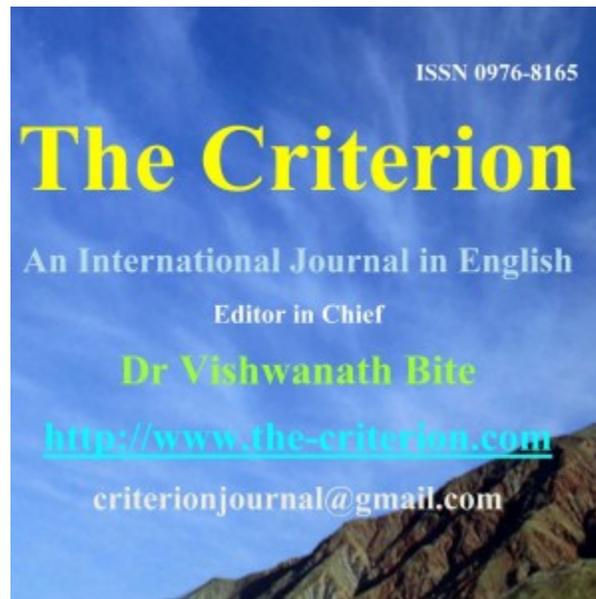


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Mubarak Al-Twaiji

Indianising Literary Criticism

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T.S.Eliot some eighty years ago in one of his seminal and influential essay 'The Function Of Literary Criticism' stated that criticism is "the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste." In the same essay he reflected that at present (in 1920s) it was not so much an orderly field of beneficent activity but more a Sunday park of "contending and contentious orators."

This Eliotian belief is more truthful and relevant in the present era than in the early twentieth century. As now we have more contending and contentious orators after the so called theoretical revolution of 1970s. Ironically the revolution fails to establish an ordered, disciplined and a fruitful approach to study literature in general. Literature and criticism are together left in lurch by this revolution. The resultant deluge of theories has made the secondary and informal writing more important than the literary text and more fatally playing the role of a segregationist than an integrationist. Goodheart argues that contemporary criticism has lost its moral authority and modernism is responsible for it. Literary modernism, he argues, "tends to render suspect all privileged positions and thereby, undermines the critical act, which assumes the priority of a particular set of values." Instead of the social, cultural and humanitarian values it is debating power, gender, race, responsibility, sexuality, mind, aporias, ironies et al. Stanley Fish opines that theory has flourished because literary critics have been given the freedom of expression to say whatever they like within the confines of their particular language game and, whether Feminists or Marxists or Deconstructionists, or they can proclaim the death of God, the end of History, the end of Philosophy, the death of the author, the subject, the phallus or whatever until they are restricted strictly. For instance criticism, in Derridian view, is a montage of textures, a release of multiple meanings, a crisis of the mind in motion, a kind of surreal protest against the constraints of moral judgement and systematic thinking. It becomes an intellectual simulacrum for modern life itself. They are, thus, entirely disabled for making good such claims in the world outside the literary academy.

Terry Eagleton in his book 'After Theory' pronounces "the golden age of cultural theory and criticism is long past." Virginia Woolf's oft quoted line that "in or around December 1910 the human nature changed" prompts me to assume that in or around 1970 came the demise of the traditional art of criticism. It was the year when theory revolution exploded. It was the time when theory became a quick-fix template which skirts over incommensurable differences between disciplines. It has become so generalised and its field of application so disparate that what it reveals may come to be only trivially true. The western literary criticism, thus, has gone gradually to dogs and is superseded by theories (the adjective literary is silently removed). These theories have produced nothing but a cobweb in which readers and practioners are sure to be enmeshed. More they try to come out of it the more they wriggle. The worst thing about these theories is that they have divided literary texts into compartments and are contented to deal with any one or two compartments leaving others in lurch. The conformation of one theory entails the refutations of other. It is this dismal state of criticism in west that encourages me to design and formulate INDIAN LITERARY CRITICISM.

A comprehensive and compact paradigm of literary criticism that may deal with all the desirable and essential qualifications of a literary text is needed today. Discourses on the disparate sociological, linguistics, semantic, generic and narrative aspects, in itself, of a literary text are not sufficed. One must not miss the very cardinal fact that literature is a progeny of human intellect. It in turn is formed and shaped by numerous affecting factors. Literature is neither totally language nor merely meaning nor a manifestation solely of some cultural-socio-historical document but carries with it ingredients from all aspects of human life. The aforementioned paradigm of literary criticism will avail a step by step procedure to analyze, to evaluate and to elucidate a text.

In this paradigm of Indian literary criticism I suppose to introduce:

- Firstly the meaning and function of criticism.
- To validate the exploration of the literary texts as the sole objective of criticism.
- To determine what literature in general and a literary text in particular is.
- To propagate the purpose and causes of literary writing.
- To determine the different constituents of literature.
- Finally projecting a feasible model for the interpretation of the literary text.

Meaning and Function of Criticism:

Literature is a mimetic practice whose primary purpose is to produce an accurate representation of its object and criticism is an endeavour to catch how correctly that imitation is done. It may be conceived then easily what literature is to life, criticism is to literature. Literature inspects life and criticism inspects literature. Criticism, therefore, is a broader discipline but indeed not the greater. Although criticism is different from theories, yet it is not without theories. Criticism is practice as in practical criticism; it seems intuitively to be more fundamental and authentic activity. Theory is simply how you talk about, organise and reflect upon what you have been doing as a critic; a kind of appended metalanguage which takes critical practice as its object. The Indian *manishis* of the past have emphasised much on this legislative and dogmatic aspect of Poetics or to be more precise *Kaṅvyashaṅstra*.

Like the western Poetics, *Kaṅvyashaṅstra* too studies the various forms, techniques and resources of literature and seeks to define its nature and function. Over the centuries *Kaṅvyashaṅstra* has passed through several detours and has extended its range much wider than its western counterpart Poetics. From Bharata to Panditraj Jagganath the Indian scholars have eyed from the most important to the minutest particle of literary creativity. *Kaṅvyashaṅstra* is concerned with making and interpretation of literary texts. Being trained in such *Kaṅvyashaṅstra* an ideal reader or a critic questions the text in hand. This questioning itself is criticism. It never takes a writer or his work for certain. A critic's questions are basically regarding the content, dialogue, character, style, culture, image, landscape, and message and of course about values, the literary text tries to establish. Krishna Rayan insists much on these intrinsic elements in the text that are relevant for interpretation and evaluation. The extrinsic elements like the philosophical, socio-political and theological dimensions of the text may render digressions in readers emotional response i.e. *rasa siddhi*. To say it more precisely criticism, in Indian *Kaṅvyashaṅstra*, subjects everything to closest scrutiny. Criticism doesn't adjudge a work of art as simply good or bad but rather it highlights where the excellencies or the positivities of the text rest, and where it lacks literariness/*kaṅvyaguna* or exposes the inadequacies of the writer. To sum up criticism, as Leavis also believes, is a step in the larger process of education which in turn is but a step in the promotion of human living and culture.

Validating the exploration of a literary text as the sole objective of criticism:

To listen once again T. S. Eliot “The greatness of literature can’t be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.” In this Eliotian proposition there are two things to concentrate upon-(a) the greatness of literature and (b) literature. The greatness of literature defies all literary canons. It transcends the barriers of rules. Dr. Johnson applauds Shakespeare who flouted classical rules of three unities. His dramas capture the emotion and imagination of his audience. He succinctly makes them laugh, weep, angry, nostalgic, compassionate etc. He wrote to satisfy the general taste and appetite of his audience. This is the only itinerary to greatness. A great writer transcends all canonical, social, cultural and religious ideologies and abides by humanitarian values in his work. A literary work of art, in its entirety, is therefore a self-sufficient entity. S. K. De points out that Sanskrit literary theory fails to relate the textual features to the poet’s imagination (*kavi-vya□pa□r*) and personality (*kavi- swabha□va*). But what De regards as the chief failing of Sanskrit poetics is in fact its chief strength. Sanskrit/Indian theory focuses on the observable formal elements in the work, analysing them in relation to the reader’s response; and it marginalised the creative imagination and the author’s life, psychology, philosophy etc. as factors external to the experiencing of a work. The critic’s chief project then is to identify as far as possible the normal affective response to the work, to examine each of the objective elements in it, to analyse their interaction among themselves, and to evaluate their effectiveness as suggestors of the reader’s emotion which constitutes the meaning of the work. Therefore a critic should look into the text how it captures reader’s emotions and imaginations and satisfies his emotional hunger. If the reader negates his own real world and is engrossed in the fictive world of the author, then only the work will be considered a great work. For realising the greatness of the work one has to surrender himself completely to the text forgetting author’s biography, ideologies and even history. Rayan prescribes the same “A literary work has to be read as a literary text, and when it is so read, any connection which it may be found to have with the author’s personal history will be seen as an extra- literary factor and will be of no interest to the reader.” Thus the literary text itself should be made the prime objective of critic’s interest. The critic must possess the knowledge of literary standards because by only this he can differentiate between a literary and non- literary text.

Determining literature:

Coincidentally the occidental and the oriental, to be more precise Aristotelian and Bharat’s notions were framed largely in regard of drama. It was because drama in their time was the dominant and most representative of all forms. Later many other forms notably poetry, epic, novels, stories etc came into existence. Irrespective of all their different structures and forms here I take up literature as a collective term for all its variants. The differentia of literary discourse as opposed to ordinary or standard discourse has been variously identified in terms of such opposition as: fiction/truth, emotive/referential, aesthetic/ utilitarian, deviation/norm. But literariness is best described as defined by the dominance of unstated, implied meaning. Dhvanya□loka, the 9th century Sanskrit classic of literary theory, asserts “*ka□vyasya□tma dhvanih* i.e. suggested meaning is the essence of poetry/literature. Paul De Man, one of the founding fathers of Anglo-American Post- structuralism rejuvenates the same when he declares that he “would not hesitate to equate the rhetorical, figural potentiality of language with literature itself.” The *Vyanga□rth/ va□cya□rtha* in Dhvanyaloka correspond to suggested/ stated or denotation/connotation in English. A work of literature is one which teaches or shows us a way of living, ordered and patterned in accordance with some ideal

of a civilised community. Even the slightest deviation from this pattern is sufficed to inspire an author to write. Human life consists of the interplay of different emotions or *rasas* viz. love, humour, mercy, anger, valour, fear, hatred, wonder and calm. When he sees the same interplay of emotions in a fictive world of literature, he begins to identify himself with the character. He derives a sense of pleasure and satisfaction. He supports the protagonist in his venture to put things in order or to punish the guilty. Literature stirs and moves its readers. Bhattanayak refers to such power of literature as *sa-dhrnikaran*. It means an empathetic and sympathetic sharing with the character on the stage or in the pages. It follows therefore that literature is not just an aesthetic experience but one dictated by the writer's profoundest interest in life. With this profoundest interest come universal and eternal values. Only that literature matters vitally that pleases always and pleases all. Periodical pieces can appeal to a particular region in a particular time but great literature is inexhaustive. Literature's prime objective should neither be purely to praise nor to totally condemn its age. It should afford to common men the highest kind of pleasure or the ideal position in which he can mould himself.

Aims of literary writing:

Literature manifests the entire spirit of its nation from the beginning to the present and even to its future prospective. It shapes and preserves the cultural heritage of the nation. It formulates the viable and flourishing milieu for the human race. Our ancient scholars like Bhamaha, Kuntaka, Kshemendra, Keshav Mishra, Dandi and many other assert the ensuing *ka-vya-prayojans* or objectives of creative writing--- fame, worship, faith, covetousness, benefit, getting the desirable, abandoning the ill and lastly knowledge. Mammata is more precise in determining the aim of literary writing. To him material gain and inculcation of practical knowledge among common folk should be the prime motto of a poet. Addison and Steele's 'The Spectator' is a brilliant example of such literary writing. Their periodical essays teach a common man from how to wear a cap to how to appreciate Milton's 'Paradise Lost'. With affording pleasure literature must impart a sound judgement among the readers regarding dos and donts. Although the ancient ideals are very high such as the concept of *purúsha-rtha chatustaya* yet we have to abide by it because there is no alternative to it. Even today the ultimate aim of literary writing is fame, material gain, craving to maintain the order and to attain salvation by serving people.

Some other stimuli determine the creation of the literary text besides all abovementioned objectives. Some of them are called *ka-vya-hetoo* or literary catalysts. How does a magnum opus of a writer born? What are those special attributes of a writer that creates an everlasting impression on the psyche of so many? Answers to such questions will reveal these literary catalysts. These are ingenuity, an uncanny power in poet which creates the new vistas and renew the old and everyday life, wide knowledge, dexterity and incessant practice. To this may be added a fourth one religious faith. Milton in his prose writing has suggested the literary aspirants to cultivate all these four traits. Mammata considers only the first three to be essential for making a great poet. Matthew Arnold's conviction, too, is worth mentioning here-----

“A literary masterpiece is produced when two powers conquer at in argument union, one is the power of man and the other is the power of moment.”

Often the writer is provoked to write by his surroundings. Arnold himself is an excellent example of it. His poetry is imbued with unfathomable melancholy because he is distressed to see the loss of religious faith in his age. Recently awarded with the coveted Booker award Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is another example of this theory. The book seems to be produced as a result of the writer's discontentment with the current milieu of India.

Determining the different constituents of literature:

Now in this unprecedented deluge of literary works only a handful of works survive. These works survive because it does possess some of the literary merits or to say *kaṅvya-guna* in Indian tradition. A literary work consists primarily of two things—(1) content or ideas and (2) expression of ideas or suggestiveness or the stylistic features of it. Otherwise we can say it the semantic or linguistic are the two aspects of a literary text. The meaning of a work is not what the author intended nor what the work may be said to contain but what the reader produces. The reader's act of responding to the work is the same as his act of producing its meaning. "The meaning of a work is the reader's experience of it", so says Norman Holland. In Sanskrit theory the *sahrdāṅya* (the competent reader or spectator) is also called *saṅmaṅjika* (member of the community). Reader's emotional responses are not solipsistic or inviolably personal but are determined by the implicit system of codes and conventions of reading internalised by them. The community consensus and the page with the marks on it are effective constraints on any impressionism or idiosyncrasy resulting from the reader's freedom to produce meaning. Within a culturally homogeneous community, largely the relationship of the object to the emotion is marked by constancy and uniformity, being cultural items; they have a shared meaning for members of a group. A. K. Ramanujam coins a term "correlative objects", in contrast to "objective correlatives" of T. S. Eliot, in order to show that the former are "given by the culture" and latter are "sought and found by individual poets."

Indian literary masters have told certain literary merits for both the aspects. Pt Keshav Mishra ascribes five literary merits to each—words and its meanings. Words should be precise, sublime, sweet, terse and emotive (using one word to function multiple actions). Easy revelation, euphemism (harsh and strong things said less harshly) syntagmatism and suggestiveness are the four *gunas* ascribed to meaning. However these two broader divisions of literature in thematic and stylistic section can be further divided in more sub-categories. Like in a drama, novel or a story the idea or the story develops through a plot. The plot develops the projection of a character. Character presents the spectacle and interacts through dialogues. In the background to character the literary text has an internal ambience of its own in which the character and situations are framed, it is landscape or locale equally important as character or narrative. Landscape in its most inclusive sense can be said to mean any environment presented in the text, not excluding townscape and perhaps even the indoor scene. The urban landscape is in fact, an important component in certain texts but in certain other texts landscape in its strict sense i.e. physical nature discrete from and discontinuous with the human world are the dominant factor. Landscape can be presented simply as a thing of beauty, can be compared with the character's mood or situation, human emotions can be ascribed to the landscape with pathetic fallacy. Recounting other necessary ingredients is inconsequential because I am talking about literature in general. Therefore discussions about generic attributes will certainly blur my objectives. Character, undeniably, is the next most inevitable asset of literature. Now it is in the form of a character and then in the form of a narrator that the author voices his ideas. This character should be judged by the idea he represents and the action he upholds. But a critic must be on his guard while judging a character and maintains the distinction between *homo fictus* and *Homo sapiens*. A character is one of the suggestors or *vibhaṅvas* (either an *aṅsraya* or an *aṅlambana*) of the *rasa*. A character is no more than a part of the design of a particular arrangement of words which we call a text and it can only function as an element in the text. Forster's taxonomy of round and flat characters are compatibly applicable to the cluster of characters. Among there is one main character who is the protagonist or *Nayak*. He is the focused and ideal character. He is the glimpse of the writer's vision of an ideal man. It is

he who's suffering, victories, grief and struggle is most felt by readers. Therefore the protagonist must be an ideal man devoid of petty shortcomings. He should be grand, imitable and exemplary. He must be sacrificing, sweet, clever, brave, helping and impartial. In Indian Kaavyashastra there are four kinds of *Nayak*—*Anukul*, *Dakshin*, *Shatha* and *Dhrista*. Anukul Nayak remains faithful to his first love/wife. Dakshin Nayak is one who despite affection for other women doesn't corrupt himself. Shatha entertains and enjoys his multiple affairs including his own heroine. The Dhrista knowingly and openly relishes his illicit rapports. Likewise heroines are also of four kinds--- *Anudha*, *Swakiya*, *Parkiya* and *Padangna*. Swakiya is the best heroine being most beautiful, shy, modest, witty and respectful.

Above all it should be made crystal clear that literature can be philosophical but not philosophy. It isn't solely an agency of moral guiding. Literature contains neither pure truth nor falsehood. If literature doesn't make a better person, it does criticise our way of living. It enlarges mind, give thoughts and insights that last forever. John Carry suggests that "literature's function as a mind developing agency gives it special relevance in our present culture." Despite all oddity, uncertainty and difficulty of the present era, literature shouldn't reflect it as it is, like a mirror does. But it is imitation which recreates and its sole duty should be to propagate the beauties and the positivities of life.

An Indian Paradigm for literary criticism:

Since in India literary creativity is supposed to aid in the attainment of four noble deeds (*purusha-rtha chatustaya*) for the writer, the critic must see first of all how much the concerned literary work stir our emotions and consequently drag us to social, religious, cultural and humanitarian aspects of the country. Which is the preponderant emotion or mood throughout the text? The second relevant task of the critic is to examine whether that literature keeps us in touch with the beauty of the world or simply exposing the vulnerabilities. The work must bring us into contact with our best selves and make us opposing the injury. Thirdly the critical expert should observe that the work must be offering a solution if it takes up a crisis for its theme. In other words it should establish poetic justice in the end. The power and the appeal of the text are to be highlighted. Most importantly a critic must occupy himself in finding how many literary merits or *kaavya guna* it preserves. Evaluation, withal, incorporates determining how effective the objective features of the work- its imagery, plot etc. are as suggestors of the readers emotions, how far they are in accord with it. Accord denoted by the term "decorum" is tantamount to *aucitya* in Sanskrit. Deficient accord will be called in Sanskrit theory a *rasa dosa*, a flaw in the presentation of emotion. Then the work should also be put to a stylistic test foregrounding its technical features. These questions will certainly compel readers to read and reread the text and this recurrent reading will flash the inherent beauties of the text.

It's in our hands then to save literature from further compartmentalisation and to re-establish the entirety and integrity of literature. Neither only thematic, nor merely semantic, nor solely linguistic and of course nor any ideology is sufficed to cultivate the value and power which together they fuse in a literary work. A critic must conform that literature is a social and cultural phenomenon and it must not be narrowed by making it a vehicle for some particular agendas viz. feminism, Marxism, Lesbianism et al.

The White Tiger: An Elucidation

All literary texts are meant, ultimately, either to establish a kind of order or to attack the disorder preponderant in its contemporaneous time. Aravind Adiga's 'The White Tiger', the Booker prize winner of 2007, appears to be both in an entirely novel way. The existing reality of the present day India is exposed while developing the illuminating but utterly amoral story of Balram Halwai or the 'white tiger' of the title.

While the plot lays down Machiavellian ethics for attaining material success, it also unveils a new visage of the country, a visage that may be unexhilarating and debilitating for the chauvinistic lovers of the country. Adiga is an innovative and phenomenal talent to watch and enjoy. He develops the plot in an unprecedented way mixing the past with the present with an eye on future. He does so with a brilliant use of flashback technique with intermittent commentaries. The complete story runs over the course of seven nights in which Balram describes his journey from the darkness of the village to the entrepreneurial success. But the most marvelling point of the novel is the mingling of fiction with verisimilitude.

The protagonist Balram Halwai, who has been dubbed as the 'White Tiger' by the inspector of education because of his little more knowledge than his colleagues in the school, is the son of a rickshaw puller but he is too sentient for his class. Although he is deprived of formal schooling and education yet he continues to learn by having an exceptional observant eye to his surroundings. Beginning with crushing coals and wiping tables at a local tea shop at Laxmangarh, his native village, he manages to find his haven in Dhanbad in the family of the Stork, a rich landlord from his village. The Stork has two sons Mr. Ashok and Mr. Mukesh. Ashok is an America returned and educated Indian and is uncorrupted by the modern culture of the country. Mukesh is in starkest contrast to Ashok and handles Balram as a servant than a man. Balram, outwardly a loyal, honest and faithful servant but inwardly a restless aspirant for doing better in life, kills the innocent Ashok and grabs his money with which he opens a whole 'brave new world.' He doesn't allow his predestined servitude to last because he detests being a straggler. This seemingly simple plot unravels itself through many intricacies. The novel assumes the format of a bildungsroman (a novel of formation or education) as it narrates the development of the protagonist's mind and character from childhood through varied experiences to maturity and the recognition of his role in the world.

As aforementioned the book seems to establish new ethics, inevitable to success, diabolical in nature, i.e. the way to success leads through spilling a little blood, a little trickery and a determination to try forbidden ventures. It is a reiteration of the ancient Indian ethics of *matasyanya*—*ya*. Simultaneously the book attacks the disorder prevalent in contemporary India. The cultural codes in the book appear murky and bleak. The educative system, the working of officials, the polluted Ganges, the sick hospitals, the corrupt administration and politics, the cunning and astute police almost everything that constitute the present day India are put forth in its naked reality.

'The White Tiger' is an eye-opening and revealing text. It shatters the professed and traditionally acknowledged ideas about the glorious and highly praised Ganga, the river of emancipation. Taking a dip in it once in life is an unwritten but inevitable law for an average Indian if he has to undo all his sins. But Balram warns Mr. Jiabao—

"I urge you not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of faces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion and seven different kinds of industrial acid."

He further describes the filthy Ganga in the holy city of Banaras. Such is the existing veracity of Ganga. Children start making their carriers at schools and it is where they are first exposed to corruption. The government plans to provide education with free food, uniforms, scholarships and many other amenities to students. The plan is made and endorsed but it never reaches its target. The author reveals the snobbery, hypocrisy and falsity of a headmaster of a school in a mocking and teasing way-

"The teacher had a legitimate excuse to steal the money; he said he had not been paid his salary in six months. He was going to undertake a Gandhian protest to retrieve his missing wages; he was going to do nothing in class until his pay---. Yet he

was terrified of losing his job, because the pay of any government job in India is very poor, the incidental advantages are numerous. Once, a truck came into the school with uniforms that the government had sent for us; we never saw them but a week later they turned up for sale in the neighbouring village.”

Adiga’s acumen regarding the function of police in India is highly praiseworthy. When Balram has to start up his business venture of taxies in Banglore he bribes the police and uses it in accordance with his planning. Bribed by Balram the police first raid the other taxi owners of the city for lacking driving licence and other papers. Secondly the police placate the angry brother of a dead in an accident caused by one of Balram’s drivers. The police act according the class of the victim as the author says—

“A man on a bicycle getting killed the police don’t even have to register the case. A man on a motorbike getting killed they have to register the case. Man in a car getting killed- they would have thrown me in jail.”

Apart of the thematic concern the stylistic front of the work is also highly commendable. The technical dexterity of Adiga marvels the readers beyond their expectation. He is at home in revealing even the complex inner turmoil of Balram in easy and simple syntaxes. Creating suitable metaphorical utterances in the mind of the protagonist is Adiga’s forte. In his external behaviour and duties Balram never gives even the slightest clue of his contrivances. The writer beautifully even effectively externalises his inner conflict between the good and evil self of Balram. Once Balram is driving his master Ashok somewhere in Delhi when in a traffic jam he sees two puddles of paan spit assuming the shape of two Balrams talking to each other---

The left hand puddle seemed to say:	The right hand puddle seemed to say:
1. Your father wanted you to be an honest man.	1. Your father wanted you to be a man.
2. Mr. Ashok doesn’t hit you or curse you like people did to your father.	2. Ashok made you take the blame when his wife killed the child on the road.
3. Mr. Ashok pays you well, 4000 rs a month. He has been raising your salary without even your asking.	3. This is a pittance. You live in a city. What do you save? Nothing.
4. Remember what the buffalo did to the servant’s family. Mr. Ashok will ask your father to do the same to your family once you run away.	4. The very fact that Mr. Ashok threatens your family makes your blood boil.

The book profoundly displays certain literary merits. The diction of the text is suggestive, emotive, simple and off and on euphemistic too. The best euphemistic expression in the text, I find, is the expression “to dip the beak in someone” and “arousing of the beak” for erection. The *Nayak*, protagonist, doesn’t conform to any of the category. He is a common man and perfidy is his forte. The type of his character has no antecedent. He is the first character who mockingly reveals the zeitgeist of the present India where he swims in the same tide. Instead of having heroic qualities, he possesses villainous scheming which he practices not against any individual antagonist but against all who comes in his way. Morally he may not be ideal and an imitable but his dazzling success is a tempting one. His story of triumph postulates that the present day crises in India can be tackled only by being corrupt. It is indeed an ominous pitfall.

While *The White Tiger* exposes India's fake attitude and unconcern with much of the glorious assets in our culture as Balram proposes to eliminate God and Gandhi from the school he is going to launch—

“A school where you won't be allowed to corrupt anyone's hand with prayers and stories of God and Gandhi --- nothing but the facts of life for these kids.”

It does praise the economical boom in the country. Adiga predicts that the coming time will be purely of China and India—“My humble prediction is in twenty years time it will be just as yellow men and brown men at the top of the pyramid, and we will rule the whole world.”

It is indeed hard to praise such a character who justifies his act of murder in the end by comparing it to numerous murders done by the politicians----“kill enough people and they will put up bronze statues to near parliament house in Delhi..... But that is a glory, and not what I am after. All I wanted was the chance to be a man---and for that one murder was enough.”

The book does make us feel what we were once and what we are now. Adiga deserves absolute praise for it.

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English in Multilingual and Cross-cultural Context: Exploring Opportunities and Meeting the Challenges

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The proposed paper endeavours to analyse the role of English language in growing economies, like India, and transforming societies like Nepal. It also attempts to establish that English language has become the vehicle of transformation and an objective means to interpret the numerous cross-cultural contexts within the pluralistic societies. The paper proposes that if the linguistic pre-eminence of English, as a foreign language, is maintained it may affect numerous indigenous native languages/paroles and ultimately disturb the traditional fabric of the ancient cultures. The paper does not suggest that the English language should be dissuaded but it surely seeks to endorse the need to promote English as a more acceptable native language, expressing the hue and taste of the region, in any multilingual and cross-cultural context.

The English language has flourished and developed in multilingual and cross-cultural environments. It has become the indisputable world language, owing largely to its status as a link language in multilingual and pluralistic societies. The main reasons for the growth of English may be attributed to the rise and fall of the British Colonial rule, the imminent linguistic void in the immediate post colonial era that required a lingua franca to fill the hiatus and in the more recent times the role of English as the language of modernity, Science, technology, knowledge and development.

English became the language of transition and change ever since the American struggle for independence. It became the de facto language of the United States of America. But independent America, which was the amalgamation of various colonies, accommodated words from different languages within the colonies and the aboriginal communities to understand and describe their immediate reality. Most of the people who advocated English as the language of independent United States of America were native speakers from English speaking countries. When England and America became two independent countries using the same language adoption of new words gave the Americans a different identity. Queen's English was thus rendered insufficient to describe their concurrent reality. This gave rise to two variants of English i.e. British English and American English. Colonies, after independence, adopted either one of these language variants, as a constitutional language or a link language.

English, which was considered as the language of power during the imperial rule became the language of interpretation in independent colonies. The analogy between America and other colonies may seem far fetched in the 21st Century. But, the progress of America, over centuries, also owes to the fact that it produces knowledge in the accepted international language, English, whereas other colonies largely interpret knowledge through English and try to disseminate it appropriately in their local languages. As a result interpretation (not translation) has become an important activity that may also lead one to the different socio-political power structures in many of these countries. It clearly suggests that countries that have

adopted English as their first language seem to develop at a faster pace, for example, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and America. On the other hand countries that adopted English only as the language of governance created a social cleavage between those who knew English (government) and those who did not (the governed). The pull towards English as the language of governance and the attraction of adopting local language as the de facto language due to its affinity with culture creates a perplexity within the citizens of the respective countries who deliberately seek to acquire English for understanding the governance and power structures in their own countries. More and more people opt for English as the medium of instruction in schools and higher education. Local languages, with the passage of time, become insufficient to carry and deliver the load of Western information (dubbed as knowledge). Michel Foucault in "The Discourse on Language" maintains that:

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every education system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.

There is a third category of countries which includes our neighbours in Asia, namely, Japan and China, who have shown a miraculous rate of growth in spite of avoiding the lingua franca role of English, for a very long time. Indonesia is another curious example. The country, during the Japanese occupation showed miraculous progress through the adoption of one nation one language theory. Just as America, after independence, enriched its language by adopting new words and terminologies, Indonesia too included seven thousand new words and terminologies to its newly adopted national language. Under the Japanese occupation:

Indonesian became the sole language of education, administration, and the mass media. Prior to the Japanese occupation, all texts used at the high school and university level were in Dutch. These Dutch texts were promptly translated into Indonesian and new terminology was developed.... Indonesian suddenly began to grow at a tremendous pace... a forced growth, designed to enable it to exercise the functions of a mature modern language in the shortest possible time. The Language Office coined 7000 new terms during the period of Japanese occupation.

In Nepal, as is also the case with India, very little deliberate attempts have been made to inculcate and popularise new words and terminologies to enhance the de facto languages. Moreover the citizens of these countries have learnt to adapt to new terminologies through their acquaintance with English or modes of technology like television, computers, radio, and mobile phones. English has become an essential language in both these countries. It can be seen in the preference of English, over national language, as a medium of instruction in schools and higher education institutions. As a result English language is replacing the mother tongue, at least in the upper-middle-class and cosmopolitan areas in India. Even in Nepal there is a large population that migrates and in the process loses its language. That they acquire skills in other languages is not a point here because one may find new words to express new experiences but losing old word-associations also takes away the cultural affinity of

that expression. Acquired words do not represent the cultural experience of the speaker and do not penetrate into his/her psyche so as to allow private conversation even with the self. In that sense one not only gradually loses one's language but also one's culture. And if the adoption of a national language, like Nepali, or a de facto language like Hindi is mainly to retain the cultural integrity then the purpose is not served. Moreover, when language is overtly discouraged as the medium of instruction at schools and institutions of higher education it becomes an impediment to the child's psychological and intellectual growth. In societies, like India and Nepal, that are pluralistic and multilingual there should be provisions for simultaneous exposures to different languages so that individuals can develop languages required for public identity and at the same time nurture the language that defines them personally. It may seem difficult initially but if children are exposed to more than one language simultaneously they will acquire them easily. But when languages are differentiated on the basis of being considered as elite or inferior medium of instruction or communication, it creates a sense of inferiority in the native speakers and dissociation with the group that uses it. A sense of discrimination creeps in that encourages people to avoid their native language. Perry and Delpit's observation about African children holds ground even in similar situations encountered elsewhere:

. . . children's confidence is affected when they are made to feel ashamed of their home language and implicitly their parents and community.

Both India and Nepal, as also other countries where English has become the de facto link language, should differentiate between knowledge and language. Language should not be seen as a substitute to knowledge. It would be a great disservice to the indigenous ancient languages of these countries if contemporary knowledge cannot be translated into these languages. Similarly, it will be an equally great disservice to the world if the knowledge embedded in the ancient languages of these countries cannot be translated into English for the benefit of the world. For example Gautam Buddha, who was born in Nepal and whose views about life have transcended not only national but also continental boundaries became an inspiration in America¹ during the 1960s due to Herman Heese's novel *Siddharta*. Many people must have learnt about Buddhism through this novel. Buddhism is knowledge while German, the language in which the novel was initially written, and English in which it was later translated are only vehicles or mediums to carry this knowledge. The lucidity in the novel comes from the simplicity of the culture described and the precision of the thought depicted. Similarly, Ferdinand de Saussure's doctoral thesis on the genitive absolute in Sanskrit enabled the West to reconsider its monolithic philosophy and accept the multiplicity of meaning and consequently language and culture. Saussure is also considered as one of the founding fathers of semiotics. His concepts of sign/signifier/signified/referent were later adopted by literary thinkers such as Ronald Barthes, Lacan and Levi-Strauss and implemented in their respective areas of study. So Saussure's study of Sanskrit not only influences the study of Western linguistics it also became the basis for modern studies in literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis and anthropology. These examples are equally applicable to India and Nepal because both the countries exert an equal claim over Buddha and Sanskrit.

The best opportunity for India and Nepal lies in the cultivation of their cultural heritage through the plough of translation in the fertile field of English language. Both the countries need intellectuals who can translate indigenous

knowledge into English and the appropriate foreign knowledge into native languages. The Nepalese proverb which says green forests are Nepal's wealth can be used to promote indigenous practices of restoration and upkeep of environment in other parts of the world. Udaya Sharama, Chairman, (Resource Development Initiative Center) RDIC Kathmandu very appropriately points that:

. . . indigenous people value land and forest, they worship land and forest as it conveys a strong and intimate relationship that binds the indigenous people with the forest and land. They grow with the land and forest that is exclusively managed by indigenous groups without external help."

Just as Ireland has a close association with the sea and its literature conveys this cultural association even Nepal can create and translate its literature that prominently brings forth its association with hills valleys and mountains. International recognition of such writing, original or translated, is essential to promote Nepalese culture and literature. A well received book can bring more foreign tourists to a land than promotional bookings. "Once English acquires a new identity through creative writing, the language is liberated from its colonial past."² During the eighth decade of the twentieth century the novels of V S Naipal and Salman Rushdie created a new opening for the Indian literature in the West and now Indian writing in English is a booming business. Many writers like R K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and a host of others had created individual space for themselves in the Western literary world but commercial success due to an awareness and curiosity about the Indian culture and its writing grew at a phenomenal pace during the last decade of the twentieth century. The Indian writers writing during this period were the second or third generation Indian citizens who knew both the Indian culture and the English language like the back of their hand. The advantage India is reaping today owes a large deal to the fact that most Indians excel in the two prominent means of global communication i.e. English and computers. And both these means of global communication can be learnt at a faster pace if the younger generation is exposed to them in the mundane life situations. ATM kiosks, interactive screens in libraries, video games, mobile phones, television are some of the modern technologies that can increase both the technical and linguistic quotient of individuals.

Nepal being a land locked agrarian country with limited modern resources of electricity, industry and technology can use the communicative power of English to climb the Everest height of progress. It should not be forgotten that even the United Kingdom is an Island but the country established its power across continents by rowing across the sea. Nepal too can climb to reach its success going across the mountainous terrain, into the world that needs skilled manpower. Communication skill in English is a basic requirement but a competitive and creative bent of mind can best unlock the resources lying vacant in the outside world. Communication skills, to understand and entertain the foreign tourist, can help individuals sustain their livelihood but cannot bring large scale resources essential to the transforming nation. But if the English language becomes an essential language that can penetrate the individual feelings of people in the heartlands it will become a part of the culture and not remain an essential second language. Through English Language Teaching Nepal can aim to create cultural synergies. With so many variants of English in the advanced countries, Nepal and other transforming countries can equip their citizens with intercultural competence to work in a changing world. Language teaching should be substituted with language learning. And language learning has to be linked

with job opportunities and other economic activities. A teacher can only be a facilitator in the language learning activity. The state of Gujarat, in India, for instance has initiated various interactive programmes to facilitate language learning for students and other people. The Society for Creation of Opportunity through Proficiency in English (SCOPE) has been set up to build English language proficiency in youth and thereby provide employment opportunities to them. Classroom teaching/learning is not mandatory for the course. The government has also set up Digital Education and Learning Labs (DELL) in Under-Graduate colleges. The government has made provisions to telecast study aid through BISAG for those who cannot attend DELL and other study centres. The most important aspect in these programmes is that they promote self learning through interactive methods. Over the past two years more than one lac people have participated and benefited through these programmes in 369 centers. The government aims at training five lac people in 'Business English' through these programmes.

English is the only language in the world that has more number of non-native speakers compared to its native speakers. In countries like Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia or even America, where different variants of English are in use, the debate is not about the standardization of the different variants of English. In stead the conflict is with lesser spoken native aboriginal languages that form the fringes of the margins and vie for a greater acceptance. Robert Phillipson asserts that:

The advance of English whether, in Britain, North America, South Africa, Australia or New Zealand has invariably been at the expense of other languages. . . . The monolingualism in Anglo-American establishment blinds its representatives to the realities of multilingualism in the contemporary world and gives them a false perspective.

Languages that cannot survive even on these fringed margins become extinct and other languages replace them on the fringe to meet the same end over a period of time. Both India and Nepal need to popularise non-native English. Edwin Thumboo is right when he says:

. . . language must serve, not overwhelm, Mastering it involves holding down and breaching a body of habitual English association to secure that condition of verbal freedom cardinal to energetic resourceful writing. In a sense the language is remade, where necessary, by adjusting the interior landscape of words in order to explore and meditate.

Probably other countries within the region can also come together in this mammoth task of language enrichment. Just as the Americans, the Australians, and the Canadians, have gradually created their own standard Englishes we too need to work towards giving our own expressions to the English language we use and thereby making it a part of our distinctive linguistic heritage. Yes, there can be as many Englishes as there are speakers but only when the right click in computers across the world gives the option of Indian English, Nepalese English or say Asian English can it be said that yes we have clicked, right. Both the Indian and Nepalese societies are transforming. India is undergoing an economic change while Nepal is preparing for the change in the structure of governance. Change is never easy to come but when change becomes visible, as is the case in both these countries, it is sure and near.

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The Criterion

Harold Pinter's *Old Times*: A Memory Play

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Harold Pinter may easily be considered the most challenging contemporary British dramatist. Bulk part of the literary circle emphasis Pinter as an absurdist, but the other part of Pinter's writing remains untouched. It is difficult to measure Pinter's payment to modern drama, but it is very clear that he revolutionized the theatrical understanding. Pinter's mastery of the word, of peeling down the English language to its most necessary and influential mechanism has been recognized by all his contemporary writers. His mobile, perceptive confrontation of some of the darkest themes of modern existence has hardly ever been matched to anyone. *The Old Times* is a stunning piece by the Nobel Laureate Harold Pinter, narrating the element of time, space and the related concept of memory of the dim distant past, which was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre in London on June 1, 1971.

My aim through this article is to propagate that Pinter has shown the power of the past and memory in this play. His famous plays *Old Times*, *No Man's Land* and *Betrayal* all center on loves past and present, where when memory pressures to invalidate past well-being it may demolish present happiness to the characters. In these plays, we see that characters oppose about their memories, disagree with themselves, remembering events one way and then forgetting it ever happened; memory becomes a weapon. The past plays a very energetic role in the relationships of the characters as well as the action of the present situation. As in the other of Pinter's Memory plays, memory is a weapon used by *Old Times*' characters to gain control and dominate their opponent's characters.

In this play the character's preferences to control can demolish relationships on various levels: the characters' personal world, the world of the audience, and the world beyond the audience.

[To] Pinter human beings are simply inscrutable, to themselves as well as to others. They may be emptiness surrounded by illusion, but they may also, without knowing it, possess a solid center of reality. The point is that they do not know and are too frightened to find out...(1975. p. 385-8)

The supremacy of Pinter's theme of memory maintains even in the play *Old Times*. In *Old Times* Pinter presents three people, a husband and wife, Deeley and Kate and a friend of Kate's Anna, who is now revisiting her old friend after an interval of twenty years. In this play we can see that one woman and man fighting for another woman. Deeley and her friend Anna fight for getting the favours of Kate. The relationship of Kate and her husband is not cordial and convivial and does not prove to be fertile. Eventually it is Kate who achieves control over herself, as well as, the other two characters. At the end of the play Kate denotes that she has won this round, because Anna and Delley have both done the mocking efforts to control her. The

theatrical concern of this play centers upon the disparities between various accounts of actions, which are supposed to have happened twenty years in the past.

Anna's opening speech reminds memories of the time that she shared with Kate:

Anna: Queuing all night, the rain, do you remember? My goodness, the Albert Hall, Covent Garden, what did we eat? To look back, half the night, to do things we loved, we were young then of course, but what stamina, and to work in the morning, and to a concert or the opera, or the ballet, that night, you haven't forgotten? ...

[That world,] does it still exist I wonder? Do you know? Can you tell me?

Deeley: We rarely get to London.

(Kate stands, goes to a small table and pours coffee from a pot.)

Kate: Yes, I remember. (*Old Times, 46*)

The contest between Anna and Deeley for Kate's attention has begun. Pinter mentions the lesbian relationship throughout the play and we can see the perfect epitome of this when Anna tells Deeley:

You have a wonderful casserole . . .

I mean wife. So sorry. A wonderful wife. (*Old Times, 46*)

Pinter distinguishes that the past is basically dramatics when explored through conflicting memories both because the choice of possible action is further extended and because the uncertainty of outcome holds the audience in continuous suspense. There are so many dialogues spoken by Kate who have indicated the illicit relationship of Anna and Kate. The statement casserole becomes the symbol of bisexuality:

Kate: Yes, I quite like those kinds of things, doing it.

Anna: What kind of things?

Kate: Oh, You know that sort of things.

Deeley: Do you mean cooking?

Kate: All that things. (*Old Times, 48*)

Harold Pinter tries to mark their past relationships. Here, all the characters think over the past, truly or not, and the audience is unlikely to know who is telling the truthful past and who is not.

As Pinter observes:

I suggest there can be no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false (1986, p. 11).

Deeley faces a lot of struggle to penetrate the circumference of her defensive sovereignty. In the play Deeley has recognized himself with the movie title *Odd Man Out*. Nevertheless Deeley continues to fight throughout the play. The film *Odd Man Out* provides an interesting point in *Old Times*. While the film is not the play's stimulation, the title alone recommends a wealth of possibilities to its purpose. *Odd Man Out* plays an interesting part as Deeley and Anna use the film and its characters' stories to redesign their pasts and present with Kate. Pinter enjoys negation, and *Old Times* is built on exact, shared memories that seem to contradict. The past determines present behavior and events, and the characters who make and remake the past find

themselves “re-living” the past in the present situations. Because of the theatrical impact of *Old Times* which is due to the expectation in trying to get at what really happened in the past and what sort of relationship existed between Anna, Kate and Deeley. Pinter articulates his views:

We don't carry labels on our chests, and even though they are continually fixed to us by others, they convince nobody. The desire for verification of the part of all of us, with regard to our own experience and the experience of others is understandable but cannot always be satisfied (1986, p. 11).

The memories in Pinter's Plays are marked for an unconventional outlook on life and things. His women characters are constantly prepared to fight for equivalent authority with men. Pinter's characters can alter their memories in response to the necessities of their differences in the present.

The tales remembered by the characters, one by Deeley and another by Anna, are of prime importance in creating the threat of the past transparently. These memories project the sharp angle of menace that has caused Kate to restrain her memories of her old and only friend, Anna. The information accruing from these memories suggests overtly that Anna and Kate have had a lesbian relation between them in the past. The dialogue connecting Anna at many points in the play clues at this lesbian relationship:

Kate: I'll think about it in the bath.

Anna: Shall I run your bath for you?

Kate: No I'll run it myself tonight. (*Old Times*, 56)

We see that Kate wins in the last round and she also maintains control over both Deeley and Anna because all of the action revolves around Kate in the play. Through these memories of the characters' memories, as they fake or accurately recount the events, the original experience, the memory, and the reality in which they are currently living all become part of their memory as Anna speaks:

There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place. (*Old Times*, 39)

There are many interpretations that can be applied to this play as Harold Pinter's says about *Old Times*:

It happens, It all happens.

In *Old Times* Pinter shows his total capability in similar to human reality with that creative effort to capture the given moment and set it above the doubts which time brings all the way through its channel. The play *Old Times* is basically a sequence of dialogue between three characters, Anna, Kate, Deeley, who from a clear love triangle try to show the other character belittle. Their conversation, woven typically around the episode of the past, attempts to define the nature of the relationship which existed and steadily came to stay in between them.

Anna: Why don't you try her yourself?

Deeley: Would you recommend that?

Anna: You'd do it properly.

Deeley: In her bath towel?

Anna: How out?

Deeley: How out?

Anna: How could you dry her out? Out of her bath towel?

Deeley: I don.t know.

Anna: Well, dry her yourself, in her bath towel.

(Pause) (*Old Times*, pp. 50-51)

In this play we see that both Kate and Anna have played a powerful role in comparison to the character of Delley. Pinter uses a variety of techniques in the play both to depict the fight between Deeley and Anna, and to denote the bias of memory in the play. Pinter shows memory, can operate on a variety of levels and that memory becomes someone else's reality.

All the three characters Anna, Kate, and Deeley play the memory game, the strength of memory's power is ever present, whether there is fact to their asserts and games, or not.

Almansi and Henderson appropriately comment:

the characters in *Old Times* enter a sort of time-machine..

(1983,91).

Pinter's play explores the subject of memory and its relation to reality. The past is so important that very little seems to happen in the present, the relationship between the three characters after in time with their conflicting and changeable memories of the past. Lowe opines (2006):

Anna is reconstructing the past by reminiscing about the past episodes of her living together with Kate in London as working girls decades ago. By doing so she provokes Kate to remember things, to dig up the memories of Kate's past from oblivion. The tension is well discerned and implies that the menace of the past is to run its course through the action of the play, and that by stirring the skeletons in the cupboard Anna shall exercise considerable influence over the present..

Pinter's most of the plays present the women assume the position of authority, dominance, freedom and control towards the end of the play. Harold Pinter provides the message in his plays that no male should undermine women and the new woman is now to stay and men have to come to stipulations with this new reality of life. The characters become completely overwhelmed in their "memories" and at some point completely misplace the past and the battle for dominance in the present.

Deeley and Kate, and the triangle of the characters thus formed gives out an immediate representative meaning therefore the past exists in the present through memory, and past is capable of exercising conspicuous and possible impact on the present as Almansi and Henserson rightly point out:

has the effect of diachronic time, since, from the outset, past and present are both manifest on the stage simultaneously, though with a different status (light versus dark; centre of the room versus windows; foreground versus background).. (1983, p. 86).

The play *Old Times* attempts to capture the past, to co-relate eternal time with the effect of the past on the present through memory lane. Their conversations relate to the past of all the three characters, and are broken up by comprehensive stories which in their turn transmit again to the past with reference to space in time.

Gale observes that. . .

In *Old Times* Pinter has given us the dramatization of the famous opening lines of T.S. Eliot *Four Quarters*: Time present and time past... (1977, p. 188).

In *Old Times* Pinter demonstrates that a play in its broadest description is a personal and straight notion of life of characters. Its value is greater or lesser in accordance with the concentration of the impressions of the persons. Harold Pinter knows that physical presentation expresses internal clashes and decision. He uses a theatre language capable of carrying forward these sense impressions.

The past is no longer within accomplished and it has vanished into eternity forever, only the recollections remain. Memories are said to be the authentic account of past happenings. Memories, more often than not, redefine the past—man has undergone various stages of alteration along with the unalterable passages of time. In *Old Times* the dialogue is covered in a firm and stable monologist framework. The play is established through oral connections between all the three characters that the reality of the past fades, and memory transforms real events into shadowy leftovers of slight experience. So the characters do not like to come out of the confusion of the past, as it happens in *Old Times*. Through conversations and memories their histories and behaviors are exposed, but it seems unlikely that everything we hear is harmonious, precise, and accurate because the account of the memory presented by the characters are full with contradictions, struggles and conflicts in their relationships. The frequent question which strikes in audiences mind is to whose memories are actually true and precise. We see there is an added expectation of how each one of the character is going to respond when the lanes of memory appear to cross. However the question, what really happened in the past, does not concern in present.

The play, essentially about memory and past impressions and how elusive and self serving they can be, brings together three people with their own perceptions, but forced somehow to acknowledge their interdependence. *Old Times* is one of Mr. Pinter's most satisfying memory plays, with the careful combustion of its language and moments of almost deranged humor.

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The Criterion

Problematics of Female Body
A Critical Study of Shashi Deshpande's Novel *In the Country of Deceit*

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The body is the bearer of the human being and at the same time the expression of his/her existential condition. Individual and social biographies are represented in the body as the social and cultural circumstances in which it has developed (Wengel 1983). In Robert Crawford's words the body is a cultural object. It is a vital foundation upon which behaviour and values are predicated. By the close of the twentieth century the body has become a key site of political, social, cultural and economic intervention. The body has come to be reorganized as a contested terrain on which struggles over control and resistance are fought out in contemporary societies. Human bodies are shaped and controlled by the norms and expectations of gendered social orders, intersected by racial, class, religious and age norms and expectations. The result is gendered body produced for a gendered social world.

The body has emerged in recent years a key problematic in the social sciences is indicated for instance, by the proliferation of books and journals, conferences and other media dedicated to a sociological analysis of the body. The assumption of classical positivist sociology, that bodies belong primarily to biology, has collapsed and the meaning of the body has become a problem for linguistic, cultural and social analysis. This inclusion of the body in sociological inquiry can be regarded as a critical and reflective response to the social changes which have brought the body to the forefront of contemporary struggle and debate.

The perspective of embodiment is imperative to understand women, their position, and their struggle in Indian society. A woman is located in a physical and psychological space as much as she is in cultural domain. No individual lives in particular social or cultural vacuum. The body is the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and realized (Macnay, 1999). Through history women have experienced their bodies in different ways. Some have lived with their body in subservient ways, while others have challenged social norms in subversive ways. Sometimes both these aspects of docility and resistance have interplayed giving one a clearer vision of the body.

In the past few decades an enormous amount of feminist research has been generated from a diversity of disciplines, theoretical perspectives and methodologies. The female body has been the subject of numerous empirical studies in a wide variety of specific contexts. Feminism has put the body on the intellectual and theoretical map of society and history. In the era of sexual liberation, feminists have brought the body to the forefront in their analyses of power relations under patriarchy. The body has become a political issue as feminists struggle to gain control over their fertility and sexuality. The feminists of the autonomous women's movement have identified

the centrality of women's bodies and recognized patriarchy and capitalism and the institutions like State, family and marriage as the prime sites of control. Feminist studies focus on how women experience their bodies, on how women's bodies are implicated in various social and cultural practices and on symbolic representations of the body. The history of women's bodies has been mapped in various areas of social life and attention has been devoted to how institutions and cultural discourses shape women's embodied experience undoubtedly.

The control and abuse of women's body creates and maintains women's oppression all over the world. Man holds the important decision making positions in all social, political and religious institutions that organize and control society. Through this institutional power men constructs, pass laws and enact policies that serve their interests and give themselves the power to control women in public and private spheres. Men's definition and control of female sexuality constructs and regulates women's sexual activity. Voluntary as well as involuntary, violations of society's man made rules mark women as tainted and immoral. Repression and exploitation are different but complementary forms of control and abuse of female sexuality. Women's and girl's sexuality is repressed by strict control on sexual activity through such customs as placing a premium on girls virginity, basing family honor on the sexual control of daughters and wives and exacting severe punishment for adultery. The cultural boundaries imposed on the sexual freedom and sexual expressions of women, have been an effective means of the subjugation of women. The sexual boundaries walls for women remain dauntingly tall and unchallenged, and are periodically reinforced through the public castigation of violators.

Sexuality is socially constructed, shaped by social, political and economic influences. Feminist theories have assisted in documenting the ways in which females' sexuality is shaped by culture and by institutions that disadvantage females by silencing their voices. Feminism has demanded that women writers in particular should reflect and defend women's right to desiring, and that the pursuit of the fulfillment of female sexual desire –even if transgressive –should be a veritable metaphor for women's equality politics. Women writers should focus on body matters in their writings, trying to find out answers to questions- Is the sexed body a potent site of political interrogation? In other words, do bodies matter? Whose bodies matter? How do they matter? To what extent do women own their bodies? Does consent matter anymore when a woman enter an intimate relationship? Can she experience her own sexuality as a pleasurable one, autonomously decided, that is to be able to express it when, how and with whom?

The Problematics of female sexuality is an issue that has engaged the creative- critical attention of postcolonial women writers writing in India. All of them contest the notion of female sexuality as destructive and celebrate it as a positive energy. It is only through the reversal of the dominant male gaze that woman can retrieve the autonomy of her body and sexuality. These writers attribute all the ills of the society to the suppression of female sexuality and advocate a re-appropriation of its generative principle through a deliberate inversion of patriarchal morals around sexuality and female body. These writers want women's sexuality to be portrayed as an arena of pleasure and agency in which women are empowered to make decisions on their sexual –relational issues without feeling powerless. They have emphasized the necessity of women's choice and control over their sexuality in order to find it gratifying. The tension between pleasure and danger prevalent in the sexual discourse of women needs to be addressed and dealt with. They advocate the need to extend femaleness beyond breast and womb and integration of body with the mind by uncluttering the mind of patriarchal domestic demands. They exhort women to live, control and enjoy their bodies, their gender, their sexuality and their reproductive

potential and challenge the male domination and patriarchal mechanisms of surveillance and control over their bodies.

Women's narratives in almost all Indian languages have traversed a long distance from the tradition bound ethos of chastity and fidelity to new sexual ideology. They have constructed a new, unmasked and uninhibited language to facilitate the propagation of new sexual conventions. Women's narratives can be studied in three phases from the point of view of feminine sexuality. The earliest texts depicted the devoted, convention bound and self-sacrificing wives with total physical and mental chastity, the text of the middle phase envisaged women who, tormented with deep guilt and mental conflict in extramarital situations, finally annihilate themselves to preserve social morality and the contemporary texts where the prescribed codes of sexuality are appropriated, female sexuality is addressed as a necessary urge. The contemporary writers construct sexuality as an individual force, and not a regulated and controlled social force subject to the injunctions of the collective sexual hegemony. It is not in its prohibitiveness and suppression but in privilege and assertion that the new sexual ideology is structured.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the living dynamic women writers in India. She has treated the typical Indian themes very sensitively and has pictured the contemporary middle class women with rare competence. She as an Indian English writer stands apart, for she writes about certain specific concerns after her own manner. Her fiction with rare insights and finesse, bonds the authors' relation with her work. Her writing career reflects an ongoing process of problematizing life's conflicts and compromises, resolutions and irresolutions, ironies and affirmations, triumphs and tragedies. Her perspective of women's liberation and autonomy, are deeply entrenched in the Indian women's situatedness within the socio-cultural and economic spaces and paradigms of the country. Although consistently pressured in tangled relationships, her women firmly refuse to become prisoners of orthodoxies, fossilized traditions and stereotypically idealized identities. She casts a hard look at the fissures in the structural dynamics of the society functioning to the disadvantage of the female. She not only speaks of liberation but also attempts to trace the actual processes by which women are 'womanized'. She does so by locating and foregrounding the overt and covert means of women's bondage and conscription by ideologies, stereotypes and limited choices.

Shashi Deshpande is the author of nine novels and also has four books for children, a collection of essays, several volumes of short stories, as well as translations of two Indian languages into English to her credit. Her own novels and short stories have been translated into many Indian and European languages. Her latest novel 'In the Country of Deceit' was shortlisted for the Regional Commonwealth Writers Prize. This novel continues Deshpande's earlier probing into women's experience, women's involvement in and the constraints of family life, and the problematic of sexual relations. At the same time, the novel strikes out in an entirely new vein and one that holds readers attention from the beginning. The novel is a bold and small step in opening up a social and linguistic space for the discussion and exploration of female bodies and sexualities at a time when serious interest in the complexity of female sexuality is emerging. The novel is the story of female quest, of female desires and empathy. The text becomes the vehicle for expressing the sexual politics and the cultural dilemmas of female subordination. The heroine in the novel is presented as a woman of new generation who desires for purely personal gratification-sexual and psychological. The protagonist acquires agency and becomes self-directed. Critics see this departure variously as quest for autonomy, individuality, feminine freedom, or a woman's need for a new space, a 'new cosmos'.

The novel explores the life of Devyani, convent educated, law graduate, twenty seven years old spinster. All these years she had been a follower of her spirited older sister, then in charge of her parents' lives, the observer of their tragedy. For a brief period she acted as her cousin, Kshama's helper and later as Sindhu's attendant after her surgery. Now for the first time she gets a chance to play solo waiting for something interesting to happen. She is trying to find the rhythm of her life at Rajnaur. The stage is set for a new beginning; "I felt as if I was waiting for the curtain to go up, waiting for something to happen" (8). One day she happens to witness a football match with her cousin Gundu and she sees Ashok Chinnapa, the new D.S.P of Rajnaur and is fascinated by the energy surging through his body as he lifted his hands to celebrate the victory of his team. "It was the extremeness of the gesture, its flamboyance, may be, declaring a small moment of supreme happiness, announcing the pinnacle of achievement. I want a needlepoint of that extreme happiness, I want a moment in my life which make me feel I am touching the sky" (24). The extreme happiness is the fulfillment of the bodily desire which she has ignored till now due to restrictions of the society which does not allow women to fulfill this natural desire without marriage. Satisfaction, gratification of desire, fulfillment and not deferral, is one of the two main lines of movement of this novel.

Sexuality is the main force or the driving energy behind the body's self-expression. Although in India overt sexuality is considered as an act of shame for a woman, sexuality nonetheless is an important aspect of both male and female psyche. The novel can be read as an extended discourse on sexual desire, the discourse unfolding itself on the one hand through Devi's experiences of her body and on the other hand through her aunt Sindu's letters in which she writes about her own life and, though at first inadvertently, comments on or complements Devi's experiences. Sindhu emphasizes the need of sexual fulfillment in life "life is lived through the body. Body is important and so the demands of the body. And yet do you know that there is a line in the Upanishads which say that generating organ is the center of all pleasures. And they use the word Ananda. Remember, this is a very natural feeling, a very natural desire and you have a right to expect your life to contain this Ananda as well" (42-43).

Then Devyani meets Ashok at Rani's house in a party and is again fascinated by him. "It was like a Picasso painting— eyebrows, cheekbones, ears, hair, nose, mouth, eyes, yes his eyes looking at me, resting on me...I lay in bed wide awake, conscious of my body in its nightdress, thinking, that's the point of marriage. Sex without guilt. Sex without any strings attached. Sex without fear" (77). The desire for the union of her female body with Ashok becomes intense and uncontrollable, "It's only the body's response to desire. I knew that I know the desire for a man, the longing to be held by a man, to feel his body against mine" (89). Devyani becomes aware of her 'body consciousness' - feeling one's emotions and desires, being in contact with bodily processes, listening to body's needs. Devyani says "I cannot tell Savi that this time I am frightened, not of the man but of myself, of my desire to run, not away from him. But in his arms" (94).

Ashok declares his love for her, love without any commitment and promise of durable relationship. It is the love between two bodies craving for the fulfillment of bodily hunger. One day Devyani gets a letter from Ashok inviting her for a clandestine meeting with him at a resort. She ignores the dictates of her mind, and succumbs to the desires of her flesh. To extinguish the fire of the body she throws herself in the arms of Ashok. In utter silence they communicate through the language of the bodies. Devyani, first time in contact with the body of a man experiences utter contentment and sheer, unadulterated joy suffusing her entire being. She says, "He began to trace my features with his fingers- my eyebrows, my nose, my chin, my lips. I

could never have imagined that such a gentle touch so light that I could feel it, could evoke such a strong response from my body” (132). She is a woman who cannot betray the desires and demands of her body. Her sexual relationship with Ashok cannot be considered otherwise, for she is in full command of the situation as she is claiming her body for herself. “It was not just the passion, the immense tenderness, the joyousness with which he loved me. It was the exuberance, the flamboyance with which he expressed his love, letting down my hair, and holding it up again so that he could plant innumerable kisses on nape of the neck” (159). The union is followed by other bodily unions and she experiences her own sexuality as a pleasurable one, autonomously decided. Her body feels elated and satisfied. As Naseem says, “Devayani you look as if you ‘have been brassoed...as someone has brought out the shine and polish in you” (147).

The societal and psychological constraint inherent in our ‘fundamental pattern’ does not allow Devayani to confess her rendezvous and her embodied personality are split. There is disintegration between her mind and body. The body cannot steer clear itself of temptation and mind disapproves this act as it is conditioned by the norms of society. A conviction that physical urges which one cannot help having are unjustified, undignified, and presumptuous, undercuts the oldest basis for a sense of worth, it contaminates the original wellspring of subjective autonomy. Antagonism to the body stem solely from external constraints designed to foster social obedience. The burden of sensual self-abnegation imposed on women by double standard is not undertaken in a willful spirit. It is passively accepted. She feels, “I had entered the country of Deceit. I could no longer be open with people I loved. I had to deceive them” (147). She becomes an ‘Abhisarika’, a woman so in love a man that she is willing to brave a solitary walk in night. She is riddled with guilt and fear of becoming a floozy and whore. Constantly swinging between euphoria and despair, she learns to live with guilt. The guilt again empowers her embodied self when Arjun becomes critical with pneumonia. She holds herself responsible for his acute illness as she thinks she has gone against the society by committing adultery. She prays during the flight, “Let Arjun be alright, I will give up Ashok, I am doing wrong, this is a punishment, but I’ll give up Ashok, I promise” (177). She promises to placate the deity by breaking her relationship with Ashok.

Chastity, virtue and above all purity are extolled as great feminine virtues embodying the honour of the family and community. A woman’s experience of her body is largely that of shame as she is seen as transgressing family and social moral norms. In a sense woman’s body often is no longer her body but is taken over by the community. Savi and Shree are furious when they come to know about her relations with Ashok. Savi says, “You should have said you want to get married to get sex instead of doing a dirty thing just for sex” (184). Devi retorts:

Nobody, but nobody has the words for what sex with your beloved is like. It’s the same with music. You have to hear it, you can’t describe it. “You want sex,” Savi had said, crudely, savagely, deliberately trying to shock me. Perhaps. But there was much more. Only this man could give me such ecstasy, only he could give me such joy with his lovemaking. Ananda, Sindhu had called it. Yes, more than joy. Bliss. And he could give it to me with a touch, with a word. It was this man, not the sex. This man’s love, not the sex. And yet, the sex too. (193)

Shree accuses her of committing adultery and trying to destroy Ashok’s marriage, which is not the task of respectable woman. Devyani knows that luck is not on her side.

Conflict is central to women’s lives, whether or not woman is able to give expression to her desires and views. Compliance and resistance are both central to women’s everyday life experience. Both within and outside the family, women engage in the twin process of compliance

and resistance, submission and rebellion, silence and speech. The cultural boundaries imposed on the sexual freedom and sexual expressions of women have been an effective means of subjugation of women. Woman is expected to control her conduct in order to protect her and her family honour. Thus she subconsciously recognizes the existence of a power hierarchy that hides a politically correct message and that involves the acceptance and respect of those above her. Furthermore, she is fully aware that the resistance of them will end in failure and disownment. Though unwilling, Devyani agrees to keep herself away from Ashok under the pressure of family and society. But she does not regret her relationship, she celebrates it, “Yes, I would never have known the joy, the experience of loving, of being loved, of becoming me with another human being. I wonder this union is what we long for all our lives. And you and I were lucky to have it. But we can’t go on, that is the truth, however precious it is to us, we can’t go on... Our mating, it was a miracle, a disaster” (256-257). Devayani, the female character does not entirely reject traditional and culture restrictions per se but call for a new message that incorporates the demands of the contemporary world in a constant process of social, political and technological advance.

The dream like relationship with no strings attached is severed to comply with the dictates of the society. Ashok is transferred to another city and Devyani is left alone. There is no bitter feeling, no treachery as Devyani considers the union to be the union of body and soul and is ready to remember the sweet memories of the passionate, beautiful time spent with her man, Ashok. “Is this what my life is going to be like from now- a constant struggle between trying to forget and wanting to remember?” (259). Silence becomes the reality of women as words are strangled and the body subjugated. The sweet sensation even if felt are consigned to the silence of pain. The writer through her feminine narrative presents the unconforming affair neither as a sexual perversion nor as a willful transgression, but a symbolic construct of woman’s freedom and individuality and a strategic posture against rigid conventional institutionalization. She does not go on the defensive by justifying her protagonists’ act of sexual violation through structural manipulations, her narrative do celebrate female sexual self-assertion embodied in a new feministic assumption that woman is a desiring subject with an intense longing for sexual expression, satisfaction and fulfillment.

Sexuality has not been looked at as central to women’s liberation but as linked to other relations of power within the society. Central to it is the idea that ‘personal is political’ which has been an important slogan of women’s movement. Sexuality thus can’t be seen as an issue related to the private lives of the women but has to be seen as linked to the institution of practices that structure their lives and experience. All would agree that women sexuality has been deeply constrained by the discursive and disciplinary practices of patriarchy that has sought to channel bodies and subjective into pre-determined gendered models.

Are women’s bodies and bodily response any less natural, any less part of our human identity? Perhaps what Shashi Deshpande is seeking in her novels, and what is so difficult to find, is a response to the female body, by men and women, that grants it the right to its own truth, its right to self-possession, and its right self- containment. There is still a need for women to name their own bodily experience and their own sexuality. The concept of ‘body consciousness’ is important. Body consciousness also has wider implications, it can be a process through which women seek and find identity, control and power. The body is the room of the self. Female emancipation will only be fully realized when the rights to that room are given to women.

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The Criterion

Colonial and Neo-colonial African Society in Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick*

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Meja Mwangi, one of the greatest Kenyan creative writers in English, began his prolific writing career in the 1970s, a decade after his more well-known fellow citizens such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot had been publishing their works. Meja's works depict Kenyans lives and their urban areas with a searching intensity. Though he does not have the university education like William Shakespeare, he penned down numerous social issues in his fictions. Many of his writings deal with not only colonial African societies but also African neo-colonial societies, distrust, corruption and humiliation. The burning problem in postcolonial literary works is about tyranny, corruption and other forms of oppression. Said Edward (1993: 19) declares "domination and inequities of power and wealth are perennial facts of human society." Mwangi's handling of disillusionment and pain a virulent critique of the African past and present, and a pessimistic view of future evolution is praiseworthy. Mwangi has written many aspects in his novels. As he had experienced the emergency as a child, living in the area of the main conflict, he attempted the theme about Mau Mau war. Since many Kenyan writers had used the theme, he might be inspired from their works. British colonialism and dangerous neo-colonial scenes are clearly portrayed in this work. Griffiths (2000: 151) adds "the novel has altered the traditional map of African fiction beyond recognition because of his undisguised depiction of postcolonial decadence and the harshness and abruptness of its style."

Kill Me Quick is Mwangi's semi autobiographical novel which is written after graduating from "secondary school and discovering that he and his friends could not find jobs" (Mazungumzo, 1980: 51). The novel brought the Kenyatta Award for Literature for him. It is explored with a view to highlighting how he has contributed to the discourse of the motifs of pains and disillusionment in the postcolonial African novel. It gives not only a detailed picture of the atmosphere of fear, hate, humiliation and suppression but also highlights the dictatorial and oppressive tendencies of the imperialists and neo-colonial rulers in African nations. He used the first person narration in this novel. The novel deals with the story of two boyhood friends, Meja and Maina, who represent one of the major social problems of Nairobi in the Kenyan countryside who apply themselves at school, in the belief that education will be paramount to their success in a newly independent, modernized post-colonial Kenya. When they complete their graduation, they move on to Nairobi, eager to find work, but come to understand that their education has been useless; a black middle class has replaced the white colonial rule, and discrimination and struggle are attacked to the date. Meja Mwangi dedicates the novel to "... all those little Mejas still in the back streets of the city, destined to stay there until they come of age, when the green van will come and whisk them off to Number Nine." Meja and Maina are shown to have been institutionalised by despair. It is not surprising that Meja should see the world as "dark, cold, lonely and miserable." (22).

The social injustice still, in neo-colonial Kenya, dominates on local people. The similar theme constitutes the driving dynamic in the novel. The problem of class stratification in neo-colonial African societies is captured vividly at the beginning of the novel. "Meja sat by the ditch swinging his legs this way and that. A few people passed by engrossed in their daily problems and none of them gave the lanky youth a thought. But the searching eyes of Meja missed nothing. They scrutinized the ragged beggars who floated ghostly past him as closely as they watched the smart pot-bellied executives wrinkling their noses at the foul stench of backyards. And between these two types of beings, Meja made comparison" (1). Most of the people in Kenya survive under the

poverty line. The politicians and rich men control the power of the government. Since full of corruption and dominance is in Kenya, the misery of the poor is highlighted by the extravagance of the African nouveau riche. The society still reflects some characteristic social and economic structures created by colonial rule. In connection to this, Agho (1993: 121) comments "Post-independence Kenya, like many other countries in Africa, is faced with another rift: a horizontal rift dividing the elite from the mass of the people. Contemporary Kenya has not only witnessed the frustration of the peasants who had hoped for a better life after independence, but their deepening impoverishment and exploitation." At the end of the emergency, the ends do not justify the means. The loss is simply too much to justify the efforts. This is a betrayal of ideals and trust. The utter uselessness and senselessness of the anarchy has become the major preoccupation of contemporary East African writers. Jomo Kenyatta, who was the first president of Kenya, (1968: 212) reiterates the "aspirations and yearnings of the Kenyan people from the Mau Mau war: Our march to freedom has been long and difficult. There have been times of despair, when only the burning conviction of the rightness of our cause has sustained us. Today, the tragedies and misunderstandings of the past are behind us. Today, we start on the great adventure of building the Kenya nation."

The neo-colonial African society is extraordinary depicted in the novel. Mwangi has well tried to show through what the real things are in Africa. Since the most of the people in Kenya are illiterates, they can not understand the cunning of the rich politicians who corrupt money and bring the development of the country to a standstill. In connection to this, Griffiths (2000) says that "The wealth is in the hands of a privileged minority, which surrounds itself with country houses, cars, washing machines, television sets, and all the consumer durables that are associated with an acquisitive middle class. The economic position of the peasants is extremely precarious." Mwangi's postcolonial novels, including especially *Kill Me Quick*, deal with this context and make the reader to realize. He brings the ideas from contemporary history to pass comments on the social ills of the Kenyan society. Indeed the local people are dehumanised and humiliated in their own country. The novel centres on the plight of the Kenyan masses that have been brutalized by social stratification. Since the economy and power are in the hands of foreign interests whose main intention is the production of food for profit and exploitation of foreign markets rather than feeding the masses, the youths and women are forced to move into the cities. When the main characters, Meja and Maina visit Nairobi, they are surprised to see the things that are rather different from their village. There they become victims of dehumanisation and exploitation. Though they are belonged to same country, they are treated as foreigners in the cities. The torment and trail of the penniless theme in Mwangi's fiction are similar to Festus Iyayi's *The Contract* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*. Wangari, a character in *Devil on the Cross* and who participated in Mau Mau war for freedom, does not have land to cultivate so that she moves to Nairobi to find a job where she is arrested because she does not have proper papers for entering the city. She bemoans the fact "I, Wangari, a Kenyan by birth-how can I be a vagrant in my own country? How can I be charged with vagrancy in my own country as if I were a foreigner?...I am not a vagrant here in Kenya, and I will never be a foreigner or a vagrant here in Kenya. Kenya is our country." (43-44)

Meja and Maina remember their village and its setting when they are in the city. In the villages, life is completely peaceful and people go about their daily chores without hurry. The rural society signifies satisfaction, love and neighbourly humane feelings whereas the city, it is marked by artificiality, eroticism, marginalization, dreadful individualism, loss of pristine being, and dancing to the tunes of western values. The two frustrated boys, Meja and Maina, indicate the multitudes of problems facing the common man in neo-colonial African societies. The structure of the story is also adapted to reflect the thematic obsessions of the novel and the ordeals and vicissitudes of life of the African masses. The theme reflects the political and social failures of the neo-colonial Kenyan nation in particular and the entire African continent in general. These young boys could not get the job and they spend their time in the Shanty towns of the capitals and become social parasites. They squander their time in writing job requests that pile up in all the administrations. Some of them join the underground so life in the cities is full of pains and conflicts. They are experienced malnutrition, distress, agony, starvation, cold, alienation, ill health and

misery. The Shantytown, where the deprived masses live in the novel, is used as an objective and concrete index of the characters and their material impoverishment. They take risk to survive in the city and “fetched food from bins, slept in bins and lived in the backyards, in bins” (9).

The neo-colonial African society is still countenanced with the problem of unemployment which is one of main themes in the novel. Meja Mwangi's way of presentation and theme in his novels represent the works of great Kenyan workers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Margaret Ogola and Alexander Nderitu who have written their works about unemployment, socio-problems, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Regarding the unemployment in Kenya, Mashanga (1970: 42) says that there are ‘fewer than one million jobs for the population of about ten million’ Mwangi, through the characters of Meja and Maina, exposes the complex problems confronting the Kenyan State, the suffering of the population in the midst of plenty and the inability of the state to cater for its citizens. The novelist uses their daily experiences to harp on the helplessness of the masses in neo-colonial African societies. Since they do not have the job, they won't think to sweep rooms and wash dishes and chop wood. The literates and educationists are ready to do any kind of jobs. They see the sign board—“NO VACANCY, HAKUNA KAZI” (5) and thrown out of the shops. They would do household tasks in order to survive, but they always end up being cheated. The exploitation of the two job-seekers reaches its pinnacle stage during their brief employment in the white settler's farm where they are paid as little as possible. Their misery and the inhumane condition under which they live are best reflected in their huts, which they share with rats, bed bugs and fleas. They are entrapped in their woeful and painful world. The old and shabby dresses they wear locate them in their social class. For example, “Maina was dressed in khaki shorts, now tattered and anything but khaki in colour, and his feet were bare and horny, the nails of the toes standing out at weird angles” (3-4). They also experience all kinds of exploitation, discrimination and humiliation. This is the painful experience of man in neo-colonial African societies. Thus, the occupants of the drains comprise what Frantz Fanon (1970) refers to as *The Wretched of the Earth*. A scarcity of infrastructures, broken-down shanties, a disordered pattern of settlements, filth and squalid lives all indicate the habitation of the common man. Mwangi dwells on the sordid details of the locations. Thus, this postcolonial novel reflects the continuing hypocrisy, pretence, corruption, degeneration and frustration witnessed in Africa.

The novel is regarded as merely one dimension of a wider and deeper struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. It is very common thing that lack of amenities makes the two boys to crime. Although nobody excuse them, we should think regarding the environment. Mwangi wants to tell us to identify the circumstances that could have turned once normal and innocent young men into such recidivists and of course this is the important message in the novel. Meja makes a similar observation when he contemplates on the allegation of murder levelled against Maina. Meja says “More than anything else, Maina had always wanted to remain clean....He would rather eat from dustbins than steal. I knew him well. He would not just kill people. It is not like him to hurt anyone. I don't even understand how we came to be among criminals. I honestly don't know. We never even thought of it when we were together. It is so... so... He shook his head painfully and the tears overflowed. He did not dry them. Why did this have to happen to him? They say it is fate but is it really? Is it?” (149).

The main characters of Mwangi's are called “Mwangian Man” (Calder, 1984: 24). Among the foremost characters in the novel, there are portraits of people suffering from deep physical and mental pain. They look forward to the simple and unvaried pleasures of their lives. When frustration and aggravation are intense and the individual's inner controls are poorly developed or temporarily lowered, assault or homicidal acts may result. Mwangi shows repeatedly the frustration of energy and ambition plaguing the postcolonial African masses. The sarcasm of life is shown by the comparatively improved living conditions in prison custody, which has dim electric light. The world of the novel is where prison custody is even preferable to hostile freedom: “at least that was better than living in a quarry and burrowing in the rock for the rest of one's life” (119). The prison scenes in *Kill Me Quick* indicate the high level of crime in the society. It reminds us the scenes from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Matigari*. Many young innocent people are found in the prisons and there are much

feeling of comradeship and contentment among the inmates. Even when they are released they look forward to a quick return to prison and to their friends there.

Meja's family expects him to send them money as soon as he secures a job that is not forthcoming. He even accepts to work in the white man's farm, because of the promise of free feeding and wages. This shows how the local Black people are treated maliciously in their countries under the domination of white people. In Meja's case, he thinks this will be a little improvement on his earlier experience living on decayed food and disclosure to the vagaries of weather. However, the experience at the farm shows that there is no way out of suffering in a decadent society. He is also overworked and underpaid. His employment in the white man's farm shows him in another round of battle with fate. Boi, the chief of the farm, blames Meja and Maina in a theft case. Due to his negative metamorphosis, Meja finds it is difficult to show himself to his family. When he finally comes face to face with his little sister, Wambui, he feels shame himself though he does nothing. His earlier promises before he left home for the city have been a mirage. Thus the novel sums up Meja and Mwangi's concern for the ubiquitous social abnormalities in neo-colonial Kenya.

Conclusion:

The neo-colonial African writers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Margaret Ogola, Alexander Nderitu and Mwangi, depict the problems of neo-colonialism in their works. They show their disenchantment to the present landscape and socio-political structures of their nations. They assert bitterly that post-independent Africa is a symbol of betrayal. The postcolonial African writers always depict their continent as a place where the rulers have failed woefully to protect their nations' truncated authority and integrity from the ravages of neo-colonialism and globalization. Mwangi believes that novels of disillusionment give expression to a profound rejection of African societies as they are presently constituted, especially in terms of their human dimensions. The lives of Meja and Maina in the novel suggest that independence in African nations has not been very beneficial to the masses. Therefore, there is a recurrence of undisguised bitterness against the black African rulers who have betrayed their nations.

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Resistance, Re-creation and the Blocked Return: Narrative Art in Atwood's Dystopian Novels

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Critical commentary on *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) has dealt, chiefly, with the novel's engagement with sexual-political issues germane to the USA of the 1980s; critics have dwelt on Atwood's use of the dystopian form to bring out how the seeds of a misogynistic patriarchal totalitarianism lie dormant in the socio-cultural matrixes that embed our lives; and much insightful criticism has engaged with the relevance of the 'Historical Note' to Atwood's thematic preoccupations, on Atwood's implied critique of institutional feminism and on how the protagonist's career reflects on the concept and praxes of inter-gender 'romance'. I propose to examine how these aspects of the novel's thematics are related to and augmented by its languages – the language of Gilead as well the linguistic edifice that is the narrative as a whole. Next, I move on to *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Atwood's second venture in dystopian speculation, and examine the two-tiered narrative of the novel as an integral aspect of Atwood's speculative-fantastic art and of the cultural-critical purposes it serves. An examination of these two narrative edifices together helps us to understand their relevance to Atwood's engagement with the dystopian form on the one hand and shows us how they function as the fulcra supporting her cultural critique of different aspects of our times on the other.

Taking up *The Handmaid's Tale* first, we see that the use of (verbal) language is heavily restricted and controlled in Gilead, especially for the Handmaids, who may only engage in the minimum of phatic communion by making neutral comments on the weather or by exchanging pre-set Biblical phrases, like "Blessed be the fruit" (294). In place of normal verbal language Gilead has instituted a system of non-verbal signification. Thus, people in Gilead signify functionally through colour-coded attires and generic names, like 'Handmaids', 'Wives', 'Aunts' and 'Eyes'. Specially created terms, like 'Prayvaganza' and 'Particicution' define the grotesque and cruel rituals in Gilead; dead bodies are hung along roads to signify warning; handmaids may not even exchange glances with anyone as glances could be eloquent; and women must ratify state sponsored murder of other women through the ritual of 'Salvaging'.

It is this restrictive non-verbal semiotic system that Offred subverts or uses to her advantage at moments like when she swings her hips at guards at a check-post; when she and Moira signal to each other to secure a private meeting in the toilet; and when she responds to Ofglen with a code-prohibited answer (31, 251). On this last occasion, Offred walks with the new Ofglen to the Wall, where three women from the morning's Slavaging hang:

"Let that be a reminder to us". Says the new Ofglen finally. I say nothing at first, because I am trying to make out what she means. She could mean that this is a reminder to us of the unjustness and brutality of the regime. In that case I ought to say *yes*. Or she could mean the opposite . . . Her voice was bland, toneless, no clues there. I take a chance. "Yes", I say' (295-96).

This instance of verbal subversion is particularly remarkable for Offred's intelligent attempt to defy Gilead's repressed and repressive semiotics, and also for her subtle courage. Her most potent strategy of enduring and resisting oppression, however, consists in her narrative. Offred's narration of her experiences, even if only "in [her] head" at first, is important both for her own endurance and ultimate survival and, in the Gileadean context of linguistic repression, as an act of defiance of the writ of the state by the oppressed female individual (49, 144).

Among the most significant features of Offred's narrative is its palimpsest-like nature. She herself draws the reader's attention to this in the beginning as she hears "a palimpsest of unheard sound, style upon style" in the gymnasium-turned Re-Education Centre in Gilead (13). Gilead has replaced the democratic order by its own totalitarian regime; but for people belonging to the transitional generation, like Offred, it cannot efface memories of the past. Their experience of Gilead impinges on and interacts with that of pre-Gilead in a dialectic whereby each comment on the other.

The most obvious result of this palimpsestic interaction of the past and the present is in the structure of Offred's narrative. In most chapters the narrative juxtaposes events/thoughts/feelings located in the present setting of Gilead with Offred's reminiscences of those about her life in pre-Gilead. For instance, in the first chapter Offred is in the gymnasium where women have been brought to be trained as handmaids (a fact we learn only in later chapters), and this gymnasium is used as a point of reference for the pre-Gilead world. Offred's thoughts go beyond immediate sensory perception and she smells, "faintly like an afterimage, the pungent scent of sweat, shot through with sweet taint of chewing gum and perfume from the watching girls, felt-skirted . . . later in mini-skirts . . ." (13). This atmosphere of reminiscence changes as the lights go out in the gymnasium, and the Aunts start to patrol with "electric cattle-prods", making us realize that the gymnasium is a kind of prison now, and the inhabitants are prisoners (14).

In chapter five, Offred walks with Ofglen along the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts which is now the heart of the republic of Gilead. She remembers walking the same streets with Luke, her husband:

Luke and I used to walk together, along these streets. We used to talk about buying a house like one of these . . . fixing it up. We would have a garden, swings for children. . . . Such freedom now seems almost weightless. (33)

This weaving together of the past and the present allows Offred both to hold on to her history, and hence to her sense of self, and also to keep herself firmly grounded on her terrible present, against which these incursions from the past seem like "flashes of normality" (58).

Sometimes, however, such juxtaposition of the past by the present serves not to distinguish, but to liken. Chapter ten opens with Offred singing 'Amazing Grace' in her head. As she waits in her room, she recollects Moira's "underwhore" party and the memory is juxtaposed by the recollection of stories she had read in the papers just prior to the rise of Gilead – stories about women "bludgeoned to death or mutilated, or interfered with" (66). The suggestion is unmistakable: pre-Gilead has led to Gilead while women like Offred lived by "ignoring": "Nothing changes instantaneously: in a gradually heating bath-tub you'd be boiled to death before you knew it" (66).

In chapter twenty-one Offred narrates the scene of a "Birthing" -- of Janine giving birth, to the chanting of instructions by the handmaids and in the presence of Aunt Lydia and the Wife. As Offred returns to the "Birthmobile" she talks to her feminist mother, in her mind, sarcastically linking pre-Gileadean separatist feminism with religious fundamentalism: "You wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies" (137). Thus, throughout most of the narrative, Offred weaves a complex pattern of observations about the past and the present that helps her maintain a "perspective" to what happens to her, helps her hold out against her present, thereby making her survival possible. As she observes: "Perspective is necessary. . . . Otherwise you live in the moment. Which is not where I want to be" (153).

Another important aspect of her narrative is that it draws attention to its status as a narrative, a “reconstruction” of reality (144). This self-consciousness is made apparent at numerous points in the narrative, notably in chapter twenty-three where she says, explicitly:

This is a reconstruction. All of it is a reconstruction. It’s a reconstruction now, in my head, as I lie flat on my single bed . . . If I ever get out of here – (144).

She checks herself at this point and says: “Let’s stop here. I intend to get out of here. It can’t last forever” (144). Similar clinging on to hope is expressed, again, through narrative reconstruction in chapter twenty-eight, where Offred thinks of Moira, saying “[s]he was still my oldest friend. Is” (181). Sometimes, however, her detachment from her experience is not enough to numb her to the maddening pain of her oppressive existence in Gilead, like when she wails inwardly: “Oh God. Its no joke. Oh God oh God. How can I keep on living?” (205).

In chapter thirty-eight Offred draws attention, once again, to her perception that story-telling is subjective. At chapter’s end she reflects on her struggle as narrator: the story she wants to tell is not aligned to truth:

Here is what I would like to tell. I’d like to tell a story about how Moira escaped, for good this time. Or . . . that . . . she blew up Jezebel’s, with fifty Commanders inside it. I’d like her to end with something daring and spectacular, some outrage, something that would befit her. But . . . that didn’t happen. (262)

Readers get reminded of the constructed character of Offred’s narrative most remarkably in chapter forty where she gives two different versions of her first sexual encounter with Nick, and then negates both. The first version of the events is erotic, but that is refuted: “I made that up. It didn’t happen that way” (273). She then gives another rendition, quoting flirtatious repartees from pre-Giledean movies. But this version is also negated at the end of the chapter: “It didn’t happen that way either. I’m not sure how it happened; not exactly. All I can hope for is a reconstruction: the way love feels is always only approximate (275). Besides the obvious implication of the constructed nature of narrative/history/reality another point is made here: Offred’s negation of two conventional registers of inter-gender love – that of the hierarchically ‘romantic’ and the merely flirtatious – signals, as it were, her wish to seek out a more egalitarian *and* affectionate amatory experience.

Sometimes Offred’s narration – her mental running-commentary on the reality around her – keeps her from feeling its full force. As she muses:

Maybe the life I think I’m living is a paranoid delusion.

Not a hope. I know where I am, and who, and what day it is. These are the tests, and I am sane. Sanity is a valuable possession; I hoard it . . . so I will have enough, when the time comes. (119)

This highly objective self-awareness is what keeps her sane, helping her hold out against Gilead’s misogynistic madness. Thus, during the “Ceremony” she attempts to “keep the core of [her]self out of reach, enclosed, protected” by the objectivity of her intellect detaching itself and observing her experience (274):

My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. . . . I do not say making love, because this is not what he is doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. . . . I lie still and picture the unseen canopy over my head. (104-05)

All the while it lasts Offred keeps herself mentally occupied – and distanced – by alternately thinking of people’s obsession with sex in pre-Gilead and describing concrete details of the situation. “One detaches oneself”, as she says, “[o]ne describes (106).

At one point in the narrative Offred observes herself in this act of observing and relates it to her life as a woman in Gilead: “I wait. I compose myself. My self is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a *made* thing, *not* something *born*” (76) (emphases added). The self-conscious narrator here skillfully relates the ‘composed’ character of her story with the constructed artificiality of her life as a captive breeder in Gilead. And the echo of Simone de Beauvoir’s legendary sentence in *The Second Sex* (“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”) extends this congruence between artificiality and compulsory procreation to femininity itself, that is, to womanhood as it is lived in patriarchy (295).

Howells sees Offred’s narrative, her “inner space meditations”, as an instance of what Cixous calls *écriture féminine* -- a text into which Offred writes herself and her body, “realigning herself differently through her private narrative about her body” (Howells 167). However, one hesitates to agree with this view: if in her affair with Nick Offred seems to claim her body as her own, there are numerous points in her narrative where she is bitter about its corporeal femaleness, as objectified and fragmented by Gilead’s essentialist ideology. Thus, she describes the handmaids as “ambulatory chalices” and as “two-legged wombs” (146); the disgust Gilead makes her feel for the adult female body is expressed also in her description of Serena Joy’s perfume, which, she says, evokes “the innocence of female flesh not yet given over to hairiness and blood” (90).

Indeed, she expresses strong repugnance to her body as also a sense of alienation from it when she muses: “I avoid looking down at my body, not so much because it’s shameful or immodest but because I don’t want to see it. I don’t want to look at something that determines me so completely” (72-73). If at one point Offred feels her body as her “own territory” she also feels it as “[t]reachorous ground”: it is to her a “swamp”, a quagmire that has betrayed her into being mere flesh given over to “breeding purposes”, rather than an instrument helping her in “[r]eversing Gilead’s authority”, as Howells perceives (83, 146) (Howells 167). Commenting on one of the differences between her pre-Gileadean past and her present, Offred muses:

I used to think of *my body* as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will. . . . my body was nevertheless lithe, single, solid, one with me.

Now *the flesh* arranges itself differently. I am a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is . . . more real than I am. . . . Inside it is a space, huge as the sky at night and dark and curved like that, though black-red rather than black. (83-84) (emphases added)

If her womb thus “expands into an image of cosmic wilderness” it does *not* give any corresponding amplitude to her sense of self (Howells 168). Rather, this perceived immanence of her fecundity – ‘more real’ than herself in Gilead – seems to engulf and nullify her, making her feel like “sedentary flesh”, “a prize pig” or, at best, “a child” (79, 63). The “[l]unar” rhythm of her womb seals her into Gilead’s oppressive baby-farm -- into its stifling environment of “prodigal breeding” -- cut off from the currents of “solar” time, as it is lived by ‘real’ persons in the rest of the world (209, 190, 209). It is this nullification of her selfhood by her captured animality that Offred resists by telling her story, the acts of observing, commenting and telling being

As part of self-consciously describing her experience in Gilead, Offred ‘detaches’ herself from, thereby resisting, this oppressive context of her life, one defined and constrained utterly by her body. This is especially true, as has been observed, of her description of the ‘Ceremony’, wherein she dissociates herself from her body, objectifying the latter in an ironic parody of Gilead’s fragmentation and reification of female bodies. She tries, as it were, to think herself out of her body, to premise her identity as a human person as distinct from and more than her existence as

a fertile female body in the service of a totalitarian patriarchy: “I avoid looking down at my body, not so much because it’s shameful or immodest but because I don’t want to see it. I don’t want to look at something that determines me so completely” (72-73).

However, by giving linguistic expression to her experience in Gilead Offred does seem to “seize” language and “make it hers”, *à la* Cixous, using it to tell of and bear witness against utmost patriarchal tyranny (Cixous 343); when her “oral ‘herstory’” is discovered and published two hundred years later she emerges as “Gilead’s principal historian” in spite of having her document edited by male academics (Howells 165). This seizure of language by a woman to subvert a patriarchal power-structure -- both by telling against it and by disobeying its silencing dictat – finds its objective correlative, as it were, in the foregrounded, metalinguistic nature of Offred’s narrative.

Atwood’s narrator produces a highly complex, self-conscious, postmodern narrative that draws attention to itself. The fore-grounded narrative prevents us from losing ourselves in the story, encouraging us to take a critical stance vis-à-vis the experience described, so that we may attend to the clues that reveal aspects of present-day sexual-politics critiqued in the novel. As Deer observes, the novel makes us see the narrator as both an “innocent recorder”, a powerless victim, and as a “self-conscious rhetorician and story-teller”, who “scripts special footings of (both) intimacy and authority with the reader” and shows “compelling existential fortitude” (107, 95, 111).

However, the incursions from the past, Offred’s piteous clinging to hope, and the obvious pain that comes through much of the narrative, despite its objectivity, keep the reader sufficiently engaged too with the protagonist. While Atwood wishes her readers to think for themselves she does not wish them to suffer from an [i]nability to feel” (222). Indeed, as Kolodny points out, the ‘Historical Notes’ that form a sort of epilogue to the novel is also part of Atwood’s narrative strategy (46).

Apart from letting the reader know details about the Giledean regime, it also serves to jolt her/him into the awareness that “the single response” that the “the primary document” -- Offred’s painfully told narrative – demands “is the same response that its interpreter categorically refuses” (Kolodny 46). What Offred’s testimonial narrative demands from us, apart from empathy, is that we learn the lesson that moral relativism could be dangerous and culpable and that how we respond to ideas and praxes in the present and how we read the past will determine our future.

A similar relation of critical equivalence between the putative future and the ambient present underlies Atwood’s next speculative novel *Oryx and Crake* as well. This later novel presents a two-tier dystopian narrative, a near-future world – already dystopic – giving way to a wasteland scenario after an apocalypse that leaves only one human being living with a group of bioengineered humanoid creatures. The narrative, as in Atwood’s earlier dystopia *The Handmaid’s Tale*, juggles different temporalities and different spatial settings; however, unlike the earlier novel, *Oryx and Crake* is not a first-person narrative. A third-person omniscient narrator records the voice of the protagonist, Snowman, through whose consciousness the narrative is focalized. Unlike Shelley in *The Last Man* – with whom Atwood shares an apocalyptic imagination – and unlike Atwood herself in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the narrative does not purport to render an edition of a ‘found manuscript’.

As Howells points out, the abandonment of the ‘found-manuscript’ device allows for a more stringent realism as we are given a rendition of words in the protagonist’s head because “he’ll have no future reader” (41) (Howells 171). Supplementing Howell’s point one would observe that this adoption of the speaking/thinking voice instead of a written rendition of that voice has another

relation to the situation portrayed in the novel: Snowman will have no future readers “because the Crakers can’t read” (41). The engineered beings that have inherited the earth and will be Snowman’s survivors are designed not to develop any sort of symbolism, and the written characters of an alphabet are arbitrary symbols of uttered sounds. The Crakers’ inability to read is symptomatic, they being products of a society that reduced language itself to a utilitarian tool in the service of consumerism and a scientific vision that considered symbolic thinking and especially the arts and literature as inimical to humanity.

What the narrative voice renders is a relation of events in the protagonist’s present, interspersed with his thoughts and feelings and memories; his dialogues -- with the humanoids in the apocalyptic present and with people in his life in the pre-apocalyptic past -- are pervasively used to bring out the protagonist’s own perspectives to people and events. The shifts in time (and setting) most often arrange themselves into separate chapters; but they often also occur within a single chapter as aspects of Jimmy’s life impinge on Snowman’s consciousness through memories and/or reflections that work with the logic of association.

The first result of this narrative pattern is the creation of a gap between Snowman and Jimmy, his earlier self. This starts as early as in the first chapter of section two, as Snowman, having decided to “[g]et a life” starts musing on his life as Jimmy (12):

Once upon a time, Snowman wasn’t Snowman. Instead he was Jimmy. He’d been a good boy then.

Jimmy’s earliest complete memory was of a huge bonfire. He must have been five, maybe . . . five and a half, thinks Snowman. That’s about right. (15).

The objectification by Snowman of his experiences as Jimmy is signaled by the use of the fairy-tale formula even as the narrative makes an almost unnoticeable movement between the third person narrator’s comments and Snowman’s thought. Also the theme of the unreliability of memory – and hence the unreliability of Snowman as a narrator -- is introduced.

Snowman’s objectification of Jimmy reflects his attempt to create a distance between his past and his present. He cannot live his horrible present as the desperately lonely last human being on the earth without reminiscing his ‘human’ past; in this the narrative incursions into the past serve a function similar to that of Offred’s memory in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. On the other hand, these incursions of the past enable Snowman to have a critical distance from his own experiences, and this distance is used in the novel both to advance self-realization and understanding in Snowman as also to make apparent his failure to achieve completely this understanding of the past. These last instances are brought out at those places of the narrative where there occur slippages between the third person narrator and Snowman/Jimmy.

In section two, chapter three, for instance, this creation of an objective distance between Snowman and Jimmy is especially sharp. The chapter begins with the third person narrator rendering Jimmy’s boyhood experiences, his memory of a conversation he had with his mother about why she left her job; we are told about Jimmy’s Philippina nanny, Dolores, who would pet and pamper Jimmy and cook the egg just the way he liked it, but who had to go when his “real mummy” started staying at home full-time; we are given hints that staying home with her son might not have been the real reason for Sharon to have quit her job; we learn also that Jimmy liked Dolores a lot and missed her (30).

Significantly, the narrator reports Jimmy’s perception that Sharon’s staying at home full-time “was held out to him as a treat”: there is a strong suggestion that he failed to perceive why it should be so (30). Thus, the narrator covertly undercuts the perception widespread in (American) culture that full-time mothering is invariably necessary and good for the child; as Foy points out, the

pathos of the deprived, unhappy child is satirized even as it is advanced by Jimmy's yearning for a well-cooked egg (409 - 10). Also, the new-right postulation that a mother's total selflessness is what the child wants and needs is undercut by Jimmy's preference for a Sharon who enjoys her work and herself, perhaps in one of her "explaining moods", when she will be telling Jimmy about cells and microbes, or "on days when she appeared brisk and purposeful, and aimed and steady" rather than a Sharon trying to act out her role of a caring mother or a Sharon listless and apathetic (29, 30).

At the end of the first half of the chapter the narrative comes back suddenly to Snowman as the narrator reports his thought at the present moment: ". . . nobody needed two mummies did they"? "Oh, yes they did, thinks Snowman" (30). We are given the hint that there may be some reason for this wish of Jimmy's beyond his dissatisfaction with her 'real mummy'. The occasion Snowman remembers is significant to his relationship to that mother:

Snowman has a clear image of his mother – of Jimmy's mother – sitting at the kitchen table . . . She would have a cup of coffee in front of her, untouched; she would be looking out the window and smoking . . . She sounded so tired; maybe she was tired of him. Or maybe she was sick. (31)

Jimmy's sense of deprivation at being at the receiving end of what he perceived as imperfect mothering and the confusion and anxiety engendered in him by his intuitive insight into her depression are brought out by the episode remembered -- that of her mother apathetically issuing out directives to him about fixing his own lunch. So much was Jimmy bothered by such depressed moods of hers that magenta, the colour of her bathrobe, "still makes him [Snowman] anxious whenever he sees it" (31). The distancing of 'Jimmy' from his present is Snowman's effort to protect himself from his painful memories of his mother.

The chapter goes on to give another rendition of Jimmy's interaction with Sharon. She has arranged an elaborate lunch for him, so elaborate it frightens Jimmy "for what was the occasion" (32). Carefully dressed, "her lipstick smile an echo of the jelly smile on the sandwich" she is all attention to Jimmy and his "silly stories", stories Jimmy cooks up partly to act his part of the cared-for child: "He knew he was expected to appreciate all the effort she had put into his lunch, and so he too made an effort", "overdoing it" and ultimately getting her to laugh (32). The strain of the deliberate effort that Sharon puts up to act *her* part of the good mother gets across to her child: "What she reminded him of at such times was a porcelain sink: clean, shining, hard" (32). Thus the narrator again chips away at the myth of perfect motherhood, by showing both the mother and the child at unease enacting such roles; the scene also provides an illustration of Jimmy's emotional intelligence and his genuine concern for his mother's happiness

The chapter ends with another encounter of Sharon and Jimmy, now older and "more devious" (32). Hating and fearing his mother's depressed sulkiness Jimmy tries to get "a reaction" of her by deliberately pestering her with questions and comments he knows would irritate her. When Sharon loses her composure and expresses her inner disquiet through convulsive crying and/or other extreme behaviour Jimmy would be feeling love for: "He loved her so much when he made her unhappy, or else when she made him unhappy: at these moments he scarcely knew which was which" (33). Although the narrative thus creates a confusion as to the state of Jimmy's feelings – reflecting Jimmy's own thoughts as Snowman remembers them – this is not endorsed by the narrator, who tells us, a few lines later, that although he would be sorry for his mother at such moments that was not all of his feelings: ". . . he was sorry, but there was more to it: he was also gloating, congratulating himself, because he'd managed to create such an effect" (33). Jimmy appears as a gendered male, who, even this early in his life, takes pleasure in exercising power over

women. Through this episode of Snowman remembering 'Jimmy's mother' the narrator starts to unfold the nature of Jimmy's relationship to her; also, a subtle critique of the neo-conservative ideal of perfect motherhood is advanced even as Jimmy's puzzlement at his mother's depression and his sense of deprivation are also compassionately handled.

The plurality of narrative focalizers serve to bring out the differences between the two worlds throughout the novel even as it highlights the connections between the two. In chapter three of section seven ('Blue') the narrative starts with Snowman as he makes his way up to his destination – the RejoovenEssence Compound – reverts to Jimmy midway and returns to Snowman's present time toward the end. As Snowman reflects on Craker-sex toward the beginning of the section he starts comparing it with the concept of love in the pre-apocalyptic world of Jimmy and thinks of the ill consequences that would ensue upon an unrequited passion, and he remembers Crake's views on these points: "Maybe Crake was right, thinks Snowman. Under the old dispensation, sexual competition had been . . . cruel: for every pair of happy lovers there was a dejected onlooker, the one excluded" (165). The narrative reverts to Jimmy after this and we are given the rendition of a dialogue between him and Crake in the older times whereby Crake's intellectual attitude to sex is presented – a conception of human beings as faulty "hormone robots" whose sex-life is different from animals' only in this that there happens "biological mismatches" among humans while among animals there are no such "misalignment" of hormones and pheromones (166).

This leads to a discussion of art and its significance to the human scheme of things, and Crake's conception of art as sexual facilitator -- much as the male frog's call in the mating season – comes out. In the course of the discussion Jimmy, the word-person, takes up for art and makes the point that when any civilization is reduced to ashes art is what remains as the repository of "human meaning" (167); their contrasting conception of 'human meaning' gives a rendition of the central conflict in the novel – that between a mechanistic view of humanity and human life and one that sees human significance in the extra-biological specificity of human feelings and values.

From this discussion the narrative makes an almost imperceptible move back to Snowman through Jimmy's memory of his artist girlfriend, some of whose ideas of the divinity of nature Snowman used in the course of his myth-making for the Crakers. The chapter ends with some more of Snowman's reflections on Craker sex and his feeling of dejection at being utterly alone and his anger at Crake for making him a monstrous Frankenstein vis-à-vis the innocent, beautiful Crakers.

The movement between the two different segments of narrative time and between the perspectives of Jimmy and Snowman serves also to bring out Snowman's retrospective realization of the connections between his personal predicament and the workings of the world before the apocalypse. Thus, in section eight, chapter two ('Happicuppa') we are presented with a relation of Jimmy and Crake vacationing at Uncle Pete's "nice place" at the "HealthWyzer Gated Vacation Community", watching the "gen-mod coffee wars" -- the "global" "resistance movement" by groups demonstrating against the mechanized cultivation of high-yielding genetically modified coffee beans that would throw "the small growers out of business" reducing them to "starvation-level poverty" (179).

This conversation between the two friends shows the difference between perspectives on the event taken by them – Crake coolly analyzing the situation, bothered about HealthWyyzer "nuking cloud forests" for planting of 'Happicuppa' but casual about the dead peasants ("... there's always been dead peasants"), and Jimmy disturbed about the human tragedy involved in the whole process but covered by Crake into not showing his partisan views because "taking sides" is not the done thing in their class and society (179 – 80). It also serves the crucial purpose of highlighting issues that constitute the major themes in the novel: the ill effects of too little governance on the

poorer sections of people the world over and the imperialism practised by big global business groups gobbling up the economies of the poorer countries of the world.

As Jimmy and Crake watch the television coverage of the protests Jimmy sees his mother on screen, part of a street-demonstration being put down by the CorpSeCorps. Later, after the two friends have talked in guarded words about Jimmy's "deviant mother", Crake goes on to tell Jimmy about his non-conformist father and hints his father was driven to killing himself by the people at HealthWyzer West, whose interests he might have been sabotaging because of his anti-establishment interests: "The tact was amazing. Nobody used the word *suicide*. They said 'your father's accident'" (183). The narrative returns to Snowman at the end of the chapter as he marvels at his own inability to understand the overt meaning of Crake's words: "How could have I missed it? Snowman thinks. What he was telling me" (184). Trying to diagnose the reason why he failed in understanding Crake's meaning, Snowman "can't describe himself, the way he'd been. Not unmarked – events marked him, he'd had his own scars, his dark emotions. Ignorant, perhaps. Unformed, inchoate" (184).

There seems to emerge a gap between Snowman's understanding of things and that of the omniscient narrator's as the narrative ends with a more acute analysis, one that tells us about why Jimmy had been unable to connect the personal with the political. "There had been something willed about it though, his ignorance. Or not willed exactly: structured. He'd grown up in walled spaces, and then he had become one. He had shut things out" (184). While not exonerating Jimmy of his complicity in the making of the apocalypse the narrative here points beyond Jimmy to suggest the reasons for his lack of vision: the creation of 'walled spaces' in the world by means of a market-driven global inequality among people and the cultivation of insensitivity and apathy by a materialistic, utilitarian system of education.

Thus, shifts in the narrative voices in the chapter -- and throughout the novel, as we have seen -- serve to illuminate aspects of the two different worlds that Jimmy / Snowman inhabits by letting them comment on each other, and connects Jimmy's human story with the larger global-political picture of which it is a part. Also, this complex weave of narrative voices and time, which creates a brilliant metafictionality, is instrumental in bringing out subtle shades of the protagonist's character, giving an evaluation of the role Jimmy – the average man of his futuristic society – played in the making of the global annihilation. Jimmy's society -- the near-future for us -- resembles, we are shown, our present in its restrictive sexism and materialism.

In both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*, then, Atwood uses narrative ingenuities and metafictionality to achieve both textual and cultural-critical purposes. In the former, narrative is a tool for survival and resistance; and in both a self-conscious narrative reflects a re-creation by the protagonists of their oppressive lived experience. Moreover, these novels projects visions of the future, which arise from and reflect on the realities that they ostensibly leave behind, and the narrative effect of the putative future reflecting the ambient present is critical to this.

Indeed, this mirror-effect created by the ingenious and metafictional use of narrative and language is integral to the way Atwood negotiates the generic tradition of dystopia. Both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* differs from many other texts in the dystopian tradition in refusing to allow readers to the comfort of "hypocritical self-congratulation"— taking them to dystopia's "point of no return"— by showing that the negativities envisioned in the imagined futurities are not distant possibilities but are already germane to contemporary social orders (*The Handmaid's Tale* 314) (Teewen 120). Drawing attention to feminist dystopia's critical link with present reality Bartowski defines the genre as a speculative elaboration on the question of "what – if", where the speculative scenario is an image of the "what – if of despair, the underside and

antinomy of hope”, both dystopia and utopia being responses to anxieties and desires arising from the lived experience of the author, the “imagined site” implicating “the here and now of its production” (4). This historicist theory of dystopia seems to be apposite to what Atwood does in the two speculative texts under study.

In *The Handmaid's Tale* the mirroring of the present by the putative future brings out how the intricacies of gender-based domination of women at the private/interpersonal level are related to the ideologies (misogyny, biological essentialism, religious fundamentalism) that shape public life and discourses -- how, still, the personal is deeply political. The blocked dystopian return wrought by the reflection of the contemporary by the futuristic brings out in *Oryx and Crake* how the seeds of a highly materialistic, scientism-driven but still sexist culture that would redefine the meaning itself of being human are germinating in the contemporary world. And the warning messages in both of Atwood's speculative-dystopian texts are all the more powerful because they are delivered obliquely, through narrative subtleties, with the thrust of the polemic being more intellectual than emotive.

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The Criterion

The Language of Eyes in Aphra Behn's Plays

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Introduction

The signals that people send out with their eyes are very expressive and understandable. Some of us can read the language of eyes naturally; some others are not sufficiently intuitive to understand the meaning. Nevertheless, the language of eyes is one of the most powerful medium of nonverbal communication. Language of the eyes is wordless, and it can either support or betray whatever you are saying. Actually, the eye expresses its language honestly without conveying any form of lie. If the person cannot express what is going on in his heart and his mind, his eyes will reveal those feelings. Even the slightest movement of the eyes can indicate the biggest meaning. Through the eyes of the speaker, you can analyze his personality, and you can know whether he loves or hates you. Indeed, to know whether a person loves or hates someone, try to understand his looks. So, eyes show what a person does not sometime want to reveal such as love, hatred, desire, etc. Love, romance and flirtation can best be expressed through eyes. In short, different emotions and mood can be expressed through gazing, glancing, winking, squinting, closing, and staring. If you know how to read and understand the language of eyes, you will know who the person you are conversing with and what he wants to tell you. With respect to the speaker, if he knows properly how to use the language of eyes, he can take control of what is going through his mind.

The subject of the language of eyes seems to be more suitable for psychological studies especially when we talk about the movements of eyes and the meaning of each movement. However, the importance of eyes' expression in literature is fascinating especially when it regards love and hatred. To give sufficient description for the language of eyes in the plays of Behn, I have chosen three genres, a tragedy *Abdelazer*, a tragicomedy *The Forced Marriage*, and a comedy *The Rover*. The word "eye" is used around 49 times in *Abdelazer*, around 41 times in *The Forced Marriage* and around 22 times in *The Rover*. This indicates to the importance of the expressions of eyes in the service of emotion.

Abdelazer

Abdelazer is a tragedy, so the using of “eye” mainly indicates to hatred and, even if it is sometimes denotes love, it is abominable love. At the beginning of the play, Queen Isabella chides Abdelazer, the hero of the play, for not exchanging love with her and not giving her as much consideration as she expects. She admonishes him, “Whilst in my Eyes, needing no other Glass, / Thou shalt behold and wonder at thy beauty” (Abd.1.1.[43-44]). The Queen does not only chide Abdelazer, her main lover, but she also chides her old lover Mendoza, the Cardinal. Once when she is with Mendoza trying to convince him to help Abdelazer by withdrawing his army from the side of her son Philip and put it in the side of Abdelazer, she reminds him of their love. Then she chides him for not loving her as before because her eyes have become idle. She gently reproves him, “Is’t thus, my Lord, you give me proofs of Love? / Have then my eyes lost all their wonted power? / And can you quit the hope of gaining me” (Abd.2.1.[80-82]). Her sweet words make Mendoza turn against his prince, and because of this treason, Abdelazer gets victory and her son is held captive.

In his turn, Abdelazer understands the needs of women through their eyes. He interprets the Queen’s eyes as “Thy face and eyes! ... / And thou shalt see the balls of both those eyes / Burning with fire of Lust” (Abd.1.1.[52-54]). Abdelazer does not consider her a woman worthy of love, but a woman of lust. Joyce Green MacDonald explains Abdelazer’s view towards the Queen:

This distaste for Isabella’s sexual appetite is further underlined by Abdelazer’s assertion that it has made them both deviate from their socially proper roles. Recall that Abdelazer, a prince in his own country, humiliatingly believes that others will see him as having been reduced to the status of the queen’s “Minion” by his sexual subjection. (154)

The Queen is a woman of lust as Abdelazer calls her. Indeed, her relation with Abdelazer does not hold to be a kind of love, it is only a kind of lust. Hence, it is strange to hear her telling Abdelazer that she has left everything to get his love in spite of his disparagement. For this reason, her role in the play is silly and unacceptable. Undoubtedly, her role in the play is intolerable, and it is designed very strangely and contributes to the weirdness of the plot. In addition, it gives a negative impression about the value of motherhood in general. Behn is able to present her as a beautiful Queen but a suffering wife whose act is almost good for Abdelazer. It is very strange to see the Queen sacrifice her family and her social status as a queen of Spain in order to marry Abdelazer. However, the Queen seems to be sick of lust that is why she is seeking a new lover while she is still a wife for the King. If she is having a sexual relation with Abdelazer in secrecy and without committing any crime, it is perhaps acceptable at least to some people. Melinda Alliker Rabb lists some of her crimes. She says, “The lascivious queen commits adultery, incest, and murder, yet survives and is pardoned” (143). However, love is destructive especially if it has been changed into lust. Thus, the lustful Isabella devotes all her life to the service of Abdelazer; at the same time, she does not realize that she is a married woman and a mother of three, she is the Queen, and her position is very sensitive. Despite Abdelazer’s disgust for the Queen, he praises her eyes at the time when she shows him resentment. He knows well that if he loses the Queen, it means he loses her help. So, he flirts with her, “My Queen, my Goddess, Oh raise your lovely eyes” (Abd.1.1.[109]).

It is not only Abdelazer who knows the wicked personality of the Queen, but it is also Alonzo. Alonzo is the future husband of the Queen’s daughter Loenora, and he is the brother of Florella, the wife of Abdelazer. Alonzo understands the wicked personality of the Queen through

her eyes. The Queen facilitates the meeting between her first son Fernando and Florella, the wife of Abdelazer. When she makes sure that the two are together, she sends her woman to Alonzo to tell him to come. However, she pretends to be sad as she reports the match between her son and his sister. Alonzo understands the ulterior motive for telling him this story exactly at this time. He remarks, "It must be strange indeed, that makes my Queen / Dress her fair eyes in sorrow" (Abd.3.2.[47-48]). Ironically, she looks worried with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes not because she does not like the match between her son and Florella, but because she wants to get rid of Florella to be alone with Abdelazer. So, her eyes reflect exactly what is going on in her mind. Alonzo does not suspect his sister because he knows well her loyalty to her husband. However, Alonzo understands that the Queen intends to do something through her eyes, and his suspicion is soon justified. She invites Alonzo to be a witness to the meeting. She takes him to Florella's Chamber where the King Fernando is supposed to be. Unfortunately, they enter at the time when Florella is holding a dagger warning the King that she will kill herself. Florella intends to commit suicide instead of committing adultery. The Queen uses this scene, where Florella is holding the dagger, as a chance to get rid of her. Without further delay, she snatches the dagger from Florella and stabs her to death, claiming that Florella wants to kill the King. This claim is false because in fact she has decided to murder Florella in order to get Abdelazer for herself. When Alonzo makes sure of the Queen's treason, he goes out to bring soldiers. Because she is a woman of lust, she leaves the crime scene to enable Abdelazer to kill her son. Abdelazer enters and finds his wife murdered. He does not ask about the real killer of his wife because her murder is not important. The most important task is to get rid of the King, so he should not let the chance go by. When the King is killed, she comes back murmuring: "Oh Heav'ns! my Son the King! the King is kill'd! / *Yet I must save his Murderer: Fly, my Moor*" (Abd.3.3.[192-93]). It is really unacceptable to find a mother who does not care of her murdered son, but she cares and tries to save his murderer. Strangely, she intends to save Abdelazer and to exonerate him from this murder.

The Queen supports Abdelazer with all her power to fulfill his wicked ambition. When he feels that the Queen will be an obstacle in the way of marrying her daughter, he orders Roderigo to kill her. So, one can say that she falls into the same trap. She is murdered on the command of her lover Abdelazer.

Abdelazer sees the eyes of the Queen as "Burning with fire of Lust," but he interprets the looks of Leonora in a different way. Ironically, Abdelazer accuses the Queen of lust because he knows well that she is under his control. However, he praises the eyes of her daughter Leonora because he wants to marry her. So, he is ready to please her by all possible means. He describes her eyes, "By yon bright Sun, or your more splendid Eyes / I woul'd divest my soul of every hope, / To gratify one single wish of yours" (Abd.5.1.[375-77]). He also says, "Your Eyes insensibly do wound and kill!" (Abd.5.1.[454]). When Leonora refuses to marry him, he reassures her that he will amend his eyes to suit her. He assures her: "I could even teach my Eyes the Art / To change their natural fierceness into smiles. / What is't I wou'd not do to gain that heart" (Abd.5.1.[495-97]). At the beginning, he and the Queen exchange love, but when he gets satisfied of the Queen, he orders Roderigo to murder her. Then he decides to marry her daughter, Alonzo's fiancée; it is because he sees in her eyes: "In your bright Eyes there is, that may corrupt 'em more, / Than all the Treasures of the Eastern Kings" (Abd.5.1.[628-29]). In Abdelazer's interpretation, the eyes of the Queen are completely different from the eyes of her daughter. The Queen's eyes are a reflection of her sexual lust, infidelity and ugliness while Leonora's eyes are a sign of her beauty and innocence.

On the other hand, Abdelazer's eyes have their own meaning from the viewpoint of Philip. Philip, Queen's second son who also an experienced interpreter of eyes, suspects Abdelazer and reads the evil in his eyes. Philip says, "Why stares the Devil thus, as if he meant / From his infectious eyes to scatter Plagues" (Abd.2.1.[1-2]). He is the one who regards Abdelazer a criminal from the beginning; it is because he comprehends the signs of his eyes. Philip states, "I saw him dart Revenge, from both his Eyes / And bite his angry Lip between his teeth" (Abd.2.2.[125-26]). Meanwhile, Abdelazer has his own interpretation about his eyes. He feels that his eyes are a symbol of power but not of revenge and treason as Philip says. He boastfully tells The Queen about her son Philip:

And with the awfull splendour of my Eyes
Like the Imperious Sun, dispers'd the Clouds.
But I must Combat now a fierce Foe,
The hot – brain'd Philip, and a jealous Cardinal. (Abd.4.1.[11-14])

In short, the expressions of eyes in this play denote hatred more than love even if the speakers recall their eyes to express love.

The Forced Marriage

In *The Forced Marriage*, the importance of eyes lies on the fear of the lover whether his/her partner is loyal or disloyal. As in *Abdelazer* the eyes denote hatred, in this play, eyes denote love, but the love that is mixed with suspicion; however, love triumphs at the end.

Aminta does not show Alcander any love because she has suffered in her first love with another man. She loved that man madly, but she also "left him for a faithless crime; / But then I languisht even to death for him" (F.M.1.2.[53-54]). Because of this painful experience, she keeps her love to Alcander secret. Pisaro, Aminta's brother, is aware of his sister's hesitation whether to reveal her love to Alcander or not. He is also aware of the suffering of Alcander. Indeed, he is able to tell from the expression of their faces that they love each other. He observes Alcander's suffering through his eyes, but he wants to hear him say what is going in his mind. He tells Alcander:

Prythee, Alcander now we talk of her,
How go the Amours 'twixt you and my wild sister;
Can you speak yet, or do you tell your tale
With eyes and sighs, as you were wont to do. (F.M.1.1.[204-07])

Certainly, Aminta loves Alcander too much, but her intention in keeping it secret is to increase his love towards her. She thinks if she shows him love, he will be confident and then he will not come to her to seek her love as before. She does not even tell Olinda about her love with her brother Alcander, but on the insistence of Olinda on knowing her real feeling, she reveals her fervent love for him, yet she also decides to keep it secret. She confesses: "Yes, Olinda, and you shall know its meaning, / I love Alcander - and am not asham'd o'th' secret, / But prithee do not tell him what I say" (F.M.2.2.[45-47]). However, her carelessness of not showing him love may have negative consequences because the man she loves may leave her and seek another woman that shows him love. This is nearly about to happen. Alcander leaves her angrily, telling her he leaves her for Falatius, another man who falls in unrequited love with her. When she realizes that she will lose Alcander, she frankly tells him she loves him.

On the other hand, Gallatea and Erminia are close friends. They share ideas and consult each other. They often exchange their joys and sorrows. However, they are friends and remain friends so long as their interests are not in conflict, but their friendship may end when they love the same man. Gallatea in times suspects Erminia of getting Alcippus. Gallatea loves Alcippus;

unfortunately, he marries Erminia. Erminia visits Gallatea to express her sorrow about her marriage to the man she does not love. Gallatea sees Erminia's suffering in her eyes. She tells her, "Thy Eyes, Erminia, do declare thy heart / Has nothing but despairs and death t'impart" (F.M.1.2.[67-68]). Actually, Erminia is suffering because she is forced to marry Alcippus, but she reassures Gallatea that she does not love him. Meanwhile, Erminia understands Gallatea's love for Alcippus through her eyes. So, she tells Gallatea, "Your cause of grief too much like mine appears, / Not to oblige my eyes to double tears" (F.M.1.2.[75-76]). When both friends make sure that they do not love the same man, they indulge in a bout of weeping for their misfortunes.

Gallatea is convinced that Erminia does not love Alcippus, but she warns her of his eyes. She feels that if Erminia concentrate on his eyes, she will love him because his eyes are full of love. Indeed, she is afraid that Erminia may not be able to resist the temptation of Alcippus's eyes. So, she advises her:

Erminia, guard thee from his Eyes,
Where so much love, and so much Beauty lies:
Those charms may conquer thee, which made me bow,
And make thee love as well as break this Vow. (F.M.1.2.[119-22])

Gallatea knows well that men and women are affected by the looks of the opposite sex. Therefore, she warns Erminia of the eyes of Alcippus; meanwhile she encourages her to contemplate the love that comes from the eyes of Philander. However, Karen Harvey states the difference between the looks of men and women. She writes:

Men's vision was manipulated by women in order to arouse and perpetuate male desire, rather than to protect men's attractiveness. While women received and transmitted desire in the ocular language of pleasure, the primary purpose of their eyes was to signal willingness and attractiveness. The involuntary appearance and behaviour of women's eyes indicated a perpetual receptivity and the inevitability of passive consent. (215)

Furthermore, Gallatea warns Erminia not to let Alcippus have sex with her because it will kill Philander. She also reminds her of the fervent love of Philander for her. Gallatea intends by her speech to keep Erminia away from Alcippus. But Erminia is already in love with Philander, and she does not need such words to strengthen her love for him because she can read Philander's torture and fervent love in his eyes. Erminia tells Gallatea:

Ah, Madam, do not tell me how he dies,
I've seen too much already in his eyes:
They did the sorrows of his soul betray,
Which need not be exprest another way:
'Twas there I found what my misfortune was,
Too sadly written in his lovely face. (F.M.1.2.[133-38])

Gallatea considers Erminia's birthplace humble because she was born in a cottage. Despite her humble birthplace, Gallatea feels that Erminia is able to attract Philander by her eyes. She tells her, "Your eyes did first Philanders soul inspire" (F.M.3.3.[19]). Then she advises her to keep her eyes on Philander and not look to any other man; otherwise, Philander will be wounded. She tells Erminia, "Remember 'tis a Prince that does adore, / Who offers up a heart that never found / It could receive, till from your eyes, a wound" (F.M.3.3.[56-58]).

Philander commits an error when he does not tell his father, the King, of his love with Erminia. Therefore, the King blesses the marriage of Alcippus and Erminia. However, when all

characters meet in Act Two Scene One and when the music is softly playing, the looks the characters exchange are mixed with love and hatred. Those who are in love look at each other passionately, while the rivals are staring at each other with eyes full of hatred. Each look displays the inner suffering of the person concerned. With his sword half drawn, Philander gazes at his rival Alcippus. Erminia fixes her eyes on Philander, her lover. Galatea looks passionately at Alcippus. Pisaro passionately gazes on Galatea. In this critical situation, Philander talks to his sister about the feeling of Erminia towards her forced marriage to Alcippus. He reads her suffering in her eyes. He tells Gallatea:

'Tis done, 'tis done, the fatal knot is ti'de,
 Erminia to Alcippus is a Bride;
 Methinks I see the motions of her Eyes,
 And how her Virgin-breasts do fall and rise:
 Her bashful blush, her timorous desire,
 Adding new Flame to his too vigorous fire;
 Whilst he the charming Beauty must embrace (F.M.2.1.[1-7])

Erminia's eyes make Philander sure that she is innocent because it is not she who chooses Alcippus. Philander tells his sister: "Such charms of Innocence her Eyes do dress, / As would confound the cruel'st Murderess" (F.M.2.1.[80-81]). Gallatea is pleased to hear her brother talk about Erminia in a way as if he intends to get her from Alcippus, her husband. Meanwhile, she warns her brother about carrying out his threat to kill Alcippus. But now she understands from Philander's eyes that he may forgive Alcippus if he gets Erminia. Gallatea tells him, "I'de have thy eyes more Love than anger wear" (F.M.2.1.[99]). This is really what happens at the end. When Philander retrieves Erminia, he gives his sister to Alcippus. In fact, Alcippus hates Philander because his wife loves him, and Philander is full of anger because Alcippus has taken his lover.

Later, Pisaro explains these different looks of the characters towards each other to a page. He observes the fervent love between Philander and Erminia, the hatred between Philander and Alcippus, and Gallatea's love for Alcippus. In fact, Pisaro loves Gallatea, but he changes his mind when he observes that she cannot take her eyes off Alcippus. So, he intends not to love the girl that loves his friend. However, the expression of Philander's face, as it is read by Pisaro, shows his intention to kill Alcippus. Pisaro states the expressions of their eyes and faces:

I saw her lovely eyes still turn on him,
 As Flowers to th'Sun: and when he turn'd away
 Like those, she bow'd her charming head again.
 -On th'other side the Prince with dying looks
 Each motion watch'd of fair Erminia's eyes,
 Which she return'd as greedily again,
 And if one glance t' Alcippus she directed,
 He'd stare as if he meant to cut his throat for't. (F.M.2.5.[31-38])

Pisaro also tells Alcippus about Gallatea's love: "Till by her eyes I found that she was mortal" (F.M.3.1.[59]). Pisaro is right in his interpretation of the eyes of Gallatea. She is fond of Alcippus, but Alcippus's eyes are still on Erminia. He does not imagine himself as a husband for the daughter of the King. However, Pisaro reminds him of the honour he will receive from marrying Gallatea. He advises him:

Set Galateas charms before your eyes,
 Think of the glory to divide a Kingdom.

And do not waste your Noble youth and time,
Upon a peevish heart you cannot gain. (F.M.3.1.[130-33])

Regarding Alcippus's marriage with Erminia, Alcippus does not know that Gallatea loves him. Surely, if he knew her love, he would marry her instead of Erminia because Gallatea is the daughter of the King while Erminia is only the daughter of the former General. Once, when Alcippus and Erminia are in their bedchamber, Alcippus is aware of Erminia's suffering from her eyes: "But still methinks Erminia you are sad, / A heaviness appears in those fair eyes" (F.M.2.3.[1-2]). Then he asks her, "Why are thy eyes declin'd?" (F.M.2.3.[15]). Erminia tells him frankly that she does not love him, but she loves Philander. She continues to tell him that she has married him under force. So, she considers him a brother. Alcippus tries to sleep with her, but she also refuses to share him his bed. So, Alcippus gets angry, and his eyes reveal exactly what is going on in his mind. Erminia tells him, "Whatever rage you threaten from your eyes / Yes – you may disapprove this flame in me / But cannot hinder what the Gods decree" (F.M.2.3.[75-77]). Alcippus does not harm her at this time, yet he tries to convince her of his love. He prays her to sleep with him because he cannot tolerate the beauty that comes from her eyes. He tells her:

Thou – hast disarm'd my rage, and in its room
A world of shame and softer passions come,
Such as the first efforts of love inspir'd,
When by thy charming eyes my soul was fir'd. (F.M.2.3.[88-91])

As a matter of duty towards her husband, she tries to be kind to him, but she never subjugates herself to his desire. Ironically, Alcippus tells her, "Thy blushes do betray thy willingness, / And in thy lovely Eyes I read success" (F.M.2.3.[117]). It is however the "success" of her insistence to keep her virginity. She has promised Philander that she will be only his, and she is keeping her promise. To protect herself from Alcippus, she uses her weapon; it is weeping. When Alcippus sees her weeping, he considers her tears as a weapon that cuts his heart: "Sent those more powerful weapons from your eyes" (F.M.3.3.[141]). Nearly at the end when he has strangled her because he suspects her of disloyalty, believing that she is dead, he tells Pisaro, "Now I shall read no terror in her eyes" (F.M.4.6.[104]). Furthermore, Alcippus's eyes are full of love, but after strangling Erminia, he feels that "My eyes all bloody, – and my hanging lids, / Like Midnight's mischief, hide the guilty Balls" (F.M.5.2.[49-50]). When Alcippus tries to strangle Erminia, she does not die as Alcippus thinks, but she falls into a coma. Then the play ends when Philander marries Erminia and Alcippus marries Gallatea.

The Rover

The language of eyes in this play revolves around love. Florinda and Belvile are in love, but Pedro, her brother, insists on marrying her to his friend Antonito. Hellena intervenes and supports her sister in her choice. She argues that if Pedro really loves his sisters as he claims, he should help Florinda to choose her partner but not force her to marry his friend, the man she does not love. Pedro gets angry at hearing Hellena talk about the value of love despite the fact that she is still young. He tells her, "Has your nunnery breeding taught you to understand the value of hearts and eyes?" (Rover.1.1.81-82). Nunnery has not taught Hellena the value of love, yet she feels the suffering of her sister, and she recognizes her suffering through her eyes. Actually, Hellena has not loved any one until now, but when she meets Willmore for the first time, she is attracted to his "horrible loving eyes" (Rover.1.2.156). Therefore, it can be said that Hellena, or any other lover, does not need to be taught how to love or to be loved. Love is a kind of sense and it can be better expressed through eyes. In his turn, Willmore searches for women who have

pretty eyes. However, both Hellena and Willmore are attracted to each other from the first meeting, it is because they exchange the language of eyes. In this meeting, they do not become fully acquainted with each other. Willmore is not only attracted to Hellena but also to Angellica, a prominent and much-admired courtesan.

Willmore does not know Angellica, but Belvile praises her as “she’s now the only adored beauty of all the youth in Naples...” then he continues to say that it is the lucky man who can “attract the eyes of this fair Charmer” (Rover.1.2.305,308). Willmore urges his friends to take him to this pretty lady. Willmore, Belvile, Frederick and Blunt go to meet her; unfortunately, they cannot pay the required money to be able to sleep with her. Only Pedro and Antonio are able to pay the required money, yet they fight for the priority because each one of them declares that he is the first one who wins Angellica. They start fighting despite the fact they are friends. Because they are in disguise, they do not know each other, but Pedro is able to recognize Antonio when he utters the name of Florinda. However, Willmore and Blunt enter and break them up.

Willmore sees a small picture of Angellica, so he wants to take it, but Antonio does not allow him to take it, so another fight break out between Willmore and his English friends on one side and Antonio and his Spanish friends on the other. Angellica enters and asks Willmore to speak with her inside to calm the chaos. Belvile and Frederick are afraid that Angellica may harm Willmore, but Angellica reassures them that she will not harm him because she has no weapon except her eyes: “Fear not sir, all I have to wound with is my eyes” (Rover.2.1.275). This is exactly what happens. Willmore is attracted to the beauty of her eyes and she is attracted to his sweet words. Willmore assures her that he is really wounded by her eyes, and there is only one way to be cured; it is to sleep with her: “And soon will cure those wounds your eyes have made” (Rover.2.2.65). By his sweet words, he is able to persuade her to sleep with him. Angellica has never loved anyone before and because “His words go through me to the very soul” (Rover.2.2.70), she has fallen in love with him. Therefore, she lets him sleep with her for free.

Willmore has been inside with Angellica for two hours, so his friends Belvile, Frederick and Blunt have come to retrieve him. As soon as Willmore leaves Angellica’s house, he meets Hellena who is in disguise, so he starts courting in her eyes. At the time when Willmore begins to flirt with Hellena, Angellica comes in disguise and sees Willmore betray the vows he has made to her. However, Hellena understands that he wants to see her face. So, she frankly tells him, “I have considered, captain, that a handsome woman has a great deal to do whilst her face is good...” (Rover.3.1.170-72). When he sees her face, he bursts into praises of her beauty: “By heaven, I never saw so much beauty! Oh the charms of those sprightly black eyes!...” (Rover.3.1.187-88). In her turn, Hellena knows that Willmore was with Angellica, but when she pretends that she does not know with whom he was, he tells her, he was with a man friend. So, Hellena again asks him in a way conveys too much criticism: “And was’t your man friend that had more darts in’s eyes than Cupid carries in a whole budget of arrows?” (Rover.3.1.231-32). Surely, the arrow of the eyes can hit only the opposite sex because eyes never convey love of a man towards a man; the normal love that eyes can express well is the love between the opposite sexes. In short, Willmore is attracted to Angellica’s eyes, so he was with her and not with a man as he claims.

When Angellica feels that Willmore is interested in Hellena, and there is no way to retrieve him, she reveals her suffering in her soliloquy. She says: “In vain I have consulted all my charms, / In vain this beauty prized, in vain believed / My eyes could kindle any lasting fires”

(Rover.4.3.399). One can feel Angellica's suffering. At the time when she truly loves Willmore, he leaves her. She thinks the reason is perhaps her eyes which attract Willmore, so he and all other men become slaves to this power and not to real love. She states, "I should have thought all men were born my slaves, / And worn my Pow'r like lightning in my eyes" (Rover.5.1.269-70). Then nearly at the end of the play, she points to Willmore and decides:

I'd not have sold my interest in his heart
 For all the sword has won and lost in battle.
 But now to show my utmost of contempt,
 I give thee life – which if thou wouldst preserve,
 Live where my eyes may never see thee more (Rover. 5.1.336-40)

On the other hand, Blunt and Lucetta interpret the looks of each other according to their desires. Lucetta, a "jilting wench," begins to seduce him at the first meeting and because he is attracted to her eyes and influenced by her looks, he does not believe his friends that this woman is a thief and a prostitute. He believes that they are jealous. Unfortunately, he enters her bedroom undressed to his shirt and drawers. Ironically, he with a candle in his hand goes toward the bed where Lucetta is supposed to be, but she asks him to "put out the light, it may betray us else." He proudly replies that he does not need the light because he "need[s] no other light but that of thine eyes!" (Rover.3.3.16-17). When the room is dark, she leaves the bed using a trapdoor system. Blunt stumbles around and then falls through another trapdoor. Then Lucetta, her servant, and her pimp enter and steal Blunt's money. So, his remark that her eyes are enough to take him to her bed is so quickly achieved but in an inverse way; her eyes take him into the sewers instead of the bed.

To sum up, whenever there is a use of the word "eye" in these three plays, it superficially indicates to love, yet the eyes sometimes reflect the opposite. It really reflects what is going in the mind and heart. In *Abdelazer*, it is noticeable that the word "eye" denotes hatred more than love even if the speaker intends to use the expression of his eyes to show love. In fact, his love is used as a way to control others as in *Abdelazer*'s case, so it is his eyes which expose his real feelings. In *The Forced Marriage*, the characters exchange love through eyes, yet their eyes sometimes betray them to express love well for a matter of suspicion. This suspicion is because of the serious action in the play, so the person who falls in love needs much consideration from his lover, the other party, yet the other party is also busy of his problem. However, love triumphs at the end especially when both parties exchange mutual love. In *The Rover*, eyes play big roles in love among lovers. It is right that some characters do not succeed in their love because of the unrequited love, but this does not mean that the language of eyes are different from the spoken language. Both the language of eyes and the spoken language correspond with each other and focus on love more than something else.

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The Criterion

Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*: An Anatomy of Lament

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It is clear that the most “compelling cause” of lament for Tennyson in *In Memoriam* (1850) is the loss of Hallam in that the poem is characterized by the depth of grief where the great grief is known to, is shared by, is consoled by, and the joy is sanctified by the spirit of the dear, dead friend. In *In Memoriam*, grief has corrosive, therapeutic, cathartic, regenerative properties. In the chequered path of the poem, we see a poet who broods, mourns, weeps, wails, doubts, despairs, resists despair, catches at hope and clings tenaciously to it. However, the lament in *Duino Elegies* (1923) is occasioned not by any personal loss but by an agonizing perception of the inadequacy and fragmentariness of human consciousness. The elegies encapsulate many of the dilemmas of the twentieth century and beyond, of which the loss of belief in a divinely sponsored universe, the struggle with industrialization, a preoccupation with war and death and the atomization of society are the important ones. The piercing allegories of modern life, the praise for a self-negating kind of objectless love, the brooding on death, the critically important role of the poet, the *Duino Elegies* is an architectonically arranged cycle of hymnic poetry, embodying and proclaiming an intensely felt personal process of experience. This essay examines the nature of grief in the poems and the poets' approaches to it. Regardless of differences in spatial, temporal and linguistic terms, both the works evince a good deal of similarities in their treatment of the majestic sadness.

Although the first 27 sections of *In Memoriam* enact the tension in the poet's mind at its acme and there is a gradual decline of grief from section 28 onwards, Tennyson's thought of a marriage with grief in section 59 situates the reader in an interesting, yet baffling place as to the poet's real attitude to grief:

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
 No casual mistress, but a wife,
 My bosom-friend and half of life;
 As I confess it needs must be;

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
 Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
 And put thy harsher moods aside,
 If thou wilt have me wise and good. (1-8)

It would be appropriate to allude here to Section 3 of the poem where Sorrow declares the universe to be pointless, and striking the prevailing tone for roughly the first half of the poem: “O Sorrow, cruel fellowship, / O Priestess in the vaults of Death.” Unlike section 3, in section 59, however, Sorrow is addressed more hopefully, in a marriage metaphor, which suggests the proper tone for the speaker's spiritual recovery in the second half of the poem. The varying phases of grief, in line with its episodic nature, demonstrate a rectilinear structure, even though the grief coils back and is straightened out intermittently in the poem. Tennyson's struggle to

mediate his loss with words highlights the melancholic character of the poem which interrogates the goals of proper mourning. As Irene Hsiao comments, “As the story of loss is pared into sectors of grief, series of ends, the lost object is transformed into a stone with a word carved into it. When the act of mourning is arranged into a series of stages, its progress is raised into a linear process. Dead and living join specified narratives which only touch and then terminate in divergent places. The story of mourning is a wish that the heart would abandon its circumambulation and replicate the forward impulse of time” (173-196). Quite likely, as it seems, in the Prologue, Tennyson deems his grief profane; an unbecoming failing which, though natural and human, is an impediment in the path of faith: “Forgive my grief for one removed.”

Tennyson’s Love-Grief chemistry runs in consonance with the bliss of inebriety where to be “drunk with loss” and “to dance with death” are ineffable feelings. The passion, “Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss, / To dance with death, to beat the ground” highlights the poet’s almost pathological obsession with inalienable grief. The poet’s resolve to fortify his heart against the onslaught of grief, “Thou shalt not be the fool of loss” functions as an existential imperative which, while suggesting the failure of all possible mechanisms in containing grief, does underscore a curious combination of resoluteness and helplessness in the face of grief. The poet feels, slumber, like many other things which could be taken recourse to, is but a futile attempt to avoid grief, and wonders how could his heart mourn for a loss when it scarcely knows what the loss is. An undercurrent of thanatos highlights the stupefaction caused by the death of Hallam, and the poet’s self-possession to master grief is further betrayed by his surrender to it off and on:

To Sleep I give my powers away;
 My will is bondsman to the dark;
 I sit within a helmless bark,
 And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
 That thou should’st fail from thy desire,
 Who scarcely darest to inquire,
 ‘What is it makes me beat so low?’

Something it is which thou hast lost,
 Some pleasure from thine early years.
 Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
 That grief hath shaken into frost!

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
 All night below the darken’d eyes;
 With morning wakes the will, and cries,
 ‘Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.’

Lines 1-4 make the division of the self apparent, and the subject surrenders his will to sleep and only then begins an internal dialogue with his heart, addressing it as a localized region of loss. As Hsiao goes on to write, “Classically manifesting psychosomatic illness, the low-beating heart bears all suffering to shield the questioning mind from the lost object. The sleep-suppressed will thus reveals itself as the will not to know and upon waking berates the mind for its nocturnal interrogation, sternly forbidding the subject to become “the fool of loss.” In the phrasing of the

reproach, the will maintains the subject's ignorance by referring to a generalized loss, persisting in the refusal to name the "something" which has been "lost," amorphously passed over as "some pleasure" or "clouds of nameless trouble" (173-196).

It is significant that the poet is aware of the possible desecration of the grandeur of grief by the verbalization of the inexpressible. Therefore, far from giving "that larger grief" a verbal vent, he would rather revel in the ingestion of that sadness where the distinction between "the lesser grief" and the "deepest grief" serves only to highlight the inadequacy of the former and the built-in strength of the latter. Thus, when the poet suddenly springs up to a ratiocination of his grief as "private sorrow's barren song," he gives an inkling of recuperation from the scarifying grief for the realization of a greater good. Ultimately, grief awakens in the poet a necessity of love, which finds expression in section 27 and is asserted again in section 85: "Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all."

There is no denying the fact of the gradual attenuation of grief in the second part of the elegy, but there is still the grasp of that perceptible, coercive grief from which the poet cannot make himself free. Contrary to it, he ballasts his reasons to grieve because therefrom he derives his strength to live. When he writes, "Who show'd a token of distress? / No single tear, no mask of pain: / O sorrow, then can sorrow wane? / O grief, can grief be changed to less?," he seems to demonstrate a conviction built upon a resolution that he shall not cease to grieve.

Thus, Tennyson's perception of a built-in strength in his grief is suggestive of his rationale for luxuriating in its excesses. The strength "reserved" in grief stems from its power to both sadden and enlighten, which while making the poet lugubrious does make him "see into the life of things." Tennyson's attitude to grief is that of an optimist, a rational thinker whose vision is not jaundiced by frantic philosophizing; rather ennobled by sound judgement and perspicacity:

And so my passion hath not swerved
To works of weakness, but I find
An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved. (section 85, 49-52)

However, although the lines in section 105, "No more shall wayward grief abuse / The genial hour with mask and mime" run counter to the realization achieved in the lines of section 85 just quoted, yet the word "wayward" holds the key to an understanding of Tennyson's banishment of the stymieing grief in whose luxury he was basking before. The poet further wishes for or enjoins a dismissal of grief that hinders clear thinking and frustrates greater realizations: "Ring out the grief that saps the mind." Tennyson ends section 108 and begins section 113 with a common line "'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise" only to summarize what he has said before. This expression demonstrates Tennyson's apparent ambivalence toward grief, but contains a great truth insofar as wisdom ensues from sorrow. In essence, Tennyson's attitude to grief is not affected by a partisan colouring of a demented mourner; rather it is held up *against* such thoughts to highlight its positive outcomes.

Like Tennyson's line, "And in my grief a strength reserved," Rilke's expression: "we for whom grief is so often / the source of our spirit's growth" (The First Elegy) underlines a similarity of approach toward grief, marked by a similar philosophical rigour. Both reckon the

formative, regenerative properties of grief. An inquiry into the nature of Rilkean grief in the *Duino elegies* points, at the outset, toward a perception of helplessness which the speaker feels when he suffers angelic nonchalance. If the speaker cannot but have the misgivings that he will not be heard despite his cry; and further, that there is no provenance of solace, he is also quite sure of the cause that “we are not really at home in / our interpreted world.”

However, Rilke’s attitude to grief is not spoiled by the rancour of frustration; rather it is chastened and sublimated by a capacity for diagnosis. His poetic task, thus, involves an examination of the ontological problems. In *Duino Elegies*, a fusillade of apparent imperatives from Rilke is, in fact, the poet’s impassioned entreaties, “Don’t you know yet? Fling the emptiness out of your arms / into the spaces we breathe.” Rilke’s reference to the “springtimes,” “the star,” “the wave,” “the violin” in the First Elegy in respect of their wish for appreciation vis-à-vis our incapacity to respond to them is a fit occasion for his melancholy. When he asks, “But could you accomplish it?,” he is prepared for an answer in the negative, which is bound to be, since we are “always distracted by expectation.” That which exacerbates his grief is his conclusive apprehension that “there is no place where we can remain.” The poet despairs at our inability to execute the “mission,” and bewildering estrangement from divine succour, and while he does so, he wishfully longs for the blessedness of the early departed who enjoy not only the liberation from mundane miseries, but also lose its joys: “those who were carried off early no longer need us: / they are weaned from earth’s sorrows and joys.” With semantic subtleties, the poetic persona expresses tacit desire for the earthly, and equates the early departed with the angels who frustrate us with their indifference.

Rilke’s systematic examination of our problems encompasses each and every aspect of our existence where we founder and fail. However, it would be erroneous to say that Rilke addresses all what he has to say in the elegies *only* to the modern man; rather the whole gamut of human experiences taken up by him is typified by a universal “we.” Plagued at the back of his mind by the indifference of the angels, Rilke probes into the root of our radical insufficiency and weakness:

But we, when moved by deep feeling, evaporate; we
 breathe ourselves out and away; from moment to moment
 our emotion grows fainter, like a perfume. Though someone may tell us:
 “Yes, you’ve entered my bloodstream, the room, the whole springtime
 is filled with you...”---what does it matter? He can’t contain us,
 we vanish inside him and around him.

The poet desires that we discover “a pure, contained, human place” which, while striking a spatial chord, offers up possibilities for inner growth with spiritual dimensions. When we chart the movement of the poet’s grief in *Duino Elegies*, we see it reaching the crescendo in the Eighth Elegy, but there are other instances where Rilke grieves over certain crucial problems, as in the Third where he is dismayed to visualize the circumscription in relation to the image of a “mother” that conjures up the poet’s childhood nightmares:

Yes, you did frighten his heart; but more ancient terrors
 Plunged into him at the shock of that feeling. Call him...
 But you can’t quite call him away from those dark companions.

Of course, he *wants* to escape, and he does; relieved, he nestles
 Into your shattering heart, takes hold, and begins himself.
 But did he ever begin himself, really?
 Mother, you made him small, ...

 Ah, where are the years when you shielded him just by placing
 Your slender form between him and the surging abyss?

An important facet of Rilke's approach lament relates to pinpointing existential problems. In the Fourth Elegy, he berates the lovers who have reduced their relationship to a charade, which is why they had already incurred the poet's displeasure in the Second Elegy as to an exigent need to understand their true self: "lovers, *are* you the same?"

Rilke's somber meditations are engendered by umpteenth reasons for sadness, where the elegies are precise enumerations of the reasons. "We are not in harmony," writes Rilke in the Fourth Elegy, and the reasons ascribed, among many, are: (1) "we force ourselves abruptly onto the wind / and fall to earth," (2) "Flowering and fading come to us both at once," and (3) "we never know / the actual, vital contour of our own / emotions." What Rilke condemns is our hollowness with which we pathetically play our part in the tawdry carnival of our adult life that is bereft of candour and innocence. Rilke's nostalgic longing for the bliss of the childhood stands obverse to the insinuating hysterics of the adult pleasures cankered by pretence and deceit.

Oh hours of childhood,
 when behind each shape more than the past appeared
 and what streamed out before us was not the future.
 We felt our bodies growing and were at times
 impatient to *be* grown up, half for the sake
 of those with nothing left but their grownupness.

In the Sixth Elegy, Rilke's juxtaposition of our hauteur with a plausibly botanical phenomenon—the pure dynamics of the fig-tree—seems to dismantle our façade of self-importance which arises because "we still linger" and because our pride is "in blossoming" where "we enter the overdue / interior of our final fruit and are already betrayed." Rilke exposes our pride that is but a paltry thing in comparison to the fig-tree's complete omission of its blossoms. The "pure mystery" referred to in relation to the fig-tree is alien to man who cannot dispassionately sustain its operations. The pure work ethic of the fig-tree characterized by the quality of its making every action "unproclaimed" serves only to lay bare our smugness and languorous stasis following any achievement. The poet's grief gathers a wider ambit since it addresses every possible issue concerning human existence. As in the Seventh Elegy, for example, the lament touches a metaphysical plane and necessitates inner transformation as integral to the revelation of happiness: "even the most visible happiness / can't reveal itself to us until we transform it, within." Despairing at the replacement of the aesthetic by the cerebral where "the external / shrinks into less and less," the poet is skeptical of the progress of the "cerebral" at the cost of the spiritual or the aesthetic, and decries in the following lines:

Our age has built itself vast reservoirs of power,
 formless as the straining energy that it wrests from the earth.
 Temples are no longer known. It is we who secretly save up

these extravagances of the heart. Where one of them still survives,
 a Thing that was formerly prayed to, worshipped, knelt before—
 just as it is, it passes into the invisible world.
 Many no longer perceive it, yet miss the chance
 to build it *inside* themselves now, with pillars and statues: greater.

Rilke's lament in the Eighth Elegy, the most despairing one in the entire cycle, is occasioned by the lurid contrast of "the Open" (das Offene) with the created world—the former enjoyed by the animal and the latter crafted by us to languish in circumscription. Rilke's aim being the poetization of "the Open," in the Eighth Elegy, his emphasis is on the whole of the human condition and its problematic nature. The Elegy defines most precisely, both in thought and in poetic word many concepts central to the understanding of the cycle. A study of lament in the Duino elegies necessitates an examination of the Eighth Elegy, which encapsulates the themes of the elegies and enacts Rilke's poetic mission. The first line introduces two basic concepts: "die Kreatur" and "das Offene," which permeate the entire elegy ("With all its eyes the natural world looks out / into the Open"). With the picture of Kreatur, Rilke highlights a natural state of being that is further predicated by the second term das Offene, describing the particular perception or consciousness of this type of being. The animal's open, unbounded world is its realm of consciousness which is contrasted to the human perception marked by a profound sense of temporality. Rilke is skeptical of our predilection for the introversion of our consciousness so that we do not see "the Open, which is so / deep in animals' faces. Free from death." That is why we are away from life; what lies before us is death: "We only, can see death; the free animal / has its decline in back of it, forever, / and God in front, and when it moves, it moves / already in eternity, like a fountain."

The poet disapproves of the human subject's perception of the world in relation to its own existence and own self-imposed boundaries, an existence which is never lived from within the world, rather across from it. The implication pertains to a particular spatial distance, which is relative or at least determinable according to the human subject, but which does not necessarily encompass all possible orientations toward the world. Contrary to this perception, the animal is "open" and is not restricted by its consciousness and mode of operation. Rilke's expression of temporality in terms of spatial imagery is used not merely as a poetic device but as a means of reflecting spatiality in relation to human perception. Rilke wonders and grieves as to why "Only *our* eyes are turned / backward," and

Never, not for a single day, do *we* have
 before us that pure space into which flowers
 endlessly open. Always there is World
 and never Nowhere without the No: that pure
 unseparated element which one breathes
 without desire and endlessly *knows*.

As for the expression "Only *our* eyes are turned / backward," Rilke uses the mirror image of this metaphor in describing his experience of "reaching the other side of Nature." In examining our deprivation of "that pure space" which is the realm of the flowers but farther from us, Rilke wonders why we do not have the gay abandon of the animal in terms of its ability and naturalness to operate in "the Open," and the endless, uninhibited efflorescence of flowers. Rilke

places man in stark opposition to the animal who possesses a greater capacity to feel the boundless and further strikes an ironical note by saying that if the animal had our kind of consciousness, then it would wrench us around and drag us along its path. Rilke's singular aim in depicting the animal lies not in glorifying what is beastly, but scarifying the supposed superiority of man which is no match with the innocent, yet pure, boundless "vast gaze" of the animal:

But it feels its life as boundless,
unfathomable, and without regard
to its own condition: pure, like its outward gaze.
And where we see the future, it sees all time
and itself within all time, forever healed.

The superiority of the animal gathers more strength when the animal's "vast gaze" serves as the benchmark of unstinted outwardness to the natural world even while one is nearing death. As Rilke writes, "For, nearing death, one doesn't see death; but stares / beyond, perhaps with an animal's vast gaze."

The intricate pattern of Rilke's grief in the Eighth Elegy incorporates diverse elements like mysticism, death, fate and memory and all this is dramatized to generate in man a capacity for, or to pave the way for, the experience of the beyond. As for fate, Rilke writes, "That is what fate means: to be opposite, / to be opposite and nothing else, forever." Rilke's reference to fate, "which is silent about us" underscores an apprehension of the almost unchangeable condition of man in terms of his apparent incapability to be expansive like the animal. Again, Rilke makes a curious juxtaposition of escape and longing in the Ninth Elegy where "escaping from fate" is set against "keep longing for fate." In a sharp twist to this juxtaposition, Rilke finds a common inextricable malaise that plagues both the animal and the human:

Yet in the alert, warm animal there lies
the pain and burden of an enormous sadness.
For it too feels the presence of what often
overwhelms us: a memory, as if
the element we keep pressing toward was once
more intimate, more true, and our communion
infinitely tender

The preponderant impact of memory lies in the fact that apart from providing a kind of bridge between past, present, and future; memory serves as an expression of the process of internalization and appropriation of past experience into our present consciousness as a kind of eternalizing of experience. The expression, "the pain and burden of an enormous sadness" is associated with memory since it baulks the movement and afflicts the mind with insuperable anguish. Rilke is dismayed to find the pointless scurry that impels us for departure, a kind of hastening that is apparently bereft of any cause or purpose. He wonders, "Who has twisted us around like this, so that / no matter what we do, we are in the posture / of someone going away?" The expression in the last part of the Elegy, "forever taking leave," which while connoting the answer to the previous question in the negative, points at how we have foisted upon us the banal exigencies, the meaningless hurry, the mad pursuit which in turn have "twisted us around." Rilke's resentment points at our systematic manoeuvre toward a corrosive, narcissistic inwardness:

And we: spectators, always, every where,
 turned toward the world of objects, never outward.
 It fills us. We arrange it. It breaks down.
 We rearrange it, then break down ourselves.

In continuation of the elegiac mood of the poet, the Ninth Elegy offers possibilities for us being needed. There is no more the oppressive indifference of the angel, no more the miasma of neglect since “everything here / apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way / keeps calling to us.” But we frustrate ourselves of the experience: “Us, the most fleeting of all.” Rilke’s lament in the Tenth Elegy highlights the genuine suffering inherent in the human predicament and he suggests it by the metaphor of the evergreen leaves. As Torsten Pettersson writes, “It is not irreconcilable with his anguish in the first six Elegies, which may now be seen as a genuine existential experience, though one that should be embraced rather than resisted. But the appreciative conception of suffering clearly undercuts the attempt to transcend it in the Seventh and Ninth Elegies” (731-743). Yet an undercurrent of grief persists in the poet:

How we squander our hours of pain.
 How we gaze beyond them into the bitter duration
 to see if they have an end. Though they are really
 our winter-enduring foliage, our dark evergreen,
one season in our inner year--, not only a season
 in time--, but are place and settlement, foundation and soil and home.
 (The Tenth Elegy)

The Tenth Elegy is significant for the element of bleakness that characterizes Rilke’s grief. The poet’s visualization of “the streets of the city of grief” as “alien” is built on a combination of the disparate phrases which conjugate rather metaphorically as in the expression, “in the false silence formed of continual uproar.” What Rilke intends to highlight is not how we try to mitigate or avoid our miseries, but the degree to which we prostitute ourselves to distractions, made available by and to us, which are but a travesty of our greater purposes. Thus the aim lies in showing the reality in its nakedness and thereby to desist us from undertaking such ludicrous ways to regale ourselves in our “market of solace, bounded by the church with its ready-made consolations.” In the Tenth Elegy, he once again pictures the hate and the indifference of the angels who would “stamp out” such markets created by us. Rilke’s tacit reference to the indifference of the angels seem to be somehow condign for us because we are blighted by our insufficiencies and limited consciousness—we are the hapless denizens of the city of grief whose “edges are curling with carnival.” The poet strikes a verisimilitude between us and our city, which well-nigh typifies a broader spectrum, in order to harp on selfsame inwardness by which both are limited. Sure of the foregone fiasco that characterizes our sordid attempts, the poet imprecates us for our venal, mercenary obsessions:

For adults only
 there is something special to see: how money multiplies, naked,
 right there on stage, money’s genitals, nothing concealed,
 the whole action---, educational, and guaranteed
 to increase your potency.....

As for the reference to the “market of solace,” which is a very disparaging image used by Rilke, the poet makes his points clear in his letter to Countess Margot Sizzo-Noris-Crouy, January 6, 1923:

I reproach all modern religions for having provided their believers with consolations and glossings-over of death, instead of giving them of the means of coming to an understanding with it. With it and with its full, unmasked cruelty: this cruelty is so immense that it is precisely with *it* that the circle closes: it leads back into a mildness which is greater, purer, and more perfectly clear (all consolation is muddy!) than we have ever, even on the sweetest spring day, imagined mildness to be (Mitchell 332).

Rilke’s introduction of the image of a personified Lament (Klage) in the Tenth Elegy again emphasizes “the first condition of timeless equanimity” that characterizes “those who died young.” The young dead or the early departed ones already referred to in the First Elegy (Line 63) gets buttressed up here not to underline Rilke’s covert penchant for necrophilia or for the theme of early death, but to highlight instead the degree of fulfillment that is the prerogative of the early departed. Rilke’s reference to them is significant in relation to his approach to grief insofar as it relates to Tennyson’s lament over the death of Hallam who *also* died young, thus offering a classic basis for comparison. Rilke, in a letter to Magda von Hattingberg, February 16, 1914, explains his rationale for exalting the young dead:

In Padua, where one sees the tombstones of many young men who died there (while they were students at the famous university), in Bologna, in Venice, in Rome, everywhere, I stood as a pupil of death: stood before death’s boundless knowledge and let myself be educated. You must also remember how they lie resting in the churches of Genoa and Verona, those youthful forms, not envious of our coming and going, *fulfilled within themselves* (italics mine), as if in their death-spasms they had for the first time bitten into the fruit of life, and were now, for ever, savouring its unfathomable sweetness (Mitchell 318-319).

Rilke’s dramatization of traversing the landscape of Lament by the youth with one of the elder Laments and their conversation in the Tenth Elegy is a metaphor for a similar landscape we inhabit where “the tall trees of tears,” “the fields of blossoming grief,” “the herds of sorrow, grazing,” “the solitary cry” unite to display a panorama of irremediable lament. Of course, he does not end the elegy with despair as he transports us from “the land of grief” to “the fountainhead of joy.” However, his grief still persists, and he regrets at our conception of happiness:

And we, who have always thought
of happiness as *rising*, would feel
the emotion that almost overwhelms us
whenever a happy thing *falls*. (The Tenth Elegy)

Rilke’s lament, like Tennyson’s, touches higher, impersonal planes, and addresses issues of universal concern. His grief, however, is not the elegiac effusions of a passive observer; rather the mission of a poet who is aware of his task. A comparative study of the nature of lament in the poems reveals an autotelic nature of grief in that it is sustained by the poets’ own catharsis.

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The Criterion

Feminist Perspectives in the novel Yajnaseni of Pratibha Rai

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Among the contemporary fiction writings from Orissa, 'Yajnaseni'- the story of Draupadi, is perhaps the best known woman's voice. Endowed with a reformist mindset its writer is a passionate crusader against social evils prevailing in the society. This work reveals the social injustice done to Draupadi, one of the five satis and a well-known mythological character who is often insulted as one with five husbands and hence implied to be a woman of loose character. Actually she was not ready to accept the five Pandavas, as her husbands but the situation compelled her to surrender herself to the situation. She felt so insulted but even her husband, in the name of religion, also was not in her favour. The writer has done psycho-analytical study of what is going on in her mind being a womanist character. Pratibhaji's objective in the depiction of the story is to clear the "negative" interpretation of the character and to give her the honour she deserves for holding the Pandavas together and being an 'agent of change in her time' and a kind appeal to treat all the women of the society with the equal respect that to man we are giving.

Introduction:

'Yajnaseni' is an Indian novel originally written in Oriya language by Dr. Pratibha Rai who is an eminent novelist and short story writer of Orissa. In her stories she has tried to reveal the underlying mysteries of the society. From romanticism, she moved to realities of life. Her interest and choice of a subject for novels and short stories are varied. The innumerable strains of modern life, the alienation of individuals, hedonistic philosophy and corruption in the narrow lanes of politics and moral degradation which comprises the nucleus of her thoughts are reflected in her novels. Her novel 'Yagnaseni' is the novel which has given her name and fame in the world of psychological novels. It is her Bhartiya Jananapith's prestigious ninth Moortidevi award winning novel.

In all languages of India, novel, stories, lyrics and other forms have developed after having come in contact with the western influences, particularly with the English literature. What we call a novel is being written in Oriya language in the period of last fifty years. Fakirmohan Senapati is recognized as the father of modern Oriya literature. Novelist like Ramshankar Rai, Madhusudan Chintamani, Mahanti Gopalbandhu, Kalicharan joined in the walk of it. Social problems concerned with country life are effectively presented in their novels. As time passed, people got social awareness. Many remarkable changes occurred in presentation and story-elements of literary forms of literary writers. Oriya literature was not an exception. The contemporary writers began to touch upon the color of 'women awareness' which was entering slowly in world literature. Feminine awakening has revealed itself in the writings of writers. But in the literature of Pratibha Rai, feminine awakening has been revealed in quite a different way. She has obtained a Ph. D. degree in Psychology. When Pratibhaji observes any episode or event occurring around her, her mind and heart penetrates into inner reality through outer surface and then she becomes prepared to produce inner reality with psychological approach on papers. The treatment of story element, subject element, story grip, curiosity, story interest and story

substance in her literature appeals to any appreciative reader's heart which has made her a well known writer in Oriya Literature.

Women consciousness has been presented in Pratibha Rai's novel as well as her stories through the protagonist in a very natural way. Women consciousness reveals through different characters. Of course, women consciousness is not so aggressive and intense in her stories. Pratibhaji only tries to show the inner burning of apparent black coal. She sees, rather observes women's problems and examines them with psychological approach. Thereafter through her observations and imagination, women's age old burning problems awaken in herself like burning volcanoes. "The search for a "social order based on equality, love, peace and integrations", continuous, since the novelist and short story-writer first wielded her pen at the age of nine. "Love and let live" is her motto." Anwesh Ray says the words in his critical review on the book. "I am a humanist" she says, "men and women have been created differently for the healthy functioning of the society. The specialties women have been endowed with should be nurtured further. As a human being however women is equal to man". Her this approach is generated in this novel also.

Several writers have treated 'The Ramayana' and 'The Mahabharata' in their different literary forms and provided seed for story plots. As twenty-first century is the age of science and technology, at the outset of this century, many social changes have come and with them, people's ways of thinking have been changed. With the changes in thoughts, the old story plot is accepted with a new approach. Even our ancient literature has not remained exception in this matter. After receiving an inspiration from 'The Mahabharata' writers like Kalidasa, Rabindranath Tagore, Shri Arbindo, Pemchand, Umashankar have created unique literary works. The woman character of the epic 'Draupadi' has attracted all the womanist writers to judge it with a new approach and a new angle which has resulted in Pratibhaji's one of the greatest literary work named 'Yajnaseni' as she has been deeply feeling in herself global awakening of women-race.

Pratibha Rai makes a determined effort for a portrayal of the epic character and brings to the surface the broader and deeper aspects of Draupadi's mind that lay submerged in the majestic sweep of the grand Mahabharata. In the novel we feel that Draupadi not only remains anchored in the epic but also rises out of its pages to become our contemporary and extremely relevant modern womanist figure to our time. She branched out to explore the more hidden recesses of the human psyche and character. Her short-story and fictional world is not an imaginary landscape. It is rooted in a concrete socio-historical reality. She prefers such stories which are unsparing in their indictment of social evils and injustice. Bigotry and obscurantism of all kinds are her particular *bête-noir* as in 'The Other God', a story that offers a savage critique of the so-called "civilized behavior of man.

Draupadi is a challenge of womanhood. Such a woman has not yet born on the earth. Beautiful women have been suffering like her throughout the ages by lust-blinded men, sometimes, even in the presence of wise, qualified and honorable men. Not only this, because of the words that slipped inadvertently from the lips of her mother in law, she was compelled to marry five brothers for which she was often abused by her family. Her life is full of joys and sorrows. A series of grieves of various types entered her life but still she was self-confident. She had totally surrendered herself to her five husbands. But despite of her sacrifice, dedication and strength, she was deprived of attaining the pleasure of heaven. When, at the last stage of her life, she slipped her step on the Himalayas foot-hill and fell down, she hopefully waited for one of her husbands to wait for her and help her. But none of her husbands even threw a glance at her. On

the contrary, Dharamraaj Yudhishtir, Lord of righteousness, said “Do not turn back to look! Come forward!” They emptied the entire cup of blame on her head and went away leaving her at death’s door! Yudhishtir’s these words had shattered Pratibhaji’s Draupadi’s heart. She thought, “How false is this bond between a husband and a wife! Affection, love, sacrifice and surrender! If man suffers the consequences of his own deeds, then offering myself at the feet of five husbands for the sake of preserving Yudhishtir’s dharma! Why did I have to bear the burden of the whole world’s mockery, sneers, innuendos, abuse, scorn and slander?”(3) This novel begins with the Draupadi’s life ending period. Lying at the foothills of Himalayas, she writes a letter to her friend Lord Krishna through which her women consciousness is revealed. The above mentioned quoted words show first awakening of women consciousness in her. Through ‘the flashback narrative technic’ the novelist has tried to depict self-aware attitudes of a woman protagonist which normally take place in almost all sensitive women of our society.

Draupadi’s awareness as a daughter:

As a daughter to king Draupad, Draupadi is a conscious and alert character. She is fully aware of her duties and rights. The novelist has tried to present that by depicting the inner anguish of Draupadi. Many injustices done to her during her role of a daughter are revealed here by sighting many instances showing her inner movement regarding her rights being a ‘daughter’ of king Draupad. Draupadi was born from the sacrificial alter built for fulfilling a vow. Her aim of taking birth was to avenge her father’s insult and to preserve dharma on this earth. After the completion of her naming ceremony, her father offered his feelings to Lord Krishna to marry Draupadi as he was the best of all men in Aryavat. Listening to that, Draupadi felt thrilled due to some unknown sensation. A heavenly, pure, sweet stream of love drenched her heart. Once when she was enjoying evening breezes in her garden, Nilanjana rushed to her to inform her that Shri Krishna was parting to return to Dwarka. She reached there and requested him to accept her pranam. With lowered face, when she offered herself at Krishna’s feet, he soon removed his feet and told to the king that she was not an ordinary woman. So for her to select a life partner Draupad had to arrange a ‘svayamvar’. Krishna’s those words seemed to churn her heart. When Krishna told Draupadi that his intimate friend-Arjun was only suitable for Draupadi and he would give name and fame to Draupadi, fulfilling his vow to defeat Drona’s arrogance, Drupad thought that his son-in-law must be the greatest of heroes, if he might be Krishna or Arjun. But Draupadi thought, “The garland that I had been weaving since the morning to put round Krishna’s neck would have to be put around Arjun’s neck. That too at Krishna’s behest! Did I have no wish of my own? No desire? No carving? Simply because I was ‘Yagnaseni’-born of the sacrificial fire? My birth, life and death-all were directed by someone else. Why had I come and why should I remain alive? Why should I die? What was their intention? I knew nothing.”²⁴ She felt as if her youth had been varnished. She had no right to take decision of herself. She had become an infant. She thought, “As an ignorant infant, I should play with whatever toy my master places in my hand! Be happy and go on living. Who was I to ask who would be my toy and why?”⁽²⁴⁾ She always thought that she had to honour only her father’s wishes. There was no meaning of her life. Sometimes she felt that she alone had to preserve dharma on the earth as if it is only her duty being a daughter of her father. She satirically responded the situation as “what option do I have? Whatever Krishna desires, father will do. It is my duty to honour Father’s wishes. Leaving dharma aside, what meaning my life hold? (27)

Once, Draupadi was strolling in the garden with Nitambini. She was teaching her talking of Arjun’s Qualities. Her brother Drishatayadumna arrived there to inform her about the death of the Pandavas. Even after that, and knowing that there was no one to suit her daughter, the

svayamwar was held. She thought that if everyone failed to fulfill the condition of the svayamwar, her father would not relax the conditions of the test. She also thought, “And if he did relax the conditions, why should I silently accept them? First I was offered to Krishna. He did not accept me and ordained that I was for his friend-Arjun. I did not feel any hesitation as Arjun had been born of a portion of Krishna himself. But if someone other than Arjun succeeded in the test due to her father’s relaxations, how can I taint my soul by wedding that person? (33). She disliked the fact that even though she was capable of taking wise decision she was not allowed to choose her life partner. Her father was playing a game about selecting her life partner. He was thinking of the person who can help him to take revenge of his insult by Drauna’s arrogance which laboured to make Drupad adept.

When Draupadi was informed about the death of Pandavas, she said her brother, “Brother! Can’t the arrangements for svayamvar be stopped?” Her brother was startled and said, “How...Pandya, Magadh, Koshal, Hastinipur, Madra, Kamboj, Gandhar and other kingdoms have come. To speak of aborting the arrangements will be a great insult to them. Panchal will have to acknowledge defeat before their united strength. Panchal will be gravely endangered. Therefore, for the welfare of the kingdom and to honour the guests, the svayamvar assembly will be held at the notified date and time. There is no other choice.”(34) Draupadi thought to herself, her danger could never be of greater importance than the danger facing the kingdom. Therefore she had to face the danger of unknown person who will fulfill the condition of the svayamvara. She was feeling so sorry as no one was there to appreciate the danger which she was facing. Sighing deeply she said that none will be able to the conditions of svayamvara and, therefore, she shall remained unmarried. Let only the danger facing the kingdom be averted and Panchal be emptied of enemies. Listening to these her brother hopefully said that, that was what was going to happen. Her brother’s those words made her disturbed. She remained silent. All the enthusiasm, dreams, fantasies, desires, anxieties aroused in her by the ceremony had died out. She accepted the truth that after all she had no role in what had occurred and what was going to occur, where was the cause for anxieties? Thus whatever she was doing was only to respect her father’s wish. Her heart was not supporting her decision.

On the day of svayamvar she had to appear before all. First she went to bathe and entered into the temple of Parvati for worship. She prayed, “Devi! Preserve my honour... If the person I have accepted as my husband has been burnt to death is that not an insult to me... If anyone other than Arjun was successful in passing the test, father would accept him as son-in-law, but how can I take him as husband?” (36). She was thinking that chaste Sita was her ideal. After reading her life story she had turned her devotee. But then she thought that to live like her was not possible for her. Like her she could not silently bear the agony by burning up within.

She was profoundly ashamed to be the target of so many lustful eyes. Before appearing before the invited worriers she was thinking, “I would be on display before all. My beauty and radiance would spur the competitors on.” (39). She was thinking, for any woman, how painful it was to have her beauty on display in an assembly hall. The entire hall filled with murmurs the moment she arrived. Young and old, Brahmin and Kshatriya, men and women – everyone gazed stunned at her dark loveliness. She wanted to hide her face in the veil. Then, as if in tune with her wish, bees left the bouquets arranged in the hall and began humming around her like a dark blue veil creating a curtain between the greedy eyes of the princess and herself. She was thinking that bees they were, but they were very sympathetic. She was grateful for their generous support. Only they could feel how painful it was for a woman to have her beauty on display before the lustful eyes. Strangely enough, scholars and priests were incapable of sensing that.

One by one all the ambitious suitors began advancing to the spot but one after another failed in fulfilling the condition of svayamvar. At last taking permission of lord Krishna one hero lifted the bow and shot the golden fish on the ground. Directions reached her for alighting from the dais with the marriage garland. But Draupadi was already affianced and betrothed to Arjun. She was thinking how could she wed anyone other than Arjun? She told this to her brother but her brother told her, “the father’s dharma is the daughter’s dharma. Ramchandra had taken to the forests for preserving his father’s dharma. King Drupad has desired to make Aryavat’s finest warrior his son-in-law. Today that best of the heroes has been tested and he stands before you. Without delay honour your father’s vow and discharge the duty of a daughter.”(46). She was instructed to honor her father’s vow. She felt much disturbed thinking, “even if my dharma was destroyed, my father’s dharma must be preserved.” (46). Perhaps this is a big satire on the religious approach of our society which strongly believes that any members of father’s family is not entitled to use anything of their daughter or daughter’s father-in-law’s home. Here such a religious father wants to make his well-versed daughter a puppet. To fulfill her father’s desire she is forced to surrender herself to whatever her father points out.

Draupadi felt very much tensed as even the learned men, priests, scholars and elders could not experience the grief, the sorrowful condition she was passing through. She thought in this male-dominated society, a daughter is a toy in the hands of her brother or father. Her woman conscious mind was not ready to accept what her father, her brother, or the society was doing to her. A male dominated society is a social evil which a common woman can’t understand. Pratibhaji has really very deeply experienced her situation and doing psychoanalytical study tried her level best to judge her character with new angle.

Feminine awareness in Draupadi as a wife:

All the marriage life incidents those took place in the life of Draupadi in the novel ‘Yajnaseni’ are representative of women race’s sufferings and miseries. Even if the shooter was a poor Bhramin, Draupadi had to walk away with him harmoniously on the path of life to honor father’s wish and vow. The frustrated lust crazed king’s wish to snatch her away from the suitor could not be unnoticed by her. Anyway, she was protected by her husband. Then-after, they had to go by chariot to her father-in-law’s house, but the bhramin opposed that and said they would go on foot. He also told that Krishna had to honor her husband’s dharma. Dhrishtadyumna, her brother, wanted to protest but Draupadi instantly said, “Brother, now permit me to follow my dharma. This is what is proper for every woman. I too should do the same. What trouble is there in this? She, who has taken birth from sacrificial flames, can, if the need arise, immolate herself by preserving dharma. Now bid me farewell with joy.”(48). Every one left speechless at her words as her explanation was a strong slap on their faces. She had tried to show them that a woman should always follow anyhow the rules laid down by the male dominant society in playing any role. She had accepted the rules of the svayamwar. She had to accept besides her affianced condition that mendicant Bhramin as her husband, obeying instruction of her brother, and then she had to obey her husband’s wish as for any Indian woman, it was her humble duty to follow her husband’s wish in any situation. Draupadi was thinking that every daughter did not fall into the hands of an eminent man. And even if that happened, there was no guarantee of her being entirely happy. So she did not like to be sorry for the Problem which had no solution. Taunting her father, she said, “You wanted the greatest hero of Aryawart to become your son-in-law. That has what happened.”(49). Here perhaps she wanted to make them realize that all of them had thought over their problems, their vow, their Dharma. They never had taken care of her. She became very much conscious of herself looking back on her past. Directly, nothing had

happened with her as she desired. She did not know then that her role would keep changing every moment; that she would have to carry out terrible duties amid on ever changing scenario.

Passing through the forest with her husband she was quite happy. But when her mother-in-law told them, “My sons, whatever you have brought divide it amongst the five of you equally!”(55). Listening to elder brother’s call that they had brought a priceless object, Draupadi disliked the word ‘object’, even though she knew the fact that she had been remained as an object in the hands of her father, of her brother, and at last of her husband. All five brothers were ready to marry her. At that time she thought, “My mind rebelled. Did I have no say? Then what was the meaning of the svayamvara?Why should I accept the other brothers as husbands?...Why should I silently bear such an insult? Was I a lifeless statue...would these brothers impose upon me their whimsical authority and should I accept that?”(56). She was furious with her husband. She was not like other women for whom their husband is God. She thought that why did her husband not rebel hearing that his wife was to be turned into an object of enjoyment for his elder and younger brothers? On the contrary when her husband told other brothers that Krishna would be the wife of all, Draupadi once decided to turn into searing flame of the sacrificial fire and destroy the world and in it these five brothers too. If her husband were to turn into a fist full of ashes she would not be sorry. She was burning in inner anguish. An ordinary woman can’t think like this as she prefers to fast, to attend ritual ceremony, to do jap, tap and vrat for her husband’s health and wealth sake. After that critical condition she had known that her husband had nothing to do with her depression or anguish. She knew a woman had to bear everything. Sometimes she felt that was it what she wanted? – to marry five brothers to save dharma unwillingly. The truth of the universe is not unrevealed to her. She knew to be proud of once husband is one thing but r to be happy with once husbands is much more difficult, keeping the husband happy is an even more complicated task. For her too it was very difficult.

Except her, there was not a single woman married more than one husband. To justify her role of wife, she thought to become a wife of each Pandava by turn for a year and at a time mother and sister with all the Pandavas. But while passing her time with Yudhishtira, she realized that no one can ever justify everyone. She had been suffering a lot after her marriage as she married five brothers. Kauravas always taunted her for her chastity. They always said her bad words calling her a wife of five husbands. In reality she was wife of five husbands but no one was there to take care of her. On the contrary as an ideal Indian wife, it was only her duty to take care of all. Once she was not well. She needed her husband’s touch. But Yudhishtir remained content handing over the responsibility of her treatment to the royal physician. Draupadi thought he had considerable faith in the royal physician but she had lost faith in herself. She was skeptical – with five husbands and insulted by the Kauravas all through life. She would not be able to lead her healthy life. She was so much conscious of herself that for her the surrounding situation was intolerable. Once Arjun deliberately had broken the rule – not entering into other brother’s room who was busy with Draupadi , because of which he had to undergo exile in the forest as a celibate for twelve years . Draupadi could not bear the situation as she had been counting days to meet Arjun whom she loved much. But her all the efforts to stop him were proved worthless. Before going to forest she was instructed so many guidelines – what to do and what not. Draupadi thought, “But what about me? If a woman was learned or wise did no one think of her? Was there no affection, sympathy, for her in anyone? Was she stone, a lifeless piece of sculpture?”(170). When she asked about this to Arjun , he replied that he had done knowingly to punish Draupadi. Arjun was very much wishing to be always with Krishana which became not possible. Actually for that Krishana was not responsible but all of them emptied a cup of

responsibility on her shoulders only, which as a wife she does not like. In such circumstances most of the world's women would be called unchaste, if not physically then at least mentally but Draupadi could remain chaste with her controlled mind. As a wife she was quite conscious about what to do but her husbands were not. They were always in search of substitutes for replacing Krishna to get entertainment for which Krishna never thought of.

Once Duryodhan commanded queen Yajnaseni to appear in the assembly hall as Yudhishtir staked his entire property including slaves, brothers, himself and even Krishna-his wife. Draupadi as a conscious wife in a steady voice said Pratikami, "Go and asked my husband whether first he staked himself and lost or me?"(234). She easily did not accept any command from anyone. She was thinking that even a gambler could not stake his wife then how could Yudhishtir, the dharmaraja? Full of anguish and anger she was thinking: "Was woman merely men's movable or immovable property...Being a woman did I not have right even over myself, my soul? If they had rights over this body of mine, did it mean they could do as they wished with me?"(235).

At that time Draupadi had not obeyed the command of Duryodhana so Dushshashan came there to drag her to the assembly hall. His barbaric behavior had disarranged his single cloth. Before her husbands she was insulted and yet they were silent. Besides them other respectable personalities were still there. Even though, everyone was helpless. When Shakuni said ignorance and helplessness increase the charm of a woman because in such a condition she could grovel at anyone's feet and beg which she wished. Draupadi was learned so she could not do that for which perhaps she was punished. Listening to that argument she replied to Shakuni, "I do not beg for anyone's pity. I demand justice. To protect the honor of women is the dharma of a king...I wish to know: has my husband got the right to stake me after he has already staked and already lost his own self." Each and every woman of the society can't be able to ask such questions to her husband at public place. Not only that, she also challenged the Indian civilization. When she felt helpless she surrendered herself to Krishna and saved her 'satitva'. At last in the presence of all respectable Lords, the kings, priests, and others she vowed, "Till I wet my hair with the blood of Dushshashan's breast, I will leave my hair unbound thus."(244). Only a learned, courageous and rights-conscious woman can take such type of vow without taking permission of her husband. She never felt it compulsory to take permission of her husbands to do something which revealed her feminine consciousness. When they had taken shelter in one palace in disguise, shameless Keechak was misbehaving with Draupadi. On finding an opportunity, she told about that to Yudhishtir. But Yudhishtir declared her helplessness and told her to protect herself. At that time Draupadi thought the husband was the wife's god but if he was unable to protect his wife then how could he be God? Since long she also had taken vow not to say anything to Yudhishtir shading tears as he did not give any importance to his wife's insult. Not only this indirectly addressing king Virat she said a lot to Yudhishtir like, "My eldest husband cannot tolerate any disturbance in his dice-game. It is because of this game that my very life has been choked out of me...if my respect for him lessens should he blame me for that?"(341). Is for common woman to say like this possible?

Conclusion

Draupadi is a challenge of womanhood. She has faced insult, mental and emotional dilemma even in the presence of wise, qualified and honorable men, not only this but also in the presence of her five husbands for the sake of their own dharma. The Mahabharat's Draupadi had no reaction to that. But Pratibhaji's Draupadi is not mute. If required she opens her mouth. She does not believe that husband is God and she should always obey him. She is full of women

consciousness. As a daughter or even as a wife she asks so many questions and declares doubts even regarding the dharma of a female on this earth to scholars. Thus Pratibhaji has tried her level best to present a Psychological picture of Krishana as a woman living a predicament-ridden life, full of variety.

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The Criterion

The Treatment of Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Name Sake*

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Indian writing in English is one of the voices in which India speaks. It spreads the traditional and cultural heritage of India within India and also introduces it to the whole world. It is Indian in sensibility, thought, feeling and emotion and experience but submits itself to the discipline of English for expression.

The contemporary novelists tread new paths and this shows the vitality of Indian fiction. Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh, Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth depict the Indian social scene, the partition scene, the theme of alienation and the social, economic and psychological problems of modern man.

Writers who are cultural hybrids like Maxine Hongkinstun, Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and many others take up issues like identity crisis, nationalism, alienation, marginalization, insider – outsider and the hegemonic power discourses in the fiction that they are writing today.

Jhumpa Lahiri as an immigrant novelist clearly fits into the school of writers better known as the writers of the 'Indian Diaspora'. The word 'diaspora' has been taken from Greek, meaning "to disperse".

'Diaspora', is the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions.... [Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin]

Normally, diaspora fiction lingers over alienation, loneliness, homelessness, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, questioning, protest and assertions and the quest for identity; it also addresses issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures, discriminating margins of two different social milieus, internalizing nostalgia and suffering a forced amnesia. We may call it a literary / cultural phenomenon with a distinct melting pot syndrome or that of a salad bowl where the identity of each ingredient is under question.

Diaspora is the communities of people living together in one country who "acknowledge that the old country as a nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore, always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions".(qtd.in.Kaur, 192)

Diasporic experience is a spring of agonized inspiration, multiple identities, new subjectivities, creative memories and fresh perspectives of language and life. The earlier immigrant works of the neo-colonial and post-colonial works were often a product of forced immigration of people running away from religious and other political or social persecution. But several Indians who migrated to America in the mid 1970s and afterwards were in search of a better life, and material success and prosperity.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967 and raised in Rhode Island. She was the daughter of Bengali parents. She was influenced by both Indian and American culture and heritage. This multi-cultural life style plays a central role in many of her stories, which depict the alienation and loneliness of immigrants caught between two drastically different worlds.

Her novel, *The Namesake* focuses on the lives of Indians and Asians who have migrated abroad. Her writings tell us about the adjustment problems of Indians (both first and second generations) who have now settled in America. The tension between adhering to Indian culture and imbibing American culture, between upholding family tradition and subscribing to the individual freedom and realization that one is an outsider even though one is born there is beautifully highlighted in her works.

Jhumpa Lahiri portrays immigrant experience and the clash of cultures. The conflicts portrayed in the novel bring great empathy to Gogol as he stumbles along the first – generation path, strewn with conflicting loyalties, comic detours and wrenching love-affairs. With penetrating insight, she reveals not only the defining power of the names and expectations bestowed upon us by our parents but also the means by which we slowly, sometimes painfully, come to define ourselves.

The Namesake, is the story of the Ganguli family. Following an arranged marriage in Calcutta, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli move to the U.S. and settle in Cambridge and Massachusetts. An engineer working at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Ashoke adapts more quickly to life in America in contrast to his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family, in Kolkatta. When a son is born to Gangulis, they are faced with the realization that they cannot wait for a suitable name for the child.

Ashoke names the boy Gogol after a Russian writer, whose book he credits with saving his life. But Gogol who does not know the reason for giving him this name, is unable to identify either with the Americans or with the Indians. Intimately interacting with the American environment, the Indian diaspora continues to feel that they are the outsiders even though they have an insider's insight.

The question of cultural identity occurs in Lahiri's writings. In India no single culture exists. Too many cultures have crossed and blended here, and produced a hybridity in us that cannot now unmix. The Indian cultural identity has acquired a heterogeneous composition with today's youth who are on the move in search of better jobs.

Hence the bonding between the people and the settlement is fast disappearing. The familiarity and uniformity of basic cultures across communities in the states of India makes for easier assimilation and preservation of one's own culture. But when one leaves India and goes abroad, one realizes that even though one may try and assimilate with that culture, yet it is a baffling new world. The west which appeared alluring when one viewed it from one's locale, appears complex and complicated when one settles there and realizes that one is exiled by choice from one's home.

Immigration is the movement of people from one country or area of the world to another to establish a new permanent residence. People become immigrants primarily for economic, political or religious motives. The U.S. has often been called the "melting pot". The name is delivered from the United States' rich tradition of

immigrants coming to the U.S. looking for lucrative jobs and having their cultures melted and incorporated into the fabric of the country.

Most of them (immigrants) were not highly educated and did not possess wealth or power in their home countries other than these few commonalities of what they didn't possess, their backgrounds were vastly different. The thread, however, that bound these immigrants together was their vision of improving their current situation.

Emma Lazarus, in a poem entitled "The New Colossus", which is inscribed on the pedestal of the statue of liberty tells of the invitation extended to those wanting to make the U.S. their home. "...Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free". (Encyclopedia Americana, 1998, Vol.637)

To a question in an internet interview, regarding Lahiri as a child of immigrants in America and the conflicts she felt while growing up, she says,

It was always a question of allegiance of choice. I wanted to please my parents and meet their expectations. I also wanted to meet the expectations of my American peers, and the expectations I placed on myself to fit into American society.

She adds that it's a classic case of divided identity, but depending on the degree to which the immigrants in question are willing to assimilate, the conflict is more or less pronounced. Her parents were fearful and suspicious of America and American culture when she was growing up. Maintaining ties with India, and preserving the Indian tradition in America, meant a lot to them.

The first generation immigrants try to stick to the mannerisms, values and beliefs of their own culture and any clash between their concept of "home" and their beliefs baffle them. In most of the second generation people these emotional links and ties with the past in most of the matters are loosened. They mainly go by American styles in food and habits, and their marital relations too are crumbling.

The term first generation immigrant may be used to describe either of two classes of people. One may be, an immigrant to a country, possible with the caveat that they must be naturalized to receive this title. The second class may be the children of immigrant parents, first in a family line to be born in the new country. The ambiguity of this term extends to the term "second generation immigrant", which may refer to the first generation born in the new country, or the first generation born to parents who were themselves born in the new country.

The living 'in-between' condition is very painful and marginalizing for them. There is the yearning for "home", to go back to "the lost origin", and "imaginary homelands" are created from the fragmentary and partial memories of their homelands.

The novel opens with Ashima recalling her homeland fondly. She is in an advanced state of pregnancy, admitted in a hospital for her delivery. To quote,

...nothing feels normal to Ashima. For the past eighteen months, ever since she's arrived in Cambridge, nothing has felt normal at all. Its not so much the pain, which she knows, somehow, she will survive. It's the consequence: Motherhood in a foreign land. It was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved. (*The Namesake* 6)

They also face cultural dilemma when their cultural practices are mocked at and there is a threat to their cultural identity. They stand bewildered and confused, and show resistance also to the discourse of power in various forms. In the following generations these confusions, problems and yearnings become less intense as they get influenced by the culture of that country and also adapt themselves to it.

To a question in an internet interview, regarding her immigrant experience, Jhumpa Lahiri says,

...The way my parents explain it to me is that they have spent their immigrant lives feeling as if they are on a river with a foot in two different boats. Each boat wants to pull them in a separate direction, and my parents are always torn between the two. They are always hovering, literally straddling two worlds....

She feels an immigrant must teach us so much about the world and about human beings, things we can't understand if we are born and raised and live our whole life in one place.

"The generational differences" of the migrants and their children occupy different spaces in the 'representative' culture but their experiences of feeling rootless and displaced can be similar on nature. Though the children born to migrant peoples enjoy better settlement and place in that country "their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community is influenced by the past migrant history of their parents or grand parents".

Ashima tries to settle in and adjust herself to her surroundings, but she feels strange and lost in this country and spends hours remembering her parents and family, and reading the same five Bengali novels time and again. While waiting for the child to be born, she relives the past until the point of her departure for Boston. The thought of bringing up a baby in an alien land terrifies her.

...to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare. (The Namesake 6)

Ashima gives birth to a boy and he is named Gogol after the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. She feels,

without a single grandparent or uncle or aunt, at her side, the baby's birth, like most everything else in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half true She never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived. (The Namesake 25)

Gogol who does not know the reason for giving him this name, is unable to identify either with the Americans or with the Indians.

Gradually Ashoke and Ashima's circle of Bengali acquaintances grow and the cultural spirit of Bengal is recreated whenever the friends meet. Robert Cohen comments that distinct diaspora communities are constructed out of the,

...conference of narratives of the old country to the new which create the sense of shared history.

As Ashoke and Ashima continue to maintain a solidarity with the community, they identify Gogol continues to search for his own identity, for a set code that will not make him feel an "insider – outsider".

The first time his parents leave him alone overnight he goes with his friends Colin, Jason and Marc to a party in the university where his father teaches. This is his first visit to a dorm. There he meets a girl and he introduces himself as Nikhil and “he feels at once guilty and exhilarated”. (The Namesake 96) “Stunned at how easy it is” to say Nikhil, he who never dated a girl before and feels brave. He manages to kiss her before he goes. But it hadn’t been Gogol but Nikhil, “*That Gogol had nothing to do with it*” (The Name Sake 96)

One must note the dual identity or identity crisis in Gogol. Prior to his departure for college, Gogol officially changes his name to Nikhil. But even though he had longed to change his name, he finds that he has to get used to being called Nikhil. And when his parents also refer to him as Nikhil he feels, “... in that instant that he is not related to them, not their child”. (The Namesake 106)

Ashoke and Ashima make adjustments which are absolutely necessary. They try to bring up their children the way it is done in India. Sonia and Gogol try to assert their individuality, and Gogol goes to the extent of reminding his parents that he is eighteen.

Ashoke and Ashima cannot think of Pemberton Road as their home, but Nikhil refers to his New Haven hostel as his home. Ashima is outraged by his remark. “...Sorry, I left it at home” (The Name Sake 108). Ashima says

...that after twenty years in America, She still cannot bring

Herself to refer to Pemberton Road as home. (The Namesake 108)

Though Ashoke and Ashima have a large circle of Bengali migrants as their friends; the sense of alienation can be felt in them. Gogol and Sonia, American born and educated, want to be accepted as Americans. However, they feel alienated both from their parents and from their American friends who consider them as outsiders. The insider outsider feeling is prevalent in all migrants.

It is through the eyes of the first generation settlers that the second generation learns about their homeland. The idea of ‘home’ is central to all human beings in every culture. Having sampled the pleasures and pains of the world, one longs to return to one’s home. Ashoke and Ashima’s body language and demeanour change, the minute they are in India. They are more confident and assertive. It is true that every time one returns one comes back to a different home, because times change and so do people, but nevertheless it is a home where one’s roots are anchored.

The first generation wants to preserve their culture and customs in the foreign land. It is significant that every other Saturday Ashoke and Ashima send Gogol for Bengali language and culture classes at the home of one of their Bengali friends. But,

The children in the class study without interest, wishing they

could be at a ballet or softball practice instead. (The Namesake 66)

Lahiri also shows that most of the first generation people adjust well and make a space for themselves in the new country. Ashima is a good example of Lahiri’s first generation people. She tries to adapt herself with the society, she tries to work in a library and manages to drive a car by herself. They concede to Sonia and Gogol’s demand of celebrating Christmas, and having an American dinner once a week.

However, when Gogol gets involved with Ruth, they disapprove openly saying ‘You’re too young to get involved this way. (The Namesake 117)

When Ruth goes off to Oxford to do a course he misses her and he, ... longs for her as his parents have longed, all these years, for the people they love in India... for the first time in his life, he knows this feeling. (The Namesake 117)

He attends a panel discussion about Indian novels written in English. There the question about marginality is discussed.

Teleologically speaking, ABCDs are unable to answer the question 'where are you from?' the sociologist on the panel declares. (The Namesake 118)

Gogol realizes that ABCD [ABCD stands for American born confused "desi"] refers to him also. He ponders over the question of identity.

After graduating Gogol gets a job in a firm and is posted in New York. He meets Maxine and is invited by her for dinner. While eating dinner with Maxine's parents, he recalls his mother's hospitable nature and how, "*She would never have served so few dishes to a quest.*" (The Namesake 133)

Lahiri shows that comparisons and contrast between Indian culture and Western culture are bound to occur. Cultural displacement involves the loss of language, family ties and a support system.

Salman Rushdie says,

A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption. He loses his place, he enters into alien language, he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behavior and codes are unlike and sometimes even offensive to his own. And this is what makes a migrant such a pathetic figure, because roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be human being.

For the second generation the question of identity is a complicated issue. At home Indian culture and value system are adhered to, while in public the American code of conduct is followed. This becomes doubly problematic. Added to this is the fact that Ashoke, Ashima and all first generation settlers want their children to do well and get good jobs. The American dream looms in their eyes and they want their children to exploit the situation and derive the maximum benefit for themselves, but they must follow the Indian moral and cultural code at home.

However, Gogol, Sonia, as well Moushumi want to chart out their own lives. Gogol's shifting in with Maxine is an assertion of his independence, and his desire to completely merge with the American culture. Gogol eventually marries Moushumi, but they are not happy and so they part.

Ashoke dies, and Ashima decides to sell the house on Pemberton Road. Hence forth she would spend six months in India and six months in the states.

True to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders, without a home of her own, a resident everywhere and nowhere (The Namesake 276)

Initially when she had come in 1967, she had been petrified of living in America. But now as she makes the journey back home alone, she is no longer terrified.

It is the last Christmas party at Pemberton Road after the death of Ashoke. Gogol, Sonia and her fiancé Ben, and other guests gather around Ashima to enjoy this moment. Gogol goes to get his father's camera and finds the book, which his father had given him on his birthday and which he had never bothered to open and read. As the party goes on downstairs, he sits on his bed and begins to read the book.

The first generation migrants face cultural dilemma but do their best to retain their cultural identity and cultural practices in their beliefs, values, cloths and eating habits. These 'beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values along with their 'possessions and belongings' are carried by migrants with them when they arrive in "new places". The children of the migrants do not face the same problems because of their parents living "here now". Thus Lahiri has shown dynamically the shifting concepts of 'home' and 'displacement' in the successive generations of migrants.

Lahiri uses her own craft, technique, style, format and structure. Her narrative voice is elegant, bitter sweet and gentle. Her novel talks of Indian culture, traditions, including food and festival, clothes and customs.

Her novel, *The Namesake*, exhibits her signature style and in it she revisits issues that she knows well, those of cultural displacement, sense of identity, and belonging with one foot in two worlds.

Lahiri gracefully shifts the narrative focus from the Ganguli parents to Gogol as he reaches school age. Gogol struggles with his name, which he regards as absurd and inappropriate. The issue of culture permeates the novel, from the early dislocation of immigration in the first half of the novel to Gogol's departure from home to Yale University.

This transition is marked by Gogol's decision to change his name to Nikhil. Gogol's college experience in one way resembles what might be called typical; he falls in love; he discovers architecture; he begins to assert, against his parent's desires, his independence and individuality. And yet his experiences are always complicated by the particular, as in any life. Gogol can never, even when he moves to New York to work in a large architecture firm, shake his past, his culture or his name as he wishes to do. The novel exposes the fallacy of the American myth of self-creation.

Gogol grows up, moves out and goes through life suffering personal tragedies that also shape his identity. The novel ends with Gogol in his early thirties. Although the novel never feels busy or hectic, the characters are always in transit.

America and the west have always been idealized by the Indians. But when qualified Indian migrate to America then the adjustment problems begin between the traditions, one has inherited and the day to day life one encounters there. There is a gradual adjustment, and assimilation and then a hybrid culture comes to the fore. Gradually one develops a respect for other cultures even though one's own culture remains ingrained within oneself. Culture is not defined now-a-days by a place, it is defined by time 'the now'.

As identity becomes the core issue, names become quite significant. The expressive function of a name varies from culture to culture. In Lahiri's novel, Indian names, the Indian identity of her characters become potent symbols and tools to highlight the immigrant identity. Lahiri's works are scattered with details of

traditional Indian names, food items, cooking details and wardrobe lists providing the Indian an ethnic touch.

In Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* the role of memory in a process of change is often used by the writer in an effective way. Memory plays tricks on all of us. Memory often idealises its perception of a place to convince oneself that there is one entity which remained constant in world of flux.

Food in the novel is a talisman, a reassuring bit of the homeland to cling to. Spices and flavor waft through like themes in a piece of music as evidenced by the following passage.

...with the samosas, there are breaded chicken, cutlets, chickpeas with tamarind sauce, lamb biriyani, chutney made with tomatoes from the garden. (The Namesake 148)

Lahiri uses food as a tool to explain Bengali culture: and also tries to distinguish it from other cultures.

For example :

...Gogol's annaprasan, his rice ceremony there is no baptism for Bengali babies, No ritualistic naming in the eyes of God. Instead, the first formal ceremony of their lives centers around the consumption of Solid food. (The Namesake 38)

Ashima is shocked to see whiskey and wine bottles instead of cereals and tea on top of the refrigerator in Judy's house. Here Lahiri emphasizes cultural difference through food. Lahiri is keenly sensitive to the fine ruptures and sudden disjunctures which make the familiar alien, which delink one from the ties of humanity, family kin leaving one with the acute sense of being alone. She maps the emotional lines of her characters.

Lahiri's elegant prose guides us through their lives. Toward the end of the novel Gogol's mother, Ashima, thinks, "They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness" That pressure has given way, in the case of the subsequent generation, to American common sense". The perpetual tensions between cultures, between individual minds, between the mind and the world beyond it, runs through this empathetic, beautiful novel.

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The Criterion

Promoting Multiculturalism in R.Ramanathan's *Who is Kalam?*

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A general definition of Multiculturalism is, the appreciation, acceptance or promotion of multiple cultures, applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, usually at the organizational level, e.g. schools, businesses, neighborhoods, cities or nations. A common policy to promote this multiculturalism is that they avoid presenting any specific ethnic, religious, or cultural community values as central. It is the root for forming new cultural phenomenon or "Transculturation", a word coined by Cuban, an anthropologist. Even opposition for this multiculturalism is there under the name of trust, charitable, unstable condition, westernization etc., the current trend and globalization support multiculturalism a lot under the name of equality, broad and updating view point and growth. So many countries like Australia, Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, Japan, Philippines, and Singapore including India started to adopt the multicultural set up for their policy making system. Though the word 'multiculturalism' is not much used in India in the past it has used the sub-division of multiculturalism, unity in *diversity* is more commonly used and still is being used. Our former president and dedicated scientist, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, also encouraged this policy for the growth of his nation. But he didn't blindly accept all aspects of this cultural system. He simply means to take each aspect on its own merit and determine if it can be acceptable in the whole. R.Ramanathan's, Financial advisor of Dr.Kalam, in his book *Who is Kalam?*, portrayed some important incidents which helped to draw the personality of Dr.Kalam, Kalam's immediate responses to certain situations, his personal habits, his life style, his interests, his way of responding to different kind of people and leaving impressions to youth, children, and to his co-workers, Raman's study on the turning points of Kalam's transformation from a shy young man to the courageous and motivating leader of the nation, and some achievements of this great personality. Among those information shared with an attempt to kindle the interest of the readers, this book, also leaves some place to view Kalam's support for his usage of multicultural set up with a purpose. Thus this paper focuses to bring out some of Kalam's thoughts that how the multicultural set up could be used for the benefit of a country without making any complex issues through a study on R.Ramanathan's *Who is Kalam?*

Promoting Multiculturalism in R.Ramanathan's *Who is Kalam?*

Dr.A.P.J Abdul Kalam, the eleventh President of India teaches, through his own example and percept, the art of living a prosperous, holy, spiritual, successful, happy and divine life. The atrocities by religious extremists have been increasing over the past few decades which resulted in making everyone started uttering anti-religious denunciation against some religions. So the development index, including moral, ethical and humanitarian goals is at the bottom in so many countries that are unwilling to accept the multicultural set up for leading their life style. Without the abundant existing of natural resources in those countries they would be at the bottom of the wealth ladder too. These countries are the dredges of humanity, they are cesspools of intolerance, foment and murder. These countries are in the drainage and stink worse than sewage. And what is astounding is the fact that some personalities with the broad view of the religion outside the religious based countries hold as a goal to make their host country into becoming these sewers and thus take away the very

prosperity that allows them such freedom of thinking and action. One such personality is Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam.

India is the most culturally, linguistically and genetically diverse geographical entity after the African continent. While Pakistan had to acquire the nuclear bomb from China because it expelled most Hindus, India which did not expel the Muslims in return was able to develop the nuclear bomb indigenously with the help of Abdul Kalam, a Muslim, it did not expel. The point is that it was a person from the minority who helped India to make the bomb. All the countries of the world are a very long way away from the multicultural diversity of India. We have just about every religion of the world here and just about every culture of the world here. India is the only country in the world where other religious people have not faced egotistical Anti-Semitism. When we talk of power we always refer to a dominance that would begin to give us the status of a developed country. It is also implied that we would begin to live and behave like the most powerful amongst the developed countries of the world.

At the same time, we have stopped dreaming of inventing a good life for ourselves independent of what obtains in a few countries abroad. We tend to overlook the difference between our initial condition and those of countries we would like to emulate when we prescribe methodologies for a fast pace of economic progress. When Kalam was traveling in an Aircraft in the United States, he was told that much of its controls were software driven and most probably developed in India. When he presented his credit card, he was told that it was being processed in the backend server located in Mauritius. When he walked into one of the multinational software company in Bangalore, he was fascinated to find that it truly presented a multicultural environment that, a software developer from china working under a project leader from Korea working with a software engineer from India and a hardware architect from the US and the communication expert from Germany were all working together to solve the banking problem in Australia.

Kalam encouraged scientists to travel abroad frequently may be with intention to insist the importance of multicultural set up for every field. For example, Ramanathan R. who worked with Dr. Kalam, for seven years as Financial Advisor in the Defense Research and Development Organization, in *Who is Kalam?*, says about Kalam's interest about the fusion of foreign and Indian technology

He wanted them to go out and present research papers and attend as many conferences as possible, to get exposed to as much new information as available. He wanted all the scientists who went abroad to give, on return, a one page report to him on their experience[...] More than 400 scientists went abroad every year from the DRDO. (30-31)

Another best example to prove the result that multicultural set up and thinking will be the best solution for the development of a country could be justified when Kalam watched the fighter planes of many countries roar past the skies of Paris in the air show. His watching of the roaring planes created a burning longing for the day when the Indian planes will adorn the skies at the Paris show.

In his farewell address to the nation, he said his mission in life would be to bring connectivity between billion hearts and minds of people in the multicultural society and to embed the self confidence that we can do it. Kalam did not forget to mention the 100-million dollar pan-African E-Network Project, designed to help bridge the digital divide in Africa, a project considered as his brain child [...] as part of the project 12 universities -- seven from India and five from Africa, 17 super-specialty hospitals -- 12 from India, five from Africa, 53 tele-medicine centres and 53 tele-education centres in Africa will be connected. The project will use Indian expertise in IT, education and healthcare to deliver affordable distance

education and tele-medical services in 53 countries across the continent via a network of satellite, fibre optics and wireless. The President expressed happiness that Indian experience was beginning benefits of technology to the people in Africa to bring about societal transformation in the entire African continent. While concluding his speech, Kalam said he was touched by the variety of Indian panorama, emotional content to the tune, cultural diversity and unity of minds in the vast land of ours.

Kalam stressed bridging the rural-urban divide, equitable distribution of an adequate access to energy and quality water, harmonious working of the agricultural, industry and services sectors, and total eradication of poverty and illiteracy. We are the largest pool of skilled technical personnel after the USA because of which we have a burgeoning and prospering Indian professional diaspora in the West. Nations tend to be successful in activities and industries that people admire or depend on the activities from which the nation's heroes emerge. Japan's heroes work for Toyota, Sony and Honda; German heroes work for BMW, Audi and Mercedes. While we did not have national heroes in our traditional exporting business, we did begin in the nineties to make our software warriors into national icons. People like Narayana Murthy and Premji increasingly became role models. Dr.K.venkatasubramanian praises Kalam in *Who is Kalam?* that

Kalam will perhaps be an Abraham Lincoln of the Bharat
to uplift the blossoms in the dust on the strength of his
great intellect and spotless integrity, a very rare combination
indeed. (100)

Culture is not one definable thing based on one race or religion, but is the result of multiple factors that change as the world changes. The road to India's status as a great power therefore, lies through a judicious and balanced building of both its soft and hard power attributes. Indian leadership in the coming decade or so will have to demonstrate that while adjusting with the unipolar world order, they have not compromised on India's independence and self-respect; that they are capable of resolving the dilemma of dealing with the immediate neighborhood; that the forces tearing India's democratic credentials and plural, multicultural, secular identity have been contained; and that the pace of capacity building in economic and military sectors will not be slackened.

Failing on any of these four counts will delude the aspirations of a great power. In that case, 2020 or 2030, India would still linger on and muddle through as a 'potential' and 'emerging' great power, rather than being accepted as a nation that has arrived and cannot be ignored in any vital decisions affecting the world order. Multiculturalism is the acceptance or promotion of multiple ethnic cultures, for practical reasons and/or for the sake of diversity and applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, usually at the organizational level, e.g. schools, businesses, neighborhoods, cities or nations. In this context, multiculturalists advocate extending equitable status to distinct ethnic and religious groups without promoting any specific ethnic, religious, and/or cultural community values as central. The fusion of multiple cultures and civilizations is the unique character of Indian civilization. Living within the embrace of the Indian nation are vast numbers of different regional, social, and economic groups, each with different culture practices. Culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but it is also a very fragile phenomenon. It is constantly changing and is easily lost because it exists only in our minds. Kalam in *The Family and the Nation* remarks that:

When I was ten, three unique personalities would meet in
our house- Pakshi Lakshmana Shastrigal, who was the head
priest of Rameshwaram temple and a vedic scholar, Reverend
Father Bodal, who built the first church in Rameshwaram Island,
And my father, who was an imam in the mosque. They would
discuss the island's problems and find solutions. (53)

India has the advantage of the mixing of minds. Kalam wants India to play her part in developing an international culture based on past trends and modern urges. NPO Mashinostroyeniya, Reutov, Moscow was involved in technical consultation for Indian scientists in military and technical cooperation by a decision of the Russian Federation Government. This cooperation is a reliable basis for the future success. He discovers India's ancient spirit of adaptability and inclusiveness, its tolerance and spirit of compromise. He finds this ancient spirit necessary for imbibing modern scientific spirit and urges to establish international outlook. The concrete picture of unity in diversity that Kalam gives is the result of his mind and heart.

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The Criterion

A Meeting of Streams: Bapsi Sidhwa as a Folk Historian and Myth Maker

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“Preserver of the collective tradition, a folk historian and myth maker.”

M. G. Vassanji

Vassanji has rightly laid out the crucial role of a postcolonial writer in the above line. A postcolonial writer plays dual roles of a preserver of culture and tradition as well as the harbinger of modernity with new modes of thinking and expression. In their attempt to assert their ethnic identity they redefine the hybrid identity of the nation, the community and their self. In their works can be seen the writer's need for self-expression, nostalgia, interrogation of history, and alternative perspectives of history and reality.

Bapsi Sidhwa a prominent Pakistani novelist fulfills Vassanji's criteria for a writer. Hailing from the minority community of Parsis settled in the Indian subcontinent, she has remarkably accomplished the role of a folk historian and mythmaker.

Postcolonial fiction is characterized by its obsession with history; trying to unearth perspective hitherto ignored or hidden underneath layers of colonial consciousness. Representing history through the altered spectrum of the postcolonial consciousness, writers like Sidhwa undertake the job of a historian and a mythmaker. If history is the details and facts of incidents that happened in the past, then myths are the collective unconscious of the a race, community or group of people having shared history that represent and carry forward their ancestral wisdom, tradition, culture and experience from one generation to another.

When history seeps into fiction it does not merely remain a collection of facts and figures but becomes a human story. Unlike a historian who filters down facts and figures from the past in a dry form, the writer creates characters who relive history in front of our eyes, in the present. They are as much influenced by history as they themselves exert an influence on it. Novelists like Sidhwa are in league with other postcolonial writers as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Michael Ondaatje, etc., in their choice of history as a major theme of their fiction. Approach to the theme however is individualistic; if Rushdie satirizes history then Ghosh interrogates it, while Sidhwa presents an alternative perspective like in her novel *The Ice-Candy Man* she depicts the trauma of partition through the eyes of a polio ridden young girl, Lenny.

Intertextuality being an integral part of postcolonial fiction, Sidhwa like her contemporaries draws heavily from her repertoire of rich cultural heritage of the subcontinent. Parsi and Hindu myths and beliefs find an equal space in the life and characters of her novel *The Crow Eaters*.

In her maiden novel *The Crow Eaters* (TCE 2001) published in 1978, Sidhwa has dexterously maintained her role as a preserver of culture, a folk historian and mythmaker. Narrating the journey of her fictional character Faredoon Junglewalla from the forests of Central India to Lahore, and his phenomenal success as a businessman, Sidhwa represents the migratory nature of her community, their adaptability, eccentricity, ethnic customs, rituals and religious beliefs. Through her fictional narrative she has depicted the historical

context related to an undivided India, Colonial rule and the Partition affecting and transforming her community, their affiliations and life.

Parsis are a very industrious and hardworking. They owe their migratory and adaptable nature to their diasporic genes. They left Pars or Persia over 1200 years ago to preserve their culture and religion from the invading Arabians. Arriving on the coast of Gujarat they assured the Maharajah of their peaceful co-existence through the example of a bowl of milk and sugar that blend harmoniously. Thus adaptability runs in their blood as evidenced by their easy assimilation of Gujarati language, dress and customs into their life and culture. With the arrival of the British they once again adapted themselves with Western life style and culture thereby gaining their patronage. Survival is the most basic instinct of every living being and it is this very instinct that makes the Parsis adapt and assimilate into their immediate environment making the most of the situation; not only surviving but also triumphing over it.

In the novel *Fareedoon* shifts to Lahore in the then undivided Pakistan. He works hard and sets up his business of groceries and supplies. Shrewd and diligent he manipulates even the most difficult of situations to his benefit. Sidhwa gives an expression to the stereotypical image of Parsis and their idiosyncrasies through the characters of *Fareedoon* and his mother-in-law *Jerbanoo*.

In her fictional tale Sidhwa retells the tale of her community at the turn of the last century when the nation was under the colonial rule of Britain. The Parsi community sided with the Britishers, wheedling them with their loyalty and assistance in return for economic favours and freedom. In taking the side of the British they have in fact followed the dictates of their religion that requires them to be loyal to the ruler thereby linking the state and community in a complementary relationship of mutual benefit and gain. On coming to Lahore *Fareedoon* registered his arrival and his loyalty to 'Queen and Crown' by visiting the Government House. *Fareedoon* imparts the wisdom latent behind this thought to his children when he says, "Oh yes, in looking after our interests we have maintained our strength- the strength to advance the grand cosmic plan of Ahura Mazda- the deep spiritual law which governs the universe, the path of *Asha*." (TCE 12).

Apart from the sycophancies adopted by *Fareedoon* and others to cater to the British displaying Parsi loyalty to the ruler, Sidhwa also sketches the colonial history of the subcontinent and the divided loyalties of its people. The dominant centre always marginalized the subservient other, and the attitude of the Britishers was no different. They patronized the Parsis for their own interests in business and economy but never accorded them an equal status. They were also the 'mimic men' trying to imbibe western modes.

. . . the exaggerated servility of Freddy [*Fareedoon*], his son Billy and other Parsis towards the British is revealed as an act to ensure legal security, peace and economic prosperity. With her ironic perspective the flattery of the Parsis is humourously revealed in the novel, but it also expresses an underlying identity crisis and quest for security amongst the community as a whole. (Kapadia 127)

Their identity crisis is evident from *Fareedoon's* opposition to the nationalist movement and *Dadabhai Navroji* whom he calls a "misguided Parsi" (TCE 282).

Throughout the novel Sidhwa has interspersed her narrative with the teachings of her religion. *Fareedoon* quotes often from the scriptures whenever he wants to share his experience and wisdom with his children or make them understand his point. Even his decision to migrate to Punjab is influenced by his religion, as the "Septa Sindhu"; the Sind and Punjab' is mentioned as created by their revered *Ahura Mazda*. He always laces his advices with Parsi beliefs and teachings as when trying to cajole his son *Yazdi* to

accept and understand his decision regarding his love for Rosy Watson. He was proud of his Parsi lineage and spoke of the 'spark' that is carried forward through the purity of generations reaching back to the times of their great Zarathustra, the Magi. He spoke of his cherished friendships with people hailing from all communities, British, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and even goes to lengths to break away with tradition as when they come to pay their last respect to his dead son Soli, yet he is against mixed marriages and mongrel identities like that of an Anglo-Indian, Rosy.

The household of Faredoon follows the Parsi customs of worship and dressing. Fire being the symbol chosen by the prophet; a symbol of their faith, it is revered and considered sacred. "It represents the Divine Spark in every man, a spark of the Divine light. Fire, which has its source in primordial light, symbolizes not only His cosmic creation but also the spiritual nature of His Eternal Truth." (TCE 49). In the Junglewalla household fire is so revered that neither the candles are blown out nor the cooking fire extinguished. Instead the candles are snuffed out with a reverent pinch of the fingers and the cooking fires preserved in ashes to be rekindled each morning. Jerbanoo prayed five times a day and moved from room to room each day with the family fire altar. She made fragrant and lavish offerings of sandalwood and frankincense. Putli, Faredoon's wife sang cheerfully inviting the spirits of prosperity to the house and adorned the landings with patterns of fish and the entrances with garlands of fresh flowers.

A typical Parsi family is portrayed by Sidhwa with all its religious beliefs and customs but she does not fail to acknowledge the fact that migration and displacement has had, on the Parsi psyche and beliefs. From centuries they have lived in India, assimilating themselves into its cultural beliefs and tradition. Faredoon has imbibed the multicultural ambience of the country and the Western colonial influence. He has as much reverence for the Bible, the Bhagwad Gita, and the Quran as for the Avesta. They have an equal standing in his life and are positioned equally with the book of Famous English Proverbs right above his prayer table. On his prayer table stood pictures of the Virgin Mary goddess Laxmi, Buddha, Sita, Christ and Indian saints along with Prophet Zarathustra's image on the shade of the holy lamp. On the table are laid the other items of worship like rose-water sprinkler, pyramid shaped *pigani* and anointing bowls, coconuts, flowers, figs, prayer beads, garlands of crystallized sugar and joss sticks. Like any Indian he believes in mystics and astrologers and consults them occasionally in moments of distress. Sidhwa mentions the custom of making horoscopes for which purpose, "The birth of Parsi infants is timed with the precision of Olympic contests. Stopwatch in hand, anxious grandmothers or aunts notes the exact second of delivery. This enables Hindu pundits to cast the horoscope with extreme exactitude." (TCE 53). The faith in astrological predictions and fortunetellers is depicted through Faredoon's association with Gopal Krishnan and his prophecy of Soli's death. Various other superstitions and customs that characterize Parsi way of life and culture are represented in the novel like the belief in the evil eye by Faredoon and Jerbanoo.

Of the various peculiarities associated with the Parsi way of life is the presence of the 'other room' in every Parsi household. It is a room to which the women are confined to for duration of five days every month during their monthly cycle. "Thither they are banished for the duration of their unholy state. Even the sun, moon and stars are defiled by their unholy gaze, according to a superstition . . ." (TCE 70). Putli is also banished to the other room, a tiny windowless cubicle with an iron bedstead, an iron chair and a steel table. She is not to venture out except for her need to use the bathroom, even for which she has to make sure that no one is around. Food is served to her by the servant boy in a tin plate and spoon, reserved for the purpose. She cannot touch pickles or even flowers, as

they are believed to get spoilt by the touch of women in her condition. She has to spend her time alone and can speak to her family only through the closed door.

Another custom followed by Parsis relates to the coming of age of children in a Parsi household, indicating their readiness for marriage. It is a custom for the young individual to hint to his family his/her desire to marry by mixing salt into the drinking water for a period of three days. Yazdi does it when he falls in love with Rosy and Faredoon had also done the same in his youth.

The Parsis are a close-knit community who has endeavoured to preserve their ethnic culture and tradition despite strong influences from other cultures. Their religion and religious customs and rituals have stood the test of time. Being a small minority community they have held together and maintained their ethnic identity and culture. The first thing that Faredoon does after arriving in Lahore is to visit the four Parsi families settled there. As Sidhwa comments, "An endearing feature of this microscopic merchant community was its compelling sense of duty and obligation towards other Parsis. Like one large close-knit family, they assisted each other, sharing success and rallying to support failure." (TCE 21). It is this community feeling again that can be witnessed at the arrival of Mr. Adenwalla, the insurance agent in Lahore which brings the whole community together in a mood of festivity. When years later Freddy that is Faredoon succeeds in business, he is much sorted after for his help and counsel.

Even in changing times Parsis have held on to their customs. Putli makes Kustis that are much in demand for Navjote ceremonies not only in Lahore but also in Karachi. Though the younger generation as represented by Tanya, Behram, Yasmin and Bobby slowly ebb away from tradition yet the link is never totally severed. All the Parsi women, Putli, Jerbanoo and others never leave their households without their mathabanas covering their heads. They wore Kustis and their saris were worn differently with a triangular piece in front. The men wore crisp pyjamas, flowing white coats fastened with neat little bows and flat turbans.

Every Parsi has to be initiated into their religion through an initiation ritual. The *Navjote* ceremony is a formal ceremony for initiation into their faith that Parsi children undergo. According to the teaching of Zarathustra, every child born to Zoroastrian parents is not considered a Zoroastrian until he has had the *Navjote* ceremony. Putli is full of motherly pride when her children are initiated into the faith at their Navjote ceremonies. "Then, invested with the outward symbols of the faith - the undershirt, *sudreh* and the *kusti*, they were girded to serve the Lord of Life and Wisdom." (TCE 124).

Sidhwa mentions each and every aspect of Parsi life through her narrative, meticulous with her details and personal knowledge. When Behram (Billy) gets engaged to Tanya, the simple ceremony of blessing the couple and finalizing the engagement is portrayed by the novelist. Billy stands on a small wooden platform on which patterns of fish are drawn in lime. His mother-in-law anoints his forehead with vermilion and rice and touches the toes of his shoes with vermilion. He is presented with 'token money' and presents, and is directed to step off, right leg first. The ceremony restricted only to ladies is accompanied with traditional songs and is followed by the Tanya's turn on the wooden platform. Later their wedding is officiated by two priests who stood before the seated couple and chanted, throwing rice, coconut slivers and rose petals at them. The bride and bridegroom are accompanied by their respective parents standing behind them throughout the ceremony as witnesses. Vows are taken in accordance with the rites and customs of the *Mazda* and the blessings of God are invoked on the couple. After their return from honeymoon, when the young couple arrive at their new home they are welcomed ceremoniously by Putli. She swung a silver tray containing water and rice over the bowed

heads of Tanya and Billy. She tipped its contents at their feet, broke an egg on the floor after circling it seven times over their heads and finally a coconut on the floor.

The Parsi community is distinctly known for its rituals related to death, which gives the present novel its name, apart from the fact that they have earned the epithet as a result of their ability to “talk ceaselessly at the top of their voices like an assembly of crows.” (TCE 56). Parsis leave their dead in open roofed enclosures atop hills, to be eaten by vultures, known as the *Tower of Silence*. The structure of the tower is given in detail wherein marble floor slopes towards the centre, which has a deep hollow inside that, receive the bones and blood. The hollow is connected to underground ducts that lead outside the tower into four deep wells that full of lime, charcoal and sulphur. Jerbanoo is aghast at the thought of her remains being given a burial “beneath mounds of maggot-ridden earth” rather than the customary Parsi burial since Lahore did not have a *Tower of Silence*. Nostalgic, she spoke with great respect and admiration about her late husband’s burial at the Tower in Sanjan. “It was his final act of charity! Every Parsi is committed to feeding his last remains to the vultures. You may cheat them but not God! As my beloved husband Jehangirjee Chinimini said, “Our Zarathusti faith is based on charity.” (TCE 47).

When Soli, the eldest child of Faredoon dies, all the customary rites are performed. His body is bathed, dressed in old worn garments of white and *Kusti* tied around his waist by his father along with recitation of prayers. His body is taken to the *Fire Temple* and placed in one of the rooms in the living quarters of the priest. Laid on two stone slabs, the corpse bearers draw three circles around it with sharp nail; a rite after which none could enter the circle except the corpse-bearers. The priest’s dog that had two eye-spots above his eyes was brought into the room for it was believed that his four eyes could ward off evil. The fire-altar was brought in and the priest sitting cross-legged before it began reciting from the *Avestan* scriptures. The recitation continued through the night and the fire was kept alight, fragrant with sandalwood and frankincense. The next morning the mourning continues and the compound between the priest’s quarters and the stone building of the Fire Temple is filled by non-Parsis. In the afternoon, the corpse-bearers come and carry the body on an iron bier after reciting a prayer to *Ahura Mazda*. The corpse bearers are all dressed in white, white scarves cover their foreheads, sides of their faces, and is wrapped around their necks, even their hands are gloved in white cloth tied at the wrists.

Traditional yet adaptable to change, the Parsi outlook to life follows the evolutionary pattern. They adopt new life and thought but are still ingrained deep in traditional values. The new generation though modern in lifestyle, attire and thought still follows tradition. Putli recognizes her two sons-in-law and other members of her community who had volunteered to do the duty of corpse-bearers. If tradition is adhered to then change is also inevitable and Faredoon removes the white sheet covering Soli’s face.

Someone said, ‘Faredoon, this is sacrilegious! Pull yourself together!’ And Freddy, fighting desperately to keep his voice steady, said, ‘They had stood all this while to see my son: let them. What does it matter if they are no Parsis? They are my brothers; and if I can look upon my son’s face, so can they!’ (TCE 179)

Sometimes moving away from tradition is a necessity more than choice and Soli’s body is laid down to rest at a small graveyard instead of the traditional burial at *Tower of Silence* for Lahore does not have a *Tower*.

Sidhwa wraps up her narrative beautifully with the motto of life followed by Faredoon which he passes on to his children on his death bed with an imminent independence and partition on the horizon, representing the attitude of his community

which has mingled and made their home wherever they went, “We will stay where we are . . . let Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, or whoever, rule.” (TCE 283).

In Sidhwa’s fiction, the multiple streams of fact and fiction, history and myth meet in harmony representing the story of a community and people who have endeared through rough times and trying situations, overcoming obstacles and emerging triumphant. Parsis have become an integral and prominent part of the subcontinent’s fabric of life contributing richly to its economy, art and culture. Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *The Crow Eaters* can be rightly referred to as the family album of an entire community and generation of people, their history, tradition and culture; a melodious medley of cultures and streams of thought and tradition. Alamgir Hashmi thus remarks:

Bapsi Sidhwa writes from a deep historical consciousness. Her evocation of a part of Lahore life as lived in the first half of this century is convincing-and charming . . . looking . . . through the diminutive lens of insidious comicality as an outsider who knows better; as a member of the Parsi minority in Pakistan who knows her people’s secrets, real strengths, and foibles. Her novel, beyond particular situation and character, aims at a sweep that encompasses a people . . . (Hashmi 139)

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Conflation of Victorian Binaries and Creation of Dangerous Womanhood in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*

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In the heart of the Victorian age, the 1860s, flourished the sensation novel. Its initiation was in the hands of Wilkie Collins, who's famous *The Woman in White* (1860) started the trend that was to be adopted by many of his contemporaries like Charles Reade, Ellen Price Wood, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. Although many critics have described the Sensation novel as a mere phenomenon of two decades, on a closer look we find that the vestiges of the genre and its sensation elements remained in the novels of main stream Victorian novelists like George Moore, Thomas Hardy, R.L. Stevenson and Daphne Du Maurier – even as late as the 1880s. So influential and palatable its elements were to the popular taste that even a serious artist like Thomas Hardy chose to write his earliest novel *Desperate Remedies* using sensation elements as late as the 1880s. The Sensation novel was a genre particularly noted for its unconventional depiction or handling of women. By 'unconventional' I mean departing from the conventional depiction of women in Victorian Literature – as angels, upholding the morality and sanctity of the Victorian homes, or as passionless madonnas who submerged their own desires and interests in those of their husbands or children. It was however a usual custom in the sensation novels to depict at least one female protagonist as an assertive and transgressive creature of passion, a woman cleverer than Victorian society expected its women to be and adept in disguise and deception. In a few words she was someone dangerous to know, usually the transgressive and self-assertive woman, juxtaposed with the 'angelic' heroine. Such women were doubly dangerous as they generate social instability because they have secrets potent enough to destroy the fabric of rigid Victorian society. Such juxtaposition of two contrasting characters of women was an important feature of the Victorian novel in general, a stylistic device to depict the two polarities of the moral and ideological spectrum that women occupied – the angel or the fallen. Thus we have Becky Sharp pitted against Amelia Sedley or Eustacia Vye and Thomasin. The sensation novel as a genre was perhaps undervalued by critics because it used a fixed formula of ruined heiresses, damning letters, skeleton in cupboards, arson, blackmail, attempts to murder, madness, all the vestiges of the Gothic novels that Austen had parodied in *Northanger Abbey*.

However what is often missed in Sensation novels is the realistic and sympathetic investigation of individual psychology and an exploration of female psyche in the manner of George Eliot and Charlotte Bronte. The prevalence of these 'ingredients' in the popular fiction of 1860s and 1870s suggests that the sensation novel drew its energy from a popular Mid-Victorian reaction to middleclass stodginess and prudery, a reaction that continued well past 1880 and is evident in late Victorian works such as Daphne Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). The popularity of the Sensation novels among the working classes could be accounted for from the attacks that these novels staged on both middle class morality and upper class respectability

In this context I would like to discuss one of the most popular sensation novels of this period under focus, Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, chiefly because I intend to point out that in her depiction of her chief woman character – Lucy Graham – Braddon not only blurs the rigid demarcation between heroine and villainess, or merely tease the reader with the problem of differentiating between appearance and reality, but also plays with, mocks and explodes the Victorian water-tight compartments of the depiction of women as either 'angels' or 'fallen women'.

But, before we go into discussing her novel we ought to know a little about Mary Braddon herself, whose life was as adventurous and as unconventional as any of her transgressive heroines. She started acting in provincial theatres from the age of seventeen and thus came into close contact with the not-so-respectable areas of society very early in life. Mary was bold and transgressive when judged along the parameters set by Victorian society to measure the character of women. She became the protégé of John Maxwell, a publisher, and tried her hands at novel writing. From protégé she very soon became his live in partner and surrogate mother to his six children as his wife was confined in a Dublin asylum for insanity. It was Maxwell who serialized her *Lady Audley's Secret* in his magazine *Robin Goodfellow*. In 1899 the London newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* named *Lady Audley's Secret*, which had by then been staged in countless adaptations, as one of the hundred best novels, despite the fact that it had been published almost four decades earlier.

Braddon was one of a handful of young revolutionary novelists who in their artistic responses of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act 1857 started creating dangerous, scheming heroines embroiled in the complications of what negative reviews termed the 'Bigamy Plot'. They created a new genre while championing the rights of women against a law with an obvious male-bias which determined that, while a wife's adultery alone was sufficient cause for a divorce action, a husband's adultery was insufficient unless accompanied by physical abuse or cruelty. Braddon is consciously contributing her views to the Victorian debate over the nature of femininity as ought to be depicted in literature – either of the conventional angel or the subversive monster – and challenging such polarities by depicting it as it really is – a mixture of both angel and monster. By creating a character like Lady Audley she seems to pose a challenge to the Victorian Patriarchal tendency of simplifying the depiction of women, by neatly labelling them as either the one or the other type. She also mocks the contemporary picture of 'the angel in the house' that was the staple of the Victorian novels of the time. The 'angel' was just a myth constructed by patriarchal society for holding its moral foundations intact. Its definition was unclear and based more on external factors of a woman's appearance, social interaction and little "deeds of goodness" that could earn for her the tag of "angel", but which could very well be a show off by the woman to earn the same. At least the fact that Braddon seems to think so too can be clearly seen in her depiction of Lucy from the inception of the novel. Lucy Graham enters Audley as a governess and instantly fascinates the people around her with her 'angelic' beauty and 'innocent' charms:

...by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile. Everyone loved, admired and praised her. The boy who opened the five-barred gate that stood in her pathway ran home to his mother to tell of her pretty looks, and the sweet voice in which she thanked him for the little

service...the servants; everybody, high and low, united in declaring that Lucy Graham was the sweetest girl that ever lived...(Braddon, 6)

Her fragile beauty and disposition not only build up the female ideal to its height but also shows the enormous power its possessor wields over the minds of people; it allows Lucy to sustain her masquerade for a very long time, earns for her the devotion of the ageing, but rich, Sir Michael Audley and the good opinion of half the world. Braddon's use of ideal female beauty to portray her not-so-ideal and subversive heroine serves many purposes in the novel. However, what has often been overlooked is that Braddon chooses to conflate the ideal with the subversive and deliberately houses them in one woman rather than pitting the angelic heroine against the fallen villainess, that was a common trope of so many sensation novels of the time; in other words she purposely erases the distinction between the "angel" and the "fallen woman" and tries to shake the complacent Victorian reader out of his generalized and shallow assumptions and distinctions regarding women as "angels" or "fallen". The depiction of Lucy Graham with her aureole of a "shower of curls" and her "innocent" and "blue eyes" is used to feed the preconceived notions of the reader by Braddon. She seems to question the very concept of labelling women as "angels" that Victorian patriarchy practised, because Lucy's label of an "angel" helps to mask her true identity of a "fallen woman", a bigamist, a criminal and a ruthless social climber. Braddon makes clever use of voyeurism, as Robert Audley's different perceptions of Lady Audley are conveyed to us, leaving the Victorian reader in two minds about this woman, in particular, and about all women, in general. In the course of some thirty pages Robert presents with too descriptions or opinions about Lucy. In the first he thinks: 'Lucy Audley, with her distorted hair in a pale haze of yellow ...might have served as a model for a medieval saint...' (p.216) And, in the next, Robert is dreaming when he sees:

...the hurrying waves rolled nearer and nearer to the stately mansion, [he] saw a pale, starry face looking out of the silvery foam, and knew that it was my lady, transformed into a mermaid, beckoning his uncle to destruction...(Braddon, 246)

On one hand she appears to be a saint but on the other she is more appropriately the mysterious and dangerous mermaid, thus the threat that Lady Audley poses is not only to the people around her in the novel but to the real world outside too, where patriarchal Victorian society tries to understand its women through hassle-free straitjackets. She disarms and embarrasses society because she has the courage to own her monomania to escape a life of poverty by using the trappings of an angel, which have ironically been given to her by this very society. Lucy Graham is not the fragile, helpless woman that Sir Audley thinks he is rescuing from the bitter gusts of life and taking into his generous shelter but a scheming, calculative and shrewd woman from first-to-last who is also frightfully mercenary. Although all young women of the time were trained to conclude suitable marriages, Lucy shocks the mind of the readers when she confesses that – marriage to her was the means of raising herself from the abject misery of her poverty. She is conscious of the tremendous power that her sexuality and beauty possesses in the marriage-market and she does not hesitate to put it into full use. In doing

this Lucy, or Helen Talboys, proves herself to be the subversive fallen woman, rather than the conventional angel, if only we were to extend the definition of fallen ness to mean falling from virtue and honesty of intentions that should be the guiding spirit of every human being, be it man or woman. Indeed we are set to wonder if her marriage to George Talboys was the fruition of love or based on a tragic misconception that she was entering a socially advantageous alliance, only to realize that Talboys had been disinherited by his father. Utterly disillusioned she forces her husband, with her harangue, to embark on a voyage of fortune hunting in Australia.

Lucy, alias Helen Talboys, does not pine away as the deserted, angelic, forlorn wife, waiting for things to happen to her. Instead she leaves her son with her aged father, invents a new name for herself and by using the universal passport of her angelic looks and innocence manages to secure the position of a governess. Thus far her duplicity, though shocking with respect to Victorian generalizations about the angelic goodness of women, is not corrosive except to her own morality, and the twenty-first century woman-reader thinking so deeply about the rights and emancipation of women, cannot grudge this woman, daring to exploit the only means at her disposal, to carve out her own destiny in a merciless masculine world.

However this admiration cannot hold us for long as we see the Lucy, the 'angel', deceiving Sir Michael by marrying him and committing bigamy. But in a society where the only option open to women was marriage, was it not inevitable that certain, not so morally scrupulous, women would use the glorified labels (and their external manifestations) attached to women by that society and turn the very tables against it? In fact Lady Audley does confess that her calculated second marriage is a foray into a life where there would be no more dependence, no more drudgery for her ever again.

In fact our golden haired, charming, angel can go to any extent to preserve her new-found fortune and Braddon perhaps deliberately breaks all the idealized images one by one as we see Lady Audley conniving with her servants to hold their tongue, to murder her arch enemy Robert Audley, and in fact there is nothing criminal that is beyond the capacity of this iron-willed Lady Macbeth, donning the mask of angelic beauty and feigned innocence. It takes an obsessed "villain-hunter" like Robert Audley to suspect this fair, wax-doll of grave crimes that the people around her cannot even get a whiff of because they write her off as the conventional 'angel'. For them she is either the paragon of beauty, and hence of virtue, or just "silly" and inconsequential. In fact the references to painting in the novel help to intensify this confusion regarding the depiction of women and the flesh-and-blood reality about them. It is only the inspired and probing soul of a painter which can read Lucy mind like a book, painting her in an expression that others think she is incapable of:

"...a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a Pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard an almost wicked look it had in the portrait...Lady...had something of the aspect of a *beautiful fiend*."(My italics)(Braddon, 71)

I have italicized the phrase 'beautiful fiend' because it brings me close to my argument that, Braddon was carefully and consciously trying to conflate the conception of the 'angel' and the 'whore' or 'fallen woman' in a single woman to bring out the pitfalls of the Victorian tendency to generalize, label and simplify women. What tools did

this society have to see through the game of a woman like Lady Audley who carries out her deception at the cost of a society, self-deluded in its understanding of women? None.

Indeed Braddon's introduction of the trope of madness in the novel, to explain away Lady Audley's transformation from the 'angel' to the 'villainess', is indeed a dig at patriarchal society which built up such fixed binaries. It was impossible for such a society to accept the scheming of a perfectly sane woman, who uses the sacred Victorian refuge of the homestead to execute her plans, and Robert Audley, a representative of this patriarchal society having discovered the secret of her aunt that "she is sane" and a criminal has to rely on this label of madness, as several had done before him, to incarcerate this woman.

Braddon thus, is able to stress that madness was an easy excuse, to absolve a woman from her diabolical, criminal activities or cover up her subversive actions, not so much for her sake as for the sake of keeping the myth of ideal femininity intact, and in this case preserving the reputation of the Audley family – which could contain Lucy the 'angel-turned-madwoman' but not Lucy the scheming bigamist, pretender and murderer. Hence, the novel which concludes with the containment of the transgressive woman within the asylum raises serious doubts at this society which is happy to perpetuate the female ideal unblemished by pushing under the carpet such uncomfortable cases like those of Lady Audley, in whom the boundaries of the rigid binaries are blurred. Lady Audley, though denied the acknowledgement of having acted on her own diabolical responsibility by society, still stands out as a threat to Victorian ideals of femininity but at the same time represents women of all times, barring her criminal side, as they are or as they may be forced to become – fallen angels in a Fallen world.

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An Endeavor for Identity in Mudrooroo's "Wild Cat Falling"- A Critical Study

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I need the clefts and crevasses of, well, of a city about me.
Surrounded by man-made rock, I am at home and can
hide away from all that I must hide away from; but, but, I
drag the world in after me, and my misery is exposed on a
stage for all to see.

---- Mudrooroo

The hybrid is already open to two worlds and is
constructed within the national and international,
political and cultural systems of colonialism and neo-
colonialism. To be hybrid is to understand and question
as well as to represent the pressure of such historical placement.

----Kumkum Sangari

In 1965 the first young intellectual of aboriginal blood, *Mudrooroo's*, addressed the country with his first novel "Wild Cat Falling". He is considered as Australia's most gifted writer. He generates the perennial source of inspiration through literary works for the consolidation of aboriginal culture. through his prolificity, bold experimentation and aesthetic sensibility, has made immense contribution to Australian as well as world literature in English. His choice of unconventional subjects and characters has been determined by typical or reminiscent of the harsh poverty-stricken living conditions of humanistic philosophy. The choice of characters in a novel is determined to a large extent, by the exigencies of the period in which the novel is written and by the writer's own interest, wimps, and idiosyncrasies. That is why there is a noticeable change in the concept of hero from time to time. *Mudrooroo* uses literature as a means to modify society has led readers to dub him as a propagandist, despite his repeated emphasis on the fact that Australian content demands an identity for the aborigines. Also inseparable from any meaningful discussion of Johnson and his fiction today, is an issue that is conceivably one of the most sensitive and controversial in Australian literary history – what has become known in contemporary times as 'passing'. The notion of 'passing' is enormously

complex and falls within the culturally coded exegesis of racial classification in Australia. The possibility of passing as either white or black emerges from the interracial human entanglements of colonial encounter and the violent reconstruction of selfhood this may well entail. In the Australian context, the concept also touches on the ongoing question of non-Aboriginal control and authority over Aboriginal peoples' perceptions of dominant processes and expressions of imperial thought.

"Wild cat falling" explores the character of an aboriginal youth who grows up on the ragged outskirts of a country town, falls into a petty crime. He is sentenced to imprisonment for 18 months. In this novel Mudrooroo shows more clearly the displacement of modern aborigines and their inability either to find a place in white society or lead their life according to the traditional ways. The eighteen months imprisonment pushed him under the impression that the society is a fake heaven.

The novel opens with the release of a young aborigine who doesn't feel any variation between imprisonment and freedom. He feels that it is better to be a prisoner instead of leading abortive life in city where he was alienated & marginalized. The protagonist defines himself throughout the novel using motif of a cat. It will be a great surprise for the readers of the novel *"wild cat falling"* the protagonist appears as an optimist by retrospection of his heroic memories. In reality he is a pessimist who has strongly decided to lead a reclusive life. More over the protagonist appears with no hope for future.

"Today the end and the gates will swing to eject me, alone and so-called free Going out side into the fake heaven, I have dreamed of these last Eighteen Months". (3)

Protagonist is engaging himself in quest for social knowledge, self - knowledge to get his own mark in society. He started observing all the prisoners who are going to be released: some feel that they are uncomfortable to face the world, some secretly scared of to face the world but the protagonist confirmed himself that the life will be worse the moment he stepped out.

The day has come and he moves to superintendent's office to collect payment for the days he worked in jail *"March, really step out to show my acquaintance, that I am on my way"* (22). He steps out with so-called freedom. He assumes that as he was born at the bottom of the world, he has to work for him to be the best bodgie. Before his release, he was haunted with various queries in his mind. He looks for abet, and place after his release from all possible directions to enter into an abstinent society.

"Cars zoom past, laden tucks lumber and clatter to and from the wharf. Fremantle is a busy port buzzing with movement, everyone but me with some where to go, while I was inside some zealous prison worker asked me if I know where I was go in I said a ticket was put into my hand when I was born, but if it gave a destination, well, time had smudged the ink and so far no collector had come to clear the matter up." (31)

At outside, he has seen the rigidness of social classes in juvenile section, hierarchical structure of screws and their use of power on their subordinates.

"I soon found out whom to trust and mix with and who to avoid, summed it up. Pretty quickly and decided to make my Mark." (5)

Mudrooroo has shown the hero in many dimensions. He expresses numbness. He feels all love is fantasy. Even sexual relations are through power, but not with love. He wants to love & makes love too, but all physical attributes of his mates and then he felt guilty and full of remorse. He has gone the maximum extent to analyze difference between sexual act and rape.

The conditions have drawn him to think physical relations. This junction gives a chance to see women's conditions and how they are treated and how their lives are encountered by the white society. The important person in this context is his mother who often restricts him not to move, play, and talk to aboriginals. She often insists him to live with white, think like white men. It shows that she is not at all interested to have relation with aboriginals' kids.

"Its not joking matter," she says." If we get seen with that not we'll be chucked out of this place quick smart You've got to prove you do, and don't you forget it (10)

In some cases the protagonist possesses abstruse personality who has acidulous life even after his release. He is the first in a series of alienation, and a humble seeker of true reality behind the appearance of social life. The moment he happened to see June he is under the impression that is it the reality of illusion or the illusion of reality? He changes his attitude to grab her attention towards him. There his attitude shows his curiosity for recognition. He awaits a chance to have a conversation with June where he thought June provides a considerable contrast to the deny character. The protagonist feels that if he goes out with that woman his life circumstances are going to be more fortunate. He expresses *"She's a nice doll this one."* (88) The long conversation between June and the protagonist made them reveal about each other. During their conversation without any brazenness he says to her that he is coming from the prison as an answer provided to June's question. He has also given the details of his educational background.

"I went to an ordinary school for a couple of years, " I tell her." " there I learnt the art of survival against mob rule. Then I got copped for stealing and I was sent to a home where I was educated in the simple techniques of crime and learnt to survive the harshness of Christian charity. In the noongar camps I learnt the art of being completely unexplainable and of sabotaging every make – believe effort to improve the native's lot. I also learnt to take raw alcohol and raw sex. In jail I graduated in vice and aver come my list illusions about life. Now I know that hope and despair are equally absurd."(41)

The way the protagonist explains about his qualifications shows that his awareness about his status in the society, keep a hold of himself and the principle "live and let live." He is looking for some one who helps to solve individuals' worries, internal conflicts or issues in relationship, deep seated psychological traumas and over whelming incidents in one's life. In the process of continuous conversations with June, he appears as he has lost control over him both mentally and psychologically. Generally the loose of control leads to dissolve a potentially balanced image of any human being. The status of imbalance, deep sorrow which he feels that the life offered him a scene of alters desolation. At the end of their conversation, he realizes that all solutions are with in him.

*"Well. If you've got any guts
You'll give them away and start again.
"I'm too old now" I say
"How old?" she asks.
"Nineteen"
"Practically Methuselah"
"Too old to laugh or Cray any more. So*

Old my bones ache”..... Flyblown descendants of the disposed erupting their hopelessness in petty crime” (44)

Mudrooroo wants to explore a sense of belonging, a feeling of loss and abandonment which they have its genesis in a traumatic childhood and troubled teenage years spent in Australia’s welfare institutions. Even after his release the protagonist feels that still he is in prison because of the various issues in the society look like prison walls which restricts his every moment. Before he steps out from the prison he dressed as “*Grey uniform of belonging*” (16) to exhibit himself as one of the “*Citizen of the world*” (16). He tries his best at every moment to hide his aboriginal heritage. Though he exchanged his dress but unable to find a place for him in the society. He is still “*looking for a place*” (37).

His original insight and worried experiences have given a great passion to make his life very happy and comfortable or to become acme instead of appease and antipathy. He feels his aboriginality itself is anathematized.

“I suppose I’m not what they call Australian. I’m just an odd specious native fauna cross-bread with the migrant flotsam of goldfields.” (69).

The novel “wild cat falling” is a mirror which shows the lives of cynical young aboriginals are in dilemma whether they need to practice contemporary aboriginal traditions or need to adopt traditions of white, to lead a better life in the white society. In the world that who really doesn’t have experience about aborigines at all they will get a glimpse of slice of life that is unfamiliar to them. The protagonist is also in the same dilemma since his childhood, “*My mum was half –caste*” (42). Every movement after his release forces him reminisce his childhood experiences. Since his childhood he shares his ideas with schoolmates about the disadvantages of indigenous people in relation to white society.

“My mum says you’ve got to go or you can’t get on”.

“Get on where?” Asks the first boy.

“Search me” I say” get a job I s’pose”

They look at me with dark and doubtful eyes (12)

It is very difficulty for individuals to attempt to reintegrate with society after spending in prison. Throughout the novel he has been struggle by humiliation, marginalization, and atrocity. At every moment he looks for someone fraternize with him. It has shown very clearly while he is interacting with prettiest, astute and “*swell doll*” (38). Where as the protagonist has been portrayed as bucolic, bigotry and who doesn’t have any hope on life. He strongly believes that he is anathematized.

“Not so good” I say “I’m one of the permanent unemployed- unemployables. No rich family to bludge on either” (39)

Trevor Shearton’s novel “White Lies” in which three white men who have sexually shared a black girl buy their way out of guilt with a cash payment to her and the illegitimate child. Due to their bad economical conditions may be forced to change the black women life styles. Who ever were born through such women in the society obviously has to endeavor for identity? It may be the same with Jessie, the protagonist’s mother who has a physical relation with Mr. Willy. The absence of white father, the displacement of mother’s aboriginal heritage, and her passion for identity are the most significant causes for the ‘wild cat’ loss of identity. He expected to be with mother and father “*I’m just so pleased when Mr. Willy takes me out.*” (34)

When they have gone to hill place for wood cutting his father says to his son that the world is a big place. It is the only situation where 'wild cat' has got a chance to go with his father. Willy would have taken his son into the society instead of the hill spot he would see the external beauty of the world .

*"Get a good view from up there?" Mr. Willy asked
The whole world," I say.*

"Hmm," says Mr. Willy and shakes his white head.

"The world's big place, son."

*"I know," I say. And I feel it is a good and a wonderful
World"(36).*

In each moment of his life he stares at every thing so strangely as he comes across first time in his life. He is marginalized by the limitations of the white society and all his emotions like happiness are burnt. Happiness is a great feeling which arises at every heart in a pleasant situation. *"I suppose she expects me to smile back"* (37). 'Happiness' and 'identity' both remain as perennial dreams of 'wild cat'.

As it is mentioned he often throws himself into reminiscence of childhood incidents. Some times he confesses himself that he has done a great bungle, so it is the reason for his struggle for identity. He has been suffering from feeling of isolation since his school age where he had become a funny teddy bear for white kid's happiness. He would have cared his mother's suggestions to make his life happy in white society.

"mum had said when I told her how the white kids laughed at me and kicked my case along the road. She hoped I'd make friends with but I never did. They played with me at school when they had to, but outside the school gates they only picked on me. I didn't tell her at first until she got wild about the case and my torn shirts." (48)

Identity crisis is not only a problem to 'wild cat' but also to his mother . She has a physical relation with Willy and aspired to undergo a major transformation from her aboriginality. The protagonist faces a bitter experience when he and his mother are ordered to come to courthouse for which he has stolen the money and the comics from Mr. Cox's shop. While they are entering to the court house he expresses that *"no one notices a coloured woman and a boy. Nobody knows"* (51). His mother has shown abet to over come his guilty. The same sort of abet he looks even after his release. Instead of abet in the society he experiences aloof and appease. He is very happy with his mother abet *"never mine, son. Every thing will come out alright."*(53)

The main character mind fully loads with problems. With this state of mind what ever the problem he comes across while he is passing on he applies to his life. He has seen the a car machine parts are separated for repair. He looks at it and feels that it is also become victim like him. *"I have sense of fusion with this machine I am always separate and alien from everything and anyone."*(113) Most of the time protagonist appears with full of dejected feelings and abstruse.

He happens to meet Denise. She is a part time prostitute with whom he had an off again\ on again sexual relationship. Denise offers pills to the protagonist and says *"The pills will hit you in a minute. They're great kicks."* (57) Though aboriginals are ill-treated but when it comes to adopting new cultures aboriginals are also equally high in rank with whites. To increase their intoxication they have habituated swallowing pills. Protagonist has seen Denise on bed, the way Denise lies on the bed stimulates *"floods in to me."* (59) Though he is in intoxication and his mind is filled with flood desires, he says *"I want to be unmoved by everything like a God."*(59)

Some of the things can be tolerate in life up to some extent, if things go beyond their hands a person adopts hyperactive attitude. He says:

I have now swell feeling of power now.
..... Sort of god- like my strength at the world (111)

He doesn't care any relation. He finds fault with every one as they are cause for his displacement in the society, "*Did she expect me to thanks her for bringing me in to this stinking world?*"(113). His frustration can be seen in his words "*The stink of the old is worse than jail.*"(114) He looks at every one with a single idea. After his release he adventitiously has come to know from his mother about Jeff with whom he has an acquaintance. He knew him since they spent together in an orphanage and coincidentally he met him in jail. Jeff got released from Jail on the same day. They are not really friends but only acquaintances. Jeff is not a bright individual but very loyal to his friends. But he says to his mother "*I don't have any friends.*"(114). All are cause for his deject and dislocation. His life itself is a mysterious thing for him. There are many around him but no one supports him to perish the so called social boundaries. His experiences after release make him decide to dream for alternative realities. The word "dream" shows a psychic status of the character compiles both metaphysical and spiritual concept, for which there is no adequate English rendering (Mudrooroo's 41).

The main character has a long journey from fremantle jail to Perth, where he again comes across the "*poor old mum.*" (114) He dislikes to converse with his mother who lives at "*a cheap furnished room not far out from Perth.*"(113) His mother has collaborated with the whites and has placed her own sense of belonging and has forced her son to be a mere subject of white society for which he could never forgive his mother and he hates his mother. At the end of the novel he comes to know that his mother has come back to the noongar camp and knows that she is in her deathbed, he observes:

"So now she has gone back to die with them and be buried in that back part of the cemetery in a nameless noongar grave, serves her right. She has it coming to her. Pretending to be better than the rest of them, keeping me way from them, giving me our like a sacrificial offering to the vicious gods of the white man's world." (123)

After he leaves the place, he decides to stop "*A terrible tiredness*" (120) by pointing "*Rifles springs up defensively.*"(120) "*You look done in, Boy*" (120), he heard an old deep voice. He is sure that it's not a white man's voice by which "*I release the safety catch.*"(120) the protagonist is very good at reminisce. He tries to remember where he has seen him. He remembers

"He must be the one that kids said was a magic man..... language of bush animals."(122)

The old man and the protagonist have a long conversation in which the old man has revealed the secret and called him with an identity "*Jessie Duggan's boy,*" (121) and says their binding relationship that could not be perished by any one. The protagonist also says to the old man that how he is forced to keep noongar heritage aside, and constrained to practice live and learnt to think like white men. He has lived in dreams and illumination and under a notion that "*I haven't got a country,*" I say "*Don't belong to any where*"(126) until the old man reveals the bounded relation between them. For the first time he feels a sense of belonging when he is called with 'an identity' and he feels that he has returned to spiritual roots of aboriginality.

The moment the old man has given the ultimate illumination, the care he has taken, the affection he has showered on the protagonist makes him feel that his belongingness is identified. More over he stands as a bridge between the protagonist and his noongar community.

The old man also plays a role of father when he is in bush to escape from copper. The protagonist feels as *"The cat want to live a long tome like the old crow."*(127)

At the end of the novel the unnamed protagonist confesses himself and got enlightenment, *"Why not stick around and face up to some thing for a change? Great thoughts."*(130-131) when the copper comes to arrest him for his attempt to murder, he experiences kindness, pity, humanity from the copper even he has done a worse thing in his life. The protagonist has very impressed by the magic word used by the old man *"Jessie Duggan's boy"*(121). The copper *"asks my name and charges me with attempted murder."*(131) and takes him from the old man's house with a specific identity. He develops a strong passion on life which stimulates a great desire to live with a new sense of belonging.

"I want to live more than I ever knew before. I even feel I might know just a little how to live."(130)

The various snippets of song lyrics used for an effective part of the novel. Because 'wild cat falling' is almost non-stop parade of different voices – and many of them are musical one. From the earliest quotation of *"Love me tender, love me long. All my dreams come true"* (4) to the repeated involution of blues lyrics such as *"Trouble In Mind"*, the novel is shot through with melody and rhythm, especially African American rhythm.

In a perceptive article on the significance of such influences upon Australian Aboriginal Literature, Emmanuel S. Nelson underlines the significance of the blues genre as it informs both the style and structure of the novel. As the notes, the extracts from five different blues songs waves into the next of 'Wild Cat Falling' resonate a 'desolate sense of isolation'. Nelson also proposes that the entire book takes the form of "an extended blue song" and notes that the tripartite structure of the novel resembles the typical form of a blue lyric:

*A typical blue song follows three stages: the singer first indicates his sorrowful mod by introducing his private tale; then he reveals the depth of his personal pain by tragic –comically exploring it in detail; and he concludes the song with an assertion of transcendence through reconciliation with his painful condition."*¹¹

Nelson's observation is a tantalizing one, but is also ultimately flawed: Mudrooroo uses non-Aboriginal structures in his novels, but always within a Black Australian framework. The protagonist of Wild Cat Falling is influenced by the blues when he is in a non-Aboriginal environment, but it is noteworthy that the blue refrains cease in the final chapter of the book. The rediscovery or illumination he undergoes then is a much a repudiation of the self – pitying blues of the life as it is an exploration of his Aboriginality. The blues song provides us with a way into the scarred psyche of the protagonist, but it is, explicitly, a Nyoongah song chat gives him – and us a clear way out of his predicament of rootlessness (*Mudrooroo – A critical study – Adam shoemaker: 23-24*).

Mudrooroo concepts of literature as closely related to life are a by-product of his humanistic ideas. It is his own ardent love for aborigines and his pity for the suffering, wretched, subjugated humanity that lead him to believe that all writers for the sake of man and the function of literature is to enable man recognize his dignity. To the extent that the convergence of concern with identity in postmodernism has been diagnosed as a response to 'a Crisis of cultural authority specifically of the authority vested in Western European culture'. This culture – clash between Australia and its immediate geographic neighbors is exemplified by deferent life styles in such activities as aborigines bonding system of political government, religious traditions and superstitious, food culture and sexual behavior patterns. The changing Australian consciousness

of Asia is reflected in the themes and the authorial, perspectives prevalent in contemporary Australian literature.

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The Quest for Authenticity and Cultural Identity: A Study of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

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Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* presents a family's history, which invariably reflects the collective history of the Afro-Americans. This sequential story revolves around Milkman Dead and his unwitting spiritual and physical journey to his ancestral home. Marc C. Conner points out that finding home is not, as Milkman believes, "a simple matter of geography" but that "his communal identity must be *earned*; that is, Milkman must undergo his own harrowing—in the older sense of being torn, lacerated, cut through—in order to find who he is and where he has come from" (60). Milkman commences his life with a very low level of awareness about the triptych of race, class and gender. Such ignorance leads to an absence of self-awareness, which deters his journey towards his identity. His self-realization is hampered by his embrace of the materialistic and acquisitive philosophy that he imbibed from his father. When he gives up money-oriented thinking, his conscience rises to a higher level and begins to commingle with African masses. This novel, as Marilyn Sander Mobley states, is "essentially the story of Milkman Dead's search of discovery of meaning in his life" ("Myth as Usable Past" 97). It is the story of Milkman's search for his roots. He initiates a journey to the "mythic past" (Spallino 511). Milkman's journey is crowned with the sprouting of his spiritual identity, connecting him to the past incorporating him to present and peering him to the pinnacle of self-discovery.

Milkman's search for identity does involve racial conflict, social transition and communal values. However, on the most basic level, his search for identity is intertwined with family and domestic values. Philip M. Royster notes that the development of Milkman's identity "is depicted by a series of episodes during which he discovers his relationship to his family" (419). He begins his journey toward a self-knowledge that will be earned through an understanding of family relationships and his heritage. As Mobley argues, "*Song of Solomon* invites us to remember the expensive price of freedom and the struggle the descendents of enslaved Africans had to wage to obtain what racial identity once denied" ("Politics of Representation" 212).

Milkman's father, Macon Dead, believes that acquisition of wealth will put him on par with the white race. This can be seen in the way "he behaves like a white man, thinks like a white man" (*Song of Solomon* 223). According to Susan Willis, Macon Dead's attitudes toward rent and property make him more white than black (34). His desire for wealth is his vision of a freedom quest. He chooses to believe what he shares with his son, Milkman, "Money is freedom, Macon. The only real freedom there is" (*Song of Solomon* 163). His inordinate craze for possession pervades Milkman's mind but at the end he realizes that materialism is a hindrance that prevents him from constructing his identity. Macon is as the "tyrant-monster" of Morrison's literary myth. It is much more unnerving to recognize how his ambition, his concern with image and his insistence that his son steer clear of lower classes reflect a value system that dominates our culture (Coontz 1992). Everything about Macon establishes him as Morrison's "modern" man. He is materialistic, isolated, alienated and always looking to the future.

The series of rejections Pilate faced by the Afro-American community shortly after her brother's (Macon's) desertion and her father's murder could easily have allowed her to become bitter, hostile, angry or even deranged, in her isolation. Although she did "finally . . . take

offense,” she did not level vitriol at those who hurt her, instead she took the time to “decide how she wanted to live and what was valuable to her,” choosing to extend merciful love (*Song of Solomon* 149).

Pilate unlike any of the other characters in the book, bases her decision on how she wants to live her life with a focus solely on the Afro-American community. Basing her pattern for behavior on the kind care she had been given “by [her] father . . . brother” and Circe, Pilate chooses to value “a deep concern for and about human relationships” (*Song of Solomon* 149). Pilate determines to love others, treating each one with respect and concern. Her home is open to anyone in need as a haven for rest, refreshment of the spirit or shelter. It is, as Cheryl A. Wall asserts, “a utopian alternative” (25). Pilate demonstrates merciful love to all who enter her door or with whom she comes in contact. She is, in fact, the epitome of love in Morrison’s novel.

When Pilate sings the old blues song “Sugarman, Don’t Leave Me Here,” she sings with an understanding of loss and sorrow, separation and love. No matter where she has traveled or where she sets up her household, Pilate carries the family’s heritage with her. She keeps the name her father gave her in a brass earring and the story of her family in her heart.

Macon is afraid that his son might imbibe Pilate’s impractical philosophy. So he warns him “Pilate can’t teach you a thing in this world. May be the next, but not this one. Let me tell you right now the one important thing you’ll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own, own other things. Then you’ll own yourself and other people too” (*Song of Solomon* 55).

Milkman considers his name a source of shame. J. Brooks Bouson connects Milkman’s rejection of his name to a broader rejection of his race, gender and heritage, describing him as “a shame-ridden individual who carries with him the ‘shit’ not only of his family’s false class pride but also of inherited familial and racial shame” (75). But his contact with Pilate totally changes him: “Now he was behaving with this strange woman as though having the name was a matter of deep personal pride, as though she has tried to expel him from a very special group, in which he not only belonged, but had exclusive rights” (*Song of Solomon* 39). It is Pilate who nourishes his mind with some stories of her childhood, of his father, of his grandmother and of his grandfather who has been murdered; such stories awake his consciousness about his family’s past. She showers love on him. Wallowing in it, he tells for the “first time in his life that he remembered being completely happy” (Plakkootom 85).

When Macon convinces Milkman that Pilate’s green tarpaulin bag contains gold apparently stolen fifty years earlier, he and Guitar stealthily enter her home to steal it. Although Pilate would have been justified in her anger towards Milkman, whom she had loved and cherished, she instead extends merciful love when Milkman is arrested for the theft. Instead of filing charges against him, she changes her form in order to garner the police officers’ pity, appearing as a short, frightened old lady, rather than the tall, confident tree that she was. “Pilate had been shorter . . . she didn’t even come up to the sergeant’s shoulder . . . and her hands were shaking as she described how she didn’t know the sack was gone until the officer woke her up” (*Song of Solomon* 206).

Pilate is a “natural healer,” has an “alien’s compassion for troubled people,” has “respect for other people’s privacy,” and “she never ha[s] a visitor to whom she d[oes] not offer food before one word of conversation . . . beg[ins]” (*Song of Solomon* 149). Pilate was thus able to fly “without ever leaving the ground” (336). Her life of love, care and respect for other people defined her and allowed her to transcend the mundane.

After Ruth's father dies and Macon becomes enraged when he "catches" her kissing her father's dead fingers, he fabricates a plethora of sordid assumptions about the type of relationship Ruth actually had with her father. Ruth talks him out of killing her; however, Macon withdraws from his wife and moves to another room. Ruth is left "with nobody touching [her] or even looking as though they'd like to touch [her]" (*Song of Solomon* 125). The combination of her father's death, the one person who genuinely cared about her and Macon's withdrawal create Ruth's central trauma. With no genuine friend to talk to, no significant communal interaction and the withdrawal of affection from anyone, Ruth thought that "[she]'d really die if [she] had to live that way" (125).

After Macon's second rejection of her, Pilate had intended to leave Michigan and continue her sojourning lifestyle. However, observing Ruth's demise, she stays in Michigan in order to help Ruth and to perpetuate the familial line. Pilate's intervention aids in healing for Ruth and in the conception of Milkman. Pilate, once again, extends merciful love.

Milkman does not love other people. He loves himself and the pursuit of sensual pleasures. Self-centered and uncommitted, he feels no responsibility to home or family. He sees his mother as "insubstantial, too shadowy for love" (*Song of Solomon* 75); he assumes and expects Pilate, Reba, and Hagar's love for him, he overlooks the sacrifice of his sisters, who gave up their childhood to cater to him; and his father, the one person he claims to love, he does not give to or share himself with. Indeed, he is insensitive to the needs of his mother and sisters, careless and cruel in his affair with Hagar and unknowing about the effects of his actions.

Milkman's attitude to his mother and sister is mercenary. Vernersa C. White contends that Milkman is—"a true product of his environment in so far as his relationships with women are concerned" (73). Milkman extends his crippled vision to include his mother. "Never had he thought of his mother as a person, a separate individual, with a life apart from allowing or interfering with his own" (*Song of Solomon* 75). Not only that. He spies over his mother and asks her to provide an explanation. Morrison movingly draws Ruth's response to her son in "I lived in a great big house that pressed me into a small package" (124). She further asserts, "I am not a strange woman but a small one" (124).

Milkman's initial disregard of persons other than himself extended even to those women with whom he was sexually intimate. Although five years his senior, Hagar's and Milkman's sexual play continued to excite and entertain Milkman well into his twenties. However, after their relationship had stretched out for more than a decade and she finally asked something of him, *commitment*, he discarded her like detritus. After all, she had become "the third beer. Not the first one, which the throat receives with almost tearful gratitude; nor the second, that confirms and extends the pleasure of the first. But the third, the one you drink because it's there, it can't hurt, and because what difference does it make?" (*Song of Solomon* 91). While Milkman was experiencing his spiritual epiphany in Shalimar, Hagar was dying in Michigan, of a broken heart.

Still attuned to the lessons he has learned from his father, Milkman offers to help Circe with money. She refuses it, telling him that he has helped her by listening to her story and sharing his own knowledge of Macon and Pilate. Milkman departs, but when he hitches a ride to town, he shows that he has not yet understood Circe's veiled warning to not devalue the lives of others. He never asks the name of the man who gives him a ride, then further insults him by offering to pay him. This same attitude buys him a fight at the general store in Shalimar. Milkman, who is assaulted when he speculates that he might buy a new car, believes that his

attackers are jealous of his wealth, but Morrison lets readers know that his impersonal attitude prompts their aggression:

He hadn't found them fit enough or good enough to want to know their names, and believed himself too good to tell them his. They looked at his skin and saw it was as black as theirs, but they knew he had the heart of the white men who came to pick them up in the trucks when they needed anonymous, faceless laborers. (*Song of Solomon* 266)

The men take their anger out on Milkman; they see him as a villain, not because of his money, but because he treats them as though they are invisible.

Milkman, who began the bobcat hunt as swaggering, arrogant child of the middle class, emerges from the woods a changed man. His soul-searching and his near death experience on the hunt has humbled him and he willingly confesses to the men that he is no match for them as a hunter. To say that he found his identity through his experience is to gloss over the knowledge he gains; Milkman finds his identity by realizing that others have identities. The hunting party is alert to the change in Milkman as they were to the movements of the bobcat and once the animal is dressed, they point Milkman toward the home of the woman, Sweet, implying that he would gain more than a night's rest. And indeed he does, but the man who spends the night with Sweet is not the same man who had used and discarded Hagar. Milkman gives Sweet fifty dollars, but only after he had also given her a bath, washed her hair and also her dishes.

Milkman's increasing awareness regarding race oppression, class exploitation and gender subjugation steadily emerges. His awareness regarding race, class and gender facilitate his journey towards the quest for self. He questions the people and events around him. Through this inquiry he is able to arouse his consciousness and discover the variegated and crucial questions of identity in a composite American culture. It is Pilate who is responsible for Milkman's journey towards constructing his self and establishing his identity. Dorothy H. Lee makes a perceptive observation about Milkman's journey. She states that Milkman ". . . travels from innocence to awareness i.e., from ignorance of origins, heritage, identity and communal responsibility to knowledge and acceptance" (353).

K. Sumana pithily expounds the development in his class consciousness when he opines that Milkman "commits class suicide" (91). His awakened consciousness regarding race oppression and class exploitation pays the way for the sprouting of his consciousness regarding gender. During the early stages of his life women receive variegated forms of ill treatment from him. This vicious treatment, which he has meted out to women who had served his welfare, signifies his lack of gender consciousness. But when he reaches a high level of consciousness, his crippled view of women is totally changed. He realizes that all his life he had thought "he deserved to be loved," even while he refused any responsibility for the pain or problems of those who loved him. Morrison clearly lets readers know that this is Milkman's defining moment. She tells us that the "cocoon" that had defined Milkman's "personality" gave way (*Song of Solomon* 277).

During his journey Milkman realizes that, "[w]ith two exceptions, everybody he was close to seemed to prefer him out of this life. And the two exceptions were both women, both black, both old. From the beginning, his mother and Pilate had fought for his life, and he had never so much as made either of them a cup of tea" (*Song of Solomon* 331). With self-awakening he comes to value the great assistance he had received from women like Pilate and Hagar. He begins to respect women and the poor blacks. His new attitude entails his renunciation of the commoditized way of life. He begins to embrace the feminist trend that called for equal rights for

men and women. His former biased view of women is buried forever. He develops reciprocal relationships with women. This reciprocity is manifested through Pilate's guidance to bury the "dead in him" (Sumana 91) and Milkman's direction of Pilate to bury her father's carcass. He becomes a source of life and acts as a catalyst for women.

Participation in the "Seven Days" serves to feed Guitar's repressed anger, fan the flames of his hunting prowess, and free him to hunt whomever he chooses. Guitar becomes a killer. When Milkman leaves in search of the gold, alone without Guitar, Guitar's resentment at Macon for being just like a white man, anger at Pilate for her "aunt Jemima act" before the police and suspicions of Milkman's treachery in seeking to take the gold for himself coalesce (*Song of Solomon* 209). He heads to Pennsylvania and then Virginia to kill Milkman; "he had snatched the first straw, limp and wet as it was, to prove to himself the need to kill Milkman" (331).

Just as Pilate places the earring that contains her name into the grave, she is shot by Guitar who mistakes her for Milkman. Cradling the head of his dying mentor, Milkman is overcome by love for the first time in his life. Pilate's dying words underscore the focus of her life and her place in Morrison's texts, "I wish I'd a knowed more people. I would [have] loved 'em all. If I'd a knowed more, I would a loved more" (*Song of Solomon* 336). Milkman whispers a wish of his own: "Now he knew why he loved her so. Without ever leaving the ground, she could fly. 'There must be another one just like you,' he whispered to her" (336).

Wilfred D Samuels states that Milkman has become "... one, who has been shaped not only solely by his environment, but his distinct choices and actions" (67). He experiences strange loneliness which cannot be assuaged by the quirks he boasts of. "There was nothing here to help him—not his money, his car, his father's reputation, his suit, or his shoes. In fact, they hampered him" (*Song of Solomon* 277). This loss of his clothes symbolizes the loss of "the white cultural values he has absorbed and assimilated at the expense of his black values" (Peach 60-61).

When Milkman is leaving Susan Byrd, he asks about the watch he had left with Grace. Susan tells him he will probably not get it back because Grace will have a great time talking about the watch the northern man gave her. It is significant that Milkman decide to accept the loss of his watch, which indicates that Milkman loses western concept of time that is linear. It insinuates that he espouses the African concept of time, which is cyclical. The son of the man whose only advice was that "time is money" relinquishes what was perhaps the most significant symbol of his "modern" identity.

The song that the children in Shalimar sing during their games intrigues him; it is the same song that Pilate has been singing, inaccurately, for years. From Susan, he learns that the subject of the children's song is his great grandfather, Solomon, one of the legendary "flying Africans" who, so it was told, flew back to Africa to escape slavery. Milkman, always intrigued by the idea of flight, is quite taken with the idea of a great-grandfather who dared flight for his freedom. At the end, he realizes that Ryna and the twenty-one children, his great-grandfather left behind, paid the price for his freedom. The children's song is not a celebration of a heroic "flight," but a mournful lament about the betrayal of responsibility.

Although only Hagar's image "flashe[s] before him," as the woman whom he mistreated the most, the picture of her "bending over him in perfect love," despite his abusive behavior, personifies and epitomizes the type of merciful love he has been shown by all of the women in his life (*Song of Solomon* 279). Unlike the depiction of his former behavior delineated by Magdalena, "to this day, you have never asked one of us if we were tired, or sad, or wanted a cup of coffee," Milkman finally learns the importance of reciprocity (215).

While Milkman is privately envisioning Hagar and recognizing their spiritual connectivity, the Southside community in Michigan is publically acknowledging that same linkage through Hagar's funeral. Thus, the cries for "Mercy!" voiced through Pilate's and Reba's song at Hagar's funeral are answered in Shalimar through Milkman's resurrection and spiritual renewal (*Song of Solomon* 316). The momentous transformation evident in Milkman, after his rebirth, is as a result of the mercy he will now have "in the nighttime . . . in the darkness . . . in the morning . . . at [his] bedside . . . [and] on [his] knees" (317-8).

Milkman realizes his previous relationship with others was based on the attitude that "I am not responsible for your pain; share your happiness with me but not your unhappiness" (*Song of Solomon* 277). He belatedly realizes that he is to blame for Hagar's tragic death. He had flown off, but it was Hagar who suffered and died in his absence: "Just as the consequences of Milkman's own stupidity would remain and regret would always outweigh the things he was proud of having done. Hagar was dead and he had not loved her one bit" (335). For Milkman, this realization that he can never escape the consequences of his actions is the most difficult and painful of all. Accepting his responsibility for Hagar's death, he decides to carry with him Hagar's box of hair, which symbolizes his new awareness of the past. His act can be constructed as expiation for his inhuman treatment and exploitation of Hagar. The recognition of his mistakes can be construed as an act of expiation and repentance for his past. He atones for the severe hurts he had inflicted on the psyches of others, particularly of women. He feels "a sudden rush of affection for them all" (278). Milkman rises to this awareness when he comes to the stage of outgrowing his vanity, self-veneration and the feeling of apathy for others.

The realization of Milkman's spiritual death and renewal is further illustrated in his abandonment of the quest for the gold. No longer focused on securing freedom through money or running away from his familial responsibilities Milkman becomes excited about the discovery of the facts of his ancestry. His brief relationship with Sweet provides him with the forum necessary to learn and express reciprocal love. As Milkman begins to love, he also confronts his family's living heart, beating in love and sadness. For the first time, he feels homesick and misses the family he had been so determined to leave. With his heart, he sees his parents in a new light. He looks at his mother and sees how sexual deprivation "would affect her, hurt her in precisely the same way it would affect and hurt him" (*Song of Solomon* 300). He sees how this deprivation has distorted her life, actions and creativity. Then, looking at his father, he sees how Macon Dead loves what Solomon had loved and how he has distorted that love: "That he distorted life, beat it, for the sake of gain, was a measure of his loss at his father's death" (300). There is a clear shift in Milkman's values. While he had once valued his own freedom and power, he now sees the value of family ties. With renewed enthusiasm, he searches for his family history—not the gold he began his journey looking for. His new awareness of people around him precipitates his initiation into new society governed by the tradition and the mores of African people. He shows us a real transformation in his personality when he "accepts the responsibility of adulthood and Africanhood" (Sumana 90). This can be elicited from the statement: "he had stopped evading things, sliding through, over and around difficulties" (*Song of Solomon* 271).

At the end of the novel, Milkman knows that Guitar "needs" his life and he declares his willingness to give it. He shouts to him, "You want my life? You need it? Here." He leaps toward Guitar, knowing that "if you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it" (*Song of Solomon* 337). Morrison does not allow readers the comfort of certainty. We never know for sure whether Milkman "flies" or dies.

If Milkman Dead begins his journey in conflict and ignorance, he ends it in complete awareness. Barbara E. Cooper observes:

On Solomon's Leap, he understands how little value there is in property and how priceless are family relationships and connections. By losing everything in search of gold, Milkman is released from the burden of his self-indulgence. Like the peacock, he was weighed down by his vanity and greed. However, when he sets aside this deadening weight, he finds a life-giving treasure in family history and remembrance (156)

Through his journey south, Milkman confronts his own heart and responsibility to others and learns the value of family ties through song and family stories. "As long as he casts off family responsibility, he is truly dead but when he sings the songs and learns the stories, he is alive" (156).

Milkman breaks free from the avid materialism that seduced and enslaved him. He is thus able to return to Michigan as a new man. Armed with a new sense of self, a heart of mercy, an understanding of love and a willingness to confront the consequences of his former actions, he finally flies, "without ever leaving the ground" (*Song of Solomon* 336). Ultimately, he emerges as a triumphant hero who traces the genesis of his rich history and culture and succeeds in identifying with the community, spirituality and physically. He establishes his identity and finds meaning in life. He emerges as a totally changed man, a new Milkman.

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The Criterion

Romantic Elements in Claude McKay's Poetry

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Introduction

Emergence of the 'New Negro' is the special feature of the early 20th century American Literature. In the second decade, all the African-Americans, who had gathered together in the name of race and colour in Harlem, a part of New York City, had just started expressing themselves in words and actions. Having been suffocated for centuries, under the over-dominance of racial whites, these culturally awakened writers had, for the first-time, the golden chance for self-expression. 'The Negro was in vogue,' (1940:288) to use the words of a noted African-American poet Langston Hughes.

Among those who wrote in this period were a few noted persons like Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Jessie Fauset, Margaret Walker, Jean Toomer and James Weldon Johnson. This paper focuses on some of the aspects of Claude McKay's poetry.

Methodology and Area of the study

Although Claude McKay has written novels, short-stories, autobiography, essays and poetry, this paper studies most of his poems published in *Songs of Jamaica* (1912) and *the selected poems of Claude McKay* (1953) edited by Max Eastman with the purpose of finding out some romantic aspects of his poems. The romantic theory has been used while analyzing and interpreting his poetry.

The method used in this research article is what Mr. Austin Warren suggested in *Theory of Literature*- 'understanding poetry passes readily into judging poetry, only judging it in detail and judging while analyzing instead of making the judgment a pronouncement in the final paragraph.' (1978:250)

Analysis, Interpretation and Observations

Claude McKay was born and brought up among the Clarendon Hills, in Sunny Ville- in Jamaica, West Indies. In his village, he had the perfect freedom to play, read and think, During his formative period- his school days which he spent with his elder brother who had been for some time a school teacher, he had read much of Byron, Blake, Milton, Poe, Dante, Goethe, Baudelaire and Shakespeare-the writers who had moulded his poetic sensibility. Very early in his life he had started imitating them. One reminds S. T. Coleridge's remark, 'we unconsciously imitate those whom we love.' (1989:27)

We have 'the first great lyric genius that his race [has] produced' (1953:7) who sang of Nature in his poem *Suki River* :

Thou Sweet voiced stream that first gave me drink
 Watched over me when I floated on thy breast;
 What black faced boy now gambles on thy brink,
 Or finds beneath thy rocks a place of rest?

What naked lad doth linger long by thee,

Or heed the pea-dove in the wild fig-tree. (1953:17)

His untainted love for his birth-place is seen in these lines. This is the memory of his happy childhood which he had spent on the banks of the Suki River. While writing about diaspora, Uma Parameswaran refers to Wilson Harris who rightly said that 'memory is the cornerstone of identity'. (2007:320) McKay's childhood is still alive in his Nature-poems.

The memory of his childhood 'The sacred moments when he played/ All innocent of passions, uncorrupt' (1953:13) in the lap of Clarendon Hills and on the banks of the river keeps him ever sensitive to his past. So he has some promises to keep:

I shall love you ever
 Dearest Suki River:
 Dash against my broken heart,
 Nevermore from you I will part. (1953:17)

He writes in *To Clarendon Hills and H.A.H.*

Loved Clarendon Hills
 Dear Clarendon Hills
 Oh! I feel de chills
 Yes, I feel de chills.
 Coursin' t'rough me frame
 When I call your name,
 Still my love's for you
 Ever ever true
 Though I wander far,
 Weary wander far. (1912:106)

How forcefully he feels the past while remembering his Clarendon Hills!

Here are some lines carved on his soul- in the poem *My Native Land, My Home*:

Dere is no land dat can compare
 Wid you where'er I roam
 In all de wul' none like you fair,
 My native land, My home.

His unconditional love for his land is seen in the following lines:

Though you may cas' me from your breas'
 An' trample me to deat'
 My heart will trus' you none the less,
 My land I won't forget (1912:84)

The Jamaican black-dialect and slang don't interfere with our understanding of his love for his homeland.

McKay's love for all natural objects and animals is extraordinary. He has captured not only the 'lazily moving time' but also the movements of some of the birds and animals like 'crickets', 'lizards', and 'humming birds' in *North and South*:

There by the banks of blue and Silver streams
 Grass-Sheltered crickets chirp incessant song,
 Gay colored lizards loll all through the day,
 Their tongues outstretched for careless little flies

A breath of idleness is in the air
 That casts a subtle spell upon all things,
 And love and mating time are everywhere.

The fluttering humming-bird darts through the trees,
 And dips his long beak in the big bell-flowers.
 The sea beats softly on the emerald strands-
 O sweet for quiet dreams are tropic lands. (1953:20)

Definitely, there is a Keatsian beauty in the above stanzas. His memory still lingers on in *A Dream*:

A winding footpath down the woodland leads,
 And through the tall fox-tails I wend my way
 Down to the brooklet where the pea-dove feeds,
 And bucktoes' in the water are at play.

And watching as the bubbles rise and fall,
 I hear above the murmur of the dale
 The tropic music dear to great and small,
 The joyous outburst of the nightingale. (1912:96-97)

His poetry is not only of eye, but of ear. It paints the graphic reality of the beautiful Clarendon Hills.

He couldn't live there in his youth and adult life. Unfortunately, he had to migrate to distant places and cities- in the name of education and job. However, his Jamaica's-Nature followed him wherever he went. It speaks through his mouth in *Home Thoughts*:

O something just now must be happening there!

Amid the city's noises, I must think
 Of mangoes leaning to the river brink,
 And dexterous Davie climbing high above,
 The gold-fruits, ebon-speckled to remove
 And toss them quickly in the tangled mass
 Of wis-wis twisted round the guinea grass.
 And Cyril coming through the bramble-track
 A prize bunch of banana on his back;

And Gorgie-none could ever dive like him –
 Throwing his scanty clothes off for a swim;
 And school boys, from Bridge tunnel going home,
 Watching the waters downward dash and foam.
 This is no day time dream, there's something in it,
 O something's happening there this very minute! (1953:21)

He has delineated the natural beauty of Jamaica with so simple words. This poem is as good as Wordsworth's sonnet 'Upon the Westminster Bridge' as far as the natural images are concerned. Moreover, it is more attractive than the sonnet because the images are down to earth natural.

A well known critic Addison Gayle, Jr., has aptly remarked:
 Jamaica was to McKay what Tintern Abbey was to Wordsworth,
 Chicago to Carl Sandburg, the Southland to Jean Toomer and Harlem
 to Langston Hughes- a reservoir for the spirit- filled to over powering
 with hours of happiness.(1972:22)

'An increasing interest in Nature and in the natural, primitive and uncivilized way of life', (1998:769) is one of the dominant aspects of romanticism. Almost all romantic poets have realized this delight in Nature. McKay also took delight in singing of *Morning Joy* that comes after the cold-wind-night.

At dawn, behold! the pall of night was gone
 Save where a few shrubs melancholy, alone
 Detained a fragile shadow.
 And the following beautiful lines flow from his pen:
 The sun rose smiling by the river's breast,
 And my soul, by his happy spirit blest,
 Soared like a bird to greet him in the sky,
 And drew out of his heart eternity. (1953:70)

The sad night fades away with darkness, giving place to the light of eternity. McKay is a poet of positive capability and sensitivity in the above poem. The comparisons, the personifications, the metaphors and the similes all are appropriate and there is no scope for artificiality and excessive exaggeration.

Once in New York, McKay saw some finely displayed fruits in the window of a fruit-shop

Banana ripe and green, and ginger-root,
 Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,
 And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit
 Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs.

Immediately he became restless with the memory of his native place. He says in *The Tropics in New York* :

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;
 A wave of longing through my body swept,
 And hungry for the old, familiar ways,
 I turned aside and bowed my head and wept. (1953:31)

A rare example of nostalgic mood it is! We know Wordsworth whose heart leaps up when he sees a rainbow in the sky; or his heart starts dancing with the daffodils which he recreates with his imagination in solitude. But here we have McKay who weeps for the loss of the sheer sight of his loved land and its mellowed fruits. It is, of course, a spontaneous response and there is not a stress of pretended gesture.

Some poets universalize their feelings. Sometimes, the sincere individual consciousness melts into the wider cosmos of the collective consciousness. Sometimes, some plants and flowers are made immortal in literature. e.g., 'daffodils' in Wordsworth, 'Casuarina Tree' in Toru Dutt, 'The Banyan Tree' in Dilip Chitre and the like. McKay has made 'Spanish Needle' plant popular with his feelings for it. The dividing curtain between the animate and inanimate things soon vanishes, and the poet's passionate communication begins in *Spanish Needle* in the following way :

Lovely dainty Spanish Needle
 With your yellow flower and white
 Dew-bedreched and soft sleeping,
 Do you think of me tonight?

Do you see me by the brookside,
 Catching crabs beneath the stone?
 As you did the day you whispered:
 Leave the harmless dears alone?

Do you see me in the meadow,
 Coming from the woodland spring,
 With a bamboo on my shoulder
 And a pail slung from a string?

Lovely dainty Spanish Needle,
 Source to me of sweet delight,
 In your far-off sunny Southland
 Do you dream of me tonight? (1953:24)

Although he had much travelled in the realms of the world, his heart grieves much for the loss of his favourite place and plants.

J. A. Cuddon is of the opinion that there is 'an affirmation of the need for a freer, more subjective expression of passion, pathos and personal feelings' in romantic poetry. (1998:771) He paints his love for his mother in *December, 1919*:

Last night, I heard your voice, mother,
 The words you sang to me
 When I, a little bare foot boy,
 Knelt down against your knee.

'Tis ten years since you died, mother
 Just ten dark years of pain,
 And oh, I only wish that I
 Could weep just again. (1953:23)

A sense of loss engulfs him. He realizes that all the other activities in Nature, as usual, are performed without any change in them. He writes in *My Mother*:

The older people are at their peaceful toil

Over the earth where mortals sow and reap –
Beneath its breast my mother lies asleep. (1953:22)

He finds himself in the fleeting moods. A sense of loss is subdued by the sense of belonging to the soil where he was born. It is a kind of rootedness.

With his uncommon imaginative sensibility he speaks to the Moon that shines in the sky in the poem *The Moon*:

Go spill your beauty on the laughing faces
Of happy flowers that bloom a thousand hues,
Waiting on tiptoe in the windy spaces,
To drink your wine mixed with sweet draughts of dews. (1953:69)

There is a marvellous personification in the above stanza. Look at the following desire of the poet in his poem *Thirst*:

My spirit wails for water, water now!
My tongue is aching dry, my throat is hot
For water, fresh rain shaken from a bough,
Or dawn dew heavy in some leafy spot.

Pure water from a forest fountain first,
To wash me, cleanse me, and to quench my thirst! (1953:109)

For him, his native land is both incitory as well as cathartic. His native water has a healing power. It has a kind of cathartic effect on his soul. The above lines express his deep attachment with his native soil. His alienated soul longs for the visit to his native place.

Raman Shelden opines that, 'alienation, like Sin, is a foundation for good works'. (1988:443) Even Malcolm Bradbury says that, '.. We can take alienation as a force from outside, driving the writer away and into exile; or we can regard it as something internal and structural to the artistic condition in particular individuals or in artists. (1988:454) McKay's 'self exiled' situation was a blessing in disguise for him. His sonnet *I shall Return* is a monument of paramount beauty in words about his homeland Jamaica:

I shall return again. I shall return
To laugh and love and watch with wonder eyes
At golden noon the forest fires burn,
Wafting their blue-black smoke to sapphire skies.

I shall return to loiter by the streams
That bathe the brown blades of the bending grasses,
And realize once more my thousand dreams
Of waters rushing down the mountain passes.

I shall return to hear the fiddle and fife
 Of village dances, dear delicious tunes
 That stir the hidden depths of native life,
 Stray melodies of dim-remembered runes. (1953:32)

P. B. Shelley's definition of poetry- 'poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.' (1962:251) properly suits to McKay.

As a true lover of Nature, in his poems, he has painted many natural things that he had seen in his Jamaican environment. One feels the pulse of William Cowper-who summed up his understanding: 'God made the country and man made the town' (1989:256) while reading McKay's Nature-poems. Although he visited America, England, France, Russia, and Morocco, the din of city had not truly entered into his consciousness. His 'peasant-heart' always sympathized with the labourers. In the *Tired Worker* the hard worker says:

The wretched day was theirs, the night is mine;
 Come tender sleep, and fold me to thy breast.
 The worker requests the dawn:
 O dawn! O dreaded dawn! O let me rest
 Weary my veins, my brain, my life! Have pity!
 No! once again the harsh, the ugly city. (1953:79)

He had a firm belief that the city takes away from any person the vital part of human life. So he writes:

I will not toy with it not bend an inch
 Deep in the secret chambers of my heart
 I muse my lifelong hate, and without flinch
 I bear it nobly as I live my part. (1953:74)

In *When Dawn Come to the City* he says :

The tired cars go grumbling by,
 The moaning, groaning cars,

 Under the same dull stars.
 Out of the tenements, cold as stone,
 Dark figures start for work;
 I watch them sadly shuffle on,
 'Tis dawn, dawn in New York. (1953:62)

He always preferred the countryside life to the city life. His heart was there in the Hills-where the 'cocks are crowing; the hens are cackling; the old horse is neighing; the tethered cow is lowing; the old Ned is braying, and the shaggy Nanny goat is calling.' (1953:63)

Conclusion:

To conclude, no other African-American poet is as deeply rooted in his soil with all his sensibility and consciousness and with autobiographical persona or self as

Claude McKay is in American poetry. He had an exceptional thirst and hunger for his naïve life, and he always longed for their satisfaction.

Some remarks must be made about his poetic diction. We do not find 'over styled poetic diction' in him. Again, nowhere he is seen hopelessly and labouriously grappling, like Matthew Arnold does in his lengthy elegies, for the proper words. His choice for the sonorous and singing words is supreme. The felicity of diction is amazing. One wonders with his abrupt and marvellous sonnet-ending. He has a mastery over the fixed rhyming composition- i.e. the sonnet form. Most of his sonnets are the best poems. His Nature-poetry is the unique contribution in the Jamaican poetry. His almost all Nature-poems are without any tinge of morbid philosophy. Unlike Wordsworth, he never could hear, 'the still, sad music of humanity' in Nature. His poetry is not over-shadowed by the philosophic tones.

All of his poems are short and sweet, unlike the 'uncontrolled and lengthy poems' of Shelley and Byron, though they are the best romantics. Like Byron, he too, 'loved not the man less, but Nature more!' and looked beyond the polished life of educated men in cities to the wider and cruder ways of living. Although he is a modern poet, he is not unnecessarily complex and complicated. Nowhere his 'untamed imagination' looms large. He has an extraordinary control over his simple words and expression. Therefore, one always finds his poetry readable and simply enjoyable. In brief, his poetry is romantic, rich in native tunes and local colours; and with the Jamaican peasant sensibility.

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Charandas Chor: A Study in Paradox

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Before a detailed analysis of Tanvir's play *Charandas Chor* as a study in paradox is undertaken, it will be in place to explain the meaning of the term, paradox. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines it as, "a statement containing two opposite ideas that make it seem impossible or unlikely, although it is probably true" ("Paradox").

According to M.H. Abrams, "Paradox is a statement which seems on its face to be logically contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to be interpretable in a way that makes good sense" (201).

Cleanth Brooks also defines it as a term which enables a writer to express his complex emotions. He describes it as a way of juxtaposing two contraries.

What all these definitions tend to underline is that paradox resides in what seems to be self contradictory in statements and situations. The apparent oppositions are however, reconciled to reveal the complexities of life. Wit and irony, which serve as not only a source of delight, but also as organizing principles, are integral to the use of paradox in literature.

The play, *Charandas Chor*, is steeped in paradox. In fact, it is built around the contraries. To quote Javed Malik, "Charandas Chor is conceived in terms of paradoxes and contradictions"(15). Habib Tanvir during his conversation with Anjum Katyal, the translator of the play, suggested the same when he said, "Habits are hard to shake off. So I'd like you to say that just as a drunkard cannot leave drinking, a liar cannot leave lying and a thief cannot leave stealing, truthful men cannot leave telling the truth. If habit is vice and truthfulness becomes a habit, then that too is a vice" (40).

And if a truthful man happens to be a thief, then things become more complex and interesting. Anjum Katyal during a short conversation said that she could not conceive the play, *Charandas Chor*, in any other terms than seeing it as a putting together of truth and lie simultaneously in a man.

The entire theme of the play is constructed around contradictions. There are liars, scoundrels, thieves, but they are men of principles as well. There are custodians of law, but they are breakers of it too. There are saints and sanyasis, but they run after money as well. There are men of intellect, but it is very easy to deceive them. There are rich, affluent people, but at heart, they are the poorest. There are paupers, but at heart, they are very rich. Thus, the theme of the entire play is embedded in a remarkable juxtaposition of opposites, one after another.

In the play, as has been pointed out, truth and lie go hand in hand. People who deceive and cheat others turn out to be humanitarian as well. This paradox is well worked out through the portrayal of the central character, Charandas. He is a thief, who steals golden plates. He is all the time chased by a policeman. He robs the poor farmers, snatches jewellery from a wealthy merchant's wife. He even enters into the temple and steals whatever he finds there. He is even not afraid of anything while robbing the Queen of her five coins. But, stealing and giving go hand in hand in his case. On the one hand, he is a thief, and thieves are not supposed to be humanitarian. They are supposed to run away with whatever they get. But, Charandas never does that, he first steals and then returns. For example, after stealing sattu from a poor peasant, he shouts, "Arrey, sattu, only sattu! Oh sattuwalla! Come here! Come on back, don't be scared. Sit down; let's share this like brothers" (Tanvir 60).

He robs a wealthy merchant's wife, he is expected to run away with all the booty, but, instead of this, Charandas cannot see her weep. He returns immediately whatever he has snatched. Actually, he inadvertently takes five vows before the Guru, according to them, he will never eat in golden plate, never presides an elephant procession, never marry a queen and never be a king. He also says that he will never lie in future. Now, on the one hand, he is not ready to abjure stealing, which he calls as his "Dharma" (Tanvir 101), on the other hand, he pledges to remain truthful. No doubt, he does not give up stealing, but he also adheres to his oath of becoming a truthful man. A thief is generally supposed to be selfish, mean and egocentric. But, Charandas is of a helping nature. He robs the landlord not for his own sake, but for the sake of the entire village. He robs the Queen not to enhance his fortunes, but to make his presence felt. Later on, time tests him. He is given opportunity of leading a procession, marrying a queen, eating in a golden plate and becoming a king. But, he refuses to do any of the things. Had there been any other common man, he could have pounced upon this golden opportunity without caring for future consequences. The Queen happens to be young and pretty, and she also offers to pay off all penances: "Do penance, if necessary. We can hold an atonement ceremony and gather all the ascetics and holy men and fulfill all the rituals necessary to absolve you" (Tanvir 110).

He is expected to surrender, but no, he is very firm. This explains the nature of paradox. Here we have a man who is immoral, thief yet he is a man of noble principles and promises. He took vows in a joking way and yet he adheres to them in a serious manner. He prefers to die rather than succumbing to all pressures.

Another paradox dealt within the play is: Spiritualism V/s Materialism. This is evident from the conduct of the Guru and the Priest. On the one hand, there is religion represented by the Guru and the Priest. As Guru is supposed to be a man of restraint, a man who has renounced all worldly considerations, a man who is selfless and benevolent. The Guru in the play also asks his followers to give up their vices, and yet he is a man of this world, he is more concerned with money than with salvation. The song which he sings constantly proves this:

That's all you have to do, just
Give the guru his due.
Is it salvation you want? Just
Give the guru his due (Tanvir 64).

The Priest is also supposed to be a man of pious nature. He is expected to be well versed in the Vedas. Now, the priest in the play does perform ceremonies yet reading of many religious scripts fail to turn him into a man of wisdom. He is not able to penetrate beneath the mask which Charandas is wearing. His heart leaps when he sees a basket full of golden ornaments. He is not here motivated by any humanitarian instinct. His eyes are set simply upon the precious booty which forces him to make Charandas stay there.

Affluence vis-a-vis Poverty and Poverty vis-a-vis Affluence is yet another set of contraries that one encounters in the play. Here one meets people who are rich yet poor, and poor who are paradoxically rich. The landlord in the play is a rich man. He has fields in various villages. His fields are full of crops. He also possesses a tube well and electricity connection. He is expected to share his fortune with the suffering lot in the time of crisis. But, he turns out to be too mean and miserly. He may be rich, but only in the worldly sense. From humanitarian perspective, he is the poorest of all. Then, there are poor peasants who have nothing to eat. When they get food, they are expected to fill their bellies first. But, instead of

that, they distribute the entire food in the village first. Thus, the poor turn out to be rich than the so called rich.

The contrastive interplay of the oppositions like: Defending and Offending, Making and Breaking, Preserving and Violating, however, constitute another interesting paradox. These contraries are central to the character of the Havaladar. He is a policeman. He is supposed to preserve the law, punish the offenders and maintain peace in the town. He enters the stage chasing Charandas, he threatens him at his mischief, and he even warns him against going astray. But, he also violates the law. He instead of catching the thieves, takes commission from them and lets them go. He befriends them and aids them in their unlawful deeds. For example, he says to Charandas, "If you have, just tell me and I won't report. We'll share the booty" (Tanvir 57).

Yet another set of oppositions that captures attention and is a source of delight lies in the counter play of the oppositions such as: Sublimity and Pettiness, intellectuality and foolishness, Wisdom and Buffoonery. The case of the Munim and the Minister can be cited to substantiate these paradoxes. First there is the Minister, who is expected to have some integrity in him. He is also supposed to be a worldly wise man, since he is next to the Queen. So, one expects in him an amount of dignity and intellect to see through the pranks of unsocial elements. He enters the stage with his head high, as if he will never be trapped. But, how easily he is trapped and befooled by the Guru and the Havaladar. A man who is supposed to run the country along with the Queen is reduced to an easily manipulable fool. He condemns the Munim at his incapability of differentiating between a Chor and a Minister. But, ironically enough, he himself is not able to dissect beneath the incognito of the tricksters. Then there is the Munim, an accountant, who is expected to be again an intelligent person, that's why, he is hired to maintain the accounts. But, ironically, he also turns out to be a good for nothing fellow. His wisdom and intellect never enables him to see whether he is talking to a minister or a chor. On the other hand, he is hired to preserve the accounts, but he himself steals five golden mohurs and later on is sacked.

The contrast between the dominator and the dominated, the ruler and the ruled, the commander and the commanded is yet another set of contraries that is enacted in the play. The Rani perhaps is the best example for this kind of paradox. On the one hand, she is Rani, the Queen, ruler, commander, authoritative, dominator of the country. And yet she is ruled, controlled, dominated by not only physical passions but her personal concerns as well. She is supposed to command everyone, but see the irony, she herself falls down at the feet of Charandas. She implores him to marry her. Later, she beseeches him not to tell anything to the outer world whatever had passed between them in that closed compartment. Charandas, though a thief he is, is ready to die in order to preserve his vows and dignity. The Queen, paradoxically, is out to kill others- a ruler and yet so weak in her character! As a Queen, she is expected to save the life of her country folk, but for her personal gains, she takes the life of her people, even the one she loves and admires.

To conclude, it can be said that *Charandas Chor* is a remarkable play steeped in paradox. These paradoxes not only make the play interesting, but make it complex as well. What Tanvir is trying to prove is that, perhaps, nothing is final and nothing is absolute. Truth becomes lie and lie becomes truth. Preserve becomes offender and offender becomes preserver. Meaning is never fixed. It is determined by the context. Secondly, these paradoxes also surprise and amuse the readers because of the innate irony which they carry in them. One expects one thing, but something quite different and surprising happens. This constant shifting from one meaning to the other makes the play a delightful and illuminating reading.

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The Criterion

Generational conflicts and co- existence of binary opposition in the characters of Jagan & Mali in *The Vendor of Sweets*

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The paper tries to highlight a serious study of the novel *The Vendor of Sweets*. The focus of the paper is on the binaries embedded in the text and how generational conflicts between Jagan and Mali aggravate the conflict in the text. Along with the difference between Jagan and Mali we have also tried to explore the economic thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawarharlal Nehru and how their difference of opinion moved Narayan and how he has used it in the thematic construction of the novel.

To explore the specific ways in which our language determines our experience, Jacques Derrida borrowed and transformed the structuralist idea that we tend to conceptualize our experience in terms of polar opposites, called 'binary oppositions'. For example, according to structuralism, we understand the word 'good' by contrasting it with the word 'evil'. Similarly, we understand 'reason' as the opposite of 'emotion', 'masculine' as the opposite of 'feminine', and 'civilized' as the opposite of 'primitive' and so on. The concept of binary opposition acts as a background force in the thematic construction of *The Vendor of Sweets*. The protagonist 'Jagan' and his son 'Mali' from the beginning to the end of the novel are projected as two opposite characters, contradicting at every point. The conflict between them acquires larger dimensions, signifying ambivalences at various socio-cultural levels. In this context William Walsh says that their difference of opinions range from "the division of East and West, of young and old, of child and parent". (152) In the paper there is a critical analysis of the novel with the aim, to justify the dichotomy that exists as an underlying theme in the plot construction of the novel. Apparently it seems that the novel only deals with the polarized views of two characters – Jagan and Mali but in depth amplification states that the novel tries to unravel the theory of binary opposition intertwined within the text.

The novel begins with the statement, "Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self". (07) The sense of ambrosia associated with self victory brings out a strange meaning at the outset. 'Taste' has got a gastronomic connotation and when it comes to 'conquer the self'; it means self – victory, introspection and then final solace. The author here advocates that if human beings can enjoy food then they can enjoy life to their heart's content. This philosophy of Jagan stems up as his profession is selling sweets and he believes in Gandhian ideals of 'Simple living and high thinking'. Jagan's faith in Gandhian theory is pronounced when the author describes his quest for 'truth' and 'simplicity' in the key areas of diet and dress. Regarding Jagan's dress the author comments,

He wore a loose jibba over his dhoti, both made of material spun with his own hand; everyday he spun for an hour, retained enough yarn for his sartorial requirements (he never possessed more than two sets of clothes at a time) , and delivered the excess in neat bundles to the local hand – loom committee in exchange for cash.(09)

Jagan even maintains austerity in his food habits and follows Gandhi's style of relishing simple food. In this context John Thieme says:

Despite his occupation, he has progressively renounced a range of foods as part of a way of life that has both political and psychoanalytic associations. In line with Gandhi's boycott of imported salt, he has on the morning when the novel begins, resolved to use only "natural salt" and as the chapter progress he explains how he has removed sugar and rice from his diet, replacing them with honey and "a little stone – ground wheat". (128)

Jagan portrays his simplicity and his belief in Gandhian ideals in all his activities. He declares in due course that his father initially was very poor, lived in a thatched hut and he had to undergo severe hardship along with his siblings. Whatever Jagan has acquired from his father, he treasures in his later life. From his childhood tradition, customs, rituals are deep rooted in him and he always adheres to it in the later course of his life. It is because of his attachment to tradition and his faith in agrarian life style, Jagan hesitates to accept Mali's inclination towards Western culture. However the cousin puts his view on 'simple living and high thinking' in a contradictory way, rather directly saying, "But what I don't understand is why you should run a trade, make money and accumulate it". (29) The statement seems to be justified because Jagan although he leads a life of penance, austerity, has firm faith in acquiring wealth. However the apparent justification becomes baseless as Jagan's tenacity to carry on his business emanates from Gandhian economic thought. One of the important tenets of Gandhian economics is the dignity and sanctity of manual labour. To Gandhiji labour is the law of nature and its violation is the main cause of present economic ills. In all his writings and speeches Gandhiji made an advocacy for manual labour for all irrespective of caste, qualification and occupation. Gandhiji not only preached this principle but also practiced it in his daily life. Gandhiji himself wrote in this connection 'I do not know whether I am a karma Yogi or any other Yogi. I know that I cannot live without work. I crave to die with my hand at the spinning wheel'. If this is the frame of reference then Jagan cannot be "palavered" (08) for his spiritual manifestations or for leading an austere life. His zeal to do the business can be associated with the economic theory of Mahatma Gandhi- 'Sanctity of Labour or Bread Labour'. Gandhiji believed in bodily labour and so Jagan is highly dedicated to his business as it involves both physical and mental labour. Jagan is absolutely a self – made character in the novel as he does all his household work himself and also runs his business with own effort, without the help of any machines. Jagan is assumed to be against all types of machinery, in other words against the advent of industrialization.

The conflict between Jagan and Mali arises in the third chapter when Mali goes against the system of education and intends to sail across the seas to reach America. Mali's arrogance and his audacity towards his father reveal his nature and his attitude to life. Although after the demise of his mother, his father rears him but his entire attempt to instill in his blood good values of life goes in vain. Mali is an amalgamation of all western values. He abhors whatever is traditional and so he articulates "I can't study any more" (23) which once again reveals his anti – traditional attitude. He is a complete antithesis of 'East' and 'West', thus reiterating the force of binary opposition. A very minute introspection of Mali's character ensconces how Mali is portrayed in the novel. Mali's desire to become affluent after returning to India gives an idea of his lofty ambitions, residing in the repressed state of his mind. Unlike his father he is not simple and does not believe in conventional, archaic style of life. He believes in flamboyance and appreciates western tradition, culture and their life style. The buoyancy of his spirit is due to his western influence. Mali's statement "I can look after myself" (24) clearly evokes his transformation, and his struggle as a modern man to get an individual identity.

As the novel progresses the narrative explores action of a small businessman (Jagan) and his frequent encounter with modernity. The conflict that emanates in the third chapter continues in the narrative of the novel to its culmination. Modernity is internalized in the character of Mali. He intends to sail across the seas to reach America because he wants to learn the art of writing. Jagan's preconceived notion associates 'writing' with the job of a 'clerk' and so he says, "he was trying to shape the boy into an aristocrat with a bicycle, college life, striped shirts, and everything, and he wanted to be a "writer"! Strange!". (28) When his notion is dismantled and he conceives the fact that 'writer' means not a 'clerk' rather a 'story – writer', he feels elated but at the same time could not understand why his son has to go to America to

learn the art of story writing. He even tries to ensure Mali that 'grandmother's tale' and even Hindu mythologies can be of immense help to inbuild the art in him. The overwhelming interest of Jagan in Mali's venture, adds to the existing mental turmoil of his son. Mali proclaims: "Father, you do not understand. I want to write something different". (38) The word 'different' contextualizes the contrapuntal ideas of Mali and Jagan. Jagan's insight fails to conceive the future plans of Mali. In regard to this John Thieme says: "Malgudi of his fiction is always a fractured and transitional site, an interface between older conceptions of "authentic" Indianness and contemporary views that stress the ubiquitousness and inescapability of change in the face of modernity". (03)

Modernity, and especially Westernization, is, however, inescapable facts of Malgudi life.

V.S.Naipaul avers in the "Time" article that Narayan's lack of sympathy with modernity has led him to present modern phenomena in an unnecessarily grotesque fashion. Naipaul's example is from *The Vendor of Sweets*. Narayan, he says, pillories technological advancement and the contemporary fascination with gadgets and appliances through the fantastical instance of Mali and his novel writing machine built with foreign collaboration. (159)

If we consider the import of Narayan's novels and assess his contribution to the society then we may not totally agree with V.S.Naipaul's attacking remark that is discussed earlier. Narayan has never overtly discussed the concept of modernism in any of his text and has given priority to 'human relationship' above everything. However, while delineating the intricacies of human relationships, he has consciously or sub-consciously touched upon those issues in the text, which illuminate another angle in his critical perception. As we move with the confrontation between 'Mali' and 'Jagan' regarding the profession of a 'writer', eventually at the end of the chapter three he succumbs to it and utters an invaluable line in the novel – "No wonder Mali wants to try a new line. There are bound to be changes of outlook from generation to generation, otherwise there will be no progress". (40) The articulation of Jagan itself refutes the statement of V.S.Naipaul and strongly proclaims to the world that Narayan perceived the change that is about to percolate into the society due to modernization and so designs the characters in his imaginary canvass in such a beautiful manner.

The turmoil in Jagan's life is reflected in his behaviour and his body language. Narayan creates the character of a 'cousin' in the novel but his background is never unraveled, only his presence is observed in every nuances of action in the novel. Whenever Jagan is disturbed and he happens to discuss with someone regarding any issue, he discusses it with the 'cousin'. The cousin appears to be an alter ego of Jagan. The concept of alter ego is associated with psychological matters, which has no overt expressions in the novel; but still whenever Jagan is in deep thought, worried, it is the 'cousin' who plays a significant role to proceed with the actions in the novel. If we take for example Chapter three when Jagan advocates the philosophy of Gandhi: "Simple living and high thinking", (39) then the cousin replies: "True, true. But what I don't understand is why you should run a trade, make money and accumulate it". (39) In this reference we can cite another example from chapter four, when the cousin finds Jagan looking restless and disturbed then he says: "Every gift of life you are blessed with: what ninety out of a hundred people crave for – money; and what a hundred out of a hundred crave for – contentment. Yet you have not mastered one thing, that's the art of looking happy. You are always looking careworn". (39) At this Jagan replies: "If one looks worn out by cares, God knows one must have sufficient cause. Do you see Mali at all?". (43) From the examples we have discussed, we can consider, the 'cousin' as another self of Jagan. It seems as if Jagan is questioning and his 'other self' is defending the statements. Here the cousin's speech, behaviour intentionally represent those of Jagan. If we try to dissect the novel from the point of view of a scholar, keeping in mind the assumption we have discussed earlier, we will find plenty of examples in the novel where the cousin's

reply seems to be the reply of Jagan's another self, of whom Jagan is unaware. Like Marlow, alter ego protagonist of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or the characters Doctor Jekyll and Master Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* where the characters represent an exploration of the concept that good and evil exist within one person, constantly at war; we can situate the character of the 'cousin' in a similar manner for the psychological exposition of Jagan. The simplicity of Jagan, philosophical and practical disposition, adherence to Gandhian ideals acts as an alternative to Mali's characterization. Mali is an epitome of modernization, product of industrialization and he examines man and his social institutions with intellectual courage and shrewd, irreverent insight. He tries to challenge the traditional heritage of Jagan and opposes him in every single step of his life.

Mali's sojourn ends in chapter five and he comes back to India. In the words of Kanhaiya Jee Jha:

His stay in America transforms the entire orientation of his personality. In his attitude and outlook, he shifts from one extreme to another – a conversion of all Indian traits into an American mode of life, various stages of his complete deviation from his tradition have been made explicit through his letters, in which he passes shocking information to his traditionalist father to have "taken to eating beef". (58)

He cultivates the habit to splurge, displays behaviour like a trained American professional and expresses his desire to make quick money even at the cost of human values. Besides his monetary pursuits and exhibition of a completely different character, detached from the roots of his tradition; his marriage with 'Grace' slams the tender heart of Jagan. The conversation between Jagan and Mali regarding the word 'marriage' drags the novel to the hot bed of discontent and confusion –

This is Grace. We are married. Grace, my dad". Complete confusion. Married? When were you married? You didn't tell me. Don't you have to tell your father? Who is she? Anyone she looks like a Chinese. Don't you know that one can't marry a Chinese nowadays they have invaded our borders... or perhaps she is Japanese. How was one to find out? (58)

Jagan is completely wrecked as he worships his tradition and his own blood relation, while Mali, turns out to be an iconoclast. In the words of John Thieme, "The novel responds to central tensions in South Indian society in the third quarter of the 20th century, particularly ways in which changing value – systems give rise to inter – generational conflicts". (130) The theme of East and West conflict also encapsulates the entire novel. Jagan symbolizes oriental culture where as Mali communicates occidental culture. Although Mali is of Indian origin, his disregard for his cultural roots and equal affinity to American mercantile attitudes, bewilders Jagan, hence their attitudinal difference aggravates the situation in the novel.

Narayan is always appreciated for his study of human characters and for his humour in the character delineation. It seems he plays a neutral role in the growth of his characters and he deliberately gives opportunity to his readers to deduce different interpretations of his texts. A closer inspection reveals several critical insights deeply submerged in the context of the novels. If we consider the exemplary characters like Raju in *The Guide*, Daisy and Raman in *Painter of Signs*, Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*, and many more we can certainly claim that besides human relationships, several other issues have also been discussed. The theme of 'East' and 'West', scathing attack against caste system and touch of modernism is what we perceive as we go through the beautiful novels of R.K.Narayan. In this context we can quote the words of Rudyard Kipling who is exposed as the arch-colonialist. His lines from *The Ballad of East and West* (1889), 'OH East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. These lines are a proof of a permanently unbridgeable gap (to the point that it has become as Gayatri Spivak puts it, ' "an old slogan", even though the poem continues: "Till Earth and sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;/ But there is neither East nor

West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, / when two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!"'. The poems of Rudyard Kipling suggest that East and West are self – devastating mental constructs. When we place the characters of Jagan and Mali against the background of these immortal lines of Rudyard Kipling, we can spontaneously conceive the fact why Jagan cannot unite with Mali and bridge the emotional and psychological gap existing between them. This unbridgeable gap starts expanding more from chapter five onwards. In chapter five Mali communicates about different gadgets like – gramophone, Polaroid camera. He divulges his knowledge about “the Grand Canyon and the Niagara and the statue of liberty and the traffic jams in New York.” (61) Mali’s life style, ostentatious nature, self – conceit altogether affect the innocent continent of Jagan. This leads to the fact that Mali believes in modernization. His interest in electronic gadgets, search for European food and inclination towards imbibing western culture makes his instantaneous response to socio-cultural transformation. The ideological difference between Jagan and Mali in reality illustrates the difference in the economic thought process of Gandhi and Nehru. Jagan’s character acts as an alternative to Gandhi’s ideals. In the words of O.P.Misra :

In Gandhi’s thought village self – reliance, “Charkha” and decentralization went together... “Charkha” symbolized his economic philosophy. The spinning wheel, cottage and village industries, were instrumental in making villages self – sufficient and attaining the ideal of decentralization of economic and political power. His firm opinion was that the “Charkha” would act as life – belt to all those drowning in the sea of hunger. Nehru did not agree with Gandhi to such a simple equation, villagism and loin cloth civilization. (124)

Nehru did not vehemently oppose the Khadi movement and hand spinning but he felt that these two movements were an intensification of individualism in production and a return to pre-industrial age. According to Nehru for liberating India from the grip of economic problems, India desperately needed Industrialization and modernization. In regard to this Vishnu Dutt remarks,

For Nehru, on the other hand industrialization, as the spearhead of a program of all round development, was the first necessity in independent India...His belief was that the development, of basic and key industries like steel, machine tools, machine – building plants, fertilizer factories and the fostering of irrigation and power would provide the impetus for an advance on all fronts, enabling the country to cross the economic hump in fifteen or twenty years and attain the stage of self – sustaining growth. (139)

The culmination of the discussion situates Mali as an alternative to the ideals of Nehru. It seems Narayan was also confused and leaves an open ended opinion to the readers after creating the characters of ‘Jagan’ and ‘Mali’.

From Chapter six onwards the aforesaid discussion forms the backdrop of the remaining chapters. Here the cousin takes the initiative to divulge the truth to Jagan that

He wants to manufacture story- writing machines. Mali shows his hatred in his father’s business and tries to divert his attention towards manufacturing machines. Mali exploits the simplicity and innocence of Jagan and tries to convince him to support him in his venture. Mali retorts ‘An American company is offering to collaborate. In course of time, every home in the country will possess one and we will produce more stories than any other nation in the world. (77)

The exasperating speech of Mali is intentionally plotted so that Jagan is tempted to find interest in his adventurous job. Jagan’s initial interest in the venture is an outcome of his inquisitive mind. He is driven highly by his zeal to learn American culture. Jagan is an outstanding character portrayal of Narayan as his inclination to acquire knowledge about

America reminds us of Francis Bacon's essay *Of Travaile*. In the essay Bacon enumerates his philosophy. The essayist thinks:

When a Travailler returneth home, let him not leave the Countries, where he hath Travailed, altogether behind him; But maintaine a Correspondence, by letters, with those of his Acquaintance, which are of most Worth. And let his Travaile appeare rather in his Discourse, then in his Apparrell, or Gesture: And in his Discourse, let him be rather advised in his Answers, then forwards to tell stories: And let it appeare, that he doth not change his country Manners, for those of Forraigne Parts; But onely prick in some Flowers, of that he hath Learned abroad, into the Customers of his owne Country.(07)

In simple terms it should be an augmentation of knowledge not a purposive deletion of one's culture. Jagan strictly adheres to it. Jagan eventually perceives that his son wants to plunder his money and start his business. When the cousin unfolds the discussion about his acquisition of wealth and Mali's knowledge about it, Jagan utters: "Money is an evil". (81)

The statement is a bit confusing and cannot be correlated to Jagan's character. Perhaps the author here tries to project Jagan as a man full of practical wisdom who is well aware of the dark side of monetary pursuits. We assume that this statement is deliberately uttered by Jagan to situate Mali as a contrast to him as Mali is blind in monetary matters. Mali believes in capitalism and Jagan believes in Sarvodaya even though he is interested to accumulate wealth through his business. Perhaps Jagan understands the evil effects of money. The nature of 'money' in reality is multifaceted. Money can make life as well as destroy life. Jagan is sensible and he has used his rationality to make money so that future remains stable. Jagan prophecies 'simple living and high thinking' and he was in disbelief that people knew about his property even Mali also. Since he might be forced to pay two lakhs without knowing the future prospect of the business he articulates this statement.

The novel proceeds towards the climax when Mali is supported by his wife (Grace) in their collective effort to convince Jagan in investing his wealth in Mali's venture. The reference to "washing machines, grinding, powdering or calculating-nowadays one uses electricity for everything" (82), these tempting words are used by Mali to make Jagan understand the progress of the nation. There is an ulterior motive behind their approach and that is, to trigger passion in Jagan's heart and to make him conceive the fact- how technology has progressed and changed the outlook of the society. Mali epitomizes the socio-economic transformation in his behaviour and he also accentuates on the interest of people in scientific inventions and their inclination towards expanding their boundary of knowledge. Jagan becomes aware of all the schemes of Mali and so he utters,

"Gandhi has taught me peaceful methods, and that's how I'm going to meet their demand. These two are hell bent upon involving me in all sorts of things," he reflected. He was bewildered by his son's scheme and distrusted it totally. He was aware that pressure was being subtly exercised on him to make him part with cash. He was going to meet the situation by ignoring the whole business; a sort of non-violent non-cooperation. (86)

Mali retaliates on every gesture of Jagan and he tries to enforce Jagan to part with his wealth. In his conversation with Jagan he expresses his anti-nation statement: "I really do not know what you mean. You expect everything to be said ten times; no wonder nothing gets done in this country" (88) In the midst of the conversation, Jagan says, "Gandhi always advocated poverty and not riches". (89) In the book *Economic Thought of Gandhi and Nehru*; O.P. Misra observes

Gandhi's love and praise of poverty, suffering and the ascetic is contrasted to the ideals and philosophy of Nehru. In *An Autobiography*, Nehru wrote: Personally I dislike the praise of poverty and suffering. I do not think they are all desirable and

they ought to be abolished. Nor do I appreciate the ascetic life as a social ideal...nor do I appreciate in the least the idealization of the simple peasant life...what is there in the "Man with the Hoe" to idealise over crushed and exploited for innumerable generations he is only little removed from the animals who keep him company. (125)

Mali voices out his dissent in the words "You expect me to do that? I have better plans than to be a vendor of sweet meats". (89) The novel almost reaches the climax here because the clash in opinion between Mali and Jagan reaches the optimum height in these lines. We all know that Narayan is inclined to Gandhi's philosophy and every page of his book is pervaded by Gandhism, here we can witness the dichotomies that always exist in Narayan's character portrayal. Narayan is baffled and leaves to the reader to decide who adheres to right path. We can say that the sudden outburst of Mali inundates the novel with two parallel ideas pacing at same momentum. On one side is the Khadi movement, hand-spinning industries which can be instrumental in making villages self – sufficient and according to Nehru it is an intensification of individualism in production and a return to pre – industrial age and on the flip side is industrialization. In *The Hindustan times*, 30 November 1939 Nehru wrote, "Any attempt to build up a country's economy largely on the basis of cottage and small – scale industries is doomed to failure". (124) Thus Jagan, vendor of sweat meats, is confined in his business, increase the employability of many common people and contribute something towards the industrial growth of the nation, where as Mali's intention; not considering his nature or latent desire; is towards the growth of the nation. Thus Mali follows in footsteps of Nehru who pleaded for industrialization and modernization of India. From the economic point of view of the novel the above mentioned distinguishing points between Jagan and Mali can be well appreciated and evaluated. From the humanitarian point of view Jagan's symphonic generosity towards the children, when he sells the sweets at low price, his simplicity, adherence to values of life, proclaims that he is an embodiment of everything that is traditional and goes through an experiment with truth.

At the end of the discussion we can say that the novel is deluged with multifaceted ideas ranging from east & west encounter to Narayan's empathetic consideration of Indian women in their post marital life. The plight of Ambika, Mali's mother; and Grace, Mali's wife; opens a new dimension in the novel. It shows Narayan's keen power of observation and how he has allocated space for other dimensions besides the main content i.e. Jagan and Mali's ideological difference. In the words of James Dale:

'Perhaps the most valuable element in Narayan's novels for modern man, caught up in the frenzied rush of the acquisitive society, is his rejection of mere materialism, his insistence on the supreme importance of human relationships and the spiritual values which should underlie them'.

To end with the words of Dr. Kanhaiya Jee Jha , "In The ideological difference between Jagan and Mali, thus, signifies the clash between traditional, human, spiritual values and modernity, that promises prosperity by the use of machine' ". (58)

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The Criterion

Vijay Tendulkar's Play *The Vultures* in the Light of *Rasa* Theory

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Most of the students of Indian art and literature tend to imitate the Western trends of beauty and aestheticism. Due to the influence of the Western education, we seek guidance from the works of Aristotle, Horace and Longinus and forget our own entire philosophical and artistic traditions, which are in no way inferior to any other source of knowledge about art and craftsmanship. Whether it is Indian dance, poetics, or dramaturgy, it has direct or indirect relation with the realm of metaphysics. According to Bharata Muni, it is *rasa* which is both the 'seed' as well as 'the fruit of the arts'. (Mukerjee 91) *Rasa* which literarily means flavour is also the source of aesthetic pleasure. According to Indian tradition it is not only love and laughter, mirth and attractiveness, which aesthetically attracts us but other 'repulsive' emotions and feelings like terror, fury, and disgust, can also yield us *rasa* if these are presented in an artistically delightful manner.

Vijay Tendulkar is among the few modern Indian dramatists who wrote successful plays on major social problems in India. The main theme which recurs time and again in his plays is the theme of violence, anger, and disgust. In the very early period of his dramatic career he earned for himself the name of an angry young man from media and multitudes. His plots are mainly based on the practicalities of life than the romantic love stories. He seems to acknowledge the presence of *krodha* and *bhaya bhava* as the essential moods among common human beings in their day-to-day material and practical lives. *Raudram rasa* is the presiding *rasa* in Tendulkar's dramas. Anger and fury are the feelings or *bhavas* which get derived from the *tamas guna* whose expressions are ignorance, imbalance, and inertia. *Tams*, which is one of the three *gunas*, contains all the negative attitudes and sentiments, such as fury, fear, and disgust. Thus the three main *rasa*, *raudra*, *bhayanaka*, and *bibhatsa* are also attributed to *tamas*. And it is these three *rasas*, which I will try to bring forth in Tendulkar's writing.

Among the various dramas of Vijay Tendulkar, *The Vultures*, has the maximum scenes of fury and anger present in it. In ancient times the *raudram rasa* had been associated with the subhuman beings like *asuras*, *dhanavas*, and *rakshasas*. In this modern drama Tendulkar relates his characters with the flesh eating creatures. The very name of the play suggests the cruelty and violence present in it. I will try to analyze the first act of this play in the light of *rasa* theory.

In the opening of the play, Rajninath, one among the only two compassionate and kindhearted characters, exposes the whole theme of the play through his expository poem. He uses the words like beast, leper, mangy dog, hell, and death for his half-brothers and his father. The whole of the family except Rajninath and his sister-in-law, Rama, is a vicious bunch of vultures, who most of the time live their lives under the feeling of *bhaya* (terror), of each other. They are shown attacking each other most inhumanly. There are no such feelings of love, brotherhood, or filial gratitude, as is desirable in a compact family like theirs. In his long and expository poem, Rajninath describes the family as:

"Not a home, but a hole in a tree
Where vultures lived
In the shape of men.

A haunting burning ground
Surrounded by evil ghosts.” (Tendulkar 204).

While narrating the event when Rajninath was ignored and provided with no food to satisfy his hunger for many days, the ‘saint-like’ Rajninath got furious and tried to revolt. His fury is depicted in accordance with *raudra rasa* by Tendulkar when he says

“I’ll kill them all!

I’ll cut off their heads!

As goat’s is chopped to mince and eat” (Tendulkar 204).

In Tendulkar’s plays most of the violent scenes are peculiarly presented on the stage. There are certain exceptions where he makes his characters narrate these events. In one of the events Ramakant, the eldest son in the family, narrates how he injured his family servant who had only come to ask for his salary. “Blood streamed from the fellow’s mouth. Must have lost one or the two teeth. Well, they’d have fallen out anyway.” (Tendulkar 210). While narrating the episodes of cruelty committed by him, he does not feel any type of guilt or remorse. He takes pride while unfolding his violent deeds.

In the mock fight to frighten their father, Ramakant and Umakant attack each other violently in order to crush their father in between.

“RAMAKANT. Fine one you are to kill me! I’ll bash your bloody brains out! Filthy bloody bastard! Let him go Manik. Let go him!

UMAKANT. Manik let me go...” (Tendulkar 228).

They knock their father down. “*There is a gash on papa’s head, from which blood is streaming.*” (228). *Raudra* which is represented by red colour, is many times spilled in the form of blood, during the first act of the play; sometimes in the form of their servant’s blood, sometimes their father’s, and in other acts, their sister Manik’s, whom the two brothers attack. The same bloody scene gets repeated at the end of the play when Rama’s foetus gets aborted by the revengeful act of Manik’s witchcraft.

Bhaya rasa, which is the *rasa* of horror and fear, one among the *tamas guna* is present in abundance in the play. All the family members in the play *The Vultures* live in a constant fear of each other. It is Hari Pitale, the father and his daughter Manik who are always fearful of other members of the family. They think that they will be any time attacked and killed by Ramakant and Umakant. Manik and Hari Pitale find no reason to join their hands against others because they themselves take part in the plots and schemes against each other. All the members of the family keep on changing parties in order to save their individual lives.

Manik keeps always the door of her room locked during her sleep.

“MANIK. Ha! So should I keep it open, should I? So you can come and strangle me, all of you?” (Tendulkar 207).

She thinks that she is still alive because she is careful enough; nonetheless others are always in search of a suitable chance to kill her.

MANIK. I was careful. That’s what saved me! I just refused my medicine. I wouldn’t even drink water. That’s what saved me. I never slept. Even in the dark, I never closed my eyes for a second. That’s how I survived.” (Tendulkar 208).

Bibhatsa rasa (flavour of disgust), which also springs forth from *tamas guna* has also been variously made use of by the dramatist. Hari Pitale, the father of the family, who experiences a feeling of disgust to have such children who are always ready to kill him. But we know that he himself is not a saint. He has an illegitimate son in the person of Rajninath, who has never been acknowledged their own relation by the family. Hari Pitale has also duped his

own brother for material gains. His sons are following his own footprints. He feels it disgusting to have children like his own.

“PAPA. My stupidity... yes! To produce bastards like you!” (Tendulkar 211).

In return his own sons feel it loathsome to have such a man as their father.

“UMAKANT. A mangy dog would have made much a batter father!

RAMAKANT. That’s right! Bravo, brother.” (Tendulkar 213)

When we scrutinize Vijay Tendulkar’s most of the plays in the light of *rasa* theory we come to know that he is basically the playwright of fury (*krodha*), terror (*bhaya*), and disgust (*jugupsa*). He mostly weaves his plots and produces his characters in accordance with the *tamas guna*, which occupies all the *rasa* and *bhava* present in his plays.

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The Criterion

The Criterion

P C K Prem's *Rainbow at sixty*: an Overview

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Rainbow at Sixty by P C K Prem constitutes a rainbow of his experiences that he underwent in his life. It appears the book was begun and presumably completed in 2006, when Prem was celebrating his 60th birth-day. However, it was published in 2008. It is a collection of sixty poems speaking about sixty years of the poet's experiences, each unique in itself. The poet embarks upon an independent approach to Indian Poetry in English. He is very honest and true to his feelings. Spontaneously does he outpour his true and honest feelings in poetic numbers. Indian ethos is never missing, it is sustained throughout. Each poem is a spectrum of his experiences universal in tone and treatment.

In *Rainbows*, the poet describes metaphorically how man is spreading feet on to sky just as the wings of rustling rainbows. He is out to disfigure truths and unveil a myth untold. He is out to limit and broaden a life un-lived and unsung. Man has immense potential for he has been able to squeeze the horizon and create a sky of his own. The poet has strong belief in man and his power. He is a humanist. How beautifully does he describe the declaration of a war for mapping the sky!

“And there rises a figure
With a conch in the mouth
Declaring a fiendish war unending
Trying to find pedigree in the sky unmapped.” (Prem, *Rainbow at Sixty*, 1)

However, the poet regrets that man in an effort to distend legs on to the planet or spreading feet on to the sky shows his ugly face like that of crows and conducts himself accordingly:

“And crows trip about and laugh
Sitting on the throne
Poisoning the nectar in drops
That falls in drizzle
To silence churning in life”(Ibid.)

Man to make his future resolutely secure builds an ethos with tongues of lust. Men and crows are alike. To quote the poet,

“And men in the masks of crows
Snatch the throne from foxes cunning
To tell a renewed story
Of Bali and Vibhishana

With not a shred of doubt
Or deception.”(2)

In *Walls*, the poet describes how a fragile man stands like the tall barren cliffs and is in search of an identity before he dies and is buried. His names are reduced to foot-notes or coloured blank posters pasted on debris of walls. A man without a history is bundled up in rusted trunks. He is forgotten in the jungle of rainbows or amid windy rains.

Puppies is a pictorial presentation of Babus in India. It seems to be based on the very personal experience of the poet. Babus are no better than puppies who do not think of dangers. They sit and blink and drag lethargically pencils on the papers. How true the poet is here! He further says that Babus are as insensitive as robots and they are further compared to buffaloes. He says:

“Creating robots who stare like men
Similar to buffaloes in ponds
Throwing black mud around
With a splash of strong tails and sticks.”(4)

There is an inner contradiction between Babus and men and so is it between the real self and the projected self of man. Man is ‘pathetically pushing mucky bodies/ Half distorted and punctured/ Spines often changing to rubber’.(Ibid.)

In *Defeat*, the sunrise has been beautifully presented through personification:

“The sun rises on a sad note
Driven to perilous edge
Parking a red ball quietly
On broken window panes
Gleaming a little intriguingly
With probing eyes fitfully.”(5)

When the sun rises, it engulfs all silently and spreads ‘yellow vast sheets in tiny cotton flakes’(Ibid.). Its rays dispel iniquity and antagonism. The imagery of a long wooden chariot carrying heavy baggage of grains reminds of the prosperity that the sun brings with itself.

Blue is a beautiful poem describing how things change their shapes in course of time. It is a change not for better but for worse. The poet begins with the instance of road. The bitumen road is prepared to die like a man in the deep sea of miseries. It is with deep fissures giving the impression of wounds. It is crushed by scrawled wheels and honks. It is further described how ‘nirvan’ is neglected and Markandey's confront conspiracy. It is something to be thought of seriously:

“And ‘nirvana’ is put on fire
Of earthly wishes and desires
Appearing strong and eternal

And Markandey's of the millennium
Confront conspiracies and perdition”(8)

Men of Barren Hills is a commentary on the contemporary life and situations. Prem has used very appropriate similes, metaphors and allusions to assert his point of view. The way he has presented modern men, it appears that men and barren hills are synonymous. The poet says:

“Struggle of a man to catch words
And lazy crooked feelings
With heart beatings without meaning.”(Ibid.)

It is a world where men live sterilized life among the skinless marble statue and gods have kept their eyes closed. It is a damned life, men fighting for existence with folded hands. The poet says sarcastically here how man indulges in purifying mortals by becoming insensitive to human values:

“And a few ablutions to purify mortals
In a bloody whirlpool
Of temples and religious yajnas
Without foundations.”(Ibid.)

A scene is created here to assert the sterility of modern men:

“A scene opens up, men change
Into treeless rocky hills
And tall deodars are infertile
To give birth to clouds.”(9)

How funny it is that man is searching for roots in rock! The poet says:

“Searching roots in rocks of granite
Or under the wreckage of walls.”(Ibid.)

The essence of life has dried up, nay, it has evaporated not in the sky to form clouds, but in the desert:

“Life’s juices are soaked or evaporated
In the vast desert
Where trees dissolve and disappear
In the deep gorges of rocks
Making words harsh and bitter
And rains do not fall on time
As clouds are faithless; may be barren.”(Ibid.)

This world is full of towering egos. The poet uses the word, egos with the spelling e-g-o-s. This is deliberate. ‘Egos’ signifies that Man is a bundle of ego. On the one hand,

there are towering egos and on the other, the workers whose eyes are wet to see the denuded forests somehow find a foothold of life. The eternity is long lost.

Man is making all efforts for fertility in life. He is visiting shrines, shaking bells, folding hands for divinity in life, but of no use. Out of frustration he is pulling out swords to wound prayers and gods.

The poet further says that men are 'like words of consonants without vowels'(10). They search for identity and name but the 'ink stops replying'(Ibid.).

Man has become absolutely barren and he is unable to make a deep study of things. This reminds one of Eliot who says that man is in search of information only and that knowledge is beyond his reach.

Men of Barren Hills is very rich in imagery. The analysis is deep and complex. It seems to be a representative poem of Prem.

Call is a poem inviting us for action. Life promises lots of joy, colours and flowers, rainbows and rays. However, man sits like a Buddha in deep meditation forgetting that life will generate extreme joy and happiness. The poet makes this statement sarcastically. The discussion of Buddha charges the poem with Indian ethos.

Silence is a poem commenting on the corrupted clerks in India who have got magnetic fingers for coins. They expect tingling coins for the fulfilment of a rich crop of passions. Eventually, their conduct lands them into prison for 'a life long penance and sermons/ And an endless meditation'(13).

In *Life*, the poet speaks of disharmony between body and soul. Man is in dilemma worried sometimes like an ascetic and sometimes like a lunatic and ironically enough, he is in search of home.

A Long Journey deals with the journey of life and death. The journey ends in graveyard among agonizing cries and tears. Tall Deodar trees observe all these quietly and billows bow to say prayers. The description is picturesque. The poet also talks of rebirth. The journey of life is never over as it begins with each ending.

Sickness says how the mind of man is sick and its diagnosis is difficult. Man is still behaving as homo sapiens, seeking pristine glory in gory blood cuddling events. Giving a gloomy picture of the world of man, the poet says,

“Where men are burnt alive
Or nailed to death
And women’s breasts severed
To squeeze milk without waste of time.”(22)

Father is an excellent commentary on communal disharmony which exists in our society. Three decades ago, things were different. The society had neither witnessed the fall of Babri Masjid nor the rise of a temple. The poet says that 'the fall of Babri Masjid was an event/ Of great destruction in creation/And a birth of another thought'(31). The situation has worsened and Rama, Rahim or Jesus are mute spectators and they would be happier killing all than to live with men. This is the time of mutual distrust and disharmony.

Struggle is a poem contemplative in nature. It speaks about the struggle of a man 'in an invisible paradise' (35). The struggle is life-time and to become like God is impossible on this planet. Life is

“A nightmare and a blind running
 Into a mirage of cobras
 And snakes like smoldering embers.”(Ibid)

A vast, never-ending desert is spread before man and the earthly things are embracing death. Man is forced not to live a religious life, rather to live a life of ‘eat, drink and be merry.’

Even the upbringing is in question. The poet refers to the Indian myth. Prajapati had a daughter, Saraswati with whom he wanted to have an unholy relationship. Saraswati, however, escaped the sexual assault by transforming herself into a mare.

“And to think of father is disgusting
 Prajapati desired a daughter
 He paired with her in passionate moments
 And united in unholy alliance
 And thus committed a transgression
 By releasing dangerous fiery seed.”(Ibid)

This seed is terrible and destructive, however considered as sacred and celestial. Such an unholy thing makes oblation challenging.

The birth on the earth is destined and it lives with an unquenched thirst. The journey is long and tortuous. Elegance and paradise are the words beyond imagination in this vicious age.

It is utter foolishness to search for salvation on the earth, yet this is the thing mostly desired. The poet writes:

“Here nothing is possible
 Found in hot ashes born out
 Of living tissues, flesh and skeletons
 Ready for immersion in holy Ganges
 Out of faith and skepticism
 But it remains a transient thought
 Of seeking liberation in meditation
 Under a Bodh Tree.”(36)

The poet finds the modern world disgusting and he does not want to be re-born as man. He says,

“I don’t wish to be born as man
 To be self-serving
 I can’t dream of turning into a machine
 With breaks, clutches and accelerators
 And petrol or diesel in the stomach
 I refuse to take birth next, after death.”(37)

Living in the modern times will lead to death with indigestion as one is forced to eat “grass, guns and ammunition/Coffins, pumps and inhale LPG”(Ibid) in place of fresh air.

People swear by the Bible, Koran or Gita and cheat human beings and Gods as well. The world is full of pseudo-saints, be he a priest or a guru or a baba or a white robed Father of the Church. They live brightly in animated lies and eat flesh and meat of dead and living/Pulsating mutton cooked in liquor and nectar/without distinction.”(Ibid)

One has to wait for rebirth as a man after going through eighty four lakh yonis. It is so difficult, but still this life is not a blessing. The poet says,

“It is tragedy of times
Where a real man awaits a birth
After passing through eighty four lakhs ‘Yonis’
But life is still not a blessing in disguise
I feel it is negation of all patronage.”(38)

Life on the earth is a long torturing epic of man. The situations do not allow him to live like man. Hence, he writes:

“And so I refuse to call myself a man
I am neither a beast nor a priest
But play as a lesbian in the open.”(39)

The use of lesbian in the above context is innovative and revolutionary. This is typical of Prem’s style.

The scenario laid before us is misty. The poet is forgotten and lost amidst falling comets, hurling of missiles and blistering bombs. His faith is shaken and so he says,

“Living is a nightmare
And humanity is a huge wastage
From democracy to socialism
To communism and anarchy
From a speck of man to a crowd unguided
All survive in the blood of men
Where skeletons and skulls look arranged
In patterns beautiful, and in frozen shapes
Of museum and galleries
Those speak of wonders and history.”(Ibid)

Today, man is connected with pollution, cancer, pains in joints etc. rather than with nature. He excavates, explores and flies high, but fails to understand spirituality.

The poet has wasted sixty years of life waiting for a new dawn but alas! This is a hope against hope.

“... I stand alone as a mina
With a bag of sixty years wasted

To wait for a dawn of new millennium
 With messages of a Third World War.”(42)
 People are in the pursuit of worldly things and the Ramayan is viewed differently.
 The poet says,

“Ramayan can’t be called an epic
 To tell God’s functions on earth
 But a simple grandma’s tale
 Reduced to a wife’s loud tantrums
 For a throne, land and much more.” (Ibid)

The poet does not like rhetoric and pretensions. People put on the masks of Gods and declare to be Nanak, Mahatma or Teresa. A life of peccadillo is always better than a life owning pretensions.

In such a situation, the poet wishes ‘to live life not as a man of dignity/And virtuous heart but a life of pleasures.’(Ibid)

This is the struggle of man on a planet of evil spirits. The poet shows his brilliance in the employment of imagery taken from different religious and social sources.

Quarrels is a beautiful analysis of men and women living in an age of uncertainty, extremism and mad race. Women do not participate in the pious job of child birth. They instead love to play cards, Tombola and participate in partying. Men are impotent and women are not better, they are worse. Prem has presented an unforgettable metaphor here, “Women in crowds are deserts/ Larger than Gobi and Sahara.”(73)

On the whole, *Rainbow at Sixty* sets out to explore the realities of life. The explorations are sometimes bitter and unpalatable.

The book is a brilliant mosaic work of a variety of similes, metaphors and allusions taken from different areas of life. Prem’s use of imagery is straight-forward, but unique and ingenious. Like Ted Hughes, he attempts to use animal imagery such as that of fox, crow, dog and buffalo, but he fails to achieve depth and complexity. Animal imagery is an important choice of the poet. Through animal imagery he highlights the animal attributes inherent in man.

Most of the poems are structured on an idea. The language is simple and precise. There is sustained interest in his poems.

R.A. Singh comments thus about Prem’s ability as a poet,

“P C K Prem is a competent poet and for him the English language and its nuances pose no problems. He manipulates them in his way and naturalizes idioms, syntax, poetic forms, metre and rhythm to Indian ethos. He attempts to find out poetic expression for multifarious social and individual contradictions affecting present-day life.”(Prem:Foreword)

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The Criterion

Travails of Self Identity

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Shashi Deshpande novel *Small Remedies* has very strong portrait of women. This novel is an embodiment of changing ideologies in the society seen through changing role of woman. All of them represent the woman of today they do not believe women are inferior beings who must remain passive and submissive. Instead the women give a tough fight against the established order and often come up with new concepts of morality. They not only live their lives as a wife, mother and daughter but also as an individual. These characters along with feminine qualities are also invested with the conventionally considered unfeminine qualities like courage, independence, intellectual energy, rationality and ambition. They are autonomous and self determining women who struggle to obtain selfhood by dissolving their pessimism, inculcating the strength to survive with dignity and analyzing their problems rationally. They refuse to surrender before anxieties, indoctrination, social conditioning and resultant oppression. They are aware of the injustices heaped on them; they display a determination to face the riddles of life boldly. These women are Madhu, Savitri Bai and Munni.

In the book, Madhu the protagonist of the novel brought up in a liberal atmosphere by her father. Her father is so lavish in his love and affection for her that she never feels the need of her mother. Her father's death when she is only fifteen years old shatters her and she comes to stay with her aunt Leela her guardian henceforth. She is not happy in her aunt's home and cannot adjust to staying with her aunt's family which includes Joe, her aunt's husband and their two children Paula and Tony. She finishes her graduation on the money that has been left by her father but when the money finishes she refuses to study further despite being cajoled by Leela and Joe but she insists, "I am determined. I will start working. I will earn my own money, become independent" (SR,83)

In the meantime a friend of Joe's Hamid Bhai offers her a job of writing and editing his magazine City Views. This offer of a job is like a godsend opportunity for her to establish her independence. The next step of course is a place to stay. This problem too is resolved by Hamid Bhai's offer of a small room on rent. The small room becomes a symbol of her independent identity and provides her a sense of fulfillment.

She is happy in her world of independence which gives her a profound sense of self fulfillment. Tony her cousin visits her frequently and introduces Som and Chandru to Madhu. Madhu's friendship with Som blossoms into love and they soon get married. Marriage brings bliss and soon they are blessed with a son who is the apple of her eye. Aditya her son gives her a new identity he becomes the centre of her universe and for his upbringing she gives up her job and becomes a devoted mother.

One night she reveals a secret of the past to Som and after that her peace and happiness is finished as Som becomes increasingly suspicious of her and violent quarrels and arguments ensue between them adversely affecting the tender psyche of Aditya. She gets infuriated many

times at his suspicious attitude and even thinks of parting but she remains silent because of Aditya. Aditya however leaves the house and soon dies in a bomb blast. Madhu is shattered and walks the streets looking for him; she remains seated by the telephone waiting for his call. She loses touch with reality and her days are spent in fitful anxiety worrying and praying for his safe return. One day confronted by Som she accepts the death of Aditya and if Aditya was the catalyst which kept them together his death becomes the cause of estrangement.

Madhu holds Som responsible for Aditya's going as it was his over suspicious attitude that created tension in the household and consequently his death. She feels that "to see Som is to remember and to remember is to make living impossible and therefore it is that Som and I prefer to part (SR83). Therefore she decides to leave Som and live apart. She wants to forget whatever has happened in the past between them and moreover she cannot share the moments of her suffering as a bereaved mother with him. She deliberately creates the indifference with Som as she feels, "it is just indifference that has made forgetting possible. Indifference is, after all, the best armour you can wear. If I don't care, I can't be hurt" (SR,107)

She decides to accept the offer of Chandru who wants her to write the biography of Savitribai Indorker so that she can divert her grief and also it would give her the opportunity to be away from Som.

Madhu moves to Bhavanipur, where Bai lives and takes up residence with a young couple, Lata and Hari but despite their demonstration of love and care Madhu engages herself in her work and largely remains indifferent to those around her. She also has visits of Tony and Rekha who urge her to come back to Som, even Som writes to her pleading with her to come back but all these appeals are like water off a ducks back. She remains adamant and resolute in her decision saying that, "i turned my back on them. Nothing can help" (SR,113) but gradually she starts to connect with her surroundings trying to overcome Aditya's death and Som's ealos nature. She responds to Lata's sincere efforts of love and affection but it is Hari who reveals his connection to Madhu's mother and begins to call her *Kaku*. It is Hari's persistent efforts that help bring Madhu to the real world by initiating new relationships.

Madhu slowly gets involved with all especially since Hari asks her about her aunt Leela. All the memories of her life repressed by her come flooding back and then a crisis in the form of Bai's stroke and Hari's accident forces her to confront her own grief.

She confides in Hari about the agony of losing Aditya how she mindlessly waited for him to come back and the disappointment when each day ended with no sign of him. She also talks of the immense sorrow of not being with him in his final moments and also what a waste of a life that got finished in bomb blasts. She says, "Sometimes I think I could have borne his death if I had been able to be with him, to see him die. We have a right to share it, the most profound human experience of death" (SR,305)

Talking about Aditya's death with Hari is therapeutic for Madhu. It has a cathartic effect and she lets herself open up to other people's grief and pain also. Her healing begins on comparing herself with the tale of Kisa Gotami who had gone to Lord Buddha to revive her dead son and Lord Buddha had asked her to get mustard seeds from a house which had not been visited by death. Obviously there was no such house as she soon realized and peacefully accepted her son's death. Remembering this story helps Madhu to accept her fate.

Shashi Deshpande through the character of Madhu presents the picture of an extremely courageous woman who faces the problems of her life boldly and also manages to come out of them. She though given to occasional self pity displays rare courage and confidence in trying to cope with difficulties, humiliations and frustrations by herself.

Through Madhu we are told of another lady called Savitribai Indorker. She was an extremely dare-devilish kind of woman. She crosses “a clear line of demarcation between what females could do and what they couldn’t by breaking not just a couple but a whole host of taboos” (SR,218)

She was interested in music right from childhood and wanted to become a professional singer. On not gaining permission from her father she takes music lessons without her father’s permission. And later on in her in laws household she listens to music secretly and even asks her father-in-law to arrange for music lessons for her and finally one day she runs away from her inlaw’s home with a tabala master who she feels can better her prospects of becoming a professional singer. By taking this step, she summons the courage to break all the barriers of caste and marriage codes. She dares to defy society. Madhu says about it, “A step so great that even today it would require enormous courage. The stuff even movies still hesitate to take on” (SR,166)

She is so desperate in her desire to earn name in the musical world that she not only abandons her husband and family but also rejects her only daughter. “By taking this step she entered another world far removed from the world of food, cooking, festivals, rituals, pregnancy and children that she had to inhabit as a daughter-in-law of the house” (SR,219) .Somuya Bhattacharya finds this novel as an “uplifting experience” as there are a lot of anti-traditional decisions being taken.(Bhattacharya)

Savitribai disassociates herself from all her relations but perhaps the most painful of all is her treatment of her only daughter, she neglects her and the child Munni too feels unwanted, unloved and rejection because of which she develops an aversion to her mother.

Through the character of Bai we have a woman who gives preference to her own individual aspirations and rejects the traditional role of housewife and devoted mother. This is in subversion to the traditional roles of a mother and wife. For a woman to aspire to a life beyond the limits of the home was considered heresy of the worst kind. Malti Mathur asserts, “Any woman who wished to give up the security and safety of the confines of the home for an uncertain, unsafe identity outside, are looked upon as no less than a jezebel” (Mathur,85)

Bai’s character is the epitome of strength and courage. She is a daring woman who, instead of choosing the sheltered and respectable life, prefers the path less trodden which no doubt would be full of obstacles.

She is a source of fascination to Madhu who admires Bai’s strong will and determination in the achievement of her goal. It is never easy for Bai to move on as she is alone in the journey. Many hurdles come in her way but she never gives up rather faces and overcomes each of them courageously and rather it is this determination to achieve her goals that gives her courage to face the jibes and hostility of society. Madhu sees her as “the rebel who rejected the conventions of her times. The feminist who lived her life on her terms” (SR,166)

She moves on in her life and at last all her efforts bear fruit as she becomes not only a singer but an extremely successful professional singer as is depicted from the various awards, photographs, pictures with prime minister, ministers, singers, writers, dancers and various dignitaries. This is all due to her dedication to her art. Amrita Bhalla in her book Shashi Deshpande comments about this involvement of Bai to her art. She says, "Bai's story speaks of commitment and dedication to her art, of the courage to step across the threshold and break out of the restrictions of upper caste patriarchal society in search of a dream"(Bhalla,79)

Bai also brushes aside some age old beliefs which reflect the subversion of the role of new women. She shows immense courage to give her illegitimate child the name 'Indorker' the name she herself adopted as a singer later, from her mother's hometown Indore, thus neither using her maiden name nor her marital name. Her daughter was given by her only her name, not of the male parent thus claiming her daughter exclusively as her own child once again neither her husband's nor her lovers. She is a woman who takes all the decisions herself and bears the responsibility for her decisions. Her ability to choose and the desire to face the situation boldly without surrendering and being oppressed by anybody make her a unique woman who successfully manages to subvert the traditional role of woman. Darshana Trivedi says, "She challenges the code of Manu, she proves that her life is her own. She can take the decision in her own life."(Trivedi,262)

The last but not the least important character that follows the theme of subversion of roles is Leela, Madhu's aunt. We were introduced to her as the caretaker of Leela after her father's death but now we would study her character as she too is a remarkable lady. Leela was fiercely independent. She participated in the quit India movement but as a leftist she is against Ahimsa and Satyagraha. She feels being beaten up and abused goes against human nature. She went underground many times and did many daring deeds. There was even a price on her head, she had narrow escapes and avoided getting caught. She devotes her life helping the poor, destitute, under-paid, over-worked factory laborers. She endeavours to do a lot for the women inflicted by T.B. She is deeply loved and honoured by the people. Leela devotes her life to the people marrying very late. She marries Joe, a Christian while she herself was a Brahmin Hindu widow. she did not believe in caste and was the only one who accepted the marriage of Madhu's parents and offered them a place to stay with her as they had nowhere to go. Madhu recalls, "Leela moved away from caste and disowned it. It meant nothing to her, which is why she alone in the family accepted my parents marriage"(SR,98)

She defies many traditional norms and joins prabhat pheries, her nationalistic views; her individualistic viewpoints make others perceive her as a rebel who disregards codes of society. Leela also persuades Madhu to study further and not to surrender to the vagaries of time. Madhu admires Leela for her integrity and strength. She says, she was "part of a generation even before mine. She always supported herself" (SR,94). Though her entire life was full of trials and tribulations she lived a complete life both in the public and private spheres. She tries her best to be a mother to Madhu, and Paula and Tony, Joe's children. She fulfills the expectations of all who rely on her and proves to be a complex and modern woman

Munni, is the illegitimate daughter of Savitri Bai. From the very beginning Munni realized that she was a misfit as her mother a Brahmin married woman staying with a muslim man. Munni denies that her father is Ghulam Sahib and makes up stories of her father staying in Pune, a successful and famous lawyer. She confides to Madhu, her closest friend and neighbor that

Ghulam Sahib had kidnapped her. Madhu narrates Munnis words, “Do you think I,d have come here otherwise?...My father would never have let me go”(SR,64) Thus creating imaginary stories munnis strives to attain the life and identity of a respectable family, which her mother had rejected. Munnis starts living a life of illusion, no matter However how much she tries to reject Ghulam Sahib as her father, her resemblance to him is exact and foils all her efforts to disown the relationship between them. Madhu says, “ she tried hard to.... cover it up, deliberately cultivating a bedraggled ragamuffin look ,far removed from his tidy elegance...but her eyes, her light grey eyes ...unmistakably linked her to the man she so strenuously disclaimed as father”(SR,75)

Munnis’s relationship with her mother is based on rejection .as Bai rejects Munnis so too Munnis rejects everything to do with her mother, may it be her talent or looks or even the men who come to listen to her music. Bai’s lifestyle means disgrace and Munnis craves for respectability. And to this purpose she denies her vocal talent and ability too.

Munnis struggles to achieve respectability is finally achieved in her youth when after marriage she becomes a common middle class woman Mrs Sheleja Joshi. Madhu says, “fighting with her back to the wall for the identity she wanted to have, the one she claimed finally, successfully denying her old one .Shailaja Joshi-a long way from Munnis, daughter of Savitri Bai and Ghulam Sahib”(SR,77)

Thus to Munnis her identity lay in being an ordinary woman belonging to a respectable family and for this she rejected everything associated with her mother- music, ambition, freedom and name. Munnis’s search for identity leaves Madhu saying, “But for all of us, there is a self inside which we recognize as our real selves. For Munnis the self that she saw as her lay in the future, it was towards that self that she moved with deliberation, it was that self I met in the bus-an ordinary looking woman with an ordinary family life and name so ordinary that it covers pages in the telephone directory”(SR,170)

Munnis’s life can best be seen as a form of rebellion, a repudiation of all that her mother stands for and it is indeed ironic that her death in the same bomb blast in which Aditya lost his life, she is recognized as Savitri Bai’s only daughter. Yet we perceive her as a strong woman who lifelong fought against her illegitimacy and sought the safe comfort of conventionality.

Small Remedies is thus a sensitive portrayal of women in a transitional phase. The characters offer us a glimpse of the divided self of women when they are confronted with the opposing forces of tradition and modernity in their quest for self identity.

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The Criterion

The Power of Gaelic National Ethos, Ideology and Irish Essentialism in prompting *The Playboy Riots*

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A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful; poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. (Shelley 115)

John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* is a drama which concurrently explores the transformative effects of poetic and mythical rhetoric and equally the failure of such lyricism to transcend the prosaic praxes of Western peasant society. It is a text that pivots upon the juxtapositions of mimetic realism and modernist verisimilitude; comedy and Dionysian tragedy; poetic discourse and action, and examines the dialectic relationship between such oppositions. As Synge expresses, "there are ... many sides to the play" (qtd. in Holder 527). It is precisely this complexity that incites the rioting of a Catholic bourgeois in the Abbey Theatre in 1907. While *The Playboy* riots are affiliated with Synge's use of the word 'shift' and the impropriety it signifies, the sole attribution of the audience's indignation to such an utterance is an insufficiently reductive explanation for the upheaval in the Abbey Theatre on the opening nights of the play. The ruckus, as this essay will argue, is reactionary to, not only the overt and sanctioned violence by the Mayoites, but also Synge's demystifying of romantic Irish peasantry, the debunking of Gaelic nationalist ethos and the exposure of state and ecclesiastical institutions as stagnating forces in the creation of a vitalized, albeit, refashioned revivalism. It is these elements, in their cumulative force, that provoke "the uproar ... [of] gigantic dimensions, stamping, booing, vociferations in gaelic ... [and the] Babel of sounds the refrain of 'God Save Ireland'" (qtd. in Morash 148).

Declan Kiberd notes that, "the protestors shouted 'We Irish are not a violent people' and then sprang at the actors" (168), thereby becoming "the thing itself" and exhibiting the gruesome attributes that the audience claimed were farce in Synge's violent representation of Irish peasantry. At the crux of the audience's fury is the disjunction between Synge's unrestrained, antithetically savage representation of Irish peasantry and the audience's expectation of an ethnographic discourse that would be a rigidly mimetic endorsement of Gaelic nationalist rhetoric. Elemental to Romantic nationalism is the construction of the West as a bastion of innate Irish identity. Gaelic nationalists centre their revivalist discourse upon their conviction in an idealised native other and a topographical periphery unblemished by English colonisation. Nevertheless, just as Christy is forced to question his subjectivity, asserting "Is it me?" (14), Synge's Irish audience are prompted into querying their aesthetically purist constructions of Irish peasantry. While Christy confesses to killing his father, claiming in a violent lyricism that he "riz the loy" (25) and "hit a blow on the ridge of his skull ... and he split to the knob of his gullet" (25), this socially transgressive deed is transformed from "a grand story" (25) to a gallant action, where Pegeen declares that Christy is "fit to be holding his head

high with the wonders of the world” (53). Similar to the Lynchehaun case in the West however, where murder is mitigated through a justified political motive, Michael James remarks, “That was a hanging crime ... You should have good reason for doing that” (11) thus demonstrating a primitive sublimity to Western society (Knapp 61). This is a milieu where the concept of ‘justice’ and ‘morality’ are deconstructed. It is the community’s catalogue of justified and commonplace transgressions when determining Christy’s crime that demonstrate the distortion of Western mythos. As Philly probes, “Maybe the land was grabbed from him, and he did what any decent man would do” (9), equally the villagers wonder if Christy was “judged to be hanged” for “fighting bloody wars for Kruger and the freedom of the Boers” (10). By presenting the audience with references to agrarian land crimes, violent bailiff disputes, and landlord wars, Synge is presenting his audience with a social realism, but one which demonstrates how savagery is tightly interlocked into the peasantry social structure thus granting an authenticity to the sadist imagery that is causing abhorrence within *The Playboy* audience. As Patrick Kenny writes in *The Irish Times*, “It is as if we looked in a mirror for the first time, and found ourselves hideous” (qtd. in Kilroy 72). It is this tension generated by the dichotomous interspace between a bona fide representation of Irish peasantry and Synge’s embracing of Bakhtin’s “grotesque realism” that intensifies the riots. While Synge claims in his preface that the “wildest ... ideas in this play are tame indeed” (vii) compared to reality, Synge reduces Romantic nationalists’s idealised perception of the West to a phantasmal aesthetic construct by illustrating the community of *The Playboy* as a gruesome inversion of Western morality. In this amoral society, Jimmy Farrell is heralded for hanging “his dog from the license, and ... it screeching and wriggling three hours at the butt of a string” (11) and there is no retribution for inhabitants who catch “a maniac ... and pel[t] the poor creature” (44). Given that the Abbey – ‘The Irish National Theatre’ was meant to endorse an affirmative depiction of Irish peasantry, it is this Rabelaisian and unmitigating savagery that resembles England’s pejorative colonialist rhetoric concerning Irish lawlessness that prompt the audience to riot and avow vehemently “that is not the West” (qtd. in Martin 65).

The Manichaeian thinking surrounding national and imperial ethos and Ireland’s will to activate a stark refutation of that colonised identity for an authentic Irish essentialism, is central to the audience’s antagonism. While Synge projects a universality onto his play claiming in *The Irish Times* that *The Playboy* is not “‘a purpose’ in the modern sense of the word” (qtd. in Thornton 136), the political consciousness of his audience cannot be divorced from the riots. Synge is not only destabilising the image of an ‘idealised rural past’ at a time when Irish nationalism is seeking to attain self-definition through that very concept (Doggett 285), but he is undercutting the notion of a puritanical patriarchy that is central to the state’s nationalism. As Nicholas Grene notes, it is the eroticism evoked by the crude use of ‘shift’ rather than the refined lexeme ‘chemise’ (*Politics* 80), in conjunction with the sexual promiscuousness conjured by Christy’s assertion, “what’d I care if you brought me a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts” (54) that act as a catalyst in prompting the rioting in the Abbey Theatre. Rather than adhering to ecclesiastical dogma of an asexualised female purity, Synge usurps this ethos by presenting his audience with overtly sadistic and sexual female characters. Just as Sara Tansey, “yoke[s] the ass cart and dr[ives] ten miles to set eyes on the man bit the yellow lady’s nostril on the northern shore” (22), the women of Mayo

walk “four miles” (27) to “marvel” (25) at Christy. As Widow Quinn asserts, “There’s great temptation in a man did slay his da” (18). It is the male figure, Christy, who is constructed into an idealised sexual object (Kiberd 167). Synge deliberately challenges the patriarchal dichotomy of feminine and masculine identities. Indeed, Peegen’s “wild-looking” (57) nature - a temperament that leads her to violently apply a “lighted sod” to “scorch” (55) Christy, in conjunction with Christy’s “little small feet” (23) and his preening himself in “the looking-glass” (21), exhibit an inversion of stereotypical gender roles, and offer a fusion of feminine and masculine attributes that produces androgynous beings. Yet, as the men in Mayo community are instilled with “[t]he fright of seven townlands for Peegen’s biting tongue” (13), the reverse of these gender roles instigate barrenness within the community and annihilates the identity of the village (Cusack 157). As Julia Kristeva explains, “feminine subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* ... throughout the story of civilisations” (original emphasis 23). Yet, the distorted and destructive female sexuality of Synge’s play effaces the ethnographic continuity of the peasant community.

The Playboy, as Paige Reynolds has noted, prompts the audience to critically examine the “types” of institutions constructed within one’s community and to determine if these establishments are detrimental to village’s stability and progression (57). Following the Famine and Emmet Larkin’s “Devotional Revolution”, Irish society is stalwartly dependent upon Catholicism as a source of political and moral identity and as a means of generating a solid base for national subjectivity. Nevertheless, Synge’s *The Playboy* dismantles these patriarchal and ecclesiastical structures and exposes them as degenerate and stagnating forces within Irish culture. While the presence of women is central to lineage and the Catholic Church fervently endorses a matriarchal family structure, there is either an absence of motherly figures in *The Playboy* or a distorted version of maternal presence (Cusack 127). Old Mahon, one is told, “did tend [Christy] from his hour of birth” (41) hence alluding to an absence of a mother figure, equally Peegen is “an orphan girl” (49). Similarly, Widow Quinn “buried her children and destroyed her man” (18) and is by this act rendered infertile; her genealogical line has been halted. Her transgressive and “noted misbehaviour with the old and young” (33) can only produce illegitimate offspring. This is a sterile and disfigured environment where Red Linahan with his “squint in his eye” (4) and “Patcheen [who] is lame in his heel, or the mad Mulrannies ... lost in their wits” (4) are capable of producing pathetic “puny weeds the like of what [Peegen would] breed out of Shaneen Keogh” (50). Indeed, Peegen’s statement “Aye. Wouldn’t it be a better thing for a girl to go marrying the like of Shaneen ... with no savagery or fine words in him at all” (49) illustrates the need for “the Playboy” (57) Christy and the agency and vitality he represents. Within this dwindling and mutilated community, mother and wife spheres are usurped and Old Mahon, driven by monetary objectives, urges Christy to marry Widow Casey who “did suckle [him] for six weeks when [he] came into the world” (25). The suggestion of Old Mahon to Christy to engage in this incestuous and Oedipal relationship mars and destructs life as it is this very reason that “did rouse” Christy’s “spirits to a deed of blood” (17) thereby killing the male figure needed for procreation (Akin 57).

The “travesty on the sacrament of marriage”, as Bourgeois claims, is equally made profane by Synge’s implication that marriage and fecundity are made stagnant if one accepts the impositions of ecclesiastical doctrines (qtd. in Innes 60). Catholic

devotee, Shawn proclaims that he is “afraid of Father Reilly” (6) and wonders if he has a “right to pass in” (3) to his fiancé Peegen late at night, worrying “what at all would the Holy Father and the Cardinals of Rome be saying if they heard [he] did the like of that?” (6). Marriage and reproduction are halted in *The Playboy* as Peegen and Shawn are “waiting these days on Father Reilly’s dispensation from the bishops, or the Court of Rome” (4). The very absence of Father Reilly’s presence from the play conveys Catholicism as an outmoded guardian of state order. The adherence to the tenets of the Catholic Church is depicted as disturbingly puritanical and is ridiculed. It is Shawn who is displayed as “a middling kind of a scarecrow” (49) when he refuses to stay the night with Peegen, scampering at the suggestion and claiming, “Leave me go you old, Michael James, ... you old Pagan” (7). It is not only the sacrament of marriage that is ridiculed by Synge, but death and the deeply valued custom of funerals are derided through the Bacchantic excess displayed by Michael James at Kate Cassidy’s wake (Doggett 288). *The Playboy’s* derision for Catholic morality and its favouring of a Pagan order coincided with Synge’s blasphemous and indiscriminate use of scared language during a period when Ireland is deeming the hegemonic rule of the Catholic Church as an elemental aspect of Irish nationalism, cause outrage in the Abbey theatre and spurs the onset of rioting.

It is the presence of these degenerative and debilitating social structures and the community’s need for a rejuvenating entity that will regenerate Irish national identity that permit Christy to be aesthetically constructed into “a fine, handsome young fellow with a noble brow” (14). When Christy wanders into the Mayo village, he is “nothing at all” (6) but a vagrant and a doppelganger of Shawn Keogh and confesses that he is “a middling scholar only” (9) and like Shawn, a “law-fearing man” (11). It is by the “power of a lie” (53) and the imposed poetic rhetoric of Peegen and the villagers onto Christy that transform him from another Apollonian, order sanctioning figure like Shawn, to a Dionysian and rebelliously vitalised hero who is as worthy as “Owen Roe O’Sullivan or the poets of the Dingle Bay (14). While the transposing of murder into a heroic discourse by Irish peasantry rouses disgruntlement in Synge’s audience, with the *Evening Mail* stating that “the parricide represent some kind of nation-killer” (qtd. in Watson 75), it is Synge’s portrayal of mythology and heritage as static forces that causes discontent. By killing Old Mahon and becoming a “poor orphaned traveller” (10), Christy has relinquished his past (Doggett 289). He is a nullified figure, a *tabula rasa*, who is by effect able to refashion himself into a rejuvenating being (Cusack 158). As Nietzsche argues in his secondly *Untimely Mediations*, one must “use history only in so far as it serves the living” (1). Rather than stimulate a will-to-power, Synge illustrates how fixation on mythology hampers the Mayoites’s agency and mummifies life. As Peegen nostalgically reminisces, “[w]here now will you meet the like of Daneen Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler, or Marcus Quinn ... got six months for maiming ewes” (4). The macabre imagery of “old Dane[s]” (39) bones, the continuous re-emergence of Old Mahon in his ‘living-dead’ state which threatens Christy’s vitalised poetic identity, act as metonyms for the decaying social order in Mayo; a crumbling order perpetuated through the communities preoccupation with legacy (Doggett 292). By doing this, Synge is undercutting the core of Gaelic nationalism whose creeds centre on fashioning a separatist Irish identity from England by imposing “a rhetoric of nostalgia” (Cusack 158) onto Irish civilisation. The patricide by Christy, which is an allegory for the killing

English colonised authority, offers a symbolic break from this stagnant culture. Similar to the 'cuchulainoid heroes' of Irish society, Christy's individualised will deems him fit to defy colonial and patriarchal power (Greene *Critical* 138). Indeed, Peegen asserts "if I'd that lad in the house, I wouldn't be fearing the loosed kharki cut-throats" (12). Equally, the villagers consider Christy as "a lad would kill his father ... would face a foxy divil with a pitchpike on the flags of hell" (sic 12) thereby portraying Christy as a heroic figure that can challenge and transgress the other limiting force in Mayo community; the church. Nevertheless, Christy's second patricide and the community's rejection of him show the failure of narrative form to alter a society steeped in the mere idealisation of poetic rhetoric and revolutionary activity rather than the reality of actively prompting that revivalism. There is a disjunction between the concept of the poetic and the transformation of such discourse into a vigorous action. As Peegen states, there is "a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed" (55). Christy's self-actualisation involves the incorporation of myth to produce a refashioned and more vitalised subjectivity. By accepting that "one must have reality, and one must have joy" (viii), Christy becomes the "masters of fights" (57). Nevertheless, just as Synge's audience reject the hybridising of language and the producing of Hiberno-English and a refashioned national identity through the fusing of the coloniser's English and the land's native Gaelic, Christy's modernist and adopted intersubjectivity is rebuffed in the Mayo community (Davis 43). He must go "romancing through a romping lifetime" (57), subjugating patriarchal authority and having his father by his side as a "heathen slave" (57). Nevertheless, his new found authenticity and revolutionary actions are ineffectual against the ecclesiastical and patriarchal rule in Mayo. The villagers, threatened by revolutionary potential, regress to colonial control as a means of perpetuating the archaic status quo. As Old Mahon declares, "[i]t is the will of God that all should guard their cabins from the treachery of the law" (57). Furthermore, Michael's cry, "[b]y the will of God, we'll have peace now for our drinks" (57) establishes patriarchal power, just as ecclesiastical control is reinstated by Shawn's assertion, "[i]t's a miracle Father Reilly can we us in the end of all" (Doggett 293). Losing "the only Playboy of the Western World" (57) inevitably means a return of paralysis to the Mayo community. There will be no revolutionary activity or change. This debunking of mythology and the failure of a revolutionary hero at a time when Gaelic nationalism is seeking to spur individuals to revolutionary heroism is fundamental in understanding the rioting of *The Playboy* audience.

Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* is heteroglossic in style, incorporating many discourses and styles in order to challenge Gaelic national discourse. Challenged by Synge's use of profane language and the demystifying of Western peasantry and femininity, the Abbey Theatre rioted. Indeed, the political consciousness of the audience is fundamental to the fury generated within the spectators. While Synge's play was condemned as a libel assault on the tenets of Gaelic nationalism and Ireland's revivalism, Synge's drama is not attacking the concept of an independent Irish identity, rather he is advocating a modernist refashioning of Irish essentialism that uses the past as a catalyst for a revitalised authenticity. Yet, Synge's view was too far-reaching in manner. As Yeats stated, "the outcry against *The Playboy* was an outcry against the style, against its way of seeing" (qtd. in Holder 45).

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Woman and Sexuality: Gender-Class Interface in Selected Short Stories of Ismat Chughtai

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Feminism interrogates patriarchal structure of society and it opposes women's subordination to man in public and private spheres of life. Women have often been called upon to make sacrifices and suppress their personal desires. They have often been left on the margins of the social set-up as far as their personal desires and fulfilment of those desires is concerned. Women are not a minority in our society but their "lives, experiences and values have been treated as marginal" (Sherry 6) and men's experiences have been assumed to be central to society. One also needs to contest the often stated view that in India women have always enjoyed a place of respect and dignity, that they have been respected as '*devis*.' It needs to be seen that "the respect and privileges which accompany the position of a '*devi*' (Goddess) are not only anti-individualistic," they are also anti-humanistic and "deny women a personhood" (Jain 10). Describing woman as a '*devi*' amounts to negating her a normal human life and demanding from her a '*divine*' kind of behaviour where she blesses others and bestows favours on others. On the other extreme in our society, women are just treated as sexual objects or things of exchange, again denying their humanity, their wishes and desires, their individual self. The present paper focuses on selected short stories of Ismat Chughtai to examine how these depict suffering of women in a patriarchal set-up.

Ismat Chughtai began writing at a time when "any attempt on the part of women to write poetry and fiction was viewed as intellectual vagrancy" (Naqvi xiii). Ismat Chughtai used her pen as a weapon to question male authority and hierarchical power structure in patriarchy. Most of her work deals with themes directly related to women and their status and role in Indian society. She portrays the struggle of women against the oppressive social institutions of her time and her deep understanding and perception of the female psyche are clearly reflected in her writings.

Women are treated as property, as objects of exchange between men, a transaction which denies them subjectivity. Women are "commodified as sexual creatures to serve male desire" (Lim 817). Simone de Beauvoir used the term "Subject" and "Other" to show the real place of women in patriarchy. The "Subject" is the man who controls and rules over the woman and the "Other" is the woman who is supposed to have no identity of her own. She is not regarded as an "autonomous being" and "appears essentially to the male as a sexual being" (Beauvoir 16).

Woman is not only considered inferior to man but is largely perceived by man only as an object of sexual gratification. Ismat Chughtai candidly reveals in her stories, the working of sexuality in middle-class Muslim households. Behind every story lies a specific intent but Ismat Chughtai's stories do not preach, they just present some images of reality in our society. Female sexuality is kept invisible or mythologised as passive in patriarchy, more so in Muslim families where '*pardah*' is an additional custom to keep the woman's physical person hidden. Ismat Chughtai not only exposes the abuse of woman's body for man's gratification but she also delineates woman's sexual desire – a theme or subject considered forbidden in the patriarchal set-up.

"The Quilt" (*Lihaaf*) is a powerful story by Ismat Chughtai, which daringly sketches female sexuality and the loneliness of a woman who yearns for her husband's love. Written in 1942, "The Quilt" proved to be a landmark in Urdu short story writing. A frustrated housewife, whose Nawab husband has no time for her, finds sexual and emotional solace in

the companionship of a female servant. At a time when any talk of female sexuality was unthinkable, Ismat Chughtai had the courage to portray a lesbian relationship. Bonnie Zimmerman refers to Faderman's definition of lesbianism as follows: " 'Lesbian' describes a relationship in which two women's strongest emotions and affections are directed towards each other ... the two women spend most of their time together and share most aspects of their lives with each other" (81).

The protagonist of "The Quilt," Begum Jan is a young and beautiful girl. Being poor, she is married to the Nawab who is rich and of 'ripe years' but 'very pious.' Since Begum Jan's family is not well-off, they see in her marriage to the rich influential Nawab, a favourable economic option. After the marriage, he "deposited her in the house with all his other possessions and promptly forgot about her ! The young delicate Begum began to wilt with loneliness" (8). This highlights how the institution of marriage commodifies a woman and reduces her to an object of mere business transaction. The Nawab spends most of his time with the "young, fair and slim-waisted boys" whom he keeps at his place and whose expenses he meets. The Begum spends "sleepless nights" and becomes a picture of "melancholy and despair" (9). Begum Jan yearns for her husband's love and company, but the Nawab does not have even a single minute to spare for his wife. Her youth withers away and she loses all desire to live. At this crucial point, out of utter desperation she recklessly turns to Rabbo, her maid, for the satisfaction of her sexual desires. In the story Rabbo is shown as constantly massaging parts of her body: "Rabbo used to sit by her side and scratch her back for hours together – it was almost as if getting scratched was for her the fulfillment of life's essential need. In a way, more important than the basic necessities required for staying alive. Rabbo had no other household duties" (10).

This focus on woman's sexual desire and its fulfilment in a relationship with a woman is Ismat Chughtai's way of asserting the protagonist's humanity and her basic human needs. A woman's identity is not defined only by her relation to the male world and male literary tradition. The powerful bonds between women are a crucial factor in women's lives, and the sexual and emotional orientation of a woman profoundly affects her consciousness and thus her creativity. Bonnie Zimmerman regrets that "Heterosexism in feminist anthologies – like the sexism of androcentric collections – serves to obliterate lesbian existence and maintains the lie that women have searched fulfillment only through men – or not at all" (77).

A lesbian relationship, considered a deviance by patriarchy "might well embody the culmination of women's capacity to love and be committed to each other" (Smith 792). More than the bonding between women, the story reveals the deprivation of a poor young woman to a homosexual Nawab on the one hand and the assertion of woman's sexuality on the other.

The Nawab never displays any interest in his wife's life, her wishes, desires and problems and in fact, completely neglects and dismisses her presence in his life. Begum Jan is just a social stamp of approval for the Nawab. She is just a heterosexual cover for him so as to escape ridicule and suspicion of society for his inborn sexual orientation. Beyond that, the Nawab totally "forgot about her" (8). Such inequality in marriage is symbolic of the subjugation and oppression of women. Ismat Chughtai brings out the fact that how no heed is paid to female sexuality. The woman's needs and desires are not acknowledged even in marriage. Women are conditioned against any expression of their sexuality. The Nawab fails to realize that she has entered this marriage with certain hopes and desires but he is totally oblivious of or rather he ignores the sexual needs of his new bride . As he romances with the young boys "in gossamer shirts," (8) he never bothers to acknowledge the sexual expectations of his own wife, who lay lonely, confined and neglected. The very fact that he wilfully imprisons a poor young girl to meet the societal obligation of marriage, never bothering about

how he would never be able to fulfil her sexual needs, speaks about the repression of and absolute indifference to female sexuality.

How such inequality and oppression can lead a woman into a sense of complete loneliness and depression is another important aspect that is brought to light by Ismat Chughtai. While the Nawab fulfills his homosexual desires, Begum Jan, peeping “from the chinks in the drawing room doors... felt she had been raked over the coals !” (8). Such is her pain and desperation at the Nawab’s being oblivious to her presence. Romantic novels and sentimental poetry make her all the more restless and dejected as by reading them she became all the more aware of her own desires and fantasies. Gripped by a sense of failure in not being able to attract the Nawab, Begum Jan sinks to a pitiable condition, losing sleep and peace of mind.

The child narrator’s encounter with Begum Jan while Rabbo is away, also forms a significant part of the story. Once when Rabbo goes out of house, Begum Jan feels very lonely and yearns for the company of Rabbo. As the narrative goes: “All day Begum Jan was restless. Her joints hurt like hell, but she could not bear anyone’s touch. Not a morsel did she eat; all day long she moped in bed” (14). The child narrator, a nine year old girl, who is sent to live with Begum Jan for some days, sees Begum Jan and playfully starts scratching her back. Begum Jan “sighed as if with immense relief” (14) and feels a new life coming into her. Begum Jan tells the child to scratch other parts of her body. The child narrator, who had begun to scratch Begum Jan playfully, now begins to feel that something wrong is happening. The thoughts of the child narrator are very well brought out in these lines: “ I wanted to run away from her, but she held me closer. I struggled to get away. Begum Jan started laughing... I felt gripped by an unknown terror. Begum Jan’s deep dark eyes focused on me! I started crying. She was clutching me like a clay doll. I started feeling nauseated against her warm body” (16).

The child, in her innocence could not analyze the thoughts in Begum Jan’s mind but the child becomes fearful and terrified and runs out of Begum Jan’s room. The child narrator wishes her mother to come and take her back home. Finally Rabbo returns and Begum Jan feels very happy. The child narrator is so terrified from the day of her encounter with Begum Jan that she tries to stay out of Begum Jan’s room and spends time with servants of the household. Thus, the child narrator’s encounter with Begum Jan brings to light the fact that a woman who has been oppressed can at times become oppressive and this is how Begum Jan acted with the child. She herself is oppressed and in turn she tries to oppress the child for whom Begum Jan becomes a “terrifying entity” (16). The nine year old girl recounts things as she remembers them without self-consciousness or any inhibiting sense of social taboos and this gives a greater freedom to the writer to write on a theme which was to be hid behind the veil at the time in which she was writing.

Not only patriarchy has been silent about women’s sexual needs but even within feminist criticism, lesbianism has been marginalised. Radical feminists turned women’s attention to sexuality and the disparities of power that pervade heterosexual relationships in patriarchal cultures. According to radical feminists, male heterosexuality objectifies the female body. They aimed to reshape society and restructure its institutions which they saw as inherently patriarchal. They assumed all women to be good and all men to be bad and laid emphasis on the idea of “sisterhood.” Radical feminism thus, over-simplified the question of sexual discrimination. They failed to see that in real life, often the women of a superior class or race oppress women of lower class or of a subjugated race. Hence socialist feminists emphasize that while addressing the issue of women’s victimization, the factor of class should also be taken into consideration along with gender as upper class women often become agents of oppression of lower class women. Ismat Chughtai often depicts in her

stories, how in middle-class homes often it is women of the household who exploit or oppress poor women.

The gender-class interface is depicted with great boldness by Ismat Chughtai in “Lingering Fragrance” (*Badan ki Khushboo*) which frankly exposes another sordid side of the society. It also exposes the idea of “sisterhood” propagated by some feminists. Class becomes an important factor in determining the situation of women. Ismat Chughtai’s story “Lingering Fragrance” shows how poor village girls are employed in the palaces to train the young Nawabs and initiate them into the complexities of sex life. It shows the workings of the wealthy, feudal Muslim family, with a large household and a large army of servants. Maids are kept in order to provide sexual service to the young men of the family. The story becomes intricate when Chhamman, a young man of the household, becomes so much attached to his maid, Haleema that he refuses to desert her in childbirth and insists on marrying her.

We are presented with a social setting in which “women are turned into commodities, totally disposable, totally dispensable, to be used and discarded” (Kudchedkar 5). The elder women, including the senior servants, parcel out the maids in the service of the young men of the household. A maid who fails to attract and “serve” the man has failed in her task, she is not likely to be kept in the household. Chhamman, a young man of the household, is against the system of concubinage and initially he refuses to accept Haleema, a maid. Chhamman’s revulsion against the system of concubinage, however, makes Haleema fearful of the consequences that would follow if Chhamman does not accept her. She fears that if Chhamman refuses to accept her, she will be offered to a diseased old man in exchange for a pair of bloodhounds that the Nawab fancies. She had to plead to be ‘used.’ She says, “... what do you take me for? I admit I am a maid but I’m not a leper. The entire *mahal* is cursing the day of my birth. Everyone is laughing at me because I repulse you” (205).

A candid description of the lust of the rich, young men is given in the story and also how the women of the family support their actions. When the maids become pregnant, they are dispatched in haste to their far off villages to deliver the baby. Thus, the brutal use of their body and emotions is highlighted and how they are sent back to ‘repair.’ It is because of their poverty that these maids have to bear with the ruthless, brutal and abject exploitation all their life.

The story also shows how their motherhood is abused. Labelled as cattle, maids are sent to the village to deliver and then are brought back, their babies separated from them. While their children grew feeble, they had to return alone, their breast full of milk, to spend the rest of their lives as maids. The pain, agony, torment and injustice involved in the tradition can be glanced in the following lines:

How pathetically the wretches would wail and cry. Like animals they groaned for their young. Breasts filled up with milk, causing intense pain. Often they would burn with high fevers. Sometimes one of the Begum’s babies was brought in for suckling. How they would enjoy the pleasures of taking the baby to the breast. But such delights were ephemeral. Ladies of noble birth cannot be expected to breed like animals, just to give their maids the pleasure of suckling! Once their impotent grief had spent itself they were once again put back to work. (198)

In this story, when the enlightened Nawab Chhamman Mian remains indifferent to his maid, Haleema, for a long time, his mother becomes worried because according to her, such behaviour was not normal. Her own brothers had started flirting with the maids at the age of eleven or twelve and at this age they were “stomping and fuming for the kill” (201). When Chhamman expresses his opinion that this kind of liaison with maids was callously

exploitative and condemnable, people began to doubt his sanity. But when he declares that he has fallen in love with Haleema and will marry her in preference to the Nawabzaadi chosen by his mother, terror strikes the entire family. They could see their so-called family honour crumbling down to pieces. When all strategies to separate the lovers fail, Chhamman Mian is disowned and driven away from home. The inhuman practices of the Nawabs families are exposed where fair, just and good people like Chhamman also become victims and are powerless. The whole family joins hands against Chhamman when he tries to bring respect and happiness in the life of a destitute girl like Haleema.

Here man is not the oppressor but women are more eager to let their young sons exploit the maids. The story also questions the notions of family honour and disgrace. Thus, we see that class affinities are stronger and the women themselves become propagators of patriarchy. As wives, they themselves might be oppressed but as mothers they actively contribute to the same oppressive structures. Upper class women become active agents of oppression of poor women. The upper class women treat the lower class women no more than commodities to be used and discarded.

The active role played by the women of the family in providing “healthy maids for their sons” shatters all ideas of “sisterhood” among women. A woman at times subscribes to the double standards that support suppression of other women by the patriarchal order. These women are the victims of patriarchy and become the perpetrators of torture, inequality and injustice against other women.

Thus, we see that lower class women have no option but to become maids in the homes of the wealthy and depend on their masters and mistresses for their sustenance. Female servants in the upper class family are used by the women of the household as objects for masculine lust, to be discarded when they become pregnant or when a male becomes attached to them.

Another story “The Rock” (*Chatan*) reveals how men can also treat women only as domestic helps and sexual objects. The male protagonist, who remains nameless in the story, is an active exploiter of women as he sees women merely as attractive bodies, as sexual objects. After transforming his young and beautiful wife into a proper ‘housewife,’ he is attracted towards another young girl, Shabnam. He is attracted towards Shabnam as she “swayed like an intoxicated female serpent” (80). Seeing her movements, his eyes gleamed and he “revealed his teeth in a grin” (80). The man leaves his first wife and children for Shabnam. He marries Shabnam and after becoming his wife, she too meets the same fate as the first wife. Shabnam is also turned into a proper ‘housewife.’ Once, when they go out for dinner, this man is attracted by the physical beauty of an Egyptian dancer. This is how the narrator, who is his sister, describes it: “*Bhaiya’s* (Brother’s) hungry eyes crawled over her body like scorpions” (89). Shabnam, who used to be a thin girl and whose “complexion glowed like molten gold” (77) before marriage, had now become fat. She rapidly gobbles down roasted chicken in order to distract herself from the way her husband was looking at the Egyptian dancer. Thus, we see how man objectifies woman and treats her no more than a sexual object. He considers her only as a commodity to satisfy his lust.

The story “Tiny’s Granny” (*Nanhi ki Nani*) brings to light the social and religious hypocrisy of the society. It shows how poverty and circumstances can change people and how the poor girls are sexually exploited by the upper class men and how difficult it is for girls of lower strata of society to live a decent life.

The very beginning of the story brings forth the question of identity into focus. The first line says, “God knows what her real name was,” (117) as no one ever called her by it. She has no identity of her own and as the years pass, she is called ‘Baftan’s kid,’ ‘Bashira’s daughter-in-law,’ ‘Bismillah’s mother’ and ‘Tiny’s granny.’ She never had a childhood.

When she ought “to have been laughing and playing with other children,” (117) she had started working in people’s households.

As the years pass, she tries all trades for a living. She had been a maid, a cook, a beggar and even a thief. The miserable condition of the poor people is brought out in the story. Poor people do not get enough to fill their stomach and Granny, who was living a life of utter poverty, did not leave any opportunity of grabbing food for herself and her granddaughter, Tiny. Everybody knew about her stealing things but nobody questioned as she would “threaten to take an oath on the Holy Quran. And who would disgrace himself in the next world by directly inviting her to swear a false oath on the Quran?” (119). This shows that even religion becomes meaningless to the poor since their primary concern is meeting the basic necessities of their life.

The cruelty and hypocrisy of the rich people who hold positions of power is also brought out in the story. Granny puts Tiny into the ‘ancestral trade’ and Tiny works in the Deputy Sahib’s house. Tiny did “job at the Deputy Sahib’s for her food, clothing and one and a half rupees a month” (120). Granny always stuck to Tiny “like a shadow” but “a pair of old hands cannot wipe out what is inscribed in a person’s fate” (120). Even ‘fate’ is cruel towards the poor as Tiny’s chastity is violated by Deputy Sahib, the grandfather of three children. This is how Ismat Chughtai describes it in the story: “Tiny, who was supposed to be pulling the rope of the ceiling fan, was dozing with the rope in her hand. The fan stopped moving, the lord and master woke up, his animality was aroused, and Tiny’s fate was sealed” (120-21). Deputy Sahib was known as a religious man who said his five daily prayers and had provided water vessels to the mosque. This is ironical, as in real life he had no religiosity and the image he portrays in society is completely false and deceptive.

Even society is callous and cruel towards the poor people and does not raise its voice against the injustice and wrong done to the poor. Instead it makes fun of the poor for no fault of theirs. After Tiny’s fearful encounter with the Deputy, her Granny comforted the “wounded bird” (121) with sweets. Instead of sympathising with the poor girl whose innocence and childhood have been ravished by the Deputy, the women of the society would ask Tiny all that happened to her on the pretext of giving her something like bangles and after hearing the details from her, would laugh out loud. This shows the callous and unsympathetic behaviour of the women who are neither angry with the Deputy’s behaviour nor do they try to comfort and understand Tiny; instead they mock at her. The idea of “sisterhood” is thus, demolished as a ‘myth’ even in this story.

Tiny’s childhood is now lost forever and instead of growing into a girl, she directly becomes a woman and not a “fully-fashioned woman moulded by Nature’s skilled and practised hand, but one like a figure on whom some giant with feet two yards long had trodden-squat, fat, puffy, like a clay toy which the potter had knelt on before it had hardened” (122). Even the boys pinched her and teased her that she had relationships with many men. All the men share their claim on Tiny as “when a rag is all dirty and greasy, no one minds too much if someone wipes nose on it” (122). This brings to light the fact that after Tiny’s terrible encounter with Deputy, other men too consider her as no more than a sexual object. Tiny then runs away to a bigger city as “they say that in places like Delhi and Bombay there is an abundant demand for this kind of commodity” (122-123). Thus, from an innocent child, Tiny is made into a mere “commodity,” an object of sexual recreation for men.

Granny is left alone after Tiny runs away. Granny lies to people that Tiny died of cholera as Granny knows that people of the society would not stop talking about her. We also get an insight into Granny’s loneliness who is left with her only companion, the pillow. Fate had always been cruel towards Granny and even the monkeys do not spare her. A monkey steals her pillow and peels the coverings of the pillow and all things stolen by Granny are revealed to the people who then abuse her for her theft. “Thief! ... swindler! ... old hag! ...

Turn the old devil out! ... hand her over to the police! Search her bedding: you might find a lot more stuff in it!" (127). People abuse poor Granny for petty thefts but they do not raise their voice against the bigger crimes of the rich like the Deputy.

Granny then dies and in her death "she showered continuous abuse upon the world" (129). The lines at the end of the story are very significant bringing to light the truth of society: "On judgement Day... (Granny) burst into the presence of God the All-Powerful and All-Kind... and God, beholding the degradation of humanity, bowed his head in shame and wept tears of blood" (129).

"A Pair of Hands" (*Do Haath*) is another powerful story that brings out the issues of gender and class, of poverty, and of woman being no more than an object to be bought and sold and the hypocrisy and oppressive behaviour of the upper class. The title of the story, "A Pair of Hands" is very significant as the pair of hands are the hands that work and keep working throughout life. Ram Autar, the sweeper who returns from the army is not concerned about the fact that the child born to his wife Gori is not his but he is happy that in old age, a pair of the child's hands will be useful for him and support him. Like religion, morality also does not have much use for the poor who have to struggle at the basic level of existence. All the people say that the child had been born after two years since Ram Autar had left the village but Ram Autar says, "He (the child) will contribute his two hands, sir, and he will be my support in my old age" (175). Working and earning for a living becomes the prime concern in the life of a poor man.

After her marriage to Ram Autar, initially Gori was meek and cried a lot when Ram Autar left for his job but "then, gradually, the length of her veil begins to diminish." (163). Gori was "dark like a glistening pan," she had a "bulbous nose, a wide jaw," "squint in her left eye," a thick waist and her feet reminded one of "cow's hoofs" but still she "was able to throw darts that never failed to hit their mark" (164). Owing to Gori's 'indecent' behaviour, the women of the neighbourhood complain to the old sweepress, Ram Autar's mother, and tell the old lady to send her daughter-in-law back to her parents. The old sweepress however refuses to comply with their request. She says that she cannot send her back as she has bought her for Rs. 200 and much had been spent on the wedding and if she sends her away, Gori's father would sell her away to some other sweeper and it was all the more expensive for her to get another daughter-in-law as it would cost her not less than Rs. 400. Gori was "bought" and brought in the house so that she could help the mother-in-law in her old age as it was difficult for the old lady to survive without someone being there to help her. As it is put in the story: "A daughter-in-law not only warms a son's bed, she also does the work of four people... A well-built stalwart daughter-in-law like this one could not be had for less than four hundred now" (166-167).

This shows that the woman is just an object to be bought and sold, a business transaction. She is dehumanized and not valued as a person but she is an 'object' that is bought for man's sexual recreation and for the service of other family members. Gori works throughout the day in her own house and even in the house of others and also takes beatings from the old lady without letting out a word because she has been "bought."

The son of the old sweeper's brother-in-law, Ram Rati, comes to visit the old sweepress and stays on. Gori and Ram Rati get intimate and people complain to the old lady but the old sweepress protests and says that "people have become her enemies for nothing" (170). The story shows how it is difficult for the lower class people to live the way they want and they are questioned time and again by the upper class people. The upper class people do not peep into their own lives but charge the lower class people of doing all the wrongs. All the upper class women accuse the old lady's daughter-in-law for indecency but none of them accuses the men who are after her. Gori went about openly doing what she wanted to but the people of higher rank do all things but not in the open as "no one's dirt was hidden from the

old sweepress; her old hands had buried the crimes of many a respectable person. If she wanted to, she could overthrow the thrones of many a queen with these very hands. But she bore no ill will towards anyone” (170). Thus, we see the plight of the poor people and the hypocrisy and pretensions of the society. Certain moral codes are fixed by the society for the woman and going against them means being labelled as ‘indecent.’

The story also brings out the point that religion and morality have no meaning for poor people who have to struggle daily for meeting the basic needs of life. Ram Autar knows that really the child is not his but he says that it is “*Bhagwan's* (God's) gift” and will support him in old age. As the narrative goes on: “... these hands were neither legitimate nor illegitimate; they were only hands, living hands that wash away the filth from the face of this planet, that carry the weight of its aging. These tiny hands, dark and soiled, are illuminating the earth's countenance” (175).

As depicted in these stories, both men and women can exploit women's sexuality and can be equally ruthless. Ismat Chughtai, with great sensitivity, represents the plight of poor girls who are exploited callously by both, men and women of middle and upper classes. She also has the courage to portray the assertion of a woman's sexual desire and her attempts to fulfil it in a lesbian relationship. Ismat Chughtai thus, takes up the question of female sexuality in patriarchy with its complexity, not simplifying it as a matter of exploitation of women by men.

By portraying the suffering and abuse of women, Ismat Chughtai projects the individuality and humanity of women. Her writing about things usually kept invisible becomes an act of resistance and an act of interrogation of the prevailing social order.

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The Criterion

Impact of 9/11 Terrorist Attacks on American Narrative

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Today, bookstores in the US are filled with shabby screeds bearing screaming headlines about Islam and terror, Islam exposed, the Arab threat and the Muslim menace, all of them written by political polemicists pretending to knowledge imparted to them and others by experts who have supposedly penetrated to the heart of these strange Oriental peoples over there who have been such a terrible thorn in "our" flesh (Said's *Orientalism 25 Years Later*. Par.7).

On 9/11, 2001, the Americans are attacked for the first time, after quite long while, in the depth of their strategic territories, Washington and New York. The attacks were aggressive and brutal and caused huge physical and psychological damages. Thousands of innocents are killed and living ones get scared to fly for quite good time after the deadly attacks. Following the attacks, security is tightened and American nationalism reaches its peak to confront the attackers. According to many American sources including the Bush Administration and the CIA, the Islamic network of Al-Qaeda is behind the attacks. According to this theory, 19 Arab terrorists embarked on four passenger jets, hijacked the airplanes and intentionally crashed the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and The Pentagon. Though good elaboration has been done on this theory, yet it remains vague for researchers in this area for two main reasons; firstly Osama Bin Laden never claimed responsibility and second is the impossibility of penetrating the American airports as easily as the CIA reported.

Through the many attempts to predict the impact of these events on the American novel, there seems to be a consensus feeling that all research on this area results in the formation of two camps of forecasters. The first set of forecasters, scholars who conduct research in Islamic societies, insist that representation of Islam in post 9/11 American novel is a negative one and Arab Muslims' image gets worsened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Accordingly, first and foremost consequence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks is that the whole religion, Islam, and its more than one billion adherents are viewed as violent, aggressive and anti-America: "two aspects, violence and reciprocity, have come to characterize the dominant image of Islam in the West in recent times: violence in the widespread prevalence of targeted killings, riots, bombings, and warfare that have devastated parts of the world; reciprocity in that Islam is no longer the passive tableau on which Westerners fashion an image" (Quinn. 166). Muslims across the western societies become subject of racism and suspicion. Likewise, other brown Asians who resemble Arab Muslims particularly Indians and Sikhs share the same discrimination with their Arab counterparts.

The second camp, Muslim and non-Muslim scholars who reside in the west, note that American novelists classify a majority of Arab Muslims as bad guys or terrorists and a minority as good guys or moderate Muslims. According to them, the post 9/11 division

of the Muslim Arabs into “Good Muslims” and “Bad Muslims” becomes broadly accepted in West and particularly in the United States (Chossudovsky. Par. 3). Tariq Ramadan, a Professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford University and a president of the Think Tank European Muslim Network in Brussels, argues:

The dust from the collapse of the twin towers had hardly settled on 11 September 2001 when the febrile search began for "moderate Muslims", people who would provide answers, who would distance themselves from this outrage and condemn the violent acts of "Muslim extremists", "Islamic fundamentalists" and "Islamists". Two distinct categories of Muslim rapidly emerged: the "good" and the "bad"; the "moderates", "liberals" and "secularists" versus the "fundamentalists", the "extremists" and the "Islamists"(1).

American literature of this period witnesses an increase in the national awareness to the new reality imposed by 9/11 affair. Further, this awareness imposes a new direction in subject matter which can be seen in the shift from an aesthetic and pleasant literature to moral, functional, instructional and informative narratives: “Post-9/11 consumers were more concerned with the functional contents of their books than they had been before the attacks, and they judged their books accordingly” (Gustafson. 69). This shift entails modern narrative to provide a good deal of knowledge on many issues pertaining to 9/11 deadly attacks including the nature of the attacks, their perpetrators and the possible means for avenging the insult of the American territory. More geo-political issues become target of the new narrative which requires writers to overstep the national territory. Accordingly, Arabs of the Middle East, as the main suspects, and their religion become the most recurrent characters for demonstrating evil, wickedness and terrorism in modern narratives. According to Stephen Biddle “the bulk of the post-9/11 literature has simply assumed that terrorism is now the nation’s first priority” (5). It seems that feelings of fear, horror and vulnerability help extending subject matter that aims at realizing and confronting the outsider threats.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks results in a very strong curiosity and eagerness among the Americans public to know more about their assailants and the intention behind the attacks: “9/11 influenced the subject matter of the books that were bought and published. After the attacks, people showed greater interest in books which provided them with information relevant to the attacks and books which offered spiritual comfort—both functional characteristics” (Gustafson. 69). Sales of books related to Islam and Arabs reaches the highest level in the history of the United States. Emily Eakin, a reporter for the *New York Times*, wrote on September 18: “Within hours after last Tuesday's terrorist attacks, sales of books related to the disaster surged as people desperate for information and explanations rushed to purchase treatises on terrorism and the Arab world and biographies of the World Trade Center”(1). According to Islamonline.com, Quran remains the best-selling book for long time in the major states inside America. Similarly, Islamic religious figures like Muhammad, Aisha, Abi Bakr and Omar become the subject matter of many novels. Emily Eakin goes on quoting:

Our Islam section has really emptied out," said Virginia Harabin, a supervisor at Politics & Prose, a bookstore in Washington. Among the books selling well, she said, were two by Karen Armstrong — a history of Islam and a biography of Muhammad — and the works of the Palestinian-American literary critic Edward Said (par.3).

Terrorism, likewise, has been a motivation for many American novelists who never hesitate to make direct connection between Islam and terrorism. Novels such as *Terrorist*, *The Teeth of the Tiger*, *Khalifah*, *Big Apple 2 Bites*, *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *Dawn of Saudi*, *Finding Nouf*, *The Jewel of Medina*, *The Emperor's Children*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *The Scorpion's Gate*...etc deal with either prominent Islamic figures or Muslim Arab terrorists to satisfy the reader's curiosity about the enemy. Christelle Nadia observes that the changes caused by 9/11 have painted literature with a military color: "many writers realized that literature could again change the world and that writers could do what politicians, journalists, and consultants couldn't do by imagining a world where clashes and fears aren't necessary and thus inspiring a frightened citizenry to not fear the world and the other" (6).

The major number of post 9/11 American narratives is counter-terrorist texts. This Counter-terrorism discourse tends to focus not only on the irrationality but also the efficacy of the terrorists (Mckahan. 12). It focuses on individual or group motives, prominent Islamic figures, political objectives and psychological profiling and "often expounds a dubious, xenophobic state of paranoia of the invading Other, a self-styled alarmism or patriotic realism"(Mckahan. 31). Most of the published novels pertaining to Arabs and Islam focus on dehumanizing of Muslim Arabs, defaming all the prominent Islamic figures and pitying Muslim Arab women who live under the tyranny of Islamic code of live (Ghazali. 77). An Arab becomes not welcome in the American society. He is seen as a synonymous of terrorist, barbaric and savage. Emory Elliott observes:

On September 11, 2001, the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon dramatically altered American Society and culture in ways few would have Predicted....American literature in the twenty-first century will be influenced by the events of that terrible day and by the ways that the United States government responded (qtd. Ingrida. 112).

As far as Arab Muslim image is concerned, a strong parallel between this image and American hegemony in the Middle East increases in post 9/11 American narrative. As a neo-Orientalist discourse, exposure of the dangerous image of Arab Muslims and Islam always precedes the military occupation of the demonized group of people. Neo-Orientalist narrative discourse, then, seems to be facilitating the American military and political hegemony in the Middle East, a region that has the biggest oil and gas reserves in the world. In this connection, Said observes that the west always tends to produce many images on the Orient before any military interaction. This technique helps convincing the public how dangerous the enemy is:

Whenever in modern times there has been an acutely political tension felt between the Occident and its Orient (or between the West and its Islam), there has been a tendency to resort in the West not to direct violence but first to the cool, relatively detached instruments of scientific, quasi-objective representation. In this way Islam is made more clear, the true nature of its threat appears, an implicit course of action against it is proposed (Sad. Islam Through Western Eye.7).

The terrorist attacks on the United States by a very small group of radical Muslims who claim to be true Muslims have brought the whole religion and its prominent religious figures into the literary focus. Muslims feel that stereotypes of Muslims in America today exceed the limits of freedom of opinion. Their sacred figures become targets of the worst representations ever in the history of the Islamic civilization. Said observes that Islam in

the United States occupies a good deal not only in literary textbooks but also in media, film, radio in a way that facilitates the American hegemony in the middle east (14). Islam as a whole becomes the enemy of the United States and humanity as a whole, particularly Christendom. This reminds readers of the Middle Ages enmity between Christians and the Jews in Europe when Shylock was a symbol of the Jewish hatred for the Christians. Today, Shylock and his hatred for Christians do not exist anymore while, interestingly, Bin Laden becomes the new Muslim Shylock who is taken to represent aggression of the Islamic World against the Christian peace-loving world. In An article appeared on *Policy Analysis*, Leon T. Hadar, a former bureau chief for the *Jerusalem Post*, describes Islam as “*The Green Peril*” and foresees a new cold war between Islam and the West. He quotes Amos Perlmutter; “Islamic fundamentalism is an aggressive revolutionary movement as militant and violent as the Bolshevik, Fascist, and Nazi movements of the past” (Hadar. 4).

In his book *Covering Islam*, Edward Said observes that propagating Islamic terrorism and evil in American recent publications is central to the American hegemonic policy in the Middle East region: “The recent success of books, journals, and public figures that argue for a reoccupation of the Gulf region and justify the argument by referring to Islamic barbarism is part of this phenomenon” (liii). Further, representation of the whole of Arabs and Islam as a serious foe to American civilization enhances Huntington’s prophecy of Clash of Civilizations. Said notes:

Islam has always represented a particular menace to the West, for reasons I discussed in *orientalism* and reexamine in this book. Of no other religion or cultural grouping can it be said so assertively as it is now said of Islam that it represents a threat to Western civilization. It is no accident that the turbulence and upheavals which are now taking place in the Muslim world have exposed the limitations of simple –minded Orientalist cliché about “fanatic” Muslims without at the same time generating anything to put in their place except nostalgia for the old days, when European armies ruled almost the entire Muslim world, from the Indian subcontinent right across to North Africa (lii-liii).

Said’s central thesis in *Orientalism* has a direct explanatory role to play in our understanding of the work produced in, at least, one area of scholarship about the Arab and Islamic worlds, namely Arab-Islamic philosophy from the classical or medieval period. After the death of Edward Said, *Orientalism* seems to have become limited to the treatment of Arab Muslims by the post 9/11 American experts, excluding the rest of other parts of the traditional Orient without failing to carry the spirit of traditional Orientalism. The tendency to use the military history of the Muslims becomes one of the most favorite subject matters in American narrative in the post 9/11 time. According to more than 43% of post 9/11 American narrative books provide negative stereotypes of Arab Muslims, Islam and non-Arab Muslims (Sides and Kim7-8):

Islam was unknown to many in America, but after September 11th it has suddenly become a major topic of discussion and more and more political leaders, scientists, researchers, and thinkers consider it necessary to understand Islam correctly... Everybody was saying how Islam and Muslims were terrorists, so I wanted to find out for myself (Naoual. 6-7).

In his *Orientalism*, Said observes that the essence of the Orientalist discourse is built on “distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority” (42). Further, he notes that the western scholarship is not satisfied by this general classification, rather very minute observations of the differences are encouraged to add more reduction to the Orientals. To most of the westerner historians and thinkers, this kind of distinction has created resentment and rage toward the Western culture and Christendom from the Islamic side. Bernard Lewis goes further in his study of the reason of Islamic hatred for the West and comes to a conclusion that Muslim’s awareness of their failure and the success of the western civilization increases the enmity toward the west: “At first the Muslim response to Western civilization was one of admiration and emulation -- an immense respect for the achievements of the West, and a desire to imitate and adopt them. This desire arose from a keen and growing awareness of the weakness, poverty, and backwardness of the Islamic world as compared with the advancing West” (42).

With reference to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and consequences that follow, Lewis foresees that the long struggle between the Muslims East and the Christian west is an unfinished one. The accumulated inheritance from Islamic conquests, the Crusades, the western colonization of the Islamic countries seems to undergo a clash between the two civilizations in the twenty first century. According to Lewis’ hypothesis the Muslims power ebbed from the West and the western ‘cultural memory’ continues to fuel the western hegemony on Muslim Arabs and other Islamic countries. Lewis, a committed Zionist historian and scholar in oriental studies, is the first scholar to describe the problematic relationship between Islam and the west with the concept a “Clash of Civilizations”: “This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both” (47).

Lewis’ use of the term “Judeo-Christian heritage” is not bereft of political import. The term assumes that, historically, Muslims were more hostile than were Christians toward the Jews” (Mowahid. 8). Further, Professor Lewis does not give a further explanation beyond the Muslims’ hatred toward the west other than the Muslim economic and technological failure in front of the west. Still he observes that a particular segment of the Islamic world still in alliance with the west. He divides the Islamic world into two segments. The first segment is the one which is “the most extreme in their hostility” to the west. This part of the Muslim world hates and rejects the western culture. The other part is more tolerant to the west and its ally: “There are still significant numbers, in some quarters perhaps a majority, of Muslims with whom we share certain basic cultural and moral, social and political, beliefs and aspirations; there is still an imposing Western presence—cultural, economic, diplomatic—in Muslim lands, some of which are Western allies”(The Roots.Par.5).

Yet the most explicit hypothesis of the emerging Islam as a foe comes from Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* that appears on Foreign Affairs in 1993 in which he notes that Islam has been a tough enemy for the west and Christianity since its birth. According to this hypothesis the next clash will not be “primarily ideological or primarily economic” but rather “it will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations” (Huntington. 2). He indicates that the post cold war division of the world into the first, second and thirld worlds is not relevant at the present time rather a new division based on civilizations takes place. These civilizations basically differ in history, culture, tradition,

religion and views on the relationship between God and man. Accordingly, Huntington places the Islamic civilization as the most rival and dangerous to the western civilization. He foresees that “This centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent”(Par. 24) . Further, he indicates that any cooperation between the Islamic and the Confucian civilizations will be worse and more dangerous to the west; “The most prominent form of this cooperation is the Confucian-Islamic connection that has emerged to challenge Western interests, values and power”(Par.57). All hypothesis of Islamic enmity to the west emanates from the idea of that Islam is a bloody religion as appears in 2006 in Pat Robertson’s words a "bloody, brutal type of religion.

In 2001 Edward Said introduces his “*The Clash of Ignorance*” as refutation of Huntington’s “*Clash of Civilizations*” and describes Huntington’s argument as “belligerent kind of thought”(Par.3). Said observes that Huntington’s hypothesis is motivated by his ideologist thoughts which is based on a similar ideological hypothesis “*The roots of Muslim Rage*” which is “a crude polemic devoid of historical truth, rational argument, or human wisdom (that) attempts to characterize Muslims as one terrifyingly collective person enraged at an outside world” (*Covering Islam*.xxxii) written by the Anglo-American Orientalist Bernard Lewis “whose ideological colors are manifest in its title”(Clash of Ignorance. Par.3). Said finds classification of civilizations to be an impossible task because drawing minute boundaries between certain civilizations may interject them into what they not. For example, he rejects the classification of Islamic and Western and the enmity of the former to the later. He states; “Think of the populations today of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Britain, America, even Sweden, and you must concede that Islam is no longer on the fringes of the West but at its center”(Par. 8). Said observes that Huntington’s efforts in making civilizations clash only result in “a clumsy writer and inelegant thinker” (Par.4).

The image of Arab Muslims and Islam reaches its lowest level among nations and religions of the Globe after the tragedy on September 11, 2001, that caused the world to point its finger at Arab Muslims as terrorists. The atmosphere created by the 9/11 has been fueled by the media, news and literature which worsened the situation where chances of understanding and reconciliation seem to be impossible. Only rebirth of thousands of Edward Sais may introduce a better understanding and reconcile the distorted relationship between Islamic world and the United States.

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Twenty-First Century Arab Feminism: a movement from Islamic to the Secular

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Arab women's rights occupy a good space in Arab and Western feminist thought. In both the East and the West, Arab Muslim women often share contrasting and identical stereotypical representations and discourses which are welcomed by some Arab feminists and rejected by others and accordingly Muslim Arab feminists are divided between pro-western feminism and Islamic feminism. The focus is on the difficult situation of Arab feminism in the twenty-first Century after the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a defining moment for Arab women whose rights become a part of the American war on terrorism as the then First Lady Laura Bush states: "The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (Smith. Par. 4). These words have an insightful resonance for a reader who has knowledge of colonial discourse that uses women's right to justify imperial domination as Gayatri Spivak clearly puts it "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (296). Therefore, September 11, 2001 is playing a catalytic agent for westernizing the feminist content that gradually replaces Islamic feminism in the twenty first century especially among the Arab intelligentsia. Simultaneously, it is also noteworthy to know that Islamic feminism is still effective even among Arab women who live in the United States and Europe today. Nouha al-Hegelan, an Arab feminist in the US, argues that one can never ignore the rights of woman given with the advent of Islam when the Arabs used to bury their newly-born daughters alive and the Christian church was still debating the existence of a woman's soul:

Before Islam, women in the Arabian Peninsula followed the cultural bonds of the tribe...In some instances, women were chattels and men often buried their newly-born daughters alive... Islam liberated these women from such cruel prejudice and gave them the dignity of humanity and the pride of being a woman. Islam projected a woman as being parallel to a man and embodied the philosophy of being both equal and different. Fourteen hundred years ago, Islamic women were given the right to run their own businesses, to keep their financial autonomy after marriage and, more importantly, the right to learn-the key to emancipation (7-8).

As far as Arab feminism is concerned, Islam is seen by the West as a political ideology and an obstacle before woman and her struggle for freedom. Here, a comparison between the terms Islamist and Islamic will make things clear. Islamist government refers to a radical orthodox Muslims who oppose all the western traditions including the notion of women's rights. Caroline Cox and John Marks define Islamism as an ideology: "Islamism' and 'Islamist' are the terms now widely used to refer to radical, militantly ideological versions of Islam, as interpreted by the practitioners and in which violent actions such as terrorism, suicide bombings or revolutions are explicitly advocated, practiced and justified using religious terminology"(6). So, feminist voice for promoting

women's rights is seen as a challenge to male patriarchy. And rejection of these laws would be looked at as a rejection of their heritage, religion and identity. Therefore most of the contemporary Muslim Arab feminists find that a struggle against patriarchal religious authorities becomes a necessity because blind submission to Sharia's laws, derived from the *Quran* by male, causes more social, political and economic suffering to them.

Contrary to Islamist code of governance, the term "Islamic" refers to the moderate Muslim thought who adopts a reinterpretation of the Quran to modify the Sharia's law and make it more flexible and compatible with modernity. Hence, the Islamic feminism emanated from this thought does not totally oppose secular feminism rather it tries to become more compatible with it. This movement can be looked at as a Quran-centered reform movement by Muslim Arab women with the linguistic and theological knowledge to challenge the male interpretations of the Quran and offer alternative readings in pursuit of women's advancement and in refutation of both Western stereotypes and Islamist orthodoxy alike. As a general rule, the majority of twentieth century Muslim feminists argue that Islam elevated women's position in society and was successful in ending many traditional practices that undermined women. Further, these Islamic Arab feminists try to transcend and destroy old binaries that have been constructed by a mono-interpretation of religious texts that favors the male. So pioneers of the Islamic feminist movement in Arabia have always had space for secular feminist ideas to make their movement go hand in hand with modernity. Nawal Al Saadawi, a prominent Egyptian Islamic feminist, argues:

The idea that you can have feminism within a religion is incoherent, should it be Christianity, Judaism or Islam. In the States and in Europe, many Christian women tried to be feminist within Christianity and reinterpret the bible. They said that Christ was a black woman. So as such some Islamic women are reinterpreting the Koran and they can say Mohamed was a black woman or whatever they want. To reinterpret religion is a good; it's positive and in the favor of women, because all the books, the Old Testament, the Bible and the Koran are biased in that they portray women as inferior to men" (qtd_Saleck. 12).

Though those feminists were fighting on a daily basis to achieve positive and concrete changes in the lives of women from education, employment, driving to issues of divorce, much of the theoretical debate has focused on opposing certain concepts in western feminism. This old generation is represented by the most known women like Hind Nawfal and Bouthaina Shaban from Syria and Hoda El Sharawi and Nawal El-Saadawi from Egypt. Their effort has been a two-fold one aimed at fighting both male dominance in Arabia and the western charges against Islam as a religion that denigrates women and treats them as second-class citizens. In pre-Islamic Arab tradition, women were perceived as a disgrace to the family. So in order to avoid having females in the family, burying new born females was common in the Arab society before Islam. From an Islamic feminist point of view, Islam liberated the female from the brutality of Arab tradition. The Quran reveals the brutality of this action and links it with horrible signs of the Day of Judgment:

When the sun is wound round and its light is lost and is overthrown, when the stars fall, when the mountains are made to pass away, when the pregnant she-camels shall be neglected, when the wild beasts are gathered together, when the seas become as blazing Fire or overflow, when the souls are joined with their bodies, when the female (infant) buried alive (as the Arabs used to do) is questioned: For what sin, was she killed? (81:1-9).

In the *Theory of Modernizing the non-Western World*, Wolfgang Zapf finds that two major factors have been hindering the process of Westernizing the Arab world: first is the communist heritage some Arab countries inherited from the Soviet Union and second is the gradual growing of the fundamentalist reaction to Western colonization. Interestingly, when we look at feminism in the Arab world today, the first idea comes to mind is that women rebel against male dominancy without any adherence to the religious code. Based on the response to westernization, Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilization* theory foresees the new encounter between the West and the Islamic world will take the form of a "Clash of Civilizations": "This centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent..... On both sides the interaction between Islam and the West is seen as a clash of civilizations"(Par. 25). This clash begins to manifest more in the twenty first century as Arab feminism comes very close to its Western counterpart and becomes more critical of Islamic code of life. Bernard Lewis observes that Arab women's response to western ideas is the most appreciated influence of western feminism in the Arab world:

It is clear that irreversible changes have taken place. Even those claiming to restore the Holy Law in its entirety are unlikely to reintroduce legal concubinage, nor is there much probability of a return to polygamy among the educated classes in Middle Eastern cities. Fundamentalist influences and rulers have in many ways changed the content and manner of education for women, but they have not returned them -- nor are they likely to return them -- to their previous condition of ignorance. And while, in Islamic lands as in Europe and America at an earlier age, there are women who speak and work against their own emancipation, the long-term trend is clearly for greater freedom. There are now significant numbers of educated, often Western-educated, women in Islamic lands. They are already having a significant impact, and Islamic public life will be enriched by the contributions of the previously excluded half of the population (31).

This shift becomes manifest among some well-known Arab feminists today. These feminists look at secular feminism as a savior from gender dilemmas in the Arab world due to excessive application of religious dos and don'ts in ordinary life. They loudly articulate their revolt against Arab cultural heritage and Islamic religion as being unfair to them and thus they adopt the Western secular feminism. Wafa Sultan is an Arab Syrian psychiatrist and critic of the Arab patriarchal society who lately moved to America. Sultan feels that both tradition and religion have been oppressors of Arab women for fourteen centuries and distort the concept of honor. The *New York Time* called her an "International Sensation" and after her book *A God Who Hates* was published, she was labeled by *Time Magazine* as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. According to her Arab Muslim society is a savage one when compared to western society:

As an Arab woman who suffered for three decades living under Islamic Sharia, it is clear to me that Islam's political ideology and Sharia must be fought relentlessly by Western civilization to prevent its application in a free society...When I first immigrated to the US, I learned to my dismay that Islam has been labeled by many as "a religion of peace." But for me, as a Syrian who grew up in an Islamic country, a set of beliefs that insists that women are wicked is an evil set of beliefs (1-6).

Due to the failure of the Arab Islamic feminist movement in the face of the dictatorial and Islamist regimes in Arabia, westernization finds its way to delve into the Arab intelligentsia. Rajaa Al Sanea is a Saudi dental graduate and author of the bestselling novel *Girls of Riyadh* in which she gives a detailed life of Westernized Arab women. The novel deals with issues, love, sexuality, homosexuality, oppression of women, banned in the Saudi conservative society. It becomes one of the controversial texts in many Arab countries and was banned in Saudi when it was first published. The *Times* describes the novel as "A brave one and revolutionary indeed". Al Sanea demonstrates that a Western code of life in an Arab society is more preferable and suitable than the Islamic one. *Girls of Riyadh* is set in Saudi society with a western atmosphere. To an Islamic reader, Al Sanea is a rebel against the Islamic tradition. She opens the novel with a wedding of one of her friends, Gamrah, in which all the young girls call on the groom to kiss his bride in public; "We want a kiss! We want a kiss!" Rashid's mother smiled and Gamrah's mother blushed"(9). Being a conservative society, especially in man-woman interaction, the book creates lots of public disputes. Further, its inclusion of tales of gays, lesbians, women indulging in alcohol and sexuality shows the openness of Saudi women to the western traditions. Alsanea tries to distance her style of feminism from the Islamic and moves close to the western code which she believes more free and fair. Valentine Moghadam, director of Women's Studies Illinois State University, observes:

The "modernizing women" of the Arab/Middle Eastern region – who have been ignored by Orientalists but targeted by Islamists – are at the center of cultural change and at the forefront of the movement for change. As I have tried to show, they have already accomplished much, although they face numerous obstacles and constraints, and experience some tensions within their own movements. For the region as a whole, the most difficult tension may be that between a national identity based on Islamic civilization and culture, and the call for civil and political rights that may be construed as unduly inspired by Western traditions (66).

As a bourgeois individualist, Al Sanea is in favor of demolishing all the hypocritical restrictions of the obsolete code of sexual and homosexual behaviors. Her *Girls* is a reaction against Arab conservative societies like Saudi Arabia where men do not get exposed to women other than their mothers and their sisters. Al Sanea criticizes the whole way of life in the Islamic Arab societies and contrasts them with the western ones. All her characters are high class Saudi citizens who are exposed to modernization. In an interview with Okeily she states: "My concerns are identical to those of many other women in Saudi Arabia. In fact, I aspire to be the first to signal the beginning of change.

These are social changes that are not connected to religion...Silence is evil. I hate negativity and refuse to wait for others to act on my behalf. It is my duty to myself and to my children in the future (2008). Like most of the Americans, Al Sanea finds that homosexuality is a normal behavior that should be considered by the society:

She was well aware that even if showing signs of being homosexual might not be considered an illness in America, in Saudi Arabia it was an utter calamity, an illness worse than cancer. She had almost fainted when the doctors told her, at the start of it all, that her son was "defining his sexual identity." Over time, they said, he would choose between masculinity and femininity (112).

Kyla Hakim observes that the American influence on Arab society is perceived by the way the Arabs respond to it where the native cultural resistance weakens slowly. Woman in Arab society begins to appreciate how the male has been dominating her life fully and finds an alternative in the American style. This is largely seen in Zaynab Hifni, another Saudi feminist living in London, who states that her exile from Saudi goes back to the three taboos she deals with in her writings: sex, religion and politics. Hifni argues that oppression of Arab woman has a religious basis related to the anti-woman interpretation of the holy Quran and Muhammad's Hadith (Prophet Muhammad's sayings). She criticizes all the interpretations introduced by males that aimed at subjugating females: "Our problem is that everything in favor of women we consider an unreliable *hadith*, whereas any *hadith* that favors men - like the one that says, 'Women are lacking brains and faith' - is considered a 100 percent reliable *hadith*. Why? Because it harms women. This doesn't make sense" (Jackson.2006). To Hakim, a good number of Arab feminists embark on American feminism for two reasons: first, the American offer is far more generous than the traditional one and second, modernization permits the Arab woman to loosen the clutches of man that prevent her from activities:

The American national culture largely revolves around the wants, needs and goals of the individual... As one of the greatest superpowers of the time, its influence on the global community towards the focus on the individual is nothing short of inevitable. The movies, clothing and new age mentality of America are sending all people regardless of age, upbringing and locale, into a grand scale social transition. The Arab and Muslim beliefs, traditions and entire state of being are no longer as they were 20 or 30 years ago. The women of the novels, Nadia, Fatima, Umm Saad, Maha, Asya, and Su'ad, each living in various Arab countries with unique situations of their own, are united on the common ground of American introduced ideas and concepts of individualism through such venues as feminism, capitalism, sexism and consumerism which adversely affect their society (1).

It is commonplace to point to Arab woman's dress as the quintessential sign of Islamic oppression of woman in twenty first century Arab feminist movement. This is because, according to Ahdaf Soueif: "In every country, social, cultural and political changes manifest themselves in dress" (3). This dress code is perceived as a means of controlling woman's sexuality and freedom. Many Arab women express their interest in banning veil and headscarf in the Europe. Henda Al-Mansour, a Saudi feminist living in

New York states: “I don’t like the idea of giving up my rights; I want to be responsible for my actions...I would like to be able not to wear the niqab [full veil] any more....Above all, the full veil is an instrument of male domination...I completely agree with the French bill that aims to ban the full veil in public places (7). Arab feminists find that the practice of veiling, whether a religious or traditional practice, is a symbol of women’s oppression. They condemned Islamist fundamentalism as misogynist and called for secular and democratic political-legal frameworks:

The women would put on their long *abayas*, head coverings and face veils, while the men stripped off their suits and ties, including the belts that they always tightened under their bellies so that one could see how rippling- full of flesh and fat and curds and whey they were, to return to the white *thobes* that concealed their mealtime sins and the red *shimaghs* that covered their bald pates (Al Sanea. 115).

Judging Arab woman in the light of her beliefs to find out how civilized she is a common western view on Arab woman. Accordingly “If a Muslim woman holds certain beliefs that are uncommon in Western culture, she is described as backward, no matter how highly assertive, educated or independent she is; in other words, women are not judged on how they fit within their culture as much as they would fit in a Western culture” (Eltantawy. 144). This western standard of how a Muslim woman looks like, what relationships she makes, what clothes she wears and how western her thoughts are may not be logical since many liberal Muslim still hold conservative religious opinions that fit their cultural affiliation and lifestyle. In her anthology “*E-mails from Scheherazad*”, Muhja Kahf allows her impatience with the Western view on Arab woman to come to the fore without fear of direct confronting the post-September 11 American political landscape: “No, I’m not bald under the scarf...No, I would not like to defect. I’m already American. Yes, I speak English. Yes, I carry explosives. They’re called words. And if you don’t get up off your assumptions...They’re going to blow you away” (39). In *Orientalism*, Said draws a distinction between “unconscious positivity” which he properly names “latent Orientalism,” and “the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology,” he calls “manifest Orientalism.” Said explains that: “Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant” (206). Said further notes that it does not matter how Orientalists differ in their treatment of the Orient because such differences are found only on the “manifest” side of Orientalism while the only thing that unifies the Orientalist effort is the “latent” side which is the deeper level of Orientalism that introduces the Orient as inferior.

Thus Samuel Huntington might be correct in suggesting a “clash of civilizations” between the Islamic world and the Western world. This appears clearly in the regular images of Arab woman as oppressed by religion and tradition produced by twenty first American Century literature. If not a clash of civilizations, what then can interpret the recurrent appearance of Prophet Muhammad’s wives in this particular time? For instance

in *The Jewel of Medina* (2008) by Sherry Jones, one reads of women humiliated by Prophet Muhammad and his teachings as Jones tells the reader in the preface to the novel:

Join me in a harsh, exotic world of saffron and sword fights, of desert nomads...We are in seventh-century Hijaz, in western Saudi Arabia...where Bedouin raiders fight for survival and women have few rights, and a religion destined to be one of the greatest in the world has sprung from the lips of a man regarded, until he reached the age of forty, as unremarkable (VII).

Edward Said emphasizes the dynamicity of this discourse, twenty five years after the publication of his *Orientalism* in his "*Orientalism after 25 Years*", that Orientalism is "very much a book tied to the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history" (3). Therefore, it is commonplace to point to Muhammad's harem as the quintessential mode of American representation of the Muslim woman's oppression and Quran as an oppressive tool fabricated by Muhammad to subjugate women. Jones provides one of the Quranic verses that she tells us to be an oppressive one:

Do not enter the prophet's home unless you are invited, and leave as soon as you finish your meal...When you ask his wives for something, ask them from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts... It is not for you to cause injury to the Messenger of al-Lah, or ever marry his widows after him. To do that would be something dreadful in the sight of God (Jones. 160).

Following in the footsteps of Sherry Jones; Homa Pourasgari leaves Muslim woman in the same position where Jones has left off. First of all, Arab Muslim woman is oppressed, marginalized and silenced by Muslims' absolute power endowed to them by their Prophet. In Pourasgari's *The Dawn of Saudi* (2009), a reader comes across people who resemble their Prophet in oppression and sexuality: "Men preferred their women as young as one year old...The Prophet Muhammad was the model they followed. Aisha became his wife when she was six years of age, and the marriage was when she was nine. The younger a woman married the better. She would be more subservient" (Pourasgari 5). Patriarchal discourse in modern America texts always contrast a "good" woman who is a paragon of the female authority's notion of femininity with a "bad" woman who epitomizes all that is considered unfeminine. If American culture begins its encounter with Islam by representing the Muslim woman primarily as a "bad" woman, this badness is not left irredeemable in the post 9/11 novel. Muslim woman becomes more appreciative of her role in changing the patriarchal forces. Accordingly, the ideal woman is not the one who accepts the oppressive treatment of Islamic culture, but the one who rebels.

Arab feminist movement towards secularizing its thoughts resembles many feminist movements in the third world nations that try to escape the control of tradition, religion and the bourgeoisie grip. In Arabia, in particular, decolonization left either Islamist regimes or dictatorships to establish nation states. No major difference can be seen between the two when it comes to issues like women's rights. Islamists and dictatorships rely on conservative religious interpretations or Arab nationalism that define them and differentiate them from the West and its influence. So secularizing of this

movement comes as a result of huge efforts made by high class Arab women who have access into the western society. The West, especially, US, Britain and France become the destination of many Arab women who seek education, work, tourism or refuge. This exposure to the western environment has the major influence on shifting Arab feminism towards secularization.

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The Criterion

A Chronological Survey of Marginalization: Women in Sam Shepard's Buried Child as an implicative exemplary

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Perspectives on Marginalization: Historical Background

The concept of Marginality is originally applied to social science by explaining its effects on people of immigration, culture clash, and other transitional situations, such as status, role, or class changes. Cullen and Pretes (2000, cited in Pilar and Jo Udasco, 2004) consider the concept of marginality "an elusive concept" or a fluid relative concept since there is no clear definition of marginality as its meaning reshaped according to its use.

However, the concept of marginality / marginalization is originated by the sociologist Robert Ezra Park in five essays entitled "Human Migration and the Marginal Man" published in 1928 between the Two World Wars. Park's essays are basically concerned with migrated people to US rather than marginality. Nevertheless, the context of this concept in his essays refers to the idea that marginalization ostensibly occurs due to the sustained culture contact, like the minority group immigrants to the United States who are on the horns of a dilemma between their native and original culture and that of the new, host culture, stressing on the consequences of race, religion, and social and political conflicts. Park depended only on his personal surveillances made during his travels, and biographies of immigrants. The overall conclusion that Park presented is that being between different cultures would definitely produce the marginal personality.

Then, this concept is also fully elaborated by Park's student Everett V. Stonequist (1937) in his book *The Marginal Man*. Since then marginalization as a concept was widely used and refined in literature studies (Dunne, 2005; Billson, 2005; Deegan, 2005; Pilar and Udasco, 2004). Stonequist's interest was in European dominion and colonialism, emphasizing the prominent effects of such factors like "class conflict; and science vs. theology" (Jenkins, 2005). He uses the concept 'marginality' as an umbrella where he places another transitional situations as a panoramic view of marginalized individuals and marginal situations around the world and through history. He concluded that marginality could result not only from clashing different cultures, but also from ethnic, geographic conquest, class and role changes.

Billson (2005) in her study "No Owner of Soil: Redefining the Concept of Marginality" tries to securitize the concept of marginality in sociological literature studies since 1928. Billson comes with three types of marginality which all reflect the negative interaction between the marginalized man and his world. These types are: "cultural marginalization", "social role marginalization", and "structural marginalization". She states her belief that 'cultural marginality' develops out of a cultural process connected with race, ethnicity and religion. Accordingly, this marginalization indicates a dilemma of "cross-cultural and assimilation that

dominated classical statements". Sharing or non-sharing the values of a culture makes one either in or out of the group. 'Social role marginality' indicates that marginalization reflects the struggle created because of the social constrictions. While in the last type, marginalization as a process is mainly caused by certain segments affected by the "political, social and economic powerlessness".

Dennis (2005) in his study "The Age of Marginality", highlights the issue that marginalization is never outdated, regarding it as one of the most prominent issues of the modern world. He discusses what he called as "the dual marginality" through which he expresses the paradoxical attitude embedded in the marginality as a term, believing that marginality does not indicate only the outsiders who are rejected from the social sphere. He rather shows that marginalized people are both "outsiders as insiders" and "insiders as outsiders". They are not totally invisible, but they are merely disregarded. Being disregarded does not restrict their vital roles in the society. He attributes the reasons of marginalization to "[the] power, position, and status [that] do not view you as important to recognize, except within limited economic, political, or cultural boundaries".(p.4) Furthermore, Dennis points out the effect of "double consciousness" which reflects almost the classic case of "blaming the victim", as found in many societies like Brazilian society where practicing brutal action and "killing of marginal male street" is considered as a necessity to keep the social order. Moreover, he relates marginality to identity, stressing their close correlation for all human beings who live their lives through "'identity shelves": males-females; dominant-non dominant"(p.5). In another words, Dennis sees that we all may experience marginalization in one way or another due to the social, economic and political upheaval, but it intensifies more in the immigrants because of cultural differences.

Deegan (2005) in her study, "Transcending 'The Marginal Man': Challenging the Patriarchal Legacy of Robert E. Park", criticizes Park for his using what she called, "men's standpoint" as a gauge for every marginal experience. Thus, she sets for re-organizing the term 'marginality' from a feminist point of view to correct what she called "Park's biases". Her objection to the unfairly use? of the term stems from her belief that women are suffering from marginalization more than men owing a lot to men's freedom and hegemony and women's limited opportunities and their submissiveness. Accordingly, she sees that using this term "the marginal man" to refer to both genders is not totally accurate, since women's values and images are created by men, and since they are confined and controlled by men's rules, as "strangers in [their] own society", "the other" (p.217). She may go too far in her assumption that women have no place at all in this world, they belong to nowhere, while men even if they are marginalized belong to "somewhere". Women have been deceived and convinced to believe that they are lower than men who are in turn "superior to women". Furthermore, she concludes that white women experience of marginalization might be harsher than that of women of colour. If the immigrant women and women of colour are marginalized due to their gender and colour, they might find a consolation in their own heritage. While the white woman who lives in a dominant society, "has one heritage...[that] defines her as outsider"(p. 218) . So the process of marginalization is commonly shared by all women, but with different degrees. Moreover, the experience of marginalization for women is seen as a "cross-cultural", i.e. women in both modern and non modern worlds are marginalized by one way or another. They are "invisible to men in all cultures."(Deegan, 2005, p.219).

The margin and the centre/ theories and ideas

In the attempt to display how the studied playwrights portray woman in their plays, it is necessary to discern and conceive the parameters of identifying the marginal and the centre, reconstructing the theories of margin and centre.

The terms centre and margin are most explicitly explicated from a philosophical point of view by Derrida. Accordingly, it is believed that the works of the French philosopher and socialist Jacques Derrida are the steppingstone in illustrating the position of centre and the margin (Kawashima, 1993). Derrida's vision of the state of the margin in his strategy of 'differance'—a term combines both "difference" and "deferral"—"challenges the possibility of an identity, sameness, or inside that could be conceived of independently of the altering power of its difference, its other, or its margin....". He assumes that the presence (=centre) implies immediacy or self-presence of being as a principle of "Western metaphysics" where the binary oppositions, such as speech/writing, presence/absence, subject/object, centre/margin, are constituted in "violent hierarchy"(Morgan and Leggett, 1996, p.3). The first term of each of these dualisms is regarded as the "central term of the metaphysical system" and it is superior to the other (Ryan, 1982, p.9, cited in Morgan and Leggett, 1996 p.3). While the second term has no entity by itself, it is merely defined by the existence of the former. Derrida sees the relation between centre and margin as natural and given, as "centrism" is related to the desire for unity, order, and self-presence. Yet, Derrida exerts his effort to reverse and displace the binary oppositions. In most studies the common use of the term "centre" is assumed to be both dominant and defining. In this case Derrida suggests that the term "presence" indicates both what is desired and legitimate and what delineates the status of "absences"(Morgan and Leggett, 1996, p.4). Accordingly, in using the centre/margin distinction to typify unequal power relations, the oppressor is often situated at the centre and the oppressed at the margin of hierarchies. Such view tends to articulate a kind of an inherent and objective connection between centrality and authority on one hand and marginality and powerlessness on the other hand. This view is partly short sighted since it reflects an ignorant fact related to the complexity and the contradictory sites of human subjectivity of both centrality and marginality.(Morgan and Leggett, 1996, p4)

Although the centrality is a dominant, it is not necessarily a defining factor, because it is sometimes seen as a site of oppressive acts which make it undesirable and unemancipatory. Partha Chatterjee (1990, cited in Morgan and Leggett, 1996) argues in her essay "Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" , that nationalist discourse provided a stringent dichotomy between public and private, outer and insider, and center and margin, where male domain is marked with the external, public, and centre, while women are confined by the private and marginal sphere. The women's home is regarded as a dominant and superior to the public sphere, consequently even if the women occupied a space superior to that occupied by men, they wouldn't allow defining or choosing it in relation to the public sphere. In other words, the centrality that is given to women in the modern society is not absolutely real or authentic, as it creates "new forms of domination" that "bound [women] to a new and entirely legitimate, subordination". The women are marginalized in spite of being within the nation space. Hence, the need to reconstruct the term "centre" and "margin" in terms of a more complex notion of position. In other words, the position of that centre and margin is the most significance in understanding the cultural processes through which this binary opposition connected with different histories, identities, and social formations.

However, many feminists and postcolonial theorists have stressed the importance of 'positionality', assuming that being in a margin is a matter of position instead of being a "pregiven" or natural. Moreover, it is a space of cultural resistance and struggle. The feminists have struggled to validate experience of marginality as a site for the production of counter-hegemonic knowledge and resistance monolithic (Hooks, 1990; Fuss, 1980, Morgan and Leggett, 1996). Hence, marginality is neither stable nor monolithic.

Ferguson (1990, p.9) raises an issue about the nature of the centre and the norms or the yardsticks through which one can be judged as margin. He says, "when we say margin, we must always ask, marginal to what?". He concludes that the condensed power exercised by the centre is hidden and an elusive, and not an essay to be recognized. Yet no one can gloss over or refuse to acknowledge centrality and its effect on the whole cultural and social strands and currents. Lorad (1990) gives this 'centre' a mythical norm, defining it as "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure." (Cited in Ferguson and et al 1990, p.482).

Ferguson states his belief that the power and the enforced values of centre are merely ostensible. Though they are alleged to be "natural", they demonstrate the centre insecurity. That perhaps partly explains the violence actions of the male characters in Sam Shepard's and Tennessee William's plays. Their male characters are afraid that autonomous women might confiscate their claimed privileged position; hence, they show their fear of losing their centrality. Fiedler (1966, cited in Pearson and Pope, p.7) perhaps follows this wave saying that the "absence of realistic female characters from many American [and British] works is a result of male fear of women." "Manliness," Bourdieu (2001) points out, "is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself."

However, Bourdieu tends to establish his belief that women are underestimated through 'cultural practices' of the everyday life. Bourdieu in his book *Masculine Domination* points out to the dominated position of women in society as something not natural but rather *naturalized*. Domination in its broadest sense is a result of "social arbitrary" (Bourdieu, 2001) and not of the existence or the absence of the 'phallus' as Freud believed. So, men's domination over women shouldn't be seen as a biological; rather it is the incarnation of social practices and traditions. Bourdieu interprets masculine domination as being rooted in unconscious structures that are centered on "phallonnarcissism."

Bourdieu trenchantly criticizes Marxist analyses that give a primacy to the effect of economy in the production of social structure, stressing on the significance of the cultural production and symbolic systems in playing a crucial role in the production of social structures of domination (Lane, 2000: 15). Moreover, to sketch the strategies that people adapted in their struggle to get the centre, and the dominant position, he sees that the modern social world is divided into what he calls as "fields." For him this field is field of forces which contain people who are dominant and others who are dominated. All individuals, Bourdieu argues, in this universe involve in many social conflicts and bring to competition. Accordingly, the stage as a field of social space operates to show how men are dominators and women seem dominated by the power of culture and patriarchy that give men the upper hand over women.

Marginalization, Gender and Patriarchy

Undeniably, a certain ambivalence concerning the issues of marginalization, gender and patriarchy, long in conversation with each other, have emerged as causes

of women's predicament. The tendency of equating the 'margin' with 'woman' reveals the polemic relationship between marginalization and gender. This universal canonization is reexamined in an attempt to bring attention to the status of women.

Butler (1990: 22-23) stresses on the correlation between 'sex' and 'gender', arguing that "the institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is different from a feminine term." She insists on the "performative nature of gender" and its ability to re-constituting itself; hence there is no fixed and preexist gender identity. Butler's ideas concerning the continuous constructing of the female/male gender binary and the nonexistence of a fixed gender category might help in explaining that the centre/margin binary "can also be conceived as a proformative construction of identity in which there are no preexisting categories—the categories are constantly produced and re-produced through the expressions of marginalization" (Kawashima, 1997: 15)

Scholars in psychology and sociology have shown that one cause of women's marginalization may lie in their gender. However, 'gender' as a concept is defined variously depending to some extent on the purpose of its applying and the different epistemological goals of its study fields. In this respect, the researcher finds Sally Haslanger's definition of gender useful in providing a good starting point to sketch a brief account of gender. Haslanger (2000) defines gender in terms of the social position that both men and women occupy. A person is the product of her/his society, of the interaction between her/him and the different dominant powers. A woman belongs to gender because she is taught and thought to have certain distinctive bodily features that reveal her productive capacities and evaluate her individuality and assess her social position. Haslanger agrees with others that gender is a social institution or category as opposite to the biological category 'sex'. Along with this view is Simone de Beauvoir's (1908-1986) well known phrase that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

Similarly Gayle Rubin (cited in McCann and Kim, 2003) in her essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex", emphasizes the interrelationship between gender and sex as a production of cultural processes. She says:

Gender and sexuality are produced as features of cultures, bodies and identities. This sex- gender system takes the raw material of human babies/ bodies and produces gendered beings whose skills and personalities complement each other to such an extent that the social and sexual bonding between them in marriage produces the basic social unit of human groups. She further argues that women are positioned as subordinate within in such kinship systems in as much as they are exchange between men. (p.14)

Accordingly, the position of women to gender is similar to her position to centre. They are usually judged by certain social and moral norms and they are sanctioned by the contempt and marginality of others if they violated these norms. Studies show that gender norms impose codes of masculinity and femininity, and of what is appropriate and normal. In other words, gender shapes and prefigures man's and woman's identity and its relation with the outside world. The distribution of wealth and power is largely affected by gender norms, because these norms of success in position of authority have a collision with norms of femininity. Whereas the position of authority asks for certain decisiveness and assertive behavior, the norms of femininity put clear limits on how assertive women can be before they are considered

aggressive and thus evaluated negatively. So, women suffer from this duality and they feel that they are in "a no-win situation"(Browne, 2007: 57). If women behave according to the social norms regulating leadership position, they will be judged as masculine and aggressive and if they confirm the regular social norms which specify how women have to behave, they will be seen as too passive and insufficiently ambitious to be able to succeed in the positions of the male world. Bourdieu (2001: 67) points out the difficulty that women face and the power imbalances between the two genders as femininity norms make it much harder for women than men to gain power. He argues that:

access to power of any kind places women in " a double bind", if they behave like men, they risk losing the obligatory attributes of "femininity" and call into question the natural right of men to the positions of power; if they behave like women, they appear incapable and unfit for the job.

For feminists, gender as a subject, however, is the crucial code that refers historically to a position unavailable for women to occupy. The male subject has been regarded as the traditional subject that everyone must identify with. Scanning some of the "masterpieces" of the theatre, where their focal point is the male subject, one can see that women are unevenly called upon to be identified with certain characters that are considered "universal" like Hamlet, Oedipus, Faust and other male characters. This matter has projected "the dominance of the self as male has taken its historical toll on women."(Goodman and Gay, 1998: 145).

Gillan Hanna, a founding member of the socialist-feminist theatre company, objected the role of woman in theatre and her "theatrical identity", on the basis that woman is not portrayed for her own but only as an accessory to complete men's social image; she is one's wife, mother, daughter or lover . Woman's existence depends only and merely on her attachment to man (cited in Aston, 1999)

Moreover, women and men are typified by "gender stereotypes" which have far-reaching effects on the conceptions of oneself. Studies held in psychology and sociology aim to explain why women achieve less than men in the profession, when there is no indication of overt discrimination. In such cases gender stereotypes play a central role in shaping women's and men's achievements. In this respect, the definition of stereotype may help to understand women's position: "Stereotypes are cognitive devices that operate at the non-conscious level, and help us to make sense of the staggering amount of information that our brain constantly has to process"(Browne, 2007, p.58). Studies have shown that women still lag behind men in terms of employment in key creative positions.

Consequently stereotypes are formed as part of the socialization processes, which are not wholly inaccurate but they are over generalized since people, especially women, are judged not only on their own performances and abilities but in part on the stereotypes of their gender. So under the effect of the stereotype the behavior associated with being a good professional is typically valued negatively for women and positively for men. Apparently, marginalization of women due to their gender is quite normal in social modern life. The pay gap, for instance, has long been used as a simple but telling indicator of gender and sex discrimination in the labor market and, by implication, other areas of life. Till recently, women's pay in Britain and USA is less than men due to the difference of their gender (Hakim, cited in Brown, 2007, p.191).

McCann and Kim (2003:13) stated that the concept of gender introduced in the early 1970s to distinguish the acquisition of social attributes from biological ones.

Before that the concept of gender had merely a feature of grammar without any "social meaning." So, in the 70's feminist theories began to use the concept as follows:

Biology (sex) is not destiny, and to assert, instead, that meaning attributed to sex difference (gender) are defined in historically specific ways through culture and politics and, as 'man-made' interpretations, secure male dominance over women. (p.13)

Arguably, women, in patriarchal society, are often perceived as the weak sex and constructed as marginal figures; they suffer a lot from men chauvinism. Patriarchy refers to the male domination nourished by the culture norms, religious attitude and social constructs. Thus, women, based on patriarchal practices and structures, are limited in rights and entitlements which consequently lead to a situation where women remain powerless and dependent on men. Richardson (1993:52) examined the concept of patriarchy, seeing it as "an important concept for the theorization of how and why women are oppressed". This concept 'patriarchy' has been used by feminists to explore the systematic manners that structure men supremacy and female subordination. The researcher aims also to analyze how patriarchy contributes to marginalize women and what is the reaction of women to resist the patriarchal attempts to marginalize them.

Marginality and Feminism

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir (1952:xxii) argues that men have appropriated the "center," with women's consent: "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other". The most importance here is not only the male domination, but also the constructing of identities. In the case of male/female relationships, Beauvoir asserts that women have always been regarded as "the absolute Other," as the irrational, tied only to her body, and therefore have been subordinated as inferior, a situation which is "validated" historically in patriarchal culture in which "the dominant class bases its argument on a state of affairs that it has itself created" (xxx) and then unremittingly presents as evidence of "absolute truth." Beauvoir provides many different patriarchal definitions of female "otherness," from "flesh" to "nature" to "mediatrix" to "mystery," concluding that each patriarchal society and each male individual ratify its/his own self-image first, then reduce the female into a correlative meaning of the "other", denying female existence for herself. Most significantly, in every case women's identity and significance are decided by another, never self-defined, her identity is mainly men made (Mulvey and et al, 2006:16; Skredsvig, 2002).

In retrospect, women were also underestimated as playwrights since dramatic literature has been authorized as "masculine, scientific, vital, and dynamic", where women are bereft from writing in this genre, on the excuse that "women are likely to have only a definitely limited knowledge of life" and are also "deficient in the faculty of construction" (Matthews, 1916: 124, cited in Smith, 1998). Hence, women experience marginalization not only as *per se* women but also as writers. They undergo a lot of difficulties to prove themselves and their merits. In several lectures she gave during the 1930s and later, the writer Virginia Woolf reflected upon the challenge she and her fellow female writers faced at the beginning of the century—Woolf noted that although women had been writing for centuries, the subjects they had written about and even the style in which they wrote was often dictated not by their own creative vision, but by standards imposed upon women by society in

general. Advances in women's issues, such as the right to vote, the fight for reproductive rights, and the opportunities women gained during the first half of the century in the arena of work outside the home were major developments.

Women in Sam Shepard's Buried Child

Hailed as one of the most significant playwrights, Sam Shepard is regarded as one of the United States' most prolific; most celebrated, and most honored playwrights. Critics examine Shepard's plays extensively, reconsidering his plays as "a recorder of the lost American dream and the deficiencies of our [national] theatre" (Blau 1984, cited in Williams, 1997). Critics posit that nearly all Sam Shepard's plays examine the functions and dysfunctions of the relationships between individuals that constitute either family structures or social structures that approximate family structures-, close friendships, or the struggle of haves like brother and brother, and father and son, or tight-knit business alliances. The theme of family dysfunction, which is so obvious in his plays, may stem from his conviction that family is the core of the whole life and everything in the world whether positive or negative could be attributed and traced back to the family. Shepard, himself stresses this, saying:

What doesn't have to do with family? There isn't anything, you know what I mean? Even a love story has to do with family. Crime has to do with family. We all come out of each other - everyone is born out of a mother and a father, and you go on to be a father. It's an endless cycle (Cited in Bigsby, "Born Injured":p. 21)

McDonough (1997) joins in the chorus, stressing Shepard's careful characterization of the crisis of man's identity and the "mystery" between his male characters, whereas his female's characters are degraded to be the "sidelines of his plays". Critics believe that Shepard has no interest in portraying his females as their issues are not that of significance for him. His tendency of pushing his females off the stage, obliterating their individuality let critics detect misogynic treatment of women. Along with this term, Lynda Hart (1988, cited in) argues that Shepard's objectification of the females in his plays is ultimately "pornographic." Other critics like Londre (1987) Wilson (1987) Williams, (1997) and L Podol (1989) suggest that Shepard's search for masculine landscape and his concentrating on the reviving of the American Dream victimizes women.

In *Buried Child* (1979) Sam Shepard creates a world that woman not only marginalized but also attributes as the reason behind disturbing the "familial equilibrium". The play demonstrates that the patriarchal system represented by the law of the father is oppressive where the created family is dysfunctional and violent.

Set in rural Illinois farm, the play is a macabre look at an American family, suffering from a terrible secret. There is a strong hint that the mother, Halie has committed an act of incest with her elder son Tilden. Tavv (2000: 52) states that Tilden represents "one aspect of the Oedipal impulse, the mother is seducer." However, Halie has been portrayed as an sexual object for men, a woman of uncontrolled and repressed sexual appetites due to the fact that her husband Dodge is "old, feeble, and impotent" (Hall, 1993). Such marital deterioration might indicate, Hall states, "the threat feminine sexuality poses for patriarchy:"

Halie: I went once with a man.

Dodge: (mimicking her) Oh, a "man".

Halie: A wonderful man. A breeder.

Dodge: And he never laid a finger on you, I supposed.

(Long silence) (*Buried Child*: 2)

And that may explain her passionate love to her son as seen by May (1988: 97) who states that "sexually frustrated mothers whose husbands were not in command might turn their perverted desires toward their sons." The fruit of this intense relationship is a child killed and buried by the father expressing his power over the women and that anything created outside the patriarchal system is terminated.

Halie, during most of the play's opening scene, remains upstairs, away from a husband she neither loves nor respects. She is even referred to as "Halie's voice" at the beginning of the play. However, she left her house in favor searching for "phallic economy". That means she cannot live without a man and she clings to men's world that identifies her as human being.

Shelly, a girl friend of their returned son Vince, is another female character in this play. Shelly is put under the men's gaze. Nevertheless, she is given the status of the spectator at the same time. She observes and objectifies the action of the play and the power of men. Yet, that does not give her a privilege as she by herself is merely a spectacle. Ironically, to defend herself from her odd and dead system surroundings, she uses what women conventionally were usually brought up to do, that is the domestic activities. When Vince turns to her for comfort that his family cannot provide, Shelly deflects his desire by saying: " You're the one who wants to stay. So I'll stay. I'll stay and I'll cut carrots. And I'll cook the carrots. And I'll do whatever I have to do to survive" (94). It seems that these 'feminine' activities which provide Shelly with the substance of existence. Throughout the play, Shepard fully portrays men, giving a full characterization for their psychology, emotions and masculinity while women appear as tools to prove their patriarchal power and agents to clarify their masculinity.

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Myth and Puranas: Decolonisation of Indian English Drama

Nagraj Holeyannavar

Myth is fictitious belief of the people in a popular manner. Hence, many of them do not believe it because of its allegorical nature. But it is the belief which is fore-grounded in the tradition of the past and it is of real life presented in a fictitious manner. This has led human mind to accept the belief in a conscious manner. And, it is not like a story told in history. It is a history told in a story. According to Lillian Feder:

“Myth is a story involving human limitations and super human strivings and accomplishments which suggest through action- usually of a ritual, ceremonial or compulsive nature- man’s attempt to express and thus control his own anxiety about those features of his physiological and psychological makeup and his external environment which he cannot comprehend, accept or master. The characters of myth may be God’s, men or monstrous creatures with a qualities both, but even in his myths dealing exclusively with immortals, the narrative material, the portrayal of conflict and sorrow and the resolution or revelation are all reflections of human concerns.”

And further myth is collective unconsciousness of the society found in orecture. Later, these myths are written in expository form as seen in the puranas. They celebrate the powers and the works of the God. Today, the playwrights derive their thoughts directly from these and build up their thought. Puranas are of eighteen in numbers and even there are upapuranas. Upapurana deals about the superiority of the one god to other gods and treat other gods as subordinate, whereas, the puranas deal with philosophical, theology and mythological narrative writings of the Hindu culture. These come under poetical tradition. Under epic traditions, Ramayan and Mahabharat are the epics. These epics give the sources for the modern writers to present their ideas and thoughts in a new perspectives These epics consists the themes which are common stories even of today as myth always shows the man in internal and external world, how he suffers and struggles in the world. They deal with abducting another’s wife for the sake of physical fulfillment, fighting among brothers for property, committing of adultery and marriage issues.

Indian drama is deeply rooted in mythical stories and puranas. Indian English playwrights take the mythological elements in exhibiting their thoughts on the present condition with inner or external struggle of a human being. Mythical thoughts give more meaning, and it widens the horizon in a more thoughtful way. Everything is based on socio-culture patterns of the society of today’s. Since, myth has abundant storage of stories relating to the present condition. The stories of myth are being of common men and the society. Indian culture and tradition has not changed much compared to that of Europeans and Americans. Hence Indians thought is fully fore-grounded on Hindu religion. Although modernity has invaded, Indians have not left their culture and tradition. Even today to them the religious ideals and thoughts give meaning to the existence. And there is no existential anguish like that of European thought. The problems which are highlighted in the plays are of social.

Myth and puranas decolonize the thought of colonized culture and tradition. This type of writing was started with Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo and T.P.Kailasam before independence. In taking these essences in the stories, they wrote the plays with

highly symbolic in their approach and style. The use mythical and puranic element teach the public, the moral, and to instruct them in a philosophical way and to know better about the life, what is it? Like these Girish Karnad, Sriranga, Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Chandrasekhar Kambar and others had taken similar approach in their place and are popular in using of the myths.

Whenever, there is turmoil in the society and social unrest, awareness to the public is given through with mythical approach in solving of the problems. And better understanding of the human values of those myths help with the mythical aspect of the God, which is there in the subconscious mind of the people or audience which works as dramatic ritual. The inner struggle of the man is nowhere seen in the Indian literature like that of unrest in metaphysics. It is only the external struggle what is seen in Indian life. Every dramatist has his own approach in instructing the public. If the playwright takes the mythical element, then he is likely to capture the attention of the audience; by giving his vision of thought in regard to the culture prevailing at the times.

Rabindranath Tagore's plays like *Chitra*, *Karana and Kunti* and *Gandhari's Prayer* are being inspired from Mahabharat. In *Chitra*, transformation of Arjun comes from physical to spiritual life. Chitrangadha has got the supernatural power with that she gets the attraction of Arjun. And then, when the beauty of Chitra decrease, Arjun negates Chitra. Later Arjun comes back to the sense.

In *Karna and Kunti*, both the characters are thinking for their salvage at the last hour of the war from its wreckage. In *Gandhari's prayer*, Gandhari knows the truth of Duryodhana's bad things, whereas his father Dritarashtra supported him. Gandhari knew that the Duryodhana will be doomed for his bad things.

Aurobindo has written different mythological plays but not on Hindu mythology. Still he wants to show the struggle of human being with the use of myths in his plays. *Perseus, the Deliver*, shows old myth falling and rising of new myth in this. His other plays are *Rodogune*, *Vizeiers of Bassoria* and *Eric, the King of Norway*.

T. P. Kailasam's plays are based on the Indian epics. *Burden* is taken from Ramayan's story. *Fulfillment, the Purpose* and the *Curse of Karna* are taken from Mahabharata. Kailasam justifies Karna, Ekalavya, Krishna and Keechakas roles in the play.

In post independence period Girish Karnad, Chandrashekar Kambar, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Sriranga (Adiga Rangacharya), Vijay Tendulkar, Asif Currimbhoy and Uma Parameshwaran.

Sriranga has written 47 plays of *Shadows in the Dark*, *Yama Vanquished* and *Ramarajya*. *Ramarajya* starts like in Pirandello style. Although, there is no mythical essence in the play but, it gives dramatic thought to visualizes, why playwrights take mythical writings in their plays? What is there in that? These are being answered by 1st person a character who wants to write the play based on mythical element which is the best way to instruct the public as the public awareness comes only with this element. And public knows the struggle of myth person:

1st: what sort of a play?

3rd: A mythological play

1st: What did you say?

2nd person: Look here, sir! What the public wants is a mythological play. Gods, demons, the court of Indra,

the dances of Rambha and Urvashi....

(1s person cannot control his laughter. He laughs loudly)

3rd Person: (Seeing 1st Person shaking with laughter.) What is, sir?

1st person: Oh no! (Stops laughing) Do you think I'm a small boy? Gods, demons, miracles-all these subjects appeal to the very young. After all these years, you are telling me to write about such things? Am I living in the 20th century, or in the Stone Age? What will the intellectuals say if I write such plays?

3rd person: What do you mean by such plays?

1st person: A story which goes like this: a king or perhaps a sage. Enter s demon.

The demon abducts a woman, followed by war, a curse and miraculous acts. Does it bear any resemblance to what happens in daily life? Do such things ever happen in everyday life?

2nd person: That's the very reason why the public likes it, sir

Yama vanquished – A sick man is thinking that he will die. Yama comes asks him to get ready as he will take him. He requests Yama to take him when he is alright. Hence, Yama does not care for the excuses made by him. Meanwhile, the doctor comes and tells him that he is perfectly alright. The wife of the sick man complains, and later she abuses Yama. And then, she threatened to leave him. When the sick man comes to know that his boss is coming, he gets up and prepares himself to welcome the boss. And the wife is surprised to look that her husband is alright.

In *Ramarajya*, Sriranga satirizes the political system. After fourteen years of exile Ram returns to his kingdom and immediately there is a problem to who to rule. If Ram does not take the prime minister-ship then who will become the Prime Minister? And who are all likely to become the ministers and the Deputy Prime Minister? In *Ramarajya*, people are given the ultimate rights as seen with the character, Siddhanta. Siddhanta, even questions the position given to Sita as a deputy prime minister, is not so good because she was there in the enemy's country for few years.

Girish Karnad has been popularly known for using mythical elements in his plays. In *Yayati*, Girish Karnad presents a mythical story taken from Mahabharata. Yayati is cursed for the adultery by Sukracharya to become old on the complaint of his daughter and also granted him that he can become young if someone gives him the youthness. So he asks in regard to the exchange his old age to his sons' youth. Hence, none turns, only Puru turns to his demand. He enjoyed the life but at the end he came to know that there is meaninglessness in the physical pleasures. And a person cannot change his fate whatever he might of his age.

In *Hayavadhana*, Girish Karnad comments on the incompleteness of the human being. It is because; human beings have instinct and thinking ability because of this he differs from animals. Human beings have to face the conflict between the two. Even the play takes turn for the search for ones belongingness like that Sartre. Although, absurdity is there in Indian context, which is on meaninglessness of life, but, the meaning differs on the grounds of philosophical level. And it is not possible to stick to anyone of these. With the use of the myth of Lord Ganesh and Gandharva supplies the meaning to the play in the highly modernistic thought of identity.

In *Nagamandala*, myth of cobra stands as fertility. Even, it stands for physical attraction. In taking this element he points out the differentiation of the societal norms for male and female. In *Taledanda*, caste system as an off shoot of myth is associated

with religion such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. *Fire and the Rain* is taken from Mahabharat. Arasu and Parasu are the sons of Raibhya, a sage. Parasu killed his father and Arasu's devotion brings back his father. Rain god, Indra comes whenever kills the demon Vritha. This myth symbolizes as fertility and drought. Hence, rain comes of good deeds but not of bad people deeds as they are being unimpressed to God, whether they priests or any influential people performing the ritual.

In Girish Karnad's plays, the characters are based on the existentialism and they are unable to find out their identity in the external world. At the end of each play Girish Karnad as a socio-moral critic gives his opinion as the solution to the problem and there is poetic justice at the end. His thought differs from Eurocentric thought, in using of absurdity in the plays because, Karnad knows that Indians thoughts are deep in religion.

In Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, Indrajit as Meghanad Ravana's son is taken from Ramayan, who opposes the system and neglects follow to the rules, unable to find anything good. He comes to a point in his life that future makes the person to survive which is like dream. Death is the greatest happiness.

Vijay Tendulkar in Ghasiram *Kotwal* and *Kanyadhan* expose the myths of caste system in the one as he shows a Brahmin turning as the kotwal of the city and on the other one exposes the impossibility of casteless society. It is because the culture is based on ideals of the caste. Ideological clash takes place in regard to the caste.

Asif Currimbhoy's *Om* and the *Dumb Dancer* have mythical essence. In *Om*, Svetaketu is character from Chhandogya Upanishad representing for historical development of Hindu culture. In *Dumb Dancer*, mythical character, Bhima is taken from Mahabharat, who is facing a psychological problem.

Uma Parameshwaran's *Meera: A Dance Drama* and *Sita's Promise* are taken Mahabharat and Ramayan.

Chandrasekhar Kambar's *Jokumaraswamy* "is folk mythical ritualistic play fertility impotence and their implication extended to agriculture as well as the failure of revolution in India just as tenant and not the land lord is the real owner of the land .The potent servant Basanna happens to own sexually the wife of the impotent village chief"³. In his play *Siri Sampige* he mix up the narcissism myth and the thought of body and soul. In both plots, the characters Shivanaga and Avali and Javali are shown with dilemma of body and soul

Mohan Rakesh in his play *Half way House* depicts the condition modern life which has been fragmented. Savathri and Mahendranath stereotype characters in mythical manner. Savatri is the savior of her husband's life as per the myth. Over there she is not the savior of his life but turns out to be destroyer of her husband's life.

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Presence of Myth and Religion in *A River Sutra*

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India is a land of religion. To the Indian mind “Religion is the manifestation of divinity in man” (Complete works, Vol.4, 358). In this sacred land, everything is spiritual and all find expression in spirituality. Religion is the nation’s soul and plays a deep and influential role in the life of most of its people. It is believed that it strengthens man’s character. It is an inseparable facet in everybody’s life. Along with religion, the stories attached to it (mythological stories) play a significant role to teach morality and religious doctrines to the people. Indian mythology is one of the richest elements of Indian Culture, which enriches it further and makes it a unique one in the world. In this ancient cultural ground innumerable stories survived. Probably every village has its own legendary history as Raja Rao in his foreword to one of his novels said:

“There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich sthalapurana or legendary history of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village - Rama might have rested under this pipal tree, Sita might have dried her clothes, after her bath, on this yellow stone...” (*Kanthapura*: i).

One fine aspect of these stories is that they generate interest and stimulate faith in people towards religion. With this pertinent view, Gita Mehta brings in many religions in her novel, *A River Sutra*, interweaving mythology into it.

She introduces each character to explore different religious themes that are entrenched in India and weaves them all into a cohesive search for spiritual truth. The novel presents the complex medley that is multi-religious India. She handles major religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, the old tribal belief and their different practices. However, she entwines all these variations tactically by using common elements like the River and the Narrator.

Hinduism is omni-present in the book. She writes about many Hindu rituals like Narmada parikrama. It is a long journey of more than 2000 kms along the river and visiting temples across the river. It is considered to be a commendable performance that a pilgrim can undertake. The purpose of this parikrama is endurance. Through their endurance they hope to generate the combustion within an individual that links men to the energy of universe. The river Narmada is believed to link mankind to the energy of Lord Shiva, the omni-potent. The author spins every geological reality into a myth. The story of very existence of the Narmada is a myth. It is Indian psyche to believe beyond doubt anything associated with religion. Hence, the tale related to the birth of the Narmada is incorporated in one of its chapters. She illustrates that the river is born from Shiva’s perspiration. The destroyer of worlds sat in an ascetic trance for a long time on the peak of Amarakantak. The perspiration flowed from his body in such quantities that it became a river which cascaded down the hills. It then takes the form of a woman;

“the most dangerous of her kind: a beautiful virgin innocently tempting even ascetics to pursue her, inflaming their lust by appearing at one moment as a lightly dancing girl, at another as a romantic dreamer, and yet another as a seductress loose-limbed with the lassitude of desire. Her inventive variations so amused Shiva that he named her Narmada, the Delightful one, blessing her with the words ‘You shall be forever holy, forever inexhaustible’. Then he gave her in marriage to the ocean, Lord of rivers, most lustrous of all her suitors.” (ARS, 8-9)

The original source of the river is a small tank called Narmada kund. Even today, it is observed that the water in the tank will not get desiccated in any season.

Most famous Shiva temples are located around the river. Amarakantak, Maheswar, Mahadeo, Omkareswar are few examples. Lord Shiva is the presiding deity here. The ascetics imitated their God by their matted hair wound on top of their heads and their naked bodies smeared in ash and they chant: “Shiva-o-ham, Shiva-o-ham” (ARS, 5). Here every pebble stone is worshiped as Shiva lingam (a personified form of Shiva). These lingam shaped stones are called Banalingas or Banashivalingas. Another myth proposes that the river Ganges is polluted by millions of people bathing in it. To cleanse herself, Ganges attains the form of a black cow and comes to the Narmada to bathe in its holy waters because the river has such cleansing powers.

In this work she refers one of the most interesting mythological characters Kama, the god of Love. In fact, Kama means desire and his character is a personification of ‘Desire’. In one of the stories tribal women discussed that Kama sharpens his flowery arrows in spring season. That is a dangerous season even ‘it rouses old tigers from their rest’. (p.92). Kama has a sugar cane bow strung with honey bees. He was known as ‘Exciter of Madness’ (p.93). He raises temptation in the soul by striking with his arrow of flowers. No one can control the madness or enticement after this. Gods are not an exemption. Even once gods had warned Lord Shiva about it. They said that one must feel desire and, ‘without desire the play of the worlds would cease.’ (p.97). She touches the story of Shiva and Kama. Kama, with his sugarcane bow, tried to tempt the ascetic (Lord Shiva). He sent Maya, the illusion of the worlds, thought that the only woman capable of arousing the desire of the destroyer of the worlds. He enraged at the destruction of his meditation, opened his third eye and reduced Kama to ashes.

Gita Mehta associates Kama with the ancient Goddess, worshipped by the tribal inhabitants of India’s forests before the Aryan settlement. Tribal belief is an old tradition. It is older than classical Brahmanism. Hinduism is introduced by Aryans. Tribals belong to pre-Aryan period. They are descendants of this civilization. They worship the river as a manifestation of the goddess. They attribute super-natural powers to the river and believe Narmada to be sacred, capable of purifying sins by just looking at it. It has extraordinary powers to cure any kind of madness. It is just proved in the case of Nitin Bose. Bose is a young executive in Calcutta’s oldest tea company, who enjoys the high life of meaningless adulteries. He has no interest in all those Puranas and Vedas and Upanishads. Then he opts to become manager of a tea estate. In his long and solitary evenings, to his surprise, he finds himself enjoying his grand father’s old texts, the endless legends contained in the puranas. Later his loneliness is disturbed by the connection with the tribal girl, Rima. He is possessed by the woman. He feels her presence like half serpent on his bed:

“...her small teeth pierced my skin again and again like the sudden striking of a snake,...when she left my bed I was already asleep, dreaming I still held a creature half serpent in my arms,” (ARS, 125)

This description is just exactly like the symbol of the tribal deity. He is bewitched by the tribal woman at the night of eclipse. According to the tribal's inspection, the night of eclipse has full of ill omen. He becomes like a madman. The guards of the tea estate call the priest of the village. After a long observation, he chants some magic spells and finally advises him to worship the goddess at any shrine that overlooks the Narmada River. He declares that only Narmada River has been given the power to cure madness. Nitin performs a ritual there. His experience with Rima, while performing ritual for healing, helps him in making a mud image of goddess that he immerses in the river by chanting its salutation. For thousands of years tribals have worshipped desire as goddess. Now by making idol and worshipping it, Nitin respects both the power of desire and womanhood. When the idol begins to disintegrate in the current, he watches fragments of the image being swept down stream. With this, the binding of attachment of Rima's image gets fragmented like the idol and Nitin Bose regains the normal state of mind.

Mr. Chagla, the servant in the guest house rightly interprets the tribal way of understanding life. He elucidates why the tribal people worship desire. He feels, “without desire there is no life. Everything will stand still. In fact, be dead.” (ARS, 142) Their goddess is nothing but;

“just the principle of life. She is every illusion that is inspiring love. That is why she is greater than all the Gods combined. Call her what you will, but she is what a mother is feeling for a child. A man for a woman. A starving man for food. Human being for God.” (ARS, 142)

Another event is also offered, the war between Aryans and Pre-Aryans. Dr. Mitra, the doctor who attended on Nitin Bose, has his own contribution to the many legends about Narmada. He says that the war, between the primal belief of the tribals and Aryan reason, was fought on the banks of the river. He recalls the meaning of Narmada as ‘whore’ in Sanskrit. He is a scholar on the river. He explains that the war had taken place in that particular area centuries ago. But, ‘it is still unresolved here’ (p.153). He states that the war between Pre-Aryans and Aryans was a ‘classic conflict between instinct and reason.’ (p.154) The Pre-Aryans are not tribals at all. They had a great civilization long before Aryans came. They had huge cities and they called them ‘Nagaras’. It is expected that the Sanskrit term ‘Nagara’ (City) came from them. They worshipped ‘Naga’ (Snake) and they labeled themselves ‘Nagas’.

And he provides an evidence to justify this. He mentions the story of a man of pre-Aryan period, who is still living in the dense forest beside the Narmada. He is called Avatihuma. Tribal people around the river believe that a man who defeated their ancestors (an Aryan) is living in the forest. Even though their ancestors cut his head, it is still sleeping in the jungle, because he is blessed with immortality by his gods. Bandits are searching for that head; it is trusted that his head is covered with honey bees. If one of the bees stings any human then he will become immortal. All the bandits believe that their leader, Rahul Singh is struck by the bees and he conquers mortality. Proving the story is a myth; he is encountered by the police and died.

In ‘The Musicians story’, Gita Mehta renders the origin of music and art. She explains the divine source of music from Hindu mythology. She states:

“The six mighty ragas, the pillars of all music, were born from the expressions on Shiva’s, face and through their vibrations the universe was brought into existence.” (ARS, 205)

People believe that music and all the arts are Shiva’s gifts to mankind. Shiva’s love for His Goddess is the reason for the birth of music. The very shape of the veena immortalizes the beauty of His consort, Parvathi. Musicians believed that Lord Shiva after he made love to the Goddess all night rose from the bed, saw the beauty of the consort and created an instrument to immortalize his wife’s eternal beauty. So, the first instrument of music veena is born:

“the two globes that provide the veena’s resonance are the breasts of Parvathi.

The neck of the veena is her slender arm, the frets of the veena her lass bangles, and the music of the veena the expression of Shiva’s love.” (ARS, 196)

The novel depicts Indian cultural heritage and religious harmony through a magnificent set of short stories. She explains the practices of Jains at the time of their renunciation. The narrator meets a Jain Monk in the course of his journey. He states the meaning of Upanishad to the monk as “to sit beside and listen.” (p.13) He invites the monk to take a seat beside him and asks the reason for his renunciation, their shaving heads and wearing masks to cover the mouth and nose. The Jain monk replies that it is to avoid human vanity and the masks prevent them from killing some blameless insects by sudden inhalation. The monk shares his views on Jainism and says that non-violence is the most difficult path to follow among all the Jain principles. At the time of his renunciation, his father duplicates the procession with which Mahavira, the great teacher of the Jain faith, renounced the world.

Mahavira, a great prince found that all his wealth, power and beauty, gave him nothing more than worldly pleasures which are temporary. So, he decided and left his beautiful young wife by night to find the state of bliss. At the time of his renunciation elephants, horses, camels loaded with wealth was distributed to the poor. Since then, whenever a Jain becomes a monk, a procession and the distribution of charity to the poor, marks his departure from the world. His father spent sixty two million rupees for his renunciation ceremony. With all this description of his religious life the Monk departs from him.

Mehta’s portrait of Islam in the novel is captivating. She describes their faith excellently and in a way that everybody admires it. She introduces the character Tariq Mia, Imam at the local mosque. It is a Sufi Shrine. He leads the life of a truly spiritual man. Perfection is found in his actions, he comprehends life from its many angles. He understands that religion, as many of the Indian ancient teachers have expressed, is the experience of divinity. It teaches how to express love and merge with God. Mia leads religious life not in the sense of narrow dogma, but stressing spiritual values and practicing spiritual discipline. Beside the mosque, a marble platform leads to the sixteenth century tomb of the Sufi-poet and saint, Amir Rumi. Once in a year, the silent valley reverberates with the songs of Sufi singers from all over India. They congregate at Amir Rumi’s tomb to pay homage to their saint and poet on his death anniversary. From Mia, the Sufi poet Kabir’s name is introduced. He says, “the man whose poems made a bridge between your faith and mine,” (ARS, 46). His songs are the bridge between the Muslims and the Hindus. Mehta sings many divine songs by using the throat of little, blind singer, Imrat. All the songs, which are sung by the boy, are wonderful. They are pregnant with religious spirit and demonstrate the strength of his mind. His songs describe his composure and how a believer should be. They are truly spiritual and

are evidences for religious unity and integrity. The songs indicate the oneness of the humanity and the world. He sings:

“Some seek God in Mecca,
Some seek God in Benaras.
Each finds his own path and the focus of his worship.
Some worship Him in Mecca.
Some in Benaras.

But I center my worship on the eyebrow of my Beloved.” (ARS, 74)

Similarly, In ‘The Courtesan’s Story’ the author introduces a small state of Shahbag. It is famous throughout India for its culture then. The ruler of the state is a muslim Nawab. The Nawab of Shahbag praises and believes the power of the river and its holiness, though he is a muslim;

“Bathing in the waters of the Jamuna purifies a man in seven days, in the water of the Saraswati in three, in the waters of the Ganges in one, but the Narmada purifies with a single sight of her water. Salutation to thee, O Narmada.” (ARS, 163)

These words show the harmony even in the reign of several Muslim kings in India. Mehta presents good coherence and interdependence of religions. It is a great opportunity to the people here to share their knowledge and experience different shades of worship. For instance, if The Minstrel’s story is taken, Tariq Mia, a Muslim, learnt Shankaracharya’s poem, the invocation of the river from the Nagababa. Music teacher Master Mohan enjoys the songs of Sufi Quawwali singers. In spite of religious difference, he is ready to enjoy the taste of songs of the great Sufi mystics. Because of passion towards music, he attends to listen Quawwali singers. Mohammed-Sahib, who brings him there, explains the meaning of the songs. The above incidents from the text are a few examples of our convivial spirituality. In India, Hinduism is the oldest living spiritual tradition. The most unique feature of Hinduism is its ability to evolve and update itself to suite changing times and people. This has helped to sustain Hinduism for thousands of years through many different times. The tolerance of other people’s cultures, religions and views is one of the most beautiful aspects of Indian spirituality. Within the framework of this tolerant spirituality is a tremendous spiritual freedom that encourages and provokes Indians to think, learn, explore and look inside themselves for the meaning of life.

On the whole the setting of the novel, particularly the guest house where narrator resides, illustrates the hospitable blend of religious spots. It is located near the Narmada River, which is a holy pilgrimage site for the Hindus. The author describes a muslim village beyond the valley on the next range of hills behind the narrator’s bungalow. She depicts a row of ancient Jain caves in the valley. So, there is a regular stream of pilgrims of various religions passing through.

In the end, Mehta sketches a very interesting portrait of India and its uniqueness in being home to such philosophical concepts and the quest of its people for seeking the truth. Her master narrative implies that religion is not the source of meaning. Meaning must come from life, from our humanity. It is true that Indians are aware that the religion is not a dogma, just following the foot steps of their saints, but realizing their true self. Truth is one but paths to realize it are many and for this, there should be religious accord. All the prayers in the world are for God. Man calls him with his innumerable names and offers his prayers to his innumerable forms. Man created many religions but all the prayers are passed through his

belief to God. The world presents much diversity in the religious practices but the nature of man towards God is one. Indians know that instead of quarrelling with each other about which religion is the best, each one should try to practice respective religions in the best way possible.

The novel is not only an outstanding, accurate portrayal of the variegated cultural situation in India, it's also an appealing, well-written, compelling collection of short stories that stands on its own as a work of fiction. Though it is generally considered a novel, in terms of form, it is a series of interlocking short-stories. They are enclosed within a structure. There are six individual stories projecting 'Love' as their common theme and their common association with the narrator and the river.

Mehta studies Indian mind brilliantly and projects it vigilantly. She, with her luminous thought, creates an atmosphere which delivers the serene mix of religions around the Narmada. The book is rich in its cultural flavour and combines the river Narmada's myths and legends with human experience. The unique characters immersed in traditional Indian mythology create a colourful contrast between the modern and the ancient, the individual and the collective. The stories that are incorporated in the main story are incredible and they are able to add fuel to spiritual fire with in the reader. These fairy tales get stupendous success in making a spell around and generating interest among people towards religion.

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Pidgin: An Admixture of Different Elements

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Like dialects, standard language register, pidgin is also a variety of language. Pidgins have evolved due to political, social, and economic interactions among people. So it is interesting to study pidgins and its wider scope

Pidgin:

It is a language composed of or containing elements taken from different languages. So pidgin is made up of different elements taken from different languages. It is a kind of mixed or hybrid language. It a mixture of elements taken from different languages. It is used as a contact language.

A Pidgin is a language with no native speakers. It is no one's first language or mother tongue. But it is a contact language. It is the product of a multilingual situation. It has simplified grammar & vocabulary of that language.

i) Origin of the term Pidgin:

The term Pidgin is thought to be derived from the English word 'business.' It was developed in China as Pidgin English. It was also called as business English or Pidgin English.

ii) Use of Pidgin in the World:

There are a large number of Pidgins spread in the world. In Europe the migrant workers in Germany have developed Pidgin varieties based on local national language. Each Pidgin specifically constructed to suit the needs of its users. Nigerian Pidgin English is a kind of bad English imperfectly learned. Hence those who speak a Pidgin are likely to be regarded as deficient in some ways. They are thought to be deficient socially, culturally and even sometimes cognitively or intellectually weak.

Pidgins have their own special rules. Pidgins are even used for self government in countries like Papua New Guinea. They are highly functional or useful for the user and important for them.

Pidgins are used in some parts of South-west Asia. Chinese Pidgin is the combination of items from Chinese and English language. It is used for limited purpose of trade. It is a well known example of Pidgin.

iii) Pidginization:

Varieties of languages get mixed up with each other in different ways such as borrowing. Sometimes in getting mixed up they create a new variety out of two or more existing languages. This process is known as variety synthesis or mixture of different languages. The mixture of different language or variety synthesis takes place at different levels and in different forms. This variety synthesis or the process by which two or more languages give birth to a new language or variety is called as pidginization. The process by which a new language is created by mixture of two or more languages is called as pidginization.

Such Pidgin or Pidgins are used for practical purpose of communication between people where there is no common language.

iv) **Vocabulary of Pidgin:**

A pidgin is a simple form of language for the benefit of the users. It's vocabulary is based on the vocabulary of two or more languages. In former, European colonies a large number of Pidgins are based on the vocabularies of English, Dutch, French and Portuguese.

v) **Syntax & Phonology of Pidgin:**

The syntax and phonology of pidgin can be similar to the dominant languages from which the Pidgin develops. Hence the Pidgin is made easier for other communities to learn than the dominant languages.

vi) **Tok Pidgin:**

Pidgins are developed as trade languages. They are used for trade and administration. An example of such a Pidgin is Neo-Melanesian Pidgin or Tok Pidgin. This is an English based Pidgin used in New Guinea and various islands nearby. This Tok Pidgin was developed during the twentieth century. It was developed for communication between the English speaking administrators and the local population. The following sentences from Tok Pidgin or Pision give an idea of its relationship to English language. The words in brackets show the English source for the Tok Pision words e.g.

e.g. - "Sick he – down – im (him) me"

The meaning of sentence is – I am sick.

"Me like im sauce pan belong cook – im bread" –

The meaning of this sentence from Tok Pision is – I want a pan for cooking bread.

Like a number of other pisions, Tok Pidgin has developed very effectively. It has been accepted as the medium of communication in so many situations in New Guinea. Hence it has been now adopted as the standard language in New Guinea.

vii) **Characteristics of Pidgins:**

Some of the characteristics of pidgin can be stated as follows:

a) **Pidgin: - A variety of language**

Pidgin is a variety of language. It is used by a community of speakers who pass it on from one generation to the next. It has its own history. It has been suggested that many pidgins have a common origin in the Portuguese based Pidgins. Many Pidgins which have developed in Far East & West Africa during 16th century were under the influence of Portuguese sailors.

b) **Pidgin – Not a result of large scale borrowing:**

A pidgin is not simply the result of heavy borrowing from one variety into another e.g. an English based Pidgin is not a variety of English as it has borrowed a lot of syntactic constructions and phonological features from other languages also. It's syntax, phonology & morphology can be different from English or any other dominant language.

c) **Absence of native speakers:**

A pidgin has no native speakers because it is used only for communication between members of different communities where no ordinary variety is available as a link language or language of communication. So pidgin has no native speakers.

d) **Lack of Morphology:**

There is a lack of morphology in a pidgin. Differences in tenses, numbers, case etc. are indicated or shown by the addition of separate particles e.g prepositions, articles, adverbs, conjunctions, etc. Indeed one of the most characteristic features of pidgin is the lack of morphology.

Thus we find that pidgin is a variety of language which is developed from elements taken from different languages.

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The Criterion

Challenges Before The Indian Higher Education

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Introduction:

The core mission of Higher Education is to educate, to train, to undertake research and to provide service to community. In the context of globalization, the scope and demand for the higher education is increasing day by day. The new paradigms in higher education involve creation of intellects of world standard and also training of skilled human power at mass level without compromising on quality which has become the touchstone of higher education in 21st century.

Higher education plays a vital role in the overall development and growth of a country. It imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so as to expose the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life. It not only broadens the cerebral power of individual within a narrow specialization but also gives a wider perspective of the world around. It is only the higher education that provides qualified and trained human resources to keep pace with the fast changing world. While elementary and secondary education fulfills the needs of a common man, it is the higher education alone which takes a man ahead of others in this competitive world. Investing into higher education is highly rewarding in order to strengthen the society and the nation as a whole.

II CURRENT Scenario OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The vastness and variety of the system of higher education could be viewed from the fact that we have about 547 universities and about 26000 colleges dispensing education with about 5,21,843 teachers at different levels and types to nearly 23,76,718 students who represent diverse cultural and socio-economic layers and regions. There can be no doubt that higher education has made a significant contribution to economic development, social progress and political democracy in India.

The Government of India has been quite concerned to ensure progress in the growth of higher education as it is aware that a knowledge society can be built on the fabric of higher education only. A good number of Commissions and Committees were setup by the Government of India to study the major challenges / issues/concerns of the Indian higher education and suggest ways and means to overcome them. A number of reports were tabled to the government. Some of the significant reports include Radhakrishnan Commission Report (1949), Kothari Commission Report (1964-1966); National Policy on Education (1968); National Policy on Education (1986); Acharya Ramamurthy Committee Report (1990); Programme of Action (1992); Report to the Nation: National Knowledge Commission (2005); Report of the Committee on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher

Education' (2008) etc. These Commissions and Committees have deeply studied the issues, challenges and problems of the Indian higher education including the financial aspects also.

III MAJOR CHALLENGES BEFORE THE INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The major challenges before the Indian higher education can be stated as follows:

1 **Quality and Excellence:**

Quality of higher education has always been a major concern of the Government and UGC with massive institutional expansion of higher education during the last few years, the quality has been further compromised. UGC has devised a number of schemes to raise the standard of teaching and research in the universities and the colleges. Such Schemes like Universities with Potential for Excellence (UPE), Colleges with Potential for Excellence (CPE) Special Assistance Programme (SAP), Centre of Advanced Studies (CAS), etc have been trying to uplift the quality and excellence of higher education. Such more schemes are necessary to be devised for the enhancement in quality and excellence of higher education.

2 **Academic and Administrative Reforms**

During XI Plan UGC has taken a major initiative for academic and administrative Reforms in higher education. These Reforms were aimed at promotion of quality and excellence in teaching and research. To initiate such reforms UGC has given importance to – a) Introduction of semester system b) choice based credit system c) Revision of curriculum and e) examination reforms. The academic and administrative reforms is an ongoing process or exercise. Therefore it is utmost necessary that in the competitive world innovations in academic and administrative areas are very essential.

3 **Globalization of Higher Education**

Higher education is one of the most globalised activities. It is said that the cross- border higher education promotes the possibility for innovation in teaching and delivery methods and promotes greater mobility of students' programmers and providers. Informal globalization of Indian higher education has been going on for quite some time by way of students and teachers going abroad for higher studies, teaching, and research. Indian students have been going in large number to Universities in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. In the same way higher educational institutions from UK and USA have entered into maximum number of collaboration with Indian institute.

UGC is also implementing a scheme of Promotion of Indian Higher Educations Abroad (PIHE). India also attracts students from about 195 countries most of whom come from countries of Asia and Africa. Most of these students enroll in India to undergraduate courses. A number of measures are essential to give initiatives to globalization of Indian higher education

4 **Financial Constraints**

Adequate resources have always been a challenge before higher education. Only about 1.0 % of India's GDP is spent on higher education. It is lower than that of countries like United State of America (2.9%), United Kingdom (1.3%) and China (1.5%). A research study in this respect shows that about 75% of the maintenance expenditure goes on salaries and pensions

and 15% is utilized for the claims such as rents, electricity, telephone and examinations in Indian higher educational institutions. A number of Commissions and Committees have recommended and governments also have pledged from time to time that 6% GDP should be earmarked for education. However none has provided 6 % of GDP for education. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Central Government had taken a bold initiative and increased the allocation for higher education during XI plan to Rs. 46,449 crore from the meager expenditure of Rs,3,984 crore during x plan. Huge funds have flown into the system of higher education during the period of XI plan. But the State Governments have not risen to the occasion. Their allocation for higher education has not increased on the lines of Central Government. In most of the Universities and colleges vacant positions of the teachers are not yet filled up, buildings and infrastructure are poorly maintained and the maintenance grants have stagnated for a number of years. So various steps by the Central Government and state governments are essential to be taken to facilitate financial assistance to the institutes of higher education

5 Poor Standard of Primary and Secondary Education

Primary education is the foundation stone of any education system and secondary education is the back bone. All are well known about the miserable condition of Indian primary and secondary education. Till today both levels of education are unable to serve their purpose. Most of the children of primary and secondary school complete their schooling without undergoing adequate training. So when they go for higher education they face a lot of difficulties. If these stages of education are upto the mark in their performance then the poor performance of higher education is obvious.

6 Quality of Research

Teaching and research are interrelated and are integral parts of higher education. The qualities of teaching and research are the back bone of development of any nation. More research is one of the prominent indicators of quality of higher education. So imputes to research is essential in higher education.

7 Politicization of Higher Education

Politicization of Higher Education has become the main obstacle in the quality of higher education. Now a days, it has become a trend in the Indian higher education although the interference of politics in educational institutions is legally banned. Most of the political parties are influencing the higher educational institutions. Its seem to be one of the major challenges before Indian higher education.

8 Unplanned Growth of Institutions

The mushrooming of private educational institutions in the country stands testimony to the quality of taking a back seat in higher education. Engineering and medical colleges in the private sector have endangered the quality of higher education

9 Increasing Strength of Students

The dictum education for all is harming the quality of higher education because the strength of students in classes is increasing year after year and violating the given ratio of number of students in classes. It is certainly harming the quality of higher education

IV Conclusion

Thus we find a number of challenges in the Indian higher education. These challenges can be solved or minimized with the help of active initiatives of the Central Government and State Governments and also with the deliberations of intelligentsia in the country.

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The Criterion

Ibsen And Freud: A Study Of Hedda Gabler From A Psychoanalytical Perspective

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Introduction

One of the questions that still haunts us is whether Henrik Ibsen got wind of Sigmund Freud's study on psychoanalysis and put it into practice in his plays or whether Ibsen was the force behind Freud's study. However baffling the question is, one thing everyone agrees on is that both are masters in their own areas. Henrik Ibsen is hailed as the 'father of modern drama' while Freud is known as the 'father of psychoanalysis.' The intention of this paper is to examine Ibsen's female character, Hedda Gabler, from a Freudian psychoanalytical perspective. At the end of the paper, a plausible answer to the question of who influenced whom will be attempted. For this purpose, the paper is divided into five parts viz. Introduction, Hedda Gabler at the Time of its Publication, Models for Hedda Gabler, Hedda Gabler under Freudian Psychoanalytical Scanner, and Ibsen and Freud.

Hedda Gabler at the Time of its Publication

In *Hedda Gabler* (1890), Ibsen lays a great emphasis on individual psychology. It is a full-length portrayal of a woman character of the same name as the play. In the play, Hedda Gabler is depicted as a neurotic character and Ibsen shows his deep understanding of individual psychology, especially abnormal psychology. However, it is worthwhile to note that *Hedda Gabler* was not understood at the time of its publication. Ibsen's portrayal of this type of a neurotic character was met with the most vehement criticisms. The critics found Hedda Gabler to be a mysterious and incomprehensible female character. The critics outdid each other in condemning Hedda Gabler. Hans Heiberg said that the play 'was published simultaneously in English, German, French, Dutch and Russian and was received with almost total confusion all over the world' (257).

Even her Norwegian contemporaries received Hedda Gabler as a weird character. Her character traits were very unfamiliar to the people of that time. In this regard, Bredo Morgenstjerne remarked that 'we do not understand Hedda Gabler, nor believe in her. She is not related to anyone we know' (Nilsen 8). Another critic wrote in *Morgenbladet* that Hedda was 'a monster created by the author in the form of a woman who has no counterpart in the real world' (Nilsen 8). With special emphasis on *Hedda Gabler*, Alfred Sinding-Larsen denounced Ibsen saying that 'Ibsen's modern drama is the drama of abnormality. His main characters have nothing human about them save the flesh in which they are clothed' (Meyer 671).

Gunnar Heiberg was the only person in Norway who seemed to have a liking for the play. However, it seems that he did so just because he was a die-hard fan of Ibsen and not because he really understood Hedda Gabler. In this connection, Hans Heiberg said:

The only person in Norway, to defend it was that Ibsen admirer, Gunnar Heiberg, who maintained that she was neither unreal nor incomprehensible. But he did not

elaborate: he simply went on to jibe at all those who had written unfavourably about it. (257)

It was only when the science of human behaviour developed that people began to show more eagerness in the play. And people began to understand it. Now, *Hedda Gabler* has become one of the most performed of all Ibsen's plays. The play has also received favourable criticisms from many well-known literary figures. Randolph Goodman has remarked that '*Hedda Gabler* is Ibsen at the height of his creative powers' (25). Another well-known Ibsen scholar, Harold Clurman, also praised *Hedda Gabler* as 'certainly a masterpiece in its own right' (150).

Models for *Hedda Gabler*

Various critics have pointed out many models on which the character of Hedda is based on. Randolph Goodman, in his book, *From Script to Stage: Eight Modern Plays*, has shown that Hedda has been inspired by a character called Helena of August Strindberg's short story, *Corinna*. Goodman brings out the similarities between Helena and Hedda Gabler in these words:

Helena ... is the daughter of a general and is brought up to excel in horseback riding, gymnastics, and other masculine sports. She despises women, holds men in contempt, is revolted by sex, and, like Hedda, is afraid of the responsibilities of motherhood. Out of financial necessity she marries a college teacher, a weakling she looks down upon but helps him to acquire a professorial chair. Though she treats him disgracefully, he is madly in love with her. All these elements, of course, are fundamental to the plot of *Hedda Gabler*. (26)

Strindberg was so certain of his influence on Ibsen and he himself declared that 'my seed has fallen in Ibsen's brain-pan—and germinated' (Goodman 27). Certain others have claimed that Hedda was based on Emilie Bardach, Alberg and Victoria Benedictsson. However, Dr. Arne Duve, a Norwegian Psychologist, 'has persuasively argued that Hedda is a self-portrait, and that she represents Ibsen's own repressed and crippled emotional life' (Meyer 674).

However, Havard Nilsen argued only a few years back that the most likely model for Hedda is Lou Andreas-Salome. In his essay, *How Ibsen found his Hedda Gabler*, Nilsen shows the many resemblances between Hedda Gabler and Lou Salome:

Hedda Gabler is of the same age and appearance as Lou was when the play was published; like Lou, she is the daughter of a general. Her strong relationship to her father, the general, who is at the root of her own masculine independence, is accentuated, as Ibsen also explicitly indicates in a letter to a friend: 'The title of the play is *Hedda Gabler*. My intension in giving it this name was to indicate that Hedda as a personality is to be regarded rather as her father's daughter than as her husband's wife.' (17)

Nilsen continues:

To the surprise of her many admirers, Hedda has married a somewhat boring academic scholar, just as Lou in 1886 had surprised everyone by declaring her engagement to the 40-year old sinologist Friedrich Carl Andreas. ... Just as Lou would often find herself surrounded by two men rivaling for

her attention – Nietzsche and Ree; Andreas and Rilke; Freud and Adler – the play is centred on Hedda's similar relationships of rivalry. ... She [Hedda] is sexually attracted and repelled at the same time. This is similar to the enigmatic side of Lou's personality when Georg Brandes met her in the early 80s – she could speak of sexual matters with a shocking frankness, while in reality she was still a virgin and admitted no lovers. (18)

It is highly possible that not one but all the models suggested by various critics were instrumental in the creation of one of the most famous women characters of Ibsen.

***Hedda Gabler* under Freudian Psychoanalytical Scanner**

Hedda Gabler, the most prominent character in the play is 'today the best known of Ibsen's creations apart from Nora Helmer' (May 80). She is portrayed in the play more as a victim of her upbringing as a General's daughter rather than as a victim of the restrictions her society placed on women. The portrait of General Gabler that adorns the inner room, and which can be seen throughout the length of the play, has significant importance in the understanding of the character, Hedda Gabler. Ibsen himself intended Hedda Gabler to be portrayed in the play more as the General's daughter than as Tesman's wife. The General has imbibed in her a strict sense of discipline. Moreover, her father taught her all kinds of masculine acts like riding horses and firing pistols instead of preparing her for wifehood or motherhood. These masculine lessons transformed her to admire the attractive and often sexual pursuits which men enjoy. In the play, she is found playing with her father's pistols, a possible Freudian 'phallic symbol' which shows her latent wish to be a man. Thus, she wishes to shove away all feminine ways. But being a woman with a strict compliance to social conventions, she cannot become the sort of person she wishes to be. Thus, her unfulfilled desires are repressed and she keeps on yearning for things she can never attain. This psychological 'repression' ultimately makes Hedda Gabler a 'neurotic.'

With this mental unbalance, she grows up into a handsome young woman. However, none of the flirts surrounding her propose her for marriage. And as she becomes advanced in age, she starts to suffer from depression. Finally, when Tesman proposes, she accepts readily. However, she accepts Tesman's proposal on the basis that Tesman is almost sure of being appointed as a professor. Hedda, sees only the money that Tesman will get from such a lucrative post. In this regard, Havard Nilsen said:

It becomes obvious as the events unfold that she has not married her newlywed husband out of love, but out of a strange blend of convenience and desperation, possibly depression and loneliness. (16)

However, Tesman's expected post of professorship keeps eluding him. This means that Hedda could not get enough money to enjoy the kind of life she wants. Tesman keeps on rejecting her demands, which include among other things a man servant and a saddle horse, saying that they ought to be careful with their expenses till he gets the post of professorship. This makes her terribly dejected and she plays with her father's pistols. And, as she has not married for love, she could not find pleasure in her married life. Her life becomes more and more boring. Her personality keeps on deteriorating day by day.

However, Hedda, in spite of all her discontent, remains obsessed with the image of conventional woman, probably because of the strict compliance to social conventions her father instilled in her. Thus, she can only complain about her marriage but she does not have the courage to leave Tesman. Even before her marriage, she refused the advances of Lovborg, the man she had some sort of a relationship with. In this connection, it would be apt to state that she suffers from 'Oedipus complex' or rather 'Electra complex.' None of the flirts surrounding her, as also her husband, were as charismatic as her father. And thus, though she wants her sexual desires to be fulfilled, she could not as she was not attracted physically to any of them. In this play, Ibsen shows that Hedda's 'suppression' of her sexual desires affects her behaviour throughout the play so much so that she becomes a victim of 'sexual frigidity' (Clurman 162). Thus all her life, all that she wants is suppressed. Her utterly neurotic character is born out of this suppression.

It has already been noted that Hedda is a woman who is attracted by the freedom with which men enjoy. When she was a young girl, she used to force Lovborg to tell all his wild sexual adventures. Later on in the play, she even tells Brack that she would like to 'come along as an invisible onlooker' and watch the free kind of enjoyment the men will have in the party. She really wants to experience all these unfeminine pursuits. But being a sexually frigid woman who has gone down the feminine path of marriage, she keeps on suppressing her desires. To quote the words of Gail Finney:

The clash between Hedda's unfeminine inclinations and the steps she takes down the feminine path of marriage and, inevitably, pregnancy results in hysteria. (100)

Hedda's 'hysteria' is the reaction to her female roles to which she is unsuited. Hedda rejects marriage and pregnancy but it does not mean that she achieves the way of living she wants and thus she becomes very depressed. Her unwanted marriage and pregnancy is thus the major cause of her hysteria. It is seen in *A Doll's House* that Nora's hysteria finds release in the Tarantella dance. Likewise Hedda's hysteria finds release in the wild dance tune she plays on the piano.

Hedda's resentment of her father, who had prevented her from experiencing wanton and sexual pleasures by instilling in her a strict compliance to social conventions, is transferred onto everybody she meets. This resentment is directed towards others in the form of hatred, violence and destruction, which is a form of 'transference.' It is worthwhile to mention that 'transference,' according to Freud, is the redirection of feelings and desires retained from childhood towards a new object. Thus, the utter resentment she had for her father from childhood is redirected to everyone who comes onto her path. She hates all those who could achieve those desires she cannot attain. And in her hatred and subsequent jealousy, she tries to manipulate the lives of others to ruin them. The most glaring example of this is when she instigates Lovborg to go to the party. Her sinister influence is the result of her envy of Mrs. Elvsted when she sees her having control over Lovborg. Orley Holtan says in this regard that 'Hedda's jealousy is immediately aroused and her action is at least partly motivated by the desire to win Ejlert [Lovborg] away from her rival [Mrs. Elvsted]' (83). And when Lovborg finally comes back from the party frustrated over his lost manuscript, Hedda, instead of giving him his manuscript, encourages him to commit suicide. She even gifts him one of her father's pistols so that he may end his life beautifully. It is because of this destructive nature of Hedda that Harold Clurman said, 'the neurotic temperament, the frustrated, the physically or morally unsatisfied often see beauty in destruction' (164). Moreover, she

eventually burns Lovborg's manuscript out of her jealousy for Mrs. Elvsted. It is precisely for this reason that Auguste Ehrhard referred to her as 'the demon of destruction' (Mayerson 131). However, this cruel destructive side of Hedda was present in her right from her childhood. It is mentioned in the play that Hedda used to pull at Mrs. Elvsted's hair when they were in school. Hedda had even once threatened to burn it off.

Being a destroyer makes Hedda an unacceptable woman but she becomes all the more reprehensible to the audience for her reluctance to take responsibility of anything. Hedda's complete unwillingness to accept responsibility is one of the biggest aspects of her neurosis. Hedda is not in a right frame of mind as she thinks that she can marry but should not get pregnant. She bluntly rejects every reference Tesman unknowingly makes of her pregnancy. She even keeps on counting the months in dread of her approaching childbirth. And when Brack refers to her responsibility of having a child, she becomes furious as she resents all kinds of responsibilities and even pregnancy because she wants to enjoy life and 'shuns everything painful and ugly; she cannot tolerate the sight of sickness or death' (Clurman 164). Her burning of Lovborg's manuscript which she refers to as Mrs. Elvsted's child is the manifestation of her desire to kill her own child. It can be aptly said that Hedda is more dangerously neurotic than Nora because while Nora only leaves behind her children, Hedda vehemently avoids the very notion of childbirth and murders her unborn child by killing herself.

Thus, the play deals with the story of a woman who is torn with an inner conflict between her unfeminine cravings on the one hand and her journey along the feminine path of marriage and pregnancy on the other. She is portrayed as a woman who cannot find her own identity. And in her quest for identity, she ends up killing herself. In this regard, Randolph Goodman said that '*Hedda Gabler* (1890) has for its protagonist a neurotic woman who is unable to find her identity and destroys herself' (23).

Ibsen and Freud

Ibsen published *Hedda Gabler* in 1890 about ten years before any of Freud's works were published. This means that while Ibsen was writing *Hedda Gabler*, Freud was still, at most, at the initial stage of his study on psychoanalysis. Moreover, no critic has ever mentioned that Ibsen knew and conversed with Freud. Thus, there is no possibility that Ibsen learnt anything from Freud. On the other hand, the character analysis of *Hedda Gabler* shows that Ibsen was no fluke in the science of human behaviour but was well adept in it. Randolph Goodman stated in this regard:

It [*Hedda Gabler*] is a drama that depicts a type of neurotic personality that has become more universally recognized in our day than it was at the turn of the century. Long before the advent of Freud, Ibsen understood intuitively that there are internal pressures that drive people to commit inexplicable and wanton acts. (25)

The present study of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* throws many a light on some key aspects of psychoanalysis like Neurosis, Repression, Hysteria, Phallic symbols, Oedipus complex, Transference, etc. on which Freud was later to deal on. It is also a known fact that Freud admired Ibsen and used some characters from Ibsen's plays for his case studies. Especial mention can be made of Freud's study of Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm*. Moreover, Kate Taylor stated in an article published in *The New York Times* that Freud learnt Norwegian to study Ibsen's plays in the original language (www.nytimes.com/2009/01/04/theater/04taylor.html). Thus, this argument points to

only one direction: that Ibsen was definitely, in some ways, an influence to Freud in his study of Psychoanalysis.

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Exploring the Relationship between Man and Nature in Dhruba Hazarika's *Luck*

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Literature from North-East India is popular mostly in the representation of the various political problems and violence that are typical to the north-east situation. However, many contemporary writers are breaking free from the shackles of these stereotypical and over-represented issues and are bringing to light other remarkable features of the region. Dhruba Hazarika is one such writer who consciously moves away from the portrayal of the typical problems of the region and instead creates a deep impact in the minds of the readers by his representation of man's essential connection to the world of nature. His collection of short stories titled *Luck* portrays, as Ruskin Bond says, his "empathy with all creatures great and small" and is like a breath of fresh air in the body of North-East literature.

The focus of this paper is on Hazarika's portrayal of the complex relationship that man shares with the world of nature. Set amidst the backdrop of various places in the North-East, these stories present man's destructive nature, similar qualities that he shares with the animal world, and the solace that he ultimately receives in the unconditional company of other species.

Literature from North-East India abounds in tales of the troubled political climate, violence, backwardness, underdevelopment and poverty. The unique geographical positioning of the seven states and their equally different political, economic and social situations from the rest of the country, have resulted in the rise of a body of writing that is considered to be different from mainstream Indian English Literature. However, many contemporary writers of the North-Eastern states like, Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai and Harekrishna Deka, have expressed their discomfort with the terms 'North-East literature' and 'North-East writers' as they relate those with the colonial legacy. Senior Editor of *Zubaan*, Preeti Gill rightly states "To say that the Northeastern states are different from the rest of India in almost every way is to state the obvious, but it is important to recognise that these 'differences' have created rifts, giving rise to insurgencies, demands for secession from the Indian state and years of internal conflict and discontent. To the people of the Northeast their world is central to themselves; to 'mainland India' it is a borderland." (*Tehelka* 2009) There is a growing tendency among the writers of these states to break themselves free from the shackles of stereotypical writing. The strong political awareness, issues related to identity and ethnicity, violence in different forms, and above all the shadow of the gun are some of the common realities of North-East India which hardly any writer of that region can ignore in their works. Many writers of the modern day period, however, have shown a desire to move away from the over-stereotyped and typical 'North-East' issues and have brought to light other under-represented remarkable features of the region. It has been pointed out correctly: "It is tragic that the long-running unrest, violence and terrorism in the North-East has remained a mere digression in the mainstream of the Indian nation-state....The poems by Uddipana Goswami....stories by Mitra Phukan, Srutimala Duara and Aruni Kashyap, serve as a reminder that the "North-East" is not a geographical, political unit, but a place of many languages and cultures." (*Pratilipi* 2010) It is in this context that (re)viewing the works of many

writers of the North-East region becomes important to discover the rich legacy of the place, its people, their cultures and traditions.

Dhruba Hazarika is one such writer of today's time who focuses on issues which have remained under-represented but are close to the hearts of every man living in the North-East. Nature and its relationship to man has always remained one of the recurrent themes in the works of the North-East writers. The beautiful landscape of the region has time and again formed the most desired backdrop to the works of many North-East writers. Writers like Mitra Phukan, Easterine Iralu, Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Anjum Hasan, Jahnvi Baruah, Siddhartha Deb and many more have brought alive the traditions, cultures, and popular beliefs of the region by highlighting the all-encompassing presence of nature in the lives of the people of the North-East. Mamang Dai, like many North-East writers, gives much prominence to nature and holds it as a common link that binds all those in the otherwise heterogeneous entity of the North-East together on a common platform. She says, "...we also have the land...the whole geographical continuity...the forests, the mountains, it's all the Eastern Himalayas belt...the big rivers link us...with the landscape comes a common shared culture and a relationship to the land..." (*The Hindu* 2010) Hazarika in his collection of short stories titled *Luck* carries on Dai's feelings further and presents man's relationship with nature from the perspective of someone who is familiar to the natural world of the North-East region. In many of the stories included in *Luck*, Hazarika gives the background of common everyday problems of the region, but his focus is more on man in relation to the world of nature. Considered to be an elegant and moving collection of short stories, Hazarika's book is about unlikely encounters between human beings and animals. He presents an intangible, almost mystical connection between humans and the other species. The narratives present people with whom readers can identify as they are common representatives of today's world – self-absorbed people, caught up in day to day worldly matters. Hazarika presents the flickering moments when human beings amidst their daily hustle and bustle realize the deep relationship that they share with the other denizens of the natural world.

In almost all the stories included in *Luck*, Hazarika explores the comfort and soothing effect that man draws from the relationship he shares with nature. In a sense, these are all coming-of-age tales. The title story is about a solitary man learning a thing or two about patience and caring in the company of a pigeon. Man's loneliness in this vast world is brought to light in the narrator's urge to have pets right from his childhood days. But somehow, his house turned unlucky for the umpteen numbers of parrots, chicken, ducks, rabbits and dogs that they got. The pets either flew away or ran off and the narrator was led to feel that they were like "...guests who had been forced into being guests, or people who had strayed into camps that cut off their freedom, they stayed awhile, enlivening the compound, and then, when the spell came, they were gone and there was nothing you could do about it." (*Luck* 6) Even the roadside mongrel that he had tried to care for found peace only when they let him loose and allowed him to seek his own home, wherever it was. These repeated experiences makes the narrator to believe that their "...house was taboo for animals and birds" and maybe even "for humans, since no man or woman lasted very long, either." (*Luck* 6) Hazarika touches upon the issues of man's loneliness, urge for company and the feeling of incompleteness in this story. The narrator, a loner, seeks company in the form of a pigeon whom he calls Luck, as he believes that bird to have turned his destiny in the right direction. In Luck's "sparkle and confidence – his proud gait, the chest always thrust out, as he came to pick the gram from my hand; the way his eyes darted around without fear or suspicion; the graceful fall of his wings as he settled like an owl over the box for the night" (*Luck* 14-15), the narrator tries to draw comfort as he admires the bird for qualities

that he has always desired for. In the narrator's admiration for the pigeon, the reader gets reminded of the narrator in D.H. Lawrence's poem 'Snake' who is awestruck at the beauty and dignified appearance of the snake who comes to drink water from his water-trough: "...must I confess how I liked him,/ How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough/ And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,/ Into the burning bowels of this earth?" (Lawrence 1923) Luck, the pigeon, not only gives comfort to the narrator, he is also able to provide company, a feeling of completeness and above all, changes the nature of the narrator. In the company of the bird, the man does something which he had never done before – inviting his neighbour and his wife for lunch. His communication to his colleagues in the office, which had always been minimal, also changes for the better. The narrator is not only able to derive mental comfort, but is also in a position to learn important values of life through his association with the bird. As with the narrator in "Luck", the young, melancholy magistrate portrayed in "Chicken Fever" relates to the hens which he gave all his "time and attention....much as army men polish their shoes and iron their uniforms at sunrise." (*Luck* 34) Rattan Deb Barman is a man who is always awkward at home, with his newly wedded wife and is overly conscious of his shortcomings. The hens in the hen-coop that Barman has built himself, provides him with much solace to combat the emotional insecurities that trouble him. On a police raid, supposed to be risky, his mood is altered by the sight of a fat black hen in a haystack and this affects a crucial choice he makes in saving the life of a young girl. The hen, guarding her brood of chicks, takes away the fear from his mind. He regains hope and feels less afraid and desolate, and when time comes, is able to act immediately to save the girl. In the character of Rattan Deb Barman, Hazarika portrays man's essential bonding with fellow creatures. He not only saves the girl from the destructive eyes of his own people, but also "prayed the girl wouldn't move, would hold her breath and still her wildly beating heart" (*Luck* 54) as the policemen ransacked the huts. Even though probably laughed at by his subordinates at his eccentricities in saving the hen and her brood, Barman is finally able to feel proud for having done a good deed. Peaceful within himself, at last, he is able to understand his wife better and the story ends with the possibility of a better relationship between the husband and the wife. Hazarika in these narratives portrays people who are able to discover something familiar in other creatures while they discover something unfamiliar in themselves. This close bonding of man with nature leads to self-satisfaction and a rewarding experience for him in other facets of his life.

However, Hazarika does not portray only the positive aspect of man's relationship with nature. Man, in his selfish interests, does not care for the lives around him. "The Hunt" portrays man's destructive qualities as a party of four men kills an innocent, beautiful doe in the jungles of Karbi Anglong. Considered to be an illegal activity, they slit the animal open as they "couldn't carry the doe in one piece to Diphu. The guards at the checkpost at the 6th mile would nail you for less." (*Luck* 3) The doctor, who had shot the bullet and killed the doe, on slitting open the stomach of the dead animal, discovers to his dismay, three "tiny spindly-green, almost transparent bodies roll out of the mother's womb..." (*Luck* 3). The men start feeling uncomfortable at the sight, but the doctor is the bereaved of all as he relates that to the personal tragedy of losing his wife at childbirth just a year back. Many traditional beliefs of the people in the North-East regions are also portrayed by the author in the offerings made by the hunters to the forest gods and seeking forgiveness from the gods for having killed the doe. Temsula Ao represents similar beliefs while describing her grandmother who similar to many others of that region had "clung to the core of her native faith about the human soul turning into birds or insects..." (*Harmony Magazine* 2007) The doctor and the other hunters in Hazarika's story also

share similar beliefs about the essential oneness in the existence of man in relation to other living creatures. The author, however, moves a step beyond and shows the complexity in human psychology as presented in the character of the doctor. No doubt he laments the death of the doe and on discovering the unborn fawns in her womb is found “lying on top of the slain doe, holding her neck” (*Luck* 4) in his moment of profound grief, but nevertheless he is the one responsible for killing the innocent animal. Chief Seattle, the chief of the Suquamish Indians, allegedly wrote to the American Government in the 1800s regarding modern man’s tendency to destroy the natural world in his selfish interests. His letter stated that – “Your destiny is a mystery to us. What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered? The wild horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills is blotted with talking wires? Where will the thicket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! And what is to say goodbye to the swift pony and then hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival.” (*Prologue Magazine* 1985) True to what Chief Seattle had predicted, man does not hesitate to destroy the world of nature for his own selfish interests, and the doctor chooses to hunt innocent animals in order to forget his own personal grief. A similar picture is presented by Hazarika in “Ghostie”, where an unusual, ghostlike dog becomes a test of the limits of human cruelty, and perhaps, a catalyst to understand what growing up really means. Whereas in “The Hunt” Hazarika has portrayed adults indulging in cruelty towards innocent animals, in “Ghostie” it is young boys who derive fun and excitement by torturing a dog. It is also the coming-of-age story of the narrator, a ten-year-old boy, who has indulged in hurting the dog without any reasons, but undergoes a complete change towards the end. The narrator and his friends make it a point to torture the dog every now and then by “occasionally being cruel as only children can be.” (*Luck* 69) Their cruelties, however, knew no bounds, which ranged from hitting the dog, hurling balls, splashing hot water and at last to shoot bullets at the dog. Their aggressiveness and desire to hurt increased evermore as a result of the silent presence of the dog who never gave them the pleasure by reacting to their cruelties. This nature of the dog slowly gained him admiration from the boys who realized that ghostie with his “aloof and confident look, the shine of his coat, the broken ear, the undulating muscular body delineating what each of us hoped to be one day: tough both inside and outside. Though even as boys we knew he was everything that we would never be.” (*Luck* 76) Ghostie succumbs at last to the bullet shot at him by one of the boys and disappears forever but nevertheless, becomes instrumental in the changes in the narrator from being a callous boy to a more responsible human being. Hazarika seems to be really concerned with this irresponsible nature of young boys and explores it further in “Soul Egret”, a first-person narrative by a clerk whose troubled mind is soothed by a brief physical contact with an egret late one night. The egrets who live in the branches of the fig trees in front of the narrator’s room, offers him much solace in his lonely existence in the staff hostel, away from family and friends. The beautiful birds are however not free from the cruel eyes of the children who reside in nearby quarters. The narrator finds this cruelty most disturbing and often scolds the children. He becomes very vigilant when once on asking the children why they want to disturb the birds, “they grinned and mumbled something about the taste of birds’ flesh” (*Luck* 125) and thereafter, he starts protecting the egrets as though they were his possessions. However, he is not able to protect them for a long time and the egrets are eaten and sold off by the boys when the nest falls down after a storm. The narrator derives comfort as he is able to save one lone bird and puts it back on the branch of a neem tree. Hazarika presents man’s essential bonding with nature in the portrayal of the narrator’s drawing comfort in the company of the egret and consciously subduing his momentary urge to keep the bird captive. Hazarika’s

characters respond in different ways to the knowledge that they gain in the company of the other creatures. They might be humbled, or enlightened, or comforted but they do change for the better in their association with the creatures that they come across.

Hazarika's collection of stories do not merely portray man's positive relationship with other creatures and his destructive attitude, he goes a step further in exploring the world of man and nature – the inherent similar qualities shared by both. In "The Leopard" the author presents three boys in search of a missing cow, probably pregnant, who fleetingly come face to face with a predatory leopard. The boys are shocked at discovering the leopard coming "out of the cow's stomach, teeth bared in a defensive snarl, its sleek body caked in blood." (*Luck* 32) But more than the shock, it is the sense of justice which attracts the attention of the narrator when he gets to know the same leopard being killed by the villagers and the discovery of the two starving cubs beyond the mountains. As most of the stories in this collection are about the knowledge and experience gained by men in their association with the world of nature, the narrator here gets to understand the conflicts in the animal kingdom which are quite similar to our situation as well the concept of the survival of the fittest. In recounting his experiences with nature, the narrator grows wise by learning certain truths of man's existence in this world. Hazarika's portrayal of the negative qualities in the world of animals, similar to the world of man, is again portrayed in the story "Vultures". The narrator cannot identify the vultures feasting on the dead bodies as birds as for him birds were the "pigeons and sparrows and mynahs and parrots" which "lived on gram and green grass and the occasional earthworm. Birds were crows, despite their never-ending cawing, and birds were owls, eternal in their dignity and wisdom. I could not think of vultures as birds." (*Luck* 115) Hazarika probably includes a story on vultures to highlight similar characteristics in human beings. The way the author presents their physical description as "huge and ominous....black and grey and hunched, their necks old and crooked" (*Luck* 120) the reader can get a clear picture of similar characteristics in the world of human beings. Hazarika portrays these similar qualities in the world of human beings and the world of nature; positive aspects like motherhood as well as negative ones like destruction and the feral nature of both man and animals.

Hazarika, however, is at his best as a narrator in the slightly different stories titled "Asylum" and "The Gunrunner of Jorabat" which are unique in their tone and effect. "Asylum" is a nicely playful story about a vet-cum-psychiatrist who might be experiencing some very odd hallucinations. The author portrays a man with his animal-like qualities in the representation of the vet, Hargovind. Even though he nurtures a close bonding with the various animals in his possession – a cat, a dog, pigs, pigeons and hens – he does not hesitate to show his cruelty in turning a sane man mad and putting him in the asylum. He further carries on an illicit relationship with the man's wife and goes on injecting him periodically to keep him insane. The author portrays such inhuman qualities in men in various other characters in the stories in the book. "The Gunrunner of Jorabat" is the only story in which Hazarika makes no mention of animals and yet it is as powerful as the other stories in representing the distinctly animal-like qualities of men. Written in the informal, rustic voice of a partly drunken narrator, the story unfolds men who are worse than animals. These are men who derive pleasure in torturing others, molesting girls, and killing innocent lives. Hazarika's narration comes full circle with this story as he is ultimately able to create the maximum emotional impact on his readers with his poignant description of human nature and the everlasting bond which exists between man and the world of nature.

Dhruba Hazarika's *Luck* brings alive many remarkable features of the North-East, usually kept in the periphery and is able to prove wrong the "assumption that literature from North-East should capture the blood, violence and terror that ravages this part of India." (Kashyap) Hazarika's book, instead, captures the traditions, culture and beliefs, and lifestyle of the people in the North-East. He devotes much of his attention in portraying the loneliness of man, be it in the backdrop of the jungles of Karbi Anglong, the hills of Shillong, or the staff quarters in Tezpur - Hazarika's narrators share the feeling of being loners, and so seek solace in the company of other creatures. No doubt, the narratives abound in tales of people who are cruel and selfish to innocent creatures, but in most of the cases, realization dawns soon and they change for the better. Ultimately, *Luck* is a celebration of the bonding between man and the world of nature – a bonding which is essential from the perspective of every man's existence in this world.

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R. K. Narayan's Art of Characterization in the Novel *The Financial Expert*

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Novel is the most popular genre in English literature. One of the reasons for its popularity is its simple technique. Characterization is an important aspect of this technique. E.M. Forster (1927:36) refers to two types of characters 'flat and round'. Flat characters were called 'humorous' in the 17th century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality. In this connection E.M. Forster (1927:47-48) states: "One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in - recognized by the reader's emotional eye not by the visual eye which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name." We must admit that flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones and also that they are best when they are comic. The case of 'round' characters is just opposite to the 'flat'. It is not constructed round a single idea or quality. It shows many qualities and changes by circumstances. The round characters have big achievements in themselves. Marjorie Boulton (1975:121) concentrates on the life-likeness of character. The most enjoyable fictional characters seem very 'life-like'.

There are different types of traits used for the revelation of a character by the novelist, such as general, physical, personal and emotional. Techniques like conflict, action, self-discovery, motivated actions, contrasting characters, narration and confession help to make the character 'round' and three-dimensional. In the presentation of character, the novelist uses direct or dramatic method. Direct method works best for the 'flat' characters and dramatic method suits more to the 'round' characters. The novelist presents his characters at different levels as per his requirement. Thus, portraying a character is a complex process involving a lot of work on the part of the author.

Characters in R.K. Narayan's novels may be categorized as A) The Principal characters B) The Subordinate characters C) The Minor characters. In R. K. Narayan's novels usually the protagonist is the principal character; for instance, Mr. Srinivas (*Mr. Sampath*), Jagan (*The Vendor of Sweets*), Margayya (*The Financial Expert*) etc. The subordinate characters in the context of their relationship with the principal characters carry great importance; for instance, Ravi (*Mr. Sampath*), Mali (*The Vendor of Sweets*), Balu, Dr. pal (*The Financial Expert*) etc. Minor characters are portrayed as insignificant persons, useful only in the context of circumstantial details. But, they are not ignored. R. K. Narayan has created a marvellous portrait-gallery. His characters are realistic and lively. He has created several immortal characters. His most memorable characters like Mr. Sampath, Jagan, Margayya etc. are ordinary men & have high ambition for money, success, love & happiness. All the protagonists are individual but at the same time they have universal significance.

Margayya, the central character in the novel 'The Financial Expert' is very interesting character. His description in the beginning of the novel is very realistic and ridiculous. Margayya, a middle-aged money lender who carries his business under the shade of a banyan tree in front of the Central Cooperative Land Mortgage Bank in Magudi. Margayya is immeasurably obsessed by the power of money and he judges everything in terms of money. On being questioned by the priest, if he will propitiate the goddess of wealth or the goddess

of knowledge, he gives vent to his mind: "A man whom the goddess of wealth favours need not worry much. He can buy all the knowledge he requires. He can afford to buy all gifts that Goddess Saraswathi holds in her plam". (P 55) He becomes more and more interested in accumulating money. His real name is 'Krishna' but nobody knows his real name. The real name is covered with a dense mist and the new name has caught the attention of the people. He is Margayya or the path shower who shows the way to others to solve their financial problems. But, the irony of fate is this that his lack of cool judgment brings him to the low point where he had started his business of earning money.

Next to money, his problem is his son, Balu. In spite of numerous facilities, Balu fails twice in the matriculation exam. Balu hates exam. and likes to smoke a packet of cigarettes. Margayya, the great visionary finds it difficult to save Balu from getting spoilt. Margayya has a dream to make his son a doctor. But the citadel of his dream crumbles down. The 40 days' worship of goddess Lakshmi bears fruit and the small money-lender rises to unexpected heights of affluence. He has firm faith in the dignity of labour. He is always busy in his affairs. As a result, his rising star shines brilliantly in business. But, it is sheer irony of fate that the financial mountaineer who has a strong desire to reach the summit of Everest comes to the place from where he had started. His rise and fall has been vividly delineated in the novel. He shows the needy people the way out of the financial jungle but loses his own way in it. Margayya ends exactly from where he had started. He has the wisdom to return to the banyan tree with his tin box. When he meets Dr. Pal, he quickly ascends the ladder of fame and fortune. He exploits Dr. Pal to reach his target: But Dr. Pal, his benefactor, being insulted, turns into a monster and brings him ruin. As Harish Raizada (1969:116) observes: "The creation of Margayya, a tragic-comic and an ambitious financial expert is R. K. Narayan's special contribution to Indo- Anglian." Narayan portrays Margayya as an engaging character from the very beginning to the end. M. Mukherjee (1969:82) finds affinity between *Mr. Sampath* and *The Financial Expert*: "Margayya of *The Financial Expert* is nearly as fascinating as *Mr. Sampath*. He is the central character, 'The sad, ambitious and absurd financial expert'."

Margayya's companion Dr. Pal, a subordinate character, has been portrayed brilliantly. He is a man of thirty, his face still youthful, tall man with sunken cheeks. Margayya encounters him when he made a trip to the pond beyond Sarayu. Dr. Pal is busy in search of news and he devotes to writing books on sociology. He is a journalist and has done Ph.D in sociology. Living in poverty he is immensely interested in his job as a writer. He unhesitatingly shows Margayya the manuscript of his book entitled 'Bed life or the Science of Marital Happiness'. The book is based on sexology. According to Dr. Pal, this is a branch of sociology. His main purpose is to create happiness in the world and to prevent tragedies relating to ill-matched couples. He is Balu's constant companion. Balu and Dr. Pal gather in a house of a man who called himself a theatrical agent. They sat there continuously playing cards till midnight. They chewed tobacco and betel leaves. Within a few days, Margayya understands that Dr. Pal is the cause for the ruin of his son. When he was badly beaten up by Margayya, he recorded an immediate complaint with the police. He turns an enemy and he pushed margayya back to the positin from where he had started his business. Dr. Pal realizes his position quite late in the novel. He has rightly assessed: "I am an academic man, and I shouldn't have associated with businessman" (P.174). Thus, he proves to be a tremendous force in the novel.

Balu's character provides a very interesting study in the novel. He is an apple of Margayya's eyes, only child of Margayya. He has no interest in study. It is a matter of fact, Margayya wanted Balu to grow into a well-educated man, probably going for higher studies

to Europe or America. He had a dream about his son becoming a great govt. official or something of the kind. Margayya cherishes high hopes about his son, but his ardent ambition is never fulfilled. He thinks that Balu will not read in a corporation school but he will read in the convent with the sons of the District Collector or the Superintendent of Police. But, irony is that Balu can't pass even his S. S. L. C. exam. and remains undereducated and idle throughout his life. Balu has picked up a new habit of smoking. He spoils himself. He deserts home but with the timely help of a police officer, Balu is located in Madras. His discovery makes Margayya happy. After marriage he is allowed to live separately with his wife, Brinda in Lawley Extension. Here, Dr. Pal enters his life and Balu forgets all responsibilities towards his wife and the little baby. Here, Margayya's cherished dreams about Balu are scattered. As Graham Greene (1973: vii) remarks : "Margayya's son Balu whose progress from charming childhood to spoilt frustrated manhood is perhaps the saddest episode Narayan has written."

After considering the principal and subordinate characters of this novel, it is necessary to throw some light on minor/small characters who adorn its structure and produce effect. Narayan's minor characters are also interesting. They are the natives of Malgudi. Narayan shows the suffering of middle class wives with his deep insight. Their role is very silent. Margayya's wife, Meenakshi endures everything patiently. She speaks very little. As wife, Meenakshi is always anxious for the welfare of her husband. When Margayya works interminably on account of banking business, the wife is worried over his thin appearance. The other important woman in the novel is Brinda, Balu's wife. She is a daughter of a wealthy father who owns tea-estates. She is a submissive wife. But, she doesn't hide her husband's character from Margayya. Meenakshi & Brinda are the embodiment of Indian womanhood.

Besides Meenakshi & Brinda we meet male characters. Arul Doss, the head peon of the Co-operative Bank, is an old christian. He is connected with the office of the Secretary of the Co-operative Bank. The Secretary is no ordinary person. Margayya feels insulted when the Secretary calls him through a peon. He stopped Margayya's illegal business activities. Madan Lal is the proprietor of Gordon printery and printer of 'Domestic Harmony'. He doesn't hesitate to advertise his business. The Temple Priest is a wise & well-versed in ancient studies. He always gives advice to Margayya in all important matters. He emphasizes the importance of puja in life. The Police-Inspector is sympathetic by nature who rendered timely help to Margayya. He is firm in his duty. He is an ideal officer fully devoted to his Job. The Madman in Park Town who is in the habit of picking up addresses and writing messages is also an interesting character. He is a rich fellow, gone mad. He also owns a theatre which is managed by his relations. Sastri is Margayya's accountant. He is very punctual & sincere. He was paid rupees fifty a month. He was in the habit of making unwanted comments but helpful to his boss in settling the marriage of his spoilt son, Balu. Guru Raj is a dealer in blankets & becomes the first client of Dr. Pal, the tout in Margayya's banking business. He is the owner of the house in which Margayya's office functions. Kanda, Mallanna were villagers. Margayya's brother was his real rival. Mr. Nathaniel and Mr. Murti are the two teachers of the Town Elementary School. Mr. Nathaniel is a mild christian. Mr. Murti is English and Arithmetic teacher who functioned as Balu's tutor at home.

The characterization of The Financial Expert (Margayya) makes the novel a work of art, wherein the writer has shown the value of money for modern life. R.K. Narayan's characters are typically Malgudian, rooted in the age-old local traditions and they extremely belong to Malgudi in every sense. Through Margayya, Narayan has represented the dishonest money lenders and crafty people of the society. Here, we find Narayan's deeper view of social realism.

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The Criterion

Heard and Unheard Voice in Human Discourse

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The paper is a study of art that can shape, contain, reproduce feeling and sensitivity in such a way others can share it. The excellence of art includes media, patterns of speaking, repetition, recollection, the pattern of images which contributes to an effort to convey meaning. Tongue, eye, feet, hands, hips are all equally engaged in and equally necessary to the machinery of memory – a gift through which, in language and thought, art achieves the union of past and future and makes one realize the power of talking tongues and speaking gestures in performance. It seeks to implant a new strength in the sentiment of freedom by placing it in the heart of our need.

This paper will consider a voice as a character in its own right, may belong to a character on stage or outside, may refer to a silent voice or exist as a personification in its own right. Voices have been taken from here and there to examine the performative voice in relation to the spoken and written discourse because human communication begins with the primary orality- the ability to speak with others.

The endeavour is also to provide a forum for the unheard voices, the feel that there is an outlet where they can be heard. All performances are communicative and my concern in this paper is to address some:

What tongue does my gesture speak?

I invite a gestural response in finding an answer to this question. When you listen to me, it is like, what I am talking about? When you listen you don't just listen to the tongue, you listen to the content, intent, the heart and the mind i.e, the spoken and the unspoken and understand it. This language is performative in the sense that it is seeking a voice to repeat it – 'listen to me', 'you listen', 'listen to the'. Articulation speaks and gives the listener a fair opportunity to gain access to the code. Thus in this paper you not only find a voice, heard and unheard but also a reference to the gestural implications, as this is where the performative voice originates.

This paper points a metaphor which must be voiced. It summons memory to relive the experience, to perform a gestural replay. In order to recognize an event as a historical one, it is necessary to relate that event to some present perception that situates it in the context of having already occurred. Virginia Woolf rightly said that nothing has really happened until it has been described. The descriptive devices bring to the mind for the audience a constellation of personal and traditional connections and recollections:

"Fog everywhere. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners... for cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck ... with fog all around them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging the misty clouds (Dickens, 1853)."

There is a specific type of descriptive evocation, which provides the audience a familiarity of form, to connect to a specific time and place and to be drawn into performance. The Bleak House is a metaphor of the divided modern consciousness. The "fog" refers to the court of chancery as corrupt, life destroying. Here law has little to do with justice. The metaphor of location currently echoes through a number of contemporary social, political and academic discourses. From the infinite number of past happenings, the

trillions and trillions of events occurring daily, only articulation in words, i.e, spoken or written human commentary can create what we call historical. Without human utterance, whether on paper or oral, the past is silent and chaotic. The past does not speak; it must be evoked. No picture, no sign, no image, no object speaks for itself; it must be commented upon and interpreted to become historical.

In this paper theology is also voiced and bodied forth in the speaker's drama as lived experience. There is the realization of theological truth through voice, body and display in the moment of utterance. It is both a doing and showing. This is to sustain and develop an emphasis on the role of imagination and creative expression plays in the proclamation of faith. The participation of the body in gestural forms in the ritual of speech and dialogue is depicted in terms of performance.

We archive our lives through spoken language, through the use of the written word, the oral narration and through the creation and preservation of sound and image, creating reproductions of ourselves and our lived experiences. In doing so, we add our own subjective experiences to the greater collective that is human experience. The archived life gains transmission through recollection; we must therefore have a means of performing recollection. Our experiences are not solely our own as we share events with those in our community. Conversational discourse is characterized by linguistic, paralinguistic and kinesic involvement strategies, designed to create interaction and integration between speaker and listener. Linguistic involvement strategies, such as repetition, constructed dialogue, and representational imagery, are common to oral and literary story telling. Whenever a ghost story is told around a campfire, whenever a lullaby is sung, whenever a riddle, tongue twister, rhyme, or knock-knock joke shared, or fables and proverbs told, orality lives in performance. A description of remembering for personal conversational narrative is sketched in terms of cognitive narrative.

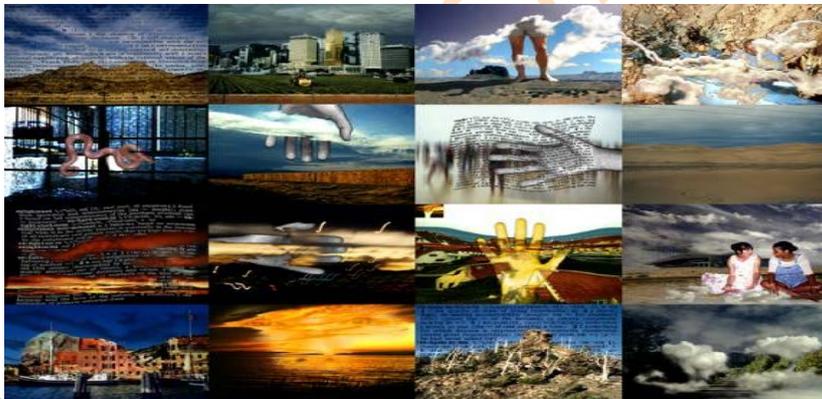


Fig 1. Archived life: explorations of memory and narrative

An unheard voice shares some characteristics with the identity of a real voice. It is not to be confused with the spoken words; it has a tone of its own. We don't hear the real voice until by art we have found a means of giving voice it. By placing voices, the artist evokes the audience thereby participating in the artist's picture of the word. The voices are conscripted by the artist so that they might re-enact the enduring qualities which so captures the artist's intimacy. Orality and found signs are not only indicative of the contours of the social environment, but also the plenum in which our identities are shaped, understood and articulated.

Fig.2 Articulated hand gestures by artist Derek Besant

What is the gesture of a building? Five articulated hand gestures point out towards the street from the wall, spelling the word DREAM in sign language. Dreams, too, are constituted of memories. A dream is a resurrection of the past, although it is a past that we sometimes fail to recognize, since it may have to do with a remembrance which had apparently disappeared, but in reality lay concealed in depths of memory. The gestures in the figure can be read from both traffic directions and form a hand gesture language metaphor. The sculpture suggests an implied activity echoing the exchanges among people along the street. The already lost voice through performance, through the sign language, through the articulated hand gestures, opens art to the common stuff of daily life, providing a stage on which the voices of history may interact. Oral history mediated by memory and shaped by performance offers a multiplicity of voices able to bear witness to events. History is by its very nature performative. Because we cannot be there to witness historical events in their states of original actuality, we must rely on what are essentially performative recreations of these events.

The paper discusses the crucial ways that make gesture communicative. It attempts to suggest, quite metaphorically, a certain grammar or aesthetic of gesture. In medieval civilization signs of the cross were gestures of faith; joined hands, raised hands, hands outstretched in a cross were gestures of prayer. In many performance cultures, visual signs communicate the creation of legal relationships. In early medieval Welsh, English, French, and Spanish law, a hand clasp indicated the making of a contract. But what meaning does history have in a cultural context if it cannot be recalled in some form into the present consciousness of the observer? The significance of past if it is to be remembered must be performed. This can be codified and held in common- as ritual, theatre, media; quotidian. Perhaps most importantly, we collect and preserve stories and artifacts as reminders, telling and retelling them, booking them into museums, galleries and archives that are both cultural and private.

Through repetition we hear the echoes of oral performance. During trials, law is recalled. Performance gives law a here that makes the rules of distant legislature near and a now which makes past precedents present. The here and the now of performed law command attention and respect while rendering law accessible to human understanding. In other words voices make the law. The case record exists in the aural memories of those present. In this context, legal performance transforms the ordinary into the identifying these connections between law and performance. It is the re-enactment of conventional words,

gestures and other behaviours which establish order as much through their rearticulating. As we perform we are also historical.

Gesture falls under the umbrella of performance and forms the discourse structure characteristic of explanations. We live in a world of close contact acted out through various means of communication and interrelated sharing of moments. Gesture can be considered a performed symbol, a sign that communicates some meaning. Communication fluency frees the hand and the tongue. It can be said that its meaning rests entirely on social convention and acceptance. When we speak, the words we use are inherited from the vast reserves of time and cultural interplay. Oral culture are interactive. Interactivity is what creates them. When talking stops the culture vanishes. Let us observe the difference between the gestures of Italians and the gestures of US. The Italian gesture meaning “come here” is the same movement that in the US means “go away”. The knowledge of cultural framework in which the gesture is acted is necessary to understand the meaning behind this performance. Gestures bear metaphoric relations to the things they represent. Let us take the statement as an example: “We have grown apart” while separating two hands. Here gestures speak more than the talking tongue.



Fig.3 Come here



Fig.4 We have grown apart

Orality is a forever, moving element and expands through the merging with modernity. We look for scholars for chronological accounts, to the media for cultural analysis, to performers and artists for interpretive regenerations. It provides with many standpoints, such as a base to merge ancient stories, myths, and performances with modern ideas, networked hypermedia. And also promises to restore the dialogic features of orality. Blogs, Web 2.0 sites and wikis all rely strongly on community to both discuss and contribute content. Networked multimedia is not only a shared collective memory, but is also a kind of collective dream. Meaning and narrative is always changing with the context. Rather I would say the nature of human communication itself is changing, to where content is mutually negotiated through mediated system. Negotiations with images, sounds, codes shift perceptively. A complex process of association, linking and connecting sense information is always active. It updates the relationships, which are constantly being changed. Identities are redefined in the light of changing art worlds- thus they stand to gain , not loose, status from the influence of these new constantly evolving art forms. We can say that the place of gesture has expanded with interactive digital media.

I really believe that the purpose of art is to serve the community and to tell people's stories that we wouldn't hear. Korean Yohangza takes on Elizabethan theatre. Yohangza is a south Korean Multiaward- winning physical theater company (best production at 15 Cario International Festival of Experimental Theatre for Karma in Sept.2003).We are going through the recycling bin. A Midsummer Night's Dream- a multilingual performance is

narrated in a foreign tongue using the modes of gestures, movements and facial expressions with a mix of energetic dance and music. It refers to as making Shakespeare “our contemporary”. Its performances have struck a chord with audiences, both Korean and international. Their plays take the audience through the passage of life that every human being experiences - birth, growing up, marriage and death. Yohangza’s work presents an exciting collision of the past and the present; a reworking of existing Korean styles and themes infused with contemporary elements.

Gesture is analyzed as embodied communication act. Kutiyattam (a mode of Sanskrit theater from Kerala) is a remarkable example of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. Kutiyattam, which means ‘combined acting’, endows great significance to facial expressions, and the face with its delicately-wrought eye, cheek, brow and lip movements and the elasticity of facial muscles. The power of communication through the eyes is so refined, pervasive and wide-ranging that it can portray any situation, thought or activity. It reflects the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity.

Fig.5 Kutiyattam - Kapila nangiari in a sublime pose during a performance at JITM, Parlakhemund



The performance is built on the mimesis of communication. This paper deals with a specific type of performance energies that stem from body, performance, identity techniques that I would apostrophize as realist. Our body acts as an application filter between “what’s there” and “what’s perceived as being there”. For Proust, the experience comes up spontaneously to repeat itself in the present. In T.S Eliot’s “Four Quartets” we find a parallel sense to this experience. We can hear through memory the unheard music of the early days, which through present holds them alive. There is a glad note that reality has after all been grasped.

“Quick now, here, now always”

“The unheard music hidden in the Shrubbery

And unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses

Had the look of flowers that are looked at”. (Eliot, BN)

It can be said that the tree is already to be heard when it falls in the forest, but it does not actually make a sound unless the body is there to perceive that sound and embody it. Sound is

a subjective interaction with matter. All that sound is, is vibrations through a medium. Sound doesn’t exist, since no conscious being was there to interpret those sounds. May be there is a there there, but the real there is here!

I end this performance – with a literal call to action.

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The Criterion

Lacanian concepts – Their Relevance to Literary Analysis and Interpretation: A Post Structural Reading

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Introduction

For understanding the major Lacanian concepts such as the development of the infant, the function of ego, the treatment of unconscious and other related issues and their relevance to literary analysis and interpretation, it is essential to note that his greatest contribution to literary studies is the way he reinterpreted Sigmund Freud and reformulated Freudian theories so as to make them compatible for literary studies. The credit of establishing Psychoanalysis as a distinctive field of study, as is well known, ultimately goes to Freud, the real originator of Psychoanalysis, whose study of psyche is primarily based on the principle of causality and determinism (Homer 2005:4). M.A.R. Habib rightly points out:

Freud opens up a number of literary critical avenues: the linking of a creative work to an in-depth study of an author's psychology, using a vastly altered conception of human subjectivity; the tracing in art of primal psychological tendencies and conflicts; and the understanding of art and literature as integrally recurring human obsessions, fear, and anxieties (Habib 2008:89).

While accepting the tenets of nineteenth century science with its metaphors of mechanism and impersonal forces, Freud developed a language for his newly established science with the objective of interpreting man and society. His reading of the unconscious shows that it is primarily the storehouse of instinctual desires, needs, childhood wishes, unsolved conflicts, painful experiences and emotions, fears and memories. He says that once anything enters mental life, it never perishes. He even shows that unconscious comes into existence when we are very young through repression, expunging from consciousness unhappy psychological events. In fact, the concept of the 'unconscious' formulated by him and later modified by Lacan made it the most vital and debatable subject matter of psychoanalysis.

Prior to Freud, the working of the mind was taken mostly as a conscious phenomenon but Freud devised the typographical divisions of the mind into the conscious, the unconscious and the preconscious. Later, he named them as the *id* (forming the reservoir of libido or psychic energy), the *ego* (representing conscious life) and the *superego* (functioning as the voice of conscience and censorship). Freud stated:

That the ego represents the organized part of the psyche in contrast to the unorganized elements of the unconscious (the *id*) and argues: the *ego* is that part of the *id* that has been modified by direct influence of the external world.... The *ego* represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the *id*, which contains the passions (see Donald E. Hall. *Subjectivity*: 61)

In this sense, the ego is related to consciousness but is also in constant tension with the demands of the unconscious and the imperatives of the superego. The function of the ego, therefore, is defensive insofar as it mediates between the unconscious (the id) and the demands of external reality (the superego). The truth of this conceptualization, as Lacan comments in “Aggressivity and Psychoanalysis”, is evident in infantile transitivity: that phenomenon wherein one infant hit by another proclaims: ‘I hit him!’, and vice-versa (Freud 1966)

Similarly, while describing his theory of the psychological development of the infant, Freud discusses the three stages in infants — *the oral*, *the anal*, and *the phallic* — arguing that it is the Oedipus and Castration complex that end polymorphous perversity and create “adult” beings. Against this, Lacan creates different categories to explain a similar trajectory from “infant” to “adult.” He formulates three newly devised concepts – *need*, *demand*, and *desire* – which roughly correspond to the three phases of development or three fields in which humans develop or grow: *the Imaginary*, *the Symbolic*, and *the Real*.

It must be, however, pointed out that Lacan reinterpreted Freud in the light of Structuralist and Post Structuralist theories and thus changed psychoanalysis from an essentially humanist philosophy or theory to a Post Structuralist one. One of the basic premises of humanism was the notion of a stable self with free will and self-determination that Freud’s notion of the *unconscious* questioned and destabilized. By bringing the contents of the *unconscious* into consciousness, he could minimize repression and neurosis. Freud’s goal was to strengthen the ego, the “I” self, the conscious or rational identity, so it would be more powerful than the *unconscious*.

Main Argument

In his approach, Lacan broadened undoubtedly the scope of *Unconscious* saying that *the unconscious* is always at work and the being of everything. The distinctive feature of Lacanian theory, however, is its emphasis on language and his contention that the Unconscious is structured like a Language, an assertion that needs to be viewed in the broader perspective according to which the *unconscious* comes into existence only with the individual’s access to or entry into language. In other words, a child learns its mother tongue from its sense of how the world is and how it experiences its biological body. The unconscious is also structured like a language in another way: the operations of the unconscious resemble two very common processes of language: Metaphor and Metonymy, an opposition of two figures first discussed by linguist Roman Jakobson (Vice 1996:116). Lacan suggests that the *unconscious* works in the same way that language does, ‘along the two axes of Metaphor and Metonymy which generate the signified’. Metaphor works by linking two concepts to each other and Metonymy works by association or closeness rather than likeness, particularly through synecdoche, in which a part is taken to stand for the whole. In terms of how the unconscious works, its metaphoric structure involves moving from one signifier to another found with it; metonymically, it slides from one to another that is similar. According to Tyson:

Both metaphor and metonymy involve an absence, a kind of loss or lack: they're both stand-ins for something being pushed aside, so to speak (Tyson 2006:10).

Lacan bases his concept on Freud's account of the two main mechanisms — condensation and displacement — which are essentially linguistic phenomena, where meaning is either condensed (in metaphor) or displaced (in metonymy). Metaphor, according to Lacan, is akin to the unconscious process called condensation (both processes bring dissimilar things together) and metonymy is akin to the unconscious process of displacement (both processes substitute a person or object for another). He believes that Freud's theories and concepts such as dream analysis and most of his analysis of the unconscious symbolism depend on word play, puns, associations which are chiefly verbal. Accordingly the contents of the unconscious are invariably acutely aware of language, particularly of the structure of language. While saying so, Lacan seems to have modified the ideas and concepts of Ferdinand de Saussure who talked about the relations between signifier and signified that form a sign. Following Saussure, Lacan insisted that the structure of language is the negative relation among signs. While focusing on relations between signifiers, he argues that the elements in the unconscious — wishes, desires, and images — form signifier and these signifiers form a *signifying chain*: one signifier has meaning only because it is not some other signifier. Like other Post-structural theoreticians, he stated that there are no signifieds; there is nothing that a signifier ultimately refers to. If there were, then the meaning of any particular signifier would be relatively stable: there would be, in Saussure's terms, a relation of signification between signifier and signified, and that relation would create or guarantee some kind of meaning. Lacan believes that the relations of signification don't exist rather; there are only the negative relations, relations of value, where one signifies what it is because it is not something else. Because of this lack of signifieds, he says, the chain of signifiers (See, Lacan's *Seminar XI*) is constantly sliding and shifting and circulating. There is no anchor, nothing that ultimately gives meaning or stability to the whole system.

The reader is often reminded of Jacques Derrida according to whom meaning is only the mental *trace* left behind by the play of signifiers, and that trace consists of the differences by which we define a word. Hence, meaning resides in words (or in things) only when we distinguish their *difference* from other words (or things). It is clear that Derrida believes in Language having two important features: one, its play of signifiers continually defers, postpones, meaning and the other the meaning it seems to have is the result of the differences by which we distinguish one signifier from another (Tyson, Lois 2006: 253). Michel Foucault says that no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex dynamics of social power because there is a dynamic, unstable, interplay among discourses as they are invariably in flux, overlapping and competing with one another every moment.

It is also important to note that Freud's psychoanalysis focuses on the author and or the characters in the literary work, Lacan following the structuralist and post-structuralist approaches focuses on the language of the text. In his *Ecrits*, Lacan, while reinterpreting Freud in the light of structuralist and post structuralist theories of discourse, challenges some of the traditional and orthodox interpretation of his main tenets and doctrines. Orthodox

Freudian doctrine views the unconscious as chaotic, primordial, instinctual, and pre-verbal while as Lacan believes that the *Unconscious* is like a continually circulating chain or multiple chains of signifiers, with no anchor, or to use Derrida's terms, no *centre*. He argues that the process of becoming "self" is the process of trying to fix, to stabilize, and to stop the chain of signifiers so that the stable meaning – including the meaning of "I" – becomes possible. According to Lacan the signifying chain has a life of its own which cannot be securely anchored to a world of things because there is a perpetual sliding and slipperiness of the signified 'under the signifier'. Accordingly, he argues, meaning is sustained by anything other than reference to another meaning.

Lacan even effectively reformulates in linguistic terms Freud's account of the Oedipus complex. Freud had posited that the infant's desire for its mother is prohibited by the father who threatens the infant with castration. Faced with this threat, the infant represses his desire, thereby opening up the dimension of the unconscious, which is for Lacan not a "place" but a relation to the social world of law, morality religion and conscience. According to Freud, the child internalizes through the father's commands the appropriate standards of socially acceptable thought and behaviour.

Like Freud, Lacan's infant initiates as something inseparable from its mother: that is, the child, having no sense of 'self' or 'individuated identity', is not conscious of its body as a coherent unified whole and can hardly differentiate between *self* and *other*, between itself and mother. In other words, the most crucial factor for the baby is feeding which mother gratifies and it feels as though it and she are only one entity or individual. At this stage, therefore, the baby is driven by *Need* — it needs food, comfort, safety, to be changed, etc. All these needs are satisfiable by an object because it gets a breast or a bottle when it feels hunger and gets hugged when it needs safety.

After passing through the phase of needs, the child normally switches over to the phase of demands where it has to separate itself from its mother in order to form its own identity: a pre-requisite for entry into civilization and culture. In other words, when the child feels the discrepancy between its inner needs and the outer satisfaction of those needs, it learns that our own world is not the whole world. It finds that it is not autonomous but there is an outside something, an 'Other' who feeds it or more generally, on whom it is dependent.

Keeping these things in view, it becomes obvious that the demands of the baby are not satisfiable with objects because a demand is always a demand for recognition or love from another. This awareness of separation, or the fact of otherness, creates an anxiety, a sense of loss. The baby then demands a reunion, a return to that original sense of fullness and non- separation that it had earlier. However, all this seems to be impossible because once the baby 'knows' and its knowledge shifts from an unconscious level to a higher awareness level it comes to realize that the idea of an "Other" exists. Hence, demand is the demand for the fullness and the completeness which is impossible, because that lack, or absence, the sense of "otherness", is the condition for the baby to become or emerge as an independent self or subject. This is where Lacan's *Mirror Stage* exists.

Lacan's *désir* follows Freud's concept of *Wunsch* and it is central to Lacanian theories because the aim of the talking cure — psychoanalysis — is

precisely to lead the analysand to uncover the truth about their desire, though this is only possible if that desire is articulated or spoken. Lacan says that desire is named in the presence of the other. He believes that the subject should come to recognize and to name his/her desire because that is the efficacious action of analysis. But it is not a question of recognizing something which would be entirely given. In naming it, the subject creates, brings forth, a new presence in the world. Therefore, what is important is to teach the subject to name, to articulate, to bring desire into existence.

Although the truth about desire is somehow present in discourse, discourse can never articulate the whole truth about desire: whenever discourse attempts to articulate desire, there is always a leftover, a surplus. On the basis of this fundamental understanding, Lacan maintained throughout his career that desire is the desire of the Other.

Lacanian theory, as analysed above, does not deny that infants are always born into the world with basic biological needs that require constant or periodic satisfaction. Lacan's stress, however, is that, from a very early age, the child's attempts to satisfy these needs become caught up in the dialectics of its exchanges with others. Because its sense of self is only ever garnered from identifying with the images of these others, Lacan argues that it demonstrably belongs to humans to desire- directly- as or through another or others.

The Mirror Stage

It remains "one of the most frequently anthologized and referenced of Lacan's texts" and is concerned with the formation of the ego through the identification with an image of the self. It describes the formation of the *Ego* via the process of objectification: the *Ego* being the result of feeling dissention between one's perceived visual appearance and one's perceived emotional reality. The moment of identification is to Lacan a moment of jubilation since it leads to an imaginary sense of mastery, yet the jubilation may also be accompanied by a depressive reaction, when the infant compares his own precarious sense of mastery with the omnipotence of the mother. This identification also involves the ideal ego which functions as a promise of future wholeness sustaining the Ego in anticipation. For Lacan, this 'jubilation' is a testimony to how, in the recognition of its mirror- image, the child is having its first anticipation of itself as a unified and separate individual. Before this time, Lacan contends, the child is little more than a 'body in bits and pieces', unable to clearly separate 'I' and 'Other', and wholly dependant for its survival upon its first nurturers. The implications of this observation on the mirror stage, in Lacan's reckoning, are far-reaching.

It is an established fact that an individual's attempt to speak and think in the second or third person is a permanent possibility of adult human experience. What is decisive in these phenomena, according to Lacan, is that the ego is at base an object: an artificial projection of subjective unity modelled on the visual images of objects and others that the individual confronts in the world. Identification with the ego, Lacan maintains, is what underlies the unavoidable component of aggressivity in human behaviour especially evident amongst infants, and which Freud recognized in his *Three Essays on Sexuality* when he stressed the primordial ambivalence of children towards their love objects.

In complete opposition to any Jungian or romantic conceptions, Lacan described the unconscious as a kind of discourse: the discourse of the Other. Presenting the three interrelated concerns — the child's castration as a decisive point in its becoming a speaking subject; the 'interpretive paradigm' in Freud's texts; and the efficacy of psychoanalytic interpretation as the 'magical' power of the word — Lacan allocated language a great importance in psychoanalytical criticism. According to him, it is only after the child accedes to castration and the Law-of-the-father that it becomes fully competent as a language-speaker within its given social collective order.

From the above assertions, we can deduce the conclusion that, like the later Wittgenstein, Lacan's position is that to learn a language is to learn a set of rules or laws for the use and combination of words. This is virtually a phenomenological concept of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, according to which human consciousness is not the passive recognition that brings the child great pleasure: a subject is to experience the world as a meaningful totality and language is crucial to this capability.

Lacan's innovation in "The Mirror Stage" was to combine the phenomenological distinction between subject and ego with a psychological understanding of the role of images and the constructed nature of the self through the philosophical category of the dialectic. Dialectical thought, as conceived by Hegel, foregrounds the contradictory nature of all things, as all phenomena can be said to contain their opposite; their own notion. Out of this relationship or unity of opposites something new will emerge in an endless process of transformation. It was Hegel's great insight, contends Lacan, to reveal how 'each human being is in the being of the other' (Miller 1988:72).

The mirror image is also known in psychoanalytic terminology as an "ideal ego," a perfect whole 'self' that has no insufficiency. Once this "ideal ego" becomes internalized, we build our sense of "self," our "Identity, by misidentifying ourselves with this ideal ego. By doing this, we imagine a self that has no lack, no notion of absence or incompleteness. The fiction of the stable, whole, unified self that we see in the mirror becomes a compensation for having lost the original oneness with the mother's body.

In short, according to Lacan, we lose our unity with the mother's body once we enter into culture because the child's self-concept, its ego or "Identity" will never match up to its own being. The child's image in the mirror is both smaller and more stable than the child, and is always "other". The child, for the rest of its life, will misrecognize its self as "Other", as the image in the mirror that provides an illusion of self and of master. The mirror stage cements a self or other dichotomy, where the child projects its ideas of self or Other dichotomy, where previously the child had known only "Other," but not "self." For Lacan, the identification of "self" is always in terms of Other.

Lacan uses the term "Other" in a number of ways, which make it even harder to grasp. First, and perhaps the easiest, is in the sense where "other" is the "not-me", but becomes "me" in the mirror stage. Lacan also uses an idea of Other, with a capital "O", to distinguish between the concept of the other and actual others. The image the child sees in the mirror is an Other, and it gives the child the idea of other as a structural possibility, one which makes possible the structural possibility of "I" or self. In other words, the child encounters actual others: its own image, other people and understand the idea

of “Otherness,” things that are not itself. Lacan refers to this loss of object of desire as *objet petit a*, or object small *a* with the letter *a* standing for *autre*, the French word for other. The little other is the other who is not really other, but a reflection and projection of the *Ego*. He is both the counterpart or the other people in whom the subject perceives a visual likeness (*semblable*), and the specular image or the reflection of one’s body in the mirror. In this way the little other is entirely inscribed in The Imaginary order. The big Other designates a radical alterity, an otherness transcending the illusory otherness of the Imaginary because it cannot be assimilated through identification. Lacan equates this radical alterity with language and the law: the big Other is inscribed in The Symbolic order, being Symbolic insofar as it is particularized for each subject. We can speak of the Other as a subject in a secondary sense, only when a subject may occupy this position and thereby embody the Other for another subject. When he argues that speech originates not in the *Ego* nor in the subject, but in the Other, Lacan stresses that speech and language are beyond one’s conscious control; they come from another place, outside consciousness, and then ‘the unconscious is the discourse of the Other’. When conceiving the Other as a place, Lacan refers to Freud’s concept of physical locality, in which the unconscious is described as “the other scene”. It is the mother who first occupies the position of the big Other for the child, it is she who receives the child’s primitive cries and retroactively sanctions them as a particular message.

A study of the Lacanian mirror stage reveals that this stage marks the child’s first recognition or understanding of lack or absence and its search for the moment of the distinction between *self* and *other*. It also provides the grounds for the ego ideal, the image of the ego, derived from others, which the ego strives to achieve or live up to. Besides, the mirror stage initiates the child into the two-person structure of imaginary identifications, orienting it forever towards identification with dependence on images and representations for its own forms or outline. As Lacan rewrites this process, the child passes through the three orders or states of human mental disposition: the imaginary order, the symbolic order, and the real (Habib 2008:91).

The Imaginary Order

The imaginary order is a pre-oedipal phase where an infant is yet to distinguish itself from its mother’s body or to recognize the lines of demarcation between itself and the objects in the world; indeed, it does not yet know itself as a coherent entity or self. Hence, as elaborated by Habib:

The imaginary phase is one of unity (between the child and its), as well as of immediate possession (of mother and objects), a condition of reassuring of plenitude, a world consisting wholly of images (hence “imaginary”) that is not fragmented or mediated by difference, by categories, in a word, by language and signs (Habib 2008:91).

During this period, the child acquires language, and experiences a change that, for Lacan, is of paramount importance because the child’s acquisition of language means a number of important things, including its initiation into the symbolic order; for language is first and foremost a symbolic system of signification. Our entrance into the symbolic order involves the experience of separation from others, and the biggest separation is the separation from the intimate union we experienced with our mother during our

immersions in the imaginary order. For Lacan, this separation constitutes our most important experience of loss, and it is one that will haunt us all our lives.

A study of the Lacanian concept of the *Imaginary* indicates that this stage is equated to the child's first entry into the social life where it gradually understands its difference from mother which turns out to be the base of its own individual identity, an identity which is fundamentally alienated. The symbolic, marked by the concept of desire, represents adulthood or the structure of language or the discourse of law that we have to enter into in order to become speaking subject or normal subjects of the society.

Language is empty because it is an endless process of difference and absence: instead of being able to possess anything in its fullness, the child simply moves from one to another, along a linguistic chain which is potentially infinite. One signifier implies another and that another, and so on *ad infinitum*: the 'metaphorical' world of the mirror has yielded ground to the metonymic chain of signifiers, meanings, or signifieds which will be produced; but no object or person can ever be fully 'present' in this chain. This endless movement from one signifier to another is what Lacan means by *desire*. All desire springs from lack, which it strives continually to fill. Human language works by such lack: the absence of the real objects designated by signs point to the fact that words have meaning only by virtue of the absence and exclusion of others. To enter language, then, is to become a prey to desire: language, Lacan remarks, is 'what hollows being into desire'.

The Symbolic

Tyson very rightly points out that "in entering the Symbolic Order—the world of language— we're entering a world of loss and lack"(Tyson 2006:30). It is not therefore surprising then, that according to Lacan the Symbolic Order marks the replacement of the mother with the Name-of-the-Father. For it is through language that we are socially programmed, that we learn the rules and prohibitions of our society, and those rules and prohibitions were and still are authored by the Father, that is, by men in authority past and present"(Tyson 2006:31).

Tyson adds further:

Our desires, beliefs, biases, and so forth are constructed for us as a result of our immersion in the Symbolic Order, especially as that immersion is carried out by our parents and influenced by their own responses to the Symbolic Order. This is what Lacan means by his claim that "desire is always the desire of the other" (See, Seminar Bk. XI: 235).

However, we desire what we are taught to desire. In other words, the Symbolic Order consists of society's ideologies: its beliefs, values, and biases; its system of government, laws, educational practices, religious tenets, and the like. And it is our responses to our society's ideologies that make us what / who we are. That is what Lacan means when he capitalizes the word Other while discussing the symbolic order. Other refers to anything that contributes to the creation of our subjectivity, or what we commonly refer to as our "selfhood". The Symbolic Order dominates human culture and social order, for to remain solely in the Imaginary Order is to render one incapable of functioning in the society.

The symbolic order, or the world known through language, ushers in the world of lack. Hence, the Symbolic order, as a result of the experience of

lack, marks the split into conscious and unconscious mind. It is repression that first creates the unconscious. Indeed, Lacan's famous statement that "the unconscious is structured like a language"(Miller 1992: 12) implies among other things, "the way in which unconscious desire is always seeking our lost object of desire, the fantasy mother of our preverbal experience, just as language is always seeking ways to put into words the world of objects we inhabit as adults that didn't need words when we felt as preverbal infants, one with them"(Tyson 2006:30). It is only in the absence of a desired object that language becomes necessary, and through the use of language that a self comes into existence. The form of that existence is both desiring and linguistic.

The Symbolic and the Imaginary are overlapping, as there is no clear marker *or* division between the two. In fact, in some respects they always coexist because the Symbolic order is the structure of language itself and we have to enter into it in order to emerge as speaking subjects, and to designate ourselves by "I." The foundation for having a self lies in the Imaginary projection of the self onto the specular image; the other in the mirror and having a self is expressed in saying "I," which can only occur within the Symbolic. The Imaginary is structured by the Symbolic order: in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan argues how the visual field is structured by symbolic laws. Thus, the Imaginary involves a linguistic dimension. If the signifier is the foundation of the Symbolic, the signified and signification are part of the Imaginary order. Language has Symbolic and Imaginary connotations; in its Imaginary aspect, language is itself the "wall of language" which inverts and distorts the discourse of the Other. On the other hand, the Imaginary is rooted in the subject's relationship with its own body (the image of the body). In *Fetishism: the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real*, Lacan argues that in the sexual plane the Imaginary appears as sexual display and courtship love. He accuses major psychoanalytic schools of reducing the practice of psychoanalysis to the Imaginary order by making identification with the analyst the objective of analysis. He proposes the use of the Symbolic as the way to dislodge the disabling fixations of the Imaginary: the analyst transforms the images into words.

In his *Seminar IV*, "La relation d'objet", Lacan asserts that the concepts of Law and Structure are unthinkable without language: thus the Symbolic is a linguistic dimension. Yet, he does not simply equate this order with language since language involves the Imaginary and the Real as well. The dimension proper of language in the Symbolic is that of the signifier, that is a dimension in which elements have no positive existence but which are constituted by virtue of their mutual differences. The Symbolic is also the field of radical alterity, that is the Other: the unconscious is the discourse of this Other. Besides, it is the realm of the Law which regulates desire in the Oedipus complex.

Lacan even questions Saussure's assumption (Lodge with Wood 2007) that there is nothing problematic about the bond between the signified and the signifier in the verbal sign by pointing out that the two signifiers, 'Ladies' and 'Gentlemen' may refer to the same signified (a WC), or be interpreted in a certain context as apparently contradictory place names. In short, language, the signifying chain, has a life of its own which cannot be securely anchored to a world of things. 'There is a perpetual sliding of the signified 'under the

signifier'. No meaning is sustained by anything other than reference to another meaning'. Such dicta were to have major repercussions on the theory and practice of interpretation.

The Real Order

Lacan traces the origin of the Real in Aristotle's '*Tuche*' which means 'search for cause'. According to Lacan the 'real' is a state in which an individual is free from all desires and demands as he /she is hardly affected by the worldly attractions. In other words, this phase is a liberalized state which can't be confined to any linguistic domain, as it is pre-linguistic. It is a place beyond language, and hence *unrepresentable* in language. The Real entiated elements, signifiers, the Real in itself is undifferentiated, it bears no fissure. The Symbolic introduces "a cut in the real", in the process of signification: "it is the world of words that creates the world of things— things originally confused in the "here and now" of the all in the process of coming into being.

Thus, the Real is that which is outside language, resisting symbolization absolutely. In *Seminar XI*, Lacan defines the Real as "the impossible" because it is impossible to imagine and impossible to integrate into the Symbolic, being impossibly attainable. It is this resistance to symbolization that lends the Real its traumatic quality.

The Lacanian concept of the 'Real' is certainly a difficult concept and as such beyond the comprehension of meaning of an average reader because it lies almost outside the world created by ideologies, which our societies generally use in order to explain 'existence'. According to Tyson:

One way to think of the Real is as that which is beyond all meaning — making systems that which lie outside the world created by the ideologies society uses to explain existence (Tyson 2006:32).

It is the uninterpretable dimension of existence; an existence without the filters and buffers of our signifying or meaning-making systems. It is the experience of an individual, may be even only for a moment, to feel that there is no purpose or meaning in life; and religions as well as other rules that govern society are hoaxes or mistakes or the mere results of chance.

In other words, it is a realization that 'ideology' is not a set of timeless values or eternal truths but only a curtain that is embroidered and makes everything bleak. The 'existence' behind the curtain is the Real, but it is beyond the competence of every individual to see or experience the truth of reality which Lacan calls the *trauma of the Real*. According to him, it gives us only the realization that the reality, hidden beneath the ideologies society has created, is beyond our capacity to control:

The trauma of the Real gives us only the realization that the reality hidden beneath the ideologies society has created is a reality beyond our capacity to know and explain and therefore certainly beyond our capacity to control (Tyson 2006:32).

For Lacan, the real is impossible: that which occurs beyond the entire framework of signification. The real is a sign of its own absence, pointing to itself as merely signifier. Not only opposed to the Imaginary, the Real is also located outside the Symbolic. Unlike the latter which is constituted in terms of oppositions, i.e. presence/absence, "there is no absence in the Real." Whereas the Symbolic opposition presence/absence implies the possibility that something may be missing from the Symbolic, "the Real is always in its place".

The Lacanian concept of the Mirror Phase, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real imply that an individual's sense of individuation can in no way develop merely due to one's 'inner wealth' or 'innate potential'. The mirror phase marks the point at which this comforting imaginary condition breaks down, pushing the child into the symbolic order, which is the world of predefined social roles and gender differences, the world of subjects and objects, the world of language. This is why Lacan calls it the phase of demand and *the mirror stage* or the realm of the Imaginary. For Lacan, it is a condition in which: we lack any defined centre of identity. Lacan believes that ego or self or identity is always on some level a Fantasy, identification with an external image, and not an internal sense of separate whole identity. In fact, the image the child sees in the mirror is in this sense an alienated one: the child misrecognizes itself in it and finds in the image a pleasing unity which does not actually experience in its own body. Hence, the imaginary for Lacan, is precisely this realm of images in which we make identifications but in the very act of doing so we are led to misperceive and misrecognise ourselves. As the child grows up, it continues to make such imaginary identifications with objects, and this is how its ego is built up.

For Lacan, the ego is just the narcissistic process whereby we bolster up a fictive sense of unitary selfhood by finding something in the world with which we can identify 'self'. Lacan's theory teaches that our ability to gain definite access to the essence of things is possible only through language. Being humans, we are trapped within the universe of discourse, and it is impossible to conceive or articulate or express whatever is outside without articulating it within the discursive field in one of its forms like desire. It is now evident that meaning is constantly shifting despite the fact that language always carries meaning; it is incapable of fixating it. As human beings, it is always our desire to articulate our demands in a well-formed language but our desires never get materialized because of the slippery nature of language which makes us persistently conscious of our 'lack' or 'failure' to communicate. We continuously search for this lost-impossible real but the search ends in failure because our attempts prove meaningless, futile for neutralizing this lack. In this way, Lacanian theory is but another version of social constructionism.

According to Lois Tyson (Tyson 2006:33) the most reliable way to interpret a literary work through a Lacanian lens is to explore the ways in which the text might be structured by some of the Lacanian concepts and see what this exploration can reveal. Such an exploration shall focus on the following: (i.) Do any characters, events, or episodes in the narrative seem to embody the Imaginary Order, in which case they would involve some kind of private and either fantasy or delusional world? (ii.) What parts of the text seem formed by the Symbolic Order? That is, where do we see ideology and social norms in control of characters' behaviour and narrative events? & (iii.) Does any part of the text seem to operate as a representative of the Real, of that dimension of existence that remains so terrifyingly beyond our ability to comprehend it that our impulse is to flee it, to repress and deny it?

Taking a clue from Lois Tyson, one can think of analyzing & interpreting the major literary artifacts from 'Lacanian Perspective' in order to search for newer meanings or explore modern dimensions which have so far otherwise remained unexplored or untouched in the literary artifacts.

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The Criterion

Gifted Women: Identity and Expression

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This paper endeavors to present many images projected of the female since ages. The image as temptress, the waif, the matriarchal aggressor, earth mother, etc., but now that Sue, Gloria, Betty, and Germaine have become a common name or we can say, "household names", now that we have learned to express our outrage and define our hang-ups, are we any closer to having security and identity?—A very genuine question to be answered.

For generations women have been demanding a positive answer to the question presented. Infact Dorothy Sayers in her 1938 lecture, "Are Women Human?" has focused on the matter of concern and said, 'Both women and men have grappled with the struggle of women to be acknowledged as completely human as men.' Sigmund Freud wrote approximately twenty-six volumes trying to identify the problems of humanity. There are helpful analyses in his works, yet no identity emerges from all this effort.

"If you have any doubts that we live in a society controlled by men, try reading down the index of contributors to a volume of quotations, looking for women's names."— Elaine Gill.

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, written in 1879, Helmer says, "Before everything else you're a wife and a mother." Nora replies, "I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before everything else I am a human being just as much as you are. At any rate I shall try to become one." Then, leaving behind a baffled, confused, and perhaps chastened man, Nora pursues her search for identity. I second on the thought of Helmer. How readily we who are women identify with her frustration, but the drama ends as the question is posed. We are left without answers, without definitions, because in a self-focused context there are none. It is therefore with both compassion and misgivings that we trace the futility of her pursuit.

The purpose for our human existence has, appropriately, been assigned by creative fiat. God has chosen women, as well as men, to be the bearers of his image, vessels in whom his own life is resident, life that transcends death and brings grandeur to every dimension of our humanity, as we live for the praise of our Maker. This is the factor that determines whether we will use or abuse our sexuality.

Our case for identity rests on the fact of God as Creator, and the reason he created. Our concept of God governs our sense of identity and self worth and our identification with every other person. The crux of our humanity is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind." Our Lord was quoting the Old Testament commandment in which the Hebrew word for love contains a sexual connotation. A love relationship with God is necessary to the completeness (wholeness) of our humanity. The sexual connotation not

only points to this truth, but also reveals the completeness and intimacy of the believer's relationship with the Lord God. God is concerned with our entire being. He created and defined every function of our humanity.

So, are women human? The question should never have to be raised! The incontrovertible proof is the biblical account of creation. Do women have equal value with men? The answer will be evident and affirming if we receive the biblical mandate for who we are and why we are here. We cannot think of the world without women. On the other hand, the question has no definitive answer when we detach ourselves from God's purpose for our mutual humanity, and rely upon a non-biblical assessment of our value/identity.

Much attention has been given to this identity crisis. Both women and men have grappled with our struggle to be equally human. Dorothy Sayers wrote an interesting little book entitled *Are Women Human?* A man named Freud wrote about 26 volumes trying to identify the problems of humanity. There are many intelligent definitions in his works, but no identity emerges from all these efforts and it is a matter of concern..

When women attempt to redefine their roles and expand their arena of choices, their perceptions and actions generate reverberations through the entire society necessitating a re-ordering of not only gender roles and arrangements but also of the social and political order affecting the culture and the collectivity and its self-definition and identity. Thus history's oldest oppression and cleavage is shaken at its very roots.

Women's education, employment, and family roles and the interrelations between them have attracted increasing attention during the last few years. Feminists have disbanded long held notions about 'women's place' and the accepted myths about their nature and function (Goldstien 1972). Over the last few decades there has been a tremendous change in laws, attitudes, and norms affecting women's status, roles and the development in society in India. As a result of which women have ventured beyond the traditional role of wife and mother, and have sought employment and careers outside the home, and have actively participated in the economic and social development of the nation. (Liddle & Joshi, 1986).

There is a need of restructuring and reorientation of women's roles in contemporary society. Rapid social changes in women's career and family roles are accompanied by a significant transition in their attitude towards career and family. Research in the last decade highlighted the complex relationships between a woman's objective roles and her subjective attitudes regarding these roles, which affect her overall life satisfaction and sense of identity in society (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997).

It would strengthen the statement that the days are gone when women had to search/beg for her identity. Contrary to popular customs of the East as well as the West, A Sikh woman is independent of identity of her male counterpart. At birth, each woman is given the name Kaur, meaning Prince and each man the name Singh, meaning Lion. Men and women are to preserve their spiritual, social independence and identity from birth until death. There is no mediator or priest between an individual and God. Each individual's relationship with God is personal and direct. So, situation has changed and it is high time to recognize the importance of women, their contribution to the society and the universe. We must acknowledge the importance of an individual may it be man or woman as every individual is giving a significant contribution to this world. Exploitation to any individual is an insult to humanity.

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Last Man in Tower: A Faithful Copy of Contemporary Society

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Researcher

“Jackets of, sleeves rolled up, a ‘no-nonsense’ approach”;(Cuddon 729) these crude and striking features of the realist novel are well projected in Aravind Adiga’s *Last Man in Tower*; the latest novel by the Booker Prize winner. The realist novel is a faithful copy of the world in the sense that it reflects real events. It reflects reality but in its own way. That’s why, even after reflecting reality Realist novel is the part of fiction instead of history, journalism, diary etc. “The Realist novel represents stories, characters, and settings that are similar to those commonly found in the contemporary everyday world.” (Earnshaw 14) Instead of directly representing an actual existing individual, it copies the real world. It copies the incidents, we don’t need to be told because we already know it and live it in everyday of our lives. The main aim of the realist novel is to mirror reality. Mirrors are not allowed to possess their own view but they have to show what is before them in their real shape. This is the thing which has been portrayed in *Last Man in Tower* by Aravind Adiga. Following the concept of realism, Adiga has presented the life with fidelity. He comes towards us, and very cleverly leaves all the responsibility to draw any conclusions over its readers.

The plot of *Last Man in Tower* begins with the word picture of ‘Vishram Society’ i.e. ‘unimpeachably pucca’. Vishram Society has two towers: Tower A and Tower B. Of course, both of them are within the same compound but they are totally different from each other. The seven-story Tower B has been erected in 1970s while Tower A around which the novel’s story revolves was unveiled on 14/11/1959. In comparison to Tower A, Tower B is the more desirable building to purchase or rent in but the tower about which the neighbours think of as ‘Vishram Society’ is Tower A. All of the residents of ‘Vishram Society’ live like a family. From Mary, the ‘khachada-wali’ to ‘Master Ji’, the most respectable person in the society; all of them have an affinity to one another. All of the residents of ‘Vishram Society’; as Mr and Mrs Pinto, retired accountant for the Britannia Biscuit Company, Ramesh Ajwani, the real-estate broker, Mr and Mrs Puri, Ashvin Kothari, the secretary of the society, Ibrahim Kudwa, internet store owner etc. respect Yogesh A. Murthy, popularly known as ‘Master Ji’ a retired school teacher, now living alone after the death of his wife, Purnima.

Basically, this novel is the tale of Yogesh A. Murthy i.e. ‘Master Ji’ and his struggle against the real, moving and changing world. A world that is changing with the time, a world that is now not caring for principles, a world that is now not caring for human emotions or human lives. It is changing with the time. Now it is running after money, status and ‘a drawing room with flamingoes’. But it is the reality which we can’t ignore. And it has been portrayed very clearly in this novel. It has been portrayed that how money get success in “turning good people in to bad people” (319)

Everyone respects ‘Master Ji’, and perhaps in lieu of that or to engage him in some work, he takes the ‘top-up classes of Science’. He teaches all the children of Vishram Society, whether

they are Hindu, Muslim or Christian. He really enjoys teaching. He feels honored that most of the students taught by him are appointed on good posts. Everything is running very smoothly and people of Vishram Society are like ideal for others. But reality can't be hidden within covers; it comes out as soon as it gets chance. There comes a property developer named Dharmen Shah, who is determined to tear Vishram down and replace it with luxury apartments. For it he gives very generous offer to all of the residents of Vishram. Some of them get ready at the moment and some of them after getting extra 'sweetener' from Shah. As soon as resident of Vishram Society get chance to get money, their greed awakes. Their greed makes them what they actually are. They forget everything, their humanity, their religion, their fear of god, their life-long relation to each other but remember only one thing that how to remove the big stone named 'Master Ji' from their way, which has blocked their way of riches.

Venue of this story is Mumbai. If we think pointedly, this novel portrays the real situation of present Mumbai, where property development is a serious business, sometimes deadly serious. But at broad level, this is the picture of contemporary changing world where prime land is costly and human life is cheap, where money can purchase everything whether it is police, lawyer, human values or emotions. Even blood relations stoop before money and get ready to change their loyalty. This novel has very clearly painted the corruption which has been scattered everywhere. From top to bottom, everyone seems to be involved in it and if any one tries to fight it, he meets the fate of the protagonist, 'Master Ji'.

Aravind Adiga has written the story of a New India; one is full of greed and opportunism, and other is underpinned by the daily struggle of millions in the lower classes. This novel is the story of money and power, luxury and deprivation; it is the story of a small apartment building and its owner occupants. All of them are not much rich and satisfied but happy in the company of each other. Trouble begins when a self-made real-estate mogul, Dharmen Shah decides to build a luxury high rise where the building of Vishram Society currently stands. He offers each of the residents 250 times what their dinky little apartments are worth. Dharmen Shah is the real estate developer. He rose from nothing to create an empire and hopes to seal his legacy with a building named 'the Shanghai' which promises to be one of the city's most elite addresses. He says, "Every man wants to be remembered...I'm no different" (87). He was really a dangerous man to refuse. But this time in case of 'Master Ji' he himself did nothing. He just played a trick and as soon as he found that money is dancing before the eyes of all of the residents, he makes the friends enemies, turned the acquaintances into conspirators with the help of his right hand man Shanmugham. The hope to get money exorbitantly changes many equations, friends become foes, enemies flock together to serve their personal motives and diehard followers of ideals shun their ideology. As soon as the deadline of leaving the apartment comes closer, all of the residents who have dreamt for money feel as something is going away from them. The cozy atmosphere of the society gets vitiated by the alluring offers of Dharmen Shah. Master Ji stares at three of his neighbours; women who had once pampered and flattered him but who now conspires his undoing. He wonders whether he is looking at good or bad people.

When Dharmen Shah offers to redevelop the society, 'Master Ji' was not serious about it. He was opposing him just to support his friend Mr and Mrs Pinto. Mr and Mrs Pinto were not in favour of this redevelopment because Mrs Pinto was blind. And she was scared of the situation which she will face if she goes to a new place. Here in Vishram she is habitual of way; she can go anywhere very easily by counting her steps. When Shelley, another resident of the society hears the cry of her husband, she is aware that she is 'just twenty-nine steps away' from the guard's booth. She is not ready to go anywhere because of her inability but this is not the case

with her husband. He is just avoiding it in greed of money. Being his wife, when she doubts her husband, Mr Pinto says that he is just ‘cal-cu-la-ting’ the money. He says that ‘Master Ji’ is his friend “of thirty-two years. I will never betray him for US dollars.” (250). But finally he too crouches down before the money and betrays his friendship of thirty two years.

In the beginning, Mr and Mrs Puri, Ramesh Ajwani and Mrs Rego; all of them oppose the offer but as soon as they get ‘sweetener’, they get agree. They think that it is the wish of ‘sweetener’ which is making ‘Master Ji’ to deny for the proposal. Dharmen Shah also tries to convince ‘Master Ji’ he invites him to his home, but unfortunately, because of the less traffic ‘Master Ji’ reaches there before time. At that time, Shah is in the school of his son Satish. There is a parent teacher meet. Shah is also a widower like ‘Master Ji’. As much as he tries to succeed in his profession, he fails in his family matters. His son goes out of his hand. He begins to hate him. The hatred between son and father is so strong that the son himself prays for the failure of his father’s dream project for which the father is very desperate. The episode of praying before Lord Ganesh for his dream project becomes heart rending when we see that Satish, the son, too prays to God just opposite of his father. This portrayal of father son relationship makes the plot more realistic.

The residents of Vishram Society think that ‘Master Ji’ denies the offer because he wants . Of course, he wants but not money. There may arise a question that why actually ‘Master Ji’ denies Shah’s proposal. Is Master Ji’s refusal meant to protect a more vulnerable tenant? Is he holding out for more cash? Is he simply afraid of change? Does he relish the sensation of power? Is his refusal rooted in incorruptible principle or dictatorial ego? And answer seems that it is his ego, which stops him to accept the offer. At first he opposes Dharmen to help his friend but when Mr Pinto takes his steps back, ‘Master Ji’ doesn’t get back with him. He takes it on his honour. He himself says, “Wasn’t Gaurav right- wasn’t it just pride that kept him from running to Mr Shah and saying: ‘I accept your offer. Now leave me alone!’” (300).

Gaurav is the only son of ‘Master Ji’, who instead of living with his father lives in a house provided by his company. It doesn’t seem big issue but what is to notice is that he has never offered his father to live with him while his father-in-law lives with him. Masterji was a man of 61. At this age a man needs extra attention while he was not getting the one he once had. His wife has expired recently. It is after her passing away, he began to miss him more and more. When the calendar of kitchen sounds due to wind coming from kitchen window, he thinks that his wife is trying to say something to him. He thinks that she is still there in kitchen and chopping onion on the cut board. He misses her terribly. He tries to fill this blank by meeting his grandson but feels that his daughter-in-law doesn’t like it. ‘Master Ji’ presents a book named *The Illustrated History of Science* to his grandson on his birthday but one day when ‘Master Ji’ goes to meet his son to his son’s home, Sonal his daughter-in-law returns that book and says that “The boy doesn’t read much; he plays cricket...It is better that you keep this yourself”(45). It hurts ‘Master Ji’ and he thinks that was their flat is so small that they can’t put his single book in it. He feels insulted at the act of Sonal “to shove my gift back in my hands” (45). This is other thing that this is the book which saved him when he is attacked by two boys sent by Ajwani, the broker.

But it is after this attack we find that masterji gets more and much closer to the realistic principles of *Bhagawadgita*. He seems to follow those principles in his own life. He doesn’t fear death. He begins to believe in:

*vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gr̥hṇāti naro ‘parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny anyāni samyāti navāni dehī* (22)

Which means:

Just as a man shedding out worn out garments, takes other new ones, likewise the embodied soul, casting off worn out bodies, enters into others which are new. (Goyandka, 29)

Masterji thinks that his son loves him but it is under the effect of Sonal he doesn't care for him. But soon he realizes that it is not true. In the case of 'Master Ji', Shah never plays any game directly. Everywhere he uses tricks. This time he finds the man of his own match. So he takes every step very thoughtfully. When he finds that 'Master Ji' has asked for help from police, he doesn't say anything to 'Master Ji'. But he goes to police station and gives a bit of 'sweetener' to them also. He seems to waste his money but it was his dream project for which he can go to any level. When 'Master Ji' goes next time to police station he finds that all are advising him to get agree by taking some "sweetener". He sees the same sweet box, which Shah has distributed to the residents of Vishram and then realizes that how corrupted our society is.

After failing at police station, he goes to a lawyer named Mr Parekh. He feels much confident that law is with him. He prepares himself to face all sorts of boycott by his own society members. They stop the supply of water and electricity, and law helps him but only till the moment Shah doesn't contact him. As soon as he comes in contact with Mr Shah, he also suggests him for treaty and proves our helplessness before corruption. Now if anything remains before him that is the help of media. But here also he doesn't get anything.

'Master Ji' has made a list that can help him at the time of need. He has always felt honoured of his being a teacher. He thinks that in it one can include police, media, Law and Order, Family and finally students and old boys. He always feels proud of his students. Often he names one of his students, Noronha, who is at present in *Times of India*. Noronha has been his last hope but there also he fails. He has always given importance to his duty, to his students even over his family. As Gaurav complains, "Your students always came first for you. Not that they had any love for you...They used to give you nicknames in class. (p.298) We find that in this attempt 'Master Ji' loses his son, his family also. His own son begins to hate him. During his early days Master Ji punishes Gaurav, student of the same school where he teaches, even at the little mistakes just to prove towards other students that "there was no favoritism" (298) . Unlike the phantasmagoria of other writers here we don't find any reward for these selfless duties of 'Master Ji', just like the real world he suffers and suffers a lot without any relief from any side.

Mrs Puri puts the piss of his 18 year old Ramu at the door of 'Master Ji', he says nothing and cleans it silently. Mrs Puri is a woman of the twentieth century. When she gets married, just like conventional society norms of this century she wishes to give the priority to her career instead of family life. She tries and tries again to get a job but all efforts go in vain. It is not the case that she revolts with her husband but she does all this with the consent of her husband. Her husband was just an accountant. Both of them were aware of this real fact that with the help of the salary of an accountant, they can't maintain a standard of which they have dreamt. It is medically approved that the best time of child bearing is between 24 and 30. When Mrs Puri gives birth to a boy named Ramu, she has already crossed the age of 30. After few years, both Mr and Mrs Puri come to know that their son is afflicted from Down's syndrome. Now what remains before her – to take care of her son throughout her life? 'Master Ji' also loves Ramu, he is with Mrs Puri to support her mentally even at the time when she comes to know about his son's illness for the first time. The boy also loves 'Master Ji' and whimpers if anyone talks against 'Master Ji'. But all this relation and understanding evaporate in light of money, 'the sweetener'.

Mrs Puri, who has not enough money to give medical treatment to her son, seems to become superstitious to some extent. She was not happy and satisfied with her life. She always blames that even at the age of 18, her son used to piss in his pants. She is fed up of everything. She thinks that if 'Master Ji' will sign the paper, the obstacle between her and comfort will fade away and she may have enough money to get a nurse for Ramu.

In case of Mrs Puri the realism comes to the bare surface when we analyse the cause of her visits to temples and religious places. She visits temples everyday because there is no hope and option for her. It is not the case that she is such a devotional lady but she visits temples and other religious places just because she has no option at all. But as soon as there comes an opportunity of getting money and better living standard, she forgets everything. She comes towards us as the most cunning lady in the society. She plays the role of 'Lady Macbeth' of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* who even doesn't shiver to murder the person who is of the age of her father.

'Master Ji' has always helped everyone and doesn't seem to ask any thing in lieu of it. He thinks, "I have done good to others. I was a teacher for thirty-four years." (287). When in market, he sees a cow "creaming good milk out of bad air and bacterial water." (287), he thinks that he has also done the same thing. When he touches the living organs of the cow he feels that cow is saying him: "all this power in me is power in you too" (287). He thinks of his neighbors also who has been changed suddenly just at the possibility of money. What the money can do for them? But even though 'Master Ji' doesn't blame anyone and hopes that as soon as the last date of signing will pass, all of them will again live together with each other. But when bit by bit, Adiga strips away the cover of so-called goodness of all the neighbors, we feel shocked.

When deadline passes away, 'Master Ji', feels relieved. He hopes that now very soon he will take his top-up classes once again. But Dharmen Shah here once again plays a trick and doesn't send anyone to collect the paper on the last date. And it is after crossing the last date all of the residents plan for the simplest of the way to get the money. They plan to push 'Master Ji' from the top floor. Ajwani seems to play the lead role but as soon as the time comes, he rings Mr Pinto and says, "Tell them not to do it. We can live together in the building like before. Tell Mrs Puri. Tell the secretary." (385). But Mr Pinto the best friend for thirty-two years betrays 'Master Ji' and doesn't convey this message to anyone.

Finally, this novel substantiates my claim when it projects the stories, characters and settings in realistic way where all the conspirators including Ibrahim Kudwa go to the room of 'Master Ji'. All of them attack him, and then bring him to the top floor with the help of lift and Mrs Puri gives him final push as he is the stone blocking of her happiness for so long. She thinks of him as big stone and "pressed her back and buttocks against the stone that had blocked her happiness or so long" (391) Master Ji falls down and dies. Everyone knows that it is not suicide but a murder. Even though all of the residents get first installment of payment from Dharmen Shah and Shah begin his construction over there. Ajawani in form of penance refuses to take money and moves somewhere else. At the end of novel we find that everyone has got money and all of them are enjoying the glamour of money. No one is suffering even after murdering the humanity and trust. Being the writer of this novel he would have punished the characters who were involved in the conspiracy of murder, but it would have been much far from reality. This cruel ending justifies that this novel is really a faithful copy of this contemporary world where nothing stands before money.

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The Criterion

Cultural Nationalism and A.K.Ramanujan's Poetry

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After the Second World War and with the end of European colonies from the most of the countries, it was being earnestly felt among survived communities that they should work for cultural identification not only for themselves but nation also. During colonial period, European value systems have been imposed on the colonized, oppressed communities. These value systems threatened from the very root of the indigenous art, culture, and organization. But with 'postcolonialism', native survivals and various ethnic groups living across the borders who any how survived/preserved their culture and identity did their best to assert them. As such, 'cultural nationalism' became a reliable strategy of self (nation included) affirmation. The colonials tried all the way to inculcate the sense of inferiority among natives that their art and culture are of no use. In fact after political freedom and national sovereignty it was necessitated to mend identity and culture and got over the problem of identity crisis. As we all know that colonials badly disjointed and dislocated everything. Cultural consolidation programme was of course to ferret out roots. Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* writes: "The passion with which native intellectuals defend the existence of their national culture may be a source of amazement; but those who condemn this exaggerated passion are strangely apt to forget that their own psyche..." (Fanon 209). He further argues that "the claim to national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native...colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country....By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (Fanon 210). The aesthetic of cultural nationalism is a mode of self affirmation. This draws images and symbols from the various components of culture and history. To decolonize once colonized mind, creative writers thoughtfully exhausted national history, legends, myths, folklore, music, religion, language etc.

A. K. Ramanujan is a well-famed figure among the poets of Indian diaspora. His poetry is mainly marked by his deep interest in Indian myth, religion, folklore, culture, tradition, and Hindu view of life. His interest in India and Indian pattern was not acquired rather it was inherent. No doubt, Ramanujan living in Chicago celebrated India and did a lot to restore the spoiled glory of it. But he was not blind admirer of India. Irony frequently he applied to drive truth home. Indian and American both experiences are made captive in his soul. His inclination towards and love for India not only helped him get over the problem of his own identity but largely redressed India also. Ramanujan in many of his poems recounts and reworks Hindu myth, legend, religion, culture etc. with no fear. Some of them are: "Towards Simplicity", "The Hindoo: he doesn't hurt a fly or a spider either", "One, Two, May be Three, Arguments against Suicide", "The Hindoo: he reads his Gita and is calm at all events", "Compensations", "Prayers

to Lord Murugan”, “Death and the Good Citizen”, “Mythologies I”, “Mythologies II”, “No Fifth Man”, “A Hindu to His Body” etc.

Hinduism occupies central space and lies at the heart of India and Indian people. India is the home of religion and tradition. In Indian belief and practice, human body is made up of five elements (Panchbhutani)- air, water, fire, sky, and earth. After the death of the body (as soul is immortal and not subjected to death and decay), these all elements naturally return to their respective elements. In the poem “Towards Simplicity” Ramanujan writes that ‘corpuscle, skin, cell, and membrane’ all have certain life and are bound with one another in an intricate manner. Each element runs towards its perfection that is death. As such life-death cycle runs infinitely. As he writes:

Millions grow lean and fall away
in the hourly autumn of the body.
But fertile in fall, ending as others begin,
to the naivete of death they run. (CP., 37)

In “A Hindu to His Body” Ramanujan seeks to drive home the fact that to a Hindu, body and soul both are equally important. A little fancifully the poet calls the body “Dear pursuing presence”, “dear body”. That is why the body requests to the soul not to leave behind. As he knows that often the see-off of immortal soul, the body will return into nature. He writes:

When you leave all else,
my garrulous face, my unkissed
alien mind, when you muffle
and put away my pulse

to rise in the sap of trees
let me go with you and feel the weight
of honey-hives in my branching
and the burlap weave of weaver-birds
in my hair. (CP.,40)

In Hindu philosophy, every creature has a perishable body and an immortal soul. Soul is immortal. And therefore every creature, big or small, deserves equal importance. The essence of Hindu philosophy is tolerance, sympathy, and sensibility or sensitivity. One should have ever mercy on others. Ramanujan being born in a south Indian Brahmin family is deeply rooted in Hinduism. He doesn’t like to ‘hurt fly or a spider either because he thinks that these creatures might be one of his ancestors. He affirms:

Maybe it’s once again my
great swinging grandmother,
and that other (playing at
patience centered in his web)
my one true ancestor, (CP.,62)

No place is approved for suicide in Hindu philosophy. Every Hindu knows that suicide is not a problem-solving approach to life. It is a kind of crime. Those who commit suicide are cowards. Perhaps this belief inspired the poet to muse upon two, three reasons against suicide in the poem “One, Two, Maybe Three, Arguments against Suicide”. He ironically calls one dear departing saint who commits suicide. He focuses on the horror of the sight of the suicide:

you see red, you faint, at the sight
of blood. And there’s always the danger

you may be understood, as never
before, misconstrued by some
casual stranger. (CP.,71)

In Hindu belief, one who commits suicide makes his/her soul restless and sends soul to hell which is not the aim of life. In Hindu thinking attainment of liberation or Moksha is the highest end of life. Now the poet looks at the later situation of suicide:

now, yet live on forever in spite
of what those doctors certify:

your self now a mere odourless soul,
a see-through man-shaped hole

in the air, a late lamenting ghost
looking in vain for an empty seat

at the full house of your posthumous
fame where you can see but not hear

the rain of applause, the jungle
of medals on the breast of your happy

unhappy widow. (CP.,71-72)

Very often untemperised desires and emotions result in suicide. Since desires are endless, one should keep physical desires cool and calm but not altogether. Here the poet stealthily weaves out Kamadev myth into the texture of the third section of the poem. He writes:

Remember what the wise callous hindus

said when the love-god burned: keep your cool,
make for love's sake no noble gesture.

All symbol, no limbs, a nobody all soul,
O Kama, only you can have no use
for the *Kamasutra*.

Ashes have no posture. (CP.,72)

In "The Hindoo: *he reads his GITA and is calm at all events*" the poet inveigles against those Hindus who claim good mastery in the teachings of Gita. The Gita stresses fortitude and 'calm of mind, all passions spent', sympathy, mercy, tolerance etc. But Hindus often misconstrue the essence of the Gita which is blunder. The persona claims that he doesn't bother at all about good and evil things. He just passes by events even when help or support is expected. The poet writes:

...Knives, bombs, scandal,
and cowdung fall on women in wedding lace:
I say nothing, I take care not to gloat. (CP.,79)

Moreover, the personae 'look at wounds calmly'. Though, the Gita teaches to take the world as a family, Hindus have forgotten instead of their claims. Here the poet doesn't slander the sacred

Hindu scriptures. He jeers at Hindus not Hinduism. He wants Hindus to be consistent with Hindu philosophy.

Finally in “THE HINDOO: the only risk” the poet arrives at the conclusion that Hindus who keep incomplete knowledge of sacred texts are given to selfishness and heartlessness. These Hindus do not follow the essence of Hinduism. They need squire meal everyday and have nothing to do with spirit of the Gita. This is another casualty of Hindus.

As I earlier mentioned that Ramanujan sporadically weaves out Hindu mythologies in his poems. In the poem “Compensations” the poet depicts the situation and condition of soldiers who suffered massive blows of war bells aftermath wars. He depicts them as engaged in several activities. But towards the closing of the poem the poet takes recourse of the Hindu myth of Tandav (deadly dance of God Shiv). It is believed among Hindus that lord Shiv performed Tandav whenever He wished to herald a new generation (Yuga). Ramanujan alongside all Hindus believes that Tandav marks the greatest destruction. He writes:

surpassed only by the last
miracle of grace, the three-eyed
whirlwind of arms, dancing on
a single leg though he can dance
on many, kind returning god
of Indian deluges, (CP.,110)

According to Ramanujan Lord Shiv at every time of Tandav brought new era but leaving traces of destruction like famine, war, and riot. This is the compensatory work. Since lord Shiv sooner or later will destroy the entire world, the periodic wars, blood-shed and many other lethal human works become of no use. The poet criticizes wars for power and dominion sake.

In “Prayer to lord Murugan” the poet laments the loss of faith among people. People are not worshipping this “ancient Dravidian god of fertility, joy, youth, beauty, war, and love” (CP., 113) sincerely and faithfully. This reminds of Mathew Arnold’s attitude expressed in “Dover Beach”. Actually people are getting speedily corrupt and selfish and therefore spiritually inclined people feel estranged:

Lord of headlines,
help us read
the small print.

Lord of the sixth sense,
give us back
our five senses. (CP.,116)

In “Mythologies I” the poet reworks Putana and Krishna myth. According to this myth, Kansa the uncle of the baby Lord Krishna, sent Putana (a female demon with poisoned breasts) to kill the baby by offering her poison coated breasts but the baby happily sucked her nipples and blessed her:

She changed, undone by grace,
From deadly mother to happy demon,
Found life in death (CP., 221)

Every Hindu prays God for salvation and resurrection. He invokes God to-

Drink my venom.
Renew my breath. (CP., 221)

In “Mythologies II” Ramanujan similarly reworks lord Vishnu and Hiranya Kashapu myth. Kashyapu was great atheist but extraordinary devotee of Lord Vishnu. This clever devotee asked the perfect boon:

not to slain by demon, god, or by
beast, not by day nor by night,
by no manufactured weapon, not out
of doors nor inside, not in the sky
nor on earth, (CP.,226)

But Lord Vishnu had ‘to disembowel his pride’ appeared in the shape of half-man-half-lion amidst twilight (neither day nor light) killed Kashyapu cleverly. The poet calls Lord Vishnu “midnight sun”, “connoisseur of negatives and assassin of certitudes”. He calls upon him-

...slay now my faith in doubt.
End my commerce with bat and night-
owl. Adjust my single eye, rainbow bubble,
so I too may see all things double. (CP.,226)

Ramanujan well steeped in Indian legendary tradition narrates a story about five Brahmins in “No Fifth Man”. These Brahmins ‘went abroad to learn all the sixty four arts’ and to show off their mastery in all arts by bringing back a tiger into life. In the process all four brothers lost their lives but the last Brahmin was rich in commonsense anyhow managed and saved his life. The poet writes:

The fifth man, the coward,
cried, ‘Wait, wait
just one second’,
and climbed up a tree in a hurry (CP.,244)

In this way the fifth brahmin could save his life but the rest were left of not even a bone.

As far as the use of language is concerned, Ramanujan unhesitatingly like Nissim Ezekiel and other Indian poets, uses words from Hindi language. Irony has been his favorite tool to expose sham and hollowness of the society. He chose free verse to express his attitudes uninterruptedly

To the end it can be said that Ramanujan by celebrating Indian myth, folklore, culture, tradition, language etc. restored Indian identity and India.

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English Poetry: A Journey from Obscurity to Ambiguity

Rajesh Kumar
India.

The machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry.

(Empson, W. 1955: 21)

Meaning, particularly in literature, is a three-dimensional concept – the meaning of a word, of an utterance, and of a text. Possible meanings of words contribute to the meaning of utterance, which is an act performed by the writer. The relationship however is not that simple and straight, as the utterance may, in turn, condition the meaning of the word. Finally, the two together contribute to the meaning of the text. Meaning of a text – what it is and what it is not – has been a problematic area of practical criticism, and this has been the inspiration behind several schools of criticism. The emotive elements of language make it "vague, protean, fluctuating phenomena", something that we accept in literature but refuse to do so in sciences. The lyric, oriented toward the first person, is intimately linked with the emotive function; epic poetry, focused on the third person, strongly involves the referential function of language. The traditional model of language was confined to three functions – emotive, conative, and referential – and the three apexes – the first person of the addresser, the second person of the addressee, and the third person (Buhler, 1933).

... the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic, and the aesthetic: the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic to the realization accomplished by the reader. From this polarity it follows that the literary work cannot be identical with the text, or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two. The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader – though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader.

(Iser, 1988:189)

It is reasonable to presuppose that author, text and reader are closely interconnected in a relationship that is to be conceived as an ongoing process that produces something that had not existed before. For some, meaning of a text is the author's intention; for others meaning of a text is what the text means, not what the author intends; and for yet others meaning of a text is what the reader understands, not what the author intends or what the text means.

There are three possibilities. It might be found in using the text as evidence of writer's intention: what is significant is what the writer means by the text. Alternatively, one might take the view that the text signals its own intrinsic meaning, whatever the writer might have intended: what is significant is what the text means. Or, thirdly, one might say that what is

significant is what a text means to the reader, whatever the writer may have intended, or whatever the text itself may objectively appear to mean.

(Widdowson, G. 1992: viii)

Meaning for Saussure is based on differences – ‘language is a system of differences’ and the meaning of an element depends on how it differs from other elements of the system that can replace it on the paradigmatic scale. Deconstructionists attempt to deconstruct the author's intention by reversing the process of creation. I. A. Richards (1929) warns against individual readings into the poem and talks about respecting the autonomy of the poem. Cox and Dyson (1965) appear to believe that poems have their own independent existence. The New Criticism locates literary meaning in the formal features of the text, rather than in the author's intention or the reader's response. By implication, *"meaning [is] the property of the poem itself as an autonomous artefact and [is] in principle recoverable from the text, totally and intact"* (Widdowson, G. 1992). Nowotny's 'unarguable' dimension of language and Wimsatt's 'explicit meaning' imply that all words have stable and stateable meanings. Reader Response School of criticism believes that no piece of language has a meaning unless it has been understood by a reader. The only meaning that a text can have is what is read into it by the reader.

Traditionally, the role of the reader has been seen as animator of the text and as a disposable machinery of extraction, *"whose task is simply to activate meanings deemed to be in the text, but who takes no initiative to engage creatively with the text"* (Widdowson, G. 1992). This rather passive role of the reader has been challenged by Fish (1980) and Freund (1987) – *"You do not read meanings out of a text but into a text"*. This three-dimensional picture of meaning – writer's meaning, reader's meaning, and the meaning of the text – would have been easily accepted without debate, if all the three dimensions had been the same. Not only this, different readers generate different meanings in the same text. Though it would be too much to question the legitimacy of what textual critics have done by focusing on the text, and the text only; it is more than apparent that the inspiration behind this was the natural human tendency to streamline things and smother any discordant note. The objection against allowing the readers to have several different interpretations of the text is not philosophical but a practical one.

A poem is free of an author's intentions and his experiences, and of a reader's responses, because these are variable, irresponsible, undiscoverable, demonstrably erroneous, etc., while the poem remains stable. We cannot locate the poem in the author's state of mind at the moment of creation because this is inaccessible and may be changed by the act of writing ... we cannot allow the poem to reside in the individual reader's experience as he reads, because that would be tantamount to saying that there are as many poems as there are occasions of reading, whereas we know very well that there is only one poem".

(Bradbury and Palmer, 1970: 178-79)

It is clear that the objection is more of a pragmatic nature than of a philosophic one. Readers should not be allowed to be differently affected by the 'reality' of a particular text because their responses are "variable, irresponsible, and undiscoverable" which is ample evidence of the fact that there was no love lost between the text and these textual critics, rather they were afraid to allow the readers to spin millions of individual

webs of interpretation to come out of which will be a Herculean task for the critics. The fact of the matter, as it appears to me, is that

The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination.

(Iser, W. 1988:191)

This discordance between the intention of the author, the text and the response of the reader as well as between various interpretations of the same text by different readers may be understood in terms of the fluctuating relationship between signifier and signified. In Derrida's view of language the signifier is not directly related to the signified. There is no one-to-one set of correspondence between them. Signifiers and signified are continually breaking apart and reattaching in new combinations, and one never arrives at a final signified which is not a signifier in itself. Derrida argues that when we read a sign, meaning is not immediately clear to us. Signs refer to what is absent, so in a sense meanings are absent, too. Meaning is continually moving along on a chain of signifiers, "and we cannot be precise" about its exact 'location', it is never tied to one particular sign (Sarup, 1993).

I would rather use 'and we cannot be precise' – literature defies precision. A great work of art cannot be reduced down to a precise, neat and systematic explanation; it is achieved by a subtle use of language that induces different meanings in different minds. Nowotny says that the structure of a poem is not "discontinuous with linguistic process in ordinary life", however, she accepts that the language of poems is "more highly structured" than "language outside poems". One characteristic of a poem is that it fashions the language in such a way as to give poignancy to words which cannot be explained but experienced only. When readers try to explain this unexplainable, they read different meanings in the same text. In a poem, the function of language is not referential but representational.

Whereas with reference language is dependent on external and actual context, with representation, context is internal, potential, and dependent on language: it takes shape in the verbal patterns of the poem. These ... provoke the reader into divergent interpretation ... "

(Widdowson, 1992: 33)

Reading a literary text is a creative process that is much more than a mere perception of what is written 'there'. Part of this creativity, to me, is lexical in nature. Reading literature gives us the chance to formulate the unformulated. Gaps or blanks in literary texts created by Derridean binary oppositions like presence/absence stimulate the reader to construct meanings which would not have otherwise come into existence. The techniques frequently used by the poets to create these gaps or blanks is that of sincere lying, non-linear progression of events, the art of distancing and back and forth movements of rhythm and tone eventually evincing a keen bend towards 'purposeful distortion', which lends words and phrases more than one possible meaning. The possibility of this plurality of interpretation makes a poem ambiguous.

It would be worthwhile to carefully state the parameters set for this paper whereby 'ambiguity' means not the multiplicity of meaning caused by phonological,

morphological or syntactic ambiguity but a multiplicity of meaning caused by a word having two or more than two relevant connotations that keep on changing from time to time, from text to text, and from reader to reader: co-text and context become very significant here. Ambiguity has rightly been argued to be a purely mental phenomenon that takes place in the mind of the reader, however, that is caused by some linguistic features – and that linguistic feature for the purpose of this paper is the connotative aspect of English vocabulary.

It is also essential for the purpose of this paper to distinguish ambiguity from obscurity which is the case of a word having more than one acceptable, but stable and stateable, meaning that call upon the reader to choose the relevant one. Potentially ambiguous words possess distinct, disparate but clear meanings all of which are relevant as alternatives in a given context, although there is always an uncertainty as to which one is the more appropriate. Lack of clarity lies at the pragmatic level where the intended meaning is not clear to the reader. Ambiguity is an intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly a corollary feature of poetry. Not only the message itself but also its addresser and addressee become ambiguous (Jakobson, 1988).

In the case of obscurity, on the other hand, lack of clarity occurs at the semantic level itself. Faced with ambiguity, the reader asks, "Which one is the intended meaning?"; faced with obscurity, he asks, "What is the intended meaning?" Obscurity is, therefore, different from ambiguity, though it can provide the latitude for ambiguity to occur in. Most of us, I think, will agree that 17th and 18th century poetry may be obscure because the reader faces the difficulty in finding 'what is the intended meaning', but not as ambiguous as modern poetry wherein he undergoes the trauma of deciding 'which one is the intended meaning'. This may partly be significant to show how English poetry has been on the move from obscurity towards ambiguity.

Heavy borrowing from different sources, particularly of words that led to an unequalled profusion of synonyms, is a characteristic of English that distinguishes it from other languages.

The Latin element in Modern English is so great that there would be no difficulty in writing hundreds of consecutive pages in which the proportion of words of native English etymology ... would not exceed five percent of the whole.

(Bradley, 1904: 63)

It is a matter of common knowledge that traditionally education and literacy had been the prerogative of a particular class of British society, and the poets had that particular class in mind while writing. So much so that there may be seen a clear distinction between language being used in poetry and that being used by the common folk.

... a similar historical process began in English in the seventeenth century, when literary and colloquial norms were set apart by the conscious creation of a literary Standard.

(Adamson, S., 1989: 207)

Though English replaced French as the official language in the later middle ages, and Latin as the language of scholarship during the Renaissance in successive stages, the substitution was not a single act. In both the cases the English that substituted French or Latin was heavily influenced by the language it substituted (Baugh, 1959). Prescriptive

grammarians and lexicographers of the 18th century turned to Latin for their models of correct usage. There was a widespread belief among writers that the propagation of Latinized forms would 'fix' the diversity and changeability of speech forms, and place English on the rational foundation of universal grammar.

A reading of English poetry down the ages reveals that words of foreign origin tend to be used more frequently in the poetry of 17th and 18th century in comparison to that of the 19th and 20th century poetry. It can also be safely assumed that modern poetry is by and large more ambiguous than 17th and 18th century poetry. Modern poets, like modern men, look at themselves in relation to others or others in relation to themselves. Life for them since Einstein is no more absolute but relative; it is not possible for them to look at life in isolation like 16th century lyricist, for example. The primacy of the metaphoric process in the literary schools of romanticism and symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called "realistic" trend, which belongs to an intermediary stage between the decline of romanticism and the rise of symbolism and is opposed to both (Jakobson, 1988). Modern poetry tries to transform the sign back into meaning: its ideal, ultimately, would be to reach not the meaning of words, but the meaning of things themselves. This is why it clouds the language, increases the abstractness of the concept and the arbitrariness of the sign and stretches to the limit the link between signifier and signified (Barthes, 1957).

The reasons may be many, but the one that I propose to be the case is an apparent journey from the classical to the colloquial. The substitution of classical by the colloquial that started during the latter half of the 17th century was completed by Wordsworth's democratic humanism which demanded that literature must leave the territory of the literate elite and occupy the common ground shared by both the poet and the audience. Gradually Latin got 'frozen' as the language of education and books. Today its creative use is confined to a diminishing elite whose classical education gives them a working knowledge of Latin roots and derivational morphology.

The failure of the classical vocabulary to get integrated into the colloquial standard has had important consequences for the semantic structure of English. There are systematic differences found in meaning between classical and colloquial terms which can be attributed to their dichotomous learning conditions. Colloquial terms are learnt communicatively in the context of actual experience and hence are interpreted by reference to a wide range of experiences with which they are associated. Classical terms, on the contrary, are learnt in academic context devoid of any real life association and hence are interpreted by reference to a prescribed definition. They "fall upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outlines," smothering any possibility of multiplicity of interpretations.

To support my line of argument I would take a classical-colloquial pair '*parsimonious-mean*' as an example. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1998) defines '*parsimonious*' under a single entry as '*extremely unwilling to spend money*', while it defines '*mean*' under multiple entries as '*have a particular meaning; intend to say something; say which person or thing; intend to do something; say something seriously; result in something; involve doing something; show something is true or will happen; unkind or nasty; unwilling to spend any money or share what you have with other people; cruel and bad tempered; average; poor or looking poor; and*

belonging to a low social class'. The word 'preserve' too is defined under three entries as 'to save something or someone from being harmed or destroyed; to store food for a long time after treating it so that it will not decay; and to make something continue without changing', whereas 'keep' is defined under thirty entries as 'not give back; not lose; not change/move; make somebody/something not change/move; do something repeatedly; delay somebody; store something; look after; protect; and celebrate something' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1998).

The two examples, though by no means exhaustive, demonstrate my contention clearly that colloquial words have greater connotations than that of the classical ones. It is this fluidity or indeterminacy of meaning associated with the colloquial vocabulary that makes readers have divergent interpretations – the hallmark of ambiguity. Moreover,

... [classical terms] have connotations of conceptual clarity and emotional neutrality, while the ... [colloquial terms] are associated with physical reality and subjective response. In the most general terms, the ... [colloquial] vocabulary is associated with an experiential mode of reference, the ... [classical] vocabulary with a noetic mode.

(Adamson, S., 1989: 214 – 15)

This dichotomy further strengthens the idea that colloquial terms do have greater scope of plurality of interpretations and their greater frequency in modern poetry leads to greater ambiguity. The movement from classical to the colloquial vocabulary in English poetry can be seen as a movement from the monosemic to the polysemic, from the noetic to the experiential. The relatively monosemic nature of the classical items allows it to stand as an abstract statement of the semantic content, whereas the more polysemic colloquial items are open to scrutiny for alternative meanings leading to greater ambiguity.

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The Criterion

The Criterion

Ganesh Devy's Concept "The Tripartite Relationship": A Linguistic Relation

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Ganesh Devy presents his scholarly views on the relationship of various languages. The colonial period gave chance to develop this relationship. Here he has introduced the concept, 'the Tripartite Relation' to focus the relationship between *marga*, *alien* and *desi*. Ganesh Devy points out that like the other cultural institutions in India, it carries the burden of the tripartite relation between the *marga*, the *alien* and the *desi*. He adds ahead that the tripartite cultural relationship which determines the course of Indian literature in English can be seen at work in a large number of writers. Devy points out that the exchange of ideas and intellectual or cultural movements between the *marga* and the *desi* traditions, or between one *desi* tradition and another, took place through the system of cultural diffusion evolved all over India. This paper focuses this relationship and its effects on the literary field of India.

Ganesh Devy has introduced the concept, 'the Tripartite Relation' to focus the relationship between *marga*, *alien* and *desi*. In the beginning, he points out the hierarchical positions among these traditions. Before going to the tripartite relation, he highlights the *marga* and the *desi* tradition's relations. He states that there is a split in their personality. The *marga* and the *desi* had, traditionally, a hierarchic relation, the main stream being considered inherently superior. According to him, the nature of literary fragmentation can be understood properly considering the fact that Indian society had developed a sophisticated cultural apparatus of intricately balancing various sub-cultures in relation to the mainstream culture. He explains the terms *marga* and *desi* as: *marga* means not only the mainstream but also the traditional, and *desi* means not only the regional but also the contemporary (1992:78). Here, he states that the relationship between the two was based on the principle of a healthy exchange. He adds further that during *marga*'s heyday, Sanskrit poetics had acknowledged the importance of regional variations in poetics and dramatic styles.

Ganesh Devy points out that like the other cultural institutions in India, it carries the burden of the tripartite relation between the *marga*, the *alien* and the *desi*. He adds ahead that the tripartite cultural relationship which determines the course of Indian literature in English can be seen at work in a large number of writers. Here Devy gives the fine example of R. Parthasarthy's poem *Rough Passage*. According to Devy, during the first eight centuries of the present millennium, the exchange and opposition between *marga* traditions and *desi* traditions occupied a central place in India's cultural transactions. He adds ahead that the Colonial rule or British contact added the *videsi* cultural transaction. So he states that in contemporary India we notice in our culture and literature, a triangular relationship between the three strands of tradition: *desi*, *marga* and *videsi*. Devy further points out that during colonial period *marga* and *videsi* get great prominent position whereas *desi* remained largely neglected. The debate regarding the medium of education either *margi* Sanskrit, Persian, *videsi* English or *desi bhasha* made a profound impact on the literary culture in modern India (Paranjape, 1997:10).

Devy points out that the exchange of ideas and intellectual or cultural movements between the *marga* and the *desi* traditions, or between one *desi* tradition and another, took place through the system of cultural diffusion evolved all over India. He adds further that the

country's geography has been a crucial factor in determining its history and culture. He views that, in cultural transfer, geography played a central role. The network oriented geography performed the function of transferring and transfusing ideas from the *marga* to the *desi*, and the other way around. He points out that with the advent of Islam in India, the *marga* intellectual traditions stopped growing and survived in the decadent forms for several centuries and this picture helped the *desi* or *bhasha* traditions to grow to a greater extent to create a new identity and a new cultural space for themselves. He further states that this new situation had two important consequences: i) An increasing dialogue among various regional literatures, and ii) the reversal of roles between the *marga* and the *desi* was the emergence of a hierarchy of literary values. This state influenced the development of the *bhasha* literatures up to the arrival of the British (1992:78-81).

Ganesh Devy highlights that the possibility of cultural domination and mediation by Sanskrit was diminishing, helped the *bhasha* literatures to establish direct channel of communication with one another. The exchanges between one *bhasha* literature and another resulted in the *bhakti* poetry, the finest chapter in Indian literature. Devy points out that traditionally, *marga* traditions established literary criteria and aesthetic values for elitist literatures whereas *desi* designated rustic and vulgar literary expressions. And as a result the Sanskrit poetics had to defend itself against the Indo-Islamic cultural invasions as well as *bhasha* threats. Studying the pathetic situation of Sanskrit or *marga* tradition, Devy locates its position in critical scenario as:

“During the Indo-Islamic period, the *marga* traditions were dominated by the Islamic cultural influence, and subverted by the rebellious sectarianism of the *desi* traditions. But during the initial phases of the British colonial rule in India, the *marga* traditions received some very vigorous but artificial respiration from the European Indologists” (1992:81).

Here he points out that the transition from *marga* to the *desi* in the field of literary criticism remained unfinished. According to Devy, during the *bhakti* poetry, *bhasha* literatures vindicated the vertical, regional and *desi* elements of culture against the hegemonic and over-rigid *marga* traditions. He argues ahead that *bhakti* was not a restricted but a composite concept and a pervasive movement which medieval India posed as an alternative to the hegemony of *marga* traditions and excessively sophisticated system of Sanskrit poetics. To focus the changing situation due to the emergence of *bhasha* literatures, Devy states:

“The development of *bhakti* poetry was a natural consequence of the emergence of the *bhasha* literatures. *Bhakti* unleashed an emotionalism which classical Indian literature had held under the strict control of conventions and rigidly defined social ethics” (1992:87).

Here Devy points out real freedom enjoyed by *bhakti* poetry that was not allowed in *marga* tradition under the convention. Then he adds ahead the aim and nature of *bhakti* poetry in relation with *marga* traditions as:

“Since the sole aim of *bhakti* poetry was to challenge the *marga* traditions, a tradition, of logically rigorous philosophic systems, its attitude to theory was one of indifference. It tried every kind of experimentation with style and diction, and replaced every established convention of poetry; but it never tried to formulate a statement of the new conventions of poetry” (1992:88).

Here he points out that *bhakti* poetry is a kind of reaction to *marga* tradition. It offers a kind of liberty that was not in *marga* tradition being governed by their conventions. He argues ahead that though the *bhakti* movement generated a substantial body of literature, it failed to initiate a new theory of literature due to a breakdown in the intricate network of the *marga* and the *desi*

traditions. The *marga* tradition accepted only the theological contents of *bhakti*, neglecting its rebellious spirituality.

Ganesh Devy states in conclusion that, formal education belonged to *marga*, while the experience of life's complexities was perceived and articulated through *desi* idiolects. He also points out that the literature was being produced in the bhashas, criticism continued to survive through Sanskrit. He argues that the modern mind, reared on Western Paradigms of literary history, may find this situation difficult to grasp. Devy strongly rejects the established view of this situation that considers it in terms of a failure, a sickness, a vacuum and an inability. Even he opposes that Indian literature had lost (for a period of half a millennium) its critical sensibility. Here he argues that criticism did become a discourse, a monolingual system of intellectual premises about literature; but it remained a multicultural and multilingual enterprise. So he states ahead that multiculturalism and multilingualism need not be seen as symptoms of a great cultural failure and sickness merely because they have no parallels in Western literary history. During the initial contact with British, the Indian mind considered multiculturalism and multilingualism as natural conditions of existence, and continued to strive to maintain them as such even during the high period of Indian nationalism which was inspired by Europe's monolingual-monoculture nationalism. Later on Devy lights on the relationship between Western and Indian in following lines:

“The city and cantonment structure, with its politics of sex, race and culture, formed the essential typology of cultural relations in colonial India. Indians, with their experience of multiculturalism in the past, were able to face the colonial situation with maturity. The dual system of values itself became their weapon to fight colonialism in every area of culture, including literary criticism” (1992:99).

Here Devy points out the selfish and restricted relations of Western/British with Indians. He appreciates the multiculturalism and multilingualism of Indians as a strong weapon of fighting with colonialism. He further states that Indian criticism is gripped, and the tension caused by being ‘torn’ between ‘Westernization’ and ‘Sanskritization’, are epistemological rather than ontological features of Indian criticism.

Ganesh Devy Argues that English criticism that was negligible branch up to the beginning of the 19th century acquired the great significance due to the provision of ready and vast market for critical text by colonies. Seeing the extension possibility and utility of European literary criticism, English texts were exported to many colonies to achieve the great importance and it received a valued marketable commodity status. Devy points out the changing sensibility of Indians regarding literary criticism due to the Western effect in following words:

“Since that education worked as a channel to draw the ‘natives’ into the colonial market system, creating a class of culturally displaced Indians, such a displacement came to be valued. Imitating Arnold, Leavis, etc., this class then started maintaining that literary criticism is an index of a healthy culture. Thus, in India, literary criticism of the Western type was pressed into use after it came to acquire value” (1992:105).

Here Ganesh Devy comments the bhasha critical works due to its blind imitation of Western four types: i) Mimetic, with theories focusing on the relation between literature and the cosmos, ii) Pragmatic, with theories focusing on the relation between literature and audience, iii) Expressive, with theories focusing on the relation between literature and the writer, and iv) Autonomous, with theories focusing on literature as a sovereign ontological object, without regard to the history of own origin of literature. Devy further objects the usefulness and value of these Western ideas as they were originated in the context of divergent metaphysical and social

perceptions. He also objects wasted pursuit of theory of Indian critical talent that was totally irrelevant to literature in India. He also points out that the most crucial factor in the above type of transaction was the attempt to define the 'self' of Indian criticism in terms of 'the other' of the Western criticism, and the constant reference to 'the other' was the central feature in the self definition of Indian criticism. Devy focuses the entry of the Western literary criticism in Indian situation as:

"Hence, nationalism in the field of literary criticism involved acceptance of liberal Western ideas and paradigms of literature, together with the revival of Sanskrit poetics. An ideal imitation of the West in this field would have been to orient Indian criticism to the bhasha literatures just as English literature. But colonialism produced tolerance for inappropriate models, a liking for theorizing and a loss of self-confidence. In the field of literary criticism, Westernization has taken the form of submission to the forces of colonization" (1992:109-10).

Here, Devy remarks that the modern period of Indian culture has transformed the bilateral relationship of the *marga* and the *desi* traditions into a tripartite relationship between the *marga*, the *desi* and the colonial/West, with respect to literary criticism. He also states that the relation consists of various patterns of collaboration as well as confrontation of these three traditions with one another. He further points out that the colonial experience of literary criticism based on economy affected the Indian perception of literary criticism. He also highlights that the 'class-based' and 'Westernized' perception in literary criticism has generated a crisis in literary criticism as it remained fragmented by the tripartite relation. He further points out that the colonial perceptions of history of the bhasha literatures, and the subsequent cultural amnesia, have made modern critics incapable of appreciating the pragmatic wisdom of the bhasha literatures in refusing to submit to the authority of the *marga* criticism.

Ganesh Devy describes the nature of the cultural amnesia referring to the literary theories developed three dominant Indian critics (theorists): Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy. Here he points out that 'Indian modernism' was more clearly imitative of the Western models than the Indian Romanticism was. He adds further that in Indian criticism, modernism brought with it the trend of pseudo-theorizing, for most of it was theory based on alien theories without any relevance to Indian traditions. He gives the reference of the modern Indian critic, B. S. Mardhekar in whom we all observe the fine blend of ancient Indian philosophy and modern Western ideology.

In summing up, Devy comments that in Mardhekar's literary criticism, as like Aurobindo, the bhasha tradition revolts against orthodoxy and authority was consumed and stilted by the colonial trend of theorizing. Finally he presents the real situation of tripartite relation that he observed in modern Indian critics in following words:

"Sri Aurobindo tried to move away from the colonial paradigms and into the world of ancient Indian poetry. Mardhekar threw the *marga* traditions overboard, and wedded himself intellectually to the colonial tradition. The motivating force in both was the urge to create something new, to nativize and to vitalize. That urge was inherited from the *bhasha* traditions. To the extent that they represent the field, it can be said that the literary criticism in India displays patterns of the tripartite relation of the *bhasha*, the *marga*, and the Colonial/West traditions, and that, conditioned by a cultural amnesia, it still remains a fragmented discourse" (1992:119).

Here Devy presents the real situation of Indian literary criticism in the context of the tripartite relation of the *desi*, the *marga*, and the West traditions. According to Devy, the cultural

amnesia's presence caused to fragment the present discourse. In fact, the entire history of Indian English literature is a series of various patterns of conflict and collaboration between the Western, the *marga* and the *desi* cultural traditions.

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The Criterion

Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry : Arrival of a new School of poetry : The Romantic School

Ashutosh Ranjan

Wordsworth revolted against the stereotyped moulds and excessively charged diction of the Eighteenth century poetry his famous pronouncement that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and that takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity" heralded the arrival of new school of poetry - The Romantic School. Wordsworth lays emphasis on powerful emotion and intense feelings, the qualities which the poetry of the preceding age lacked, Wordsworth started from an interest in life rather in art.

In his poetry, Wordsworth has developed his literary vision of nature through various stages. In the first stage, the child Wordsworth looks upon nature as a source of and scene for animal pleasure like skating, riding, fishing and walking. Wordsworth's first love of nature is a healthy boy's delight in outdoor life. In the second stage, Wordsworth develops a passion for a sensuous beauty of nature. As he grows up his 'coarser pleasures' ("Tintern Abbey line 73) lose their charm for him and nature is loved with an unreflecting passion altogether untouched by intellectual interests or associations. Stage three refers to human heartedness. All the aching joys and dizzy raptures came to end with the poet's experience of human suffering in France. The French Revolution opened his eyes and made him realize the dignity of the common man. This stage is followed by a final stage of spiritual interpretation of nature. It is known as the age of Pantheism.

In the poem "Nutting" Wordsworth describes the circumstances under which a great chance comes in approach to nature. After his 'merciless ravage' (line 45) something Mysterious touches him, and he feels that there is a spirit in the woods. Henceforth, he realizes a divine principle reigning in the heart of nature. As Margaret Drabble puts it, "At this stage the foundation of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode of seeing God in nature and nature in God" since the poet believes that the Eternal Spirit pervades all objects of nature on the health and well-being of the human's everyday life. If the individual, in his quest for well being, turns to nature, it is necessary to investigate on the relation between man and nature. Furthermore, in its healing process, we can note that nature may foster joy, love psychological and mental relief, and teaching that cannot be obtained without mystic forces pervading nature.

The bond between nature and man originates from the creation of the world as stated in the Bible:

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. [.....]"

In other words, God created nature and created man to preside over it. So the relationship between man and nature was established by God at the creation.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (The Holy Bible, Genesis 1, 11, 12, 26)"

Wordsworth shows how human beings fit into the midst of the interplaying forces of nature.

The impressions a part receives from the observation of objects are purged of their accidental ingredients and are spiritualized till what is left is the ideal essential truth. When, in tranquil moments, the poet recalls the original impressions, the feelings the emotions which accompanied them are also revived. Thus the faculty of recreating an emotion belongs to the poet; as he composes a poem, he lives through his original experience, now existing in an idealized form. The artistic creation, thus, to Wordsworth, represents a complex process of observations, impression, feelings, thoughts and their interaction. Some of his poems like Tintern Abbey And Yarrow Revisited stand as example of his principle that poetry is emotions recollected in tranquility.

Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey is a true Romantic poem because it describes communion with nature and focuses on the development of the individual, while providing a psychological escape from unpleasant and mundane realities. Nature is unifying them in this poem. Wordsworth revisits the place that he has not seen in five years and exclaims.

"Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; [Line 4-7]

Here the phrase, "thoughts of more deep seclusion" is interesting because it delves into the psyche of Wordsworth. Here in nature, is where he seems to be the most at peace. The word seclusion is synonymous with isolation and privacy, but also means shelter.

In Wordsworth's theory special emphasis is laid on memory. He blamed Scott for taking a note-book and making an inventory of all the pleasant object he found in nature and finally waving them into fabric: "He should have left his note-book at home", said Wordsworth, and taken all that he saw into a heart that could understand and enjoy. "He would have found that when the accidental had vanished what remained would have been ideal and essential truth of the scene. It is obvious that here Wordsworth is describing his own method, and that in defining poetry as arising from emotions recollected in tranquility he is simply generalizing from his own practice.

There were various reasons why Wordsworth chose incidents and situation from humble and rustic life as themes of his poetry. A poet according to him, essentially a man speaking to men. His first duty is to trace those primary laws of human nature which govern the manner "In which we associate ideas in a state of Excitement". The primary instincts and impulses which govern human behavior can be best studied in simplest and most elementary forms of life. In the simple and natural village life behavior is instinctive and passions find a sincere, uninhibited and unsophisticated expression. The rustic, free from all external influences, speak from their own personal experiences, and their passions are less under restraint. A close observation of the manner of the rural life provides greater opportunities to a poet for tracing in ordinary situations those primary laws of human nature which, in the artificialities of sophisticated life, are rendered complex. In the humble surroundings of rustic life man is more natural and unrestrained, and so a proper subject of study for a poet who must write "on man, on nature, and on human life". The city life, according to the theory, with all its artificialities inhibitions and restraints, is not suitable subject of poetry. The

feelings and passions of the humble village farmers, shepherds, wood-cutters, leech gatherers etc. are universal; they are not peculiar to them alone but are common to all mankind.

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The Criterion

Elusiveness is Resistance in J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*

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J.M. Coetzee in *Life & Times of Michael K* portrays a tragic fable of colonialism that surpassed the boundaries of his native South Africa. The novel is written in response to a particular political and constitutional debate in South Africa in the early 1980s, when the nation has been in the throes of insurrection and foreboded bloody outcomes. *Life & Times of Michael K* appeared in 1983 by the time Coetzee's reputation as a fiction writer had already been established. *Life and Times of Michael K* has been awarded England's prestigious Booker Mc Connell Prize in 1983, apart from winning Central News Agency (CNA) Literary Award (South Africa) and Prix Femina Etranger (France) in 1984.

Michael K, the protagonist is a man who eludes colonization whether it is the colonization of the body through labour camps or the colonization of mind through charity. Michael K is an unassuming assertion of Coetzee's artistry adopting a political stance as has been the practice of fellow South African writers such as Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer and Athol Fugard. The locale of the novel is specifically South Africa, but it seems to the South Africa in the future. The back ground conflict is probably a civil war which is predicted as occurring in South Africa and the smouldering scenes of such anticipated civil strife that have already marked Gordimer's latest novel *July's People*. The civilians' movement from district to district controlled by means of the Pass laws, the compulsory military service, the imagined civil war pointing to the bleak picture of what the future holds, the presence of the homeless and the destitute taking up the urban space, all these depictions reflect the historical 1980s of South Africa. The realistic stir in the beginning pages of the novel are referred to by Susan van Zanten Gallagher in *A Story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* as "an apocalyptic parable which reflects the chaos and the hope for salvation" (1991: 145-6) marking the novel's revolutionary urge. In her review "The Idea of Gardening" in *The New York Times Review* Nadine Gordimer reminds that the blacks and Whites are engaged in civil war in 1984 on South Africa's borders and the underground liberation movements resorting to bombings with in the country have caused "R 508 millions of damage in five years. (1984: 2)

The narrative presents an individual asserting his freedom through inarticulate defiance towards the agencies of the state and scapes through the trauma without being the victim of the ravages of the civil war. The actual war remains peripheral to the central conflict in the novel because it is peripheral to Michael K's concerns. It seems that the main conflict is between Michael, the individual and the enemy others.

Coetzee does not directly tell us the colour of Michael K's skin, the issue that by all means defines South Africa, its politics and its people. The midwife who attends the laboring of K's mother mentions that K has "a harelip" (1984:3) obliquely refers to

the physical deformity other than the colour of Michael K's skin. It becomes a distinguished feature of K from not being generalized as *Everyman*. It is clear from K's position in the society that he is not a member of the ruling class and he is not White. K's harelip so repelled his mother that she placed him in a state school, Huis Norenus in *Faure*, where, until the age of fifteen he spent his time in the company of the other rejected and unwanted children. Although Michael K is an outsider by nature and a loner by preference, his experiences in sharing among the destitute are very much humane. Before he and his mother set out on the road, he assures her and himself that "people were decent, people would stop and give them lifts" (18) which is proved later when a man in a lorry gives them a ride. At the hospital where he takes his mother, he mentions that he is hungry, and stranger buys him a hot meat pie. The narrator underscores the bonding as Michael sat on a bench and ate. The pie was so delicious that tears came to his eyes.

Michael thinks he has found a place "that belonged to no one yet" (47) when he reaches the abandoned Visagie farm, which seems to be inhabited only by wild animals and where nothing grows in the garden. After exhausting himself killing a goat, only to discover that flesh repels him, he draws a significant lesson, "not to kill such large animals (57). Relegating the questions regarding ethics to the background, the question of survival overpowers Michael. He considers the relation of life to death and perceives a duality. He believes that his mother who was in some sense in the box and in some sense not being released will be more at rest and peace as "she was nearer to the natal earth" (57). It is life and nurturing that absorbs his attention most. He scatters his mother's ashes on the earth, restores the dam and plants his seeds. He has an awakening concerning the essence of his being. He thinks that gardening is in his nature and in a fit of exultation takes pride in regarding that "he, alone and unknown, was making this deserted farm bloom" (59).

A short time later he is confronted by a pale plump young man who introduces himself as "boss Visagie's grandson" (60). K's accepting Visagie's farm was one of those islands without an owner gets disillusioned through learning a lesson that no piece of land is left without a claim of ownership. Defying submission, Michael hides in the mountains, he at first eats whatever comes to hands, roots, bulbs, ant-grubs, flowers after which he fasts until he reaches a state where he "emptied his mind, wanting nothing, looking forward to nothing (68-69). Here Michael K draws parallel with Kafka's "Hunger Artist", a connection which Dovey traces in *Novels of J.M. Coetzee* when he realizes that he can no longer bear starvation, he comes down from the mountain seeking food. He is captured and sent to Jakkalsdriff camp, a resettlement camp for the unemployed, the inmates of which are deployed to work on state projects of building and reconstruction.

Soon after this incident, Michael begins to reflect on the ideas of the man named Robert, who got accused of political association after he and his family of eight were turned off a farm where he had worked for twelve years. Robert explains to Michael that the police had arrested him and his family on the road for having "no fixed abode" (80), the day after he had been terminated from his job which showed a place in Jakkalsdrif. Robert believes that such camps exist for two reasons: to prevent

the discontented lot joining the ranks of rebels in the mountains and to avert the too terrible a look that people wear owing to sickness and die.

If we just grew thin and turned into paper and then into ash and floated away, they wouldn't give a stuff for us....They want to go to sleep feeling good. (1984: 88)

Michael K imagines people in the camp digging a big hole, climbing into it, and being buried and covered over, as the narrator lays out his thoughts.

When we had exhausted ourselves digging, and had dug a great hold in the middle of the camp, they would have to order us to climb in and lay ourselves down: and when we were lying there, all of us, they would have to break down the huts and tents.....and cover us with earth, and flatten the earth. Then, perhaps, they might begin to forget about us. (1984: 94)

Michael K escapes from the Jakkalsdrif camp and returns to the Visagies farm, lying at the dam, he comes to realize that the house is never a safe place for him, that he must live in a hole, hide by day and leave no trace of his existence. In a sense, he chooses to be forgotten, so that he would not be exploited and oppressed by the system. K goes literally underground, burrowing without trace, like the animals, insects and grubs which he eats and likens himself to, or is ploughed back into the earth like a fallen seed. Earth has become his element and is a constant touchstone and is constant touchstone and referent for his existence.

Michael K considers himself a parent of plants, one so closely related with the earth that his seedling children growing into a family of "sister-melons" and brother-pumpkins" (113), the fruit of this real mother, to whom he is connected by an invisible cord of tenderness. Michael K is less a man than a spirit of ecological endurance. A question that looms large is where in lies his relevance, whether to the contemporary political situation of South Africa or to the ecological situation of the African continent at large. The African soil resents not the industrial aggravation but the colonialism and the war generic of South African context. It is not industrial plants but jails and camps like Jakkalsdrif that cause earth to be "stamped so tight.....and baked so hard.....that nothing would ever grow there again" (104). K tells his mother and argues

....there must be men to stay behind (from the war) and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening, because once that cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children. (1984: 109)

Of Coetzee's protagonists in his first four novels, only Michael K can be said to have escaped historical event to enter a realm of being outside of linear time. He lies in his burrow, whiling away time that bears "him onward in its flow" (115). In such isolated idleness, Michael occasionally falls into self-conscious reflections. Michael falls silent and almost inarticulate. He lives in terror of life spent with people and at one point envisages himself as an earth-hole into which words disappear.

Always, when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding balked, into which it was useless to pour words. The words were eaten up, the gap remained. (1984: 109-110)

The best communication is of silence of being without words. He loves idleness, surrendering himself to time “flowing slowly like oil from horizon to horizon over the face of the world” (115).

A former race course club near Cape Town styled into a rehabilitation camp for the captured rebels stages Section-2 of the novel. Michael gets arrested as a suspected rebel for running a storage-site for the rebels at the end of the Section-1. Michael is an object of punitive action undergoing imprisonment and an object of charity being a patient in the hospital attached to the camp. Coetzee narrative point of view takes a shift from Third person narrative to first-person account of a Medical Officer who supervises K's treatment at the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp. The Medical officer grows inquisitive and carves out a meaning to K's reluctance to take food as a program of resistance. The Medical officer is shown as a representative of Empire, colonialism, and White South Africans extremely disillusioned at the chaotic conditions in his country. The Medical officer is assigned with the task of restoring health to patients like Michael K.

The Medical officer observes that he is the agent converting Michael to being a follower of the diktats of the state rejoining camp life marching back and forth across the race course shouting slogans and saluting the insignia practicing “digging holes and filling them up again” (133). The commanding officer is interestingly named Noel, being equally frustrated as the Medical officer, and invigorated by their official purpose. K is suspicious of the Medical officer's charity because he has learned from his mother's experience that benevolence is never innocent. After a lifetime of scrubbing other people's floors, Anna K is abandoned not only by her employers, but also by the society to whose economy she has contributed. K tells the Medical officer when she became old and sick her employers had forgotten her and put her away out of sight. When she died they threw her away into fire and gave Michael an “old box of ash” (136) asking him to “take her away, she is no good” (136) to them. Tired at Michael's silence in offering his story, the Medical officer warns him of being directed to back-breaking work of filling sandbags and digging holes “if you don't survive tough luck” (138). This resistance on the part of Michael K constitutes an apolitical withdrawal, when K tells the Medical Officer “I am not in the war” (138).

Michael K's unyielding attitude to tell his story and his escape from camps go at even length throughout the narrative. The resistance to tell his story gains its strength by turning it into a metafictional question of what constitutes a story. In the first section of the novel, the sense of nothingness becomes the gap in the narrative. The narrative seems to take a strange stride as Michael dozes off all the time listening to the silence pervading the farm. The silence of Michael K, which is a kind of resistance, can also be understood as being imposed by the colonizer on the colonized to push the colonized to the realms of obscurity. Dominic Head in *J.M. Coetzee* asserts that where issues of material advantage are concerned, “K's silence and compliance assist in his oppression” (1997: 98). The silence speaks out the strangled truth about the magnitude of suppression of the colonized. The Medical officer is disturbed at Michael K's rejection to render his story. Stephen Watson considers the Medical officer is wrought to a pitch of desperation by Coetzee, who in

their efforts “escape the intolerable burdens of the master-slave relationship” (1986: 378).

Both the Medical officer and Noel, the arsonist calls Michael as “Michaels” insisting on the plurality of the non-white countrymen much like every White South African. The Medical officer displays a spectrum of taking stance of Michael K ranging from compassion, to condescension and paternalism, to hostility, ending finally in idealization. Michael’s starved look spurs the officer to nurse him to bring Michael back to healthy state; he even offers to provide surgical correction to K’s harelip which is met with K’s unwillingness to ingest food of captivity, as he is reluctant to accept the bread of charity. The Medical officer concludes that K survives on “the bread of freedom” (146). Noel, the commanding officer is conscious of the real intent of running the Kenilworth camp, as he says that a war is being fought “so that minorities will have a say in their destinies” (157), but the objective at first does not seem admirable, since one of the minorities in South Africa, the White governing race is also fighting to preserve the “say in their destinies.”

Coetzee forecasts a grim future for the Afrikaner cause as the already overtaxed medical staff receives a shipment of four hundred new patients, many of them in “a state of life in death or death in life” (159). His paternalistic attitude is evidenced when the officer proclaims, “I am the only one who can save you” (151), commanding him to “yield” (152). Though the Medical officer’s opinions cannot always be trusted, the narrative perspective concurs with his description of K as “a great escape artist” (166), “a human soul above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, untouched by history” (151). His escape from History, whether intentional or passive, is what puzzles the Medical officer. He narrates in an imagined letter to Michael K

...we have all tumbled over the lip into the cauldron of history; only you, following your idiot light, biding your time in an orphanage (who would have thought of that as a hiding place?) evading the peace and the war, skulking in the open where no one dreamed of looking, have managed to live in the old way, drifting through time, observing the seasons, no more trying to change the course of history than a grain of sand does. We ought to value you and celebrate you, we ought to put your clothes on a maquette in a museum. (1984: 152)

What Michael K represents is a mode of existence that history has never encompassed. History is not only what devours individuality but also what witnesses one’s status. In the historical context of South Africa, Afrikaner history erases black Africans in double senses; that is, black Africans are recognized either as non-existing or as the other. Many critics have attributed positive significance to this elusiveness of Michael K. Coetzee, in his interview with Dick Penner referring to the two prominent features of the novel, one being Michael’s elusiveness and the other being the exclusion of racial specification of the protagonist points to a conspicuous strategy of resistance to the population Registration Act of 1950.

It is open to question whether Michael K’s disappearing so as to be forgotten can be an act of effective rebellion, since he confronts the authority through meek surrenderance rather than through a vehement revolt against the political anarchy. The

Medical officer finally resolves that the originality of Michael K's resistance lies in the fact that he does not resist at all.

As the time passed, however, I slowly began to see the originality of the resistance you offered. You were not a hero and didn't pretend to be, not even a hero of fasting....when we told you to jump, you jumped. When we told you to jump again, you jumped again. When we told you to jump a third time, however, you did not respond but collapsed in a heap; and we could all see, even the most unwilling of us, that you had failed because you had exhausted your resources in obeying us. (1984: 163)

To resist, paradoxically, Michael K chooses to obey. The power of domination gives rise to revolution as a natural phenomenon and revolution is the Siamese twin of domination and authority. But Michael's elusiveness develops a different logic transgressing duality of domination and revolution by being immune to be dominated or exploited through his elusiveness. Toward the end of his narrative, the Medical officer idealizes the unyielding Michael in an imaginary letter asking Michael to forgive him and is gratified for having chosen Michael "to show the way" (163) for him. Michael K's resistance to social, racial and political identifications must be understood as a tacit critique. The Medical officer convincingly insists, K's story an allegory "of how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence in a system without becoming a term in it" (166). His story stands as an emblem to the non-conformist's right to have freedom protected from the will of the community.

Section-3 of the novel is a brief one. At the end of the novel, K has come full cycle and is back in Cape Town, where he is offered food, drink and sex. He has survived, but his freedom is only a matter of degree. He has no money, for instance, and he cannot raise his own food although he is left with a half packet of seeds. The final section portrays a return to the beginning to where Michael's mother lived briefly in a room when she was sick in the Cape Town, near by a sea point. There by the sea, he finds love in a lavatory. He confronts two pimps and their whores, one of the pimps insist that K drink wine which causes dizziness to K. One of the prostitutes seduces Michael K, which makes him reflect that "I have become an object of charity" (181). He is extended charity by the people wherever he goes. The essence that Michael K has come to realize occupies significance as he contemplates the truth that "I have been a gardener....The truth, the truth about me. I am a gardener (181).

Michael had had the insight to tell his own story, he "would have told the story of a life passed in prisons" (181). He imagines himself as a gardener with "plenty of seeds.....seeds for each pocket" (182). The novel concludes as he dreams of finding a friend and returning to the farm. The novel ends with Coetzee reminding that earth endures, life endures. Michael remembers

.....the mountains purple and pink in the distance, the earth grey and brown beneath the sun save here and there, where if you looked carefully you suddenly saw a tip of vivid green, pumpkin leaf or carrot-bush" (1984: 183)

Towards the end of the novel, he considers the meaning of his experiences. He recalls the moral of the story and resolves that "there is time enough for everything? Is

that how morals come, unbidden” (183). This statement is treated by Kelly Hewson “as a definition of complacency” (67) in “Making the Revolutionary Gesture.” The novel concludes as he dreams of finding a friend and returning to the farm. There they stand, Michael K imagines, by the pump blown up by the soldiers. As his friend says “what are we going to do about water?” (183). Michael produces a teaspoon and a long roll of string from his pocket, clears the rubble from the mouth of the shaft bending the handle of the teaspoon in a loop tying the string to it. He lowers the bent spoon down the shaft deep into the earth fetching spoonful of water and in that way “he would say, one can live” (184).

The final line of the novel points to one of the many possibilities that through the exemplified resourcefulness of Michael a community can be founded though there is minimum subsistence. K dons the principal role of leading the people who want the “bread of freedom” (166). The final line suggests the means of achieving individuality and relying on interdependence, never missing the salience of individual integrity and privacy.

When Anna K, Michael’s mother, falls sick her son rejects everything represented by the father in South African culture, encompassing the military establishment, special institutions and penal system, and the war fought to defend and preserve them. The novel’s epigraph, drawn from Heraclitus’s *Cosmic Fragments*, presents the war, too, as belonging to the domain of the father:

War is the father of all and king of all.
Some he shows as gods, others as men.
Some he makes slaves, and others free.

The idea that war can produce order through strife is curiously close to the Foucauldian notion of power as a force dispersed through every level of social relations, including the production of subjectivity. Michael, however, is on a quest in the novel to discover who his true mother is. From the beginning of the book, K’s two mothers are closely associated. On the first page his harelip forces his natural mother to feed him with a teaspoon and on the last page is “fed” water, in an identical manner, by the earth, whose hills are elsewhere represented as “two plump breasts” (1983: 137).

As the mother opposes the father, gardening is the opposite of this corrosive notion of power. From the moment K leaves Cape Town and travels into the jaws of the war with his mother in the cart, his resistances become associated metonymically with the mother, and when K distributes her ashes like seeds and turns them into the soil of the farm, Coetzee exploits the symbolism of mother earth. Thus, out of the burial of his natural, biological mother is conceived the tending of his greater, cosmic one, and K can reply ambiguously to the doctor’s enquiries about her whereabouts saying “she makes the plants grow (1983: 178).

Coetzee’s fiction endeavors to unmask the power structure on which the representation and knowledge of the *other* relies. To some extent, realism, as a mode of representation embodies such power structure. David Atwell aptly points out that reflexivity and referentiality are not necessarily in contradiction with each other in Coetzee’s works, in which reflexivity is a key element, “directed at ‘the mechanics and assumption of composing, interpreting, structuring, positing’” (1993: 18). From

this point of view, Coetzee's rejection of realism doesn't mean that his fiction shuns reality, but it intends to challenge the assumptions about realistic representation which, more significantly, involves the authority of interpretation. As Dominic Head sums up Coetzee's concern in *Life & Times of Michael K*,

...Coetzee has termed 'limited omniscience' in the novel, a third-person narrative in which the extent of the narrator's knowledge about Michael K's story is unclear. In fact, an important impetus of the novel is to raise doubts about this knowledge; but there is still a convention of realism which suggests appropriation in the narrative mediation of Sections 1 and 3, akin, perhaps, to the medical officer's overt attempts at appropriation in section 2. (1997:98-99)

In other words, the third-person narrator's insufficient knowledge parallels the medical officer's failure to interpret. Even in the first and third sections, the purpose of "lingering realism" in the novel, to use Head's phrase (1997:98), is to expose the problem of realism.

While the portrayal of an oppressed protagonist wins applause from those who expect literature to be a social criticism, Michael K's eventual resistance to get in contact with his social and political milieu marks him as an anti-hero. The lack of any revolutionary solutions to the structural injustices renders both the text and Michael K's body vulnerable to attack. In fact, the text and the body are in a similar relation to history and politics. Michael K's precarious life on the verge of being devoured by history and politics corresponds to Coetzee's disbelief in the domination of history over the novel.

As David Atwell in *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* states about Coetzee's metafictional frame that produces the deconstructive gesture of the entire story. He states about "the capacity of the novel to 'get behind' itself and displace the power of interpretation in such a way that K is left uncontained at the point of closure" (1993: 99). The novel exposes the violence implicated in representing the other, and suffering successfully imbibed into the narrative. The narrative strikes at the sense that otherness and suffering in true terms can't be represented but must be felt. Michael K's inability to tell his mother's story should be understood as a refusal to lament a trauma that can't truthfully echo the trauma of suffering.

Thus, the narrative is the worshipping the earth as a deity with the protagonist serving it as an ecological priest. As Nadine Gordimer's incisive review "The Idea of Gardening" states

J.M. Coetzee has written a marvelous work that leaves nothing unsaid – and could not be better said – about what human being do to fellow human beings in South Africa. (1998: 143)

The Nobel committee in its citation for J.M. Coetzee commended

...he writes of men and women doing their best to duck under history or simply float above it".

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The Handmaid's Tale: The Carving Out of Feminist Space in Margaret Atwood's Novel

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Introduction

In Canada the modern feminist movement started in the early 1970s. It was an outgrowth of the women's liberation movement of America of the late sixties. The women's liberation movement in Canada showed women as a severely oppressed group. This movement, as in the USA, demanded equality for women in all social, economic, cultural, judicial, and sexual matters. The newly enlightened women launched a systematic campaign against economic discrimination, violence against women, and sexual ignominy. It is the patriarchal set up which reinforced the discriminatory treatment of women. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise observe that the essence of feminism is its idea about the personal, its insistence on the validity of women's experience and "its argument that an understanding of women's expression can be gained only through understanding and analysing everyday life, where oppression as well as everything else is grounded." Such oppression and tyranny affecting a woman are fundamentally the basic themes of the feminist movement.

Discussing the role of the writer in society Atwood remarks that the writer tends to concentrate more on life, not as it ought to be, but as it is, as the writer feels it, experiences it: "Writers are eye witnesses, I witness."

In her writing Atwood is concerned with the weak as against the strong victim versus the victimizer. A key word in any Atwood discussion is "survival". By survival Atwood does not mean continuity of mere physical existence, but a striving for dignity in the battle with society and circumstances. Almost all her protagonists are victimized - either by man or by authority or by a particular social environment. Atwood examines the place of women in modern society. She explores her identity in a commercialized, technological age. On the question of moral perfection traditional society has demanded of women, Atwood says thus:

Women are still expected to be better than men, morally that is, even by women, even by some branches of the women's movement and if you are not an angel, if you happen to have human feelings, as most of us do, especially if you display any kind of strength or power, creative or otherwise, then you are not human. You are worse than human, you are a witch, a Medusa, a destructive power scary monster.

Atwood allows her women protagonists the imperfection a normal human being possesses. She criticises the social system that assigns roles to the sexes and labels them as inferior or superior. Her portrayal is of a woman concerned with selfhood and with that vigorous aspiration deviating from norms of subservience to the dominant gender.

A woman writer is seen as an aberration, neurotically denying herself the delights of sex.

Regarding the male attitude towards the female and vice versa, Margaret Atwood says thus:

Why do men feel threatened by women? I asked a male friend of mine... "I mean," I said, "Men are bigger, most of the time, they can run faster, struggle better and they have on average a lot more money and power. They are afraid of women laugh at them," "he said, "Undercut their world over," then I asked women... Why do women feel threatened by men?" "they are afraid of being killed."

From this Atwood came to the conclusion that men and women are different in the range and scope of their threatenability. It is this threatenability, the victim-victimizer relationship, that Atwood explores in her novels. Her new woman refuses to be a victim, but in the process of refusal she faces the indignities that are showered upon women.

Yet another important feature of Margaret Atwood's fiction is that it is post-modern in its use and abuse of traditional literary conventions, including novelistic realism. Also, as some one "formed" in the 60's, Atwood is at ease with the political dimension of post-modernism. In the early seventies she was best known for her Canadian nationalism and for her feminism. Her short and powerful lyric poems were written alongside her long narrative pieces almost as a kind of allegory of the tension between product and process that persists in her work. An advantage of the narrative as a form of investigation for a political writer like Atwood is that while poetry is often seen as the place where language is renewed, the novel has been seen as a more powerful and appropriate vehicle for social and ideological critique. The novel posits greater common assumption between reader and writer or it carries a didactic desire to create that commonality. But if the novel is written in metafiction, a new tension between didactic motivation and the more inward-directed self-reflexivity is introduced.

The Handmaid's Tale is an important novel in the Atwood canon. We are constantly made aware of the fact that a fictive world is created and our participation in that world involves us in the process of creation which we share with the author. Here is the core of Atwood's postmodernism. With the participation comes the responsibility – political and moral; public and personal. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a novel where politics and metafictional parody meet in a nightmarish projection of both history and its modes of narration. The oral/written paradox appears in the frame tale. Here it is again the female who is associated with the oral and male with the written. A simultaneous mixture of involvement and distance constitutes this postmodern novel. Self-conscious about the fact that this is a dystopia created out of words associated with feminist rhetoric, consumerist advertising, literalist fundamentalist ranting, *The Handmaid's Tale* offers us a world carried to an extreme. It gives us a vision of the implications of current ideological trends. Here men still rule and women still collude. It would not be hard to read this novel in terms of the extreme of the imposition of a certain kind of female order. Women are respected above all for their mothering function. Women burn pornography and punish deviation from the norm. There exist an Underground Femaleroad. Gilead may be patriarchal in form, but in content much is matriarchal. *The*

Handmaid's Tale is an overtly political fable. The narrator self-consciously tries to tell her story. It is a true one, but the narrator realises that it is ordered, constructed, and fictionalised. The protagonist tries to become pregnant in order to retain her position in her society as one of the rare fertile women. The travails of creativity are thus both narrative and physical. Atwood once declared that "fiction is the guardian of the moral and ethical sense of the community." Atwood thus is one of the most important novelists belonging to the postmodern phase. She is at the centre of the Canadian imagination. Survival for her means that there is no dominance or submission but that all individuals are free to determine their lives as equals.

The Handmaid's Tale: The Carving Out Of Feminist Space

The Handmaid's Tale is Margaret Atwood's international award-winning best seller. It is a critique of female brutalization articulated in *Bodily Harm*. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a cautionary and poignant tale that dramatizes a futuristic, bleak, totalitarian society where women are denied the basic rights. The novel is a kind of anti-Utopia of the not-too-distant future as reflected through the voice of Offred, a handmaid and one of the victims in the theocracy.

Patriarchy and colonialism are both power structures which operate on similar principles. Colonialism may well be seen as a paradigm of patriarchy in feminist literary discourse. This is because gender relations provide the "blue-print for all other power relationships" and are "the model for power relations between generations, socio-economic classes, relations, racial and ethnic groups as well as between imperial powers and their colonies."

Both patriarchy and colonialism involve relationships of domination and suppression, assumed superiority and imposed inferiority, where the dominated is forced to take up the oppressed, exploited victim position. Both in patriarchy and colonialism, various subversive tactics may be resorted to by the dominated group – open rebellion, secret revolt, formation of defiant groups, outward submission accompanied by a slow carving out of inner independent space, acts of subversion and sabotage, and the creation of free space through written or oral language composition.

According to Northrop Frye, Canada is "the only country left in the world which is a pure colony, colonial in psychology, as well as mercantile economics." Just as colonial power structures seem to be built into the collective unconscious of Canada, patriarchal power structures too have left their impact on the female psyche. A sensitive and consciously self-aware writer like Margaret Atwood exposes these power structures and their effects on both those who exercise power and those who are subjected to it. While colonial domination is a recurrent theme with the Canadian male writer, women writers see colonialism as a metaphor of the gender power-struggle. In Linda

Hutcheon's opinion, "In all her writing, Atwood shows herself to be the tireless exposed and exposes of cultural clichés and stereotypes, in particular of those that affect women." In *Handmaid's Tale*, "the colonies" are mentioned in a purely negative sense as a symbol of exploitation, isolation and alienation, where people are used as objects or functions.

Atwood's dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, imitates the epistolary form with a slight difference: it is recorded and not written - a cumbersome exercise in the twentieth century with all technical amenities at our command. Writing or recording,

both a form of speech, is denied to our protagonist in the theocratic society of Gilead, situated in South Dakota, U.S., and established by religious fanatics. The protagonist's "own story" recalled from memory is transcribed by Professor Pieixoto, an activist. It cannot be the authentic version, yet it reaches us. It may be controlled and altered by patriarchy, but it is surely an approximation to and reconstruction of the protagonist's version.

Offred, the protagonist in *The Handmaid's Tale*, escapes from the Republic of Gilead to the Undergrowth Female Road to tell her tale of victimization. Freedom of speech is a capital offence in Gilead. She uses "language" as a means of communication to unlock her inner feelings and bitter experiences. Language is as well a "subversive-weapon" to tell her tale. Her tale addresses itself to the marginalization of women. She tells her tale with a sense of commitment to expose how dignity and autonomy of women are neglected by anarchic and repressive societies like the Republic of Gilead. She also suggests ways and means to surmount the barriers to woman's individuality and autonomy. Offred's power of word triumphs despite the barriers constructed by time and man.

Offred, the protagonist, now the handmaid of Commander Fred, was picked up as she, along with her husband and daughter, was attempting to escape from this country. Her husband is probably dead and the daughter quite possibly is in one of the Morality Schools and is being adequately trained either to become the wife of some unknown Angel or to serve a Commander as a future handmaid. In either case, her womb is to be colonized. Like Rennie, the central character in *Bodily Harm*, Offred is placed in Red Centre for training. Such "speculative literature," as Atwood defines it, is built up from the experiences of the past and the present and extended to the future.

Despite the strict regimentation at their training centre, the handmaids communicate with one another "through whispers, lip reading and touch, while lying flat, each in her own bed." The protagonist manages to communicate with her former friend Moira who also arrives at the same training centre. Despite the ban on all communication between the handmaids and the Marthas, one of the housekeepers, Cora develops a liking for Offred and is even willing to lie for her once. For Offred, it is a triumph in itself, a subversive carving out of female space.

Offred, the narrator of *The Handmaid's Tale*, is one of the several "handmaids" who, because of their "viable ovaries" (135) are to be recruited for "breeding purposes" of the "Commanders of the Faith" who are childless as a result of their wives' infertility. The Republic of Gilead is openly misogynistic, in both its theory and practice. The state reduces the handmaids to the slavery status of being mere "breeders." As Offred says, "We are two-legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices" (128). If the handmaid becomes pregnant, the child she bears will be regarded as that of the Commander and his wife. After the delivery the handmaid has to surrender the child to her mistress. So the handmaid must act as surrogate mother and bear a child for the aging Commander with the collusion of his barren wife by a literal enactment of the device invented by Rachel in the Bible. In this way the handmaid is desexed and dehumanized.

The Handmaid is proclaimed an "unwoman" if she does not succeed by the end of her third two-year posting. The dire alternative for her is the punishment of

banishment to the colonies where women clean up radioactive waste as slave labourers. Thus, the dictates of state policy in Gilead relegate sex to a saleable commodity exchanged for mere minimal survival. In contrast, male sterility in Gilead is unthinkable. As Offred says, "there are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law" (57). So women are judged by double standards of morality in respect of infertility.

Offred in her autobiography, *The Handmaid's Tale*, "sets before us ... her desperate struggle to reconstruct her being across an all but unbridgeable, violent severing of time before and after the imposition of Gilead. To do this she must insist upon her own script, in a world where her voice has been erased and her role in life rescripted for her by others, where her meaning, use and plot are totally controlled by other interest and forces." Despite the call of authority to forget, to be silent and thus remain effaced, pilotless, Offred's response is defiant. Her scripting of the self through memory and language proclaims the defeat of Gilead's monologicistic authoritarian discourse. In this venture, Gilead is the fountainhead of all activity. Every action of Offred, like having a physical relationship with Nick, every symbol like playing of the scrabble, every image like that of the wall, square, church, shops, the use of Bilhah's myth, the hint of chosen words like 'ceremony', 'salvagings', and 'participation' (the execution of male offenders through the participation of women by way of lynching), demonstrates a poet's control of structures, symbols, and words. Atwood is more a poet than a fiction writer and her initial orientation as a poet has enriched her style. Her protagonist, explicitly and more often implicitly, sings her music that is perfectly audible and comprehensible to the discerning ear. "*The Handmaid's Tale* though written in the tight-lipped minimalist style that has become an Atwood trade-mark, conceals an ultimate insight that is far more complex and illusive."

When Gilead first came into being, the very first step of the new regime had been to freeze women's credit cards and bank accounts and take away their jobs and property rights, thus destroying their financial independence which is the primary requisite in any true liberation of women. With the loss of her job, the protagonist had felt stripped of her independence and individuality, perceiving herself as a doll-wife. Moreover, the state cancels the original names of the handmaids in order to erase their former identity and labels them according to names of their Commanders. It is metaphoric of the silencing of women that their names have been given by the state.

Hence "Offred," the narrator's relational naming, is not a name but a tag that she wears to signify that she is the handmaid "of Fred."

The separation of women according to their functions in Gilead promotes their fragmentation. The wives are mainly decorative in functions and are dressed in blue. The middle-aged housekeepers called Marthas are dressed in green. When they become weak and sick and cease working, they are deported to the colonies. The handmaids, dressed in red, are young women in their twenties or thirties and serve as child-bearers to elderly childless Commanders. In addition to the handmaids, the Republic of Gilead offers its own state-sponsored brand of sex prostitutes called the Jezebels whose sole function is to entertain foreign delegations. The Aunts, the police women of Gilead who are clad in paramilitary khaki, train the handmaids. Thus women are completely controlled by men and are arranged in a hierarchy of value in Gilead. Therefore Offred's

The Handmaid's Tale posits a "future culture in which such feminist dreams have been replaced by fundamentalist patriarchy that divides women into rigid categories based on function."

Offred, the handmaid, in her "reduced circumstances" (99) obeys "ritualized subjugation" to the ruling elite because she knows what the statement "Give me children, or else ... die" (Genesis) means. She is compelled to discharge her duties as a handmaid knowing fully well the consequences. Under the pressure of terrifying alternatives, Offred feels, "I resign my body freely to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me. I am object" (268). Offred is forced into pregnancy tests every month. The doctor who examines Offred and other handmaids periodically for signs of pregnancy never sees their faces. The Commander who attempts to impregnate her once a month is indifferent to her appearance. As appearance is unimportant for the commanders, the handmaids are not given face cream. Their bath is regulated by others. Their eating of food is not chosen by them. For minor offences like reading, their arms and legs which are seen as inessential for reproduction, are ruthlessly chopped off.

According to Offred, language in the Republic of Gilead is officially forbidden because the ruling class recognizes the power of words as weapons that can free the people from bondage. In Gilead only the ruling class has access to books. As part of the training, the handmaids are required to recite the Biblical injunctions which are distorted to reinforce their submissiveness. Biblical and Marxist teachings are blended and distorted in the effort to brainwash the handmaids: "From each says the slogan, according to her ability; to each according to his needs. We recited that three times, after dessert. It was from the Bible, or so they said St. Paul again in Acts" (111). Offred's ironic comment "or so they said" casts doubt on the authority of the statement and forces us to note also the use of the pronouns "her" and "his" as yet another evidence of the oppression of women in Gilead. So Offred questions the authority of patriarchal language which comes from the reservoir of male discourse. Women in Gilead are denied books, paper, pens, and even scrabble is a clandestine activity. Shops are identified by pictures rather than by names "they decided that even the names of shops were too much temptation for us" (24). Thus, words are themselves forbidden in a society governed by The Word.

Offred recalls her visceral connections to the husband and daughter from whom she has been so abruptly separated. She mourns a holistic love for them.

No body dies from lack of sex. It's lack of love we die from. There is nobody here I can love, all the people I could love are dead or elsewhere ... Where they are or what their names are now? They might as well be nowhere, as I am for them. I too an a missing person. From time to time I can see their faces, against the dark, flickering like th images of saints ... I can conjure them. (97)

In this way, Offred endorses a genuine and holistic love for her husband and daughter. She hopes she will receive a message that keeps her alive.

It is through Nick, the Commander's chauffeur, that Offred associates herself with underground network which shifts her from "being a helpless victim to being a sly, subversive survivor." Ultimately Offred is rescued by Nick, the Private Eye and the

Underground May day resistance group who have come in the "black van." Nick calls her by her real name and says, "It's May day. Go with them" (275).

The Handmaid's Tale is not presented as history or *his* story, i.e. a story from a man's point of view, but as her story, the story of Offred, narrated by herself orally. The narration is made off and on, not chronologically, into a recording machine and preserved in tapes. Annis Pratt's generalization about women's fiction could perhaps be applied to Offred's narrative: "Women's fiction manifests alienation from normal concepts of time and space precisely because the presentation of time by persons on the margins of day-today life inevitably deviates from ordinary chronology.

The novel concludes with an Epilogue, supposedly placed about 200 years after Offred. The Epilogue presents the male point of view of the woman's story, which had formed the main narrative. This becomes the frame or perspective against which the novel acquires depth. There is much ambivalence in the Epilogue. The Epilogue gives hints and clues regarding the main story, in case the reader has missed them, and yet it laughs at critical interpretations of the story by posterity.

There is also ambivalence of another kind in this novel. There are moments when feminism itself seems to be viewed ambivalently and a woman's culture is seen to be not an unmixed blessing. This is seen, for example, in Chapter 21, in the description of the natural childbirth, in which Wives, Aunts and Handmaids all participate. Offred apostrophizes her feminist mother in imagination.

In all of Atwood's fiction formalist concerns (such as parody and metafictional self-reflexivity) are never separate from political ones, and this is largely because of the very postmodern paradox that ties them together. In Atwood's own constantly repeated terms, this is the paradox of art as both product and process, as both artifact and part of life.

Conclusion

The Handmaid's Tale is a critique of female brutalization, a theme articulated in *Bodily Harm*. It is a dystopian novel by Atwood which imitates the epistolary form with a slight difference. It is recorded, not written. The protagonist's "own story" recalled from memory is transcribed by Prof. Pieixto, an activist. The narrative may be controlled and ordered by patriarchy, but it is surely an approximation and reconstruction of the protagonist's version. Offred, the protagonist, uses language as a means of communication to unlock her inner feelings. Her tale involves an exposure of how dignity and autonomy of women are negated by anarchic and repressive societies. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a piece of 'speculative literature' built up out of the experiences of the past and present and extending to the future. The novel concludes with an Epilogue which gives us hints about the main story and yet it exposes the critical interpretations of the story by posterity. There is yet another ambivalence in the novel. That is feminism itself appears to have been viewed in certain contexts with certain ambivalence. An overtly political fable, *The Handmaid's Tale* shows how in Atwood's fiction formalist concerns and political ones are never separate and this is a paradoxical postmodern phenomenon. If *Cat's Eye* is a woman painter's cynical retrospective principally on her relationships with other women and feminism, *The Handmaid's Tale* is most often labelled feminist dystopia. The novel is offered as a prediction of the future only if its warnings against oppressive central powers to mute protest are ignored.

The world of Gilead is not quite an inevitable destiny. *The Handmaid's Tale* resists labels that place it within a particular generic stream. The maintenance of a multiple identity is shown in the novel to be part of a policy of subversion of the dominant. The perspective given by the final chapter, that what we grasp as a single text is in fact a reassembled account from a surviving jumble of cassette recordings, shows how the novel reiterates its uncertain, problematic relations with the concept of a single reality, one identity, a truthful history as propagated by the political orthodoxy of Gilead. There are four levels of narrative time in *The Handmaid's Tale*. One of them is the pre-revolution past characterized by the narrator's memories of her childhood with her mother, her student days with Moira, her memories of her daughter, and her relationship with Luke. The second level of narrative time refers to the period of revolution itself and the time immediately subsequent to it. At yet another level we have the Gileadean time. It is this narratorial period that is interrupted by the dream sequences. The Gileadean present is what the narrator is telling her tale about, although the events at this present are still retold as past occurrences narrated retrospectively. At the fourth level we have the time of the present, the period of the Symposium of Gileadean studies. The novel suggests that the privileging of history, in the form of authentic first person account of the past, as something more truthful and accurate than fiction, is fallacious. The narrator insists that the tale she is telling is a reconstruction which is going to be at some level inaccurate, partial, incomplete, because it is retrospective. But she suggests that this status, neither wholly fact nor complete fiction, is something that her story has in common with other historiographic metanarratives. *The Handmaid's Tale* is dystopian fiction, but also historiographic metafiction with a confessional journal-style first person narrator.

Many novels of Atwood deal with woman's experience in a male-dominated culture. They present the woman caught in oppressive stereotypes and they show how some women struggle to create a female space for themselves. This may be done through autonomy of thought through self definition and reconstruction of the self, through bonding among women, and through a refusal to take up the victim position or the role of subjugation.

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Language Learning Strategies for Second Language Teachers

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People need to learn a second language because of globalization; connections are becoming inevitable among nations, states and organizations which create a huge need for knowing another language or more multilingualism. The uses of common languages are in areas such as trade, tourism, international relations between governments, technology, media and science. Therefore, many countries such as Japan (Kubota, 1998) and China (Kirkpatrick & Zhichang, 2002) frame education policies to teach at least one foreign language at primary and secondary school level. However, some countries such as India, Singapore, Malaysia and Philippines use a second official language in their governing system. Many Indian people are giving enormous importance to foreign language learning, especially learning the English Language.

This article provides an overview of language learning strategies (language learning strategies hereafter LLS) for second and foreign language (hereafter L2/FL) teachers. Teachers may follow this approach in using LLS in their classes, and summarizes key reflections and questions for future research on this aspect of L2/FL education. It also lists helpful contacts and internet sites where readers may access up-to-date information on LLS teaching and research.

Keywords: second language, learning strategies, teachers, education, information.

Introduction

Within the field of education over the last few decades a gradual but significant shift has taken place, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching and greater stress on learners and learning. This change has been reflected in various ways in language education and applied linguistics, ranging from the Northeast Conference (1990) entitled "Shifting the Instructional Focus to the Learner" and annual "Learners' Conferences" held in conjunction with the TESL Canada convention since 1991, to key works on "the learner-centered curriculum" (Nunan, 1988, 1995) and "learner-centeredness as language education" (Tudor, 1996).

This article provides an overview of language learning strategies (LLS) in second and foreign language (L2/FL) learning and teaching. In doing so, the first section outlines some background on LLS and summarizes key points from the LLS literature. The second section considers some practical issues related to using LLS in the classroom, outlining a three step approach to implementing LLS training in normal L2/FL courses.

A Brief Overview

Within L2/FL education, a number of definitions of LLS have been used by key figures in the field. LS as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language -- to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence". Rubin (1987) later wrote that LS "are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined learning

strategies (LS) broadly as "behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning" which are "intended to influence the learner's encoding process". Later Mayer (1988) more specifically defined LS as "behaviours of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information". Clearly, LS are involved in all learning, regardless of the content and context. LS are thus used in learning and teaching mathematics, science, history, languages and other subjects, both in classroom settings and more informal learning environments.

Thus, in conclusion it can be said that language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability.

The Importance of LLS for L2/FL Learning and Teaching

Within 'communicative' approaches to language teaching a key goal is for the learner to develop communicative competence in the target L2/FL, and LLS can help students in doing so. Communication strategies are used by speakers intentionally and consciously in order to cope with difficulties in communicating in a L2/FL. For all L2 teachers who aim to develop their students' communicative competence and language learning, then, an understanding of LLS is crucial.

In addition to developing students' communicative competence, LLS are important because research suggests that training students to use LLS can help them become better language learners. This section provides an overview of how LLS and LLS training have been or may be used in the classroom, and briefly describes a three step approach to implementing LLS training in the L2/FL classroom.

Three main types of direct LLS are : **Memory strategies** "aid in entering information into long-term memory and retrieving information when needed for communication". Cognitive LLS "are used for forming and revising internal mental models and receiving and producing messages in the target language". **Compensation strategies** "are needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language" **Metacognitive strategies** "help learners exercise 'executive control' through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating their own learning". Affective LLS "enable learners to control feelings, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning". Finally, social strategies "facilitate interaction with others, often in a discourse situation".

Contexts and Classes for LLS Training

LLS and LLS training may be integrated into a variety of classes for L2/FL students. One type of course that appears to be becoming more popular, especially in intensive English programmes, is one focusing on the language learning process itself. In this case, texts such as Ellis and Sinclair's (1989) *Learning to Learn English: A Course in Learner Training* or Rubin and Thompson's (1994) *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner* might be used in order to help L2/FL learners understand the language learning process, the nature of language and communication, what language learning resources are available to them, and what specific LLS they might use in order to improve their own vocabulary use, grammar knowledge, and L2/FL skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Perhaps more common are integrated L2/FL courses where these four skills are taught in tandem, and in these courses those books might be considered as supplementary texts to help learners focus on the LLS that can help them learn L2/FL skills and the LLS they need to acquire them. In this writer's experience, still more common is the basic L2/FL listening, speaking, reading, or writing course where LLS training can enhance and complement the L2/FL teaching and learning. Whatever type of class you may

be focusing on at this point, the three step approach to implementing LLS training in the classroom outlined below should prove useful.

Study teaching Context

It is crucial for teachers to study their teaching context, paying special attention to their students, their materials, and their own teaching. By observing their behaviour in class, for example, you will be able to see what LLS they already appear to be using. Do they often ask for clarification, verification, or correction, as discussed briefly above? Do they co-operate with their peers or seem to have much contact outside of class with proficient L2/FL users? Beyond observation, however, one can prepare a short questionnaire that students can fill in at the beginning of a course, describing themselves and their language learning. I ask students to complete statements such as "In this class I want to/will/won't...", "My favourite/least favourite kinds of class activities are...", "I am studying English because...", etc.. Talking to students informally before or after class, or more formally interviewing select students about these topics can also provide a lot of information about one's students, their goals, motivations, and LLS, and their understanding of the particular course being taught.

An EFL writing text I use brief sections on making one's referents clear, outlining, and choosing the right vocabulary, all of which may be modelled and used in LLS training in my composition course. Audiotapes, videotapes, hand-outs, and other materials for the course at hand should also be examined for LLS or for specific ways that LLS training might be implemented in using them. Perhaps teachers will be surprised to find many LLS incorporated into their materials, with more possibilities than they had imagined. If not, they might look for new texts or other teaching materials that do provide such opportunities.

Teachers need to study their own teaching methods and overall classroom style. One way to do so is to consider your lesson plans. Do they incorporate various ways that students can learn the language you are modeling, practicing or presenting, in order to appeal to a variety of learning styles and strategies? Does your teaching allow learners to approach the task at hand in a variety of ways? Is your LLS training implicit, explicit, or both? By audio taping or videotaping one's classroom teaching an instructor may objectively consider just what was actually taught and modeled, and how students responded and appeared to learn. Is your class learner-centered? Do you allow students to work on their own and learn from one another? As you circulate in class, are you encouraging questions, or posing ones relevant to the learners with whom you interact? Whether formally in action research or simply for informal reflection, teachers who study their students, their materials, and their own teaching will be better prepared to focus on LLS and LLS training within their specific teaching context.

Reflect and Encourage Learner reflection

This section requires teacher reflection, echoing a current trend in pedagogy and the literature in L2/FL education. However, in implementing LLS and LLS training in the L2/FL classroom, purposeful teacher reflection and encouraging learner reflection form a necessary step. On a basic level, it is useful for teachers to reflect on their own positive and negative experiences in L2/FL learning. As Graham suggests, "those teachers who have thought carefully about how they learned a language, about which strategies are most appropriate for which tasks, are more likely to be successful in developing 'strategic competence' in their students" (p. 170). Beyond contemplating one's own language learning, it is also crucial to reflect on one's LLS training and teaching in the classroom. After each class, for example, one might ponder the effectiveness of the lesson and the role of LLS and LLS training within it. Do students seem to have grasped the point? Did they use the LLS that was modeled in the task they were to perform?

What improvements for future lessons of this type or on this topic might be gleaned from students' behavior? An informal log of such reflections and one's personal assessment of the class, either in a notebook or on the actual lesson plans, might be used later to reflect on LLS training in the course as a whole after its completion. In my experience I have found, that rather than limiting my perspective to specific LLS such reflection helps me to see the big picture and focus on "teaching how to learn" within my L2/FL classes.

In addition to the teacher's own reflections, it is essential to encourage learner reflection, both during and after the LLS training in the class or course. In my research study involving "guided reflection" did this by asking his students to keep a journal in which they completed the following sentences: This week I studied..., I learned..., I used my English in these places..., I spoke English with these people..., I made these mistakes..., My difficulties are..., I would like to know..., I would like help with..., My learning and practicing plans for the next week are... asked her learners to complete simple self- evaluation forms at various points during their course. I used student diaries, questionnaires, and interviews to carry out my research and help her students reflect on their LLS and language learning. These are just a few examples from the current literature of various ways to encourage learner reflection on language learning. As Graham declares, "For learners, a vital component of self-directed learning lies in the on-going evaluation of the methods they have employed on tasks and of their achievements within the...programme" (p. 170). Whatever the context or method, it is important for L2/FL learners to have the chance to reflect on their language learning and LLS use.

One example of implementing LLS training within a normal L2/FL class from my experience in teaching After studying my teaching context by considering my part-time, evening college students (most of whom were working) and their LLS, the course textbook and other materials, and my own teaching, I became convinced that I should not only introduce LLS but also teach them and encourage learners to reflect on them and their own learning. To make this LLS training specific and relevant to these ESL students, I gave a short-lecture early in the course on the importance of vocabulary and learning and using English, and then focused on specific vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) by highlighting them whenever they were relevant to class activities. In practicing listening, there were exercises on multi-definition words, and after finishing the activity I introduced ways students could expand their vocabulary knowledge by learning new meanings for multi-definition words they already know. I then talked with students about ways to record such words and their meanings on vocabulary cards or in a special notebook, in order for them to reinforce and review such words and meanings they had learned.

In order to encourage learner reflection, later in the course I used a questionnaire asking students about their vocabulary learning and VLS in and outside of class, and the following week gave them a generic but individualized vocabulary knowledge test where students provided the meaning, part of speech, and an example sentence for up to 10 words each person said he or she had 'learned'. I marked these and handed them back to students the next week, summarizing the class results overall and sparking interesting class discussion. For more information on the research that I carried out in conjunction with this activity What became obvious both to me and my students in that attempt at LLS training was that vocabulary learning is a very individualized activity which requires a variety of VLS for success in understanding and using English vocabulary, whether or not one is eventually 'tested' on it. Though this is just one example of implementing LLS training in a normal L2/FL class, hopefully readers will be able to see how this general three step approach to doing so may be adapted for their own classroom teaching.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief overview of LLS. It has also outlined some ways that LLS training has been used and offered a three step approach for teachers to consider in implementing it within their own L2/FL classes. In my experience, using LLS and LLS training in the L2/FL class not only encourages learners in their language learning but also helps teachers reflect on and improve their teaching.

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Transforming Realities vis-à-vis Postmodern Indian English Fiction

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The towering figures of Indian English Fiction like Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Kamala Markandaya had a strong commitment to expose the harsh realities of life to effect the desired transformation in society. Nationalism, partition, poverty, peasantry, subjugated women, rural-urban divide, East-West encounter, feudal practices, casteism and communalism were some of the themes quite closer to their heart. Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Markandaya are deified as path-breakers of Indian writing in English for their portrayal of contemporary Indian life in a truthful manner. If Raja Rao was upheld as “an Indian writer using mysticism to explore the spiritual unity of east and west,” R.K. Narayan was acclaimed by V.S. Naipaul for his interest in “the lesser life that goes on below: small men, small schemes, big talk, limited means: a life so circumscribed that it appears whole and unviolated, its smallness never a subject for wonder, though India itself is felt to be vast.” Similarly, Mulkraj Anand and Kamala Markandaya are revered for “Anand (was) to Indian people what Anton Chekhov was to Russians: a profound interpreter of their lives, an analyser of their deepest conflicts, a verbaliser of their agonies” and for the dominant theme of Markandaya being “the intersection of rural and urban life in India and the unrealized dreams of peasants seeking their fortunes in the factory.” Besides, the partition narratives present a harrowing picture of the consequences of separation so much so that an entire generation had to bear that stigma for one reason or the other. In an essay written in 1989, Anita Desai is all praise for Indian English Fiction of those days when she comments:

The changing landscapes of life, politics, geography, hunger, love, are explored in contemporary Indian fiction, as in literature of the country's past.... A character in R. K. Narayan's story is both "from far away" and going "far away again" not unlike Indian authors today... Indian authors are impelled by a knowledge of the past and a visionary stance toward the present; they take keen notice of the struggles.”

Taking a departure from the first generation of Indian English novelists, the Postmodern Indian English novelists have concentrated on an entirely new-fangled set of themes which are as wide-ranging and complex as the life in the age of globalisation is. Engrossed with the emerging issues like globalisation and subsequent multiculturalism, postfeminism, cyber-feminism, queer theories, cultural conflicts, diaspora sensibility, glamour, consumerism, commodification, BPOs, upward mobility and consequent erosion of ethical values, and transforming public sphere, the present generation of novelists seems to have buried down the erstwhile fundamental issues. It is in this context that the present paper aims at exploring the range of themes undertaken by the postmodern Indian English writers.

‘Postmodernism’ in itself is a complex phenomenon as it is neither a complete negation nor an acceptance of modernism. Merriam Webster’s Dictionary defines Postmodernism as “of, relating to, or being any of various movements in reaction to modernism that are typically characterized by a return to traditional materials and forms (as in architecture) or by ironic self-reference and absurdity (as in literature)” or “of, relating to, or being a theory that involves a radical reappraisal of modern assumptions about culture, identity, history, or language.” Holding the realities to be plural and relative, it involves the belief that most of the seeming realities are only social constructs, as they are relative and subject to change with the temporal or spatial changes. Postmodernism emphasizes the role of language, power relations, and motivations and is against the sharp distinctions such as male

versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial. Perhaps, taking clue from the generalised definition of the term, postmodern Indian English writers have taken excessive advantage and liberty to evade even the key social concerns like poverty, debt-ridden farmers, and underprivileged sections of society. The postmodernist discourses have made the issues of identity and nationality as all the more complex. It is quite amazing that even the novelists who are being conferred the coveted prizes like Nobel, Booker or Pulitzer have now no ink left for the portrayal of poverty which brings India disgrace for it being the home of the largest number of poor people. Present generation of Indian novelists in English seemed to have travelled far from a rich literary heritage which championed the cause of even the most underprivileged in the novels like *So Many Hungers* and *Untouchable*. Apart from it, to hide their apathy, the novelists like V.S. Naipaul who is held in high regard by the countrymen, shun India with harsh satiric remarks like “Indians defecate everywhere,” and “No other country I knew had so many layers of wretchedness, and few countries were as populous... country where, separate from the rest of the world, a mysterious calamity had occurred.”

Cross-border migrations being common during colonial/postcolonial period, and more frequent during the reforms period, there are scores of Indian diasporic writers including Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Nirad C. Choudhury, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, M.G. Vassanji, Farrukh Dhondy, Amit Chaudhury, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, to name only a few who have lured the readers and academia across the world by producing the literature depicting typical diasporic sensibility among the émigré and expatriates. Their works capture the essential diasporic complexities by reflecting upon Jacques Lacan’s concept of mimicry which “reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage....it is not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.”¹ This mimicking tendency goes hand in hand with other concepts like interstice, hybridity or liminality resulting into diasporic ambivalence characterised by love-hate relationship with the native or alien culture, Freudian heimlich-unheimlich dichotomy where ‘heimlich’ signifies “pleasures of the hearth” while ‘unheimlich’ signifies “terror of the space or race of the other” further leading to the generalised politics of home and abroad. The portrayal of nostalgia for the native culture is beautifully contrasted with Indian diaspora’s temptation towards the glamourised Western World. Meanwhile, the double consciousness of the Indian diaspora abroad, like other diasporas, is “not merely double, but a reality that involves the crossing of an indeterminate number of borderlines, one that remains multiple in its hyphenations.” The Indian diasporic literature has been quite rewarding for the authors of Indian origin and the compatriots because it fetched Nobel Prize for V.S. Naipaul, Booker for Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai and Pulitzer for Jhumpa Lahiri.

The novels like *Midnight’s Children*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *Such a Long Journey*, *The Palace of Illusions*, *Desirable Daughters*, *Inheritance of Loss*, *A Suitable Boy*, *The Assassin’s Song*, *Difficult Daughters*, *English*, *August*, *The God of Small Things*, *The White Tiger*, *One night @ Call Center*, and many others established new canons in Indian writing in English. First two books in the list i.e. *Midnight’s Children* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* made India take pride in the authors of Indian origin who could sense the essential predicaments of Indians at certain points of history i.e. one during the independence and consequent partition, and another during the colonial days of utter poverty and deprivation which made people sign the bonds for Indentured labour. In spite of the fact that the whole oeuvre of the two celebrated writers is derivative of their Indian experience, the reader finds the characteristic elements of empathy, concern and commitment for the real issues troubling

ordinary Indians (which were the guiding principles for the first generation of Indian English novelists) lacking in great measure. In addition to that, the Indians had to reconsider their sentimental approach to these writers with the publication of Naipaul's Indian Trilogy whose titles—*An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilisation* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* signify the sarcastic attitude of the novelist towards the land of his ancestors.

With the changing Indian realities in the context of globalisation and immigration, national identity as well as the literature is bound to change. We have emerged from the darkness of illiteracy to near universalization of elementary education: from darkness of superstition and colonial subjugation to the realisation of 'selfhood'; from the trauma of partition to the celebration of multiculturalism and inter-culturalism, from the hegemony of caste-based hierarchy to *sanskritisation* and upliftment of *dalits* and subalterns; from a sluggish economic growth rate to a resilient growth rate; from under-developed country to an emerging nation; from the borrower of technology to the domineering status in science, technology and software engineering; from a country of indentured labourers to a capable diaspora abroad and one of the most attractive foreign direct investment destination; and from restricted access to transport, communication and career options to a massive road and rail network (along with metro trains, bullet and Duronto trains) and easy access to telecommunication and web-services; from a limited number of English language speakers to India now taking pride in hosting probably the largest number of industry-ready professionals who are proficient in both spoken and written English, besides phenomenal transformation in every walk of life. Now, "India is big and India is young. Its size and its demographics, together with its growth potential, have made it a fashionable market. Marketers from around the world and within India are betting big on these two aspects of the country...." Erstwhile begging bowl is now identified as a nation already 'emerged' and as one of the fastest growing economy; previously agriculture based economy is now gearing towards more sophisticated service-led economy; the agenda of self-sufficiency and over-reliance on indigenous products are now replaced by global competence and consumerist practices of open-market; the decadal growth of female literacy rate has surpassed the male literacy rate; and Indian culture as a whole seemed to have undergone phenomenal transformation. Similarly, the social sector has also shown tremendous growth during eleven five-year plans and the erstwhile vulnerable sections like women, unorganised labour, farmers, scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, and backward classes are now given importance so much so that they are not only provided with insurance cover, finance packages or reservation in jobs, but also with the confidence that they now hold the important political and administrative posts at national and state levels. Further, the eight Millennium Development Goals and targets are largely contributing in eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; universal primary education; gender equality and women empowerment; reduction of child mortality; improvement in maternal health; combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; environmental sustainability; and most importantly, global partnership for development.

Now, it is the time when '*Sanskritisation*', consumerism and commoditization characterise Indian sociology. M.N. Srinivas's concept of '*Sanskritisation*' in Indian context denotes "the process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, "twice-born" caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community." Similarly, globalisation and consequent rise of Indian middle class which is estimated to touch 267 million in next five years (National Council for Applied Economic Research, 2010) has literally deconstructed the typical Indian way of life by giving more importance to consumerism, commoditization and Epicureanism. "Interestingly, as per NCAER findings, the middle class that represents only 13.1 per cent of India's population currently owns 49 per

cent of total number of cars in India, 21 per cent of TVs, 53.2 per cent of computers, 52.9 per cent of ACs, 37.8 per cent of microwaves and 45.7 per cent of credit cards.”

Erstwhile sacrosanct values like austerity, self-restraint and life with limited means are now considered old-fashioned. Now, we are in the blind race of accumulating more and more wealth and consuming the materialistic pleasures to the every possible extent. The emerging realities signify that “there is an inclusion for some and an exclusion, or marginalisation, for many. There is affluence for some and poverty for many. There are some winners and many losers. It would seem that there are two worlds that co-exist in space even if they are far apart in well-being.” If this is what we call transformation then there is nothing wrong in the new generation of writers like Chetan Bhagat (IITian turned banker turned writer), Aravind Adiga, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Suketu Mehta presenting to us the rural-urban divide, consumerism, commodification, glittering metropolitan culture, upward mobility, spell of westernization, openness in relations, and changing principles guiding our ethics and morals.

Life style has now become as fast as twenty-twenty cricket, social institutions have become quite fragile, our goals have become as short lived as a puff of cigarette, fashion and glamour as essential as air to breathe, and life without cellphones and laptops unthinkable. According to the latest report of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, India has the remarkable tele-density of 70.89% out of which 67.98% subscribers use cellphones or wireless sets and only 2.91% use wire-line phones and Broadband subscription has reached to 11.87 Million in March 2011 from 11.47 Million in Feb. 2011. In the age of Orkut, Facebook, Google and other popular sites, we are proud to have more friends on social networking sites than in real life. With an obsession of chatting, surfing, tweeting, mailing, e-matrimonial, e-invitations, e-governance, e-banking e-ticketing and e-everything, we have lost community spirit, respect for social institutions and celebrated Indian legacy.

So, if we consider Literature as subject to change with socio-political and economic pressures and refer to C.S. Lewis for whom “Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become,” Postmodern Indian English Fiction is very much close to that definition of literature when it is termed either as ‘twitterature’ or ‘glitterature’. Indian chicklit novels (following the Chick lit genre popularised by Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*) including Rajashree’s *Trust Me*, Swati Kaushal’s *Piece of Cake*, Varsha Dixit’s *Right Fit Wrong Shoe* and *Xcess Baggage*, and Shobha de’s Novels present to the readers a spicy flavour of life. Similarly, the feminist literature has evolved with a new set of terminology under the postfeminist approach. The women issues are now discussed with a preconceived notion that no two women could have one set of problems and so any attempt to reach to a consensus regarding common issues of woman, would be a futile effort. Ironically, on the one hand cyber-feminism is debated in the context of Donna Haraway’s “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”, while on the other hand ecofeminism is now being revived afresh.

Moreover, the socio-political and cultural transformations in Indian culture have led to the demands for the legalisation of gay & lesbian rights, revocation of IPC Section 377 by Delhi High Court stating that “sexual orientation is a ground analogous to sex, and that discrimination on sexual orientation is not permitted under Article 15,” legalisation of live-in relationships, and popularity of queer theory and literature which is a sort of redefinition of sexuality in the pretext of postmodern celebration of differences. The best-selling novels of N.Raj Rao’s *The Boyfriend* (the first gay novel from India) and *Hostel Room 131* and the much hyped launch of website <http://www.allthingsqueer.net> show an entirely different orientation of Indian culture towards postmodern “celebration of differences in race, gender, culture, and religion as well as in other areas of life.” The queer has now become so common

that perhaps to capitalise on that Joseph Lelyveld recently wrote a book on Mahatma Gandhi's homo-erotic relations with Hermann Kallenbach.

Thus, it can be affirmed that the trajectory of Indian English fiction has not been linear; rather, the whirls of social, economic and cultural transformations reshaped it as an entity entirely different from what it used to be. With India taking pride in all sort of success stories in different spheres of life, and with a number of failures in the form of scams and scandals, Indian English fiction has portrayed the newly defined social, economic and cultural realities. It is only because of their sensitivity towards the changing national realities with the fine mix of fiction that Chetan Bhagat, Aravind Adiga, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and many other Indian English writers are among the largest selling authors today. Besides, they are writing in tune with the global changes, multicultural environs and cosmopolitanism which obviously impress the readership beyond spatial boundaries. They might have failed to achieve the stature of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan or Mulk Raj Anand but they have the propensity for the depiction of emerging issues, though by excluding certain dark sides of multiple realities of 'new India'—poverty, hunger, displacement on the name of development and denotified tribes.

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Dalit Autobiography and Education: An Analytical Study

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The history of the evolution of mankind shows that from the ancient times, human beings have preferred to live in groups for one or the other reason. This attachment to one's group made it possible and easier for the members to survive in the hostile circumstances. As the group provided its members a sense of security and togetherness, gradually its importance went on increasing and it became an indispensable part of the members' lives. It is seen that various rites, rituals, customs and traditions of the group influence its members. The actions and behaviour of the members are largely controlled by their group. While living as a member of any particular society, a human being has to give more importance to the social customs and traditions rather than his individual likes and dislikes. It is so because of his numerous needs and aspirations which can only be fulfilled in a collective, collaborative manner with the help of certain social resources.

However, it doesn't mean that only the human being is dependent on society: the society also depends upon the human being. In other words the relationship between the society and its members is reciprocal. Both influence each other and in turn are influenced by each other and go on changing accordingly. As the personality of a human being is shaped by the society and its institutions like marriage, family, education, law, etc. similarly the individuals also play a vital role in shaping and developing these institutions.

Writers, being very important and active members of the society, considerably influence and in turn are influenced by the society and its institutions. And so the social institutions and their impact on the lives of its members has become a very sought-after area in social, cultural and literary studies. As the study of various social institutions and their influence on the personality development of human beings requires a large canvas, this article limits itself only to the study of the institution of education and its influence on the personalities of the protagonists of *Athavaninche Pakshi* and *Baluta*, the epoch-making Dalit autobiographies in Marathi, written respectively by P.I. Sonkamble and Daya Pawar. Such a study, the investigator believes, will add to our knowledge in understanding the importance of education in human life in general and in the lives of Dalits in particular.

It is universally accepted that education, both formal and informal, plays a vital role in the development of human beings. It helps the learners to grow in their personal as well as social life. The history of mankind itself is a proof of this fact. From the ancient Sanskrit literature, we come to know that princes and other members of the royal families were being sent to the *ashrams* to get education. The same is also seen in ancient literatures of the West. However, the same history shows that human society has been a place of inequalities at many levels from its very beginning. There have been proofs that every society had and still today has a hierarchical structure. In such a society, a group of individuals is always dominant than the other groups. And the dominant group almost invariably exploits the weaker groups of that society. This dominant group considers it superior to the others and forms the upper strata of the social structure and exploits the lower strata. Such an oppressive system is found to be present in almost all the ages and all the places. And it is because of this fact that the members of lower strata are forced to lead miserable lives.

Dalits formed the lower strata in Indian social structure. Hence, they were denied each and every opportunity by the upper caste Hindus. All the efforts of Dalits for getting education were strongly and unanimously opposed by the upper castes for social and political

reasons. The upper castes were afraid that if the lower castes are allowed to get education, they will ask for their share in power. That is what R. Manjhi says:

“The caste formed the basis for a high degree of polarization in access to knowledge and means of production....The instrument used for perpetuation of socio-economic differentials was the separation of work from knowledge and power. The working class was denied the access to education as it was considered a privilege of few upper castes. The denial of education was essential to prevent them from acquiring rights in productive assets...”

(Manjhi)

The severe punishment meted out to Eklavya and Shambuka for their efforts in getting education exemplifies the attitude of the upper castes towards the lower castes. And it is because of the lack of education that Dalits remained far away from the development and consequently led miserable lives. Actually, the caste Hindus were not ready to treat Dalits as human beings at all. For them, Dalits were not better than animals. The following remark made by Leibowitz in connection with Blacks in America is equally applicable to Dalits in India. He opines that the Whites did not consider Blacks:

“... scarcely more than chattel or animals, to be taunted, manipulated, humiliated at will, and kept in their place at the bottom of society. Crossing the colour line was an offence seldom tolerated and often severely punished.”(Leibowitz 1993: P.43)

But once Dalits became aware of the importance of education in their lives, they started to educate their children and it helped them to climb the ladder of success. The credit of changing the psyche of Dalits and making them aware of the importance of education undoubtedly goes to the Herculean efforts of the social reformers and educationists like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Maharshi V.R. Shinde, Chh. Shahu and others. These reformers worked for the abolition of untouchability and tried to uplift the down-trodden by making them aware of the horrible conditions of their lives. However, it was with the rise of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in Indian social and political affairs that Dalits really became aware of their sad plight. The efforts of these visionaries were supplemented by the country's political independence from the British rule and the spread of education that brought a sea-change in the outlook of Dalits in India.

P.I. Sonkamble's *Athavaninche Pakshi* is a narrative that speaks about Pralhad, a parentless child belonging to a backward 'Mahar' community and his struggle to live a meaningful human life. Similarly, Daya Pawar's 'Baluta' speaks about various incidents from the life of Dagadu, also a member Mahar community. Both these autobiographies speak about the endless efforts of their writers to survive in the hostile, inhuman social circumstances. While dealing with the ups and downs in the lives of Dalits, they throw a flood-light on the importance of education in human life in general and in the lives of Pralhad and Dagadu in particular.

A close analysis of 'Athavaninche Pakshi' and 'Baluta' shows that Pralhad and Dagadu had realized the importance of education at a very early stage in their lives. Education was regarded so important that P.I. Sonkamble begins his autobiography with a chapter entitled 'Goshta Pati-Pustakachi' (A Story of Slate and Book). In this chapter, Pralhad tells the readers how his sister bought a slate and a revision book from the weekly market and admitted him to a government-run school. He writes:

βeyk cfg.khua xkokrY;k eaxGokjP;k cktkjkrwu ,d ikVh o pkjsd vk.;kpa mtG.khap ,d NksVla iqLrd ?ksÅu len;kpa c?kwu frP;k xkokP;k ljdkjh 'kkGsr Vkdyā-Ḑ (Following other villagers, my sister brought a writing slate and a small Revision book costing

four annas from the Tuesday-market and got me admitted in a government-run school of the village.) (Sonkamble, 1979: P.43)

For Pralhad and Dagadu, putting in school was so remarkable because in those days thousands of Dalit children were deprived of education due to apathy, poverty and ignorance of their parents.

We are told that as a child, Pralhad was very much interested in attending the school and getting knowledge. But as he had lost his parents he was living with his elder sister in a small village. His sister was married to a poor farm-labourer and was compelled to work hard to support her family. Though India was politically free with her own Constitution proclaiming liberty, equality and fraternity, it was very difficult for backward castes to lead their lives peacefully, particularly in villages. Caste Hindus were not mentally and emotionally prepared to accept Dalits on equal terms. An inhuman and evil custom of untouchability was practiced. A touch or even a shadow of a Dalit was considered to be contaminating.

In such hostile social circumstances Pralhad and Dagadu had determined to get education and give some meaning to their lives. They firmly believed in the power of education in transforming human life. But getting education for Dalit children was not an easy job because of adverse social, familial and economical conditions. Though there were government-run schools where Dalit children could get free education, they were compelled to work hard to support other expenses of the school. Not only the hostile social circumstances deprived Dalit children of their education, but there were also their own people who did not want them to be educated. 'Baluta' narrates an incident in which Dagadu's close relatives advise his mother not to send him to school. Their contention was that instead of sending Dagadu to school, if he is made to work, it will bring home some money for his widowed mother to support the household expenses. Daya Pawar writes:

βlƒw] dákyk i@jkyk lkGar ĘkkMR@l\ vki.k dk Okkuhcke.k
gkOk@r\ fQjay Xky@Xkyh vku ƒkĀy MyhMqYYkh- UgkĀ Rkj
TkkĀy xqÚgkadMa- R@o<hPk jk[kqGh ,khy- OgĀy Rkqyk
ehBfejPkhyk! P (Sakhu, why are you sending this boy to school?
Are we Wanis or Brahmins? He will wander in the village lanes
and eat whatever he gets... or will look after somebody's cattle. It
will also help you financially.) (Pawar, 1978: P.37)

Similarly in *Athavaninche Pakshi*, we are told that after passing 4th Standard, Pralhad's education was discontinued because his second brother-in-law took Pralhad with him on the pretext of helping him open a shop. But soon Pralhad realized the falseness of his promise. Thanks to the timely support of Vinayak, Pralhad's teacher and his own strong will-power that Pralhad succeeded to get admission in 5th Standard and his educational career was saved. Pralhad studied very hard and passed the exam. He tells the readers that without knowing English alphabet and attending the school for only one month in the first term, he was the only student from his village, except Prabhakar, who passed the examination by scoring 187 marks. Actually, it was a surprise for him as well as for others. While speaking about this incident, P.I. Sonkamble writes:

βcja okVya- VksVykr ikl gko Eg.kwu- ts psÚ;kps iksj ikolkG;kr
isj.khiklwu 'kkGar tkr Ogrs rs dks.khp ikl >kys ukghr- QDr
HkVkp;k izckdjyk lksMwu- lxG;kauk uoy okVya- ,d rj fcubaxzth
ckjk[kMhp /kMk okp.;kpk o nqljs Eg.kts ,dk efgU;kr 187 dk
OgbZuk ekDIZ ?ksĀu ikl Ogk;pa- okf'kZdykch ikl >kyks o #G
lksMwu xsysyh xkMh #Gkoj vkyh-P (I was pleased as I had
passed in aggregate. The students of Chere, who were regularly
attending the school since the sowing in rainy season¹, had all

failed in the examination, except Prabhakar, a Brahmin. All were surprised for my reading the lesson from English textbook without knowing its alphabet and passing the examination by getting at least 187 marks. I also passed the annual examination and my life-wagon came back on the right track from where it had derailed for some time.) (Sonkamble P.I.: 1979: P.59-60)

By facing such attitudes of their relatives and community members, Pralhad and Dagadu continued their education. Pralhad was required to walk five miles whereas Dagadu used to walk three miles daily to reach to the school. The economic condition of their house was very poor. The monster of poverty was a permanent member of their household. To overcome this monster, they were forced to do all kinds of works. Pralhad used to sell the bark of babul tree to the tanners, collect bones of dead animals, collect clay for the potters and remove the carcasses of the animals. While narrating such incident, Pralhad says that it had become his routine to collect the bones and sell them to the vendors after the school. He felt disgusting to do such works but there was no any other alternative for him. He writes:

ßykxyks ehgh tukojkps gMa xksGk djk;yk ftFkwu terhy frFkwu lkÚ;klkj[ks- 'kkGk ulyh o vlyh o nqikjh lqVh >kyh dh rksp ek>k /kank Ogowu clyk---Ð (I started to collect bones of dead animals from wherever I could find them. Whenever there was holiday or half-day at school, collecting bones became my sole profession.) (1979:P.67)

Another inhuman work Pralhad used to do was throwing away the carcasses of the dead animals. In fact, it was an ancestral work of Dalits in India. It was horrible to do. But Pralhad, Dagadu and many others from their community had no choice but to do that work. In *Athavaninche Pakshi* Pralhad narrates an incident of throwing away a dead dog. At the beginning he was pleased to get the work as the old woman had promised him a piece of bread. But when he lifted the dog with its tail, it gave way as it was decomposed. It had a stinking smell. He writes:

ßeu dkcwr Bsoyks fu R;k dqå;kP;k 'ksiVkyk /kjyks- /kjyks rlap 'ksiVkp 'ksoVpk Hkkx ek÷;k gkrkrp vkyk- dkj.k rks gksrk lMdk-eyk okl ;sr Ogrk i.k ykywpggh Ogrh] prdksj dk OgbZuk feG.;kph-Ð (Somehow I controlled my mind and held the tail of the dead dog. As it was completely decomposed, that part of the tail gave way and came into my hand. Though it had a stinking smell, I continued with the job as I had a craving for a small piece of bread which I hoped to get after finishing it.) (1979:P.87)

Here both of the above incidents show that the lives of Pralhad and Dagadu were similar to the lives of other four-footed animals with which Dalits were usually compared. They were made to do all kinds of chores just for a piece of bread. But the most important thing about these experiences is that they throw a light on the personality of Pralhad and Dagadu. These incidents, in fact, strengthen their will-power to get education and defeat their circumstances.

During their school-days, both Pralhad and Dagadu stayed in government-aided boarding meant for backward class students. Dagadu speaks about his stay in one of such boarding. His mother used to work as a cook in the same boarding house. She was required to cook for 50-60 inmates of the hostel. It was a tiresome job. But there was no choice for her. She worked there without complaint as she could have the company of her children. But other students of the boarding accused her of showing undue favours to her son during the meals. Dagadu was disturbed to listen to such accusations. But he was emotionally devastated when the students refused to have dinner because Dagadu's mother had prepared it during her

menstrual period. In traditional Indian society a woman is forced to keep her away from the touch of others during her menstrual period. Dagadu's mother had informed about her period to the concerned authority. But she was asked to prepare the meal for the students. Daya Pawar writes: ...

β...dq.kh tsoko;kLk Rk;kj ukgh. dk; >kya;] gs eyk dGr ukgh... eh rkVvOk:u mBr® vkf.k vkÃdMs dk,k Ádkj >kyk,k ,kkph p@d'kh djRk®. Rkh >kysyk Ádkj lakXkRks. èkj.kh nqÒaXkkoh vkf.k vkEgk ek;ysdkyk fRkua vkRk ?;kOka] vla OkkVya. lekt T;kapk fOkVvG ekUkr g`rk] R;kakUkhp L«kh-nsgkpk fOkVvG djkok... P (Nobody was ready to have his meal. I didn't understand what actually had happened there... I got up from my plate and enquired with my mother about the matter. She told me about it. After listening to her, I felt so humiliated that I wished my mother and me cease to be. The people to whom the society considered to be polluting, themselves were humiliating a woman for her natural menstrual cycle.) (Pawar, 1978: P. 108)

Though the boarding was funded by the government, majority of the trustees and other office bearers used to be caste Hindus. So in many cases, they were not taking proper care about the essential facilities provided in the boarding. The living conditions used to be far below the expected standards. The students of the boarding were not allowed to voice their displeasure. And if somebody tried to protest, then he was punished. Actually, the mentality of the caste Hindus was not changed. They used to think that the backward students were unnecessarily entertained by the government and so they were spoilt:

βvjs rqEgh lkjs ljdkjps tkobZ! mxhp xifpi ts fnya rs [kk.;kis{kk dhjdjh dk dj;pa\ rqEgkyk ljdkjua lkja fnya; vkrk QDr iksjh ns;kP;k jkfgY;kr-P (Hey! All of you are the favorites of the government! Instead of eating whatever is served to you, why you are making fuss of it? The government has provided everything to you free of cost... still you are expecting more.) (Sonkamble, 1979: P.177)

But Dagadu and Pralhad had no time to think about such things. They had vowed to move forward in their lives by getting education. Whatever knowledge they had acquired from books, had taught them to think differently. This change in their attitude had made them self-conscious. They could understand that the sufferings of their lives were based on the false concept of superiority. But it was not easy in those days to speak or to act against the traditions. The fear of upper-caste Hindus was deeply rooted in Dalit psyche. Dalits thought of themselves to be toothless snakes which can be poked even by children. Their dependence on society had made them helpless. That is what Daya Pawar says:

β...lkya] vki.k ,o<s fHk«ks dls\ gh fHkrh vkiY;kyk dq.kh fnyh\ ,[kkna jLR;kRk LkjlkV.kkja fTkOkk.kw vlkoa vkf.k ;srktkrk i@jakuh R;kyk dkBhua fMOKPkkOka] fTkOkk.kwua lkÈkk QqRdkjgh Vkdw u;s] vla vk;q"; g®Rka. dèkhdèkh okVv;Pka] fklÒj x`G;kIkBh vki.k fdRkh ykpkj!...P (What a coward I am? Who made me such a coward? My life was similar to that of any crawling object in the street which even cannot hiss at the children who poke at it with a stick. Sometimes I used to feel that I have lost all my self-respect just for a morsel of food.) (Pawar, 1978: P. 72)

It was possible for both Pralhad and Dagadu to get the job of teacher after passing Matriculation. But they opted for higher education. In those days, getting higher education

was not an easy task for Dalit children. But they did not give up their efforts. Education had instilled self-confidence in them. Finally, Pralhad got admission in Milind College, Aurangabad. Here he came in contact with many good teachers and was impressed by their knowledge. He thought if he could become like them. Now education had taught him to dream of a better life. It had enabled him to climb a ladder of social hierarchy. Even gradually the attitude of the people was also being changed. The people of his community had also become aware of the value and power of education. They knew that education is going to change Pralhad's life. Pralhad speaks about this changed attitude of his people in the following incident:

βpsÚ;krp ygkukpk eksBk >kY;keqGa o ijfnlk o ijxkopk vLY;keqGa o lkÚ;kaukp ckiwek; Eg.kwu ykowu ?ksÅu yowu pksiwu okxY;keqGa lkjps t.k eyk [;kyh[kq'kkyh fopkjk;ps o Eg.kk;ps vu~dok vkykbZp ;s ek;...o<a ekrj [kja dh ek÷;koj o Egksja f'kdysys dks.khch vkSjxkcknyk dkWystyk tkÅu vkya ulY;keqGa frrY;k reke yksdkauk eksBk vkpack iMwu uoy djrklr-Ð (As I was brought up in Chere and was an outsider, and also behaved respectfully with all and sundry, whenever I used to visit my village, all villagers enquire about my well-being. It was true that all the villagers were amazed as there was nobody except me who had been to college at Aurangabad.) (Sonkamble, 1979: P.140)

It is seen that education had also brought some change in the attitude of Savarna Hindus. They had started to treat educated Dalits a little differently than illiterate Dalits. Both Dagadu and Pralhad speak about such a changed attitude of the upper-caste people. In *Athavaninche Pakshi*, Pralhad tells the readers that once he had come back to his village from Aurangabad during the Diwali vacation. At that time Bhimraobapu, a caste Hindu, sent Pralhad with his son, Yankat, to bring his daughter, Putalabai for the festival. When Pralhad reached her house, he noticed a positive change in the behaviour of Putalabai and her family members. As Pralhad and Putalabai had learnt in the same class and now as he was taking his higher education, she treated him cordially. He writes:

βts vlsy rs vxnh iaxrhyk ijiap u djrk eyk tso.k ok<.;kr vkys--.ek>a iksV Hkjkoa rla R;k iqrGkckbZyk okVr gksra- rla frP;k ok<.;ko#u eyk tk.kor gksra- dkj.k xjhc vlwugh dkWyst f'kdrks; ;kpa fryk fuf'prp dkgh rjh okVwu o vkiY;k ?kjh vkiY;k Hkkokcja cksGkbZ Eg.kwu vkyk; rj nksu ?kkl tkLr ?kkrys R;kyk fcpkÚ;kyk [kk;yk rj dk; fc?kMys-Ð (Without making any distinction I was served all the items of the meal. Putalabai was serving me plentifully as she wanted me to eat to my full satisfaction as (she might have thought), I was studying at college though I was poor and had accompanied her brother to take her to her parents' home. So there was nothing wrong if she served a little more food to the poor fellow like me.) (Sonkamble, 1979: P.143-44)

But it doesn't mean that educated Dalits were treated on equal terms by the Savarnas. On the contrary, many people were not ready to change their age-old orthodox way of thinking. For them Dalits, either educated or not, were the same. Though by their hard work, Dalits had achieved some success in their lives, the caste Hindus had not completely changed their attitudes towards them. The knowledge which Dagadu and Pralhad had acquired from their education had made them aware of the fact that their oppressors were not ready to give up the battle easily. They wanted to rule over their victims permanently. A critic speaks about this attitude of the oppressors in following in following words:

“(The oppressors were always cautious)...to keep (the oppressed) in his place; to restrict his freedom of movement, discourage his ambition, and banish him forever to the nether regions of subordination and inferiority..”(Bone, 1969: P.14.)

Naturally, such a vitiating attitude of the caste Hindus does not allow their victims to have a normal growth of their personality. But Dalits continued their efforts with the hope that someday their oppressors will change their attitudes.

In ‘*Baluta*’ and ‘*Athavaninche Pakshi*’, there are many incidents in which the readers come across an orthodox attitude of the caste Hindus. Dagadu speaks about one such incident in which Vithoba, a member of Maratha community did not allow him in his house in Mumbai. He was served his lunch outside the house. Even he knew that Vithoba’s wife will purify the plate in which he had eaten his meal. (Pawar, 1978: P. 84)

The incident with Pralhad is more thought-provoking. He tells us how a man belonging to Mali community expresses his displeasure for Pralhad’s sitting with others. Actually, Pralhad was invited by his upper-caste friends. As his friends insisted, Pralhad sat with them. But the Mali expressed his displeasure for Pralhad’s sitting with upper-castes on the equal footing. P.I. Sonkamble writes about this incident in following words:

βLkkjs dla dk gksbZuk fouorkr Eg.kwu xsyks ?kksaxM;kP;k dkVkoj tIs dh lkjs clys gksrs- rj >kya dk; R;k ekG;kus ts vxksnpj ukd eqjM.ka lq# dsya gksr R;kr Hkj iMwu rks MksGs OkVk#u dks.kkl u dGr ek÷;kdMs c?kk;pk o ukd brdk eqjMk;pk dh t.kw R;kP;k ukdkyk Q.klh oXkSjs >kyrh- lxGa >kY;koj e;/sp rks Eg.kkyk] fnoathlkgsc rqEgh dkgh Eg.kk gk ijY;k dkbZ f’kdyk rj mrhe yksdkaP;koj iaxrhyk cl.ka cj ukgh- R;kyk gs ?kkrd gS dkj.k R;kus vkiY;k ik;jhusp okxkoa-β (As all were requesting me to sit on the woolen mat I sat on its edge. However, the Mali, whose aversion to me could already be seen by his facial expressions, started to look at me angrily, taking care that it is not noticed by others. His behavior was such that it seemed to me that my sitting there had made him sick. During the conversation, he interfered by saying, “ My Lord, you may not agree but this Parlya, though he is highly educated, should not consider himself to be equal with the higher castes and so should avoid sitting on equal footing with them. If he does not recognize his social status, it will be dangerous for him.) (Sonkamble, 1979: P.147-48)

Such kinds of people were everywhere. They were not ready to forget the customs easily. Even Mahatma Gandhi believed that caste Hindus will take more time to forget the age-old tradition of untouchability. Dr. Shriram Nikam speaks about Mahatma Gandhi’s belief in following words:

“He (Mahatma Gandhi) conceived the process of assimilation of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu-fold to be gradual due to prevalent social customs and beliefs of the majority community. They cannot be expected to shed all the long cherished beliefs and customs overnight. Moreover in the matters of faith and social custom use of force was out of question. It could prove counterproductive.” (Nikam, 1988: P.142)

Mr. Gandhi seems to be correct in his observation. It was but natural that the caste Hindus will try to enjoy the benefits of the old social custom as long as possible and to keep it intact, they will stand united against all those forces that will try to abolish the system. However, it should be noted that though it is against their will, with the passing of time the

caste Hindus have started to accept the change. And for this attitudinal change, education is one of the important reasons.

Until now Dalits had considered the atrocities against them to be the outcome of their ill-fate. But now education had taught them to think rationally. They had realized that their sufferings were the consequence not of their previous sins but that of cruel social customs. Education had brought the light of knowledge to their dark ghettos. The teachings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had made them aware of inhuman conditions of their lives and instilled the ideas of equality and freedom in them. Now they were not ready to tolerate the atrocities of the upper-castes. They had made up their minds to protest against all those social traditions which had exploited them for centuries. Daya Pawar writes about this change in the attitudes of Dalits. During his school-days at a tahsil place, he had realized the true identity of his personality. He had come to know that there is no need to feel inferior to the upper caste students as he can show his talent in studies and overcome them. He writes:

BrkyqD;kP;k 'kkGsrPk eyk ekÖ;k £Ú;k O;fDreŸOkkPkh v`G£
>kyh. vkiY;kRk dkgh deh ukgh] XkkOkP;k
d@aMOkkMÓkkRkwu ckgsj iMyaPk ikfgts! ákdjrk f'kdk;yk
gOka! 'kgjkrhy Okk.;kCkkEk.kkP;k Ik`jkaukgh vkIk.k vH;klkr
ekXka Vkdw 'kdr@] gk 'k@èk vpack dj.kkjk OkkVr vLkr@-P (I
realized my true personality at a school in Tahsil place. We are
devoid of any weakness. We have to break free from the bondages
of the village. For that, we have to get education. After coming
into the town, it was surprising to know that I can easily overcome
the high caste students in studies.) (Pawar, 1978: P. 52)

By bringing in such a change in their attitudes, Pralhad and Dagadu succeeded in their lives. Pralhad, a parentless child belonging to the *Shudra* community, entered into a teaching field and became a lecturer in a college and could achieve social status. Similarly, Dagadu, who had lost his father at a very early age, defeated the antagonistic social forces and became a famous writer and social and political activist. Actually, it was the transformation in the lives of these Dalit boys. And this transformation was the result of education. It should be noted here that there were so many boys and girls both in *Shudra* and *Savarna* communities, however, only those could get some success in life who had treaded on the path of knowledge, who had taken some kind of education. Pralhad and Dagadu did the same and could climb the ladder of success in their personal and social lives and also showed the path of success to the others.

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Archaism: Survival of Heritage Of The Past

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Classical or ancient culture has its own dignity. So archaism also has its own dignity or grandeur. Archaism can be considered as the survival of ancient ethical values and culture.

Archaism:-

Archaism means the survival of the language of the past into the language of the present. When the poet uses vocabulary of the past writers, it can be called as Archaism. So use of vocabulary of olden times can be called as Archaism.

The basis of archaism was laid down by Aristotle. This convention was carried on by the poet's in English literature also. The poets used archaism only to imitate the model of a particular writer or school of writers of the past. So we find archaism in English poetry when the poet desires to write in the manner of a certain poet or writer of the past.

2 USE OF ARCHAISM

We find such use of archaism during the period of 1600-1900 in English poetry. This period is called a standard archaic usage in English poetry. We find influence of the writers of the past like Spenser & Milton on the modern English poets. However, the poets of 18th or 19th century modified or changed the archaic elements or old words in their poetry. Such poets got an inspiration in the literature of the past. So Coleridge; D. G. Rossetti & Morris got inspiration from the literature of the past ages. These poet's kept alive in their poetry such archaic words as behold, thou, quoth, burthen, damsel, eflsoons, eld, ere, fain, hither, oft, thee, quoth, , smite, sprite, unto, wight, thy, wot, yonder.

3 ARCHAISM AND GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

Some grammatical features were used or retained up to 19th century. Other grammatical features such as the second person pronouns like thou, thee were used by Victorian poets. In the same verbal endings st and th are also used. The old negative and interrogative forms without any auxiliary such as I know not, saw you anything are also used. Such grammatical features were used by the poets of 19th century. The grammatical variants or varied forms were also used. These variants are such as 'tis, 't was, 'gainst, ne'er, e'en, o'er, spake, holped, were also retained.

4 ARCHAISMS AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Even in orthography or spellings archaic words were used. In late 18th century poetry we find such different use of spelling or orthography such as chant which was used as chaunt. The word mariner was used as 'marinere' as in Coleridge's poem 'Rime of Ancient Marinere.

5 TRADITION OF ARCHAISM

We find that the tradition of Archaism was continued till twentieth century. However the poets like Hardy, Yeats, Robert Bridges continued to use the tradition of archaism in their poetry.

We also find the vogue or use of archaism in Modern English because of the influence of Authorized Version of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and the works of Shakespeare.

6 **Function of Archaism :**

Main function of archaism is the poetic heightening of language. It means wherever poet uses archaic language, his poetry becomes noble or is heightened. Archaic language has dignity and solemnity. This dignity & solemnity is found in archaic language because of noble achievements of writers of the past. Archaic language also gives a sense of cultural continuity. It means that the use of archaic language links the modern poetry to the culture of past ages.

Religious fervour or emotional ethos or atmosphere of the past culture is brought by the use of archaism. So there is a sense of grandeur in archaism or old language. There is a kind of overflow of emotions in the use of archaism.

We also find sublimity in the use of archaism. The 19th century prose writers used archaism for its sublimity. They used biblical or poetical language at the points of emotional climax. So loftiness of tone is given to language by the use of archaism.

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Politics, Plague and ‘Others’ in Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*: A Retrospect

Dr. S. Banerjee

One significant section of the critical repertoire of stunning volume and variety that has built up around *Frankenstein* has dwelt on the novel’s dialectic with the French Revolution in particular and the spirit of revolutionary politics in general. Shelley’s third novel, *The Last Man*, which has followed her legendary first one in the reception of critical attention, also lends itself to an examination of her response to this theme. Indeed, in *The Last Man* Shelley dramatizes her perception of the various political systems and the different styles of leadership that emerged in the aftermath of the French Revolution, so that this later novel may be read as a more revealing index to Shelley’s perspective on the revolutionary impulse and its human and political import.

Moreover, *The Last Man*, which continues Shelley’s insider’s critique of Romanticism, links up her perspective on the revolutionary timbre of mind with her critique of (male) Romantic egoism and the cults of perfectibility and heroism engendered by that mentality. With this critique of male-accented Romanticism is added too Shelley’s perception of the colonial project, which she understood as a function of both male egoism and the Anglocentric/Eurocentric world-view that was taken as granted even by the enlightened of her times. In this article I blend a historical approach with close textual study to show how in *The Last Man* Shelley brings together her personal preoccupation with male egoism and its human impact with her intellectual apathy toward intemperance, her emotional aversion toward violence while registering her love of the finer aspects of being and becoming human. Mine is a retrospective look that takes in the seminal critical writings on the novel, building on and problematizing them, in order to make apparent how these elements of Shelley’s intellectual and emotional temperament blend into each other in this apocalyptic novel.

Political Lessons and the Plague. Raymond’s titanic political ambitions prove destructive to both familial and national communities as his allegiance shifts from monarchy to republic, and thence to ethnocentric imperialism, in the service of his grand ego; and the Countess of Windsor, the primary representative of monarchy in the novel, so lusts for power that she schemes to force her daughter into a politically expedient marriage and is ready to drug and kidnap her to achieve her goal. On the other hand, the democratic principles that Ryland professes prove to be mere rhetoric when, in the face of the plague, he has to propitiate the aristocracy to meet “the present ends” of the “commercial population” and, later, tries to quarantine himself from the infected masses: “Every man for himself! the devil take the protectorship, say I, if it expose me to danger” (187, 195). The theocratic imposter prophet who promises immunity to the plague to his followers in the name of his divine power is roundly condemned as “the enemy of mankind” and as an incarnation of the “principle of evil” (321).

Realizing the worthy Revolutionary ideal of equality the new government makes conditions “the same for all”, ‘a la Rousseau’ (60). Shelley’s attitude to this state-imposed egalitarianism is best gauged from her presentation of the career of this fledgling equality. Even as “magnificent dwellings, luxurious carpets and beds of down (are) afforded to all” the new-found equality is under threat of being made meaningless by a “more leveling” one to be conferred by the Plague that is bringing death to all (252). Shelley’s apocalyptic vision parallels revolutionary politics with a revolutionary catastrophe that makes a mockery of the former.

The ideal of perfect equality is fully realized through an apocalypse that makes it meaningless by annihilating civilization itself. The plague, then, could be seen to symbolize the failure of utopian political ambition, detracting from the worthiness of the revolutionary pursuit of equality and liberty championed by radicals, like William Godwin and Percy Shelley. That the global scourge that ends humanity in *The Last Man* is not something caused by human agency and proves intractable to human ingenuity and knowledge only intensifies its power as a symbol and a fantastic/gothic deconstructive tool.

The Plague as Metaphor. In his analysis of *The Last Man* in the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath Sterrenburg sees the novel as embodying a certain post-revolutionary tradition of linking nature and politics. In this tradition of literature and painting the view of nature as an antidote to post-Revolutionary despair – a view shared by the Romantic poets, like Wordsworth and Shelley – is negated by visions of “utopian social reform giving way to apocalyptic annihilation”, as in *The Last Man* (Sterrenburg 326). While Shelley’s ancestors and literary forerunners used disease metaphors to express their faith in the ‘natural’ resilience of the social organism (Burke) or in the efficacy of such ‘diseases’ for social melioration (Godwin, Wollstonecraft), Shelley makes the social disease a literal plague that devastates humanity itself. Shelley’s Verney quotes at length from Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* after the plague is already on its deadly course, remembering how Burke attributes to human society

“the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but, in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression.” (182)

However, Verney omits the opening clause wherein Burke expresses his belief in the relationship of equivalence between the world of nature/the outer world and human society (“Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world”): by making a natural agency of destruction unleash anarchy and full-scale annihilation upon the human world Shelley subverts Burke’s faith in the orderliness of nature buttressing an orderly society (Sterrenburg 332).

Utopianism, Reason and the Plague. Shelley’s apocalyptic vision also subverts Godwin’s utopian hopes about the future of human society. “We are sick and we die”, Godwin declares in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, “. . . because we consent to suffer these accidents” (869); he looks forward to an “improvement of mind” that will bring about a future when “there will be no disease, no anguish, no melancholy and no resentment” and humans “will perhaps be immortal” (867, 872, 871).

Shelley’s Adrian, who becomes the Lord Protector of England, expresses utopian longing with regard to the society he is to protect and govern. In an ironic undercutting of Godwin’s hopes, Shelley makes Adrian long for a Godwinian disease-free future at a time when disease rampages over the globe:

Oh, that death and sickness were banished from our earthly home! That hatred, tyranny, and fear could no longer make their lair in the human heart! . . . let us will it, and our habitation becomes a paradise. For the will of man is omnipotent, blunting the arrows of death, soothing the bed of disease, and wiping away the tears of agony.

(59-60)

By a literal use of the metaphor of social disease Shelley undercuts both the Burkean faith in the organic resilience of society and Godwin's utopian dreams about the powers of human will and human Reason. More recently, Barbara Johnson has commented on this aspect of the novel's cultural critique. Noting that Shelley's critique of different political systems and modes of leadership bears no relation to "the train of events" that follows Johnson observes that Shelley sees in the failure of the different political ideals "a lack of relation between acquired knowledge and the scene of action", a failure more fundamental than that of particular political theories (Johnson 264). Moreover, since "murderous nature" is shown to be impervious to human will and reason and indifferent to human fate *The Last Man* undercuts the anthropocentrism of humanist thought, and becomes one of the earliest literary embodiments of a posthuman(ist) conception of the world (324).

The plague in *The Last Man*, as critics have shown, is a symbolic indictment of male Romantic egoism, of the human will to power, and of the blind spots of the gender-inflected nineteenth century ideology of the family. In its function of subverting the eighteenth century intellectual belief-system -- the organicist faith in the resilience of human (English) society and the utopian hopes of the rationalists -- the plague also symbolizes the ineffectuality of reason and knowledge in shaping the history of humankind. Literalizing the disease metaphor used by her forerunners, Shelley paradoxically deepens the symbolical charge of the plague, in the process, "swerv[ing] dramatically from their eighteenth century visions of history" (Sterrenburg 331).

History. Placing Shelley's later work in the tradition of the British historical novel begun by Sir Walter Scott's Waverley series Deidre Lynch observes that *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830) "all in varying ways lay claim to the territory of public history" sharing as they do "the Waverley Series' defining concerns with individual and collective memory, with the work of time, and with the intersection between those events that seem to make or to alter history and the continuities of everyday life (134 – 35).

In a similar vein, Gary Kelly observes how the gender inflections of mainstream history was being restructured in the post-Revolutionary times by women writers in Britain -- like Shelley -- as they began to engage more and more with public and political issues. Their representation of domesticity, especially its afflicted dialectic with the public domain, effected a critique of the masculine discourses of history by focusing on what that left out, namely, the domain of inter-personal and domestic interactions that formed the center of women's experiences. In this revision of history conflicts and the exercise of violence were perceived as disruptive of domesticity and individual subjectivity.

'Feminization' of the past? In this context Kelly views *The Last Man* as Shelley's critique of masculine history. The political framework of the story is a revision, Kelly observes, of the transition in England from the Commonwealth of the 1650s through the Restoration of monarchy in 1660 to the constitutional monarchy of the Glorious Revolution (1688). The cycles of revolution and transitions implicated in the novel involve conflict and destruction, marginalizes the subjective and the domestic and are ultimately condemned as futile by the device of the plague. The carnage and oppression which were the fallout of the revolutions are shown to be outdone by the 'natural' plague which defies revolutionary optimism, revealing the constructed and contingent nature of personal and national identity and history.

Greg Kucich also relates *The Last Man* to such revisionist historiography by women writers of the nineteenth century, like Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Christina Crosby, Jane Austen, and others. Placing *The Last Man* within the context of these writers' efforts to reformulate the narrative and epistemological patterns of mainstream history,

Kucich observes how in Shelley's revisionary humanization the transformation of the Sibyl's leaves results not in a visionary history of progress, but rather in a sustained record of personal sufferings among friends and relatives: Verney's testimonial narrative, expressing his agony of loneliness and memorializing his dear ones, constitute a new history aimed, says Kucich, at modifying social and gender relations by personalizing – and feminizing – the past. However, one would like to modify Kucich with the observation that it is not merely a 'feminization' of the construction of the past that Shelley's historiography is about. She is concerned as much about the consequences of men not sharing in the familial/interpersonal realm with the same level of commitment that women bring to it as well as with the impact on women of their constriction in that realm of immanent being.

Colonialism/Anglocentrism/Ethnocentrism. Entering the narrative at the precise moment at which the West is about to conquer the East at Constantinople, the plague is the "absolute Other" that deconstructs the categories of the East and the West (Johnson 264). Indeed, the plague exposes the insularity and narrowness of the world-view of the leaders/protagonists of the novel and brings out Shelley's critique of European imperialism and the imperial mindset: "Mary Shelley's insight into these unreconstructed men who want to reconstruct the world adds to the purely feminist critique a less common critique of Empire and thus reformulates that critique" (Fisch 273-74).

Seeing *The Last Man* as "the first and last history of the British empire", Bewell observes that the novel "articulates Britain's darkest fears, that colonialism has unleashed forces that dwarf European medical, technological, and social knowhow" (307, 301). Cantor too sees in the Eastern origin of the Plague Shelley's understanding that imperialism is dangerous for England: Shelley makes a connection, he says, between disease and the commercial and political interactions between nations engendered by colonialism (194). Shelley's plague does originate in Asia, probably reflecting facts of the time: it coincides fairly with the cholera outbreak in India in 1823, an epidemic that subsequently spread over to Europe.

Commenting on Shelley's intellectual foresight Cantor argues that in *The Last Man* Shelley makes a prescient diagnosis of "European imperialism" and the conditions of "modernity" -- including what in the novel has been called "the fictitious reciprocity of commerce" -- as a composite destructive force for the world: the plague spreads as a result of a British expedition to defeat the Turks at Constantinople and its course traces the imperial trade routes and Shelley is critical of colonial/imperial ambitions on the part of English men because it proves detrimental to domestic harmony (187) (Cantor 195). Thus, a connection is established between the imperialist impulse as manifested in Raymond's expedition to "plant the cross" on the "Stamboul" mosque and the spread of the Plague – between the imperialist impulse and disease, both literal and metaphorical. (154)

But beyond this connection there is a further, even more significant point about Shelley's critique of Empire and that is brought about by the way Shelley handles the subsequent course of events vis-à-vis the protagonists' actions and attitudes. It is here that the true meaning of Shelley's political critique is to be read. The novel begins with Lionel's description of England as a land rich with the wealth of the mental powers of its people and safe from all dangers:

I am the native of a sea-surrounded nook . . . which . . . appears only as an inconsiderable speck in the immense whole; and yet, when balanced in the scale of mental power, far outweighed countries of larger extent and more numerous population . . . England . . . now visits my dreams in the semblance of a vast and well-manned ship, which mastered the winds and proudly rode the waves. In my boyish days she

was the universe to me . . . the earth's very center was fixed for me in that spot, the rest of her orb was as a fable. . . . (5) [Emphases added.]

It is this conception of England as “mental mastery, inviolable insularity, self-sufficeint centrality” that is challenged and ultimately falsified by the course of the events (Johnson 265). Fisch shows how this myth of the safe ship of England – safe and superior, safe *because* superior -- is tenaciously nurtured by the heroes in the novel (271-72).

Thus, Lionel turns, with “rapturous delight” from “the physical evils of distant countries, to my own dear home, the selected abode of goodness and love”, ignoring the Plague as a disease which is destroying Asia Minor. (180). The idea of England as a safe ship of state survives in the political circles of Lionel's England in the face of surrounding devastation:

We talked of ravages made last year by pestilence in every quarter of the world. . . . We discussed the best means of . . . preserving health and activity in a large city thus afflicted – London, for instance. . . . “We are all dreaming this morning,” said Ryland, “it is as wise to discuss the probability of a visitation of the plague in our well-governed metropolis, as to calculate the centuries which must escape before we can grow pineapples here in the open air. (176)

If the conservative Ryland construes the evil of the Plague as remote as the distant future, the liberal Lionel too sees it as a problem for Greece, and feels only pity:

But, though it seemed absurd to calculate upon the arrival of the plague in London, I could not reflect without extreme pain on the desolation this evil would cause in Greece. The English for the most part talked of Thrace and Macedonia, as they would of a lunar territory, which, unknown to them, presented no distinct idea or interest to the minds. (176)

Thus, inability and unwillingness to face the truth – their glorification of England (along with their egoism, pointed out by feminist critics, like Mellor) -- actually contributes to England's ruin.

In his analysis of Shelley's treatment of imperialism in *The Last Man* Cantor observes that the novel “raises profound doubts about England's attempt to reach out and embrace the whole of the globe” (195). However, in the context of the English leaders' attitude to the contagion itself, one feels that it is precisely the lack of an embrace – as opposed to subjugation and appropriation – that is the crux of the issue. It is the exclusionary snobbery of the European world-view that Shelley critiques by his disease-metaphor – the Plague. With its “lethal universality” the Plague “deconstructs” the boundary lines constraining such a perception of the world (Johnson 264); it “ruthlessly insists on the equal humanity of all and on the spuriousness of categories used to make distinctions” (Fisch 72).

Ironically, Ryland – advocate of equality and democracy, and successor to Raymond as Protector -- provides a particularly odious example of this exclusionary attitude in praxis. When the Plague arrives to England the country is flooded with foreign people seeking an escape to a climate less conducive to the spread of the pestilence; at this worst of times for the people Ryland abandons his position, saying: ““Death and disease level all men. . . . I neither pretend to protect nor govern an hospital – such will England quickly become. . . . Every man for himself! the devil take the protectorship, say I, if it expose me to danger!”” (194-95).

By danger, Fisch observes, Ryland understands not the Plague, “which he cannot and does not flee”, but the masses of people, leveled by the Plague (276). Even if one does not quite agree with Fisch in thus making an abstraction of Ryland's fear of the plague, he does sound as if he identifies the disease with the hordes of strange people whom he seems to abhor. His

“chauvinistic democracy” is one that is “not intended to work in an England ‘corrupted’ by foreigners, and a democracy which could neither foresee nor forestall the disasters brought upon England by its place in the world and the world economy” (Fisch 276).

The figure of the imposter-prophet, with the doctrine of his followers as “the elect” does more than parody the egoism of Raymond, Adrian and Ryland: his attempts to conceal the deaths of his followers in order to sustain people’s belief in him “literalizes the ideological work of the myth of [the safely separate] imperial England” that is done by the political leaders of the country. (323) (Fisch 277)

Unlike Raymond and Ryland, Adrian is able to conceive of the humanity of ‘other’ peoples: recognizing the humanity of the Turks, he flinches at the spectacle of their massacre by the English army led by Raymond: “The Turks are men; each fibre, each limb is as feeling as our own, and every spasm . . . as in a Greek’s” (128). He seems to arrive too at a tentative feel for the dangerous, willed myopia of the leaders of England if not of their near-xenophobic national snobbery: “I have long expected this; could we in reason expect that this island should be exempt from the universal visitation? The evil is come home to us, and we must not shrink from our fate” (194).

But it is Lionel who, through sheer necessity, is driven to accept, in praxis, the concept of the humanity of peoples other than the English as he decides to leave Rome – his “magnificent abode” – for unknown shores in search of living humanity: “. . . it was still possible, that could I visit the whole extent of earth, I should find in some part of the wide extent a survivor” (373). Yet he too is unable to see the flaws of his civilization or in his people. Imagining his future readers he can only think of the greatness of the departed races of European peoples, blind still to the pride that contributed to their fall:

Yet, will not this world be re-peopled, and the children of a saved pair of lovers, in some to me unknown and unattainable seclusion, wandering to these prodigious relics of the ante-pestilential race, seek to learn how beings so wondrous in their achievements, with imaginations infinite, and powers godlike, had departed from their home to an unknown country? (372)

When he does leave Rome, hoping to find remnants of humanity in some far off shore, he still travels with the cultural baggage of the European civilizations and with the same “vision of the Englishman mastering the sea” (Fisch 268): “I have chosen my boat”, says he, “I have . . . laid in my scant stores. I have selected a few books; the principal are Homer and Shakespeare – But the libraries of the world are thrown open to me – and in any port I can renew my stock” (374).

As Fisch points out, it is not clear whether by new ‘stock’ Verney means more of European classics or such literature as other countries might offer him (268); it is not clear, that is, if at the start of his voyage out of Rome he is prepared to embrace the specificities of other cultures and peoples in a spirit of equality or means to act as the imperial emissary of European/British culture. Still, as witness to the apocalypse, Lionel “shows the myth” of the inviolate superiority of England to be “just a myth”: as witness he exposes the exclusions necessary in order to create and maintain the illusion of the inviolate ship of imperial England – shows how in order to conceive of England as the very center of the earth, the rest of the earth has to be relegated to a “fable” (5) (Fisch 268).

A rather different view of Shelley’s treatment of colonialism is taken by Richardson, who sees *The Last Man* as belonging “squarely in the tradition of British colonialist discourse”. While *Frankenstein*, despite its colonialism, had its anti-colonialist moments *The Last Man*, Richardson says, “seems to participate in the growing imperial confidence of its moment” so that Shelley has

no difficulty imagining England to be at the centre of an empire even in the twenty first century; England is also the leading power in an European confederation against Asia, which is dominated by the Turks. And while the novel shows England as a country that has continued to advance Turkey is projected as having stood still, a monument to barbarism, Lord Raymond's efforts to plant the Cross on Constantinople's principal mosque being the ultimate effort of the humiliation and subjugation of the racial-cultural 'Other'. It is only the plague that seems to thwart the total conquest of Asia by the 'civilizing' West.

Richardson seems to read Shelley's attitudes in the drama off the East/West encounter she creates but ignores the fact that the Plague too is an invention of the author and as such it has ideological meanings corresponding to its effects in the narrative. We have discussed how the Plague deconstructs the East/West power-binary and how by the English heroes' response to the Plague Shelley critiques their exclusionary mentality and their blind national/racial pride. The global devastation that happens to spread as a conflagration from the juncture in space and time where the West defeats and conquers the East underlines Shelley's sense of the inappropriateness and the dangers of totalizing attempts to impose the Western humanistic ideal of civilization on the rest of the world.

The plague itself, Richardson points out, is shown to be of Afro-Asian origin: it begins in Africa, just like the AIDS virus does in official Western accounts and becomes generalized soon as the contagion from the East, a nursling of the Tropics which attacks the people from the South but spares the pale-faced Celt. Even as one may argue that the eastern origin of the Plague is probably based on an historical event it is more important to note that the narrative actually gives the lie to Lionel's initial comforting assumption that it spared the Celt.

In the context of the contemporary United States' reaction to the AIDS epidemic Fisch has shown how Shelley's novel, indeed, can be read as a critique of the way the media and governments in the USA use the 'Us versus Them' (the 'general population' versus marginal 'others') model of thought to reinforce oppressive categories, like homosexuals and Blacks, and to evade the responsibility of creating conditions in which *everyone* can and does adopt practical preventive measures (269-70, 282-83).

The idea that ends Richardson's critique of *The Last Man* is that of its "almost jingoistic Anglo-centrism, its evident disgust at the spectacle of the colonial other, and its strident Orientalism". Shelley did have the English aristocrat's aversion to 'other' peoples, at least early in her life, as is evident from her own candid remarks; but to read the attitudes expressed by Lionel as her's is to adopt an interpretative attitude that would render all first-person narratives into fictionalized autobiographies. Lionel's vision of the world and of England's position in it – a position of obvious centrality and superiority – is progressively exposed in the novel as a myth: indeed, the novel is the process whereby that myth is debunked.

The all-consuming plague of Shelley's dystopian vision could be seen, as Mellor does, as a suggestion / realization on the part of the author that the imperialist English mind has to embrace the racial 'other', like Verney actually does, in order to gain health and peace ("Response"). As Mellor puts it, it may be significant that

Verney succumbs to the plague when, hearing a moan, he compassionately but incautiously enters a dark room where he is 'clasped' by a 'negro half clad, writhing under the agony of the disease' who convulsively *embraces* Verney. . . . From this unwilling but powerful embrace of the racial other . . . Verney both contracts and, recovering, becomes immune to the plague ("Introduction" xxiv).

Through this episode, then, Shelley may be indicating the need for an/other mode of being that

would oppose oppression and attend to the ‘other’ without either appropriation or annihilation. And when Adrian leads the surviving English to warmer climes, claiming the world as their country, what we have is probably not the “hollow ascendance” of the English over the world, as Richardson suggests: Shelley might be suggesting a broadening of mental horizons along with geographical ones.

Richardson sees Adrian’s induction into the British ranks of the mixed army of North Americans, Scots and Irish – come to avenge themselves on the British – as colonialist taming and appropriation of the force of the colonized. However, given the tenor of Adrian’s speech that effects the merger of the armies – its anti-violence rhetoric focused on the unity of mankind against a malevolent nature -- one would rather see the episode as Shelley’s endorsement of a model of social amelioration by the benevolent wisdom of an enlightened aristocracy -- an idea that Charles Dickens develops later in the century.

Shelley’s Conservatism? As has been argued by critics on *Frankenstein*, Shelley had an aversion to violent politics. This aversion to the sanguinary aspect of revolutionary movements, coupled with her mistrust of non-pragmatic idealism, impelled her to endorse a more or less conservative politics that sets a greater store by the ameliorative social efforts of an enlightened and benevolent aristocracy than on the reformatory impetus of violent revolutions. However, Shelley was sympathetic to the principle of democracy, and the enlightened, benevolent republican sympathizer Adrian (in lineage a royalty) is positively presented in *The Last Man*, although his impractical utopianism is the target of some of Shelley’s irony.

Thus, Adrian urges the people of England to share wealth and privileges more equitably; when England is attacked by the deadly disease he comforts, counsels, takes preventive measures, and leads the people to a warmer clime, trying, *en route*, to soothe factional rivalries among groups of his people, endangering himself in the process. However, Adrian is not capable of achieving his political vision through a pragmatic plan of action: only after the plague has leveled everyone in terms of wealth and class can he persuade himself to assume leadership of an egalitarian society. Also, as we have seen in the previous section, his lack of prudence resulted in the voyage that caused his death and Clara’s, deaths that obliterated the last hope of the regeneration of the human race in a post-pestilential world.

Conclusion In forming an idea of Shelley’s political predilection we may again turn to her presentation of the Plague, the chief motor driving the novel’s action and the central metaphor in it. As England makes the transition from monarchy to republicanism material conditions become equal for all citizens even as the specter of the Plague threatens to bring death to one and all with a matching impartiality. Shelley describes the new situation thus:

As the rules of order and the pressure of laws were lost, some began with hesitation and wonder to transgress the accustomed uses of society. . . . We were all equal now; magnificent dwellings, luxurious carpets and beds of down were afforded to all . . . We were all equal now; but near at hand was *an equality more leveling, a state where beauty and strength, and wisdom, would be as vain as riches and birth.* (252) [Emphasis added]

Shelley records the change in the “accustomed uses of society”, yes, but does not seem to rue it: rather, she is sensitive to the vanity of “riches and birth”. At the same time, one notes that her concern with the approaching epidemic gets its charge from the fact that it would make non-material, asocial human attributes and attainments as meaningless as those of wealth and class. While indiscriminate death would make apparent what Fisch calls the “spuriousness of

categories” it would also disrespect categories among men and women whose bases are not spurious.

As the Plague rampages over the newly republican state it not only harbingers mass-extinction, but also unleashes anarchy:

The wretched female, loveless victim of vulgar brutality, had wandered to the toilet of high-born beauty, and . . . had died before the mirror which reflected to herself alone her altered appearance. Women whose delicate feet had seldom touched the earth in their luxury, had fled in fright and horror from their homes, till, losing themselves in the squalid streets of the metropolis, they had died on the threshold of poverty. (255)

Apart from emphasizing how the Plague has made the achievement of republican equality futile, the passage brings out Shelley’s concern with the lawlessness, the toppling of order that the epidemic unleashes, even as a rude *exchange of station* between the rich and the poor replaces the *equality* that was imposed on the state by the republic. Given the metaphoric valence of the Plague (discussed earlier), this could be seen as an index to Shelley’s apprehensions about the destructive and anarchic potential of revolutionary politics itself. Indeed, the exchange of station between the aristocracy and the *hoi polloi* even indicates, one may say, her insight into how all political movements are ultimately about power (and egoism) and how the rule and domination of the aristocracy is more apt, under practical conditions, to change into the rule and domination of the masses rather than into a perfect (and therefore unsustainable?) equality.

Shelley’s respect for “beauty, wisdom and strength” indicates a high-mindedness and discernment that must not be conflated with vulgar snobbery. When Verney extols the glories achieved by the English race he reflects this discernment, this respect for the distinctions that qualities of the mind and personal achievements confer on certain individuals, irrespective of birth and standing, qualities and attainments that take the human collective to a higher state of being. No human society, Shelley seems to be saying, should suffer to lose these, either through post-revolutionary anarchy or through the contagion of the “vulgar spirit of commerce” , the materialism, that Shelley thought might be endemic to democracy. While not subscribing to the Godwinian utopianism about the human mind being potentially capable of transcending all barriers to the attainment of “godlike” mastery over the fate of the race, Shelley had too deep a love for real – and demonstrated – excellencies of that “wondrous” mind to be able to countenance the prospect of its ruin through a sudden, anarchic political revolution.

Shelley’s politics in *The Last Man* (as in her first novel) might seem to be “deeply conflicted” (Cantor 202). At the root of the apparent ambiguity, however, are her resistance to totalizing ideologies and praxes, her endorsement of a mode of being and action that would recognize and work through the contingencies and imperfections incident to human nature and human situations (without being waylaid either by notions of perfectibility or hatred of ‘others’), and her love of all that is fine and noble about our species and its achievements.

Shelley’s political critique, however, goes beyond a denunciation of sanguinary political movements and unmasks the egoism, the will to power and the ethnocentric, colonialist ambitions that drive (English) men toward courses destructive to the peace and wellbeing of both the home and the world. In her engagement with both Enlightenment and Romantic beliefs and ideals her prescient intelligence makes her gesture toward a post-anthropocentric, post-human(ist) understanding of the world. At a time when England was at the pinnacle of colonial glory and Eurocentrism/Anglocentrism was taken as granted Shelley’s cosmopolitanism took a

more nuanced view of the phenomenon, linking it up with (male) lust for power on the one hand and insular, irrational national pride on the other.

In *The Last Man*, then, Shelley weaves together her concerns as an heir to the Godwinian-Shelleyan legacy of Enlightenment humanism, as a Romantic keenly alive to human 'beauty' yet critiquing (male) Romanticism for its destructive and solipsistic egotism, as an intellectual ahead of her times, and as a woman whose life-experiences taught her to value the Apollonian ideals of temperance and stability over the allure of the Dionysian spirit.

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The Criterion

Aboriginal Woman Autobiography and the Problematics of Identity in Sally Morgan's *My Place*

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In her autobiographical novel *My Place* (1987) Sally Morgan makes an attempt to trace her family history by matrilineal descent. Sally comes to know about her Aboriginal past when one day her grandmother Nan in a mood of despair reveals the fact that she is a 'black' woman (*My Place* 120). When this new knowledge of her Aboriginal past is revealed, Sally becomes conscious of her matrilineal descent:

For the first time in my fifteen years, I was conscious of Nan's colouring. She was right, she wasn't white. Well, I thought logically, if she wasn't white, then neither were we. What did that make us, what did that make me? I had never thought of myself as being black before. (*My Place* 120)

Sally explores her family's past and decides to write a 'family history' book incorporating the life experiences of her grandmother, mother and, her uncle (*My Place* 190). Sally's autobiographical novel therefore includes the life-histories of three other characters who are related to Sally's life. This mode of writing an autobiography is unique because the author (Sally Morgan is the author of this novel and also a character in the novel) is not interested to narrate only her life-history, rather she takes into account the life-histories of other family members. The author separately records the stories of her Aboriginal uncle Arthur, her Aboriginal mother Gladys and, her Aboriginal grandmother Nan. In fact, Sally's autobiography lacks an essential broad story - there are mininarratives (different life-histories) which are linked with one another. All these small narratives seem to challenge the Western mode of writing a grand metanarrative autobiography which only concentrates on one defining and essential self. As an important black Aboriginal autobiography, Sally Morgan's *My Place* seems to be a postmodern autobiography which engages to show not only the life of the author, but also the lives of the other black relatives of the author. Sally's life narrative has a relevance in the novel when it is compared to the life narratives of Arthur, Gladys and Nan. If seen from the perspective of Western autobiography, *My Place* can be treated as a different kind of autobiographical writing which apparently challenges the basic convention of writing life-histories. Writing from a marginal position, Sally's autobiography attempts to de-essentialize the Aboriginal black identity that the Western theorists have homogenized in their writings. As a document of Aboriginal life-histories, *My Place* glorifies the plurality of the Aboriginal race in Australia. The Western critics have always tried to homogenize the black experience in their theories and speaking on this issue the renowned black American critic Bell Hooks in her essay "Postmodern Blackness" (1990), suggests the black writers to criticize the unique black identity that the Western theorists have propagated in their theories to erase differences of black experience. Hook says, "The critique of essentialism encouraged by postmodernist thought is useful . . . We have too long had imposed upon us from both the outside and the inside a narrow, constricting notion of blackness. Postmodern critiques of essentialism which challenge notions of universality and static over-determined identity within mass culture and mass consciousness can open up new possibilities for the construction of self and the assertion of agency." (*The Norton Anthology of*

Theory and Criticism 2482). In *My Place* Morgan critiques the universal notion of black identity by writing about many black aboriginal selves that tell about different black experiences. Bell Hooks comments on this important issue by stating, “When black folks critique essentialism, we are empowered to recognize multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible.” (*The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* 2483).

Among the four different narratives in *My Place*, Arthur’s story presents his journey from working as a servant to the whites in missionary homes to becoming a rich farmer and finally the white government taking away his land and property. His story shows his failure to fight against white government’s supremacy and how he encounters the racist stereotypes of his society. But, Arthur is never too much emotional in telling about his past. He understands the futility of protesting against the white rule and also knows that the blacks will remain forever inferior to the whites. At the end of his story, Arthur therefore says to Sally, “You see, the trouble is that colonialism isn’t over yet. We still have a White Australia policy against the Aborigines. Aah, it’s always been the same. They say there’s been no difference between black and white, we all Australian, that’s lie. I tell you, the black man has nothing, the government’s been robbing him blind for years.” (*My Place* 266). In Glady’s and Daisy’s stories, one can locate the pain and agony of a doubly colonized native. When they narrate their stories to Sally, they feel ashamed of their past and are also reluctant to tell all the details about their past. In fact, Glady and Daisy belong to that generation of Australia’s colonial history when the assimilation policy was in effect. They both had to cope with the brutal assimilation policy of the whites which did not allow an Aboriginal child to keep his / her unique black identity and were forced to assimilate the white culture. The trauma of colonization inherent in the assimilation policy of the whites had been so deep that Glady and Daisy concealed their Aboriginal identity and suppressed their memories of original past. Anne Brewster in her book *Aboriginality and Sally Morgan’s My Place* pinpoints this issue of suppressing the Aboriginal identity, “During the 1940s and 1950s both Daisy and Glady felt ashamed and fearful of identifying as Aboriginal. They denied their Aboriginality and attempted to repress their memories of the past.” (17). However, unlike Glady and Daisy who had been the victims of assimilation policy of the whites, Sally is proud to own an Aboriginal identity. In her story one finds her insistent desire to know her past and reclaim it. Brewster finds this difference interesting in the novel:

My Place is the story of the excavation of the family’s history by a younger woman for whom Aboriginality was a badge of pride rather than of shame. It tells of Morgan’s excitement over her new-found heritage and also her frustration in trying to unlock the secrets of the family’s painful and humiliating past. . . . The book is a story of the dislocation of generations; where her grandmother and mother had hidden their past, and their Aboriginality, Morgan wanted to reclaim and make visible the past, an action fiercely resisted by her grandmother. (Brewster 17)

It therefore becomes clear that Sally’s search for her identity is intimately linked to her mother’s, grandmother’s and great uncle’s stories of the past. In fact, as we all know that the Aboriginal women autobiographers have always tried to define their identity in relation to the family that they belong. The family’s identity for the Aboriginal women writers is more important than the individual identity. Brewster interprets this important concern for the family among the Aboriginal women writers as a contradictory attitude of the Aboriginal women writers to the “First World feminism which sees the family as oppressive for women.” (Brewster 10). Apart from the fact that Sally attempts to reclaim her Aboriginal identity with the help the stories

of Arthur, Gladys and Daisy; one finds that she is more interested in the story of her mother Gladys. Gladys's story as it seems has been prioritized by Sally. The prioritization of Gladys's story becomes emphatic when one finds that seventy seven pages in the novel have been used to record Gladys's history. Arthur's history is limited to forty five pages, whereas Daisy's history is limited to forty pages in the novel. It is this important fact that strikes me as a reader of this autobiographical novel. In fact, Gladys's story shares a significant critical relationship to the story of Sally.

Sally emphasizes the story of Gladys because Gladys has a very strong influence in the life of Sally. When we read the narrative of Sally, we find that Sally's childhood is mother-centric. Gladys influences Sally to continue his studies and complete her education. Sally's affinity with her mother is strong and they both share some common qualities. Sally's imaginative mind is reflected in her paintings whereas Gladys's imagination is reflected at the Parkerville's Children's Home when she counts "the numerous rainbow-coloured dragonflies that skimmed across the surface of the water." (*My Place* 314). In fact, when Sally persuades both Gladys and Daisy to tell about the past, then Gladys is the first to take initiative and help Sally to know about her Aboriginal past. It is clear from the narrative of Gladys that Sally is intimate to her and this intimacy is exclusive. Sally's intimacy with her grandmother Daisy and great uncle Arthur is not deep and exclusive like her mother Gladys. In Sally's life-history Daisy and Arthur are marginalized by the presence of Gladys. This obviously accounts for the less number of pages used to record the story of Arthur and Daisy. However, Gladys's story of the past seems to be important from the point of view of Sally's Aboriginal identity. But before explaining this issue, it is necessary to explicate Gladys's story from a different dimension. In Gladys's narrative, one finds the character of Bill who happens to be the white husband of Gladys. While narrating her past, Gladys clearly mentions that when she married Bill, everybody in Bill's family and Gladys's family disapproved the marriage. The outcome of the marriage of Bill and Gladys is not a happy one. Bill becomes alcoholic after marriage and also develops a kind of indifference to the relatives of Gladys. But instead of accusing Bill for his racist attitudes, Gladys builds up a sympathetic figure of Bill in her story. When Bill on one occasion refuses to meet Arthur, then Gladys explains the attitude of Bill by stating in her story, "Bill was a strange man, he wasn't prejudiced against other racial groups, just Aboriginals. . . . Bill had spent a lot of his childhood in country towns. I think that moulded his attitudes to Aboriginal people." (*My Place* 373). In her story Gladys suppresses her guilty consciousness of marrying a white man who has ruined her dreams of happy marriage. Gladys therefore presents Bill differently in her story to evoke a sympathetic response from Sally. Gladys's attempt to present Bill in a sympathetic way to Sally becomes more relevant when we take into account Sally's hate for her father Bill. Sally hates Bill because he is an alcoholic. Gladys therefore strategically gives importance to Bill in her story and thereby makes an attempt to link Sally with his white father. This attempt of Gladys is problematic in terms of Sally's Aboriginal identity. In fact, by associating Sally with his father Bill, Gladys's story critiques the notion of Aboriginality that Sally claims to seek in her book. Gladys's story, as if seeks to remind Sally that the concept of Aboriginal identity which she is trying to reclaim will invite problems when seen from the domain of half-castes¹. Sally is a half-caste daughter of Bill and Gladys and her understanding of the Aboriginal consciousness can be contested by those who are the pure black natives of Australia. Gladys's story therefore complicates the search of Sally's Aboriginal identity and questions the very authenticity of it.

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The Criterion

**Immigrant Women: Many faces and Myriad experiences: A perspective
into the paradoxical existence of women in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's
*The mistress of spices and Sister of My Heart***

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Immigrant Women Characters populate the American mainstream literature, steeped in the archetypal images of Asians Americans. Women are portrayed as the most visible symbols of the perilous incongruity arising out of the cohabitation between cultures. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has proved her mettle as one of the most prolific and vociferous voices of Asian American Immigrant women. Her stories, despite all their mystery and magic, create a veritable smorgasbord of characters, barely untrue to their human failings and travails of a life. She has captured the bare rumblings of disquiet and often sheer cacophony through the varied immigrant experiences of women. This paper seeks to delve into the incongruity involved in the lives of women characters and forces and factors that bring about cataclysmic changes in their lives. *The mistress of spices and sister of my heart* offer ample scope to bring out the paradoxical elements involved in the convoluted and often paradoxical existence of women characters.

Rummaging through the rich harvest of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works one can easily conjure a virtual picture of the South Asian diasporic experience across the Atlantic. Her view of these experiences have been conditioned by ,as is common to all diasporic communities, the unremitting cycle of contradictory posturing in notions of race and culture, time and geography. In most of her works The South Asian women divided between loyalties develop easily manoeuvrable thought processes as well as customs and habits to achieve a harmonious duality of existence. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explores the typical immigrant experience showing the mirror to Indian women wriggling out of stereotypes in American urban landscapes through her novels. Set in spaces-Physical as well as mindscape- divided by continents and cultures, Divakaruni's plots feature women of Indian roots torn between old and new values. Her writings centre on the lives of immigrant women - women in love, women in difficulties, and women in relationships. Her interest in delving deeper into the amorphous and often paradoxical existence of women began soon after she left Indian shores and her subsequent documentation of cross-country immigrant experience. She always maintained that the stories for her novels are inspired by her imagination and the experiences of others which the Indian Diaspora abundantly offers. Divakaruni combines a natural felicity of treating the narrative texture with the artistry of a painter. She strove to capture the

complex and baffling psyche of the south Asian women in America in a manner akin to Du Bois's "double consciousness".(P.5) Divakaruni's women are caught between the decadent, sullen customs of South Asia , their place of origin and their present skirmishes with a forward looking ,liberated culture of an adopted place. As opposed to Du Bois's model of double consciousness, the women of her oeuvre get their place under the sun in the categorical constructions of racial and sexual identities. Divakaruni's characters take their journey beyond threads of duality, more towards conditions inherently complex and multifarious. In a clear departure from double consciousness, her women characters exhibit multiple consciousnesses ending up in creating a self that is fragmented. As the women perceive both their race and sexuality through new and varied prisms the notion of a singular identity comes out as a misnomer. A contradiction of sorts characterise the lives of women which is born out of varying levels of consciousness. The women characters display a raw streak of uncertainty in understanding the nature of their identities, and are also hazy about their adaptability to the social-cultural milieu of an American society. In fact, most diasporic writing is suffused with identification consciousness and problem of living in an alien society (P..42 Diasporic Indian writing in English by Somadta Mandal).However in a strange paradoxical move this condition of multiplicity paves the way for emergence of a state of freedom from conflicts for the characters. Adaptation to a cross cultural setting actually enables this multiple consciousness to ultimately engender a positive psychological element. The women of Divakaruni's 'imagined world' display a flair for adjusting to a world which is linear and individualistic with equal élan as a collective mass of consciousness that is borderless and infinite in inventing identities.

The sublime manifestation of her character's inner and outer worlds add a rich emotional texture to an emancipating story in *The mistress of spices* about women who are quick to make peace with the difficult choices that the circumstances have forced upon them. The plot goes for a roller coaster rides as the characters get in enmeshed with one another. Divakaruni's vaunted style is palpable in display and the emotional surcharged insights into the bare bone realities of women's lives- in all its lively detail- whether in material comfort, or bodily pleasure or the baffling bursts of superior levels of consciousness. The protagonist Tilo led a life underplayed often in being controlled by others. The discovery of her innate powers turns the dice in her favour and her new found mystical aura elevates her standing in the family scheme of things and she becomes a giver and facilitator for her family,s magniloquent lifestyle. She had to constantly juggle to realize her identity, losing sight and feel of it more often than not- finding and losing in the secluded company of snakes under water while searching for treasures or later in the Island of spices. Success serenades her life in a strange way; most eloquently she became the Mistress of spices. But her search resumes its trail again from the time she met the lonely American when as a Mistress she "was being treated as the other". Her adopted place Oakland failed to snap her ties of nostalgia about India , which is more pronounced in her flashes of unmistakable empathy for fellow Indians. Her intermittent search for her true identity was laced with clashes and flouting of norms with the solitary exception of the moment of visceral and carnal gratification with Raven in a night of gay abandon and wilful surrender after she attains beauty with the help of spices. The feeling of being an alien is very much represented by Tilo in this fatalistic tone as "nothing except my eyes is my own". Instead, as a girl she gained recognition only as a girl of supernatural powers and even at the spice shop she was treated as a witch woman by most of the persons. Life turns a full circle for Tilo, the protagonist, who started out as one causing another dowry debt in her family.

Even the minor characters of the novel represent the theme of alienation to a large extent. Geeta and her family members too suffer the alienation. Geeta suffers the most when her family turns against her desire to marry Juan, an American notwithstanding their seeming

acceptance of the language and culture to some extent. However, she being more coming of age and sure footed hated women making kitchen their fate, decides to marry Juan. Strangely, she could solemnise the matrimony with the consent of her parents and not against their will. Chitra Banarjee's women are liberated as Geeta but her use of mysticism unlocked from Hindu mythologies adds to the infusion of paradoxical elements into her characters. The alternating strand of meaning underneath the metaphor of the spice Turmeric which she borrows from the mythological story of '*Devas and Asuras*', considered as a shield for heart's sorrow, an ointment of death and hope of rebirth. The mistress tries to cure Lalitha Ahuja's wife with this turmeric when she feels deserted by her husband leaving her long to have a child of her own, to fill the emptiness in her life. Even in while self anointing herself, the mistress enjoys the liberty of alluding to the story of Tilottama, the beautiful dancer, and Apsara at Indra's court and how she was banished to live a mortal life for seven ages. Her characters like Lalitha find solace only when they dared to step away from the pre ordained life of passivity and helplessness. Hameeda too suffers a lot in the hands of her husband but starts life afresh, ironically with help from his brother which is stark reminder about the inherent paradoxes involved in the lives of women in this novel. She even attends classes to learn English to make her own living in America and to bring up her daughter. The contradictions are just not limited to the physical or social space alone. While flight to advanced societies are reasoned by prospects of economic betterment, in this novel disparities in economic values and opportunities come to the fore. Women find a mini replica of their substandard stature in the patriarchal society in their homeland here too, mainly because of the economic disparities. However, Chitra Banerjee not only poses the questions but also offers solution to her women characters by suggesting practical ways of finding emancipation and financial assurance, often through vocational work. Divakaruni represents the women of her novels as a class just as Marxian epistemology. As a fight against the atrocities, women were shown different areas to work and stand on their own with their creativity and hard work and thus breaking the male geocentricism.

Divakaruni's "*Sister of My Heart*", is a poignant tale of two young women whose lives are torn asunder by marriage, as one reaches the foreign shores leaving the other behind in India. The upheavals in their lives are simple aftershocks of their cultural displacement and ambivalence, quite typical of post colonial cultural studies (1.). Sharing the same genealogy an upper caste family of distinction, Anju and Sudha offer pictures of contrast. While one is fortunate to have credible parent, the other is the daughter of the black sheep of that same family. Even physical attractiveness is a divisive element. Yet despite these obvious incongruities, they share a bonding of compatibility and pure understanding due to strange coincidences in their dates of birth and the deaths of their fathers in similar mysterious fashions. They carry this bonding well into their womanhood in spite of their mothers failing to comprehend it.

In a sudden twist in plot Sudha's discovery of a dark family secret threatens their bonding tempting them to taste the bitter feel of suspicion and distrust. Family fortunes do take likely turns so as their lives take opposite turns. They lead lives of secrets till tragedy strikes both of them and realize an imperative urge to unite blurring distance and marriage. At this point it is apt to run through Rosellen Brown views: "What an irresistibly absorbing immersion into the pleasure and anguish of growing up passionately in a world of duty, where each comfort is hedged with a constraint and love unsettles every plan. *Sister of my heart* may be alive with exotic detail but its emotions are very recognizable". This forms the central message of the '*Sister of My Heart*'. It can be studied from various angles and points of view, and its varied nauseas and poignant realities include traces of feminism.

Sudha, one of the protagonists of the novel, suffered a lot, being a fatherless child, and out of guilt of her father's act, could not insist on her choice of marrying Ashok. She

could never reconcile to the dark family secret. Tradition claims its easy prey in women which is clearly represented by the character Pishima, the sister of Anju's father, widowed at an early age and even denied opportunity to continue studies, condemned to the kitchen for always. She shorn of everything she could have got lives a life of utter dependence. And quite paradoxically, Gourima, the mother of Anju, is shown in contrast to the character of Pishi assuming dominance in running the household after the death of her husband. She handles the book shop and even takes care of the two daughters, Sudha and Anju, their studies, and even the widows, Nalini and Pishi. She even neglects her health, while struggling hard to take over the family without hurting the traditions of the Chatterjees. Again quite interestingly Nalini, the mother of Sudha represents the dominant forces of society, conservative and bossy who revelled in denying others their rightful privileges be it education or otherwise. Her dark prophecies are summed by the author as:

For girl-babies who are so much bad luck that they cause their fathers to die even before they are born (P.3.)

What follows in Sudha's life is nothing short of catastrophe as in all her choices she bows before the family's will. Ironically, Nalini more than caring for her daughter's wellbeing feared the society after she goes through terrible plight. Divakaruni brings out the paradoxes involved in how as daughters Sudha and Anju were restricted not to be fashionable, not to watch movies, not allowed to use lip stick and salwar kameez in a bid to make them the acid test of finding a good suitor. Even other women characters like Mrs. Sanyal betray their own perceptions of womanhood and impose flawed notions and expectations on other women like Sudha in detecting pregnancy. When Sudha comes out of Bardhaman, out of fear of abortion, Mrs. Sanyal quite nonchalantly declares that to be a fault and even decides for a second marriage to Ramesh without the least hesitation.

Divakaruni represents the women of her novels as a class who constantly struggle to achieve financial self sufficiency. When Sudha was divorced Anju invites her to come to America and to have her own boutique which she dreamed off in her childhood. She even says that the Americans give much value to those which represents the Indian tradition. Anju too does a part time job of assisting her lecturer in proof reading so as to provide economical support to Sudha and help her to make a good starting in America. In this novel, Divakaruni represents the psychological struggle often bordering on duality in women. Sudha, despite being so close to Anju could not resist her feelings after knowing the dark family secret unable to fathom the difference between them. Anju's struggles too looked endless from being aghast being considered baby-machines to inability to fulfil personal aspirations. Even though she went through a lot of stress when she realizes that her husband is very much disturbed by the beauty of Sudha, she stands in her support and strives a lot to present her a good life in America which results in the loss of health as well as a miss-carriage too. However, Sudha, till the end of the novel, feels the displacement because of the guilt that she was feeling because she was not the real cousin of Anju. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni makes use of mythological metaphors to accentuate the liveliness of experiences her characters undergo. She reveals the glorious stories of Rani of Jhansi through the voice of Sudha to Anju at the time when she was depressed because of her misscarriage and helps her to regain her strength. She narrates it also to her daughter Dayita, on their way to America, in a different way. She even reveals the story of Lord Krishna who helped his sister Draupadi in times of need and compares the lost child of Anju to be Lord Krishna in the symbol of a star in the sky - thus leading Dayita to a bright future.

In fact, much of Divakaruni's work deals with the immigrant experiences which is an important theme in the mosaic of the post colonial literary landscape. Works starting from "Arranged Marriage", a collection of short stories about women from India caught between two worlds to the analyzed texts "*Mistress of Spices*" and "*Sister of My Heart*" are

microcosmic representations of lives lived by women who are caught in the cross roads of a cultural shift. She in her beautifully lyrical style fills the canvass of her work by caricatures of women in all perceivable dimensions of womanhood. In fact, in one of her interviews, she observes that, 'women in particular, respond to my works because I'm writing about them, women in love, women in difficulties, and women in relationships'.

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"CREATING CONSCIOUSNESS AND INVENTING IDENTITY"-An Examination of Self-Perception, Multiple Consciousness and the Process of South Asian Diasporic Identity Formation in Selected Works by Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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The Criterion

Malayali - English Pronunciation: With Special Reference to the Impact of Spelling

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Introduction

There are more than thirty major languages in the Indian social milieu. The educated sections of the speakers of India's 'national languages' constitute the Indian English bilinguals who use English as their so called second language (L₂). When one learns a second language after acquiring the first language, features of the first language interferes with aspects of the second language. This is called L₁ interference or negative transfer. As the major languages of India have distinct features, the kind of English spoken by speakers of these languages, due to L₁ interference, acquires special features as is evident from such terms as Hindi-English (Hinglish), Tamil-English (Tamilish), Malayalam-English (Manglish) etc. These terms, though pejorative, point to the existence of a number of English 'accents' in the country. An 'accent' implies a particular style/ way of pronunciation. The pronunciation of English by Indian English bilinguals, being modelled on the pronunciation of their mother tongues (L₁) often come under the influence of the pronunciation patterns of the speaker's mother tongue.

This is because most of the Indian languages are phonetic in the sense that all written letters (graphemes) are pronounced. Besides, the iteration (stress) system is syllable timed. This is so in the case of Malayalam which is a Dravidian language. In it all written letters are pronounced with syllable timed stress system. So, in Malayali English speakers resort to 'spelling-pronunciation', giving equal stress to all sounds, parts of words, words and even sentences.

Spelling-influenced pronunciation is the primary affective variable of Malayali English 'accent'. It affects mutual intelligibility in contexts of communication outside Kerala. Consequently, in national and international domains of English speech Malayali English negatively correlates with communication success: spelling-influenced Malayali English pronunciation is a communication barrier that produces communication handicap in Malayali English bilinguals. In employment situations, especially during recruitment drives, this handicap would become an economic handicap when Keralite job aspirants are marginalised in the selection process, due to their 'poor English'. And so, an examination of the impact of spelling on the pronunciation of Malayali English is significant and relevant as it would help in minimising the impact of spelling-pronunciation, thereby, maximizing the intelligibility of M.E out-side Kerala. Besides, insights obtained from the study can be replicated elsewhere and put to good use in the ELT class-rooms across the country.

A perusal of studies pertaining to interference shows that this aspect has been studied internationally by linguists like Swain and Barik (1978), Kenworthy (1987), Major (1987), Swan and Smith (1987), Taylor (1993) and Carter and Nunan (2004).

A number of studies have been carried out in India pertaining to the pronunciation of English in the country. Studies by Kachru (1965) Pattanayak (1969, 1981), Verma (1978), Prabhu (1987) and Tickoo (2009) have attempted to highlight features of General Indian English.

Studies by Asari (1970), Nazareth (1990), Syamala (1983,1996), and Thomas (2002, 2011, 2011a, 2011b) have attempted to indicate some aspects of L₁ sound interference on

English pronunciation of Keralites. But there is a shortage of specific studies on the impact of spelling on the pronunciation in Malayali English. Hence, the need for the present study.

Methodology

A study of the English pronunciation of 400 undergraduate students (17-20 age group; arts/ science/ commerce students; both sexes) selected through stratified random sampling from the Central Travancore Colleges has been undertaken. The members of the sample were required to pronounce selected words and sentences. The students' pronunciation was recorded by English teachers. Thus, through recorded pronunciation and participant observation (direct listening) the data was collected and subjected to further study.

Results

Analysis of the data indicates that the impact of spelling on the pronunciation in M.E. can be grouped under: Pronunciation of silent letters, gemination or pronunciation of double letters, pronunciation of some nouns/ adjectives and verbs without stress shift, spelling Pronunciation of the phonologically conditioned Plural '-es/s' and past tense '-ed' morphemes and strong articulation of weak function class words

I) Pronunciation of silent letters

Seven letters which are silent in the R.P Pronunciation of some words have been found to be pronounced in M.E.:

- Silent 'd' is Pronounced in M.E. Eg: *adjourn* /- ə'dʒɜ:n / - [M.E ə'ddʒɜ:n], *adjudge* /ə'dʒʌdʒ/ [ə'ddʒʌdʒ]. Similarly /d/ in the following words are pronounced in M.E: *adjudicate* [ə'ddʒu:di.ke:t], *adjudication* [ə'ddʒu:di'ke:ʃn], *badge* [bæddʒ], *badger* [bæddʒ.ə], *bridge* [briddʒ], *bridgehead* ['briddʒ.hed], *budge* [bʌddʒ], *budget* ['bʌddʒ.et], *cudgel* ['kʌddʒ.əl], *dodge* [doddʒ], *dredge* [dreddʒ], *edge* [eddʒ], *fridge* [friddʒ], *fudge* [fʌddʒ], *gadget* ['gæddʒ.et], *hedge* [hedddʒ], *hedgehog* ['hedddʒ.hog], *judge* [dʒʌddʒ]
- Pronunciation of 'b' occurs in *bomb* /bɒm /- [bɒmb] and *comb* /kəʊm /- [ko:mb]. Other examples include *crumb* [krʌmb], *crummy* ['krʌmb.i], *debt* [debt], *honeycomb* ['hʌn.i.ko:mb], *indebted* [m'deɪt.ed] etc.
- The letter 'h' is pronounced in M.E.in *annihilate* /ə'nai.i.leɪt/ - [ə'n.i.hile:t] and *honour* /'ɒn.ə / - [ho:n.ə]. Similarly, *honest* ['ho:n.est], *dishonest* [dɪ'sho:n.est], *honorable* ['ho:n.ə.r.ə.bəl], *vehicle* ['vehi.kəl] etc.
- 't' is pronounced in M.E. in *ballet* ['bæ.lət], *christen* ['krist.ən], *Christendom* ['krist.ən.dəm], *christening* ['krist.ən.ɪŋ], *gourmet* ['gor.met], *mortgage* [mort.ge:dʒ], *mortgagee* [mort.ge:dʒi], *tarot* ['tæ.rət] etc.
- Silent 'k' is pronounced in *victual* /'vɪt.əl /- ['vɪktʃu.əl]. 'G' is pronounced in *poignant* /'pɔɪ.njənt/ - ['poi.gnent], and *vignette* /vɪ'njet/ - [vig'net].
- Silent 'p' is pronounced in *corps* [ko:ɪps], *coup* [ku:p], *cupboard* ['kʌpb.o:d] and *receipt* [rɪ'si:pt].

II) Gemination or Pronunciation of double letters

The sounds /p/, /l/, /m/, /n/, and /k/ are given double articulation when they occur twice in spelling:

- Doubling of /p/ occurs in *apparatus* [ə'p.p.a r'e.təs], *apparel* [ə'p.pær.əl], *apparition* [ə'p.p.a r'iʃ.ən], *append* [ə'p.pend] etc.

- b) Gemination of /l/ occurs in **brilliant** ['brill.i.ənt], **brilliance** ['brill.i.ən.s], **bullet** ['bull.et], **bullock** ['bull.ok], and **bully** ['bull.i]
- c) Summation of /m/ is common in M.E: eg: **commemorate** [kə'mmem.ə|re:t], **commence** [kə'mmen.s], **commend** [kə'mmend], **commensurate** [kə'mmen.sr.e:t] **commission** [kə'mmiʃ.ən], **committee** [kə'mmɪ.ti].
- d) Gemination of /n/ is found in **innate** [ɪ'ne:t], **innocent** [ɪ'nn.ə.sent], **innocuous** [ɪ'nnok.u.s], **innovate** [ɪ'nn.o.ve:t], **innumerable** [ɪ'nnju:.m^ər.ə.bl].
- e) Doubling of /k/ is heard in **occult** ['okk.ʌlt], **occupy** ['okk.u.pai], **occupation** [okk.u'pe:ʃən], **occupational** [okk.u'pe:ʃən.əl], **occlusion** [o'kklu:.ʃən], **occupancy** [okk.u.pən.si], **occur** [o'kker] etc.

III) Pronunciation of words without stress shift

In the R.P some words which are used as nouns/ adjectives and verbs have the same spelling but different pronunciation, with a shift in stress based on their changed function. But in Malayali English the words are pronounced alike, irrespective of their change in function: eg:

Word	Noun / adj.	Verb	M.E.
absent	'æb.s ^ə nt	æb'sent	'absent
abstract	'æb.strækt	æb'strækt	abs'trakt
accent	'æk.s ^ə nt	ək'sent	'aksənt
addict	'æd.ɪkt	ə'dɪkt	ʌdɪkt
record	'rek.ə:d	rɪ'kə:d	re'kord

IV) Spelling Pronunciation of the phonologically conditioned Plural –‘es/s’ and past tense – ‘ed’ morphemes

In Malayali English the Pronunciation of the plural morpheme [-es/s] is always /-s/ unlike in the R.P. which has three distinct phonologically conditioned morphemes, as in **Roses** - /r əʊzɪz/, **dogs** - /dɔgz/, **looks** - /luks/ which are pronounced as [rɔ:ses, dɔ:gs & luks] respectively in M.E.

The past tense morpheme -‘ed’ is always pronounced /d/ in Malayali English unlike in the R.P. which has three distinct phonologically conditioned morphemes, as in **rooted** - /ru:tɪd/, **rubbed** - /rʌbd/ and **looked** - /lukt/, which are pronounced as [ru:ted, rʌbd and lukt] respectively in M.E. This is because the morpheme distinction is not marked in spelling.

V) Strong articulation of weak function class words

In Malayali English, weakly articulated function class words in the R.P. are spoken in their strong forms. Eg: the sentence ‘I am coming’ - /aɪm 'kʌmɪŋ/ is pronounced as [aɪ am 'kʌmɪŋ]. Similarly ‘can I go?’ - /kənai 'gəʊ/ - [kjan ai go:]. This strong articulation of function class words is due to the absence of weak articulation markers in spelling.

It is clear from the above account that the impact of spelling on pronunciation in M.E. manifests in the Pronunciation of silent letters, gemination or pronunciation of double letters, Pronunciation of some words without stress shift, spelling Pronunciation of the phonologically conditioned Plural (-es/s) and past tense (-ed) morphemes and in the strong articulation of weak function class words.

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Religious Training and Byronic Psychology

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Despite Byron's consequent aversion to traditional observances, he was always acutely sensitive about religious beliefs. At the age of nineteen Byron had finished reading Hugh Blair, A Scottish Presbyterian divine and popular writer of sermons; Porters, Tilloston and Hooker all eminent men in the field of religion and theology. Doctrinal Christianity, also known as Calvinism had a deep impact on Byron. When Byron was back from his first tour on the continent he received long visits from Francis Hodgson and William Harness at Newstead. Both of these Byron's close friends later became clergymen of the Church of England. Harness subsequently wrote, "Byron from his early education in Scotland had been taught to identify the principles of Christianity with the extreme dogmas of Calvinism. His mind had thus imbibed a most miserable prejudice, which appeared to be the only obstacle to his hearty acceptance of the Gospel. Of this error we were most anxious to disabuse him."

By the extreme dogmas of Calvinism Harness meant the great emphasis laid upon original sin and predestination in Calvinistic systems, doctrines that exercised a profound influence upon Byron's imagination. The fascination, which they held for him, explains in large measure his life-long concern with theological controversy. He could not digest that one should suffer for other's fault. He protested, "... the basis of your religion is injustice; the Son of God, the pure, the immaculate, the innocent, is sacrificed for the Guilty. This proves His heroism; but no more does away man's guilt ..."

Byron's wife Annabella Milbanke later confirmed Harness' account. During the courtship she questioned Byron about his religious beliefs. But he shied away from answering that time. She later discovered that Byron's dislike for religion was closely related to fear. The fear he used to feel in his childhood in Aberdeen, living close to a grave yard. Lady Byron related, "There was a deliberate purpose [on Byron's part] to set God's will and human law at defiance...Vice in itself was spoken of as insipid, as deriving its zest from its lawfulness."

"Over and over again there were the raging fits, the despairing fits, and the reference to some abnormal, unforgivable sin."

Byron and his wife used to have a great many discussions on religion and Lady Byron's authoritarian dogmatism was the disturbing element in their conversation.

"He tried to undermine her faith in Christianity as a rule of life by argument and ridicule."

Byron experienced an inner conflict, which his constant preoccupation with traditional beliefs is evidence.

"So that his mind is continually making the most sudden transitions- from good to evil- from evil to good."

He wanted to shake off this burden of conflict:

"Yet let us ponder boldly- 'tis a base
Abandonment of reason to resign
Our right of thought- our last and only place
Of refuge; this, at least, shall still be mine:

Though from our birth the faculty divine
Is chain'd and tortured- cabin'd, cribb'd, confined,
And bred in darkness, lest the truth should shine
Too brightly on the unprepared mind,"

His contact during youth and early manhood with the orthodox tradition consisted in a series of experience to which he attached certain values. His vacillations between belief and doubt were always attended by inward distress; religious uncertainty was a constant source of suffering to him. Sin and suffering are the recurrent theme throughout his works:

"Existence may be borne, and the deep root
Of life and sufferance make its firm abode
The bare and desolated bosoms; mute
The camel labours with the heaviest load,
And the wolf dies in silence"

But in spite of the religious confusion and skepticism Byron was a firm believer in God and His creation. 'God made man, let us love him, piped the little Aberdonian at five. His acceptance of the belief in a creator was by no means a rationalistic or philosophical theism. It was the product of religious teaching, grounded upon the Old Testament. His poetry reflects this truth everywhere. It is found in his earliest poetry, and is intimately associated with the development of his natural religion and his pantheism. "*Cain*" and "*Heaven and Earth*" show most markedly Byron's concern with the Divine purpose. Whatever skepticism may be traced in these dramas there is no question that Byron assumed the existence of divine will:

"...all
Rests upon thee; and good and evil seem
To have no power themselves, save in the will."

By 1815 Byron shows that tendency toward Catholicism, which seemed to carry with it an increasing reverence for the person of Christ. Not until maturity did he come to a sympathetic attitude toward the Christian system of grace. The relation of the creature to the creator, or, in traditional language, the salvation, appeared to him during his formative years in Hebraic rather than in its Christian aspect; his early poetry ignores the New Testament teaching of a divine mediator between man and God. Although he came finally to conceive of Christ as a divine teacher, he seldom concerned himself with Christ as a redeemer. The later speculative poems, "*Cain*" and "*Heaven and Earth*" are hence conceived in the spirit of the Old Testament. But one can hardly escape the conclusion that Byron's mind was fundamentally religious -Religious, not in the sense of orthodox piety, but in the sense of a being innately predisposed to concern itself with the supernatural order, or to inquire into the bearing of traditional beliefs upon human experience. To a mind of that stamp, sin and its consequences are of prime importance. Byron's awe in the presence of all that lies beyond ordinary experience, and his exaggerated sense of guilt, are closely connected with the strong emphasis placed upon the doctrine of original sin by Calvinistic creeds. It would be hard to find a mentality more likely than his to be thrown into a state of emotional agitation by such a doctrine. His blazing sense of justice, his passionate desire for a state in which the guiltless should be unmolested and the wicked should be restrained, made Byron preeminently the poet of revolution. Yet he was confronted with a dogma, which laid upon him and all men the guilt for another's misdeed. Byron was thoroughly convinced that there lay upon the Byron family a curse which predestined its members to the expiation of ancestral faults. He knew well enough that to have the blood of the wicked Byrons in one's veins was no matter for rejoicing:

"... - 'tis written on my brow!
There read of Cain the curse and crime,
In characters unworn by time:"

Almost every biographer has remarked the strange fatality, which seemed to hang over his existence. Byron thought he could trace the hand of destiny in the most ordinary circumstances of his kin. It was a line accursed, for whom naught but misfortune was to be expected. His own personal sense of moral guilt was hence rendered morbidly alert. The perversity with which he paraded his own escapades was in part but a flippant substitution of bravado for uneasiness; Moore called it inverse hypocrisy. The traditional expressions of viciousness in the first cantos of "*Childe Harold*" may in part be discounted as new evidence of immaturity.

"I am tolerably sick of vice, which I have tried in its agreeable varieties."

"I have been guilty of many excesses."

But there persists in his mind a prepossession with the mental states associated with guilt indicative of an acute sensitivity in such matters. Even in the intrigues to which he devoted so much of his energy he seems never to have lost his awareness of guilt. His letters to Lady Melbourne about the intended seduction of Lady Francis Webster are frankly uneasy about the tremendous

"beam in my own eye"; and the "strongest mixture of right and wrong"

in the Lady's justification of her conduct. In another letter to the same Lady he writes, about his relations with 'X' i.e., Augusta Leigh (His half-sister),

"as for me, brought up as I was, and sent into the world as I was, both physically and morally, nothing better could be expected, and it is odd that I always had a foreboding ..."

Byron seems very definitely to have associated his rearing, his lameness, and his violent blood as integral parts of the fatality, which appeared to rule his life.

With regard to Byron's lameness, the testimony of Lady Byron about the effect of Calvinistic training is of great importance. From all Byron's associates comes the evidence that he was in certain recurrent moods the prey of fears for which nothing external to his native temperament will account save his preoccupation with the most extreme dogmas of Calvinism. His intermittent periods of skepticism were but an added source of agitation. He was haunted by his religious heritage. Although he revolted against it, he could no more evade the spell it exercised upon him. His overpowering sense of guilt, deeply infused into the characterization of the Byronic hero, is a direct result of Calvinistic training. In similar fashion one can trace in Byron's misanthropic tirades the initial impetus of the theological doctrine of total depravity. He rejects the positive or redemptive elements of Christianity for a special aspect of its tradition, the Hebraic emphasis on the need of submission and the insignificance of men. Cain questions the greatness of the God:

"... They have but
One answer to all question, 'Twas his will,
And he is good'. How know I that? Because
He is all- powerful, must all – good, too, follow?"

In the depths of his mind the doctrine of 'original sin' was deeply ingrained. "*Manfred*" was but a defiance of this doctrine. "*Cain*" was an exposition of its minor premises. Through the heterodox speeches of Lucifer, Byron made an impression on his radical and conservative contemporaries. The two dramas, together with "*Heaven and Earth*", may be considered as giving Satan's side of the high argument in Heaven which resulted in the fall of man and as protesting against the punishment of man for acts committed through no fault of his own will. The character of "*Cain*" is an unsuccessful attempt to trace the invertible causes of crime to outside forces. The deliberate anticlimaxes of "*Don Juan*" are again the expression of a soul that could not look upon earthly matters with the calm, cheerful acceptance of the conventional pagan, but that decried every foible and folly of mankind as a mortal fall from grace. He wrote to Hodgson,

"God would have made His will known without books."

From the point of view of the humanist, Calvinism was a crueler religion. Its purpose is to make man ill. It denies the full, healthy, rich life. It destroys a sense of beauty and proportion in

conduct, by isolating these qualities from the moral order. By ascribing natural instincts to the acts of the Devil, it makes suffering inevitable, creates a morbid sense of sin. Its cruelty is spiritual rather than physical, and hence all the sharper. It has necessitated hard thinking and action. Upon Byron its action had this two-fold result. It exaggerated his melancholy and sufferings; it denied him ease.

“There is a war, a chaos of the mind,
When all its elements convulsed, combined,
Lie dark and jarring with perturbed force,
And gnashing with impenitent Remorse-
That juggling fiend, who never spake before,
But cries, ‘I warn’d thee’! when the deed is o’er”

Between Byron’s Calvinism and his passion for liberty existed an intimate relationship. The two supplemented each other. Fretted by the shackles of a religion basically fatalistic, he developed a horror of being confined or ruled and hence championed Liberty of thought and expression. His eccentricities, inconsistencies, and violent passion may be traced largely to the fact that, essentially a man of action caught in inactivity, he floundered about like a whale in a puddle, until the Greek Revolution presented him with his chance for relief. Paradoxically, Byron was deeply affected by his Calvinistic training. His sense of guilt was, in large measure, responsible for his notoriety. Though more violent, he was not wicked. He boasted openly of those things not to be admitted but it was to relieve his conscience by talking of his sins.

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Decolonising English for Literary Writing: An Apology for Indian 'Nation Language'

Uttam Kumar Guru

I

“When you inherit a language, it does not mean you are totally in it or you are passively programmed by it. To inherit means to be able to, of course, appropriate this language, to transform it, to select something. Heritage is not something you are given as a whole. It is something that calls for interpretations, selections, reactions, response and responsibility.”

Jacques Derrida. “An Interview with Jacques Derrida” by Nikhil Padgaonkar. *n.d.* (Last update: March 17, 1997) <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jacques-derrida/quotes/>. Web. 12 Nov. 2011.

The specious logic in Thomas Babington Macaulay’s infamous minute of 1835 regarding the introduction of English education in colonial India was premised on his faith in the intrinsic superiority of the Western literature which is indeed fully admitted by the members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education...It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. (Macaulay, paragraphs 10 & 11) Admitting that it was not possible for the British Government to make arrangements for English education for all at the same time, he spelt out the purpose of English education with disarming candour and, perhaps, with a smirk:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. (par. 34)

Eleven years later at a meeting of the Edinburgh Philosophical Association the same chauvinistic Macaulay proposed a toast to English literature,

...the most *durable of all the glories of our country*, to that literature so rich in precious truth and precious fiction...to that literature which has *exercised an influence wider than that of our commerce and mightier than that of our arms*...to that literature, before the light of which impious and cruel superstitions are fast taking flight on the Banks of the Ganges; to that literature which will, in future ages, *instruct and delight the unborn millions who will have turned the Australasian and Catafrarian deserts into cities and gardens*. To that literature of Britain then! And wherever the literature of Britain spreads, may it be *accompanied by British virtue and British freedom*. (Quoted in Tharu 160; emphases mine)

Placed side by side, Macaulay’s warped argument in the Minute and his grandiloquent claims about the superiority of the English literature betray the colonisers’ awareness of the language/literature-power axis—that it is the most “durable” of the glories of England, that it is “mightier” than their weaponry and that it would “instruct and delight” even the “unborn millions” in the colonized countries! Another piece of information: English literature was “instituted as a formal discipline in London and Oxford only after the Indian Civil Service examination began to include a 1000 mark paper in it. English literature was necessary for those who would be administering British interests” (Loomba 75). It is therefore no exaggeration to

say that the colonial attempt to train the colonised in English language and literature was motivated by administrative considerations.

Ngugi wa Thiong seizes right on this point and initiates a serious debate on the choice of language of writers of the once-colonised countries. His objection that to continue using English for writing about one's own cultural experience is to remain caught in the linguistic fetters of colonisation does not seem untenable. Identifying "the mental universe of the colonised" as the most important area of domination for the ultimate seizure of economic and political control, Ngugi writes,

For colonialism, this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography and education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised. (16)

Suffice it to say for now that every language has a subterranean level of associative values, cultural codes and modular behavioural patterns. And literature irresistibly draws upon them for legitimising itself as well as the status quo of the powers-that-be. Thus the colonial classroom can be conceived as a special language laboratory where indigenous cultural discourses were dismantled and devalued by instilling in the native learners the preciousities of English language and literature—a decisive yardstick of respectability and self-worth. This strategy to develop attitudes in the native learner, more often than not, succeeded in making her/him see and feel their own physical environs the way the colonisers did. Ngugi refers to the Kenyan writer and scholar Mĩcere Mũgo who once related "how a reading of the description of Gagool as an old African woman in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* had for long time made her feel mortal terror whenever she encountered old African women" (18).

The "domination" of the "mental universe" of the colonised by the British required the former's tacit approval of the moral superiority of the former—an acceptance of the vantage moral position of the British as a prerequisite and even necessity—to rule over a people as a matter of ethical responsibility. And needless to say, the teaching of English literature became the single most important ideological vehicle for highlighting the moral worth of the colonising nation. Thus Viswanathan writes that the teaching of English literature in the initial phases of institutional studies in India had virtually nothing to do with enunciating the aesthetic niceties of a text as with highlighting the moral values enshrined in it. The obvious purpose was to project the English literary text "as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state" (Qtd. in McLeod 142) against which the native learner was induced to assess his/her moral worth.

True is it that this colonising operation was not polarised; nor was it accepted without resistance (Loomba 75-82; James Kelman 71-73). But this element of resistance notwithstanding, the native learner's relationship with the discursive provinces of indigenous culture and literature largely remained an unacknowledged commitment.

Are we then still in thrall to the colonial powers in the form of language? Does not it prove the cocksure Macaulay right? Are we still unconscious supplicants before the English for their giving 'language-alms' to us?

In this paper, I have argued a case for pidgin English in Indian writing, especially fiction in terms of the history of the imposition of English language and literature in India in retrospect. In the next section, I have analysed the theoretical solutions so far offered to this problem of language of Indian authors. The penultimate section deals with James Joyce's art in *A Portrait of*

the Artist as a Young Man (1916) in returning the English language in its un-English form to its custodians in England, whereas in the final one I have endeavoured to construct a possible model of English for construction of Indian identity in creative writing in English.

II

In "The Alchemy of English", Braj Kachru points out how English can be used to unify expositors of the postcolonial experience. Kachru holds up the example of the neighboring and often competing language cultures of India. Hindi, Persian, Hindustani, and Sanskrit, the "native codes," all carry "markers". That is, they are "functionally marked" as representative of cultural groupings in terms of religion, caste, or region. Therefore, despite the accuracy of these cultural connotations, English stands as the neutralizing alternative for the Indian writer. Kachru concludes that "Indian English Literature. . . has provided a new perspective in India through an 'alien' language" (Brown, pars. 1 & 4).

Although Kachru's argument seems apt given the multilingual nature of India, his misgivings that an elite group of English writers may not reflect or represent vast peoples across the country almost seems to undermine his apology for English as a neutralising language in India.

In "Constitutive Graphonomy: A Postcolonial Theory of Literary Writing" Bill Ashcroft theorised a solution to this problem. His notion that an utterance no matter what language it involves is produced and received in a specific context and therefore the literature in English in the once colonised countries is bound to shake off its British/European associations in order to respond to the cultural/situational specifics of the place of its production (McLeod 123). Ashcroft's readymade solution appears to rest upon characteristic feature of Speech-act as enumerated by J L Austin who remarks that for a speech act to happen

[T]here must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances... (14).

The problem with Ashcroft's prescriptive panacea lies in his belief that reception and consumption of literature written in a specific language is informed merely by the *situatedness* of the text and the reader in a particular place/nation, and not by the acquired ideological and aesthetic and semantic determinants that in an once-colonised country and fed for long on English literature inform an act of reading a literary text written in English. While reading Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* or a Tagore novel, even in English translations, we know the kind of responses these texts invite from us. In contrast, when we take up a modern Indian novel written in English, the reading self is geared for an aesthetic response conditioned by our knowledge of the European/American texts, literary experiences and literary history of the West—an automatism of literary response in spite of ourselves.

This initial phase of automatism of response in reading an Indian fiction written in English (to be discussed in detail in the final section) subsides soon afterwards, and is followed by a conscious attempt to relocate the reading self in search of a textual position from which the text would seem coherent and plausible. And here the Indian reader often feels orphaned out of the text not because of the text's being in English, but because of the author's failure to capture the rhythm and nuances of native languages in *English*.

McLeod also criticises Ashcroft for the generalising nature of the solution:

Although admirable in its attempt to address the specific *situatedness* of all language usage, the argument becomes rather detached from the specifics of place and is rather

generalising, both in terms of postcolonial 'english' usage and standard English. (124; author's emphasis)

R. Parthasarathy also acknowledges the failure of Indian writers to capture the vitality of Indian languages in English writings, advancing the opinion that "there is obviously a time lag between the living , creative idiom and the English used in India .And this time lag is not likely to diminish" (Rawat par. 5). But such an excuse for the present idiom of Indian writing in English as Parthasarathy's makes it all the more inevitable for us to explore ways to forge a new and creative idiom in English keyed up to capture India in its wonderful variety, no matter if the time lag diminishes or not since this creative idiom stems both from our awareness of the postcolonial contemporaneity and from a need to reestablish our relationship with the language.

An important line of development is put forward by Edward Kamau Brathwaite whose notion of the 'nation language' in the context of African writers' use of English provides an inspiring model for the Indian writers in English. By 'nation language' Brathwaite implies the Africanised "kind of English spoken by people who were brought to the Caribbean, not the official English now, but the language of slaves and labourers, and in which one can decipher "survivals of African languages" (260). There are also remnants of Amerindian, Hindi (brought by imported Indian labourers), and "varieties of Chinese" (260) spoken in the region. The result is "that spectrum--that prism--of languages" (260) which Brathwaite terms a "plurality" (259). Here is his confident assertion:

English it may be in terms of its lexicon, but it is not English in terms of its syntax. And English it certainly is not in terms of its rhythm and timbre, its own sound explosion. In its contours, it is not English. (266)

Again while listing some of the features of nation language like orality or oral tradition, a different rhythm and the "shape of intonation", Brthwaite emphasises on its being of a piece with what he calls "total expression"—a willful participation of an indigenous people with their culture, tradition and the physical surroundings. And literary productions should strive to capture, represent and replicate that total expression by means of a collective commingling of nation language and the indigenous literary typologies. Here is Brathwaite again:

Reading is an isolated, individualistic expression. The oral tradition, on the other hand, makes demands not only on the poet but also on the audience to complete the community: the noise and sounds that the poet makes are responded to by the audience and are returned to him. Hence we have the creation of a continuum where the meaning truly resides. And this total expression comes about people live in the open air, because people live in conditions of poverty, because people come from a historical experience where they had to rely on their own breath patterns rather than on paraphernalia like books and museums. They had to depend on *immanence*, the power within themselves, rather than the technology outside themselves. (273; author's emphasis)

He is, however, careful about making a distinction between 'nation language' and 'dialects'. He contrasts 'nation language' to "dialect" (266) which has "pejorative overtones" (266) to its use--it is thought of as 'bad English', used to make fun of people: "[c]aricature speaks in dialect.

In his discussion, Brathwaite has made a very illuminating point. He traces this plurality back to a subterranean level of indigenous linguistic consciousness (es) when English was proclaimed as the official language. These languages went underground, yet informing restructuring English utterances:

What these languages had to do was to submerge themselves, because officially the conquering peoples . . . did not wish to hear people speaking Ashanti or any of the Congolese languages” (261-262).

This phenomenon “served an interesting intercultural purpose” (262) in that “although people continued to speak English” (262), this was “nevertheless influenced by the underground language, the submerged language that the slaves had brought” (262). This language began also to reorient itself, moving from a “purely African form to a form that was African, but which was adapting itself to the new environment and to the cultural imperatives of the European languages” (262). Quite interestingly, this in turn shaped the way in which European colonisers spoke their own language.

This may well be the starting point of our discussion on a viable mode of English, or pidgin English for Indians writing in the language about India. Brathwaite’s observation that even the European colonisers began to acquire the corrupted English of the imported African slaves is pointer to a postcolonial attempt to return the language to the erstwhile masters in its un-English form.

III

James Joyce may be credited with returning the language to the English. In *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) Joyce tears apart the British sophistries of the language by using it in sync with the speech rhythm and nuances of Irish language, especially Irish Gaelic. He disorients the language with a view to break free of the aesthetic inevitabilities inherent in the language, the home to “precious truths and precious fiction”, pace Macaulay. Time and again, Stephen makes clear his tangential position in relation to the language, as in his conversation with the Dean of Studies. When the latter referred to the word ‘funnel’ in explaining as how to feed an oil lamp, Stephen mentioned the word ‘tundish’.

—What is a tundish?

—That. The... funnel.

—Is that called a tundish in Ireland? Asked the Dean. I never heard the word in my life.

—It is called a tundish in Lower Drumcondra, said Stephen, laughing, where they speak the best English.” (Joyce 233).

The irony in Stephen’s utterance in the last line in the passage is hard to miss. That the word ‘tundish’ is spoken in Lower Drumcondra where “they[people] speak best English signifies the linguistic space—a no-man’s land—forged by Stephen and even the people of Lower Drumcondra to individuate the Southern British English to the extent of surgical overhaul. A little later, he feels an absolute disenchantment from the Dean, a “countrman of Ben Jonson” (234), his way of seeing the world and, more importantly, his language:

—The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words HOME, CHRIST, ALE, MASTER, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (234)

The rest of the novel shows Stephen snapping out of the net of conventional aesthetic norms and questing for a new aesthetic forged in a ‘new’ language in such a way that the British themselves would find it twisted and distorted well beyond their recognition. Ismail S. Talib writes,

From a symbolic postcolonial angle, the former imperial masters as the ‘custodians’ of the language in England where ‘real and proper English’ is to be found, and where it is ‘preserved and listed, and listed like a property of the National Trust.’ (Widdowson 1994:

377) might not be happy that their language is 'returned' to them in such a state by Irishmen, Africans and others. (79)

What Joyce did, according to Terry Eagleton, was to estrange the "English language in the eyes of its proprietors" and strike a blow "on behalf of all his gagged and humiliated ancestors" (Qtd. in Talib 79).

IV

The question which now squarely faces us is how we can work out a model—a dialect—of the language like the 'nation language' and how we can strike a blow on this language on behalf of all our gagged and humiliated ancestors!

Raja Rao's strong pronouncement in favour of customising English to suit the Indian expression provides a starting point for us. He writes,

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit which is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language... We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the world as part of us. *Our method of expression, therefore, has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American.* Time alone will justify it. (Forward, *Kanthapura*, emphases added).

We may try a formulation now first by expanding the limits 'nation language' a little more to cover even the dialects, and then by orienting the creative idiom in English to taking cognisance of the indigenous linguistic consciousnesses in India. With all the profanities or "pejorative overtones" nevertheless, dialects are part of being of large numbers of people—their way of experiencing and expressing the world around them, an irreplaceable staple of their existence. And 'nation language' for Africa or India bereft of the dialects, would always seem a narcissist attempt to install a linguistic oligarchy effecting further marginalization of people that constitute the lower strata of society.

Again, one needs to remember that we cannot afford to graft Brathwaite's model of 'nation language' on to Indian situation, given that there had been no edict against speaking one's mother tongues in India unlike in Africa. And consequently, English has never been able to permeate the linguistic consciousnesses of a vast number of people. Most Indians are bilingual or even multilingual. To take the help of linguists, this condition of bilingualism is called *diglossia*. A person speaks one *dominant* language and a *subordinate* one, the dominant one for day-to-day informal purposes (one's vernacular or a dialect even, for example) and the latter for formal activities (the standard form of one's vernacular or English). And it usually so happens that the "use of the subordinate language involves a process of translation from the dominant language at a fairly superficial, though not necessarily conscious, level of the psychological programming of the utterances" (Lyons 282). This happens also in the use of English by an average Indian whose first language is not English, and who happens to translate her/his thought process in vernacular into it. And such an 'English' dethroned from its regal position and denuded of its conventional linguistic niceties can be called Indian English dialect.

The nation language in the Indian context, therefore, has to take into account the variegated linguistic nature of our country. Although the language-power axis often makes any one form of language the standard language for official and institutional uses in a region, it often however comes in numerous dialects that differ from the acrolect in pronunciation, vocabulary and even grammar. Thus apart from the standard Hindi, there are dialects like Khariboli, Harayanvi, Kanauji, Bhojpuri and others; likewise, the Saurashtra Standard or standard Gujarati

also comes in dialects like Gamadia and Kathiyabadi among others. Again, millions of people in Andhra Pradesh speak Telugu dialects like Berad, Dasari, Dommara, Golari and Telengana. And as has been discussed, these forms of indigenous language often inform even the English spoken in these areas.

An Indian writer of fiction in English keen to capture Indianness should make sure her variegated linguistic environment against which the fictional characters are placed is highlighted in all its possible shades. Characters in such a fictional work will thus speak a plurality of languages even if registered in English, truly portraying this part of our planet where language changes with every ten kilometres. A true Indian fiction would thus be a language-collage—a or the bricolage, and the writer a bricoleur, to appropriate the phrases used by Lévi-Strauss who in the course of discussing the sign system of the primitive man defines a bricoleur as the one making use of “heterogeneous repertoire” (17) of materials, however limited, to construct myth or a bricolage of belief-system. The novel may therefore seem a tissue made up of layers of languages, especially in the dialogues of characters.

Quintessential purists may object to this riot of languages in the framework of a single fictional work on the ground that such a mess of languages may bog it down and mar its thematic focus. They may be politely pointed out that Nigerian authors have worked out a different version of written English based on their vernacular codes. In his *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) Achebe has made plenteous use of many indigenous registers of English, doing justice even to the vernacular dialects by ‘inventing’ living idioms of English. A police sergeant at the entrance of the village Abazon is speaking to Chris, a newcomer in the following language:

So at the same time, we hear the news this lorry wey dam load beer full up come de pass. So we say na God send am. The driver talk say the beer no be him own, na Government get am. So we say: very good. As Government done fall now, no who go drink the beer? So we self de stand for sun here, no water to drink; na him God send us small beer to make our own cocktail party. (212)

This is a dialect at its best, and full of the nerve and verve of an ‘English’ synchronized with the people and their linguistic culture.

Moreover, such a skein of languages in a novel—in its descriptions, dialogues and etc.—is not an end in itself by virtue of the deliberate dismantling of the Queen’s English. It also corresponds to the Indian way of thinking. In a very interesting essay “Is There an Indian Way of Thinking: An Informal Essay” (1989) A K Ramanujan identifies the Indian way of thinking as context-sensitive, i.e., the Indian tendency to locate every situation and even philosophical stance in accordance with its corresponding context as against the Judeo-Christian/Western way of context-free normative mode of thinking. Drawing from an array of Puranic and contemporary literary texts, he goes on to show this “preferred formulation” in “cultures like India’s” (47) where there’s no “common or absolute (*sādhāranā*) *dharma* which the texts [*shāstras*] speak of...” (48). What seems apt in the context of our discussion is his discussion of Indian classical literature:

No Indian text comes without a context, a frame, till the 19th century. Works are framed by *phalasaruti* verses—these verses tell the reader, reciter or listener all the good that will result from his act of reading, reciting or listening. They relate the text, of whatever antiquity, to the present reader—that is, they contextualise it. (48)

An Indian writer of novel can do no better than contextualise the setting, locale and descriptions by simply letting the characters speak with the eccentricities of their vernacular

dialects—by making the characters sharply and vividly etched against the linguistic-cultural situatedness of their existence.

Another important point made in the passage is the contextual involvement of the reciter/reader and listener in the act of reading/reciting/reading takes our discussion back to Brathwaite. He categorically mentions that for ‘nation language’ to be successfully employed for literary output, it is imperative to use it in consonance with indigenous literary forms like oral literature. Ramanujan’s observation, as quoted above, about Indian literary forms up to the 19th century also stresses the primacy of orality and the practice of roping in the audience/reader in this performative literary form. And here is a passage from Kanthapura which is no less than a study in the synthesis of orality and a corollary language:

Kenchamma is our goddess. Great and bounteous is she. She killed a demon ages, ages ago, a demon that had come to ask our young sons as food and our young women as wives. Kenchamma came from the Heavens—it was the sage Tripura who had made penances to bring her down—and she waged such a battle and she fought so many a night that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth, and that is why the Kenchamma Hill is all red. If not, tell me, sister, why should it be red only from the Tippur stream upwards...
...? (2)

The use of inversions (‘Great and bounteous is she’) and tautology (‘ages, ages ago’, ‘blood soaked and soaked into the earth’ and so on) in the passage narrated by Achakka, an old woman in the village of Kanthapura make the narration close true not merely to the people described and but to the pastoral simplicity of the setting. Again, narrator’s address to the listener as ‘sister’ takes in the reader/listener into this oral format of story-telling. A fine blend of ‘different’ English and the Indian way of storytelling!

As pointed out in Section II of this article, the immediate response of an Indian reader to an Indian English fiction is conditioned by her aesthetic training in Western, especially English aesthetic values—an *automatism* of perception. But she feels alienated from the world delineated therein soon afterwards on account of the failure of the text concerned to reproduce the liveliness of Indian languages in English. A wonderful outcome of employing the Indian version of ‘nation language’ would be that the entire reading experience of an Indian reader would be thoroughly *defamiliarised*. By foregrounding the language as well as the narrative techniques, an Indian English writer of fiction would thus jolt the reader out of the aesthetic automatism—the product of English education in India. Decolonisation of the mind can best be realised in literary productions. Once it was English literature which once helped our white masters shore up their supremacy; now we ought to answer back by thoroughly decolonising, both the language and the concomitant aesthetic.

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A Sense of Ignominy in *The God Of Small Things*

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“The basis of shame is not some personal mistake of ours, but the ignominy, the humiliation we feel that we must be what we are without any choice in the matter, and that this humiliation is seen by everyone”.

- Milan Kundera

This is a disgrace to the rich father whose daughter would collect empty beer bottles and sell them in the market to pay her college fee and earn food. And it is the utter helplessness of the mother who couldn't help to afford her only daughter's study and food allowances. This is no other than the novelist herself, Arundhati Roy. She is humiliated by her friends and ignored by her kith and kin. This is all embarrassing if a daughter of a rich tea planter would live a miserable life. Roy has projected herself in one of Ammu's twins Rahel in the novel. Like her, Rahel with her mother and twin brother is deserted by her father who is also a tea planter in Assam. Her mother Ammu suffers bitter ignominy at the hands of her husband, her brother and her aunty, Baby Kochamma and the police officer at Kottayam police station. She bears the sting of humiliation wherever she goes and in whatever she does. An attempt has been made here to project Roy's sympathy with the ignored and her disgust against the ignorers in the novel. Ammu, the lady protagonist in the novel submits to her predicament. She admits that she is herself responsible to her plight and the misery of her offspring. She adapts to the abominable condition and never tries to come out of it. She marries a non-Christian, Bengali tea planter against the wishes of her parents; but very soon she gets divorced from him. She is now all alone, disappointed and in utter dilemma – of to be or not to be. She has no other option but to return to her parents' where she would never like to come back. She comes back to the wrath of her parents and cynicism of Baby Kochamma (also called Baby Aunt), her father's sister. Her decision to marry the Bengali tea planter against the wishes of parents brings ignominy and distress in her life. She didn't believe how a person pledging to lead whole life with her, to love her for ever and never hurt her sentiments, could ever think to offer his wife to his boss for saving his job. She remained taciturn over the chameleon change of her husband. She was shocked and somehow managed to flee from the husbandry humiliation. Eventually she “left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything that she had fled from only a few years ago” (Roy 42).

A person can never escape from his destiny. It brings Ammu to the place where she never wanted to come back; it brings her to the people whom she never wanted to see again. She finds herself as a stranger in the house of her own parents. They don't procure her as they would do her before she was a girl viz. an apple of their eyes. A kind of grudge seeps up their veins against their daughter and her inbreed children. They hold grudge against she got married to a non-Christian and eventually she abased the family name in the Christian society.

They hold grudge against Baba who proposed their daughter and vowed to steadily stand by her forever and divorced her. They feel ashamed that the society would look down upon their daughter as a divorcee and as an omen. As a social view is commonly held that a married woman has no place in her parents' home. Baby Aunty adds: "As for a *divorced* daughter she had no position anywhere at all (Roy,45). Ammu silently tolerates Baby Aunt's critical humiliation. She is so gentle; she never criticizes Baby Aunt for the latter's affair with a priest. Lady cynical viz. Baby Aunty is in Ayemenem house because her proposal was declined by a bishop. It is said that that Baby Kochamma fell in love with a clergyman. The two were seen infatuated towards each other but the bishop lost his interest in her. Still the parson continued amorous proximity with Baby through love billets. Baby Aunty was all set to do the same deed what was done by Ammu but unluckily she failed and couldn't be alleged to defile the image of the family earlier than her cousin. It seems that Ammu has confided with her destiny and wishes to purge her sins through deep disgrace. It is, as believes Ammu, the discomfiture that can wash out her all vices. Thus she is herself answerable to her fiasco. It is a sin if a marriage-fiasco-daughter claims her father's assets while a love-fiasco-sister is entitled to proclaim herself a prospective owner of her brother's property.

It is a shame upon an affluent family if it's one inmate dies a miserable death. Ammu's life ends in all shame. She dies all alone in a room of a hotel where she was called to face an interview for a waitress. She is doubted to be a sex worker. The news of her suspicious death spreads all over the hamlet like jungle fire; especially tidings of her ignominy that a whore found dead in the hotel room broke out far and wide. And this only inspires scorn in the people instead of sympathy with her. None comes forward to join her funeral ceremony. She is refused to burial in the churchyard. Nobody advocates for her basic right to have a land for eternal peace in the holy land of graveyard. Her brother Chacko solicits for her ritualistic burial, but the petition is declined on the grounds that the church solemnizes only sublime deaths, not shameful ones. This is ignominy of death. All through life Ammu struggled for survival, bore bitter humiliation within home and outside in the locus; but everywhere she attracted only public aversion and that only helped to estrange her from herself. Her dead body is wrapped in dirty sag and laid on a stretcher. It is electrocuted to ashes, and thus ends Ammu's episode of humiliation. Nobody but the daughter of the cremated, Rahel envisages the cremation like the final journey of Caesar, the Roman emperor. She calls up Estha as the Caesar who speaks the last words to his most trustworthy friend Brutus – "Et tu, Ammu?" It is very difficult to investigate who killed whom in actual. It is Ammu who virtually slays her children second time; first they were damned by Baba to lead live-death. Rahel feels herself and twin brother completely deserted and soberly blames her deceased mother to put them in such predicament. Now Ammu is reduced into complete taciturnity but her humiliation remains alive and accedes to her children. Chacko consoles Rahel but the child finds no comfort in his shallow sympathy. She badly misses presence of Estha, her twin brother. He could not bid final adieu to mother, his both 'Baba and Ammu' and couldn't observe last peace rituals. Nothing can be more ignominious for a woman who passes away without any of her twins "at her back in bed". All life she was humiliated but overall more humiliating was her end. Roy appears to grieve over the ceremony of Ammu's funeral. Ammu throughout life suffered disgust of her family and the society too; and Death also embarrassed and deprived her from the basic Christian right i.e. coffin-space earth for her eternal peace. The novelist seems to bitterly condemn the ignominy of Ammu's death and calls up Shakespeare's reproach against it: "Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave, But not remember'd in thy epitaph!" (Henry IV). The person whose death the dramatist bemoans is relatively luckier for at least it finds some place in the churchyard for eternal peace. Ammu's spirit couldn't get salvation for as per Christian code, only the burials are blessed and elevated to the heaven. She is not entitled to win kindness of Christ as well as of *Ishawar*, but nobody can drag back

her from the company of her ignominy, her fellow traveler and her own offspring born of her meekness.

A police officer also insults Ammu before her daughter. He taps “her breasts with his baton. Gently. *Tap, tap*. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket” (Roy,8). Her only crime was that she came to see Velutha, a criminal suspected to kill Sophie Mol. She is suspected to have illicit relation with the criminal. She, a lady of high birth, is behaved like a harlot. Chacko, her real brother doesn’t hesitate to reprimand her for she ridiculed his ex-wife, Margaret. Actually Margaret laughs at Maria, the maid who welcome-sniffs Sophie Mol’s palms. He insults Ammu publically and says: “I think you owe my wife an apology”(Roy, 179). This deeply hurt Ammu and she feels very low in her own eyes. She finds herself utterly desolate and all alone with her kith and kin around and calls herself and her twins “some damn godforsaken tribe”. It seems; she wants to redress all her sins taciturnly undergoing tough trials of life. Roy puts forth a paradigm of ignominy that caused unforgettable human massacre at Kurukshetra during the Mahabharat. The warrior, Karna was more sinned than a sinner. Roy sympathizes with the brave soldier and grieves over his destiny: “He *is* Karna, whom the world has abandoned.” He was “a prince raised in poverty” and “born to die unfairly, unarmed and alone at the hands of his brother” (Roy, 232).

Ammu’s vulnerability is the main cause which invites ignominy in her life and ruins her ‘millstones’ too. She is, to an extent, the cause to force her children adopt personal grudge and lead life like orphans. Like their mother, they are also molested and bitterly humiliated at the hands of the family and the society. Estha ever holds up his “right hand” – a *chhi-chhi* hand away from his left all the time; because at *Abhilash Talkies*, a vendor molested him for a cold drink. The boy hates himself. He more hates when he watches the movie “The Sound of Music” and finds the hero Clapp-Trapp-Christopher dislikes the dirty children. And he is very dirty with “right hand” smeared with the black man’s “soo-soo”, therefore he deserves no love. The unfortunate twins grew up unloved and uncontrolled. Paucity of love made them vagrants and indiscipline vagabonds. The family cynicism filled them with contempt, created a kind of void. Estha fears that mother would find out “...what he had done with the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, she’d love him less as well. Very much less” (Roy,114). Rahel feels “a cold moth” creep on her heart, for she ridiculed her brother’s xenophobia of and mother’s praise for the black vendor. She fears she would likely lose mother’s love. The twins never got father’s love. Now they fear to lose mother’s love. They feel alone and ignored by their mother too. They are considered as jinxes by their Aunt. Ammu is forced to leave the house. She goes to attend an interview for a waitress’s job and dies a suspicious death. Since she is found dead in a hotel room, she is labeled a sex worker. Life has no mercy on her. The scene of deep personal contempt is rampant in the novel.

Thus the novel is the urn of the dark ignominy. It is ignominy which brings disrespectful end to Ammu and horribly painful end to Velutha; it is this sense of ignominy that settles in the tender minds of the twins and turns them pessimistic. It is this –only this that draws Roy’s sympathy towards the humiliated and antipathy towards the disgusting tormentors of the novel.

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 (All subsequent citations to the edition are given in the text of the paper)

The True Literary Voices of Kashmir: A Study of *Curfewed Night* and *The Collaborator*

Tasleem Ahmad War

Since 2008, the English literature of Kashmir has gone through a process of resurgence and this offers a glimpse of hope in the dark clouds of Kashmiris. The good news is that their grey clouds have plentiful silver lining. This gets verified by the fact that there is a sort of renaissance their literature is going through. Kashmir is catching global attention today and not for ordinary reasons. It is true that they have a rich tradition of producing fantastic literature, mostly in Kashmiri, Urdu and, to some extent, Persian. But their brush with English is somewhat new. The English era of Kashmiris begins with Agha Shahid Ali – the genius, who made the literary world take note of Kashmiris' ability to craft astonishing English literature. No matter the angel of death had him little early, and we didn't get to read a novel from him, his poems remain the best thing ever produced in English. His writings – including his translations of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's Urdu ghazals -continue to captivate, and leave a reader with incredible but pleasant bewilderment. What has created ripples in the literary world lately, however, are Basharat Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night*, and now Mirza Waheed's novel *The Collaborator*. Peer and Mirza are genuine Kashmiri English writers, who know their job well and have made an excellent case for what they have crafted. Both these books are undoubtedly a work of colossal effort. What they have done in great measure is to make the world open its eyes to Kashmir's profound human stories. These books are bold, do not mind making people angry, and come with an emotionally-charged personal relation to their narratives. For those who wish to appreciate why Kashmiris nurse so much of pain and anger, these books hold the answer. In two of these books, there is also some resonance with Muzammil Jaleel's "My Lost Kashmir", which appeared in the London Observer way back in 2002.

Every now and then, Kashmir and its protracted insurgency make headlines. But most of them talk about the tragedy as if it were mere statistics while as *Curfewed Night*, a memoir by Kashmiri journalist Basharat Peer, is an attempt to tell the human side of the story. While working as a journalist in Delhi in early 2000, Peer tells us, Kashmir was the almost daily death count in the newspapers. Both Peer and Waheed represent a clear break from their predecessors like Walter Lawrence's *The Valley of Kashmir*, Tydale Biscoe's *Light and Shade*, Michael Palin's *Himalaya* and Justine Hardy's *In the Valley of Mist*. There are still others like Vikram Chandra's *Srinagar Conspiracy*, M J Akbar's *Beyond the Vale* and Prem Shankar Jha's *Kashmir 1947*. But all of them are either the outsider's account of Kashmir or the historical accounts which were restrained, India-friendly, balanced recounting of a situation that has always needed more heart to narrate.

Basharat grew up in the foothills of the Himalayas in the beautiful Valley, reading Shakespeare, Stevenson, Dickens, Kipling and Defoe. He has a fond memory of a blue Willys jeep driving to a village called Seer in southern Kashmir:

It would follow the black, ribbon-like road dividing vast expanses of paddy and mustard fields in a small valley guarded by the mighty Himalayas. (Peer 2008:09)

He had adoring parents, cricket playing mates and a familiar milieu. One may think that his upbringing was nearly perfect. It was, almost. But the winter of 1990, when the author was just 13, brought war in the valley and his world went topsy-turvy. His idyll was shattered. He writes, "The war of my adolescent had started." (Peer 2008:14) Kashmir was a princely state under British rule in India. In 1947, when India and Pakistan were separated after the British withdrawal from the subcontinent, Kashmir's fate was left in limbo. A predominantly Muslim state, it was ruled by a Hindu king, Hari Singh. Meanwhile, Sheikh

Mohammed Abdullah, Kashmir's most popular leader, sought India's assistance after tribesmen from the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan invaded Kashmir in October 1947. A fighting ensued but ceased in January 1949 after the United Nations' intervention. In order to end the conflict UN recommended a referendum to determine which country (India or Pakistan) the Kashmiris belonged to. But things took an ugly turn in 1953 when India jailed Abdullah, dashing Kashmiris' hopes of a mature and competent leadership. His release a few years later was unable to bring smiles on the people's faces as he abandoned the issue of referendum. Over two decades later, Indian government rigged the elections, arrested opposition candidates and unleashed acts of terror. This led to the formation of insurgent groups like Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) whose militants Peer and his friends revered in their adolescent days.

Peer's fascination with the militants was shattered when his whole family objected to the idea of joining the insurgents. His grandfather, he writes, fixed his watery green eyes on him and asked, "How do you think this old man can deal with your death (Peer 2008:48)?" In order to save him from death, he was sent farther and farther from Kashmir, first to Aligarh Muslim University near Delhi, then to the Indian capital in the newspaper offices, from where he often ventured back into Kashmir to report. Like many journalists who at some point are frustrated with the limits of their medium, Peer realized that Kashmir's stories cannot be fully told in a newspaper or magazine format. Thus, to his parents' dismay, he gave up the newspaper job and travelled to his war ravaged homeland. As he went about writing a book on Kashmir in his head and a notebook in hand, he was often haunted by the past, at times unable to write and ask the questions he wanted to. Trained as a journalist (he is a graduate of Columbia University and has worked at Rediff and Tehelka in India), Peer has the poet's sensibility and the journalist's eye for detail and the elements of reportage. Ahmad Rashid writes that:

The story of Kashmir has never been told before so evocatively and profoundly.

Peer writes with the skill of a novelist, the insight of a journalist and the evocative power of a poet (Ahmad Rashid).

The book is divided into fifteen chapters. The book contains several stories of betrayal, survival and courage, disappearance, displacement and destruction. It speaks of deep tragedies. It is as much about the author's life as about Kashmir and its people. Peer, who may well be the best chronicler of Kashmiri tragedies, however ends the book in a positive note. After all, hope still floats in the Valley. At one point in the book, he writes: "I was carrying a copy of *Homage to Catalonia* with me and gave it to him (Ahmed). 'You will find Kashmir in its pages,' I said (Peer 2008:225)". War sparks creativity. But Peer often laments the lack of good books on Kashmir.

Curfewed Night brings alive the horrors of people in Kashmir, their never ending pain caused by the loss of the young and the old. People outside Kashmir have already heard first hand stories about the militant and army rule in Kashmir but this book goes much farther than those accounts. One really loves the way Peer narrates the stories interconnecting them with one another moving swiftly and immaculately from Tariq to Shafi to Bilal to Shameema to Asif to Hilal to Yusuf to Vikas to Shabnam to Shahid to Ahmed and countless others who suffered the wrath of either the militants or the army in one way or the other. Peer painfully recounts his struggle to get a rented accommodation in Delhi made further difficult due to his ethnicity and religion. Peer explains how it is that people don't lead normal lives in Kashmir, why they thank God just for staying alive, why every child once dreamt of picking up a Kalashnikov and joining the armed struggle, why the 'azadi' is so much important to them, what it is to be looked with suspicion even in your own place with the so called outsiders, what it is to fear the police and army as they have the unrestrained power (like AFPSA) of putting the innocents behind bars in the name of interrogations and terror suspicion. One of

the heart rending accounts this book contains is in chapter twelve, which has an anecdote about a mother's courageous attempt to save her son. A mother runs towards a battleground where the army was going to use her two sons Bilal and Shafi as human bombs. She sees Bilal about to be sent into the militant's house with a mine in his hands. She throws herself at Bilal, removes the mine from his hands and holds him in her arms. The soldiers let them go.

One realizes why Kashmiris feel insulted to be called as a part of India. Everybody would feel the same in the given circumstances. They live fears, tragedies and the life in which there is a loss of self esteem and dignity. Ironically not many in 'India' are actually aware of either the history of Kashmir, or the tyranny on its people. Steve Coll observes that:

Curfewed Night is the finest book I have read on the contemporary Kashmir conflict-literary, humane, clear-eyed and reliable. Peer has given a voice, unforgettable, to a generation of Kashmiris who have never been heard in the United States, but who should be (Steve Coll).

All people outside the Kashmir know is that Kashmir belongs to them, it's a part of their country and they will fight a million battles to keep it this way. They don't care if in Kashmir the women are raped and abused every day, its youth is being oppressed every hour, the children are deprived of a peaceful and sane childhood every minute and the old are losing their dignity and once held self-esteem by each moment. They just don't care. So *Curfewed Night* is not only a book, it is the blend of lives of people in the conflict ridden state and it apprises us of the miseries and trauma of people. Pankaj Mishra in his review of the book says rightly that:

Curfewed Night is a tale of a man's love for his land, the pain of leaving home, and the joy of return-as well as a fierce and moving piece of reportage from an intrepid young journalist. Describing the ruin of Kashmir, it doesn't only shock, but also challenges our most cherished beliefs-in democracy, rule of law and the power of individual conscience. Everyone should read it (Pankaj Mishra).

Curfewed Night is a brave and unforgettable piece of literary reporting that reveals the personal stories behind one of the most brutal conflicts in modern times. Since 1989, when the separatist movement exploded, more than seventy thousand people have been killed in the battle between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Born and raised in the war-torn region, Peer brings this little-known part of the world to life in haunting, vivid detail. Peer tells stories from his youth and gives gut-wrenching accounts of the many Kashmiris he met years later as a reporter. He chronicles a young man's initiation into a Pakistani training camp, a mother forced to watch her son hold an exploding bomb by Indian troops, a poet finding religion when his entire family is killed. He writes about politicians living in refurbished torture chambers, idyllic villages rigged with land mines, and ancient Sufi shrines decimated in bomb blasts.

The other book which this paper attempts is Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*- a debut novel. It is set in the early 1990s in the village of Nowgam, high up against the border passes. The unnamed narrator is the village headman's 17-year-old son. He used to play cricket and swim in nearby water meadows with four close friends. Now, ever since a florid mullah appeared and radicalised the villagers, his pals have all slipped away into Pakistan to take up arms. It is a scene that is being repeated all over Kashmir, with thousands of boys trekking over the mountains to join the uprising. The narrator's honour has departed along with his friends, because Captain Kadian, the head of the local Indian forces, has forced him into working for the army. He must go out into those same meadows to identify guerillas the army has killed and dumped there. At an age at which he should be preparing for adulthood, he is trapped in scenes from a horror film, rooting through corpses for documentation. Every day, he fears he will find his friends among the bodies. Yet his oppression has a human face:

Captain Kadian. Like the narrator's vanished friend Hussain, Kadian favours the singer Mohammed Rafi; he is lonely away from home and overindulges in whisky, hectoring the boy when drunk. Waheed methodically builds an atmosphere of menace and despair, all the while interleaving elegiac description. His writing is often excellent. The boys jump into a river, "splashing its cool water into the sky and gazing at the pearls that would come down mixed with the sharp rays of a July sun (Waheed 2011:74). Ever present are the mountains: "These undulating rows of peaks, some shining, some white, some brown, like layers of piled-up fabrics (Waheed 2011:75). At the core of the story is the narrator's agonisingly protracted dilemma over whether to cross the border to join his friends in the training camps or to stay put with his parents. Whether his indecision is due to weakness of character or a realistic grasp of the insurgency's futility remains unclear, but stasis comes to dominate the novel, which would benefit from cutting. Even so, this funereal tale of the annihilation of a community possesses a disturbing power that is both lingering and profound. The unnamed protagonist of Mirza Waheed's devastating novel grows up in the forgotten last village before the border. The border is not really a border but – in official parlance – the Line of Control, which divides the former princely state of Kashmir between India and Pakistan; the time period is the early 1990s, when the confrontation between the Indian state and Kashmiris demanding azaadi (freedom) turned particularly violent. Such a place, in such a time, cannot remain forgotten very long.

The novel starts when the eponymous narrator is 19, and the forgotten days of the village are long past. He is employed by a captain in the Indian army to go down into a valley near the village and collect the ID cards and weapons of the corpses – thousands of them – which are strewn about the valley floor. The corpses are those of Kashmiri "militants" or "freedom fighters", depending on which side of history you're on, who crossed the Line of Control into Pakistan for training and were gunned down by the Indian army while crossing back. Their ID cards can be used for PR purposes when the Indian army issues press releases about the militants it has killed; the corpses themselves are just "dead meat", left to rot. The early descriptions of the protagonist's visits to the valley of corpses are written in the most haunting prose.

By the way, did I mention there's a profusion of tiny yellow flowers growing among the grasses here? . . . You can see bright yellow outlines of human forms enclosing darkness inside. It makes me cry . . . In some cases the outline has started to become fuzzy now, with the tiny plants encroaching into the space of the ever-shrinking human remains. I don't know the name of the flowers. Some kind of wild daisies, perhaps (Waheed 2011:14)

Picking through corpses among the daisies would be enough to drive anyone to insanity or tears—or both— but in the case of the 19-year-old there is a possibility he faces each time he goes into the valley that makes the situation even more horrific. Might he encounter the bodies of his four childhood friends – Hussain, Gul, Ashfaq and Mohammed?

The novel is divided into three sections. The first moves between the present and the past, weaving together the story of the narrator, whose family are the only ones to have stayed in the village while everyone else has fled, with the early days of Kashmiri resistance; his friends went to train in Pakistan and left him behind. The second section charts the consequences of his friends' departure amid the increasing brutality of the Indian crackdown in Kashmir; and the final part returns us to the story of the Collaborator and his relationship with the Indian captain who employs him. Along the way, Waheed gives us a portrait of Kashmir itself. Away from the rhetorical posturing of India and Pakistan, he reveals, with great sensitivity and an anger that arises from compassion, what it is to live in a part of the world that is regarded by the national government as the enemy within, and by the government next door as a strategic puppet.

The book is also gripping in its narrative drama. Why has this young man become a collaborator? Why is his village empty, save for him and his parents? Why has his mother stopped speaking? Why did his four friends join the armed struggle, and why didn't he go with them? How long can he continue to nod and listen to the drunken Indian captain, who boasts of his success in killing Kashmiri boys? One of the most remarkable features of this novel is how much of it is concentrated around a single person, in isolation. It is only in his memories that the narrator has friends and a close-knit family he can rely on, and even within his memories those relationships start to fall away as the state of war throws up divisions and absences and speechlessness—so that when we encounter him in the present, his closest intimacies seem to be with the corpses in the field. They are the only Kashmiris of his age left in the vicinity.

Waheed is too subtle a writer to draw an explicit connection between the isolation of the 19-year-old and the isolation of Kashmir as it enters the third decade of a war forgotten or distorted by the rest of the world, but the boy's situation can't help but reverberate beyond his individual story. It is perhaps because his story suggests so many other stories. Kashmir is one of India's most spectacular regions, a place of soaring mountains and sylvan valleys. It is also the site of a bloody conflict that has ebbed and flowed for decades. The Indian army is fighting an insurgency with sectarian overtones (many Kashmiris are Muslims), allegedly sponsored by Pakistan. Since 1989, an estimated 70,000 people have been killed and around 8,000 have disappeared.

First seventy pages into *The Collaborator*, one begins to dread the inevitable. Mirza Waheed, it seems, will not veer from the trodden path. We have seen this before: the before and after story of Kashmir, the fall of paradise to something worse than hell. It's all there: the familiar snow clad mountains, babbling brooks, blue skies, greener meadows and the innocence of childhood spent amidst such idyllic scapes. All of this set to Rafi's timeless melodies: *Tum mujhe yun bhula na paoge.*

Soon enough, the scene dissolves to gruesome torture, to disappearances and death. But Waheed has already warned us. His tale begins with one Captain Kadian of the Indian Army, purveyor of death, destruction and despicability. The protagonist, who remains nameless is in the Captain's employment to retrieve Identity Cards off corpses deposited into a sort of death-field where yellow flowers grow between the legs of mutilated bodies. Poignantly, this was once where our protagonist and his four friends – all of whom went sarhad paar – played cricket. And yet, just a few turns of page later, Waheed settles into his story and you finally begin to enter uncharted territory. The rhetoric drops off along the margins and it is this boy's deliberations of to cross or not to cross that takes centre stage. For all its lack of "action", this internal struggle of a boy left flummoxed by the world around, of which the relevant aspect is simply that his best friend went across without telling him, is the most gripping. Yes, there is the usual talk of Azaadi, and who did what to who, but the most tender passages are of this boy, who's strongest motivation to go across seems to be his loneliness, a biting feeling of being left behind. It is in these pages that Waheed creates the most powerful images and draws us in. We don't resist. And this is really the nub of the issue. Should we treat books coming out of Kashmir as accounts of victimhood, documentaries, or should we look at them first as literature? All Kashmiris are simply happy to hear their own –long suppressed – voices coming out. To them, at this stage perhaps, it matters little how Kashmir's literary output stacks up as long as it tells the stories that they have lived for the past two decades. For now, it is simply their story, told by them.

Waheed's biggest achievement is that he continues the journey Peer (and in many ways, Agha Shahid Ali) began. Between them they have successfully paved the way for resident Kashmiris, too many of whom feel numbed by the conflict, to yet again hope in the power of words, in stories and song, to find the first outlines of redress. Importantly too, Waheed

reminds us that Kashmir has a voice of its own. It is a voice that is framed independently of Pakistan and India. In his closing pages the protagonist stares at his handiwork – an ablaze field of corpses – and thinks:

To hell with them all, to hell with the Indian, to hell with the killer dogs they send here in their millions to prey on us, to hell with all this swarming Army here, to hell with the Pakistanis. To hell with the Line of Control, to hell with Kadian and his Mehrotra Sir, to hell with India, to hell with Pakistan, to hell with Jihad, and to hell with, to burning, smouldering hell with everything! It must all end. It must all, all end (Waheed 2011:300-301).

For as long as India and Pakistan remain obdurately compulsive about their theoretical, rhetorical, positions on Kashmir, perhaps it is only in narratives like Waheed's *The Collaborator*, that Kashmir will find independence. What *The Collaborator* does remarkably well is bring to the world the story of Kashmir's secluded hinterland – the life of the hapless people living close to the Line of Control. When it comes to *The Collaborator*'s title - originally titled *In the Valley of Yellow Flowers* – a reader is left thinking if it is intentional. A best-selling novel of the same title by Seymour Gerald, published by Hodder & Stoughton, is already in the market since September 2009 in the UK. There is, nevertheless, a big reason to cheer our Aborted Martyrs kind of writers – waging a jihad of a different ilk, winning friends to their political cause and empathy for their people's suffering. First novels seldom bring out the best of the writers. Writers evolve as they write. Basharat and Waheed possess a talent that is capable of producing far more striking stories. When a noted novelist reviewed Basharat Peer's memoir, *Curfewed Night*, he called the book "...a brave and beautiful report from a conflict the world has chosen to ignore".(Source) Imagine an ongoing struggle that claimed more than 70,000 lives, witnessed thousands of arrests, rapes and 'systematic torture' in the past two decades and is still vague to the outside world? Imagine a zone being more militarized than Iraq and still not being talked about. That is the reality of Kashmir. Last year, Basharat Peer was invited by an international news channel to talk about the protests in Kashmir, during which 117 people, mostly youth and teenagers, were killed. Before commenting on the situation, he was asked to give the (geographical) map of Kashmir for the 'viewers'. Kashmir maybe a picturesque, beautiful piece of land, but most of the people outside do not have enough understanding of the cause of the insurgency that broke out against the Indian rule in 1989, or the morbid events that followed it. Why is it so? The reason: Kashmir lacks a voice of its own.

The unwritten books of the Kashmir experience in the English language bookstores in Delhi prompted Peer to write the *Curfewed Night*. Starting with borrowing the title for his book from a poem by the Kashmiri poet, Agha Shahid Ali (1948-2001), Peer carried forth the literary movement pioneered by Ali. *Curfewed Night* was crossing the Rubicon. It was the author's urge to give the world a glimpse of the atrocities and humiliation Kashmiris face every day. Released in 2008, *Curfewed Night* created a stir. The book did what many politicians in the last 20 years could not do for Kashmir: It made the world take cognizance of what is happening in Kashmir. Since then, it has encouraged many Kashmiri writers to tell their stories in the form of novels, articles and blogs. "Ali's legacy is assured with the past decade seeing an upsurge in quality Kashmiri writing in English," writes Claire Chambers, a senior lecturer at the Leeds Metropolitan University, while mentioning Peer and Mirza, in her tribute to Agha Shahid Ali on his tenth death anniversary this year. *The Collaborator* has received good reviews. However, the bigger insight from the novel is the 'nameless' protagonist, a testimony in itself that Kashmiri writers are trying to establish a 'voice' through written discourse. They are writing to be heard and giving Kashmiris a voice that has been suppressed for years now. And why shouldn't they? Aminatta Forna, a writer, puts it

aply, “My country had a war. It would be extraordinary not to want to write about that (Aminatta Forna)”.

There is a war in Kashmir. Would it not be extraordinary not wanting to write about that? What happens if we don't tell those stories? What happens to the people who die during the events that are undocumented? Do they become non-entities as if they never existed? And what about the atrocities people faced? Do they stand negated as if nothing ever happened?

In fact, one of Mirza's premises and earlier impulses to write *The Collaborator* was ‘an image of a dying boy on the roadside’, while Mirza was walking to a crackdown (search operation conducted by the army). The image ‘stayed with him’ and pushed him to form his narrative. That is what rest of the young Kashmiri writers are trying to achieve: they are trying to represent people who either do not live to tell their tales or those who do not have the capability and facilities to write them. They are telling the stories of their battered brethren and the survival of their rather ‘endangered’ community.

Sajad Malik, a 23-year-old cartoonist, recently published a graphic novella which has Hangul as a central character, symbolizing the fragility of Kashmiris as a community. He draws the analogy of Kashmiris as endangered species with that of the Tibetan antelope, locally also known as Hangul. Another instance of seeking a voice is that of a 21-year-old Kashmiri rapper, Roushan Illahi aka MC Kash, whose songs have made headlines. His number, *I Protest*, became an anthem of last year's summer protests. The international media used the title ‘Kashmir rapper uses rhymes to protest Indian rule’ to describe his longing to be heard through the hard-hitting lyrics. The title of MC Kash's other number, *Until My Freedom has Come*, was used as a title for a book published by Penguin earlier this year. Sanjay Kak, a Kashmiri documentary filmmaker, edited the book, *Until My Freedom has Come: The New Intifada in Kashmir*, a compilation of writings of summer 2010. It is an anthology of non-fiction essays and articles contributed by journalists and academics. It has been called, “a timely collection of some of the most exciting writing that has recently emerged from within Kashmir, and about it”.(Source) Other than finding creative outlets to express themselves, the generation born in the 1990s also lays emphasis on reading. The younger lot, in their 20s, seeks inspiration and draw parallels from other parts of the world with disputed presents or pasts to comprehend the reality of the Kashmir that they were born into. They want to understand while children, in other parts of the world, grow up watching Teletubbies, why is it that all Kashmiri kids see around them is firing, encounters and bomb blasts? While most of the teenagers decorate their rooms with the posters of Hannah Montana, what makes their Kashmiri counterparts save Edward Said's stone pelting image as wallpapers on their mobile phones?

The young generation of Kashmir is delving deeper and reading widely to understand what's happening around them. They pull out data and mass tag scanned images of newspaper articles on social media sites, dating back to 1947-8 (when India gained independence from the British and Kashmir acceded to India) in order to create awareness. They blog, write articles and analyze because they feel the yearning to tell their stories and be heard. “We have to move on but we need to keep memory alive. Each single act of violence, mass or individual, has to be remembered. “We need memorials for those who laid down their lives” (Najeeb Mubarki), a Kashmiri journalist, said during a conference. That is what the younger generation of Kashmiri writers, bloggers and journalists are doing: recording each memory, keeping it alive and building memorials through their writing. “...the boys have grown up, and they are going to tell their stories (Peer).” Basharat Peer once said in an interview. The boys have indeed grown up and they are telling their stories. They're giving Kashmir its much-needed voice.

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The Criterion

Quest for Identity in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*

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Lady Oracle is Margaret Atwood's third novel which was written in the 1970s and it deals with the woman's role and condition in a society which is dominated by men. The novel can be called a feminist study of how women have problem with self-definition in a male dominated society. Therefore, the novel discusses the problem of individuals and specially women who are forced to play predefined and fixed gender roles such as daughter, wife or mother and it shows the result of such oppression. So the effect of this problem is woman's rebellion to beliefs, values and ideas dominating in society. Joan, like all the other characters in Margaret Atwood novels starts a journey of realization for finding her true identity and during this quest she faces many difficulties but at the end of her journey she emerges as a autonomous woman. As Charles Correa in her essay named "Quest for Identity" says "We develop our identity by tackling what we perceive to be our real problem...we find our identity by understanding ourselves, and our environment. (10)"

The narrator of the novel is a woman who struggles with anxiety and problems in a male dominated society. The protagonist of the novel, Joan, is so isolated and alienated that she sees her friends, parents, husband, as total strangers. She is overwhelmed by the problems and dangers that she sees around her and she wants to cut off from any relationship with the human world. The novel discusses problems in family relationships and the influence of childhood on adulthood. It also tells us that how a female feminist writer might adopt to challenge the male-centric literary tradition. According to Rosemary Sullivan, Atwood examines how the forces of society interact with the individual (129).

The protagonist lives in a community which thinks that woman's success is only dependent on the size of the body and on female beauty. And because Joan, the protagonist of the novel, is fat and does not have the characteristic of an ideal woman and refuses to become a perfect daughter, wife and a perfect woman in her society, she feels rejected and marginalized. Most of the characters whom she contacts, force Joan to adjust to the pre-fixed social roles but she revolts against them. Through the novel she describes step by step the development of her inner rebellion against social expectations.

Throughout the novel, Joan describes the memories and the anxieties of her childhood and adolescence. In life she had a desire for love and to find acceptance. But like many women in her time, she sees herself like an object. So Joan learns to use her body as a weapon to stand against her society and specially her mother: "By this time I was eating steadily, doggedly, stubbornly, anything I could get. The war between myself and my mother was on in earnest; the disputed territory was my body" (65). The male dominated society expects women to fit into the norms of the society. But Joan cannot accept this idea so she rebels against what a woman should

be and try to be herself. But unfortunately, the more she rebelled against the gender norm for her society the more she was disliked and ridiculed.

At the beginning of the novel, Joan has just faked her own death and is living in a suburb of Rome, where she decides to start a new life. Then she narrates the sad story of how she has ended up here. Lady Oracle's protagonist, like the unnamed protagonist of *Surfacing*, creates a fictional past. She never tells her husband about her past, and her childhood, that she was a fat girl and what kind of relationship she had with her mother. But she tells the truth of her past and her most private memories to her readers. She tells the reader about the things that she was afraid to tell her husband and friends.

In her narration she starts from her childhood memory, when she was a fat, unattractive and ignored child, and because of her body she was rejected by her thin, beautiful, and cruel mother. Her father worked as a sort of legitimate contract killer during the war. He was a stranger to Joan, and they didn't have much relationship with each other. Her mother was an anxious and possessive woman. She rules the home so one can find little life or joy within the house. Because of all these unbearable behavior, Joan escapes to her aunt's house where she is taken to a church and she is encouraged by her aunt to see dead people and starts writing through. And after the death of her aunt, who leaves her some money, she goes to England, and starting a new life under the name of her beloved aunt. Frank Davey argues that "Atwood gives us a large view of Joan Foster's early life and makes it clear that most of Joan's difficulties with adult relationships are caused by the transferences and projections from childhood experiences" (56).

Most of women accept the ideal image which is attractive for men and for society and in this way they become an object for men. And in order to achieve this desirable self they stop eating to be thin because thinness is an ideal image for women. So becoming fat is a plan that women use to react to the inequality of the sexes. Women get fat to avoid being seen as sexual object. In this novel also, Atwood talks about the use of the body as a protest. Joan's weight gain can be seen as a source of rebellion by the use of war metaphors: "I swelled visibly, relentlessly, before her very eyes, I rose like dough, my body advanced inch by inch towards her across the dining-room table, in this at least I was undefeated" (70). When her mother wants her to wear some clothes that make her thin, Joan deliberately wears clothes that make her fatter. In this way Joan has used her body and her clothing to resist her mother: "I had defeated her: I wouldn't ever let her make me over in her image, thin and beautiful" (88).

But after Joan's weight loss and when she is thinner, men begins to look at her in a different way, as a sex object, "like a dog eyeing a fire hydrant" (123). For example in the bus she is faced by men who put their hands on her thigh, and she does not know how to react. Because of all these experiences, Joan wants her old body back. She desires to be fat again: "There was something missing in me. This lack came from having been fat; it was like being without a sense of pain, and pain and fear are protective" (139)

The relationships that we have with different people in our lives effect on us and to some extent change our personality. Our relationships with other people around us can define who we are. Indeed Joan is a woman who had many problematic relationships during her life. She has a depressing relationship with her mother, husband and many other people around her. These relationships definitely have an influence on Joan, impacting her as a person. The narrator's quest for self discovery consists in an analysis of her past and also a decision to become more active in the future.

So the first part of her quest starts at the beginning of the novel when Joan decides to fake her death and leave her family and friends. Part one tells the reader that what happened to Joan that she faked her death. And it is through this chapter that we come to know about Arthur, the protagonist's husband. Indeed, he shows a paternalistic attitude towards the heroine, deciding what she should do. During this part we come to know that she is a writer and she likes writing because she can get multiple identity and personality by it.

In the second part of the novel there is a long flash back of the heroine's past. The shocking mother-daughter relationship in the heroine's childhood is one of the most important parts of the novel's plot. The most important relationship in Joan's life is the one with her mother. Joan feels rejected, unwanted and unloved by her mother, who treats her coldly because she is a fat girl. At first, Joan struggles to adapt herself with her mother's ideal vision of her and tries please her mother's expectations. Joan's description of her childhood, the abusive mother and the absent father suggests that he was not mentally satisfied so she sought satisfaction in eating and food. Her mother wants Joan to be thin but she objects:

This was one of the many things for which my mother never quite forgave me. At first I was merely plump; in the earliest snapshots (...) I was trying to get something into my mouth: a toy, a hand, a bottle (...) I failed to lose what is usually referred to as baby fat. When I reached the age of six the picture stopped abruptly. This must have been when my mother gave up on me (...) she had decided I would not do. I become aware of this fairly soon (43).

When she fails to satisfy her mother, Joan resents her mother's unbearable attitude and becomes antagonistic toward her. After that she tried to go against her mother's wish and did exactly opposite of what her mother expects and wants from her. Her mother tries to decrease Joan's size both by diet and suitable clothes, in order to make Joan look acceptable for society. She does not care about Joan's opinions, feelings and needs, her only aim is to create a woman that will be an embodiment of her own success as a mother and which would be perceived by others in a positive way. The mother's attempts to change the heroine's appearance to the shape acceptable for society are described by the protagonist in the following passage:

At this time my mother gave me a clothing allowance, as an incentive to reduce. She thought I should buy clothes that would make me less conspicuous, the dark dresses with tiny polka-dots and vertical stripes favored by designers for the fat. Instead I sought out clothes of a peculiar and offensive hideousness, violently colored, horizontally striped. Some of them I got in maternity shops, others at cut-rate discount stores; I was especially pleased with a red felt skirt, cut in a circle with a black telephone appliquéd onto it. The brighter the colors, the more rotund the effect, the more certain I was to buy. I wasn't going to let myself be diminished, neutralized, by a navy-blue polka-dot sack. (84)

Joan decided to buy clothes that she knew her mother would hate and in this way she started a war with her mother. It was not important for her what other people thought of her, because she only wanted to annoy her mother. Joan overeats herself on food, gaining weight in the process, because she knew that her mother didn't like it. She really wanted to be her mother's exact opposite, and she did everything in this way. So Joan fails to match to her mother's and society's definition of a beautiful little girl.

The protagonist of the novel is annoyed by the memories of her mother's cruelty. Joan hates her mother because of her cruelty and emotional and mental abuse. The conflict between Joan and her mother begins in her early childhood. According to Emma Parker, "Joan's mother

attempts to deny her daughter any sense of autonomy and tries to control her life and identity. She makes her diet and tries to assert her authority physically by reducing her daughter in size. Joan challenges her mother and takes control of her own life through eating. She retaliates against diets by eating more and more.” (2)

During her childhood she was not able to make decision for herself and the feeling of inability to make decisions remained with Joan during her adulthood and become the reason for her rebellion against her mother, who is presented as a dictator and ruler. Moreover, the Joan's mother sees life's success with good clothes and furniture. And because of these behaviors of her mother, Joan hates and disgusts her mother, so she refuses to become a woman like her and that she even tries to go against her – a fat person. In this way Joan rejects the role of the woman who is the head of a family, who behaves like a dictator and ruler and who decides for the other people's lives according to her own expectations and needs. In the other word she refuses to become a woman at all.

Moreover, Joan rejects the ideal of femininity and refuses to become the kind of woman that her mother and society consider as ideal and perfect. It is repeated many times in the novel that Joan does not fit the description of an ideal female which the male-dominated society has created. At the same time, she also expresses her rebellion against being treated as an object. In the eyes of her mother, the person who has all the characteristics of an ideal woman is Joan Crawford. She is what society dreams and demands. She is a beautiful, thin, successful woman who is loved and accepted by others. Joan's mother gave her daughter a name after the actress because she thought that her daughter would become similar to her namesake – strong, smart and, most of all, slim. As Joan rejects to be a submissive daughter and a polite female who is respected only for her appearance instead of intellect, the war between her and her mother begins. Joan uses her body as weapon to show her resistance. While she feels helplessness and dependency on her parents, Joan eats too much in order to make her mother worried and angry. Joan refuses to be changed because she finds her mother's actions destructive for her personality and identity.

In order to stay in her childhood and not entering into adulthood, Joan eats too much. She understands that as long as she remains plump and fat and childish, she is not attractive to men and, therefore, not endangered by them and she will be safe. That is the reason why Joan is not afraid of her father, even though he is presented in the novel as dangerous. Although Joan has a difficult relationship with her mother and no relationship with her absent father, she unconsciously wants to stay a child and not to leave home.

Her relationship with Aunt Lou is another step in her quest to self discovery. Aunt Lou is a surrogate mother for Joan, a person who embodies everything that her mother is not. Women have been forced by society to play the roles of a good daughter, wife and mother for centuries. Yet, as they became more self-aware and independent, they started to rebel against the traditional roles and fight for their rights, which they thought should be equal to those which men had. It is not only Joan who is a woman who does not accept her own fate and social position. Aunt Lou is also another woman who is different from the other women. In her relationship with Aunt Lou, Joan does not transform her identity to please another person. Aunt Lou is not demanding and a difficult person like her mother, and in spite of her mother, she gives Joan the opportunity to be herself. She actually seemed interested in what I had to say, and she didn't laugh when I told her I wanted to be an opera singer (81).

Aunt Lou's acceptance of Joan made her self-confident and gave her the chance to state what she felt and thought, without worrying about what other people thought. Aunt Lou was the

only person that Joan showed her true identity to. Because of her closeness to Aunt Lou Joan decides to take her Aunt Lou's full name, Louisa K. Delacourt, as her pen name. And with her name, Louisa K. Delacourt, Joan was able to be herself after Aunt Lou's death. As her Aunt Lou had earlier warned her, "you can't change the past." However, the niece had then insisted, "Oh, but I wanted to; that was the one thing I really wanted to do" (p 10), and till the end of the novel she is certain that if she had a governess and had finished school, her life would have progressed more smoothly. Aunt Lou helps Joan to grow up. She slowly leads the heroine into adulthood through adult movies and newspapers. She also makes the protagonist lose weight and break free from her mother's influence. Aunt Lou is the first person who notices the heroine's refusal to become a woman and rightly understands Joan's eating disorder. In the light of Freudian psychology, overeating in *Lady Oracle* is definitely the protagonist's refusal to enter adulthood, which she is expected to do by society, peers and family.

Part three her quest focuses on her encounter with a polish Count. After the death of Aunt Lou she escape to England in order to find her lost Self. After leaving home, Joan meets a Paul. Paul treats her as a child. He has a superior attitude toward her. "His manner was warm but patronizing, as if I were an unusually inept child" (146) .he makes decision for her and does not pay attention to her own opinion. After meeting Paul, or the Polish Count, in London, Joan dose everything in order to be acceptable in the eye of Paul and tried a lot not to upset him. This is a direct opposition of the identity Joan assumed when dealing with her mother. Instead of going against Paul's wishes, Joan is submissive and passive. Her passiveness is easily visible during the beginning of her stay in Paul's home as his mistress when she allows him to take her virginity without saying a word.

She always lets him have the final word in their discussion and decisions. Her identity at this point is based on Paul. She is nothing more than an extension of Paul. But the Problems begin when Joan tries to change of this model of behavior. she begins to realize that he is not as wonderful, romantic, and heroic as she had originally believed him to be. When Joan started to do more things for herself, instead of doing things that pleased him Paul went crazy, he was not satisfied with this situation because he wanted a passive and submissive mistress with him. Paul's attitude towards her gradually changes to reveal his mimicked paternalistic attitude: he didn't like her earning more money than he does. [Paul] began to have fits of jealousy. It was all right as long as I did nothing but loll around the flat, reading and typing out my Costume Gothic and going nowhere except with him (158).

The fourth part of her quest for self discovery shapes with her relationship with Arthur and their wedding. Joan's relationship with Arthur is similar to her relationship with Paul. After a walk in Hyde Park one day, she bumps into a fellow Canadian, political activist Arthur, who is an undemonstrative cold fish only interested in the latest fashionable crisis affecting humanity. Joan falls in love with him, despite his indifference to her, and they marry, with ne'er a romantic demonstration from Arthur, who knows nothing of Joan's former life as a fat child nor that she writes trashy novels. In fact, Joan doesn't tell him hardly anything about herself, but Arthur is far too interested in himself and his campaigns to notice that Joan is even there. Starved of romance and affection, Joan can't write, and to help her find her way back into a creative mind sight, she tries 'automatic' writing again. To her surprise she finds that when she falls into a trance she manages to create absurd and fantastical poems; she sends these to a publisher who raves about Joan as a new feminist voice, and publishes the book under the title 'Lady Oracle'. After their marriage, again she loose her female self and starts doing what she thinks Arthur will like and shaping herself in a way that will be more attractive to him. In her relationship with Arthur, Joan

encounters the same dominating attitude. She describes Arthur as a man who knows her personality and feeling. He always tries to influence her choice of clothes and like her former lover, treated her as a child. His behavior was that of a father with his little kid. She lies to Arthur about her past. She never tells him of her problematic relationship with her mother or her battles with her weight, these are all an effort to become the type of wife that she thinks Arthur wants:

“Though I was tempted sometimes, I resisted the impulse to confess. Arthur’s tastes were Spartan, and my early life and innermost self would have appalled him. It would be like asking for a steak and getting a slaughtered cow. I think he suspected this; he certainly headed off my few tentative attempts at self-revelation. (215)

Joan is not satisfied with her real identity, so she creates another one. In her marriage with Arthur, her main goal is to be an ideal wife for Arthur and making sure that he is satisfied and pleased with her. “Then discovered to my dismay that Arthur expected me to cook, actually cook, out of raw ingredients such as flour and lard. I’d never cooked in my life....But for Arthur’s sake I would try anything” (208). Joan’s attempts to cook fail, but she keeps cooking because she thinks that Arthur enjoyed watching her mistake: “My failure was a performance and Arthur was the audience. His applause kept me going (Atwood 209).

Another relationship which affects Joan’s life and identity is her relationship with the Royal Porcupine. When Joan meets this character at a press party, she is first attracted to him precisely because she thinks that he is a romantic character, a character from her novels. With his top hat, cape, and cane, he could have stepped right out of one of her novels. In this way, Joan wants to escape from her husband's gloomy behavior and a sexless marriage by having an affair. At first, they were happy with this relationship. They had a fine time and they arranged to meet at literary gatherings and she even took him along on her book-promoting tours.

But then, like the other men in her life, her lover begins to change the rules of the game.. So while she is evading one marriage, he proposes another and evolves his own fantasy of settling into a regular existence replete with wife, children, job, house, mortgage .The Royal Porcupine changed his appearance, shaved, in jeans and a T-shirt but Joan was disgusted with this change. "He'd thought that by transforming himself into something more like Arthur he could have Arthur's place; but by doing this he'd murdered the part of him that I loved. I scarcely knew how to console the part that remained. Without his beard, he had the chin of a junior accountant" (271).

Joan is not very happy with the success of her book of poetry, “Lady Oracle”, because she fears that someone may discover her other selves, her costume Gothic writer self and her former fat self: Now that I was a public figure I was terrified that sooner or later someone would find out about me, trace down my former self, unearth me” (251). As she was afraid, Fraser Buchanan, discovers her past and request some money to be silent about her past. She is afraid that the people around him would come to know about her past identities. So she pretends that she got drowned in Lake Ontario, with the help of her friends and fly to Italy. In this way Joan want to put an end to her multiple identities.

Indeed the novel focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. So the novel can be called a Bildungsroman. At the end of the novel, Joan finds that she must return to Canada, admit that her "death" was all an act, and confess the reasons for the pretense in order to save the two friends who await trial for her murder. That

failure, however, is also a fortunate fall. Inadvertently, her feigned death finally forces her to repudiate various false identities.

Joan has finally begun to see the uselessness of escaping into fantasy world. So she decides not to continue to work on Costume Gothics because she recognizes that she need no longer be a victim and that she will no longer impose the myth of the victimized woman onto herself and her readers. She has begun to confront her present only in her life, not in her art. Ultimately, Joan's attempts at creating multiple selves appear doomed to failure. And at the end she admits "I've always been terrified of being found out." All through her life she tries to construct her life as if it were a fictional plot. But at last she recognizes that her problems are all because of the incompatibility of her separate lives: "If I brought the separate parts of my life together surely there would be an explosion. Instead I floated, marking time," she notes. Eventually Joan appears to find some resolution to her duplicitous problems.

At the end of the novel and after her encounter with a reporter and hitting him with a bottle, she decides to tell her story, truthfully, to him. She feels that she has never been truly loved in the past. Her partners could only love a constructed version of Joan. She also admits that Arthur "loved me under false pretenses" (Atwood, *Lady Oracle*, p. 345). So the novel suggests that you have to look within your own self to find a more secure and heightened place in the world.

So at the beginning the protagonist finds herself alone among exploitative and abusive people and in an unequal situation. The female protagonist realizes that these people and their way of life are a threat to her true self. She attempts flight, she forbids certain activities in order to save herself and in order to survive in a male dominated society. In this novel when the young woman became conscious about herself and her situation, she can give up her usurped powers to a somewhat reintegrated being. So the protagonist comes to be aware of her selfhood and accept her status as a woman.

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A Dream of Africa

Irena Nieslony
Crete, Greece

Evening was drawing in, and the sky was a flickering mixture of red, orange and blue. The girl sat alone listening to the sounds of the bush, and despite the closeness of the wild animals, she felt calm and unafraid. A hyena yelled before letting out a blood-curdling laugh, and in the distance she heard the desolate sound of a screaming solitary rhino. Knowing that the rhinoceros had come close to extinction, it thrilled her to hear one call out. She was going on a game drive the following morning and hoped she would have the chance to see one of these extraordinary creatures. Looking around, she couldn't imagine being anywhere as perfect as this. Close to where she was sitting, two giraffes moved between the trees, and she admired their grace and elegance. Then the girl's eyes turned towards the water hole. Watching the antelopes and impalas make way for the ferocious and heavy buffalo herd, she thought how impressive and magnificent nature was.

The girl was lost in her own private dreams and didn't need other people to keep her company. Sitting by herself with the sounds and smells of the bush, she felt a wave of peace enfold her, making everything she had left behind in England seem distant and remote. However, sudden laughter startled her and she looked around. She resented being taken away from her own world so abruptly, but immediately felt guilty. She was on vacation in Tanzania and there were only five other people on the safari. Her companions weren't overbearing or demanding, and there weren't crowds of people suffocating her. She knew the others were keen to gain new experiences on their first trip to Africa, and she had no right to feel annoyed, knowing that they should be able to enjoy themselves in the way they wanted. However, the girl believed she was different to them. She had only visited the continent once before, but she felt as if she was returning home. Her first visit to Africa had been both a spectacular journey and also a profound experience that had changed her whole outlook on life.

The girl looked at the people who had come onto the veranda. The group had been travelling all day to get to the lodge and had arrived feeling tired and dirty. They had gone to their rooms to shower and rest, but the girl hadn't wanted to waste time indoors. She had freshened up quickly and then gone outside to sit alone. Getting a glass of wine from the bar, she sipped it slowly, letting the African wilderness envelop her and enter her soul.

"A gin and tonic, that's what I need after today," a loud voice called out.

The girl looked up as the man came and sat next to her. She knew she was being selfish wanting to be alone and decided to put her dreams aside for the evening.

"Yes, it's been a tiring day. The roads were very bumpy, weren't they?" the girl said. "I'm sure it'll be worth it though. Just think of all the animals we'll see tomorrow."

"I hope it'll be worthwhile. It's been disappointing so far," the man continued.

The group had flown into Nairobi and had visited a game reserve in Kenya before moving on to Tanzania. They were all anxious to watch elephants, lions and rhino interact in the wild, but unfortunately they hadn't seen many of the big game in Kenya. Despite this, there had still been

much to admire, and the girl wished that the man were able to immerse himself in the atmosphere of the bush. Africa was a dramatic place, and she found it hard to understand how anyone couldn't be swept away by the power and beauty of the land.

The man, John Carter, was in his late forties, and was travelling with his wife, Jo, and their daughter, Sarah. He was burly and noisy and wore enormous khaki shorts, but despite his overbearing appearance, the girl felt he would never willingly hurt anyone. He would occasionally make jokes at the expense of his wife, but Jo would take them in her stride and would often match him in his humour. The girl could see that underneath this ribaldry, John and Jo cared deeply for each other. Like her husband, Jo was also large and cheerful. Both had dreamt of an African holiday for many years, but had not been able to afford it until now. However, as much as Jo had wanted to visit Africa, it wasn't the ideal holiday destination for her. She was terrified of snakes and asked her husband to search their room each time they went in. Before coming on vacation, she had been determined to put these anxieties aside and to revel in the experience. There was so much she wanted to see in Africa, but now she was finding that her fears were taking over.

John and Jo's eighteen-year old daughter, Sarah, was quite different to her parents. She was petite and timid, and although she was finding Africa exciting, she was also overwhelmed. It was her first holiday abroad, and while she had been looking forward to seeing the wild animals, she sensed danger everywhere and felt on edge. The girl saw Sarah glancing at Dave, another member of the safari group. He was in his early twenties and was handsome, kind and quiet. His older sister, Kate, was travelling with him. She was also attractive, but was more extrovert than her brother. The girl could see that Dave and Sarah were drawn to each other, but both were afraid to make the first move. Dave had first been mesmerized by Sarah's deep brown eyes, which seemed to hide so many secrets. He wanted to discover what lay beneath that distant exterior of hers, but he looked at her shyly, not knowing whether to talk or not. A few days had gone by since they had started their holiday, but they had said very little to each other. Time was running out for them, but the girl hoped that their African romance would blossom and turn out better than hers had.

The girl took another sip of wine and thought about her visit to Nairobi two years previously. She had believed herself to be passionately in love, but now she shivered in fear as she remembered that time. In the bar of her hotel, she had met an Englishman who lived in Kenya. It was uncharacteristic of the girl to talk to strangers, but from the moment she saw the man, she felt a deep connection with him. The two days they spent together in Africa had been a magical experience. Trembling each time he looked into her eyes, she believed that he understood her completely, never before having felt that anyone was able to truly sympathize with her. At the end of their first evening together, he had taken her in his arms and kissed her, first slowly, and then with increasing passion. They had gone to her room and made love with an intensity that she had never before experienced. She gave herself to him completely and without question, and when she had to leave him to return to England, she believed that her world had been taken away from her. Feeling that she was nothing without him, she hadn't wanted to go, but she knew she would be unable to cope with the guilt of leaving her widowed father on his own in England. As she left for the airport, the man promised to phone her and said that they would be together again. Although he did contact her, the calls then stopped abruptly and she thought he had forgotten her. She couldn't understand how such a passion could cease to exist, but as time went

on, her life started to return to normal. Still, she couldn't completely put him out of her mind, and when he came to England six months later to find her, she had to go and see him. Despite the pain he had caused her, memories of their time together in Africa flooded back. Although his excuses for not contacting her were poor, he courted her with such intense emotion and force that she felt unable to resist. However, it wasn't long before she realized the mistake she had made. When they had been together in Africa, he had made her feel like the most important person in the world. However, now she saw that he was possessive and jealous. He wouldn't let her have any freedom and was like a python, winding himself around her body and squeezing the life out of her. She ended their relationship, but he wouldn't give up and continued to pursue her, going away for weeks and then reappearing to frighten her. Sometimes she would look out of her window and see him lurking in the shadows. Then the phone would ring, but there would be nobody there. Walking down the street, she sensed there was somebody following her, but she didn't see anyone. Eventually the phone calls stopped, but it took many months for her to feel safe, and until recently, she thought that she could never trust anyone again.

"Hey, come on, it's time for dinner," a voice boomed in her ear, taking her away from her thoughts. "Looks like a good spread tonight."

The girl attempted to smile and then reluctantly got up. She had been comfortable sitting outside being absorbed in her own dreams and feelings, but she knew she'd been thinking too much again. She went into the dining room and sat with the others. She imagined they thought she was strange travelling on her own, but it didn't worry her what people thought, nor did she mind being on her own. Her mother had died when she was thirteen, and from then on she had looked after herself. Her father had done his best and had tried to relate to her, but she had been born late in his life and they were worlds apart. Now she was in her early thirties and had never been married or even lived with anyone, but because of her childhood, she didn't fear loneliness. Over the years she had got used to it, and was probably more afraid of settling down and making a commitment. Because she had been alone for so long, taking that step filled her with apprehension. When she had been with the man in Nairobi, she had thought for the first time that she was ready to spend her life with someone else. However, when he came to England, she realized that he had fooled her. Now she didn't know if she would be able to dedicate herself completely to another person and was afraid that she was incapable of giving up her freedom.

"Have some bread; it's really fresh," Sarah said.

The girl smiled again and wished that her mind would stop wandering away from the present. She felt that she needed to relax and enjoy the company of others for a change. They were all kind and genuine people, and it wouldn't do her any harm to experience normality. She ordered another glass of wine and tried to stop thinking. Attempting to pull herself together, she joined in the conversation.

"I hear there are tree climbing lions in Lake Manyara National Park," she said. "It's so unusual for lions to climb trees. It would be wonderful if we could see them."

"Yes," Jo said, "It would be great. I just hope we don't see any snakes!"

They all laughed. Jo was still stressed about meeting snakes, but luckily she hadn't encountered any yet.

Everybody continued to talk about the animals they wanted to see the next morning. They had so many hopes for the following day, and the girl was carried along by their enthusiasm. It felt unusual and strange to her to be part of a group, but she was starting to like it. The other people accepted her for who she was and this felt unusual and fresh.

As the evening drew to a close, the girl looked towards Dave and Sarah. They were talking quietly together and seemed locked in their own private world. The girl was pleased that their relationship had started to move forward, and she hoped that everything would turn out well for them. Then she remembered the man in Nairobi. For a moment she felt isolated, but because she wasn't afraid of being alone, this feeling soon disappeared. Then she started to think of the man she had met recently. He was a warm and compassionate person, and although she was nervous, she finally had hope for the future. Thoughts of her previous lover began to fade.

They all got up at five the following morning for the game drive. They had enjoyed the previous evening and had gone to bed late, but the girl had still been unable to sleep. She had been too excited to close her eyes and thoughts had kept running through her mind. Although she was filled with anticipation, she was also scared. She had been worried that since she had last visited Africa, she had built up an imaginary picture of it. She had thought about her previous trip many times in the last two years, particularly when she was unhappy. It had been her escape from reality, and it didn't matter that her romance had turned out badly. She loved Africa and the freedom and mysticism of the land. This trip was turning out to be very different to her last one, but she was relieved that she hadn't yet been disappointed by her return.

The girl felt herself tremble as they got into the jeep and started to drive through the park. She hoped that the others wouldn't be disappointed and would see everything they wanted. She had been lucky on her first trip to Africa, and although she wanted to see the animals again, she was content just being there.

At first they just saw zebra and antelope, but then a cheetah appeared. It stared at them and was suddenly gone. The girl thought that this was how it should be, and remembered her trip to Java the previous year. She had visited a zoo, and although she didn't like to see animals in cages, the tour guide had been persuasive. As it had been many years since she had been to a zoo, her curiosity had been aroused. She had wanted to see how the animals coped with their captivity, but she was shocked by what she saw and a deep sadness had overwhelmed her. The elephants had chains around their feet and were unable to walk properly. She had stood looking at a leopard in a cage, and neither she nor the big cat could take their eyes off each other. People stared as she talked to him, but she didn't care. Trying to apologize to him for what the human race had done, she wondered what good it would do. He was imprisoned in that cage for the rest of his life, a life of what seemed to be unhappiness and suffering, a living death. The girl sometimes felt that she too was in a cage, and her thoughts drifted towards her father. Even though she was an adult, he still tried to stop her from doing what she wanted. She loved him, but he treated her as a child. Although she knew that he worried about her, she felt suffocated, and there were many times when she felt like exploding. She wanted to be free, and although at this moment she was, the prison still waited for her. She knew that she would never do to anyone what her father or her ex-lover from Kenya had tried to do to her. Now she was in love again, but she was afraid. She thought that her new lover might also have the same fears as she did, and she didn't want him to feel trapped. How could she make him believe that she would never put him in a cage and that she didn't want to stop him from pursuing his dreams or ambitions? She

trusted him implicitly and knew there was no need for them to be together all the time. She also had her friends and her own interests, and she needed time alone. She loved the man, but she didn't want to change him, knowing that if she tried, he wouldn't be the person she had fallen in love with. She wanted to understand him, but she was unsure of what was going through his mind.

"Look at the lion in the tree. It's an amazing sight," Sarah suddenly said, bringing the girl back to reality.

The girl gazed at the lion, feeling privileged to see this regal creature sitting comfortably in an unusual setting. The uniqueness of the tree-climbing lions thrilled her, and she felt lucky that she had the opportunity to have this experience. She wished the rest of the group would be quieter, but they were all setting up their cameras. The girl knew that she should also take a photograph, but she was reluctant. The lion was a proud animal and she felt she was invading its' privacy. Then she smiled as she thought of her friends and work colleagues back home. They all thought she was a little quirky and strange because she believed that animals were as important as people. At work she would be humoured as she walked around with petitions to stop ivory poaching and whale hunting. However, she didn't really mind what people thought. She had her passions and they didn't harm anyone.

Having taken photographs, they continued their game drive and were privileged to see elephants and giraffes. As they returned to the lodge, the girl felt elated by what she had witnessed. She wished that the elusive rhinoceros had been there, but she wasn't disappointed. There was still time, and even if she didn't see one, she was content just being back in Africa.

That afternoon they drove to the rolling ocean grasslands of the Serengeti plains. Her dream was to see the great migration of the wildebeest, but she would only be there for two nights, and this could happen at any time in the next couple of months, if at all. The rains had been heavy this year and there might not be any need for the animals to leave.

The journey to the Serengeti had been long, but this time the girl did rest when they arrived at the lodge. She was tired and drifted into a deep dreamless sleep, waking up just in time to go for dinner. Walking into the lounge, she heard a crescendo of deep rolling grunts and knew that there was a lion in the distance. Looking around the room, she saw Dave and Sarah sitting together holding hands. Their African romance seemed to be working out, but for a second she felt a sense of isolation. She was happy for them, but she also wished that her new lover were there with her. She suddenly missed him and realized that sometimes you could be alone too much.

John and Jo hadn't come into the lounge yet. The girl got herself a drink and went to sit on the veranda, wondering if Kate minded that Dave was spending so much time with Sarah. Then she looked around and saw Kate chatting and laughing with a few people from a different safari group. Watching them, the girl thought that Kate would never have problems finding companionship, and for a brief moment she envied her. Closing her eyes, she saw the lion in the tree again and she smiled to herself. However, she was soon disturbed from her dreams by a loud scream.

"There's a snake in my room. I know there is. I saw it," Jo said as she rushed into the lounge.

John came in a few seconds later and put his arms around his wife.

“Come on Jo, it’s just your imagination. I didn’t see anything,” he said quietly.

Jo was trembling and looked drained. There was nothing that her husband could say to calm her down.

“I know what I saw. I’m not going back into that room.”

“You can’t stay out here all night,” replied John. “It’s just as dangerous. Snakes can get in here as well, and goodness knows what else comes in when we’ve all gone to bed.”

“Oh my God, I just want to go home,” Jo said, sobbing.

John looked at his wife and felt at a loss as to how to help her. She was generally a strong and self-sufficient woman, and he felt unable to deal with her weaknesses.

The girl was concerned for Jo, knowing that it was difficult to overcome your fears, so she brought her a large brandy in the hope of calming her down.

“Here, drink this,” she said. “It’ll do you good. I know it’s hard, but try not to worry. The snake was probably just as scared of you as you were of it. Try to focus on something else. Think about the other things that happened today. I could see how much you were enjoying the game drive this morning. The lion in the tree was an unbelievable sight wasn’t it? And those baby elephants were gorgeous.”

Jo tried to smile. The girl might be a little unusual, but her voice was soothing and she always seemed serene and calm.

“We’ll all go and search your room before you go to bed tonight. I’m sure that if there’s anything there, we’ll find it,” the girl said, gently smiling.

Jo felt slightly better. The girl was on her own, yet she seemed so unafraid of anything in this strange country. She wished she could be like her. Africa was extraordinary, but she felt out of place and apprehensive. She sipped her brandy, and as the warm liquid entered her body, she relaxed and put all thoughts of the snake to the back of her mind. The girl had assured her that they would check the room before she went to bed and she trusted her.

Later that evening, the girl lay in bed thinking. As promised, she had helped to search John and Jo’s room, but they had found nothing. Jo had become calmer, but she had made sure that all the windows were shut before she went to bed. John knew it would be hot with the windows closed, but that was preferable to his wife sitting up all night. The girl could hear John snoring in the next room, the heat not having affected him as he thought it might, and she wondered if Jo had managed to fall asleep yet. She started to think about the man back home and imagined him touching her, moving his hands softly over her body and then kissing her passionately. She realized then that she loved him, and even if she didn’t see him again, her feelings wouldn’t change. She knew that he had problems, that he had an ex-wife who was making his life difficult, but she was prepared to wait for him until he had sorted everything out. There was no rush. She didn’t need to be with anyone else and was fine on her own until he was ready to be with her completely.

With these thoughts, the girl drifted into a restless sleep. Unlike when she had slept earlier in the day, her mind was now filled with confusing dreams. She was sitting in a cage with a lion and was feeling tense and uneasy, but it wasn't the lion she was scared of. He was old and injured, and she sensed he was also afraid of something. She felt that the animal was no longer able to hold a place in his pride and that he knew his life would soon be over. Sitting huddled with him in a corner of the cage, the girl then looked outside and saw her father laughing. He had finally managed to entrap her and she could see no way of escaping. Suddenly, the cage disappeared, together with the lion and her father, and she was now sitting out in the bush while a snake crept stealthily over her body. She tried to scream, but no sound would come out. She had never feared these creatures before, but as the snake's hold got tighter, she started to tremble. The snake then began to speak and she realized it had the voice of her African ex-lover.

"I have you now. You thought you'd escaped, but you'll never get away from me," he laughed. "You will belong to me until the end of time. Never forget it."

Then she saw the man she now loved. He was calling to her and she started walking towards him. The snake had disappeared and she momentarily felt relieved. However, although she kept walking towards her new lover, he became more and more distant. She started running, but was unable to get any closer to him. He still called to her, but his voice became fainter, and soon she couldn't see him at all.

Waking at four, the girl felt as if she hadn't slept. She went and sat in a chair by her window and breathed in the warm African air. She knew it was too dangerous to go out of her room while everybody was in bed, knowing it was easy for the animals to come into the lodge when it was quiet. She started to feel calm again, but then it dawned on her that she only had a couple more days in Tanzania. Soon she would have to return to England, but although she didn't want to leave, she knew it was impossible to stay in Africa.

The girl stood at the airport waiting to go home. The rest of her holiday had gone too quickly, but her dream of seeing a rhinoceros in the wild had become a reality. It had been the highlight of the trip for everybody and they couldn't stop talking about it.

Looking at the other people in her group, the girl felt sad. They had become close in the last few days, but she knew she would probably never see any of them again, despite exchanging addresses. She glanced at John and Jo and thought they seemed content. After the girl had helped to calm her down a couple of nights previously, Jo had become more relaxed. Despite her anxieties, she hadn't seen a snake, and had realized that there was little point living in fear. She had managed to enjoy the rest of her holiday and was going home with some spectacular memories. Dave and Sarah were sitting together holding hands, and the girl had a feeling that their romance would continue when they returned to England. She saw Kate chatting to the other safari group, and was a little jealous of their relaxed friendship.

The girl felt a tear roll down her cheek, but although she didn't want to leave Africa, she was anxious to know what was waiting for her at home. She knew she had to stand up for herself and couldn't allow anyone to put her back in a cage. Despite loving her father, it was time for him to let her go. She still had fears that her ex-lover would come looking for her, but her return to Africa had made her strong enough to face him and to tell him to leave her alone. She didn't know if the man she loved would be waiting for her at the airport, but she hoped he would be

there. He was the man she wanted to be with for the rest of her life, but if he couldn't be, she would survive on her own. She always had before and believed that she could do so again. If he did still want her, she was determined to prove to him that she loved him unselfishly, and she would show him that she was prepared to wait for him until he was ready. She had no idea what would happen in the future. The only thing the girl was certain of was that she would return to Africa. It would always be there for her and would take her in with open arms whenever she needed it, even if it was only in her dreams.

The Criterion

THE GIRL WHO WENT AWAY TO FAIRYLAND

Frederick Hilary
Euboea, Greece

Daniel Potts had once been a young poet of promise. His lyrics had brought him early fame, before the last embers of Romanticism were doused by the Moderns. The problem with Potts, his friends and fellow poets knew, was that he could not grow out of his dreams, nor lay his wishful desires aside, as the rest of the literary scene had done. He was left behind, and grew old and grey with years, and became scarce remembered, except by those who hankered after nostalgia, or those with an unfashionable taste for supernaturalism.

He certainly looked the part of the poet. He had waves of silver hair, and a frail pair of tortoiseshell glasses always sat upon the edge of his nose. His expression was implacably wistful, and his eyes seemed to be misted with some fair away Celtic twilight. He travelled often, in the world and out of it, and wrote his poems, which no longer brought him any real money. He might have taken his place amongst the Moderns, but he was too honest, and in any case he could never have felt at home there: his allegiances had not changed since childhood, and the romantic in him had never put away his blade and foolish dreams.

What had attracted the most notoriety, just as the new wave of poetry was sweeping the literary landscape, was his lengthy study of the folklore and supernatural beliefs of his native Ireland, and in particular the peasant belief in fairies. He had travelled throughout the countryside himself to gather the tales; but he had not stopped at being a mere chronicler and folklorist, for it was not his nature. Potts had gone where the anthropologists feared to go: he had sought fairies in the deep green woods and isolated spaces; he had seen them himself, and followed them out of the world for a time, and returned back; and the verse he had concocted afterwards had attracted its fair share of ridicule, for it spoke of impossible things, and tried to contain in image and rhyme what could not be expressed in human language in the first place.

In his autumn years there was the odd trickle of money from the patronage of the rich, but most of his income came from visiting the stately homes of people whose literary taste would have been, by others at least, considered dubious and sentimental. He would read from his early works, and a small selection from his later ones (which differed only in that they were less well known), and over dinner he would talk of his beliefs and literary philosophy, and if his hosts were so inclined, his experiences of the supernatural realm. That way he managed to keep his hearth from growing cold, in the bare walled country house he had made his occasional home when not travelling, and also to pay for clothes that were fine enough to give the impression of a refined taste with some vague air, though he loathed the word, of celebrity.

The visions of fairyland he had beheld, though, were all in the past. He had not been able to find a crossing place for several years, and wondered whether he ever would again. If tales and verse were all he had left, he would have to make do with those.

One morning in early Spring he had an invitation to visit a house in Wales; it was an unusual one, for as a rule such invites came with a long preliminary letter, in which the rich patron in question went on at great length about his love of Potts' early verse. This time, however, the

letter offered not a hint of flattery, nor any explanation at all, other than that he come at his earliest convenience to a house in the heart of the Welsh hills, to meet with a lawyer who would pay “the poet and supernaturalist” (these were the words used) on arrival. Long ago, perhaps, Potts might have been more selective in his appointments, but no more.

The house where the meeting was to take place was surrounded by gloomy deciduous woodland. The driver did not take him up to the house itself: he had to disembark and make his way on foot along a winding path through the trees, for there were other paying passengers who had pressing business further along the route. He pulled his collar tightly about him, for it was cold, and there was the threat of rain in the air. It was a cinder drive that he followed, well kept enough, doubtless belonging to a sizeable mansion house.

After about ten minutes' walk, he glimpsed the house itself: built of Victorian red brick. Not a single window in the house was lighted, even though it was a murky afternoon, the sky low and thick with clouds, and a dolorous mood hung over the scene that, perhaps in an earlier time, might have inspired him towards creation of some lines of verse.

The man who came out to meet him wore a long brown greatcoat, and though not dressed in black, he somehow gave the impression of one in mourning. Potts studied the man's face, and in particular his eyes, and saw no great sorrow there, unless it were masked in some way.

“They haven't lit any of the fires in the house,” said the greatcoated man, who introduced himself as Standish, a lawyer. “Not for days now. Not since the happening about which I'll tell you as soon as we're inside. The weather's turned again. It's cold, even for March. There was sunshine on the lawns a few days ago.”

Leading Potts through the heavy oak door, he added: “Appropriate really. As if they have some power over the elements.”

“They?” Potts asked delicately. He was aware, in the wide, dimly-lit entrance hall, of the echo that followed the tap of their footsteps, and amplified even the sound of their breathing.

“It sounds a bit mysterious, doesn't it,” the man said, not taking his greatcoat off, nor offering to take Potts's travelling cloak. “I had better begin at the beginning. Let us find some suitable office and get down to business.”

Standish led him through a maze of rooms, all of which seemed empty of any living soul, despite the expensive furniture, until they arrived in a spacious study in one of the house wings. “This will do well enough.” The lawyer pointed to the grey ashes in the hearth. “If you blow on them, or comb them with your fingers, you might feel some heat.”

“Yes, it is wintry indeed,” said Potts, nevertheless taking off his travelling coat and putting it over the back of the chair he lowered himself in.

“Right then, no more dalliance.” Standish seated himself opposite, in the chair nearest the unlit fire, and drawing his greatcoat tighter about him said, in spite of his suggestion that

business should be conducted promptly, “one dare not ask the servants to light even a cooking fire. Baron and Baroness Hensham have forbidden it. They eat their meat cold, and take no tea at all, and wander about the woods in all weathers looking for the young Miss.”

“Looking for their daughter? The young lady of the house has disappeared?”

The lawyer rubbed his hands and lent forward. “Oh yes. The young Miss Hensham.”

“How old is the girl?”

“Ten years old last November.”

“She went missing while out to play in the woods or the gardens, I take it? This is a police case, as I see it. Mr Standish. If you will forgive me getting straight to the point, I was brought here under the auspices that my particular gifts would be required. I do not see how my crafting of verses, nor indeed my insight into certain sensitive matters that are beyond the ken of today’s rational mindsets, can be brought to bear in the search for a missing child. Even if you have some reason for suspicion of psychological intervention, I am not your man, for I am not a psychic in any conventional sense of the word. The police should be your first call. You do know something about me, I take it?”

“I am aware you are not a psychic. You are a poet and mystic. You wrote a long compendium of encounters with fairies, and are famous for your first-hand encounters with the supernatural. It is not the sort of thing a lawyer should look kindly on; though I must confess I am a rationalist by profession, not by belief. But of course what matters is what Lord and Lady Hensham want, and I am their humble servant in that regard.”

As he spoke, his breath came out in thin white clouds. “So you see,” he continued, “I know exactly who I have brought to the case. You shall know the facts, then, since you suspect I am wasting your time. You see the young Miss Hensham was in the habit of conversing, even sporting, with beings about which you doubtless have had some dealings.”

Rising quickly, and thrusting his hands in the drawer of a desk near the window, Standish produced a wad of photographs and handed them to Potts.

Potts looked them over without speaking. After inspecting every one, he brought one particular photograph to the top of the wad and let his finger rest on the figure that was captured there, next to the pretty, smiling girl on the lawn.

“I can’t corroborate this. I don’t deal in cases of authenticity, or in rooting out fakes.”

“I don’t expect that of you, Mr Potts. But you have seen with your own eyes...”

“A fairy? No. Not English fairies. The Fey, in some form or other, I have glimpsed, yes. The Sidhe of Ireland: I was fortunate enough, in my younger years, to encounter their kind. But in all

the years I have criss-crossed England and Wales as a speaker on the longevai in poetry and folk tales I have not seen a single example of the English breed.”

He studied the photograph as he spoke. There was a tiny figure, hatted, with long dark boots, skipping on the grass in the foreground of the picture, while the Hensham girl, delighted, looked on.

“At least it’s not a winged dryad, or some flower cup fairy. They are the kind that the forgers usually go in for. Who took this photograph?”

“Lord Hensham. All last summer he berated the little girl for telling tales about the little people, the Lilliputians at the edge of the lawns. But then, out hunting, he saw one with his own eyes. And he followed the young miss, and crawled behind the topiary, and took this set of pictures.”

“And he didn’t startle the creatures?”

“Evidently not. They continued their play, and young Emily there, as you can see, is delighted to be playing with the little folk. That was the end of it, though. After this day, they came for her, and drew her towards the woods.”

“So they led her away? Did anyone witness it?”

“The Lord and Lady heard the music. Even the servants heard it. Far off, they said it was, coming perhaps from the edge of the woods, yet seeming even more remote than that. The most beautiful music they’d ever heard. All of them agreed on that. Lord and Lady Hensham went out, and the servants were out on the lawns already, and they caught a glimpse of the little lass, skipping towards the line of beeches at the far end there, following the music. Then the woods closed over her, the gloom and the shadows seemed to swallow her up, and the music ceased, just like an air one hears in a dream.

“Of course, they searched the woods right away. They even had the police here. She’s gone, Mr Potts. Away with the fairies, it is. That’s the only explanation of the case the Lord and Lady will entertain. They all heard this beautiful, otherworldly music, played on heaven knows what instrument – no one can agree whether it was wind or brass or string – the tune of which none can remember. They called her away, just like in all the old stories. Away from the world, isn’t it? Away from trouble and responsibility, yes, but away from everything living and growing too. Lord Hensham wants you to bring her back.”

“Why doesn’t he talk to me himself?”

“Because the both of them are inconsolable. Because this is to be a matter of business, and right now I am the only clear-headed one in the whole house. The servants, too, loved the little girl. They’ve been combing the woodlands day and night, and not a thing to show for it. Lord and Lady Hensham will give you whatever you ask. Do what you must to bring Miss Hensham back. I am at your service, if you need me.”

“Mr Standish, we have a problem here. You see, the fairies themselves planned to take the girl, and it was their power which opened the gates between our world and theirs. But anyway, let’s say I know a way in. It is perilous, even more perilous than you might imagine, for Faerie is a mapless wilderness, and a pathless one too. Few come back from such a place. And of those who do come back, few are untouched.”

Here Potts paused, and his eyes glinted, as if lit by pale flecks of fire.

“It is a place beyond time and generations. The beauty one sees there, the beauties of our world cannot stand comparison against. I will need to protect my mind if I agree to go in.”

“Whatever is necessary, Mr Potts. You will notice that, even though I am a legal man, a man of business, and of the city, I do not doubt for a minute the veracity of the whole of this, nor do I question the work you must do. Tell me how I can help you, tell me what you desire, and I will do it.”

“Very well, then,” said Potts, rising. He put on his travelling coat, and headed straight for the door. “I’ll go walking in the woods, then. Alone, if you do not mind.”

Potts had cold lunch brought to him, and cold tea, and finally cold supper. He stayed away from the house, and spent all his time in the woods, among the oaks and ashes and beeches, and looked for signs of fairy intervention. There were a few fairy rings in the green swards in the clearings in the wood, and these he noted, and thought that his purpose might be achieved, with a little good luck. He asked Standish to bring him some beeswax, that his ears might be shut to the music, should the fairies wish to ensnare him too; grown men, as well as innocents, were sometimes their prize, for among dreamers there is no end to play. As to the beauties that would assault his eyes, it was easier done, for he could always use his lids, or cover them with his hands, and he would need to measure the space he looked with some other marker than time’s, for though time did not flow in Faerie as it did in the world, the illusion of mortal time was carried by those who slipped beyond its borders, and because of this they could sometimes be deceived, so that a hundred years were recorded by the mind as the space between one heartbeat and the next.

He knew how perilous Faerie was, for all the longing it inspired. He might not have agreed to the charge, but then again the girl was gone – an innocent soul. Was it worth it, though? She would, after all, be carried away towards delight and happiness, towards the undying. He supposed that he was doing it for those left behind, for her family. They would be left with grief. And anyway, he told himself, Faerie is not heaven – it does not come as light at the end of a life of toil and darkness. It is an endless twilight, filled with the ceaseless enchantments of beauty, without trouble, without tears, and yet perhaps without the greater, more sublime joys. As he

tramped onwards through the woods, and the pale light led to evening, he realised that, for all his verse and tale gathering, he did not quite understand, just like every other mortal thinker had failed to quite understand, the nature of Faerie. It was beyond logic. Its promises and delights, so strange and alien to those in the world, were perhaps not the same to all people. It might be said that for some it was to be more desired than anything at all in the world, yet for others it might be a place of entrapment, of madness and slavery to the play of shadows upon the senses. As he had grown older, and despite his adherence to Romanticism, he did not know where he himself stood. All he knew was that he would have to go in, for as brief a time as possible, and get the girl out. And even if he did not delay, there was no assurance that she could be brought back in her right mind, or even brought back at all.

Twilight came to the woods, and then darkness, and the night sky cleared, so that through the gaps in the treetops he could see the half penny of moon shining down on all the earth, on the human world and Faerie both. Most of the servants had gone in doors, and there were only a few rustlings and shakings of branches to tell him he was not alone in the woods. Lord and Lady Hensham he caught no sight of, but he supposed that they too were keeping the night's vigil. It was enough of a madness, this, looking always for the doorway in, and seeking the one who has been charmed away.

They will not carry us forth with music, not a second time, Potts thought. They have their prize. But when inside, he would need to plug his ears in case it drew him into inescapable woods. In his pocket he had a long yarn of thread, supplied by Standish, a string with which to be able to return via, like Ariadne's in the labyrinth. He was lucky tonight – all was clear in the moonlight. He had studied all day the course of the land, the undulations, and gone from one edge of the wood to the other, and noticed every line and silhouette of every tree and branch. He was looking for slight variations, anomalies, subtle, hardly perceptible threadings and unthreadings of nature, where the woven tapestry, in its parts and in its whole effect, was out of harmony with the rest. That would be the sign, that would be the marker. A leaf not belonging on the tree that bore it. A greensward too bright for moonlight. Something that did not sit right with the rest.

The night drew on. It got colder. He was sensitive to temperature, for it too could be the sign he was looking for. But here in the low space of the valley, not too far from the murmurings of the river, it was bound to be cold anyway, and nothing about the lingering chill seemed out of keeping with the environment.

After waiting a time, he made his way towards the river, which flowed near the far edge of the woodland, away from the house. Stooping down when he reached the thin course of moonlit water, he studied the course of its flow: here smooth, glistening with moonlight, there quickening just a little, swollen like the slippery back of a fish; tension held in balance.

He listened to the air and the night sounds too. There was a harmony, an overarching balance, he expected to hear in all, even though, like the spaces of quick flowing water amongst the smooth, there was tension; the point was that the tension was brought to bear, was controlled, by the general order of the whole. He was looking for something that did not conform to this wider, vital order.

To know and recognise supernature, one has to study nature meticulously. Nature is the element man exists in, Potts knew. In another element, he will know himself transported at once. But in order to find the way through, to cross over, it was necessary to discern where one system overlapped with another. He found it, soon enough, before half the space of night was gone, a little further down the river. There was a place where the river narrowed, the banks cut deeper into the earth, and passed under a knotty bridge of bushes and briars. Drawn to the dark space under the natural bridge, he knew: there was gloom there that was illuminating as light, and silence as loud as a shout, a sense of danger that enticed as much as a safe harbouring place. He knew that was his door. It would involve getting wet. There was no getting around it. The river looked deep at this spot. He thought about calling back to the house for a pair of galoshes, but thought better of it, for his knowledge told him the doors between worlds were not always open for long, and this one might shut unexpectedly. So he sat down on the bank, dangled his legs into the water, just so that he got a feel for how cold it was (it certainly was bitterly cold), and then lowered himself in.

The water came up to his waist. It was hard to keep balance, for as it neared the bridge of bushes it sped up considerably, and for a moment he wobbled there, uncertainly, wondering if the current would take him and sweep him under, if this would be the last of the poet. Then he realised, with half a smile, that this was the only way: he needed to go under that bridge. He needed to cross into the dark. So he simply sloshed forward, and gave up thinking about losing his footing, for that would only quicken matters. He stooped under the thorny archway and crossed into Faerie as soon as his head entered the gloom.

There was no river on the other side. His senses, at once, were tricked. One second he had been aware of his waterlogged boots, the freezing grip of the water on his skin, the next he was quite dry, and his skin was warmed as if by the light of a woodfire. He looked down. He was in a clearing, standing, as it seemed, in a long sliver of moonlight. It flickered, dissolved and reformed for a minute, so that briefly it seemed to be water rather than light, and so too the sensation from his toetips up to his waist teetered and played between utter cold and delightful warmth. Then he was sure. He was quite dry. The river was gone. The moonlight, instead, formed a winding path that he could follow across the clearing and out of it. The March moon – if this were precisely the same March moon – did not cast a cold light but a warm, illuminating light that was even more pleasant than sunlight on a warm Spring day.

He cast his eye about him, and instinctively blinked a few times so as not to look too long. Trees grew in a close rank on the edges of the clearing. Grass whispered and breathed beneath his feet. It was all like, and yet wholly unlike, the nature he knew. For the grass seemed like the hair of his old grandfather, which he used to twine about his fingers when he was a child in the old man's lap. The branches of the trees drooped like the tails of cats, and their bark was not coarse but like soft velvet, of a colour he could not place, but somehow knew to exist. The air itself did not invigorate or refresh, rather it intoxicated like wine: it was like the air of dreams, playing all its tricks upon the mind.

Potts fought for mastery of himself. He heard his own heart beating. That was the thing. No sense of time could be a marker here. The heart beats according to the law of its own nature, without obeying the rising of sun or moon; the heart does not know the seasons, even though it

moves as they do in its own cycle from the first beat of life, in its mother's womb, aligned to her heartbeat, to the last, when the spirit goes out of a man. Potts had prepared himself well. Internalize your thoughts. Keep them rooted in the music of your own heartbeat. So he counted his own pulse, never faltering in his measure, and, drawing out the ball of string, set off along the stream of moonlight that led out of the clearing.

He found himself deep in the midst of fairy woods. He closed his eyes regularly, and felt with his hands and his fingertips. The branches of the trees that touched him were like soft cotton. Nothing seemed barbed in this place, or came to a hard point or edge. It was all so enticingly soft, it made him want to lie down and go to sleep on the softest grass – for such was the stuff beneath his boots, amongst tree roots that were like a nurse's fingers as they brushed against him. But he resisted. He concentrated on his heartbeat, and kept count of the pulse. Not beats per minute, for in the restarting he might lose his count to the external clock of supernature. He had counted, so far, 542, and kept at it. Keep your feet moving, he told himself. On through the woods, deeper and deeper, one set of fingers on his pulse, the others leading out the thread so that I can go back.

There was no path of moonlight through the deeper woods. There was only the labyrinth of trees, but glancing back at the trail of string told him he was going ever forward – for moving in circles was to be feared as much as anything else. The Fey, the longevai of Faerie, held more dearly than anything else the cyclical nature of things. Their dances were circular dances, and when they played it was always in the round, in wheeling jigs. So mortals would be ensnared, if they entered the realm, by moving always in a circular space, never leaving the same circle, though thinking, for the trees and the landscape were in on the game, that they were moving every farther afield. And thus, thinking themselves afoot on a single night, their heart would wear down, their body would wither according to nature's laws (to which it was bound as soon as it emerged from Faerie), and if they were released at all it would be to stumble out into the mortal lands again, long-bearded and weary of limb.

The music started before Potts knew it. He caught himself listening for a brief space, unconscious while he had been doing so, and thus forgot to count the pulse he had so been dutifully recording. A few spaces had gone by – he guessed that the beats he had missed were between the number 943 and 948 – before he resumed his count again. The music had done it. Far off, delicious, feasting music, music that spoke of a great banquet, that delighted the senses and whose notes invited the listener to savour them like delicious cherries or ripe peaches.

He caught himself and fished out his beeswax. Plugging his ears at once, he went on with the count of his heartbeat, and with all his will tried not to be enticed by the music, which nevertheless lingered ghostly in the background, and moved to its own time, interfering with his measure of the beating of his heart.

Yet follow it he must. There, in that place where the music was coming from, he would find the girl. Count, he told himself, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, step, step, step, step, move closer to the music, but shut off your mind, and your heart, and all your senses to its beauty, imagine it is not beautiful at all but the ugliest sound, the drumming of tails of beasts against the ground, against

the trees, there, a little further, is the winding string still behind – yes – now I can see light, the glow of a fire perhaps, the fairies will be there.

He came out into the clear wide space. It was a white sward of green, in the very centre of which there was a fire, though a fire unlike any he had seen. It was not made up of flame at all, as far as he could tell. It would be more accurate to say that it looked like a fountain of water, whooshing up from the ground and cascading back down again. But it was no more water than it was the first element – Potts recognised it as moonlight, as flickering and dancing silvery tongues of the moonlight itself. He knew this because it was made up of the same properties as the moonlight he had all his life glimpsed things by, yet somehow with even greater potency.

Near the dancing flames of moonlight there were figures, small figures, even smaller than tiny children in size, though not with child's proportions. They were, of course, the fairy folk. Some were reclining, basking in the glow of the moon's heat, with blades of grass for their beds or flowers for their pillows; others were weaving circular dances about the place; yet more were playing music with instruments unlike any Potts had seen: some resembled shells, through whose hollow chambers the fairies blew as if they were horns or tubas. Others looked to be holding spider's webs. But when their hands passed across the glistening silver strands the most delicate and melodic notes were plucked out. There was even a fairy who was striking out a drumming pattern on the shiny back of a black beetle. Instead of drumsticks, he was using two nimble twigs topped with bright red berries.

The sight of the fairy orchestra was absurd. When he looked, from out of the cover of his palm, Potts almost laughed to see the little folk holding such ridiculous things in place of instruments. But at the same time, and in spite of the beeswax in his ears, Potts could not mistake the beauty of the music, close up this time, perilously close. It was for the most part playful, even flippant in its melodies, inconsequential as rain patter or the breezes that pass through stalks of hay in a summer meadow. But then it would take a sudden, fleeting turn, with a few dark, sombre notes that tore at the heartstrings, or contrariwise, with high, sounding, joyful notes that brought forth tears of happiness. And no sooner had the emotion come into the music than it was gone again, and all was seen to be as light and inconsequential as before.

Potts, even while he noticed these things about the music and the fairy folk, kept counting the beat of his heart. He had gone up to two thousand now. What was two thousand divided by sixty? How many minutes had he been here? But no time for that now, and not just because it might mean he would lose count. There was the object of his search: the girl, Emily.

Emily was seated at one end of the clearing, at the edge furthest from the fire, her back to a tree. She was garlanding flowers, while all around her little folk did the same, weaving circlets of daisies and buttercups to place in her ringlet curls. She was already festooned with flowers, and the fairies were bringing her ever more, woven not just as garlands for her hair, or as bracelets for her wrists and ankles, and necklaces, but also into delightful ornament shapes, one in the form of a puppy that she laid chucklingly at her feet, another as a basket made of flowers, into which flowers could be placed; one, the largest of all, was made of white flowers, peonies it seemed, and was shaped into a magnificent white unicorn. All the time the girl was smiling, and

would break suddenly into laughter, and her eyes would widen in delight at each new gift and trinket.

She, and it seemed the fairies too, had not noticed Potts enter the clearing. For a few beats of his heart longer he stood watching. It seemed unlikely that the fairies did not know he had come. They were extremely sensitive to mortals entering their realm, and would doubtless try to stop him from taking the girl. But how, if they were so diminutive? What magic could they use, other than the magic of enchantment, against which he was holding all the will of his being, and, as it seemed, succeeding?

He took a first step, and then another, towards the girl. The music did not cease, nor did the fire go out, nor was there a single break or pause in the merriment. The fairies went on garlanding the captive girl, and her eyes never lifted up once to the man who was approaching her, leading a long white yarn behind him. He was half covering his eyes, and reaching out a hand now to clutch hers. He felt the contact of skin, felt his heart skip a beat as he held on tightly to her thin, pale wrist. She looked up, and from her pendulous lids he saw her misty grey eyes meet his.

They were filled with sadness, and filled with longing.

She was singing a song. For a few minutes, that was all he was aware of.

“Buttercups and daisies,

Oh the pretty flowers,

Coming ere the springtime

To tell of sunny hours.”

He lifted her to her feet. In the corner of his sight, there was a flash of silver and white and green, the milling movement of a thousand tiny bodies, the fairies, either in a panic or in some wild dance of abandon.

He threaded the string between his fingers. He had not thought what he would do, now that he had to lead the girl. He could no longer keep count of his pulse. But his mind quickened to the answer: he would trust his breath, and count the inhalations and exhalations, for just as the heart keeps its own clock, so the lungs do too. He did not lose count, not for a minute. He led the girl by the hand, and with the other hand threaded the string through his fingers.

Two thousand and fifty-one. Two thousand and fifty-two. He led the girl out of the clearing, unresisting, yet dazed and in a dream, still singing her little song of spring.

“While the trees are leafless,
While the fields are bare,

Buttercups and daisies
Spring up here and there.”

They were moving back through the trees. Without the ball of string, he would have been hopelessly lost, for the trees now closed in all around, and each was alike to the next, and the air had a thick, heavy quality, as of spices or opium. Potts tugged at the girl's hand, which now, unexpectedly, had become heavier. He turned towards her, and surmised that at first she had let him lead her from the instinct to dance, but now, away from the music, she was resisting at last. Her hand felt heavy, and was pulling away from him. The weight of her, of everything in fact, even the string, made it hard for Potts to keep from falling to the ground. The only thing that kept him going was the certain knowledge of what that would mean: fall, even for a second, and she would be imprisoned in the realm forever, and he along with her. He would give in to sleep, and wake up after a hundred years had passed. He would be old and grey, his body withered, yet he could live on, and never know, just as long as he kept to the immortal realm. Here, no record of the body's withering could be seen.

All of this kept him going. He counted on, two thousand, one hundred and forty five, two thousand, one hundred and forty six, two thousand, one hundred and forty-seven. On and on through the trees, looking for the end of the string, winding it back to the reel, with only the slightest pressure, so that he was sure it was not be pulled taut and its starting place lost. The girl, with a strength that did not match her tender years, had almost to be dragged behind him, never giving up her song.

“ Little hardy flowers
Like to children poor,
Playing in their sturdy health
By their mother's door
Purple with the north wind,
Yet alert and bold;
Fearing not and caring not,
Though they be a-cold.”

At last they reached the first clearing, with the stream of silver moonlight. There was the string's end, on the ground. Nearly up to two thousand three hundred now, his breathing more laboured than ever, but kept regular. Pick up the string, a last tug on the maiden's hand, and to the place where the door had lain, the widening pool of moonlight.

He plunged into the silvery pool, yanking the girl behind him, and in a moment there was that teetering, that uncertainty, when warm could be cold, and cold warm, when light could be water, or water light. And then he was plunged back into the cold of the spring night in that Welsh river, spluttering and spitting and wheezing from the cold, plunging up from the water like a big old landed fish. The girl, the flowers in her hair matted and dripping wet, her dress ringing, came behind him. His grip was as tight on her flesh as he could manage without breaking the small bones of her wrist. He had brought her out, he had rescued her from the immortals, and now together they landed on the bank, numb from the cold, he breathing in gasps, she no better, yet still, in the thinnest, hardly breathing voice, managing to continue her song.

“What to them is weather!
What are stormy showers!
Buttercups and daisies
Are these human flowers!”

He bent over her, brushed her matted black hair back from her fine, wet forehead. Her grey eyes were misty, as before. Lost, still, in the dreaming of that place.

“Who are you?” said Potts, with a heaviness of tone.

The girl seemed to look through him. She could see, he knew without even having to ask, the fires in the clearing far away. The flowers of fairyland, that even now withered on her wrists and around her neck, which had turned to the withering violets and peonies of the material realm, having been translated. The music of the fairy orchestra, played on the coned shells of snails and on half-invisible spider webs. All of these were the objects of her mind. So he had failed.

He had brought her out, yes. In that he had succeeded, he thought as he lay back down on the bank. But how much time had passed between his entering Faerie and now? He had resolutely counted his heartbeat, and later his breath. The whole time, from first emerging into Faerie until the pool of silver moonlight, and the end of the ball of string had been found again. All except that once. He remembered himself counting, the exact moment when it had happened. The beats he had missed between counting, between 943 and 948. How long could have elapsed? He might have missed only heartbeats. But across the wood, in the direction of the house, there was no sound at all, no sounds of the brush being beaten, or of the servants' voices calling Emily home.

He led the girl to the house at last. She no longer resisted, and they crossed the woodland quickly. They came into the house, at the butler's answering the door, and were led by the man, whose face was a mask of shock, into the parlour where Lord and Lady Hensham were sitting. It was the first time Potts had seen the Lord and Lady, but he would remember them to the end of his days rising from their sofa, with open mouths, looking at their daughter as if she had returned from the dead.

“How long has it been?” Potts said, and the Lord, with tears in his eyes, answered, “A year to the day. A year she has been gone, and you also, and no explanation and not a single shred of hope. Until today. Oh, my good man, you have brought her back to us. We have suffered and gone to hell this past year. But it is all right now. She has come back. You are both wet through. You must rest at once. We are forever indebted to you. Our Emily has come back.”

Yes, rest was what he desired most, but he would not take it. He accepted only a change of clothes, and once he had been given some that fit, he made his way straight from the house, passing the woods without hardly a glance, and on towards the town and the train. What had happened in a whole year, he dared not speculate. There would be all sorts of affairs to untangle. Perhaps even scandals to which he could give no satisfactory explanation. But the sooner it was all begun, the better.

He remembered the name Hensham when he saw the card. He knew that it was Emily, and was not greatly surprised that she had sought him out. After all, Lord and Lady Hensham would not have thought anything untoward in the girl going to thank her rescuer. Not even, perhaps, if another seven years had passed since her reappearance, as they had.

He saw a young woman whose beauty was rare and refined. She was still recognisable as the girl who had lain on the bank next to him, garlanded with flowers, or who had sat amongst the fairies in the glade. In some ways, at least. But her face was troubled, and her eyes, when he looked into their depths, were as misty and as far away as ever.

“Why have you come to see me, Miss Hensham?”

She looked at him from the other side of the desk, and looked away. “Can’t you suspect?”

“I suppose it is not just to thank me. Your father and mother did that already. They have sent me Christmas hampers ever since, for which I am genuinely grateful.”

“It is not that,” said Emily, her voice becoming grave. “No, not that at all.”

“I thought as much,” said Potts. “Yours is not the first such case, though it is the first in which I have been so directly involved.”

“What do you think I want, then?”

“I suppose, Miss Hensham, that you are unhappy. That your parents urge you to marry. To look for some suitable match among the landed gentry. I suppose that you do not want this. That your heart is not in any such future. Nor is it in books, or in music, or in any of the various pursuits that might engage and distract a bright and curious mind like your own.”

“You have great understanding of the case, I see.”

Potts sighed wearily, and lit a pipe. “What would you ask me for?”

“What only you can give,” the young woman went on in earnest. “The way back. The way into Faerie. They hired you, eight years ago, to find a way in and bring me back with you. You did it. That can only mean that you know how to find the fairy paths amongst the woods. Don’t you see, Mr Potts? You never should have brought me back. It was never my fate to grow into this woman, to wither, to gather dust in drawing rooms, to wilt from the spring flower I was. The music led me, yes. But it was not just enchantment. It was desire, it came from inside me. I wanted to be enchanted. Didn’t you see that, when you found me? Didn’t you understand?”

Potts was looking out the window, drawing his pipe. “What do you expect me to say, Miss Hensham? That I knew and yet acted nonetheless? What about your parents, who would have grieved for you?”

“Many parents grieve. It is the way of things, Mr Potts. Some are fated to leave the world young, and I truly think it is a bad thing to interfere. But you can make amends. I will pay you, twice as much as my father did in the first place, if you can lead me to the door.”

Potts was looking out onto his garden. At length, he said, “how long do you think you’d have to spend out in the woods before some way, some sign, revealed itself? Where there are the comings and goings of the little folk, there might be more tears in the fabric dividing our world and theirs. But unless they are seen, one could spend a lifetime looking for a way into their realm.”

Emily lent forward in her chair. “That won’t do, Mr Potts. I can’t wait a lifetime. I can’t even wait a single day, in this mood of mine.”

“It’s nearly February,” Potts said, half to himself. “Winter’s almost over. The flowers will be out soon. Very well, I will leave it in your hands. I don’t want money, you know. And you must find some way of leading your parents away from the trail. I don’t want them coming here ready to sue me because their girl has disappeared once again. You do not have a child of your own, Miss Hensham. But do you have another in the family? Ideally a female, though males may do equally as well. Preferably close to the age of puberty. An innocent, for of course not all children are innocent as by rights they should be.”

“There is my cousin’s child. She is ten, I believe.”

“Then invite her to your house. Let her play on the lawns, down by the woodland’s edge. Make a spring of it, and if nothing happens, invite her the next spring, and if she grows up and marries, find another child. Watch them, and wait, and one spring day they’ll come, and garland her with flowers, just as they did you, and you’ll see the strange, delicately woven bracelets and anklets and wonder at how her little fingers did all that fine work. And you’ll know the fairies have come. And if they take her, be waiting, and offer yourself in exchange, for the fairies know how to bargain as well as humans do. Do not let the child go as well, but go in her place, because though now you have made your choice, and think yourself grown up enough to do so, the child cannot do so. And remember, if you hear the music, follow it, always moving in circles, never in a straight line. You’ll reach a spot in the woods where sound becomes scent, where water turns to moonlight, and all seems to turn back again. That will be your door. Take it, and I only hope it will be better for you. If you truly believe it to be your fate, who am I to argue?”

He had hardly finished the last sentence when he heard the door click shut. The young woman was gone. Sighing, feeling old, Daniel Potts looked out the window of his office, at the rain driving against the February lawn, and thought that he should wait there, in that very chair, counting his heartbeat, until the spring came.

In the Woods without an Anything

Darryl Benjamin
Vermont, USA

The job at the post office was a means to an end, and that end was art. Although my passion was painting, it was by choice I had abdicated my social and economic status – at least in my parents' eyes – to the drudgery of civil servitude.

As usual, they were right: it was drudgery. But I chose it and maybe because of that I didn't mind sorting, carrying, delivering, just minding the mail in general. I felt as if I was contributing to something much larger than myself; I provided a service humanity found useful, a species defined by its gregarious, voyeuristic and avaricious compulsions, a formula that keeps on giving like the golden goose.

I kept my head down, the wheels greased, and didn't complain. I liked the flow and the orderliness, the undulating, rhythmic currents. The decision to work at the post office had been made in the interest of establishing a reliable income while I painted great works of art. That was supposed to be the consolation prize that took the drudgery from it.

Regardless of my reasoning, my parents were convinced I had gone down with the Titanic, despite the occasional artistic recognition: no less than *The New York Times* trumpeted a show of my paintings in one resounding sentence: "Thomas Beckersfield embodies the disembodiable; he captures the aggregate vision of womanhood with confident, surrealistic yellows, oranges, and reds; his masterful flourishes of bold, lusty strokes are a tribute to feminine timelessness, courage, beauty and, of course, libido."

Of course.

I have yet to understand the half of it.

I sold a few paintings because of the publicity, but when things settled down, as they inevitably did, I was back at square one.

Ironically and seemingly in tacit complicity with my parents who compulsively felt they had to be right all the time, my job at the post office faded. The post office itself assumed an ominous, translucent glow, a jaundiced patina of decay and under-use.

The handwriting was on the wall, sallow and still, unable to compete with the backlit parcels of colorful light shot directly into the eyes. The new wall had metamorphosized into Facebook, dubbed itself a proper pronoun and then decreed:

To all friends, family, co-workers and selected acquaintances: I am here to stay. To follow you only need sign onto me, The Wall. Post your heart out. Dare to share all. Cast your judgments here. Dream your dreams, have your say. There is no lapse, no time delay. Write conveniently on The Wall all day, every day, 24/7, round-the-clock, except maybe when you're in the shower, asleep or feeding the dog. We will possibly grow to love you, maybe hate you, because you are so goddamn endlessly fascinating.

The golden goose stopped laying her eggs. How could a whispered letter with a delicately inscribed address compete with the endless shout of news from even a single day spent at the frontiers of a person's life? How The Wall promised and then delivered delicious micro-adventures, continuous soap-operas and dramas, moanings and pleadings, the celebrations and perpetually-spinning P.R. wheels that clatter out the message of how enthralling you are *now!* *Instantly! In Real Time!* I wondered for a moment if there was a place for me in that world and

knew the answer was no before I finished asking the question. The earth had parted beneath my feet and I fell through the rabbit hole.

What a shock to discover it was me who had been living in Fantasy Time! The tectonic plate labeled 'technology' had crashed headlong into my sense of security; I was India ink bowing to the ball point pen, a Dodo bird heading down the chute labeled extinct.

Ladies and gentlemen, on the left we have a dull, workaday Joe delivering mail, mostly bills, credit card offers and legal requests, sometimes dodging growling, biting dogs. On the right, we have an artist working nights and weekends, praying for the day his ship will come in!

As the steady river of letters choked to a crawl, it left the slimy stench of snail-mail suspended in fluorescent, flickering, pale light – overwhelming and stomach-grippingly fetid. The sanctuary I had sought was gone forever. The Great Recession and the Digital Revolution sang a harmonious dirge: *you're washed up and as abandoned as a wind-up watch*. I felt old.

Day after day inside the sullen and heat-swollen walls of sorting machinery we chugged on, sweating and cursing under constant threat of losing our jobs. We teased each other with gallows humor about touting a shotgun. Jarvey, my best friend, said it was better than going numb and sinking into oblivion.

Jarvey's goal was similar to mine: work at the post office while he would write the Great American Novel. And so he wrote feverishly and obsessively in the style of Hysterical Realism, a Post-Modern hiccup consisting of multiple universes colliding in an orgiastic dance of discovery, thwarted dreams, conspiracies and unrequited love. Frequently he was lost in thought and I had to repeat myself before his eyes registered my presence.

He liked to joke around. "You and me, we're artifacts," he said. "We are Untouchables. I sincerely hope you can paint nostalgia."

Despite our attempts to ward off the inevitable, depression set in like a fast-creeping vine, penetrating tissue and sapping our strength.

We took lots of coffee breaks. We yammered and laughed and wondered if now would be a good time to go postal. We felt neglected and hurt, as if a loyal friend had deserted us – no less than the citizens of the United States of America. We felt a class action kind of kinship that despised the faces we saw bent feverishly over their devices on busses, in cars, and passing us on the street. They were the Guilty. We were The Unrecognized, The Martyred. And for what? Uncle Sam himself had responded by situating his spreading ass over a park bench, removing his tall hat, and setting his long, slender fingers ablaze texting pink slips.

My parents worried about me. I accepted the loss of credibility: a civil servant is considerably lower than the bar they'd set for me. My father's contracting and building business was interesting, but not fascinating. Few were building during the Great Recession. He had too much time to sit on his hands and contradict my decisions. "I'm not getting any younger," he said. He was in his seventies.

I felt angry when Jarvey committed suicide. I knew I couldn't blame him and I shouldn't blame myself for failing to prevent it. I didn't see it coming. I thought we were in the same sinking boat and had each other to guarantee our survival. I was adrift, alone and frustrated. We were the dying dinosaurs after a digital blast had obliterated our world.

The week after Jarvey died I received the pink slip along with 7,499 post office employees.

The shock of losing one's job, I heard, is equivalent to the stress of the marriage ceremony, divorce proceedings, or moving from one town to another. The waters were rising and

I determined to keep my head above it. I had no savings to speak of. I would have to move and find a cheaper place. And forget painting, at least for a while. I could also forget about getting a dog. I had to worry about myself. Food and Shelter, the very bottom of Maslow's hierarchy.

The night I lost my job I strolled along the long, narrow, desolate strip that divided the highway from the sandy beach by the ocean. The wind blew my hair into a corkscrew haystack. It felt wonderful. I had been unable to sleep, my mind racing.

There is a curious thing that occurs when one walks out a problem. The motion of the body, the sensation of cool air rippling against your skin; the gentle, seductive, arias sung by lapping waves, combine into a glorious contemplative cocktail, free from hangover, free of cost, and free, at least temporarily, from whatever mountain you're climbing.

The world would have to wait for my masterpiece. I saw myself going from painting art to painting walls: the family business would always take me in. They'd be delighted I'd finally come around. They'd no longer be ashamed of me. I would have to console myself with being grateful I had a safety net until I could get back on my feet.

The Post Office hired some kind of Employment Consultant to cheer us on. She came dressed to the nines and offered this bit of information: "It is not uncommon that it could take a year or two before you find a job." She delivered this with a smile. I wanted to punch her in the kisser. The bitch had a job. How about giving us some news we could dress up for?

But I knew she was right; for every job there were hundreds of applicants, and my feeble business skills were far from unique.

The only splash I was going to make was the narrow stream of piddle I aimed into the ocean. I looked up. The night sky was a velvety, saturated black with pinpricks of dazzling white light woven like silk strands into mysterious, unknowable patterns.

A cloud drifted across the incandescent waxing moon, temporarily obscuring it. Simultaneously, a cool breeze blew across my shoulders and I shivered, the little hairs on my arms standing at attention like prairie dogs.

What time was it? I glanced at my watch. Just past one in the morning. The road was empty of cars and the beach empty of people. I felt very alone.

I was thinking about something Jarvey had said. I hadn't fully understood it until now: "We're headed for a constellation of trouble," he said, as expressionless and poker-faced as a platypus, "Fasten your seatbelt, cowboy."

I looked up in time to see laser-like headlights slicing toward me. The car had bounded off the road and over a hill at high speed and silently zigzagged toward me. I realized with sickening certainty I was out of their line of sight; they hadn't seen me and they weren't slowing down.

Adrenaline screamed through my body issuing lightning-fast Paul Revere warnings, SOS's, and neon fireworks. Time slowed. The car floated lazily toward me in a liquid, molten-graceful palm-waving arc, surrealistically slow but then unimaginably fast as the headlights bore down. "Oh, shit," I said and turned to run.

The last thought I had was of a bowling pin struck with cracking force as the car knocked my legs out from under and flipped me into a backwards somersault that propelled me head-first and upside down through the windshield. Fade to black.

Jamie Salerno was aware that she was the by far the prettiest, sexiest girl in the club. She was Queen of the Club, Star of the Show. She was used to thinking that way. She was aware, too, that the way she dressed, moved and spoke, the way her hips moved – came naturally and

effortlessly. She never had to work too hard to get a guy or even the guy she wanted. That, she reckoned, was what separated her from the hoards of girls that surrounded her at the club and on campus of the community college she attended.

The downside, of course, was the Legions of Losers. They came in droves. She had learned the hard way to be selective: she had trusted, loved and lost in a dizzying and devastating series of relationship and one abortion.

She was through with losers and positive thinking. She felt the weight of the false turns heavy in her belly; as if she had spent too much of her vitality, as if something delicate and birdlike had flown from her for good.

Jamie and her girlfriend Hannah, a trim, tall brunette with shoulder-length hair, were giggling in the bathroom of Club Vanquish. The club was a trendy newcomer with loud music and several floors – or shelves, Jamie had said, because it reminded her of a chicken coop. Great big, noisy, busy shelves of guys and gals mixing it up.

“You think I should let him under the bigtop?” Jamie asked giddily.

Hannah faced her foursquare and probed into her eyes. Jamie’s eyes were malachite green, a deep forest of splintered fire. “You still talking that bigtop nonsense?” she asked.

As neighbors they had grown up together, often spending sleepovers not sleeping but playing circus, setting up an elaborate two-ring tent stitched from an old sheet by Jamie’s mother into the semblance of a circus bigtop tent. The wooden dowels that served as posts were happily donated by Hannah’s father from his basement workshop.

Jamie was Master of Ceremonies. “Ladies and Gentlemen,” she drawled into her portable Karaoke microphone, her voice blooming and fragrant as it permeated the house, commanding and hypnotizing. “Welcome to Jamhan’s Bigtop!” Her mother smiled from the kitchen as she washed the dishes. The intended audience was their accumulated American Girl Dolls – Samantha, Kirsten, Molly, Felicity, Josefina, Elizabeth, Emily, Ivy and Rebecca, who sat patient as stones, but attentive.

They had fought about the name of the circus. Hannah wanted Hanjam’s, putting her name first. And why not? Hadn’t her father help build it?

Jamie resolved the problem by ignoring it. If she was going to be Master of Ceremonies, by gosh, she would call it whatever she wanted. And so she did, wordlessly squashing Hannah, who burned under the injustice.

Now that they were older, the bigtop had mutated into something else: the warmth of the receptive boudoir, the inner sanctum of her heart, the depth of her body’s hunger, the feel of her lover’s arms, the one who would fulfill her dreams and make her life turn out right. Her notions were the stuff of packaged, processed media; she had been reared on the glass teat of TV, the world explained by movies, music, advertising and the Internet. She accepted these messages as effortlessly as Sponge Bob absorbed sea water.

Above all the bigtop meant sanctuary, a private and safe place where she could withdraw and stop worrying what would become of her.

“If he’s another loser I’ll kill myself,” Jamie said.

The guy she had met earlier that evening had possibilities. He was tall, blue-eyed, clean-shaven. That was a plus. He drove a recent-year BMW. That, too, was a plus. He seemed different from the rest because of some indefinable mysteriousness, as if he was showing only the tip of something much larger. What, she couldn’t say. But she wanted to find out. He was attentive. She knew he had come from money; of that she was sure. He was well-spoken and had success written over him as if it was ordained from On High. The pluses added up.

“He’s gay,” Hannah said.

“What?” Jamie swayed in her seat. “You think so? You really think so?”

Hannah took her time replying.

“I’ll kill myself if he is,” Jamie said.

Hannah shrugged. She had a different philosophy about men. She was sure it was a better plan than Jamie’s, which obviously wasn’t working. Hannah believed that when the time was right her man would pop up like candy from a Pez dispenser. They would instantly know they were each other’s soul-mates and it would be right and forever — holistic, organic, and especially — without drama.

“He’s probably not,” Hannah finally said, “he’s probably just one of those metrosexuals.”

Before Jamie could reply, her phone bleated *eh eh eh eh*. She remembered she had wanted to change the ringtone, purchased in honor of her Latest Loser, the infamous Kurt McCray, boy wonder, who introduced her to poker, beer and TV sports. She hadn’t minded the beer or the poker. What bothered her was his addiction to sports TV. She tried unsuccessfully to lure him away. Either her wiles were not enough or the pull of sweaty athletes was too strong. She guessed he would end up selling insurance or Google ads for a living.

He had called her so many times after she broke it off that she installed an audio clip of Lady Gaga’s notorious telephone kiss-off:

eh eh eh eh

K-kinda busy

K-kinda busy

Sorry, I cannot hear you, I’m kinda busy.

“It’s him!” Jamie squealed.

“Who?”

“The guy-who’s-not-gay, else why would be calling?” Jamie said.

“Don’t answer. Text him!” Hannah said. “Keep him hanging. Don’t make it easy. That was your problem last time, remember? You made it too easy. In fact, we should go. Let’s go. I’ve had enough of this chicken coop for tonight and I know you have.”

Jamie didn’t care for beer but she loved vodka in all its incarnations. Hannah loved margaritas. The floor was lolling under them as they left the bathroom stalls, washed their hands, and combed their hair in the mirror one last time. Jamie oscillated as if she was standing on the deck of a ship in a storm. “I think I’m getting a zit,” she said. She wrinkled her nose. “Right here,” she pointed, moving in close to the mirror. She tried to touch the tip of her nose and missed by an inch. “Like a witch with a wart.”

Hannah was used to such comments. “Your shkin is perfect, dear,” she said.

Jamie giggled. “Did you say ‘shkin’?”

They broke into gales of laughter and made their way to the car, arm in arm, flushed and exhilarated in the cool night air, the drugs they’d taken earlier kicking in.

Inside the car Jamie received a text message from the boy: why do u think I’m gay?

“Because u said u had to pwder yur nose.”

“That’s me exuberant.”

“I didn’t mean to offend, but if I’m gonna let u in, you gotta come clean.”

“I’m clean.”

“What do you think he means by ‘I’m clean’?” Jamie asked Hannah.

Hannah had reclined her seat, snuggled her back down as if she was settling into a lounge chair, and crossed her long legs. “No AIDS,” she said.

And then, sitting up, “Is that what he said? That he has no AIDS? Well! Let the buyer beware,” she said, and lay down again.

“What do you mean?” Jamie asked as she corrected the steering wheel.

“Ask him if he’s been tested.”

“Hannah!”

“No, I’m serious. Ask him.”

“Yeah sure, like you’re going to ask Mr. Right the moment he pops up on your doorstep.”

“Bet I will.”

“Easy for you to say,” Jamie said. She decided to ask anyway.

Thumbing the mini-chicklit-sized keys of her cell phone as she drove, she was about to add the final question mark when she looked up and gasped. The road was gone. For an instant she expected the car to splash into the ocean. That changed when she saw a suddenly-illuminated figure running directly in front of the car. He was on the narrow beach that followed the coast down to the Atlantic.

The car struck the man with a blasphemous crackling roar that swept his legs out from under. He somersaulted backwards as his legs jackknifed over his head. His head penetrated the windshield facing up, inches from Hannah’s face, and lodged there, his arms pinned to his hips, his legs useless and limp on the roof of the car.

The horrifying thing — in addition to his head having gone through the windshield — was that he was upside down; the back of his head was suspended inches from Hannah’s face. Fortunately she had been reclined, and was now screaming heartily at the head that dangled before her eyes.

Jamie slammed the brakes and the car skidded to a stop. She was too dazed to speak. Hannah loosed a long, deep-throated sonic blast, a howl of raw, naked shock until she sputtered and gulped for air like a misfiring engine, her eyes fastened on the intruding head.

His eyes fluttered open and his lips quavered. This brought the girls to attention as if their butts had been electrified. They sat erect and opened their eyes wide. A gurgling issued from his throat. They strained to hear. They glanced at each other and then back at him.

“Help me,” he croaked, “I can’t move my arms. Everything’s upside down.” He spoke slowly, his voice slurring. It took him thirty seconds to say it.

“You’re the one who’s upside down. You’re stuck in the windshield,” Jamie said.

He thought he detected an accusatory quiver in her voice. Had it been his fault? He passed out.

Hannah drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Shouldn’t we call somebody?”

Jamie fired back without hesitation. “Who? My mother? I don’t think so. The cops? No way. I’ll figure something out.”

“He’s in the windshield!” Hannah cried.

“I can see that,” Jamie said, starting the car.

“What’re you doing? Shouldn’t we wait for a cop? Maybe we should call the hospital. Is that what you’re doing? Driving to the hospital?”

Jamie flashed an opaque look. The car scrambled onto the road, the body rocking but firmly wedged. It wasn’t going anywhere.

Hannah pressed her back down into the reclined car seat, still in her seatbelt, her hands clasped over her mouth, arms akimbo, eyes white as ping pong balls and almost as large. She squirmed to avoid the head which bobbed gently as Jamie drove.

“His eyes are open again!” Hannah shouted. Jamie glanced. She was carefully reading and obeying each sign. If she paid attention now she might be able to make it home without getting stopped. “Listen, I’ll figure something out. Hannah, help me figure something out,” she said. *I have to stay calm*, she thought. *I have to stay above the horror*, she told herself.

“The hell you say!” Hannah said.

“Calm down, Hannah,” Jamie said in a reasonable voice, “Keep your head.”

“Keep my head!” Hannah cried, “Look at *his* head!”

“Calm down. We’ll be home soon,” Jamie said, “It’ll be all right. We’ll figure something out if we just stay calm.”

“You’re taking him to your house? Now I know you’re crazy. Can’t you see he’s gonna die if we don’t help him now!”

A slow-rising mournful wail, imperceptible at first, rose from the man’s throat until it filled the compartment of the car like a marshy odor that threatened to shatter the windows.

“Where the fuck did he come from?” Jamie asked Hannah. “Did you see him?”

“What the fuck does it matter? He’s in the windshield!”

“But what was he doing in the dark?” Jamie asked. Then she turned to the man and repeated the question. He was limp, his ghostly head still.

Hannah whispered, “It was *you* who weren’t on the road. You were texting gay guy. . .”

And then, inexplicably, the man’s head animated and he began to laugh. He laughed as hard as his position allowed. Low choking tremors exploded into salvos of blood-spewing hiccupping coughs.

“He’s delirious,” Hannah said, “He’s in shock. He’s gonna choke to death. We need to get him straight to a hospital.”

“A postman,” the man said, “Post. Man.” His voice was raspy yet the words were deliberate and clear.

“He’s babbling,” Jamie said.

“A postman,” the man repeated, and then, clarifying, “a carrier.”

“You see,” Jamie said. “He talks. He’s not so bad. We’ll fix him up at home.”

“Not me. You,” Hannah barked.

“Am I going to die?” the man asked. He began to cry. “Oh Sweet Jesus, I’m going to die. Fifty-one years old and I’m going to die.”

Jamie didn’t feel drunk now. All her senses were set to maximum. She saw he had a deep gash in his forehead from contact with the windshield. Bright red blood pulsed slowly from it, sending tributaries into the thickets of his hair that dripped slowly from the back of his head. Blood pooled onto her upholstery. For a moment she wondered how the hell she was going to get the stains out.

The house was empty. Her mother was visiting Jamie’s grandmother in Florida. Jamie pulled the car into the garage and closed the door with a push of a button. She glanced at the dash clock before shutting the car off. 1:30 am. They hadn’t passed anyone; they hadn’t been seen by a soul.

Hannah swung her door open and wiggled herself out of her seat to avoid even minimum contact with the jogging head, whose eyes were, for the moment, blessedly closed. “I’m outta

here," she said, sounding half-way out there already, "he's your problem! He popped up in your life, not mine! You should call the police. That's my advice, call the police, I'm done!"

"You know, Hannah, you're a real bitch," Jamie called after her.

"I may be a bitch," Hannah shouted, "but look what you got under the big top!" And then she was gone.

Half an hour passes. He is saying something now, so low Jamie cannot hear. She places her ear beside his mouth. "Water," he whispers, "bring me water."

Wordlessly, she goes to the kitchen through the garage side-door, fills a glass and brings it to the man.

"What's your name?" she asks.

"Water," he replies.

Since he is upside down she is forced to dribble the water from the glass into the roof of his mouth. He drinks what he can. The water that spills out is pink with blood.

"Tom," he says.

"I'm so sorry I hit you with my car, Tom," Jamie says tearfully.

"Can you get me out?" he asks.

"Are you in pain?"

He doesn't reply. *Of course he's in pain, you ninny*, Jamie reprimands herself.

"Can you get me out?" he mumbles.

She hesitates but then goes into the house and comes out after a few minutes with a hammer. "I think I can crack the glass with this," she says.

"I can't feel my arms," he says, and then his eyes roll up and he's out again.

Jamie takes the hammer back to the kitchen and returns to the car empty-handed.

He's awake again. His head swims as he speaks. "You're not going to get me out, are you?" he asks. "I'm bleeding to death. I must have a dozen cracked bones. What's wrong with you? My body feels like shredded wheat." He delivers this in a harsh, raspy voice laboring to pronounce each syllable, his breath rapid and shallow, each word measured and carefully delivered.

Jamie slides into the driver's seat and cries. "Why were you there? Do you realize you've ruined my life? I'm only twenty-three and my life is over." She cries into a pink handkerchief almost the color of blood.

eh eh eh eh her telephone interrupts.

"Hello?" She doesn't recognize the caller ID.

"It's me, your gay-but-not-really-gay-friend from last night."

She had almost forgotten about him.

Jamie looks at her watch. 2:15 am. "It's a little late," she says.

"I know," he says. "Look, I really think I like you. I don't want you to think I'm calling just because I'm drunk."

"Are you drunk?"

"Well, yeah, maybe a little. I'm calling because I like you and want to see you."

Maybe he's the one.

"I can't see you now. I'm busy."

"Oh? Are you with someone?"

She is about to say, "Sort of," but changes her mind.

"Just busy," she says. "Besides, it's late and I need to get my beauty sleep."

“You don’t need to sleep to be beautiful.”

“Are you sure you’re not gay?”

And then she looks up and sees Tom’s head. It is shaking and dripping blood. Bubbles are issuing from his mouth.

“Call me later,” Jamie says, and disconnects.

She is drifting, and after a while she speaks. “Behind bars. That’s where I’ll end up. Maybe it’s the best thing. Maybe I need the rest, maybe there’s a silver lining,” she says. She hadn’t intended to speak out loud, but the words escape her lips softly, like a ribbon, and flutter to the floor. His breathing slows. His eyes open and she is sure he heard her.

“I haven’t eaten in two days. AARP says eating less extends your life,” he says.

She can’t tell if he is serious, crazy, or just plain stupid. He simply says the words, offering them up like cough drops. “Do you think I could get some water?” he croaks. He seems more awake. His voice is still raspy, like a thousand bees are caught in it, but she understands him and quickly brings a glass of water. He spits blood and water that leaves tiny pink droplets on her skin.

“Jesus!” she screams.

He can’t turn his head to look at her. It feels stiff or wedged, he can’t tell which. “Can you try to get me out?” he pleads.

“I already did,” she says. “I tried pushing and pulling but you’re wedged tight. You woke up a few times but then passed out again. Don’t you remember?”

He shakes his head.

“You want to spend the rest of your life behind bars?” he asks. “Are you nuts? Get me out of here!”

He corkscrews his head in a vain attempt to meet her eyes. It is too painful to turn. She makes no effort to move into his line of sight. “Can you hear me? Are you there?” he cries.

“I’m here,” she says, sitting back, letting her head relax against the padding. She watches him. “You wouldn’t understand,” she says.

“Do I look like I’m in a position to not understand?” he asks. “If you don’t get help I’ll bleed to death. I’m already so weak I can barely stay conscious.”

She turns her head away from him and begins to speak. “Maybe I am better off behind bars. It’s horrible to wake up and realize I’m the only one who can stand my company. All those techniques to find guys, what clothes to wear, rules to follow, what to say and what not to say, the waiting and the guessing. It used to be fun, but I’m out of fun, I’m not having fun anymore. I’m tired of keeping up. I’m already in prison,” she says miserably. She opens her hand and her phone slides to the floor.

“You want sympathy? Are you joking?” he asks, and then nods off, muttering about how it’s too soon for him to die. She strains to hear all of his words. His eyes are slits; his breathing regular. She wonders if she should call Kurt McCray. Even if he is a jerk, at least he’d come running as eager as a jack rabbit. The challenge of extricating the body from the windshield would give him a chance to show what a man he is.

“Ah,” Tom says. He springs awake and is speaking feverishly in a supplicating, plaintive voice. “Jarvey, can you hear me?” His eyes dart as he repeats the question three times, each time more desperately. *He’s delirious*, Jamie thinks.

The dam breaks and a raft of words wash downstream. “Jesus fucking Christ, Jarvey, wake up! Hello, Emergency? My friend’s passed out. He’s got a bunch of empty pill containers.

He won't wake up. I'm not sure if he's breathing." Tom pauses to gasp for air. Then he continues, more annoyed than angry, more mystified than confused.

"Where are the letters? The letters are gone, you stupid sunnavabitch, they've gone to e-mail, every one. Do you think you can stop technology? It's a fucking tsunami, is what it is. It uses you, not the other way 'round. You held out for a backlash, Jarvey. *The Letter Renaissance*, you called it. You wanted to start the Church of Letter Day Renaissance. Jarvey, you dumb sunnavabitch, you held your breath longer than anyone I know can hold his breath. You made it look so natural no one suspected how much pain you were in. It must have felt good to finally let go." Tom shakes his head violently. "Fucking pink slip," he mutters and is out again.

The pills Jamie had taken in the kitchen go to work. She blinks her eyes rapidly and then closes them, allowing herself to sink into a pleasurable well, a sugarcoated endorphin-rush spreading from her abdomen outwards to her limbs, *almost like a star*, she thinks dreamily. Her eyes glaze and she raises one hand to trace the cobwebby spider cracks that's transformed her windshield into an intricate mosaic. "Octopus star," she says, feeling the tentacles invade every corner of her being.

She reclines beside him in the driver's seat and lets the movie behind her eyes unfold. She is in the woods. There are trees everywhere, dozens of intense shades of green towering against an absurdly deep-blue sky. The air is fragrant with intoxicating aromas; a symphony of flora embraces her. She is happy. She feels peaceful. It's an alien sensation, but exactly as she imagined. So this is what everyone is talking about!

But it wasn't to last. The path turns wet and mushy and she sinks down. It isn't summer any more, it is fall, and the earth pulls at her feet. "If the mud is thick enough it will suck the boots off any one, no matter how proud," she says. She squats to examine a log. "The crumbling trunk is teeming with ants," she announces to the trees. Her eyes follow insects with fascination.

"Where are you?" Tom asks. He can see her face in a corner of the rear view mirror. She is older than he first thought. Nice looking, not too badly put together. He's surprised when she answers. "In the woods without an iAnything," she says.

There is a moment of silence and then Tom is bucking as if he's riding a bull. "You were texting when you hit me," he says. "That's why you drove off the road." He issues a single bark of pain or laughter, as jagged and sharp as a broken tooth, before passing out again.

She wakes at 4:30 am. She's been out forty-five minutes. He looks worse. There is dark foam erupting from his mouth. His eyes are open and bloodshot. Although she feels she must act quickly if she is to save him, she knows he is already gone. But really, she thinks, I should call Kurt McCray. He'll have the guy popped out like a champagne cork in no time. But she doesn't move: she cannot move. She feels as if shackles are on her wrists. Some internal guidance system has ordered her to stand down. She can't believe the events of the last few hours are real. Maybe she's hallucinating? She realizes Tom is awake and watching her.

"Just maybe," he says mournfully, "this is better than death by slowly falling apart." With a great effort he turns a little from her toward the passenger window. His eyeballs swivel upwards. "Can you hear me Jarvey? You did it your way and I did it hers! What's the difference? We're both done in by e-mail. The whole damn country left us to die on the vine."

His head jerks from side to side like a fish on a hook. "Maybe you did me a favor, girl. I haven't been honest. My parents were right: I would never make it as an artist. My time has come and gone. I'm just another post-office-old-man ready to die."

Jamie stares at him. She attempts to wipe his oozing mouth with a napkin left over from MacDonald's. He turns away, but the river of words keep flowing. "Yeah, that's right, my

skeleton is breaking down, turning into cottage cheese. ‘Degenerative bone disease’ is what the muthufuckas calls it. Don’t bother beating yourself up, you did me a favor.”

“You’re acting nuts,” she tells him.

He ignores her and begins to sing.

*I sing the body breakdown!
I’m turning into Walter Matthau
the grumpiest of old men
—confound the vowels in his name!*

*My bowels are never excreted enough
My hemorrhoids are itching insane
My prostate is enlarged but the rest of me is shrinking!
And now my body’s smashed to smithereens*

“It’s the chorus,” he yells, “join in!”

*To smithereens, to smithereens
To smithereens, to smithereens
And now my body’s smashed to smithereens*

He quivers and wilts again, his eyes closing. She blinks several times rapidly and wonders if he’s dangerous. Maybe he’s one of those homeless people that can be found by highway ramps and intersections holding signs begging for money or work?

She cries. It is a soft and sobbing cry, a cry of helplessness and despair.

“My side hurt,” he says, his eyes still closed.

She jumps. “Stop doing that! Every time I think you’re out you wake up.”

“I can’t feel my legs,” he says, opening his eyes.

“I guess you’re dying,” she says. She looks through the window at the side of the garage where her mother keeps white-wire shelving stacked with garden tools.

“No, I mean it. What’s your name? Jamie? Jamie, it’s been downhill since I hit forty. I didn’t see it coming just like you didn’t see me.” He’s wheezing now but she can’t tell from anxiety or his broken body. “Prison doesn’t scare you?” he asks.

She swallows her last oxy and stares at the hand claw on the shelf. If only she could bring the claw into her dream. She would claw the earth into order. She closes her eyes.

He wonders if she’s asleep, but then she begins to speak, her voice barely audible. “I am exhausted wood pulp . . . silver curling birch . . . sitting by the cut logs there’s always an empty red plastic gasoline jug, hollow and useless. . .” She jerks into an upright position, her back straight, her eyes open.

“What?” he asks.

“There must be a way to get you out and fix you up besides calling my dumbass ex-boyfriend. But I can’t do it myself. I thought I could count on Hannah but she’s so jealous of me she can’t see straight.”

Then she slumps, deflated. “I bet she called the cops.” She flashes a graveyard grin. He slides into pain. “It’s getting darker,” he says.

They drift off.

She is no longer in the forest. “My boots are walking though elephant shit,” she says. “Look at the beautiful arched backs of the trapeze artists! They dangle like Christmas ornaments under the bigtop! I want to fly.”

He is moaning now.

“The whip and chair is all you need for lions,” she says. “All eyes are on me. How did I get on this tightrope? I can’t remember climbing. Everyone is holding their breath. Will I fall? Will I hurt myself? Half the crowd is afraid I will and the other half hopes I will. I can’t decide who to please!” She curls into a fetal position and whimpers.

Now he is talking, his voice quiet and steady, his eyes fluttering. “At lunch I like to sit in my car, turn on the AC and read the paper while I eat. One day I notice an old lady, she’s anywhere from seventy-five to eight-five, with cotton-candy white hair, bent of neck and walking purposely like a cruising locomotive. She wears a loose pink sweater and chugs right by my window without noticing me and then she extends her right hand and attempts to pry a shopping cart from between the pipe-like rails it had been rammed into. Because she is pushing it backwards, it bucks and stubbornly checks her forward momentum. She is annoyed she has to stop, if only for a moment. But rather than go around and into the narrow path between the rails where she could easily back up the shopping cart with two hands, she chooses instead to strong-arm the cart with one hand as she doggedly walks on. The cart rears and struggles to tear itself away from her grasp until, fed up with pulling, she gives a furious yank. There is frustration and defeat in that yank, but it does the trick and the cart scuttles into compliance.

I think a lot about that woman. I don’t think we’re that different. I’ve been trying to force the cart backwards my whole life. Maybe the pink slip was the yank I needed to return to compliance. It would have been much easier had I worked for my father.”

Jamie says nothing. She is mute, vacant, an empty vessel.

“I’m dying,” he says quietly. His eyes roll to half-mast as he rests from the exertion of talking.

After a minute Jamie speaks, shyly at first. “I’ve never been better than mediocre at school. I relied on my looks. People are willing to bend over backwards for a pretty girl.”

“Shit,” he mutters.

She is not surprised he is awake. But she hates the unexpected fright of it. They drift in and out, unpeaking.

The overhead light in the garage winks out. Jamie is instantly awake. “It’s on a timer,” she says absently. They sit in the dark for a few minutes before Jamie speaks.

“I’m getting older too. Maybe I’m not as fresh and pretty as I used to be. I suppose I could become a cosmetologist. A hair stylist. Or maybe I’ll stay home and do medical billing. I hear third-party billing is all the rage. But who could bear being stuck indoors all day, every day?”

He coughs and keeps on coughing. Occasionally he comes up for air. Once he chokes out, “Maybe you should buy a broom.”

Jamie isn’t sure she heard right with all that choking.

“So you can sweep yourself off your own feet,” he says.

Her voice becomes little-girl like, sweeter. “I have this dream that I’m walking in the woods. It’s always the same: it’s rainy and green and the air smells beautiful, if beautiful is a smell. But when I look at my feet they’re stuck in mud. Suddenly I’m in a tent, a huge tent, a bigtop circus tent and I’m walking in poop, not mud.”

She pauses and looks at his injured head. “Don’t you think that’s strange? What do you think that means? I’ve never told anyone, not even Hannah.”

“What kind of poop?” he asks.

She shrugs. “I don’t know. Elephant. What’s the difference?”

She slumps into the seat. “Now look at me! The bigtop has shrunk to the size of a Ford Fiesta. I’ve got a human cannonball lodged in my windshield. I’m pouring out my life’s troubles to a stranger. The police are probably outside right now. All I wanted was somebody to love. Like the song. *I just want somebody to love*. I admit it. I was texting this guy from the club when I hit you. I don’t even really like him. He’s probably gay anyway. I’m really, really sorry.”

“Yeah. Me too.” It is the last thing he says. His head relaxes lower than she’d seen it before, the coil released, weightlessly dangling like fruit until it comes to rest on the passenger seat, his neck bare and vulnerable.

Jamie holds a compact mirror to his nose and mouth. It does not fog. She steels herself and thrusts her hand onto his chest. No heartbeat. She recoils and stares disbelievingly, occasionally burying her face in her hands. She finds she can’t tear her eyes from his inert body.

eh eh eh eh her cell phone rings. She jerks it open. *What the fuck, who’s texting at 5:00 am? Hannah. It’s Hannah. Maybe she changed her mind and wants to help.*

Jamie, I’ve always been a good girl I don’t want to spoil my future. Accessory to murder! Hit and run! Leaving scene! Etc. Sorry I called the cops.

A hard rapping sound startles Jamie. Someone is pounding something heavy on her garage door. A rough male voice calls out. “Jamie? Jamie Miller? Open up, Jamie. We know you’re in there.”

She looks around the small cabin of the Ford Fiesta, realizing these are the last few seconds of freedom she will ever have. *From here on out, things will be different, and not for the better.* She leans forward and kisses the postman’s lifeless lips, still warm, and whispers, not for the last time, how very, very sorry she is. Even if she isn’t feeling sorry for him just yet, she is certain she will be in the very, very near future.

An Ordered Life

Megs Gillespie
Illinois, USA

In the place of “I Do” two shots rang through the church.

The Bride watched her fiancé slam against the front of the kneeler before falling away, unmoving.

Silence echoed.

At an unknown signal, everyone began whispering and yelling into phones as the bride shook her fiancé’s arm with no response. She did not understand. He was supposed to answer her; he always answered her when she cried his name.

She was confused by the sirens coming down the streets, because they sounded vaguely like the blaring of an alarm clock.

Blinking, Ari stared in horror at the red 7:00 numbers thinking there was blood on her hands as she searched for the snooze button.

Pulling back her hand, she searched it in confusion, her dream fading away. Why on earth had she dreamed she was marrying her boss? Groaning, she buried her face back into her pillow waiting for the snooze to go off that meant she had to run to get to work on time.

“Bloody Hell!”

“Do you want to get fired?”

“Grmph- you’d be using much stronger words if you had to deal with a desk that ate papers and a laptop that has a taste for hiding documents.” Ari growled at her co-worker.

“Which is why you have that desk, because I know I can trust you to keep a civil tongue in your head,” a new voice interjected.

Biting said civil tongue, Ari smiled at her employer, showing more teeth than necessary in polite conversation. “Is there something I can do for you, Mr. Kazmir.”

He waved a miniature composition notebook in front of her nose. “I need you to run these errands. I would suggest paying particular attention to every detail.”

Scrambling to catch the dropped notebook, she said in a creepily happy tone. “My pleasure! Would you like these done before or after I re-type those letters to the corporate heads of the company? I also need new file folders. The ones from last week seem to have... run away.”

His grin matched her peppy tone “Oh, I should think that the errands should be done before nightfall. Laptops generally don’t have a taste for human blood.”

Ari’s smile froze as Mr. Kazmir closed himself in his office once more. Still being particularly conscious of not allowing the paper notebook she had been given to touch her desk that was devoid of all papers, she let her head bang down with a groan.

The skinny pen drawer seemed to have a broken spring because it sprung open with no warning, brushing against her chest. Squeaking, she stood, tripping over her chair as she clutched tightly at her notebook. She landed painfully in an open drawer, which attempted to close, squeezing her now bruised rear-end. Muttering curses, she stood and rammed her chair against the still open pen drawer, not feeling much satisfaction as the drawer rattled shut.

Gathering her white purse, white down coat, and a warm, fuzzy, red scarf from the racks just

beyond reaching distance from her desk, she bid her co-workers farewell, heading out into the bright, cool afternoon to gather the items on her shopping list.

Lunch break was just ending as she headed towards the forest preserve by the office.

Following the main path till about half ways in, she rounded a bush and, with a great deal more difficulty, followed an animal trail.

“Smug- irritating- jealous- overbearing- horse-rimmed nikampoof... Don’t even know why he needs a *personal* secretary; everyone in the office is pretty much his secretary as it is.” Ari muttered under her breath as she trekked through patchy snow. It was cold and her breath left water-droplets on the edge of her fuzzy scarf and the bright sunlight did nothing beneath the thick canopy of tree branches. She decided it would be a good time to start a new tirade.

“Needy bastard- eek!”

“You forget how good my ears are.” Kazmir mentioned off-hand as he fell in next to her, still making no sounds as Ari’s feet crunched chilled leaves and broke twigs, ringing through the forest. “This is the part where I remind you I am your boss, and you should be trying to keep me happy.”

“You have four hooves! How do you move so damn silently! Make some noise,” she growled, thrusting the bag at him. “And why the hell did you need a girl’s swimsuit anyways?”

“I distinctly remember writing ‘your swimsuit,’” he commented searching through the bag for the bulls-eye candy he had also asked her to bring.

“Well- I assumed you meant one in my size...” She began to take a couple steps back towards the way she came. “I suppose it’s none of my business, since you are my boss and all. I’ll just be heading back to finish those letters now.”

“Ari,” Kazmir said, chewing on one of his favorite candies. “Did you look at the list while at your desk? You know it’s illegal to write items from across the boundary in human ink.”

She stared at him in horror, before frantically digging through her many pockets attempting to find the thrice-cursed cow paper pad, quickly flipping to the page with the tab.

There were three new items on the list. “What- I have to go back there again?” She squeaked, reading the new list revealed because of the proximity to the crossing. She looked up in horror, “Do you not remember what happened the last time I went there!”

He simply motioned for her to follow him as he led the way to a stream that moved too fast to be frozen and the caves that lay beyond. “Kaz!”

Her world knowledge had been flooded with strange creatures. Centaurs, fauns, nymphs, distant cousins of the immortal legends. And then there were creatures like Kazmir a distant cousin of the centaur race, which she had never heard of in human legends. Apparently because they were usually mistaken for centaurs, they were not in human folklore. The only real difference is they had a more human-like nature, and their hair turned into a mane, travelling down the length of most of their human back.

The last time Ari had been to Kazmir’s home world, she had come in contact with a real centaur. That had been a terrifying experience, especially since she apparently had wide enough hips to birth to a foal. She had escaped with her life.

“You’re alive and still sane, aren’t you?” He called in reply. “Move it.”

Fear welled up in her chest and she reluctantly raced after the horse’s ass in front of her, “But- I thought you said you’d give me fair warning next time. You’re dumping this on me again! Those- ” she searched for a word that would describe the strange sexless creatures that

inhabited a mountain courtyard with wings for arms. “Those bird creatures threatened to kill me if I ever showed my “un-educated, insulting face” in their land again. And don’t even try to tell me they aren’t allowed to do that. I won’t believe you.”

“Fine. And I did give you fair warning,” he replied, unwrapping yet another bulls-eye candy. “You have that desk for a reason. You know you can’t read the Ink unless you’re within a certain radius of a crossing or in direct contact with one of us Creatures.”

“Giving that desk to me is sexual harassment,” she pouted, knowing full well that she was the one who screwed up this time. “You knew it was in love with me when you brought it to the office. I have to double the paperwork, cause he wants me to search through his damn drawers all the time... He groped me earlier today!”

“Speaking of which, that last batch of folders I gave you should’ve lasted till the end of the month.” Kazmir said.

“Did you forget the part where a sentient being is attached to my desk and is not only able to feel the emotion of love, or rather lust, and can learn? Isn’t he the whole reason I had to meet the bird-creatures?” Ari stumbled across a tree root. Readjusting, the bag on her shoulder, she continued lecturing her boss. “He’s been dismantling them a day faster for the past few months. He must’ve cracked some code, cause it’s only been two weeks this time around- Oi. Get back here. My boots are so not waterproof and it’s way too cold to go barefoot!”

Kazmir dutifully leapt back over the small stream and helped Ari clamber up on his back. “I really need to get permission to teach you how to properly ride a horse...” He winced as she slipped, digging her heels into his flanks as she pulled at his mane that went about half way down his back.

“Sorry,” she muttered, slinking down, and wrapping her arms tightly about his chest from behind. He walked through the water this time, carefully so as not to create a reason to dislodge her. Once on the other side, he climbed the short slope to the cave. “Watch your arms and legs,” he commented as he began entering the narrow crevice in the rocks. She jostled about on his back pulling her knees up onto his back so that she would fit inside the crevice as well.

They travelled for about five feet before they emerged into a summer fantasy land. Off-balance and without the crevice walls to secure her, she tumbled off the broad mahogany horse’s back and groaned. Kazmir merely shook his head, “Horse-back riding lessons. Most definitely.”

“You could at least help me up,” she snapped, but he had already offered his hand and she took it with a huff.

“Read the list again?”

She draped her coat and scarf over his back, enjoying the change in climate in the fantasy land she had come to learn about a year ago. “Paper, new charms, and extra-chairs- more special chairs?” She hated the special chairs, they had the tendency to move around and one of her many jobs was to look after them and apologize and explain that the chair was ‘broken’ when humans with normal back-ends try to sit on them. They were meant for creatures with tails and strange lower halves. At Kazmir’s simple nod, she remembered. “Oh- and more file folders. I refuse to keep the paperwork on my shelves, like all the rest of my office supplies and personal possessions.”

“If he keeps that up, the head honchos are going to have a talk with him. They need a human with me to help with the human world business, and they refuse to give up any of their workers that have dealings with both sides. Drink?”

Kazmir tossed her a water bottle. Ari dutifully took a sip, almost choking on the water before handing back the water bottle. She decided to ignore Kazmir in preference of enjoying

the walk to wherever they were going. As much as she hated crossing over, she did love the climate and the landscape of the strange world. She often felt as if she were walking through the pages of a story book with the springy grass beneath her feet and the trees that stretched high into the sky, well-known and unfamiliar animals peeking out of branches and holes in the ground. It was too hot to truly be perfectly picturesque.

Her good mood was abruptly shattered by the high-pitched voice that cooed, “Kazzy!” Suggestive comments were coded into every word that was heard, “You’re not coming to visit us, are you?”

“Kaz-zy?” She repeated with a strange hesitance.

“It’s good for business,” Kazmir shrugged, but she would have sworn in a court of law that the tan horse-creature was blushing. “You might want to go find a place to put your swimsuit on.”

She glared.

“You’re more than welcome to swim with or without your clothes as well,” he retorted; she noted it was only after he had moved out of her immediate reach.

When she went down the water’s edge, safely changed, she left her clothes in the bag ignoring the Octopus-maids that were presently climbing over her boss who was already in the water. She did not bother paying close enough attention to see if the maid presently kissing Kazmir was sticking her tongue down his throat as well. Sticking her toes into the water, she enjoyed the gentle waves that splashed over her ankles, playing with the white ties on the edge of her swimsuit. She really hated white and sat wondering why she had picked out a white wetsuit. She never had enjoyed the strappy look that the wetsuit was trying to copy.

Wishing for her goggles, she scooted till she was sitting on a rock in the actual water. Ari had never been to a true ocean before, but if it was anything like the expanse of water before her, she would be living on a water-front somewhere. Somehow.

Daydreaming and purposefully ignoring her immediate surroundings meant that she was completely unprepared for the slimy, tentacled hand that grabbed her ankle, pulling her off her rocky perch. Water filled her nostrils and mouth, and she was rudely reminded that coughing also required air.

Squirming desperately, she kicked to reach the surface, despair drowning out the curses she had been placing on her boss. The last thing she expected to feel was cool, scaly lips pressed against hers. A tongue pried open her mouth leaving a vague fishy taste, not unpleasant, that spread throughout her mouth, creeping down her throat in a manner that left her trying to scratch at her neck in an attempt to relieve herself of the tickling feeling...

Released from all holds, she coughed and was able to gather the required air needed for her body to work. Now familiar lips and tongues covered her ears and eyes. She fought against every nerve in her body that screamed to get away from the tickling feeling that crept towards the nerves protected in her ears and made her eyes attempt to turn backwards in their socket because they *itched*.

“-ri. Ari. Ar-“

Apparently octopus-maiden saliva had magical properties. At least Ari thought it was magical, she had been an English major mainly out of love for the subject, but partially just in order to prove that science was evil... and no one ever paid much attention to her explanation regardless.

“Oh shut up, I can hear fine now.” She rubbed her eyes and ears vigorously. “There had to be a better way...”

“Not really, short of having the entire physiology of your body changed.” Kazmir grinned, obviously enjoying her discomfort. “Trust me when I say that this is much better. No uncomfortable bone-reshaping.”

“Side effects?” She asked, swimming towards him.

“Nothing of consequence.”

“Kaz!” He swam downwards, leaving her to follow. Looking back towards the surface of the water, she sighed. Somewhere along the line she had gotten hooked on the idea of new adventures. Remembering her childhood dreams of being a nice steady school teacher, she groaned to no one in particular. “This is not the life I ordered!” She quickly swam away from the bubbly giggling of the octopus-maidens.

An hour had passed, the constant swimming made Ari’s muscles ache. She was seriously considering reaching out to grab her boss’s tail and hitch an easy ride.

“We’re here,” Kazmir’s voice interrupted her contemplations.

Looking past the mesmerizing moving tail, she realized that they were at the base of what must be the biggest tree ever. Kicking with renewed energy, she shot past Kazmir to dive head first into the maze of tree roots. “Is this really a tree?”

Kazmir shook his head, a smile twitching at the corner of his lips. “This is why the Feathren assumed you were so rude.”

“Feathren?”

“The bird creatures.”

“Oh them- but there’s no one here. And- just- look! We’re swimming through the roots of a giant tree... these roots are as big as some of the actual trees back in the Forest Preserve!”

She swam to the edge of Kazmir’s sight before exclaiming about little circle-worm creatures that glowed amongst the roots and flowers.

Ari stared curiously at first creature that had appeared before her, raising a hand in a tentative wave. There were 50 more of the twig creatures before she blinked, encircling her inside of a sphere. She tensed, ready to fight, but Kazmir called out a greeting.

The sphere of the webbed wood creatures were gone as fast as they had appeared.

Blinking, she watched as Kazmir grabbed them, tossing them out of his way, the water filled with lighthearted vibrations that she felt throughout her whole body rather than heard.

Kazmir hurled one of the brown bodies at her. Wrapping her arms around it, they traveled back a couple feet, most of the light-hearted vibrations having stopped. She looked down into bright blue eyes that peered curiously up at her. “Hello, there.” She said.

“Hello, there!” the greeting was strange against her eardrums. And then she was bombarded by soft twig bodies, anxious to discover if she was hiding an extra pair of arms or legs.

“What are they?” She question Kazmir.

“Bluebarks,” he replied. “These are the children.

“Obviously,” she snorted as one of the kids found a particularly ticklish part on the back of her neck. “Where are their parents?”

“Here.” Only two of the tiny blue-barks stayed by her side as the rest swam easily through the water. Kicking, she turned herself around and blinked in surprise at the large creatures resembling plank-shaped trunks, eyes just as bright blue as the children, but the adults shimmered blue between the cracks in their bark. Ari doubted she would be able to see the blue glow if she had met them in any form of sunlight. Beneath the large tree, shaded from the open

water by the maze of the roots, she was able to view the glowing creatures that somehow actually walked through the water on the sandy floor of whatever body of water they were in.

“You’ve come for the order of chairs?” Again she could not spot any mouths and felt the words with her entire body. Aside from the brief announcement, the adult bluebarks paid no heed to Ari.

“Yes.” Kazmir beckoned Ari. “My secretary will review the paperwork and receipts, if you please.”

“The child is a secretary?” Ari could not pinpoint a speaker to save her life.

Swimming, she rested her feet best she could against the sand next to Kazmir, “I am his secretary. My childhood years passed long ago.”

“Your kind is even smaller than the Manes.” The Blue-bark said with friendly curiosity, referring to the fact that she was smaller than Kazmir.

“Yes, we are smaller than most people in this land, but our brain matures at a faster rate, because our life span is much shorter. I’m only 24 currently.”

Kazmir’s tail twitched, his head cocking slightly to one side as vibrations buffeted against her. It took her a minute to realize the creatures were chuckling. They handed her a paper as large as her torso, “You are still a child. Younger than even Kazmir the Mane, but we will respect his decision in this. All children must learn through experience.”

Ari nodded respectfully, biting her tongue. She would not give them more cause to baby her by running her tongue. Kazmir helped hold her ground as well as the papers, showing her what she needed to look for amongst yet another new type of receipt. They had ordered and paid for two chairs from the water-tree, because it was the only type of wood that would accommodate creatures of all different sorts of back ends.

Signing the receipts, Kazmir allowed Ari to swim the receipts over where the chairs were waiting for them.

“Do you still require assistance with transportation?”

“Yes,” Ari replied. “We have already paid for it as well.”

“Won’t you stay for dinner?” A dark bluebark extended the invitation.

“It would be much nicer to travel with full digestive tracts,” a decidedly feminine voice said.

“We would be delighted,” Ari accepted delightedly, happily oblivious to Kazmir’s worried look.

Dinner was a strange mix of under-water foliage, served with chewy bark (she could only hope came from the actual tree roots), and some sort of meat that reminded her of sushi. There was a strange pill-like seasoning of some sort on one of the browner foods; she rolled them off, hiding them under one of the casings of oysters’ shells. Dessert consisted of some flavored shake. The children claimed her after the official food course was over, happily sharing their dessert with her.

They popped sponge-textured bites into her mouth, flooding her senses with a sickeningly sweet taste. The children continued to shove the sponges in their own mouths and hers, mindless of the fact that human digestive systems were vastly different from their own. Soon, her taste buds could only tell that the sponges meant a sweet euphoria as she floated weightlessly with the giggling, tickling twigs.

Kazmir found himself only able swear violently when he found her, far above his head, voluntarily gorging on sponge-bites with curious, amused bluebark children.

“She claims she is not a child?” questioned their dinner host.

“She’s apparently young enough,” Kazmir growled in reply.

The bluebarks chuckled.

“Ari!” Kazmir called, beckoning.

Ari stared in horror down at Kazmir; his torso was covered in blood; it bubbled, just a little, from the corner of his mouth. She swam desperately towards him, “Kaz- Kaz!”

“Woah- woah!” Ari struggled against the arms restraining her. “Calm down, calm down, Ari. It’s alright.”

“Let me go!” She yelled, “Let me go! I have to get to Kaz. He’s hurt!”

“She’s way too strong- I need some help!”

“Kaz! Kazy!” Ari cried. She did not understand why they would not allow her to go help. “Help him! He’s bleeding, can’t you see he’s bleeding!”

“Crud- she’s off. Bring the tranquilizer!”

“Ack- I found her meds. She hid them in the plant.”

“Kazy!” Ari could no longer see him. Everything was white. She was dressed in white; the bluebarks dressed in brown were a stark contrast against the white. The only contrast. “He’s dying- someone help him!”

“Hurry.” The voices were extremely calm, completely controlled. “She’s agitating the others.” There was a sharp pinch in her thigh, as her hands got caught in the white straps on her wetsuit.

Cursing, she continued to tug, but she could not coordinate enough to free her hands. Kazmir’s hands were helping then, and she looked up at him. “I’m okay.”

With a sigh of relief, she fell asleep.

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THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English

Remembrance

Uzoечи Nwagbara
Wales, United Kingdom

Journeying from a sense
Thoroughly overawed
By frittered earth & clobbered space,
Streaming from memory –
Draped with incendiary shells by SHELL:
By the unsolicited foragers of our heaven,
And –
Invoking a panoply of mnemonic snapshots
Melancholically sated
With the cruel hangman's snare & noose,

Our space
Reminds all of the generational war
Between good & evil;
The freshness of the dairy
Is crowded out by clabber;
The field is barren
From the globalists' handiwork,
His alibi for evil is
Like the priest',
Preached behind the pulpit of "boundryless" earth;
A metonymy for brigandage!

Our earth
Spins the yarn of might & 'weakness';
The alluvium is barricaded thickly
By the explorers' wrath:
The pluvial record
Mediates a million testicles
Not germinating the earth,
His dear mistress
In dire straits of insemination!

Our sanctuary
Is hewed down
By nationalist maniacs,
Who banished
Our primeval neighbours –
In the time past, our staple:
A reminder of our unspoiled universe!
They will pay for this!

Park Avenue

Ron Starbuck
Texas, USA

Here, I am with my
begging bowl in hand,
that only I can see.

I am in the heart of Manhattan,
dressed in a Canali double breasted suit
walking from St. Bart's to the

Waldorf, it's only one block and
a world away from home. A young
lady passes by, smiles and that is all it

takes you know, one solitary smile, and
my begging bowl is full once more.
Such riches come rarely, such joy

is known as Shantideva teaches, by
wishing joy to others first. Did you know?
That a single smile, like this one, can

save ten thousand worlds, across ten
thousand universes, as if the first light
of creation has turned back upon the world.

The Criterion

Silent Witnesses

Kushal Poddar
West Bengal, India

Two old men sit at my beginning and my end,
closed eyed, descending down their blind staircase.

What does blindness mean if they do not see me
staring into their eyes, salvaging the moment they saw-
my mother tilting her head toward my father's shoulder
as her water broke then and there at our steps?

At the beginning.

At the end.

Every day.

There, the banyan tree sprawled over the old heads
and an elephant cloud disturbs the new building tips.

I dig; dig until I am born again,
a part of me deciding to come and another to return unborn.

Oh Paladin

Thomas Pelto
Connecticut, USA

Golden tresses tumble
From beneath the shimmering helm
Chiseled chin barely visible
behind the visor
Above which peer a pair of
steel grey eyes that see right through
Piercing any man's armor

Like flash of blade
sharp and true, mirrored
In her polished panoply
Commanding presence
A stunning charisma
not one can resist

Fierce warrior
Battling ever on
Demons, dragons, any enemy
Vanquished, dispatched
but more than that

A gentle healer too
Protector by virtue
of both
knowledge and magic
Binding wounds, restoring strength
To ride and fight again

Adventure with me
Oh Paladin
Let us share in the spoils of
our journey
Filled with treasures and glory
and pleasures untold
While we create this legend
Our story...

An Orchestra

K Pankajam
Tamil Nadu, India

Breeze blows music
sift itself
through the bamboo shoots.
While trees rustle their harps,
the earth starts to sing.
Watching the leaves playful
tufted feathers of thistles
take to dancing.
In the ensemble
ambiance exulted
A conglomeration
Symphony perfect.
I realize
I have become
a song in the concert

The Criterion

a rondel.....but not for you....

{ variant form of a rondel }

Mamta Madhavan

i wanted to write a rondel for you
but my mind is in one of those blank halls
where sounds of solitude bounce from the walls

my penumbra has always been in view
charcoal dart ricochets askew and falls

i wanted to write a rondel for you
but my mind is in one of those blank halls

seduced in the cobwebbed lanes that i drew
muffled voices sigh in the vacuous stalls
the echo achingly trails out and crawls

i wanted to write a rondel for you
but my mind is in one of those blank halls
where sounds of solitude bounce from the walls

Memorization

Michael Dickel
Jerusalem, Israel

Clove memory lingers,
jasmine overwhelms,
the half moon in a blue sky falls
and a hot sun rises.
You stand over by the railing;
jazz musicians play.
I stand watching a river
through a camera;
hikers stream by.
A rainbow over the highway
holds a flock of storks in its arch;
our hands touch. And touch again.
We read a book, watch a movie.
From these, we braid
a narrative thread:
You and I live.

Agate remembers light,
limestone recalls salt,
anemones represent red
and lemons recollect rain.
My coat slips over your
shoulder; we sit to listen.
Your timbre warms
the lens' view;
our feet grow tired.
The dissolution of now
re-deems its essence
when haunting memory;
our hands touch. And touch again.
We watch a movie, read a book.
From these, we weave a cloak
of identity: we are.

Untitled

Peivand Zandi
Malaysia

The moon is down

Iran

I breathe the last days

To the breaking relation

Let's hang the self

Contained earth...

Let's swallow the growing silence...

I can feel the cold faith of a warm skin

The shallow deep desire of mine

Counting steps to the bright destination.

The Criterion

An interview with Ron Starbuck, poet/author, and publisher.

Aparna Mukhedkar

[Wheels Turning Inward](#)

New and Selected Poems

FreisenPress

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1. What inspired you to write this collection of spiritual poems?

These poems are simply a reflection, an echo even, of my relationship with the Divine discovered through my relationships with and through others, through community, through silence and stillness, through God and creation. However, you may imagine or understand God, the Divine Mystery, at work in your own life. I grew up a Christian. I am still a Christian, an Episcopalian (*Worldwide Anglican Communion*), so I tend to visualize these relationships (*this Gestalt*) through the Trinity, or Trinitarian symbols.

I have also studied Buddhism and have many Buddhist friends; in this sense I am a “double-belonger,” a term coined by Prof. Paul F. Knitter at Union Theological Seminary. In my case, I’m practicing or following the Christian faith and Buddhist philosophy. So, there are also Buddhist elements and language at play within many of the poems, like the Mahayana concepts of Samsara – Nirvana – Sunyata - Emptiness, and the related concept of dependent origination or arising.

Poetry to me is a symbolic language, a language of images, of myth and metaphor, where myth (*the function of myth – pointing us towards truth & transformation*) points us towards the ultimate truth of all creation. The Divine Mystery, God, the Trinity if one wishes to place it into a Christian context. Before any poem is ever written, before it takes form, it is formless, empty of words, but always full of the infinite potential and nature of all creation that is changeless and ever changing.

Think of the first few verses from Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was **without form, and void**; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” (KJV Genesis 1:1-3)

Our words about God are symbolic; language itself is symbolic, composed of symbols. Whatever symbols we may use to describe God as Divine Ultimate Mystery, such symbols are always fingers pointing at the moon.¹ Creation is happening now, ever evolving, ever present, and ever at work. God as love, through interacting and interconnecting, as a verb, through all our relationships, is actively at work within creation, sustaining creation through love; creation is an act of love.

2. The "*A Mockingbird's Song*" and "*Mockingbird Morning*" are two of my favorite ones among many in this amazing work. The senses truly come alive when you read them. Were you writing these poems as you were experiencing the song? It seemed that way while reading it.

These are two of my favorite poems as well, and they were both written very much within the moment. Writing them each was a singular and holistic experience; in some ways the poems wrote themselves. In the case of "*A Mockingbird's Song*" I got up very early one morning to write, to be intentional about writing. And there really was this one Mockingbird singing in the tree, just outside our window at home. I started listening and then typing, trying my best to be in that moment, and the words came pouring forth. I tried to get them down as quickly they came; afraid at some level that they might disappear or dissolve from my mind.

Writing "*Mockingbird Morning*" was a similar experience, except that I was standing in our front yard with a cup of coffee in hand, early in the morning, still dark outside. I did hear two Mockingbirds singing together as a duet, the moon was out; I was standing under a Pecan Tree. And I did yearn or long to simply sit there all morning listening. I still go back to that moment at times, to rest there, it too was a singular moment, a moment of openness.

I love it when this happens in writing, when the words seem to flow out of you like nectar. It's always a moment and an experience of grace, a gift of grace. I would encourage people to read the poems, experience the song, they'll feel it too I hope.

3. Silence and stillness are two beautiful concepts that are captured throughout your work. Explain how these two processes punctuate your world daily. Do you agree that silence and stillness are where the gods reside?

I do believe that we can come to know the mystery of God in stillness, in silence, in sacrament, in meditation, beyond all words and thoughts and images, to quote the Old Testament Psalms; "*Be still and know that I am God.*"

4. Do you meditate every day? If so, what type of meditation do you practice?

I do try my best to practice prayer and meditation in some form every day, in some instances that practice may come in the form of writing poetry or prose. At other times it is a very intentional practice based upon Christian or Buddhist meditations I've been taught. You might say I like to mix my metaphors, or at least my practice (praxis).

I may start with a Buddhist technique and end with a Christian one, or the other way around. Ultimately, I'm getting to a point of stillness and silence within, where I'm letting go of all thoughts, all words, all images, and simply resting in the Presence of God, in that openness, while everything else around me dissolves away. We might think of these words from T.S. Eliot in his beautiful poem *Burnt Norton*, it's like this I think, if we can put such an experience into words. It is a dance, we dance.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;

*Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

5. You wrote a beautiful poem dedicated to the poet Rumi. How did his work influence your own writings?

Rumi's poetry has lived with and within me for a long time, most of my adult life. I was first introduced to his poetry through my personal study of Sufism, twenty years ago or longer. Books on Sufism are certainly part of our home library. Sufi Literature is rich in diversity and wisdom, for instance, I love the parables and humor of Nasrudin (*Nasreddin*). Then there is Coleman Barks, whose free verse work with Rumi's poetry is a work of pure genius, brilliant in its simplicity and presentation. I love this translation by Barks.

*Dissolver of sugar, dissolve me,
if this is the time.
Do it gently with a touch of a hand, or a look.
Every morning I wait at dawn. That's when
it has happened before. Or do it suddenly
like an execution. How else
can I get ready for death?

You breathe without a body, like a spark.
You grieve, and I begin to feel lighter.
You keep me away with your arm,
but the keeping away is pulling me in.*

I believe that Rumi would like the poem I wrote because he was a universalist of his time, looking upon Islam, Judaism, Christianity, or any of the great faiths, with an open heart and a good eye, as a path towards the Divine. The voice and work of Rumi inspired (*breathed into me*) and helped me to discover my own poetic voice, to trust that voice, to take heart, to have courage, to write, to be unafraid in writing, to be, to take flight.

6. Thich Nhat Hahn wrote a book titled, "Living Buddha, Living Christ." You too note the similarities in their teachings. Why and what do you think that these two god like beings had so much in common?

In Christian theology, we speak of Christ as both fully human and fully divine. This is a great mystery in the Christian tradition. Still, if at some level we are created in the image of God, then God's Spirit dwells within us all, it does. Life gives us each a chance to understand that mystery and our fullest human potential, to grow spiritually. Both the Buddha and Christ were men of compassion, men who understood the potential of wisdom, compassion, love, and forgiveness to transform the world and our own lives. I believe that they were both inspired by this love, and they certainly lived lives of great compassion. Ultimately, beyond all religious dogma and doctrine, this is what they shared in common.

One of my favorite scriptures in the New Testament comes from 1 John 4:16; – *"So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them."* This says it all for me, if we abide in love, then we abide in God, we abide in the Divine Mystery. Christ and the Buddha both abide in love, in compassion, in the openness of love and its transforming power to heal our lives.

7. You write in the poem titled "Eternal Life" what it means if you really believed in it. As the poem unfolds you tell us your thoughts of what you "think it would mean." Do you believe in eternal life and reincarnation?

What an intriguing question. Yes, I do believe; "I believe Lord, help my unbelief." I believe that we can experience eternal life now, in the eternal now. What may come later, and in what form, is still a mystery to me. I do trust that there is something more, beyond this life, a greater reality. But, I also think that it is something we can come to know and be known by in this life too. All the great mystical traditions and faiths of humankind point us towards this mystery. It's important I think to live in that mystery, to let it be what it is for now, not to worry. To live in the moment, and that's what this poem tries to capture and express, as do many of the other poems.

8. In the midst of this stirring spiritual exploration, how do you see the two poems "Which and That" and "Poets Without Punctuation" fitting in with the rest of the work?

Ah, these are poems that I hope will open up a bit of humor and humility (*as in the word - humus, grounded, of the earth, soil, and ground*) in the reader, certainly for the poet who wrote them. We tend to take ourselves far too seriously at times. And these two poems cut through some of that, they help us to see ourselves in the midst of both life and mystery. Writing is hard, and following all the rules of formal writing even harder, it's all hard work. These poems are also a reminder, not to take myself too seriously in my own spiritual life.

9. In these times of strife, conflict and so many personal challenges, you weave lyrical threads of hope, compassion, and faith into your poems. Is that what you are attempting to convey - that all is not lost and if you do feel a sense of aimlessness you can find your way back through love and faith?

Most certainly, life is what we make it, and the richness of life is discovered in and through our relationships with one another and within creation. We forget this far too often. We forget that the Divine Mystery, God, is in front of us all the time. We are not only human beings, but spiritual beings, we live in the midst of God, and God lives in our midst. This is what Jesus tells us in many of his parables and teachings. All the core faiths of humankind point this out. God as the Divine Mystery is here with us, amongst us; a simple thought, a single breath, or a poem away. I hope that these poems point people back towards the Divine Mystery, and to an understanding that they can find this mystery dwelling within.

10. What's next? Do you have another book in the works?

I am working on a new collection of poetry, a book; one that I hope will be published within the next twelve months. The title will probably be, ***When Angels Are Born***.

The poems are diverse and varied, relational, contemplative, confessional; many touch on the divine mystery of nature and draw upon Buddhist and Christian images. Some are intentionally brief, like a snap-shot. While other poems are narrative and focus on my relationship with people; my paternal grandfather, my two best friends of forty years, a favorite aunt and uncle, childhood memories.

One of my hopes in this work is to align the Christian concepts of *Kenosis*, Greek for emptiness, and *Creatio Ex Nihilio*, creation out of nothingness, and the Buddhist concept *Śūnyatā* or *Emptiness* and *Dependent Arising*, to bring them together.

Biography

Ron Starbuck is the author of *Wheels Turning Inward*, a rich collection of over fifty poems, following a poet's mythic and spiritual journey that crosses easily onto the paths of many contemplative traditions. He has been deeply engaged in an Interfaith-Buddhist-Christian dialogue for many years. Ron holds a lifelong interest in Christian mysticism, comparative religion, theology, and various forms of contemplative practice. He is a former Vice President with JP Morgan Chase, now serving in the public sector on an information technology executive management team. He is also forming a new nonprofit company, **Saint Julian Press, Inc.**, to work with emerging and established writers and poets, and offer their work to the world in the context of a cultural, interfaith, and literary dialogue. He writes occasionally for Parabola Magazine and also author's three blogs, two poetry and one prose.

To learn more about Saint Julian Press, go to this web site.

<http://www.saintjulianpress.com/>

1. God As A Verb – Parabola Magazine Tangent: <http://www.parabola.org/book-review/god-as-a-verb>