political stability. His belief of manipulative politics brought him notoriety in later ages. Some men belong to the government interpreted Machiavelli's doctrine of politics as manipulation, as justifying limitless

displays of power; Mussolini is an example. Machiavelli's treatment of 'ends' and 'means', it appears, has prompted even some Greek philosophers and Christian theologians or some Islamic fanatics to take it for granted that some harmful and immoral actions (means) might lead on to other desirable ends.

Among Hobbes, Locke, and Machiavelli, it seems that little credibility should be given to Machiavelli as a theorist of power. Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), and Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), and *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) give us an account of freedom and responsibility and some sketches of power and its exercise. Hobbes observed a strategic deal between the subjects and the sovereign in which freedom is exchanged among subjects for the sake of security. As for violence, Hobbes explained its threat being an aspect of the human condition and nature. According to Barry Hindess, Hobbes distinguished the variability of power and its heterogeneity but was unable to recognize the importance of this for the formulation of power. Hindess judged that "...by interpreting power as an underlying essence of effectiveness, Hobbes (and for too many of his success) is able to acknowledge the heterogeneity of sources of power without recognizing the significance of that heterogeneity". (141) Dealing with the concept of the social, these three thinkers could render some essential notions. Hobbes's judgment of a social contract in which collectivity is viewed beyond the individual and Machiavelli's account of ethnography of power all put the individual in relations to others. Arguing the concept of the social good, Locke could come across the issues of laws, rights, and responsibilities. Being empiricists, all these precursors to the modern sociology were able to insist on the complexities of power and also on its differentiations. Furthermore, they were successful in portraying the two faces of the individual i.e., 'social man' and 'natural man'. It was their treatment of these conceptions of human nature, whether 'violent' in the case of Hobbes or 'wicked' in the case of Machiavelli, that prepared grounds for later discussions on reason and on man as a rational creature.

France of the 1700s witnessed some political and philosophical alterations. In the war between the supporters of the nobility and the clergy and those of the Enlightenment, the victory was with the latter for whom the individual, reason, and progress were the major slogans. However, there were some objections against these notions at that time. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a serious campaigner who showed his negative reaction to Enlightenment philosophy. Enlightenment philosophers emphasized and practiced a cultivation of feelings. The individual and self-interest were significant issues for the Enlightenment philosophers while for Rousseau the community and the general will were vital. Affirming 'return to nature', Rousseau viewed man as basically good and thought that evil originated in civilization. For him, civilization and sciences led the people to an artificial and degenerate life and also pervert the natural good in man.

As for individualism that runs from Hobbes through Locke and on to the French and British liberalists of the 1700s, Rousseau tended to defend religion, morality, and community against attempts to attribute all valid insight to the natural sciences. For

liberalists, individualism meant fully developed individual with self-interest, desires for profit and prosperity, property, and so on. They viewed all these prior to the development of the State. As state could protect private property, it was bound to be valued. Rousseau advanced a line of argumentation that followed the state of nature and ended in a social contract. Therefore, for Rousseau, reason and science are important as far as they come to help in the ordering of human affairs that in turn secure the general will. In fact, his ideas traced the concept of power not in terms of the individual but the genuine community which, it seems, was taken by others to introduce both the national state (Hitler), and the party state (Lenin) so that arbitrary rulers will impose their will as the general will. Hence, Rousseau's organic theory of society, emphasizing the ties between people and ignoring the institutions, leads to an irrational and romantic cultivation of community.

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## POILE SENGUPTA'S THUS SPAKE SHOORPANAKHA, SO SAID SHAKUNI AS A POSTMODERN TEXT

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### INTRODUCTION:

LITERARY CRITICISM AS SUCH PERHAPS BE CALLED  
THE ART OF RE-READING.

—Barbara Johnson

By mid-fifties the modernist tendency in literature has run its course, as it were. Modernism in the hands of Eliot, Joyce, Faulkner and their imitators had practically turned the pursuit of literature into a 'criticism industry' for the enlightened academics. With Modernist text like *The Wasteland* or *Ulysses*, with its invitation to enormous textual exegesis and New Criticism, for all its rejection of biographical and historical criticism, literature and criticism were increasingly becoming something especially meant for academic consumption and it intended to entertain less. Hence is the postwar artist's frustration with regard to Modernist art. The passing away of Modernism was mourned / celebrated by W.B. Yeats in 1919 in the following lines.

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...  
The best lack all convictions, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Leslie Fiedler (1982) would be a good representative who first coined the term Postmodernism. And his essay *Cross the border – Close that Gap: Post modernism* is still a good introduction to the subject. Edward Arnold (1992) argues that Modernism and Postmodernism give great prominence to fragmentation as a feature of 20<sup>th</sup> century art. The modernist laments fragmentation while the Postmodernist celebrates it. The current use of the term Postmodernism was used in 1930's by Jean Francois Lyotard in his essay the *Postmodern condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Lyotard's essay 'What is Postmodernism?' (1982) breaks the meta-narratives that purport to explain and reassure are really illusions, fostered in order to smother difference, opposition and plurality. Derridian Deconstruction, Lacanian Psychoanalytical Criticism and the Feminist Literary Criticism of the 1960s and later are the Postmodern support of Lyotardian petite-narratives.

Decline of faith in the key-stone ideals and ideas of the Enlightenment like liberty, truth, subjectivity, humanity, progress etc are the Postmodern out look which completely believes in fragmentation and plurality. Gyno-criticism and Gyno literature along with the minority and subaltern voices became an important postmodern phenomenon. Not only do the postmodern texts vary in form and content but postmodern outlook gives a new meaning and interpretation to the old and established renowned epics and texts.

**Poile Sengupta** was born in 1948 as Ambika Gopalakrishnan. She is one of the foremost Indian writers in English especially well known as a playwright and writer for children. In addition, Poile has been an accomplished actor on stage and in film (*The Outhouse*). She is the founder of Theatre Club, a Bangalore-based amateur theatre group. Thus *Spake Shoorpanakha, So Said Shakuni* (2001) is one of the six plays included in her book *Women Centre Stag: The Dramatist and the Play* (2010) in which, Poile Sengupta brings in the two villains from the two great Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata together at one platform in the modern world. Shakuni from Mahabharata, hated even today as the man who fanned the conflict and later led to war between Kauravas and Pandavas and Shoorpanakha from Ramayana, a villain who is more seen with ridicule and contempt because of which Sita was stolen by Ravana, Shoorpanakha's brother and there by led to the war between Rama and Ravana, meet in the modern age in an airport at the waiting lounge. The entire play is set in the airport, within the context of delayed flight and the threat of terrorism. During their talk with each other, another angle of their personality is brought out while also justifying their actions and blaming the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of their respective characters in the epics and by the people later. Infact both are victims and vengeance seekers and through out the play the theme of vengeance runs in both of them.

From the dramatic technique point of view, the play is highly innovative, for, the stage has the centre stage with two chairs, which is the acting area and the down stage with the left and the right two clearly defined areas. The down stage is in the full view of the audience, each of which holds the props and costumes needed for the action. What is more interesting is that it also has a make-up kit and a mirror so that make-up is done to the artists either by the make-up artistes or by the actors themselves on the stage itself. The director is also free to place chairs behind the acting area on the centre stage to simulate the airport waiting lounge and what ever happens behind, the actors are not to be disturbed. The very stage craft of the play is novel and postmodern in its approach, with the touch of the Brechtian model of Epic Theatre.

There are two characters in the play, the WOMAN and the MAN. They are not named and are dressed in contemporary travelling clothes. This is how the characters are universalized and belong to the past, present and of all times. The WOMAN has a bulging hand bag and a glossy magazine, while the MAN has a heavy brief case picked up from among the props down stage. The WOMAN sits very comfortably in the chair seriously examining the cover of the fashion magazine. From her appearance, her eagerness to hide her spectacles and the way she tries to read the magazine from up side down, it is clear that she does not know to read and write. The MAN tries to sit by her side and looks as if serious and dislikes every thing around him. The very erotic and feministic talk of the WOMAN makes him even more irritated. The language of the play is contemporary and postmodern and the idea of the occurrence of a bomb in the vicinity is floated in the beginning of the play by the WOMAN.

WOMAN: You know these people who've got late for the flight and they call and tell the airport that there is a bomb on the plane. And of course everybody knows it's a hoax but you can't take a chance, can you? You have to search the aircraft and everybody waiting. (248)

Both these characters strongly feel that they have been wrongly interpreted by history and they are made villainous by unfolding partial truths related to them. Both feel that they are innocent and they played an important role in the respective epics but are not given due importance in the epics; on the contrary they are portrayed as vicious, villainous and neglected. Both the characters are with anger and vengeance to undo the injustice by history and prove their innocence. The MAN and the WOMAN feel that even in the contemporary era they are similarly exploited and neglected and hence find a parallel to the epic characters of Shakuni and Shoorpanakha. In fact, the MAN carries a bomb in order to take revenge. They come down to the down stage and pickup from the props so as to make them look like the epic figures. This type of stage craft, transformation of characters on the stage where the characters move continuously from present to the past and vice-versa reminds the audience of Salman Rushdie's magic realism. Like Rabindranath Tagore (as in *Chitra*) and Girish Karnad (as in *Yayati*) mythology is perfectly blended with the contemporary situation. The play rather is a retelling of the epics in a contemporary situation with the help of two characters who are the icons of the two minor but villainous characters from the respective epics, who move continuously between the past and present. This very idea is postmodern in its origin.

The WOMAN first divulges her identity as Shoorpanakha with the words 'It's my story. (Pause.) I was her. (255). She narrates the incident that was responsible for the Epic to commence. While Rama, Sita and Lakhshmana were in the forest, it is Shoorpanakha who expresses her love and sexual desire for Rama first and then to Lakshmana, but both the brothers refuse her.

WOMAN: You know what they did to me...the two brothers...they laughed. Laughed at me. They teased me. Mocked me. The older one said, ask my brother...he might want you...the younger one said...I can't marry without my brother's consent...ask him...They tossed me this way and that, as if...as if I did not deserve any more respect. As if I were a broken plaything. (261)

The ridicule of the two brothers and the chopping off her nose, ears and breasts raged Shoorpanakha who says that 'I wanted love...just a little love...for a little while.'(262). Her brother Ravana was filled with anger and went to take revenge for her sake, but soon 'fell in love with Sita and took her away to his palace' (269) and as a result the epic turned around the triangle of Rama, Sita and Ravana and finally ended with the death of Ravana. In this entire epic, Shoorpanakha remains as a villain and she feels that the epic/history did not give her justice and so she wants to take revenge.

WOMAN: What was Shoorpanakha's crime? That she approached a man with sexual desire?

Shoorpanakha merely wanted love. (277)

They assaulted a defenseless woman. (278)

Since then Shoorpanakha wanted revenge on history and on people; she also wanted a justified place to be given to her. The MAN joins the WOMAN and says, 'I wanted revenge too. Hot...bloody...fanged revenge.' (262). The MAN identifies himself with Shakuni, the villainous character from Mahabharata and announces, 'I am an illusionist. Like you.' (263) Long before Drutarashtra married Shakuni's sister Gandhari, the Kuru soldiers defeated the Gandhara princes, of whom Shakuni was the youngest. The Kurus imprisoned the Gandhara princes and fed them all with a handful of grains. The brothers fed their youngest brother, Shakuni with all the grains and they died one after another in front of him. Shakuni was filled with revenge for the Kurus, but when he was released, he was very surprised to see the blind Kuru prince, Drutharashtra getting married to his own sister, Gandhari, who willingly blinded herself for the sake of husband, by wearing 'a dark, thick, bloody bandage over her eyes' (265). As Shakuni was destined to take revenge on the Kuru clan, he accompanied his sister to Hastinapur and pretended to be a friend of the Kurus.

MAN: When you want revenge, you should be completely focussed...every part of you must plan the revenge. (269)

: I pretended I was the friend of the Kurus...that I was on their side. (269)

: But when plotting revenge, nothing else is important...not my nephews...not me...Finally...not even my sister...I wanted to turn everything to dust. Dust and ashes. (269)

To play the game of chance, i.e., the game of dice with Pandavas was also according to the plan of Shakuni. Shakuni played on behalf of the Kurus and he doctored the dice as the dice was made of his brothers' bones, naturally the Kurus won and the Pandavas were easily defeated. Shakuni started the war and got the Pandava brothers to kill all the Kurus.

MAN: It was all part of my plan anyway. The five brothers and the wife were exiled for thirteen years and they left city as the crowds wailed... But I did not let my bloody nephews forget their hate. I coaxed their hatred...fed it...I inflamed it and finally there was war. (271)

WOMAN: I started a war too. But it was not fought for my sake. (271)

MAN: I felt that Shakuni hadn't been given his due.....

...I realised that he was a victim. (276)

WOMAN: Like Shoorpanakha.

The revenge motto brings both the characters together. While the WOMAN feels that Shoorpanakha merely wanted love and she was not only disappointed but neglected by history, the MAN feels that the second epic was only because of the Aryan greed, their striking race superiority and their arrogance like a blood thirsty sword where Shakuni played an important role but not given due place in history.

The MAN and the WOMAN in modern times also are the sufferers still. The WOMAN still doesn't get true love for which she has been searching for centuries. The MAN's land, in the modern times, has been torn apart and his brother has been taken away by branding him to be an informer and killed him later. His thirteen year old sister has also been kidnapped, raped and killed. Hence the MAN decides to take revenge by exploding the bomb at the airport.

WOMAN: Love. Hate. Bomb. All four-letter words. (279)

Sengupta has finely blended the modern terrorism with the old revenge. By making the marginal characters of the epic to be the important and emphasizing, Sengupta brings out the central place for the subalterns. The dramatist has finely fused the past and the present; the illusion of the modern characters with the epic characters; the marginal and the minor characters of Shoorpanakha from Ramayana and Shakuni from Mahabharata to dominate the entire drama where both are filled with the feeling of injustice not only in the respective epics but in the recent times; and their revenge to be exercised in the world with bomb blasting is the postmodern way of looking at the epics. The skillful handling of the plot, merging of the two epics, the domination of the plot by the minor characters of the epics, the blending of reality of the modern times with the illusion of the past, the continuous movement of the characters between present and past and the modern use of the language by the characters adds to the stunning effect of the play. The play abandons the nostalgia of the epics for the 'one and all' and realizes the intervention at the micro and local level in the Lyotardian sense. Both the characters are consumable, in which the medium becomes the message, and truth is just another illusion in a Baudrillardian dictum. If the postmodern age is full of simulations and the 'loss of the real', the text represents a typical postmodern condition.

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## Marginality Vs Spirituality: A Thematic Review of Tagore's Play *Chandalika*

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A Brahma-Hindu Rabindranath Tagore had a lasting regard for the Buddha. The rational and humanistic aspects of the teachings of the Buddha had attracted the creative genius of Tagore since his earlier days. "Only once in his life, said Rabindra Nath, did he feel like prostrating himself before an image and that was when he saw the Buddha at Gaya" (Maksud Syed). He found the Buddhist principle of man's social equality particularly alluring to his own concept of 'divinity in man'. *Chandalika* is a dramatic expression of this ideology. The play is a visual presentation of the age-old struggle of the marginalized section of Indian society to attain the status of equality. It is based on a Buddhist legend associated with one of the Buddha's disciples named Ananda. In this legend, Tagore found readymade material for the propagation of this idea of equality and humanism through an intense conflict between marginality and spirituality. The play is also a criticism of the worst vice of the Vedic religion, namely, casteism. John Wilson, in his celebrated work, *Indian Caste* Volume One, observes: "Buddhism in its most important social aspect was a reaction against Caste, the tyranny of which multitudes had begun to feel to be unbearable. . ." (Wilson, 1877: 278).

It is a short drama in two parts with just three characters – Prakriti, her Mother and Ananda. Prakriti and the mother represent the marginalized human world who are in conflict with the spiritual world of Ananda. The legendary Buddhist monk, Ananda, opens the blind and subjugated mind of Prakriti with a divine preaching of equality and makes her aware of her 'self'. Prakriti then becomes a symbol of revolt against this age-old malady of the Indian society. Soon, however, she oversteps the religious and ethical boundaries of the established social norms and desires to wed the very monk to prove her awakened worldly existence. Her mother, still under the spell of caste-suppression, fears the worst, but eventually yields to the entreaties of her daughter and tries to aid her cause by using her magical skills sacrificing her own life in the end. In the process, the inner life of these three characters becomes a battlefield of a conflict between the ethics of morality and worldly desires.

The play begins at the confrontation of Prakriti and her Mother over the topic of Ananda's inspiration of Prakriti as a living, breathing human being and not as an untouchable, despicable, socially neglect chandalini. His magical words – 'Give me water' – addressed to the frightened girl, significantly negate her orthodox sense of being an outcaste. A holy man asking for water from an untouchable was completely unheard of in those days. It was thought to be a violation of the social as well as religious code of conduct. To receive and to give food or water were sacrilegious for both – the monk and the untouchable. In the play, therefore, the 'water act' presents the untouchable's liberation from the unjust bondage of slavery of the customary prison of marginality. A new human being full of vitality, exuberance and revolt from this oppressive custom is born.

The enlightened mind of Prakriti now refuses to accept the age-old humiliating cannons of Hindu religion. For her, “a religion that insults is a false religion. Everyone united to make me conform to a creed that blinds and gags” (Tagore, 1970: 154). Ananda’s preaching, brings a sea-change in her attitude and she feels awakened to a new life – a life where she is no Chandal but a human being on par with the world, even with the holy man. She argues with her mother: “Plenty of slaves are born of royal blood, but *I* am no slave; plenty of Chandals are born of Brahmin families, but *I* am no Chandal” (152). Dr. Ambedkar, the modern social reformer and messiah of the downtrodden, is once said to have remarked: ‘Make aware the slave of his slavery, and he would revolt’. Similar thing happens with the untouchable Prakriti. The ‘free mind’ now fires the emotions of love and desire for Ananda in her heart. Excited by the feelings of liberty and to prove her equal status, she revolts against the age-old shackles of the marginality put upon her ‘self’ by the religion and society. She now decides to get united with the very person who had liberated this ‘self’. The Tagore scholar, Agarwal, says: “Caste is a man-made institution confined to transitory ends. It can neither strengthen nor spoil the dignity of marriage” (Agarwal 87). Now, Prakriti demands for her coupling with the Buddhist hermit.

This is an outrageous idea for the moral and ethical cannons of the world since the Buddhist monks in their pursuit of ‘nirvana’ follow the vow of celibacy strictly and so are beyond the reach of any common individual in terms of worldly pleasures and familial obligations. The well-known Bangladeshi academic and religion scholar, Azizun Nahar Islam, rightly remarks: “The Buddha pointed the changes, vicissitudes and tragedies of life. He condemns the charms and temptations of body” (Islam 96). Accordingly, every Buddhist monk is bound by the divine vow of celibacy and strict morality. In turn, the common folks are in awe of their holiness and, therefore, respect their divinity. But, blindfolded by the awakened consciousness of liberty and overpowered by the freshly sprung need of equality and spiritual union, Prakriti oversteps this morality and ethical boundaries. That results in her spiritual tragedy in the end. K.R. Kripalani calls it a ‘tragedy of self-consciousness overreaching its limit’. (Tagore, 1970: 145). His further remarks regarding Chandalika’s reaction point out to the drawback in such extremes when he says: “But self-consciousness, like good wine, easily intoxicates, and it is difficult to control the dose and have just enough of it” (ibid.). In the play, Prakriti loses all sense of fear for the holiness and social and religious codes of conduct in her newly awakened state. Hence, she declares: “I fear nothing any longer, except to sink back again, to forget myself again, to enter again the house of darkness. *That* would be worse than death!” (153). In doing so, she forgets that Ananda is not an ordinary human being to exercise her passions upon but a divine mortal working for the cause of upliftment of human dignity. She says to her mother: “I’ll send my call into his soul, for him to hear. I am longing to give myself; it is like a pain at my heart” (152). This pain of longing for the beautiful and magnificent monk becomes even more intense when, later in the play during her second chance citing of him, Ananda, immersed in his inner spiritual self, totally ignores her presence and moves on chanting the hymn of Lord Buddha. That crash-lands her illusionary flight of worldly longing. It is a great shock to her sensitive mind. Her female ego gets crushed and the newly awakened woman feels deeply hurt. So in rage, she orders her mother to cast her ‘magical spell’ on the male heart of Ananda to force him to beg

for her conjugal company. That way she could satiate her feelings of revenge upon the entire manhood of the earth for neglecting the urge of the hitherto marginalized individual.

This is a sensational twist to the dramatic rendering of Ananda legend. It now becomes a wonderful and studious portrayal of female psychology by Tagore. The dramatist seems to be aware of the general belief that a woman, longing to give away everything to a man, can go to any extreme if her female pride is hurt. "Her extreme anxiety to possess the monk is the external manifestation of her latent desire to offer her best" (Agarwal 91). But Ananda is too far removed from these worldly desires to accept her offering. So Prakriti has no other options but to resort to violent means unacceptable in any religious or social ethics. She asserts: "If my longing can draw him here, and if that is a crime, then I will commit the crime. I care nothing for a code which holds only punishment, and no comfort" (Tagore, 1970: 155).

Therefore, Prakriti intends on rousing similar lust in her enamour's unresponsive heart. However, it is a mental torture for the mother to fulfill this unworldly demand of her daughter. Conventionally bound in the caste web of her orthodox temperament, she neither can commit such a religious and social sin to force a Buddhist monk to break his celibacy nor can she tolerate her only daughter's outrageous demand. She is afraid that it would bring a curse upon the unhappy girl and certain death for her own self, if committed the sin of forcing the holy monk to fornication. If undone halfway, even then, the spell would kill her. Therefore, she tries to instill some practical sense into the enraged head of Prakriti. But blind in revenge, the stubborn girl pays no heed and forces her mother to chant the 'magical spell' to bring Ananda full of lust to her.

The second part of the drama further extenuates this conflict. Prakriti's mother works her magical spell upon the meditating Ananda who is resting at his abode in his spiritual bliss. As intended, this magical spell does affect the holy man and torments his pure heart. Never in his religiously devoted life had such a thing happened to him. He tries furiously to shake off this 'desire for woman' but to no avail. The religious light which adorned his divinely beautiful face is now extinguished by the water of intense sexual urge. This yearning for woman by Ananda is entirely against the concept of Buddhism which forbids its Bhikshus to indulge in such worldly pleasures associated with ordinary folks. However, the 'magical pull' exercised by Prakriti's mother upon Ananda is so strong that, in this case, the Buddha's renowned ascetic practice is at stake. The control that Ananda tries to exercise upon his moral self recedes in the enormous power of the old woman's 'magic chants'. Therefore, unconsciously and helplessly, he trudges all the way from his Monsoon meditation abode at Vaisali to Prakriti's residence in Sravasti to cool his newly awakened sensuous feelings. That is a victory of Prakriti's marginalized womanhood against the rigid spiritual morals of the monk.

But this victory of the marginalized girl, however, remains short lived. When Ananda is at the threshold of her home, she is horrified at the change in him brought about by her mother's magic. The light, radiance and the shining purity has vanished from the beautiful and serene face of Ananda due to the overpowering sexual desire in him awakened by the mother's spell. He appears to her completely worn out, faded and without heavenly glow. He

does not even look like the revered monk whom she earnestly wanted to wed. In fact, he appeared like an animal twisted in womanly desire and under intense suffering due to the agony of spiritual pain which she did not anticipate. His ugly face strikes Prakriti beyond her belief. In shock, she realizes her mistake and the sin she had committed in her blind rage. Repenting, she stops her mother from further exercising the spell, begs forgiveness from Ananda and falls at his feet. As a consequence, the magical spell, which so far tormented the pure heart of the monk, breaks to normalcy. The mother, too, begging forgiveness, dies at the feet of the holy man. And Ananda returns, chanting the name of the most pure Buddha, to his usual self with untainted spirituality.

*Chandalika*, thus, looks like, apparently, a chronicle of the Buddha's disciple and his divinity. However, Tagore's introduction of the psychological revolt, against the age-old caste suppression overreaching its limits and resulting in tragedy, lends it a new meaning. S.R. Sharma writes:

Against the abomination of untouchability he, of course, wrote his moving play *Chandalika*. Since that abomination continues with us, in fact assuming formidable proportions not so infrequently, the play acquires new relevance. (Sharma .92).

No doubt, the Hindu concept of caste distinction based on one's birth is inhuman. It should be completely wiped out and equality tinged with humanity should be established. This is the order of the day. Yet, for the better functioning of the social order, some moral and ethical restraints should also be exercised by the newly awakened human beings. This could be the idea of Tagore in dramatizing the Ananda legend through *Chandalika*. In the words of K.R. Kripalani: ". . . a new consciousness after ages of suppression is overpowering and one learns restraint only after suffering" (Tagore, 1970: 145). That's what happens to the protagonist of *Chandalika*. Prakriti, the Chandal girl, in the end of her tragic experience, realises the necessity of ethical values in her new birth. Eventually, she corrects the mistake of overhauling the human ethics she had committed earlier and turns a better and spiritual woman in the end, an example worth to follow in the modern world full of casteist strife.

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## The Chronicle of an Unsung Hero of Jazz Music in Michael Ondaatje's

### *Coming through Slaughter*

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Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Jazz is regarded as a marginal music, enjoying neither the straightforward commerciality of rock and popular music, nor the levels of public support afforded to classical music and opera. The marginal status of jazz music is confirmed by its stereotypical socio-cultural associations. It is mainly colligated with the bordellos and prostitutes of New Orleans and to the alcoholics and the drug addicts of the nightclubs in New York and Los Angeles. New Orleans has been situated on a nexus of French, Spanish, and British territory. The control of all the three powers has created a truly unique environment for people of different cultural backgrounds to interact. The African culture is also bestowed to New Orleans as a result of the slave trade and the vortex of people from these four major cultures is the codependent factors in the creation of jazz.

*Coming through Slaughter* explicitly signals its participation in a larger movement to assimilate people of colour into history. The novel establishes the historical significance of previously marginalized groups by overthrowing the specifically white male individual from the heart of the narrative. Ondaatje fictionalises the tormented life and tragic death of the black American cornetist, Charles Buddy Bolden who is believed to have been one of the first and most powerful musicians to play what was subsequently called hard jazz and blues for dancing. Bolden inaugurated the rich musical transformations of African-American music across the country. He is known as a jazz originator with a good band but there is no extant recording of Bolden's music and so his reputation is staked only on the word of mouth. The novel coerces Bolden's exclusion from emerging histories of jazz and corroborates that his illiteracy as a musician and his place within an especially marginalized African-American community in New Orleans as the grounds for his exclusion from the history.

Buddy Bolden was born during the Civil War period in New Orleans on September 6, 1877 to Westmore and Alice Bolden. In the scenario of civil war, one's racial identity determined the course of their life. Bolden's mother and thousands of other slaves were allowed to choose only one path which is that of slavery. However, once when the rules were abolished they were allowed to choose their own paths. Bolden belonged to the first generation of blacks to be born after the abolition of slavery. He did not know or particularly care what the rules had been and saw life as an open challenge instead of being within a confined domain.

Ondaatje addresses the issue of literacy at the core of the black tradition. The slaves were forbidden by law from reading and writing. For enslaved African-Americans, literacy was a communal act, a political demonstration of resistance to oppression and of self-determination. Mutt Carey, Bud Scott, Happy Galloway were Bolden's teachers but he does not consider Hall

and Carey his “real teachers,” (99) because they taught him craft and “the real teachers never teach you craft” (99). Bolden did not like the trumpet’s usual role of providing the structure to the song. He sees this in Mutt Carey’s playing and expresses his dislike of it. Bolden explains that “the trumpet was usually the steel shoe you couldn’t get out of because you led the music and there was an end you had to get to” (99). He believes that if there is an end that must be achieved, there must also be a beginning and middle, and the trumpet player usually leads the band through this structure. Bolden feels that the role of a musician to evolve a structure in his music turns out to be a burden, something one is chained to and cannot move very far from it.

Hall taught Bolden the fundamentals of how to play and Carey taught him the strategies of how he should not play. Galloway on the other hand taught him how to improvise and how to be a jazz musician. Bolden explains that “Galloway taught me not craft but to play a mood of sound I would recognize and remember. Every note new and raw and chance. Never repeated” (99). Bolden learns from Galloway how to find a mood and improvise on it by shifting the emphasis on every note producing new notes that is different from Hall and Carey’s “steel shoe” (99) trumpets. Bolden feels that “[i]t was good when you listened to Galloway bubble underneath the others and come through slipping and squealing into neighborhoods that had nothing to do with the thumper tunes coming out of the rest” (99).

The rest of the musicians are like Carey and Hall provide the structure of the song by playing the same note the same way every time. In this way, they play “thumper tunes” (95) in contrast to Galloway who “bubble[s],” “slip[s],” and “squeal[s]” (95) into notes that no one could have anticipated by improvising every note. Bolden admires the fact that Galloway’s “guitar was much closer to the voice than the other instruments. It swallowed moods and kept three or four going at the same time which was what I wanted” (95). Bolden wants to play like Galloway reflecting multiple moods at the same time, a style that parallels his multi-faceted identity and contrasts the single “strong notes” (95) of those who play “thumper tunes” (95).

The crucial distinction between Bolden’s untutored music and that of his contemporary Robichaux who dominated the New Orleans music scene during Bolden’s day is that Robichaux’s music is based on the formal musical education. Coomi S. Vevaina remarks that “Bolden’s spontaneous, anarchic and transient music was an expression of his life” (57). He was “never professional in the brain” (8), and would “stop and talk to the crowd” (8). He “tore apart the plot ... hunting for the right accidental notes” (35). He was “formless ... tormented by order” (35). His music was “covered with scandal and incident and change ... was coarse and rough, immediate, dated in half an hour” (41). He “showed all the possibilities in the middle of the story” (41). He wanted people to “be able to come in where they pleased and leave when they pleased and somehow hear the germs of the start and all the possible endings at whatever point in the music that I had reached *then*” (98).

Ondaatje indicates that Bolden took full advantage of what life had to offer, for “[h]e did nothing but leap into the mass of changes and explore them and all the tiny facets so that eventually he was almost completely governed by fears of certainty” (9). He refused to “control the world of my music because I had no power over anything else that went on around me, in or

around my body” (104). He wants “to overcome this awful and stupid clarity” (105). Bolden confides that the life is full of possibilities, never settling on just one because to do so would limit the possibilities; it would mean being certain about the world around him, and he feared the limitations that such certainty would bring.

Bolden lived a life without any order. His detective friend, Webb realizes that Bolden pinned down the possibility of any limitations in life. He “never spoke of his past. Simply about which way to go for the next ten minutes” (36). Webb’s interview with Bolden’s neighbours makes him to ascertain that “[t]heir stories were like spokes on a rimless wheel ending in air. Buddy had lived a different life with every one of them” (64). Bolden privileges emotion and its inherent flux over form and its inherent stasis. His music was custom tailored to his audience and their environment: “If you never heard him play some place where the weather for instance could change the next series of notes – then you should never have heard him at all. He was never recorded” (35).

The inherent values of jazz, its apparent variability and unpredictability are diametrically opposed to Robichaux’s “clear forms” (97). Bolden criticizes Robichaux’s music by saying that “I loathed everything he stood for. He dominated his audiences. He put his emotions into patterns which a listening crowd had to follow” (97). As an artist Robichaux is keen in imposing a dominating structure and pattern and rigidly wants to control what his listeners must hear. Bolden’s music sharply contrasted with the perfect arches and “mechanistic pleasure” (97) of that of Robichaux. Despite the surface anarchy “there was a discipline” (35) in his music but his contemporaries fails to comprehend it. Robichaux being part of a written musical culture gives him an unearned advantage to find his way into the official history of jazz.

Bolden humorously teases the official history by divulging the life in a low life district amidst prostitutes, hustlers, gamblers, alcoholics and drug addicts: “stray facts, manic theories, and well-told lies” (19) in his magazine *The Cricket*. He was a cornetist, a barber by day who, in his spare time, edits and publishes the magazine from 1899 to 1905. He edits the information that he receives from his customers and police, “Bolden took all the thick facts and dropped them into his pail of sub-history” (19). His position as barber enables him to be exposed to a wealth of such information and sub-histories. The sub-history accompanies official history and those who make it: “a servant’s memoirs told everyone that a certain politician spent twenty minutes each morning deciding which shirt to wear” (19). The routine of so called decision-makers is thus ridiculed.

*The Cricket* reverberates Bolden’s obsession with the fear of mortality: “There were descriptions of referees slashed to death by fighting cocks, pigs taking off the hand of a farmer, the unfortunate heart attack of the ninety-year-old Miss Bandeen who opened her door one night to let in her cats and let in someone’s pet iguana instead” (19). The mysterious death of his wife’s mother, Isadora Duncan reminds Bolden of his mortality for the first time. Bolden realizes that incidentally, the dance performances of Isadora like those of Bolden’s music were never recorded. He realizes that to become immortal he must record his work. On the other hand, he is

dubious of the outcome of such recordings as his “children” (19) or his creations would lose their life and become static.

Bolden repeatedly outwits the mortal enemy and escapes all confinements. He is certain that fame would possess an unseen threat to the musician “reputation made the room narrower and narrower” (88). He ascertains that reputation and fame will stifle his effort and by “drinking in only your own recycled air” (88) he will gradually suffocate “full of [his] own echoes” (88). He vindicates this by saying that “I didn’t want to be a remnant, a ladder for others” (107). He is the bottom rung on the ladder of jazz history and anyone who plays jazz must step over him, just as Bolden did with his ancestors: “Climbing over them still with me in the sense I have tried all my life to avoid becoming them” (100). He acknowledges that his father was a famous musician during their times but after his death he slipped back into the memory:

My fathers were those who put their bodies over barbed wire. For me. To slide over into the region of hell. Through their sacrifices they seduced me into the game. They showed me their autographed pictures and they told me of the even bigger names all over the country. My father’s failing. Dead before they hit the wire. (99)

Bolden’s friendship with Bellocq on the contrary infuses in Bolden a heightened sense of self-consciousness which jeopardizes his ability to improvise. He encourages Bolden to develop a conscious mind that appreciates structure in music and life. Ondaatje reveals that

Bellocq had pushed his imagination into Buddy’s brain....They had talked for hours moving gradually off the edge of the social world. As Bellocq lived at the edge...he was at ease there and as Buddy did not he moved on past him like a naive explorer looking for footholds. Bellocq thought of this. Aware it was him who had tempted Buddy on . . . . Buddy who had once been enviably public. And then this small almost unnecessary friendship with Bellocq. (65)

Bolden’s meeting with Bellocq prompts him to leave Storyville and move to the Shell Beach. He feels the destructive impact of history “on top of his own life” (35). He therefore escapes the sure lanes of his life with Nora and his nightly performances during his stay with the Brewitts by remaining anonymous and alone in a white room with no history and no parading. During his two year sojourn at the Brewitts, Bolden does not play his Cornet once and, in fact, forsakes all his musical affiliations. His detective friend, Webb finds Bolden at the home of Jaelin and Robin Brewitt. Webb convinces Bolden to return to Storyville and continue playing music, but before doing so Bolden takes practice at Webb’s cabin in Pontchartrain. During this time of total solitude, Bolden undergoes a complete transformation in his opinion of Robichaux’s playing. Bolden listens to Robichaux on the radio and says:

I hate to admit it but I enjoyed listening to the clear forms. Every note part of the large curve, so carefully patterned that for the first time I appreciated the possibilities of a mind moving ahead of the instruments in time and waiting with pleasure for them to catch up. I had never been aware of that mechanistic pleasure, that trust. (97)

Ironically, Bolden begins to admire the precision of Robichaux's form and the conscious nature of his music. Bolden finds comfort in the fact that there is a mind moving before the instruments, planning what will come next, which completely contradicts his earlier opinion of Robichaux as dominating his audience.

Bolden exhibits his appreciation of structure in music in his newfound appreciation for Robichaux. During his time at the cabin in Pontchartrain, Bolden also comes to appreciate structure in his life, as exemplified by the fact that he constructs a brief narrative of his life, namely, about how Webb interrupted his silence and dragged him back to play music: "Come back you said. All that music. I don't want that way anymore. There is this other path..." (106). Bolden had wanted to explore all the possibilities in the life but after his stay at the Brewitts, he clearly visualises one distinct path for himself and that path leads him away from the world of music. It was Bellocq's friendship that introduced Bolden to "this other path" (106) and the dominating personality of Webb tries to pull Bolden off the path Bellocq has started him on. Bellocq pulls Bolden out of the public world of jazz and improvisation into a solitary world of silence; Webb, on the other hand, pulls Bolden out of solitude back into the improvisational world of jazz.

The public moment of Buddy's private collapse occurs at the Liberty-Iberville parade when he plays the cornet for the first time since his return from the Brewitts. It is at this point that he takes a step past the boundary over the social edge and into himself. Once Bolden steps into the parade he takes over and eventually begins to play to the audience in general. Bolden and an unnamed woman in the crowd tunes completely with each other "the girl is alone now mirroring my throat in her lonely tired dance, the street silent but for us her tired breath I can hear for she's near me as I go round and round the Liberty-Iberville connect. Then silent" (138). Bolden continues playing:

"something's fallen in my body and I can't hear the music as I play it....She hitting each note with her body before it is even out so I know what I do through her. God this is what I wanted to play for, if no one else I always guessed there would be this, this mirror somewhere...." (138)

She mirrors the sound of his cornet with her body, while he mirrors the movement of her body with the sound of his cornet. In this way, they are both shifting and spontaneous, the woman clearly representing his ideal audience and the experience the peak of Bolden's career. The two continue to feed off of each other, reaching a frenzied pace, as indicated by Bolden: "it comes up flooding past my heart in a mad parade,...it is into the cornet, god can't stop god can't stop it can't stop the air the red force...god I can't choke it the music still pouring in a roughness I've never hit, watch it *listen it listen* it, can't see I can't see....can't see" (139).

Bolden eventually collapses during the march with a serious hemorrhage linked to bursting of blood vessels in his neck. The throat from which the air is pushed through the cornet and into the audience has been severed: "You see I had an operation on my throat. You see I had a salvation on my throat" (139). The stomach, once a place where ideas could ferment to challenge an existing order, and the mouth, which would voice the new free sounds were

disconnected. He becomes increasingly erratic and violent, he was taken to the House of Detention and there he undergoes a surgery for his neck injury and was soon afterwards incarcerated in an asylum for the insane.

The climactic parade scene describes the role of audience participation, creative impulse and artistic vision in the musical live-performance. The parade mirrors the ideal performance where Bolden draws from the response of his roaring and dancing audience and gradually the “boundary of crowd” (137) dissolves and moves free. The parade thus reflects the live recording of a historical event where the personified audience takes an active part in negotiating the notes which become both live event and history. Bolden’s march from sanity to insanity thereby epitomizes his procession from mortality to immortality.

The official reports and chronicles of Bolden contrasts sharply with the real truth within which they are embedded. Ondaatje interrogates the tendency of official accounts to force a label on Bolden as a “Paranoid Type” (142) and “Hyperactive Individual” (148) in the segments entitled “Charles ‘Buddy’ Bolden” (141), the “Interview with Lionel Gremillion at East Louisiana State Hospital” (148), and “Selections from *A Brief History of East Louisiana State Hospital* by Lionel Gremillion” (143). Ondaatje resists the authoritative tone of the source texts by securing a place for Bolden in jazz history. Willie Cornish says:

Then everyone was becoming famous. Jazz was now history. The library people were doing recording and interviews. They didn’t care who it was that they talked just got them talking. Like Amacker, Woodman, Porteous, anybody. They didn’t ask what happened to his wife, his children, and no one knew about the Brewitts. All I had of Buddy was the picture here. (157)

In *Coming through Slaughter*, Ondaatje distinguishes between conventional history and unrecorded accounts of events: “there is little recorded history, though tales . . . come down to us in fragments” (2). Sally Bachner adumbrates, “the Jazz that Bolden is enlisted to personify can hardly be separated from the lives of the people in Storyville. Storyville and Bolden’s music share a rawness and marginality that confer authenticity to both by virtue of their resistance to the respectable monumentalization that the historicization of jazz has entailed”. Ondaatje by exploring Bolden’s lifelong struggle against the closure of “wax history [and] electronic history” (35) avows that Bolden has shown them new possibilities for jazz musicians by influencing the generation of musicians through his legacy.

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## Self as Narrative in *The Narrator: A Novel*: A Narratological Perspective

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*The Narrator: A Novel* is a mishmash of several stories woven together and presented to us from view-point of several writer-narrators or character- narrators. The narrative opens with a horrifying, strange and magical phenomenon in which the principal narrator of the story, Rahul witnesses an emanation from his mouth that gradually takes a human shape. The ghostly figure calls himself Badrinath Dhanda who wants to write a story for a film but cannot because he is uneducated. He has come to meet him (Rahul Pattwardhan, a lecturer of English at Asafia University) to write his story for him. With obvious hesitation as Rahul who possess more complex schizophrenic desire to write a novel (creative schizophrenia whom he deliberately attribute to his more darker and libidinal alter ego Baddy) but like Badri is unable to do so for a different reason- belief in literalism and disciplined truth- agrees to compose for him. In the course of the narration of a typical Bollywoodian script of *Manpasand*, Rahul (to the readers) and Badri (to Rahul) tell their autobiographies- their birth, upbringing, education, profession, libidinal pursuits, most often foregrounding their sexualities. The narrative of *The Narrators* is multilayered. Paranjape focuses on no single character. Rather, all the characters turn into participant narrators with a view to revise their (mis) representation in the story. The story of the novel can be divided into three main threads:

- The first is the story of Rahul Pattwardhan, a young lecturer at Asafia University Hyderabad who is suffering from creative schizophrenia since his childhood and, in the process has given birth to his libidinal alter ego, Baddy-the progenitor of all his 'sexploits' and early creativity.
- The second is the interwoven story of Badrinath Dhanda, a ghost-figure who comes out of/after a magical phenemenon of emanation Rahul undergoes and finally diaapperars leaving the characers and readers baffled. Badri's life story, in a way an autobiography, is full of filthy aspect (*Vibhatsa*) of sexuality.
- The final thread is that of the movie script, *Manpasand*. It was for this that Badri came to/emanated before Rahul and disappears into the middle of the story burdening Rahul to finish the script alone. It has a self-dependent rich woman Tara as the heroine who wants to find a good match for herself. She appoints a private detective Vilas to lok into the lives of her suitors but finds herself into a great trouble amidst the mafias. Finally, this is Vilas who comes to her rescue after which she marries to him. This melodramatic story contains all the movie massala of Bollywood. Furthermore, this is the most interesting and technical section of the novel in which Tara complicates the issues of narrative representation with her journey from 'reel' life to 'real' life of her creator Badri.

Critics might dub the novel pornographic declaring that the prurient will enjoy this novel better--there's sex all around, in all its variations of softness and crudity--straight, hetero, incest, sodomy, mental adultery, extramarital relationships, child abuse, voluptuousness and pure love alike. I too agree that the readers' encounter with the text will be a highly charged one in which scenes after scenes revel in the excess of eroticism or sexual aberrations. However, this is not merely an erotic or romantic novel dealing with sex of which much is fairly explicit. Paranjape deliberately tries to make the story erotic and he has a purpose in his mind. Therefore to ignore and debunk the novel only on the ground that it contains unnecessary and obsessive sexual explicitness would be fallacious as it would deny the writer and the work the literary recognition and achievement it deserves. The novelist is self-conscious of his pornographic project and its consequences. He sees these 'sexual aberrations' very natural but finds them repressed, forbidden and conflicting with the bourgeoisie 'censor' that is pushing them back in unconscious as these do not fit in society's standards of morality and propriety. The novel can be seen as a liberator of libidinal fantasies and "vile bodies". And, of course, its effort is to include all variations on the matter of sex, a subject of much modern hilarity and hatred, has a very serious sub-text that is pre-consciously realized by many modern men and women. Paranjape makes his point very clear when the readers find Badri proclaiming:

...Sex is one area in which the modern man is most confused and complexed. That's because sex offers the easiest escape from the painful confines of the self...we keep wishing to prolong it, to hold on to it, to get it for ever. We think that somehow our formula's failed; otherwise we'd have reached that pinnacle of the experience...This other side to sex, the selfish, violent, irrational, and painful side, is brought out into the open here. Some people are likely to wonder why not a single sexual encounter here is beautiful, elevating, happy. Well, why should it be that way? The rest of the world is busy glorifying and mystifying sex; why should it bother anybody if the uglier, but perhaps more real, side of sex is also exposed now and then, not in some social welfare report, but in fiction? (*The Narrators: A Novel*: 1995:254)

Paranjape, just like Freud, seems to believe that the creativity wells up from unconscious drives (id which is the repository of repressed sexual and other unwanted libidinal desires) which are always conflict with social standards of morality (superego). The artist (ego) has special power to negotiate these insatiable demands of id and censoring dynamics of super-ego. This model of id, superego and ego will be very useful to resolve the conflict of the identity of the narrators. Rahul is an artist who is caught between the incessant sexual drives of Baddy and the morally constraining, tutored nature of his goody. The conflict between Baddy(id) and Goody(superego) is so destructive that Rahul has developed schizophrenia. And, here emanates Badri (ego of the artist) who allows the artist Rahul to overcome the conflict and repressions. Badri, similar to the functioning of ego, manages to mediate the transgressive demands of Baddy and the limits imposed by goody. The script *Manpasand* he narrates to Rahul which is finished by Rahul, in a way, shows the special ability of the artist to shift the original libidinal drives from their sexual orientations to non-sexual higher goal (a movie script). The result is a 'fantasied wish-

fulfillment' for the artist Rahul and a mode that releases the tensions of his schizophrenic self opening "the way back to reality", to his wife and the baby.

But there is a subtle difference in the method of the libidinal release. Whereas in Freudian terminology, the artist uses the mechanisms of condensation, displacement, and symbolism to manifest the latent content in the manner acceptable to conscious mind (of the author and the reader), Paranjape prefers to Deleuze and Félix Guattarian model of the release of the libidinal energy. He also critiques Freudianism and re-eroticises the latent sexual desires of his narrator Rahul—all flows pass through freely, with no stopping, and no directing. He does not think sublimation or purging off the bodily desires necessary to cure schizophrenia of the narrator Rahul. Contrary to the neuroticising process of psychoanalysis, Paranjape re-eroticises Rahul freeing him for his libidinal pursuits in opposition to the repressive regimes of the scious which territorialise and control individual sexual desires from being allowed their freedom. Instead, he unchannels and 'deterritorialises' Rahul's desires to produce 'a body without organ' (the existense of Baddy and up to many extent Badri make the point more clear and stronger). following Deleuze and Félix Guattarian model of the schizoanalysis, Paranjape construes a fragmented, liberated, libidinal body of Rahul which casts of its socially regulated and subjectified circumstances of the existence. I would argue that despite the destructiveness of the mental illness, the schizophrenic condition of the narrator does provide a model for liberation from the restrictive binaries of goody and baddy. Here schizophrenia need not be taken as an illness but creatively positive mode of writing that gives an advantage to the writer/narrator otherwise limited, miserable and boring. Here schizophrenia means what Brian Massumi, in *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, summarizes as:

The "schizophrenia" that Deleuze and Guattari embrace is not a pathological condition. For them, the clinical schizophrenic's debilitating detachment from the world is a quelled attempt to engage it in imaginative ways. Schizophrenia as a positive process is inventive connection, *expansion rather than withdrawal(italics mine)*. Its twoness is a relay to a multiplicity. From one to another (and another...).... Not aimlessly. Experimentally. The relay in ideas is only effectively expansive if at every step it is also a relay away from ideas into action. Schizophrenia is the enlargement of life's limits through the pragmatic proliferation of concepts."

*Expansion* of Rahul into Baddy, Goody and Badri allows the greater limits of freedom to express himself, to create. Schizophrenia here becomes a rhetorical trope to write a fiction helping the narrator to become a writer by the end of the narrative.

### **The 'Funhouse' of Narration:**

In the process of telling the stories, the narrators of the novel, Rahul and Badri, examine and comment on the art of fiction writing, among other things, and seem to undermine the conventional and predictable nature of fiction. In the novel, Paranjape presents a narratological "funhouse," a dense maze that weaves in and out of plot, narration, and a self-conscious attention to the process of writing itself.

Telling a story is, for Paranjape, is highly self-conscious act. How to tell a story is as important as what to tell. How to write their stories is an unbearable anguish that both the two most important narrators, Rahul and Badri, suffer from in the novel. The untold stories within them are found, to the readers, splitting and killing their selves, most importantly in the case of Rahul. The schizophrenic split of Rahul selves into Baddy is the heightening of Rahul's frustrated aspirations to be a writer. Rahul has been aspiring to write a novel which is "intelligent in form, self-consciousness in technique....in a word, a novel born of jouissance, informed with jouissance, an image of jouissance(The Narrator:6-7)" but fails to write such a novel due to the limitations of his goody-goody, unlying nature (make up) and addiction for literalism. Similar to Rahul but unlike him, Badri's difficulty of writing his story is accentuated by his ignorance regarding the craft of fiction. Badri had not received any formal training in literature and knows nothing of modes and methods of story-telling. Rahul cannot write because he is too moral and literal while Badri also cannot write for want of sophistication and refinement of language. But once these two meet, the story *Manpasand* germinates which combines former's crafting art and latter's untempered imagination.

Self-conscious narrators of the novel frequently comment and call into question their own narratives to readers on what is happening in their stories while they are in the process of telling their tales. From the very beginning, Rahul self-reflexively comments on what kind of fiction he desires to create. He says:

If I were to write a novel, it wouldn't be one of those precious, ponderous, and profound tones in which nothing happens, the reading of which is an imposition, an onerous duty performed reluctantly, if diligently....Nor do I want to write a story which has lots of action, plenty of suspense, brilliant plotting, and, no doubt, an unexpected conclusion...but flat characters, pedestrian style, and no thematic value....the novel I want to write is intelligent in form, self-conscious in technique. It entertains without being superficial, moves without being boring and priggish....Innovative, even brash in telling....it wears a tint of the erotic....in a novel born of jouissance, informed with jouissance, an image of jouissance. A very desiree of a novel (6).

As we can see from this quotation, Rahul/ Paranjape formulates voices his ideas on the nature of the creative process in literature. He is modest in his ambitions and wholly conscious of the kind of fiction he is writing- with a tint of eroticism, flat characters, pedestrian style, and no thematic value, innovative, even brash in telling. On the part of the narrator/narrators, such a self-conscious 'meditation' on the methodology of the fiction-writing which investigates a theory of fiction through their practice of writing fiction formulates a 'dialogue on novel'. This is where

we inevitably come to think about the term *metafiction* that is “given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality (Waugh:2)”. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text” Metafictionality of *The Narrator* also stems from the fact that it strives to produce a new anti-novel kind of fiction which constantly displays the process of its own construction in the process of exploring the problematic relationship between fiction and reality. The peak of this metafictional self-reflexivity can be well discerned if one analyzes some final sections of the last part of the novel in which Rahul and Badri alternatively comment on the script of the movie *Manpasand*. Badri has his grouses against the ending of the novel and does not approve of the ‘straight’ end Rahul has given to the story. Instead he has his own alternate ‘gay’ version for the other half of the movie proposing the multiple endings for the novel. Calling into question the story Rahul has narrated to the readers, Badri charges Rahul for exploiting and malhandling him and his characters. He angrily remarks:

For starters, I think he should realize that the favourite shrine of Punjabis is Vaishno Devi, not Badrinath. He should have called me Devi Prasad Dhanda or some name like that. Then there is this problem of my parents dying on their way back from the shrine: that’s too cruel and is bound to offend the sentiment of the believers. My being abused by my uncle and cousin, too, might be unpalatable to many readers. They don’t think these things happen. My turning homosexual, though perfectly logical following my broken childhood and unsuccessful heterosexual relationships, is sure to disturb some readers...what may bother some people even more is my sudden disappearance...Badri appears from nowhere and disappears ....Throughout multiple interpretations are possible. Badri never existed; or both Badri and Baddy are the same person; or both Badri and Baddy exist but cancel each other...if I were to write my own story, I would have offered a more dramatic way of disposing of myself (*The Narrator*: 263).

Once again such intellectual self-consciousness and digressive contemplation on the part of the narrator, Badri, disturbs the rhythm of the story forcing the reader to dissociate himself from the ‘fictive’ story.

The juggling act between author, narrator, character, and reader becomes one of the fantastic performance of which the readers become a participant in the novel. Like a professional juggler, Paranjape leaves his readers extremely baffled and entertained with a bunch of "questions" regarding the narrators of the story and their relationship with the author and the readers. Paranjape has chosen to let several narrators tell their story and the story of the story from different points of view. Then he leaves it up to the reader to decide which narrator seems most reliable to him for the interpretation of the story. Further, like William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* in which Faulkner narrates the story from the first person view of multiple characters, Paranjape allows the narrators to present their story from first-person point of view bringing greater emphasis on the feelings, opinions, and perceptions of a particular character in a story, and on

how the character views the world and the views of other characters. Moresoever, as in *As I Lay Dying* wherein each chapter is devoted to the voice of a single character after whom it is titled, Paranjape also fashions his story in similar manner wherein narrators alternate their voices to tell their story and later comment on and revise it. Some final sections are also named after the narrators of the novel. Unreliability of both the narrators complicates the narratological issue of the novel. Unreliability of both the narrators wells up from two major difficulties of the reader-First, the writer has always kept the readers in confusion regarding the identity of the narrators. The identity of Badri is most susceptible as the readers are not in a position to decide whether he was a real person that exists or a hallucinatory figure that emanated on account of Rahul's schizophrenia and his dissociative split of the self into his other, Baddy. If Baddy is real wherefrom he came and whereto and why, all of sudden in the middle of the story, disappeared. He is delusionary as he says, "I am Badrinath Dhanda, alias Baddy, am the only true hero in this novel (278)" then how come he stays with Rahul as a living entity and more importantly, sends a letter to Rahul containing a cheque of Rs. 100001 and Blessings for forthcoming baby Patwardhan. The readers are always perturbed at this irritating reliability of Badri. In addition, Rahul is also schizophrenic and his account, too, can never be taken for granted. Second, both the narrators *cancel/suspend* each others story revealing that the other narrator has manipulated or fabricated the preceding story, thus forcing the reader to question their prior assumptions about the text. In this case the narrators' unreliability is never fully revealed but only hinted at, leaving the reader to wonder which of the narrator should be trusted and how the story should be interpreted. Such a tricky and manipulative manner of story-telling is further enhanced by the fact that the characters within the novel are found interrogating their creators. Rahul has suggestions for the original author of the story. He wants to make it more polyphonic, dialogic, open ended and mutivocal. He wants the original writer to rewrite and revise his characters. He says:

Will the real author of this book please stand up? I have a couple of suggestions to make to him. For instance, wouldn't it be a good idea to start a feedback column inside a novel?...What I have in mind, instead, is for the characters in the story to get back at the author....So, I, Rahul Patwardhan, lecturer in English at Asafia University, Hyderabad, the husband of Neha, the friend of Badrinath Dhanda, and the "other" of Baddy, would like a chance at rewriting my own character (246-7).

Further, Badri, too, is unhappy with his creator Rahul. Tara also transgresses the limits of narrative convention walking out of the movie script into the real life of his creator, Badri. Paranjape's use of these techniques is aimed at creating an unsettling and irrational aura for the reader in which the end result is a reader's participatory encounter with the text and he/she gathers the narrator's observations as well as the information presented by the text, and selectively makes what they will make meaning out of the text.

The other noteworthy feature of the novel's narratology is the choice of rare narratorial point of view. The point of view chosen by the novelist to narrate the events can be seen as an instance of *variable focalisation* (following Genette) as the different episodes of the story are told to us

through two main focalisers, Rahul and Badri. The narrators are both homodiegetic (when they are telling their own stories) and heterodiegetic (when they are writing the script of the movie *Manpasand*). While reviewing of the novel, Nitin *Jarandikar* writes of three narrative levels (borrowing from Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse*) present in the story- extradiegetic level (outside the text.), intradiegetic level (inside the text) and metadiegetic level (stories told by a character inside a story). Dividing the story into these three major narrative levels, he remarks:

- i. Extradiegetic level: Where Rahul Patwardhan narrates his personal experiences, his meetings with Badri, and the working out of the script, "Manpasand"
- ii. Intradiegetic level: where Badri Dhanda narrates his personal experiences to Rahul Patwardhan and to the real readers.
- iii. Metadiegetic levels: where the screenplay 'Manpasand' is unfolded to the real readers.

But to read the novel entirely on the model of available western theories, especially postmodern, would be partial. Without going into specifics, I will safely claim that the narrative appears to have a close affinity with the tradition of story-telling in India. In fact, the narrators have their own argument for calling a story born out of Indian tradition of story-telling. Badri, in this regard, comments:

If I were educated and knowledgeable like Rahul, I would immediately understand that this book belongs, at least, to the venerable tradition of Indian story telling. The Indian story is never a straightforward narrative, marching tidily from the very beginning, through the middle, to the end. Rather, it is like a labyrinth or the whorls of a flower. It is multilayered and multilinear. Indian stories are very conscious of their narrativity.... Once the pretext has been established, the narrative proceeds through multiple narrators, point of view, stories within stories, flashbacks, digressions, philosophical disquisitions, minor treatises on architecture, painting, music, dance, drama, archery, equitation and so on...." (274-5).

True to Badri's claims the narrative of the novel is also part of the continuing great tradition of story-telling in India. The whole novel consists of a series of interlinked but interpolated stories stretching and with breathless virtuosity, the narratives propel the reader to the lives of Rahul and Badri alternatively. The narrative consists of multiple narrators, stories within stories, digressions and multiple endings.

In brief, the narratology of the novel *The Narrator: A Novel* distinguishes it from the rest of the Indian novels written in English. The novel tends to be experimental, and breaks away with the conventional methods of story-telling used in Indian English Fiction. Through out the narrative, the readers notice that there is little attempt to create an illusion of realism or naturalism. It establishes its own conventions of narratology, a kind of anti-realist deterring the reader from identification with the characters, yet at the same time persuading him to participate. Some obvious features of the narrative include lack of an obvious plot; diffused episode; minimal

development of character; self-reflexivity; polyphony; innumerable experiments with language (vocabulary and syntax), punctuation; alternative endings and multiplicity of the narrators.

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## Evaluation of Nissim Ezekiel's *Hymns in Darkness* Through *Rasa* Theory

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*Rasa* theory basically examines various kinds of emotions, as well as the logic of their evocation or generation in a sympathetic reader, or how they are depicted, postulated and transmitted through a work of art. The principal objective of a creative writer is to portray emotions and subsidiary feelings which govern actions of a character. Literally *Rasa* means something to be tasted or savoured. Bharat Muni, the propounder of *Rasa* theory identified eight 'sthayibhavas' (permanent emotions) and thirty three 'vyabhicharins' (transitory or temporary feelings). The eight 'sthayins' – *Rati* (Love), *Hasa* (Humour), *Shoka* (Grief), *Krodh* (Wrath), *Utsaha* (Energy), *Bhaya* (Fright), *Jugupsa* (Disgust), *Vismaya* (Wonder) when they are nurtured by 'vyabhicharins' (discouragement, apprehension, envy, intoxication, weariness, indolence, depression, recollection, contentment, shame, unsteadiness, jubilation, agitation, stupor, pride, dejection, impatience, sleep or drowsiness, amnesia, coma, awakening, indignation, dissimulation, ferocity, self-assurance, malaise, insanity, death or dying experiences, fright, and deliberation), the particular *rasas* are generated. All eight 'sthayins' in the course of time generate particular corresponding *rasas*.

The ninth *Rasa* namely, *Santa*, is certainly a later addition lies in the beginning and in the end too. There has been great controversy over it. A majority of writers have accepted it. *Santa* implies the aesthetic experience of spiritual serenity. It is the state of bliss into which all other emotions subside. Abhinavagupta recognized and stabilized *Santa Rasa* in Sanskrit criticism. According to him, *Santa* is the chief and all other eight *rasas* are just transformations (*Vikaras*). *Santa* implies a state of calmness or tranquility where sympathetic mind enjoys final bliss or *Moksha*. Joys and sorrows have no meaning for him. That's why the *Vibhava* for this *rasa* is the knowledge of truth, detachment or purity of mind etc., *Anubhava* is self-control, meditation, universal sympathy and the like; while the *Vyabharibhava* is purity, firmness, thrill etc. *Sama* (right knowledge) is *Sthayibhava*. *Sama* is the state where one has complete control over his senses or desires. *Sama* is the primary requirement to have the state of bliss. In short, these *rasas* arise due to certain subjective and objective factors available in the text. With this conviction I have undertaken *Hymns in Darkness* to study in the light of *Rasa* theory.

"Hymns in Darkness" is the title poem of the volume **Hymns in Darkness** (1976). By common consents of the critics and the readers, it is the best poem from his pen. It marks, I feel, the acme of his poetic sensibility. The phrase "in Darkness" of the

poem is ambiguous. It in literal sense refers to the ignorance of fallen spirit - modern man. And the term “Hymns” do not refer to any sacred song of glorification addressed to God or gods. Instead it refers probably to the wild pursuits of the modern man. Here in the discussion, I use the phrase ‘modern man’ now and then; but it does not refer only some outside entity that excludes the poet. The poem is the sum-total of Ezekiel’s serious religious musings on life. By the use of the technique of the persona, the addressee and the distance, the poet confesses his own guilt in the process of ridiculing some of the common weaknesses of the modern man. The poem is difficult in its thought and structure. Its suggestive force makes it complex for the general reader.

The poem is developed in sixteen sections. I shall analyse each section, followed by the application of the *Rasa* doctrine.

The first stanza describes some weaknesses shared by all modern mankind. According to the poet, there is no connection between the ideal and the real aspect of modern man’s life. The modern man speaks a lot about the virtue called ‘humility’ but seldom practises it himself. It is the first casualty with the modern man. The modern man pretends to be thoughtful and intellectual, but unfortunately, this bargain proved him harmful:

He has exchanged the wisdom of youthfulness

for the follies of maturity.

What is lost is certain, what is gained

of dubious value.           (*Collected Poems*, p.217)

The modern man feels glorified in “self-esteem” but it has interrupted his natural growth. He doesn’t know how to be an ego-free person; otherwise he has been a happy creature. The modern man is burning like his own passion. His state of mind and spirit is compared by the poet to the hustle-bustle of the city. As the matter of fact, he does not know himself adequately. “All truths are outside him” so he remains mere a bundle of ignorances that “mock his activity”. He doesn’t know in real sense what he is doing.

In the poem, the poet refers to the discrepancy between the ideal and the real aspect of modern man’s life. It may evoke the emotion of *Hasya*, but the nature of the words used in the poem is serious and pregnant with abstract meanings. The seriousness, in a sense is apposite to the emotion of laughter.

Abhinavagupta, in his book *Abhinavabharati* explores possibilities of the various *Sthayibhavas* that can lead to *Santa* separately. About the *Sthayibhava* of *Hasya*, Abhinavagupta states:

... we find that a person attains to liberation if he realizes the oddity of everything in the world (Masson and Patwardhan, p.129).

In the light of above quotation, here is the ‘oddity’ of life that is realized and this holds the possibility of the disillusionment that can lead one to *Santa*.

By overall impressions, the poem suggests *Santa Rasa*. *Sama* is its *Sthayibhava*. The awareness of the discrepancy between the ideal and the real is, of course, resulted from the “*Vibhavas* such as knowledge of the truth, detachment, purity of mind etc.” (Abhinavagupta). As I have earlier said that the poem is the result of poet’s religious musings. So, his musings are the *Anubhavas*. *Alambana* is the addressee of the poem that is the modern man. *Ashraya* is the poet and the modern man’s life style. So, the disgust with the world (*Nirveda*) is the *Vyabharibhava*.

In the second section, the poet argues that the self-deception is the eloquent of modern human being. He lives in perpetual self-deception. To be “undeceived” is almost impossible. No immediate redemption looks in sight. The modern man has discovered too many things and with that he has come in the state of utter confusion. He is unable to identify a thing and its proper use. He has “too many keys that unlock no locks”. More knowledge, more confusion. He lives in the mechanical world where desires are satisfied artificially. On its outlook, it seems fanciful but it has, of course, deprived him of his youthfulness. The modern man speaks always keeping truth and falsehood side by side. His truth can not remain uncontaminated. The modern man always wants to be a leader. He only believes in being heard by the others. He views others with the eye of suspicion, the eye “in the centre of his forehead”. Such selfish nature of the modern man has rendered him a tiny creature, ‘a puny self’. This man always wants to exploit all powers of nature (both latent and manifest) for his betterment and advancement. He is quite regardless of other creatures living in the world. In this battle of exploitation, his all attempts get foiled each time. But, still he boasts of his knowledge and as such remains “self-deceived” throughout life.

Here again, the poet exposes the hollowness of modern man’s life. Nissim Ezekiel condemns such life. His condemnation of the modern man’s life style suggests his disgust with the world. He, in fact, by and by wants to know the myth of life. So, the second section evokes *Santa Rasa*.

In the third movement, Nissim Ezekiel exposes another casualty of modern man. He often harms himself by ignoring the truth. He properly knows the importance of the signs of God's existence but he is unable to follow the hints of those signs. The modern man is like a sot whom a single burning candle appears multiplied. He has no single aim of his life. Therefore, he has no "fixed star" for guidance. He can not face the truth of life boldly because he is a coward like Peeping Tom. He faces life from the windows only. And yet boasts of his manliness:

He is the man

full of his name.

-C.P., p. 218

In this section, Ezekiel again exposes the breach between abstract and practical. This oddity of modern man's life may lead one to disillusionment and hence to *Santa Rasa*.

The journey of exposing the shams and pretences of the modern man continues in the fourth stanza. He professes high ideals and principles but acts according to his preference and convenience. The modern man plays various roles but not faithfully. He is a mere symbol of disciple, guru, husband and father. He is not a true performer of these roles. To his wife, he is an impossible husband because he is not loyal and faithful to her. He is lustful. To his children, he is less than loving because he takes them as hindrances. But he never blames himself for all these discrepancies. Instead he blames destiny and circumstances.

In these four sections, Nissim Ezekiel brings the oddities of the modern man's life under the search-light. In all these, there is the possibility of laughter. According to Abhinavagupta, this emotion (laughter) like other seven emotions (dominant) can lead to the state of *Santa*. The realisation of the truth of modern man's life is *Alambana*. The poet's disgust with the world (*Nirveda*) is the *Vyabharibhava* and *Sthayibhava* as well.

In the fifth stanza the poet expresses astonishment over the lot of modern man. He has gained certainly a lot of knowledge but unfortunately he remains mere a bundle of ignorances. The poet wants to know why "so much light" is placed in fallen spirits. He (the poet) again expresses wonder at the tremendous courage given to the modern living-hell dwellers. The modern man negates "the voice of truth". Then, why was he forgiven, helped and comforted by Christ? He has lost faith in himself and tries to lean against others. This tendency of the modern man resulted in him total faithlessness which is his faith.

In the process of enumerating weaknesses of the modern man's life, Ezekiel expresses wonder at the modern man's destiny. So, here is clearly *Adbhuta Rasa*. But the emotion of wonder can lead to *Santa*, however, it is normally inimical to *Santa*. In this section, by all its impression, it may evoke disgust with the world. As Abhinava himself has accepted the possibility of *Santa* in the emotion of wonder. So, here is *Santa Rasa*.

In the sixth stanza the poet says with surprise:

How far a man may travel

In the wrong direction!

-C.P., p. 219

The modern man is complacent with his scientific knowledge which the poet calls "hindsight wisdom". The modern man has nothing to do with religious and moral learnings. The poet says that the modern man holds fast to the old and obsolete traditions. He never likes to question them. He wants to keep alive this "unredeemable relationships". He believes in scientific conclusions. He does not like to batter his mind in hundreds of thoughts regarding to religion and ethics: "To hell with all directions, old and new".

Here again the poet expresses the sense of nihilism that has covered all spheres of life. In this regard, the sense of nihilism holds the possibility of disillusionment with the world. So, here is *Santa Rasa*.

In the seventh hymn, the poet talks about spiritual barrenness in which the humanity is sunk. The poet describes a tarred road that appears bright after the rain. In fact, this is red-light road where sexual bargains are done. This spot is marked by dog-shit surrounded by "wet, green leaves/patterned flat" and a "ragged slippery near an open gutter" against which crows are striking with their beaks. It is the road where prostitutes come before modern man with their "breasts, thighs, buttocks / swinging / now towards / now away from him".

In this section, the poet describes an unpleasant spot (*Vibhava*) which is characterised in the poem by the images of "dog-shit" and a tattered slipper at which three crows are pecking. So, here is *Bibhatsa Rasa*. Its dominant emotion is disgust. The image of "dog-shit" surrounded by "wet-green leaves" and "ragged slipper" are the *Uddipana-Vibhavas*. The description by the poet is *Anubhava*. Thinking of tarred road and the other things (*Vitarkas*) are the *Vyabharibhavas*.

In the eighth section, the poet wants to convey the message that the modern man likes to progress through the ladder of self-love and vanity. The modern man invokes God “for power and stamina”. He finds his position shaky:

His house is built on rock.

It shakes in the wind.

*-C.P., p. 221*

The above lines suggest that this man has no secure household. There is no love-lost between wife and husband. His house is surrounded by a waste-land. In such situation, the modern man has nothing to depend upon except contemplating:

He sits alone and looks out of the window.

He contemplates the sources of his life.

*-C.P., p. 221*

This section evokes the emotion of *Santa*.

In the ninth stanza, the modern man’s carnal wishes get fulfilled which he has not attained in the previous section. This lustful modern man is rude and harsh to his wife:

Don’t, she says, do not,

conniving all the same.

short of tearing her clothes

he’s using all his force.

soon, he’s had what he wanted,

soft, warm and round.

*-C.P., p. 221*

Such relationship has no trace of genuineness. If there had been genuine love, his house would have been heavenly. In the absence of true love, his house has become truly a living hell. Though it appears pretty on its outward face.

Here in this section, *Srngara* is reversed into *Bibhatsa*. *Natya Sastra* (VI. 73) writes about *Bibhatsa*:

*Bibhatsa-rasa* arises from seeing something one does not like, from unpleasant smells, tastes, physical contacts, words and from many violent tremblings of the body (Masson and Parwardhan, p.55).

Disgust is *Sthayibhava*. The wrong-doings of the protagonist which are undesirable are the *Vibhavas*.

In the tenth section, the poet thinks about the essence of man. The poet says that the profession, age, height, colour are not real attributes of man. He is simply a man. They are important only in so far as they help in the understanding of his speech.

This section is neutral from the point of *Rasa* theory.

In the eleventh section, the poet describes God as the “Enemy” of mankind and “The absentee land lord” like ideologies that rule over people being itself absent. The poet blames Him for creating rifts and divisions in families, castes, communities, clubs and political parties. God victimises both the oppressor and the oppressed. It is religion that keeps young people under control and prevents them expressing themselves frankly and freely. Under the tyranny of “The Enemy” the modern man is rotting and losing all his vigor and originality.

Here, anger of the poet finds full expression. He calls God “Enemy”. So here is clearly *Raudra Rasa*. Anger is its *Sthayibhava*. *Alambana* is God or religion. The modern man’s feeling that he is rotting and losing is the *Anubhava*.

The twelfth section glorifies the virtue of darkness. The poet asks us not to curse darkness:

It’s a kind of perfection,  
while every light  
distorts the truth

-C.P., p. 223

This section is neutral from the framework of *Rasa* theory.

The thirteenth and the fourteenth section describe a man who remains happy even in the universal darkness. He feels joy by extending his service to all at the expense of his comfort. He is “a tireless social human being” who takes defeat and victory as a “twin brother” Contrary to this man, the poet finds himself grave and grim in his “little light”. The poet sees no hope in the life of a philanthropist.

This mankind-lover daily extends his service selflessly to the beggars, strangers and the foul-smelling populace of his native city. This man teaches the poet “to fear the five senses”. He (the philanthropist) has crossed the limit of worldliness. This baffles the poet very much.

In these both sections, the poet expresses surprise over the life-style of the philanthropist. But no dominant emotion is properly developed.

In the fifteenth section, the poet turns over the theme of death, the common lot of all creatures. The poet disapproves the life of the philanthropist terming it as a living-death because he is cut off all the senses. The poet says if the death is the common lot of all then we should not meddle with it. He (the poet) prefers quick and rapid death to the living-death of the philanthropists.

In the last section, the poet says that it is useless to console one self to know about the mystery of life and death. Since death is inevitable, belief and unbelief does not matter. So it is better to live in presence and try to know the secrets of unfathomable reality that reveals its enigma to a man gradually.

In the last four sections, the poet tries to know the secret of life and ultimately arrives at the conclusion that it is better to live in present and face the reality of life and time. It is the state of *Sama*. Overall, impressions of the poem suggest *Santa Rasa*. It is the ruling (*Angi*) *Rasa* of the poem. However, this conclusion may differ with the other readers.

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## THEME OF OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION: SKETCHES OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS BY ALICE WALKER IN *THE COLOR PURPLE*.

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*Well ye know  
What woman is, for none of woman born  
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe  
Which ever to the oppressed from the oppressors flow.*

*SHELLEY*

“The Revolt of Islam. A Poem in Twelve Cantos. Canto Eighth”

The year 1982 was taken by storm with the winning of the coveted Pulitzer Prize for the novel The Color Purple. The much acclaimed, writer is Alice Walker. In the history of Afro-American Literature, Alice Walker is not a mere name but a reality and has created history for her dominant themes. And one of the themes is, the theme of oppression and liberation in the female characters of her ‘magnum opus’ The Color Purple.

The female characters in Alice’s The Color Purple show their destiny in relation to God, the coloured woman’s position in relation to man, society, white people, financial freedom, sexual freedom, and identity.

In The Color Purple the religion of the black people takes centre stage: The black people have directness, a down-to-earth approach. They are honest and straight from their heart in their approach to religion. God is not a commodity, but friend and the best friend. Unlike the white people to whom religion, spirituality and God has been institutionalised. They worship God for their own selfish ends. Their love for God is need and commercialised and there is a stipulation that we can reach God only through the institution of Church. And over the years this Church does not accept black and the marginalised class have been pushed over the pale of the Church for one reason or another. So God for the black people is their very own and without any medium and they sometimes realise God to be existent in their very beings. They live and breathe with God without any external help or appendage.

The word ‘oppression’ cannot be compartmentalised like other words. Its root and destination begin from nowhere and ends nowhere thus giving us a range of literal, figurative, etymological, metaphorical and epistemological meanings to our understanding. Oppression can be in the form of armed struggle, economic disparity, racism, casteism, religious intolerance, slavery, lynching and other societal reservations, including gender bias.

The history of oppression has remained for ages and become more prominent with the advancement of human civilisation, social development, technological advancement, and

rationality used in a diverse field. The word 'Oppression' in Latin, means being weighed down with physical or mental distress and for centuries human beings with their guarded behavioral patterns have either been an agent of oppression or served as a catalyst. But the question lies whether human race alone is to be blamed for such an act or external factors together have crippled and strengthened the success rate of oppression. Physical, societal, economical, and political environment together give rise to the form of oppression as existing in societies, advanced or backward, where we live and interact and this gives rise to various modes of oppression. There are certain 'inequalities of race, ethnicity, class, colour, and particularly of gender' (On the Origin of Women's Oppression: Pat Brewer) that have flared the differences, distinctions and made the scars in class societies. "Our variants of socio-biology, genetic make up, evolutionary psychology, genes that determine our sexual behavior, oppression against women, seem to justify systems of exploitation, oppression, domination, class hatred and the like as something inescapable, unchangeable, and inevitable." (On the Origin of Women's Oppression: Pat Brewer)

In the foregoing paragraphs there is an attempt to explain the nature, origin and meaning of the term oppression. In The Color Purple, the female characters Celie, Nettie, Sophia, Squeak, Corrine all represent the microcosm in the macrocosm of the world of women in pain under the patriarchal subjugation and repression in a coloured segment of society which bears the stamp of male domination and patriarchy.

The story revolves round the central character Celie, the persona who plays a pivotal role and acts as a microcosm of oppression, physical and mental both, in the vast macrocosm of the repressed class. She is under fetters by man-made institutions like marriage and also the Church. But Celie after years of being weighed down for years breaks loose all fetters.

Her story starts when she is 14, stigmatised from birth for being born in a poor family. She loses her father. Her mother is bogged down in bed giving birth to multiple children in dirt and squalor and she cannot turn her mind on anything else. These ill-fated midnight's children become part of Celie's responsibilities. She herself is deprived of family love, care, attention and the food for the healthy growth of any child. Her worst curse is being a nigger child in a black family where love and care are far away cries especially if she is darkest of the lot and not fortunate to be a good daughter, and under the conspiracy of a step-father.

Celie's religion is that of a black one, where she is in direct communion with God. God is her very own, her father, her mother, best friend and most importantly her confidante. 'Celie fearfully heeds Alphonso's warning, as told by Ernece B. Kelly in "Paths to Liberation in Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1982)" 'not never tell anybody but God'.(60) She feels safe in the haven of God who appears to be white-skinned. Maimed physically through rape, scarred psychologically through inhuman and beastly treatment, Celie has no one in her life except her sister and friend, Nettie and perhaps also God in whom she can confide and disclose all her emotion.

In the progress of the story, we travel through Celie's intense trauma and inflicted scars and reach to the bedrock of her suffering. We get the slice of her life. Celie is the representative of

several women as found not only in Afro-American literature but also in literature of all other climes and if I am to expand the horizon she pictures the naked truth of uncountable oppressed women in several un 'civilised' societies. Her picture represents not merely a particular territory but is a universal story of all the oppressed women of the world.

Celie is not one of those fortunate ones to be born with a silver spoon in her mouth, but chosen by her *karma* or her 'actions' to be born in a nigger family with unhealthy and dark atmosphere prevailing in her life. The author makes it clear as the readers sail through first part of Celie's life. There is an interpretation closely related to Indian philosophy and religion in relation to Celie's nature of existence. Some critics have, introduced the concept of 'karma' to explain the darkness in her life.

While turning through the pages of the novel, and realizing the pain in Celie's life, one is reminded of the effects of *Karma* in one's life. "The concept of karma is part of the world view of many millions of people throughout the world. Many in western cultures or with a Christian upbringing have incorporated a notion of karma. The Christian concept of reaping what you sow from Galatians 6:7 can be considered equivalent to Karma. According to karma, performing positive actions results in a good condition in one's experience, whereas a negative action results in a bad effect. The effects may be seen immediately or delayed. Delay can be until later in the present life or in the next. Thus, meritorious acts may mean rebirth into a higher station, such as a superior human or a godlike being, while evil acts result in rebirth as a human living in less desirable circumstances, or as a lower animal."(Wikipedia).

In Western New Age and Theosophy, the same concept of *Karma* was accepted and given stand in the Occidental world .The reading (construal) of *Karma* suggests it to be some sort of luck associated with virtue i.e. if one does evil or wrong things, one can expect detrimental effects and bad luck. This idea is allied to the Neopagan *Law of Return* or *Threefold Law*, which states that 'what goes around comes around'. To add to this there is also the metaphysical idea which I believe is more rational, that states *Karma* is energy of life and not some responsive creature capable of making verdict. *Karma* or action is not all about good and bad doings, because to the civilised and sensible society that would sound too critical, but to emphasise on the early Sanskrit word 'oorja'(energy), it is all about good or bad, constructive or unconstructive, where unconstructive energy can incorporate things not usually seen as bad like 'sadness and fear' and nstructive energy can be caused by being inspired and offering solution to problems and emanating love and indulging in moral acts.

If without being biased, I am to analyse the character of Celie, did *Karma* or action of her previous birth have any effect on her present birth; the one which anguishes the readers who equally feels tormented like Celie in the wave of emotions. The Christian evaluation to a man's good or bad life is directly dependent on his *Karma* (*as ye sow so ye reap*) as found from the definition in 'Wikipedia' and popularised in the Western philosophy. In Western New Age and Theology, it is initially seen that the negative karmic influence is seen in the first half of Celie's life, where negative energy has incorporated sadness and fear in her early life and in the later half Celie has got solution to her problems and more profoundly radiated love through Shug,

Nettie, Harpo, Sophia even to some extent Mr. Albert. If *karma* suggests good action and be stationed well in the next birth or as a lower animal (in case of a reverse action), than to Celie rebirth took in this life only, rebirth from inhumane oppression, financial dependence, sexual duress.

Yes, Celie, the oppressed soul was finally liberated and this liberation was through the 'other', 'challenging', and 'defying the norms of the society' Blues cabaret singer Shug Avery. In other words Shug brought in a new chapter in her life that gave the central character a new meaning in her bare existence. She learnt the art of expressing her sexual freedom, financial freedom, psychological freedom through Shug Avery.

Retreating few steps back, the long lost letters of Nettie, which Celie thought to be no more as it contained the information of Nettie, and Celie's only source of strength, warmth, love and inspiration to live her life were really not lost but kept away from Celie by her husband, Mr.\_\_\_\_\_. To Celie the letters were her life-blood which enabled her to live and walk the path of her life alone. The letters acted as a touch stone for all her pains, miseries and sufferings. But it was Shug Avery who helped to unlock the letters hidden in the chest of Mr.\_\_\_\_\_. Shug transformed Celie from the hellish life to the fresh lease of life, as it clearly pronounced that her dear sister was alive in a far away land and is doing well with the missionaries and is to return soon to her native land and meet her. The letters were written despite the fact that Celie was unaware even of her sister's being alive or not. She kept her pen moving on and poured her life to her sister through these letters.

After discovering the letters it seemed that Celie identified herself through her long lost voice by signing in the next series of letters while writing to Nettie from then onwards. She was gradually removing the shackles of her life. A person not even having the liberty to be master of her own body, and dispossessed from her own self, ultimately wins freedom by discovering her own boy, and learning to love herself and then Shug Avery, thus gaining sexual freedom.

Financially crushed by Mr. Albert very so often, Celie earned financial freedom, by making comfortable ladies pants from any range of light to heavy work and ultimately becoming a name in the common households. She also feels jubilant and liberated, with conquering the soul of Albert's and making him a bit humane and introspective about his past actions. He ultimately settles with friendship with Celie and even thinks of sharing a man- woman relationship with her.

Celie is often referred to as 'the mule of the world' concept passed on to by Jean Toomer, Zora Hurston and Alice Walker; it did not necessarily denote strength in the positive. In the first place, a mule, as the story goes (here an old one, thrown into the well by its master on account of its old age and thrown mud over it so that it dies) is not very smart to shake of its load, but then it seizes opportunity from the obstacles that comes across (imposed by the surrounding elements as in the case of Celie) and finally comes out of the well, thus liberating itself from the clutches of wicked people (here Celie liberated herself from the depraved elements of her life). The old mule and its thorns in life connote the story of Celie.

The characteristic feature of the female characters of Walker's women is that they know to bear pain, sorrow, burden to an indefinite extent and have patience enough to bear every storm in their life. Some are big-hearted and self-righteous. Some are forbearing and compassionate even to the people (men) who undermine and debase them. Some are unquestioning and unwearied. They become supple with passage of time and gradually come to win over their misfortune and to their wonder and to that of the readers they liberate themselves in their own ways.

To Celie 'God' is a foreign concept and bears the image of white skin, but staying with Shug Avery, this realisation dawns upon her that God is your very own and is within you. Walker's modern women in that way discover God within themselves like, Celie, Shug and Meridian, and that is also a path to liberation.

Sophia is a foil to the common female characters of The Color Purple, leaving aside only Shug, be it physically, mentally or even verbally. A robust woman and wife of Harpo, the son of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ from his first marriage, is a kind of misfit into Mr. Albert's family. She is strong unlike other woman characters of the novel and is having more of society framed masculine qualities where "repairing the roof and cutting the wood" is more considered of male activities. With the sketching of the character of Sophia we get reflections of a woman being 'de-womanised' in the sense, she protests against any off-beam done to her, or is engaged in male activities as mentioned, or even does not take a step back (hesitate) to hit her husband, if hit at her, which is unlikely of the women class in general or even in the genre of Afro-American literature.

Sophia loves Harpo, marries him under strained family circumstances and mothers his children. Harpo is not too stereotypically characteristic of Black men and helped Sophia in household chores like washing the dishes and looking after the hearth. The problem cropped with Harpo's too much eating and short temperedness and instigated by his father's advice to tame a woman is to whip/ and beat her, as the latter did to Celie. To this ill advice Harpo acted accordingly and the result was Sophia's hitting back at him, as she is not a woman to tolerate any misdemeanor. Under such circumstances, once when she was asked by the white skinned jailor of the town to act as a maid in his family, she strongly denied, and defying the colour and racial norms even blew a knock at the jailor.

The result is obvious that for a black to survive in a white man's land would mean to listen to the white man's dictates. Nonetheless the punishment for hitting a white man was, Sophia, jailed for eight years. The punishment did not end over here. She became extremely submissive like Celie and performed her duties behind the bars too obediently and as a result her punishment got reduced. A woman strongly conscious of her self-esteem and possessed by self-righteousness had ultimately to serve the white jailor's family, the humiliation for which Sophia initially had hit the white man. But, now she is left with no choice. For Sophia the fresh breath of air comes when the little daughter of the white household, Miss Eleanor befriended Sophia and makes her confidante which is quite surprising and unexpected. To a reader's point of view this is a rare incident and to me especially it seemed that winning over the heart of a white child, let's not consider the 'innocence' is like finding a new form of liberty amidst white subjugation. Amidst

all her miseries, Sophia is asked by the White lady, the jailor's wife to drive her to some place and enjoy with her family members. This is also some way of attaining liberation amidst chains from white domination as it is not to be expected from a white man. Somehow fate had some other game and by accident as the car did not function well, Sophia again had to drive the white family back from town. That was incidental, but owing to circumstances Sophia emerged triumphant even for the countable 15(fifteen) minutes. Living with the white family and growing, learning, adapting she ultimately changed from the murderous person to a kind- hearted person. A comparatively, weak personality, Mary Agnes, fondly called as Squeak and second love of Harpo, a character came into play, no sooner than Sophia was jailed. Squeak, was a kind of pet to Harpo. An inwardly fragile character but good at heart was a person similar to that of Celie. Weak in spirits, she was regularly abused by Harpo. But the good person in her made her does something, which was again quite unusual, and can be expected only out of fellow-feeling. She took charge of herself to find some kind of connection with the jailor only to liberate Sophia from the clutches of confinement, but, was used as a prey by the jailor in a sexually, self-consuming extent. She sacrificed her self respect and showed immense strength of character to liberate another oppressed woman. Finally she discarded her diminutive nick name 'squeak', only to gain confidence, give power and ascertain her Christian name Mary Agnes, so as to reveal her individuality and identity and not be just some cocky pet to some man as expressed in the words,

“Harpo say, I love you, Squeak. He kneel down and try to put his arms round her waist. She stand up. My name Mary Agnes, she say.”(Celie's forty-first letter)

Mary Agnes liberated her soul from every kind of domination by getting a new life of her own through the channel of music; she made music her life with the slightest help of Shug Avery and then growing musically big, but independently. Squeak attained liberty through the world of music, leading to the emancipation of art, soul and finally self.

Amidst the enslaved black world, the only character is Corrine who has grown out of it both in humanitarian way and well as spiritually. In the bleak, dark, world of the Blacks, Corrine is the only woman of courage, education, love, cleanliness, health, peace and a symbol of happiness for the black women. She and her husband Samuel took a revolutionary step to save the black race from torture and agony in any form. In other words they stood as a saviour and they were missionaries. The couple in their initial search for freedom and a happy state for the black Africans was later joined in this zeal of theirs by Nettie, sister of Celie. In the later development of the story the readers learn that the two children of Celie who were a result of rape by Celie's (so called) step-father (of incest fathered by her step father) are actually adopted by Samuel and Corrine as their foster children. And Nettie knew the fact, but joining the Christian Missionary couple was more a matter of chance than choice. With development of the plot Corrine and Samuel both become very good friends to Nettie and Nettie was happy amidst them and the two children. But with passage of time and the gloomy and sick atmosphere of the African place Corrine however started losing faith in Nettie and unfortunately doubted Nettie with Samuel, to the extent she even believed that the children were of Samuel's and Nettie's. The symbol of

strength and happiness soon became an example of self-annihilation. She troubled herself mentally, suffocated herself and advanced her death age, only to be liberated at the end when she finally reconciled with the fact that nothing wrong was between Nettie and Samuel. Thus Corrine with this realization and peace of mind her soul was liberated to rest in peace.

Olinka, one of the tribal races of Africa is brutally suppressed in many ways be it economically, culturally, colour, industrialisation, education, in every possible way, compared to the so called advanced nations of the world. The steep cultural practices still exist and they carry it in their heart and soul. Tashi, one of the Olinka women, friend of Adam and Oliva (adopted children of Samuel and Corrine) and later love of Adam, also carries in her heart the ritual of cultural practice and abides by it. The ritual of circumcision and initiation, a brutal practice which the Olinka people think distinguishes them from the other prevalent cultures and gives them a sense of identity. Tashi is no different. She goes through this ritual however inhuman and this causes a rift between Adam and Tashi. But historically Adam who was so against this, being from a non-Olinka background and educated parents does all this only to be united in love with Tashi. So the girl Tashi, after oppression in the hands of beastliness of man, destiny, self-annihilation, imposed by tradition, colour and race, ultimately finds liberation in love when Adam goes through the same process of initiation.

Nettie is the little sister of Celie, and a strong character has been portrayed through the eyes of Alice Walker. But fate showed no mercy in the initial years of her life. Nettie educated and strong was dearer to her step-father than her sister. But Nettie also gradually became a victim of dirty gaze of her step-father. Shielded by Celie in most of the times, Nettie was the greatest source of inspiration, pride and confidante of Celie. Days were rolling by, when Nettie all of a sudden became an object of lust (dirty looks) for a man called Mr. Albert. He tried to become unusually close to Nettie. But Alphonso, step-father of Celie and Nettie wanted somehow to get rid of Celie first and so lured Albert towards Celie, uttering words like:

She ugly...But she ain't stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed it or clothe it' (Seventh letter).

Reluctant though, Mr. ----- married Celie out of spite. Nettie to flee from the clutches of her step-father came to stay with her sister for shelter, and love. But by the dictates of character, Mr. Albert did not stop his dirty glances towards Nettie. Celie out of fear asked Nettie to leave the place and be by her own, and be in touch with her through letters. In the process of time, Nettie became a constant companion to a missionary couple and coincidentally they adopted the discarded children of Celie. Nettie's role transformed to an aunt and a friend to these children who were absolutely fond of Nettie and looked more like Nettie for the virtue of being her sister's children. While the missionary couple was in Africa, the swampy, sordid, dismal nature of the place deadened her spirits and Corrine started doubting Nettie with Samuel, which led to her insanity and ultimately death though reconciling with the fact that Samuel and Nettie were more like brother and sister and never played foul with Corrine. Till here we can however mark the first part of the story and hence forth starts a new episode in Nettie's life in holy union with

Samuel. Nettie united with Celie years after, first through letters and then physically with Celie and her children, Adam and Olivia. So liberation takes in the form of unification in love first with Samuel, Adam, Oliva and finally with her beloved sister Celie, and most importantly her work as a missionary that helped her to live a healthy mind.

In the study of the female characters of Alice Walker's The Color Purple, it has put in the picture of Celie, Nettie, Sophia, Mary Agnes, Tashi and as women whose fate turns out to be the characteristic fate of women as laid in The Old Testament. Walker's women characters turn out to be Eve's daughters according to The Old Testament, in the first book of Genesis. The book states the subservient status of women which always position them below men and is treated as mere objects; Here Eve's lowliness is established in Genesis 3:16 when the Supreme power (God) discovers that she has tasted the forbidden fruit of knowledge. The line states the dictate of God as "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."(KJV, Genesis 3:16) The word rule used in Genesis 3:16 comes from the Hebrew *ma'shal* (????), which can mean to rule, to have, reign and to have power (Strong's). Different translations of the bible translate the word differently but the meaning remains similar. For instance, the Living Bible translates the word as "master" and the Modern Language Bible translates it as "dominate". This single word, "rule", powerfully communicates Eve's position beneath Adam. Because Eve committed a transgression against God she is punished by being made totally subservient to Adam's will. Eve is transformed from Adam's helper into Adam's slave or property. All these women will be inferior at birth and will inherit Eve's subservient role. " (The words are quoted from The Representation of Women and their Social Position in the Holy Bible: Renee D Mattila).To support the aforementioned history on the oppression of women there is also this article which states that "Women's unequal role in society is justified in terms of the role and functions she has to carry out in giving birth and raising children in the family. Women's subordination is thus seen as based on her biology and is thus her destiny."(On the Origins of Women's Oppression: Pat Brewer). Supporters of Marxism contradict this evolution of women's suffering as not biological, but social and have evolved over time.

In the same lineage of The Old Testament, we have gathered enough evidence of the pitiable and subjugated status of Celie, Nettie, Sophia, Mary Agnes, and Tashi who have endured torturous suffering in the hand of the 'other gender', race, culture, and victimized like Eve's daughters.

But defying the age-old theories and reversing the law of Holy Bible, to the surprise of self-possessed believers, the characters find salvation and emerge victorious by defying ages of slavery, domination and man-made laws. They are the modern heroines and paving the path of liberation for future generations giving the strength and sunshine to outdo the aberrant norms of society.

The main theme of the book is triumph of good over evil that is the first indication of oppression followed by liberation. Interestingly the novel sailed through, "...oppressed Afro-American slaves moved from object to subject, from silence into speech". ( Alice Walker's The Color

Purple and History : Kevin Patrick Mahoney.) In the journey of the novel, we find there is a sort of inter-connectivity between the characters, where the black woman influences each black woman and they attain liberty through them also. “The story of Celie, is a simple Southern woman--abused first by her father and then by the man to whom her father eventually marries her off--whose confidence and self-awareness are awakened under the guidance of a free spirited cabaret singer, Shug Avery.”(Interview, Ebony, May, 1992: Charles Whitaker) Again it is this Shug who proves a turning stone for the submissive Mary Agnes to gain her self identity through music. A single free-spirited woman paints colourfully the colourless lives of Celie and Squeak. Celie and Nettie, the two sisters live for each other and finally re-lives for each other, and liberate their souls. Corrine, being a missionary, in the generic sense had already a “dramatic gesture of racial uplift,” but also had profound impact on the life of Nettie, transforming her life from nothingness to a meaningful existence. Sophia, the daughter-in-law of Sophia becomes a source of undaunted strength and pillar to Celie and Squeak, which leads them to their development. So the bonding between the black women especially as depicted in the novel, between Celie and Nettie, Sophia and Celie and Squeak, and Celie and Shug Avery, speak “a great deal about the liberating possibilities of the bonds between black women” and the women characters can be real example who provide warmth in the lives of other women and is a constant source of liberation from oppression.

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## Influence of the English Modernists on Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry

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Every writer is a typical product of his age and the literary movements prevailing at the time substantially affect his works. The well-known Indian poet in English Nissim Ezekiel has been obviously influenced by his contemporary poets like T. S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and Philip Larkin. These influences shaped his creative odyssey that stretches well over five decades. In fact, the huge bulk of his writings, creative as well as critical, evidences a receptive personality prone to assimilate various impacts. To Suresh Kohli's query as to who were his influences, Ezekiel replied :

Some of my early poetry was influenced by Rilke. I did not succeed in assimilating this and eventually discarded it. I have imitated Eliot, Pound, Yeats and others, but never very well. My own voice has often been muffled or confused by random and temporary influences. That is the main weakness of my verse....A clear influence is no proof of a poem's merit. Quite the contrary, I was not influenced by Yeats after *The Unfinished Man*, nor by Eliot and Pound after *Sixty Poems*. I don't feel I make the grade to talk of influences at all. All this talk of influences may be of some value only when I write good poetry during the next ten years or so, which I certainly hope to do. (Kohli 1972)

Ezekiel's first two volumes *A Time To Change* and *Sixty Poems* bear a strong imprint on of Rilke's mind. His poems like "Speech and Silence" and "Prayer I" appear to be written under Rilke's influence. The following lines bear testimony to this view:

If I could pray, the gist of my  
Demanding would be simply this:  
Quietitude. The ordered mind.  
Erasure of the inner lie.  
And only love in every kiss.

("Prayer I", *COLLECTED POEMS*, p.54)

Chetan Karnani has very aptly noted this fact, "His early prayer was for quietitude. He wanted to seek the life of solitude and meditation. This ideal of Rilke is strongly expressed in these poems." (Karnani 1974) Ezekiel, however, denies having imbibed anything from Rilke straightway. He never intended to be a mere imitator :

If someone were to say, "Ah, but in these poems in an early book there are echoes of Rilke and Eliot," I would agree. This does not mean that I produced a whole poem which is nothing but Rilke. If there were some poems like that, I don't think, I published them (*Selected Poems*, p. 171).

W.B. Yeats' most pronounced influence on Ezekiel's early poetry which has derived immensely from the Irish poet's imagery and symbols. It was under Yeats' influence that Ezekiel identified parameters to discover his self at various stages of its development. In his well known statement the Irish poet has said of his poetry : "It is myself that I remake" and Ezekiel, in his "Foreword" to *Sixty Poems* , wrote:

There is in each (poem) a line or phrase, an idea or image, which helps me to maintain some sort of continuity in my life." (Quoted in Karnani 1974)

The Yeatsian impact is tracable in *Sixty Poems* where several images used by him remind the reader of Yeats' imagery. In "The Stone", the image seems to have been borrowed from Yeats' "Easter 1916" –"The stone is in the midst of all." In Yeats' poem stone is the symbol of fixity that defies change. The image of the stone represents obsession of the Irish revolutionaries with the liberation of their country which in the process had rendered them heartless and inflexible. A parallel use of this image occurs in Ezekiel's poem :

I have learnt to love the texture of a stone,  
Rough or smooth but all unyielding stone,  
Which plays no facile game of outward show,  
And holds itself together as a bone;

(*COLLECTED POEMS* , p.40)

The title of his fourth volume, *The Unfinished Man* is also taken from Yeats' poem "A Dialogue with Self and Soul" :

The ignominy of boyhood; the distress  
Of boyhood changing into man;  
The unfinished man and his pain  
Brought face to face with his own clumsiness...

(*COLLECTED POEMS* p. 115)

Ezekiel believed in Yeats' dictum that poets, like women, "must labour to be beautiful," and the poem "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" (*COLLECTED POEMS* , p. 135) is a suitable case in point where the poet says "The best poets wait for words" like an ornithologist sitting in silence by the flowing river or like a lover waiting for his beloved till she "no longer waits but risks surrendering." Ezekiel, like Yeats, has managed to create his own Lake Isle of Innisfree : "He dreams of morning walks alone/ And floating on a wave of sand" ("Urban", *Collected Poems*, 117). The only difference between them lies in Ezekiel's commitment to put up with "kindred clamour close at hand" instead of Yeats' "I shall arise, and go now , go to Innisfree."

T. S. Eliot's impact on the twentieth century poets has been so pervasive that no poet of substance could afford to remain uninfluenced by him. In his obituary on Eliot, Ezekiel refers to this phenomenon :

Eliot's poetry from 1917 to 1943 is like the Himalayan mountains, with the Everest of *The Waste Land* several al but inaccessible peaks, a score or so of attractive but treacherous ranges (*A Song For Simeon* , *Marina* et al.) and a miscellany of small , steep hills obscured in the mist. *The Quartets* form a spacious, high plateau among the clouds. The air is rarefied but gracing, the winds are strong and chilly. The temptation to remain in this mountain-scape and to accept it as the only sovereign territory of poetry was irresistible to several generation of readers. (Ezekiel, 1989)

Repudiating adverse comments on *The Waste Land* about its haphazard structural pattern, Ezekiel observes in the same essay ;

I think it is possible to make out a strong case for appreciating the poem despite its disorganisation, concentrating on its richness ....I consider it a great poem, not he oddity it is now widely considered to be. It is great because of the 'unity of a personality' expressed in it, which finally overcomes its disorganisation, once the requisite erudition is acquired by the reader to grasp that unity.

It should, however, not create the impression that Ezekiel is a blind imitator of Eliot because he also disagrees with him at times as in the following extract from the 'Obituary' :

It is in fact painful to compare Eliot's liberating conception of the literary heritage with his constricting dogmas of the human heritage as a whole. Further the theory of how individual talent ought ideally to operate, and the vision of the existing monuments modified by the introduction of a really new work of art among them , is so abstract and metaphysical that it adds little to our appreciation of specific masterpieces.

Eliot approaches the problem of human degeneration in *The Waste Land* in a typically Christian way—"I had not thought death had undone so many." Though not a religious poet, Ezekiel shares Eliot's diagnosis of human loneliness caused by a variety of factors. In poems like "Urban", "Island" and "A Morning Walk", Ezekiel vehemently denigrates selfish interests and material concerns. The denizens of Ezekiel's 'unreal city' of Bombay are no better than their counterparts in Baudelaire's Paris or Eliot's London in that they are simple human ghosts with nothing positive in life. Ezekiel's hybrid colonial city epitomizes all the tensions and corruptions which had engulfed all the major European capitals after the First World War. In the face of a complete collapse of Western Culture—"London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" – Tiresias is at his wit's end—"Shall I set at least my lands in order?" –Ezekiel's protagonist "as a good native should" takes "calm and clamour in its stride" ("Island", *COLLECTED POEMS* , p. 182)

Ezekiel has been equally indebted to Ezra Pound, whose association with Yeats and Eliot is part of Modernism's history. He candidly admits that the American Imagist influenced him thematically as well as technically:

The early influence on me of Pound and Eliot concerned poetry as an art, as well as on criticism of poetry, of society past and present, of modes of thinking and feeling etc. But I never accepted the doctrines which Pound and Eliot, separately defined for themselves and their readers. I sorted them out for myself, modified them to suit my temperament, and so on. It would be misleading and unfair to say that Pound and Eliot influenced me only on the “technique side”. Their influence was far reaching, even comprehensive, but I was never dominated by it. I used it and went back to it from time to time, noting how my growth changed my attitudes to their outstanding creative as well as critical writing. (Ezekiel 1968)

Ezekiel’s poetry has an overwhelming impact of Movement poets like Philip Larkin and Donald Davie in its deft precision of phrase, common subject matter, self irony and allergy to hypocrisy. Larkin and his colleagues had ensured that poetry ceased to be an instrument of propaganda, an official hymn, as in the case of the poets of the Thirties, it must be saved from degenerating into romantic yearning of Dylan Thomas’ variety.. Ezekiel on his part had to keep at arm’s length both, the romantic vagaries and also the misplaced patriotic strain of pre-Independence poetry. He has admitted his debt to Philip Larkin and this is most pronounced in his deliberate eschewal of intricate symbolism or far- fetched mythology, denigrated by the British poet as “common myth-kitty”. David McCuchion has perceptively commented that Ezekiel :

belongs with the Thom Gunn, R S Thomas, Elizabeth Jennings, Anthony Thwaite, and others like them. He has their cautions, discriminating style, precise and analytical, with its conscious rejection of the heroic and the passionate as also of the sentimental and cosy. (McCuchion 1968)

The contention of Christopher Wiseman that the impact of the Movement poets was rather unhealthy for Ezekiel’s poetic virtuosity, is not entirely off the mark. The Movement style did restrict Ezekiel’s poetic canvas and his own real voice often got suppressed. To quote Wiseman,

It is, I think, significant that Ezekiel never experimented with the traditional forms to the extent that most British and American poets did, seeming to be content with strict accentual-syllabic patterns and relatively straightforward stanza forms; and, for all his obvious innate talent, many of his earlier poems suffer from an almost mechanical rigidity, a monotony of sound which deadens and weighs down the bright buoyancy of his content. (Wiseman 1976)

Enumerating his formative influences, Ezekiel wrote to Anisur Rahman (1981) that his poems written after 1965 have shaken all the influences howsoever dominant and irresistible they might have been in his early poetry :

In the early stages, there were Eliot, Yeats and Pound, Rilke, modern American poetry from Whitman to William Carlos Williams, the poetry of the 30’s in England, including specially Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Day Lewis. The later poetry is not under particular influence, because I had begun to resist them. All the poems in *The Unfinished Man* are obviously in the spirit of the Movement poets in England but from *The Exact Name* onwards, I am on my own again.

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## ***Sakharam Binder: Tendulkar's Human Zoo***

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Tendulkar's plays deal with agonies, anxieties, and tensions of the urban, white-collar, middle-class people. They focus on the conflict and confrontation between individual and society. The angry and frustrated protagonists of his plays are actually the victims of harsh circumstances in life in the so-called modern, cultured society. The anger and frustration of these young men and women is expressed in their rejection of the conventional or traditional values and norms. So, the cruelty of some protagonists is a kind of perverted humanity and their desire to inflict miseries on others is a kind of revenge sought against society. They offer the world a set of social attitudes that are anti-establishment, anti-cultural, and even anti-humanitarian in the existential sense as opposed to the established, cultural, and humanitarian values. However, the world fails to recognize their struggle for existence, their bravery, and their sense of humanity.

While projecting the wrath of the young generation, Tendulkar explores human mind and its complexities in all depth and variety. He presents man-woman relationship in terms of sensuality and violence rather than love and affection. An anti-romantic playwright as Tendulkar is, he projects not love but its perversion, not sex but its degradation.

While pursuing his study as a part of Nehru fellowship, he has won, Tendulkar was left feeling a psychological

curiosity about violence— not as something that exists in isolation, but as a part of the human milieu, human behaviour, human mind. It has become an obsession. At a very sensitive level, violence can be described as consciously hurting someone, whether it is physical violence or psychological violence.... Violence is something which has to be accepted as fact. It's no use describing it as good or bad. Projections of it can be good or bad. And violence, when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive. So, it depends on how you utilize it or curb it at times.<sup>1</sup>

### **Treatment of Love, Sex, and Violence**

The play *Sakharam Binder* explores complexities of human nature. The play consists of three acts : The first act depicts the relationship of Laxmi-Sakharam, the second one, that of Champa-Sakharam, and the last one, that of Laxmi-Sakharam-Champa. Sakharam, the protagonist, is at the pivot of the situation. Laxmi considers Champa as her rival in Sakharam's love; the one is a foil to the other.

It is with the presentation of *The Vultures* that Tendulkar's name has become associated with sex, violence, and sensationalism. However, these elements were there in his earlier plays too, but have, now come to be noticed in more glaring light. Tendulkar, who has been witnessed as the angry young dramatist of the Marathi theatre, rebels against the established, conventional ideas and values of the society from the presentation of the play *Silence! The Court is in Session* onwards. The play places him among the leading Indian playwrights and sets him apart from the previous generation of the Marathi playwrights. Thus, he is one who at once belongs to the tradition and establishes himself as an individual talent, a pioneering figure of the Contemporary Marathi Theatre. While commenting on the naturalism in the play *Sakharam Binder*, Arundhati Banerjee states:

In the portrayal of this lower strata(stratum) of society, Tendulkar's plays signified a definite departure from the main stream Marathi drama that mostly dealt with the more privileged section of society. One of the reasons why there was such a reaction against *Sakharam Binder* was its burning naturalism. Here was a raw chunk of life with all its ugliness and crudity which was more than a shock to refined and prudish middle-class audiences. Such a direct confrontation with 'vulgar' reality was difficult for them to bear.<sup>2</sup>

In an interview Sharad Gokhale had with Nilu Phule (the actor who played Sakharam's role), the latter states: "The playwright has suggested to avoid gaudiness in the play's performance and symbolically indicate the presence of the sex scenes. For Tendulkar feels: "If the audience attend the performance for the sheer pleasure of seeing sex on the stage, it will be my defeat as a playwright."<sup>3</sup>

Through Sakharam's character, Tendulkar exposes the masochism of the lower middle class male. Due to the ill treatment meted out to him by his father, he flees away from home. The bitter experiences he had in his life leave him rough and tough and foul-mouthed.

Sakharam does not believe in the institution of marriage. So, he remains unmarried all through his life. However, he gives shelter to a helpless, deserted woman in the society, not with a view to improving her lot but to exploiting her further by fulfilling his sexual desire. It is a kind of contractual relationship based on mutual convenience. Wine and woman are his chief attractions. He has his own rules of the game, a special moral code, which he expects his temporary mistress to abide by. The play opens, when he brings Laxmi to his house, the seventh one in the series of his women or "temporary wives" if we call them so.

It is with the publication of this play that Tendulkar is accused of imperilling the very existence of marriage as an institution. However, growth, development, and destruction constitute the natural process of any institution in the cultural history of man. No literary discourse, whether it is Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder* or Bertrand Russell's *Marriage and Morals*, has the capacity to change the social attitude towards the problem, suddenly and abruptly.<sup>4</sup>

Laxmi is portrayed as an ideal Indian woman like Savitri in the mythological story.”<sup>5</sup> Her husband has tortured her as she fails to conceive a child by him. Now, for her, Sakharam is her husband. She tries her best to fulfil his every need despite the fact that he even fails to understand her expectations and exploits her physically as well as psychologically.

Sakharam’s association with Laxmi brings about some good changes in his life-style. He becomes devoutly religious, takes a regular bath, and transforms himself into a responsible “family man”. He himself notices these changes occurring in him but fails to attribute the credit to Laxmi. However, the playwright succeeds in convincingly showing, on her departure, the deep impact of Laxmi’s daily religious routine on Sakharam’s mind through his confession : “ There have been many women here, but this one left a mark before she went away.” (153)

The relationship of Sakharam and Laxmi cannot last for a long period, as they are totally in contrast with each other. Laxmi is very sensitive, generous, calm, and tender-hearted. Sakharam is very aggressive, violent, and sensual. Laxmi fails to fulfil his excessive physical lust and Sakharam remains blind to her expectations. Both cannot satisfy each other either physically or psychologically. There is no sharing, no harmony in their relationship; their life is totally disrupted. At last, they part company, saying good-bye to each other in good humour and a very cordial manner.

On Laxmi’s departure, Sakharam brings Champa, the police Fauzdar Shinde’s wife, into his house. A foil to Laxmi, she is younger, slightly plumper, and better built. Her appearance, behaviour, dialogues, and even her name indicate that she is whimsical by nature. All good, desirable changes in Sakharam’s life come to an end with Champa’s arrival. A religious, responsible “household man” transforms himself into a lewd, sensual drunkard.

The difference between Laxmi and Champa is obvious. At the beginning, Laxmi appears embarrassed. Although she has been starving for a week, she remains quiet. When Sakharam lectures to Champa laying down his terms and conditions in his usual vein, she responds indifferently and asks him to prepare tea. Thus, she dispels his false notion: A woman has to attend the household chores. She never seems disturbed by Sakharam’s demands. On the contrary, she shocks him by frankly expressing her opinion about Daud, “He’s nice!” (p.159) Sakharam cannot appreciate this, but remains helpless. His conception about the sanctity of home ends with Champa’s arrival in his house.

Outwardly, Champa appears gross and sensual, but she, too, is touchy and sensitive to some of the issues of life. She denies Sakharam to get into bed with her at the first night saying: “I don’t like it at all that man-woman stuff. I had my honour to save.” (162) However, in all helplessness and for the fulfilment of her bare needs such as food, clothing, and shelter- she has to yield to him and satisfy his physical lust.

Laxmi accepts Sakharam almost as a husband and, therefore, submits herself to him willingly; Champa, on the other hand, accepts him merely as “her man” in sheer helplessness. She has no alternative but to share bed with him, but, for that, she has to reluctantly help herself with an alcoholic drink also. Nevertheless, in one corner of her mind, she feels that all men are equally bad; a man is, in her view, either a “corpse” or a “dog”. Champa is a rebel against the

male-dominated society. She does not accept conventional norms and values regarding man-woman relationship. No doubt, she is naive and sexy, but her mother and husband have been responsible for her being what she is.

Laxmi returns to Sakharam, once again. Champa persuades him to give her shelter. However, the presence of Champa and Laxmi, at the same time and under the same roof, creates a psychological turmoil in Sakharam. He grows impotent. "Laxmi develops an asexual relationship with Fauzdar Shinde while Champa develops a sexual association with Daud", since Sakharam can no longer sexually satisfy her. Though Laxmi finds nothing wrong with her association with Shinde, her moral sense is outraged by Champa's affair with Daud, and she uses this opportunity to malign her rival. This brings out the latent hatred in Laxmi for Champa."<sup>6</sup> Getting his masculinity doubly hurt, Sakharam kills Champa in his rage. Thus, Laxmi, who outwardly appears to be generous and kind-hearted, turns out inwardly to be vicious or violent. On Champa's murder, she shows more presence of mind than Sakharam. When the latter fails to carry out her instruction to bury Champa in the house, she herself takes up the shovel and does the grave-digging. Here, symbolically it seems to imply, "She buries not only Champa's dead body, but her uncivilized, barbaric, feminine desires also. Her power to fight injustice appears everlasting."<sup>7</sup>

It is observed that Laxmi successfully tones down Sakharam's sensuality, while Champa inflames it. The simultaneous presence of these two women together, who are foils to each other, disturbs him. It creates a psychological storm in his life. The lack of sexual potency on his own part and Champa's sexual association with Daud, his friend hurt Sakharam's ego acutely. As a result, he turns into a cold-blooded murderer. The role-shifting in him transforms the audience's feeling from apathy into antipathy (due to the cruelties he inflicts upon Laxmi) and back from antipathy into sympathy and pathos (due to his helplessness in covering up Champa's murder at his hands). According to the Marathi critic Vasant Palshikar,

Both Sakharam and Laxmi are extremely selfish, lustful, and dominating. In the conflict between Laxmi and Sakharam, the former naturally becomes victorious. The dramatic tension in the conflict grows potent with remarkable effects. Throughout the play, Laxmi is portrayed as pious, patient, and kind-hearted. The ending of the play throws light on her real nature. The success of the play lies in its presentation of Laxmi's actual nature.<sup>8</sup>

All the three characters -- Sakharam, Laxmi, and Champa -- appear to be the victims of circumstances. The deterministic overtones of the play are most perceptible in their respective demeanours.

E. Renuka considers Sakharam the replica of Tendulkar. From the complaint of his wife Meena, it is noticed that he compels her to disregard her talent and restrict her "to tend his needs and raise his children."<sup>9</sup> Despite his efforts to remove injustice in society, he unconsciously practices it in his own house. In the play *Kamala*, he appears to criticize Jaisingh for treating

Sarita not as a wife but as a sex object or plaything. However, in actual life, he himself appears to perform the same role he projects in Jaisingh or Sakharam.

But there is no point in discussing all these things: it is an example of biographical criticism; it does not lead us anywhere in the critical assessment of Tendulkar as a dramatist. One shouldn't peep in the personal or private life of Tendulkar- Tendulkar, the *man* and Tendulkar, the aesthete are two different entities. Otherwise, it exemplifies what is known in literary criticism as "Intentional Fallacy."<sup>10</sup>

Outwardly, Sakharam pretends that he is a saviour of women, but inwardly he is a dumping ground of all that is bad in society, so far as man-woman relationship is concerned. Although he criticizes married life, he develops such a relationship, which is worse for the woman who suffers more with Sakharam than with her husband before. He brings the deserted, miserable woman to his house not to improve her lot but to serve his needs. And he is ready to throw her out when there remains nothing womanly about her. Therefore, E. Renuka is quite right in pointing out that Sakharam's nature is as deceitful as that of a crocodile.<sup>11</sup> Although he understands and supports a rebellious woman, he wants his woman to slave for him day and night, to respect his wishes, and to satisfy his lust. He claims to be the saviour of women by offering them a life better than the earlier one, but he is neither a saviour, nor a rebel, but an epicurean, a self-centred pleasure-seeker.

Sakharam, like Osborne's Jimmy Porter, appears to be the spokesman of the angry and frustrated modern generation. He lashes out at his women and the world at large explicitly and implicitly at himself. He does not care for the world but wants the world, particularly his women to care for him. The want of love has generated a kind of fierceness in his temperament. As a result, he turns into a masochist who seeks pleasure in inflicting pains and miseries on others.

Apparently, Sakharam's anger appears incoherent but it can be understood as the symptom of a positive trait of a character in search of his identity. The harsh treatment given by his Brahmin father, and his running away from home to escape from suffering are responsible factors for the sense of instability that he exhibits throughout. Like the protagonist of an avant-garde play, he shows himself cut off from society by rejecting the accepted cultural norms and established moral values.

The ending of the play is not satisfactory. After Champa's murder, Sakharam is projected as bewildered. So, he cannot follow Laxmi's suggestions. The chief tension of the play springs from his violent, rebellious nature. He is nothing, if he is not aggressive. So, the ending of the play appears to be an artificial resolution. It is a technique called *deus-ex-machina*, but is used in the way Dickens and Hardy use it in their novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Tess*, respectively. While commenting on the ending of the play, the Marathi critic Vasant Palshikar says:

Sakharam kills Champa as a revenge for his incapacity to satisfy her sexually. However, due to the incident of Champa's murder, the dramatic action of the play suffers a set-back and becomes rather flawed and cheap.<sup>12</sup>

While commenting on the varied aspects of sex and violence in the play Tendulkar states:

Even in the plays like *Sakharam Binder* and *The Vultures*, the theme is not violence. Violence comes as a way of life—a natural way of life, if you consider the background of the characters. It is there as a part of functioning of a character.<sup>13</sup>

It is observed that violence is an inevitable aspect of the lives, nature, and culture of all the characters in this play. Therefore, Manchi Sarat Babu is quite justified in stating: “The inhuman violence of the human characters in these plays is only the result of the physical deformity.”<sup>14</sup> Violence characterizes the play, because it is inherent to the very life styles of the characters.

### **Victim- Victimser Relationship**

The play exemplifies the power struggle at the family level. The shifting of roles implicit in the Drama Triangle is clearly noticeable here. Sakharam is a foul-mouthed womanizer who pretends to be a saviour of women, but actually, he is just an egoistic epicure. He gives shelter to a woman, deserted by her husband, but she gets from Sakharam treatment worse than that from her husband. He wants his woman to slave day and night for him, and respect him, and satisfy him. He cares a fig for her on a personal level and throws her out, when there is left nothing womanly about her. Tendulkar, in this play, denudes both an individual and society. The play is

Sakharam, leaves the house at the age of eleven due to the barbaric treatment of his father to him. Though he is born in a Brahmin family, he lives like “a Mahar, a dirty scavenger” (127) to show off his arrogance and powerlessness. His exceptional mode of behaviour is a kind of revenge sought on the Brahminical tradition he hates, like Narayanappa’s in Anant Moorthy’s brilliant novella *Samskara*.

Sakharam does not believe in the institution of marriage. He gives shelter to the needy and helpless women. The woman has to provide him physical pleasure and domestic comfort. Laxmi, the seventh one in the series of his women, succeeds in re-Brahminizing Sakharam. However, in his association with Champa later, he is transformed into a sensual drunkard. Laxmi’s arrival for the second time creates a psychological turmoil in Sakharam, which leaves him impotent. Champa gives shelter to Laxmi but there is a streak of contempt in her treatment to the latter. The kindly, tender-hearted Laxmi cannot bear to see Champa as her rival in love. As a result, she uses the policy of “using a thorn to take out a thorn” (63) like Nana does in *Ghashiram Kotwal*. She informs Sakharam of Champa’s illicit relationship with Daud Miyan. Sakharam cannot bear this and strangles Champa to death.

Thus, Sakharam’s role shifts from Victim to Rescuer, from Rescuer to Persecutor and Laxmi’s from Victim to Persecutor. Similarly, Champa’s role shifts from the Victim to the Rescuer and back from the Rescuer to the Victim. Thus, Sakharam shifts from his role---from Laxmi’s master to her slave. Likewise, Laxmi too shifts her role---from that of Sakharam’s slave to his master.

### Physical Deformity

Norman O Brown, a psychologist,<sup>15</sup> sees in primitive man a perfect harmony between mind and body. However, in the process of civilization, mind and body are divided and alienated from each other, and the ultimate result is physical deformity.

Gender deformity and social deformity, at times, cause physical deformity. Gender deformity divides human beings into men and women and social deformity, into manual labourers and intellectuals. These divisions indirectly throw light on physical deformity also.

In this naturalistic play Tendulkar projects the crude perversion of individuals, caused by physical deformity. The play moves around the triangular relationship of Laxmi-Sakharam-Champa. Each of them is abnormal in his or her own way. However, they are the victims of circumstances and not of any inherent wickedness.

The world portrayed in the play *Sakharam Binder* is obscene, physical, and sexual. The people in this world reveal their innermost thoughts in the rustic language they speak. It tends to destroy subtle sensibility. This world is not completely alien to the audience. It disturbs them, however, by shocking their moral consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

Sakharam's cruelty arises from a greater misery. The violent constant beating of his Brahmin father makes him leave the house at the age of eleven. Born of a Brahmin father and a Mahar mother, Sakharam introduces himself: "I'm a Mahar, a dirty scavenger." (127) It indirectly suggests the kind of family background he has as inheritance. The bitter experiences in his childhood make him grow like a desert cactus. To smoke tobacco, to drink liquor, and to indulge in sheer mechanical sex are the means that he has adopted to overcome his feeling of frustration.

Sakharam remains unmarried throughout his life and he arranges a kind of informal husband-and-wife relationship without marriage in his house by giving shelter to a woman in all helplessness. However, the woman suffers a constant humiliation and severe beating at his instance. Although Sakharam is seen criticizing his father for his brutality, he himself metes out brutal treatment to his women.

Laxmi's relationship with Sakharam brings about some good changes in the latter's stormy life, but the relationship does not last for long. Due to the sharp contrast in their nature, they cannot satisfy each other either physically or mentally. Laxmi's refusal to allow Daud in joining the prayer of Lord Ganesha and Sakharam's violent beating to Laxmi in its aftermath become the cause of their separation.

After Laxmi, Sakharam brings Champa. The younger, attractive, and a lot sensual Champa transforms the religious-minded, responsible householder Sakharam into a sensual drunkard.

Laxmi's separation from Sakharam proves temporary, as she returns to him fascinated within a few months. Champa pities her and gives her shelter against Sakharam's stern objection. However,

the presence of Laxmi and Champa at the same time has a strange effect

on Sakharam. It is as if the two different strands in his character come into direct confrontation, creating a psychological turmoil in him and resulting in his temporary impotence.<sup>17</sup>

Champa's illicit relationship with Daud, his friend, turns Sakharam mad with anger. In consequence, he strangles her to death. Towards the end of the play, he gets an emotional support from Laxmi, who helps him cover up the murder and get rid of the feeling of remorse. "Anyway she was a sinner. She'll go to hell. Not you. I've been a virtuous woman. My virtuous deeds will see both of us through." (196)

### **Comment on the Complexity of Human Nature**

The play depicts the life-story of Sakharam, the foul-mouthed womanizer. Bitter and harsh childhood experiences in life renders him ruthless. Hardened as he is by life's experiences, he welcomes life as it comes to him. Sakharam is a complex character that changes with the changing to circumstances. To quote Arundhati Banerjee, "He is a man who is primarily honest and frank. His straightforwardness in dealing with helpless women... demands a certain admiration."<sup>18</sup> Champa, too, like Sakharam, is the victim of circumstance. Ill-treated by her mother and husband, she grows violent and aggressive. The character of Laxmi is totally different from that of Champa. Hers is a round character that changes itself according to the necessity of time and prevails over circumstances.

The playwright successfully maintains a total objectivity in portrayal of the characters. Each character in the play is a combination of good and evil, strength and weakness. At the beginning of the play, Laxmi is portrayed as sensitive, religious, kind, generous, and tender-hearted. She wins the audience's sympathy for bearing Sakharam's inhuman treatment. However, she exhibits her viciousness in her treacherous behaviour towards the end of the play. She frankly develops a friendship with Fauzdar Shinde, Champa's husband and finds nothing wrong about it. But her moral sense is outraged by Champa's sexual relationship with Daud. There is a definite development in her character from a simple, generous, sensitive woman into a cunning, ruthless, determined lady who devises the plan of defeating her rival and carries out her decision successfully. Looking upon Champa as her rival in love, she incites Sakharam to kill her and helps him in covering up the murder. The vicious treatment she metes out to Champa creates the feeling of antipathy towards her in the audience's minds.

Champa is apparently portrayed as gross and violent. Nevertheless, there are the kinder aspects to her nature that we notice when she generously gives shelter to Laxmi who returns in all helplessness. No doubt, she is aggressive, but her violence is not without any reasons. The cruel treatment her mother metes out to her crushes her tender feelings and makes her coarse and violent. Further the sexual exploitation by her husband leaves her a somewhat virago. She appears human throughout the play. So, "she does not suffer from powerlessness as Sakharam and Laxmi do."<sup>19</sup> Hence, her ruthless murder by Sakharam evokes sympathy for her in the audience.

### **Tendulkar: A Mute Feminist**

The play also explores the plight of women in all helplessness along with the depiction of complexity of human nature. Although Sakharam is the protagonist of the play, the action of the play revolves round the character of Laxmi. Vasant Palshikar is quite justified in pointing out:

Actually, the play *Sakharam Binder* is not about Sakharam. Initially, the playwright may have intended to make Sakharam the protagonist. But the play slips from his hand; it becomes the play that focuses on the character of Laxmi, and at this point, she becomes the protagonist of the play.<sup>20</sup>

Appearance is totally deceptive so far as Laxmi's character is concerned. Throughout the play, she appears meek and polite, but at its end, she incites wrath in Sakharam, which goads him on to killing Champa.

After Champa's murder, Sakharam is portrayed as a feeble character, for he becomes totally helpless. It is a golden opportunity for Laxmi, who takes a full advantage of the situation. Once she gets Sakharam completely into her grip, she begins to cow him down.<sup>21</sup>

So, it will not be an exaggeration to say that Laxmi has an ambition to exert power and influence over others right from the beginning. The ambition is there but in a latent form, until she gets an opportunity to realize it. Her success in getting entry into Sakharam's house fans the flames of her inherent ambition till it reaches a fever pitch.

Champa's character exhibits woman's torture at different levels. She suffers at the hands of her mother, her husband, her male-companion, and, at the end, her female-companion also. Both Champa and Laxmi, have their share of suffering sexual, physical, and psychological at the instance of Sakharam, for he gives them shelter and they just receive it in their helplessness.

The characters in this play are types, changing in the course of action according to the necessity of circumstance. Some of them are sensitive, submissive, and tender-hearted. They rouse sympathy in the minds of the audience from the beginning to the end. But even the characters that are wicked, violent, and aggressive win their sympathy. Their fall creates the scene of pathos that evokes the feelings of pity, sympathy, and tenderness. However, in most of his plays, Tendulkar is "able to achieve an almost total objectivity."<sup>22</sup>

It is observed that *Sakharam Binder* best illustrates the philosophy of determinism. The character's actions and other events in the plays are determined by forces, which are inevitable and over which human beings have no control. Heredity and environment are the determining forces that shape their nature, character, and behaviour. Sakharam inherits barbaric tendencies or inclinations directly from his father. The bitter circumstances in life leave Champa aggressive and violent. Laxmi becomes the victim of circumstances. Suffering is their lot; they are predestined to suffer. Thus, the plays reflect the precariousness of the balance between human free will and predestination. They further throw light on the grim accounts of doings and misdoings of the characters trapped in the grip of their animal nature and sordid environment.

One can easily notice that Tendulkar, in this play, rejects idealized portrayal of life and attains complete accuracy in realistically presenting “details of the details”. He displays disinterested objectivity and frankness in depicting life as a brutal struggle for survival. He neither praises nor blames the characters for the actions within or outside their control. All the characters in this play are typically lower-middle-class people we come across in our day-to-day life. They are motivated by such animalistic drives as sex, hunger, and fear and play their predetermined roles in an atmosphere clouded by depravity, sordidness, and violence.

To put it in a nutshell, Tendulkar’s plays best illustrate the philosophy of determinism that was evolved/ transformed into naturalism years ago and practiced by the French novelist Emile Zola in his novels. They bear evidence to naturalistic philosophy enunciated by Darwin in his *Origin of the Species*. To substantiate the point, we see again, in the play *Kanyadan*, Jyoti’s brother Jaiprakash arguing: “How can the same atmosphere always prevail? Everything changes. Those who are able to adjust to the changing conditions survive. This is the law of life.” (530)

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## Theme of Love in Manjul Bajaj's *Come, Before Evening Falls*

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*Come, Before Evening Falls* is a novel which weaves the story set in the year 1909 in Rohtak Division of the erstwhile Punjab province. Though the story has past historical reference, it has the stark and brutal choices that confront young people as they try and find a way between the impulse of love and the dictates of duty to their families, remain largely unchanged.

Raakha, the protagonist is a problem child. He perceives the awkwardness and shame in his mother's marriage. His mother was the second wife to his father. Raakha considers his father ruthless as he exploited his mother for his own pleasure. As a young girl, his mother was sent to assist her sister's delivery who in turn gets pregnant twice and later discarded to her fate. Her older sister hated her and blamed her for seducing her husband and also for his transgressions. Raakha, along with his mother and younger brother had slowly been edged out. They live like servants in their own house. If it wasn't for his mamaji, Raakha would not have got education.

Jugni was Chaudary Hukum Singh's niece. They were Jats. It is a society governed by strict marriage rules and the dictates of the Khap panchayat. The village is Kaala Saand named after a dead bull. She is the first person to see the new teacher Raakha. Jugni feels a thrill run through her body when she sees Raakha. She wonders at the unknown reason that causes her heart shrink at the thought of Raakha. Jugni and Raakha have their first acquaintance at the family well. Since then he visits her house regularly to meet her uncles Chaudary Hukum Singh and Tau. Once, he stops her by holding her wrist saying that they make better friends rather than enemies. It becomes difficult for her to come out of the first crush. Since then she eagerly waits for their next encounter. Jugni was no fool for she knew exactly what happened between men and women. What she wanted to know was what happened underneath that happening. She not only mulled between the chemistry between the men and women but also how life could cut a person in a zig zag- the loyalties on one side and the personal interests on the other. Jugni's loyalties lay with her Dadi, Tau and Chaachi who nurtured her utmost care. The novel gives explicit statements regarding womanhood and marriage. Chaachi says, "Womanhood was a bottomless well" (Bajaj 2010 29). In another context also she says, "Nothing remained your own after you get married. Not your body, not your sleep – not even your tears" (ibid).

Bajaj endows Jugni with two persons. The insider and the outsider. In her mind she pretty well knew that she was clear-headed and sensible. She was alerted by the impulses incapacitated at the sight of Raakha. She wondered what if the insider in her entirely took over Jugni and makes her do stupid things and brings dishonor and shame. She imagines her body hanging from the peepal tree in the chaupal at the centre of the village, Tau crying into the turban, and her brothers

tip toeing through the village hanging their heads – in permanent shame. She dares not to take any chance.

Raakha develops love for Jugni. Every morning when he woke up, her face flashed up across his sleepy brain. Her eyes, the tilt of her chin, the arch of her foot, the gold of her skin, the toss of her plaits and the curve of her waist. All these caused a happy smile to flash across his face. Jugni, on the other hand is a self-controlled girl. Though the word love kept inserting itself into her head, she kept sending it away. She told herself that nothing can happen unless one permits it to happen. The words disgrace, dishonor, and death whispered themselves in her head. She does not prefer to choose the words. She is also aware that love beget bastard children. And girls who fell in love either became corpses hanging from the trees or doomed to fates worse than death. Considering the consequences of love, Jugni pleads Dadi to get her married as soon as possible. However, Raakha cannot keep his mind off from Jugni. He tries to impress wherever he meets her. Jugni is just an ordinary village girl – unlettered, outspoken with piquant looks, not beautiful by any standard, still the moment he lay on his bed, he felt that she was no girl but a woman. His woman especially created to wrap herself around him, her body fusing with his. At twenty four, Raakha was a man, a grown man who had known many women but none like Jugni. He had always felt drawn to the company of women. The warm softness of their bodies was a reprieve from the harsh coldness of the outside world. The light of longing in their eyes succeeded in momentarily vanquishing the shadow of rejection that followed him everywhere. The thrill of a new conquest always helped him lose sight of himself of the battle that could never be won. Making love to a woman left no space for pain, it was pleasure but with Jugni he imagines that it will be different. He thinks that he will not lose himself but will find himself in her. He remembers his first and latest experiences. His step brother Malakhan's wife who had seduced him when he was eight – to the very last - a migrant cattle- herder from the Thar desert. He carried the separate odour of each in his nostrils. The differing touch of each upon his palms. Not one had he forgotten. Even the prostitutes, he thought back of fondly. Married women, prostitutes, widows, were his priority in the order of safety. To him, married women were the safest because they never cried or tried to blackmail. By chance if they became pregnant, no one searched for the father of the child.

Jugni finds herself helpless because it becomes difficult for her to come out of Raakha's love. She annoys herself for asking Dadi to get her married off quickly. Once, Raakha dreams Jugni running away from him. He pleads her saying that he is not a predator. He imagines tiger pouncing upon her and ripping open her blouse. He wakes up from the violent dream. The last image is unforgettable to him. Jugni's bear breasts, in the centre of her naked girl – woman's breasts written unmistakably in the school master's neat handwriting were two letters – Raa kha. The image was vivid in his head – her naked breasts clearer, more real to him, than those of any woman he had ever slept with.

In reality Jugni is sure that she will not go when Raakha calls her. However, he doesn't call her. Jugni is torn between herself and the insider. Her heart wants to feel the warmth of his eyes. She

fails to understand the reason behind her disappointment. It may be because he doesn't call her as her nerves were all on edge from the waiting, and partly because the Nayin always left some new tit bit of a tale corroborating her theory of Raakha's interest in Kamala, the potter's middle daughter. But mostly, she wept from the sheer confusion of not knowing how to stop the shouting slanging voices that had begun to live inside her head; not knowing which was her real self; not knowing which voice to be nurtured and which throttled into silence. Jugni meets Raakha in the field and asks the reason for his not calling her. In this meeting both of them try to know each other's psyches regarding their commitment of love. Jugni's meetings with Raakha in the clearing field fall into a pattern but still she cannot speak of it as love to Raakha. The thought of speaking about love is to end it because it made Jugni increasingly anxious at what was happening to them setting a constant war within her. Nothing in her short life had prepared her to face the tumult of what was happening. Meeting him was utterly reckless, dangerous beyond contemplation, putting her life at risk. Yet each time she reached the clearing field and found him waiting for her seemed like a home coming to her soul. She knew no place in the whole world that felt safer than his arms.

The thought of Jugni getting married to somebody else brings him a thought to, "Runaway. She will not say no. Far away, to a place beyond gotra rules, the diktats of the Khap "(Bajaj 2010 143). He also gives another thought, "But in what currency would he measure the grief of the girl he loved more than anything else on earth when he separated her from everyone and everything she had ever known and loved since birth?"(ibid) Jugni and Raakha enjoyed themselves a lot of liberty, Sharing of his romantic tales over which Jugni getting possessive gives a picture of their congenial relationship. He often pulled her leg about her name. He said, she was born fitted with a light inside, like the firefly she was named after, shining her torch inquisitively into the dark corners of other people's souls. Ferreter of secrets, he called her. He cares her a lot for her feelings. Though he gets a chance to make love to her in the clearing field he never forces her. He thinks, "If he were to push her down into the warm mud and begin to make love to her, as he wished to at that moment, he knew it would end badly for them both. Her body would stiffen "(Bajaj 2010 149)". There is a lot of compatibility and also a lot of uncertainty in their relationship. She always instinctively knew the right thing to do; when to question and probe and when to retreat and console. What would he do when she was gone? This village, this job – nothing would be the same without her. How could it be, that she was meant so much to him, was not meant for him at all?

Raakha has a lot of uncertainty regarding Jugni's love because she prefers the love of her Tau, Chaachi and Dadi and never does anything to hurt them even if it killed her – still Jugni risks her life in bringing a kurta for him to wear to Hissar but he shakes and abuses her for being very selfish in coming to see him only when she pleased. She considers him angry, irrational and cruel. She thinks, "Perhaps, he was incapable of love. Distrust and anger were his nature. She was lucky to have got out of it like this. A broken heart can be hidden. In time it would heal. At

last she had not sullied her face and blackened her family's name. At least her Tau's reputation was safe" (Bajaj 2010 185).

For days on , he had rung the temple bell and waited in their clearing field but she had not come. He waited for her, "Come, Jugni, come. Come before evening falls" (Bajaj 2010, 194). But she never turns up. Talking about family honour Tau tells Jugni," A family,s honour was everything. A family was like a tree, its honour was not to be violated like this. Honour was the main trunk, if you struck at it, everything else – the branches, the leaves, the flowers, the fruit – they just fell, collapsing in a dead heap around it, "(Bajaj 2010, 199)".

Raakha goes crazy without Jugni's love. He asks, "Jugni. Just tell me whether or not you will come with me .....Jugni, you are my woman. How do you expect me to live with the thought that I let you marry another man without making any effort to stop? I will die for you. Jugni, before I let that happen "(Bajaj 2010 206)".She thinks that there is no greatness in dying for love. She wanted to say that those who die untimely, violent deaths do not bring ashes. They become guilty scars on the flesh of the living. They become wounds that never heal no matter how much time passes. Raakha repeatedly pleads her to run away with him. She feels that it is not just to build one's own happiness on other people's grief. She doesn't wish to be branded as a truant daughter, runaway bride, a blot on her family's history, a corpse hanging from some tree.

Twenty five days before Jugni's wedding, Tau dies. At the final prayer, Chaachi's eldest brother takes Raakha's chaddar and wraps it around his sister (chaachi). A deathly disbelieving hush descends on the gathering. Jugni runs outside, with full of impulse to throw up violently. He and Chachi, the thought of them together is hideous. This was the man who had held her in his arms and called her his rose-petal girl. And now he was married to a twice- widowed woman.

Jugni thinks, "She was to be a second wife to him! A chattel with no status, a woman the whole world would look down upon as a kept woman, a marriage breaker? A southan, a rival to her own Chaachi? (Bajaj 2010 225)" Raakha justifies himself by saying that this is the only way for them to be together. Towards the end of the novel Raakha and Chaachi are murdered dy Daadi for the sake of family's honour. While dying , Chaachi comes out with truth that she poisoned Tau. It was Raakha who plans to kill Tau by supplying poisoned tobacco through Chaachi. Jugni finds," The man she had loved had killed her uncle and seduced his wife because he saw it as the only way he could make Jugni his own" (Bajaj 2010, 235)".

Manjul Bajaj makes difference in the portrayal of the theme of love. She deals the theme in a pragmatic way. The closing lines of the novel discriminate the men and women's attitude towards love." A woman's way is different. Violence is man's way, a woman's resilience. She asserts that women know how to live on. To choose life over death, love over anger, peace over war, making over destroying, each time and every time, no matter what the circumstances are. The novel ends up with an optimistic note of Jugni's perception of womanhood. She once thought that womanhood was a bottomless well. But now, with a new perception she thinks it

wrong. Instead, it is a way to explore the darkest recesses of one's own experiences and find the sweet, life – sustaining water within.

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**NERGIS DALAL'S *SKIN DEEP*: SISTER- KNOT IN CONFLICT?****Dr. K. Sandhya**

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“...That women writers are likely to place their sense of values is likely to differ and that they will deal with what may appear trivial to male readers because it appears to have less consequence than the usual male consequences do, with what is less solid and tangible than the concerns of most men that is, less with action, experience and achievement, and more with thought and emotion and sensation.”

**- Anita Desai**

The role of women writers is a topic of concern in the present scenario for, being a woman and a creative writer, she has some distinctive perception of life to comprehend the world. Though Indian writing in English was shaped and sustained by male writers, it was women writers who struggled to create a new and unexplored space for women. They have really made miraculous feats with words blended with the kind of robustness of language and fertility of ideas, which churn inside the kernel. Most of the women writers today are all time icons because the old pattern is no longer applicable. Women have broken through the mould and their mindsets have changed and they seem to be liberating on several levels. Women today are no longer the victims of patriarchal society that subdued them to silence. The image of the New Woman and her struggle for an identity of her own also emerges as a dominant theme in the Indian English novel. The introspective novel consists of the “ objects that are hidden and reveal themselves to the avid look that establishes meanings by composing experiences in polithetic act, that is knowing a being or a thing, loving something, yearning for something, all things considered in the plural.” (<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-169876970.html>)

At the outset, Indian women writers relished the idea of making an extensive exploration of Indian myth and legend but Nergis Dalal delved deep into the layers of the human mind and gave ample evidence of her prosodic skill in portraying the sister relationship. Having been written in English, a work of this scope of psychoanalytical

depiction of the intricacies of mind between sisters is no mean feat that evolved the imperatives of the form of the novel in artistic utterance.

Psycho-analytical problems evolved out in the twentieth century fiction, bringing in its wake, the introspective novel. Thus, a considerable part of literature was based upon the psyche and its inner conflicts, paralleled with the struggle for social existence. Since the origins of psychoanalysis, the field has displayed a powerful set of connections to literature that embarked upon breaking new ground in women's psychology that led to an intrinsic exploration of the intricacies of life's conflicts, and love in the bonds between sisters. Moreover, the image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women toward conflicted female characters searching for identity, no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. The theme of East-West encounter, contemporary social practices and political issues, Indian immigrants and many a varied theme were treated deftly by the Indian Women writers.

In the novel *Skin Deep*, concept of "sisterhood" was taken as a causative theme by Nergis Dalal for, "where everything in the novels can be imbricated with biographical revelations and thus psychologised or approached formalistically so as to focus on the technical expertise with which she deploys what are taken to be characteristic themes in her work." (Ruthven : 49-50)

The writer herein takes the idea of an unconscious, a submerged iceberg, and transformed it into a dynamic force with awesome power and often cruel and crippling consequences. How the unconscious is not under the control of civilization, or any other relationship remaining as a voice within that rebels against the demands morality of the main protagonists of the novel, is an explorable question.

The most engrossing feature of a woman writer's creative art was its vitality which exposed her individual talent to the optimum and her capability of extending her writing to scale on to the peak of artistic control and an agile consciousness of the abiding values of Indian life.

In 1974, Juliet Mitchell, in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, signaled the redemption of psychoanalysis as, at the very least, a tool for the exploration of the unconscious and as an explanation of the construction of subjectivity and subject's sense of sex and gender. (Stimpson : 188)

Nergis Dalal, in exploring the relationships between the non-identical twins, Yasmin and Naaz who were often freighted with a rocky mix of emotions and most of the time they

disregard and envy each other, leading to anguish and confusion on the playground, in the home, and in the school is sought to exploit psychoanalysis by the novelist, for her creative purpose focusing on the twin's experiences negotiating their layered feelings toward each other sister shapes their psychology as forcefully as their relationships do, with their parents. Naaz in her heart of hearts thought..

“No one loved me, I cried, because I was not pretty like Yasmin, and Sophie deliberately dressed me in clothes that made me look ridiculous. I hated those horrible dresses she forced me to wear”. (Pg.24)

Her grandmother helps her to get educated and become skilled in areas such as efficient management of finances, running a smooth household and developing her personal poise in a dignified manner. She always used to motivate Naaz by saying,

“You have to make the most of everything you can do and Yasmin can't – you are clever and can work hard to do better, not only better than Yasmin but better than everyone in your class. Don't try to compete with Yasmin. Be different, make people look up to you because of your exceptional abilities and focused work ethic'. (Pg. 25)

Structurally, psychoanalysis in general elicits and tells stories. Psychoanalysis explores the complexities of the human soul, which emanated as a major preoccupation of literature. Psychological and ideological conflicts are part of human life which reveal as much about her own personality as well as Yasmin's, 'her sister, her twin, her enemy'. Naaz is the teller of the tale and the novel is structured around her narratives, mediated by the language employed by the writer.

The novel starts with the awaiting of Yasmin's visit to Dehradun where Naaz had a beautiful house, 'something that Yasmin, for all her beauty, has never had'. She starts her narration as her emotions of confrontation race back and forth between envy and appreciation and probably “Beauty and Brains” could be best used to describe Yasmin and Naaz, individually. Naaz, emerges out as a secured woman and Yasmin as a failure in life. Until then Naaz lived a peaceful and serene life but after her sister's arrival she happens to read 'sinister meanings into everything around her', looked depleted of her with and moreover, she is subjected to a kind of psychological harassment and it is well communicated as such in expressing the emotions and feelings in varied forms. Their expressions look very ordinary but on second thoughts, they carry profound meaning, result of a deep psychological analysis.

“Yasmin said, 'The house looks enormous...Why do you need such a big place?' (Pg.18)

“With Yasmin here I felt the old sense of insecurity, never quite knowing what the day would bring”. (Pg.20)

*Skin Deep* is one of Dalal's finest novels reflecting upon the concept of sisterhood bond in the family. She emphasizes on the psychoanalytic technique and dwells on the role of the nuances of the psyche's ponderings mostly of the two twin sisters. Their past and their childhood scenes are brought before the reader's eyes in flashes and images and the formative years of the two sisters lack any sentimental significance which is termed as an inevitable ingredient of the labyrinth of human relationships between the sister siblings in the family.

The novelist portrays the visible and vibrant dissimilarities of the sisters in a heart rending manner, that most often the reader sympathizes with Naaz. According to practical psychology, a child's behaviour is scrutinized to understand the adult behaviour because any kind of a present problem, has its roots in the past. Yasmin staunchly felt that life would provide everything for her because she entertained utmost confidence in herself that the world of female magic and her beauty would fetch anything that she wanted in life but everything evaporated into thin air after clashing against the harsh realities of life. Love and affection that is received through the bonds of human relationship brings out the best in the humans because an element of growth is visibly present. Yasmin did not adapt to situations and the state of evolution was utterly absent in her way of doing things and establishing a relationship with Ramesh that had been termed frivolous by Naaz.

Freudian theories point out that adult problems can be traced to unresolved conflicts from certain phases of childhood and adolescence. With Yasmin's arrival, it seemed as though the past continued indefinitely in the present life. And so, Naaz very often used to get reminded of her childhood, where she suffered the manipulated, exploited and jealous filled experiences with her sister Yasmin.

“The true heart of darkness has no real physical location, and even after all these years I can find myself there”. ( Pg.13)

As in Freud's psycho-analysis the patient gets isolated from external stimuli that his mind may play over his past and link it to the present, and so Yasmin without any self-analysis seduces her sister's husband. At times, Naaz's mind reflected the feelings that she had about her sister as if, “the sip may evoke other coffee-drinkings that in turn flood out memory as if it were a flickering cinema that pulls together images and words”(Leon : 28) Somehow life became conflicted for her because of the intense emotions that she experienced in their childhood in the household.

“In the mind past and present merge: we suddenly call up a memory of childhood that is chronologically of the distant past; but in it memory becomes instantly vivid and is relived for the moment that it is recalled.” (Leon : 41)

As viewed by Padilla-Walker, in the August 2010 issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology*, “An absence of affection seems to be a bigger problem than high levels of conflict”.

The tragedy in relationship is that Naaz’s past fears are brought into the present that produce much of the unexpected outcomes. She could not preconceive the other’s point of action or any notion. Even when she tried to free herself from the past traumatic circumstances, we certainly notice that her childhood experiences have their impact on her which again would turn out to be the most painful adult experiences. As a child she was always looked at with a feeling that she was not as beautiful as her sister. Her primal experiences and her understanding produced in her the decision that she was not that beautiful to attract, her thoughts went unpleasant which were preoccupied with her sister Yasmin. At times in relationships sharing one’s true feelings is also not safe. The more Naaz tried to bury a negative thought with positive thinking, the louder the negative thought became. At times, the tenacity of what Naaz resisted turned out to be the most powerful reality of change. The more she tried to suppress the sadness with an impoverished state of feeling and seemed of false happiness, the less credible and veritable she felt.

Naaz constantly blamed a painful childhood. We always see that her twin has an agenda opposite and rarely at one’s best interest. One should be endowed with an enormous appetite towards life and concern towards sibling relationships, in order to support our perceptions towards life. Twins are born with full of potential that they can make things happen but at times never achieve tangible results. Constant discussions and debates went on inside the twin’s heads regarding certain situations disturbing the calm and peace. The louder the chatter, the fiercer the battling in their head became more difficult for us to comprehend their actions in life. Anytime, there exists opinionated, serious and critical dialoguing in their mind which does enable us to tap into our personally manifested destiny waiting to be unexplored. (Jasbir : 296)

There is more of “emotional chronology as Keatly points out. Childhood is important. In our formative years we are fed with bits and pieces of emotional and factual information. We do not store images in a chronological order but according to their sentimental significance”.

The sister relationship in life can turn out to be a curse than a blessing, like an unfulfilled dream, Naaz childhood haunts her in such a way that she cannot articulate and be logical with her reasons because she suffers most and begins to buy into her own rationalizations. Somewhere, deep down inside her, she confidently knows that Yasmin is not true. When intensions go unexplored, they leave a tremendous hole in the soul. Any substitute remedies may not be available for, all those are the indirect sources of satisfaction but the quest for fervance in relationship only bestows a fulfillment in life.

At certain times Naaz's thoughts are uncomfortable and unpleasant, as if inviting a sister to her house becomes a self-inflicted torture. In such circumstances negative thoughts grew too large in Naaz's psyche that they became very influential, leading her to visceral experiences in life. Naaz allowed intolerable thoughts, feelings of the kind that coexisted within her, but when they exceeded the limit, she lost her peace of mind. The main error of her was putting too much trust into her husband Ramesh when he was before the out-of-control and dominant sibling as Yasmin and so, she couldn't gain back her earlier command of her life. Her relationship with Yasmin and Ramesh demanded too much of effort and caused her much of life's struggle and pain.

Yasmin's throbbing sense of insecurity makes her seduce Ramesh, so that she could be satisfied with the feeling of having taken vengeance on Naaz for the past. We wonder of what world we are in when we understand her strange way of thinking for, of how the sisters were brought up in a family, in which the past virtually engulfed the present. Certain layers are so dense that they remain obscure to any, and Dalal has rendered these obscure layers with remarkable dexterity. Her approach in rendering of the novel was treated with sensitivity and charm that rose above the plain of commonplace sentiments and traditional expression that urged upon flashy incidents in life, an astounding peculiarity of one whose vengeance was beyond question resulting in seducing one's own sister's husband.

At times, we wonder whether Nergis Dalal is primarily a novelist or a psychologist. Ayn Rand, the famous fiction writer, explores certain philosophical thoughts to make things clear in one of her books entitled *For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*. When she was constantly questioned by her admirers, of her philosophical explorations even in her novels, she states in her preface of the book,

“ I am often asked whether I am primarily a novelist or a philosopher. The answer is: both. In a certain sense, every novelist is a philosopher, because one cannot present a picture of human existence without a philosophical framework; the novelist's only choice is whether that framework is present in his story explicitly or implicitly, whether he is aware of it or not, whether he holds his philosophical convictions consciously or subconsciously. This involves another choice: whether

his work is his individual projection of existing philosophical ideas or whether he originates a philosophical framework of his own. I did the second. That is not the specific task of a novelist; I had to do it, because my basic view of man and of existence was in conflict with most of the existing philosophical theories. In order to define, explain and present my concept of man, I had to become a philosopher in the specific meaning of the term".(Ayn Rand : p.vii-viii)

In a similar way we can understand that Nergis Dalal, consciously or subconsciously endures the trait of understanding the deepest feelings and attitude of her characters' psyche. The kind of psychological excavations that she goes for, is complete with undoubted dexterity, that she explores the mindscapes and many-layered complexities of human relationships.

We understand that the author is with total creative independence, but also driven by her intuition and emotional urges of some strains of her own life because she believed that originality of vision would gain newness of ideas which could make her fiction to be approached , to learning and assimilation. Nergis Dalal is one such writer, whose work is marked by an impressive feel for the language, and an authentic presentation of conflicted female characters searching for identity. They are no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status but are depicted in two folds, i.e; by the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal.

Mrs. Dalal, drew her sustenance from the Parsi identity in India and its tradition as inspiration that made her to be very conscious of Indian culture. Her originality and novel approach in weaving out the sister relationship makes her identified in the ambiguous definition between the foreground and background space of the mind's mystical aura which created the sister-knot. Moreover, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the human mind is said to be operating on two levels of consciousness, the 'Id' and the 'Ego'. The Ego represents the conscious level of behaviour while the Id is where the repressed and frustrated emotions are stored. And so, the novelist focused on the inner recesses of her characters for a better manifestation of the sensibilities of the characters in the novel.

"Freud further developed the iceberg metaphor. Just as the vast bulk of an iceberg is submerged below water, most thoughts, wishes, motives, and so on remain out of consciousness. The small fraction of such psychological experiences that do come to consciousness show themselves as the "tip of the iceberg" above water. Most onlookers are only aware of the "tip of the iceberg", but to understand the movements of the iceberg it

is important to be aware of its submerged bulk. In essence the submerged part of the iceberg, the unconscious, has an enormous impact on behavior, but remains out of sight.” (Moghaddam: 44)

The fair idea of what was going on in Naaz’s mind when Yasmin questioned about Ramesh’s sudden demise and spoke about his leaving of some fortune for her, does not reveal her relationship with him. Naaz, is very much conscious of her sister’s affair with her husband but does not intend to express anything to her, she questions herself thus:

“I wonder, did I intentionally create the confrontation which brought on Ramesh’s fatal heart attack? Was I unconsciously or even consciously, hoping it would happen? It is a question I prefer not to answer.” (Pg.301)

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\* \* \*

## Apocalypse Then and Now

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The present research paper attempts to trace the genesis of apocalypse in all the major religions like Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It also attempts to answer how traditional religious apocalypse is different from the literary apocalypse or secular apocalypse as used by the writers in the nineteenth century. Finally it aims to show how the writers across the world and primarily American writers exploited this concept starting from the nineteenth century and continuing even upto today. Hence the essence of this paper could be summed up as the concept of apocalypse as used in antiquity and in the present times since there is a clear cut shift from the traditional apocalypse to the literary one. Literally, the word apocalypse means a revelation or revealing the shape of things to come. The Greek word "apocalypsis" means uncovering, a kind of a prophecy about what the future holds in store for men. It is in the last book of *The Bible*, *The Revelation*, that apocalypse, signifying the end of the world, finds its full expression. To one of his disciples, St. John, Jesus appears in a vision and conveys the message of God about the end of the world. In *The Revelation* the main points conveyed about the end of the world follow a definite pattern, a series of happenings or occurrences, which shall precede the end. *The Book of Revelation*, also called *Revelation to John* or *Apocalypse of John* is the last canonical book of the *New Testament* in *The Bible* and the only biblical book that is wholly composed of apocalyptic literature.

The inaugural signs of the apocalypse, as described in *The Revelation*, shall be occasional natural disturbances like earthquakes and floods, followed by the most turbulent reign of the Antichrist. This is called the period of the Great Tribulation, followed by the second coming of Christ; and the Armageddon, a cosmic warfare, shall result in the inauguration of the millennium or the messianic kingdom. A gradual moral and physical degradation of human nature will set in as the rule of the Messiah is over. This total degeneration of human nature will be characterised by the last loosening of Satan, to be followed by the ultimate catastrophe, the end of the world by fire. Finally comes the judgement, followed by God's making of a new heaven and earth.

Apocalypticism is a feature of all three monotheistic religions. *The Book of Daniel* describes the Hebrew Prophet's vision of the end. In Islam, the resurrection, the Day of Judgement and salvation are apocalyptic features of orthodox belief as is evident in *The Quran*. The Hindu doctrine

teaches that the human cycle called *Manvantara* is divided into four periods. These periods correspond with the Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages of the ancient Western traditions. It is believed that we are now in the fourth age, the *Kali-Yuga* or Dark Age. In this Dark Age, cyclic development proceeds in a downward direction, from higher to lower, a course which appears to be perceived to be the complete antithesis of the idea of progress as understood by the moderns.

The traditional apocalypse is different from the modern one in that the modern apocalyptic imagination in contemporary literature is secular because it actually reflects the demonic aspects of the apocalypse world of *The Bible* in secular terms. Modern man's secular imagination pictures an apocalypse of despair, in which the end of the world will be final, without the promise of any renewal. No new heaven or earth will follow. A sense of helplessness and despair envisioned about the future of man are final and total. Apocalyptic literature has some basic characteristics. It deals with secret or hidden information which can only be disclosed by supernatural means through dreams or visions from God or angelic intermediaries. The message of apocalyptic literature is communicated in mysterious, enigmatical forms through the use of bizarre, often-times obscure symbolism and imagery. Its fantastic world of beasts, signs, colours, numbers and angels seem to have functioned as a type of code which effectively communicated its message to a secret group while concealing the message from the uninitiated. Apocalyptic literature finds expression in literature either through utopia or dystopia. Both utopian and dystopian writers have the same end in their minds but they approach it differently. In utopian writing, the writer ends on a note of hope, thus leaving a scope for the establishment of an ideal society. The dystopian writer on the contrary, offers/envisions a completely pessimistic picture of the world, without any renewal or hope. When it is pessimistic, there is little possibility for progress or positive development within the normal framework of human endeavour. From the dystopian apocalyptic point of view, things are bad and they are only going to get worse as far as men are concerned. This literature is written in times of catastrophe change as previously well-ordered world views collapse. Apocalyptic writers see themselves in the midst of the catastrophic destruction of a way of life, even of the entire universe. The utopian apocalyptic writers, on the other hand, proceed on the firm conviction that in his own good times, God will intervene to bring the evil of this world to an end and proclaim His ultimate victory. It has been aptly described as the anticipatory raising of the curtain to display the final scene. It is, in a way, conveying pictorially and symbolically the conviction of the ultimate victory of God. In recent times, the term apocalypse has been used to refer to that kind of literature which

incorporates certain dominant features of the apocalypse discussed above. Critics have identified apocalypse in genres such as *Science Fiction*.

The primary and basic feature of the secular or demonic apocalypse consists in showing contemporary civilization as passing through a phase corresponding to the last loosening of Satan, which in *The Revelation* just precedes the end. In contemporary fiction, the last loosening of Satan comes in different forms and under many different guises. Modern man's fondness for violence and destruction is considered to be symbolic of Satan's influence. Secular apocalypse is permeated with the images and themes from biblical writing, although major departure from religious apocalypse is the emphasis on disaster as the primary interest in secular writing. Hence, the most popular use of term apocalypse, which is used to mean not revelation but widespread destruction. There are many writers in the twentieth century who have expressed their apocalyptic vision in their own peculiar way. All of them have their own distinct views about it. Nineteenth century American novelists, such as, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Mark Twain were the first to reflect the apocalyptic imagination in its secular version in fiction, depicting Satan let loose in society. Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* (1852), Melville's *The Confidence Man* (1887) and Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), each dwelt upon the degeneration of human morals under the influence of demonic tendencies in individuals as a prelude to a social disaster. R.W.B.Lewis (1966:184-234) was the first among the contemporary critics of apocalyptic literature to trace the genesis of apocalyptic imagination in contemporary fiction. In his book, he labels the secular version of apocalypse as 'Ludicrous Catastrophe' (1996:184-234) and traces its origin from Melville's *The Confidence Man* and Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* to Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust* and many other works of contemporary American novelists such as Ralph Ellison, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth and Joseph Heller. Lewis analyses the various interpretations of the last loosening of Satan, given by people in different centuries and finally discusses a few apocalyptic novels. John R May takes up some of the insights of Lewis and works these out by focusing upon the use of the apocalyptic imagination in some modern American novels. May says that apocalypse "is a response to a cultural crisis." (1972:19) He discusses the secular strain in apocalypse and remarks that the times "immediately preceding the end are characterised by a general breakdown of moral standards which explains the presence and acceptability of Satan in his many disguises." (1972:34) May also links it with the advent of *Kali Yuga*, the evil age through which modern civilization is passing at present. He is of the opinion that contemporary literature is caught between hope and despair. David Ketterer advocates that apocalyptic thought is an inextricable component of much of science fiction today and that

apocalyptic imagination finds its purest outlet in science fiction which is defined as “the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-gothic mode.”(1974:14-15)

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In the light of above definition Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is certainly the first great work of science fiction followed by *The Last Man*. Both of them present dystopian visions of alternative possibilities for the human race. Science fiction established itself as a major genre of popular contemporary fiction in the magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, in which Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov and Robert Heinlein first published their stories. Science fiction is practically the only literary form that deals with issues that arise from this: the Vietnam War, revolutions in evil society, radiation, environmental degradation, even over-population, robotics and the issues of automation versus unemployment. Influenced by all this, Francis Ford Coppola produces and directs a film *Apocalypse Now* in 1979. The script of the film is based on Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* and it also draws elements from Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*, the film version of Conrad’s *Lord Jim*. It is an epic war film set during the Vietnam war.

Kenneth L Woodward, Angus Deming and Judith Gingold are of the opinion that apocalyptic talk has become too common: “It used to be felt that the only people who cared about doomsday were fundamental preachers who paddled gloom as if they owned a piece of the Apocalypse. Today, however, Americans can hardly pick up a newspaper or magazine, tune in a talk or go to a movie that does not trumpet disaster.” (1975) The author furnished a relevant reason for this: “Why the sudden spate of doom saying? Partly because a number of things have undeniably been going wrong. A decade of assassination, debilitating war and civil strife...has given way to revelations of political corruption, dwindling natural resources and industrial mismanagement.”(1975) B. Magee asserts that there is a regular stream of doom saying and according to him fondness for prediction of the doom is the result of society’s betrayal or failure:

...the lip-smacking relish with which our twentieth century prophetics proclaim the imminent destruction of our society is unmistakable. They are thrilled by it. They want it. Perhaps they want to revenge themselves on it because it is not perfect. Perhaps, more particularly, they want to revenge themselves on it because it has not fulfilled the dreams of perfection they had...it has betrayed them, betrayed their hopes and ideals...made a mockery of their lives...” (1975:37)

The reasons furnished by B Magee form the background of the contemporary apocalypse and the motivating factor behind the apocalyptic visions reflected in contemporary fiction. In an interview with *Playboy*, Allen Ginsberg emphasizes that our planet is in the midst of a probably fatal sickness: “The by-products of that sickness include not only the political violence...but all the fantasies of the cold war-the witch hunts, race paranoi, projections of threat and doom. The sickness will end in our destroying our planet.”(1975:37)

Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1972) has the reputation of being one of the most popular environmentalist books ever. He builds on Malthusian theory about population to argue that global famine was imminent and in 1995 Lawrence Buell’s path-breaking work on American culture, *The Environmental Imagination*, declared: ‘apocalypse is the single most powerful metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal’(1995:93). The spate of literary and cinematic works dealing with ‘end-of-the-world’ scenarios-from Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach* (1957) to Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003)-showcase global ecological disaster, man-made or natural.

There are many pamphleteers who would have the public believe that we are nearing the end of our culture, even of life on this planet as we know it and that the end of the world “is coming very soon and you better be ready for it.”(1989:11) They hold the doomsday theory to be a realistic appraisal of today’s situation. The approach of the year 2000 and the next millennium has put the fear of God into a good many people. “After we get into the 90s, we’re going to see a lot more apocalyptic prophecy,” (2002:1) predicts J Gordon Melton, the Director of the institute for the study of American Religion. The conviction that humans are living in the latter days is shared by millions of fundamentalist Christians. In fact, Whalen Bridge argues that “by the late 1980s...the apocalyptic fundamentalists no doubt outnumber the members of the traditional (hardcore) end of the world sects.” (2001:37) Particularly, in the wake of terrorist attacks on New York City in 2001 and London in 2005, it is perhaps no surprise that literature and films have featured a steady stream of apocalyptic scenarios. For instance, in a five year period after 2001 just some of the disaster films released include *The Core* (2003), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), the remake *Poseidon* (2006), adaptations of novels such as *I, Robot* and *War of the Worlds* (2006) and tale movies including *Category 6: Day of Destruction*(2006), *Category 7, The End of the World*(2005), *Locusts: Day of Destruction*(2006), *Oil Storm*(2005), *Super Volcano*(2005), *10.5*(2005), and *10.5: Apocalypse (I)*(2006). *The Slate Magazine* in America published an article in 2009 by Josh Levin which talks about *How is America Going to End*. He has collected theories from futurists, doomsdayers, separatists,

economists, political scientists, national security experts, climatologists, geologists, astronomers and few miscellaneous crazy people. The result is a collection of 144 potential causes of America's death.

To conclude, it is noteworthy that the apocalyptic belief in American mass culture has become a big business. It has become an industry and Hal Lindsley is one of the most fascinating figures in the whole history of contemporary prophecy belief. He published a book *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1979) and he links it to the current events like the Cold War, Nuclear War, The Chinese Communist threat, the restoration of Israel. The book *Apocalypse Near* (2006), is a revolutionary book as it creates a new genre which fuses autobiography, metaphysics, science fiction, social activism and romance with dynamic media. The book has a clear and important message as it provides an idea of ways we can save this planet and may be ourselves. The ultimate meaning of this book is that the death of the world and thus of all mankind is not just approaching but it also near, hence *Apocalypse Near*. The other book entitled *America's Financial Apocalypse: How to Profit from the Next Great Depression* (2008) focuses on all the major problems America is facing from economic, social and global issues, to all of the financial ones. Wilfred Hahn's book *Global Financial Apocalypse Prophesied* (2009) uses current financial trends and biblical prophecy to show that sometime in the future during our lifetimes, the economies of the world will fail leading to tremendous confusion, revolutions and the emergence of a one-world currency and ruler. The discussion on current apocalypse is endless as there is still a lot that can be said as this industry of apocalypse in America is booming and there is hardly any writer in American who has not been bitten by apocalypse. It is in this way that we get a clear picture of how the traditional apocalypse is different the modern one and the modern one is also in turn different form the contemporary one.

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# **The Problems and Prospects in the Achievement of Syllabus Objectives with Reference to the Papers of English and Communication Skills at Diploma Engineering and Technology**

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The importance of English language is immense. With globalizing process of human activities, English became widely used language because of the political, military, scientific, technological and cultural power that the Anglo-American nations have had. In today's world of throat cutting competition, the necessity of competence in English communication is therefore become very important. It is, no doubt, an international language. It is the window of the world. It is the soul of the corporate world. There is not a single field where English is not used. In each and every field, it is being used. It is the language of modernization. It has become essential for mobility, social and economic success. In India and on international level, no other language is used as widely as English. So it has become a link language. A person, to maintain himself from every angle (education, career, life's standard etc.) competence in English communication is needed. Every one is required to be competent in English communication and today's education system's aim is the same.

Communicative competence is important because language forces students to acquire knowledge and skills in the various disciplines; and to develop individuals to intellectuals, social and civic beings. Communicative competence means a total command over language. The nature of it may be as following:

“Communicative competence is a term coined by Dell Hymes in 1966 in linguistics which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence in terms of three components:

- i) Grammatical competence: words and rules.
- ii) Socio-linguistic competence: appropriateness.
- iii) Strategic competence: appropriate use of communicative strategies.

Canale (1983) refined the above model, adding discourse competence: cohesion and coherence.

A more recent survey of communicative competence by Bachman (1990) divides it into the broad headings of “Organization

Competence” which includes both grammatical and discourse (or textual) competence, and “Pragmatic Competence” which includes both sociolinguistics and illocutionary competence.”

(Online: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/communicative\\_competence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/communicative_competence))

The syllabus objectives in the paper English and CMS at diploma engineering and technology intend to develop student’s communicative competence through English. MSBTE states the same in the Preface of the texts of English and CMS respectively in the following manner.

‘The purpose of introducing this text is to enable the students to enhance their comprehension, writing skills and oral skills in English.

(Maharashtra State Board of Technical Education 2006: 2)

‘Purpose of this subject is to enable the students to develop confidence through effective communication.’ (MSBTE 2006: 1)

But the general observation concerned reveals that there is a maximum gap between the objectives set down and the directions followed to fulfill the objectives. It may generally be seen that the students of diploma engineering and technology are not that much competent in communication through English even after studying the subjects like English and CMS. It has been expressed in the preface of the text of English too that the snap study conducted for the role of technicians in industry revealed that the diploma pass out students appearing for interviews or working in industries lack the skills to communicate in correct English. The present article is an attempt to find out the causes behind their poor competence in communication through English and to give the meaningful suggestions and recommendations for their improvement.

Lack of sufficient time to deal with students may be a cause. In a week, five hours and four hours of 60 minutes are allotted to the teaching of English and CMS in first and second semester respectively. We get 108 hours in a year to develop grammatical foundation and communicative competence through English. But unfortunately, we are bound to give maximum time to deal with syllabus only because students are required to attempt questions to score in examination on the basis of the syllabus prescribed. Moreover, the syllabus prescribed in the paper English and CMS does not meet the need of the objectives. Though so far students have studied the grammar like parts of speech, direct/indirect, punctuation marks, tense, active/passive, types of sentences, use of article, add question tag, remove too, change the degree, correct the errors, synonyms, antonyms, use of contextual words, paragraph writing, glossary, reading comprehension etc., we find again the repetition of the same syllabus for the first semester of three years diploma engineering and technology. In Communication Skills, there are five chapters namely, Introduction to Communication, Types of Communication, Principles of Effective Communication, Non-Verbal-Graphic Communication, Formal Written Skills. All chapters except 5<sup>th</sup> make no sense as far as the needfulness of academics is concerned and even they don’t fulfill the objectives of the subject. What use are such chapters to students? How these chapters will improve their skills in communication through English? All such questions lead us

nowhere but towards ambiguity.

Sufficient time should be allotted to develop students' competence in communication through English for carrying out sufficient language activities successfully. Even, it may be stated that the subject English may be prescribed in all the 6 semesters under 6 different titles with only one objective of developing competence in communication through English. Moreover, the syllabus designing committee of English and CMS should play a crucial role in designing a curriculum to achieve a communicative competence. If the stages given below are followed, the competence in communication through English among the students of diploma engineering and technology could be improved to a satisfactory level of achievement. The stages are as following:

### **1) Basic Stage:**

At Basic Stage, the general information about language should be provided viz. language, characteristics of language, human communication and animal communication, speech and writing, importance-need-scope of English language, etc. Language acquisition-steps-problems in it should be directed. Difference between language, regional language, register etc. should be shown. The grammatical co-relation between the mother tongue and the language being learned should be focused. The students should be encouraged to read entire Marathi-English and English-Marathi dictionary so that their vocabulary maybe enriched. They should be given the proper idea about the real pronunciation of the words and the books concerned should be suggested. The importance of language skills should be convinced more firmly. The grammatical aspects like parts of speech, hierarchy of grammatical units, types of sentences, tense, auxiliaries, phonology, morphology, syntax, sub-ordination, co-ordination, basic and derived structures, vocabulary building, word formation etc. should be given more weightage. The books about grammatical development should be given priority and the syllabus should be set accordingly.

### **2) Intermediate Stage:**

At basic stage, the grammatical foundation will get developed. In intermediate stage, the comprehension ability should be checked. It should be assessed that how much the student comprehends and responds properly. How his psycho-motor technique works fast with appropriateness that should be seen. Some lessons for comprehension should be prescribed and questions should be asked in class to check their sudden comprehension and in examination for their overall comprehension. Some unseen passages should be given; correct the errors from the sentences should be asked to realize their correct knowledge of grammar and to know the profundity of background. Use of contextual words in a paragraph should be incorporated in this stage to know the appropriate sense of understanding of the student. Students should be enforced to read English newspapers and to bring important cuttings and to read them aloud in the class. In this way, their comprehension may be assessed. They may be suggested to watch and listen some English channels. Watching and listening is better than reading because in reading double role is played viz. reading and understanding. In watching and listening, speaker keeps them engaged and of course what they listen,

they concentrate only on that. By this, comprehension may increase and their knowledge of English language may enhance.

### **3) Written Stage:**

The grammatical foundation and comprehension is not sufficient enough at this stage. It is required to know the appropriateness of the form of writing. The spellings, punctuation marks, proper words at proper place, proper structures etc. should be stressed. Formal written skills like office drafting, letter writing, job application, report writing, defining and describing the objects, analysis and interpretation of picture, paragraph writing, essay writing etc. should be taken into consideration for the development and assessment of written skills. The development of thought, having unity of thought and logical sequence, may be seen.

### **4) Spoken Stage:**

In this stage, prime importance should be given to the fluency in communication through English and the efforts should be taken accordingly. To be fluent in communication through English, vocabulary, pronunciation, structures of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, the way of expression (accent) etc should be known. The stress should be given on oral skill, conversation skill etc. For this, we should know effective communication and its different principles, communicative barriers arising and the ways of overcoming, the role of different organs of human body in the effective communication etc. Different communicative concepts like greetings, seasonal greetings, good wishes, ways of expressing congratulation, introducing, thanking, apologizing, condolence, offering, inviting, advising, suggesting, requesting, warning, threatening, permission, obligation/compulsion, prohibition etc. should be given value as they are important aspects of language. Students should be motivated to read newspapers in order to absorb different words and structures. Dialogue writing, speeches, seminars, presentations, paper readings etc. should be considered essential. Moreover communicative approach plays a crucial role in the development of competence in communication through English. If a student gets habituated to use English continuously, it definitely helps for over all development. Students may be convinced for planning the thoughts in advance more systematically while making a speech. They should be told for the necessity of proper style and accent. They may also be told for not stammering otherwise they may feel diffident and they may not reach to the final stage.

Apart from this, English should be taught from linguistic and communicative point of view. In this context, Gaulkar U. A., Ex. Head, Dept. of English, Rajarshi Shahu College, Latur in a Forward to Shri Sanjay Kshirsagar's book 'Third Language English' says,

'English ought to be taught from the linguistic point of view, basic language skills have to be mastered and beauty of expression, style and idea have to be appreciated.' (Kshirsagar 2006: 3)

Teachers should be imaginative and innovative in language teaching with abundance of motivating techniques with them. Proper environment at home by parents and at college by teacher should be created. Students should do enough practice and

drill work to overcome the problem.

More weightage should be given for the development of spoken skills. While writing, the writer may get extra time to think, to analyze, to interpret, to edit, to rectify, to find the difficult words and to apply logic which favors positively. It is certain that unless and until it is completed, nobody goes to show. But while speaking, such liberty, the speaker may not get which causes poorness in communication. It means to develop the competence in communication through English; the speed of thinking in English should be increased. This is a mere way to reduce the timing gap between spoken and written. But a question strikes the mind, how is it possible? It is possible. An example can be given in convenience of this. Suppose a person is just learning typing. In the beginning, his speed may be less. To increase his speed, what can he do? He does practice alone which increases his speed of typing. And it is aptly said, "Practice makes man perfect." We shall do the same thing. But here, we are not going to increase the typing speed but thinking speed. And once we do it, we shall be able to have a good communicative competence

T.V. is watched. Journals, magazines, news papers, books etc. are read. Most of the scholars justify that this is essential for fluency building. Though this is true, something important is forgotten. Reading and listening is not sufficient. Something more is needed which may play somewhat good role. For an experiment, an example of terrorists attack at various places in India can be taken. One may consider himself Home Minister of India and may try to answer the questions raised by the reporter. Here he is both reporter and answerer. He may form the questions and ask these to himself one by one. He may take one activity per day and may repeat it till the time, he feels confident about the language development. He may write it too. By this way, he can increase his thinking speed and once his thinking speed in English matches with his thinking speed in Marathi, he may find fluency.

The article may be concluded with the view that the problems shown may become a barrier if not removed in time. Generations after generations may find themselves weak in communication. So the importance of this article is undeniable. It may be said that the improvement shown may bring competence in communication through English among the students. It is hoped that the present article will be helpful in the teaching and learning of English in the light of the suggestions incorporated as above.

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## **The Hall of Warped Mirrors: The Role of the Auditor in Browning's "The Laboratory"**

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The Victorian Era witnessed the emergence of a new form of poetry, the dramatic monologue, which poets used to achieve goals they could not reach through the soliloquy-style strivings of lyric poetry, nor gain through multiple speakers. By exposing the sentiments of an often-deranged speaker to a silent listener, the dramatic monologue complicated the reader's poetic experience. The dramatic monologue creates an intricately precarious relationship between the speaker and auditor, as well as between the reader and the poem. As the reader learns more about the speaker through the auditor's lens, he or she also becomes enlightened about the listener's role beyond the limits of the poem. The auditor in Browning's "The Laboratory" demonstrates how the sometimes-warped relationships within dramatic poetry can affect the reader by creating a sense of intimacy through opportunities for reflection. Although the apothecary acts as the silent witness, his active role in premeditated murder, as devised by a woman, complicates the reader's experience; "The Laboratory" reveals an apt metaphor for how the role of the auditor affects the reader in a dramatic monologue: a hall of mirrors that reflects the twisted relationships among the speaker, auditor, poet, and reader.

Understanding the role of the auditor within dramatic poetry necessitates an exploration of the motivations of the speaker because of the potential reflective relationship between the speaker and listener. By "overhearing" (Kaiser, "The Dramatic Monologue"; Maynard) the speaker's words through the auditor, the reader views the scene as reflected by a multi-faceted mirror that provides information about the listener as well as the speaker. In "The Laboratory," Browning's speaker, a version of the Marquise de Brinvilliers, rambles about her ambitions to the listener, a poison-maker. Although lucrative, since the speaker gives the listener her store of jewels and gold, poison-production would not appear to be the listener's sole form of funding; in her perusal of his laboratory, the speaker comments on several items that may not be poisonous and expresses distress that her purchase does not have the "enticing and dim" quality of a phial she admires (line 26). The speaker's comment indicates that the listener may be an apothecary, one who creates medicines and herbal remedies as well as illicit poisons. From her eager scrutiny of the listener's laboratory, the speaker reveals her current neophyte status as a murderess. She also reveals the listener's apparent distaste for his complicity in the work, or to her eagerness in her grisly plans, when she admonishes him to "be not morose" (line 41) in response to her command to remove her mask so she may see the results of his labor.

By their nature, dramatic monologues require an implicit or, in the case of "The Laboratory," explicit listener or witness to the speaker's words. If the poet felt it necessary to provide a listener as a lens for the reader, the reader must judge and prioritize the content through

what the speaker reflects about the listener. How the speaker interacts with the listener through the impartation of the information provides more clues to the relationship between the two. While the apothecary focuses on protective gear, creating the poison, and his fee, the noblewoman talks of dancing, her rivals, and her straying lover. Her flippant comments regarding the tools of death, ruminations about poisoning methods, and the rivals she hopes to kill demonstrate a bloodthirsty nature. She feels nothing for the lives of her future victims and wants to ensure the listener does not misunderstand her: “Not that I bid you spare her the pain;/Let death be felt and the proof remain:/Brand, burn up, bite into its grace--/He is sure to remember her dying face! (lines 37-40). Although her language is that of a frivolous noblewoman, her comment that she wants her victim’s death-pains to be etched upon her face and within her former lover’s mind demonstrates her callousness as well as feelings of superiority about the apothecary. The speaker may feel her payment of her “whole fortune’s fee!” (line 43) as well as a kiss on the mouth will guarantee the listener’s silence, but she may also be so used to getting what she wants from those she sees as inferior, in the habits of the *Ancien Regime*, that she never even considers he might tell all she divulges.

Browning’s grammatical choices emphasize the relationship between the speaker and the listener. The predominance of end-stopped lines stress the rhyme, giving a sing-song quality to her voice and an indication that she says whatever pops into her mind. In comparison to the enjambed lines of Browning’s “My Last Duchess” that indicate that speaker’s practiced nature in regard to the subject and his potential effect upon the listener, the speaker in “The Laboratory” appears imprudent or thoughtless with her comments. The use of tricolons throughout the work indicates the speaker’s haste and her eagerness. When she says “Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,/pound at thy powder,--” (line 9-10), the speaker indicates a slight familiarity with the machinations of a laboratory, but she belies her statement “I am not in haste!” (line 10). Most of the examples of tricolon usage demonstrate how the speaker rapidly ponders the poisonous possibilities as the listener continues to diligently –and silently- make the poison. The listener’s silence intrudes between the stanzas filled with her hasty language in a constant reminder of his presence. Wagner-Lawlor indicates the silence allows the reader space to interpret the reasons for the auditor’s silence (293): is the apothecary just busy, or does he express acceptance or condemnation even as he is complicit in the future crimes?

The gender of the speaker in relation to the genders of the poet and listener further complicate the reader’s experience. A male poet who creates a female speaker’s words heard by the reader through the a male apothecary creates a poetic situation that intentionally exacerbates the loop of infinite reflections and relationships found in dramatic poetry. That the speaker was based upon a historical figure adds another level of reflection. Browning took poetic license with the Marquise de Brinvilliers’ motives: the speaker in the poem wishes to destroy her romantic rivals, as opposed to murdering her family for their goods with the help of her lover (Dumas). That the speaker’s motive stems from her status as a scorned lover continues to warp the layers of reflections within the work, as this reason for seeking revenge appears to emanate from a

stereotypically feminine response. However, the speaker's flippancy concerning murder demonstrates her insanity; she indicates that her motives for murder make perfect sense.

The concept of the mask is a central metaphor within criticism of dramatic monologues. Many critics of Victorian dramatic monologues express that the mask of the speaker allows the poet to be personal while maintaining objective distance. Some critics assert the reticence of some poets necessitated the theatrical safety of a persona or guise of a speaker through which to act as a ventriloquist (Shaw, "Projection..." 315) and submerge most of their personalities. Garratt proffers a double-mask theory, one in which the speaker is one mask and the interaction between speaker and auditor is another (116). The double-mask theory recognizes that Browning has not eliminated himself from the poem; it also identifies how the second mask, the mask the persona wears in communicating with the auditor, complicates the reader's experience (118).

Theories about the necessity of the theatrical persona within the dramatic monologue contain valid points, but the terminology is inadequate. The role of the apothecary as the auditor transcends the mask or double-mask theories, not because the theories do not pinpoint key elements of dramatic monologues, but because the terms seem inadequate. Although "The Laboratory" includes the persona of the speaker as well as the listener, the apothecary as auditor allows Browning to reveal more deeply than what the word "mask" implies. The listener in this poem is no mere witness to the potential crimes but draws the reader into murderous complicity. Although psychologically apt, the mask metaphor denies the cyclical relationships among the speaker, listener, poet, and reader. The poet does not merely wear a mask like a costume; he or she becomes the speaker and the listener to reflect ideas onto readers; the readers recursively reflect upon the poetic themes, the relationships of the speaker and listener, and the connection of both to the speaker's spoken content as well as underlying content. Though brilliant and well-detailed by many learned critics, the mask theory is inadequate when applied to the layers of reflection within "The Laboratory," a poem, ironically, not given much credence by Browning himself (Shaw, "Projection..." 330). The work demonstrates how the auditor's role catalyzes reflection; the phraseology associated with the mask theories unintentionally imply that the roles of speaker and auditor are products of artifice, constructs to don on a whim. The connotation of the term "mask" minimizes the sacrifice involved in the sublimation of elements of self as well as laser-like focus required to develop a persona to explore the content of a dramatic monologue.

Like speakers in dramatic monologues, poets have something to say; the listener/speaker relationship reflects the reader/poet relationship. Browning searched for the perfect auditor; John Maynard notes that Browning's "problem was not finding complex things to say about the meaning of life but keeping the discourse at a level where others could understand it" (108). Creating a speaker-listener situation allowed Browning to look into a split mirror and reflect himself as speaker and listener. Mermin notes that Browning was "concerned less with the inadequacies of the vehicle than with those of the audience" (145). By creating dramatic monologues, Browning constructed listeners who invited the readers into their roles. The forced intimacy and sympathetic identification through the auditors of Browning's dramatic monologues disturbed Victorian readers because of the constant madness and sexual violence of

his speakers (Gregory 497). However, dramatic monologues were no mere academic exercises or theatrical games from which a poet would experiment with a persona; they explored content.

Browning's "The Laboratory" emerges as a possible comment from a male poet on the situation of emasculation of poetry as a profession. The work demonstrates an example of how a male Victorian poet might attempt to recapture poetry as a masculine art form while indicating a fear of femininity (Kaiser "Tennyson and Rosetti"). In "The Laboratory," the speaker, a woman, appears to exemplify agency: she is the eager potential murderess, and she has the power of expression within the poem. However, the laboratory itself, the symbol of agency as well as interiority, belongs to the male listener who, rather than remaining an objective witness, actively creates during the poem. That the male figure is the creator allows the reader to ponder how Browning may provide commentary on the subject of masculinity within Victorian poetry. Although the female speaker demands the poison's creation and pays for the work, she possesses an unreliable worldview because of her insanity. The listener, who reflects the speaker for the reader, may also reflect the poet as the creator. If the listener, rather than the speaker, represents the poet, the only possible representation of poetry is the poison, a stereotypically female form of murder. The result of the entirety of the work during the poem results in a grimly-colored "delicate droplet" (line 43) with the potential to destroy the creator as well as the intended victim. In addition, the poem's subtitle, "old order," may refer to the old order of the subjects and styles of Romantic poetry to equate feminine agency with insanity and demonstrate masculine power over interiority. The flippancy of the female speaker and her rambling subjects, in relation to the constancy of the silently creative auditor, may also comment on the subject matter of female poets versus that of male poets.

The reader's experience in the hall of mirrors of dramatic poetry, as exemplified by the complications in "The Laboratory," demonstrates the change in the relationships between readers and poetry in Victorian literature. The reader held a more important role in relation to the speaker because of the creation of the listener since the reader would have to consider the effect of the words on the listener (Maynard). The reader had to be an active reader of the poem as opposed to a passive reader or consumer of the work (Kaiser, "The Dramatic Monologue"). For Browning's works, in particular, responsive readers are essential (Mermin 145). The addition of the listener, instead of isolating the reader from deranged speaker, can create an intimate relationship between them (Shaw, "Masks..." 439). In "The Laboratory," not only does the reader learn about the speaker through the lens of the auditor, he or she also learns of the auditor's environs through the speaker's observations; the work reveals reflections of reflections for the reader to consider. Not only does the reader have to ponder how the speaker presents herself and her motivations, the reader also has to interpret the speaker's observations of the listener and his setting; the reader has to debate the levels of unreliability within the speaker's comments to the listener. The reader also has to decide whether the silence from the listener is of intimidation, censure, or acceptance (Wagner-Lawlor 290). The role of the auditor complicates the reader's experience in "The Laboratory" because the reader must not only view the speaker through the lens of the listener, he or she must also evaluate the strength of the relationship

between the listener and the reader when the listener is an accessory to murder. The reader must look into the hall of mirrors and decide if the reflections are accurate.

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## Exploring the Intricacies of Marriage Through Shobha De's *Spouse*

Sangeeta Das

Shobha De has always been a Page 3 writer and I have always thought her to be dealing with the emotions and turmoil of that particular section of society. But I have been belied out of my prejudiced opinion about the writer by her judicious guidance to a happy married life.

There is no doubt about the fact that 'Marriages are made in Heaven' but they are fulfilled on the earth. This is a bond which is holy and permanently bound on the grounds of truth and love. Nevertheless, this trust and love has to be observed by both man and woman which alone will put their life on tracks leading to an even and satisfactory culmination.

Shobha De has touched almost all the aspects of a married life and tried her best to balance the content on the rails of justification. She has not sat back and preached at the couples, rather practically put herself on the altar of marriage and opened up her mind and delves deep into her life and tried to instruct and convince us through the nitty-gritty of her own life.

The relationship of a man and woman gets recognition in society through marriage. Two different persons brought-up in different environment, customs and temperaments are thrown together and are expected to live in peace and harmony. In the olden times, no doubt it was possible as the woman had to compromise greatly not only with her desires and temperament, but also with her belongings and emotions. That was all because the woman was mostly illiterate and dependent on the man. In contrast, today when the woman is equally qualified and doing may be a better job than her husband, can she be expected to do the same. Certainly not and therefore, clashes would result as a consequence. Hence in this world where each sex requires space to co-exist and flourish, man has to break out of the age-old shell and accept and recognize the importance of woman, not only in his life and house but also in the society. This acceptance is very necessary for a happy and fruitful married life. Though the couple may not have much time for each other today, Shobha De says that there are many simple ways to make each other know their presence and importance in their life.

Compromise is a key word to a peaceful married life but as Shobha De says, is not enough for a happy and satisfactory married life. Compromise may not mean love in a married life. One should be very clear about one's expectations out of a married life. Adjustment and compromise devoid of love may make one's married life dull and lacklustre. To make each other feel their importance in each other's life, a quick hug and a kiss of love also goes a long way to clear the clouds of doubt from the mind of both husband and wife.

Marriage without quibbles is incomplete. With accordance to Shobha De's views, I also believe that where there is love there is disagreement. Without annoyance and pamper as a consequence, love cannot thrive. No marriage is only romance and romance all over. It has its demerits, troubles and turmoil too. One has to balance the carriage of marriage on the wheels of romance and logic.

I absolutely agree with Shobha De that marriage is an idea. Now it is up to you how you can develop the idea with your prudence. It is in the hands of each couple to make the idea of marriage becoming and happening or miserable and drudgerous.

Marriage is an idea which is very personal and should flourish between a husband and a wife. The moment it becomes public, the success of the idea is jeopardized and the end inevitable.

Both husband and wife should keep it in their mind that it is their idea to live together and make a family of their own; hence they should not tolerate interference of any outsider in their life. The moment such encroachment is made, their idea do not remain their.

According to Shobha De, '3T's' theory should be followed by a couple to make their lives happy and adventurous. '3T's' theory is of TIME, TOLERANCE and TENDERNESS. In the marriages where the three unities exist, those marriages are sure to sail on happily, peacefully and of course successfully.

Let's first discuss these three keys to a happy married life. TIME is very important for the foundation of a relationship as well as for its flowering. A husband and wife though unite through love or arrangement need time to understand each other. Couples who have affair between them before marriage claim to have given enough time to each other to understand the likes and dislikes of each other. Even after such conformity, they disagree and quibble with each other after marriage, complaining on each other of a change in attitude. Actually, before marriage they were lovers while after marriage, their status, change into husband and wife who have to cohabit with each other through thick and thin. Conditions of life do not remain the same. Time takes its toll and subjects each to such situations where their patience is tried to the extreme. It is then that the couples prove the firmness of their relationship by adhering to each other and facing the buffets of tough time. A couple that stands the ground and is successful in the test of time will be the happiest couple on this earth. A marriage is all about time. Both should take out time from their busy schedule and spend it on each other for a happy future.

Tolerance is another important feature of a successful marriage. Each person has his or her predilections and cannot change completely for each other. No two persons brought-up in different environment amongst different set of people can be alike in their tastes and temperament. So it becomes necessary that they should be tolerant towards each other. With time, the couples know the soft-points and violent-points of each other and therefore with the budding of love between them, tolerance towards each other creeps

in slowly and unknowingly. Respect for the feelings and emotions of each other will naturally make them tolerant. There would be moments when one of the partners might lose patience and burst for reason unknown to the other, at that time, the second partner should be tolerant and understand the mental turmoil through which his/ her partner is going through and after sometime when the fructuous moment lapses, the disturbed partner will be regretful for his/her behaviour. Furthermore, the couples are usually engaged in different professions which have separate demands. Under such circumstances, it has been seen that many couples break down and lose patience with each other. This might prove fatal for a relationship. It is here that the key of tolerance, play a vital role. Both the partners should sit and discuss over the need and urgency of their jobs and on mutually agreeing to continue with the jobs, should sort out their problems amicably and with tolerance without letting the vicious 'EGO' come in between their relationship. It will be seen that not only will they flourish economically; they will become an ideal couple for others and lead a happy and peaceful married life. In our society, it has been seen that it is mostly the women, who are tolerant and overlook the mal-treatment meted out to them by their husbands and in-laws. They have been fed by their parents that a married woman's right place is with her husband and in-laws and therefore she should tolerate and adjust with them. This attitude of the parents, not only encourage the bad elements to torture the poor girl but also result into their death. Here we are discussing about tolerance, time and tenderness which may be accepted and followed by a certain section of society but then there are also such couples and houses, where these magic words are unknown and flagrantly overlooked and violated. My appeal is for such couples, who are married but do not observe the basic norms of a married life.

A relationship where the husband is egoist and stoically harsh towards his wife, treating her like a doormat and the wife is docile and subservient, accepting the treatment as her fate is lifeless in totality and is not going to benefit any member of the family. The worst hit, are the children, whose childhood would be stunted in such a stifling atmosphere of the house. Such a relationship is nothing but a chaos and will lead to either a disaster or a miserable and pathetic end.

Tolerance also denotes consideration and observation of the norms of marriage under strenuous situations. Besides emotional and mental tolerance towards each other, there should be physical tolerance too. The demanding hours of work might leave a couple drained of any desire for sex, which may create a rift between the two. Here again, if the couple show tolerance towards each other by both, not forcing the other against his/her will and showing annoyance but rather easing the tension by a loving hug or an affectionate squeeze, they can go a long way in melting the ice tending to settle between the two. Nonetheless, the couples should sort out this problem between themselves to save a long term disaster. Though not frequent, the demand of sex between the couple,

remain and should be catered to or the consequences may be horrifying by giving rise to the chances of straying.

The third and vital key to a successful marriage is tenderness. Tenderness is required in almost all types of relationships to make it a success and so does it play an important role between a husband and wife. This type of relationship irrefutably entails responsibilities, which have the power to shake a man. A tender word, a touch of tenderness or a look of tenderness between a husband and wife can go a long distance in strengthening the bond between them and relieving the strenuousness of the responsibilities. The wife who leaves her parents' house and enters an unknown territory of a new family, require patience and tenderness from the in-laws and mainly the husband on whom she banks for all her problems and happiness. The new bride should be given time and space to realize where she has landed and what her in-laws want, from her. Instead of loading her with a horde of demands, they should be polite and instructive. At this juncture, a tender word from her husband and some consideration from him can enable her to know her in-laws and tackle them accordingly. In the vice-versa, the bride should not enter the house of the in-laws with a negative feeling from the start. She should remember the fact that they are related to her husband and a negative approach in the start would be derogatory to their relationship. A wise bride will always let things take their time and taking a back seat should observe and plan her moves which can enable her to carve out a favourable niche in the household. A slight tact on the part of a wife can make her the favourite 'BAHU' of the 'SAAS' and the whole lot. Such a move will also impress her husband and can create a rapport between the two and strengthen their relationship for good.

Apart from this, no matter how much a couple tries to co-operate with each other, they cannot deny the fact that their preferences, likes and dislikes vary. The moot point is their co-ordination on this ground. The husband may have friends which are close to him but disliked by the wife and vice-versa, may create a deadlock in their relationship. In such a case, the ego of both clash and can precipitate into a crack in their relationship. The wise thing that a couple can do is ponder on the importance of the issue i.e. friends or their married life. Most of the couples would definitely choose their married life as nothing can be more important than they themselves to each other. The wise thing would be to strike a balance and decide a way out of the quagmire. They can attend to the friends unacceptable to each other at a time when the other partner is not there but of course within his/her knowledge or there will be the chance of being labeled as unfaithful. This way both can avoid unpleasant encounters. There is another twist in this matter. The boyfriends of a wife may not be acceptable to a husband and vice-versa. In this case, both have to have faith in each other but remember the limits of their relationship. The wife must tell her man-friend not to call her after work when she is with her family and the same prevails with the husband. This way, each will not feel deprived and can happily adjust with their unknown friends.

Another important source of bond between couples is their baby. The correct planning of a baby is very necessary for a couple because this is such an undertaking in life which might make their life either heaven or hell. All depends on the acceptability of the child in their life. The child should come in their lives only after they have known each other well and are mentally prepared to welcome the advent of the new addition to their family because a new born baby is very demanding and can eat up the major chunk of a wife's time that a couple would like to share with each other. There may be days when the couple may not even get time to talk to each other, leave alone sleeping together. Such sudden change of situation may cause strain and frustration to the husband mainly as the wife, a newly turned mother would be very busy with the baby. A prudent and a loving husband would understand the situation and the pressing conditions of the wife and without cribbing and grumbling would help her with encouraging words and relieving her sometime with the baby and patiently dealing with her tantrums, and why not when the idea of the baby was mutual. Such a behaviour on the part of a husband will not only strengthen the bond of love and affection between the couple but also sow seeds of a happy and peaceful rearing of a healthy child.

A husband and wife relationship is thus not only physical but also mental and emotional. Both should stand by each other through thick and thin and not run off to seek solace else where at the slightest provocation. After the relationship between a parent and a child, the relationship between a husband and wife is reckoned with awe and respect. It is very easy to break up a relationship and put an end to it but the credit lies with a person, to uphold and stand by a relationship through the vagaries of time.

Our culture is therefore very rich and respectable because it teaches us the importance of relationship between a husband and wife and its importance could be seen in India still at this time when the western wind is trying hard to blow away the aura of our culture from our mind and heart. Shobha De has done a commendable work in taking up such an immense topic and putting it threadbare before us, forcing us to stop, look and ponder and review our marital relationship and make amends if and where required.

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## Post Modernism and English Literature: What is Post Modernism?

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It is possible to identify a singular feature- the hallmark of post-modernism, which would suggest a unity in diversity. Post structuralism and post-modernism are partners in the same paradigm. Together they exercise a joint critique of modernist ideas of order and unity. Both share a profound ontological uncertainty.

Historically post-structuralism had its origin in October 1966 during the symposium on “The Language of criticism and sciences of man” *Post –modernism and English Literature* held in John Hopkins Humanities Centre where the objective was to “bring into an active and not uncritical contact leading proponents of structural studies in a wide variety of disciplines.” *Post –modernism and English Literature* Lucien Goldmann, Todorov, Barthes, Lacan and Derrida, among others were present. It is here that Derrida attacked the traditionalist position in general and the Levi-Strauss’ version of structuralism in particular. He shows how the structuralist texts like Levi-Struss’s can be made to embarrass their own logic. Derrida contends that the “structurality of structure has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by giving it a centre of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin.” Derrida coins a word “differance” out of two words, “difference”, and “deference”. The structure of the sign is conditioned by differing and by deferring. Differing is the one not being the other, it is spatial. Deferring is something delayed or postponed, it is temporal. In other words, the structure of the sign is “differance” which means that a sign is something which is different from another sign and something that is not fully contained in the sign. Therefore, the half of the sign is what it is not and half of it is not there. A sign has no fixed meaning; all that it can do is to send us in search of meaning. The sign therefore is a trace and literary work is a structure of traces. By “decentering” Derrida means that out-side discourse there is no fixed point from which one can establish metaphysical boundaries for legitimate signifiers. The critic’s desire to find a center is a kind of wish fulfillment and such centering should be summarily dismissed as useless legacy of the old metaphysics. The idea of decentering has opened up what was supposed to be a closed system of empirical data and the

result is free play and indeterminacy. There is such an indeterminacy in any fictional art work that neither consistency nor certainty is possible. The text must be read as slippery, deceptive, unknowable and most importantly, an unstable narrative; language lets us down just when we think it meaningful. The meaning is indeterminate. The text is not a closed system but an open one into which we can have access through many different entrances none of which can be claimed as the main one. Each single text, again, is a network that recalls the many other texts and opens up the horizon of intertextuality. A text is no longer seen as a veil hiding a meaning, but a web without a centering spider; free play without closure. Once the physical condition of a book is separated from the chain of communication associated with verbal discourse, the book becomes a simple code that can be interpreted as one interprets hieroglyphics. For Stanley Fish a text is a kind of empty container waiting to be filled with meaning. The reader is the co-author and the text or, more precisely a sub-text, emerges out of the vital interaction between the text and the reader.

The most important postmodern feature is indeterminacy. Nothing is certain: we cannot be certain about anything. This indeterminacy is also partly due to our sense of fragmentation. The seamless totality of the classical and the Christian worlds are lost to us. With the death of God, the world is fragmented; the society is fragmented; the family is fragmented; the process of fragmentation is an on-going process. In post-modernism, this is reflected in the breaking of forms, use of montage and collage and mixing of genres in an unexpected manner. Since post-modern culture is essentially mass culture, all canons are discredited. The traditional values are flouted; the culture is decanonized. Art is trivialized and carnivalized. Post-modernism insisted on the pleasure of the moment and looked for things easy to like.

David Lodge identified six narrative strategies generally used in post-modern fiction: Contradiction, Permutation, Discontinuity, Randomness and the Short-circuit. Post-modernism is interested in pleasure. For post-modernism realism is just an incoherent and deluding notion. Post-modernism points a radical indeterminacy. For post-modernism the pattern or the centre is only a wishful thinking; an imposition. The idea of a meaningful pattern is a comforting fiction at the best.

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## An Interview with Sharan Kumar Limbale

**Siva Nagaiah Bolleddu**

Ph. D Scholar, Dept. of English  
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur; A.P.

Sharankumar Limbale is one among the most renowned Dalit writers in India. He was born on 01 June 1956.. Most of his writings are in Marati and translated into English and other languages. Limbale got his BA degree in English in 1978, MA in Marati in 1990 and PhD degree in Marati in 1996 from Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He is a good academician as well as a writer and he occupied so many positions in YCM Open University and now he is the Regional Director of the Regional centre in Pune of Y C M Open University, Nashik. He is an illustrious writer and his writings mostly rest on the Dalit struggle and identity. He wrote fourty books so far and he was known for poetry, short stories, including his autobiography *The Outcaste* (2004). His autobiography is written in Marati language and translated into Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, Malayam languages. Any how, it caught the attention of the world especially of the translated one into English by Santhosh Bhoomkar. He got many awards and won the wider acclaim from the public for his literary talents. He is also known for the critical work *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Studies* (2004) which is the most resource book on Dalit criticism after Arjun Dangle's *Poisoned Bread* and Kancha Ilaiah's *Why I am Not A Hindu*. He is a member of many academic and cultural organisations and many scholars did and engaged in active research on his writings. His interviews are found in well known publications and literary journals. The aim of the present interview is to know the internal and external criticism that Limbale had after his polemical personal narrative *The OutCaste* (2003).

### **Q.1. Shall I know more about you?**

**Limbale:** Today I am a professor and regional director in Yashavantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University. This is a state university of Maharashtra. This is my professional status. In literature I am an eminent dalit writer. I used all forms of literature. My major work is available in Marathi, Hindi, English, Malayalam, Tamil, Gujarati, Kannada and Punjabi. I have written forty four books and got fourteen awards for my literary contribution.

### **Q.2. How did your family members react to your autobiography?**

**Limbale:** I write my autobiography at the age of 25 years. At this time my children were small. so they can not react to my life story. Today they are grownups. I am well known author. So they get benefits of my fame and reputation.

**Q.3. You stated that your history is the history of your mother and Grand mother. How did they respond after the book is published?**

**Limbale:** My mother and grand mother are illiterate. When they knew about my book they became angry. They thought that I had defamed them. They felt that I had insulted them. Today every thing is normal.

**Q.4. Comparatively with your mother and grand mother, you spoke less about your wife in the book. How would she support you in hard times? Is there any discussion on this issue with in your family?**

**Limbale:** - The span of my autobiography is my childhood. My wife entered in the last phase of this book. So I can not talk about my wife in detail. I want write about my pain and pangs. I want write about the sufferings of my community. So I can not give importance to my personal life. I am writing for social cause.

**Q.5. *Out caste* speaks about your job in Telephone Dept. Can you say more achievements of you which are not found in your work?**

**Limbale:** I was telephone operator in P & T Department in the central government. I spent my six years in this department. I did not stop my education. I was an external student. Afterward I joined all India radio, Sholapur as announcer. Meanwhile I completed my P.G. Degree and joined Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University as assistant editor. I got Ph. D and applied for the post of reader. Because of my literature and writing I got new post. Now by carrier advancement scheme I become a professor. I have struggled in my whole life to go ahead and survive everywhere.

**Q.6. What kind of experience you have after the outcome of your book into the public domain?**

**Limbale:** When my book came out and I became star. I got publicity, fame and name. I became spokes person for my cry and problems. I became an icon for forth coming generations to write for social justice. My life changed by my book. I become bold and confidant in my life.

**Q.7. How did your friends react about the incidents that you mentioned about them?**

**Limbale:** Some friends became happy and some unhappy. I do not care anybody. I care only my commitment to society and movement.

**Q.8. What was the internal criticism (by Dalits) you got for your autobiography?**

**Limbale:** Many dalit people are welcomed my autobiography but some people from my caste bitterly criticised my work. They thought that I had showed black side of our society. It is not necessary. Because of my book they shamed and irritated. They wanted to hide their shameful past. I attacked in my writing on my ugly history

**Q.9. What was the external criticism, especially by non-dalit critics ?**

**Limbale:** External people welcomed my book. They accepted my writing as master piece of literature and tool of progressive movement.

**Q.10. Can you speak more about the experiences of otherness in schools and colleges that you studied, the public places you visited, the places where you worked etc.?**

**Limbale:** My autobiography speaks about this in detail. My autobiography is a statement of my war against injustice.

**Q.11. Can you compare the discrimination that you experienced in your childhood days and that of today is the same?**

**Limbale:** Yes. Still there is discrimination in every field of life. Our ministers are also facing such type of experience. Former president K. R. Narayan was also unhappy in his chair. He expressed his bitter feelings in his interview.

**Q.12. Do you feel that Dalits are still under clouds of discrimination?**

**Limbale:** Yes. In rural areas the Dalits are harassed by upper caste people and in urban life the upper caste people are torturing the educated dalits in many way. Dalit officers can not get their powers. They can not get good positions. They can not get houses on rent at town places.

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## Burning Old Photos on the Front Porch

**Andy Fenwick**  
New York, New York

In May of 1934, my grandfather  
and his foot-taller brother  
aim their novel fire extinguisher  
at the camera. This is their offer  
to fight fires for buyers of fifty or more.  
Launched to free them from indenture  
to a life under liars, this business venture  
flirts with a trickle of orders  
then sputters and tanks forever.  
Resurrected, a photo in my fingers,  
my grandfather's face fakes humor  
to blanket his burning desire  
to transcend financial disaster.  
I don't inherit the extinguisher.  
I lack that miracle repressor  
of genetic curses fated to prosper  
on Ponzi schemes, or dead-end labor  
endured by those born after  
my grandfather dies on a stretcher,  
too diabetic to manage a screen door,  
or after his brother's last stroke, in my father's  
arms, on a Newark factory floor.  
DNA works like arson, sparked long before  
cremations fight fire with fire.

## Sacred Yearning

**Aparna Raj Mukhedkar**  
Houston, Texas

An embryonic incongruity.  
I grow from something  
to nothing. A dot, a flicker,  
now active cells churning, a  
macrobiotic mass bound,  
in concert with the  
human body.

Pedagogic malfeasance  
committed with certain  
knowledge, then incinerated  
to a plume of dust and ashes  
fed to starving horses,  
their majestic manes glowing  
with tiny sparkles of gold  
and silver.

A blood red sun blasts flares from  
arrows tipped with intense longing  
and desire, a pulsating shudder rocks  
where once a sacred space was  
held.

## Lightning Caulks the Sky

**Charles F. Thielman**  
4960 Parsons Ave.  
Eugene,

Clouds accordion and flash a wet promise,  
sweat and grime layered on skin,  
bones collecting thunder.

City sidewalks over-ripe with chalked stats,  
the night thermals steam inside marrow  
as you press an ice cube to your throat

and watch the midnight parade  
sitting outside café neon,  
dank cloth

on skin waiting for  
the glimmer robes of summer rain.

## Reading “Old Heart”

--For Stan Plumly

**David Parsons**  
Montgomery, Texas

I have been diving  
into your heart  
for weeks now  
like some lone bear  
returning to a kill  
not always directly—

meandering through  
your *Meandering* through  
trees that are rivers—branches,  
alive with Magpies and Blue Jays,  
many, many Jays, and Spirit Birds  
taking me to more water, streaming

rivulets that run like blood, life's  
milk from the many varied sources,  
observations of the natural world, blood  
being always present, inescapable  
while feeding, head and heart,  
rib deep in that divine carcass

of your mind's eye, bloody  
run off from all our carnivore  
hearts is everywhere I look—  
I know, I know there are butterflies,  
flowers, an abundance of flora,  
the heart-felt human conditions,

and I should be feeling Keatsian  
and I do, but I can't help thinking, too  
of that massive tome: Ted Hughes.

## Sidewalks Some Times

L Douglas St Ours  
Maryland, USA

Sometimes I like urban sidewalks  
and the smell of petrol in the air  
pandering politicians on the run  
for fuck off cabbies under the gun  
circling cuddled lovers huddled for fun  
past panting painters posing poets  
rolling marbles off the alleys of the wise  
plastic people in our database disguise  
entering taverns where taverns are kind  
unlike the shitty city you left in your behind  
my preaching a preference for the country  
the way its fresh air can kill a lonely heart.

What were those blue remembered hills?  
What spires what farms what faith what thrills?  
seeking a place in the land of lost content  
the eyes of the mountains shedding tears on the plains  
flooding happy highways you once followed far  
and will not in this life ride again.

So drown your tale  
as you drink your ale  
rise from the stool  
emerge from the bar  
to a city mired in a rut  
of mistrust and smut  
but instead of me  
under the neon  
it's only sidewalks  
you're gonna find.

## A Lonely Morning

**Pavel Barakhvostov**  
Minsk, Belarus

A lonely morning  
sitting with me on a sill  
watches clouds roam  
from the drowsing east at dawn  
they float past  
bringing in their rags  
if not oblivion then still a blizzard  
meek God in a whisper of your landscapes  
you are talking to us  
unaware of time and distance  
immutable like our deafness  
you will send us winter lenient Lord  
to efface these bare aspens and oaks  
on the tired bosom of earth  
and a girl's name on the misted window  
this message of memory  
pinned to the panorama  
you will lean over the maze of boulevards  
with a gentle smile causing  
plenty of jolly wrinkles to emerge  
to put us to a white sleep of snow  
serene  
as it used to be in childhood

## A Guarded Secret

**Sunil P. Narayan**  
USA

Īshwar and his lover saved Bhūmī-Devī from  
persecution, thus the many arts of mankind blossomed  
like the mallikā

Everywhere the delightful scent of Svargāloka encircled  
the minds of unimaginative men and women  
Thrusting them into a fantasy of a guarded jungle  
with celestial flowers and rivers endlessly flowing  
towards the sunset!  
Blue butterflies follow the trails never taking a moment  
to rest

While the selfless Parinirvivapsā-Devī will offer a tender  
touch to any one who asks, her abundant hair began to  
fall to the grassy floor  
No one knew about this humble maiden who kept  
two isolated lovers alive for many years  
She was stricken by a dreadful abandonment  
It is the thorny fate all women run away from

One warm night, a small bhūruha containing the heart of  
the divine muse dropped onto the bank  
She grabbed it before the hovering balībhuja could swoop  
down  
It was the fire that consumed Īshwar and Parīkṣit  
during their lovemaking  
Too hot and heavy to hold when fresh but glistening and  
light when cool

As she lost herself in admiring the pearl, its surface changed  
from white to deep red  
Parinirvivapsā-Devī turned away from Rajanīpati-Devā,  
hiding her treasure with kuṅkumam palms for no one  
can take away what is rightfully hers!  
She had no diamonds or turquoise jewelry yet  
Rajanīpati-Devā is bedecked with nīlagandhika pādakilikās  
and maṇicīras  
Śatārūpa-Devī's gift to her shall be hidden in the soil  
so no one can find it!

The next morning Parinirvivapsā-Devī saw a woman  
clothed in a light yellow śāṭī in the forest inhaling the

mixture of campakas, bakulas and mādhavīlatās  
 She carried a basket of yellow kundamālā though did  
 not speak  
 Her eyes were two blue pools reflecting the majestic  
 Candrá-Devá  
 Hidden by a yearning for love in the form of  
 deep pink satin

The ethereal seer's skin as white as the yuthikā had  
 no scars  
 It was adorned with māṇīkyaṃamaya armlets and  
 necklaces of yellow, orange and white!  
 The hair woven tightly was covered by long strands of  
 mālatī  
 On each wrist a prāvṛṣya bracelet sparkled under  
 Sūrya-Devá

No parāgas were worn though the śāṭī covered her feet  
 She walked from one mākanda tree to another, her  
 dress fresh as if it were just bought at the market!  
 Her long neck lengthened to capture the scent of fragrant  
 orange flowers  
 She is a perfect jewel unknown to mankind yet loved  
 by the Divine!

A secret pearl offered to a miserable woman as a gift for  
 showing compassion towards the son of Sarasvatī-Devī  
 Parinirvivapsā-Devī's daughter looked at her for a few  
 minutes  
 In her mind she heard the name "Ouimi"  
 Sounds can be rubies crushed by hammers but to her  
 they were the jingling of maṇīguṇanikara

When she awoke from a nightmare she heard the calming  
 name "Ouimi" from the rāgitarus  
 A lost spirit whispering her name  
 She seems so far away like the golden rājabhavanam of  
 Mahādevī  
 Unreachable by a small being such as an earthly creature

A tired devī touched her tummy, surprised by a life  
 forming inside  
 She was left wondering how such a miracle could  
 befall her  
 For many months her belly swelled while the mādhavīlatās  
 continued to multiply

It was the least a celestial plant could do for a generous friend

When Ouimi saw her mother for the first time she gazed at her with sincere gratitude  
The varṣārtu grew more violent yet no rain drop touched the radiant face of a newborn child  
Sāvitrī-Devī blessed the loving nourisher with an oracle inside a red jewel  
By instinct Parinirvāpā-Devī buried it near her resting spot

It is where Sāvitrī-Devī dug it up and pushed inside the motherless āryan's mind while she slept  
To mankind a gift is an oracle who can guide them to righteousness, though to a woman a child is all she wants  
She can wear the most luxurious garments and still feel empty if there is no one to share them with  
A child is her priceless treasure for each moment is more valuable than a parihārya or parihāṭaka set with bhārgavakas

Collecting mālatī off of vines that cover marble sculptures is the enchanting Ouimi's favorite activity  
The smile of each one belongs to Lakṣmī-Devī  
She touches the hard lips to feel the expanding warmth  
It has an alluring scent that rubs against her cheeks to give a permanent perfume!

Every day a blissful mother laughs with her daughter till Sōma-Devā awakens from his needed rest  
It is the sound of a dundubhī echoing through the minds of all mortals, devās and devīs  
When the rain hits the ground hard these creatures hide under the branches  
The giggling of Ouimi helps them to endure the temper of Īndra-Devā

Ouimi has no reason to be angry since she sits on the vājratulya laden chair of Bhūdevī  
A fortunate fate she received when her mother and Bhūdevī became sisters  
The comfortable lap of a selfless mother is what Ouimi will ask for in every afterlife  
Nothing to her but the unlimited grace of a mother matters

## Quest

**Vinita Agrawal**

New Delhi, India

A singular quest amidst the changing seasons  
emptied me out  
it blew deserts where green fronds grew  
and scraped away the dermis of my being  
sprouted a mole on my body to take along to my next life  
and a lump in my breast that no scalpel could cure  
the search took all I had and it blew deserts where green fronds grew  
rich-poor, black-white, good-bad, bidden-forbidden  
when had it ever mattered except that it should be found...  
like an encore of sweet music on an emptied – out mind  
the sweet octaves of *raag malhaar* <sup>1</sup> should play  
they should pulse like the rains at the doorstep of the heart  
drenching, mixing, melting, liquefying, thawing life's essence  
teaching what is to be taught so that the heart might beg no more  
so that the soul may never enter another form again  
ah! this quest  
it frittered away the mind's papyrus  
criss-crossed my palms, my feet  
gave me nothing, took me nowhere,  
exhausted me  
don't go too far, mother had always warned  
but what are the earth's ends but tent-pegs?  
anchoring flapping winds concealing vital truths  
I must leave no stone unturned in my quest for love.

*Note: 1 raag malhar – Classical Indian music set especially to the emotions of love in the rains*

## Monsoon Showers

**Vinita Agrawal**  
New Delhi, India

The scent of wet earth  
after an amorous monsoon shower  
climbers up the walls of my heart  
like a snake  
biting into my poise  
the blue poison of desire spreads

some memories wrapped  
in grey sheets of thick old rain  
are still strangely warm  
like a hearth fire not fully extinguished  
or like hot lava fingers scratching a cool earth  
from beneath

some longings grow younger as we age  
love is one of them  
these rains act like a rake on the senses  
heaping autumn colored resolves  
in to the far corner of life's garden  
they water even the weeds, dimpling them  
singling me out  
to wither bit by bit with every monsoon.

## What Bees May Come

Charlie Dims

It was her last chance. A girl just out of college, she needed to find her identity before entering the world. Since birth, she had been in search of a name that she could be satisfied with. She needed to understand who she was as a person, which had not come easy. During her high school years, just like all the others, she had gone through multiple accounts of identity-searching: drama club, cheerleading club, debate club, minority awareness club (which she got kicked out of once the officials realized she wasn't a minority). Each time she entered a club, she was so sure that she belonged there. But as soon as she swirled a pomp-pomp or gave a theatrical shout, she was met with failure.

Those were the old days. Now, with her expiration date approaching, the foolishness had to end.

While in her car that day, she believed that she had found her life's calling. Yes, this time she *just knew* it was where she belonged. It was the perfect place for her, a place where everything would 'click in' and feel right. Yes, this was the right, perfect place—most likely. There was always the chance she was wrong. That, of course, was what the meeting was for. There was no reason to be alarmed. As soon as she found out that this was what she was meant for, she could join the gossip club and begin the meetings.

She had high hopes that day. She believed the meeting would go well.

Before she could make it in the door, before she could even get out of her car, a bee flew up and smashed itself against her side window. She screamed and drew back. Then, embarrassed by her stupid reaction, she let out a breath and looked for the bee. The stupid thing was nowhere in sight. And it was a stupid thing! It had just come out of nowhere and practically attacked her.

Do not be melodramatic, she told herself. You don't have the time to be melodramatic. You're panicking. Now is not the time to panic.

Opening the door a crack, she peered over her shoulder to make sure the bee was nowhere in sight before half-walking, half-sprinting to the inside of the café.

She had believed the meeting would go well.

She was wrong.

The other woman was already in the café waiting for her. They gave a brief handshake, entirely businesslike, and sat down. There were no introductions made and no introductions needed. Once she met her, names were invisibly established: First Woman and Second Woman. She, the nervous little girl who played with her hands under the table, knew she had the lower position. First Woman, a woman who squeezed the life out of coffee cups and breathed like she was already disappointed, was a type of person Second Woman feared. She avoided these people at all costs because of how jittery they made her feel. In male or female form, they were all the

same. Business was everything to them. They didn't know how to live or breathe anything but a contract. They were lost in their work and anyone who came remotely close to jeopardizing their position were instantly killed off. They were getting older and weaker, which only gave them more fuel for their fierceness. Second Woman watched her in admiration (could she one day be this strong?)—and overwhelming fear. Mostly fear.

There was reason to be afraid. First Woman had an effect upon Second Woman. Their eyes met and Second Woman had a sudden sinking feeling that she was unprepared. Totally unprepared. Why was she even here? What was she trying to accomplish? Would it be possible to even accomplish anything? The answers to these questions came just as fast: she had no reason to be here, she didn't know what she was doing, and it *would not* be possible to accomplish anything.

It wasn't until she looked away from First Woman that she could think rationally. It wasn't true. She knew herself. She was a very organized person. In fact, just before coming to the meeting, she had checked over all of her materials that she would need, checked them again, and then checked them a third time in the car. There was no reason to feel this way.

"You're early," said First Woman.

"I wanted to be—I didn't want to be late."

"No, you wanted to change the rules. The meeting was scheduled for nine, but that didn't suit you, did it?"

"I'm sorry," she said. Her apology came out weak.

First Woman just stared at her, not accepting the attempt at the apology. In those seven words that she had uttered, Second Woman felt lower than the dirt on the ground. She was so stupid. How was First Woman supposed to prepare in such a short amount of time? Couldn't she have followed the rules? She was not a good girl. She didn't care about others. Seven words. That was all it took to change her entire opinion of herself.

"You'll need your red manual for this," said First Woman, pushing aside all sympathetic moments and diving straight into business.

"The red manual?"

"Yes, the red manual."

First Woman stirred her coffee. Second Woman, of course, did not have this manual and First Woman knew it. First Woman was just waiting for the nervous response she was bound to get with someone like her. Not trying to make a fuss, Second Woman reviewed the last few days in her mind. A red manual? When did she get that? *Did* she ever get that? She could see little fragments of her day (getting the mail, going to work, watering the plants), but it was if she had been in a coma and had not lived her life.

Her eyes scanned the café. There was a *red* purse clutched by an elderly woman, *red* lipstick being applied, a *red* lamp, a *red* tablecloth, but no manual. Only when she looked at the floor, about to give up, did she see it: the *red* manual, lying at her feet. She put all seven hundred pages of it on the table.

"Here. I have it. Right here. It's right here."

“Funny,” laughed First Woman.

“What’s funny?”

“It almost seemed like you didn’t know what I was talking about.” She gave a look of curious amusement. “Didn’t you have it all along? You walked in with it.”

Second Woman laughed too, now cautious of the mind-tricks being played on her. Because, of course, this was the *same* manual that had been delivered to her in the mail, the *same* manual she had started to read, the same manual that she had triple-checked before coming in.

“Am I right?” said First Woman. “Didn’t you have this all along?”

Second Woman nodded.

This would not be an easy meeting.

“You’ll be glad to know,” said Second Woman, feeling the need to redeem herself, “that I really am prepared for this meeting.”

“Is that so? Glad to hear it. Shall we move on?”

“I’ve even started reading the manual,” she insisted, so intent on pleasing her. “I’m already on page twenty- three.”

The amused expression disappeared from her face. She dropped the coffee stick, letting it splash into the burning coffee below. Her eyebrows rose. She tried to make her voice sound controlled, but failed at it. “You’ve *started* reading it?”

Oh no. It was another sin to add to her shameful pile: reading ahead. But she couldn’t have known! How was she supposed to have known? There should have been signs. There should have been black markings across the fronts of the manuals that restricted curious onlookers from flipping ahead. There should have been warnings in the emails she had received. There should have been something much more substantial.

She understood soon enough. This was not about her being prepared for the meeting, but about First Woman being prepared. For all she knew, the whole meeting could have specifically been set up to discuss pages one through five. What would she do for the whole hour? She was already on page twenty-three. She, the stupid little girl who didn’t consider the feelings of others. This was not high school, after all. This was serious. This was business. This was life. She could feel herself being pulled away from the scene, pulled away from the moment, pulled away from her final opportunity to find herself. In a moment of improvisation, she did the only thing she thought would help. Grabbing the manual, she closed her eyes and swung it across her forehead. It nearly knocked her out.

“See! Look at me! I can’t remember what I read!” There were tears creeping into her eyes as she hit herself again. “Can’t remember!”

First Woman was not impressed. “Don’t hit yourself with the manual.”

“Yes.”

“It’s not needed here.”

“Okay.”

“It’s really not needed.”

“I’m sorry.”

First Woman considered, then frowned. “You’re right. You should be sorry. You came in too early, you had—and have—this little blank look on your face, you don’t seem to be comprehending *anything* I’m saying, you just *hit* yourself with the manual, and you didn’t follow my instructions about reading.” Somehow First Woman grew taller in the moment while Second Woman grew much shorter. “You’re not doing so hot right now.”

“It’s okay. I mean, it’s not okay, but I can forget what I read.” Second Woman paused, then continued. “Forget all of it! Forget every last drop!”

First Woman set down her coffee. She went into speculative mode, studying and drawing conclusions until she decided upon something.

“You *really did* read up to page twenty-three, didn’t you?”

Was First Woman laughing at her or judging her? Or both? It didn’t matter. Second Woman had read up to page twenty-three and she confirmed it to First Woman.

“Amazing,” said First Woman, almost laughing.

Slowly, out of some strange part of her body, came a foreign feeling that she clung to: hope. Hope that she would be okay and that First Woman, despite her comments and her looks, would forgive her client for the little mix-up. But then First Woman showed her page five.

“And I’m assuming,” she said, still performing that laugh of hers, “that you read this part?”

Under her fingers were the words, “All new members **MUST** read the **ENTIRE** manual before entering their first meeting.”

“What’s that?” she asked while Second Woman grew shorter. “Is that a no? How strange. You just told me you *really did* read up to page twenty-three. This is only on page five.” And shorter. “Is there a reading problem that I should be aware of, Second Woman?” And shorter. “Aww, don’t look so embarrassed, Second Woman. I have a nephew who can loan you his *Hooked on Phonics*.” And shorter still. “He’s three.”

Those words must not have been there before. They must have been concealed by invisible ink. She, such a careful reader, surely would have seen them before. Surely she would have! She didn’t have a reading problem and she told that to First Woman.

“It’s nothing to worry about. I just need to know these things up front. But I’m also going to assume that you didn’t bring in a story to share with the rest of the group? That part was on page six, by the way.”

Her palms were starting to sweat. Everything smelled of vinegar, everything nauseated her. Someone needed to find her heart, place it on an operating table, check its vital signs. She could feel it dying each moment she stayed there. Time was running out. Time was running out quickly. And so she said yes, yes she had a story to share. It was a risky move, but there was one particular story, something she had overheard a while ago, that had been camped out in her mind and would not leave her alone.

She was allowed to tell the story, which was about a middle-aged woman who had gone shopping at her local grocery store. It was National Chimpanzee Day and the mayor, as a special

treat to all of the children, had managed to get a real-life chimpanzee to put on display. The children did fine. She did not.

There was a sign behind the monkey that warned children not to jump up and surprise him. The woman thought it would be cute if she did. When talking to reporters about the story later on, the woman said that she had wanted to give a big, exaggerated look of surprise when she snuck up on him. She was hoping the monkey would return the look, so she stored her shopping cart in the next aisle over, walked behind the monkey, counted to three with her fingers, and tapped the chimpanzee on the shoulder. She gave the look of surprise. He did not. And she spent the next three weeks in a hospital. The National Chimpanzee Day was scrapped and had not been used since.

First Woman sighed and wrinkled her nose, obviously annoyed at Second Woman's feeble story, which wasn't worth any energy going into it. "That's it?"

"Yes."

"And the point?" She sighed again, her voice growing higher.

"The point?"

"The point of the story. What's the point of the story?"

"It was about a silly woman," she said, then added, "A stupid woman." 'Silly' was not a fierce enough word for this type of environment.

First Woman, amused at her own joke, smiled and scoffed. "So it was about you?"

"No. It was a real story about a stupid woman."

"Another stupid woman, you mean?"

"I—" She started to speak, but didn't know what it was she wanted to say. The tears were coming in her eyes again.

"That," started First Woman. She stopped herself, looking like she was having trouble comprehending the mess Second Woman had made with words. "*That* was not a real story." She laughed a wicked laugh. "That wasn't even a half-hearted attempt at a story. Honestly, my nephew could have done better. He's three. Three! And he would have used a much larger vocabulary. Hooked on Phonics, you know." She laughed again. "How about this? I'll tell a story and you can listen in like a trainee, which is what you are, and learn from me." She considered the option, then nodded her head. "Yes, let's do that, shall we?"

"Okay." Would she rather have been laughed at or yelled at? It was hard to tell and didn't matter either way. She assured herself that she still had time to listen, grow, improve. There was still hope. Her expiration date was not over. Not yet.

"This is a story that's going to make you feel good. It's going to make you feel alive. You'll be so transfixed that you won't be able to look away. Do you understand what I'm saying?" Second Woman, who was already leaning in, definitely understood what she was saying. There were powers within First Woman, powers within this meeting, powers she was ready to be swept away by. "Now...you'll..." She cleared her throat, but what she wanted was not obvious. She threw a finger at something, which did not help either. Finally, she said,

“Notes! I want you to take notes! I want you to take notes on everything that I’m saying. How do you expect to learn if you can’t write down what I’m saying?”

Notes. What else would she have meant? Notes were reference points. You studied from them, remembered from them, learned from them. During lectures like these, notes were essential. And Second Woman, rummaging in her bag, pulled out an object and, with great pride, held it high enough for First Woman to see. She had brought notes. At last, she had come prepared. (At least somewhat. The notes were not so much official notes as much as pieces of sticky pads purchased at the discount section of a local dollar store [the price tag still visible] but they were still paper and still usable!) First Woman must have seen the price sticker because her eyebrows went up. She refrained from commenting and told Second Woman to open up the notes so that the meeting could begin.

Second Woman felt mighty. Proud. Not afraid of anything. She, opening up the package just like she was instructed, knew that she had not embarrassed herself or stalled the productivity of the—shoot. The notes were stuck. The stupid discount section. She pulled at the plastic, but it refused to move. No, no! She would stall the production of the meeting. Again. Too worried to think rationally, she bit into the plastic, ripped it open, spit out the plastic, set the notes on the table, smiled, and declared herself absolutely, totally ready.

First Woman’s jaw visibly dropped. She still had that disappointed sound in her voice, but there was now an additional sound of shock. “What was that? Are you related to a baboon? *Are you a baboon?*” All her confidence, in the space of those three questions, popped away. “Oh, don’t take it as an insult. You might get more out of this story if you are. It might do you well to be related to a baboon.” She considered. “Or a farmer.” Second Woman said that she was not related to either a baboon or a farmer, which seemed to disappoint her. Her voice became edgier, stricter. “You’ll still love this story. I just *know* you’ll love this story.”

“I’m sure I will.”

“Write that down.”

She grabbed her pen. Her confidence was still damaged, but she was ready for her first assignment. “Write what down?”

“Write down that I just said it’s a great story.” Second Woman scribbled ‘this=great story’. “You need to get into the habit of recording things like that. That was an example of key information that’s essential for you to write down in order to fully comprehend the story.” She paused. “You do know what key information is, don’t you?”

Of course she knew what that was. She just didn’t know the key information for this particular story. Could a piece of cloth be a key concept? An untied shoe? Greeting the mailman? How would she know until she had heard the story in its entirety? But she knew she could not bother First Woman with these questions.

“Yes,” she said, “I know what key information is.”

“Good.” First Woman smiled.

She was sucked in.

Literally.

The café and the customers, like a great pop-up book, bended backwards until they were too thin to be seen and were replaced by fields of grass, in the middle of which was a blanket with milk, cookies, and algebra homework (the algebra homework placed on the side and ignored completely like it should have been). Both women jumped onto this blanket, nothing but instinct driving them. Their ponytails and buns unraveled and were twisted into two pigtails, one for each side of their head. Braces snaked into their mouths. Freckles popped over their bodies. Their clothes became school-checked uniforms. They looked at each other.

It was frightening, terrifying, until Second Woman understood what had happened. They were thirteen again.

Thirteen was a great age. Being thirteen not that long ago, Second Woman remembered herself and her peers being lost in tabloids, being lost in the latest gossip, constantly changing different sources to make sure they had the most accurate information. If you didn't know about the private lives of others, you were just wasting your days away. You had to know these facts because it felt so *important* to know. There was pressure in that age, but it didn't matter. Second Woman could have stayed thirteen forever.

First Woman, looking shockingly young, checked her surroundings, approving of the changes made. Everything had been set. The story could begin.

And it did.

What came out of First Woman's mouth was too beautiful, too mystifying, to be human. As she began, Second Woman had a strong sense that the story told would be one of power and triumph. There was a way in which First Woman was telling it. She had cherished this story, held onto it throughout the years, like a childhood toy with too many memories to be abandoned. It seemed that only the privileged were allowed to hear it.

The story itself was about a farmer and his wife. They lived in the south of town and had a modest, quiet life. Unless new soil needed to be bought or tools had to be replaced, the other farmers never saw them. This was not out of choice. The farmer wanted to leave the house and explore, but his wife wished to stay there, so he stayed. He could not worry about his isolation because he didn't have the time. He was a busy man with two full-time jobs: tending to the farm and keeping his wife happy, both of which could be accomplished by saying very little. When he said very little, more work in the fields got done, which meant his wife had more time to complain to him about her various problems.

To some extent, both of them wanted to leave, but it was the company that made them stay. The farmer had convinced himself he could live like that.

He was wrong.

"Now," whispered First Woman, not wanting to break the mood, "what did I just say about the farmer?" She was too excited to wait for a response. "I said he's a man! It's an insult. Remember that for later on."

(Other than this small interruption, the story had not been lost. She was still craving to hear more and First Woman kept on feeding it to her.)

It. Both had been able to survive each other until ‘it’ occurred. And ‘it’, that night, began with a single object located in the back of his closet: a black and yellow sweater. It did not look harmful or destructive. The sweater had been purchased sometime in his college years and had moved with the couple when they got married. It probably would have been forgotten about all together if the wife had never mentioned it.

She *had* mentioned it, though. That was the problem. She mentioned it over and over again. She hated the sweater and gave him all the reasons why. (“It looks horrible on you.” “No one wears those colors.” “The neighbor’s will think you’re crazy if they ever catch sight of you in that.”) Her biggest fear, which she told him over and over again, would be that the sweater would attract the bees and that the bees would get into the house. He thought it was a stupid fear. Bees were smarter than that. He was a grown man. It would be impossible to confuse a grown man with a bee.

“Can you believe that?” said First Woman. “His wife was only trying to look out for him and do what she thought was the best thing, but it was ‘too stupid’ for him. His wife is a woman. Remember that for later. It’s not an insult.”

The farmer had had a hard day in the fields the night ‘it’ happened. Throughout the day, he discovered that the birds had eaten the fertilizer, the squirrels had stolen the nuts, and the hay had gotten ruined. All he wanted to do was sit down, have a beer, and “be a man.” He did not get his wish.

The wife was angry, which translated into her complaining. Today she was complaining that the peas had not been properly cooked and would need to be re-done before dinner could be properly served and consumed. He promised her he would get to it—after a ten minute nap. Frustrated, the wife excused him from the dinner table and allowed him to go upstairs to take his small nap. He did not hesitate to leave.

When he got to his room, he closed the door, plopped onto the comforter, and was about to fall asleep when he saw that his closet door was still open and the light still on. When he went over to turn it off, he saw it: the black and yellow sweater, swinging on an iron hanger. He felt like it had been calling him. It wanted him to try it on, just for old time’s sake. And how could he refuse? He remembered the sweater well. He remembered finding it at a garage sale, buying it, wearing it and being glad that he didn’t waste any more money than he needed to. He couldn’t look at the sweater without trying it on, so he tried it on. But then he couldn’t try it on without looking at himself in the mirror, so he did just that. He found that it was too baggy, as were almost all of his clothes that he wore, but he didn’t look *that* bad.

A thought went through his brain: his wife would not know. How could she know? She was all the way down in the kitchen and he was up in the bedroom. Independence. It felt so nice to keep this secret. Lately (or ever since they got married), his wife had been driving his life. He had not been the passenger. He had been the flat tire at the back of the flooded trunk. Now he was the driver. Now, for these ten minutes, he was in control.

Being independent was magical. He, wearing the sweater, sorted the mail, put away a pair of boots, made the bed, not really paying much attention to what he was doing but simply loving

this freedom he now had. Having the sweater on was comforting. Being free was comforting. It was so comforting that, ten minutes later when he went downstairs, he forgot he was still wearing it. His wife smacked the counter.

“Just great. That’s just great. You’re trying to mock me, right? Trying to make me feel stupid? Like my opinion is worth nothing?”

It took him a moment to register what she was talking about. When he noticed the sweater still attached to him, he rolled his eyes. “Please don’t start up. Five minutes. I just had it on for five minutes. That’s all. I’m not going on national television here.”

“Go on national television if you want. I don’t care. That’s not the point. The point is that it’s very hurtful that I SPECIFICALLY asked you not to do something and then you went ahead and did it.” She snapped her finger. “Like that. Like it was no big deal.”

“He just gave her the usual,” said First Woman, rolling her eyes. Second Woman said that she wasn’t aware what this ‘usual’ was. “Oh, you know, just the usual.” She still didn’t understand. “*You* know. The “you don’t understand me” and “you never loved me” and “I just can’t be a man in this household” crap that they all say. But that’s not the point of the story. No, no, I’m getting ahead of myself here. I’ll get back to telling what I need to tell.”

The farmer and his wife argued over who was wrong and why and who was right and why. The wife won the argument. She said something that he couldn’t immediately give a comeback to, so therefore she was correct and the winner of the game. According to some rule book unknown to him, that was how it worked.

He felt ready to snap. He couldn’t handle it. The rules, the arguing, the restrictions of what he could and could not do. He went to the back door and slammed it shut. The wife screamed for him to get back inside. He refused. He was not willing to leave the one place where he was, if only momentarily, free.

“It wasn’t a bad night to be out, either,” said First Woman. “All purple skies. They were dark, but they weren’t, you know, *super* dark. You could still see things if you wanted to. You could still see people and objects.”

“What are you saying?” asked Second Woman. She leaned in.

“Oh, I don’t know,” shrugged First Woman. “I’m simply stating a fact.”

“Are you?”

“Yes. If you just happened to be out on this night and wanted to see certain colors, you might have been able to, on this night, see those colors.” She was smiling. The curved braces in her teenage form made her look more wicked than ever.

“No!”

Now they were truly sucked into the middle of the story. The sky under the meadow became purple and dark, though not too dark. Grass was replaced by fields of corn stalks and dirt roads. A woman, who must have been the wife, was standing on the back porch of a nearby house. Her arms were up and she was screaming for a man to get back inside. But the man was far from her. The man was skipping away, his hands up in the air, shouting, “Free! Finally free! Finally I’m free!”

Bees were coming in. Bees, from all regions, were swarming in.

Power and triumph. A story of power and triumph.

The bees buzzed in the background. The farmer continued to run away, oblivious to what was going on behind him.

First Woman smiled. Panic set in. Second Woman clutched a piece of her uniform, breathing more heavily. This wasn't good. First Woman wasn't a woman to smile unless there was trouble.

Power and triumph. Power and triumph.

It would be okay, wouldn't it? Wouldn't it be okay? The story was of power and triumph. She had known all along what the story was about. But that smile was never a good sign. It meant danger. And then, in an instant, Second Woman changed her mind. She knew who the hero was. She knew who would end up victorious.

She was correct.

It was beginning. The bees were gliding toward him, no intention of stopping or changing direction. The wife cried for him to come back and listen to her. He didn't listen, perhaps because he didn't know how. He was too deaf by his newfound freedom. Second Woman turned her head once more to First Woman. Same expression.

A single second.

It happened. The bees were upon him. There was a scream, either from the wife or from the farmer she couldn't be sure, that flew into her head and drilled holes into her brain. He was no longer human but instead a landing ground that all of the bees in the area could socialize on. His basic shape was not detectable. The wife was doing something. Screaming? Crying? Something. Her hands were up in the air and her eyes shut tight, but she was not crying. She was too hysterical to be crying. Second Woman gasped. She, instead, was laughing. First Woman was laughing, too. Both woman laughed like this moment was what they had been waiting their whole lives to see. It was sickening.

"Is she just going to stand there and laugh while her husband gets attacked by bees?"

"H-h-help. E-eff-ephentially!"

"What if he dies? What if he's allergic to the bees? Could he die right there? What's going to happen to him?"

This only made First Woman laugh harder. The sound of the laughter combined with the screaming made her feel like she would be sick. Both sounds were terrifying in their own way. This, Second Woman now knew, was the moment of triumph in the story. First Woman had set out to tell the tale of a wife who proved her husband wrong and was proud of her accomplishment.

The magic, the meadow, the pigtails, nail polish, uniforms, husband, wife—gone. Vanished. They returned to the café. They were no longer thirteen.

"Right," said First Woman, the smile waiving off of her face. She returned to the businesswoman that she was, her previous self gone forever. "Let's get back to the proper

business: the story. I assume you took notes on the critical key points of the story as discussed earlier?”

Second Woman was left shaking. Why did that have to be the ending? Couldn't there be something more? The farmer was left for the bees to feast on. What had happened to him? How did he get help? If only the story could continue. If only First Woman could remember some large detail (such as the farmer conquering?!) and the story could end on a happy note. First Woman went into her discussion mode, but Second Woman couldn't stop herself when she interrupted to ask, “That's it? That's all there is?”

First Woman seemed to take it as a compliment. “For the story? Wasn't it just marvelous? Or are you too disappointed that it ended? *Everyone* always wants to hear more. It's just a natural reaction. But forget about that. We're in discussion mode now.”

“But is he okay? At least tell me that he's okay.”

“Aww, are you worried about the farmer?” First Woman pulled out her phone, scrolling through the different applications. “There's *always* someone who worries about the farmer. There's *always* someone who has a fit making sure he's okay.”

“And is he?”

“Of course. He's fine.” First Woman handed over the phone. She smiled.

She should have known by that smile. She let herself believe, for a fraction of a moment, that everything really was okay, that the farmer really was the hero of the story. She looked at the images on the phone.

Of course. Of course he was not okay. His face looked like a flesh-colored balloon, over which his eyes, swollen as well, could hardly be seen. He looked like he was in a perpetual state of pain, his moaning nearly audible. In the background were white walls, which she assumed were the walls of a hospital. How sad. He was in a hospital, he had been assisted by doctors and nurses, yet he still looked so bruised, so torn. Second Woman felt her heart break. First Woman just laughed.

“What's wrong? You don't feel bad for him, do you?” She laughed. Second Woman did not laugh along. First Woman leaned in closer. Her question was asked in the form of a secret. “You don't actually feel bad for him, do you?”

“Of course I do. Shouldn't everyone?”

First Woman stared at her with a blank expression, then howled. “Of course not. Of *course* not!” She swung back and clapped her hands together. “Oh, Second Woman, you are *such* a trainee. You have *so* much to learn.”

“His head is covered in bandages.”

“Uh-huh. And his face is as swollen as a whale. Who the hell really cares? You think I care? I don't care. You shouldn't care, either. Come on, look at this.” She took back her phone and scrolled through more photos. These new ones were variations on the original. The farmer could be seen from the left angle, the right angle, from an overhead shot, to the side, facing a mirror. Whoever took the photos must have enjoyed their photo session. “Look at that. See how miserable he is?”

“Exactly. That’s why I feel bad.”

“No! You should be laughing. It’s funny because of how miserable he is.”

“I don’t like to laugh at him.” She ducked down lower. Why couldn’t First Woman understand? “It feels wrong.”

She shouldn’t have said it. First Woman took a sip of her coffee, her sour eyes staring directly at Second Woman. Second Woman began to feel shaky again. She was instructed to read page eight of the manual. She obeyed.

Page eight wasn’t just one piece of the manual. It was as if all of the pages had been chopped, gathered, and brewed into this single page of rules and tips. The heading on the top read, “It doesn’t matter if it’s fact or fiction, just as long as there’s always friction!” This led into the various rules and tips a true gossip was supposed to use (“Reference everything as a ‘valuable source’. It makes your story more official.” “Yes, dogs and cats count as witnesses.” “Don’t worry if your characters are cardboard cut-outs or not. The only thing that matters is the pace of your story.” “Plot holes must be filled in with your own imagination.” “Melodrama is the key.” “Don’t just go for the main characters. Find the dirt on everyone.” “The people in your stories are no more than characters. Do not worry about them.”) First Woman held her finger under the last tip.

“See this?” She dragged her finger underneath the last line. “See this rule?”

“Yes, I see it.”

“What does it say?”

“Not to feel bad for the people in the stories because they are just characters.”

“Exactly. Live by that. It will do you good.”

“I—I—”

“You—you—you what? You have to grow up. That’s what you have to do.”

An espresso machine went off in the background. There was screaming. Was it from the machine or from herself? She could not be sure. She, in many places, was screaming. Acting terrified.

To just fit in. That was it. That was all she wanted. She wanted this to be the last club she had to join, the last round of introductions, the last time she had to prove herself. Could she stay here? Could she be free here?

Time was running out. Her expiration date was approaching.

First Woman thought some more, then added, “Yeah, you really can’t be feeling bad for Farmer Joel.”

“Farmer Joel?!”

A waitress refilling a man’s water put down her pitcher and rushed over to their table. The man leaned forward in his chair to listen. The waitress asked again if they were talking about Farmer Joel.

“You know who he is?” said First Woman.

She dropped her jaw in the shape of an O, insulted. “Do I know who Farmer Joel is? Honestly, I’ve read everything I can about him. Honestly, *everything*.”

“Are you talking about *the* Farmer Joel?” asked a woman at the other end of the café.

“*The* Farmer Joel.”

“Oh, what a classic. What an absolute classic.”

“And *she* feels bad for him,” laughed First Woman, pointing directly at Second Woman.

\*\*\*“Why would she feel bad for him?” said a teenager near the muffin counter. “He’s, like, Farmer Joel.”

“He was in a hospital,” said First Woman, putting on an exaggerated sad face and using her fists to wipe away the pretend tears. “She doesn’t like that. It makes her feel sad.”

There was an explosion of voices. They came and bounced in all directions, making it impossible to tell who was saying what and when and where. The voices flew and broke into one another, each one fighting over the other to be heard. Everyone had an opinion.

“—a mere trainee—”

“—needs to grow up—”

“—so stupid—”

“—just kick her out right—”

“—doesn’t deserve to be here. Should go straight—”

“—just laughable—”

“—if I were her, I certainly—”

“—so pathetic, so—”

The voices were crushing her. The images of the café were blurring. Her breathing malformed into wheezing. Her body was sticky and hot. She couldn’t stay there. She couldn’t.

“Don’t you worry,” said the waitress, putting a hand on top of hers. “I used to be the same way.”

“And what happened to you? What did you do?”

“I grew up.”

Everyone in the café looked at the waitress. They processed what she had said. There was a moment of total silence. Then, acting as one, they craned back their heads and laughed. Not just laughed, but cackled. Wildly.

Time was almost up. Her expiration date was approaching.

The laughing did not stop. They could have gone on forever. By now, they were unhinged. They had no control. They were dangerous.

Time was almost up. Her expiration date was approaching.

The walls of the café were stripped of their color and became green. Vomit green. The tables deconstructed into broken pieces, pieces which flew into the walls and became lockers. The customers of the café popped off their heads and swirled about her, their eyes looking manic. She was trapped. No way out.

Time was almost up.

From their heads grew hairy black legs and round backs. A fore wing and a hind wing sprouted from their backs. Two antennas grew out of their heads and went in opposite directions.

The stingers, the thoraxes, the scopas, the black and yellow, they were all there. The creatures were approaching.

Second Woman looked around, shocked at what she saw.

She had been there before.

She had been there many times.

Overwhelmed, she saw broken images that, just like the voices from before, flew and broke into one another, each one demanding to be seen. There was Farmer Joel running away, the bees attacking his flesh, the wife laughing, the red manual on the counter, the steam from the espresso machine, the clubs she tried to join in high school, the bees, Farmer Joel, the sour eyes of First Woman, her own hands shaking underneath the table, heads swirling around her, bees swirling around her, and she couldn't take it. She *screamed!*

"Stop it, stop it, stop it!" she said. "Everyone just stop it. Stop looking at me. Stop laughing at me. I don't want to join your club. I can't join your club. I can't. I don't know how. I'm not you. I don't know how to be like you. Please stop punishing me for it. Please!"

"Oh, Second Woman," began First Woman, who was still recognizable even in her new form.

"Don't call me that. I'm not Second Woman. I'm not!"

"Of course you're not. Uh-huh. Whatever you say, Second Woman."

"No, no, I'm not Second Woman! I have a name. Does everyone hear that? I have an actual name. Laura Lindsey. That's my name. It always has been. And I'm not here to join your club. I refuse. I refuse to be here. I refuse to gossip. I refuse to be Second Woman. I'm Laura Lindsey. Not trainee, not secretary, not business client, and certainly not, certainly *not*, Second Woman."

Her time was up. Her expiration date had found her.

Knowing this, she remained in her seat until she had calmed down. Then, very calmly, she rose out of her chair, walked past the bees, opened up the door, and went to her car. She pulled out her car keys. She opened up the car door. She got inside. She closed the door. She breathed in and out. Only then, looking back, could she see what she had done.

Farmer Joel would have been proud, she thought.

She started up her car and drove away. There was no need for any more clubs. She had found her name.

## OVERLAND SYNOPSIS

**Mark Stephen Levy**

Los Angeles, California

Magical Kabul suddenly turns dangerous as four people find and lose love in the midst of the 1979 Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan. OVERLAND is a 58000 word travel/adventure love story set in this remarkable and timeless part of the world.

Danny hopes to marry Heather after his final year of medical school at UCLA. Heather's "Dear John" letter, however, changes his plans. Her inherent wanderlust pushes her to set off for London to ride the Magic Bus *overland* to Kathmandu in Nepal. Danny follows his heart to London and takes another Magic Bus in pursuit. Beyond all odds, Danny finds her along the way. But the first blush of shock and excitement of this most random encounter fades to argumentative conversations as their subliminal disparities explodes between the dissolving couple and spells the end of their doomed relationship. Danny now understands the reasoning behind Heather's Dear John letter. After a dangerous ride through Iran, they arrive emotionally and physically exhausted and left to sort themselves out in Kabul, Afghanistan. It's December 27th, two days after Christmas. Heather insists on one last celebration before they part ways, and suggests they buy each other Christmas presents. When entering the congested and panicked streets of Kabul, they are quickly separated just moments before the invasion. A bomb drops, and Heather along with the other Westerners are safely bused out of Afghanistan into Pakistan. Danny is left behind in Kabul.

Although shaken by being injured in a war zone, losing his girlfriend and unaware of her whereabouts, Danny manages to survive and thrive by employing his newly learned medical skills treating casualties of war in a local hospital. There he runs into Emily, a nurse from Northern Ireland he'd met eleven years earlier as a teen. With Heather gone, perhaps dead, Danny and Emily rekindle a love barely begun in their youth and agree to escape Kabul together. They are stranded for the winter in a tiny village in Afghanistan, unable to traverse a 12,000-foot mountain pass. Meanwhile, upon Heather's escape, she meets James, a US State Department representative while in Islamabad, Pakistan. She seeks his help to find Danny, but falls in love with James, only for James to lie and cover up about Danny's *death*. James has his own ulterior and evil motives. To everyone's astonishment, their lives intersect six months later. The theme of the entire story is based on the proverb *all's fair in love and war*.

Overland ends with a classic ending while leaving the door wide open for a sequel. Overland is also loosely based on my first travels abroad, including India, Nepal and Tibet.

## SWARMERS

**Salvatore Buttaci**  
Princeton, WV

It wasn't as if anyone got hurt. It had to be done. What I knew could do a lot more damage if I kept my feet heading the hell out of town.

So what will they say of me once the smoke clears? Once the truth rears its pretty head? I don't know that yet. This train whistles its hard steel through a runaway night to a destination that may be unknown to none but me and I don't care. Oh, sure, if they knew, they'd heap enough medals on my chest to bring this crazy man down to his knees, but I didn't do it for the honor and glory. I got all that crap in high school football. Yeah, me, Craigville's Touchdown King, the reason for the season, the golden boy who caught and carried that freaking ball like a mother clasps her baby and races out of a fire. I was lifted on too many shoulders to count. I was written up as the wonder lad who brought Craigville the state trophy for a year without one single loss.

My life after that was one huge lesson in the meaning of anticlimactic. I plunged like a stone. The future for this most-likely-to-succeed favorite son looked bright as a summer Sunday, but out there loomed more closed doors than I care to remember. In a nutshell, I was a man without a future. I had used it all up on the field, eaten up those hero desserts, and ended up sick on the "laurel flu": that malady that tells you all coming treasures will be handed to you while your ass grows large and fat on the throne of your own royal ego trip.

Up to a point, before becoming the proverbial frog-once-prince guy, life was a fairy tale. I had it all. I had married the Valentine Queen Jessica Ewing; we had two blond-haired cherubs named Montgomery and Ward. A house on Sterling Drive. A his and her garage occupied with his and her BMW's. Yeah, I had it all. Then came the other women. Then came the booze and the recreational powders up my nose. A good job at Merrill Lynch pulled from under my wobbly feet. Jessica's final exit. Monty and Ward with her.

How many nights and days I spent on my knees begging God to snatch my life from me. Let me keel over on the brink of my own sorrow and plummet into the abyss of forgetfulness. But the same God who answered my touchdown dreams as I ran towards the goal line did not answer my putdown dream of a quick and painless demise.

Custodian or janitor—call me whatever the hell you want—I reported for work each evening at town hall where I emptied ash trays, trashed the trash, scrubbed toilet bowls, swabbed the wooden floors, dusted, made all things clean for another new day.

But all that is history. I tell it so you know what "end of my rope" means, in case you think my act was one of heroism. In case you make the mistake of believing I did what I did to win your approval, crown myself "Craigville's Comeback Kid." None of that would be true. I did it because I figured, if my life mattered so little to me, who better than I to die saving those who wanted to live?

The first time I noticed a termite in the basement of town hall it was about the size of a praying mantis. A single termite that seemed glued to the crossbeam above my head that I happened to notice when I looked up to check the flickering florescent light. To be honest the bug startled me. I never saw one that large before and God knows I'd seen my share of those wood eaters from the time I was a kid and they had infested Grampa's cabin in the woods where we kids spent summer nights with him. In the end Grampa had to hire a bulldozer because those bugs had eaten enough of the cabin to cause the support beams to soften and bend like paper mache. But they were little termites having themselves a community feast, committed to doing what they do best.

But not even a fool has-been like me who had often drunk too much rye or inhaled a thumbprint of the white to maybe see things out of proportion could deny the termite in the town hall basement was out of its size class. And those antennae, straight ahead of its head, looked scary, and those black wings, hardly moving at all, seemed poised for flight. I watched and ran like hell, locked the basement door, and for the next week my nightmare sleep crawled with a troop of those bugs parading on my clothes, burrowing into my hair, screeching down the gray streets of my dreams.

A week later, after reading up on termites at Craigville's Public Library, I braved another walk down the basement stairs. I wish I hadn't. Now the white-painted crossbeams was spotted with colonies of swarmers, most without wings. Maybe like the book says, they shed them after leaving their underground tunnels.

Shaken by this new turn of events, I kept my spine pressed against the bannister so I could race upstairs if one of them dropped from the wood. Then I realized the worst of it: the termites were much larger than the first one I had discovered! They humped on one another in an attempt to cover all visible parts of the crossbeams, but here and there I could see loners and they were huge. Praying mantis? Try frogs!

What the hell was going on? As custodian of the building, I had often seen the termiticide boys come each month with their silver hoses spraying the corners and the beams and anywhere they suspected these bugs would congregate. What had they been spraying? Whatever chemical it was, somehow it was working in reverse: instead of minimizing their voracious appetites by killing most of them, it was maximizing their size!

Who could I tell? What could be done? When I checked my own house, I was relieved to find no termites anywhere. The same for some of the other houses. My father's. Aunt Emma's. The silo center where my neighbor Fenton worked. Why only in town hall? What if I told the mayor or the councilmen and they came to find nothing out of the ordinary in that basement? What if the beams looked like white supports and all those big boys with their chomping mandibles were not there? For sure I'd lose my job on grounds that my d.t.'s made me an unreliable custodian. I'd end up on Georgia Road with the rest of the unshaven, smelly homeless begging for loose change.

So I kept it quiet for as long as I could. Then one night I was watching the boob tube and something caught my eye and ear. A U.F.O. enthusiast who looked a lot like Albert Einstein

except his hair was even whiter than the  $e=mc^2$  whiz. The man's name was Dr. Franklin Birch and he was an authority on U.F.O.'s, he said. Sightings, he claimed, were more numerous than the media reported, and he even implicated the government for hushing them up.

The interviewer wanted to know the latest. "What's new up there?" he asked the old man.

"A month ago several sky events in this very area," he said in a pronounced British accent.

Oh?"

"Yes," replied the Einstein look-alike. "Not unusual. These beings from wherever they originate come to new worlds and they take on the environment."

The interviewer dressed his face with one of those smiles mental-institution personnel keep on hand. "Take on the environment? You mean extraterrestrials wear disguises?"

"They blend in," said Dr. Birch. "If they can fly their ships into our space, it would be safe to assume they are intelligent beings, perhaps much more than we are."

Now the interviewer was giggling like a school girl. "And you think, Dr. Birch, that these intelligent creatures from out of space might want to come here and take over or they're on a Sunday drive and just want to hang out?"

The U.F.O. expert wasn't amused. "We don't know. Our intelligence is lacking for now. Maybe one day we'll know. Hopefully, it won't be too late."

Then the interviewer summed it all up before going to commercial. "You folks out there, if you see anything unusual, something unidentified, contact Dr. Franklin Birch at the Institute for Science.

Which I did. What could I hope to gain by keeping my mouth shut? I had returned to the basement several times and the scene was the same with one variation: the town-hall termites were growing in number and size. Last I looked they were big as cats! And yet they remained in the basement and did not attempt to storm the door that led out of the basement, nor did they eat the wooden beams that kept the town hall on its legs.

When I told it all to the old man who kept in his head rows of file cabinets crammed with U.F.O.trivia, he was ecstatic. Of course he could come to Craigville. Of course he would drive out tomorrow. Of course. Of course.

I led him down the basement stairs, not knowing what to expect since my last visit two days before. You better have a strong heart, old man, because what you are about to see will knock your socks off. I don't know CPR. All I know is you're in for a horror shock, that's for sure.

But when we reached the end of the eighteen steps, Dr. Birch surveyed the termite-infested basement, nodded, and said, "I see. I see."

"What's causing this?" I asked. "Why are they growing?"

The old scientist cupped his bearded jaw. The termites were so still the scene appeared like a dark clip from a horror film. Now and then I could detect the rise and fall of antennae as if these creatures were conversing with one another, maybe asking who the old guy was or what the

hell these two inferior beings intended to do.

“This is not the first time I’ve come across giant termites,” said Birch.

Ok, so now you’ll make light of it all and explain how your grampa like mine had a cellar filled with—

“Termites larger even than these,” he was saying. “Years and years ago when I first left London for America. In an abandoned house on the outskirts of a small town like yours. Somewhere in Tennessee. They had grown into dog-size insects! Incredible!”

“Why don’t they attack us? Why aren’t they eating the wood?”

“Good questions. Perhaps they’re waiting for their growth to reach full potential. Who knows. If we leave them alone, will they grow tall as men or trees or buildings like this one? If I could even entertain a logical reply, I would.”

“What happened at the end?”

“In Tennessee?” he asked. I nodded. “Somebody concocted some rather hard moonshine. Who can say how potent. Enough to kill an army of drinking men. They hosed down the termites and set fire to the building and the entire grounds down several feet where it stood.”

“Booze?” I asked. Now for sure I’d stay far from the spirits.

“Isn’t that ingenious? Hard alcohol. What else could these moonshiners envision more murderous than that? But it worked. Now it seems they’re back. But oddly enough they have settled in a small town that boasts not even one liquor store for miles and miles. Not one bar or saloon or beer joint or whatever. For years the press has heralded Craigville’s noble reputation of being a dry town since it was incorporated back in the 1800s. Why not come here? They could mature and then do their business, which I suspect is not to announce to the world that they have come in peace. For some reason their intelligence identifies unswerving determination to conquer with the lowly termite they have been raised to new heights. Before they grow even larger than they already have, my good man, I say we drive somewhere wet and load up on some heart-stopping mountain brew!”

Had it been all mine to solve, this dilemma would have gone beyond the pale. Those bugs would have reached their size limit and devoured Craigville in minutes. Then, having laid more eggs than sane men would care to go hunting for, these mighty termites would lay waste a nation! But I had Birch and Birch had an unswerving determination that rivaled that of these foreigners from out there in space, except his drive was to drive them to kingdom come or wherever extraterrestrials in bug’s clothing go when they die.

We had no time to waste. Once my truck was loaded with poison shine, as Dr. Birch dubbed it, we drove back into Georgia and into Craigville, praying the colonies hadn’t left the basement and we’d find a prairie of ashes where once good people lived.

The town hall was filled with people, not unusual for an early Monday afternoon. Alongside the good doctor, I told Mayor McGowan to clear the building. Of course, he gave that haughty look folks like to spring on custodians, but when I told him what was in the basement, he just laughed.

He tried to pat my shoulder, but I pulled away. “Giant termites, you say? And they are

ready to eat Craigville? And you saw them with your own eyes? Was that after a few swigs from a bottle of Jim Beam?"

"I'll take you down and show you, Mayor," I said, "but give me your word you won't let fright drop you dead. These bugs are ugly!"

I had to clear the building. There was no comfort zone where time could be laid aside and tended to at a later date. We had run out of time. Red rivers would run through dry Craigville if we didn't act fast.

The mayor threw up on his shiny Florsheim shoes, then nearly fainted down the basement steps, but the doctor and I grabbed his arms, slapped his face, brought him finally to, his popping eyes rolling to and from the back of his head. "Do it! Do it!" he screamed from a foul-smelling mouth. "Kill them!"

I told him to get upstairs and order everybody to evacuate town hall and clear the area for at least several blocks. "Don't tell them why," I said. "Panic's not what we need right now. It might even wake up the swarmers." I didn't want anybody getting hurt, not by chomping termites, not by stampeding town hallers.

So we hosed down the creatures from another world, then from outside town hall we lit the end of a long fuse that snaked its way from where we stood hoping hard, through the open door of the building and down the basement steps where the poison shine covered the floor a good inch thick. When the flames engulfed the building, it looked like a war zone. We even heard the screeching cries of the termites and imagined them writhing their black-shelled bodies in a grotesque dance of death. Later, teams of public-works crews dug the grounds several feet deep and planted more poison shine to light with torches.

I got my job back once the new town hall was built months later. Well, not my old job but my new promotion job of city councilman and public works director. Oh, and I got Jessica back, just in time for Montgomery and Ward to start school at Craigville Elementary. My life's back in order. Knock on wood. On second thought, don't. It might just be enough to invite that old gang back from somewhere in the dark black skies.

## The Dream

**Vipul Rikhi**  
New Delhi, India

All this - everything - is a dream. In this dream I live and breathe.

In this dream I have a car, a house, a family. This dream has an I, and a car, a house, a family. It is a continuum, this dream, as if it were in conspiracy with time. Time agrees to give its deceptive coherence to the illusion of this dream, that I see everyday, and which I escape only for a few moments at night.

The dream surrounds me. It has become my life.

It drives with me in the morning when I leave my house and get into my car to go to my office. My house, my car, my office. My daily dream.

It is tenacious, this dream. It drives back with me in the evening when I leave 'my office' and get into 'my car' to return to 'my house'. It does not leave me alone. It fills up my senses. It drives me crazy... this dream.

In this version of reality people seem to walk with their feet and work with their hands. They appear to blink their eyes and look at each other, and move their bodies and touch each other. In this version of reality things appear to be how they appear: men strangling their wives, famous people giving interviews, women bearing children. Things seem to become what they become and how they become it. It is a version of reality whose coordinates everybody has agreed upon.

In this version of reality we appear to draw breaths and consequently snarl at each other. In this version of reality there is an 'I' who appears to be who I am. It is a version of reality that has become a reality - the overarching reality of this dream.

In this dream I dream other dreams. I dream of not being in this dream. Of being in some other dream. In that other dream, I dream, I would not have to dream other dreams any more. I would be happy to live in that dream, the other dream, because then I would be out of this dream.

This other dream is the exact opposite of my present state of dream. It is new, fresh. It contains nothing this dream does, not the constant knot in my stomach, nor the gnawing knocking in my head. My present dream induces a knot in my soul. My other dream wouldn't. In this dream I dream of that other dream - no house, no car, no knot. It is a nice dream to dream but there is no substance to it. I don't know what it really consists of. Only blackness surrounds it. And so I dream a dream of blackness in my dream.

In my dream - this dream - everything has the hard edge of reality. Or a version of reality. It hurts. And yet it is nothing but a dream. So much the worse for it.

I rush to touch the colours of this dream, to try to grasp the edges of its contours, but they elude me. It suffers, my dream. Its pain lives deep inside my soul. I cannot capture it but my life has been captured by this dream.

'My life.' Ha! Let me give you an example. In 'my life', I have a family. In this family I have a wife and two children. We live together in this dream and yet all our dreams are different. My wife dreams of the day I would be more caring. I dream of the day I would not have to think so much about what she is thinking. Or feeling. Our children dream about how they would leave us as soon as they grow up and how they would go to live in their own houses. All the house that we have now is this dream and yet we strive to inhabit other dream-houses. This dream is choking us to death and so we escape in fantasies that we label dreams. But this is the dream.

In this dream there is our house. In this house there are four rooms. There is a big room called the drawing-dining room. Then there are three bedrooms, one that my wife and I share, one for our daughter and one for our son. Our dream-son shuts himself in his dream-room and our dream-daughter locks herself in hers. In this dream-world we do not really talk to each other, even when we open our mouths in somebody's direction and appear to speak. It is dream-speak that we speak in this dream-house in our dream-world in this dream-life. That is why none of us hears the other speak. We only see mouths open and shut, and tongues that appear to move. We live in a completely closed reality, our personal, individual realities, and even this is not reality but a dream. We are completely self-encompassed/-encompassing, having no sort of touch with any other, caught in the vice-like grip of our dreams. This grip of vice that we call our lives.

Our lives, our house, our conversations are a dream. But we take them very seriously. I dwell incessantly, as if in a dream, on what my wife has said to me and where exactly and how much it hurt. Her words whirl around in my head and I almost use them to form a wrenching, heart-rending scream, as if in a nightmare. My son, who lives in his dream, does not like what we said to each other and therefore abuses his sister in his dream. Our daughter, living in her own dream, uses her two dream-hands to viciously assault her brother.

In our dream-house we have such plots, such scenarios, such dream sequences.

This is 'my life', my dream-life. In this dream-life I have a dream-everyday. I wake up from my dreams and look into my mirror. What I see there appears to be a dream. It cannot be real, these tired eyes, this sagging jaw line, this ugly stubble, this dull, dead skin. This skin is a dream. In my dream-mirror I see a dream-face that I fail to recognise each morning that is my dream-morning.

I hate the dreams of my dream-mornings and cannot wait for the dream-afternoon to arrive. In my dream-afternoon I have my dream-lunch. I eat it dreamily, awaiting the arrival of

the dream-evening, so I could escape my dream-office and possibly be happy for a while. I dream of happiness in my dream-office.

In my dream-office I move through my work as if through a dream. It has the same sense of unreality. None of it makes any sense and yet one cannot help being there, being guided by forces one cannot hope to control. The dream moves of its accord, shifts terrain according to its own will, takes over my waking life. I move from one scene to another, from my boss's room to my own cubicle, with the same sense of unblinking wonder at the dream. I marvel at the absurdity of the dream at the same time that I cannot help being caught in its absurdity. In my dream I am helpless. I cannot shape or guide it. I hunch in front of my computer screen and wait for the next dream-mail to arrive, from my dream-boss, containing dream-instructions about the next dream-step to take in my dream-line of work. I dream of the future.

In my dream-evening I experience a deep dream-depression. The twilight reflects my dream-anguish in its gathering darkness and the evening birds echo it in their dream-cacophony. I seek to extend, for as long as I can, the dream-interval between my dream-office and my dream-house. Sometimes I venture into a dream-bar, among dream-people, to have a dream-drink. The drink relieves the anguish of the dream, and the chattering of the dream-people is soothing to the dream-senses like the dream-cacophony of the evening birds before they lie down to rest. The dream of the bar is a dark, dank dream. Only occasional lights flash in this dream as cigarette-smoke populates its air. I dance a dream-dance with a dream-woman that I do not know. I gulp down more dream-drinks.

This dream is a dream full of nausea and flowers, made up of psychedelic, flashing, shifting lights and scents. I feel my dream-dick rise in my dream-pants as I involuntarily wet my underwear in this dream, just like a dreaming child in the night.

I have a dream-stumble that I employ each time I exit the dream-bar to make my dream-way to my dream-house. My dream-wife almost kills me with her bare hands as she dream-smells the whiskey in my dream-breath. She has been dream-drinking herself but not as much as I have in my dream. Our two dream-children stare at us with hate and wonder from the respective locations of their dreams.

We pass another dream-night. My wife and I make dream-love to each other; love that we cannot feel or touch, love that is not real, makes no sense, leaves us feeling empty and terrible in our dream-mornings, and yet has managed to produce two children. What is this dream-love in this dream-night of lovemaking? Why does this love make us feel like a dream of criminals instead of a dream of lovers? What is this dream? Where does it end?

I dream these questions in the agonised dream-silence post our dream-lovemaking, before we fall off to sleep and dream other dreams. And then the dream-morning arrives and the dream looks into its own mirror. What the dream sees when it looks into the mirror is not very clear, because it is a dream-mirror, uncleaned for ages, spotted, hazy.

This, then, is 'my life', the dream.

The mirror looks into it.

Sometimes I hammer at this dream, trying desperately to break it down, smash it to pieces, have its glass-texture shatter to the floor. If it were properly shattered, into a million glittering silvery pieces, then I would not be able to pick them up any more, to gather them in my arms and reconstruct my dream. That is the force of the destruction that I desire. It is almost death. Because my life is a dream.

Sometimes I try to gather the force required to force my death-wish to its conclusion. And then I begin to dream of the conclusion. I imagine my arms raised in agony and terror, coming down with the might of that hammer, on the febrile delusion of my dream. My dream pulsates, and pullulates, with the horror and despair of its own impending doom. It shivers with almost religious ecstasy. I raise my arms to force the issue to its conclusion. ... Upon which I wake back into my dream.

The dream that is my life.

.....

In the morning of that arising everything seemed fresh and different. The air breathed a new scent and the light wore a new colour. I saw with new eyes. My blinking had become different. The texture of the hair on my chest had altered. I groped with my hands into space that was unfathomable.

In the morning of that arising I began to act different, as if out of a dream. No one could understand me. They looked at me as if I were crazed. I must have looked a little crazed for they could not help staring at me with wide-open eyes. My family could not understand my behaviour. They could not understand the ending of that dream. They kept looking at me, as if in a dream.

I went about as if I was blind. I stumbled over objects in my path. Time and again I was miraculously saved from smashing open my skull against the floor. I would have said it was a dream except that this was not the dream. I was able to see through my own skin. I began to see what empty spaces consisted of. I began to smell space, feel it in my lungs, breathe it in and out.

All continuity was broken. Time lay shattered and smashed at my door. Coherence seemed to have flown out of my life and I was panic-stricken for a while. The coherence seemed to come back with the panic; and then both vanished. I was left empty without a soul. Nothing to call my own. I saw my erstwhile dream as if it were a dream. I saw my erstwhile family and could not understand that they could still dream.

Everything seemed strange for a while; now; always. Everything was strange for now and always. Everything was always and now, strange. As if in a dream. I was in a dream out of that dream. A dream that was constantly being bruised and broken. So that it was no more a dream. It was what was, at this moment, now, the waking up more terrifying than the dream.

The dream closed its eyes - in the shape of 'my office', in the form of 'my family' - and went back to its sleep. In that sleep the dream was dreaming itself, and I was looking at that dream.