

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 travelogues¹ 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 guy². 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 a 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 the 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 of the political setup. But during the course of his second visit he depicted the period of Emergency very skillfully. In his third visit he was vigilant and curious enough about such movements which created digressions in the 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 mutinies³ 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 Hoenikkers 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 ecosphere. 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 display's 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 restorer 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.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”.¹ *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”.² 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”.³ 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”.⁴ 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”.⁵ 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”.⁶ 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”.⁶ 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”.⁷ 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”⁸

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”⁹ and “his coat flapping a little too fatherly on his small, rounded muscles of seating”¹⁰ and his tie has “a praterplus-parenthetical curve, as though much philosophy had gone into his its making”¹¹. 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.¹²

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

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”¹⁶ and observes:

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

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”¹⁸. He simply remarked, “What do you know Irene”¹⁹ 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?²²

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”.²³

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20. *Ibid.*, P. 119.
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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). DeLillo’s *White Noise* also dwells on this philosophy. Two attitudes to death (Jack Gladney’s and Babbalanza’s) are noticeable in DeLillo’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'.¹ 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 16th 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."² 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.*³

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.⁴

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.*⁷

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".¹ 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,".²

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".³

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".⁴ 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".⁶

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"⁷. 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".⁸ 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".⁹ The main theme running across this post-war drama is "a sense of the nightmarish abyss that underlies our precarious existence".¹⁰

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,'".¹²

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".¹⁴

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.¹ 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 21st-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 .

Ecofeminism² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶ 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.

ax¹ 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”.ⁱ

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”.ⁱⁱ

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.”ⁱⁱⁱ

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.”^{iv}

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.”^v

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 20th 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.”^{vi}

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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 - 4 Heather Widdows, The Moral Vision of IRIS MURDOCH (Surrey, U.K: Ashgate, 2005), p.6.
 - 5 The feeling that something has been "lost", that there is a certain "moral void" -- echoes some of the contemporary worries about a "moral crisis" and a "process of demoralization". Murdoch, Existentialists and Mystics, 1997, p. 171.
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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 Turkish 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,güzelliğince 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 clearly. 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 in 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.”¹

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 26th 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 7th Dec’ 1829 which expresses supreme pleasure and celebrates the Act of Abolition of the cruel right of suttee 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 29th 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

