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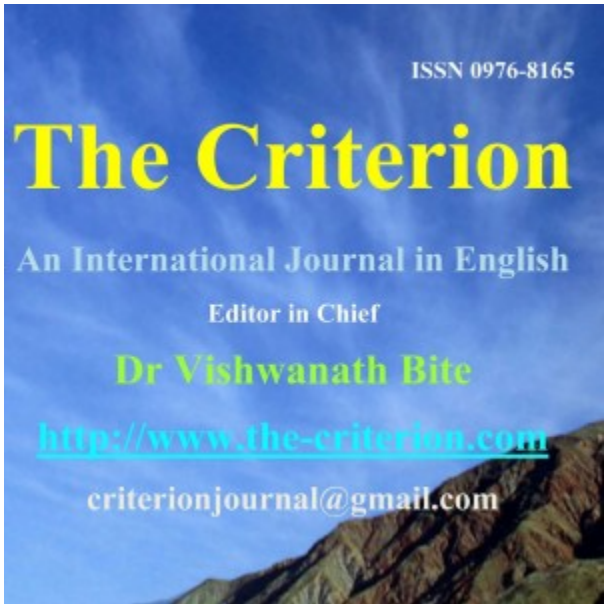

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Representation of Terrorism in Indian Graphic Novel

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The growth of Graphic novel as a medium of expression is inextricably linked with the American counter cultural experiments of the 1960s. In 1954, fearing government crackdown following Dr Frederick Wertham's incessant attack on comics for its 'corrupting influence on young minds', the comic book industry had set up a comics code authority laying down guidelines for acceptable comic book material.The new code insisted that in comics,women be properly clad, violence and sex toned down and authority figures respected(Weiner , 8). The Underground comix movement of the late 1960's, sharing the spirit of the times, was in a way, a reaction to this authoritarian gagging of artistic freedom. Revisionist and subversive, the underground comix artists substituted the 'c' in the comics with an 'x'- x standing for 'adult'- and boldly explored subjects hitherto considered taboo by the comics code authority. If the code meant that comics was prevented from saying anything meaningful about the real world, then by defying it the revisionist possibility was re-awakened(Sabin, 92).

The underground comix got disseminated outside the traditional market through a network of head shops peddling psychedelic posters and drug paraphernalia, and sold in large numbers. This alternative distribution system would later play a vital part in the setting up of comic book specialty shops and the direct market, bringing about the rise of alternative comics and revisionist re telling of super hero tales in the 1980s.The underground demonstrated that it was possible to create comics outside the dominant publishing industry, asserting the creative rights of the individual artist as against the anonymity of the artist in the assembly line- studio system (Hatfield , 16). Despite being hit by the closing of the head shops in the 1970s, the underground comix movement proved to be instrumental in shaping the counter narrative characteristics that alternative comics and later graphic novels would incur in terms of subject matter, treatment, artistic rights and modes of dissemination.

However, graphic novel's investiture in India in 2004 with Sarnath Banerjee's *Corridor* concurred with a different set of social, political and economic situations. India, despite internal unrests was bubbling with new found confidence as a result of its economic liberalisation policies, boasting a growth rate of 8.5% while the world was still recuperating from the repercussions of 9/11 attack. America was deeply mired in the 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq and the global project of 'othering' the Muslim community had attained ominous proportions. The speakers participating in the 59th U N general assembly plenary (11th and 12th meetings) had rightfully warned about the increasing tendency to link international terrorism and Islam reiterating the urgent need to stop the tarnishing of Muslims by unfair stereotypes and to debunk the theory that there is a 'clash of civilizations.'

Examining *The Believers* (2006) and *Kashmir Pending* (2007) (seminal for being the first two Indian graphic novels published by Phantomville, the first Indian graphic novel publishing company- and thereby in a position to set the tone for later works) this paper seeks to explicate

why despite being written by Muslim writers, these graphic novels shirk from exploring the counter narrative capabilities of the medium and end up inadvertently promoting the prevalent national/ international narratives that blindly equate Muslims with terrorist activities across the world.

The Believers traces the growth of religious fundamentalism in Kerala, through the tale of two Muslim brothers- one who goes on to pursue an academic career abroad and the other who gets sucked into the whirlpool of terrorism and religious fundamentalism. The secular, educated younger brother returns home to find his brother, friends and neighborhood divided on religious lines, nurturing mutual distrust. Chagrined at the dilapidating situation he sets out to make his brother see the light of reason and persuade him to forsake the path of violence. In the end the two brothers reconcile and while the elder brother realises the futility of violence, he is unable to escape his inevitable end at the hands of law. To his credit, Abdul Sultan tries to touch upon the alienated existence of the Muslim community, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and the economic backwardness that haunt the lower rungs of the community in an attempt to provide an over deterministic view of the rise of Muslim fundamentalism. Sadly, this is done with a few references strewn across the story and predictably, the work stops short of exploring these reasons to the full. The reasons are always provided by the hardliners in the story while the secular adopt an apologetic tone continually lamenting the loss of democratic ideals. This in effect, undermines the legitimacy of such claims. By limiting the discussion of the politicization of the Hindu identity by the right wing Hindu groups to a few remarks, the work inadvertently plays down the magnitude of the effect that it had on the feelings of alienation, insecurity and fear of persecution increasingly felt by the Muslim community post-Ayodhya and Gujarat where the state had been a mere spectator and then a participant.

Ashis Nandy traces the development of the idea of Hindus as a specific political community to the early nineteenth century reactions to the onslaught of excessive modernism, Christian evangelism and exposure to European ideologies of nationalism. This primarily classical, vedantic and Brahmanical attempt to redefine Hinduism as a proper religion used a nativized ideology of nationalism in its project to convert Hindus into a conventional European style nation. It defensively rejected or devalued the various cultures of India in favour of a 'high culture' more acceptable to 'modern' Indians and post- Enlightenment Europe (Nandy , 57-8). Post-Independence, right wing Sangh Parivar has made effective use of this idea of political 'modernism' by constantly emphasizing on nationalism, secularism, national security, history and scientific temper. By mounting systematic political attacks on the forms of ethnicity and religious cultures identifiably different from their ideas of mainstream culture they have made minority communities easy targets of criticism, social engineering and a crude form of 'Indianization' derived from ideal-typical definitions (Nandy , 57-8). The Ramjanmabhoomi issue and the subsequent demolition of the Babri Masjid was a logical conclusion of this project, a political movement given religious colour so that this possibility could be exploited. Thus, the articulation of 'Muslim' as the enemy becomes necessary as far as the Sangh Parivar is concerned, if its ongoing project of the politicization of the Hindu identity is to be accomplished. This concern gets manifested in the recent ranting of Himani Savarkar (president of 'Abhinav Bharat' a right wing Hindu organization) that, "We must declare ourselves a Hindu Rashtra where everyone is a Hindu. Anyone who isn't should be declared a second class citizen and denied voting rights" (Datta , 30)

In its discussion of terrorism in Kerala, *The Believers* indulges in a convenient categorization of Muslims into 'Good' and 'Bad'. The good, educated, logical, modern and secular younger brother is pitted against the bad, uneducated, irrational, anti-modern and fanatic elder brother. This is reminiscent of George W. Bush's post - 9/11 categorization of Muslims into good and bad[1].It holds 'bad Muslims' responsible for terrorism and anticipates an Muslim civil war in which 'good Muslims', in an effort to clear their names and consciences would join the war against the 'bad Muslims'. Mahmood Mamdani identifies in such a categorization, a hidden presumption that all Muslims are 'bad' unless they prove themselves 'good' and laments that "the presumptions that such categories exists masks a refusal to address our own failure to make a political analysis of our times" (Mamdani 2008, 16).This international narrative of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims co-opted in *The Believers* is faulted, for it largely engages the effect and not the cause of Terrorism. Similar tendency is also visible in *Kashmir Pending*, the second graphic novel brought out by Phantomville.

Kashmir Pending recounts the transformation of a young man of the Kashmir valley into a hard core terrorist and his subsequent realization of the senselessness of violence and abhorrence of it. In other words, this is the transformation of a Muslim into a 'bad Muslim' and then back to being a 'good Muslim' again. The protagonist is shown to be weak in his studies and easily influenced by the fiery orator of the communal leaders. His decision to join the struggle is largely 'irrational' even though hastened by the killing of a vegetable vendor in a cross fire between holed up terrorists and security forces. This would again amount to the stereotyping of Muslims as irrational and an innately violent community, unconsciously supporting the prevailing international narrative that proposes a collective restraining of 'anti-moderns' for the 'good' of civilization. Nasser Ahmed tries to present and what he takes to be a neutral and honest account of the struggle in Kashmir but like Abdul Sultan in *The Believers* forgoes a detailed discussion of the circumstances that brewed such a resistance. He rightfully details the ideological influence, training and the assistance that the armed struggle receives from Pakistan but remains silent on the tumults circumstances under which the state's accession to the Indian Union took place, the effect of which can never be over emphasized. The silence continues in the matters like highly corrupted governments and beaurocracy, lack of economic development, the cold war politics and a reactionary attitude of the administration which have contributed to the present state of affairs in Jammu and Kashmir.

These silences and omissions by the writers reflect the ideologies of their times and shows how the ideology of a society controls and determines what can be and cannot be said. This necessitates a wider reading that encompasses the portrayal of Muslims in mainstream Indian media and cinema. Nasserudhin Shah, one of the most respected Indian actors had recently noted that, "Muslims stereotyped as terrorists in films is an unfortunate thing and films are cashing in on prevailing sentiments in different sections of the society." (*DNA*, October 14, 2008).This has been a subtle and long going project which has gathered speed with recurring incidents of communal violence and explosions in the last decade. Amit Rai identifies a genre of 'cine patriotism' in Bollywood mainstream cinema, that seeks to represent, visualize, and narrativize the sovereignty of the supposedly secular, but in practice upper-caste, Hindu Indian nation (Rai, 3) He finds that:

> Contemporary representations of Muslims in Hindi films position specific cultural and religious identities as both necessary and intolerable to the security of the Indian nation. The figures of the radically alienated Muslim, juxtaposed with the patriotic Muslim and Christian citizen, and the dominant , often unmarked Hindu show how difference is crucial to the stability of the Indian nation – but not excessive difference: the militant Muslim is the figure of an intolerable difference…… a monstrous "other" that needs to be exorcised from a Hinduized national family.

Similar disturbing trends can also be found in the mainstream media, including the news channels that have come to dominate to a large extent, the process of formation of public opinion in India. While Naxalites, Maoists and other groups involved in subversive activities are termed 'radicals', 'fighters' and 'rebels' by the media, any such Muslim groups invariably attract the tag of 'terrorist'. Ajith Sahi, an investigative reporter with the Delhi based *Tehelka*, in an interview with Yoginder Sikander posted on the Indian Muslim Blog on November 11, 2008 noted that, "A hidden anti-Muslim bias pervades the media, although media persons who like to call themselves secular and liberal would hate to admit this. This is reflected, for instance, in the fact that in most cases of Muslims arrested on grounds of terrorism, all that we have are 'confessions' before the police, which are not admissible as evidence before courts, because obviously such 'confessions' are often false and procured after brutal torture. But the media simply projects these statements as supposed evidence, and then weaves this picture of Muslims as terrorists." The media never does the same with Hindu fundamentalists and had completely failed toanticipate a 'Hindu Terrorist' attack as was exposed in the Malegaon blasts.

The publishing industry, cinema and the media are all part of the Althusserian notion of the 'Ideological State Apparatus' and function primarily to perpetuate the dominant ideology of capitalist society. The silences and gaps in these graphic novels, films and media reports allow us to see this ideology at work. The capitalist ideology being rooted in the ideas of modernity and manifesting itself in the projects of colonization and globalization needs to perpetuate the narrative of Muslims as anti- modern, irrational and violent and indulge in a categorization of Muslims into good and bad for its own sustenance. The recent western interventions in the Middle East and Afghanistan should be traced back to the unfinished business of cold war years and the economic considerations that surround it.

The nascent Indian graphic novel industry's reluctance to engage in a counter narrative discourse like its American counterpart of the 1960's is largely dictated by the market and the social conditions that it has debuted in. Being the insignificant part of the 2,400 Cr Indian Book industry (English) graphic novels cannot but follow the ideology of the market. It is unable to compete with the sales figures of say, Chetan Bhagat's IIT saga *Five point someone*, which is estimated to have sold over 700,000 copies (Buisness world, May 11, 2008). In an interview with Sulaksahna Gupta that appeared in the *Indian Express* on April 15 2004, Sarnath Banerjee had openly expressed his nervousness about the sales of his book (*Corridor*) and feared that its success or failure could decide the fate of aspiring comic artists in India. Existing in a rapidly liberalizing economy with a growth rate of 8.5% and catering to an audience of 'post literate' upper middleclass armed with amazing purchasing power and fed on the ideology of globalization; graphic novel is forced to surrender the counter narrative history of the medium and meekly follow the diktats of the market and the ideologies that govern it.

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Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* as an Alternative History

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> "There are a million possible Earths with a million possible histories, all of which actually exist simultaneously."—(*Grimus* 53)

> "As for me; I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history; what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change."— (*Shame* 87-88)

The main contention of Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* is to offer an alternative version of history. The aim of this paper is to question the efficacy of historical truth as factual knowledge in the light of Rushdie's concept of history. This metahistorical text reveals new meanings of history in relation to the postcolonial context. Since history is a man-made activity, and since historical experience and its conclusions varied from one individual to another and from one society to another, the certainty of historical truth is invalid. What we have, then, are different forms of realities, each has its particular truth. According to Rushdie, there are two forms of history: formal, exclusionary, totalitarian history which offers a singular view of the historical events, and polyphonically representational history which provides multiple realities and multidimensional historical truths. Whereas the former relies on the recording of "facts" and dated events, the latter is based on the representation of them. These New Historical speculations constitute the theoretical foundations of this paper.

Grimus is a history-seeking novel. The central character, Flapping Eagle, and his companions travel from one place to another, seeking shelters for new free lives. Also, they seek the truth of life, knowledge and "new possible histories". Elfrida, a female character says, "There are a million possible Earths with a million possible histories, all of which actually exist simultaneously." (*Grimus* 53)

Rushdie's *Grimus* is made significant by his ability to build pluralistic worlds mediated by fantasy which permits entrance into alternative universe. In the novel, he uses the intervention of fiction to make the implausible possible. The alternative realities created in this novel, in particular is mediated by fabulation and fantasy to oppose the imposed rational reality and also as a technique that enable the excluded characters in the novel to escape the particular social restriction and conformities in their sad cities through the wings of fantastic imagination. Yet, the technique of fantasy in this novel serves to represent Rushdie's visions of "social change" and how history should be re-created to gratify the individual demands of new imaginative life. These pluralistic

visions of realities and experiences indorsed in the novel form what we call "alternative versions" of history.

"Alternative history" is a form of discourse which is constructed as a direct response to another form of discourse. It might also be viewed as a form of mythical narrative, which expresses a rejection to the realist political, colonial as well as patriarchal systems. It is also a method of analysis, which produces ideas and views which are used to defend certain values or attack particular dominant authorities. "Alternative history" can be described as a counter-narrative to the surrounding reality of repressive authority or colonial narrative: that is, to think of ideas and strategies that liberate people from the colonial supremacy. In the world of postcolonial fiction, the "alternative history" may signify a fictional narrative which functions as a form of counter, dissent and disruption against the repressive systems. This narrative has the meaning of confrontation and liberation, transformation and creation of new realities. In this case, the "alternative history" might be a creation of new fictions and myths against the fictions and myths of the dominant authority.

"Alternative history" is defined as "a genre of fiction consisting of stories that are set in worlds in which history has diverged from the actual history of the world. It can be variously seen as a sub-genre of literary fiction, science fiction, and historical fiction; different alternate history works may use tropes from any or all of these genres" (*Wikipedia*). In his *The Incoherence of the Philosopher*, Al-Ghazali defends the Islamic Ash'ari doctrine of a created universe that is temporally finite, against the Aristotelian doctrine of an eternal universe and proposed a modal theory of possible worlds. (Kukkonen 479–502) "Alternate history is inherently presentist. It explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the present. Based as it is upon conjecture, alternative history necessarily reflects its author's hopes and fears." (Rosenfeld 93)

However, *Grimus* is considered by many critics as a science fiction, a term that encompasses novels and short stories that "represent an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning from the world of our ordinary experience" (Abrams 278). Hence, narrative is made to render plausible the fictional world by reference to known or imagined scientific principles whereby fantasy can be the appropriate device, especially in the issue of historical representation which is based on recreation. Fantasy then is used to enrich realism.

Science fiction is basically designed to provide an alternative version of reality and thus to create a possible way of looking to reality from different angles and dimensions. It is a mixed world of the real and the hyper-real and the events in this world move from temporality to timelessness, crossing the boarders of the actual and the mythical, the real and the hyper-real. On this basis, Rushdie's *Grimus* is considered as a science fiction because it makes use of these elements, and its themes have been conveyed within the frame of this genre. The novel makes use of technology and alchemy in order to highlight the themes of transformation, change and re-creation.

The blurring of the "real" and the "fantastic", and the past and present is a dominant feature of the novel. From the beginning of the novel, we read about the "elixir" which transforms the hero into an immortal and time-traveler being who breaks the boundaries between time and place. In his fantastic voyage, the Eagle explores and experiences many versions of life in the past and present. The multi- experiences of his journey enable him to predict and plan the shape of the realistic state of future. For this, we see him in the end of the novel giving his resolution to the conflicting views of the solid and stagnant state and the absolute liberal one.

Basically, science fiction is a form of literary work whose central concern is to research history, new imagined universes, and world of technology. The writer of science fiction relies on two major things: the advanced knowledge of technology and the exploration of new cosmos. In this case, Rushdie's *Grimus* searches for possible versions of histories and alternative realities, by focusing on the different experiences of his characters and by burdening them with the quest for a "history".

However, some critics argue that science fiction is not alternative history, but a fantastic story that deals with alternative reality in which the histories of the worlds being described do not connect with our own. Yet, Rushdie's *Grimus* is not actually a typical science fiction narrative that explores the future events and predicts new technologies. Rather, it is a narrative that explores within a science fiction narratology a possible version of history through dealing with different alternative realities. The main concern of Rushdie is neither the future nor the "the pastness of the past," but "its presence".

In the light of Rushdie's view, science fiction can then be described as a historical literature in which the alternative histories are achieved through the fiction narrative itself. In other words, alternative history is seen as part of science fiction. In every science fiction narrative, there is an explicit or implicit fictional history that connects the period depicted to our present moment, or to some moment of our past. Because no science fiction story describes the actual future that will ensue in the real world, one could even say that all science fiction narratives are alternative histories. Therefore, the relationship between science fiction and the writing of history seems obvious. Whatever else history may be, it is not an experimental science. The question is how we can make plausible conjectures. This is the way in which the alternate-history story was born. The common target of the two works of writing is to provide societies with imaginative frameworks to change the social and political environments. Ken MacLeod in this regard has argued that "History remains the trade secret of science fiction… History is an inexhaustible source of plots, and an indispensable map of the way in which societies work and how they can change." (8-14)

In fact, many fantasies and science fictions are set in a world that has a history somewhat similar to our own world, but with magic added. Some of these stories posit points of divergence, but some others feature magic, thus altering history all along. For example, Flapping Eagle's universe in the Calf Island is in part historically recognizable but also obeys different physical laws, reflecting the matter of India as history, and India as reality. The writer explicitly maintains that all possible decisions are made in all possible ways.

> I do not care for stories that are, so tight. Stories should be like life, slightly frayed at the edges, full of loose ends and lives juxtaposed by accident rather than some grand design. Most of life has no meaning so it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful. (*Grimus* 141)

Grimus thus is a form of fantasy by which Rushdie deconstructs the concept of history as a given factual knowledge. Rushdie at the outset of the novel tells us that the central character, Flapping Eagle has lost his mother the moment he comes to this world. This kind of disruption that occurs in the life of the young Eagle registers a breakthrough in his life since it cuts him of his past. He has to experience a new reality in Axona. But, since Axona is the world of fixity and singularity in which there was only one version of life and one way of thinking, he was expelled for breaking the rule and having "strange attitudes". The god Axona imposes only one way of life: "The god Axona had only two laws: he liked the Axona to chant to him as often as possible, in the field, on the toilet, while making love, if concentration allowed; and he instructed the Axona to be a race apart and have no doings with the wicked world". (*Grimus* 16)

In fact, Rushdie's contention in this novel is that the individual can express his world views and live globally but thinking "glocally". Rushdie was not against the past or history, but he is against its totalitarianism. That is exactly what happens to Flapping Eagle. When he revolts against his past and begins searching for immortality (archetype) by drinking the magical liquid of elixir, he has bitten up by his sense of isolation and nihilism. His life in the Calf Island becomes monotonous and mechanical and has no meaning for human life. Rushdie here wants to suggest that immortals do not have history because their lives are governed by divine laws and therefore do not have variations. On the contrary, human life is nothing but an accumulative account of various forms of experiences and activities. It is then is subject to possible versions of realities and therefore cannot be narrated through a single view altogether. The novel at the outset deals with the re-creation of history. Mr Virgil Jones, the philosopher and the guide of the Eagle gives his views about history. "An historian is affected by the present events and that eternally recreate the past." (*Grimus* 13)

Subsequently and soon, he recognizes his meaningless life of immortality and mechanicality in Calf Island, Mr. Eagle decides to reclaim his role as a social being and gets rid off this "given" life by battling with the monolithic Grimus, the official ruler of the land. He starts longing for his personal life and nationhood in Axona and therefore decides to make the Calf Island his alternative home that combines within itself the emotion of the "past memories" and his "present realities". As a result, the authority of the past has been modified by the reality of the present. This artistic representation that externalizes the ideas of monolithic version of history and the alternative or possible view of history is the underpinning element of the novel. Through the character of Flapping Eagle, Rushdie has shown us different versions of history from the conventional to the monolithic or from repressive to the political.

Flapping Eagle brings the conflicting forces of life together. After destroying the rational kingdom of the patriarch Grimus, who misuses the power of the magical Stone Rose in controlling the activities of the island's dwellers, he attempts to resolve the

conflict between Reason and Emotion, and Rationality and Imagination. He says: "I began to re-create Calf Island, exactly as it was, with one difference: it was to contain no rose. I had decided that this was a better alternative than physically breaking the Rose. (*Grimus* 252)

Reality is "a timeless and spaceless community of spirits which perceive each other".(Ritvo 43) The problem with the Calf Island's ruler, Grimus is his obsession with the conceptualization of "dimensions" in order to fully control the movement of the immortal inhabitants. This is read as a patriarchal and monolithic discourse from the side of Grimus. Also, it tells us about the idea that there are no choices of experiences for the inhabitants who look the same thing and do the same activities. For this, Flapping Eagle leaves the K town:

> I am leaving K. It is a town made mad by a machine. Soldiers, policemen, actors, hunters, whores, drunks, wasters, philosophers, menials, morons, artistans, farmers, shoe-salesmen, artists, united by their common inability to cope with the world they have had imposed upon them. (*Grimus* 217- 218)

Flapping Eagle's power lies in his "fictive obsession" to explore the history of K town. He embarks on knowledge and enquiry to discover the truth. He is obsessed with a desire to "refute the Grimus myth" (*Grimus* 148). As long as there is a creative fiction, there will be a hope for re-creation of reality.Grimus himself on the Calf Island builds his power of controlling people from his invented myths and fictions in which the inhabitants believe. The relationship between fiction and reality is a central theme initiated in the paper. It is connected to the function and the primary interest of the postcolonial writer to build up his "fictional countries".

Nonetheless, *Grimus*, like much of Rushdie's work, undermines the concept of a "pure culture" by demonstrating the impossibility of any culture or philosophy existing in sterile isolation. This profoundly reflects the poststructuralist approach to culture which gains an overt expression in Mr. Virgil's comment on the limitations of aesthetic theories that attempt to suppress their own contingencies:

> Any intellect which confines itself to mere structuralism is bound to rest trapped in its own webs. Your words serve only to spin cocoons around your own irrelevance."(*Grimus* 91)

Rushdie relentlessly draws attention to the provisional status of his text's "truth" and, of course, the provisional status of any received account of reality, by using meta-text that foreground the unnaturalness and bias of the text's construction as an entity. Rushdie has argued that "one of the things that have happened in the 20th century is a colossal fragmentation reality". (qtd. in Afzal-Khan 154) Hence, *Grimus* incorporates magic realism in order to transgress distinctions of genres, which mirrors the state of confusion and alienation that defines postcolonial societies and individuals.

Grimus is a critique of the concept of pure culture and monolithic history. Axona represents the authoritative vision of history which excludes any other interpretations,

and everything recorded is fact and truth. We notice that Axona is governed by strict laws of morality and discrimination. "All that is Unaxona is Unclean" (*Grimus* 24). Beside this, god Axona has a law of punishment against those who might think to break the law of "purity" in the town. As a result, Flapping Eagle and his sister, Bird-Dog were exiled from Axona, simply because they broke the law and challenged the "oneness" and stagnation of the Axona system. Mr. Eagle is treated as a stranger simply because "first, my confused sex; second, the circumstances of my birth; and third, my pigmentation" (*Grimus* 18). Life and history in Axona are controlled by a pre-determined rule that prevent people even to dream or think of the world outside the kingdom. Axona town is represented as a closed world of rigidity and insularity. In other words, the traditional system in Axona does not accept the "difference".

Substantially, life is changeable, history is multifarious, truth is not absolute or final, reality has many versions, and culture is hybrid and has never been pure. These meanings and concepts are metaphorically and fancifully embodied in the character of Mr. Eagle—the symbol of alternity and social change. He has been described as thus:

> He was the leopard who changed his spots; he was the worm that turned. He was the shifting sand and the ebbing tide. He was moody as the sky, circular as the seasons, nameless as the glass … He was the Eagle, prince of birds, and he was also the albatross. She clung round his neck and died, and the mariner became the albatross … Several times he changed the name he gave to people. (*Grimus* 31-32)

He is looking for new ideals of identity, freedom, history and new culture, "I am looking for a suitable voice to speak in" (*Grimus* 32). To him, history is made of many voices and spoken by many languages. The protagonist, his sister and the other eternal birds are introduced as "anti-history" figures who act against the conventional history, which silences their voices and causes them to suffer their loss, "Frustration was building with Flapping, the frustration of centuries." (*Grimus* 35)

Contrary to the rational and fanatically religious Axona which embodies rigidity and insularity of historical truth and experience, K town is the magical world "full of secrets" (*Grimus* 20). It is a fictional life which is different from the reality experienced in Axona. It is a town, which is based on power of technology where things operate automatically and by gesture.

K town has a different type of life and reality in which the dwellers have different ways of living. It is a place of fantasy and fulfillment of desire. For instance, though Dolores O' Toole is a Catholic woman, she decides to follow her love desire. On the other hand, Mrs. Cramm is an eternal woman who submits her soul and body to the protagonist, Eagle. The sexual relationship between the two is part of the energetic life. This relationship is also an example of loose freedom on one hand, and cultural assimilation on the other.

K town is also a place of revelation and harmony. For the character, Ignatius Gribb, Calf Island "came as a happy revelation, here he found his self-respect and she

returned her love". (*Grimus* 171) Ignatius Gribb describes this sort of power as "the supreme gift of the human race" (*Grimus* 161). Joel Kuortti comments that immortality in K town is based on obsession (43). Everyone is obsessed with his way of thinking. These examples tell that the secular life has many shapes of reality and that there is no one determined version of truth, and historical experience is not subject to the pre-determined rules and ordains of law. Moreover, the pluralistic views of these people signify a rejection of one imposed sort of life. The story of "K" inhabitants embodies the concept of "simultaneity of secular time" in Benedict Anderson's famous article, "Whose Imagined Community?" (24)

This contrastive image of Axona and K town represents two visions of historical representations. The first is a traditional view of history based on religious or divine truths. The second, however, identifies the fictive view of history that celebrates variety and difference. Yet, both visions evolve out of the extreme polarities. Historical truth is not a universal phenomenon or imaginary event. History is fact and fiction, a factual record and human experience, and a narration and interpretation. Subsequently, Mr. Eagle continues his "search of history" (*Grimus* 107). He denies the view of patriarchs and expresses a feeling of nostalgia for his past. This may tell us that the creation of new countries of free living can be achieved within the limits of temporality and spatiality. He says, "To be in "K" was to return to a consciousness of history, of good times, even of nationhood" (*Grimus* 130). Flapping Eagle becomes weary of immortal life at Calf Island, he decides to regain his nature as a human being and then re-create the land of Phoenix. Now he acts as a mortal being "I- Eagle". After experiencing "the vicarious joys and agonies of countless lives", he decides to use "the thought- forms" in giving "the Phoenix a new life, a new beginning." (*Grimus* 251)

The alternative vision that Rushdie provides through the experience of the Eagle is manifested in his projected reconciliation and resolution between Eagle the mortal and Eagle the immortal, and between Axona where historical truth is projected as a certainly given fact and Calf Island the place of illusionary truth. Subsequently, we come to notice that Grimus-Eagle discovers that the people in the Calf Island are powerless and unable to draw the kind of life they want because their individuality is separated from the collectivity. He sees their fear of change: "the people of K reduced to a blind philosophy of pure survival, clutching obsessively at the shreds of their individuality, knowing within themselves that they were powerless to alter the circumstances in which they lived. (*Grimus* 251)

These lines show clearly the significance of the idea of re-imagining the past and how the Eagle emerges from his present home at "Calf Island" into the history of Phoenix to 'redeem' and 'reform' that history. We read in the passage that there is a longing for another history. The protagonist says, "To be in "K" was to return to a consciousness of history, of good times, even of nationhood" (*Grimus* 130). Joel Kuorti in her essay, "A View of History," argues that this longing connects the individual's identity to the national imagination (64). Flapping Eagle, Elfrida, Gribb, and Irina Cherkassov scuff off their immortal life in search for a new kind of earthly life, "It was because I thought life was sacred that I drank the elixir. One cannot take life." (*Grimus* 146)

The novel appears as a fictionalized picture of the writer's attitudes towards change and search for new realities. Flapping Eagle, experiences an unsatisfactory life in Axona. Similarly, he decides to break the sameness and mechanical material life on Calf Island by resurrecting the island without Stone Rose, the technological instrument at the hand of Grimus by which he controls life on the island. He rejects the views of god Axona as well as Grimus' because he seeks freedom from the force of authority.

Grimus presents a "multiple society" (Reddy 5) through a polyphony of voices. Each one of those characters represents a particular view of life and creates various versions of realities that cannot be interpreted by a single monolithic view. Joel Kuortti contends that the major problem of the Eagle is that he is burdened with history in terms of collective thoughts and that because of this he loses his home and belongings and things he owns. He is destined to be destroyed by racial, cultural, religious and political forces of history (65). Therefore, the Eagle searches for history not as a homogenous and "transparent truth" but as a process constructed from an endless number of events and stories. To develop this idea further, Rushdie seeks in his novel to undermine the authority of history by the use of fantasy, since fantasy represents a kind of truth where "real history is just another ideological fantasy." (64)

Rushdie's concern in this particular novel is the desire to offer an alternative version of history of the subcontinent and the postcolonial history in general by reworking the authorial view of historical experience and factual knowledge, and by simultaneously creating a fanciful image of historical realities similar to the postcolonial subcontinental history. The theoretical foundation of this is his rejection of what might be termed as "the totality of history" which results in "the loss of the individual". On this basis, Rushdie comes to establish his vision of history on the individual's position and role in society. The conventional history represents collective ideology which gives no regard to the individual's position in society, nor does it answer his hopes and expectations. Such an approach to history also depresses the individual, who, as a result, becomes without entity, family and history. In the light of this thought, the Eagle keeps searching for a history that privileges the "oneself" and the individual as a real element in history. The Eagle suffers the totalitarian and authorial history of Axona, and revolts against the mechanically assimilated history of Calf Island. In both "versions", this "fragmented subject" has not been given his weight as a "maker" of history or as a core of incidents against what is imagined as unified, complete and consistent with itself. By demythecizing the historical myth and mthycizing the ordinary events, Rushdie is instrumentally showing possible visions of history and realities.

By insisting on representing his protagonists as time-travelers and truth-seekers, Rushdie attempts to deconstruct the given facts and truth and subverting the concept of pure culture, absolute facts, and insular central pattern. Thus, his characters are either rebellious dissents or non-conformists. Consequently, if Axona represents the conventional view of history and Calf Island is the mythical version of history, the "I-Eagle" is the alternative history—a history formed out of recreating the "present" Calf Island and re-imagining the "past" Axona. This level of history implies that there is a room for interpreting its facts. Also, it implies that there is no final version of truth. Simply, Rushdie's method is based on exposing the problems of the individual and his

sufferings under the "authentic history", which is very often collective and repressive. His approach of analysis deals, in brief, with the social and cultural realities in terms of ideas and visions and without any restrictions of dates, events and quantifiable time. Also, it highlights the role of the individual whose business is to search for alternative possibilities on the Earth. Through the Proustian device of "reclamation" Rushdie struggles "to bring the past back and recreate it." (Durix 12)

The alternative history in the novel takes three forms in Eagle's thoughts. First, the level of science with which he works to change the conditions and reality of the island governed by the tyrannical ruler, Grimus. The second is the level of politics in which he decides to go back to Phoenix to liberate it from repression. The third one is the level of fiction as a tool to create new realities. (Kuortti 34)

Fantasy, as alternative version of history in the hands of Rushdie, is closely allied with the fictional world of the novel and its controlling theme – i.e. search for the self and history. In this case, "fantasy is not the same febrile phantasmagoria but an energetic dramatization of a better future by people living in a concrete world" (Habegger 6). Therefore, fantasy in the novel does not oppose real conditions, but reflects them. Actually, it is rooted in the real conditions themselves—in the concrete social relations. Commenting on Rushdie's use of fantasy in the novel as a form of alternative reality, Syed Mujeebuddin notes that "in positing the real with the fantastic and story with history, Rushdie is presenting the reader with an 'anti-history' (131). Rushdie neither de-bunks the conventional histories of the glorious past nor acknowledges the fictionalization of historical reality.

Axona is an allegorical version of history of India in which "Rushdie's religious allegory is absorbed quickly into the political one because religion has always been a potent weapon in the hands of those who ruled India" (Banerjee 24). Religious truth, according to Rushdie, does not represent the universally historical truth since religion cannot escape the politics of collectivity. In his manipulation of the idea of timelessness and its relation to the concept of history, Rushdie suggests that there is a space of spatiality and temporality to create possible simultaneous versions of historical realities.

From the postmodernist view, *Grimus* translates the idea of authentic experience through Rushdie's approach to historical representation. Rushdie uses the idea of hyper-reality in representing reality as a natural and authentic experience. Life in Calf Island, therefore, is an excellent example of an authentic experience out of the limits of space and time in which the inhabitants fulfill freely and naturally their desire; they live their desire and not only dream of it. In so doing, Rushdie deals with the postcolonial issues in a realm of postmodernist world. Rushdie's postmodern world is seen as the alternative world where the symbol and image become reality itself. In this way, Rushdie has provided another vision of Indian history in particular and postcolonial world in general. To develop it further, Rushdie's approach to myth and history includes the postmodern concept of hyper-reality—reality as an image. Hence, as a fictional writer, his primary concern is to represent the historical veracities in a different way. It is significant to consider that Rushdie's opinion on the relation between novel and history is based on the

idea that "knowing the world is a necessary first step towards changing it." (*Imaginary Homelands* 14)

From the postcolonial perspective, Rushdie tries to subvert the historical colonial accounts with its cons and pros by means of creating alternative histories and realities. The history of migration is also of Rushdie's main concerns in the treatment of history. The idea of alternative history takes into account the possible histories of immigrants as fragmented subjects who have experienced different forms of realities and divided between their national longing and the new cultural environment. This is just exactly the case of Flapping Eagle and his companions who have been expelled from their national land and experienced the life of migrancy, exile and assimilation in the Calf Island. Moreover, the instability of Eagle's character is also related to the idea of "unstable identity". His identity is made of different cultures. His identity is a process of cultural assimilation. "Several times he changed the name he gave to people. His face was such, his skin was such" (*Grimus* 32). Therefore, Rushdie's view of alternative history includes themes such as assimilation, alienation, loss, and longing. Despite of his postcolonial propensity, Rushdie's treatment of the compelling issues of migration, exile, political freedom, social change, and suppression of women and individual as historically fragmented experiences and stories underpin his engagement with the postmodern world. Fed up with her monotonous life of sameness on the Calf Island, Elferida bursts out profoundly:

> I don't like it [….] it's too pretty, too neat. I do not care for stories that are so, so tight. Stories should be like life, slightly frayed at the edges, full of loose ends and lives juxtaposed by accident rather than some grand design. Most of life has no meaning so it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful (*Grimus* 141).

Postmodernism denies "the fixity of the past, of reality, of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past" (Himmelfarb 72). In other words, history is regarded as a text, "a discourse which consists of representations…" Louis Montrose explains the historicity of texts and the textuality of history in the following lines:

> By the historicity of texts I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing […]. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question […]; and secondly that those textual traces are themselves subjective to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as the 'documents' upon which historians ground their own texts, called 'histories'. (20)

The postmodern view of history thus "rejects the idea of "history" as a directly accessible, unitary past and substitutes for it the conception of "histories" as an ongoing series of human constructions" (Cox and Reynolds 4). Moreover, Himmelfarb develops the idea further to suggest that:

> To 'demythiciseze' or 'demystify' this history, postmodernism has to expose not only its ideology—the hegemonic, privileged, patriarchal interest served by this history—but also its methodology, the scholarly apparatus that gives it a specious credibility. (160-61)

At the end of the novel Mr. Eagle eventually declares: "I want to return to the human race" (*Grimus* 55). Thus, the alternative history in the novel takes the shape of "resolved conflicts" and balanced attitudes between given facts and fictional truths or between factual knowledge and mythical thought.

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CONFESSIONAL MODE IN THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS AND SYLVIA PLATH

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Confessional poetry is a branch of modern poetry. There is no place either for religion or morals in this poetry. The poet does not expect any redemption or retribution as there is no remorse. It is just, that they bare their soul to get a psychic relief. It is of some therapeutic value.

These confessional poems are intensely personal, highly subjective. There is no 'persona' in the poems. 'I' in the poem is the poet and nobody else. The themes are nakedly embarrassing and focus too exclusively upon the pain, anguish and ugliness of life at the expense of its pleasure and beauty.

Sylvia Plath is one of the noted figures of this genre. Kamala Das, a popular Indian poet was not influenced by Plath or any other confessional poet. These two women responded in a similar way to similar themes. Plath is an American, educated and liberated. Kamala Das is a traditional Indian woman. Both have chosen poetry as their genre to express their intense feeling, as it gives them a lot of scope. They have an autobiographical novel to their credit. Plath wrote '*Bell Jar*', under the pseudonym of Vicotria Lucas. Kamala Das' '*My Story*' was published when she was convalescing in a nursing home.

The confessional poets were dubbed as neurotics by the society, as they did not follow any tradition nor respected any conventions. They wanted to be unique and not a part of the conventional social set up. This conflict with the society lead them to introspection. In the course, comes a breaking point when they could not compromise with themselves. They loose themselves helplessly in the battle and start searching for the lost self. This conflict has given birth to a number of beautiful poems. The sensitive poet cannot take failure for granted. At this juncture, life becomes unbearable and the call of death becomes irresistible. They are more than convinced that death can offer them more solace than life.

Nostalgia for childhood is one of the characteristic qualities of confessional poetry. As confessional poets, both Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das have drawn vivid pictures of their childhood in their poems. Kamala Das and Sylvia Plath, both the poets, can be termed as child prodigies. They started writing poetry at a very young age.

Plath was just eight years old when her first publication appeared in "Boaston Newspapers'. She is aware of and responsive to natural surroundings and described the early childhood poems as –

> Nature, I think; birds, bees, spring, fall all those subjects which are absolute gifts to the person who does not have any interior experience to write about. I think the coming of spring, the stars overhead, the first snow fall and so on are gifts for a child, a young poet.
>
> [Peter Orr, The Poet Speaks]

Kamala Das was barely six, when she started writing her poetry. There is a vivid description of her childhood days in her autobiographical novel '*My Story*'. She wrote tragic poems about her dolls who lost their heads and limbs and confesses that "each poem of mine made me cry".

Failure in love as a theme is more powerful in the poems of confessional poets, than its consummation. Kamala Das' shocking confession about the theme of love has startled equally the critics and the laymen. It was more shocking because it comes from a traditional, Indian woman. The search for ideal love is continued throughout her poetry. She was sick of love which was just skin-deep:

> ….. what is
> The use, what is the bloody use?
> That was the only kind of love,
> This hacking at each other's part
> Like convicts hacking, breaking clods
> At noon ….
>
> [Convicts]

> Sometimes, she fails to draw a line between love & lust and gets vexed

> O sea, I am fed up
> I want to be simple
> I want to be loved
> And
> If love is not to be had,
> I want to be dead, just dead ….
>
> [Suicide]

Sylvia Plath too has handled the theme in a brilliant way. She has very few poems on this theme of love, compared to Kamala Das. Plath belongs to the permissive society of the West where no brows are raised either at extra or pre-marital relationships. The normal love which she ought to have experienced as a young girl, does not make an impression on her as poetic themes.

"Death" is the common theme where both the poets meet, though, in their own different way. Of course, Plath valiantly met her goal and Das was saved. Sylvia Plath,

in her poems has sketched 'Death' in many colours without sounding morbid. For her, dying is not a painful end, but an art.

> Dying is an art, like everything else
> I do it exceptionally well.
>
> [Lady Lazarus]

Kamala Das considers death a reward for all her pains in surviving upon the earth. Her autobiography gives ample evidence to her idea of death by water, drowning oneself in the sea. The relevant passage reads thus;

> Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself to be rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way, but is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from involvements.
>
> [My Story]

The strong individuality of Plath was an asset to her as a poet but a handicap in real life. The basic ingredients of high intelligence and extreme sensibility made her different from everyone else. Plath could not be happy as a wife. She didn't like the idea of being an ordinary housewife. Her contempt towards this idea is beautifully expressed in the poem "The Applicant". She ridicules the institution of marriage where the woman is treated as 'an object'

> It can sew, it can cook
> It can talk, talk, talk.
> It works, there is nothing wrong with it.
> You have a whole, it's a poultice
> My boy, its your last resort.
> Will you marry it, marry it, marry it.
>
> [The Applicant]

Her inability to identify herself with the society and refusal to accept the tragedies as part of life, lead to a struggle of self and society.

Kamala Das' early marriage with a man much older to her creates an aversion. His demanding nature made her frigid. Kamala Das was a rebel and does not make any attempts to hide it. She looks every where for love but she gets it only in her dreams.

> Why do I so often dream
> Of a house, where each silent
> Corridor leads me to warm
> Yellow rooms-
> …..
> They love … and once awake, I

See the bed from which my love
Has fled, the empty room, the
Naked walls, count on fingers
My very few friends …

[The Corridors]

Kamala Das writes, in her usual frank open-mindedness, about married life or man-woman relationship in many of her poems. She frequently complains about man's callousness and wantonness and woman's suffering on that count. In the poem titled 'Of Calcutta', she says that her people had sent her away to another city as;

A relative's wife, a housfrau for his home, and
Doll for his parlour, a walkie talkie one to
Warm his bed at night….
... he folded
Me each night in his arms and told me of greater
Pleasure that had come his way, rich harvest of
Lust, gleaned from other fields, not mine the embers died.
Within me then.

She has thus, a strong grievance against her husband's infidelity and lust.

Both Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das have distinguished themselves by becoming vital, familiar landmarks in the development of poetry in their respective native cultures. Both of them employ highly self-conscious idioms, depicting their own peculiar sensibilities. They have also tended to assume a larger-than life 'Persona' in their poems, to comment on a wide variety of concerns, especially as women belonging to particular traditions. The roles they have played as creative writers have rendered them almost as cult figures, who will also, undoubtedly, continue to exercise a considerable influence on women in general and future poets in particular.

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Language Acquisition Through Literature Promotes Creativity and Thinking Skill

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Teachers often regard literature as inappropriate to the language classroom. Often the views are reflected that historic separation between the study of language and the study of literature has led to the limited role of literature in the language classroom. It cannot be denied that the use of literary texts can be a powerful pedagogic tool. In the present paper the study is also to be made of various approaches to teaching literature which provides a rationale in the language classroom (LCR) based on the premise that literature is language and language can indeed be literary.

The main concern of English teachers should be to help learners acquire communicative competence, as it is more than acquiring mastery of structure and form. It also involves acquiring the ability to interpret discourse in its entire social and cultural context. It is undebatable that the use of literature in the EFL classroom can provide a powerful pedagogic tool in learner's linguistic development or linguistic accuracy. It is also apparent that EFL speakers still have difficulties in comprehending the nuances, creativity and versatility which characterize even standard and transaction forms of English.

The distinct differences between literary and non -literary discourses and suggested through the various types of discourse or the classification of discourse types. This reflects a historic divergence between language and literature which is referred by **Short** (**1996)** as a border dispute over territory between linguists and literary critics. The emergence of teaching two subjects as 'disconnected pedagogic practices' has been the outcome of this divergence (**Carter and McRae, 1996: xxiv). Carter and Nash (1990)** have also suggested to consider the variety of text types along a continuum with some being more literary than others. Perceiving literary discourse as separate and remote from non- literary discourse is not advisable. The underlying fact is that the separation of literature from language is a false dualism since literature is language and language can indeed be literary. It is not difficult to find instances of standard transactional forms of discourse which make use of a whole array of literary divers. Headlines and advertisements are common example of discourse which exports literary language. The explicit use of stylistic devices like imagery, alliteration, register, ellipsis and rhythm are commonly associated with literature than with standard transactional language.

Widdowson (1970) has rightly stated that the procedures which are used to interpret literary discourse are essentially the same for interpreting any type of discourse.

Approaches to teaching literature: - No doubt, integrating literature into the EFL or ESL or LT is beneficial to the learners' linguistic as well as communication development, the need is felt to select an approach which best serves the needs of EFL, ESL learners and the syllabus. **(Carter and Long 1991)** describes the rationale for the use of the three main approaches to the teaching of literature.

Let us say that teaching language not through but within history is beneficial. Identification and recognition of literature in language should be observed.

1. **The Cultural Model** representing the traditional approach requires learners to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text. It helps to reveal the universality of such thoughts and idea but encourages learners to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own. But being teacher-centered and little opportunity for extended language work, it is largely rejected.
2. **The language model** or the language based approach as referred by **Carter and Long (1991**) enables learners to access a text in a systematic and methodical way in order to exemplify specific linguistic features, e.g. literal and figurative language, direct and indirect speech. This approach involves the language teaching strategies - prediction exercises, jumbled sentences, summary writing, creative writing, role play, etc. by the teachers to deconstruct literary texts serving specific linguistic goals. This model is described as a 'reductive' approach to literature by **Carter and McRae (1996**). These activities only serve the purpose of purely linguistic practice leaving aside literature in a purposeless and mechanical way.
3. **The Personal Growth Model** attempts to bridge the cultural model and the language model by focusing on the particular use of language in a text, as well as placing it in a specific cultural context. Learners are encouraged to express their opinions, feelings and opinions and make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in text. Another aspect of this model is that it helps learners develop knowledge of ideas and language - content and formal schemata through different themes and topics. This function relates to theories of reading **(Goodman 1970**) which emphasize the interaction of the reader with the text. As **Cadorath and Harris** point out (1998: 188)" text itself has no meaning it only provides direction for the reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience". Thus, learning is said to take place when readers are able to interpret text and construct meaning on the basis of their own experience.

These three approaches to teaching literature differ in terms of their focus on the text: Firstly, the text is seen as a cultural artifact; secondly the text is used as a focus for grammatical and structural analysis and thirdly, the text is the stimulus for personal growth activities. Such an approach to teaching literature in the EFL classroom is needed with attempts to integrate these elements in a way that makes literature accessible to learners and beneficial for their linguistic development.

Rationale for an integrated model for teaching literature

According to **Duff and Maley (1990)** the main reasons for integrating these elements are linguistic, methodological and motivational.

Linguistically, by using a wide range of authentic texts we introduce learners to a variety of types and difficulties of English language.

Methodologically, literary discourse sensitizes readers to the processes of reading for e.g. : intensive and texts priorities, the enjoyment of reading, as **Short and Candlin** assert (**1986**), if literature is worth teaching ..... then it seems axiomatic that it is the response to literature itself which is important. Interpretation of texts by learners can bring about personal responses from readers by touching on significant and engaging themes. An integrated model is a linguistic approach which utilizes some of the strategies texts, literary and non literary, from the perspective of style and its relationship to context and form. With the careful selection of the text, it can be adopted for all levels by

undergoing the stages of preparation, focusing, and preliminary response, working at it and interpretation and personal response.

Keeping the above in view, the activities can be conducted based on: -

a) Memory: the recall or recognition of information) which is the simplest and lowest level of thinking plays an important role in the learning process.

b) Translation: (Changing information into a ----------, form or language) the term translation differs from normal ELT usage. It refers to the kind of mental processing involved and is a higher level of thinking than memory. Sharing a fundamental similarity, they both involve thinking, within the given information.

c) Interpretation: The discovery of relationships among facts, generalizations, definitions, values and skills are facilitated through it.

d) Application: - It solves a lifelike problem that requires the identification of the issue and the selection and use of appropriate generalizations and skills - one needs to go beyond the given information.

e) Analysis: Facilitates solving a problem in the light of conscious knowledge of the parts and forms of thinking.

f) Synthesis : Helps in solving a problem that requires creative thinking also enhances the level of thinking involved in attempting to put knowledge into practice once again so as to solve any problem rather into a novel one - more creative type of applied learning is required involving a higher level of thinking which is beyond the information.

g) Evaluation: It helps in making a judgment- good or bad - right or wrong according to standards designated by the student.

After having discussed the various activities facilitating the language learning, the role of literature has to be assessed in its teaching. Teaching of literature as a means and tool in a second or foreign language teaching programme is significantly different from teaching of literature which aims at developing the aesthetic sensibilities of the learner.

In the present scenario, these is a special significance of pondering over the questions like whether or not to use literature in language teaching and to what extent would be the choice of the literary texts. In the words of **Prof. R.N. Shrivastava**, "Teaching of literature to a foreign student for aesthetic sensibility is one thing. While making literature as a means and tool for teaching a foreign language is entirely a different thing".

The language teacher has to be very particular about the meaning of literature while he talks about using it in FLT. It has to be spelt out the kind of literature to be included in a language teaching program as well as the stages at which this ought to be introduced.

In this connection, **the syllabus followed in some NITs should be revised because the language study of two semesters out of eight, is not sufficient for imparting the communicative skills to the learners (e.g. , engineering students) so that they may be able to interpret literature texts from third semester onwards. It is also known that literary texts are not even used in the first two semesters the fact, here cannot be ignored that literary text can help the learner to develop their varied kinds of thinking skills.** Such texts serve the useful purpose of developing the aesthetic sensibility of the learner but only after the learner has mastered the basic communicative skills of the language. It also means in turn that the learner has acquired a passive knowledge of the rules of the communicative competence.

In **1991, John McRae of the University of Nottingham**, listed, several reasons for "covering literature in English Language Teaching" (as summarized by **John Corbett of the University of Glasgow**.) ------ 'language learning, linguistic confidence, language description and awareness, language practice, memory, active involvement, classroom, interaction post-lesson stimuli, production, enthusiasm, receptively, related world knowledge, personal satisfaction, cultural awareness, linguistic or aesthetic curiosity, critical evaluation, grammatical structural, or functional reinforcement information, and constructive enjoyment. They both agreed with the view that to teach the English language, teachers should use literary texts.

It cannot be denied that introducing literature early in the curriculum would offer many benefits: classes will be more exciting, students, out of enthusiasm may chose to take literature electives after having fulfilled their language requirement. It would also stimulate their interest in language study that will lead them to opt for literature electives.

Scalone, in the introduction to **Distant Thunder**, notes "the study of literature must be a social experience in which students are given numerous opportunities to share their written and spoken responses with the teacher and with each other. (P-3)

While discussing about certain challenges, the first among all is that the language, taught without the context of the target culture is not truly representative of the actual use of the language. Secondly, it is a challenge to eliminate student – to - student, student – to - teacher, and teacher-to- student communication barriers that might be harmful to the learning process.

However, the fact remains that there are several benefits that a language learner can derive from the inclusion of literature in the educational curriculum for language learning. Our main concern as teacher is not to teach about language but to develop learners' abilities to make them capable of using the language for a variety of communicative purposes. **There is a difference between teaching about the language and communication in the language.** In the fact there is often a great ability gap between having information and being able to use it spontaneously for communicative purposes. In order to bridge this gap and frame a relevant syllabus, its contents should be made to bear a resemblance to the social contexts. This awareness of the social context can be had from the world of literature which depicts society. The syllabus should include verbal and non verbal communication, short narratives, short stories, dialogues, conversation, and interviews. These short literary texts will----

●help teachers first to acquaint themselves with language use, to develop their own competence and understand language as a social phenomenon, and not as an exclusive branch of learning.

●transform the classrooms as the stage in which there is real practice of communicative language.

●help teachers to consider language as entailing social acceptability. In other words, they can take to classroom language as carrying resemblance with the outside language. As a result this would raise communication to the level of a social responsibility.

●develop the intellectual ability of the learners and expose them to a variety of linguistic and literary expressions and communicative functions of language.

●contextualize the language to help the learner to acquire grammar implicitly.

●incorporate linguistic competence into communicative competence by putting language into use in different social situations.

The primary assumption is that teaching literature or literary texts make language acquisition more use-focused instead of form-focused. Learning literature creates many positive attitudes in learning and acquisition of English as FL or SL.

This paper tries to touch the benefits of the inclusion of literature or literary texts in EFL curriculum at all the stages of language learning in general and at the primary stage in particulars.

Books relating to the methodologies of language teaching have focused in detail on the attitude of individual teacher towards the changes that have taken place and his role in the spread of innovative modes of teaching.

Widdowson rightly remarks "Language teachers have the responsibility to mediate changes in pedagogic practice so as to increase the effectiveness of language teaching".

It is undeniable fact that the resources of language can be fully utilized by taking recourse to literature as an important aspect of language learning. For great skill and effectiveness, **literature is necessary for language learning**. **W.R. Lee** in his editorial in the journal - **English Language Teaching** says, ".....literature is rooted so far as the foreign language learner is concerned, in the oral basis of language learning rooted in lively and meaningful oral drills, in spoken and acted dialogues, in simple dramatization of stories indeed in those very procedures which make for successful, and interested learning of the languages (p-4)

Literary texts provide with a lot of opportunity to learn effectively to use words in different context.

Both language and literature teaching involve the development of a feeling for language or responses to texts. The current innovations in the teaching approaches and syllabus design focus on the communication purposes of language teaching and learning.

Literature plays a vital role in developing language learning abilities by training learners to infer meaning through different language……**.** Literary discourse offers perspective, which inspires learners to think and use language in a sensible and effective way. Language is power and power can not be asserted and impressed if it is not effectual. On the other hand, literature provides the subject matter that motivates the learners. Language learning is effective when it inspires to develop responses and reinforce messages. The more varied the response the richer language learning becomes. Literature offers a wide range of language structures which can enhance our understanding of the range of language usages. This undertaking has a direct impact on the learners' ability to learn and use language for the expression and response of those thoughts and ideas. **Literary work, in such a situation, becomes a vehicle for language learning.**

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When Mr.Pirzada Creates *Anuranan*: A Study of Home Through the Bong Connection

Dhritiman Chakraborty

Today, as we turn to face the long march back,
I ache for the cool of welcoming streets and rooftops.
But the memory of this place is forever burnt
into my children's eyes and its cinders ignite my fear.

-Debjani Chatterjee

There is fear; there is longing and overall, there is a great dilemma which emanate from these lines where the poetess mulls over the possibility of returning to her *Home*, a certain geographical place associated with memory and emotion. How does one feel first to be uprooted and then to romp back to the homeland? What does the homeland denote and what does it connote? Does homeland truly exist or is this *at-homeness* an echo of off-the-centre deconstructive feeling? Here is another poet from Scotland for whom returning to home is-

There will always be
Paddy green for me
Though the floods come every year
And flow relentlessly

-Bashabi Fraser

As both the stanzas suggest, *home* has a definite performative importance, especially for the emotional sustenance. But, there are other voices that will argue that diaspora, as part of its essential requirement, has no home in reality. It is a kind of hyphenated existence that celebrates *not-being-at-home*. It contains, according to Vijay Mishra, *hyphenated identities as indicated in their passport*. So a constant remaking in terms of identity goes on at a subterranean level, which creates new spaces for *liminality* and *hybridity*. But what happens when that home is catapulted in some crisis, or the same home undergoes a reorientation, a tectonic readjustment, or when one feels this *vagrant space* of diaspora as the means for alienation? It is really intriguing to think whether the hybridized reality of diaspora, the comfort of living in the first world can restrict one from seeking an emotional succor, a sense of importance from the very association with an imaginary or an ontological space called *home*. In Bengali, there is one beautiful word called *Anuranan* which means resonation, a kind of metaphysical connection. One may be led to retrace his/her root following an *anuranan* at a metaphysical level. This feeling or connection can be termed as *home mystique*, toeing on the line of *feminine mystique*. This story *When Mr. Pirzada Came To Dine* by Jhumpa Lahiri ends by creating a flutter, a sense of *anuranan* as the narrator discovers her hyphenated reality at muddle with her other impulse for the parent's homeland. In Urdu it is called *firaaq* which again implies estrangement, a separation combined with the quest for identity. And, we know that identity is part of the existential aspect of human life. As the narrator and her family are comfortably settled in America carrying a specific, in fact a resounding identity, they could have been free of any pull or tug of emotions towards their homeland, India. They are already in their way to get fitted in the multi-layers of American society, being part of the melting pot that proudly proclaims *pan-Americana*. But the story presents us with an unusual situation where they cling on with their Indian origin articulating and re-articulating their love for Indian-ness. From this point, Mr.Pirzada's presence and his own identity as a *common* brethren are pregnant with labyrinthine possibilities, which gradually involve all the basic tenets of Diaspora as an existential terrain. He is the one who spawns these webs of *firaaq* and *anuranan* that recur through the story, even after he stops coming to dine. So the story travels from a sense of presence to an abiding feeling of absence, a journey that is quintessentially diasporic in various assumptions.

As the title of the story reflects the most important happening or the action of the story is these evenings when Mr.Pirzada, a *desi* guy, came to dine with the narrator and her family in *videsh*. So this identity creates a connection which ends in an ironic disjunction as a new nation is set to appear by another bifurcation between East and West Pakistan. Mr.Pirzada becomes a man of no-nation. So belonging from a single homeland suddenly seems a stretched, exhausted connection. The narrator was completely taken aback by her father's words, *Mr.Pirzada is no longer considered Indian*. It reveals one of the fundamental aspects of such categorization, that *Indian-ness* has some specific *proto-affects* for this person, which is totalitarian and conclusive. Raymond Williams has referred culture as *a realized signifying system*, which is perfectly in concurrence with any homogenizing claim like the *Indian* or the *Pakistani*. There is a presupposition of culture as a *field of values* rather than as a *field of practice* in William's study of culture, but the Diaspora, as a field of culture, prioritizes practice over value. Jane Mummery in her critical piece has stated- *hyphenation is not an identity to be assumed, but a practice to be maintained. We need to remember, in other words, to keep on seeing it as practice as to 'how' we are, given that we can never fully pin down or practice 'what' we are*. Therefore, inviting Mr.Pirzada for dinner is actually tantamount to an articulation of cultural sameness, which is indeed a kind of culture of practice. This becomes more evident from this comment made by the narrator in the story-

> *In search of compatriots, they*(her parents) *used to trail their fingers, at the start of each new semester……circling surnames familiar to their part of the world. It was in this manner they discovered Mr.Pirzada, and phoned him, and invited him to our home*

It speaks of an essential trove of living outside home, which is to find different ways of being at-home that makes this primarily an unknown figure more familiar. It is the kind of familiarity that is taken for granted, by the virtue of same origin. This apparent innocuous assertion is pertinent to culture of politics and the politics of identity. There is a sense of desperation in selecting "discovered" Mr.Pirzada as their guest. Now the question that arises is why this desperation to invite someone from their *homeland* given that hybridity claims a complete assimilation after a certain level. Isn't it a fact, which is further consolidated by this statement, that somewhere down the line tall claims of multiculturalism are too ambitious for practical application? This feeling of being not-at-home is actually derived from the desire of at-homeness, which is neither anti-subjectivist nor anti-essentialist. It is true that this practice of essentialising is not free of economical and political maneuvering, but, as far as this family is concerned, they feel a sense of community in the company of Mr.Pirzada and an emotional empathy in essentialising India as *the sprawling orange diamond*. Once Lila, who is also the narrator, puts up an innocent observation which is really intriguing from the point of anthropological interest-

> *It made no sense to me. Mr.Pirzada and my parents spoke the same language, the same jokes, looked more or less the same. They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands ……*

Significantly, this sameness has spurred this feeling of belonging to a same land and culture. This feeling of togetherness is further emboldened by the fact that India, or for that matter, the entire sub-continent region is caught in another political turbulence, a political separation, and the creation of another nation. This brings in the issue of history and tradition. What does the history or tradition imply for a diaspora community? Should they take up the history

of their homeland or should they follow the history of the place they have migrated to? This is an existential tension that problematises the very liberal and democratic claim of hybridity. In the story the father enquires, *What exactly do they teach you at school*? And, the mother, who is more inured with the changed reality, replies, *we live here now, she was born here,* so learning the history of India hold no meaning anymore. But this remains a question, why the multiculturalism of American society will not allow an Indian to pursue his or her own history? The narrator, being born in America, assumes a virtual third space, and hence, she is subjected to an oppressive dichotomy between her two selves, the one, following school curriculum, is obliged to learn American freedom movement, and the other self, which following the insistence of her father to learn Indian history, is more inclined to learn the history of Partition of 1947. Mr.Pirzada's position in this whole spectrum is no less interesting as he appears to be an instrument that intensifies the entire two-pulling within Lila. That's why her mother blamed Mr.Pirzada saying, *really Mr.Pirzada…Night after night you spoil her*. In one sense Pirzada does spoil her instilling in her an identity crisis that amplifies by the incidents in the Bangladesh war of 1971. Television seems to have played a crucial means for connection as the news from the battlefield constantly pours in creating spells of tension and a longish recollection of the homeland. The story, in a conclusive manner, shows that home is never completely jettisoned; instead it characterizes and conditions their present existence. In Diaspora studies home is often postulated as an *imaginary space, a very real spaces from which alone a certain level of redemption is possible*. Heidegger in his conception of *Da-sein* describes about an in-between space between *authentic* and *unauthentic* living. There is a tremendous tension involved in this space which injects a sense of agnosticism. The positioning of Pirzada actually comes close to this in-between space creating sadness from a sense of absence, which percolates across the subconscious of all the immigrants. This is more applicable in the case of Lila, the narrator and, more importantly, a second generation migrant. Her parents are more or less settled with the fact that *diaspora never returns,* but she is not. So she more viably qualifies for that *Dasein* state of existence. The story starts with a title consisting of a subordinate clause that automatically anticipates a main clause and the main clause is the entire story, describing and exposing the struggle that underlies any process of assimilation. The title in this sense reduces Mr.Pirzada to an instrument, a metaphor for root and nostalgia. His own human identity is actually reified as a cultural emissary. But the story equally lionizes him as a herald factor. So the dualism begins from the very title of the story.

The story is also critical of a narrow ethno-religious orientation of the Indian identity. In this sense diaspora is obviously a leveler to a certain extent. Religion is relatively an unexplored territory in the context of diaspora. Lila is taught by his father to identify the difference between Pakistan as *yellow* in colour and India as *orange*. This distinctness of India is barely romantic and reeked of a narrow exclusivism. Her father also says- *Lila as you see it is a different country a different colour*. Lila makes a very innocent gesture following this comment-

> *Now that I had learned Mr. Pirzada was not an Indian, I began to study him with extra care, to try to figure out what made him different.*

This expression, in a banal way, castigates such codification like the *Indian* or the *Pakistani*. Mr.Pirzada is a man of Botany researching on the specificity of different plants, but his position in the whole family of the narrator is potentially paradoxical as he is lumped together as a man of sub-continent. So his identity as a Bangladeshi and as a Muslim, after a certain level, doesn't have any importance in the narrator's house. Therefore it can be construed from

this example that diaspora helps bridging cultural, political and, most importantly, the religious gap between people and regions.

This story also takes a stand against Partition of 1947 in India. It was Lila's father who describes to her that fateful event as *one moment we were free and then we were sliced up……Hindus here, Muslims there*. The amount and the intensity of that segregation, of that gory event, remind us about the severity of religious fundamentalism that virtually is wedged within the hyphenated reality of diaspora. The story also informs that around 1500 million people were killed in massacre soon after the independence and partition. But the way Mr.Pirzada is welcomed and becomes an essential, integral part of the family, this whole religious binarism seems redundant. Diaspora does facilitate to redress such narrowness. Like *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh and *The infinity of Grace* by O.V Vijayan, this story within its limited scope questions the validity of forming nation through a huge human loss. The entire pumpkin episode, where all the characters engage themselves in cutting pumpkin, is an allegorical presentation of that partition. Partition in a way also forms an identity crisis and Mr. Pirzada is cruelly subjected to this as he misses his seven daughters and his wife alongside his loss of national identity. Nationalism or *cultural Fanonism* as concepts are against any *cultural bi-focality* which is eschewed in the gospel of diaspora. The story in nutshell holds forth all the problems that are associated with adaptation on the one hand and the cultural, religious nationalism on the other. Actually in some point the story appears as champion of diaspora and its much flaunted claim of *One World,* but never has it claimed of an absolute assimilation or dissolvement. So it opposes any extreme stand over diaspora as well. In the story Lila and her mother prepare themselves for the celebration of Halloween Day and when interrogated, Lila's mother replies that *it is the tradition*. This is an exemplary situation of *melting-pot* concept. It is on returning from this celebration that Lila learns about the departure of Pirzada. This is not a mere coincidence but it symbolically and implicitly shows that the coexistence of Halloween and Mr. Pirzada (the desire for root) is perhaps not possible. It really unveils the crucial issue of multiculturalism as the ideal form of constructing a liberal society. It is evident that Lila and her mother enjoy the Halloween festival without any feeling of being discriminated or being imposed upon. But it remains a point of contention and curiosity whether they would have been equally allowed to celebrate Diwali or other Indian festivals. Clifford in his essay on diaspora mentions diaspora as discourse, something that is mostly pre-conceived. Some issues are not clarified, or deliberately left gray. We never know had the Lila's family been subjected to economical or social relegation how well they would have embraced the American culture. It has to be taken into account that after Freud, Nietzsche, Foucault, even a mere emotion or any simplest gestures of human being no longer remain as innocuous as it was usually conceived earlier. So if the mother is unfazed in her acceptance of the American tradition as her own, it has to be remembered concurrently that she is virtually left with no option than to be graced by that tradition of the most powerful country of the world. It is mentioned in the story that the Bangladesh war doesn't feature in the news regularly and nobody in Boston, where they live, is bothered of this war happening in an underdeveloped country. Even Lila was restricted from leafing through the pages of the Indian history in the library of her school. So the assimilation is not an easy and straight affair. It was Bhikhu Parekh who questioned the western liberal tradition stretching from Mill to Rawls. It is, concisely, through his study, that it came to be largely understood that this tradition in the guise of tolerance actually maintains a discriminatory attitude towards the non-West. But the story as it is already said doesn't embark on such difficult and nuanced perception of multiculturalism of diaspora. Rather the whole story builds up a particular pattern of assimilation and pains of missing home. In Foucauldian deliberation of Power any discursive socio-political dispensation will discreetly

muzzle marginal voices in their aim to form a unified structure. This story is not absolved from these charges.

However within its fictional limitation and obligation this story takes on, tangentially, a postmodern perspective because it claims nothing absolute. Neither the meeting with Pirzada is completely free from any divisive politics of identity nor is the need for assimilation in America entirely non-coercive. So when Mr.Pirzada comes to dine, it is actually the whole lot of nation, home, the politics of assimilation, the nationalism, the separation and the desire for re-unification have sneaked into this small microcosmic space of the family. He actually ushers in *anuranan* which starts tingling and finally gets morphed into a *Firaaq* as the girl feels attracted to the history of India and partition. She visits library and looks through pages of Indian freedom movement which was never taught to her. She is more informed of the American Revolution and the freedom struggle. It is the interaction with Pirzada that helped her finding another root of hers, hence her subjectivity undergoes reframing. In fact, through her, a new space for hybridity has opened up. It is assumed in the studies of diaspora that the borders are the most important section of a community as it is in-between those borders the real reciprocation between cultures takes place. This border is very reflectively showed through the story, especially through the character of Lila. The inter-mingling between the Oriental and the Occidental is very subtly portrayed through Lila. Her confusions, her encounters are the literal enactment of what a migrant initially comes across. So the *anuranan* most effectively germinates within her.

At the end, the narrator writes-

> *…..It was only then, raising my water glass in his name, that I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughter for so many months……my parents predicted, correctly, that, we would never see him again. Since January, each night before bed, I had continued to eat, for the sake of Mr. Pirzada's family, a piece of candy I had saved from Halloween. That night there was no need to. Eventually, I threw them away.*

With the departure of Pirzada that *anuranan* finally breaks and restarts with a new course. This story, above all its diaspora considerations, is essentially a human tale that is contingent on basic impulses of human life. After all it's about loving and missing someone, something that is more sensitively portrayed by Tagore in *Kabuliwlal*. Life, beyond swashbuckling theories of Foucault and Derrida or any politicization of private, is also a space of memory where some coveted moments get etched permanently. Pirzada is, in that sense, a memory which, through its pain and satisfaction, is stashed away in Lila's memory for ever.

Someplace
Will recall a face
And your memory will trace
The past years apace
To dwell on bygone days
When we laughed together
Sometimes, someplace, somewhere
When we were together

-Bashabi Fraser.

This human tale, like this poem, leaves us before an invisible void where we, standing at the edge of our daily existence, start interacting with our most intimate self to get the necessary intimacy with life.

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Trimetric of Land, Culture and Identity in Indian English Fiction

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Indian English Fiction is a vast treasure trove of fictional narratives that give an expression to the cultural ethos of the nation. The edifice of Indian English Fiction in fact stands on the trimetrical axes of land, culture and identity that defines and renders shape to it. Contemporary fiction, owing to the large scale influence of the Diaspora is replete with musings of 'home'. In other words land holds an eminent place in Indian English Fiction as a symbol of 'home'; it is the roots that keep the individual grounded onto his native land and links him to his past through the inherited cultural ethos that he carries within his self. Land and culture are the essential elements that engender an individual identity thereby forming the important trimetric that characterizes Indian English Fiction. In other words this trimetric is the major concern of contemporary Indian novelists, who delineate them through their fictional narratives and characters.

Land is of prime importance in contemporary fiction. It is inter-related with the concept of roots or the home. Man being central to the narrative, it is natural that his association with land would be equally important. Land, roots, home or nation, whatever be the source of reference, an individual's identity is interminably bound to it. In fact land and culture are interchangeable terms, one being bound with the other, and an integral part of the other. Every land/home/nation has its own set of customs, tradition, ethics, beliefs and practices that contribute to the formation of the native identity. No matter where the person is placed, the individual always carries within the self, the influence of this native identity that is an amalgamation of his land and culture.

In the present scenario of a globalized world wherein an individual is displaced from his homeland and is an immigrant in another, the influence, presence and the expression of this trimetric becomes interlinked with the individual's need of assimilation into the new land; a new world of pluralistic and hybrid culture.

Land, culture and identity is fused together in the narrative of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2006), which is set in the Sunderbans. The novel begins with a comprehensive description of the landscape, alluding to the myth associated with the origin of the Ganges. Ghosh has very beautifully portrayed the river with the metaphor of a cloth; India's fabric, ". . . the ragged fringe of her sari, the achol that follows her, half-wetted by the sea." (THT 6).

The very character of the islands of Sunderban is defined and created by the landscape of the archipelago. The river forms various small channels that cut across the land, meeting to create confluences that are known as the "mohona" (THT 7). The place also referred to as the "bhatir desh – the tide country" (THT 8) is remarkable for its geographical bounds are determined by the tide. "This is a land half-submerged at high tide: it is only in falling that the water gives birth to the forest." (THT 8). This inconsistency of the land the inherent insecurity that is a result of the dissolution of borders influences the life and characters of the people living on the islands. Kanai, one of the protagonist found out that his western education and knowledge were inadequate in an environment where life was lived in close communion with nature; in fact dictated and directed by it.

If Sunderban is the landscape that dominates the narrative of Ghosh then the Kashmir valley looms large over the tale of Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005). The valleys, hills, the pine trees, the river Muskadoon, the village of Pachigam, the people and their Kashmiriyat hold a significant influence on the life of the characters even when the story shifts

to the locales of the distant America. Even the names of the characters central to the tale are inspired by nature: Bhoomi (earth) preferred to be called as Boonyi, the local name for the "celestial Kashmiri chinar tree" (STC 46), while her mother was named Pamposh after the lotus but instead preferred the nickname "Giri, meaning a walnut kernel" (STC 51). The beauty of the Shalimar garden is depicted by the author enthralling the readers with its enigmatic splendour. India, the daughter of Boonyi and Max reconnects to her Kashmiri roots; "Kashmir lingered in her . . . She no longer saw this as an American story. It was a Kashmiri story. It was hers." (STC 372).

The pristine environment of Dehradoon is an integral part of Ruskin Bond's fiction. In his first novella, *The Room on the Roof* (1996), Bond details the local flavour of his beloved Dehra. The story begins with beautiful nature imagery, striking and vivid in its description.

> THE LIGHT SPRING RAIN rode on the wind, into the trees, down the road; it brought an exhilarating freshness to the air, a smell of earth, a scent of flowers; it brought a smile to the eyes of the boy on the road. (ROR 545)

Land/Nature is the setting for all the novels: a basis, an inspiration, or an influence. In all three novels the presence of nature is unmistakably strong and integral. If land defines the narrative and character of Ghosh's fiction, then in Rushdie land is entangled with the political and emotional makeup of its characters, while it becomes an integral part of Rusty's life in Bond liberating him from his confined life.

Land and culture are intertwined. Researches have proved that land and environment affect and influence the cultural norms of its people. Rituals, customs, tradition, language and food habits depict this unique association of both. For instance Eskimos have varied expressions for the word snow while the Marshalese has a variety of expressions for the coconut.

Ghosh details the native tradition and belief of the people living in the Sunderban in his narrative. The myth of Bon Bibi and her brother Shah Jongoli, Dokkhin Rai-the tiger demon and his demons, reveal the reverence for the land; the mystery and sheer power of nature. Till today the Sunderban is known for its ferocious tigers and the fragility of life held in balance at the mercy of nature: the man eaters, crocodiles, tides, cyclones and storms. Bon Bibi is the mother earth protecting her children from the tiger demon-Dokkhin Rai, while the dolphins are her messengers. The culture of the island is held in association with the land and land in Sunderban is not stable nor is life. Every step is taken in reverence to and with the blessing of the deified gods and deities of the forest for protection and prosperity.

Kashmiriyat is the culture represented in Rushdie. The village of Pachigam in Kashmir is an example of love and brotherhood. Divisions of race and religion are not a hindrance for its people and so Boonyi, a Brahmin girl is married off to a Muslim boy, Shalimar Noman with blessings and lot of goodwill. The traditional Kashmiri food, "the legendary wazwaan; the Banquet of Thirty-Six Courses Minimum." (61); the folk art from of "bhand pather or clown stories" (STC 61); co-exist with the myth sourced from a variety of various sources like Hindu mythology relate to the dance and influence of the shadow planets- Rahu and Ketu over the human mind and passions, the presence of mystics like Nazrebaddoor and belief in totems and superstitions like the belief in snake luck by Firdaus Noman, displays the influence of the land on the culture.

The celebration of Holi in Bond's novella is resplendent with the coming of spring, a time for joy and merriness in every part of India. The natural vibrancy of nature's colours get mingled with the colours of Holi, moistening the lonely and desolate heart of Rusty.

> The walls of the houses were suddenly patched with splashes of colour, and just as suddenly the trees seemed to have burst into flower; for in the forest there were armies of rhododendrons, and by the river the poinsettias danced; the cherry and the plum were blossom; thin e snow in the mountains had melted, and the streams were rushing torrents; the new leaves on the trees were full of sweetness, and the

> young grass held both dew and sun, and made emerald of every dew-drop . . . Clouds of coloured dust rose in the air and spread, and jets of water - green and orange and purple, all rich emotional colours - burst out everywhere. (ROR 566-67)

Cultural ethos of a community or group of people are defined and directed by the land. The deification of nature and animals like tiger, projects the importance of nature that influences life in the islands of Sunderban wherein man lives life at the mercy of nature and the natural elements. The fusion of cultures and happy co-existence of the various ethnic and religious groups provides a benevolence of the land that generates a peaceful life and brotherhood in the pristine environs of the Kashmir valley, which is often referred to as the paradise on earth. In a similar vein there is the celebration of the coming of spring after a chilling winter; a breath of fresh air and new life that finds an apt expression in the jubilation of the people in the revelry of Holi.

Land and culture being complementary, they are the basis of an individual's self-identification. A person living in intimate interaction with nature inculcates the inherent simpler and natural life, devoid of all artificiality and superficiality, tuned in to the true spirit of life and nature. Modern, city life is however distanced from land and divorced from the genuine concerns and understanding of life.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Fokir is the character who is deeply imbued with the spirit of the land and nature of his environment. A fisherman by profession he lives in close communion with the land and earns his livelihood from it. The simplicity and rusticity of Fokir is evident from his innocence and a lack of greed. When Piya offers him money after being rescued from getting drowned, he is bewildered by the sight of so much money. Yet all he takes from her is the amount lost to the guard. Fokir stands in the novel in sharp contrast to the modern and educated Kanai, who with all his expertise and knowledge still falls short of his stature in a place that nullifies all superficial and worldly knowledge. On one of the excursion for the Irrawady dolphins Kanai is left behind on one of the islands and finds himself ill equipped to handle the dangers of the forest. The mysterious vision of the tiger strikes him with such fear that he faints and is rescued in time by Piya and Fokir. Even at the end of the novel it is again Fokir who saves Piya from the storm; shielding her and facing the wrath of its force on his own body. "She could feel the bones of his cheeks as if they had superimposed upon her own; it was as if the storm had given them what life could not; it had fused them together and made them one." (THT 391). Fokir is a simple person without any affectations, completely harmonized with his environment and land while Kanai finds himself ill at ease in the islands. His westernized education and expertise are of no use. Even his knowledge of various languages is not essential for the illiterate Fokir to communicate with Piya. The sacrifice of Fokir transforms both, Piya and Kanai. They realize their true self and affirm to life and responsibility as is evident in Kanai's decision to return and Piya's to stay back and take the responsibility of Fokir's family.

A similar association with nature lends the freeness of spirit that Boonyi imbibes from her mother Pamposh. She represents the feminine principle of nature that cannot be bounded or restrained. When Shalimar refers to her as the earth, he is correct in his allusion but fails miserably in his assumption when he says, "She was the earth and the earth was the subject and he had grabbed it and sought to bend its destiny to his will." (STC 47). Boonyi represents the free spirit of the land that transcends all societal bounds, yet comes back after her illusions shatter. The dull, debauched living of the city life leaves her bloated and in a degenerated state. But the valley restores her lost vigour and beauty back to her, and also her resilient spirit is revived that bravely waits for her end. Shalimar's identity is also defined by his relation to his art and the land where he practices. The landscape of Kashmir abounds with tall trees like the pine, the chinar, etc. Shalimar literally walks on air as he balances himself on the tight rope. His flight does metamorphose into his voyage around the world; from India to America. His

transformation into a killing machine reflects the problem of insurgency that has ruined the beauty and serenity of Kashmir and the loss of the Kashmiri way of life. Land is also synonymous with home from where the individual is displaced and dispossessed in the modern globalized world. Shalimar symbolizes this displacement and so does Max and India. Maximilian Ophuls, a German Jew creates his identity under the shadow of the Holocaust and loss of home and family. Commenting on the process of self-identification he says, "The reinvention of the self, that classic American theme . . . began for me in the nightmare of old Europe's conquest by evil. That self can so readily be remade is a dangerous, narcotic discovery. Once you've started using that drug, it isn't easy to stop." (STC 162). This power of transformation or metamorphosis is best employed and imbibed by the migrant for whom the whole world is home; for him land is not a geographical area barricaded and confined. Yet the influence and pull of the land one originally belongs to is ingrained in the psyche through the emotions and experiences attached to the homeland. Max experiences flashes from his past while visiting the Line of Control in Kashmir, which unsettles him. "Then his history reasserted itself and he climbed back into its familiar garments – in particular the history of his hometown . . . its people's lives." (STC 180). India when she realizes her true identity confirms to the pulls of her roots that connect her to her mother and her past as Kashmira. She is all ice, cool and focused on her target when she faces her enemy and in the end "There was no India. There was only Kashmira, and Shalimar the clown." (STC 398).

The identity of Rusty is forced into confirmation by his disciplinarian guardian. English customs and traditions imposed on the young boy distances him from his land and culture; his immediate environment. The rain lashing on his face and the splash of colours of Holi, generates a new energy in him that helps him to break free from his guardian's house. His appointment as Kishen's English teacher and his growing attachment to Meena, Kishen's mother takes him forth on his journey towards maturity. His identity is mingled fully with his environ but does not realize it until he decides to leave. The decision to leave is also influenced by the absence of his friends, Somi, Ranbir, Suri, which makes him feel lonely and out of place. However the delinquent situation of Kishen makes Rusty reassess his decision and he decides to take responsibility of the child and return to the hills.

> They had to go back. To bathe at the water-tank and listen to the morning gossip, to sit in the fruit trees and eat in the chaat shop and perhaps make a garden on the roof; to eat and sleep; to work, to live , to die. (ROR 660)

Identity requires specificity of history and culture. In the modern times this specificity is temporal and shifting thereby lending a certain degree of complexity to the process of self-identification. No matter where a person is displaced, the influence and presence of his land and culture cannot be ignored or negated. It emerges either through the story, the theme, the characters or the situations inherent in Indian English Fiction. In fact it can be said that land, culture and identity are fused together to give a definite form and shape to the edifice of Indian English Fiction, which characterizes it as a unique expression of the life, culture and ethos of India and its people.

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The World of 'Marginalised' in Mahasweta Devi's Play "Mother of 1084"

G.Gulam Tariq

Mahasweta Devi was born in the year 1926 and belongs to Bengal. She began to show keen interest in literature since the young age itself. This can be witnessed in her contribution of several stories to the various literary magazines. Her first novel "Nati" was published in 1957. Gradually she raised herself to the level of a writer activist as she spent many crusades for the rights of the tribals. From 1980 onwards, Mahasweta Devi has been actively associated with many grass root level social movements around the plight of bonded labor, persisting feudalism in rural polity, state negligence especially to the marginalized section of the society which includes communities like untouchables and tribals.

In recognition of her social activism through the media of literature, she has been honored with Padma Vibhushan, Magsaysay and Padmasree awards for her activist work amongst dispossessed tribal communities. Besides this, she is the recipient of the covetous, India's highest literary award Gnanpith Award (1996) and YashwantRao Chavan National Award for 2010 "for her contribution to national integration, democratic values and the socio-economic development of India. Recognizing the work of the writer and social activist, the Human Resource Development Ministry has appointed her as National Research Professor for a second term of five years from February, 2011. This honor fetches her Rs. 75,000.00 a month. This has added another feather to the crown of her glory as a dynamic writer. Being a social activist, this octogenarian recently actively took part in issues like Sigur- Nandigram political controversy, undocumented plight of the tribals in Gujarat. Her plays,

> "*represent a profound concern for human predicament and sincere hope for the better future of mankind.*" [1]

Before acquainting ourselves with the plight of the marginalized, to know the exact meaning of the term **'marginal'** or '**marginalized**' is of vital importance. According to the Oxford Dictionary the concept '**marginalize'** means '**to make somebody feel as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; or to put somebody in a powerless position'.** So, the word 'Marginalized' refers to the group of people who are deprived of their minimum rights and are exploited.

In Post-colonial dialects the term, 'marginalized' occupies a prominent place. The term 'subaltern' or 'marginalized' incorporates the entire people who are subordinates in terms of class, caste, gender and office. It is the subject position that defines marginality. The lack and deprivation, loneliness and alienation, subjugation and subordination, the resignation and silence, the resilience and neglect, mark the lives of 'marginalized', even when they resist and rise up. They feel bounded and defeated by their subject positions. They have no representatives or spokespersons in the society they live in and so

helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential parts as human beings.

The Naxalite movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's was also an important influence on her work. Devi, in a 1983 interview, points to this movement as the first major event that she felt,

"*an urge and an obligation to document*"[2]

This leftist militant movement, which started in the Naxalbari region of West Bengal, began as a rural revolt of landless workers and tribal people against landlords and moneylenders. In urban centers, this movement attracted participation from student groups. Devi's **Hajar Churashir Ma,** ('Mother of 1084') is the story of an upper middle class woman whose life is shattered, when her son is killed for his nexus with Naxalites.

The play **Mother of 1084** is the original translation of Mahasweta Devi's Bengali play "Hajar Churashir Ma" has the best illustrations for the marginalized category. The neglected and suppressed plight of the woman is represented by Sujata Chatterjee, mother of the protagonist of the play Brati Chatterjee whose ideology i.e., commitment to the revolutionary and Communist Naxalite movement has labeled him as a rebel, and was killed ruthlessly by the police in an 'encounter'. In the play **Mother of 1084** Sujata Chatterjee, a traditional apolitical upper middle class lady, an employee who awakens one early morning to the shattering news that her youngest and favourite son, Brati, is lying dead in the police morgue bearing the corpse no.1084. Her efforts to understand her son's revolutionary activism lead her to reflect on her own alienation from the complacent, hypocritical, bourgeois society against which he had rebelled.

The play moves around Sujata, a middle-aged woman belonging to a 'bhadralok', bourgeoisie Calcutta family. Born into a conservative, affluent family, Sujata is advised to pursue her B.A. so that it helps her marriage prospects, but is ultimately married off to Dibyanath Chatterjee, a chartered accountant, despite his unsound financial situation. In thirty-four years of their married life, Sujata gives birth to four children, two sons (Jyoti and Brati) and two daughters (Nipa and Tuli). When the novel opens, two of her children are already married, Jyoti to Bina and Nipa to Amrit. In the eyes of the world, all of them are leading perfectly happy and settled lives, but as Sujata goes on to discover later, that this happiness is only superficial.

Significantly, Sujata makes several other discoveries, only after the sudden and mysterious death of Brati, her younger son, with whom she had always shared a very special relationship. For instance, she discovers that all her thirty-four years of her married life, she has been living a lie, as her husband, being an incorrigible philanderer, always cheated her with his mother's and children's tacit approval. He fixed up a petty bank job for her, when Brati was barely three years old, is not out of any consideration for her economic independence, but essentially to help the family tide over a temporary financial crisis. And, as soon as the tide is over, he wants her to give up the job, which Sujata simply refuses.

Later, she also discovers that her children, too, are leading lives very similar to her own. If there is someone who has dared to be different, it's Brati. Sullenly rebellious, right from his childhood, Brati has made no secret of his disregard, even contempt, for his familial code and value-system. Turning his back upon this decadent and defunct code, Brati decides to join the Naxalite movement sweeping through the State of West Bengal in late 1960's and early 1970's.

Unaware of his secret mission, Sujata is not able to dissuade her son from joining this movement. During his period of struggle, he comes into contact with a young girl, Nandini, who is also a member of the underground movement and with whom he shares his vision of a new world order. On being betrayed by one of his comrades, Brati and three of his close associates, Somu, Parth and Laltu, are brutally murdered by the hired assassins of the police.

Later, the police call up his father, asking him to come and identify the dead body of his son, who, has in the meantime been divested of his identity as a person, and given another 'dehumanized identity' as corpse number 1084. Not only does the father refuse to go, but he also forbids other family members from doing so. Outraged at the manner in which his associates, his immediate family and the state have abandoned the dead Brati, his mother, Sujata decides to go, throwing all pretensions to false social respectability and the fear of public censure, to winds.

Dibyanath Chatterjee, father of Brati Chatterjee is represented, as an honest representative of the male dominated society. As soon as he comes to know about the news of his son, instead of rushing to the police station he tries to hush up the matter. Sujata is aghast to see the indifferent behaviour of her husband. He was least bothered to talk about this matter to his wife Sujata. The following sentences reveal very clearly how much she was neglected by him,

"Sujata : (uncomprehending, in a panic). What will you hush up? What are you talking about?
Dibyanath: Jyoti, there is no time to waste. He goes out.
Sujata : Jyoti! (Jyoti busy in dialing a number. He does not reply) Jyoti! (Reproving). Jyoti! What's Happened? [3]

From the above lines one can easily conclude that Sujata was neglected though she was the second important member of the family. Dibyanath Chatterjee bothered to consult his son Jyoti rather than his wife, Sujata. Sujata felt shocked when Dibyanath Chatterjee refuses to go to the police station with the fear of stigma in the society for his son's involvement in anti - government affairs. In the words of Sujata,

"But that soon? Even before the body's been identified? A father gets the news on the telephone and does not even think of rushing to have a look? All he can think of is that he'd be comprised if his car went to Kantakapukur?"[4]

The four chapters in the play mark a new stage in the evolution of Sujata's consciousness, as it enables her to re-order her fragmented and chaotic life in search of a cohesive identity. Every time she visits her own past or that of Brati, Somu's mother or Nandini, her long-suppressed personal loss is slowly released into the ever-widening, spirals of betrayal, guilt and suffering. From a weak-willed, hopelessly dependent and a non-assertive moral coward, Sujata is transformed into a morally assertive, politically enlightened and a socially defiant individual.

In the first chapter, significantly titled '**Dawn**,' Sujata primarily returns to her interior, private world of personal suffering, torture, betrayal and loneliness. Negotiating the inner time in relation to her immediate familial situation, she becomes aware of how she and Brati were not just fellow sufferers but also soul mates.

In the second chapter, '**Afternoon**,' Sujata's visit to the bank to get jewellery from the locker is only a pretext for her to visit the house of Somu's mother. A close associate of Brati, Somu had been killed in the same encounter. More significantly, Brati had spent his night in Somu's house before his mysterious disappearance and death.

While Sujata goes to Somu's mother with the specific aim of retrieving the memories of Brati's last few hours, it turns out to be her entry and initiation into another world altogether. It is the world of primitive squalor, filth, poverty, degradation and subhuman existence that only hovers tentatively on the margins of 'bhadraloks' consciousness. She enters into the little known world of slum dwellers. The sight of Somu's ageing mother, her disgruntled daughter and that of their ramshackle tenement with a straw roof is enough to complete the rituals of initiation.

In the third chapter, titled **'Evening**,' when she visits Nandini, who apart from being Brati's comrade-in-arms was also his beloved. It is Nandini who reconstructs for Sujata all the events leading up to Brati's betrayal and murder. In the process, she also initiates Sujata into the little known world of the underground movement, explaining to her the logic for an organized rebellion, giving her first hand account of state repression and its multiple failures. It's through Nandini that Sujata is finally able to understand the reasons for Brati's political convictions and his rejection of the bourgeoisie code. All this leaves her so completely bewildered that she openly admits to Nandini, "I didn't really know Brati."[5]

In the last chapter of the novel titled '**Night**,' we meet a transformed Sujata, one who is more self-assured, morally confident and politically sensitive. She decides to leave the house in which Brati never felt at home, where he wasn't valued while he was alive, nor his memory respected after his death. Having found a soul mate in Brati, she turns her back on Dibyanath and his decadent value-system.

Bound by a sense of moral responsibility, she does go through all the rituals and ceremonies connected with Tuli's engagement, but during the party, she maintains stiff, studied silence. Her insistence on wearing a plain, white sari for the party is also a

significant gesture. The feelings of Sujata were not respected but misinterpreted by the members of the family. The given conversation between Sujata (Tuli, the second daughter of Sujata) and Tuli represents this thought,

Tuli : Didn't Brati laugh at other people's beliefs?
Sujata: Brati's belief was so different from your belief in the Swami, or Bina's in her prayer room, that it sounds utterly absurd when you drag his name into the same context.
Tuli : The same thing again! You will react every time we mention Brati.
Sujata : Yes.
Tuli : Are we not worthy enough to pronounce his name?
Sujata: The way you pronounce it! To hurt me! [6]

On one occasion Dibyanath Chatterjee accused Sujata for misleading their son which has led him to become a rebel. The egoistic nature of the father is understood in his words:

"Bad company, bad friends, the mother's influence" [7]

It is a well known fact in the society that father and mother play an important role in bringing up the children. But it is ridiculous to notice that when the children get spoiled, complete blame is thrown on mother. Being physically weak and fragile, (for a few years, she had been living with a rotten appendix inside her system), and traumatized by her younger son's death and subsequent repression of grief, she simply gives up on life. When she screams and collapses into a heap, her husband is quick to react that her "appendix" has burst. Whatever the symbolic overtones of his statement, she certainly succumbs to the slow process of inner-outer rot and decay. Finally, as she herself says, "Now that Brati is dead, I, too, wouldn't like to go on living." She discovers her inner self but on the whole loses her will to live and survive.

Time constantly swings back and forth, and so does the pendulum of two interconnected, intertwined lives, that of Sujata and her son, Brati. Interestingly, it is death that unites them both, irrevocably asserting the authenticity of their lives, too.

Mahasweta Devi's predominant concerns are the tribal backwaters, the "exploitations of the Adivasis by the landed rich or the urban-administrative machinery callously perpetuating a legacy of complicity with the colonizers, bonded labour and prostitution, the destitution and misery of city dwellers who are condemned to live at the fringes and eke-out a meager livelihood, the plight of woman who are breadwinners and victims of male sexual violence, dependent widows, ill-treated wives, and unwanted daughters whose bodies can fetch a price – are adequately represented".[8].

From the above situations, one can infer the insignificant role of Sujata in the play **Mother of 1084**, as a woman who has been relegated to the position of a neglected, suppressed, ill-treated, mechanical and marginalized in all forms in the male

dominated society who consider woman as an object of sex, only to reproduce, bring money when needed and does not possess even a voice to express her own concerns.

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Premonition of Death in J.M.Synge's Poetry

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Edmund John Millington Synge (16 April 1871 – 24 March 1909) was an Irish writer. He was a playwright, poet and lover of folklore. He was influenced by W.B.Yeats after meeting him and with his advice he decided to go to Aran Islands to prepare himself for further creative work. He joined W.B.Yeats, Lady Gregory, Augusta, and George William Russell to form the Irish National Theatre Society, which later was established as the Abbey Theatre.. He is best known for his play *The Playboy of the Western World*, which caused riots during its opening run at the Abbey Theatre.

Synge was born in Newtown Villas, Rathfarnham, County Dublin on 16 April 1871.He was the youngest son in a family of eight children. His parents were part of the Protestant middle and upper class: Rathfarnham was rural part of the county, and during his childhood he was interested in ornithology. His earliest poems are somewhat Wordsworthian in tone. His poetry reflects his love for nature and the richness of the landscape.

Synge was educated privately at schools in Dublin and later studied the musical instruments like piano, flute, violin. He was interested in music and his knowledge of music reflects in his poems. He wanted to make career in music but changed his mind and decided to focus on literature. Synge graduated in 1892 from Trinity College. In 1893, he published his first known work, a Wordsworth-influenced poem, *Kottabos: A College Miscellany*. He was interested in Irish antiquities. He had been the member of Irish League but due to the differences of opinion between Maud Gonne and Synge. Synge had different opinions about the revolution and regeneration of Ireland. He also had questions with regard to the religion as he got acquainted with the Darwinian theory.

Synge suffered from Hodgkin's disease, a form of cancer at the time untreatable. He died some weeks before his 38th birthday when he was trying to complete his last play, *The Last Black Supper*.

Synge suffered his first attack of Hodgkin's disease in 1897**.** The following year, he spent the summer on the Aran Islands. He spent the next five summers on the islands, collecting stories and folklore and perfecting his Irish, while continuing to live in Paris for most of the rest of the year. This collection became the basis of most of his work. His first account of life on the islands was published in the *New Ireland Review* in 1898 and his book-length journal, *The Aran Islands*, was completed in 1901 and published in 1907. Synge was advised to remove the direct references of place or names from it by Lady Gregory, he refused to do it as he wanted to make it more realistic.

In 1903, Synge left Paris and moved to London. He had written two one-act plays, *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen.* Both these plays were based on the stories he had collected on the Aran Islands. *The Shadow of the Glen* was performed in 1903. *Riders to the Sea* was performed in 1904. *The Shadow of the Glen* was based on a story of an unfaithful wife. A third one-act play, *The Tinker's Wedding* was drafted earlier but published in 1908 due to the anti-clerical elements. His next play, *The Well of the Saints* was staged at the theatre in 1905. All his plays were performed at the Abbey Theatre. Synge became director of the theatre along with W.B.Yeats and Lady Gregory but differed with their idea of theatre on account of realism.

The play, *The Playboy of the Western World,* was first performed in the Abbey on 26 January 1907. It was the controversial yet is regarded as the masterpiece by Synge. The comedy centers on the story of apparent parricide. There were riots only for mentioning the name of one undergarment. The rioters were addressed and rebuked by W.B.Yeats when returned. He felt it disgrace of the audience for welcoming the Irish young writers.

His *Poems and Translations* was published on 8 April 1909 with a preface by Yeats. Yeats and Molly Allgood completed Synge's unfinished final play, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, and it was presented by the Abbey players in January 1910 with Allgood in the lead role. Synge died in Dublin on 24 March 1909. He is buried in Mount Jerome Graveyard, Harolds Cross, Dublin 6.

Synge is commonly described as an enigma, a person who is hard to read and understand. John Masefield, Synge's acquaintance, also thinks Synge, a strange personality and Synge's problems and thoughts about life are due to his poor health.

In stanza IV of Yeats's "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory", he summarizes his view that Synge was unhealthy, sick and in pain throughout his career.

And that enquiring man John Synge comes next,
That dying chose the living world for text
And never could have rested in the tomb
But that, long travelling, he had come
Towards nightfall upon certain set apart
In a most desolate stony place,
Towards nightfall upon a race
Passionate and simple like his heart.

As Synge had been suffering from Hodgin's disease, he perhaps was thinking of the approaching death. His poetry reflects this element of approaching death that makes him pessimistic. Synge fell in love with Cherrie Matheson, a friend of his cousin and was turned down. This rejection also made him pessimistic

The Poems and Translations (1909) gives some indication of Synge's range from the spiritual delicacy of Petrarch to the earthiness of Villon, from nature mysticism to the acute observation of Irish people in an Irish landscape (Ousby, Ian. (ed.) 1994: *The Wordsworth Companion to Literature in English*, Cambridge:Wordsworth Reference)

Though his fame rests on the plays, his thought in poems is worthwhile. As it has been described in *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1990) edited by Margaret Drabble as, 'His *Poems and Translations* (many of which foreshadow his imminent death) appeared in 1909.'

We can relate his concept of premonition of death through his following poems – *On an Anniversary* and *To the Oaks of Glencree*.

On an Anniversary

(After Reading the dates in a book of Lyrics)
With Fifteen – ninety or Sixteen – Sixteen
We end Cervantes, Marot, Nashe or Green:
The Sixteen – thirteen till two score and nine
Is Crashaw's niche, that honey – lipped divine.
And so when all my little work is done
They'll say I came in Eighteen-seventy-one,
And died in Dublin …. What year will they write
For my poor passage to the stall of Night?

The poet has expressed his feelings very directly and with the rhetorical question. The poem has the references to the poets like Cervantes (1547-1616), Marot, Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), Robert Greene (1558-1592). Further he speaks of the period between 1613 and 1649 referring to Richard Crashaw (1612 - 1649),a devotional poet.

In the first part, he perhaps refers to all those poets from Cervantes to Crashaw who lived between the later half of 16th century to first half of the 17th century, which is supposed to be the most celebrated period of the English poetry. This period refers to the golden Elizabethan i.e. Shakespearean and Jacobean i.e. Metaphysical period in English Literature.

In the concluding part of the poem, Synge calls his poetic output 'little work'. He modestly calls it negligible in comparison with the poetic output by the masters he has referred to directly in his poem and wants to refer some of them indirectly. The readers and the lovers of literature would state his birth-year as they know that the poet was born in 1871. He is certain about this 'little work' remaining 'little' because of the approaching death due to the disease he suffers from.

After having read the title of the poem, the parenthesis makes us aware the impulse behind the poem. Every reader reads the writers information and learns about his life and death or the life span. Here the poet also reads the periods of different writers but realizes the death approaching due to the disease. But he doesn't know the exact date and

time but is certain of it. After the death, he is unable to see the date and time recorded against his name. His rhetorical question –

"…. What year will they write
For my poor passage to the stall of Night?" –

makes the readers introvert. It also suggests the certainty of Death and the ignorance of it by the human beings. His very small life and scanty literary career has been expressed using a very proper phrase 'my poor passage'. This passage was about to end by the forthcoming death referred as 'the stall of Night'.

Synge's poem, *To the Oaks of Glencree* also reflects the similar mood. It runs as under:

To The Oaks Of Glencree

My arms are round you, and I lean
Against you, while the lark,
Sings over us, and golden lights and green
Shadows are on your bark.

There'll come a season when you'll stretch
Black boards to cover me;
Then in Mount Jerome I will lie, poor wretch,
With worms eternally.

The poem in question also reflects the same feeling of premonition of death. In the poem, *On an Anniversary*, the poet reminds the thought of approaching death after reading the information about the life span of the poets. He then expresses his uncertainty about the date and year the people are going to quote against his name as the death year.

In the poem, *To the Oaks of Glencree,* the poet addresses the Oak tree. Within these two quatrains, he reflects both the moods of joy and pessimism very effectively. In the first stanza, he describes how the narrator has been leaning against the oak tree. At the time, the lark is singing over the tree and the poet. The branch of the tree has golden lights and the shadow of green leaves. As the narrator is leaning against the tree, he also facilitates with all the natural happiness.

But in the very second stanza, the poet reflects the sordid reality of his and obviously of everybody's life. He tells the oak tree that the same oak tree, pouring shadow or golden sunlight, might become a cover of his coffin. He speaks of his burial somewhere in Mount Jerome decaying his dead body with worms. The phrase, 'the poor wretch', is used for the body of a person in general and of the poet himself which is one or other day is going to decay in the soil i.e. in Nature. In the last line, he refers to the body buried after death as eternally lying with worms. It reflects the everlasting soul and triviality of the physical structure.

Both these poems reflect his knowledge of music in rhyme and rhythm. In *On an Anniversary*, he uses rhyming couplet; whereas in *To the Oaks of Glencree*, he uses alternate rhyme in quartet. The brevity of expression is effectively conveyed through the phrases and the metaphors.

If we relate the arguments in both the poems, we feel the poems reflect the premonition of death of the poet-narrator, due to Hodgin's disease. In the poem, *On an Anniversary*, he regrets over 'poor passage' means the small life-span and literary career; but in *To the Oaks of Glencree*, he accepts the reality and addresses the oak as the symbol in Nature, performing both the acts of happiness in the life when alive and of peace when dead in the lives of human beings.

The reference to the 'Mount Jerome' suggests his premonition of death, as we learn from the biographical details that - 'Synge died in Dublin on 24 March 1909. He is buried in Mount Jerome Graveyard, Harolds Cross, Dublin 6'. He lived a very short span of life but is yet alive through his works and makes his words true:

> Then in Mount Jerome I will lie, poor wretch,
> With worms eternally.
>
> (*To the Oaks of Glencree*)

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"Gender Barrier Communication in IT Industry"

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Introduction

It's no great secret that men and women are very different creatures. Despite the fact that they're the same species, they are physically, mentally, and emotionally composed in an almost completely different manner. This is so much the case that until fairly recently our entire society operated within very distinct gender-based roles. Up until the past few decades, for example, you didn't see many female military officers or male nurses. It simply wasn't socially acceptable. However, times have changed and we are beginning to see more and more men fill traditionally female roles and more women fill traditionally male roles. Unfortunately, IT is one of the more slowly changing fields, and to this point males are still in the majority, but there are thoughts that this may one day change. Regardless, as an IT professional you are going to need to understand what you should and should not say in the workplace in order to maintain a very gender-neutral environment. I would like to put the scenario, where some examples of detrimental gender communication and explain why these aren't good ideas in the workplace. After that, you'll see a "Resolution" section that recommends some tactics for achieving an environment that is suitable to both men and women.

Scenario.

Anwit and Shrikant are two employees of the large technology corporation known as International Grading Machines and have been employed with IGM for over three years. Just recently, both Anwit and Shrikant were informed that they'd been transferred from the customer desktop support branch of IGM to the machine assembly division. Thankfully, both Anwit and Shrikant are very happy that they've had this change. Neither of them fancies dealing with people all day long as a full-time career, and the machine assembly area gives them the opportunity to just relax and have a good time with the technology at work. The only problem with the transition is that the two of them are both going to have to spend a great deal of time in training in order to learn the ins and outs of the new division's policies and procedures. As the training has gone on, Anwit and Shrikant have begun to take lunches together. Since only a few people go to lunch at roughly the Anwit time, it works out well for both of them, even if they don't know each other all that well. While they're at lunch in the company cafe– teria, they have the following casual conversation that, unbeknownst to them, is overheard by their manager.

Anwit: "So what do you think of this new training class?"
Shrikant: "Eh, it's OK. I'm not really a huge fan of our teacher, Ms. Heinz."
Anwit: "Oh yeah? Why not? She seems like a pretty cool chick."
Shrikant: "Um … I suppose. She just seems a bit dictatorial, almost like a guy."
Anwit: "Right. I kind of like that about her. She gives it to you straight."
Shrikant: "Well, maybe. What do you think about the color of the walls in the room?"
Anwit: "The wall colors? I hadn't noticed. Aren't they red?"
Shrikant: "Yeah, they're red. I think they seem really angry."
Anwit: "I guess. Did you get a load of Ms. Heinz's supervisor, Dan? He is so flaming."
Shrikant: "Oh, yeah, totally. I thought he was going to hit on you."

Anwit: "Yep. What a sissy."

Background

Gender-based communication has become an area of concern only recently, but it's been a prevalent issue for nearly a century. Without giving a long history lesson, until the late 1800s the United States was a very male-dominated society. In that era, women were expected to be seen and not heard, to care for children, and not to concern themselves about political and financial issues. However, in the early 1900s, women decided they were sick and tired of that sort of treatment and led a protest to be allowed the right to vote. In 1920, the U.S. Congress passed into law the 19th amendment to the constitution, granting the right to vote regardless of sex. While this was a radical first step, it was by no means a complete fix-all to the current political and business situation. Afterward came the civil rights movement and the feminist movement, urging that women should be treated completely equally to men. Nowadays, society has evolved to a point that most people would consider gender roles to be fairly equal, but there is still a lot of tension. In the workplace, casually derogatory terms are tossed back and forth frequently. Without thought, many people still fall into the habit of using sexually harassing terms. And while the blame lies mostly upon men, the roles have recently begun reversing as women have started to become more authoritative.

Overview

On the surface, some might say that the conversation between Shrikant and Anwit is relatively harmless. While it's certainly casual, there were no real insults hurled between them, except to pick on their teacher. In fact, if you were to sit "most" people down and ask them if it would bother them to hear that sort of talk, chances are that they would say no. However, the workplace is not in any way concerned with "most people." In fact, office environments are very concerned about special cases. One special case can actually cause a large amount of legal liability. If someone is offended by this conversation because of its usage of offensive gender-based terms, it could cause a great deal of trouble for the company. Next, I'll discuss some of the biggest mistakes made in this conversation and highlight some of the most important aspects to remember about what you should and should not say in the office.

Key Concepts

This scenario is primarily concerned with what was said in this particular office environment and, more important, what the effect of those words could be on the workplace. In total, three "no-nos" were committed in this situation:

1. Gender-based slang is used.
2. Many degrading statements are exchanged back and forth.
3. Both individuals make derogatory comments alluding to sexual preference.

Let's take a look at each of those mistakes and see why you should avoid making them in the office.

Gender Slang

The first mistake in this situation was made by Anwit. In his second line of dialogue, he made the critical mistake of including a piece of gender slang. Gender slang is any term, slur, or expression used to identify someone by their sex or orientation. It includes, but is in no way limited to, words such as "chick," "dude," "guy," "babe," "fella," "toots," and a hundred other euphemisms. While you're in the office, you should try your best to stay away from any gender-related word that is not "man," "woman," "male," or "female." This way, you can be assured that no one is going to be offended. Almost every term other than these few carries with it a potential

for stigma that people might find offensive. This is important to note because, as was mentioned previously, the important thing about harassment (especially sexual harassment) is that it does not matter what is intended by the comment—the only thing that matters is what the individual hearing it feels.

Degrading Statements

Although Anwit did make the mistake of throwing the first metaphorical stone, Shrikant quickly followed it up with a statement that was equally damaging. And, from the way she said it, it's pretty likely that she didn't mean any offense by it. Consider the statement: "Um … I suppose. She just seems a bit dictatorial, almost like a guy." On the surface, you might again say that it is fairly harmless. But realize, some men might take great offense at being called dictatorial. One of the greatest misconceptions in the office is that the phenomenon of making degrading statements is mostly done by men. This is not in any way true. Both men and women can make equally insensitive remarks if they are not careful. When you're in the office, it's a good idea to guard yourself against anything that might be a generalization to a specific group. Generalizations are never a good idea; they don't account for anything specific and can accompany unnecessarily derisive comments.

Gender-Based Sexual Comments

You probably didn't even need me to say it, but the next big "do not do" on this list of bad habits to keep out of the workplace is to make *any* insulting joke based on someone's sexual preference. In the first place, it isn't your concern. What someone chooses to do with their time in their way is their own business. Second, in most cases you have no idea what their practices are. Although you may see someone conduct themselves in a certain manner, it may not mean anything. Consider, if you see a pair kiss each other on the cheek in the parking lot, you might assume that they are together in a relationship. However, many cultures around the world do this as a way of expressing platonic friendship. Furthermore, it's completely acceptable for members of the same sex, and in no way denotes a homosexual relationship. When you consider opening your mouth and inserting your foot when it comes to someone's sexual preference, keep this in mind: business is business. Sex should not be a factor. While it's true that it's a fact of life, it's a fact that doesn't belong anywhere near the place where someone chooses to earn a living. By violating that rule with someone you work with, you are exposing yourself to punishment and exposing them to ridicule and judgment that they do not deserve. It's simply not fair.

Resolution

The best way to avoid any type of gender-based comments or harassment in the workplace is to use the following tactics:

Tactic 1: Keep Quiet.

If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. It doesn't make you wrong if you object or think the way someone conducts themselves is inappropriate or interesting. It only makes you wrong if you make your opinions about their private life publicly known. Keep in mind that the best way to make yourself stay generally liked and to not offend most people is to just not give an opinion.

Tactic 2: Keep an Open Mind.

As a professional you are going to be exposed to hundreds or thousands of people who are going to work in your field who come from all walks of life. While some they may seem strange or interesting, they're going to have different opinions on what is and is not appropriate to say about someone's sex (and sex life). In some cultures, words like "babe" or "dude" can be very friendly terms; in others, they can be extreme insults. Because of this, it's best to keep an open

mind and a bland and conservative policy when it comes to this subject. Don't let your opinion be known, but instead just be open to those of other people. You'll find that it both gives you an interesting insight into other people's psyche and keeps you from exposing yourself to unnecessary risk.

Tactic 3: Respect Your Peers.

If people know that you respect them, they're going to respect you in return. By not using any terms that someone could find offensive, you will be reinforcing this respect. It's important that you as a professional understand this because your career will succeed or fail based on how much people respect you. Nobody wants to work for someone that they don't think appreciates them. And you'd better believe that by making rude comments they will certainly believe you don't appreciate them!

Skills to Handle the Customer

Here is a good example of a type of question you would see for concerning gender based language/sexual harassment:

1. The statement "Look, lady, I don't have time for this call" could be interpreted as which of the following types of harassment? (Choose all that apply.)

A. Verbal

B. Physical

C. Sexual

D. None of the above

Answer A: Incorrect. Verbal harassment normally needs to involve name calling or threatening in some way. Being rude doesn't classify as verbal harassment unless it accompanies one of these.

Answer B: Incorrect. Physical harassment involves actually touching someone or doing something to their body they do not wish.

Answer C: Correct. Any other term besides something proper like "ma'am" can be considered sexual harassment. This includes "lady," "guy," "boy," and "girl."

Answer D: Incorrect. The statement could be considered sexual harassment because of the manner in which the word "lady" is used.

Conclusion:

What you need to take away from this article is interoffice communication and communication between coworkers is the most important aspects of your career in business. Because of this, it's good idea to look over this article more than once. While some of it may seem fairly obvious to you, you can pick up a lot of intricacies. In fact, I suggest reading over this article when you become a professional and try to put it into practice. Make a game out of it; today you could make it your gender- neutral language day, trying your best to avoid anything that could be misinterpreted. Garneted, it's not as fun as playing Quake after hours in the computer lab, but unlike computer games, this can help your career!

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An Exploration of Narrative Technique in Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra*

Mrs. Madhuri Bite

Gita Mehta is one of the well-known contributors in Indian English Literature. Indian English Literature has a long tradition of women writers such as earlier novelists Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, etc. Compared to these women novelists Gita Mehta's contribution is though quantitatively less but it is qualitatively significant because of her handling of the subject-matter and form. As a diasporic writer, she dedicated her writing towards Indian culture and society. Her first work is *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* published in 1979 and this first book is a series of interconnected essays weaving Mehta's impressions of India's mysticism. Her first novel *Raj*, published in 1989, is a thorough and colorful historical story that follows the progression of a young woman born into Indian nobility under the British Raj. The novel is a magnificent mixture of history and fiction. Later on she published another novel *A River Sutra* in 1993. The novel centers on India's holiest river, the Narmada. It is in the form of interconnected stories. She published another non- fiction *Snakes and Ladders* in 1997 which is a collection of essays about India since Independence. She defines her India through insightful, intelligent and often witty eyes with a smattering of personalised anecdotes that define it not so much as a set of essays, but a collection of lives.

The present paper seeks to study the narrative technique of Gita Mehta's novel *A River Sutra*. The novel is a saga of interlinked stories which flows with same theme and same subject-matter. The writer situates the novel on the banks of the river Narmada. The river is associated with the religious faiths and beliefs of Indian people. People worship

the river and get salvation in her company. The river is a motherly figure for them. Therefore, frustrated and nervous people come on the banks of the river for getting solace of mind. In this novel Gita Mehta uses intricate narration or metanarration technique in which there is not only one narrator but sub-narrators. Much of the variety and vitality of this novel is due to its having more than one narrator. A narrative contains story elements which are narrated by a narrator who is a speaker of that narrative but not always a character in the work. An author's choice of point of view influences the kind of narrator used. The ancient Indian tradition of story-telling helps the novelist to present a crowded world in the novel. In ancient times story-telling was a skill. These stories give moral lessons to the people. The novel may appear to be a didactic work on account of its content and narrative technique. On the surface level it seems to be a collection of short stories but after reading these stories, the reader cannot separate one story from another. The technique of the novel is partially similar to the epic *The Mahabharata.* Vyasa wrote *The Mahabharata* but he himself is not involved in it as a character. He plays a role of *Sutradhar* who narrates the stories from his point of view. In the same way the narrator of this novel plays a role of *Sutradhar* who narrates the stories sequentially and filled the gap between each story through his story-telling skill.

In the novel there are six stories: *The Monk's Story*, *The Teacher's Story*, *The Executive's Story*, *The Courtesan's Story*, *The Musician's Story* and *The Minstrel's Story.* These six stories are divided into sixteen chapters and the last chapter *The Song of the Narmada* is a sequel to *The Minstrel's Story*. Gita Mehta uses multiple narrative technique and at the same time she fills the gap between each story. The characters of each story appear only once and carry on the same subject-matter from one story to

another. Each and every character of the novel represents a particular community. At the beginning of the novel, the nameless narrator enters with the details about his life and career from the first person point of view. He is a retired bureaucrat and joins the post of a manager of the Narmada rest house. He is trying to get this job because he wants to escape from the humdrum of bustling city life and live a peaceful life. After getting a job in Narmada rest house, he becomes a close friend of Tariq Mia, an old Muslim mullah. The nameless narrator hears the stories and at the same time gives background to each story. He seems to be a catalyst who describes all the stories objectively.

The narrator while going towards Tariq Mia's ashram meets the monk. In *The Monk's Story*, the monk is a narrator who narrates his story in first person narration. As a representative of Jain religion the monk tells about the Jain principles and Mahavira, the pioneer of Jain religion. The narration of this story shifts from the narrator to the monk. The monk through his story explores the principles of Jain religion such as non-violence which is considered as a sharp weapon of Gandhian ideology. The monk, as a son of a rich diamond merchant enjoys every moment of life and thinks that life is a blessing of God. He travels all over the world for fulfilling the purpose of trading. He returns from his journey and decides to renounce the world because he observes and feels the depth of poverty and hunger. He thinks after returning from his journey, life is not a smooth path but it is full of difficulties and sorrows. He is confused when he observes his father's ill-treatment to his miners because he is a strict follower of Jain principles and breaks those principles while treating his miners. Through the character of the monk, Gita Mehta builds the image of Mahavira in reader's mind. The monk is a mirrored figure of

Mahavira and follows the footsteps of Mahavira. For making the narration reliable Gita Mehta chooses the monk as a narrator of this story.

Each story of the novel completes in another chapter and the writer before telling any story, first creates suitable atmosphere to the story. In *The Monk's Story* the monk says to the narrator, 'I have loved just one thing in my life', (p.14) but he forgets to answer him. The narrator after his departure thinks about it but he cannot get its answer therefore he asks Tariq Mia about it. Tariq Mia is a narrator of *The Teacher's Story.* He wants to tell the narrator the secret of human heart i.e. 'The capacity to love' (p.48). For explaining the secret of human heart, Tariq Mia tells *The Teacher's Story* which is experienced by him. Tariq Mia is an old mullah who is attached to the verisimilitudes of the human life. Compared to the narrator Tariq Mia is a philosopher and like a torch for those whose life is in darkness. The narrator looks at each story on a surface level at the same time Tariq Mia observes the details of each story and tries to explain the philosophy of life. The writer chooses Tariq Mia as a narrator of this story because he is a witness of this event. Master Mohan is a music teacher with unfulfilled desire of being a famous singer. He meets an orphan Imrat and feels that he is his own self therefore he gives him music lessons devotedly. Unfortunately Imrat's murder leads him towards a path of madness and he comes on the banks of the river Narmada for the solace of the mind. Tariq Mia cures him from his madness but while returning home he commits suicide. Master Mohan is a sensitive man who is totally involved in Imrat and cannot imagine life without him. Tariq Mia tells the narrator, 'Perhaps he could not exist without loving someone as he had loved the blind child'. (p. 91) Tariq Mia narrates the story from third person point of view and makes the narration omniscient.

The Executive's Story is another story which is narrated through the diary of Nitin Bose, an executive. The writer uses a different technique for this story. Nitin Bose while staying in a tea estate falls in love with a tribal woman. His love for the tribal woman is a materialistic love so when he returns from the tea estate, every night he dreams of her. In this failure of love he loses his mental balance. He is attached to the tribal woman for fulfilling his sexual desires. His relation with her is immoral and he is afraid of the regulations of the society because according to the society his act is a sin which is not excused by the people. Therefore he buried his immoral act in his mind and the effect of his suppression resulted in his utter madness. Afraid of society's regulations he cannot confess his immoral act to anybody else so he confesses it in his diary. Diary is one of the means of confession through which one can get mental relief. Nitin Bose after writing his diary gets mental relief and is cured from amnesia. The story reflects the Indian psyche and tradition in which these kinds of acts are not allowed and if someone did it unconsciously then he is afraid to confess it. Nitin Bose as belongs to the same tradition suppresses his desire and wants to hide the truth from people. The writer, before telling the story, describes the myth of Kama, God of Love which is very helpful to create a suitable atmosphere. No one can confess his sin before anybody else so this technique is uniquely used by Gita Mehta. Through diary Nitin Bose narrates his story in the first person point of view and makes the narration reliable.

In *The Courtesan's Story* the mode of narration is again changed from one narrator to another. The Courtesan narrates her story in the first person narration and also includes the information about her daughter's kidnapping by a murderer Rahul Singh. The writer wants to provide the detailed information about Courtesan's life through this

narrator. The Courtesan represents the particular group of courtesans which is neglected by the society. The courtesans are not considered as human beings but they are used for entertainment only. In this story there is another narrator i.e. the Courtesan's daughter. She describes her life with the bandits to the narrator. She also tells the reason behind Rahul Singh's act that Rahul Singh kidnaps her because he thinks that she has been his wife in so many lives before that one. As a witness she describes the life of bandits in the state of solitude. After marriage she and Rahul Singh live a happy life and he also decides to live a life of common man but the society may not be able to forget his deeds and he is killed in police encounter. At last the Courtesan's daughter commits suicide because as a murderer's wife she cannot return in society. Gita Mehta, through the character of the Courtesan's daughter, expresses the mentality of society. It also tells that many a times innocent person also becomes a victim of the regulations of society. Rahul Singh is not a murderer but society forces him to do the murder and at the same time the Courtesan's daughter who marries a murderer is forced to commit suicide. Both these are victims of social ethos. Even though the narrators are changed in the same story, the writer uses the first person point of view because no one can express the deep feelings and emotions of a particular person.

In *The Musician's Story* the musician's daughter describes her story to the narrator in the first person. Through her story she tells about her father and their popularity in the field of music. Her father is a devoted music teacher and cheated by his disciple. The disciple promises him to marry his daughter after learning the art of music but when the purpose is fulfilled he marries another girl. The musician's daughter is ugly that's why the disciple rejects her. His love is a materialistic love which gives importance

only to external beauty. The musician's daughter cannot tolerate his rejection but the musician convinces her that beauty is a passing thing and it lies in the eyes of the beholder. In her narration she describes the details of every raga which can be told only by a person who has knowledge of music so the writer chooses her as a narrator of this story. The writer with the help of this narrator describes the selfish and materialistic world.

In the next, *The Minstrel's Story* the narrator is Tariq Mia. He meets Naga Baba a few years ago and get acquainted with him and a little girl who is saved by Naga Baba from the clutches of the prostitute. Tariq Mia who is well acquainted with Naga Baba describes the details of an ascetic's life. An ascetic is an alienated man who avoids the company of human beings and lives a lonely and peaceful life in the state of solitude. In the story Naga Baba is a representative of ascetics' community. The story also describes how people are victims of superstitions and religious faiths. The last chapter of the novel *The Song of The Narmada* is a sequel to the *The Minstrel's Story*. This chapter narrated by the nameless narrator in the third person narration which focuses on Naga Baba's reappearance in the role of Professor Shankar. Professor Shankar plays the role of Naga Baba because he is trying to change the bad practices in the society with the help of people's religious faiths and beliefs. The writer with the help of these two narrators tells that because of some beliefs the little girl is left in a brothel by her father and at the same time Naga Baba saves that girl from the clutches of prostitute through the beliefs.

In the narrative technique the nameless narrator provides background to each story. The writer uses flashback technique in the novel. The writer's purpose of providing the background to each story is to create suitable atmosphere which captures the reader's

psyche. The use of narrative technique in this novel is different from the regular concept of the novel. Generally the novel includes a saga of events related to the central character's life but the novel comprises different characters and different events. The novel highlights not only one character but with the help of various characters Gita Mehta expresses the psychology of human mind. Human mind cannot deny the influence of culture, religion, faiths and desires on him and at last surrenders before it. So, the technique of this novel is considered as unique one.

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From Ignorance to knowledge: A Study of J. M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints*

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Om Asto Maa Sadgamaya
Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamya
Mrityor Maa Amrtam Gamaya
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih
(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad-I.iii.28*)

The above prayer is not meant for the material things of the world like health, wealth, success, glory, fame or so on. It is meant for God's support in our transcendence. It is meant to free us from our sundry misunderstandings regarding our self, the universe and God and bless us with 'true knowledge'. *Tamaso Maa Jyotirgamaya* means leading from darkness to light. When the *Vedas* refer to darkness and light, they mean 'ignorance' and 'knowledge'. This is so because ignorance, like darkness, obscures true understanding. As the only remedy for darkness is light, the only remedy for ignorance is knowledge. The knowledge spoken of here is again the knowledge of one's 'true self'.

J. M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1905) is worthy of serious critical attention for more than one reason. One of the important reasons for it is the protagonist's journey from ignorance to knowledge- reflecting the Upanishadic injunction of the movement from untruth to truth- which is artistically worked out in the life of blind protagonist couple Martin and Mary Doul. This kind of Upanishadic and philosophical base gives the play *The Well of the Saints* its peculiar significance. Synge has admirably worked out here the struggles of sensitive souls of blind Martin and Mary inching its way, against formidable odds, some present within themselves and much in the social situations around, towards self-realizations and attainment of knowledge.

The Well of the Saints is a serio-comedy based of a French farce *Moralite de I'Aveugle et du Boiteux* (Morality play of the Blind Man and the Cripple) by Andrien de la Vigne. Though, Sygne is inspired by *Moralite de I'Aveugle et du Boiteux,* the plot, setting, tragic-comic elements, philosophical base of the theme of *The Well of the Saints* is his own invention. Synge took up a romantic dream of love for the sake of poesy in the play. The ridiculous beggar's impossible dream of romance plumbs the emotional and idealistic depths of Synge's protagonist and transforms what was farcical in *Moralite de I'Aveugle et du Boiteux* into a tragedy in *The Well of the Saints.*

The play opens at cross-roads nearby a Wicklow village from where Martin and Mary Doul, a blind, old, ugly, battered beggar couple is passing to the fair. The couple is happy and living peacefully by the way-side, sustaining in the ignorance that they are a handsome couple. Their illusionary world is founded on the deceitful mockery of the villagers who instilled the illusion in this ignorant, miserable couple out of mixed feelings of pity and jest. Due to ignorance, Martin and Mary consider themselves as "so fine looking" (62) and "the finest man and the finest woman of the seven countries of the East" (62). Martin considers that he has "wedded with the beautiful dark woman of Ballinatone" (69) who has "yellow hair" and "soft skin" (70).

The other characters of the play like Timy, a middle aged vigorous smith, Molly Byrne, a fine looking girl, Bride, another girl and other villagers deceive Martin and Mary and make them believe that they are extremely beautiful, while in fact, they are unattractive beggars. Throughout the Act I, Martin and Mary Doul live in the world of false impression and ignorance in which they imagine themselves as "so fine looking" (62) which gives them a feeling of false contentment, pleasure and exhilaration.

The blind couple becomes innocent victim of the village people's deceit, due to their ignorance. On this ground, the play evokes our pity for Martin and Mary. What they know about themselves is through others' languages. As Mary C. King Pointed out, "language has mediating role for the blind couple since they are dependent on it to construct their vision of objective and subjective reality" (King.1985:106). It is clearly evident in couple's, especially in Mary's speech that what they in reality know or think about their bodily appearances is gathered from the villager's talk. "I've heard tell" (61), "for I do look my best, I've heard them say when I'm dressed up with that thing on my head (67). It shows that "through the medium of language the blind couple shares in a social interaction with the community, in which the villagers serve as mirror to the couple" (*Ibid*, 109). But Martin and Mary are not only deceived by others but also by themselves ignoring the reality. They are first deceived by their fellow villagers, but since what they hear fits their imagination of their desired beauty they accept the lie without making much effort to question it. In Act I, Martin expresses his longing for the recovery of his sight in order to make sure that his imaginary picture of themselves is in fact true: "It'd be a grand thing if we could see ourselves for one hour, or a minute itself, the way we'd know surely we were the finest man and the finest woman of the seven countries of the East" (62).

At the end of the Act I, the Saint's holy water cures their sight. We see Martin Doul crying out in joy that he sees the walls of the church and the great width of the sky:

> Oh, glory be to God, I see now surely… is the walls of the Church, and the green bits of ferns in them, and yourself, holy father, and the great width of the sky.(73)

He runs in half-foolish joy and sees Molly Byrne, with her grand hair and soft skin and eyes, sitting in Mary Doul's seat. When Molly makes game of him, he goes from one young girl to another identifying Mary and people are cruelly mocking "Try again, Martin, try again, and you'll be finding her yet" (74). After restoring their sight, Martin and Mary have to face a bitter reality of life. Their recognition of their real ugly physical appearances and the deceit they were living in results in immediate disappointment and the rejection of each other which is worsened by the villagers' ridiculing.

In Act II, we see Martin and Mary facing harsh realities of life. Martin is seen working for Timy at his forge. He was working hard and getting less than when he was sitting blinded at the cross-road: "It's more I got a while since, and I sitting blinded in Grianan than I get in this place, working hard and destroying myself the length of the day" (78). Besides the tyranny of his master, Martin also has to face contemptuous humiliations by Molly Byrne. Martin and Mary both are seen frustrated, humiliated. They are seen not at ease as they were in their blindness. The grand day of restoring their sights proved but a bad day.

When Act III opens, Martin and Mary Doul lost their sight and are seen blind again, sitting back at the cross-road realizing an early spring day. The Saint comes once again and is ready to cure sight of Martin and Mary at second time and permanently. But Martin and Mary

are not ready to get it restored because now they attained the knowledge of 'real self' and real world. Martin says to the Saint;

> MARTIN DOUL:[*more troubled*] We are not asking our sight, holy father, and let you walk on your own way, and be fasting, or praying, or doing anything that you will, but leave us here in our peace, at the crossing of the roads, for its best we are this way, and we're not asking to see (98).

Although the saint was ready to cure their sight permanently to integrate them into the society of the seeing people, they willingly reject it and decide to return to the state of their blindness. In Reymond William's words, "when their sight fade again, they achieve a new illusion of their dignity of old age and fly in terror from a renewed offer to restore their sight of real world" (William.1973:144). The source of their disappointment is obviously the society around them into which they are not able and not willing to integrate. Mary's scornful remark on the society, "they're bad lot those that have their sight" (62) is quite evident in this connection.

Martin and Mary reject the holy water to restore their sight once again at the end of the play because they attained the knowledge of 'true self' and life. They want to keep themselves away from the harsh realities of the life. As has already mentioned, the source of the couple's disappointment is not only their ugliness but also ugliness of the society around them. The couple turns their back to the superficial, hollow world and finds reconciliation in the fantasy of their imagined world. They also want to keep themselves aloof from any sort of worldly pleasure. As like Alexander Pope's *Ode on Solitude*:

> Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
> Thus unlamented let me die,
> Steal from the world, and not a stone
> Tell where I lie. (Pope. 2000:101)

Martin and Mary want to live far away from the din and bustle of the society. They longs for absolute freedom from cares and anxieties which constitutes the very essence of happiness in life.

Synge's protagonists in the present play, Martin and Mary aspire to an impossible noble life, cherishing their personal distinction, even in the teeth of life's bitter realities. Synge's other protagonists are aristocrats of the soul. Blind Martin and Mary Doul of the present play also take their place in this company. What is most fascinating about the play is not the story but the questions it raises. Martin and Mary were ignorant about the real meaning of beauty, self and life but at last they attained a perfect knowledge of the self. At last, we can recognize their cry for assistance in their transcendence. They prefer blindness instead of sight because they come to know the finite nature of all the objects of the world and want themselves to lead *asat* to *sat*, ignorance to knowledge.

Martin and Mary prefer blindness instead of a permanent cure of their sight at the hand of the Saint. This leading or transformation of Martin and Mary is not a physical one. But it is a journey of souls of Martin and Mary from what they misunderstand to be theirs to what truly is of their own. They got knowledge of the things that the things of the world and material pleasures are impermanent and cannot bring them lasting happiness. The human goal according to *Vedanta* is self realization, attainment of knowledge of self from ignorance. The *atma* is the ultimate reality, when one realizes his true nature, he attains spiritual fulfillment

in this life itself. Then, upon death, he does not go to any heavenly abode but simply merges into the supreme reality. This is what Martin and Mary might have understood; hence they prefer blindness instead of sight in Synge's *The Well of the Saints*.

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Pride, Pestilence and Annihilation: Destruction of the Family Idyll in Mary Shelley's The *Last Man*

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Mary Shelley, the talented wife of the visionary poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, was the progenitor of a new literary genre – science fiction. Into this genre falls her best known creation – *Frankenstein*, which fascinates one and all, down the ages, for its incredible yet frightening proposition of the product of one's imagination and creation turning against its creator. However, the lesser-read and perhaps less-appreciated novel, *The Last Man* is the subject of discussion in the current essay, chiefly because it is also another of Shelley's great, ironic commentary on the seamlessness of human ego and ambition which finds itself ultimately powerless when it confronts the uncontrollable, overwhelming forces of nature; something which the present generation can identify with due to its encounter with ecological shifts through unprecedented natural calamities. *The Last Man* constructs its fable around the uncontainable spread of the contagion of plague that finally wipes away the entire human race. Science-Fiction is the pivot around which the novel gravitates if we choose to underplay or gloss over the autobiographical elements and not read it as a *roman a clef*. The story is futuristic, set in the twenty-first century – a wide leap in thought and time from 1826 – with all the paraphernalia of politics, philosophy and family-life guided by the norms of an age far removed from the early nineteenth century. Thus, we are ushered into a Republican England with the House of Windsor brought into the helm of power and decadence, as it is in its contemporary condition. The history of the last man recreated through the sibylline prophecies, the brilliant description of the unnatural phenomenon of the 'Black Sun'[i], the metaphorical spread of the plague through the human body and the body politic all stabilize the novel's position as science-fiction. Mary Shelley loosely outlines evolutionary ideas much before Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species*, but for her this evolution works by a reverse process – with all mankind dying out to leave behind a single man without a mate – far-removed from the nineteenth century belief in the redemptive function of history, time and nature. The reader is left inconsolable on a bleak promontory with art offering no solace or promise of a millennium.

The Last Man, above all, is a paean to a lost generation, with its tender fictional cameos of Byron, Shelley and Claire Clairmont, created by Mary Shelley to pay tribute to the little band of the 'Elect' (as she termed them in a letter dated 3rd October, 1824) of which she was the sole survivor. Her novel is an epic saga of mankind's travails of facing the vagaries of nature 'red in tooth and claw',[ii] set in the twenty-first century, where man, love, family, nation and class difference – are all meaningless and stand shorn of their significance. Under the threat from external attack and the enmity of nature, mankind instinctively turns to the comfortable refuge of the family. But Shelley's purpose in building up an idyll of domestic bliss and harmony and security is only to destroy a myth and expose her characters and her readers to a frightening reality about nature; to an "apocalypse without millennium".[iii] It has been argued that Shelley's primary concern in

her novels has been the preservation of the family in the face of external odds – posed by nature and by man alike. Anne Mellor has even gone to the extent of saying that Shelley idealizes the family as the source of sustenance and emotional succour against the oddest of odds. Having had a turbulent family life in childhood, sharing her life with her strict stepmother and her daughter, Shelley's idealization of the family could not be unqualified or absolute for an author whose own family had been lost to the altars of time and destiny. Also, as a member of the Shelley-Byron Circle she led a most unconventional family life; as a roving band of adventurers with no fixed roots or allegiances. The romanticized and sentimentalized family-unit that she so painstakingly builds up in *The Last Man*, Shelley cruelly lays waste – not only the family of Lionel or Raymond but the family of mankind, wiping away the human race from the face of the earth. Hence, Shelley's vision, which renders the family – the fundamental unit of human society – incapable of providing refuge from the turbulent forces of the macrocosm, is as apocalyptic as it is ironic. This overpowering sense of pessimism stems from the realization that no matter how brilliant a creation mankind maybe, however magnificent his heroism or idealism, he is ultimately a puny speck in the vast and infinite scheme of nature; always at the mercy of its whims. The acute recognition of this vulnerability, insignificance and helplessness of man probably originates from Shelley's close encounters with death, loss and bereavement – as the sole survivor of the Band of Elect, an extraordinary group tangled in unconventional emotional relationships.

Lionel Verney, the protagonist of the novel and indubitably an alter-ego of Mary Shelley herself, is initially a misanthrope, seeking revenge for the gradual annihilation of his family. His father pines away forsaken by the world of royal patronage and his mother too courts death in her struggle to support her two children. The impress of the family on the tender mind of young Lionel is not a healthy one – the memory of injustice, penury, the death of parents, turn him into an outlaw and a brutish power-seeker. We have the natural extinction of families on the one hand, on the other the voluntary opting out of men and women from family ties, to form new ties and fresh units. Adrian and Idris break away from their mother and the royal family by choice and set up an idyllic family with Lionel. On the other hand the ambitious, restless Raymond marries Perdita unite leaving behind their erstwhile attachments.Together the entire group forms a family-unit which, though unconventional, is projected as the very picture of perfect bliss and emotional fulfilment. Mary Shelley reveals the unconventional pattern of thoughts that we notice in her genius husband by suggesting the possibility for man to choose and create his own family. She uses picturesque language to heighten the idyllic qualities of their existence and exuberantly declares: 'Others said, we might be happy – we said – we are' (pp. 65)[iv]. The pleasures of companionship, love and harmony are magnified by the introduction of children strengthening the bonds of oneness and love among the members of the family. Hence, before the end of the first volume of the novel itself, the characters –Adrian, Idris, Lionel, Perdita and Raymond – have found an 'unparalleled domestic fulfilment, encompassing passionate love, children, friendship and intellectual stimulation" (Blumberg: 128). This unqualified projection of the bliss of family life would be inadequate for the bleak and pessimistic vision of the author and hence, even before the conclusion of the first volume this idyll of love and unity received its death blow. Ambition, with its devouring tentacles, enters as a destructive force, destroying the bonds of family. The foundations of the family are shaken by the demands of a public

life, the political exigency of electing a new Lord Protector of England. Raymond fired by latent ambition and a sense of justifiable claim to the office, for he would have legitimately been the Protector in his marriage with Idris had he not forsaken all for Perdita. Raymond had 'exchanged a sceptre for a lute, a kingdom for Perdita'. Yet, Raymond had not been able to quell his ambitions completely and Perdita's apprehensions and 'presentiment of ill' are not unfounded as she fears Raymond's ambition will be the death of the family. Raymond is assisted by his friends who know very well Lord Raymond was not meant to be 'a drone in the hive' nor was he going to be content with a 'pastoral life', and his return to political life fulfils the prophecy of Perdita. She joins him in London as Lady Protectress, while her brother returns to Windsor. Raised to the zenith of political power the idyll of the family is lost forever, never to be restored. Political and personal ambition is projected by Shelley as the enemy of the survival of the family. Raymond's engrossment with the public sphere leaves his wife and child languish in hope: 'to count the long days, and months, and years which must elapse, before he would be restored to a private station, and unreservedly to her' (p. 87). Raymond also deceives her through his liaison with Evadne and finally forsaken by Perdita's love he goes away to Greece, humbled by his own sense of unworthiness and in the hope of attaining something glorious, something which can raise himself once more in the eyes of his family, hoping that time, and even absence, may restore Perdita to him.

While initial disruption of the domestic ideal is triggered off by the malicious contagion of ambition and the thirst for power, the real contagion – the Plague – enters the plot of the novel to finally annihilate the fabric of family. The devastation that personal ambition spreads is once more reiterated in the Fall of Constantinople – as Shelley singles out the war as the cause of the rise of the plague which spreads its fatal shadow gradually from the east to the west eclipsing civilization after civilization. The plague is introduced into the world of the novel not as a mere contagion but almost as an overwhelming antagonist against egoistic humankind. It falls into the class of such overpowering and superhuman settings like Egdon Heath[v] which render the most heroic of human actions as puny and insignificant. The sway of the contagion is not localized or restricted to a few individuals but upon the entire race and that the plague is said to up rear its head and spread virulently in conjunction with the war between the Christians and the Moslems, shows that nature avenges itself whenever man tries to trespass her laws, of peaceful, fraternal coexistence between members of a race or species, by predating on its own kind for selfish self-aggrandizement.

The plague is symbolically the outwardly manifestation of the contagion or pestilence of mindlessness of the human hunger for power. Mary Shelley's apocalyptic vision plunges the characters of the novel, as well as draws along the reader, into a dark world of moral nothingness and devalued of human love. In the end there is only a single soul left on earth to experience the pangs of loneliness as Shelley visualizes the end of humanity without any scope for the hope of Salvation or reward for earthly suffering to penetrate the pitch darkness of her world. One is shocked by the sudden loss of humanity's value-systems, by the obliteration of the notion of redemption and by the proof of love's ineffectualness. Nature and time are shown as acting in cohorts to lay low the idea of the Promethean man, the roof and crown of creation, and wipe his trace from the face of the earth. The institutions that man so painstakingly builds and egoistically flaunts – the nation, the government, the kingdom, the family do not spare him from

being face the reality of his utter insignificance – he is a mere speck – in the vastness of the universe and there is no place for him to hide from the antagonism of nature, from the virulence of the plague.:

> …one word alone fell, as it were involuntarily, from his convulsed lips: The plague – 'where?' – 'everywhere – we must fly – all fly – but wither? No man can tell there is no refuge on earth, it comes on us like a thousand packs of wolves – … where can any of us go?" (p. 175)

These terrible realizations by the characters of the novel rise above its direct context and echo in the ears of the reader, making him think how useless all the idealism of man is, how vainglorious, in the face of nature's fury! The ironic vision once again steeps the novel into the nadir of pessimism as nature is shown as a brute force that takes no account of human suffering. The untold deaths caused by pestilence and the progressive annihilation of the population seem to leave no impress on nature who maintains her implacable beauty:

> The balmy air of spring, breathed from nature's ambrosial home, invested the lovely earth, which weakened as a young mother about to lead forth in pride her beauteous offspring ... (p. 229)

The physical world remains plentiful and healthy burgeoning its stores of bounty and perpetuating the cyclical change of seasons while the plague destroys the myth that man so self-deceptively and complacently reared up – he was the paragon of creation – the prophetic voice of the narrator says that the bounties of nature and the pestilence are both the children of nature: 'Plague is the companion of spring, of sunshine, and plenty' (p. 230).

The plague is a superhuman force and one that Shelley uses as a weapon to whittle away the fragile, which men fancy as enduring, idyll of domestic dream or family edifice. The human family, the safest refuge of man, suffers from the twin forces of ravenous ambition and indomitable pestilence. The plague however, for a while, draws together the strands of the remaining family unit in the novel, as love and bonding seek to hold together the strings that fell apart. The death of Raymond and Perdita in Greece, re-establishes Adrian, Idris, Lionel and the children, including Raymond's daughter Clara, in Windsor for a while the 'storm-driven bird[s]' return to the nest. In the backdrop of the spreading plague and the reports of the 'black sun', Lionel tries to recreate the bonding of the family by fragile and brittle self-assurances, or better called, and self-deception: 'such miseries could never intrude upon the domestic circle left to me…'. Very soon this complacent faith in the power of the family to withstand against the bitterest of external onslaughts and protect the lonely human being against the cruel world is shaken, as Adrian's administration of the plague-ridden city of London makes the group acutely aware of their ultimate vulnerability, which makes Lionel cry out in horror at the idea of his family being extirpated by the contagion: 'we must all die! The species of man must perish; his frame of exquisite workmanship; the wondrous mechanism of his senses…his mind, the throned king of these; must perish….' (p. 300). Thus man is rendered absolutely defenceless and powerless as the power of love and devotion prove to be inadequate to combat the fierce attack of the plague. Lionel is ready to 'walk barefoot through the world, to find an uninfected spot' to salvage his family but the plague emerges as a force too overwhelming for humanity.

The plague on one hand destroys the atomized family but on the other leads to the levelling of society by uniting men into the larger family of the human race to work together to escape the clutches of the disease for as long as possible. The plague is impartial, unbiased in extending its venomous sway over all nations of the world – spreading from the Orient like a pitch darkness it eclipses the jubilant sun of prosperity shining over the imperialist England. Nobody is excused, nobody is exempted from its indiscriminate slaughter as all nations, all races and all religions suffer the same fate in its hands. Amidst the many injustices and inequalities of the world the plague emerges as a just force ravaging mankind from Asia to Africa, from Europe to America, leaving no place for man to hide; effacing all the boundaries of nationhood; forcing man to acknowledge a sole identity – that of being a human being – and to recognize a single enemy – Pestilence, thus uniting man at the far end of his reign on earth as he realizes:

> There was one good and one evil in the world – life and death. The pomp of rank, the assumption of power, the possessions of wealth…one living, beggar had become of more worth than a…peerage of dead lords… (p. 196)

This closely reminds one of how the Romantics in general and the Shelley-Byron circle in particular, were averse to the ideals of nationhood or patriotism and their migratory life-style, extensive travels engendered the eclectic conception of the world as a single nation.

Adrian and Lionel are animated by schemes to work together for the local peasantry – now their extended family. As the taint of pestilence moves towards the countryside the family of citizens, led by Adrian realizing its vulnerability, takes to a life of vagabondism. The family gets diminished as days pass and the English peoples' pride in their insular position:

> These were questions of prudence; there was no immediate necessity for an earnest caution. England was still secure. France, Germany, Italy and Spain, were interposed, walls yet without breach, between us and the plague. (p. 168).

Is turned to mockery as the proud English can no longer feel pride in the sense of exclusiveness from the currents of continental disorder and their 'splendid isolation' changes from boon to bane:

> The sea, late our defence, seems our prison bound; hemmed in by its gulphs, we shall die like the famished inhabitants of a besieged town. (p.180).

The solidarity with the rest of world, with the rest of mankind, be it even in death, seems a better consolation, which is denied to the English, so proud of their insular status.

The sole survivors after the ravage of the plague are Clara, Adrian and Lionel, yet the author is reluctant to provide any such comfort to the reader as Adrian and Clara are drowned at sea, leaving Lionel to roam the earth alone – as the last man. The plague leaves behind a desolate landscape, where the relics of the erstwhile glory and vibes of humanity still linger on. In his lone ramblings over the desolate world, Lionel is reminded at each step of his family, of all human families, as he enters empty cottages and finds tables set for family meals, utensils ready to serve upon, and thinks once more of the brittle illusions that man nurtures about the security and endurance of the family unit, which nature can at any moment lay waste at its mere whim. 'All about him the last man is tormented by the ghost of the family; his own family and the family of man'

(Blumberg:133). We are able to recognize the false security, with which we are raised by society, in the comfort that family and human love offers. Nature reckons no ties between men and the unleashing of the plague is the proof of its extreme nonchalance.

Thus, the narrative brings us back to the place from where we began. The creation of the family so painstakingly described in the early episodes of the novel, is destroyed. Annihilation of mankind, its values of love, and its hopes for redemption leaves behind a single man – the last man – a relic of a glorious race, to suffer alone. Shelley's pessimistic vision of the future offers no final hope or consolation. Her concept of last ness is devoid of any scope for resurgence of new life. Her bleak vision of the world and human destiny renders *The Last Man* as the document of an apocalyptic imagination that conjures a present without any promise of a human resurgence.

Endnotes:

[i] An extraordinary meteorological event of 1816 called the 'year without a summer' (see Byron's 'Darkness').
[ii] Alfred Lord Tennyson. *In Memoriam*. Canto 56.
[iii] Morton D. Paley. ' Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*: Apocalypse Without Millennium'. *Keats-Shelley Review* 4 Autumn:1989. pp. 1-25.
[iv] All references to page numbers refer to *The Last Man*. Ed. Brian Aldiss. London: The Hogarth Press, 1985.
[v] Egdon Heath is the fictional representation of Puddletown Heath, which Hardy uses as the setting of his novel *The Return of the Native*.

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Chetan Bhagat: A Libertarian

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A libertarian is 'an advocate of the doctrine of free will' (Merriam-Webster). He is 'a person who upholds the principles of individual liberty esp. of thought and action' (Merriam-Webster). In his novels, Chetan Bhagat exhibits uncurbed spirits of the young people of his nation. His approach is youth calling that calls up only youths and also helps to realize their innovative vision. In his first novel, *Five Point Someone*, his replicas Ryan, Alok and Hari fight against the patriarchal education system run by the old and obsolete rules made by the century old educationists. These mighty minds of the old used to believe in wisdom of the world come through self penance; the more one penances oneself, the wiser or more intelligent one becomes. The education system of IIT Delhi depicted in his book is adhered to the same patriarchal norms and codes of education. The students are so much overloaded with assignments, class tests, surprise quizzes and majors exams that they forget what the real meaning of the life is. Their hostel rooms appear to be like prison-cells wherein they are captivated and their only crime is that they chose to carry IIT tag. Ryan, the real mouth organ of Chetan Bhagat is the student of IIT Delhi. He criticizes the education system and calls up the spirits of the youths: "This system of relative grading and overburdening the students. I mean it kills the best fun years of your life. But it kills something else. Where is the room for original thought? Where is the time for creativity? It is not fair" (*Five Point Someone* 35) That is why that IIT, "the best technology institute for a country of a billion…ever invented anything? Or made any technical contribution to India" (34)? The writer proposes to spare sometime for the recharge of the mind and the body. Sport recharges the body and entertainment feeds the mind and the heart as well. Chetan Bhagat believes that the youths are the future of the country. No mind can ever do wonders unless it thinks untraditional. No one has the right to spoil the future of a boy who is not interested in learning the names of rivers and technical know-hows. The writer adds further if a blockage is put on the creativity of the student he can not innovate. There is a legend in every youth but we kill it in his childhood by suffocating his self.

The "decentralization of education" (40) is a must for the comprehensive development of the students. This will help them to be away from the habit of mugging and spare ample time for creative activities. To some extent, the parents are also responsible for making or marring the life of their children. They get prejudiced while taking big decisions of their (children) life. They impose extra burden of their expectations upon them and this hampers the mental and physical growth. This burden, sometimes forces them to commit suicide. Prof. Cherian's son runs under the train and dies because he fails three attempts in the entrance exam to IIT. Every time, whenever he failed he was bitterly criticized and cursed too. His life could be saved if he was liberated to choose the study of his own choice. The teachers want their students to follow them blindly whether their logic is acceptable or not but they can not tolerate if any student dares to cross-question them. They compel the students to run in the mice race. It is the race wherein they have to mindlessly run "for four years, in every class, every assignment and every test" (101). The novelist advises the youths not to make race with others but with themselves if they want to succeed in life. This is what

if one has a race with oneself; one can never be a loser even if one comes last in the race. Hence "The problem with the rat- race is only that even if you win, you're still a rat" (tobeme.wordpress). So let them enjoy freedom and do what they want and wherefrom they want to start. Neha, the daughter of Prof. Cherian is strictly instructed not to talk to the IITians but she talks, befriends and makes physical relation with Hari. She feels suffocated in the reserved environment of the home. She wants someone with whom she could feel the wonders of life and enjoy the dainties of liberty. She finds such emancipator in Hari. Hence she obeys the command of her being for which she breaks all moral and social chains of the patriarchal society and enjoys her life to the fullest. Almost all students, whether they are IITians or others, believe in what their teachers teach them and that is all correct. There are a few, hardly one out of ten, who dare cross-question their teacher. Such a few ones are those who obey none but the command of the self and are not afraid of the consequence. They raise voice against the wrongs of the system. Ryan is one of such audaciously liberal activists. Prof Dubey defines machine: "Anything that reduces human effort" (*Five Point Someone* 10). Thereupon Ryan retorts: "Sir, what about a gym machine...." (*Ibid*). Prof feels down and tries to wring the self of the boy: "Watch it son. In my class, just watch it" (11). This is totally wrong. Open communication leads to the liberty of thoughts which boosts up the mental growth of the students and adds to the efficiency level of the education system. Such are the innovative and reformative steps which the writer inspires in the youths for the renovation of the social, educational and political system.

In the viewpoint of the novelist, a libertarian is always straightforward in his approach to life. He listens to the voice of his soul which, he strongly believes in, is ever true. He may suffer a big loss but finally emerges out victorious. For instance all three friends meet ignominy at college campus. All the teachers as well as the students take them for nuts, idiots and losers only because they underperform in the exams and notch five points something. But like others they are not bloody muggers, they are freethinkers, true lovers of life, harbingers of innovative ideas, icons of liberty and precursors of the youth-calling-approach. They never lose confidence, work harder on the lube project and consequently their project is approved and they succeed to achieve big fame and name.

In *One Night @ The Call Center* the novelist introduces us with five advocates of individual liberty viz., Shyam, Vroom, Priyanka, Esha and Radhika. Radhika attends duty at the call center for 9 to 10 hours. Besides she works at home and attends all in-laws and pays especial care to her mother-in-law. Apart from all this, she puts up with the mean comments of her mother-in-law. Nonetheless, she turns deaf ear thinking that her mother-in-law is very old and of old thoughts. She follows the rites of Indian wifehood especially of a Hindu wifehood. She is made to believe Indian wife is bound to submit to the will of her in-laws. But today's Indian wife knows the limits of her magnanimity. Like Indian wife, Radhika tolerates the torture upto a limit. When she finds out her husband, the source of her tolerance is not loyal to her, he loves some other girl she instantly sets herself free from hollow relationships of nuptiality and goes with Esha to Chandigarh for ever. This bold step taken by Radhika conveys a message to the youths – pay regards to the elders but simultaneously know the limit of your magnanimity. Vroom aka Varun Malhotra fights against the wrongs of the system and saves the lives of thousands of employees working in the Gurgaon call center, Connexions. He and his friend Shyam sacrifice their jobs for the happiness of other colleagues and are hailed out the true legends of liberty. They bear the burnt when their boss plagiarizes their project of the website designed for the western computers but stand for the survival of the workers when the company decides to pay off some of them during recession. They make a threat-plan which attracts huge calls from the Americans. And then they force the company to withdraw pay-offs. It is their self or the voice of the soul which empowers them to take toughest decision @ their career and this

voice is presented as the voice of God in the novel. A libertarian follows and asks others to follow the four things to success:

> One, a medium amount of intelligence, and two, a bit of imagination… The third thing you need for success is self-confidence…'The fourth ingredient is the most painful one. And it is something all of you still need to learn. Because it is often the most important thing,' God said.
> 'What?' I said.
> 'Failure,' God said" (*One Night@ The Call Center* 221-222).

One loses self-confidence when one starts doubting one's potentials: "Don't be scared and you will get it back" (222). Priyanka raises voice against the wrongs inflicted by a mother-in-law over her daughter-in-law, a true Indian wife, mother of two daughters. Her only crime is that she could not bear a boy to them. Rebuking her daughter-in-law, the old lady comments: "Look at the girls of today: don't know how to talk – look at her, eyes made up like a heroine" (87). Thereupon Priyanka retorts: "The young girls know how to talk and behave. It is you old ones who need to be taught a lesson. These are your granddaughters, and you are calling them curses" (*Ibid*)?

In the third novel, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* Chetan Bhagat acquaints us with three libertarians viz., Govind, Ishan and Omi. Ishan strongly believes in the virtues of humanity and loves the people of all community equally. He saves the life of a Muslim boy, Ali because he thinks the boy is nation's pride, a promising future of Indian cricket team. Govind kicks declines the job offer from Indian Armed Forces because he can not let anyone tame his free will and starts his own business in partnership with his friends. Omi is a Brahmin boy whose father is a temple priest. He is traditionally bound to do the rituals of the temple while he is not at all interested in their hollowness. This does not mean that he is agnostic or atheist but he worships the supreme power in other form perhaps self. He enjoys the dainties of life, takes wine, watches movies and hankers after beautiful girls. He supports Ali against the communal grudge of his Mama. He saves his life at the cost of his own life. Vidya finds herself in the cage of extra parental concerns. Her parents want her to make career in the medical line but she plants her interest in the pursuit of Public Relations Programme. She carries out her will, gets a degree in PRP and wins over parental obsession. The writer believes: "Humanity wouldn't have progressed if people listened to their parents all the time" (*The 3 Mistakes of My Life* 103) and suggests the youths to act upon the call of their self. The writer criticizes politics @ religion too. When Mama asks Omi and Ishan to persuade the temple visitors to vote for his communist party and sedate them against the favour of the government to the Muslim community. Omi persuades but Ishan dissuades the proposal. This shakes the humanitarian spirits of Ishan and he nullifies Mama's sedative proposal and gets ready to vacate his shop. He evokes the youths to keep religion far away from politics if they are truly religious. He persuades both Hindus and Muslims to follow the reconciliatory behavior like that of the male chimpanzees who "fight violently with each other – for food, females, whatever. However, after the fight, they go through a strange ritual. They kiss each other, on the lips" (71).

Krish, the protagonist of *2 Sates: The Story of My Marriage* quits the marriage proposal from the very rich Punjabi family who were ready to purchase him for two petrol pumps and boxes of cash along with their beautiful daughter. And he marries Ananya, his batch-mate from IIM Ahmadabad – a South Indian from Chennai. He listens to the command of the self and shatters the age old tradition of Punjabi community – a marriageable boy/girl is bound to wed with the match of their parents' choice. This is their religious duty to repay the debt of parenthood'. But Krish does not leave the biggest decision of his life solely in the hands of the parents. He admits that everyone's opinion should be solicited in life's biggest decision. He could not repay the parental debt but by taking the decision of his own life, he certainly repays the debt of humanity. We are human beings first then we are sects, communities, religions and

relations. Chetan Bhagat ignites the virtues of liberty in the youths. He calls them up to prefer human values to all other mundane things. They should develop libertarian out-look to judge values of the human beings. Guruji preaches Krish the ways to liberty or self-emancipation. A free man surrenders to the will of God. He finds void in the right to control anything in the world. Krish wants to control Ananya but fails and finds a sense when Guruji says: "Do you control your life? Your life depends on so many internal organs functioning right. You have no control on them" (*2 States* 169). Then how can one control others? The youths are suggested to surrender to the will of God. Once one surrenders to God, it is His sole responsibility to take one's care. One more thing dug out in the book is how to judge the status of the people. It is the comprehensive education not the riches by which the real status of the person can be evaluated. That is why the protagonist chooses to marry an inter-state and inter-caste Tamil girl for like him, Tamilians also "love educated people" (83).

This is the libertarian outlook of Chetan Bhagat which flows not only through all his novels but also through his blood vessels. He thinks freely, writes freely and believes in the freedom of self and that of others. He writes against the corrupt system and suggests how to purge its impurities.

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Full Flowering of Faith

A Study of Usha Akella's Poetic Vision
Phase II

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God is out in the open for all to see

Usha Akella's second collection of poems, *A Face that does not Bear the Footprints of the World.* is a sequel to the earlier collection *Kali Dances and so do I.* Expressed in normally the title of the new book simply suggests a person in the making – a personality that is unfamiliar with the ways of the world or the world itself. This unfamiliarity is not a negative attribute or an uncomplimentary description. It refers to the pristine purity – a kind of *tabula rasa*. The full blossoming of the flower is a matter of deep understanding, sharp insight and inclusive wisdom. Wisdom is not easy to get: it has to be gleaned grain by grain. Language and tropes are charged with power. In the poet's expression the phonemes are charged with electrifying intensity.

Usha has read her poems to audiences both in India and the US where she landed because of a concatenation of circumstances. Though it is not always easy to get into the depths of an imaginative artist's meaning just by listening to it once, poetry reading cannot be dismissed as a futile exercise. The way a poet puts across a feeling in his/her reading communicates the contours of the artist's thinking, belief and imagination.

In the essay Passing through the Shredder as Phase I of Usha's poetic vision, it has been observed that Usha's poetic personality is both simple and complex. In a genuine poet the two apparently conflicting qualities are in happy conjunction, unity and complete harmony. Understanding LOVE (n its highest sense) is a matter of faith coupled with maturity. This comes as a blessing from above. It is there in all world religions: Hinduism, Sufism, Christianity and so on. Usha believed, going by her averments that she came under the influence and aura of the Sufi saint Rumi, that she came under Sufism and that her poetry is suffused with LOVE. But as she progressed in life and imaginative envisioning her poetic vision is and in the current book under study there is a convincing and impressive fusion of religions. Sufism is not very different from the faith the poet was born into. We have Swami Sivananda's explanation of the essence of Sufism: "Be pious. Destroy evil qualities. Annihilate lust. Bear patiently insults and injuries done by others. Shun the company of the wicked men. Keep company with wise sages. Do good to people. Shun *siddhi*s as they are hindrances in the spiritual path.' *Aardrata* is the essence of love. Usha has divided her second volume (now under study here) into five sections: *Song of the beloved; Love is sitting in the corner in tattered clothes; Tentacles of night; There is a seed* and *Anahata*. A quick in-depth look into each convinces us of the process of crystallization.

The first section opens with the poem *Beloved* and significantly it is called the first gong. It is a poem of joy and enthusiasm.

The first time I head your name
It went down into the well of my being
I knew it as I knew myself, the first go
That echoed me back into me (p.12)*
*(*Emphasis mine*)*

An intense self-realization is triggered with a loud gong going deep into one's being. Flowers bloom on the plant in the soil of memory. This is bliss, ecstasy, the proximity to Him, the Lover, a Divine feeling.

The next step is the coalescing of the self into *paramatma*, the Supreme Being. The prayer is:

Give the world your flesh, your ardor,
Come back to me with what is mine. (p. 13)

This 'me' is non-existent in real terms. Then, there comes the realization that there is no choice in the matter*:*

For some souls a passing by is enough,
Centuries dart forth and back in a glance,
The universe shifts and is recreated again,
The intellect is wiped out,
Some souls are Love's playthings,
They are desired to Love and accept the hardest tasks,
There is no choice in the matter. (p.14)

The coalescing is imminent, inevitable too. The 'face' the blank tablet – not merely *tabula rasa* - the erased tablet – is the pristine and the perfect as LOVE, a Divinity. For the realized one there is no significance or value for intellect. Realization is only radiance.

the intellect collapses,
the words do not matter, not sense
all that is right, and light and timeless becomes us,
I learn to accept this magic as the law between us. (p.16)

The complexity and intensity of love is all-embracing; all-surpassing..

Our Love children have occupied planets and
the galaxies, giddy with delight,
The earth can't hold the ceremony of our Love,
Every 24,000 years it must refashion
itself to understand our Love. (p.18)

The reckoning is in terms of eons. The earth needs to refashion itself with Love as its inner strength. It is a process, possibly through passion and turbulence to understand

ALL. The'I' 'You' duality is transient, just a passing phase while heading towards coalescing, becoming LOVE. The husband-wife relationship leads to bliss when there is ripeness and fruition:

My heart, my name, your soul, our destiny, our story
(Emphasis the poet's
a patch work of remembering and forgetting,
a black void of agony sequined with stars
What is remembered glitters,
Hemmed with my calling, stitched with love,
Even the moon smiles from time to time in recollection of us… (p.20)

There is limitless surrender – even when the husband is loveless in the worldly sense. The point is that fighting for independence is lack of understanding and LOVE. Surrender is no mean thing: surrender leads one into a wider, self-less world of LOVE. The poem *But as your beloved* illustrates this:

In this century of liberated women
marching the world like soldiers
and seizing the hallways of universities with intellect,
I have found no more meaning into life
but as your beloved.

Surrender is total self-effacement, the firm step towards coalescing with Absolute and genuine LOVE. Estrangement and lamentation are steps to go up the not too easy ladder of LOVE. The wife coalesces into the husband.

Every corner I turned I turned for you,
every corner I turned the earth turned up in upheaval,
This I have done over lifetimes
as you play hide and seek,
That I will do till
scavengers tear my heat out,
and when they do
they will have to eat your name into mine. (p.23)

Some lines above bring to our mind the love of every *gopika* for Sri Krishna, and the effort to coalesce losing all individual or personal identity.

Many poems in the sub-section Hope *Drunk*, *Celebrate*, *Yes, Yes* and *You tell me* take the reader along to a predetermined destination.: *Love, Love1 I am drunk with Love, Perhaps, I must celebrate the distances,*

Come! Come! Come!
I could choose life over and over again simply to love you,
There must be promise of return to this unabated calling
Yes! Yes! It must be true(p.29)

lead to the section Return and *Love's Calligraphy:*

Yes! You have untied nature and my heart,
Poetry has burst through her cage to sing again,
You have come, and I spin madly around your presence
spinning …spinning …around your presence. (p.32)

These are all brief glimpses of the realization of the everlastingness of LOVE. The last poem in the section *Love is the light within light* comes like a grand finale:

I should have known the Light within the light,
the beloved within the beloved
… … …
The exit of one has left room
for the universe to creep back. (p.36)

And then there is this question:

How can you know me if you don't know this madness *(p.36)*
(Emphasis the poet's)

The self-willed, spontaneous destruction of 'Egosense', 'myness', *ahamkara* voluntarily leads to bliss that surrender and self-effacement alone can yield.

The second Section *Love is Sitting in the Corner in Tattered Clothes* is yearning for self-effacement. LOVE sits here in a corner in tattered clothes with no thought of herself, her appearance or joy in her mind. The scene in the poem *Love has forgotten herself* is suggestively laid in New York City. The poet comes up with her denunciations with vigor and verve. Concupiscence has overtaken civilization. Lasciviousness has come to be the order of modern living.

Love is having a manicure in NewYork city,
wearing black tights, she has just fitted herself with a diaphragm,
….… …. ….
Love is jogging in Central Park,
And rapping and poetry slamming in coffee shops
…. ….. …
Love is aborting an unborn child,
Love has become cattle in the pastures of other wives' bodies
…. ….. …..
Look at Manhattan trying to maul the sky with its greedy fingers,
"Í,I" it screams daily, "I want. I desire."(pp.39-39)

And then there is a cryptic remark to conclude*: ´love is the mask upon the mask upon the mask. (p.38-39)*

Things have turned out to be lustful or lust driven. It is all itch now, all eroticism and voluptuousness. The puerile manifestations of desire, lust and luxury lead to libertinism. It is all letch. This harlotry is ruinous. Usha's pen portraits of depravity are repulsive and are photographic representations of the actuality around. *Layers of masks* comes as a refrain. Love is portrayed to be busy with brilliant sketches of naked actuality. This state

of affairs is not just limited to New York alone: it obtains in Hyderabad also. Here are un-whitewashed versions of the scabrous and the scatological expressed with decency and subtle irony.

There is descent in the tentacles night and degeneration in the loveless human. There is recklessness and depravity. Though things are as they are, *Love remains God's handmaiden calling Man to God.(p.42)* The thinking individual is befuddled:

Why to live! Why to live!
Love has fled! Love has fled! (p.44)

The serpent has grown robust – become a python now rendering human incapable of movement or even thinking and so all the more despicable: "The whole Samsara has come to be decadent with too much appetite." "*There are frigid wombs yielding no life*" "*there is insidious repetition of madness*." A flash of cerebration comes at the end of the sad lamentations: *How can you see the light if you don't see the darkness?"(p.46)*

The hoarse calls, statements and shouts from the housetops with a fond hope of catching the attention of the passerby go unheard. The ennui becomes bottomless:

"God, I m tired of all things I agreed to do.
"become human
become woman
wear this flesh
walk this earth
be garlanded with skulls
all in your name
… …. …. …
What I really want to do is holler
your name from the rooftop
and pelt your house with stones till you
holler right back at me. (p.48)

Faith gets convulsions and one needs to go back to square one and traverse the path trodden all over again.

Section IV There is a Seed signifies the awareness of the seed along with the conviction that it sprouts. There is a doubt at first: "The seed has sprouted once, can it once more?" Yes, it could and it did. Why to live is again a doubt – the normal feeling of '*one at the threshold between the unmanifest and unfoldment'*. This leads to the flash:

At this juncture one is not alone,
one's agony is the signature of the human condition.(p.52)

The poet becomes cerebral and slips into prose, the vehicle of thundering grand declarations like the mahavakyas in the Vedas. The swing from poetry to prose is revealing. She says like a silent love-filled mystic who has has lost himself in meditation

and with an impressive mien reveals all in a flash. Nature emerges as Spring season after hibernating in wombs of winter, hidden in the folds of the earth. Long labor pains vanish. There is resurrection happening every second, in every blade of grass that springs back from earth's womb with renewed splendor. God is not a mystery. God is a revelation for all to see – the only requirement is love.

The odyssey of the poet having traversed a long way, now reaches a significant milestone: "Here, experienced in this life time, in this body, in the midst of unfoldment, in the midst of Samsara… Somehow one had come home; one had wandered for years and found home right in oneself – in the sanctuary of one's heart retrieved from the soil of Samsara." (p.53) The protagonist has successfully come back to childhood again. She realizes that she is the seed. "*I am the you of you resurrected*."(p.54) At that juncture answers to troubling questions are found, no, realized.

Why to live?
For Life's sake. No more than this.
To be unfolded. No more than this.(p.56)

Section V, the concluding one Anahata starts with an epiphany. The autobiographical element seen in many places acquires here the status of a revelation, some kind of a last word, a testament. After the humdrum details of the life of an average Indian woman, the poet avers:

I am out of the closet –
I've kept this secret too long,
I am a God lover,
That' all there has been, there is and will be,
The only titillation,
I am a hopeless lover at heart –
Loved by people, the world, anything that
rippled God's intent,
I declare myself a lover of God.(p.58)

To appreciate the poet/protagonist's spiritual evolution the concept of Anahata as implied requires a brief explanation. Adherents of sublime Tantric faith believe in *shat chakras* in the scheme of the afferent and efferent fibers of the vagus nerve in the human anatomy. Primordial Energy is described as Kundalini Shakti. Based in *moolaadhara*, the pelvic plexus, the energy is awakened with *sadhana* by the aspirant to move upward traversing *swadhishtana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *vishuddha* and *aajna* to finally reach *sahasraara kamala.* The poet believes in the cardiac plexus as per that tradition to be the seat of affection which is LOVE for God. This is the height to which one should aspire to realize oneself and God which are one. Love is the cardinal principle of life as well as existence. One important facet of Usha's poetry is this LOVE. So convincingly and unmaskedly expressed, her attitude to God and her conviction that she has reached the pinnacle sends the enthusiastic reader into the depths of her heart, filled with LOVE accomplishing the coalescing into the Supreme Being.

Kali worship, Tantrism, Hinduism and Sufism all merge into a fabulous illumination culminating in bliss. Bhakti, devotion, self-surrender, compassionate concern, *aardrata* all fuse into LOVE, a conceptual entity crystallizing into an abstraction Man, Nature and the Divine. From *mooladhaara* to *anaahata* is an arduous journey. Once awakened, *kundalini shakti* attains the acme and ends up in s*ahasraara kamala*, the lotus with a thousand petals, all because of LOVE and divine grace. This spiritual journey needs a map which the ardent aspirant has to chart himself with the guru's benediction. We hear in Usha's powerful voice *Anahata*:

My heart has burst open
and has God's name written all over it,
Petal by petal, pink-hue it lies open to the sun –
Anahata, the heart chakra in divine ecstasy.
Allah Hu. Allah Hu. Allah Hu.(p.59)

In the Faces of Shakti, there are all the seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Nature's changing seasons are aspects of *maya*, the Hindu concept which defies a single-word translation equivalent in English. The concluding poems Meadow etc culminate in the Goddess speaking:

Kali speaks:
"Lusting men! Do not sit as howling jackals at my feet
Thirstinf for my flesh,
I can only give you the blackness of my void,
Are you ready for liberation?"(p.80)

Then there is the illumination:

I? What is I?
All God's play,
I am nothing. Simply nothing. (p.80)

The argument reaches a crescendo. And then comes finally the peroration:

I love God,
I rest my case.(p.80)

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*Page numbers refer to *A Face that does not bear the Footprints of the World,* Monsoon Editions, Calicut, 2008

FEMINIST CONCERNS IN VERGINIA WOOLF'S *A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN*

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Introduction:

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an English author, feminist, essayist, publisher, and critic, regarded as one of the best literary figures in Twentieth Century. She was also a member of Bloomsbury Group. She has written number of novels, critical essays, non fictions, but the most famous works include the novels *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928), and the book-length essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She was in many ways a pioneer of feminist literary criticism, raising issues – such as the social and economic context of women's writing, the gendered nature of language, the need to go back through literary history and establish a female literary tradition, and the societal construction of gender – that remain of central importance to feminist studies. Her major work *A Room of One's Own* (1929) regarded as a classic feminist work, this book is based on lectures she had given at women's colleges at Cambridge University. She has used female authors like Jane Austen and Emily and Charlotte Bronte and examined women and their struggles as artists, their position in literary history and need for independence.

In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf raised a number of issues that would remain of central concern to feminists. This book comprises two lectures, delivered by Woolf in 1928 on the topic of women and fiction. The "room" of the book's title is a skillfully used metaphor around which the entire text is woven. Woolf's center claim is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."The most obvious meaning of this claim is that women need financial and psychological independence in order to work out their creative potential. But the claim itself is complex and the rest of Woolf's text effectively elaborates the metaphorical significance of "room." At the most fundamental level, Woolf's claim situates literature within a material (economic, social, political) context. She compares fiction, for example, to a spider's web: this web is not spun in aerial (literature does not arise in a vacuum) but is "attached to life at all four corners." Indeed, it is "attached to grossly material things" (*Room*, 43–44). Hence, literature cannot be produced without economic independence or backing: our "mothers," Woolf notes (talking to a female audience), were never given the chance to learn the art of making money, and it is this economic poverty that has underlain the intellectual impoverishment of women (*Room*, 21). Woolf notes of her own circumstances that when she began to receive a fixed income through inheritance, this initiated a change of temper in her entire outlook toward men, moving from fear and bitterness to pity and toleration, and finally to a calmer state of mind in which she felt the "freedom to think of things in themselves" (*Room*, 38–39). Hence, intellectual freedom, the "power to think for oneself," rests on financial freedom (*Room*, 106). Historically, this "freedom of the mind" for women was pioneered by Aphra Behn, the first female writer to earn her living by writing. It was she who

earned for women "the right to speak their minds" (*Room*, 64, 66). It was the "solid fact" of this economic basis that enabled the relative profusion of middle-class female writers in the later eighteenth century (*Room*, 65). It is also this fact which explains women's apparent silence through most of history. Even up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Woolf notes, it would have been out of the question for a woman "to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room . . . unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble." Women were debarred from any "separate lodging" which might shelter them "from the claims and tyrannies of their families" (*Room*, 52). But beyond the material circumstances forestalling her independence, the immaterial difficulties were much worse. Woolf relates her famous anecdote of "Shakespeare's sister" Judith, who, being "wonderfully gifted," attempts to seek her fortune in the theater like her brother. The opposition to her endeavors ranges from her father's violent anger to the laughter and exploitation of men in the theater company; such is her frustration and fragility that she kills herself (*Room*, 46–48).Woolf 's point is that "genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people." And if a woman had been born with potential for genius, she "would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage" (*Room*, 48–49).While Shakespeare's sister is fictional, her parable is extrapolated from actual circumstances: Woolf cites the examples of women such as Lady Winchilsea who were mocked for their attempts to write; many women – including Currer Bell, George Eliot, and George Sand – sought the refuge of anonymous authorship (*Room*, 50).

The metaphor of one's own "room," as embodying the ability to think independently, takes another level of significance from its resistance to the misuse of language, history, and tradition by men. Woolf notes that most of the books on women have been written by men, defining women so as to protect men's image of their own superiority (*Room*, 27, 34). She observes a deep ambivalence and irony in male attitude toward women: "women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets." In literature, woman has been treated as full of character and importance; in reality, "she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room." Hence, in poetry, in the imagination of man, woman has occupied a position "of the highest importance." In practical life, however, she "is completely insignificant" and "is all but absent from history" (*Room*, 43). Conventionally, woman "never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary." What is needed, according to Woolf, is a rewriting of history by women so as to present a more accurate account of the conditions in which women have lived (*Room*, 45). A related task for women, as they look back through history, is to seek out the up till now neglected and distorted outlines of a female literary tradition. "Poetry," affirms Woolf , "ought to have a mother as well as a father" (*Room*, 103). The work of the great female writers in the English tradition – including Jane Austen, the Brontes, and George Eliot – was made possible by predecessors such as Aphra Behn, Fanny Burney, and others. For literary masterpieces are not, says Woolf, "single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common" (*Room*, 65). Woolf points out that "books continue each other," and we must read newer women authors as descendents of previous female writers (*Room*, 80). However, when we think back through the great female writers, we find that, in addition to the material and psychological obstacles to their creativity, they were faced with an even greater obstacle: "they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help" (*Room*, 76).

This implies that there is need to establish a tradition of women's writing which has its own emblems of distinctness in terms of both content and style. In this broader sense, the "room" might cover a female tradition and female perspectives toward history. A room of one's own might also represent the possibility, or ideal, of writing in a female language or at least appropriating language for female use. Woolf holds that women should not write in the same way as men do, in spite of the fact that many female authors have felt under enormous pressure to think and write like men. This pressure has stemmed partly from the unsuitability of language as until now developed to express the experience of women. Some writers, such as Jane Austen and Emily Bronte, succeeded in ignoring the persistent domineering male voice attacking their consciousness, and managed to write as women, as able to reflect upon things in themselves rather than answering (perhaps unconsciously) to the voice of external authority (*Room*, 75). But most women writers, including George Eliot and Charlotte Bronte, failed to go beyond or ignore the imposing conventions of external authority; harmed by the lack of a female tradition, they found in the language no "common sentence" ready for their use; the "weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind" was too unlike their own to be of use; these female writers succumbed to anger, irritation, the need to prove themselves and other such obstacles to their clarity of vision, a clarity that would allow them to view things in themselves rather than things as they ought to be seen from male perspectives (*Room*, 74). The "male" language they inherited could not express their female experience; this language, habituated to showing women exclusively in their relationship to men, could not express, for example, the liking of one woman for another (*Room*, 82). Encountering the sentence "Chloe liked Olivia" in a novel by Mary Carmichael, Woolf observes that such a sentiment – the liking of one woman for another – is expressed here perhaps for the first time in literature, and, were it to find adequate expression, it might "light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been" (*Room*, 82, 84). This novel experience requires a specifically female creativity and female appropriation of language in order to be articulated. Woolf notes how woman has been at the "centre of some different order and system of life," contrasting sharply with the world inhabited by men (*Room*, 86). Indeed, so much of the literary tradition was a repository of male values – for example, the form of the epic – that, when women did begin to write in relative profusion, they expressed themselves largely in the form of the novel, which "alone was young enough to be soft" in their hands (*Room*, 77). Moreover, the domestic situation of middle-class women, obliging them to write in the common sitting room, was more conducive to novel writing than poetry; and the only literary training that such women had "was training in the observation of character, in the analysis of emotion" (*Room*, 67). Not only must women craft a sentence, a language that will grasp the rhythms of their own experience, but also a literary form that is "adapted to the body . . . women's books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work" (*Room*, 78). Broad shifts in economic conditions since Woolf 's day may undermine her particular formula here for women's writing; but her general point – that language and thought are ultimately and irreversibly grounded in the rhythms of the body, of one's particular situation in place and time – is one that has been richly pursued by a variety of feminisms. What Woolf might have meant by a "female" use of language can perhaps be clarified by her characterization of male language: a man's writing, she said, appeared "so direct, so straightforward . . . It indicated such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence in himself. " But all of these virtues – if such self-certainty and pretense to objectivity can be deemed virtues – fall, according to Woolf, under the shadow of a mighty male egotism, the shadow of the "I" that aridly dominates the male text, permeating it with an emotion

incomprehensible to a woman, an emotion which lacks "suggestive power" and which Woolf associates with certain transcendental signified of the male world, such as "Work" and the "Flag" as found in authors such as Galsworthy and Kipling (*Room*, 99–102).

Ultimately, however, Woolf is calling on women to write *as* women but without consciousness of their sex occluding their creative vision. She states that Mary Carmichael "mastered the first great lesson; she wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself " (*Room*, 93). Indeed, the mental state that Woolf sees as most creative is what she calls "unity of the mind," a unity in which the sexes are not viewed as distinct (*Room*, 97). Her advocacy of this notion of "androgyny" is also impelled by her instinct that the greatest human happiness results from the natural cooperation of the sexes. She characterizes this "theory" of androgyny (a Greek term fusing the words for "man" and "woman"; the term is taken over from Coleridge, and ultimately from Plato) as follows: "in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating . . . Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous" (*Room*, 98). Without this mixture, suggests Woolf, "the intellect seems to predominate and the other faculties of the mind harden and become barren." If we are to be creative, our minds must engage in this collaboration between male and female elements, and some "marriage of opposites has to be consummated. The whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect fullness" (*Room*, 104). It is significant that Woolf alludes to Romantic notions of unity, as in Coleridge's view of androgyny and Blake's marriage of opposites. What her allusion brings out clearly is that the primacy of reason, advocated by the mainstream Enlightenment, against which the Romantics reacted on account of the abstractness and one-sidedness of such reason, was also a profound index and culmination of a long tradition of *male* thought and male categorization of the world. What the Romantics saw as an indeterminate deficiency of reason becomes in much feminism precisely a deficiency of male perspectives. In other words, the Romantics' perception of reason's deficiency or incompleteness was itself somewhat abstract; feminism, like Marxism, sees it as a political deficiency, ingrained in the social and economic fabric of gender relations.

A room of one's own is filled with a further intensity of metaphorical significance: Woolf equates having such a room with living "in the presence of reality." The writer, she says, lives more than others in the presence of reality and attempts to convey it to the rest of us. What this means for women is that, when they have a room of their own (a tradition, a language, economic and intellectual independence), they will be free to be themselves, to see reality as it is, without their relation to the male sex weighing down their judgment; they will be able to "[t]hink of things in themselves" (*Room*, 110–111). And "reality," according to Woolf, comprises the "common life" we lead, not "the little separate lives which we live as individuals." She stresses that our essential relation is not to the world of men and women but to the "world of reality." Women need to see "human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality" (*Room*, 113–114). Ultimately, then, Woolf's call is for women to redefine their relationship to reality independently of prior definitions by men; their relation to men is but one element in this newly broadened vision of reality.

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ORWELL'S DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON (1933) : A DOCUMENTARY ON HUNGER, STARVATION AND POVERTY

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George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair 1903-1950) was the social rebel, ardent liberal who personally experienced the pangs of the down trodden and aspired for common decency embedded in Democratic and Ethical Socialism, is now acknowledged as one of the most significant writers of twentieth century. Even after sixty one years of his death, his works are running into numerous editions and are translated into nearly more than sixty languages of the world which has entitled him as a 'World figure'. Film adaptations of his novels like *Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty Four* as well as television version of his novels like *Coming Up For Air and Keep The Aspidistra Flying* have brought his works before a vast audience.

Orwell's first work *(Down and Out in (Paris and London* (1933) is a Documentary Novel. Jenni Calder clearly points out the documentary nature of Orwell's early novels including *Down and Out in Paris and London* thus : " We cannot read these novels as political novels. They are novels about class, and they are documentaries. In many respects their picture of contemporary Britain is devastatingly accurate, and although politics do not feature in them the tone of Orwell's description is as fiercely committed as the tone of documentary in Down and Out or Wigan Pier"[1]. David Wykes mentions that Orwell's Novels such as *Down and Out in Paris and London, The Road to Wigan Pier and Homage to Catalonia* are called as : *"Documentaries"*[8]

Richard I. Smyer also shows documentary aspect of the novel : "Orwell's first book certainly exhibits some of the characteristics of a documentary. Implicit in Orwell's circumstantially detailed account of his experiences among French workers and English tramps is the disturbing truth that below the comfortable world of middle class life exists a shadowy republic of the poor and oppressed.

In the words of Martin Gray the adjective documentary can be applied to : "Any play or novel based on documents of various kinds, which attempts therefore a reconstruction of an event in an exact historical rather than imaginative manner. The author will, of course, provide his own interpretation of events and may be forced by gaps in the documentary evidence into invention"[3] Alastair Fowler mentions :"Factional or Documentary Novel"[2] as one of the subgenres of novel.

The novel has two distinct parts. Orwell as a narrator is omnipresent in the novel. The first part deals with Orwell's time in Paris in the late twenties and it describes his experience of poverty starvation and his subsequent job as a plongeur or scullion first in the kitchens of a very large hotel and then in a fashionable restaurant. The second part of the book deals with his continuing poverty upon his return to England and his experiences living among down and outs in and around London. First twenty three chapters are devoted to 'Paris Section' and the remaining fifteen chapters to ' London Section'. Both sections are logically and spatially juxtaposed with the thread of poverty and starvation. The characters such as Charlie and Boris dominate the Paris section and Paddy and Bozo dominate the London section. In the documentation of hunger, starvation and poverty in Paris Section, three stories are told by Charlie and one by Valenti. Charlie's first sadistic love story with a peasant

girl (chapter II), his humorous still pathetic story of starvation with a girl named Yvonne (chapter 18) , and his third story of Old Roucolle, the miser (chapter 23) and Valenti's story of starvation (chapter 15), clearly show documentary nature of the novel. Orwell, the narrator of the novel observes , explores and participates in the slum life of Paris and East End of London. He documents his observation and explorations minutely. Hence the novel is basically a documetary.

At the outset of the novel, Orwell takes the readers to his world of down and out by his brisk documentation of the rue du Coq d'Or, the Parisian slum which he describes thus : It was a very narrow street , a ravine of tall leprous houses, lurching towards one another in queer attitudes, as though they had all been frozen in the act of collapse. All the houses were hotels. On Saturday nights about a third of the male population of the quarter was drunk. There was fighting over women. It was fairly rackety place. It was quite a representative Paris slum".[4] This sprightly naturalistic documentation takes us directly into the very spirit of the penury world of the novel. The lodgers with whom the narrator stayed were of every trade cobblers, bricklayers, stonemasons, navies, students, prostitutes, rig-pickers. The first chapter thus serves as an exposition to the story of poverty.

Hereafter starts the documentation of narrator's hunger, starvation and poverty. Day after day, the narrator's money began to ooze out as he was staying in the room of hotel 'Des trois Moineoux' as a lodger in slum area. Day after day he was forced to strave and pawn his clothes. Then he thought it absolutely necessary to find out work and remembered a friend of his, a Russian waiter named, Boris who might be able to help him.

Both Borish and the narrator set their journey on to get a livelihood. They pawned all their belongings and nothing was left to fall back on. Days were passing without a grain of food to eat. They had gone from street to street and from hotel to hotel to get a job but in vain. The narrator was too lazy to do anything but lie in bed. His description of experience of hunger is very effective : "Hunger reduces one to an utterly spineless, brainless condition, more like the after effects of influenza than anything else. It is as though one had been turned into a jellyfish, or as though all one's blood had been pumped out and luke-warm water substituted. Complete inertia is my chief memory of hunger."[5]

One day the luck changed abruptly and Boris got a job at the hotel near the place de la Concorde five hundred francs, a month and food. The narrator also got a job of a plongeur in the Hotel which was a vast grandiose place. He had to go to the kitchen which was a stiflingly low ceilinged inferno of a celler, red lit from the fires, and deafening with oaths and the clanging of pots and pans. The narrator thus takes us to the subterranean place of the working class world of the Parisian hotels and to the kitchens where the workers had to burn their body to fill the stomach. The narrator also worked as a scullion in the cafeteria of Hotel X in the hot temperature of about 110 degrees farenheit.

The story of Valenti, a waiter in chapter fifteen, who had not eaten for five days even a crust of bread, is grim documentation of hunger, starvation and proverty. Valenti was living in a dirty cheap little hotel in the Rue Sainte Elosie up in the Latin quarter. The hotel was called Suzanne May, after some famous prostitute of the time of the Empire. Valenti was starving and there was nothing he could do. All he could do was to lie in the bed getting weaker and weaker, and watching the bugs running about the ceiling. In the afternoon of the fifth day he went half mad. He saw a picture of a woman hanging on the wall and thought that it would be of Sainte Eloise, the patron saint of the quarter. Though he was an atheist, he knelt before her picture,

prayed and requested her to give him food, then he would burn a candle for her at her church down the street. Then within five minutes a big fat peasant girl called Maria, who lived at his hotel, came to his room. She saw his most wretched condition and was horrified to learn that he had eaten nothing for five days. Valenti told her that he had nothing to pawn and get money. But unexpectedly she saw an empty oil bidon for which he had paid three francs fifty as deposit. Immediately, he ordered Maria to be quick. Instantly, within three minutes Maria returned with two pounds of bread under one arm and a half litre of wine under the other. Then Valenti describes the heavenly joy of getting food after five days of starvation and says : "I didn't stop to thank her ; I just seized the bread and sank my teeth in it. Have you noticed how bread tastes when you have been hungry for a long time? Cold, wet, doughy like putty almost. But Jesus Christ, how good it was! As for the wine, I sucked it all down in one draught, and it seemed to go strait into my veins and flow round my body like new blood. Ah, that made a difference! I wolfed the whole two pounds of bread without stopping to take breath."[6] After wolfing the food, Valenti remembered that he had to burn a candle in the church of Sainte Eloise as he had promised her. But to his amazement, he found that the picture before whom he had knelt and prayed was not that of Sainte Eloise-the Patron Saint of the quarter but that of Suzanne May, the famous prostitute of the Empire !

Charlie's story of starvation with a girl named Yvonne, told in chapter eighteen is humorous still pathetic. His third story told in chapter twenty three is that of Old Roucolle, the miser. He died of a broken heart due to the treachery of the Jew. His story is pathetic, melodramatic but still touching. Old Roucolle's story concludes the first part of the novel. The first story told by Charlie is stereoptyped and the second is character revealing. The third story can be read as a parable that of miserliness leads to misery. The third story of Valenti is touching but still humorous. These four main stories are fitted in the documentation of hunger, starvation and poverty rampant in Parisian slums. They add documentary flavour to the novel.

On the whole the Parisian episodes are written with enthusiasm and light heartedness. They are rather episodic, while London chapters are of picaresque nature. The London chapters by contrast, are marked by a drabness and tedium, which, despite the liveliness of writing, suffuses the final portion of the novel with rather a grey quality. There is unmistakable difference in tone between two sections. The Parisian section of the novel is more episodic than the London section. It documents the writer's experience of hunger and that of other characters such as Charlie, Boris and Valenti. The documentation is apt to point out the theme of hunger, starvation and poverty.

In the Second Part of the novel, London Section, the documentary aspect is dominant in chapter twenty seven and thirty five. Orwell's essay *The Spike* (1931) is a description of a week end's stay in a casual ward which was later on revised to form chapters twenty seven and thirty five of *Down and Out in (Paris and London* . It is visible that while structuring the first novel, Orwell has mostly relied on the genre of documentary as he aspired to project the social realities or the worst conditions prevailing among Parisian and London poors of his times.

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Critical Review on the MLA Handbook (7th Edition)

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Introduction

*The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper*s presents a set of conventions to help a researcher in the written presentation of research. These guidelines follow current practices that are recommended by the Modern Language Association of America (a professional organization of some 25,000 instructors of English and other languages). These conventions are used primarily in the humanities. Joseph Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* provides the researcher with a streamlined and easily referenced guide to the MLA format.

A Research Paper based on MLA guidelines

Definition of a Research Paper

A research paper is a factual essay about a specific subject. The information used to write the research paper is taken from a combination of primary and secondary information sources, which must be cited throughout the paper and listed in a bibliography at the end of the paper. A primary source is original, unedited information; examples include letters, interviews, and firsthand accounts of an event or practice. A secondary source analyzes or summarizes information and can provide a critical or historical perspective on a subject.

There are two types of research papers: informational and analytical. The informational paper summarizes and presents factual information in a coherent and organized way. The analytical paper includes research findings from primary and secondary sources, in addition to the writer's own analysis of the research topic. Therefore, the analytical paper has some elements of persuasive writing in that the writer's conclusion is an opinion derived from factual evidence.

General Guidelines

The following are the general guidelines to be followed for the formatting of a research paper:

- The paper should be typed or written on a computer and printed out on standard-sized paper (8.5 X 11 inches).
- It should be double-space.
- The margins of the document should be set to 1 inch on all sides.
- A header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin should be created.

- Throughout the essay, *italics* should be used for highlighting the titles of longer works and providing emphasis.
- Title page for the paper should not be made unless specifically requested.
- A double-spaced entry in the top left corner of the first page that lists the researchers name, the instructor's name, the course, and the date should be provided.
- A header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin should be created. The title on the line below the header with the scholar's name should be centered.

Thesis Statement

A good research paper begins with a thesis statement, which clearly states to the reader what the writer intends to cover in the paper. Here are two examples of a thesis statement:

> *The development of the automobile led to economic, social, political, technological and ecological changes.*
>
> *Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories reflect a pattern in which characters who are innocent and trusting are destroyed by the stronger forces of evil.*

The thesis statement provides the framework for the entire paper. Every section of the paper is tied to this statement, and the conclusion relates each section back to this original statement of the writer's intentions.

Avoiding Plagiarism

When writing a research paper, lab report or any other type of academic assignment, a researcher generally uses resources such as books, articles and websites written by other people to support his/ her argument. However, when using someone else's information, he/ she must indicate where that information came from (credit must be given where credit is due) by citing his/ her sources. If he/ she fails to acknowledge his/ her sources, he/ she is guilty of plagiarism.

When to Cite

Before examining the specific formats of the MLA citation style, it is important to understand when to cite to avoid plagiarism. A source must be cited or acknowledged within a paper when one:

- quotes material verbatim (word for word)
- rewords or paraphrases information
- includes statistics or findings from a survey or study
- incorporates facts, ideas or opinions that are *not* common knowledge

Listed below are a few examples to illustrate when citations are required. MLA generally uses the author's surname and page number to cite information *within* the body of the essay.

Quoting- When a researcher quotes someone, he/ she uses the author's exact words.

> In his book On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Stephen King offers his personal views on writing: "I'm convinced that fear is at the root of most bad writing."

Paraphrasing- When a researcher paraphrases someone, he/ she uses his/ her own words and sentence structure to convey another author's ideas.

> Acceptable:
>
> Stephen King blames fear for the overuse of adverbs and passive verbs, hallmarks of bad writing, and he/ she encourages fledgling writers not to resort to using such devices as a crutch.
>
> Unacceptable:
>
> Stephen King is convinced that fear is at the root of bad writing and encourages writers to energize prose with active verbs.

The words in bold in the above unacceptable example are exactly as King wrote them. They have not been changed therefore they are plagiarized. Simply eliminating one or two words is not paraphrasing.

Summarizing- To summarize is to condense ideas into fewer words and with fewer details. A paragraph, page, or even a chapter, might be summarized in a single sentence. The summary should

accurately convey the author's message.

Accurate:

For Stephen King, fear yields bad writing.

Inaccurate:

Stephen King says students should be afraid of writing the SAT writing sample.

King acknowledges that students often are afraid of writing the SAT essay. He/ she does not claim that they should be. The point he/ she is trying to make in this passage is about fear and poor writing. The SAT is mentioned only as an example of what types of writing tasks make writers afraid.

Notetaking

Supplies for Notetaking

Cards in one size (3"x5" or 4"x6") should be used. These cards can be sorted, arranged and rearranged before writing the outline or essay.

Types of notecards**:**

a. Source cards b. Note cards

What to Include on Source Cards

The researcher should write one card for each source to identify all the details needed for his/ her Works Cited page. He/ she should arrange these cards into alphabetical order to make the Works Cited page. Information needed varies depending on the type of source one uses. Basic information for any source card includes Author, Title, Publisher, Date and Page (as available). A unique number or color code for each source card should be used and that code should be applied to information cards to eliminate the need to rewrite the source information (Author, Title, etc) on each information card.

What to Include on Note Cards

Each information card should be given a topic heading. Only one piece of information related to that heading on each card should be included so that the researcher can sort related topic cards together later. These topic areas will probably become the major divisions of the outline. Major ideas, significant details and quotations on the card should be written.

Finally, the card should be coded by color or number to tie the information to its source.

How to Outline

Preparing an outline is a helpful step that comes between taking notes and writing a rough draft of the paper. It gives the chance to put one's notes into a sensible order. When a researcher does this, he/ she can decide whether more of any special type of research is still needed. It also gives him/ her the opportunity to see if he/ she has really done what he/ she said he/ she would do in the thesis statement. Once an outline has been sketched out, the researcher may decide to revise the thesis statement, or he/ she may decide to re-emphasize some points more than others in the paper. In this way, he/ she may find that his/ her research approach changes as he/ she goes about the research. He/ she might end up doing a series of outlines.

How to Organize Thoughts and Notes for the Outline

Sometimes a teacher will require only a trial outline. This is a more-or-less organized listing of the topics a researcher plans to cover in the general order he/ she intends to follow in his/ her paper. He/ she should place the note cards into stacks of the various main topics they cover. These stacks should be placed into a logical order. Several organizing techniques are possible, including:

1. Chronological (by time)
2. Cause and effect (what caused an event or series of events)
3. Process (what steps occurred in a specific sequence)
4. Inductive (moving from specific examples of a problem, such as food shortages and ammunition supplies, to broad, general statements about that problem)
5. Deductive logic (starting with a general problem, such as family problems, to specific examples, such as child abuse, divorce and poverty)

Notes in the trial outline should be added to indicate which quotes and reference sources the researcher will be referring to at that point. If he/ she had numbered his/ her notecards, those numbers should be used to code those notes in the trial outline.

What the Outline Should Look Like

A formal outline is typed and follows a specific format. The guide may request either a topic outline (short phrases) or sentence outline (full sentences with conventional punctuation). The parts of an outline are typically labeled using this order:

I. Main idea
  A. Subtopic
    1. Detail of subtopic
    2. Another detail
      a. Related idea about the detail
      b. Another related idea
        (1) Supporting fact or related matter
        (2) Perhaps another supporting fact
          (a) Micro-detail
          (b) Another micro-detail
  B. Second subtopic
    1. Detail of second subtopic
    2. Another detail
      a. Supporting information for this second detail
      b. Added supporting information related to second detail

In general, a researcher may find that he/ she will have different amounts of details for some topics and subtopics than for others. That is acceptable; he/ she should just seek to keep his/ her descriptions in balance, not overemphasizing some topics at the expense of others. When he/ she has a I, there should be at least a II and possibly a III. When he/ she has an A, there should also be at least a B, and so on. Usually no element should occur singly; when one supporting point is listed, there should be at least one more at that level.

General Guidelines for Authors, Titles and Use of Numbers

The following are the general guidelines given in *The MLA Handbook* about how the names of the authors, titles and numbers can be mentioned in a research paper:

- The author should be referred to by his/ her or her full name the first time it is mentioned in the text, but by last name only thereafter, unless there are two authors with the same last name. In that case, both the first and last names should be used consistently.
- Titles of books, plays, magazines, journals, newspapers, movies, television shows, compact discs, and Web sites are to be italicized.
- Titles of articles, short stories, essays, poems, and songs are in quotation marks.
- The first and last words and all main words should be capitalize. Examples: *"Eight Days a Week," Great Expectations, Wall Street Journal, The Simpsons, "The Raven"*.
- Numbers that can be written in one or two words (four, thirty-five) should be spelled out; to represent longer numbers (110, 5 ½), numerals can be used.
- If the paper calls for a series of numbers or frequent use of numbers, such as statistical findings, numerals can be used. Also, numerals can be used for numbers preceding units of measurement (17 amperes).
- A sentence should not begin with a numeral – it should be spelled out.
- Related numbers can be express in the same format (5 out of 50 states).
- Following are examples of inclusive numbers. The second number is given in full through ninety-nine and when necessary for clarity. This format can be used for page number ranges:
  13-35 83-110 101-07 191-217 1,954-59

Internal Documentation (In-text citations, parenthetical references)

Every time a researcher paraphrases or directly quotes a source, he/ she must give the reader the author's last name and the page number of the source, either in the tag (introductory) line or in parentheses. A comma between the author's name and the page number should not be used. One should paraphrase wherever possible. When a source has no page numbers or any other kind of reference numbers, no number can be given in the parenthetical reference.

The following are the different ways in which in- text citations can be given:

Author's Name in Tagline

If the writers name is given in the tagline itself, the name should not be repeated in the parenthetical reference with the page number:

> "He was obeyed," writes Joseph Conrad of the manager in Heart of Darkness, "yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect" (87).

Author's Name in Parentheses

If the author's name is not given in the tagline itself, then the name should be mentioned in the parentheses with the page number at the end:

> The author, speaking of the manager in Heart of Darkness, says that "He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect" (Conrad 87).

More than three authors

If a work has more than three authors, one may either give all the last names followed by the page number, or use et al. followed by the page number. Notice that et al., which means "and others," ends with a period. Example: (Bell, Peters, Monsour, and Pope 19) or (Bell et al. 19). One can use the same format for the names in his/ her list of works cited.

Indirect Quotations

Material from primary sources can be used whenever possible. If the researcher needs to include a quotation from an indirect source, he/ she should use the original author's name in the tag line and add qtd.in ("quoted in") before the indirect source in the parenthetical reference:

> Sir William Berkeley believed that "learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them" (qtd. in Chappell 139).

In the above example, Chappell's book would appear in the works cited list.

Work Listed by Title

If there is no author, the article or book title (or a shortened version of the title, if it is a lengthy title) should be used before the page number. For example, a parenthetical reference to the anonymous article "Tweeting All the Way to the Bank" which appeared in the Economist would be formatted as ("Tweeting" 61).

Citing More than One Source in a Single Parenthetical Reference

If one wishes to cite more than one source, the citations should be separated with a semicolon. (Badke 48; Lupton 411-13). In the given example, Chappell's book would appear in the works cited list.

Corporate Author

Corporate authors are groups such as the United Nations, the Modern Language Association etc. It is easier to read if the corporate author is cited in the text (rather than parenthetically) the first time it is referenced, as in the following example:

> "The American Diabetes Association (ADA) warns that too much sugar could be bad for a child's health" (42).

After the first citation, one may just use the initials to refer to the author:

> "Recent research has shown that sugar can cause dental problems" (ADA 44).

Block Quotes

When a researcher quotes more than four typed lines of prose or more than three lines of poetry, the quotation should be set off by indenting it one tab from the left margin. Long quotations should be introduced with a tag line followed by a colon. Quotation marks around the material should not be used. For example:

> At the conclusion of Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:
>
> > The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He/ she gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

As it can be seen in the example given above, the parenthetical reference follows the ending period of the quotation. There is also a space after this period.

Errors in Source Material

If there is an error in the original copy, one may add *sic*, which is Latin for "thus," to assure the readers that the quote is accurate, even with the error. The error should not be corrected. One can use *sic* in square brackets if it appears within the quote or in parentheses if it appears after the quote. One should use s*ic* for directly quoted material, not a paraphrase. For example:

> "According to the Transportation Department, the trains where [sic] running late that day."
>
> Shaw admitted, "Nothing can extinguish my interest in Shakespear" (sic).

Ellipsis

Ellipsis points (three spaced periods) are used to designate that material has been omitted from the source material. These are used only with directly quoted material, not paraphrases.

How to Include Works Cited / Bibliography

Basic Rules for the Works Cited / Bibliography

A Works Cited list should be available at the end of a research paper. It should contain bibliographical references to all the works cited in the research paper. Following are some of the rules mentioned in *The MLA Handbook* that relate to the Works Cited section of a research paper:

- Works Cited page should begin on a separate page at the end of the paper.
- The page should be labeled Works Cited (the words Works Cited should not be underlined or put in quotation marks) and the words Works Cited should be centered at the top of the page.
- All citations should be double-spaced with hanging indentation, but one should not skip spaces between entries.
- The page numbers of sources should be listed efficiently, when needed. If a journal article that appeared on pages 225 through 250 is referred to, the page numbers on the Works Cited page should be listed as 225- 250.
- If an article or a publication that was originally issued in print form but was retrieved from an online database is cited, the researcher should provide enough information so that the readers can locate the article either in its original print form or retrieve it from the online database (if they have access).
- The researcher should capitalize each word in the titles of articles, books, etc, but not capitalize articles, short prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle: *Gone with the Wind, The Art of War, There Is Nothing Left to Lose.*
- Italics should be used for titles of larger works (books, magazines) and quotation marks for titles of shorter works (poems, articles)

Listing Author Names

Entries should be listed by author name (or, for entire edited collections, editor names). Author names should be written last name first; middle names or middle initials should follow the first name:

Burke, Kenneth; Levy, David M.

Titles (Dr., Sir, Saint, etc.) or degrees (PhD, MA, DDS, etc.) should not be listed with names. A book listing an author named "John Bigbrain, PhD" should appear simply as "Bigbrain, John"; however, suffixes like "Jr." or "II" can be included. Putting it all together, a work by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. should be cited as "King, Martin Luther, Jr.," with the suffix following the first or middle name and a comma.

If two or more works by the same author are being cited, the name should be listed in the first citation only. Three hyphens and a period should be used for all the following references. The same rule applies for multiple authors, as long as the authors' names in each source appear in the same order. If they are not in the same order, or if there are different coauthors, the researcher must list all names in the same order as shown in the original source. The entries beginning with the same name, but with different coauthors should be alphabetize by the last names of the second author listed.

Zepeda, Sally J. "Cognitive Dissonance, Supervision, and Administrative Team Conflict." International Journal of Educational Management 20.3 (2006): 224-32. ProQuest Research Library. Web. 2 Aug.2009.

---. "Leadership to Build Learning Communities." Educational Forum 68.2 (2004): 144-51. ProQuest Research Library. Web. 2 Aug. 2009.

Citing Different Types of Sources

The following are some examples of citing different kinds of sources on the Works Cited page. All citations should be double-spaced with hanging indentation,

Books

Book by a Single Author

A book by a single author should be cited in the following way:

Author's Name. *Title of the Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, copyright date.

Franke, Damon. *Modernist Heresies: British Literary History, 1883-1924*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008. Print.

There are times when more information is needed. The following is a list of the possible components of a book entry and the order in which they should be arranged:

- Name of the author, editor, compiler, or translator
- Title of the work (italicized)
- Edition used
- Number(s) of the volume(s) used
- City of publication, name of the publisher, and year of publication
- Medium of publication consulted (*Print*)
- Supplementary bibliographic information and annotation

Book by Two or More Authors

To cite a book by two or three authors, their names should be given in the same order as on the title page—not necessarily in alphabetical order. Only the name of the first author should be reversed, a comma added, and the other name or names given in normal form.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.

Vare, Ethlie Ann, Sheldon Olson, and Greg Ptacek. *Mothers of Invention*. New York: Morrow, 1988. Print.

If there are more than three authors, only the first can be named and *et al.* ("and others") added, or all names can be given in full in the order in which they appear on the title page.

Plag, Ingo, et al. *Introduction to English Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton, 2007. Print.

or

Plag, Ingo, Maria Braun, Sabine Lappe, and Mareile Schramm. *Introduction to English Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton, 2007. Print.

Book with an Editor

To cite an anthology or a compilation (e.g., a bibliography) that was edited or compiled by someone whose name appears on the title page, the entry should begin with the name of the editor or compiler, followed by a comma and the abbreviation *ed.* or *comp.*

Hall, Donald, ed. *The Oxford Book of American Literary Anecdotes*. New York: Oxford UP, 1981. Print.

Shell, Marc, ed. *American Babel: Literatures of the United States from Abnaki to Zuni*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002. Print.

Work in an Anthology (Book, Chapter, Essay, Poem, Short Story)

The entry should begin with the author and title of the piece, normally enclosing the title in quotation marks. The title of the part of the book should be followed with a period. If the anthology contains the work of a translator, the translator's name should be given next, preceded by the abbreviation *Trans.* ("Translated by"). Then the title of the anthology (italicized) should be stated. The inclusive page numbers of the piece one is citing should be given. The page numbers for the entire piece should be provided, not just for the material one used. Inclusive page numbers should follow the publication date and a period.

Fagih, Ahmed Ibrahim al-. *The Singing of the Stars*. Trans. Leila El Khalidi and Christopher Tingley. *Short Arabic Plays: An Anthology*. Ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi. New York: Interlink, 2003. 140-57. Print.

More, Hannah. "The Black Slave Trade: A Poem." *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*. Ed. Paula R. Feldman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. 472-82. Print.

If the work was originally published independently (as, e.g., autobiographies, plays, and novels generally are), its title should be italicized instead. Often the works in anthologies have been published before. If the researcher wishes to inform his/ her reader of the date when a previously published piece other than a scholarly article first appeared, he/ she should follow the title of the piece with the year of original publication and a period. He/ she does not need to record the medium of previous publication.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. 1845. *Classic American Autobiographies*. Ed. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Lib. of Amer., 2000. 267-368. Print.

Reprint in an Anthology

To cite a previously published scholarly article in a collection, the complete data for the earlier publication should be given and then *Rpt. in* ("Reprinted in"), the title of the collection, and the new publication facts should be added.

Frye, Northrop. "Literary and Linguistic Scholarship in a Postliterate Age." *PMLA* 99.5 (1984): 990-95. Rpt. in *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays*, 1974-88. Ed. Robert D. Denham. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1990. 18-27. Print.

If the article was originally published under a different title, the new title and publication facts should be stated first, followed by *Rpt. of* ("Reprint of"), the original title, and the original publication facts.

Lewis, C. S. "Viewpoints: C. S. Lewis." *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of* Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. Denton Fox. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1968. 100-01. Print. Rpt. of "The Anthropological Approach." *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*. Ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn. London: Allen, 1962. 219-23.

A Multi-Volume Work

If researcher is using two or more volumes of a multivolume work, he/ she should cite the total number of volumes in the work ("5 vols."). This information should come after the title—or after any editor's name or identification of edition—and before the publication information.

Lauter, Paul, et al., eds. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. 5th ed. 5 vols. Boston: Houghton, 2006. Print.

Rampersad, Arnold. *The Life of Langston Hughes*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. New York: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.

If only one volume of a multivolume work is being used, the number of the volume in the bibliographic entry ("Vol. 2") should be stated and publication information for that volume alone should be given; then one need give only page numbers when he/ she refers to that work in the text.

Lawrence, D. H. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*. Ed. James T. Boulton. Vol. 8. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

Wellek, René. *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950*. Vol. 5. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986. Print.

An Online Book: A Work on the Web Cited With Print Publication Data

This format should be used for a work on the Web cited with print publication data or for books that are available through a subscription database (including books that have been scanned). The entry should begin with the relevant facts about print publication. Instead of concluding with *Print* as the medium of publication, the following information should be recorded in sequence:

- Title of the database or website (italicized)
- Medium of publication consulted (*Web*)
- Date of access (day, month, and year)

Tanner, Jennifer Lynn. *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2006. *PsycBooks*. Web. 7 July 2009

Walsh, Richard, and Robert Lang Adams. *The Complete Job Search For College Students: A Step by-Step Guide to Finding the Right Job*. Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2007. *Google Book Search*. Web. 7 July 2009.

If a book is scanned for access through *Google Book Search* and was published before 1900, the researcher does not need to include the name of the publisher. After the print publication data, the title of the overall website, the medium of publication consulted, and the date of access should be included.

Child, L. Maria, ed. *The Freedmen's Book*. Boston, 1866. *Google Book Search*. Web. 15 May 2008.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Arthur Golding. London, 1567. *The Perseus Digital Library*. Ed. Gregory Crane. Tufts U. Web. 12 Mar. 2007.

A Digital Book

Digital files can exist independently from the Web or a published disc**.** In general, the researcher should determine the kind of work he/ she is citing (e.g., a book), and follow the relevant guidelines according to MLA for the formatting the entry in the works-cited list. In the place reserved for the medium of publication, the digital file format should be recorded, followed by the words *file—PDF file, MP3 file, XML file*, and so on—neither italicized (except for titles of software programs) nor enclosed in quotation marks. The file type is usually indicated by the extension at the end of the file name, after a period: If one cannot identify the file type, the words *Digital file* should be used.

Malkin, Michelle. Culture *of Corruption: Obama and His Team of Tax Cheats, Crooks, and Cronies.* Kindle Edition. 27 July 2009. *Digital File.*

Mezrich, Ben. *The Accidental Billionaires: The Founding of Facebook A Tale of Sex, Money, Genius and Betrayal*. Kindle Edition. 14 July 2009. *Digital File.*

Reference Sources

Print Encyclopedia Articles

An encyclopedia article or a dictionary entry should be treated as one would a piece in a collection. If the article is signed, the author's name should be given first (often articles in reference books are signed with initials identified elsewhere in the work); if it is unsigned, the title should be given first.

When citing widely used reference books, especially those that frequently appear in new editions, the full publication information should not be given. For such works, only the edition should be listed (if stated), the year of publication, and the medium of publication should be consulted.

"Ginsburg, Ruth Bader." *Who's Who in America*. 62nd ed. 2008. Print.

"Japan." *The Encyclopedia Americana*. 2004 ed. Print.

If a specific definition among several is being cited, the abbreviation *Def.* ("Definition") and the appropriate designation (e.g., number, letter) should be added.

"Noon." Def. 4b. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. Print.

When citing specialized reference works, however, especially those that have appeared in only one edition, the full publication information should be given, omitting inclusive page numbers for the article if the dictionary or encyclopedia is arranged alphabetically.

Bram, Jean Rhys. "Moon." *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Mircea Eliade. Vol. 10. New York: Macmillan, 1987. Print.

Electronic Reference Publications

Here the title of the website and the medium of publication consulted (Web) should be mentioned, followed by the date of reference.

"Dominican Republic." *CountryWatch*. Web. 10 May 2001.

VandenBos, Gary R. "Schizophrenia." *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, Vol. 7. 160-163. American Psychological Association. *PsycBOOKS*. Web. 13 July 2009.

Newspaper Articles

To cite an English-language newspaper, the name should be given as it appears on the masthead but any introductory article should be omitted (*New York Times*, not *The New York Times*). The articles should be retained before the names of non-English-language newspapers (*Le monde*). If the city of publication is not included in the name of a locally published newspaper, the city should be added in square brackets, not italicized, after the name: "*Star-Ledger* [Newark]." The medium of publication consulted should follow. For sections labeled with letters and paginated separately, the section letter is sometimes part of each page number: "A1," "B1," "C5," "D3."

Haughney, Christine. "Women Unafraid of Condo Commitment." *New York Times* 10 Dec. 2006, late ed., sec. 11: 1+. Print.

Jeromack, Paul. "This Once, a David of the Art World Does Goliath a Favor." *New York Times* 13 July 2002, late ed.: B7+. Print.

Newspaper from a Database Subscription Service

It should include the date of online publication, the medium of publication consulted (Web), followed by the date of reference.

Hayenes, V. Dion. "To Stop School Violence, Educators Look for Ways to Stop Bullying, Help Diffuse." *Chicago Tribune* 11March 2001:n.pag. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 13 July 2009.

McKay, Peter A. "Stocks Feel the Dollar's Weight." *Wall Street Journal* 4 Dec. 2006: C1+. *ABI/INFORM Global*. Web. 4 July 2009.

A Web site sponsored by a newspaper

"The Scientists Speak." Editorial. *New York Times*. New York Times, 20 Nov. 2007. Web. 15 May 2008.

"Utah Mine Rescue Funeral." *CNN.com*. Cable News Network, 21 Aug. 2007. Web. 21 Aug. 2007.

Magazine Articles

To cite a magazine published every week or every two weeks, the complete date (beginning with the day and abbreviating the month, except for May, June, and July) should be given, followed by a colon, the inclusive page numbers of the article, and the medium of publication consulted. If the article is not printed on consecutive pages, only the first page number and a plus sign should be written, leaving no intervening space. The volume and issue numbers should not be given even if they are listed.

Kates, Robert W. "Population and Consumption: What We Know, What We Need to Know." *Environment* Apr. 2000: 10-19. Print.

McEvoy, Dermot. "Little Books, Big Success." *Publishers Weekly* 30 Oct. 2006: 26-28. Print. Paul, Annie Murphy. "Self-Help: Shattering the Myths." *Psychology Today* Mar.-Apr. 2001: 60-68. Print.

Magazine from a Database Subscription Service

Here the the medium of publication consulted (Web), followed by the date of reference should be mentioned.

McEvoy, Dermot. "Little Books, Big Success." *Publishers Weekly* 30 Oct. 2006: 26-28. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 10 July 2009.

Paul, Annie Murphy. "Self-Help: Shattering the Myths." *Psychology Today* Mar.-Apr. 2001: 60-68. *Proquest Central*. Web. 10 July 2009.

A Web site sponsored by a magazine

Here, the supplementary information about the Web site (such as the name of its editor, sponsor, or publisher) following its name can be added.

Green, Joshua. "The Rove Presidency." *The Atlantic.com*. Atlantic Monthly Group, Sept. 2007. Web. 15 May 2008.

Scholarly Journals

Print Journals

The following information (as available) should be included while citing from a scholarly journal in a print format:

- Names of author(s).
- Title of article in "quotation marks."
- Title of journal or magazine *italicized.*
- Volume number and issue number.
- Year of publication.
- Page numbers of the article.
- Name of the database *italicized.*
- Medium of publication (Web).
- Date of access (day, month, and year).

Posen, J. Sheldon and Joseph Sciorra. "Brooklyn's Dancing Tower." *Natural History* 92.6 (1983): 30-37. Print.

Levine, June Perry. "Passage to the Odeon: Too Lean." *Literature Film Quarterly* 14.3 (1986): 139-50. Print.

Scholarly Journals Available in Subscription Database

Many databases include digital scans of entire periodicals that were previously published in print; often these scans present facsimiles of the printed works. To cite a work from a periodical in an online database, such as an article, a review, an editorial, or a letter to the editor, the entry should begin by following the recommendations for citing works in print periodicals, but the medium of original publication (*Print*) should be dropped. A periodical article on the Web may not include page numbers. If possible, the inclusive page numbers should be given or, when pagination is not continuous, the first page number and a plus sign should be given; if pagination is not available, *n. pag* should be written.

Killen, Joel D. et.al. "Weight Concerns Influence the Development of Eating Disorders: a 4-Year Prospective Study." *Journal of Consulting and Cinical Psychology* 64.5(1996): 936-940. *PsycArticles.* Web. 13 July 2009.

Tolson, Nancy. "Making Books Available: The Role of Early Libraries, Librarians, and Booksellers in the Promotion of African American Children's Literature." *African American Review* 32.1 (1998): 9-16. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 June 2008.

Scholarly journals on the Web (Electric Form only)

Some scholarly journals exist only in electronic form on the Web, while others appear both in print and on the Web. A periodical publication on the Web may not include page numbers, or it may include page numbers in a new sequence for each item rather than continuously across the entire issue. In such cases, *n. pag.*should be used in place of inclusive page numbers

Armstrong, Grace. Rev. of *Fortune's Faces: The* Roman de la Rose *and the Poetics of Contingency*, by Daniel Heller-Roazen. *Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature* 6.1 (2007): n. pag. Web. 5 June 2008.

Raja, Masood Ashraf. Rev. of *Voices of Resistance: Muslim Women on War, Faith, and Sexuality*, ed. Sarah Husain. *Postcolonial Text* 3.2 (2007): n. pag. Web. 5 June 2008.

Web Sites

Most works on the Web have an author, a title, and publication information and are thus analogous to print publications. But while readers seeking a cited print publication can be reasonably assured that a copy in a local library will be identical to that consulted by the author, they can be less certain that a Web publication will be so. Electronic texts can be updated easily and at irregular intervals. Publications on the Web present special challenges for documentation. Because of the fluidity of the network and the many hypertextual links between works accessed there, it is often difficult to determine where one work stops and another begins. The researcher should only include a URL as supplementary information only when the reader probably cannot locate the source without it or when his/ her instructor requires it. If he/ she present a URL, it should be given immediately following the date of access, a period, and a space. The URL should be enclosed in angle brackets, and concluded with a period.

"Maplewood, New Jersey." Map. *Google Maps*. Google, 15 May 2008. Web. 15 May 2008.

"Six Charged in Alleged N.J. Terror Plot." *WNBC.com*. WNBC, 8 May 2007. Web. 9 May 2007.

"Verb Tenses." Chart. *The OWL at Purdue*. Purdue U Online Writing Lab, 2001. Web. 15 May 2008.

Other Sources

Anonymous Articles

The reference starts with the name of the article itself:

"It Barks! It Kicks! It Scores!" *Newsweek* 30 July 2001: 12. Print.

"Where Angels No Longer Fear to Tread." *Economist* 22 Mar. 2008: 89+. Print.

Editorials

A newspaper editorial should include the name of the editor if it is clearly mentioned; otherwise the entry should start from the title of the editorial itself:

Gergen, David. "A Question of Values." Editorial. *US News and World Report* 11 Feb. 2002: 72. Print.

"It's Subpoena Time." Editorial. *New York Times* 8 June 2007, late ed.: A28. Print.

Reviews

Here depending on the source of the review, the entry should be similar to an entry in a newspaper, magazine or a journal including the words 'Rev. of'.

"Racial Stereotype Busters: Black Scientists Who Made a Difference." Rev. of *American Science Leaders*. *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 25 (1999): 133-34. Print.

Tommasini, Anthony. "A Feminist Look at Sophocles." Rev. of *Jocasta*, by Ruth Schonthal and Hélène Cixous. Voice and Vision Theater Company, Cornelia Connelly Center for Educ., New York. *New York Times* 11 June 1998, late ed.: E5. Print.

Annual Reports

Here the name of the company and year of publication of the report should follow the title of the report:

Hershey's. *2008 Annual Report to Stockholders*. Web.

Nike. *2008 Annual Report.* 24 July 2009. Web.

A Lecture, a Speech, an Address, Class Notes, a Reading

If there is no title, an appropriate descriptive label (*Address, Lecture, Keynote speech, Reading)*, neither underlined nor enclosed in quotation marks, should be used.

Atwood, Margaret. "Silencing the Scream." Boundaries of the Imagination Forum. MLA Annual Convention. Royal York Hotel, Toronto. 29 Dec. 1993. Address.

Herbster, Gene. "Managing Change." Leading Change Class. Manhattanville College. Graduate School of Business and Professions. Purchase, NY. 12 July 2003. Lecture.

Dissertations and Theses (Published and Unpublished)

Unpublished Dissertation

To cite a thesis, an appropriate label (*MA thesis, MS thesis, Diss*.) should be used:

Boyle, Anthony T. "The Epistemological Evolution of Renaissance Utopian Lierature." Diss. New York U, 1983. Print.

Covell, Dusty. "Understanding the Workplace: A Dog's Life." MS thesis. Manhattanville Coll, 2005. Print

Published Dissertation

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Videos or films

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My Fair Lady. Dir. Frank Capra. RKO, 1946. Film.

Interviews

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Wiesel Elie. Interview by Ted Koppel. *Nightline*. ABC. WABC, New York, 18 Apr. 2002. Television.

Conclusion

*The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper*s is a very useful for researchers. It is comprehensive in nature and is constantly updated according to the changing needs of scholars of modern literature and the humanities. This effort is visible from the latest 7th edition of the *Handbook* from which most of the instances given above are taken and discussed.

Translating Amrit Lal Nagar's Nachyo Bahut Gopal: Some Considerations--- Casteist and Linguistic.

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I

What is Dalit Literature ?

Pages have already been devoted to the definition and discussion of dalit literature . Such literature is nothing put an expression of a "new cultural life" (Dangle 241) of the dalit populace. It records the "shrewd rusticity" and "jolting experiences" (Dangle 248) of dalit life. Arjun Dangle has defined dalit literature as :

> Dalit literature is one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India… It matures with a sociological point of view and is related to the principles of negativity , rebellion and loyalty to science , thus finally ending as revolutionary .(Dangle 265)

According to Sharatchandra Muktibodh ,"An outstanding work of dalit literature would be born only when Dalit life would present itself from the dalit Point of view." (Muktibodh 267). Calling Dr. Ambedkar, "the mythic giant of dalit literature" Bagul feels that "Democratic socialism, the new science and technology and the revolutionary present , form the essence of Dalit literature."(Bagul 288). He yet again says that "literature that makes the common man its hero and advocates socialism is the model of dalit literature ."(Muktibodh 288).

Sharankumar Limbale has stated,

> Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations , slavery , degradation , ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief .... (Limbale 30)

It has always been felt that the Brahmins or the caste Hindus have been largely responsible for what has been called the "dominant , carteist , constructions of Indian identity ." (Limbale 1) .The systematic silencing of the Dalit "orature and literature" (Ngugi 16) has clearly sought to exclude the voice of a budding human discourse through a dissembling of the potential talents that inhere in is the alterity of the Other . However , as observed , the efforts of the Dalit figure and literary giants like Mahatma Phule , Dr. Ambedkar , Prof. S.M. Mate , Baburao Bagul , created the seperate genre of Dalit literature. Besides accepting the vision of victimization….(See – Pg-3) by giving voice to the "textuality of the self as a system of representation ." (Hall 5). This representation through Dalit literature became the core of "New textual and structual parameters ." (Bande 146) where as Bande feels:

> The dominant motifs of victimization , revolt, nemesis and subsequent loss perpetuate their oun myths. While the Socio – cultural forces throw into flux the ambivalences created by the dominant powers' repeated oppress tactics. (147)

The contemporary dalit literature then gives a voice to that moment of resistance in the Dalit life which signals the dalits private entry into an alternative reality – an alternative consciousness new of sorts. The writing of Dalit authors is committed and purposive. As Limbale points out ,

> Their writing expresses the emotion and commitment of an activist .That society may change and understand its problems -- their writing articulates this impatience with intensity. Dalit writers are activist – artists who write while engaged in movements . They regard their literature to be a movement. Their commitment is to the Dalit and the exploited classes." (Limbale 33)

In the process of manifesting this activism , the Dalit writer seeks to give rise to a sort of 'Dalitisised dialogism'; wherein (s)he subverts the logic of superiority to encourage the idea of mutual participation and support. On these lines , M.N. Wankhade felt that,

> Writing and people are mutually interdependent , but because of this self – imposed isolation there developed a great gulf between people and writing . The aestheticians and proponents of art for art's sake are responsible for this. The writing that has come forward to forge friendship and harmony between people and literature is Dalit literature . (Wankhade 320).

This literature blasts the romantic notion of the pastoral beauty to reveal the stark materiality of the marginalised lives. It documents "instances of deprivation , suffering, violation experienced and also resistence posed by them and their communities." (Mandal 1). Saptarishi Mandal calls their narratives , "Ethnographics of Justice" (1). Thus , amid differing definitions and view points , it could be said that Dalit literature is the expansion of a "revolutionary mentality connected with struggle." (Limbale 32). Couched in linguistic indecencies it manifests aggression , and rebellion ; with values of a new creation that marches towards the victory of humanism.

II

Is Nachyo Bahut Gopal a dalit text?

The above question could have many answers. In so far as writers/critics (Sharankumar Limable , Mohandas Naimishrai , Dharmveer) believe that Dalit literature is the exclusive monopoly of the Dalit writer , Nachyo Bahut Gopal can never be called a Dalit text for the simple season than Nagar ; its author is a caste – Hindu.

However , this cannot be and should not be a compartmentalized opinion. If at all literature is the site of conflicting tendencies in human nature , One has to concede the loopholes in the casteist controversy to prove that a water – light compartmentalization of creativity can be harmful to literature itself. Such discussions are of course not without an open admission that the society has very much been responsible for the insecurity , mistrust and fear in the collective mind of the Dalit society. Apart from Muktibodh , Sharankumar Limable has commented on why the caste – Hindus cannot produce Dalit literature He feels that, "...the central concern of Dalit literature is how best to represent the 'authentic experience" of the Dalits." (Limable 10)

Joya John also states the view ecohed by Bajrang Bihari Tiwari who feels that the "Primacy to self experience (Swaanubhav) is a hallmark of Dalit discourse" (John 5) . It is this emphasis on self – experience which makes it different from the concept of Parkaya-Parvesh (comparable to the term verstehen/empathy). In an interview[i] with Dr. Nilanshu Agarwal , Jai Prakash Kardam – another renowned Dalit writer from Uttar Pradesh opined ,

> I would like to quote here the words of Dr. Manager Pandey, a renowned Hindi critic , who wrote in the preface to a collection of Dalit short stories edited by Ramnika Gupta ; that "Only Ash Knows the Experience of Burning." This indicates that Dalits know the experience of burning ...burning in the five of sorrows , hatred , disrespect , injustice , inequality and untouchability. Non-Dalits do not have this experience writers can express their experiences in an authentic manner but not others. non-dalit writers may be sympathetic to the dalits , they may be their well-wishers but their experiences about dalits are not self-experiences. They are the observers of torture and exploitation non-dalits makes the difference between the writings of dalit and non- dalit writers. Hence, dalit literature is the literature of Dalits based on their lives and experiences. (Kardam 3)

Similarly, Mohandas Naimishrai has bitterly criticized writers like Premchand and Nirala to say "...sympathy alone does not work because characters portrayed sympathetically do not revolt …" (In Chaudhary 303). Uma Shankar Chaudhary,states the example of the Aristotelian concept of mimesis, where he says, that an artistic imitation of horror or pain can produce artistic pleasure in the connoisseur. He also cites the examples of the film media where the directors of movies like Titanic and Godzilla had never experienced the imagined ...and yet they achieved unprecedented success in garnering audience appreciation. Chaudhary feels that self-experience though a welcome feature , is never a mandatory pre-requisite for the creation of art/literature. R.G. Jadhav said,

> It shall be the mission of Dalit writing to transcend established norms and standards and to create new ideals and names emerging out of the characteristic social awareness present in Dalit literature. (Jadhav 299)

However real this transcendence may be , one thing has definitely become real. Dalit literature , in a bid to retain its 'originality', has somehow crossed the margins of humanism which ideally should be the goal of a literary writer. Dalit writers favour the projection of resistance instead of sympathetic victimisation to create a myth of Dalit heroism. But, I feel that such heroism is still at the mercy of victimization in literature . In other words , it is somehow imperative for the dalit writers to enliven and keep intact, the sordid individual experiences of the dalit selfhood into order to critique humanism by bringing the dalit hero within the purview of Dalit victimhood. This view has another aspect to it. It leads to the 'Otherisation' of the caste-Hindu author trying to map out the psychological terrain of his dalit characters on the basis of humanism.

Now to return to the basic question – 'Can Nachyo Bahut Gopal be read as a Dalit text ?' Amrit lal Nagar was a scion of Hindi literature and has written on a number of issues. In all his writings he has talked about the constructions of society and its lamentable aspects. If in Nachyo Bahut Gopal (1978) he has talked about the lamentable situation of the Dalit society with a keen eye , in Woh Kothewaliyan he goes deep into the lives of the prostitutes to find out about their truth. In Mahakaal ,(that has been translated into English by Sarla-Jagmohan as Hunger) he chronicled the Bengal famine and the pathetic situation of the then Indian populace. My question then is: 'does a writer , with an eye for detail and an all embracing consciousness lose the right to talk about an aspect of society of which he is not an intrinsic part ? If that be the case, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Zola and all others, who have chronicled the human situation , should openly be declared failures.

In discussing Nagar's work as a dalit text I would like to bring in the issue of subjectivity; since, dalit literature uses the touchstone of the truthful projection of dalit consciousness for its success. As a critical concept, the issue of a subject's subjectivity involves the questions of establishment of identity ,the responsibility and agency in the creation/retention of that identity. This , according to Hall takes place in "personal action , in aesthetic creation , in interpersonal norms and social valuations." (Hall 5) Dr. Viveki Rai has called Nachyo Bahut Gopal, a "novel of social revolution."[ii] and feels that Nagar has presented Dalit life not as a subject but as a "powerful thought", wherein he has explored the tendency of man's exercising of crushing power on the other ." (Hall 5)

In India, the casteist question can be linked with the issues of ethnicity else where. Donald E Hall feels that "Postmodern perspectives on subjectivity can usefully erase the boundaries of high and low culture." (Hall 112) In her work on the black women's subjectivity , Mae Gwendolyn Henderson offer the strategy of a dialogue with "aspects of Otherness within the self." (Henderson 1994 : 258-59) bell hooks in her work on the black people's subjectivity and white writers offers a dialogic model that constitutes a "critical break with the notion of 'authority' as mastery over." (423) According to Audre Lorde, "Responsible agency is never derived simply from acting out of one aspect of social identity ,rather it comes from an

awareness of the unique combinations of identities lived and experienced by the individual , whose power to respond to oppression thus originates in a critical consciousness of being athwart several even numerous , social categories ." By the same token , Aijaz Ahmad in an essay on Salman Rushdie's Shame ; replaces the "myth of ontological unbelongingness …by another , larger myth of the excess of belongings." (Ahmad 127)

Given the decentred position of a subject (as creator/character) I feel that through Nachyo Bahut Gopal, Nagar has fully lived to manifest the dalit vision , which Muktibodh feels, is necessary to transform an experience into an art. He goes on to differentiate between a dalit vision and a dalit point of view in the following words,

> Life is not lived within the rigid confines of a point of view and one does not have only such experiences as are essential to prove a controversial viewpoint. Life is lived totally , at all levels and in the totality of experience. When a view of life is experienced by a writer in its multi form distinct totality, he could be said to have had a 'vision' of his own point of view."(Muktibodh 268) .

It would, thus not be an exaggeration to say that the "totality of (his) experience" (Waghmare 308) , has been well reflected in his literature ; Nachyo Bahut Gopal , not exempted. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar clearly rued on the absence of revolution among the Brahmin masses and questioned, "With such a long tradition of knowledge, how is it that the Brahmins failed to produce a single Voltaire ?" Bagul felt ,

> To become a Voltaire, one has to stand up against oppressive religious and political authority. The Indian Brahmins and the intelligentsia could ill afford to do that , for they had created the entire system promoting religion , political power and exploitation for their own benefit. As writers belonged to the same varna , their writing obviously remained within the boundaries charted on by the Manusmrti. (Bagul 271).

According to Sharankumar Limbale,

> Babasaheb believed that everyday context , idea and feelings embedded in social interaction should be predominant in literature … Babasaheb valued literature that was realistic and life affirming … This is proved by…his expectation of humanistic idea in literature. (Limble 50-1)

In a critique of Nagar's novel , Rajendra Yadav[iii] had this to say:

> I feel that in (his) earlier novels Nagar's gave Primacy to several other things; social scenario , regionalism , Hindu myths etc. However , it is in this novel that , I have for the first time ever encountered a human –truth on a creative plane. Nagar (in this novel) breaks the barriers of all belief, orthodoxies, values, obstacles, practices to contests that the consciousness of Being ; of existing is the ultimate Human truth. He hails Nagar's novels by using the words that had been used for Alex Hailey's Roots : "Its not a novel , but an act of faith." (Yadav 106)

Yadav goes on to congratulate Nagar for his capacity to envision and experience two Indian malsystems (women & untouchability) through just one character and ends his review with the words, "How immutably mature have you rendered the Hindi Novel – and rendered us useless at the same time ...(Trans mine 9)

Given the concepts of "responsible agency"(Lorde), "literature of totality" (Muktibodh) and "humanistic ideas" (Ambedkar in Limbale), Nagar clearly reflects postmodernism in his writings through his philosophical standpoint on the duality inherent in the human consciousness . In his writings he has reflected humanism – not casteism. Infact, he questions casteism on the basis of his humans philosophy . If indeed, Ambedkar did attach the highest value to humanism as a literary value , Nagar can well be termed a Brahminical Voltaire.The narrator reflects,

> …Actually , this entire routine of making one human carry another's dirt is

> nothing but representation of the atrocity perpetuated by the higher class on the lower…. (NBG 322)

Through the prism of his objective observance and "aesthetic detachment" (Jadhav feels these qualities are essential in Dalit authors) , he writes,

> History bears testimony to the suppression of voice and emotions. When an emotionally disturbed man feels unable to vent his grievances , art and literature come to the rescue of his true agonies …The subaltern can win – if not in life at least in imagination. (NBG 316 ; trans mine)

Thus, it is via his imagination that he makes an attempt at pointing out the fissures in human lives in society. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has also pointed out in Decolonizing The Mind,

> A writer's handling of reality is affected by his basic philosophic outlook on nature and society and his method of investigating that nature and society : whether for instance he perceives and therefore looks at a phenomenon in its interconnection or in its dislocation , in its rest or in its motion , in its mutability or immutability ; in its being or in its becoming ; and whether he sees any qualitative change in its motion from one state of being into another . A writer's handling of the material can also be affected by his material base in society , that is his class position and stand point. This , I hasten to add, does not necessarily produce good or bad writing for this ultimately depends on that indefinable quality of imagination , a writer's artistry, which is able to perceive what is universal that is – applicable to the widest possible scale in time and space – in its minutest particularity as a felt experience. (Ngugi 78)

In an article written by Dr. Ramvachan Rai (published in Dharmyug, 1978 issue) the novel has been hailed as a "unique equation of literature and sociology," which organically blends the researcher's facts and the writer's imagination to create the "novelistic history" (Rai) of dalit life. Dr. Kusum Varshney's article entitled 'Dalit Sahitya Mein Nachyo Bahut Gopal:EK Padtal', (published in the Sep/Oct 2002 to Dalit Sahitya special issue) regretted that this novel, "which protects the dalit integrity, enlivens Dalit consciousness, encourages dalit freedom and advocates a casteless society has never been considered as a part of Dalit literature." (Tran. mine)

Nagar's imagination thus had the power to unleash the revolutionary as well as the counter – revolutionary processes in a detached manner to "understand the flux of life" (Kasbe 296) inherent in every human being . In a conversation between the narrator and the female protagonist , the latter asks the former,

> Can the difference between the real and the copy ever be brought to an end ?
> I replied , "…Word –power has the key to this end ."
> Smt. Nirguniya… "Your pen has fused the two and has actually experiences even those inexperienced pangs of my life , which would have otherwise remained hidden forever… (NBG 244)

It is thus through his imagination that Nagar plays out his responsible self in creating the aestheticism of humanity. Nagar assimilated the grains of the Ambedkarite thought as well as other cultural insights to claim that 'bhangi' is not a class. If at all there was a 'class', there was a class of the defeated which gave rise to their 'untouchable' and 'subaltern' status. Through his preface and characters like Majeed , Majju, Nabbu, Gullan , Masitaram and Nirgun, Nagar delves deep into the society where people spend their lives cleaning other's dirt ; are forced to accept their dues like beggars; whose women have no dignity – and remain exploited at the hands of the sanitary inspector and money lenders; whose children do not receive any education and start their lives with cleaning filth; whose shadows are dangerously polluting for the high-castes. Nagar has forcefully presented the unfortunate lot of an entire people. Gopal Rai feels that Nirguniya's character deserves a place with the immortals of Hindi literature –

Premchand's Hori and Surdas , Hazariprasad Dwivedi's Nirguniya , Yashpal's Tara and Mannu Bhandari's Bunty.

R.G. Jadhav praises Prof. Meshram for the latter's "introspective and self – critical" (Jadhav 300) literary personality. M.N. Wankhade has also said that "there is a lack of philosophical writing in Dalit literature."(Wankhade 321) Nagar's narrator does not hesitate in questioning himself as when he asks, "Infact…how much do I know my own self…my own reality?" (NBG 251) when he comes to know about Smt. Nirguniya's dual life/caste. Nagar's act of writing involves a weapon of an introspective as well as detached dialogue which is quick to "awaken the consciousness of self – respect" (Limbale 119) in his readers. Such dialogism is not an act of abstract other – worldliness.His writing organically blends the material with the spiritual; thereby illuminating the awful nature of human reality with a "revolutionary and poetic insight." (Jadhav 302) The narrator comments :

> I felt emotional, merciful and dumb for the first time. I felt like wanting to stop thinking. Today's democracy is hardly different from the barbaric and feudalistic times when man was defeated and compelled. The thought brought a bad taste in the mouth. (NBG 31).

The narrator hopefully envisages a casteless society. In doing so, he does not deny the oppression of the dalits or decry that Brahmins been life savers/downright killers. His writing is the affirmation of the politics of human identity, the quagmire of casteist existence and at the same time, the futility of identity politics in society. He philosophically reminds us that "real human consciousness and self – identities do not fall into the neat, polarised categories used commonly in the analysis of oppression." (Hall 114). According to Shyam Kashyap, Nagar's novel is successful in the "individual transformation" of his reader's minds. Against human slavery. He asks, "Can there be any better example of literary creation's revolutionary fiat ?"

Nachyo Bahut Gopal revolves around the life of a Brahmin woman named Smt. Nirguniya . In the character of this woman Nagar has brought together an amalgam of typical feminine sensibility -- a craving for physical/emotional fulfillment. He shows the highs and lows that this craving takes her through. Love makes the world go round for her , and her Brahmin self embraces a Dalit way of life. The rest of the story is a mix of the Smt. Nirguniya's autobiography and the Brahmin narrator's interview session with this Brahmin turned Dalit woman ; who (as the narrator feels) turns an ascetic as a result of her emotional/psychological struggles. How her character copes with her trials in the aftermath of her "voluntary conversion"; how love (even with a Dalit) can be an enriching experience; how does the human conscience come to terms with a sense of a bifurcated consciousness ; how does one integrate the bifurcations ; What can an individual achieve for the collectivity ? These and several other social/psychological/philosophical questions have been answered by Nagar by making Smt. Nirguniya – Not a victim , but a stoic agent of social change who realises that casteism is nothing but a farce – and refuses to come back into the 'elite' mould of the Brahmin narrator (who ofcourse , is the author's mouthpiece) , accepting her own Dalit identity with pride and integrity. She asks the narrator, "...Why did you seperate me from the sweeper community in your speech babuji? I am one of the sweepers now, and consider myself superior to your caste ." (NBG 115).

If as Dr. Dharmveer points out, Dalit literature should ideally aim at ending inferiority complexes inherent in its readers, Nagar's narrative indeed takes up, problematises and elides the 'aspects of Otherness' within the self. It is through the character of Smt. Nirguniya and a commingling of the reportage and the autobiography through which Nagar has tried to "create testimonies of caste – based oppression , anti –caste struggles and resistance." (In Mandal 1). The reality of the human situation is clearly reflected in the questions posed:

> What and how would a high class and caste man feel on being forced to acknowledge himself a low born and feel the weight of the cogent's firth on his shoulder ? How would he feel if his actuality ; his very being is challenged ? and changed by force ?.....This questions and the feelings involved are not only inexplicable but excruciatingly painful as well. (NBG 72)

In making Smt. Nirguniya answer these questions, Nagar has taken utmost care to preserve the marks of dalit aesthetics , as well the authenticity of experience in a human life. In the episode where Smt. Nirguniya cleans her mother –in-law's shit , or where she forcibly made to cut and cook up pig's flesh ; the rebellion of her Brahmin instincts and sanskars has been faithfully recorded. On being asked to cook pork she had told her husband that nobody in her generations part had ever touched such a "prohibited thing", Mohna had countered her by asking, "Nobody in your ancestry must have eloped with a bhangi – why did you do it?"

The process of her mental conversion into a Bhangi was more tortuous than a Bhangi's real oppression or perhaps at least an equally painful experience .She had told the narrator.... "I took him under compulsions, but I cannot deny love. Falling in love is not easy Babuji! It is asceticism , only ...that you don't tend to feel the difficulties in the heat of love ." (NBG 116).

Smt. Nirguniya's stance on being beaten and accepting a Dalit's life made the narrator think of her as a coward . He reflected,

> My feudal character is intact , despite my so called progressivism . Gandhiji himself became a Bhangi and taught the art to several of his disciples. But , I can never do this due to the deeply engrained modern democratic values …couldn't she have stayed hungry and given up her life ? but may be I am exaggerating ...its not easy . Ninety eight percent of the population is still doing what Smt. Nirguniya was forced to do years ago ....." (NBG 134)

Nagar becomes a champion of "democratic socialism" (Bagul 285) in Nachyo Bahut Gopal. I say so, because despite accepting the short comings of the high caste Hindu oppressive systems ,he does not dilute the marks of those human failings without which no personality/subjectivity would be complete. In fact ,it is these failings that constitute the stuff of all real literature. Dr. Dharmveer opines,

> Dalit literature should believe that the emotional aspect of literature will always help the aestheticism aspect. Infact, aesthetics should not try to annihilate emotions in literature. It is meant to strengthen its manifestation and representation." (Chaudhary 182) [Trans mine]

Shyam Kashyap in a review essay entitled , 'Yatharth aur Kalpana ka Dwand,' has credited Nagar for being able to create an antagonistic consciousness in the readers' hearts towards the degraded feudalistic practices in India. He lauds the writer for his ability to portray the bhangi society in a pathetic light. In a way the narrator becomes the writer's mouthpiece when he tells his wife.

> …I think that these so called lowborn have purposely and quite unfairly been associated with wrong attitudes and tendencies, by none other than us – the high bred. We suppose that they are utterly characterless. We reduce them to the status of beggars – for our mercy and sympathy. I strongly feel that such feelings are wrong. All they want from us is justice. (NBG 26).

The conversation between the Brahmin narrator and the Brahmin turned dalit woman Smt. Nirguniya serves to create a polyvocal therapeutic aestheticism where the restrained voices clash with the audible ones on the planes of sex , and caste to probe the ultimate humanistic psychological truth. It would not be hyperbolic to state that in creating such a text , Nagar had already laid the foundation of that aestheticism , which was demanded by Limbale years later.

In critiquing the democratic pretence of high-brow political parties in the post-independence era to chronicling comments on the sham of religious conversion and institutions encouraging ritual purity – to recording the experience of collecting leftovers , (in the pre-independence India) Nagar has tried his best to map the totality of the dalit experiences. Far from showing the Dalit characters as victims Smt. Nirguniya's character becomes the emblem of resistance and active agency to create a textual independence for the dalit masses. In celebrating the dalit mythological legends – in fighting for temple entry for the Dalits – In pioneering an educational movement for the Dalit children – in trying to inculcate and hone the Dalit entrepreneurial skills – infact , in calling Dalits by the name of 'Gandharvs'--- in fighting against the sexual lechers who were keen to exploit her 'doubly oppressed' status – Nagar makes Smt. Nirguniya's will an agent of constructing a "revisionary sociology of self-aware agency" (Hall 126) that is not perfect and complete, but has the power to "take risks bravely , and accept failure or criticism without paralysis or other self-destructive response. "(126)

Nagar's heroine is trapped in a woman's body and she accepts its limitations but does not allow their limitations to become her fetters. As an agent of Dalit life and womanhood she transcends her destiny. Nagar's narrator witnesses her son's castiest irritation and insecurity and sings a couplet :

"Bahut ghabra ke ve yeh
Kahte hain ki mar jayenge ,
Mar ke Bhi chain Na paya
Toh kidhar jayenge?"
(scared of life… they feel like embracing death
What if the troubles of life follow them in death too.…?)

Smt. Nirguniya – as a character who has transcended victimization reconstructs her ownself (and in the process her dalit identity) as "precisely the potentiality that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation."(Butler in Hall 127). Her tragic love story acts as the dark background against which the sordidness of dalit life shines with double the intensity. Her proud acceptance of her dalit social identity at the cost of her latent and reinforced Brahmin values is highly generative of social subversion. It has the power of telling one and all 'Dalits have a Brahmin within and Brahmins have a Dalit inside them.'

The conversation between the narrator and Smt. Nirguniya, brings before the readers the degrade reality of the otherwise highly hailed social superstructure . She says :

> ...Babuji ! , I don't intend to sound biased, but the ultimate truth throughout the world is ...there isn't any worse slave than a woman...I have known a Brahmin as well as a bhangi. There is no difference between men , ...The woman is the ultimate exploited at all places . I have been doubly oppressed ....(NBG 296)

She puts an end to her life after asking the narrator whether the bhangis could envision freedom in the future socio-political scenario from the degrading slavery(!?). In her death, she proves the fact of her staunch faith in her late husband as her God----it is in this manner that she creates the 'myth of faith'.The novel as such becomes a therapy for curing the disease of oppression. The novel may be read as feminist – it may as well be read as a Dalit text. In as much as we concede the power of imagination and freedom of literature to map human experiences – in as much as we credit dalit literature as the voice and agency of the oppressed ---in as much we want dalit literature to reflect "the distinct language of revolutionary ideology , the aggressive character, the refusal of inequality and the declaration of the triumph of human values." (Limbale 38-9) –- in as much as it is expected to be life –affirming and realistic ; with an ability to reflect dalit mores and myths – Nachyo Bahut Gopal, I feel, is a dalit text par excellence ...as Nagar remains the social Voltaire reflecting Kabir in his philosophy.

Ekai cham , Ek malmuta ,
Ek Rakt aur Ek Gooda

Ek Bhaanti le sab upjaane
Ka Baman ka suda....(Kabir's Sakhi)
(Same skin, similar excreta
Similar blood and same flesh,
All the humans are similarly born…
How does one , then differentiate between a Brahmin and a Shudra?)

III

Translating Nachyo Bahut Gopal

> One of the ways to get around the confines of one's "identity" as one produces expository pose is to work at someone else's title as one works with a language that belongs to many others. This after all , is one of the seductions of translating. It is a simple miming of the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self . (Spivak 397)

Translation is never an easy task. Moreso,when such translation is about a work which talks about an alien culture. Spivak in her essay , the 'Politics of Translation' favoured the strategy of solidarity rather than vague imagination. This meant that any "intimacy of cultural translation" (407) required that the translator be ready to learn another tongue. For me then , the key to translation lay , in being able to learn and understand the dalit language and culture. It is said that a translation goes though an ideological/poetic manipulation to ease its absorption into the target culture. This, however was not the case here. Translating from Hindi into English – for a Indian target readership – I had little to worry about how 'ideologically manipulative' I could be. And yet, at the same time, I was aware that I was entering murky waters. The difficulty precisely lay in the possibility of complicity; the complicity in the "seizure of power." (Lefevere and Basnett 8) through the creation/preservation of a piece of literature over which my caste –Hindu status gave me little authority. However, once my casteist fears were allayed by the sincerity of re-presentation that I was ready to put in. I was ready for my task.

Dalit literature has always been considered as a "parallel revolutionary movement " (In Chaudhary 298) with regard to Hindi literature. This is probably why even though Marathi Dalit literature has earned ample popularity; dalit issues in Hindi literature have never even been looked at with blinkers. At the most Premchand (and Nirala)have been credited with some writings but, their writings have blatantly been sacrificed at the altar of casteism. Marathi dalit literature proper started in the late 1950s, whereas poet like Hira Dom (Achoot ki Shikayat) , Harioudh , Chandi Prasad Hrydesh and Sanehi (Dukhiya Kisan) , had started recording the Dalit plight way back in 1914 through their poems in Hindi.

Why Premchand did not emerge as a major writer on Dalit issues ?[iv] This question has been answered by Akhil Anoop , in his article 'Sewaal Harijans Ka' (S Kalyan) . According to Anoop, for Premchand it was the economic distress that was responsible for the entire 'subaltern problem'. Hence, while faithfully recording the freedom struggle in his writings, issues of untouchability, temple entry for the dalits, intercaste marriages, did appear in his writings they remained on the periphery. However , writers like Paripurnnand Verma (Teen Din) , Rameshwar Prasad Srivastava (Achoot) Janardan Rai (Roze) , Indra Narayan Jha's (Achoot) , Om Prakash Sharama (Chandidas) and later Shiv Pujan Sahay (Dehati Duniya) , Madhukar Singh (Lahu Pukare Aadmi), Nirala (Chaturi Chamar) , Rangey Raghav (Gadal) , Shailesh Matiyani (Hatyare) are some of the caste hindu writers who have enriched Hindi literature with their 'dalitcentric' emotions. These along with Amrit Lal Nagar have been as active as perhaps a Sheoraj Singh Bechain or a Jai Prakash Kardam . It is an irony that these writers have never been acknowledged as being major contributors to dalit literature . This

translation was thus a small attempt to broaden as well as damage the horizon of human essentialism , which ends up making a slave of literature. According to Basnett and Lefevere :

> Cultures make various demands on translations , and those demands also have to do with the states of the text to be translated . If the text comes even close to the status of 'meta narrative' (Lyotard , 1985 : xxxiv) , or 'central text' embodying the fundamental beliefs of a culture , chances are the culture will demand the most literal translation possible. (7)

Similarly Vladimir Macura , in his essay 'Culture as Translation' refers to John Bowring's translation which to the latter "meant above all an act of cultural information." (Macura 65).Since translation empirically remains a linguistically centered activity, the mediations of language to transfer culture could not obviously be ignored. Sharankumar Limbale has also felt:

> The view of life conveyed in Dalit literature is different from the world of experience expressed hitherto…The reality of dalit literature is distinct and so is the language of this reality. It is the uncouth impolite language of the Dalits. It is the spoken language of Dalits. This language does not recognize cultivated gestures and grammar. (Limbale 33)

Language as a tool to sustain reality becomes important is a translational act. The "communicative competence"[v] of Nagar's characters betray the use of a starkly ethnographic approach in his representation of Dalit life and mores. The flux in the major protagonist's life – Smt. Nirguniya ,would have definitely remained incomplete without linguistic changes in her personality.The adaptation to a Dalit way of life has well been reflected in her rejection of the sophisticated Sanskrit shlokas (which nonetheless remain latent in her self) for a more colloquial form of speech which records the particular nuances of Dalit life. Accordingly, Nirguniya becomes a character in two speech communities; with biculturalism becoming endemic for her. Labov has defined a speech community thus :

> The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements , do much as by participation in a set of shared norms ; these norms may be observed in event types of evaluative behaviors , and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variations which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage" (In Wardhaugh 110)

In terms of a multilevel usage of linguistic skills Shyam Kashyap has appreciated Nagar's skill – Indeed , in this novel the skilled use of language has gone into making it one of the best regional/cultural novels till date. If these is a strong usage of Awadhi as in :

> "Bada Jaadu Hai";
> "Bada Andhera Kar Rakhyo hai Aaj" ;
> "Yahika baap saar khule aam Hindu logan ka kutta kahis"

There is an equally rich smattering of Urdu ;

> "Huzoor , beadbi Muaaf kariyega , apka tohfa mein kubool na karoongi."

Similarly , the novelist employees English Hindi , to delineate his colonial characters :

> "Usko dost banana maangta."
> "Tum apna shohar ke pass jaana Maangta?"
> "...Doosra kisi respectable aadmi se shaadi bana lo".etc

as well as makes a good use of pidgin English :

> "Kochch nahi , kal master mohan apni dear madam ko bicycle par sitaan karake san se yeh go aur woh go, one-tow-three pharraphan....."

The language of the incharge of the bhangis speaks typically 'dehati' language :

> "nispictor aa jayenge to pehle to khaal hi udhedenge hamai-tumai aur naukri lenge so ghaate mein."

...while Mr. Nirgunmohan , shows Nagar's acquaintence with modern English as well , which betrays the bureaucratic powerplay of democratic India :

> "…You believe the Delhi influentials are lobbying with him ?
> Let them , I care a fig for them."

Satire and institutional rhetoric, poetic rhythm, and broken words, Amrit Lal Nagar has employed them all to create an authentic experience of colonial/post-colonial dalit life for his readers. According to Shyam Kashyap ,

> The novel reflects a unique vividness of characters as well as language. If Nagar's imagination is replete with real life characters ; his mental 'taperecorder' vibrates equally fully well with multilevel polyvocal songs-conundrums and speeches; taunts and idioms; speech styles and registers . Nagar's novels are full of different scenes from the Hindi Pradesh.(trans mine)

Indeed, Nachyo Bhahut Gopal presents Surdas, Tulsi, Khusro, Kabirdas, Ghalib and the Vedic Sanskrit Shlokas with equal ablomb. Folksongs as 'Saiyan teri god mein gainda ban jaaongi' as well as film songs--all find a presence in his literary creation. The novel is a unique amalgam of folk tales and religious myths – sometimes original ; at others recreated and re-envisioned to assimilate religious sentiments and express differences in society . Islam , Hinduism , Christianity and Dalitism – he is the literary parent of them all !

Arunesh Neeraj has lauded Nagar's linguistic efforts towards the presentation of a "raw detached and straight" world. He appreciates that the author does not get entrapped in the maze of a stereotypical regionalism in Nachyo Bahut Gopal. Neeraj feels that the author has tried his best and successfully at that to awaken a consciousness of literary experimentation as well as human sensibility along with an attempt at harmonising the rythms of human life in this novel. For Neeraj , the language seems to be, "Pleading , threatening , shying away and erupting like lava." This multifacetedness of language has indeed served to present the sophisticated privacy as well as the common vulgarity of human characters .

A unique combinations of autobiography , reportage and a first/third person narrative lends this novel the immediate piquancy of an oral narrative in addition to those features which intensify its oral character . The sordidness of dalit life and the heavy usage of expletives adorns the novel with a tantalizing effect. Nagar's use of narrative voices--showing a Dalit populace in agony – runs parallel to other biographies and stories. The content and the form have achieved the perfect fusion in Nagar and this translation has tried the best to preserve this uniqueness which grants Nachyo Bahut Gopal a high place in the pantheon of Hindi literature.

Every translation, no matter how perfect, involves a loss. As Steiner says, "Decipherment is dissective , leaving the shell smashed and the vital layers stripped." (Steiner 187) This loss takes place at the linguistic level. Kwame Anthony Appiah puts its aptly when he says , that in the translational act :

> A precise set of parallels is likely to be impossible , just because the chances that metrical and other formal features of a work can be reproduced while preserving the identity of literal and non literal , direct and indirect meaning are vanishingly small. (Appiah 425).

Indeed So. And that is why, this translation has preserved the 'purity' of the sanskrit shlokas, Urdu couplets and Awadhi conundrums to the best possible order. However , expletives like 'Haraami' , 'Randi' , 'Kutiya' etc. could easily be incorporated into English – parallels being easily available. Appiah has stated , "A translation aims to produce a new text that matters to one community the way another text matters to another." (425)

In as much as the translation intends to acquaint the Indian readers with the reflection of Dalit life , the 'target – assimilation' did not pose a problem ; however to make it easier for an international readership to understand the context and encourage what Appiah calls a "Productive reading" (426) , I have used the strategy of supplying footnotes along with this introduction that has stated the theme. A recognition of the linguistic variation makes the

translation effective because it helps us understand language as a communal possession ; subject to social/psychological changes in human beings.

The character of Smt. Nirguniya has been regarded as one of Nagar's greatest triumphs. Her mental dilemmas and psychological traumas present a communal catalogue; whether of sex or caste. Similarly, the other characters in the novel present a colorful "repertoire of social identities" (Wardaugh 125), that necessitate a preservation in the process linguistic change. Although ,at times, as noted, expressions have not been exactly replicated yet the translation has tried to preserve the form and well as the tonal quality of speeches involved.

This translation has remained faithful to the original intention of the author. As "The verbalized part of a socio-culture."(Mary-Snell Hornby) Nachyo Bahut Gopal presents the character of Smt. Nirguniya in the round. This translation has tried to preserve the evolution of her character. The "dimorphism" of her character indeed makes us feel that it she who is the theme of the novel. However Gopal ,in his review of the novel categorically rejects this notion. Her duality serves as background against which the inherent contradictions of the Dalit society have been measured.

In delineating Nirguniya's character and presenting the dalit life through her , the translation has taken full care to reveal the socio-cultural specificity of dalit norms and their basic instability. The issue of religious conversions or ritualistic 'impurities' among the dalits , the low level of education of the bhangi characters; revealed through their manner of speaking – the translation has tried to preserve them all. Besides, the fact that Nagar has taken care to encompass the totality of human life by recording those moments of happiness which do form an inextricable part of dalit life through jokes and repartees; have also been faithfully recorded in the translation.

Busch stated, "Every work of art establishes its meaning aesthetically [...] . The aesthetic can of course serve many different functions , but it may also be in itself the function of the work of art."(in TSR 225) This translation has made conscious effort to preserve the indelible mark of dalit aesthetics reflected in the original. The rage in the dalits' commitment towards the construction of an independent identity and world; the mental conversion of the caste - Hindu into a bhangi (both of the narrator and the protagonist) – and the possibility of the preservation of such phenomena offered the translator a wide potential. Although, the capturing of the oral flavour of the text i.e. the riddles, linguistic peculiarities and the various linguistic registers was not easy – since an inability to recodify clearly signalled the limitations of classification and creation of identities through language; the translation has tried to extend the human imagination to a transcend the barriers of caste and adopt a humane perspective.

Talking about the Whorfian hypothesis, (since it is a cliché to talk about it in Translation Studies or in talking about the relationship between language and culture) it is believed:

> Language provides a screen or fitter to reality; it determines how speakers perceive and organize the world around them, both the natural world and the social world ...It defines (your) experience for you; you do not use it simply to report that experience. (Wardhaugh 219)

This hypothesis, applied on Nachyo Bahut Gopal would mean that Nirguniya saw dalit life as she saw it because of the language she spoke. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah:

> ...if that were true , it would affect what thoughts you could intend to express also. If what language you speak determines what thought or intentions you can have,translation, thus conceived will always be impossible." (Appiah 420)

Applying this on to this translation, it would seem that imitating or transcoding dalit life in English would be impossible. Yet circumlocution has been resorted to; thus, although literal translations have not been possible (and linguistic originality retained where essential) the

translation has been an attempt at unraveling or more appropriately popularizing Nagar's art and aesthetics. It is hoped that the translation will be successful in its attempt.

Notes

[i] http:// www.countercurrents.org

[ii] I am grateful to Dr. Sharad Nagar for this insight.

[iii] All quotes from the reviews and the novel have been translated into English by this translator.

[iv] I am highly indebted to Dr. Sharad Nagar, for helping me in the research work and giving me an insight into the critical reviews without which this paper would never have materialized. Wherever possible I have tried to record the sources. However, the sources have also remained unavailable at some places.The various reviews are:

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[v] The concept of communicative competence refers to the ability of a member of a social community to express the social norms of a community via 'socially correct' language. See Wardaugh's An Introduction to Sociolinguistics.

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Shiv K Kumar's *A River With Three Banks*: Revisiting Partition

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A River with Three Banks, the most ambitious novel by Kumar deals with the theme of the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Kumar has described the tragic consequences of the partition vividly in this novel. The merciless killing and blood shading in the wake of communal violence, the abduction of young girls, the loss of faith, the migration of a large number of people from both sides of the border are some of the tragic consequence of the partition. The river-India appears troubled by the inner currents of brutality. The title of the novel is highly symbolic. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity may be taken as three banks that condition the flow of the river-India's life-stream. Thus Shiv K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* is a symbolic record of the consequences of the partition of the Indian subcontinent. About the partition of India D. R. More in his book *India and Pakistan Fell Apart* rightly observes :

> The partition of India in 1947 was the most fateful incident in the history of the Indian subcontinent. It made a very great impact on the Indian people, turning the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who for a considerably long period unitedly fought against the British, into one another's enemies. In this civil war, thousands of men from both sides were massacred, a great number of women raped and abducted, children mutilated and property destroyed. A bilateral communalism – Hindu and Muslim or Sikh and Muslim– caused the carnage of thousands of innocent people. (More 1)

A River with Three Banks is also a story of marriage and divorce, love and hate and forgiveness and revenge on the backdrop of the partition. Gautam Mehta, a

journalist in Delhi, manipulates his divorce from his adulterous wife, Sarita through his conversion to Christianity. One day his close friend Berry tells him to spend a night with a call girl. Gautam falls in love with this call girl Haseena, a Muslim girl, who has been kidnapped from Allahabad by a gang of abductors headed by Pannalal, a pimp. Gautam helps her to escape from Delhi to Allahabad. Gautam is persuaded by Pannalal, catches him on the banks of the Ganges. In a duel, Pannalal gets killed. Gautam later on converts himself to Islam in order to marry Haseena. At the end of the novel, while Haseena's family migrates to Pakistan, she stays back but not as Haseena Mehta but as Haseena Gautam. They decide to start a new race– sans religion and sans caste.

The novel opens on a relatively calm note : "It was the quietest day of the week – comparatively speaking, of course." (*River 1*) But soon the plot of the novel starts unfolding rapidly. The novel begins with Gautam's proceedings to get divorce from his wife. Gautam Mehta, a Hindu journalist working for The Challenge, goes to Father Jones, a Bishop, to convert himself to Christianity. He manipulates the Bishop about his conversion by saying that this is a

matter of spirit and heart, he also adds that he was influenced by cardinal Newman, and Catholic writers like Francois Mauriac, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Green, etc. Actually he decides to embrace Christianity not because of his love for the religion but securing a divorce from his wife Sarita. "The certificate of baptism was all that he wanted to grab. That was his Passport to freedom." (8) What implies Gautam to get divorce from his wife is her illicit relationship with Mohinder, a fellow journalist of Gautam. The partition, in the novel, is at two levels – division of the family and division of the country. Gautam's parents are migrated to Delhi from Lahore due to the partition of the country. They suffer not only from the partition of the country but also from the partition of the family :

> His parents arrived in Delhi after many harrowing experiences on the way from Lahore. Though they were fatigued and their nerves were frazzled, Gautam could not keep them with him for more than a few days. They had been looking forward to seeing their grandson but soon they felt unhoused – their second partition …." (31)

Kumar has attempted to weave the domestic division as well as the political division of the country into the texture of the novel. The domestic drama of divorce takes place during the partition riot. When Gautam goes to the church to meet the Bishop he witnesses a murder of a Muslim called Abdul, by Hindu fanatics. Gautam discovers a letter in the dead man's pocket which reveals that Abdul was in search of his abducted daughter Haseena.

After having got the divorce, Gautam and his friend Berry go to Neelkamal Hotel which "offers its patrons everything – wine, woman and song – to use an apt cliché" (16), to celebrate the occasion, though Gautam is a gentleman he is forced to visit a prostitute by his friend, Berry. In the hotel both of them happen to meet a pimp called Pannalal. Coincidentally, Gautam meets Abdul's daughter Haseena who had been abducted by Pannalal during the partition riot. Here begins the story of Haseena as a partition victim. Pannalal had abducted her away from Allahabad when she was an undergraduate student and forced her into the business of prostitution. The abduction of women was a common thing during the partition. The story of Chandani in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* and Haseena in *A River with Three Banks* represent this aspect of the partition.

When Gautam learns that Haseena is actually the daughter of Abdul who was killed before the church, he decides to release her from the clutches of Pannalal instead of using her for his sexual pleasure. Out of the crisis evolves a romantic love story of Gautam and Haseena in the novel. Gautam falls passionately in love with Haseena. Here, Shiv K. Kumar has followed the love affair of a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl repeatedly found in many partition novels. While commenting on the love motif in the partition novels D. R. More in his book *The Novels on the Indian Partition* says :

> Almost all the novelists have used the motif of love as a means of bridging the emotionally divided minds by way of a love episode. For instance, a love episode of a Hindu or Sikh boy and a Muslim girl is necessarily woven into the plot." (More 242)

Both Gautam and Haseena decide to run away from Delhi. Finally they are helped by Berry to escape from the shackles of Pannalal. Thus Gautam's elopement with Haseena and Pannalal chasing the lovers provide a romantic tinge to the love story. If Gautam - Sarita relationship represents divorce and hate, the Gautam – Haseena relationship represents union and love.

Gautam, thus, falls in love with Haseena, and puts the proposal of intending to marry her before Haseena's mother. When he is asked to convert himself to Islam, without hesitation he embraces Islam and assumes the name Saleem. Gautam, thus, crosses religious barriers to serve his convenience. Though born as a Hindu, he converts himself to Christianity for the sake of divorce and again to Islam for the sake of marriage. Pannalal too comes to Allahabad in search of Haseena and he happens to meet Gautam. Pannalal threatens to kill him if he does not disclose Haseena's whereabouts. In this encounter Gautam kills Pannalal, which unfortunately takes on the communal colour that "a member of the majority community was brutally killed last evening by a member of the minority community." (*River* 163)

After Haseena's marriage with Gautam, her family decides to go to Pakistan. Through Berry's British connections Gautam safely escorts the family of Haseena across the border risking his own life. The couple decides to start a new race of humanity. Protesting against Haseena's wish to be addressed as "Haseena Mehta" Gautam says : "No my love," … "Not Haseena Mehta" … "Just Haseena Gautam – our first names only … Yes we'll start a new race – sans caste, sans religion, sans nationality." (214) At the end of the novel there is a description of clouds sail across the border and a flock of birds winging away into the sky. It symbolizes the message of a universal religion which Kumar wants to convey through the novel :

> The sky was now covered with mountains, clouds – white, inky blue and grey. They assumed all sorts of fantastic shapes – of giant dinosaurs, their long necks craning forward, of the skeletal remains of some primordial, mammals, of an army of soldiers on the route. Ceaselessly, they sailed across the bridge from India to Pakistan casting fugitive reflections In the tawny waters of the river. (214)

Thus, like other novels on the theme of partition, Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* too ends on a strong note of optimism. Kumar advocates that we should cross the religious and communal barriers for a better future through this novel.

Basically *A River with Three Banks* narrates two stories : the story of Gautam – his conversion to Christianity for the sake of divorce and again conversion to Islam for the sake of marrying a Muslim girl, it is also a story of Haseena – her ups and downs as a victim of the partition. Both the stories are interwoven on the background of the partition. Gautam and Haseena are the two central characters portrayed lively in the novel by Shiv K. Kumar. The impact of the partition is pronounced on Gautam and Haseena. Gautam's father is migrated to Delhi from Lahore facing harrowing experience of the partition of the country. Haseena is abducted, her father is killed and her family migrates to Pakistan due to the partition. Haseena represents the hundreds of unfortunate women abducted during the partition. Neither Muslims, nor Hindus, nor Sikhs but women of all these communities are the most suffered victims of the partition. Women were abducted, raped paraded naked in public streets, forced to prostitution, and put to death. According to Urvasi Bhutalia, "The history of partition was a history of deep violation – physical and mental – for women." (Bhutalia 131)

The theme of woman's exploitation and forced institution has been depicted very effectively in the short stories by Saddat Hasan Manto. But Haseena's character in *A River with Three Banks* is quite different from that of the women characters portrayed by Manto in his stories. Haseena is not corrupted by the institution of prostitution. Even though she is abducted and kept in a brothel, she remains unprostituted. Her first encounter with Gautam turns into love.

Pannalal, a pimp, is a selfish man. He is a villain and gets killed at the hands of Gautam. Thus the novel observes the poetic justice. Another important point to be noted here is that Pannalal and Sulieman, a man connected with the business of prostitution, work together in their business. At this level there is no scope for communal rivalry. Therefore, the Superintendent of Police comments : "Here is a real intercommunal home, with Pannalal and Sulieman Gani as its heads." (*River* 131) It is ironic that we find communal hatred only among the politicians and not among the people like Pannalal and Sulieman.

There are other references to the partition in the novel. The episodes like the public rape of a woman and stabbing of her brother, and Haseena's father dying before the church are witnessed by Gautam in the novel. The brutal killing, the rape, the forced prostitution, the abduction of women, the naked parades of beautiful women are common episodes in the partition novels. In this context, Saros Cowasjee observes : "Though partition offered a variety of subject matter, the majority of the writers chose to deal with violence of one kind or another – abduction and rape being particular favourite." (Cowasjee : 1995, xiii)

The partition was a complex phenomenon. It had many aspects – historical, political, economical, psychological, religious etc.Thus Kumar's novel *A River with Three Banks* is concerned with those people who have definite past, their present is disturbed by the partition of the Indian sub-continent but the future is possible for them. They can hope for better life in future. Thus Kumar's novel ends on the optimistic note.

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Using Internet in Improving One's English Language Skills: 50 Informative, Educative & Entertaining Websites

Dr.Vangeepuram Sreenathachary

Introduction

Acquiring a good level of competence in English language today is a necessity, but not a luxury. Economic liberalization and spread of multinational companies, with a spurt in the use of English in the urban social communication as well as in the corporate world have opened many avenues in the field of Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing. This phenomenon has generated the felt urgency on every graduate-employee's part to acquire competence in English communicative skills. Global communication is necessary at all levels in the organizations, companies, business firms and educational institutions and English is enabling them to operate more efficiently. And yet, with this opportunity emerge challenges. Employees of global companies need increasingly sophisticated English communication skills to succeed.

A recent study on the globalization of English made by the website, namely <www.globalenglish.com> points to a huge and growing English skills gap within global corporations:

- 91% of employees say that English is critical or important for their current jobs.
- Only 7% say that their current English skills are sufficient.
- In addition, 89% of employees state that they are more likely to advance in their company if they can communicate effectively in English.

Modern technologies through internet, satellite television and mobile connectivity have shrunk the world to a globalized place. "In the global village English plays a pivotal role as a medium of communication. It is the language used on the internet, as elsewhere. Since it knits the world together in a worldwide web, English has, more than ever before, gained a global identity[1]."

English is spoken as a first language by more than 300 million people throughout the world, and used as a second language by many millions more. "One in five of the world's population speaks English with a good level of competence, and within the next few years the number of people speaking English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers.[2]" This could have a dramatic effect on the evolution of the language. In the process of being absorbed by new cultures, English develops to take account of local language needs, giving rise not just to new vocabulary but also to new forms of grammar and pronunciation.

At the same time, however, a standardized 'global' English is spread by the media and the Internet. The main regional standards of English are British, US and Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, South African, Indian, and West Indian. Within each of these regional varieties a

number of highly differentiated local dialects may be found. Oxford dictionaries try to include many regionalisms encountered in different English-speaking areas of the world.

The world is truly becoming flat. Companies are entering new markets. Industries are restructuring. Outsourcing and offshoring are no longer radical ideas but accepted as productive solutions. As business goes global, so do the projects and teams. Teams in Hyderabad are working shoulder-to-shoulder with groups in Chicago and Beijing. Conference calls, online meetings, video conferencing, emails, and advanced technologies offer the possibility of instant integration of far-flung offices into one global team. But the inevitable convergence of cultures and languages presents an ongoing obstacle to teams that need to think, act and communicate as one. Seamless communication is a fundamental, strategic imperative. To be global, one needs to speak global.

Functioning at peak efficiency in a globally integrated business requires employees to be proficient in the standard common language used for business: English. Forward-thinking business executives, human resources professionals, and training leaders recognize both the challenge and opportunity of developing business English competence and are seeking fast and effective ways to address this critical training need and enable their employees to learn English online.

Why Learning English Through Internet?

Surfing on the Internet has been the most popular way to learn English because it is convenient as well as entertaining. It saves a lot of time. Some websites provide beautiful illustrations to learn English. A few websites supply amusing games and online language exercises to attract netizens' attention thereby helping them learn English effectively. For example, ALE website teaches many vocabularies through an interesting game called 'English Sharp Shooter'. The website, <www.askoxford.com>, clarifies the doubts asked by the netizens. Then, the netizens would listen to the online radio to train their listening comprehension without spending money to buy CDs. Another website, <www.englishdaily626.com> provides very useful information about the English language.

Internet gives us a lot of convenience. It is a useful tool for learning English or anything. We can receive many emails and messages daily on English using Internet and learn many a new thing. Internet also provides many materials and many types of learning methods. Although Internet has many merits for learning, of course, it has its own drawbacks. To sum up, one can learn English well or improve English abilities, if one makes good use of the Internet.

50 Informative, Educative & Entertaining Websites

Here is the list of 50 websites through which the language enthusiasts can improve their competence in English. However, one is expected to use these sites consciously so that the learning will take place rapidly.

1. http://www.1-language.com/

This is a one-stop resource site for learning English and other languages containing relevant, localized information for International students and people. The website fosters global communication through a world auxiliary language. This is a free, comprehensive ESL (English as a Second Language) Site including forums, real-time chat, jobs, grammar, helplines, multi-lingual content and much more.

2. http://www.esl.about.com/

One can use this website to find the very best websites. It is a very useful guide to ESL sites and lots of other subjects.

3. http://www.antimoon.com/

The website, which uses simple English, provides advice from people who learned English successfully.

4. http://www.appliedlanguage.com/

ALS (Applied Language Solutions) Translation Services provides translation to and from over 140 different languages and specializing in all types of translation including websites.

5. http://www.thecommunicationstation.com/

By browsing this website, one can read a chain story and then add one's own paragraph! One can create one's own funny caption for a strange picture!

6. http://www.soundsofenglish.org/

The site offers pronunciation instruction. It explains how each sound is made and offers audio and video examples with exercises.

7. http://www.eslcafe.com/

Dave's ESL Cafe is one of the best ESL sites on the web!

8. http://www.englishtown.com/

You can take a fun trip to Englishtown!

9. http://www.towerofenglish.com/

This is an excellent site that provides resources for both academic and non-academic teachers.

10. http://www.twinuk.com/

This website offers information about the English language courses available in London, Salisbury and Eastbourne, Junior Vacation Centres and accommodation. These English courses range from General English courses to one-to-one English courses.

11. http://www.englishclub.com/

A great site with much useful information for students and teachers. Don't forget to play '***Hangman'***!

12. http://www.englishforum.com/

A comprehensive web portal with a wealth of resources for students and teachers of English (ESL/EFL). There are many Interactive Exercises, Message Boards, ELT Bookshop, Good School Guide, Web Directory, World News, Links, Cool Tools and more...

13. http://www.gvenglish.com/

Global Village is a group of unique English language schools dedicated to the concept of "Serious Learning, Serious Fun!" Their language institutes offer ESL, EFL courses for all levels, Cambridge examination preparation, TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS preparation, high school and university preparations, work experience programmes and teacher training courses. They also offer courses for children and teenagers, including residential summer camps and homestay/school-based teen activity programmess.

14. http://www.edu.ge.ch/cptic/prospective/projets/anglais/

A site with pages for students and for teachers including material to download. There is also a growing exercise page. Be sure to try the crosswords!

15. http://www.eslcafe.com/

Over 2500 links in 76 different categories can be accessed through this site!

16. http://www.go.english4today.com/

English4Today has collected into one easy-to-use website a catalogue of the best English language learning and information websites on the Internet.

17. http://www.esllessons.com/

A great collection of ready-to-use lessons in 12 different categories. For use in the classroom or computer lab.

18. http://www.esl-lounge.com/

Here are free ESL Lesson Materials for TEFL and TESOL teachers. Grammar, reading comprehension, worksheets, song lyrics, board games, pronunciation, flashcards, surveys, role plays and more. Many levels. All free and printable. Also on site: Teachers' forum, TEFL Guide, Student site, ESL links, teachers' embarrassing tales...

19. http://www.eslmonkeys.com/

Free English-as-a-second-language teaching materials and learning resources for teachers, students and schools. One can search for ESL jobs, lesson plans, English schools/programmes, books, school resources and more.

20. http://www.eslwonderland.com/

Much useful information and many activities are here for every language learner!

21. http://www.esldirectory.com/

This is a very useful resource for ESL students around the world to research and locate English as a Second Language programmes from all around the world. The database contains over 1,000 ESL schools from all corners of the globe so that they are accessible in one place.

22. http://www.headsupenglish.com/

Here are many ready-to-use EFL lessons based on world events.

23. http://www.iteslj.org/

This website provides many articles, research papers, lesson plans, classroom handouts, teaching ideas and links!

24. http://www.eslpartyland.com/

Teachers can find enough number of ideas for lessons and over 10 discussion groups at this excellent new site.

25. http://www.languageassociates.com/

This is a competent ESL training company. Courses teach professionals to improve their English writing, listening and speaking skills.

26. http://www.nelliemuller.wordpress.com/

Here are the collaborative writing project ideas on how to integrate technology into the classroom, with resources for teachers and students.

27. http://www.onestopenglish.com/

This website offers teachers many free resources and ideas on lessons.

28. http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/678/01/

Here you will find variety of handouts, workshops, presentations, and resources related to writing. You can also read archived issues of the weekly email newsletter, the Purdue OWL News.

29. http://www.schackne.com/Languageteaching.htm

The site offers Internet resources for life-long learners.

30. http://www.englishnetlinks.homestead.com/index.html

It provides an index of many sites in the alphabetical order.

31. http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/ESL3.html>

This is the website of the Internet TESL Journal.

32. http://www.home.gwu.edu/~meloni/gwvcusas/

Includes READING (literature, Notable Citizens of Planet Earth), WRITING (Quiz on Punctuation, Writer's Web--online writing, handbook—Writing, Help for academic/business/technical/fiction/grant/online writing), VOCABULARY (Quiz on Flags and Countries, Word Drop and Quiz Wiz), GRAMMAR (A Guide to Grammar and Writing with grammar explanations and quizzes, Grammar and Style notes with lessons, exercises and quizzes), LISTENING (The Listening Lounge, The ESL Wonderland with authentic listening materials and instructional materials to accompany them), CONVERSATION, DISCUSSION (Discussion Lists/Keypals--SL-Lists--International EFL/ESL E-mail Student Discussion Lists, and STUDENT SITE REVIEWS.

33. http://www.oelp.uoregon.edu/index.html

The site contains many resources for teachers and students.

34. http://www.anglik.net/links.htm

Excellent links to resources (mostly British English) for all areas of English language learning and teaching, including English for Academic Purposes.

35. http://www.gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~gwvcusas/

This site provides links and reviews of different websites to improve reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills.

36. http://www.etanewsletter.com/

The Newsletter for busy, innovative, ESL and EFL teachers and tutors. Fresh and new ideas and activities for teachers to teach grammar, reading, writing and other language skills.

37. http://www.gl.umbc.edu/~kpokoy1/grammar1.htm

Links and reviews of sites to improve reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills.

38. http://www.lang.uiuc.edu/r-l15/esl/

Online activities are broken down into listening and speaking, reading with understanding, and grammar and writing. In addition, there are some great links to other ESL/EFL sites.

39. http://www.cleanfun.cz/efl/efllearn.htm

Here you will find a variety of study materials and links for English language.

40. http://www.englishpractice.com/

It offers online courses for improving grammar, vocabulary, and reading.

41. http://www.englishclub.net/study/pronunciation/sentence-stress.htm

Helps how sentence stress helps one understand spoken English.

42. http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/chorus/call/cuttingedge.html

The site includes the latest in cutting edge lessons, quizzes, and activities for students of ESL.

43. http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~itesls

Free online textbook and fun study site. You can learn much about slang, proverbs, anagrams, quizzes, activities, and more.

44. http://www.esl.to/esl.html

A new, enjoyable and effective way to learn and improve your English.

45. http://www.usingenglish.com/

English Language Learning Online. Helps in learning the English language for ESL, EFL, ESOL, and EAP students and teachers.

46. http://www.ec.hku.hk/vec/

This is a very good ESL site with translations in 15 languages.

47. http://www.vocabulary.co.il/

Builds one's vocabulary with flash cards, dynamic test and games, for SAT, TOEFL, GMT, GRE and more.

48. http://www.world-english.org/

It contains English language activities, exercises and tests.

49. http://www.myefa.org/login.cfm?fuseaction=learnmore2

A free Web-based multimedia system for adults learning ESL/ESOL/ELL. It incorporates California standards for High-Beginning ESL and the Skill Modules of the Latino Adult Education Skills Project (LAES). EFA materials include: an interactive website that is the core of the programme, five stand-alone video tapes, each containing four 15-minute programmes, five CD-ROMs designed to work with the EFA Website, and printable materials for students and teachers that are available as **.pdfs** or in **Rich Text Format** (compatible with most word processors). After watching a video, learners can practise listening, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and "life skills" based on the video segment.

50. http://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com/

Free English grammar and vocabulary exercises for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels.

CONCLUSION

In a way, the present article, "**Using Internet in Improving One's English Language Skills : 50 Informative, Educative & Entertaining Websites**" has its own limitations. Generally materials are conditioned and determined by theories and methods of teaching that the teacher adopts. "Some theoreticians like P.T.George opine that materials cannot claim independent existence. These postulations do not seem to be reasonable as methods and materials have to be dynamic to suit the ever changing teaching-learning scenario. Experimentation has to be continued in methods, materials, strategies and approaches because teaching and learning processes are creative, making the whole interaction more interesting.[3]" However, the English language learner or the netizen who is desirous of improving his or her competence in English through the Internet must remember the practicality of the netizens' saying—*Help your English help you. In this process, the Internet or/and the English language teachers will help you both*.

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POSTMODERN TRAITS IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH

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Indian writing in English has stamped its greatness by mixing up tradition and modernity in the production of art. At the outset, the oral transmission of Indian literary works gained ground gradually. It created an indelible mark in the mind and heart of the lovers of art. The interest in literature lit the burning thirst of the writers which turned their energy and technique to innovate new form and style of writing.

Earlier novels projected India's heritage, tradition, cultural past and moral values. But a remarkable change can be noticed in the novels published after the First World War, which is called, modernism. The novels written in the late 20th century, especially after the Second World War, are considered postmodern novels. Salman Rushdie, Vikaram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Amitav Ghosh are the makers of new pattern in writing novels with post-modern thoughts and emotions.

Amitav Ghosh is one among the postmodernists. He is immensely influenced by the political and cultural milieu of post independent India. Being a social anthropologist and having the opportunity of visiting alien lands, he comments on the present scenario the world is passing through in his novels. Cultural fragmentation, colonial and neo-colonial power structures, cultural degeneration, the materialistic offshoots of modern civilization, dying of human relationships,blending of facts and fantasy, search for love and security, diasporas, etc… are the major preoccupations in the writings of Amitav Ghosh.

The elemental traits of post-modernism are obviously present in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. As per postmodernists, national boundaries are a hindrance to human communication. They believe that Nationalism causes wars. So, post-modernists speak in favour of globalization. Amitav Ghosh's novels centre around multiracial and multiethnic issues; as a wandering cosmopolitan he roves around and weaves them with his narrative beauty. In The Shadow lines, Amitav Ghosh makes the East and West meet on a pedestal of friendship, especially through the characters like Tridib, May, Nice Prince etc., He stresses more on the globalization rather than nationalization. In The Glass Palace, the story of half-bred Rajkumar revolves around Burma, Myanmar and India. He travels round many places freely and gains profit. Unexpectedly, his happiness ends when his son is killed by Japanese bomb blast. The reason for this calamity is fighting for national boundaries.

Amitav Ghosh has been credited for successfully mastering the genre known as 'magical realism' which was largely developed in India by Salman Rushdie and in South America by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Ghosh is seen as "belonging to this international school of writing which successfully deals with the post-colonial ethos of the modern world without sacrificing the ancient histories of separate lands." (Anita Desai, 1986:149) Like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh perfectly blends fact and fiction with magical realism. He reconceptualizes society and history. He is so scientific in the collection of material, semiotical in the organization of material, so creative in the formation of fictionalized history.

Amitav Ghosh weaves his magical realistic plot with postmodern themes. Self-reflexity and confessionality characterize fictional works of Amitav Ghosh. Displacement has been a central process in his fictional writings; departure and arrivals have a permanent symbolic relevance in his narrative structure. Post modernism gives voice to insecurities, disorientation and fragmentation. Most of his novels deal with insecurities in the existence of humanity, which is one of the postmodern traits. In The Glass Palace, the havoc caused by Japanese invasion in Burma and its effect on the Army officers and people -- a sense of dejection that deals with so much human tragedy, wars, deaths, devastation and dislocation (Meenakshi Mukherjee, p.153) – has been penned. In The Shadow Lines, Tridib sacrificed his life in the act of rescuing May from Muslim mobs in the communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka. Pankaj Mishra describes Amitav Ghosh in the New York times, as one of few postcolonical writers, " to have expressed in his work a developing awareness of the aspirations, defeats and disappointments of colonized people as they figure out their place in the world".

Postmodernism rejects western values and beliefs as only a small part of the human experience and rejects such ideas, beliefs, culture and norms of the western. In The Hungry Tide, Ghosh routes the debate on eco-environment and cultural issues through the intrusion of the West into East. The Circle of Reason is an allegory about the destruction of traditional village life by the modernizing influx of western culture and the subsequent displacement of non-European peoples by imperialism. In An Antique Land, contemporary political tensions and communal rifts were portrayed.

Postcolonial migration is yet another trait of postmodernism. In The Hungry Tide, the theme of immigration, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced, along with its bitter/sweet experiences, runs through most incidents in the core of the novel – the ruthless suppression and massacre of East Pakistani refugees who had run away from the Dandakaranya rufugee camps to Marichjhampi as they felt that the latter region would provide them with familiar environs and therefore a better life. In Sea of Poppies , the indentured labourers and convicts are transported to the island of Mauritius on the ship Ibis where they suffer a lot. In The Glass Palace, Burmese Royal family, after the exile, lives an uncomfortable life in India. Rajkumar who piles heap of amount in Burma is forced to leave his home and business due to Japanese invasion.

Irony plays a vital role in the postmodern fiction. The writers treat the very subjects like World War II, communal riot, etc. from a distant position and choose to depict their histories ironically and humorously. In The Glass Palace, Amitav Ghosh weaves the characters of Queen Supayalat and Arjun with a tinge of irony. Queen Supayalat, even after being captured by the British forces, does not lose her pomp throughout the novel. The portraiture of the Queen is too ironic. Arjun, basically an Indian, is completely influenced by the western ideology. He imitates the West in his dressing sense and food habit. He is not aware of the fact that he is used as instrumental to inflict pain on his own people.

Temporal distortion is a literary technique that uses a nonlinear timeline. The author may jump forwards or backwards in time. In The Glass Palace, Amitav Ghosh uses nonlinear timeline. The memory links the past to the present and many of the characters. It helps to recreate a magical world. In The Hungry Tide, he shuttles between the Marichjhampi incident from Nirmal's point of view and the present day travels of Piya Roy, Kanai and Fokir. This time-travel creates an intricacy of sub-topics and plots. In his other novels, characters move round a

gyre of timelessness, yielding helplessly to the chasm in human relations and other postmodern perturbations.

The narrative style of Amitav Ghosh is typically postmodern. In The Shadow Lines, the narrative is simple. It flows smoothly, back and forth between times, places and characters. His prose in The Shadow Lines is so evocative and realistic written effortlessly as well as enigmatically with a blend of fiction and non-fiction. Throughout The Glass Palace, Ghosh uses one end to signal the beginning of another so that at one level, nothing changes but yet everything does. There is a strong suggestion of Buddhist metaphysics in his technique. Life, death, success and failure come in cycles and Ghosh uses the conceit of a pair of binoculars early in The Glass Palace to sensitize the reading in this perspective. Being a postmodernist, he makes use of very simple language to give clarity to the readers. Many Indians writing in English experiment with the language to suit their story. Ghosh also does it in The Hungry Tide using Bangla words like mohona, bhata and others, interweaving them with local myths like that of Bon Bibi and her brother Shaj Jangali, the presiding deities of the region. Though The Glass Palace and The Hungry Tide have their share of non-English lexical items, Sea of poppies in numerous places piles up the Indian (Bengali or Bhojpuri) or lascar-pidgin terms to the point where some readers might to some extent begin to get confused.

For Amitav Ghosh, language in the process of the production of art attains the status of diasporic representation – voicing him and thousands of other uprooted individuals. Language embodies the attempt to create family that has broken and dispersed in the mire of confused identity. Ghosh acknowledges it in The Shadow lines:-

> You see, in our family we don't know whether we're coming or going – it's all my grand mother's fault. But of course, the fault was n't hers at all: it lay in the language. Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (The Shadow Lines, 153)

This is a language that Ghosh believes in and this kind of language he tries to create in his work.

Postmodernists reject elaborate formal aesthetics in favour of minimalist designs. Amitav Ghosh does not give any significance for picturesque description and ornamental use of language. Tabish khair comments on this as

> Ghosh is very careful in his use of English and vernacular transcriptions. He develops a conscious and rich tradition in Indian English fiction, a tradition that includes R.K. Narayan and Shashi Deshpande. The attempt is not to stage Indian Englishes. Ghosh avoids the aestheticisation of language. (p.108)

Postmodernists defend the cause of feminists. Uma, Amitav Ghosh's character, is a perfect example of this. Uma is a break from the traditional women characters. She is a political activist who travels around the country to dissipate the patriotic spirits.

Blurring of genres, one of the postmodern traits, can be witnessed in the writings of Amitav Ghosh. He disfigures by blending many genres. Girish Karnad rightly said about him, " Ghosh uses to great effect a matrix of multiple points of view in which memory, mythology and

history freely interpenetrate …….. A delight to read" (Indian Express). The Glass palace is not only a novel but also romance, narrative fiction, adventure fiction, and historical fiction. He combines all the elements of a novel to create fragmentation. Ghosh uses the romantic genre to chart the characters who reflect on the history of colonialism in Burma and the formation of the present Myanmar nation. It is also a narrative fiction that employs a complex spiral narrative structure to texture many characters' identities and experiences in the world where we live in. It can be read in historical point of view, since it is portraiture of history and document of nation. Ghosh invents the third person narrator who relates a story in a spiral fashion that fictionalizes and makes real historical subject and event. The Calcutta Chromosome (1995) is "not only a medical thriller but also a Victorian ghost story, a scientific quest, a unique mixture of a 'whodunit thriller', and a poltergeist tale". (Sudeep Sen,p.222)

To sum up, postmodernism, not having concrete definition yet, is a blooming and ongoing area. Even if it has its own features, it is very difficult to concretize these solid elements. Thus, this paper remains an attempt to apply the post-modern theory in Amitav Ghosh's novels.

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From Routes to Roots: Diaspora in the Novels of Salman Rushdie.

Janmejay Kumar Tiwari

Displacement has no replacement and this is the reality of diaspora. Since the inducement of humanity, people have been straddling throughout the world without having any theoretical knowledge of boundaries. He has always been suffering from the disease of alienation without realizing the actual outcome of migration. However, in the 20th century, the concept of coming and going was theorized and immigrants and migrants were compelled to be aware of the plight. India, once being the colony of the British Empire, has been suffering from her internal malady and misery. The plight and predicament of the native have also been miserable. Moreover, in the search of food and other necessity, they had to be dependent on their rulers and the later caught the nerve and exploited the former to the lees. The Indians had to migrate as indentured labourers for the sugarcane farming either in Caribbean countries or in South America.

The writers of the previous century have done extensive research in and into the diasporic field from external to internal, from geographical to psychological and from virtual to real. They have left no field unravished for literary enjoyment. Even in the era of global township, the home has become more significant than it used to be. Authors like Naipaul have been edifying houses for Mr Biswas and Rushdie has no home but imaginary homelands. Writers like them have left their homelands not once but several times and still breathing the same oxygen. Imagination makes virtual homes but the fact is that virtualism is not realism.

Salman Rushdie is the author who inaugurated the field of postcolonial diasporism with his debut novel *Grimus,* which was an experiment to show the plight of estrangement and alienation. The story deals with immortality, generated worlds, surreal things, other scopes both interior and exterior, and castaways. The story follows Flapping Eagle, a young Indian who receives the gift of immortality after drinking a magic fluid. Flapping Eagle, an Axona Indian, is ostracized from the society because of his fairer complexion. His mother perished just after few moments of his arrival in this mortal world. His sister Bird Dog sheltered him and offered him with the preparation of interminable life and after that, she evaporates mystifyingly from the terrestrial of the Axona. Flapping exiles from his people, and mooches the world for centuries in search of his sister and his identity and in this mission, after wandering for 777 years 7 months and 7 days; he falls through the fleapit in the Mediterranean Sea. Because of his eternity, he lands in an equivalent dimension at the preternatural Calf Island. People of this island are consecrated with immortality yet fed up with the monotony of life. However, they are disinclined in giving up their immortality and happen in a stagnant community under an understated and creepy authority. In the search of his identity Flapping is weary of the mundane reality of immortality hence wants to get rid of the Grimus effect. The novel apparently demonstrates that migrants have no future, neither on Mortal Island nor on immortal one. They could wander wherever they wish but without having their heart with them.

Midnight's Children, his tour de force, paved the path for postcolonial literature in India. Rushdie began to decolonize English from the English and his programme is still in furtherance by him as well as from others. Like Salman Rushdie, the protagonist Saleem Sinai wanders among three countries i.e. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh but is unable to find a proper place to live in. *Midnight's Children* is a narrative of displacement and rootlessness

that is caused by relocation. Many of its characters are migrants drifting from shore to shore in search of some "imaginary homelands" and obviously, the author identifies himself with his migrant personae. As Pramod K. Nayar opines:

> Much of diasporic writing explores the theme of an original home. This original home as now lost– due– to their exile–is constantly worked into the imagination and myth of the displaced individual/community. (Nayar 191)

And,

> Diasporic writing captures the two invariables of their experience: exile and homeland. All diasporic literature is an attempt to negotiate between these two polarities. The writings of exiled/immigrant writers undertakes two moves one temporal and one spatial. It is as Meena Alexander puts it, "writing in search of a homeland." (Nayar 188)

Exploding the myth of home Salman Rushdie speaks of "imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" (*IH* 10). In the process of searching the homeland, Rushdie as well as his characters lost their roots, routes and identity. All Midnight's Children, Saleem, Shiva, Padma, Parvati face a calamity of identity, disintegration of disposition, geographical as well as cultural dislocation. As Rushdie, clarifies:

> When the Indian who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost. (*IH* 11)

Cultural displacement has forced the immigrant writers to accept the provisional nature of all truth and certainties. It is almost impossible for migrants to be unable to call to mind his native place and nativity emotionally. Consequently, this displacement constitutes a double identity that is at once singular, plural and partial. In *Imaginary Homelands* Rushdie echoes:

> Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures, at other time we fall between two stools. But however, ambiguous and shifting this ground may be it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. (15)

In *Midnight's Children*, he pictures this trauma of fluid identity. In his first migrated country Saleem becomes a dog; a member of the Cutia Unit. Consequently, his body has gone fully numb, the only sense active being his sense of smell, "anaesthetized against feeling as well as memories" (*Midnight's Children* 353). His fellow solders start calling him 'Buddha' because there hung around him an air of great antiquity" (349), though he is twenty four year old at that juncture. Here Saleem Sinai is presented as the microcosm of all the diasporic generation; how they are treated in the newly inhabited territories; how the venom is thrown upon them and the current example of this venom throwing is Australia. Saleem, being the mouthpiece of his creator, expresses the feelings that Rushdie feels while living in an adopted land.

Shame, the most political adventure of Rushdie, exhibits the trauma of migration that he has been facing throughout his life. *Shame* is a novel about migration. At several places, Salman Rushdie emerges as the narrator and narrates the deplorable conditions of migrants; as he confesses in one of his interviews with Ashutosh Varshney:

> It's a novel about the changes that happen to individuals and communities under the pressure of migration… I wanted to talk about the immigrant community in London particularly the South Asian immigrant community, and at that time what I wanted to say about it is, " Here's this enormous community of people who are, it seems, invisible–their concerns their lives you know, their fears, and so on, somehow invisible to the white population". (Herwitz and Varshney 19)

Like all migrants, Salman Rushdie has not been able to shake off the idea of roots and identity. Roots, as he says in *Shame*, are "designed to keep us in our place" (86). These roots help the migrant to be in touch of his nativity and the effect of these pedigrees could not be eradicated easily. One is bound to have an origin without that one's derivation is meaningless.

The theme of root, route and rootlessness has become an explicit and intricate part of Rushdie's plot. His novel delineates the psychological crisis resulting from the forfeiture of identity and roots and this happens to almost each and every diasporic and postcolonial author. In his authorial intervention in *Shame*, Rushdie depicts the actual position of migrants what they get and what they lose:

> When individual come unstuck from their native land, they are called migrants, when nations do the same thing (Bangladesh), the act is called secession. What is the best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nation? I think it is their hopefulness… And what is the worst thing? It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containg a few meaning-drained mementoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from time. (86-87)

And Rushdie describes his own position in these words:

> I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a new comer in two (England, where I live and Pakistan to which my family moved against my will). (85)

The core issue of this expat cognizance is the question of identity. As an immigrant moves from place to place, region to region, his identity becomes hybrid and fluid because of these geographical movements. The migrants may live in new places but that is only as imaginary homeland-- they never feel comfort in their newly occupied home/country. They live, as Bhabha states, "in between two geographical cultural locations, which is often perilous and marginalizing," and these "in between places provide the terrain of elaborating strategies of selfhood singular or communal–that initiates new signs of identity" (Bhabha 17).

Rushdie in this context of migration brings the theory of fantasy, according to him, all migrants like him are fantasist. For him fantasy is not only a part of reality but it helps him to rise above reality and it pronounces a seeming freedom of creativeness as the distinguishing feature of art. It not only hassles the fictive elements in the plot but also is, revelatory of the mind behind the work. Imaginary nation states are fabricated on existing ones. Imaginary and real countries, both have to deal with the question of history, and to some extent, they thrive in fluctuating it. A migrant writer's position has an attention-grabbing benefit as it affords him with conflict to cultural authoritarianism and its claim to speak the absolute truth, and thus to pull to bits a treatise of western historiography.

The Moor's Last Sigh is the first major novel that Salman Rushdie produced after "The Rushdie Affair". The novel narrates the story of last Muslim ruler of Spain, Boabdil who lost his empire to the Catholic conquerors Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. *The Moor's Last Sigh* refers to a geographical point in Andalusia from where Boabdil looked at Granada for the last time before the conquering armies of Ferdinand and Isabella finally captured this legendary city. Commenting upon the diasporic nature of the novel Minoli Salgado remarks:

> The novel appears to replicate the author's predicament by foregrounding a sense of banishment and impending death, opening and closing the eponymous Moor's narrative with his premature death in exile. Exile and death thus frame the rich narrative collage that constitutes this saga of Catholic-Jews Da-Gama-Zagoiby family, containing the events in a foreclosed temporal register that offers the cultural and historical density of text. (Salgado153)

The Ground Beneath Her Feet is the novel where Rushdie expresses his diasporic views ostensibly. The novelist is entailed in sketching a textual diasporism in the novel. All the three major characters, i.e. Ormus Cama, Vina Apsra and Umeed Merchant a.k.a. Rai experience the predicament of migration; as Rai describes:

> Ormus, Vina and I: three of us came West and passed through the transforming membrane in the sky. Ormus, the youthful proselytizer of the here and now, the sensualist, great lover, the material man the poet of the actual, saw visions of the otherworld and was transformed into an oracle, a ten-year monk and an Art Decorated recluse. As for me, I must say at last that I passed through a membrane too. I became a foreigner. For all my advantages and privileges of birth, for all my professional aptitude, I was turned by the fact of leaving my place of origin into an honorary member of the ranks of the earth's dispossessed. (418)

Rai starts feeling that he has started becoming peaceful when he looks at his new house that he shares with three other photographers namely—Mack Schnabel, Aim'e-Cesaire Basquiat and Johnny Chow:

> So this is what they feel like, I thought: roots Not the ones we're born with, can't help having, but the ones we put down in our own chosen soil, the you could say radical selections we make for ourselves. (414)

Like all migrants, these characters feel infatuation with their second country where they migrate Salman Rushdie himself Rai starts loving America:

> …America below fourteenth Street, loosey-goosey and free as air, gave me more of a sense of belonging that I'd ever felt back home. Also, with the dream America everyone carries round in his head, America the Beautiful, Langston Hughes's country that never existed but needed to exist with that like everyone else, I was thoroughly in love. (419)

In spite of the blind love towards America, a man of exile is unable to forget his past. He feels nostalgic, as nostalgia is the measure sub-theme of theory of diaspora. In the migrated country one feels himself thrice removed from reality: 1—he is geographically removed and in this way he loses his cultural environment in which he was brought up, 2—he is removed from his language and is forced to adopt a different language, 3—he is dislocated

from his own mental territory. The love quoted in the above paragraph is textual, ephemeral and virtual not real. In reality, the situation is quite unlike:

> …the day doesn't pass when I don't think of India, when I don't remember childhood scenes: Dara Singh wrestling in an open air stadium, Tony Brent singing, Sherpa Tenzing waving from the back of an open car outside Kamla Nehru Park. The movie *Mughal-e-Azam* bursting into color for the big dance-number. The legendary dancer Anarkali strutting her stuff. The non-stop sensory assault of that country without a middle register, that continuum entirely composed of extremes. Sure I remember it. It's the past my past. (416)

The point is that a diasporic man may become hilarious for a period only; happiness is not an everlasting one in an adopted country or rather for them, in the words of Thomas Hardy happiness is an occasional episode in the drama of pain. Rushdie feels this trauma in the land where he is living and he expresses his grieves through his characters. This is not only the story of the narrator Rai, Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama have the same sense of belongingness as they have left their birth places but unable to quit birthroots.

The Enchantress of Florence is Rushdie's last adventure where he gives the sketches of two kinds of diaspora, i.e.one immigrant and other emigrant .Both of them suffer with the same problems in their accepted countries. Mogor, who arrives India from Florence, declares himself a distant relative of Mughal Emperor Akbar. But later he was exposed and he had to flee. The case is the same with Qara Qoz ; she leaves her home for the betterment for Europe but succumbs to several problems. Both the protagonists suffer the crisis for individuality. Against the popular belief, the novelist has introduced a white immigrant and given his experiences that he comes across in India. He makes sure that not only a colonized person suffers this trauma of estrangement but also the same is the condition with the so-called occidentalists.

The narrator of the novel Mogor himself is the first victim of identity crisis. He is a traveller from the Medici and his claim to have a blood relationship with the emperor of Mughals is in the phrase of David Gates ''a literal manifestation of the connection between East and West". He adopts different names at different times. In Florence, he was Uccello di Firenze, which he abandoned like the "abandoned skin of a snake'' and Niccolo Vespucci that he left at the time of his arrival to India and became self-styled Mogor dell Amore. And ''this Mogor dell' Amore as defined by Father Acquaviva " is no name at all . . . It means a Mughal born out of wedlock. It is a name that dares much and will offend many. By assuming it he implies that he wishes to be thought of as an illegitimate prince'' (93). Eventually, he proves his illegitimacy and as displaced has no vibrant future, he has to flee like the colonial empire; as Rushdie states in the voice of Akbar: "The English had no future on this earth . . . (and) would surely be erased from times record before very long" (98).

Being uprooted is one of the several aspects of postmodern era that fascinates Rushdie much. He celebrates the uprootedness of Mogor, disintegration of Qara Koz. As longing for belonging is one of the premier themes of diaspora and postcolonialism, all the characters of Rushdie loom between two worlds: one is indigenous and the other is adopted. Both struggle in their newly arrived countries and eventually both are compelled to leave their adopted countries.

Despite several miseries that are being faced by the immigrants and emigrants one fruitful result of this wandering is that, the boundaries that were existed between the countries have been demolished. Authors of this class have attempted to bring both the hemispheres

closer together .In the novel Argalia realizes the reason of Qara Koz's coming to the West, as he says:

> She comes here of her own free will, in the hope of forging a union between the great cultures of Europe and the East, knowing she has much to learn from us and believing too, that she has much to teach. (276)

This dream of diasporic authors, to a certain extent, has come to be true. Now the wall of Berlin cease to exist and people are free to view the world according to their own perception and point of view.

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INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE TRUTH OF ACHEBE'S FICTION: MILITARISED NIGERIAN POSTCOLONY IN *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*

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Abstract
This paper critically examines the centrality of intertextuality in the production and appreciation of Chinua Achebe's fiction, mainly, his political novel about militarism, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Intertextuality deals with relations among texts: no text is an island. The departure from monolithic, author-centred theory of literary criticism to unrestricted and diversified one, following the urgency of poststructuralist lore, precipitated intertextuality. Militarism is the prevalence of the armed forces in the administration or policy of the state. The significance of intertextuality to the creation of postcolonial Nigerian literature establishes the fact that the social facts (part of which militarism) that are being refracted are real. These artistic productions are ''truthful chronicle''; they are relational in textual make-up. This paper therefore attempts to demonstrate that Achebe's fiction is a derivative of the corpus of ''verifiable'', realistic literature on militarism in Nigeria's postcolony. That is the ''truth'' about Achebe's fiction. Thus, the remit of our textual analysis here is *Anthills of the Savannah*, which largely borders on militarism and political dictatorship.

Keywords: Achebe, militarism, intertextuality, fiction, postcolony, Nigeria.

Introduction: The Origin of Intertextuality - An Overview

> Fiction reveals truth
> that reality obscures.
> --- Ralph Waldo Emerson.
>
> […] in *Anthills of the*
> *Savannah* there is a synthesis
> and assertive projection of
> the views contained in the
> earlier works.
> --- Umelo Ojinmah.

The concept of intertextuality was born following poststructuralist theorising about envisioning the death of author-centered criticism, which limited the gamut of apprehending wide-ranging, disparate meanings and multidimensionality of textual interpretations. Intertextuality de-emphasises the space of discursive evanescence thereby providing a bulwark for inclusivity and heterogeneity of textual relations for diachronic textual interpretation. This process is opposed to Ferdinand de Saussure's synchronic method of assessing texts, which is not historical in reach. Thus, the author was killed in Roland Barthes ambitious essay, ''The Death of the Author'' (1967). As Barthes lucidly puts it:

> A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (1967: 146)

Intertextuality ensconces that no text is an island. In maintaining that there is no isolated text, rather every text is derived from a pool of textual relations, intertextuality reverses the structuralist contention that a text can only be influenced by its antecedents and has no destination. Therefore, in the poststructuralist schema, older text can be filtered through later texts – thereby foregrounding the endless stream of interconnectivity of textual tissues, cultures, ideologies and mores, among others. Also, Barthes' contention in his avant-garde essay was to annihilate interpretive tyranny, which consigned omniscience to the author; this is in line with Erich Auerbach's idea of narrative tyranny in relation to author-centered textual interpretation, a departure from the Barthesian concept.

The present canonised field of study, intertextuality, has Julia Kristeva as its intellectual high priest. Kristeva borrowed a lot from the famous Derridean philosophy, neo-Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and appropriated these theories for her conceptualisation of intertextuality. Also, Kristeva's radical critical tool had a prehistoric indebtedness to Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist semiotics and Bakhtin's idea of dialogism. In Bakhtin's concept of dialogism or dialogicity, a word (in text or language) is no longer a construal of fixed meaning, rather a concourse of textual networks and surfaces (Kristeva 1969: 144). Thus, ''any text is a new tissue of past citations'' (Barthes 1981: 39). Intertextuality as Julia Kristeva's brain-child was conceptualized in 1966, during the march from structuralism to poststructuralism – in order to curb the power of the author, who assumed the authority of a closed sign-system, dictating how text could be read or understood. This approach was a prelude to Deconstruction, which takes textual interpretation from multi-faceted perspectives.

In theorising intertextuality, Kristeva maintains that every text is constituted ''by a mosaic of citations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text'' (Kristeva 1986: 37). Like Kristeva, Terry Eagleton opines that every literary work is essentially ''re-written'' (1983: 192). In re-writing literary works as Eagleton indicates, each text directly or indirectly makes reference to other texts, this is what Peter Barry sees as ''a major degree of reference between one text and another'' (1995: 91). In his important work, ''Theory of the Text'', Barthes lends credence to this perspective:

> Any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the text of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it. […] Epistemologically, the concept of intertext is what brings to the theory of the text the volume of sociality. (Young 1981: 39)

The relationship amongst texts and the dialogue such texts address brings to the fore the ideological coloration of a particular epoch or time. In instantiating this, the corpus of colonial fiction passes through a filter: the texts produced during this time, highlight imperial rule and its concomitants. Same goes for anti-colonial fiction, which gibbets imperialist incursion. Therefore, every text or literary work is derived from the ideological or politico-social realities of a particular time in the history of a people. Jean Howard echoes the same position:

> In fact, I would argue that […] attempting to talk about the ideological function of literature in a specific period can most usefully do so only by seeing a specific work relationally – that is, by seeing how its representations stand in regard to those of other specific works and discourses. (1986: 30)

This is the case with Achebe's political fiction. Every of Achebe's fiction has a trace of earlier ones at least indirectly. This is fundamentally true about his postcolonial fiction, which refracts Nigeria's ''postcolonial disillusionment'' as well as power abuse; and it is a product of ''… a plural productivity in which multiple voices – textual, socio-historical and ideological – coexist and communicate'' (Lara-Rallo 2009: 92). Thus, in connection to Achebe's fiction – particularly his political fiction *Anthills of the Savannah*, which shall form the bulk of our textual analysis, attempts will be made to locate the place of intertextuality in this work – as the work is a textual tissue that relates to Achebe's earlier fiction as well as other writers' in content and perspective.

Achebe is widely known for his appropriation of precursory artistic elements in his art. Thus ''Achebe is able to retrieve fascinating antecedent works to espouse his philosophical outlook, i.e., his belief in the cyclical theory of history'' (Kehinde 2003: 377). This narrative pattern is characteristic of the Coleridgean ''suspension of disbelief'' paradigm, a concept coined by Samuel Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* in (1817). The meat of Coleridge's phrase ''suspension of disbelief'' underwrites a writer (like Achebe) to inject what Coleridge calls ''human interest and a semblance of truth'' into a piece of fiction thereby making a reader to suspend judgment concerning implausibility. Intertextually, this means that a writer's ability to identify similar conjunctures in another work, which technically showcases verisimilitude, makes the reader to believe in the actuality of such aestheticisation. This artistic faithfulness is responsible for the Yeatsian invocation in Achebe's *tour de force*, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Yeats' Ireland has some semblance with Achebe's Igbo universe in the novel. The locale Achebe portrays in the work is turn apart by colonial incursion.

In his *Fiction of Chinua Achebe* (2007), Jago Morrison sees this commitment in Achebe to use his art as a consistent continuation of his vision, craft and ideal as thus:

> […] Achbe is also known to recast the notion of ''commitment'' So often associated with his writing… a writer's willingness to Hold firm to the personal and the aesthetic – a writer's willingness To hold firm to the truth of his vision, the authenticity of his Language and to his own artistic integrity. (2007: 137)

In this same train of thought, Onyemaechi Udumukwu's statement here corroborates the intertextual purview of Achebe's fiction:

> Achebe's reflection in *Home and Exile* paves the way for us
> To understand his novel *Anthills of the Savannah* as opening
> Up the authentic grounds for social and political re-storying
> And reinvention in the postcolonial context. (2006: 195)

The act of ''re-storying'' above resonates with Umelo Ojinmah's contention regarding Achebe's fiction as ''mosaic of quotation'', to borrow Julia Kristeva's phrase. Thus,

> Achebe's latest novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), extends
> His structural time sequence to the present. It encapsulates both
> Achebe's original views and concepts on the role of the artist in
> African societies, as contained in his earlier fictions and essays,
> His disillusionment and despair at what we have made of
> Independence . (Ojinmah 1991 :84)

In Search of Truth: Text and Militarism in Nigeria

The primal coalescence between art (literature) and truth cannot be glossed over; the quotidian deployment of art by writers to refract truth in our society is a case in point. Nigerian writers have appropriated literature to give expression to the socio-historical malaise that buffets the nation as well as harnessed it to give man a platform to know what is happening around his world in order to move in such world (Delbanco 1999: 34). This is quite pronounced in the postcolonial Nigerian novel, which chronicles the social facts in the polity. In his analysis of the debt of literature to the service of humanity and its truthful reconstruction of militarism in human society, C.O. Ogunyemi asserts that writers engage in writing because of

> The sheer urge to record, as truthful as possible, an excruciating
> indelible, visceral experience which the author has been physically
> and/or emotionally involved. (Nwahunanya 2007: 109)

For postcolonial Nigerian writers, writing does not exist in a vacuum; every piece of fiction refracts truthfully the situations, atmosphere and realities in Nigeria. This ''veracious'' artistic faithfulness is what Wellek and Warren in their well-titled book, *The Concept of Criticism* call the ''the reflection of reality'' (1963: 239), a pattern Lindfors sees as the true account of a writers' state of their society (1972: 8).

The truth of the tragic, cataclysmic military experience in Nigeria has been a cardinal leitmotif of postcolonial Nigerian literature, especially fiction. In the foreword to *The Insider: Stories of War and Peace from Nigeria*, Emmanuel Obiechina adds credence to the reality of the tragic atmosphere that Nigerian writers dramatise in their works: ''out of every serious crisis in the life of a people there comes a deepening insights into the true nature of man and of human society'' (1971: vi). This is the tradition in which novels that reconstruct military experience in Nigeria were born; Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* follows in the footsteps of this mould. In the novel, Achebe takes us on a roller-coaster of military dictatorship in Nigeria fictionalised as Kangan,

the setting of the novel. The novel also adumbrates subsets of power struggle and feminist agitation, which are annealed on the anvil of militarism. In the main, Achebe's major thematic preoccupation in *Anthills of the Savannah* is military governance, which he considers a mere aberration. It is a regimen that rather aggravates the same inanities that characterise civilian administrations.

The concept of intertextuality irrespective of its Euro-Western beginning is not entirely foreign to Nigerian (African) literature and oral tradition. There is no gainsaying the fact that African oral art and literature are typified by absence of auctorial omniscience, communal participation/ownership, and group authorship, among others. In her seminal work, *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970), Ruth Finnegan comments on the communality of African orature and art by saying that : ''such literature was, for instance, supposed to be the work of communal consciousness and group authorship rather than … of an individual inspired artist'' (36). Nigerian fiction is a product of seamless unity that exists amongst various works as they directly or indirectly refer to one another. Therefore, ''every text is an intertext'' (Leitch 1983: 59) and in the same manner, ''all intertexts are texts'' (Plett 1991: 5). Accordingly, in Charles Bodunde's view on the intertextuality of Nigerian literature, he maintains that ''each literature or text has the capacity to influence and extend the meaning of the other'' (1994: 72).

Therefore, African (Nigerian) literature is *prima facie* intertextual in scope. In the case of war novels or fiction of military experience in Nigeria, there is a palpable leitmotif that these novels adumbrate: they all point a flambeau towards command-and-obey system, violence, power drunkenness, bestiality, brutality and above all militarism. Put simply, novels on military experience in Nigeria are in seamless textual relations: they all echo theatre of horror and failure of men in uniform to drive positive change after they had preached messianic, redemptive mission for entering politics. It is on this score that Achebe says that the political failure of Kangan is encapsulated in the inability of men in khaki to establish vital nexus with the people, whom he considers as ''the poor and disposed'' (141) of Kangan, a simulacrum of Nigeria. In his ''Military Dictatorship'', Manivuzzan, reaffirms Achebe's view about military dictatorship's disempowerment of the people and its atrophied messianic mission: ''the military leaders only aggravate the problems of nation building after taking over from the civilian political leaders'' (1992: 248). It is noteworthy to make an array of fictional distillates that foreshadow military experience in Nigeria. From Achebe's prescient text about Nigeria-Biafra 1966 coup d'état, *A Man of the People* (1966) to his short story collection, *Girls at War* (1972) to *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) there is aesthetic consciousness in his craft to depict the militarisation of Nigeria's postcolonial society.

Moreover, intertextuality is also an indigenising technique of Nigerian literature; it makes its art a communal one – which could be appropriated by any writer to codify a particular experience in a manner in which earlier works appear and disappear (Oyegoke 1992: 158). In this regard, all works on military dictatorship in Nigeria have a thread that runs through them: they synthesise the horrors of brute force, tyrannical rule and command-and-obey system – which have been previously articulated in earlier texts. Thus, Chinua Achebe's political novels on military dictatorship as well as Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2006) become intertexts, turning a mosaic of meanings and

dialogue addressed by other political novels steeped in military absolutism (Ogunpitan 2007: 12). Hence, since Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is suffused with the traces of earlier works on postcolonial Nigerian militarised status quo, the novel (text) is truly intertextual and foregrounds Achebe's artistic mediation in Nigeria's postcolony, a prototype assayed in his earlier works.

Art has been described by the formalists as mere contestation of language, rather than a representation or refraction of reality - a mere simulacrum that gives a deceptive substitute of reality. It distorts and imitates rather than reflect ''truth'' or reality; it does not even oppugn reality, as some posit. Also, proponents of this warped idea of art, maintain that art offers a grotesque caricature of reality. If this position was true, how could art have persuaded men, time immemorial, to change their environment, had it not have relationship with truth? Also, if art had no ''social truth'' or did not romance with reality, why does it disturb the conscience of a people? Achebe, writing on ''The Truth of Fiction'' brings very insightfully the truth of art: ''But if art may dispense with the constraining exactitude of literal truth, it does acquire in turn incalculable powers of persuasion in the imagination'' (1990: 95). By extending the frontiers of this Achebean indication,

> the work (of art) is a tissue of fictions: properly speaking it contains nothing that is true. However, in so far as it is not a total deception but a verified falsehood, it asks to be considered as speaking the truth: it is not just any old illusion, it is a determinate illusion. (Macherey 1978:69)

In this regard, Salman Rushdie's single stroke on the canvas, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), turned Khomeini's Iran into a splendid spectacle of disquiet. This delineation is seen in Pablo Picasso's mural, *Guernica* (1937), a painting that pricked the conscience of Spanish fascism thereby signaling the tragedies of war and their concomitants to mankind.

Similarly, the intertextual ability of Achebe's fiction (particularly political ones) to refract Nigeria's political history is what Simon Gikandi sees as ''The way narrative recreates history and memory …, a crucial theme in *Anthills of the Savannah*'' (1991: 126). There is a thread that runs through Achebe's political novels on military rule: it excavates a particular type of historical experience – that of ''succession of military coups, the civil war itself and a series of corrupt dictatorships'' (Morrison 2007: 139) in postcolonial Nigeria. In this vein, Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), published in January 1966, two days before the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, makes the point about the ''truth'' of his fictive writing as well as its intertextuality. Commenting on the ''truth'' of Achebe's political fiction, *A Man of the People*, Jago Morrison says that

> There are certainly close correspondence between the political developments of the mid-1960s in Nigeria and those that are depicted in the novel. Achebe's account of the military takeover at the end of his text, in particular, comes remarkably close to describing the actual events that followed. (2007: 116)

This is also similar to the conjunctures that *Anthills of the Savannah* prefigures; it is a dramatisation of political excesses as well as state usurpation of power in the

successive military juntas that exemplified Nigeria after her political independence in 1960.

Bringing Militarism to Heels: Violence, Narrative and History

Published in 1987, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* deftly reconstructs postcolonial Nigerian space in the vice-grip of militarism. In dramatizing this notion, the opening statement in the novel exemplifies militarised Nigerian postcolony:

> You are wasting everybody's time, Mr. Commissioner for
> Information. I will not go to Abazon. Finish! Kabisa! Any
> Other business?
> As Your Excellency wishes. But…
> But me no buts, Mr. Oriko! The matter is closed, I said.

The tone that pervades the above exchange, which is speckled with language of altercation and naked force, suggests that Kangan is enmeshed in a political muddle that the Nangas and Sams have made of democracy on the African continent. In addition, the above exchange pushes sturdily to the fore that ''the military and democracy are in dialectical opposition …The military demands submission, democracy enjoins participation; one is a tool of violence, the other a means of consensus building for peaceful co-existence'' (Ake 1995: 34).

The plot rotates around the fate of two prominent male intellectuals oppressed in a militarised crackdown orchestrated by the nation's ''president-for-life'' (Sam), who is a childhood friend. The novel's sequence of narration moves between these two characters and their female friend, Beatrice, who works in the Ministry of Finance. As Kangan's Minister of Information, Christopher Oriko is in a position to wield influence since he is part of the government but cannot because of the president's absolutist power base. The president's militarised power network does not allow opposition or alternative view. This is exemplified in the manner the presidency runs the Ministry of Information by dictating to it what should be done. This is responsible for Chris and Ikem's hot debate about the latter's editorials, which the president had asked Chris to moderate. As Ikem argues, ''… as long as I remain editor of the *Gazette* I shall not seek anybody's permission for what I write'' (44). But as the novel unveils, Ikem's idealism to change his world, Kangan was met with brutality and his sudden death, which again portrays the power of the bullet and the gun.

After the death of Ikem, Chris went into hiding and wanted to escape the country because Sam's toadies wanted him for their master. In his bid to do this, Chris was killed by Sam's security operatives. Chris' killing is one of the fiercest forms of brutality. This incident took place as Chris wanted to rescue a schoolgirl who was being abducted by a police officer. The police officer in question was stealing some beer before he saw the schoolgirl and wanted to rape her. The girl was being mishandled and brutally treated by this officer that Chris was touched to come to her rescue:

> The police sergeant was dragging her in the direction of a
> Small cluster of round huts not far from the road and
> surrounded as was common to these parts by a fence of hideously-
> spiked cactus. He was pulling her by the waist, his gin slung from

> the shoulder. (215)

Chris' intervention in this despicable drama caused him his life:

> He unslung his gun, cocked it, narrowed his eyes while
> Confused voices went up all around some asking Chris
> To run, others the policeman to put the gun away. Chris
> Stood his ground looking straight into the man's face,
> Daring him to shoot. And he did, point-blank into the
> Chest presented to him. (215)

As Ojinmah avers, ''In Achebe's view, the circumstances of Chris's death typifies the depravity of military dictatorships to whom human life has become worthless'' (1991: 91).

In order to clobber opposition and dissenting views, the military in Nigerian politics employs violence and militarisation of operation to sustain itself in power. The military in this sense see might as right and coercion as a substitute for democratic principles. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe considers the solders as being worse than the civilian government they ousted; they have in this regard perfected killing, torture, intimidation, terror, violence and have in the final analysis militarised the social space. In instantiating this,

> In *Anthills of the Savannah* Achebe sees the soldiers as not being
> any better than the civilians that they ousted; if anything, they have
> become worse, having perfected torture, intimidation and cold-
> blooded killings as weapons to cow the opponents of their policies.
> And believing that they are accountable to no one but themselves,
> And having the ultimate weapon – the brute force of the army at
> Their beck and call – they have to see governance as a matter of
> How long they are able to stay in or cling to power. (Ojinmah 1991: 86)

Intertextually, the above insightful, gripping remark by Umelo Ojinmah, which is characteristic of *Anthills of the Savannah*, suffuses the cosmos of Achebe's postcolonial novels.

In this direction, ''scenes of political brigandage and thuggery as we find in Achebe's *A Man of the People''* (Amuta 1986: 149) are self-evident in *Anthills of the Savannah*, where Achebe indicates that ''There were unconfirmed rumours of unrest, secret trials and executions in the barracks'' (14). Achebe considers the use of violence and brutality as a form of police state. This indication presages the Gestapo regime in Hitler's Germany. In *No Longer at Ease* (1960), the nature of violence here is essentially that of psychological violence and threat. The protagonist of the novel Obi Okonkwo is in crisis. The wellspring of his crisis is that he is in a society whose societal values and mores are completely out of sync with his personal values and aspiration. This situation in Obi's world pushes him to marginality and cultural transition thereby constituting psychological violence as well as emotional trauma, which in the final analysis threaten his wellbeing and survival. Thus, ''Whilst Obi is an alienated, confused protagonist, the world he inhabits is shown as threateningly empty'' (Morrison 2007: 90).

The political history of Nigeria resonates with how a nation should not be run. One of the reasons for this form of inept mode of governance is military rule. Sanyo Osha in his piece, ‘‘Ethics and Revisionism in Nigerian Governance’’, lends credence to the militarisation of Nigeria’s political space; a departure from the true import of good governance:

> […] Nigeria is one of the best examples of how a nation should
> Not be run. Its disastrous history of protracted military rule has
> Virtually destroyed all facets of its national existence. And
> Militarism is a scourge that mere cosmetic reforms cannot
> Eradicate. (2002: 82)

The three main characters in *Anthills of the Savannah*: Chris, Ikem, and Beatrice whom Achebe portrayed as representing the voice of change are faced with diverse forms of inhumanity ranging from political assassination, violence, threats, repression and intimidations. As Achebe illustrates, these trio symbolise ‘‘the cream of our society and hope of the black race’’ (2). The trio’s dilemma is similar to the fate of real people in postcolonial Nigeria, which Osha is linked on militarism above.

Starting with Beatrice Okoh (Nwanyibuife) – ‘‘A female is also something’’ (87), Achebe presents a woman who is in a struggle with the apparatuses of Sam’s power game to fight for the political rights of women in her society, Kangan. Although the militarised social milieu in Kangan makes Beatrice’s quest difficult, she eventually makes the voice of women to be heard: ‘‘This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented’’ (232). Understandably, the repressive system in Kangan is a direct fall-out of African traditional institution that marginalized women and the people. This form of oppression is occasioned by militarism.

In the case of Ikem Osodi, he was killed by his Excellency’s hatchet men for standing up for the truth. Though Ikem tried the hardest to use the pen to smother militarism and dictatorship through his editorials in the *National Gazette*, which he edited, but he was eventually felled by the guns. This goes to questioning the capacity of the pen and dialogue to triumph over militarism in Kangan. As the sergeant declared: ‘‘Oh no. The pen is mightier than the sword. With one sentence of your sharp pen you can demolish anybody’’ (131). This did not materialise; rather, Ikem was brought down by the bullet. The death of Ikem is a celebration of raw force and brutality to silence opposition. After Ikem’s speech at the University of Bassa on the insensitivity of Sam’s mode of governance, he was accused of regicide because the powers that be reckoned that his speech radicalised the students as well as the people. Ikem’s speech was titled ‘‘The Tortoise and the Leopard – a Political Meditation on the Imperative of Struggle’’ (153). Symbolically, Ikem choice of words for the speech paints in a bold relief the militarisation of the status quo. The tortoise represents the people as well as the intellectuals, while the leopard signifies might and raw power. It was essentially because of this event that the Excellency (Sam) asked for Ikem’s head after his speech was misquoted to incriminate him; the next day, the national paper, *National Gazette* had a headline as thus: ‘‘EX-EDITOR ADVOCATES REGICIDE’’ (162). At the behest of Sam, Major Sam Ossai (Samsonite), Sam’s hatchet man was ordered to arrest Ikem – and he was killed in the process:

> In the early hours of this morning a team of security officers effected the arrest of Mr. Osodi in his official flat at 202 Kingsway Road in the Government Reservation Area and were Taking him in a military vehicle for questioning at the SRC Headquarters when he seized a gun from one of his escorts. In The scuffle that ensued between Mr. Osodi and his guard in the Moving vehicle, Mr. Osodi was fatally wounded by gunshot. (169)

The atmosphere above paints a shocking picture of a society caught in a mesh of blood-curdling violence, tension and apprehension occasioned by men in khaki to curb opposition.

Sam, the military commander and dictator of the fictional Kangan (unambiguously Nigeria), who assumed the ''presidency-for-life'' in a *coup d'état*, brooks no resistance to his authoritarian regime. In clobbering his political opponents and the resistance from the people, Sam used violence and brutality. Major Johnson Ossai (later Colonel) is Sam's (Excellency's) Chief Security Officer; he is the main character used to perform most of the brutal and violent operations. Ossai's portraiture in the novel parallels Nazi's chief of Gestapo (the Secret Police), Heinrich Himmler, who was executing the people during the monstrous reign of Fuehrer (Third Reich). As the sabre-rattling and belligerent Director of State Research Council (14), Sam uses Ossai to force submission and loyalty from the masses through the instrumentality of coercion, killings, violence and brute force. A case in point was when Sam used Ossai to dowse agitation from the Abazon delegation regarding draught in their province, which the Excellency (Sam) had neglected because the people's welfare does not matter to him. Thus, with the help of Ossai, Sam's anxiety regarding the drought in Abazon was ''swiftly assuaged by his young, brilliant and aggressive Director of State Research Council'' (14).

Between Art and Truth: Intertextuality, Postcoloniality and Power Personalisatisation

The truth of Achebe's fiction fundamentally lies in its capacity to mirror diverse perspectives and narratological patterns as indicated by other writers in relation to the same subject matter that he articulates in his earlier fiction. Essentially, in his political fiction, there is a distillation of Achebe's preoccupation to address one major concern: the political impasse and power usurpation in postcolonial Nigeria. This method of artistic representation is akin to the West Indian postcolonial literary experimentation on ''mosaic'' of sources, which Henry-Louis Gates calls ''tropological revision''. This is in relation to postcolonial Nigerian literature that is given to alluding diverse narrative patterns that coalesce to paint a similar and familiar picture characterising Nigeria's postcolonial condition. In the Gatesian locution, this thesis is considered as ''the manner in which a specific trope is repeated with differences, between two or more texts'' (1988: xxv).

The architecture of Achebe's technique transcends the referentiality of his earlier political fiction, and lends itself to larger complexity and synchronicity with other fiction that treat the same national historiography and history. Consequent upon this, in his piece, ''Language, Foregrounding and Intertextuality in *Anthills of the Savannah*'', Omar Sougou's statement makes credible the textual interdependence of

Anthills of the Savannah with other pieces of fiction on the militarisation of Nigeria's postcolony:

> The intertextual construct of *Anthills of the Savannah* rests on a number of allusions, parodies and direct references to Achebe's own works and to that of other writers which are ingrained in the main text. (45)

The emphasis here is the intertextual nature of Achebe's works – they constantly refer to his earlier works as well as works of other postcolonial Nigerian writers. This pattern is reminiscent of Bakhtin's dialogism. In fleshing this out, Bakhtin notes, ''a language is revealed in all its distinctiveness only when it is brought into relationship with other languages'' (141). The ''allusions'' Sougou refers to are the undeniable place of power drunkenness, political violence and the truth about militarised form of governance in this nation. As Kofi Owusu affirms: ''with varying degree of emphasis, all of Chinua Achebe's novels to date explore the use and abuse of power by those who wield it'' (1991: 459). So the question of power as well as the militarisation of societal operation through perpetual military intervention in Nigerian politics is embedded in the artistic soul of Achebe's fiction writing.

The question of power game by continual military presence in Nigerian politics as well as militarised civilian regimes, which resort to power game and the like to constantly hold on to power is one of the major thematic axes of *Anthills of the Savannah*. This is very symptomatic of Sam's leadership style, as demonstrated by Chidi Maduka in his easy, ''Chinua Achebe and Military Dictatorship in Nigeria: A *Study of Anthills of the Savannah*'':

> Thus, Achebe deftly opens the novel with an apt dramatisation
> Of the power game which is a major concern of the work.
> Sam is a power seeker who ruthlessly silences opposition
> in order to show that he constitutes a formidable power
> base capable of resisting the assault of political opponents.
> (Udumukwu 2007: 68)

This power personalisation as well as crude use of force to enforce subordination by the ''alliance of purse and gun'' (Soyinka 1973: 134) is the same point that Onyemaechi Udumukwu makes here in his *Social Responsibility in the Nigerian Novel* (1998):

> In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the leaders' lack of contact with
> The aspiration of the ordinary people manifests in an attempt
> Of the leaders to reduce national interests to their personal
> Interests. This is evident in the indiscriminate scramble among
> The leaders for political and state power as a means of attaining
> Financial profit. (1998: 23)

It is within this remit that J.O.J Nwachukwu-Agbada has argued that ''the novel (that is *Anthills of the Savannah*) is a study of power in an African state, and shows how original ideals are swept aside by the concept of power personalisation'' (My parenthesis, Udumukwu 2007: 102).

The privatisation of the public space by the military leaders and their foot soldiers in Kangan, a penumbra of postcolonial Nigeria is largely responsible for the leadership malaise buffeting this space indicated by Elewa'a uncle in the novel:

> We have seen too much trouble in Kangan since the white
> Man left because those who make plans make for themselves
> Only and their families. (228)

The horrors of power and militarisation of the status quo in postcolonial Nigeria, which find expression in the above statement, continue in the following lines:

> Now devastated, dormant!
> Clucking gulls flow over the gullies…
> Long, long ago before the agony of the Ogoni
> Oil spillage by the bastards, or Itshekiri –
> Ijaw fratricide they called ethnic cleansing!
> But the soldier-ants and pepper-soup platoons
> Termite at the root,
> … feverish and famished! (Dasylva 2006: 49)

Part of the corollary of the rule of fear and militarism is what Uzoechi Nwagbara in his ''When Fear Rules'', a versification in *Polluted Landscape* (2002) considers in the following lines:

> When fear rules,
> We live in fear.
> When fear holds sway,
> Mankind runs for cover.
>
> When fear swirls our space,
> Flesh yellows, limb trembles –
> Mouth remains agape, heart
> Flutter…
> Hair stands and eye shoots out… (2)

Gabriel Okara, one of the patriarchs of Nigeria's poetry bemoans the breach of peace occasioned by militarism in his ''The Silent Night'', a poem from his famous collection, *The Fisherman's Invocation* (1979). The militarized, wrecked social space that Okara's poet-persona refers to is being ruled by ''Sounds of exploding shells/rattling guns and raucous laughter of death'' (1979: 44). The same mantra pervades the cosmology of Nigerian drama that is steeped in militarism and power drunkenness. In drama, works such as *Opera Wonyosi (Six Plays)* (1981) by Wole Soyinka, *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991) by Femi Osofisa, and Niyi Osudare's *The State Visit* (2002), among other pieces of drama that dramatise this tradition, show the dimension of militarism and despotism. By extrapolation, the concept of power misuse and the subject matter of postcoloniality in Nigeria – and Africa by extension are inseparable. The coalescence of naked power and militarism induces fear in the people as the above lines illustrate.

Thus, the aesthetic of power and militarism has spawned its own literary tradition in Nigerian postcolonial fiction writing, which percolates the universe of *Anthills of the Savannah*: ''in the beginning power rampaged through the world, naked'' (Achebe 1987: 102). This ''naked'' power finds effulgence in the regimes of Buhari/Idiagbon, Abulsalam Abubakah, Sani Abacha, Olusegun Obasanjo, Badamashi Babangida and even most of the civilian dispensation since Nigeria's political independence in 1960. Intertextually, other Nigerian fiction that responds to the militarisation of Nigerian postcolony includes Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War* (1972), Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* (1976), Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979) and *The Heroes* (1986), Frank Uche-Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* (1995), Adebayo Williams' *The Remains of the Last Emperor* (1994), Kole Omotoso's *Just before Dawn* (1988), Sowaribi Tolofari's *The Black Minister* (1994), Ngozi Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2008) as well as *Matters of the Moment* (2009) among other pieces of fiction on postcolonial Nigerian military dictatorship and dialectics of power personalisation. It is in this light that Adeoti has indicated that

> on a general note, the reality of militarism has engendered its own aesthetics. Hence, the predominance of drama of rage, fiction of protest and poetry of indignation… These writings Are remarkable for deliberate violation of hallowed conventions of literary compositions without necessarily impeding significance. After all, military rule thrives on violation and subversion of rules. (2003: 33)

A priori, Achebe considers his art as a refraction of the goings-on in the social ambience of Nigeria. For him, there is no such thing as the Kantian/Gaultierian art for art's sake thesis, which is largely autotelic; rather, in Nigeria as well as other countries in Africa, what art should portray is ''the precision and vividness … of some observed detail'' (Williams 1972: 581). In this connection, Achebe reasons with another great novelist in Africa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who affirms that

> Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship: one is writing about somebody. At the collective level, literature, as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions conflicts, contradictions, at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. It is a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative plane, of a community's wrestling with its total environment… (Ngugi 1981: 5-6).

The essentiasl of power personalisation and its manifestation in social relations in Achebe's work are what Onyemaechi Udumukwu in his *The Novel and Change in Africa* (2006) considers thus:

> The worldliness of Achebe's text manifest itself in its preoccupation with power relations. The theme of power relations is an important one because the sharing of power and its abuse remained (sic) a major social reality in

> postcolonial Nigeria… (2006: 196)

The issue of power abuse is very crucial in understanding the political history of postcolonial Africa, particularly Nigeria. This is inextricably linked to Ngugi's statement above concerning ''conflicts'' and ''contradictions'' that stem from power in postcolonial Africa. So, *Anthills of the Savannah* is richly ''Achebe's reaction against the negation of the expectations of national independence from colonial rule'' (Udumukwu 1991: 472). This is a form of negation anchored in power drunkenness.

Part of a Whole: Epiphenomenon of Realist Tradition

In his *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1992), Martin Gray asserts that the realist tradition is a literary and aesthetic approach appropriated by writers ''who show explicit concern to convey an authentic impression of actuality, either in their narrative style, or by their serious approach to the subject matter'' (241). This method of refracting social facts in a given social space amounts to ''literary aesthetic of truth-telling'' (Lodge 1986: 4), which according to Dwivedi is the hallmark of Achebe's literary enterprise:

> Chinua Achebe has been particularly successful in creating a realistic representation of an African environment. He is one of the major writers from the African subcontinent who have given a new direction to English-language African literature by representing, realistically, an African environment and giving expression to a sense of increasing disgust and unrest within its population. (2008: 2)

One of the facets of ''disgust'' and ''unrest'' on the African continent according to Dwivedi above is military dictatorship, a recurring decimal in Nigeria's political equation given the lack of direction of her political leadership. It is to this end that Gbemisola Adeoti notes that

> The military is not only a dominant political force in the country's postcolonial governance but also a recurrent subject in its narrative fiction, poetry and drama. In the works of … Chinua Achebe… one is confronted with the tropes of power abuse, economic mismanagement and poverty among other legacies of military regimes. (2003: 6)

Military intervention in Africa particularly Nigeria has become a major source which writers use as a canvas for reconstructing real, identifiable events in the body polity. And for Achebe, shying away from the realities in postcolonial Nigeria, not the Lacanian The Real, will amount to sheer formalist literature: ''Art for art's sake is just another piece of deodorised dog shit'' (Achebe 1976: 25).

One major reason for military intervention in Nigerian politics is failure of leadership, which Achebe himself sees in his chapbook on leadership in Nigeria, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983) as ''the trouble with Nigeria'' (1). And as Achebe observes in *Anthills of the Savannah*,

> The prime failure of this government began also to take on a

> clear meaning… It can't be the massive corruption though its scale and pervasiveness are truly intolerable; it isn't the subservience to foreign manipulation, degrading as it is; it isn't even this second-class, hand-me-down capitalism, ludicrous and doomed… It is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being. (141)

Traditionally, the military have no idea of governance. This is the case with Sam, His Excellency. Sam's characterization smacks of militarism, which is a reality in political history of Africa. Sam is a quintessence of ''soldiers-turned-politicians'' (141) in Africa. Sam's leadership in Kangan dovetails with undemocratic, military mode of governance in Africa, particularly Nigeria.

Another way of measuring the realist nature of the novel is lodged in the manner in which women are marginalized and repressed in political participation and governance in Kangan, a simulacrum of Nigeria. In the novel, there are clear demonstration of power play and political tyranny meted against women. This gendered social space, which marginalises as well as discriminates against women, is typical of postcolonial Nigerian state. This contention has been taken further in this analysis:

> It should be remarked that the dominance of the military as subject in Nigeria's postcolonial literature does not imply the absence of other engagements. Some writers have explored the crucial issue of gender in social formation. The contention is that colonialism merely exacerbated gender imbalance in indigenous cultures as men were obviously privileged in the operation of the colonial machinery. Political independence had not washed off the splodge of patriarchy. (Adeoti 2003: 9-10)

In an exchange between Beatrice and Ikem, it is self-evident how the gender-blind Kangan society operates:

> The women are, of course, the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world and, if we are to believe the Book of Genesis, the very oldest. But they are not the only ones. There are others – rural peasants in every land, the urban poor… (98)

The characterisation above is in tandem with the actualities evident in postcolonial Nigeria, where women are oppressed politically through the instrumentality of political coercion, militarism and exclusion. The societal texture captured here is one which is inseparably linked with the realities in postcolonial Nigeria. Part of these realities is women political disempowerment, which need to be reversed for participatory, populist and democratic governance. It is to this end that Umelo Ojimah argues that in *Anthills of the Savannah*, ''Achebe believes that the time is now, for the new nations of Africa, to invoke the female principle, not necessarily in its original form of keeping women'' (103) in the back burner through gendered political space.

It is within the parameters of the realities in postcolonial Nigeria that Crawford Young in his polemical piece, ‘‘The End of Postcolonial State in Africa? Reflection on Changing African Political Dynamics’’ gives the following illuminations:

> Military intervention became the sole mechanism to displace incumbents, but the putschist in power normally formed a new single party to legitimize permanent status for his rule. Thus citizens became once again merely subjects, facing an exclusion from the public domain reminiscent of colonial times. One important difference: whereas the colonial state asked only obedience, the postcolonial polity demanded affection. Mere submission did not suffice; active participation in rituals, loyally
>
> (support marches, assemblies to applaud touring dignitaries, Purchase of party cards, display of the presidential portrait, Participation in plebiscitary elections) were mandatory. (2004: 25)

The above landscape is what Achebe considers as ‘‘electoral merchandising’’ (160) in *Anthills of the Savannah*, a fall-out of political coercion and militarism. The craft of *Anthills of the Savannah* is a synecdoche of the realities in postcolonial Nigeria and Africa by extension. Put simply, the conjunctures in Nigeria are what the novel refracts.

Conclusion

The main thrust of this investigation is to demonstrate that the concept of intertextuality is pertinent to apprehending the hallmark of Achebe’s fiction, particularly *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Thus, art does not exist in a vacuum; his fiction is a response to lived experience in postcolonial Nigeria. Thus, the truth that Achebe’s fiction refracts is social facts located within an identifiable, pragmatic social space. Also, it has been proven that the issues which Achebe’s fiction addresses are equally a continuation of similar matters by other fiction on Nigerian experience. There is therefore a relational nexus between Achebe’s postcolonial fiction and novels of the same preoccupation; they spawn a discursive confluence. This diachronic similarity makes Achebe’s fiction intertextual: it is part of a seamless ‘‘mosaic’’ of reference, quotation, and allusions. Therefore Achebe’s fiction is essentially a response to an ‘‘effective presence of one text in another’’ (Genette 1982: 8). The effectiveness of Achebe’s text in relation to postcolonial Nigerian situation is the ‘‘truthfulness’’ of his fiction to dramatise the contemporary experience in Nigeria in a similar way as other fiction of this fixation.

Thus, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a rich incarnation of Achebe’s artistic consciousness to illustrate palpably the matter with Nigeria, which other novels (by him and other Nigerian writers) that deal with military intervention, power play and gross violence in the polity orchestrate. It is within these parameters that the novel is read as an archetypal postcolonial novel on Nigeria’s militarised space.

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Computer Mediated Communication: The Use of CMC to Promote Learners' Communicative Competence

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Abstract

Moving from the 'focus on form' teaching approach such as Grammar Translation and Audiolingualism, recently more language teachers have noticed the failure of form focusing approach in developing learners' communicative ability in real-life situations and shifted to adopt the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The CLT approach highlights learners' communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) which is defined as learners' ability to efficiently express what they mean in the target language and successfully achieve communications in real-life situations (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Power, 2003). In order to do so, learners not only need to acquire the linguistic but pragmatic knowledge of the TL (Hedgcock, 2002). It is suggested that competence, both linguistic and pragmatic, is the knowledge developed and acquired through exposure and use (Kasper, 1997). In other words, without sufficient exposure needed for learners to notice and acquire the language input and chances to use the knowledge, communicative competence is not likely to be promoted.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that the integration of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) into EFL learning can increase both input (exposure) and output (use) of the target language that is needed for learners to promote both their linguistic and pragmatic competence.

Key Words: communicative competence, computer mediated communication (CMC), authentic and interactive learning tasks

1. Introduction

Moving from the 'focus on form' teaching approach such as Grammar Translation and Audiolingualism, recently more language teachers have noticed the failure of form focusing approach in developing learners' communicative ability in real-life situations and have shifted to adopt the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The CLT approach highlights learners' communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), which is defined as learners' ability to efficiently express what they mean in the target language and successfully achieve communications in real-life situations (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Power, 2003). In order to do so, learners not only need to acquire the linguistic but pragmatic knowledge of the target language (Hedgcock, 2002). It is suggested that competence, both linguistic and pragmatic, is the knowledge developed and acquired through exposure and use of the target language (Kasper, 1997). In other words, without sufficient exposure needed for learners to notice and acquire the

language input and chances to use the new knowledge, communicative competence is not likely to be promoted.

Unlike ESL learners who need to use the TL in everyday life for surviving in the target culture, EFL learners generally do not have adequate access to the TL outside of the classrooms and practice what they have learned in the classroom. Learners normally return to the real world speaking their mother tongue as soon as they leave the classroom (Campbell, 2004). In classrooms, although teachers now have gradually adopted approaches that focus on meaning and language use, due to the linier mode of face-to-face interaction, the learning outcome is still not efficient enough. EFL teachers now urgently need a solution to increase exposure and use of the target knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest the integration of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) into EFL learning can not only increase both input (exposure) and output (use) of the TL that is needed for learners to promote their English proficiency, but also promote learning motivation, learner autonomy, social equality and identity. This paper firstly presents : rationale of the CLT approach and , limitations of traditional EFL classrooms to implement it. In the third part, pedagogical benefits of CMC in language learning are presented. , Principles of using CMC tools in foreign language teaching are presented in the third part, which is followed by the conclusion.

2. The Rationale of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Prior to the CLT approach, traditional approaches that focus on structure and form were preferred in language classrooms; however, for its failure to develop learners' communicative skills in the target language, language teachers have gradually acknowledged the strength of the CLT approach. Traditional approaches has its origin in the study of Latin and Greek the languages of religion literature and philosophy of the Middle Ages . It concerns itself with the analysis of formal written language and ignores the study of spoken communication (John Lyons , 1981) . The rationale of the CLT approach is that the teacher should act as a facilitator to create a student-centered classroom and engage learners in authentic-like and meaningful communications that need negotiations, with the goal to increase comprehensible language input for learners and expect them to generate more output (Huang & Liu, 2000).

2.1. Focus on Meaning and Language Use

Language is used for communication. In real-life communication, we use language to express what we mean (Lightbown & Spada, 1999); however, language is more than a tool for communication, it also represents social and cultural background. Learning merely the target linguistic knowledge cannot successfully engage learners into real-life communications in the target culture; they also need to acquire the target pragmatic competence, the capacity to incorporate cultural knowledge into language use and choose appropriate language in different sociocultural contexts (Bachman, 1990, Hymes, 1972, Kasper, 1997).

Unlike grammar translation or audiolingualism that merely focuses on learners' ability to produce accurate language form and structure, the CLT approach emphasizes the learners' ability

to efficiently use the target language in different contexts (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). By pairing up learners and involving them in a wide range of meaningful interactive discussion tasksthe teacher expects to promote the learners' ability to achieve the communicative goal, rather than forming grammatical sentences.

2.2. Create More Comprehensible Input

The other purpose of the CLT approach that involves learners into meaningful communication is to create more comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982); is based on Long's interaction hypothesis (1983) which holds that when learners are involved in two-way meaningful communications requiring information exchange they tend to produce more negotiated language modification. Examples of negotiated language modification are thew following: comprehension check, 'do you understand?', clarification request "what did you say?', or confirmation checks, 'did you say 'the cat'?' Although learners are not always able to produce comprehensible language essential for a successful communication by using these strategies in paired interactions, they are able to obtain more comprehensible input than in teacher-student interactions (Lightbown &Spada, 1999) and have more chances to notice the linguistic gap between their non-native like language and the TL. It is proposed that the gap-noticing can often help learners to know what is still needed to be learned and benefit the learning (Blake, 2000).

3. The Limitation-Individual Inequality to Use the TL in Traditional EFL Classrooms

Although the CLT approach attempts to involve learners in more authentic and interactive learning tasks that promote both comprehensible input and learners' language output, due to the nature of face-to-face interaction, teachers still find it challenging to exploit the approach and maximize the learning; is especially a true case in EFL classrooms. Unlike ESL learners, EFL learners usually do not have the need to use the TL outside of the classroom; their only chance to put the learned language knowledge into use is in the classroom. However, for the linier mode of traditional face-to-face interaction, EFL learners generally have limited time and chance to speak and use the TL in traditional classrooms (Campbell, 2004).

The interaction mode is linier: when someone is talking, the other needs to be silent and wait until his interlocutor finish talking. The interaction is bound to be either learners interacting with the teacher or a learner interacting with other learners (Hansen, 2001).

Factors of learner's different personalities , such as personality type, learning and response pace, motivation, and language proficiency can all lead to individual inequality to speak up in class or in groups. For example, learners who are shy, slow, or afraid of making errors may choose to speak less in the classroom or group discussions. Insufficient access to the TL both inside and outside of the classroom certainly is an obstacle to foster EFL learners' language proficiency. Nevertheless, with the advent of computer mediated communication technology, ways of communication and learning have been efficiently changed (Leh, 1999, Cheon, 2003). By using CMC tools such as e-mails, chat rooms, discussion rooms, video or audio conference, users worldwide can easily achieve communication, without boundaries of time and space. It is

therefore proposed that CMC can be used to compensate the deficiency of interaction both inside and outside of EFL classrooms.

4. Pedagogical Benefits of CMC in Language Learning

4.1. Increase Interactive Communication and Exposure to the TL

By bringing CMC into language learning and teaching, the interaction pattern can be changed. Proponents of CMC suggest that teachers can encourage a greater amount of interactions by using CMC tools both inside and outside of the classroom (Blake, 2000; Blin, 1999; Leh, 1999, Warschauer, 1997). Learning is no longer restrained in time and space. rather , through the internet, learners are offered opportunities to communicate and learn collaboratively with learners worldwide (Kern, 1996; Shield & Weininger, 2004). EFL learners do not need to passively listen to audio tapes alone after class; through the use of the internet and CMC tools , they can easily participate in more interactions by posting and replying messages on discussion boards, writing and replying emails to their keypals, or joining online chat rooms whenever suitable anytime when they feel comfortable or have free time . This new way of learning that engages learners in authentic social interactions can greatly expose learners to the TL and enable them to practice what they have learned in the classroom (Blake, 2000; Campbell, 2004, Leh, 1999, Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

4.2. Create Opportunities to Participate in the Target Socio cultural Context

Other than more exposure to the target language, learners can also have more opportunities to take part in the target social and cultural context and learn the pragmatic knowledge, something which is very difficult to be achieved in EFL cultures. For example, by using e-mails to send photos, audio or video attachments learners can introduce their families, countries, and cultures to their keypals. By using microphones and web cameras enable learners to participate in online communications that almost resemble traditional face-to-face conversations, although the interaction cannot be as immediate as real-life communications due to transmission time. Nevertheless, through audio or video communications, learners are able to obtain both verbal (eg. intonation) and non-verbal (eg. facial expression) cues that are essential factors to develop social competency (Shumin, 1997).

4.3. Promote English Proficiency

In terms of the effect of CMC on language proficiency, many researches have proposed its positive effect on the development of the learners' language proficiency. Pennington (2004) suggests the efficiency of electronic writing tools such as the word processor that enable learners to easily compose and revise texts and check spelling, and grammar can promote learners' confidence in their ability to write better and generate more writing products. Web-based communication tools such as emails, web journals, and discussion boards that allow learners to easily give and reply to comments motivate learners to actively engage in interactive tasks and promote writing quality. Braine (2004) proposes that involving learners in real-time online interactions with other classmates and the teacher can transform the teacher-centered classroom

to be more student-centered. Communicative writing skills can be promoted because learners actively and freely use the target language to express what they mean with other learners. Learners just learn passively grammatical rules and to use it effectively.

In Foto's research (2004 she asserts email exchange can be as interactive as speech interactions although there are less non-verbal and verbal cues. Learners can use new forms of cues (eg. [:)] = smile, [I am ANGRY] = to emphasize emotion and language (eg. [Btw] = by the way) to achieve speech-like interactions. In her research, EFL learners who were involved in email-exchange learning tasks turned out to have promoted their English proficiency, especially in reading and writing skills.
Hubbard (2004) suggests CMC tools such as internet telephony, audio and video conferencing, voicemail or voice discussion board can all be used to promote learners' speaking proficiency. By engaging learners in tasks of recording speech and sending files to other learners, communicative speaking skills can be a goal to be achieved.

4.4. Encourage Motivation and Learner Autonomy

Involving learners in authentic and meaningful interactions with learners worldwide via the internet can also promote motivation for learners to keep learning.; Motivation of learning can often support learners to become more responsible and willing to engage in their own learning, defined as learner autonomy (Blin, 1999; Lightbown & Spada, 1999;Toyoda, 2001). For example, during the process of collaborative learning where learners focus on meaning exchange, they may actively utilize their language knowledge learned in classroom and check their language output before sending out their messages or emails. The process of checking language output from resources can often cause learning to take place. Teachers are no longer responsible for learners' learning; rather, they act as facilitators to help and shorten the distance between learners and the outside world.

4.5. Promote Social Equality and Identity

Unlike traditional face-to-face communication, online media communication is suggested to be less stressful and more face-saving than face-to-face communication (Hansen, 2001). Learners often feel more comfortable to participate in online discussions than in traditional face-to-face discussion; learners are more willing to express their personal opinion because they are not stared at by the whole class (Hansen, 2001). Moreover, in CMC communications, learners have more time to plan and check their language output (Pennington, 2004). For example, learners are allowed to think before they post messages or write emails to their key pals; they are able to check their spelling and grammar from dictionaries and revise anytime they want. Learners who are afraid of embarrassingly making errors in class are more willing to contribute through online communications (Pennington, 2004). Thus, every class member can have equal chances to practice the target language in the classroom discussion board or online community; individual differences leading to social inequality to speak in traditional classrooms can be overcome. Other than having equal chances to practice the TL, learners are also allowed to express their identity; diverse opinions can exist simultaneously and discussions in class can be extended after class.

5. Principles of Integrating CMC tools into Language Learning

The goal of integrating CMC into language learning is to expose learners to as much language input as possible and motivate them to be more autonomous to the learning. Although language teachers are no longer the center of language classrooms, to maximise the efficiency of CMC in language learning, teachers should carefully consider issues of how to design learning tasks, monitor learners' learning, and evaluate their language progress (Robertson, 2003).

5.1. Design Language and Cultural-Related Learning Tasks

Most learning activities designed for L2 or FL learning focus on rule drilling; learners may learn the rules but not necessarily acquire them or know how to use them in real-life situations. To transform the learned knowledge into competence, adequate opportunities to put the learned knowledge into use is essential (Kasper, 1997). Teachers, therefore, need to design learning tasks with clear objectives and consider what learning tasks or materials are to benefit students' acquisition of both the target linguistic and pragmatic knowledge (Chapelle & Hegelheimer, 2004). It is suggested that learning tasks and materials should be designed with language and culture-related goals (Opp-Beckman & Kieffer, 2004).

5.1.1. Create Motivation: Collaborative Learning

One important reason to design learning tasks for learners to achieve is to create motivation. Teachers can involve learners in doing a collaborative project with another learner; for example, the project can be to write a story journal together online. By using the feature of blogs, learners can exploit their imagination, exchange ideas online and keep a story journal together. With motivation to not only complete the story but make the story interesting, learners are more likely to actively participate in the discussion and engage in the learning.

5.1.2. Control Learners' Learning Progress

The other advantage of designing a learning task with a clear objective is to control the learners' learning progress (Hubbard, 2004); without doing this, learners may be lost in the process of learning. For example, if the teacher does not design a task for learners to achieve (e.g., to know more about your friend and introduce him/her to class , learners may feel confused about what is needed to be discussed, learned, and achieved. Or, they may encounter unpredictable difficulties during the interaction that the teacher did not teach prior to the task.

5.2. Design Tasks with Same Goal but in Different Forms

According to the psycholinguistic aspect, when a new word or phrase is learned by a learner, it is firstly stored in his short-term memory; only when being exposed to the same term several times is the learner is to acquire the new term and store it into his long-term memory (Moras el., 2001, Nation, 2001). This suggests that merely involving learners in one single task is not likely to

promote acquisition and competence of the target new knowledge. When designing learning tasks, teachers should plan several different tasks with the same goal; for example, if the objective is to expect learners' to perform appropriate speech acts. Through more exposure and practice from different tasks with similar goals, learners are more likely to acquire the target knowledge.

5.3. Encourage Online Opinion Exchange

To create an environment where interaction between learners can occur is another goal of using CMC to support language learning. Other than one-on-one email interactions, constructing an asynchronous discussion board to extend classroom discussion is another way to help develop the learners' ability to express agreement or disagreement with others' opinion (Opp-Beckman & Kieffer, 2004). When engaging learners in group discussions on a classroom discussion board, the teacher becomes the key to encourage online opinion exchange and give help when learners face communication breakdown (Campbell, 2004). Although the discussion board should be student-centered, teachers still play an important role to monitor learners' interaction and learning progress. For example, if the teacher finds one learner tends to speak less or does not reply to other learners' messages, the teacher should remind him of the importance of giving and replying to comments (Campbell, 2004).

6. Conclusion

Because of insufficient authentic resources and the need to use the target language, EFL learners generally encounter difficulties developing communicative competence. Although CLT is now being gradually adopted, due to many factors such as the linier feature of face-to-face interaction, learners' personality, learning and response pace, teachers find it challenging to maximize interaction in traditional EFL classrooms.

Researches on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) propose that the integration of CMC into EFL learning can provide learners with more authentic input and more opportunities to participate in the target sociocultural contexts; both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge can be promoted. Moreover, motivation, learner autonomy, social equality, and identity can also be encouraged through the use of CMC inside and outside of the classroom.

Further research of whether EFL learners' communicative competence can be fully developed with the help of CMC tools still needs to be done.; however, for EFL learners who desperately need more authentic exposure and the opportunities to use the knowledge learned in the classroom , the use of computer mediated communication tools both inside and outside of the classrooms certainly can benefit the learning and develop learners' communicative competence to a certain extent.

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SALMAN RUSHDIE AS A CHILDREN'S WRITER: READING *HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES* (1990) AND *LUKA AND THE FIRE OF LIFE* (2010)

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Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie borne in India in 1947 is an English Booker Prize-winner author. With the publication of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in 1990, he took his way in the realm of children's literature. Recently he has included one more fanciful fiction in the list of his children's literature, i.e. *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010). As we know that Rushdie wrote *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* for his elder son, Zafar, who was ten year old two decades ago. The book was written after the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (1988) which was banned in India. In 1989, Supreme leader of Iran and some Muslim scholars also issued a *fatwa* to kill the writer as well as the publishers of the book due to *The Satanic Verses* controversy. It is believed that his work, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, is a representation of his feelings and thoughts of that time. And, thus, there is an allegorical theme. Similarly the latest one is gifted to his young son, Milan, and also full of autobiographical elements. However, the remarkable point is that in the name of gifting his sons, the writer has provided a valuable service to the world of children's literature.

In the present time, there is a long list of such writers who are constantly writing for the children. As far as the place of Rushdie among the children's writers is concerned, it may be a sort of overstatement to include his name in the writers' list of the first water. But, among the Booker prize winner Indian English novelists in the present scenario, he is the only author who has intentionally penned some works for the children. There are many attributes which are essential for the children's literature. There are also many types of the children's literature. It may be divided on the basis of technique, tone, content, etc., and in this way, categorized into six categories: (1) picture books, (2) traditional literature, (3) fiction, (4) non-fiction, (5) biography, and (6) poetry (Anderson 2006). On the basis of different interests of children according to their ages, another type of categorization is possible. In the present paper, there is an attempt to examine the books (*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *Luka and the Fire of Life*) from the children's literature viewpoint. Keeping in mind the objective, the paper also tries to trace out some issues which make the books successful.

Rushdie did a lot in order to provide true pleasure to his readers through the books. Due to the different interests of children age 0-18, it is not an easy task to write a winning book for children. While he was "writing *Luka and the Fire of Life* for his youngest son, Milan, he grew worried about a character called Nobodaddy – a devil who assumes the figure of Luka's ailing father in the book (Galehouse 8)." In an interview, he shares it:

> I was worried that Nobodaddy might be too frightening. There are no boys in America pretending to be Luke Skywalker because they all want to be Darth Vader – so we know children respond well to the scary, wicked characters. But what 12- and 13- year olds don't like is to be disturbed. Being scared can be delicious, but being disturbed can be upsetting. I worried that Nobodaddy

> might be on the wrong side of that line. But I gave Milan the first couple chapters of the book, and he said Nobodaddy was his favorite character. … It gave me permission to just go for it. (Galehouse 8)

Thus, by genre, his works written for children are fictions which are full of fantasies and adventures. As we know that the works are written by the author for his own sons, and gifted to them when they were of 13 year old. As a result, these are appropriate for children age 13-18, and fall into the category of young-adult fiction. It is also noteworthy that same atmosphere and repetition of some important characters in the latest one proves it the sequel of the earlier published book, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Launching the book-series or sequels has been a frequent trend in the field of children's literature that is also followed by Salman Rushdie.

Both books, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *Luka and the Fire of Life*, revolve around a family headed by a storyteller, Rashid Khalifa. There are also some common themes which has been popular in the world of children's literature. Filial love is one of some common themes in both of the books. In the first one, Haroun with his father, Rashid, and mother, Soraya, lives in the country of Alifbay, a very sad city. Due to its saddest sadness, the city has forgot its own name. Rashid Khalifa is famous for his "never-ending stream of tall, short and winding tales" that spread cheerfulness throughout the sad city. His fans call him "the Ocean of Notions", and for his rivals, he is "the Shah of Blah". He is loved by the political leaders. In fact, the leaders have no credibility of their own among the people of the city. Therefore, they try to engage him in their political rallies in order to attract a large audience. His son, Haroun, is anxious to know where his father's stories come from. Soraya does not find herself happy with Rashid because he has no touch with hard ground realities. One day Soraya runs off with Mr. Sengupta who is her neighbor. The extreme mental suffering of losing his wife and Haroun's questioning the usefulness of stories are too much for Rashid to bear. He opens his mouth, and finds that he has lost his talent of storytelling. Haroun decides to bring back to him his talent of storytelling. Haroun starts his adventurous journey and reaches at Kahani, Earth's second moon kept invisible by a P2C2E (Process Too Complicated To Explain). It is the Ocean of the Streams of Story, i.e. the source for all storytellers who subscribe through P2C2E. The process is controlled by the Walrus who is the Grand Comptroller of the city of Gup (a land of perpetual sunshine).Unfortunately, Khattam-Shud, the Prince of the dark and silent land of Chup is polluting the Sea of Stories. Haroun leads the way in a brave attempt to save the Sea of Stories with Iff, the Water Genie; Butt the Hoopoe, a mad bus driver; and Mali, a Floating Gardener, and some other interesting companions. Finally, he becomes successful. We find that Soraya has come back to her farmer life, and Rashid has regained his talent of storytelling due to Haroun's adventurous journey.

Similarly, the second book, *Luka and the Fire of Life*, revolves around Rashid Khalifa's twelve year old youngest son, Luka, who has accidentally disregarded a powerful supernatural being. In retaliation, the shape-shifter puts Luka's father into a deep and dangerous sleep. To save his father, Luka following his elder brother's heroic adventures begins another adventurous and exploratory journey. He enters into the Magic World from where he steals the Fire of Life with the help of Nobodaddy, Dog the bear, Bear the dog, the Insultana of Ott, etc. in order to revive his father. Finally, the story ends with the promise of happiness. In this way, it is right to say that the filial love is a common theme running in both of the texts.

The concept of 'home' has been a celebrated theme in the works of the transnational writers. In other words, a mental or emotional state of refuge or comfort through the construction of imaginative 'home' is frequently found in the works of such writers. Rushdie as a transnational writer also confesses that the subject of home is naturally found almost in all his works. Hence, he is aware that children as well as adults get pleasure from stories that narrate about going home. The author utilizes his talent in order to allure children in the present books composed for the children. He says:

> The subject of home is something which is, to some degree, in everything I've written. Where is it? Is it a place you make up yourself? All of us have an idea of home that changes – a home we're born into and, later, a home that we make. In this book [*Luka and the Fire of Life*], it's an attempt by Luka to preserve the home. (Galehouse 9)

Alongwith the themes of filial love and 'home', there are some other themes like the art of storytelling and its utility, allegorical theme (an account of Rushdie's life and contemporary society represented through the fables), etc. which are common in both texts. Storytelling and its utility can be taken as a dominating theme in the stories. In fact, both stories revolve around a storyteller, i.e. Rashid Khalifa. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the writer expresses his views on the talent of storytelling at many times. For instance, we note in the beginning of the novel that Haroun often takes his father's stories as lots of different tales juggled together. He thinks of his father as a juggler. In the mid of his adventurous journey, he realizes how the juggling is a kind of storytelling:

> It occurred to Haroun that Blabbermouth's juggling reminded him of the greatest performances given by his father, Rashid Khalifa, the Shah of Blah. 'I always thought storytelling was like juggling,' he finally found the voice to say. 'You keep a lot of different tales in the air, and juggle them up and down, and if you're good you don't drop any. So maybe juggling is a kind of storytelling, too.' (109)

In order to illustrate the passage, Rama Kundu writes:

> The supposedly trivializing comparison between storytelling and juggling gains significance in the theoretical context of the discourse which involves the idea of story-telling as a balancing act towards harmonizing the varied heritages that an author has got to handle. (148)

As far as *Luka and the Fire of Life*, there are also many examples which bear testimony to the importance of storytelling in the world. During his exploratory trip of the Magic World, Luka suggests the badly-behaved gods that the original alternate reality is to give ancient stories a modern touch or look:

> Wake up and smell the coffee, old-timers! You're extinct! You're deceased! As gods and wonderful creatures, you have ceased to be! … Listen to me: it's only through Stories that you can get out into the Real World and have some sort of power again. When your story is well told, people believe in you; not in the way they used to believe, not in a worshipping way, but in the way people believe in stories – happily, excitedly, wishing they wouldn't end. You want

> Immortality? It's only my father [a storyteller], and people like him, who can give it to you now. (181-182)

However, in the latest novel, it is interesting to read how the writer merges the earlier employed themes with the narrative in a differentiated manner, and presents his latest story with a fresh appearance. In the answer of the query, it is well explained metaphorically through the fable of fish in the writer's own novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, that new stories are born from old and it is the new combinations that make them new:

> Iff replied that the Plentimaw Fishes were what he called 'hunger artists' – 'Because when they are hungry they swallow stories through every month, and in their innards miracle occur; a little bit of one story joins on to an idea from another, and hey presto, when they spew the stories out they are not old tales but new ones. Nothing comes from nothing, Thieflet; no story comes from nowhere; new stories are born from old – it is the new combinations that make them new. So you see, our artistic Plentimaw Fishes really create new stories in their digestive systems…. (86)

As we know that the concept of internationalism is not new in academic discourse about children's literature because of the successful attempts made by Paul Hazard (who gave the concept of a 'universal republic of childhood') like scholars. Positively, it is necessary for young readers to experience a range of different cultural understandings, otherwise their perception of their own remains narrow and impoverished. In this context, Latrobe writes:

> Today's children perceive the world from the perspective of photographs taken in outer space. They understand the concepts of lands and waters without national boundaries – boundaries that were never capable of limiting the flow of air or ocean currents or ideas. It is therefore especially appropriate that the highest prizes for children's literature should be international, representing the universality and diversity of children and their literature and offering young readers books and ideas that flow as freely as ocean currents. (Latrobe 101)

Rushdie also believes in the concept of internationalism. He takes recourse to some specific ways through which he merges this concept with the narratives. For example, in both of the stories, he deliberately interconnects literary and cultural heritages from across the globe with each other in order to prosper the idea of internationalism in the children's literature. In *Luka and the Fire of Life*, he presents a mythological adventure. During his adventurous trip, Luka faces ancient gods of Greece, Rome, South America, Scandinavia, Japan, Egypt, India, and other cultures as both friends and foes. His language also works as an effective tool for this purpose. Words are used from various languages which not only represent the different cultures, but also allure the international readership. It is also noteworthy that due to the popularity of the books among the children, and atmosphere of the stories which suit to modern technology, the writer has received many suggestions from the videogame companies for converting the stories into videogames (Galehouse 9).

To conclude, Rushdie creates his literature in a broad framework. Therefore, there may be other angles from which the books may be read or examined. But, without a doubt, it may be said that with the publication of the present books, the writer has entered into the arena of international children's literature with the purpose of securing 'the fire of life'.

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Futuristic Dystopias as Feminist Protest in Angela Carter's fiction

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Angela Carter (1940-1992) began her writing career as a journalist. In her very first novel, *Shadow Dance* she challenges the notion of sexuality. Though she wrote in the tradition of Realism, her characters are violent and bizarre. The critics describe Angela Carter as a Gothic novelist. She herself agrees with the label on account for her fondness for macabre, the gothic blood-and-thunderstorms and creepy atmosphere. She is also called a writer of fantasy. She uses fantasy to criticize and examine the material conditions of the real world around her. But she does not like the meaning of the word 'fantasy'. Fantasy is an escapist fiction, and Carter does not try to escape from reality. Her biographer, Lorna Sage, says:

> (Carter's fictions) prowl around on the fringes of proper English novel like dream monsters-nasty erotic, brilliant creations that feed off cultural crisis. She has taken over the sub-genres (romance, spies, porn, crime, gothic, Science Fiction) and turned their grubby stereotypes into sophisticated mythology… she writes aggressively against the grain of Puritanism-cum-naturalism, producing adult fairy tales. (Carter: 1969, p. 2).

As a feminist writer of Science Fiction, Carter contrasts reality with the imaginative world of the future, or the world populated by bizarre characters and situations.

Generally, Science Fiction is associated with a wide range of strange machines, technological devices like robots, ray-guns, space-ships, time-machines and, of course, strange creatures, monsters and aliens in Outer-space. This association is created by the pulp-science fiction that has become very popular in the USA, and now in other countries as well. The definition of Science Fiction given in the Oxford English Dictionary emphasizes this very aspect of Science Fiction. However, Science fiction as a literary genre has more serious aims and objectives than merely narrating space-saga on fantastic planetary locations. Such serious intentions have been encoded in the definitions of Science Fiction given by the writers and critics such as Darko Suvin, Robert Scholes, Damien Broderick and others. According to them Science Fiction presents an alterity or a world radically different from our own in an imaginative framework, but confronts our own world in a rational cognitive manner. Science Fiction uses metaphoric and metonymic devices to contrast the world of imagination to the real world. For example, if a Science Fiction novel wishes to deal with alienness, it will present the aliens in concrete shapes, metaphorically, to show the cultural, social and technological change. Science Fiction uses a 'novum' (a new thing) as a device to present the 'difference' or 'otherness' from the world of reality.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter has created three different urban cities of the future. These futuristic cities have been created to question the notions of Gender and explore the tyranny of cultural myths about woman. In Science Fiction, the women writers have created such urban spaces to situate woman or female societies. Marge Piercy, in her *Woman On the Edge of Time*; Joanna Russ, in her *The Female Man*; Mary Bradley Lane, in her *Mizora*, have created Utopian urban spaces in the shape of female body. Their intention has been to retrace female history and tradition.

In *The Passion of New Eve* the protagonist, Evelyn, is a traveller, who comes from London to New York. The city of New York is futuristic dystopia, a post-apocalyptic United States, which is a city of 'lurid and Gothic darkness' (Carter: 1969, p. 44), a city of baby sized rats, full of violence and disorder, broken down sewage system, angry women sharp-shooters swiping at men looking at blue-film posters, the blacks building a wall around Harlem and dissolution. It is a world of decay and dissolution. 'That City had become nothing but a gigantic metaphor for death'. (Carter: 1969, p. 45).

This dystopia of New York conceived in terms of male gender, where women are presented, and treated as sex objects. It is a phallo-centric world where woman is subjugated to violation.

New York, as a gendered city, is full of filth and violence. It is a city in chaos, an 'alchemical city' in the process of change. The metaphor of alchemy, an art of transmuting base metals like iron into gold, is a central idea in the *The Passion of New Eve*. Boroslav, the Czech soldier, who lives in the same hotel as Evelyn, possessed this art of alchemy, which has a pseudo-philosophical and spiritual dimension. According to this philosophy, all substances are composed of one primitive matter, the prima materia. This prima materia was identified as the mercury of the philosophers, combining male and female, like a hermaphrodite. Throughout this novel, Carter uses this idea of alchemical transmutation, combination of opposites.

As a decaying city, New York is shown to be disintegrating, but Boroslav, the alchemist, thinks possibility of creativity within its deterioration.

> Chaos, the primordial substance, Chaos the earliest state of disorganized creation, blindly impelled towards the creation of a new order of phenomena of hidden meanings. The fructifying chaos of anteriority, the state before the beginning of the beginning. (Carter: 1969, p. 4).

The protagonist, Evelyn, flees from this world of disintegration to find himself:

> I would go to the desert … there … . I thought I might find that most elusive of chimeras, myself. (Carter: 1969, p. 11).

However, he realizes later:

> I felt that I was in great hurry but I did not know I was speeding towards, the very enigma I had left behind … , the dark room, the mirror, the woman … . (Carter: 1969, p. 146).

The other futuristic world created by Carter in the *The Passion of New Eve* is the city of Beulah, the matriarchal city. Carter borrowed the name Beulah from William Blake's writings. Beulah for Blake was the state of innocence. As Harold Bloom points out in his *The Visionary Company: A Rending of English Romantic Poetry*:

> Beulah is female, Eden male … . Beulah, according to Blake, is the emanation of Eden that is its outer and feminist or created form. Beulah is therefore temporal and illusory … . Its emotions are all of the forgiving variety, emphasizing feminine self sacrifice … . (Carter: 1977, p. 10).

But Carter's Beulah is a prototype of feminist separatist communities created in the Feminist Science Fiction of Joanna Russ, Marge Piercy and others. The topography of Beulah is unique in the sense that it is created in the shape of a womb. Evelyn says:

> Beulah lies in the interior, in the inward part of the earth; its emblem is a broken column; … Mother built this underground town, she borrowed it out below the sand. (Carter: 1977, p. 15).

The shape and the colours of Beulah have artificial quality. Evelyn describes the room he was kept in:

> This room was quite round, as if it had been blown out, like bubble gum, inflated under the earth, its walls were of a tough, synthetic integument, with an unnatural sheen upon it that troubled me to see, it was so slick, so lifeless. (Carter: 1977, p. 13).

Since Beulah is underground, there is dampness in it, and absence of light, as it would be in the womb of a woman. It has the colours of a woman's womb. Evelyn realizes:

> It will become the place where I was born. (Carter: 1977, p. 38).

Dimness and shadow characterized Beulah. It is an antithesis of patriarchy. The granite structure of a monument erected at the entrance of Beulah represents a stone cock with testicles, 'but the cock is broken off clean in the middle'. (Carter: 1977, p. 39).

The city of Beulah is presided over by the Mother. Evelyn describes, her as 'a menacing Hindu Statue', 'a sacred monster',

> She was fully clothed in obscene nakedness; She was breasted like a sow -she possessed two tiers of nipples. (Bloom: 1963, pp. 21-22).

Beulah is a mixture of mythology and technology. There are modern gadgets like transmitter, modern weapons, and very sophisticated instruments and a laboratory for surgery, which Evelyn calls a 'triumph of Science'. The mysterious announcements coming from the transmitter reverberate in the enclosed womblike place, creating terror. The maxims proclaimed from the loudspeakers preach principles of matriarchy and reinterpret the patriarchal myths like Oedipus. The world of Beulah is the reversal of world of patriarchy. Technology, which is normally associated with patriarchy and male gender, is interpreted here in terms of matriarchy. In spite of the technological details, the presentation of Beulah is surreal; it appears to Evelyn as a nightmare.

The aim of this female Utopia is to bring revolution in the social and political system and in the system of beliefs. The mother is a central figure in Beulah, who has transformed herself by plastic surgery, and plans to transform Evelyn as a New Eve, who will create a new world order giving birth to a new Messiah. She would like to obliterate altogether the male-female dichotomy. So Beulah is not merely a Utopia, it is a programme to create a world without gendered prejudices, and domination based on gender-distinction.

Evelyn, metamorphosed as New Eve, physically a woman but psychologically still a man, runs away from the world of Beulah in search of his true self. Evelyn comes back to the desert. After this transformation into a woman, the ideal change of place for Evelyn is the patriarchal township of Zero, where she would undergo the essential experience of the life of a woman in a male dominated society.

Zero's city is a grotesque place, where pigs are more respected than woman. Zero, who rules the place, is a great autocrat. He rules his seven wives mercilessly. Zero believes that women are to be degraded and reviled. He does not allow them even the use of language. They are not supposed to shoo away his pigs. He is obsessed with the belief that Tristessa, the Hollywood heroine, has magically rendered him infertile, and until he discovers her, ravishes

her and kills her. His procreativity will not be restored. He is able to rule his wives savagely because his women are made to believe that their good health depends on his periodic copulation with them. These women represent the women in general in a patriarchal society, in which women have been allotted specific roles for generations together. Zero's world is prescribed for New Eve to learn and understand 'socially constructed images of the feminine as well as atrocities committed on women by men throughout time, from clitori dectomy to suttee. (Rubenstein: 1993, p. 110). The New Eve undergoes by sexual experience for some time since, though physically a woman, psychologically she is a man.

Zero's city is apparently the antithesis of Beulah, the City of the Mother. The Mother represents fertility, while Zero's City stands for infertility. Zero himself is sterile and meaningfully situated in the desert, a symbol for sterility. Secondly, if Mother stands for totalitarian female sexuality, Zero stands for totalitarian male sexuality. Zero's city is in dazzling sunlight. There cannot be any shadow in the desert. But Beulah, the mother's womb, is full of shadows. The male-world of Zero represents rationality, and it is comprehensible because there are no shadows of doubts. But the world of Beulah is incomprehensible. Evelyn may be bewildered in Zero's place, but he/she has no doubt about the role he/she must play there.

But just as Beulah is a combination of opposites: 'there is a place where contrarieties are equally true. This place is called Beulah. [19] These contrarieties are mythology and technology. Technology is associated with male while mythology with female. The mother in Beulah combines the two. Similarly, the world of Zero involves contradiction. Zero produces his own myth of male power of rejuvenation. He himself labours under irrational belief that Tristessa was the cause of his sterility. The meaning of the two cities is subverted by Carter in the course of narration. However, the point is that the cities built by her possess the element of 'estrangement' through time and space.

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Riding

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I.

Steamboat on the ocean, misfit to time. Love me like no other, baby, there is no rhyme. Believe me, I know our anachronistic past, and I understand how love can drop you from the passenger list just like that.

All aboard before the steam runs out, the pressure fades, and the current the current dissipates. All aboard, baby for one last ride—harbor to river to ocean above and beyond the silver horizon.

Misfit baby, we fit we know that. Time and space are a space-time of lost and found dreams.

All aboard, baby, hear that whistle sound, hear that whistle sound.

II.

Amtrak to carry us to work and back. Ah, the simplicity of the wheels in silver and the sound of us in sync with our time—rhythm of the rails, hum of the motion, no place to go but in a long line from A to B, which is our life, baby. The A to B of morning and night, work and time off, love and indifference. Here we are, baby, Amtraking our way into and out of the day as time goes by faster than the wheels on the rails and the sun going down, down, down.

III.

Keep the faith, baby. What else is there to hang on to? What else defines us—the stars, the blue sky, the dark night? What, baby—tell me now. We have it all, they say. The house is impressive—large and brick and cold, cold, cold. Anyone who sees it thinks it is a home. But we know, don't we, baby? We know. It's much too quiet here when the evening sun goes down. What is there to say? Hold on, baby—this is not the best or the worst of it. It just is—plain, simple, unvarnished, simple-dimple like a cherry pie. Isn't that what love is, baby? The sweetness that is promised 'til death do us part? Sweet enough to eat—you betcha. But things change—just look around you. See the ravages of time? Time is a subtle thief, and you and I have been robbed blind, haven't we, baby? Now time takes its leave of us, and time leaves us—

separate but equally lonely lives wondering where did it all go. Like a carnival, baby? The lights are on, the calliope plays, but the rides don't work. What do we do with the tickets now? The tickets grow cold in our hands as we wait, wait, and wait some more. That's faith, baby, that the rides will start again and the ticket booth will never close.

IV.

A big gold SUV, the vacation we have promised ourselves. We are packed up—red Samsonites almost blocking our rear view. We have a cooler, too, with Cokes and Diet Dr. Pepper and all the deviled eggs you can eat on a four-hour ride through the autumn country side. Tell me you love me, baby, and hand me a chicken wing. I made those special for you with the chipotle sauce you like—hot, hot, spicy hot—just for you, baby. When you're done with the wings, give me a kiss and make my lips burn with all that pepper sauce. You know I love you, baby. I keep the faith. I've got my ticket. There's more to hope for in loving you than to regret. You know that, don't you, baby? Ah, baby, don't look so sad.

In This Sign

Dave Hoing
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1. Keepers of the Holy Fire

There is never *nothing* left. Even broken things, even burnt things, are not nothing. Some little part remains, a smell, a smudge, a memory, a hope. This is what I tell myself as I pick my way among the charred timbers of the only Catholic church in the county. The pews are blocks of cinder. I see no sign of the altar or the massive wooden crucifix. I see no walls, no windows, only open sky and prairie grass scorched to the horizon in the direction of the wind. The entire settlement of Cherry Mills is gone. I'm the only one alive. My neighbors apparently sought refuge in the Lord's house, but He chose to withhold His protection.

Few escaped the flames. Those who did must have fled while their families screamed and burned within. It didn't save them. Four men and two women lay outside the church's foundation, felled by a volley of arrows. The Barker brothers. Herm Johnson. Caleb Schwartz. Mrs. Isaksen. Miss Harrow, the schoolmarm. The women are merely dead; but the men have had their jaws wrenched open and their tongues hacked out. I stare up at the sun, trying to purge my sight of the horror. *In this sign conquer*, Christ revealed to Constantine. *This* sign, this bloody sign, reveals the identity of the attackers, although no grisly calling card was necessary. We were warned this was coming.

We call them Potawatami. They call themselves Bodéwadmi, which in their language means Keepers of the Holy Fire. The Bodéwadmi take the tongues of male enemies as *bidjgosan*, a kind of magic, to use against them should they meet in the spirit world.

I can account for the rest of the adults by number only, for most are unrecognizable, no more human than embers in the hearth. Somewhere among these beloved dead is my husband Johannes, yet, despite twelve years of marriage I don't know which body is his.

The stench is unbearable, not because it's unpleasant, but because it so resembles the sweet roasting meat of a pig on a spit. Dear God, this is no *pig* for a Saturday night bonfire!

I dig through bones and blistered flesh. Remnants of still-warm skin slough off in my hands. My fingers become slick with bloody ichor. It isn't Johannes I seek, for I don't need to see him to feel his presence.

As I finish the last of the bodies, my own bones tremble with a hope akin to panic.

Rachel is not here. I can't find our daughter.

I can't find any children at all. There are only three. They aren't in the burned-out homes or storm cellars or outhouse holes. They aren't in the church. Perhaps they escaped to some secret hiding place when they heard death approaching—

No. That's only mad grief speaking. Children can't outrun ponies or arrows.

They can't take wing and fly. There is no secret hiding place. They're either dead here in Cherry Mills, or alive and in hell with the killers. And they aren't here.

The Bodéwadmi have taken our children.

A hard wind comes up from the north, a harbinger of evening storms. I vomit into what once was the sacristy, then rise from the ashes of my old life and gaze toward the west, where they've made their village. A frontier wife is accustomed to hardship and loss. But there's no shovel for burials, no priest for Mass, no law for justice, and in this place, at this time, no God for prayers.

Those are tasks for the next people to stumble upon this tragedy. I can do nothing for the dead. I have but one purpose now, *one*. The Bodéwadmi kidnapped my Rachel, and I will have her back.

2. Two Dogs

A few years ago, when Cherry Mills was just being built and there seemed land enough for all, I met Black Wolf, an emissary for the Bodéwadmi. Black Wolf had been educated at Eton and spoke English with an odd hybrid accent. One evening, near the spot we had chosen for our church, he entertained settlers with fanciful tales of the benevolent trickster Nanabozho and the monstrous cannibal Wendigo, but when Father Andrew asked him about God, he only laughed.

"Gichi Manito," Black Wolf said.

"Your Great Spirit," insisted the priest, "is not God."

"You speak of your God as if he were human," Black Wolf said. "Gichi Manito is neither male nor female, but an essence that creates simply by the power of being."

"Are you some kind of holy man?" Father Andrew said.

"*Ayaawiyaan midewinini*," Black Wolf said.

"Which means?"

"'Medicine man' is the closest term you have in English. Shaman."

The night was clear, and the moon was bright on the prairie. "We will build our church here," Father Andrew said. "Where do you worship?"

"We dance and sing in the mide lodge," Black Wolf said. "Your people have chased us from the woodlands to the grass ocean, but we have made the Hill of Stones beyond the Manidoo River our Place of the Dead. Even more than the mide lodge, it is our holiest site. We ask that you not go there."

"We don't deny you entry into our churches."

"Your people and mine are not the same. Even we do not go to the Place of the Dead, except when duty requires it."

"If your Gichi Manito is not God," I said, "where is your Divine guidance? How do you know right from wrong?"

Black Wolf asked Johannes for one of our cigarettes. He smoked the entire thing before answering. "Your tobacco is better than ours," he said, then looked into my eyes. "Each of us has two dogs that battle inside our mind. The white dog is peaceful and good, while the black dog is spiteful and wishes only to do evil. It is a constant struggle."

He rose and clasped my hands. His skin was calloused, his grip strong but gentle. Directing my gaze into the starry void above, he said, "Think, Rebecca. What is there in the eternal but mystery and wonder?"

And then he mounted his pony and turned toward his village.

"Black Wolf," I call. "Everybody knows that story. The dog that wins is the one we choose to feed, right?"

"Which dog will it be, then?" he says, smiling at us all.

3. The Wendigo

There is never *nothing* left, but they have stolen our horses, our food, and our weapons. If I am to reclaim my child, it will be on foot and without supplies. I have no reason to wait here, no reason to do anything but walk.

I'm weary, but I will not sleep on ground hallowed by death. And so I leave behind the embers of Cherry Mills, my hands stained with the blood of my people, my face and dress blackened by soot, my heart burning with cold determination.

I shouldn't hate them. We take their land. We move them, sign treaties, then break the treaties and move them again. We starve them, we mock them as savages. They kill not out of spite but desperation. They mutilate bodies not to be malicious but to prevent another battle in the spirit world. I have forgiven the attacks by the Lakota up north. I have made excuses. I have said, "*What would you do in their place*?"

But this isn't another settlement, it's *mine*. It's *my* home they burned, *my* husband they killed, *my* daughter they kidnapped.

I *do* hate them.

And I hate myself, for I wasn't here when they came. Johannes drove me by buckboard to the train station at Belleville, though it isn't far and I could have walked. My sister's birthing went well, no complications and a fine healthy son. I left there in high spirits, but sensed trouble when I returned to Belleville and found no one waiting for me. Johannes knew the hour of my arrival. He would have come, or sent somebody. I hadn't enough money to hire a horse, so I walked home to a horror no eyes should behold and, oh yes, to blameless guilt. I wasn't here when death claimed my people. My presence would have changed nothing but the body count. And had I died, Rachel would have had no hope against whatever indignities the Bodéwadmi visit upon white children.

And yet …

And yet.

Clouds tumble over the horizon, swallowing the sun. Lightning stitches earth to sky, although thunder is too distant to be anything more than an ominous tremor in the air. A wall of flame had spread eastward from Cherry Hills with the wind, but I'm heading west. Here the prairie grass is still lush and green, the ground supple, the breeze thick with the smells of growing things. Here, out of sight of the ruins, it's difficult to imagine that there could be pain in the world. A "V" of northern geese wings past overhead, ahead of the storm, honking a joyous noise.

I'm in no mood for beauty.

Against the western darkness smoke from Bodéwadmi tepees has become invisible, but I don't need that for guidance. I've been there before.

Within minutes the fast-moving storm engulfs me in wind and rain. I release my hair from its ties, then stand with arms extended, my face to the sky. The rain washes over me, washes away the blood and the soot, cleanses my body of the horror of Cherry Mills. Nothing will cleanse my soul, ever again. The rain falls like tears from God, but when the hail comes, I seek refuge in the timber alongside the Manidoo River. Suddenly exhausted, I collapse against the gnarled trunk of a black maple. The canopy here is thickest, deflecting most of the hail and some of the rain.

Thunder pounds the erratic heartbeat of the storm. Lightning ignites the space between leaves in incandescent white. If a bolt should strike the tree that shields me, I will burn as my people did. I look up into nature's fury and realize that I'm numb to my own sorrow. Now is the time I feel I should weep, but I can't.

My dress is soaked. I withdraw my arms from the sleeves and hug myself beneath the material. I'm freezing and, I fear, delirious. The wind ricochets between the trees with a demonic shriek. I can hear laughter in its voice, too, cruel laughter. *I will eat your soul*, it hisses.

Wendigo, I think. Bodéwadmi spirit of evil.

I make the sign of the Cross, although the Lord is fickle with His favors. Didn't He stand by while Johannes agonized in His church?

You have no plan, the Wendigo says, and I can smell the rot in its breath. *Will you simply rush in*? *They will kill you, too, as remorselessly as they killed your people*.

"They have my daughter," I say. "I will do anything for her."

Even die? the Wendigo says.

Lightning strikes nearby, and in the momentary white blindness of its afterglow I see a shadow emerge. Johannes opens his arms to me but we don't touch. *My love*, he says, *they have already named her*. *She is no longer Rachel, but Weeping Blossom*.

"She will always be Rachel," I say. My stomach churns.

Do you see the future? Johannes says in the Wendigo's taunting voice but with his own High German accent. *In forty years she will return to the site of Cherry Mills. She will be the wife of a chief with many children by him. He will say in the Bodéwadmi language, "This is where we found you," and she will answer, "I don't remember. I don't remember anything of that life. Did I have a mother and father?"*

"The earth is your mother," the chief will say, "the sky your father."

"Rebecca," Johannes says, "she will forget us and our ways. As if we never existed."

I rub my eyes, and the shadow of my dead husband fades into the tangle of tree shapes. The Wendigo says, *She is theirs, and you are mine*.

No, I say, "No!"

I try to rise, but my limbs won't bear my weight.

You are one woman. How will you fight them?

"I will become as you are if I have to. I will take spirit form and fly to them."

The Wendigo releases a high-pitched, mocking laugh, and then the wind is only the wind. Soon it's not even that. The rain stops, and holes appear in the clouds. The temperature rises. Glittering stars poke through the canopy of leaves. As I lose consciousness, I look into the infinite nothingness of space and I wonder.

4. Unto Thee All Flesh Shall Come

Black Wolf waited outside the circle of mourners after the funeral, not wishing to intrude. The good will between our people was almost gone, but some of us still made the effort. It was a sunny morning in early autumn, and the leaves were just turning. Johannes was on burial detail. I walked with Father Andrew from the gravesite.

Black Wolf greeted us by name as we approached. He was wearing the brown suit we had given him as a gift, complete with bowtie and bowler hat. White men's

clothing was nothing new to him, as he could hardly have worn native costume at Eton. He looked almost comical with his long black hair hanging out from beneath his hat.

"Were you acquainted with Mister Miller?" I said, knowing that he wasn't. Miller hated the Bodéwadmi, and would have nothing to do with Black Wolf.

Got no use for Englishmen or Injuns, he used to say, *and this one's both*.

He also resented Black Wolf's education, which he considered a waste of time.

"He bore us ill will," Black Wolf said, "but I bear him none."

"The Lord be with you," Father Andrew said.

"And with you." Black Wolf removed his hat. He wasn't old, but already lines creased his face as if grooved with a tanning knife. "I wanted to observe your funeral rites. *Ad te omnis caro veniet*?"

"'Unto thee all flesh shall come,'" the priest said. "It's Latin."

"Yes, Father, they teach Latin in England. I find it curious that you imprison a man in a box before you put him in the ground. How may his spirit escape into the sky?"

"Are you mocking us?"

"No, sir. I am trying to understand."

"They have no churches in England?" Father Andrew said.

"I went every Sunday."

"Then you should know."

"I know, but I do not understand."

"The casket only holds his earthly body," I said. "It cannot contain his soul."

"Ah," Black Wolf said, and he smiled warmly, as if that were answer enough. He put his hat back on. "It is always good to see you, Rebecca."

5. Day of Mourning

There is never *nothing* left. In the morning my eyes are raw from weeping, and I know some part of me is still alive. The magnitude of the tragedy sank in during the night, perhaps in dreams, perhaps in the half-world between wakefulness and sleep. Or perhaps the Wendigo returned and whispered in my ear, *He is dead and your daughter is lost to you*.

However it happened, I remember clutching at my heart and sobbing so furiously I could scarce find breath. Once released, my grief couldn't be contained.

"It isn't fair!" I cried to the stars. "Why now? Why *now*?"

You know *why now*, the stars replied, and in morning's daylight I'm still shaking. Some of this is a chill from the storm. I'm not numb. I'm *not numb*. My nose is running, my skin knotted with gooseflesh. I may have a small fever. But I can *feel*. And because I can feel, sweet Christ, if I had a gun I would put it in my mouth. Were it not for Rachel, I could not endure.

I come out of the trees to dry my dress in the risen sun. Here in the open prairie I squat to empty my bladder. Who's here to see or care?

I'm famished, though the thought of eating sickens me. But I must be strong if I'm to find my daughter. Living in a frontier town, I've learned which native plants are edible and which are poisonous. Wild carrots and onions, lambs quarters and smartweed, strawberries, blackberries, and grapes all grow in abundance. If I could catch a rabbit or turtle, I know how to make a knife from stone and a fire from kindling.

Individual curls of smoke rise from the Bodéwadmi village. They haven't packed their camp and moved on yet, despite their attack on Cherry Mills. Someday a relative of the victims, wondering why no letters have arrived, will discover the massacre and send word to our soldiers. The Bodéwadmi are aware of this. But for the moment they must feel safe, for they cannot know there was a survivor.

Using a fold in my dress as a basket, I hurry to gather enough vegetables to sustain me through the day, then return to the Manidoo River to wash them. As the shallow, meandering stream flows around my hands, I imagine familiar shapes in its twinkling surface, like a memory fashioned from fractured light. I see myself with Rachel, drawing water from the well on her fourth birthday. We're going to bake a cake. We have flour from the mill at Belleville, cornstarch, sugar, and cocoa from the Cherry Mills general store, butter and milk from Mister Miller's cow, and eggs from our own chickens.

Rachel is so excited. Once inside, she's constantly underfoot in her desire to help. She darts around the kitchen, from table to woodstove to shelf. Her fingers are into everything. She's surprised by the bitterness of cocoa before the sugar is added.

Slow down, little one, I say. *We have time*.

Mama, I'm so happy, she says.

I rise from the bank of the Manidoo. We do *not* have time. No longer able to see Rachel in the lights on the river, I heave the vegetables against the trees.

"God *damn* you!" I scream at the Bodéwadmi.

6. Nanabozho

Most of the settlers in Cherry Mills were older, their offspring grown and gone.

There were only three young children, Rachel and Esther Brolin and Paul Isakson. Black Wolf perched on the crossbeam of our fence, dressed in typical Bodéwadmi costume of deerskin breeches and moccasins. He wore a leather band around his head with two hawk feathers protruding from the back. He had shaved all the black hair from his head. The children sat on the ground before him, with the adults standing behind them. Few of us came to listen to him anymore, very few.

"I wish to tell you the story of Nanabozho," Black Wolf said.

"Nah-nah-BOO-joo! Nah-nah-BOO-joo!" the children giggled.

"One day," he said, "a great manitu came to earth. A manitu is a spirit, like a ghost, only mightier. This spirit chose a wife from among the children of men. She bore him four sons. The eldest was Nanabozho, who was a friend of the human race and often communed on their behalf with Gichi Manito. He was also a trickster, for he had a wondrous sense of mirth. After two more sons, the final and youngest was Chakekenapok."

"Chah-kuh-KEN-uh-pok!" the children cried.

"In coming into the world, Chakekenapok caused the death of his mother. By this time Nanabozho was a grown man. His mirth left him when his mother died, and he swore an oath to avenge her." Black Wolf paused to look hard at the adults present. "Among my people," he said, "revenge is considered honorable."

Then he smiled and went on. "Full of grief and anger, Nanabozho pursued Chakekenapok to the ends of the earth. Each time he found his brother, he fractured some part of his body. After several encounters Nanabozho finally destroyed him by tearing out his entrails. The fragments of Chakekenapok's bones grew into large stones and mountains.

His entrails took root in the earth and became plants and vines and trees of every kind. And so was Nanabozho's mother avenged, and from his brother's death sprang the shapes of the world we know and all the growing things in it."

"That story isn't suitable for children," Father Andrew said.

"Didn't Lot impregnate his own daughters?" Black Wolf said.

7. The Naming of Children

There is never *nothing* left. I retrieve the vegetables and force myself to eat.

How my world has changed in one day. Yesterday morning I was departing for my home and family from my sister's farmstead. Today I *have* no home and family. And yet, *Rachel*, I think. *Rachel*. *Rachel*.

Weeping Blossom, the shade of Johannes had said. *She will forget us*.

I chew as if my teeth can crush the bones of the Bodéwadmi. *I will kill you all*, I vow, and I can smell the rot of the Wendigo's breath.

Give me your strength, monster, I pray. *Give me your stealth. Cloak me in the whirlwind, let me rend their lives apart*.

When I'm sated, when I'm ready as I can be, I cross the shallow Manidoo into Bodéwadmi lands. Beyond the greenbelt the ground slopes upward. As I crest the low hill the first sign I have of my enemy is the barking of dogs.

Then I smell roasting meat. Like buffalo. Like fatted calves. Like bodies in a church. It seems the Keepers of the Holy Fire are having a feast.

I see their tepees. Their horses—and ours—are corralled just outside the village.

Women scurry about, doing whatever it is Bodéwadmi women do. Teenaged boys are playing a game of lacrosse by the mide lodge. Younger children laugh and run. Rachel is not laughing or running, of that I am certain. She is Weeping Blossom. They name children for nature, they name them for their disposition. To them, Rachel was a beautiful flower, crying for her mother. Of that I am also certain. I wonder what names little Esther Brolin and Paul Isakson have been given. Sorrow? Despair?

Dies illa, dies irae. Day of mourning, day of wrath.

There are no trees here, so I crouch in the tall grass and advance slowly.

A warm breeze blows in from the west. Dogs bark. Meat roasts. Women scurry.

Boys play. Children run.

I stop.

Where are the men?

You have no plan.

You are one woman. How will you fight them?

The Wendigo spoke truly. I am alone. What am I *thinking*?

Rachel. I'll do anything for my daughter.

Even die needlessly? I don't know if the thought is mine or Johannes's or the Wendigo's.

I scan the camp. Where *are* the men?

A high-pitched yell echoes across the hills. I don't speak Bodéwadmi, but I know a warning cry when I hear one. I've been spotted.

Pounding hooves approach from behind. I turn to see them spilling out of the timber. They were there all the time. I didn't even sense their presence. They could have taken me whenever they chose, could have killed me in my sleep. Or worse.

I stand, thrust my chest out defiantly.

I don't have to go to them. They are coming to me.

8. The End of the World

"There will be a resurrection of the dead and a Rapture of the living," Father Andrew said the one time he visited the Bodéwadmi village. Johannes, I, and a few other whites were with him. The entire Indian population was present. We were sitting together in the mide lodge. The lodge was a long triangular dwelling place, wide at the base, very simple in its construction. The Bodéwadmi had no use for a more permanent structure.

Black Wolf translated while the priest preached from the *Apocalypse of St. John*.

"All true Christians," Father Andrew continued, "will be gathered to Christ when God's Kingdom comes on earth. But a Great Tribulation will occur first. For seven years believers will experience persecution and martyrdom throughout the world. They will be purified and strengthened by it."

The chief, surprisingly to me, was a woman. She looked to be a hundred years old. She whispered something to Black Wolf, who said, "What about the children?"

Father Andrew didn't seem to understand the question.

"The ones who are too young to decide," Black Wolf said.

"Those who have not reached an age of accountability will be welcomed into the Kingdom of God."

The chief whispered again.

"Is there a place for the Red Man in your heaven?" Black Wolf said.

"If he accepts the Lord," Father Andrew answered without hesitation.

The chief shook her head in confusion. She held up a hand for silence while she conferred with Black Wolf. There was not a sound in the lodge. Finally Black Wolf nodded. "She wonders, is this how your world will end?"

"Yes."

"Would you like to know how ours ends?"

"Very much," I said, speaking out of turn. Johannes squeezed my hand in admonishment, but gently.

"Yes," Father Andrew said.

"Nanabozho still lives," Black Wolf said. "He is resting from his many labors upon a shelf of ice in the great Northern Sea. We fear that one day the White Man will discover his retreat and drive him off. As Nanabozho sets his foot upon the earth, the universe will erupt in flame, and every living creature will perish."

The chief studied each of us settlers then, her ancient eyes moving slowly from face to face to face. She spoke in a loud, clear voice for all her people to hear. They chanted and slammed their spear butts on the ground.

When the chanting stopped, Black Wolf said, "And here you are. Our Great Tribulation has already begun."

9. First Blood

There is never *nothing* left, but as the Bodéwadmi braves on horseback surround me, I can't see many options. One of them raises a spear. I notice his head is shaved, a traditional sign, Black Wolf once told me, that his tribe is at war. I draw in a breath and

mumble a prayer in preparation for death. I haven't traveled far or long, but it seems as though a great journey is coming to a sad conclusion.

I have failed. I've accomplished nothing. I'm not afraid, but my rashness has doomed Rachel to a life among people who are not her own.

I should have thought this through, but confronted with what I saw in that church, how could I think at all? How could anyone? Perhaps I should have gone back to my sister and had her husband summon soldiers. We had tried that before the massacre, to no avail. But even if they had come this time, that would not guarantee Rachel's safe return. The Bodéwadmi might have been forewarned of their approach and fled. They are ghosts when they choose to be. Or they might have killed the white children out of spite.

"Do it now, you bastard," I say. *Forgive me, Rachel.*

He pulls the spear back, then buries its point between my feet, grasps the collar of my dress, and hoists me across his horse. Too shocked to struggle, I simply lie there like a sack of flour as he taps the animal's flanks with his heels and carries me down into the village.

Curious natives gather as we pass. They've all seen white women before—me, if no one else, when I visited with Father Andrew—but probably never one facedown on horseback with her hindquarters jutting indelicately into the air.

I look up from my awkward position, hoping to see Rachel. I do not. "Where is she?" I say.

My captor shoves my head down against the horse's shoulder. Its powerful muscles quiver like a locomotive, its sweat lathers my cheek.

We stop in front of the mide lodge. He dismounts and jerks me from the animal's back, letting me fall to the ground like a fresh kill from the hunt. All the grass here has been worn down to dirt. I scrape my face and the palms of my hands on the hard edge of a rut. They've drawn first blood. It won't be the last. These small pains, I'm sure, are nothing compared with what will follow.

A frontier wife is stoic, she is sturdy and strong, but she is not immune to fear. I wasn't afraid to die when I thought death would come quickly at the point of a spear. But they didn't kill me, and I can only imagine what they intend to do with me now. It's the unknown horror that chills the soul.

I lay rigidly on my side, trembling, weeping against my will. Not daring to raise my eyes, I see only the unshoed hooves of the horses, the deerskin moccasins and breeches and dresses of the gathered Bodéwadmi. One of the animals urinates nearby, and I smell the acrid stench.

No one speaks. They simply stare at me.

I clench my fists but otherwise can't will myself to move. "Damn you," I say, "kill me if you're going to."

One of the men lifts me to my feet. Two women step forward and strip me of all but my underclothing. If they think that will prevent me from trying to escape, they needn't worry. I'm not leaving without my daughter. Thus disrobed, I'm shoved through the leather flap over the lodge's entrance. No one is waiting inside. There's nothing for comfort here, no benches, no tables, no bedding, no blankets, no food, no water, no kindling for fire. There are no windows. All is darkness save for a single pillar of sunlight slashing down from the smoke hole. At the far end a stiff breeze ripples the flap at the west entrance. For several moments that's the only sound, but soon I hear voices

outside, and laughing, and running, and people resuming their normal business, behaving as if they hadn't just imprisoned a white woman in their holy lodge.

10. Sacred Stones

After he told the Nanabozho tale, Black Wolf did something he'd never done before. He kissed the children goodbye and shooed them away. Afterward he faced the few of us who still considered him friend. His expression was frighteningly grim.

"Why have you shaved your head?" Father Andrew said.

"Warriors do that when they go to war."

"And who are you going to war with?"

"May I have some water?" Black Wolf said. I fetched a bucket from our well and scooped him a cup. Black Wolf drank slowly, then carefully put the tin cup back in the bucket. "I lived among Whites for many years," he said. "I was educated in England. I learned everything there is to know about you, and I still do not understand you."

"Black Wolf," the priest said, "what's wrong? What happened?"

"We go to war with *you*, Father. With white people. There are too many of you. You swarm like locusts. We retreat and retreat and retreat, and still you come, still you want more. We are tired. We will not be moved again."

"We can't stop the migration," Father Andrew said. "We have lived in peace with the Bodéwadmi for many years. Your complaint is not with Cherry Mills."

"What *happened*?" Johannes said.

"Why now?" I said.

Black Wolf looked as unhappy as I had ever seen him. "A white man has desecrated our Place of the Dead. He has stolen sacred stones from the hill. All we asked is that you give us that one place. That one place."

"Why would someone steal stones?" I said.

"Why do you people ever do anything? To line a well, to build a fence, to lay a foundation. Material you could easily find somewhere else. We mean *nothing* to you."

"It wasn't us," Johannes said. "It wasn't anyone from Cherry Mills."

"My people," Black Wolf said, "do not distinguish between you. What one does, you all do."

"But we're your friends!" I said.

"Friends make the bitterest enemies," he said. "Revenge is *honorable* for us. I cannot stop this. Prepare yourselves."

He then walked slowly to his horse, mounted, and rode off. He looked back once, and that was the last time we saw his face.

11. In This Sign

There is never *nothing* left, yet night comes and goes, and comes and goes, and comes and goes. No one brings food or water or blankets. Guards are stationed outside the lodge, but they never enter. They only push me back if I look out the flap.

The mide lodge isn't their Place of the Dead, but it's sacred enough. Even now, *even now*, I wouldn't defile it if I didn't have to. But a body has needs I cannot control. I relieve myself only in one corner, at the far end.

Day and night I hear drums and whistles and singing in the distance.

I've tried talking to my captors through the flap, and have been ignored.

I've begged to see my daughter, and have been ignored.

I've pleaded that I'm starving, and have been ignored. Few Bodéwadmi speak English, but in their silence I sense a collective thought: *How does it feel*?

I've remained still, and have been ignored.

I'm cold, I'm hungry, I'm nearly naked, and I'm sad beyond consolation.

Last night I lay beneath the smoke hole and looked up at the stars. The hole is small, and I could only see a few, the tail of the Great Bear, perhaps, the belt of the Hunter. They are lovely, but I'm told the distance between them is so vast that everything that is something in those spaces dwindles to insignificance.

What is there in the eternal but mystery and wonder?

What is there in the eternal but *nothing*?

I couldn't wonder at the stars. I couldn't wonder, even, at my lack of wonder.

I woke to early morning rain dripping on my face. I still had a fever from the previous storm. My deprivation hasn't helped. I have chills and hunger pangs that are almost beyond bearing. I cough constantly, and I find it difficult to concentrate.

The drums and whistles and singing continue.

The rain has stopped and blue sky returned above, but it's still dark as death in the lodge. I sit on the floor next to the eastern entrance. From this angle I can see a horizontal sliver of light at the top of the flap at the far end. It isn't much. After an hour or two the sun passes overhead. When it reaches just the right angle, the vertical pillar of light spears down, bisecting the sliver at the flap.

With the sign of the Cross, Christ made Himself known to Constantine. It was the eve of a battle. The emperor looked up into the sun and saw the Holy Cross displayed there. *In this sign conquer*, the Lord said, and Constantine did. He won the battle and converted to Christianity.

Is that all it is? *Is that all*?

I stare at my cross of light, the pillar and the sliver.

In this sign.

I climb to my knees, fold my hands together. My mind is so befuddled I have forgotten the words. I listen for Father Andrew's voice in my head. The rhythm of the drums outside help to shape the syllables.

"Exaudi orationem meam, Domini. Ad te omnis caro veniet."

Hear my prayer, O Lord. Unto thee all flesh shall come.

I can recall no more, but it's enough. I repeat the chant until my throat is near to bursting, lifting my voice above the pounding drums. As I pray a form materializes upon my cross, a transcendent form of pure light, glowing not with heat but with hope. Arms stretch out along the narrow sliver, fingers curl. One leg hangs limp, the other is slightly bent. The head that should be drooping forward in death is instead held high, eyes burning into my heart with love. His face, *His* face, is serene and beautiful.

As the darkness falls away, the light shimmers and His body takes substance. At first He is translucent. I can see His bones, His veins, His muscles. Then His flesh solidifies into glimmering alabaster, hiding what lies beneath.

There is never *nothing* left. Even broken things, even burnt things, are not nothing.

Some little part remains, a smell, a smudge, a memory, a hope ...

Oh, yes, my Lord, my *Lord*!

But as I rise to my feet the temperature drops. Though the air is still, I feel an icy wind. It carries with it the stench of rot, of decay, of corruption. Christ smiles, and as He does, His flesh suppurates and shrivels into the caverns of His skull, His eyes roll back in their sockets. His teeth blacken, His lips tatter and bleed. Muscles fall from the bones.

"My Lord …?" I say.

"Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!" the Wendigo laughs, an evil, piercing, soul-crushing shriek.

As the vision fades before me, I collapse screaming to the floor. The body is gone, leaving only my cross of light. And when the sun moves in its circuit, the glowing pillar tilts, narrows, and dissipates, too, closing in on itself like a whirlwind spindling out of existence.

12. Locusts

We took Black Wolf seriously. After he was gone, we wired for soldiers, of course. The government refused on the grounds that they had heard of no recent hostile activity by the natives anywhere in Kansas. The Bodéwadmi were, they assured us, a peaceful and compliant people. In any case, no soldiers could be spared. The army was occupied by bloody battles with the Lakota Sioux up north. *Don't bother us*, they said, *unless there's a real threat*.

For a year we waited, buying guns and ammunition and spending many hours practicing. Some favored a pre-emptive strike, but although white people might have seemed thick as locusts to the Bodéwadmi, it wasn't so in Cherry Mills. We had far fewer than half as many settlers as they had warriors.

And yet no attack came, and none came, and none came.

Gradually we let down our guard.

Gradually we began to feel safe.

Gradually we imagined that everything would be all right after all. We forgot to be afraid. We returned to our plowing, our weaving, our smithing, our baking, and our churning, to our bonfires and pig roasts and square dancing on Saturday nights.

And so when word arrived of my sister's impending delivery, I was pleased to go share in her joy.

13. The Final Tribulation

Sometimes there truly is *nothing* left.

Even the drums have stopped.

I spend my horror on the floor, keening myself into incoherence. After I've found the calm of total desolation, the flap of the mide lodge flies open and Black Wolf strides through. He seems years older, decades older. His hair is still cropped short, but what stubble he has is no longer black. He wears only a head band, a deerskin loincloth, and a pouch at his belt. He now displays four hawk feathers.

"Rebecca," he says. He looks weary unto death. His body is wet with sweat. "Stand up."

I don't move.

"Stand up," he says, "or I will force you."

Force me? I push myself to my knees, then to my feet. My first reflex should be to cover myself, but I'm not ashamed. I'm not *anything*. Let him ravage me. I don't care. "So that's what it's going to be?" I say. My voice is so ragged and hoarse I can barely hear myself.

I slap him with as much strength as I have left.

He doesn't flinch. "Rebecca," he says. "It will not be *that*. I am a Two-Spirit Person."

"I don't know what that means."

"For you it means *it will not be* that."

He pushes the flap open with his right hand and nods at someone outside. A woman brings in my dress, now washed.

"Put this on," Black Wolf says, dismissing the woman.

"Why?" I say.

"Because I will drag you in your underclothes if you don't."

I pull the dress over my head. "Where is Rachel?"

"She has not been harmed. All three children are safe."

"I want her back."

He says nothing.

"You knew I was coming," I say.

"You were not at Cherry Mills that day. I knew you would return. We watched for you. We watched you search the town and the ruins of the church. We watched you in the trees along the Manidoo. You are clumsy as a buffalo. Did you think you would catch us unaware? We had time to move the entire village if we chose. You would have found only ghosts."

"I want Rachel."

"Come with me."

He turns and exits the lodge without waiting to see if I follow.

I follow.

After four days of darkness, the sun, even low in the sky, is like a knife in my eyes. I squint and stumble along behind Black Wolf. The men guarding against my escape fall in step behind me. There are Bodéwadmi all around. They move aside as we approach. Outside a tepee two dogs growl as they play tug-of-war with a stick. A little girl looks at me and pulls at her mother's skirt.

I must look like the Wendigo to her.

No, not a Wendigo, just a haggard, broken spirit. Black Wolf has no intention of relinquishing my daughter, I know that. I have no husband, no home, no child and, now, no Lord.

Though exhausted, I run to catch up with him.

"Who killed Johannes?"

"He has gone to your heaven, Rebecca. Is that not enough?"

"*Who killed him*?"

"It was not me. I did not set the fire. But I was there. We kill our enemies without pleasure or shame."

We pass the last row of tepees. He is leading me back toward the rise by the Manidoo River, where at least two dozen Bodéwadmi warriors in full ceremonial costume wait. They must be the source of the drumming and whistling and chanting, although all is silent now. Two large fires burn about twenty feet apart. "What about Father Andrew?" I say. "He was your friend, Black Wolf. Which dog did you choose to feed?"

Black Wolf's jaw clenches. He looks straight ahead. "Stop talking."

"You are a coward."

"Stop talking."

"Where are we going?"

"Stop talking!"

"I hate you," I say.

"I know," he says.

"Why did you leave me in your lodge for four days?"

Black Wolf sighs and turns toward me. "We were preparing ourselves."

"For what?"

"We are almost there."

At the top of the hill he guides me through the Bodéwadmi warriors and between the two fires. To my back the sky darkens over the greenbelt alongside the river. Ahead the sun sets behind the Bodéwadmi village. All the men stand in a knot on the other side of the fires, facing me. The chief sits cross-legged on a blanket. She is the same impossibly old woman I met on my only other visit here. Her hair is thin, and her mottled scalp shows through. She has growths of skin on her face and whiskers on the growths. She nods solemnly at me, then at Black Wolf.

"She wishes me to say this: 'Although we would accept you as brothers, like Chakekenapok you are causing our mother's death. Revenge is honorable, yet it is not possible. If we could kill you by the tens of thousands you would still keep coming. And so for four days we have performed the Dream Dance and prayed, prayed for deliverance from the Whites, prayed for your paralysis, prayed for a way to live.'"

The sun has dropped below the horizon now. Darkness engulfs the village below, but the fires on the hill light Black Wolf's face and burn like stars in his eyes.

"Divine guidance?" I say.

"If you will," he says.

"All because someone took stones from your holy place? You desecrated our church. Isn't that revenge enough? Our debt is paid."

"Your debt will never be paid."

Another man steps forward. He is also wearing face paint and four hawk feathers.

Black Wolf reaches into the pouch at his belt and gives the man two objects, one for each hand. He keeps two for himself.

The man stations himself next to one of the fires. Black Wolf stands by the other. He opens his hands for me. Each palm holds a small, shriveled lump of … *something*. I catch a whiff of decaying meat.

Oh, sweet Jesus, I know what those lumps are! They're the severed tongues of the Barker brothers and Herm Johnson and Caleb Schwartz.

"Every spirit," Black Wolf says, "has a powerful *bidjgosan*. We have taken it from your dead friends. We will use your people's own magic to ward you off. We will join with all the tribes and build a wall of fire the length of the land to keep you out. The White Man will not pass beyond the Manidoo River again."

The men simultaneously throw the tongues into the fires and chant something in their language. Perhaps because it's magic I expect a flash or explosion, but the putrid globs of flesh make no sound save a mundane thudding on the burning wood below.

The chief leans her head back as if in a trance while the others wait in anxious silence.

I almost pity this sad, desperate plan. It's pagan nonsense, nothing more. But before I've finished the thought, a trickle of flame spreads quickly across the ground in a straight line between the two fires. As I watch, the trickle grows taller, ascending like a burning curtain. It

is no more than a few inches thick but soon higher than my head. Transparent as glass, it emits as much heat as any bonfire, yet the prairie grass does not ignite.

I'm alone on one side of the curtain, the Bodéwadmi grouped together on the other.

The chief smiles in her trance. The warriors murmur in awed appreciation.

Black Wolf gazes at me through the flame. "We are Bodéwadmi," he says, "Keepers of the Holy Fire."

"What's happening?" I say.

"Come through if you can," he says. "You must choose to do this. We cannot force you or the magic will not work."

"Are you mad?" I say.

"We will give you incentive." Black Wolf motions to someone behind him. The group parts and a child wearing Bodéwadmi deerskin is ushered forward. She walks in a stupor, as if fed a potion that renders her senseless. She looks at me without recognition.

Rachel.

Rachel.

My heart aches.

"What have you done to her?" I say.

"Come through from that side," Black Wolf says, "or I will push her through from this side. Even without magic, it is still fire."

This man was my friend. I invited him into my home. "That is no *choice*!" I scream with my tortured voice. "What kind of devil would make a child watch her own mother die? You have already slaughtered her father."

"She did not witness Johannes's death. We took the children before the battle. We hope you will not die. We hope the fire will repel you."

"And if it doesn't?"

Black Wolf glances fondly at Rachel. "We have induced a holy state in her. She will not remember."

"God damn you," I say.

"That may be," he says. "Come through."

I take a deep breath. For my daughter. If I am to die, let me die. I pause to gather myself before entering the flame. "*Exaudi orationem meam, Domini*," I mutter, although the words have little meaning now.

Suddenly I feel a weight on my shoulder. I breathe in the familiar icy air, the stench of rot.

I will eat your soul, the Wendigo says. Its rancid tongue licks my cheek. *And then I will eat your daughter's*.

"You will *not*," I say. *You do not know hunger, monster*. With a determination stronger than mystery and wonder I draw it inside myself, ensnaring it, rooting it in the heart of my rage and grief. *Feed on this. Feed on my pain*. It struggles and shrieks but cannot break free.

The Wendigo is a creature of cold. I step into the curtain of flame, the Holy Fire, the purifying fire. My dress flares instantly, then my hair. In moments my flesh blisters and chars and melts. Still I don't stop, even when my blood boils and my bones crack. I accept the heat into my core, burning through my nerves, cauterizing my pain and illness until it reaches the secret place where I have imprisoned the beast.

No! it cries, thrashing, convulsing, diminishing.

No!

Yes.

I clutch it in my will until, like my pillar of light in the lodge, it spindles out of existence, until there isn't a smudge, a smell, or a memory of it left.

After what seems like hours in hell, I tumble through the flame to the other side.

My dress and hair are singed, but I am physically unharmed.

My soul is free, unencumbered.

Cleansed, I shudder as if in the throes of passion, but it is a passion not of the body. I rush to my girl, my daughter, my beautiful Rachel, and sweep her into my arms, kissing her face, her eyes, her hair. I'm blubbering like a baby. Rachel doesn't know me yet, but when her "holy state" wears off, she will, she will.

Only now I realize that the Bodéwadmi are also weeping. All have fallen to their knees, wailing, pounding the earth. The chief has lowered her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest as if posing for death.

Black Wolf is on all fours, his forehead to the ground. "We prayed," he says. "We danced. We invoked *bidjgosan*."

"You failed," I say, squeezing Rachel closer. She hangs limp in my arms. "Your fire didn't keep me out and it didn't kill me. You can't hold us back."

Black Wolf lifts his face and sits back on his haunches. "In your stories," he says, "Jesus died so that you could live. In ours, you have lived, so we must die."

"Where are Esther and Paul?" I say.

"They are ours," he says. "Take your daughter and leave us."

I kiss Rachel again. Is there a glint of understanding in her eyes? "You have destroyed everything I own," I say. "Where will we go?"

Black Wolf waves his hand helplessly. "Anywhere you wish, it seems."

END

Trailing Sky Six Feathers: Her Story
Excerpt from Chapter One

Ian Prattis
Ontario, Canada

At the cave they gathered most of their sparse belongings and bundled it onto frames strapped to strong and willing backs. They decided to leave equipment and supplies in the cave for anyone who may seek sanctuary there. Before they left, Long Willow and her two companions offered prayers and thanksgiving for all the cave had provided them. She thanked the creatures that had responded to her request to share this dwelling. Long Willow offered her gratitude for finding two such companions in life. He gave thanks to the Great Spirit for the vision bestowed upon them. Finally she gathered up her herbs and medicines, rolling them into a blanket that she tied tightly. As she took her last step across the lip of the cave she stopped. Immobile. In a trance. He saw her. Observed her slim body swaying backwards and forwards. She listened intently to an interior voice. He stepped closer to her and supported her from falling with his strong arms. She turned and looked at him as though from afar. She spoke strongly in a voice scarcely her own: "You will return to this cave in dreamtime, though not in this lifetime. Hear me now – understand the dream and do not resist what it teaches. Hear me – and promise me."
He was puzzled by her words, yet readily gave his promise. He gently held her until she came back from where she had travelled. He had no understanding of her episodes of prophecy. He remained quiet and attentive to her. She shuddered slightly within his embrace and shook her head, as though she too did not understand. She smiled to her gentle husband. But she had understood, though he had not. In another time, he would.

They returned to their ancestral village after two days of walking. The fourth family had arrived, becoming the West Clan. To their astonishment they saw their new home almost completed. The families of the four clans had pooled their labour and resources to create the stone dwelling at the centre of the village. It was spacious, modest and nearly finished. She had tears streaming down her face as she spoke in gratitude: "Many hands and hearts have made our new home. Our village renewal has a wonderful foundation – all of you. I greet you from my heart with deep thanks. Please know that I will serve you all my days." On entering their unfinished dwelling they saw the families had contributed blankets, baskets and clay pots with food. All from their own meagre supplies. To welcome them home. It was with great joy that they spent their first night with The People. He left to visit the fourth family and speak with them. The two women were alone together.

"Do you think it time that you told him?" asked Long Willow.
"Told him what?" she answered in surprise.
"That you are with child."
Her mouth dropped open wide. She had been too preoccupied to notice that her moon time was long passed. With typical mischief Long Willow continued"
"Then I will have to tell him. It seems I have the task of carrying the tidings of continuation."

They both laughed and hurried together to find him with the fourth family. He was delighted to see them and introduced the fourth clan. Astonished by the news she brought to him. Not just his and her child, but the first born into the new beginning for The People.

At her time of delivery, Long Willow and medicine women from all clans attended to her. He waited outside, with some anxiety and much patience. He looked into the sky for a sign. The full moon was shrouded by drifting clouds. The movement of clouds by a westerly wind made it appear as though the moon was continually rising. On the first cry of the baby girl, he drew in a deep breath of relief and joy. Long Willow chanted the midwife's song of a new birth. The mother's voice joined in weakly. He smiled to hear her voice. Then it was carried along by the medicine women chanting in unison. He listened and bathed in this glorious sound. Later, Long Willow stepped through the doorway with the girl child wrapped in a soft antelope skin with a newly woven blanket around it. Long Willow gently placed the daughter in her father's arms. He held this new life close to his heart – breathing her in to his core.
"Her name is to be Rising Moon. She is the beginning of our renewal."
He slowly stepped into their stone dwelling and returned the baby to her mother. He sat the remainder of the night with them as they both slept - drinking in their beauty.

Rising Moon was loved by all, growing into a beautiful and curious child. Very much her mother's daughter. She had all the signs and propensities of a medicine woman. As a small child she knew from her mother how to speak with plants about their medicine qualities. She was also her father's daughter. At two years she would accompany him on irrigation rounds amongst the clans. As a four year old she would sit quietly next to him when the men's council met.

Rising Moon carried her mother and father within her. The gifts of healing and prophecy, with the authority to govern – both were in her tiny frame. She was slender and wiry, her unruly hair held by a headband above piercing brown eyes and a smile that melted whoever she greeted. This exceptional child was wise and gentle beyond her years. She had an almost visible internal strength. She stood apart yet also blended in seamlessly.

Several years after consolidating their main settlement The People had in place all that the three cave dwellers had discussed on the lip of the cave in the sacred canyon. After five years their numbers had increased by tenfold. Over fifty families distributed between the four clans. Some were related to the original four families, some came from other communities. The abundance of children and young people enabled the community to thrive. Long Willow also had more than 300 warriors under her command – men, women, boys and girls. The two councils decided that with their increased numbers, it was time to return to the abundance of the river settlement the following summer. They knew this could invite another raid as they had a fine stock of newly traded horses. The summer settlement was part of their territory. It could be only reclaimed by occupying it. This time they were ready and well prepared. The women and young girls were trained well by Long Willow to shoot with the long rifles and also in hand to hand combat. The young women enthusiastically took to this departure from their traditional role. They

vowed amongst themselves that not one of them would ever be taken alive as a captive to be enslaved or sold. Long Willow organized them into small groups of three – with two long guns – one sharpshooter, one loader and one replacement. The men had become very impressed with their womenfolk. In particular with Long Willow. Some had resisted her authority, until they saw how she could shoot better than any one of them. So they too trained. To be silent, patient, hardly visible, adept with all weapons – traditional and new. A confident and capable cadre of warriors were ready to defend their people.

Later that summer, once established in their river settlement, they did not have long to wait for their training to be tested. There was one further raid by the Apache, who drew on their previous successful tactics. They were spotted early on by sentinels from the East Clan. One sentinel sent in the harsh cry of a hawk. All stayed hidden, ready to gun down retreating raiders. The boys guarding the newly traded horses in the northern pasture became decoys, as three raiders sent in to kill them were cut down silently with swift arrows of death from well hidden men of the North Clan. The main Apache party crossed the river from the east, just as before. They were met by deadly gunfire from men of the South Clan situated at the top of the river bank, reinforced with stone defences. Still a dozen raiders got through and headed straight for the women's lodge. Only to find the older women waiting for them with their long guns raised. At a command from Long Willow the women quickly dispersed. In threes - to dug out hollows in the ground behind the protection of raised stone walls, and to well protected positions in the trees. One warrior laughed at the sight, only to fall face forward with a bullet in his forehead. Long Willow's instant retribution.

The remainder retreated, picking out one young woman for capture. She was returning to the village by a north west trail, not hearing the alarm cry of the hawk. She had not reached the refuge of the women's lodge and was roughly seized. She had a knife in a sheath strapped to her back and reached for it with her free hand. She stabbed her assailant twice at the base of the neck. In astonishment he dropped her. Swift as a mountain lion she regained her feet and thrust the knife upwards through his belly into his heart – just as she had been trained. Then she ran to the woman's lodge leaving her knife in the body of the dying attacker. Covering fire from the women kept her safe and cut down her would be pursuers. She was fleet of foot and sped past the first line of women. And there was Long Willow with her arms outstretched to hold the small warrior who trembled and cried as strong arms comforted her. The girl received a new name later that night in the women's lodge. She loved to laugh and dance, yet all had seen her courage and fierceness that day. From that moment on she was called Dancing Mountain Lion. In time she became a leader of the women warriors, as her training with Long Willow intensified.

The long gun fire from the women had driven the remaining raiders back. They decided to retreat the way they had came, but that door was closed by the men of the South and West Clans who had killed every one of the party advancing from the south. The women closed in from the west, the men from the river in the east and south. There were only three raiders left alive – they quickly laid down their arms. He stepped in front of the angry People, pointed to one of the Apache warriors and spoke to him in his own tongue:

"Return to your people. Come for your dead tomorrow at mid-day. Bring only a small party and many horses to carry your dead. Otherwise these two warriors will join them. We will not damage your slain warriors."

At noon next day, a small party led by a war chief arrived, trailing a dozen horses to carry their dead home. They were stopped at the river's edge. Their thirty dead were laid out respectfully on the ground. Their two living warriors were tightly bound, sitting next to them. The war chief carefully surveyed the force gathered there. He had been very aware of being observed throughout the eastern approach to the river settlement. He noticed armed men and women back in the trees and atop the rim of the canyon his party had travelled through. He examined the dead where his son and younger brother lay:
"Who do I speak to?"
He stepped forward:
"I speak for my people. I speak for the ones standing here. I speak for the ones further back in the trees and the ones you cannot see. All with guns to kill you if necessary."
He pointed to the canyon that provided passage to the river. The elderly war chief had no need to look. "We will take six of your horses as we lost six people yesterday at the hands of your warriors. When you pick up the bodies of your dead – place all your guns, bullets and weapons on the ground beside them. We take those too."

This was too much of an insult for one of the Apache warriors. He leapt at one of the young women holding a rifle pointing at him. Jerking the rifle from her hands he was turning the rifle round to shoot her. He had not noticed Long Willow standing behind, as she knew that this young women was nervous. Swiftly Long Willow's stone headed battleaxe carved an arc through the air, crushing his shoulder and arm that held the girls' rifle. He fell screaming to the ground. It was finished at that moment. He placed himself between Long Willow and the injured warrior:
"If we choose, we can kill all of you. When attacked we will defend ourselves with a fury you will not encounter elsewhere. You will lament and rage when you return to your own land. Just as we lament and rage over our lost people. But if you want horses – in the future trade for them with long guns. If you want young women – enter into marriage alliances. Needless killing must stop. When we need to – we are prepared to kill. You see that from the many bodies you carry back to your village. Our terms are fair and just. Your six horses and weapons for the bodies that belong to you." The war chief surveyed all around him. The formidable force surrounding his party. His wounded warrior, dead brother and son. He assented. He remained still and watchful on his horse while guns and weapons were laid on the ground. The bodies were lashed to the backs of horses. The six finest horses were picked out and led away. With long guns cocked and levelled at them the war chief and his small party left. Only the elderly chief rode, his warriors walked leading each packhorse with its burden of death.

In the men's council that evening he met with the four clan chiefs. She came to the door of the men's lodge, requesting permission to enter and speak:
"The women's council has met and we do not trust the Apache. Their anger will grow and create a revenge raid with enough warriors to seriously harm us. They know about us now. The women are in agreement to move our summer camp immediately. Long

Willow knows of a plentiful river and valley three days journey from here. The women are prepared to leave tonight. We will also leave baskets of dried meat and beaded moccasins for our visitors. To pacify their stomachs and please their women. The women's council has spoken."
He nodded quietly and asked each clan chief for his view. They all agreed except one. To this dissenting voice he said:
"You have a right to stay here if this is your wish, though I fear for your safety. I request humbly of you that you come with The People, so that we remain strong."
After a few moments of silence and struggle – the assent was given.

He spoke to her:
"Thank the women for their wise counsel. They are equal to the voices of this council. We leave immediately and will bring our dead to the valley that Long Willow knows of."
He thanked the North Clan chief - Crow Feather – for his decision and spoke to the men's council: "We have heard from the women and Crow Feather. Ask Long Willow and the West Clan to ride with supplies to this valley and prepare a settlement for the People. Crow Feather's Clan provides protection. You must leave immediately. The rest of the people will leave by morning light and the South Clan will be in charge of the journey. Say prayers for our dead so their spirits can welcome us back here. We take their bodies with us. The East Clan will come last to erase our trail and to make a false trail to the south. No more words need to be spoken."
Crow Feather, now fully re-united with the People, recognized the responsibility placed on his North Clan. Also the master stroke of diplomacy offered to him.

By dawn the summer settlement was deserted, a false trail broken to the south for ten miles with all trace of the westward journey carefully concealed. The Apache returned in force two days later only to survey the remnants of the summer settlement. Two baskets hung from a cottonwood tree next to the river – obviously left for them. The war chief had them cut down and delivered to him. Opening the basket of dried meat and fish brought amusement. The second basket contained intricately beaded women's moccasins – clearly to be taken back to their women. The amusement spread to a chuckle and then an exasperated roar of laughter. The war chief bit into the dried meat and offered the beaded moccasins to any warrior who wanted them for his womenfolk. Before they left the war chief remarked to his warriors:
"Perhaps we will trade with them next time."
They had been out manoeuvred yet again, though read clearly the peace signs from a well organized and dangerous enemy.

The People grew stronger. He was renowned for transforming war into trade and marriage relations. He governed wisely and skilfully. The easy manner and smile hid a steely mastery of tactics and strategy. He carefully spoke last in council, not pressing his views too hard, allowing others to claim them as their own. He encouraged and inspired other leaders to take responsibility. He knew the language and mentality of the leaders in other Indian nations. Whether friend or foe – he knew how to approach them, so they could resolve issues without armed conflict. She continued her medicine journey and shared healing skills with men and women with the gift to pass it on to generations yet

unborn. Their bond in life and marriage grew deeper than even they could realize - so different yet so unified. Rising Moon was a mixture of both their gifts. She was already recognized as a gifted healer among The People and the only youthful member of the women's council.

But the maturing of Rising Moon became unavailable to him. In his prime of life he journeyed to a distant outpost of soldiers to establish the rights of The People to the lands and territories required to sustain them. He had also taken four of his finest horses to trade with the soldiers at the outpost. He was met with desolation as the soldiers and the Indians gathered there were suffering from an ailment no one could relieve. There were unburied bodies of Indians in one corner of the compound. Soldiers were dead in their billets. The officer in command waved him away so he would not become contaminated. He left his four fine horses with the commander and began his journey home.

As he journeyed homewards he felt chills overwhelm him, vomited frequently and felt the life force draining from his body. He fell several times from the back of his horse as his strength faded. The last time while crossing a river. He battled with his remaining strength to reach the river bank, hauling himself up to the base of a weeping willow tree by the river's edge. There he lay – soaked, shivering with fever coursing through his body. He realized he was less than a day's ride from The People's main settlement. He released his faithful mare, urging the horse home to bring her. His horse ran fast and true so that by nightfall she was found by his wife next to their dwelling. With a sinking heart, she gathered her medicines and daughter, asking the horse to lead her to where her husband lay. The Clan Chiefs and Long Willow were alerted by messenger and followed shortly afterwards. By daybreak they came across him, near to death with fever and very cold. She knew what to do with the fever to prevent it penetrating her and The People. There was an ancient medicine wheel on a rocky outcrop above the weeping willow tree where he lay. Overlooking the canyon to the east. She asked the Clan Chiefs to carry her husband on a hastily built carrying frame – but not to touch him. They laid the frame down in the medicine wheel so that his head was in the west, his heart in the centre and his feet pointing to the eastern door of the medicine wheel. That was where the Sky People could enter.

She knew by this time her medicine powers were insufficient, so she called in the Sky People to save her husband. They came. Their light could be seen along the canyon to the east and it spread up to the medicine wheel where he lay. He was far too gone for even their extraordinary abilities. She lit four fires of sacred herbs within the medicine wheel to warm and purify him for his journey. She had herbal medicine prepared long ago for such an instance. With some water from the river, brought up by Rising Moon, she held his head so he could drink it. He came back to her and smiled. A beautiful smile that enveloped her with so much love she almost broke down. He knew it was his time and had no fear. Just joy at the life he had spent with her. Her heart was breaking for she did not want to let him go. Yet the depth of wisdom within her knew she could not keep him any longer. The grief abated as she summoned all her strength and love to assist his journey from his body across time and space. She beseeched the Sky People to assist her to stay steady and for him to journey well.

The Clan Chiefs, Long Willow and Rising Moon stood in silence round the medicine wheel. They were instilled with her calm and fortitude. Only she knew her inward struggle and sorrow. She surmounted both as she began to chant the sacred songs of her people. She knew not to vent her grief and loss at this moment of traversing. As she sang, he looked up at her with amazement as he had done so often before during their life together. Just before he drew his last breath, she cradled his head in her arms, leaned over and whispered in his ear:
"I will find you, my husband. I will find you"

As he began to travel on universal waves she chanted the sacred song of the Sky People - the secret chant that saved their lives in that first terrible raid. She chanted their journey to the cave, to their care for the earth and for The People. Sharing at last in her husband's last smile, she cried tears of pure joy as she sang. On the second day, Rising Moon, who had sat quietly outside the medicine wheel, approached her mother. Quietly she took her mother's arm and whispered:
"It is time mother."
She had expected her mother's face to be gaunt and drained by grief. Rising Moon gasped in surprise at the radiance of her mother's face, framed as it now was by long white hair. The ordeal of her husband's transition had turned her long black tresses to snow. She looked majestic as she gently laid her husband down in the medicine wheel. She stood up and looked around her and lifted her arms to the sky as if she were holding him still. Long Willow stood beside her and did the same.
"I will prepare my husband's body in the old way, for all our relations and the Earth Mother."

Rising Moon was very still, swaying like a sapling in the morning breeze.
"Mother, will I find him too?"
"Yes my daughter. He has traveled safely. We will both find him."

The Driver

Jen Knox
San Antonio

Frank yelled "What?" for the third time, and Maggie grabbed his arm. The DMV worker leaned over the counter, clasped her hands as though she was about to pray and repeated: "Press your forehead to the blue pad. Tell me when you see a red light and whether it's on the right or left."

Maggie examined the woman—her eyes were the color of green olives, a comforting color, and they lifted at the corners as she waited for Frank to situate himself at the machine.

"I'm ready," Frank yelled.

"O.K., Mr. Harris. Please lean in a little more so that I can activate the test." Frank shuffled his feet. "Good. Now tell me when you see a light."

"I see one."

"Which side, please?"

"Left. Hey, where'd it go?"

"They'll appear and disappear, sweetie," Maggie said. "You remember this test. We were here only a few months ago."

Frank ignored—or didn't hear—and leaned around the machine to face the woman, who was eyeing the sizable line behind them. She seemed stoic about the room full of people who were waiting to be seen as though she knew the line had no end, so why rush?

"I'm ready. You can turn it back on."

"It's on, Mr. Harris," the woman said. She smiled, exposing a sizable gap between her front teeth. Maggie felt the slickness of her veneers with her tongue and wondered what this

woman's life was like, whether she had a family. She eyed the girl's ring-less hand and thought *good girl*.

"Left!" Frank yelled.

Frank was Maggie's second husband, the second redhead she'd married, which she often thought quite the coincidence. Jessie had been tall, like Frank, and wore a short beard below light brown eyes. Frank had blue eyes, pale and permanently narrowed, and he kept a clean shave, and he was far more sensitive—a word he asked her not to use in any sentence with his name in it—than Jesse had been. She admired Frank's emotional honesty.

"Left. Center. Left—of center—"

"It doesn't look like your vision is too good on the right side," the sweet, gap-toothed woman said.

Frank took in the news, as though he hadn't considered this outcome possible. He squinted at the girl and asked, "Oh yeah? Those lights were shining on the right, huh?"

"Well, you can still get that license renewed with restrictions if you pass the regular vision test. This'll be just like the eye doctor."

Maggie read the letters: "AMESP."

Frank began: "Easy stuff here. A—W—F—S—B."

"Almost," Maggie said, deciding she would make lamb shanks tonight, serve them with asparagus and a good bottle of merlot.

"Mr. Harris, can you read anything lower than that top line?"

"Well yeah, but it's all blurry." Someone behind them chuckled. Maggie glared back, searching the room. Maggie was twenty years younger than Frank. She'd married him a year after Jessie died. Some said that she'd been too quick to remarry. But to Maggie, that year might

as well have been ten. She often relived the day she lost Jesse. The way he'd reached for a single piece of cinnamon raisin toast after his morning run and, suddenly, collapsed. The thick, ceramic plate he'd been holding landed beside him and bounced without breaking. Everything shifted.

"O.K., Mr. Harris. Try the third line for me."

"I have something in my eye." Frank shuffled back a pace and blinked a few times before taking a deep breath like a runner getting a second wind. He was wearing his jean overalls: his favorite outfit, the outfit Maggie dreamed of tossing into their fireplace if only she could get the nerve. She hated the way the heavy jean material hung from his skinny frame, the way the pale blue made him look even older, outdated. She began to rub his back. Frank would live a long time, despite his failing senses. He was honest, a trait that gives any living thing endurance. Maggie had watched as silence killed her first husband; it was his inability to show emotion, to let go. Jesse had combated fear, pain, sadness and even joy with silence; silence that ate him alive. It was a kind silence. He didn't want to hurt her feelings. Frank, on the other hand, kept his emotions on permanent display, and so he had a strong heart, strong lungs and an impressive set of ropy muscles. His temper kept him lean, gave him purpose.

Maggie looked back at the long line of people behind them. A teenager with pocked skin and tight jeans watched Frank with interest. He was probably the one who had laughed, she thought; he probably thought that the old man didn't have a snowball's chance in Hell. Or maybe these were Maggie's thoughts imposed on the boy. Maybe he wasn't thinking beyond his own nose. Teenagers, in their virtual worlds, useless messages forever blasting in their ear phones—things that looked like bright hearing aides nowadays—often thought of nothing at all because they were too over-stimulated to think actual thoughts. Everything was a blur.

Maggie imagined that she and Frank were invisible to young people. Years ago, it happened a few times that a stranger would pull Maggie aside, ask her why she stayed with such a verbally abusive man. The fact that this no longer occurred bothered Maggie. Sure, the boy behind them saw and heard this old, loud couple of which she was half, but he didn't process them, their existence. They were merely part of the background, an inconvenient part.

When they'd first been married, Maggie wasn't bothered by the non-stop commentary about the mismatch of their ages; but in the last few years, as she entered her sixties, she realized she had reached an age where it seems such things ceased to matter to the outside world, and this hurt more. She would be nothing more than *old* for the rest of her life.

Frank moved back up to the line and squinted. Maggie glanced back at the teenager and said, "He's almost done."

The teenager shrugged and removed a small white piece of plastic from his right ear. He was shifting his weight. "I'm in no hurry, really," he said, tucking his fingers into his pants pocket, which seemed to strain the fabric. Only yesterday, it seemed to Maggie, young people were wearing their pants too loose, and now it seemed they thought cutting off circulation was thing to do. She wondered if this new, tight look might cause a person to become infertile; she recalled one of her doctors accusing her of wearing too much elastic in her youth, not allowing proper circulation. This thought worried her.

Robert, Frank's brother, had once joked that Maggie was far too attractive to be married to his brother. It was the sort of compliment that still caused Maggie to blush a little. But Robert went on, speculating that she had only been attracted to Frank because she had an unfulfilled maternal instinct. He'd said this over a Trivial Pursuit board; he was recently retired and probably watching too much Dr. Phil, she thought, but when she looked to Frank to defend her,

she saw him laughing, saying how lucky he was for her malfunctioning ovaries. She laughed too, and although it usually took more than pop-psychology and bad jokes to offend her, she quickly found herself swallowing back salt until, eventually, she had to excuse herself.

"They all look like Es to me," Frank was saying.

"This is my second time," the teenager said to Maggie, just when she thought he'd never answer. "I can't seem to get the parallel parking thing." Maggie could see the boy's nerves working from his shifting to position to his widened brown eyes.

"You'll get it today. I have a feeling," Maggie said. She patted the boy on the side of his skinny arm and turned back toward her husband in just enough time to reach for his hand as the bad news arrived.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Harris. Perhaps you just need new glasses."

"I'll be back," Frank said, firmly. "Come on, Maggie. Give me the keys. We're going to the IHOP."

"Good luck," Maggie called back to the teenager as she was led away. The teenager gave a shaky smile. This kid wasn't numb at all; he was left alone to his fear, she could see, and she wished she could stay and hold his hand. He wanted this, too, she could tell, as he waved goodbye.

"Get in the car," Frank said. Maggie considered her husband a moment as he stood by the driver's side of their truck.

"I'll be damned if I'm going to IHOP," she said; and so it began. Husband and wife bickered: sharp words, rolling eyes, until the discomfort of Frank's new reality dissolved, and Maggie took the keys. She turned on the ignition and felt the swift kick of the engine before it settled into a comfortable hum.

Hagski's Domain

Chapter One of *Six Weeks to Yehidah*

Melissa Studdard

Texas, USA

The thing you would notice most was the rain, how the rain fell and fell and never seemed to stop. The sky was constantly swollen with it, then birthing it, swollen, then birthing again, and the hills, like greedy babies, suckled up all that rain. They shone and glistened green as the backs of frogs on bright green lily pads.

In a small village nestled in these hills lived a girl named Annalise. She had just turned ten, which was old enough to begin thinking about grown up things, like choosing her own clothes for school, yet young enough still to indulge in fanciful imaginings of enchanted trees and talking hills. Her best friends were the clouds that canopied her village and the verdant hills that hosted her most precious and outrageous dreams. She would lie on the grass with her hair fanned around her head like a halo, and there she would talk and sing and make up stories all afternoon long, with no audience but the clouds and the sheep to hear her tales. There she would stay, despite the rain, until the very last minute, when her mother called her in to supper.

But this one Friday, when Annalise's school was on vacation and she'd slept in and then eaten an especially late lunch, she decided to try to outlast the rain instead of going inside at dinnertime.

"I'm not hungry," she called back to her mother. "Please just let me stay a little longer."

"Okay, okay," her mother said. After such a late lunch, she wasn't exactly hungry herself. "But stay where I can see you from the kitchen window."

"Thank you, Mom!" Annalise called, moving a little closer to the house so her mother could see her.

Annalise spun around with her arms outstretched and then fell to the ground, laughing and singing.

"I love being outside," she said to Mabel and Mimi, the two sheep who had followed her back to the house.

It began to rain a little harder, and Annalise strengthened her resolve to stay outside no matter what the weather. She was, you could say, as stubborn as the rain itself. And even though she had good intentions regarding her mother's wish that she stay within sight, it wasn't long before she became enchanted with a flash of light off in the distance. Someone with less imagination might merely have assumed the light to be a firefly or a flickering lamp, but to Annalise it was a golden fairy riding a rain drop to a magical kingdom. In fact, it reminded her of a poem she'd written in school earlier that year. It went like this:

A frigid winter's night

Leaves on fir trees glistening with snowdrops

Fairies skip across the night sky
Joyous in their eternal dance
The Man in the Moon smiles fondly
at his children on Mother Earth
The path reflects the glistening heavens
A fox passes, unwavering
Unaware of the sky, the heavens,
Concerned with the darkness,
Finding his way

She recited the poem to herself as she watched the flickering light, and soon her mind went the way of her imagination, and she began to create new poems about fairies and rain drops and foxes on trails, and not a thought was left in her head about staying near the house, much less near the open kitchen window.

Annalise chased the flashing light to the base of the hill, all the way down to the river bank where she watched it dance atop the glistening water and skip from pebble to pebble. After landing briefly, the light darted into a cluster of trees, then dashed up through their tops, up into the clouds and back down again, where it skipped from treetop to treetop, twirling in between.

"I've seen this imp before," Annalise said to the sheep who had followed her to the base of the hill. "But now that I'm closer, I don't really think it's a fairy. It must be some other sort of magical being, something even more unique. I'll stay here and figure out just what it is. Then I'll write a story about it."

True to her word, Annalise stayed in the valley between the hills, even after her mother had called her home again, which, being so far away, she did not hear. The rain, stubborn as it was, remained also, and the magical light flickered and danced a merry show for Annalise and the sheep. The river rose, and evening turned into night, and as Annalise remained oblivious to the passing of time, her mother grew concerned and began to look for her, eventually calling the local authorities, who put together a search party.

When by the next morning, the villagers had still not found the little girl who was as obstinate as the rain itself, the floods started to reach the tops of the hills, and the search had to be abandoned so that helicopters and boats could take local families to safety.

Annalise, in the meantime, had fallen asleep right in the midst of singing "Zip-a-dee-doo-dah" and had then awoken to find herself, Mabel, and Mimi transported to the other side of the clouds, the place above where rain is made.

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It was the brightest waking up she'd had in many Saturdays, so even though she felt some curiosity as to her whereabouts, she decided to christen the morning with a song, "Sunny Saturday," which she made up as she went along.

"I'll figure out where I am in a little while, when I find someone to ask," Annalise thought, and then she began singing her song, which went something like this:

Oh, it's a Sunny Saturday

(baaa)

Sunny Saturday indeed

(bleat)

For here I am

On the other side of the clouds

(baaa)

With my favorite sheep

Mabel and Mimi

(baaa baaa)

Sunny Saturday

Sunny Saturday indeed

Tra La La Li

Tra La La La

Everything is so fluffy and white

(baaa)

Mabel, Mimi, and me

(bleat)

It was a full chorus. Annalise was lead, and the sheep, who could only say "baaa" and "bleat," were back up.

But that all changed in an instant, because Mimi did something unexpected. No sooner had the song ended than she shouted out what she thought to be "bleat," which meant, of course, "lovely job with the song, my dear companions." However, what came out when Mimi opened her mouth was not "bleat" but the *actual words*, "lovely job with the song, my dear companions."

Mabel, Mimi, and Annalise were so surprised that for a moment they all just stared at each other in complete silence. Then Mabel said, "Why, Mimi, you can speak real words."

"And so, it seems, can you," Mimi replied.

The two sheep, who were excited beyond measure, spent the next several minutes trying out new words on each other and practicing pronunciation, while Annalise, whose vivid imagination made her an expert at managing extraordinary happenings, remained unsurprised and busied herself making up real words to replace the "baaas" and "bleats."

"Try this," she said, humming a few bars to the sheep. Then she hummed again, and the sheep hummed with her. "Now for the words," she said, lifting her arm like a conductor holding a baton. But before she got to the words she was interrupted by the most horrid voice she had ever heard. It seemed to come out of nowhere, and it sounded like a car screeching to a stop in order to keep from hitting a dog.

Annalise, Mabel, and Mimi looked all around, but there was no one in sight. "Who is that singing in my domain?" the voice demanded.

Annalise jumped backwards, startled by the voice again, as she still could not see a body to go with it. Then, regaining her composure, she replied, "Why, it's just me."

"And who, exactly, is this 'just me' who is bold enough to reply to the divine Hagski?" the voice demanded.

"Me, Annalise," Annalise responded, shuddering. Although she could see this Hagski nowhere, she imagined her exhale as she spoke to be a gassy cloud of black fumes, like the exhaust from an old car.

"Not me and you?"

"No, just my sheep and me, Annalise."

"Annalise of?"

"What?" Annalise said.

"Annalise of the Enchanted Forest, Annalise of the Queendom of Munchkins, Annalise of the Hundred Acre Wood, Annalise of the Shimmering River, Annalise de la Mancha, you know, Annalise *of* –"

"Um, well, Annalise of The Verdant Hills, I guess."

"You guess? Well, what is it, girl? Are you from the Verdant Hills or not? Are you orphaned? Adopted? Exiled? Restricted? Did you trespass? Are you a clone? Is your brother a dung beetle? Did you escape from a firing squad? Were you mortally wounded and then left for dead only to be rescued and given to a king who was not your father but who would rear you as his own until you discovered, mistakenly, that you were destined to kill him and so you ran away, only to end up accidentally killing the man who was actually your father, thereby fulfilling the prophecy?" Hagski paused for effect, then said, "How can you not know which Annalise you are or from whence you hail?"

"Well, I don't know about clones and dung beetles and all that stuff," Annalise replied. "But I am indeed Annalise of The Verdant Hills, and you can tell anyone I said so."

Hagski now appeared before Annalise, and Annalise saw that she was indeed a hag, and quite a frumpy mess besides. Her hair was primarily black, but big chunks had been dyed pink and orange, and one side was matted to her face as if she had just woken up from a sweaty nap. She wore a wrinkled beige button-down shirt that had mud colored stains scattered about it.

"Oh, a feisty one," said the hag. "I like that. Are you a Yahoo or a Houyhnhnm, Easterner or Westerner, male or female, Christian or Buddhist, living or deceased, vegetable or meat?" And with this, she began to poke at Annalise with a chopstick that she pulled out from over her ear.

"Skinny little thing, ain't ya?" she said.

"Stop it!" cried Annalise. "That hurts!"

"Ah, meat it is, then, definitely," said Hagski, pulling out her notebook and jotting something down. "Most who come here are. It's been a long time since the carrot girls were here, or the green bean boys."

Annalise took advantage of the fact that the hag was writing instead of asking questions for the moment, and she began to look around to try to comprehend where she was and what was going on. She figured that if her sheep could now talk, she must be in a land with new rules. Then it dawned on her that she was not really in a "land" at all. She was in the sky, and gravity

no longer had the same effect on her. It pulled her, yes, but only to the top of the clouds, which she found surprisingly firm to walk upon.

"Pardon my directness," said Mabel, "but where are we?"

"You are in Hagski's domain," said Hagski. "What comes here stays here. We are a democracy, and I am the dictator. You are my new slaves. Here are your rules:

Rule #1 Always follow the rules

Rule #2 Be prepared to recite the rules upon command

Rule #3 If you break the rules you will be punished

Rule #4 Anyone caught trying to change the rules will be exterminated

Rule #5 No discussing the rules with other slaves

Rule #6 Any misinterpretation, misrepresentation, mispronunciation, misinformation, misjudgment, misunderstanding, misplacement, misconduct, miscounting, miscuing, misfiring, mishandling, misspelling, or misreading concerning the rules will be punishable by law.

"Do you have any questions?"

"Yes, I do," said Mimi, leaning towards Hagski in confusion.

"What exactly *are* the rules?"

Hagski looked furious. "You nincompoop," she screeched. "You half-witted, turnip-brained, baaaaing, bleating, comedian wannabe sheep. I just clearly outlined the rules for you, one through six. Follow them!" She paused her diatribe to roll her eyes. Then she asked, "Does anyone have any *real* questions?"

"Yes," said another screeching voice from a nearby cloud. "I have some questions." Annalise, Mabel and Mimi craned their heads around and even turned their bodies to try to see where the voice was coming from, but there was no one to be seen. The second voice began its list of questions:

1. Have these rules been approved by the rule approval committee?
2. Do they contradict previous rules, current rules, or rules that are to be made in the future?
3. Have they been revised by the rule revising committee?
4. Have they been edited by the rule editing committee?
5. Were they passed by the rule passing committee?
6. Have they been catalogued and cross-referenced with other rules?
7. Have they been printed on committee-approved paper, with committee-approved ink?
8. Have they been numbered and labeled?
9. Were there rules made to determine how these rules would be evaluated by the evaluation committees?

10. Were subcommittees created to monitor the progress of the primary committees?
11. Was there a committee formed to make sure that all committee members were on the appropriate committees?
12. Is there a meeting planned to address these questions, and if so, has this meeting been approved by the meeting planning committee?

"*Excellent* questions!" said Hagski. "I'm so glad I'm not the only one with a brain around here!"

Soon Hagski and the second sky voice digressed into a verbal skirmish regarding the fine points of a rule which neither of them had yet identified. Annalise thought it sounded like they were arguing about two different rules and that if they identified the rule, maybe they would find that their differences were not so great after all.

"Perhaps you should identify the rule," Annalise said.

"Hogwash," said Hagski.

"Cockamamie," said the other voice. "We both know we are arguing about Rule #207, 928, Section 72, Addendum A, Revision #39, Amendment Pending Results of Rule #132," said Hagski.

"Actually," said the other voice, "I was talking about Rule #17."

"Well," said Annalise. "The thing to do, clearly, is to first discuss Rule #17, and then, in a separate discussion, talk about Rule #207 and whatever else you called it."

Surprisingly, Hagski and the other sky voice agreed, after which they promptly appointed Annalise as chairperson of the Rules Discussion Committee of the sky, with her sheep, Mabel and Mimi, as her only committee members.

"Hagski," said a new voice from behind a haloed cirrostratus cloud. It was a voice that was bold but kind, and filled with humor. "Are you hazing the new arrivals again?"

"Why, indeed, no," said Hagski. "I'm just having me a bit of fun, a little poking and a little prodding, a little singing and a little songing, a joke here, a whistle there, tilting a windmill every now and then. I'd never slay a sleeping dragon."

Annalise acted quickly upon hearing a kind and sensible voice.

"Hello," she offered.

"Hello back," volleyed the haloed voice.

"To whom am I speaking, please?" she asked. She stood on a thin line of clouds, her two sheep beside her, and Hagski facing her. The cirrostratus from which the kind voice emanated loomed large in the distance, the sun shining behind, around and through it.

"You are speaking to Me," the voice replied, sounding as warm as the sunlight that seemed to be its source.

"Me who?" she asked.

"Me Anyou."

"Pardon?"

"Don't worry about it right now. We need to get you situated. Do you know why you're here?"

"No," said Annalise. "I don't even know *where* I am, much less why."

Hagski shuffled around, looking a little embarrassed. It was not Hagski's Domain after all. Me Anyou was clearly in control, a fact which made Annalise, Mabel, and Mimi feel quite pleased.

Note The poem recited by Annalise was written by Roz Williamson

Slow Dancing

Alan Kleiman
New York, USA

Thirty three days ago
Wait, stop, listen
You won't believe
Bartholome's son
Knocked on my door asking
Help me for I have sinned.
Don't ask directions
Ask what love is about
Don't ask for songs
Ask what words are about
Don't cry me a river
Row to Europe
Find Emily
And call the earth good morning.

Then one day
After people heard
About tombstones
They left the shack
Ate pasta in the streets
And said
There's no bones but an old dog's.
Don't resurrect
Josephus in my living room
We have no space
For the past
Put the future someplace else
Redact the letters that make words
Too intelligible
Masses have rights to read
To sing to dance to bowl
Every alley is open
To Jurassic members
Of our club
Won't you pay your dues
In the black box there
And push open the door
To the new world
Where Sayonara means hello
And where Sukiyaki means

How do you like my neighbor's wife's legs?
We need parallel universes
To escape into ourselves
The jackets we wear
With the label of our name
Sewn into the lining
Anchor too deeply.
Why "out of sight out of mind"
Allows existing
Is a puzzle for the ages
But is no one's quest.
Dumb lucky
We find parallel hotel rooms
Where life lives
In fantasy so real
The border shifts
To Ha! I am alive again.

But who is I am alive again?
Call me Jack for today
And John tomorrow
Edith the next
And Mary Joe on Friday.

Perhaps I will retire now
Into the boudoir
Who will I find there
Or who will I bring with me
To dine there
Sophie from the office?
Gertrude from the bookstore?
Or Melissa from the book itself
Alive in the book of names?

Tomorrow I have no intention
Of stopping anywhere.
I will visit
But I will not stay
Not to be besotted
For your pleasure
And the experience of loving
Loving what passes as sop
Soup is nicer to say
Forgive reflections that
Reek of jealousy and rage
Impolite to our guests, our hosts

And the whole cubist crowd.
The Emperor's clothes
Don't fit anymore
Record player's spinning
Slows to a crawl,
A drawl current sounds
Can't recall.
Records don't wind to a stop
Itunes just end
Like tomorrow
And today
And all time immemorial.

What Was That You Just Asked Me?

Andy Fenwick
New York, USA

Where is my mother
now, her hair
thinned to spider legs
by New Jersey air
spiked with cyanide
and methane? She carries
cattails torched with Bics,
their blue flames
repelling mosquitoes
and their bites, tiny pictures
of malaria, like slides
of my relatives, drunk
on our garage carpet
thick with spilled toy boxes,
plastic bikes, and skin
shaved off my knuckles
during hunts for tennis balls
or hidden joys. Thinking
gets boring and I
can admit that. The sun
tomorrow will bite
one more time into
the overpass and sink
with my mother's wishes.

Utopia

Aparna Raj Mukhedkar
Houston, Texas

Gifts of glorious abundance
we possessed. Ruins, we now are,
mediocre, decrepit, skeletal
remains of a once grand people.

Purposeless, lacking luster
nothing but mushrooms
and weeds grow in the
wilderness of our
abandoned beings.

Utopia. Road-blocked, stunted.
Flying saucers dropping from the
sky like rain.

Trinities Genuflecting on Ice

Charles F. Thielman
4960 Parsons Ave.
Eugene

City night waving a calico flag, jazz
bass thrumming guttural songs of love.

Your shadow crosses a mural
as weekend headlights sweep past
lounge doors, guitar picking through

what aches note to sharp note near
midnight's river, ribs like tuning forks
touching bridge railing. Waves meeting

undertow as grief splays its wings open
above unlit candles. You could carry
a crucifix, ward off inhaled thorns,

avoid grasping chain link fence,
syllables of your spine forming
in an American sea of sounds.

Horizons composed of mirages,
trinities genuflecting on ice
as the rebirth of wonder

skates past the truncated ballets
of caustic reason. City night
snapping thin bones
while running a gauntlet of echoes.
Moonlight bisects spotlights,
spills over the dry gutters

of city knuckles wrapped around
the necks of bottles, jazz bass
thrumming guttural songs of love.

Closet Poet

Edward Nudelman
MA, USA

Through a crack in my barricaded door, I can see
researchers lifting hands, exultant. They swarm around
a blinking machine, twiddling an instrument whose sole
purpose is to spew numbers in linear lines by the reams.
I should rejoice with them. How many, how long,
how perfect these number series appear. Dazzling
combinations and iterations for hypothetical models.
Soon they'll try to persuade me; soon I'll be told
nothing is something. I'll be offered correlations
and compelling data and probably a few lyrics
from some deadhead song. I know they mean
well, swimming laps in the same choppy sea
of discovery I'm supposed to lead them through—
but right now another research project supersedes.
I'm filtering white noise, holing up and hunkering
down in my bunker, closing the door, and locking it.

Edward Nudelman
MA, USA

Fizzle

Leave the grand hall, arms
at your side, head down and to one side,
knowing all was said that needed to be said.
Let the rain glide down your back.
Let people move aside and spirits step forward,
vanity and praise devour themselves.
All striving and hustle, let fizzle to dust.
You might have wanted more, or felt
you earned more; but now you lay it all down
in one small, unadorned stanza, without glitter.
Let poets howl. Let them roar. The car is cold
and the windshield weeps from the inside,
your writing hand's stuck on the shift.

Nocturne

Gerburg Garmann

Nobody, nothing, can be more
Than an eyelash, a neck-hair.
Fingers exposed too long to
the scrapes of turned faces
cannot whisper a flutter of lament.

Ears cannot lift the sound of
fitful memories stored in the eye of
the eye. Toes rushing up to the sea
Cannot console the bones

Lost while running out of waiting.

Every bit of story
snatches back under the lid.

The throat dreams in refrains.
The gaze reclines
into the archer's bow.

Praise is nowhere to be had
but in the arrows that were
never bought, meant to pierce
in slow haste the smell
of silken hair.

Do come back on Wednesday.
Bring me something in a language
I don't know.
Not in the speech
of dusty olive branches.
(Which I understand too well.)
Nor in the one
of kicking parrots.
(Which I can mimic myself if I must.)

Maybe in the one that feels as soft
as lichen on stone or better,
even, in the one supple enough
to relax our restless tongues
between our lashes. In the one eager

to still night's many messengers
between the raised hairs of our necks.

Stars and Stripes

A.J. Huffman
FL, USA

Paint me.
Red.
White.
Blue.
I'll be your flag.
Your mascot.
Your dying dream
alive in the wind.
And you can pin me to the ceiling
after you graduate.
Or to the wall above your bed.
It's okay.
Really.
I know how to surrender.
I've been practicing the wave
for years.

Lovey-dovey

Vivekanand Jha
New Delhi, India

Till in the nostril air
My heart would keep on beating
With your heart in unison
Till the time we both hyperventilate
In resonance and fall as sleep
Out of exhaust and tiredness.

Till in me energy and vigour
I would keep on striking
And raining into you
Like the spring from the mountain
On the surface of the earth.

Till in the eyes tears
I would keep on shedding
In your loving and repining memory
As leaves shed milky tears
When they are subjected to
Injury and separation
By persistent division,
Cut, break or scratch.

Till on your cheeks and lips,
Rose is smeared
My lips and nose would keep on
Hovering and humming
Like a bee for honey.

Till in the eyes, images appear
I would keep on listening
The music and magic of your eyes
Like a snake to the charmer.

I Know from My Bed

Michael Lee Johnson
Illinois, USA

Sometimes I feel
like a sad sack-
a worn out old man
with clown facial wrinkles.
I know when I reflect,
stare out my window
at the snow falling
from my bed,
my back to yours,
reflecting on my pain-
ignoring yours-
I isolate your love,
lose your touch
to another-
forgetting,
it is our bed,
not mine,
that I lie in.

-1999-

Lamentations for a Cold Drink

Stephan Anstey
Massachusetts, USA

Thin little gods in argyle socks
hold up half-ordained ghosts
in thimbles. Each spirit knows
the communion of whiskey and ice,
but not piety, not holiness, not penance,
not the miracle of a body.

A thousand thumbs point toward heaven
like a hymn proclaiming holiness
neither sipped nor watered down.

The haunted gods of nearly-nothing
use meaningless stubby fingers
pull needles through the fabric of time,
hope it wears well when
they are through. They are through
and through perturbed

A million cells full of the imprisoned
methane existences of those apparitions
crowd into those corner-less spaces
waiting for the smell of digesting beer
to blow away.

The graceless gods with fat children
bless the thumbs of just mute bishops
in ankle-hugging black felt robes
while their kids eat all the loaves
and all the fish - a single quilt of hate
and damnation stitched carelessly.
Billions of grains of sand, huddle
in the handless hand of something greater,
fill them all (the children, the bishops,
the noxious gods and the ghosts)
with something close to fear.
Endless yards of fabric, torn away
to the sea.

The whiskey is gone, there is no easter, so
the thimbles are emptied of spirits
and filled with spirits. All the little gods

are drunk and thumb-pricked.
The fat children dance with all the lost
ghosts and beg for half a blessing.
All the nearly-bishops felt nothing
but the sand between them as they stripped
away the black to reveal the white flesh
beneath. All the thousand thumbs still
point up to heaven hoping
that is where the dead have gone.

Interview with Melissa Studdard, author of *Six Weeks to Yehidah*

by **Aparna Mukhedkar**

Six Weeks to Yehidah, by Melissa Studdard, weaves a spellbinding tale that is rich with imagistic prose and glittering landscapes. Journeying through the eyes of the ten-year-old Annalise, the reader travels through the clouds to magical lands and down into the mythical shimmering underwater city, meeting, along the way, a slew of compelling and relatable characters that are, by turns, charming, effervescent, frustrating, and delightfully annoying. Melissa Studdard intersperses elements of music, magic, myth, Native American iconography, and mystery that leave the reader yearning for a sequel. Although, this is a children's book, like *Harry Potter*, adults will be just as mesmerized by the trials and travails of the cheeky and courageous Annalise.

An author, editor, talk show host, professor, and mother, Melissa Studdard makes juggling so many things at once look easy. She holds two masters degrees, one of them an MFA in Creative Writing from the acclaimed Sarah Lawrence College in New York. She has taught at several colleges, including Hunter College, John Jay College, Baruch College, and San Jose State, and she has a thick portfolio of published short stories and poems that encompass diverse subjects. *Six Weeks to Yehidah* is her first foray into the challenging world of children's literature.

In addition to her many literary interests, she practices yoga and loves travelling. Last week, she sat down for an in-depth interview in which she spoke about the inspiration behind the book. She shared invaluable insights into the spiritual background that helped give birth to the plethora of fascinating characters in *Six Weeks to Yehidah.* She reminds you of a Greek goddess with her statuesque, graceful presence, yet despite her accomplishments and appearance, she is modest, kind, and generous, and she offers hopeful yet honest tips to aspiring writers.

She currently teaches creative writing at Lone Star College-Tomball in Texas, where she lives with her teenage daughter and a bevy of cats.

***1.Six Weeks to Yehidah* is your first book. How did the concept for it come about?**

I was in a wonderful critique and writing group in which we took turns assigning prompts each month. One woman asked us to read *The Oxford Book of Modern Fairy Tales* and write our own short tale. It turned out that I was so compelled by the voice and characters I'd created that I kept writing and writing until I realized I was no longer working on a short story. I was writing a novel.

2. Tell us about Annalise. Is she someone you know?

Annalise is largely archetypal – the wholesome *Everygirl* next door – and, in that sense, she's a fusion of the traits of many people. Some of her more unique characteristics, the ones that aren't universal, like

her musical and linguistic talents, and her precociousness, are based, very loosely, on my daughter. In the first chapter, I actually even have Annalise recite a poem my daughter wrote when she was Annalise's age, or even a little younger. I was advised at one point by a literary agent to take it out of the book because it was so complex that no one would believe a ten-year-old had written it. But Annalise is not just my daughter. She's me, too. And she's that part of every little girl that shimmers with wonder, goodness, curiosity, and delight.

3. The book is so rich with imagery – the musical instruments growing like plants, the talking sheep, Mabel and Mimi, the elaborate labyrinth, the shimmering city beneath the sea, and so much more. I'm curious about the process that went into creating these highly imagistic scenes.

Would you believe I dreamed them? Not all of them, but a goodly portion. For a long time, I've been fascinated by the mechanisms of the unconscious mind, and in the years preceding the composition of *Six Weeks to Yehidah* I'd done an intensive study of dreams, meditation, visualization, and so forth. I kept a dream journal and meditated regularly. I listened to guided meditations, which are rich with imagery. In the end, it was a combination of dreaming and waking imagination that birthed the scenes in this book. It was also a combination of the made-up and the observed, and by observed, I mean both in the physical world and in books. When I sat down to write, it all just flowed very naturally.

I hear that most writers find it easier to compose realism. For me, it's easier to produce the fantastical - making things up is fun, exciting, natural to me, whereas trying to accurately record reality is a great challenge. My imagination is much stronger than my memory!

4. It's wonderful that the book is so full of music and songs, especially the part where Annalise is able to use her talents to successfully coordinate a group of discordant musicians. How did you conceptualize that?

There were a few important factors. One was that I was suffering when I wrote that scene. My personal life was a disaster, and I've never been one to write when I'm depressed, but I was on a very strict schedule with a friend to exchange a chapter every month, absolutely no excuses accepted. The book is nineteen chapters, and I wrote it in nineteen months. I got married, went on a honeymoon, got divorced, worked full time, moved twice, lost a grandparent, all while this book was being written, and I gave my friend a chapter a month no matter what, and she did the same with her book. I learned that I could write through anything. Somehow, having to write through that suffering worked a strange alchemy, transforming my own pathos into Annalise's lyricism and transcendence on the page. Honestly, and this is no exaggeration, I feel sometimes like writing that scene saved my life.

Another important factor is that I was reading *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle, when I composed that particular chapter. I remember looking at pages of *The Power of Now* and seeing parallels between what I'd just written in *Six Weeks to Yehidah,* and what I was reading in Tolle; then I would write in response to what I'd just read. I couldn't believe the connections. Between what I was reading and what I was living, I knew the chapter had to be about letting go of resistance. After that, my biggest challenge was solving the problem of how to play that out with the musicians. I was looking at a premature, mini-denouement in the fourth of nineteen chapters. That seemed a little strange to me. It was a structure I

couldn't remember a precedent for, but I decided the only thing to do was to embrace it, so I acknowledged it directly through Mabel's and Mimi's comments.

It's also important that I'm not personally musically gifted. In some ways, Annalise is who I wish I could be, and that's an aspect of the conceptualization too. When I was in 6th grade, my school collected all of the students and had us try out for choir, and I was one of only three kids who didn't make it. The great thing about writing is that now I get to be whatever I want. I can be a singer through Annalise. She can be my voice. That's a great thing about reading too. We can all be a part of Annalise's musical vision.

5. I must admit, Hagski is one of my favorite characters in the book. Tell us about how you created her.

Hagski leapt onto the page fully formed, like Athena in her armor. It surprised me at first because Hagski's such a nut-job. I mean, where did she come from? Do you know what I mean? I had that crazy woman living inside my head! But then I quickly fell in love with her. Everyone does. I notice that you're almost apologetic when you say she's one of your favorite characters, but she is, in fact, most people's *very* favorite, even over Annalise. And, of course, I realized almost immediately that Hagski would become an important part of the book and that she was absolutely integral to the conflict, but it was slow to dawn on me, through the writing process itself, what she actually represented.

6. There's strong Native American symbolism in the book. How did you research that? How long did it take?

I didn't actually research that information for the book. I've been going to retreats and seminars in Taos, New Mexico for years now, and I've fallen in love with the pueblo, the town and its history, the grand, improbable love story of Mabel Dodge Luhan and Tony Luhan. I feel such a spiritual tug towards that place, such a longing – I can practically smell the sage and piñon as I answer this. Anyway, I learned by simply listening to people when I was in Taos, and from reading books by and about Mabel Dodge Luhan. I also learned from surfing the internet for history about the pueblo. So, it was the best kind of research – not performed as a means to an end – but , undertaken, instead, out of a blazing, passionate desire to learn more about a subject for no other reason than because I was in love with it.

7. There's a spiritual undercurrent that runs throughout the storyline without becoming moralistic or religious. I notice this especially in regards to the tasks that Annalise is assigned and the choices she has to make in order to right things. How were you able to arrive at those conclusions? I thought that was impressive.

Thank you for asking this question. I hoped to encourage certain life choices without being didactic, so it's good to know that from your perspective I pulled that off. In many ways, *Six Weeks to Yehidah* is about tolerance and acceptance of ourselves and others. Even when Annalise is given the biggest choice of all, it's made clear to her that although her decision will have consequences, she will not be judged for her decision. To me, judgment is an implicit part of moralizing, as is the assumption that there is always a right and a wrong. *Six Weeks to Yehidah* is not about right and wrong in the traditional sense,

though those words are certainly used at times. It's about learning, expanding, growing, evolving, and doing so consciously. Therefore, it cannot be about moralizing and is even antithetical to moralizing.

Even when Annalise is tested, it's to see if she's ready for something, not to judge her worth. The question in the book is not whether Annalise, or humanity overall, will make the right choices. The question is about when we will make the choices that move us forward. And part of the answer is when we stop judging ourselves and each other. When Annalise judges herself or is judged by Hagski, it's a temporary obstacle to her physical journey and her personal growth. It's like a layover in her development until she gets beyond it. So the idea is that when we make unfortunate choices, it's not because we're bad or wrong. It's because we're at an early stage of the trial and error process that will eventually lead us to better choices. When Annalise listens to Hagski, for instance, that's a not a choice that's beneficial to her journey, but over time, she learns that Hagski doesn't have anything relevant to say.

It was also important to me to share certain wisdom traditions with children, and I absolutely knew that the best way to do this was through narrative. I wanted to share philosophies and ideas in a way that would be fun and exciting for the kids who read the book. We all know how gruesome canonical fairy tales can be, and, of course, these tales are based on an older model of human thought and behavior. They come from a time when we were operating on a lower rung of Maslow's hierarchy. I feel like we need new stories that more accurately reflect who we are becoming, and which give us something to aspire to. The subconscious mind is a powerful thing, and the stories we tell our children are an important facet of who they will become.

I'm not saying that everything should be all about light and fairies and sunshine, and I'm not suggesting that these new stories should replace the older ones. I write some very gritty stuff myself. What I am suggesting is that *some* of our new writing should exist alongside the older writing in a way that shows how our thoughts and lives are evolving on a generational scale – that our evolution as human beings should at some level be reflected in our literature. I'm also suggesting that some of these stories can provide models for personal growth. I do believe in art for art's sake, not that the purpose of literature is to merely instruct, but *one* of the functions often is to instruct, like it or not, and if we are not cognizant of the fact that children are learning behaviors from the stories we tell them, then we are missing valuable opportunities. Stories are so much more relevant than people realize and are often as much a part of the fabric of who we become as are our literal experiences.

8. What elements of your own spiritual beliefs or practices were you able to incorporate into the story?

Let me just start by saying that rather than being of a particular religious tradition, I'm interested in interfaith studies, as well as the mystical aspects of all traditions. *Six Weeks to Yehidah* is quite mystical overall, as are many of the beliefs and practices within it. The book also works to show the connections between different religions and traditions and to demonstrate that we are no longer served by the aspects of religion that separate us. Instead we should be focusing on the teachings that bring us together and also on the universalities that exist in all religions, such as The Golden Rule.

One of my beliefs, exemplified by the very structure of the *Six Weeks* narrative itself, is that life is a learning ground, and those of us who live best are the ones who learn best. Annalise is a great example of this, evolving and learning chapter by chapter. As is implied by Annalise's situation, I believe that we are responsible, to some degree, for our own evolution through this process and that we should make choices that reflect that responsibility. We should take part in choosing our life paths, rather than letting life be something that happens to us.

I also believe that we all have a deep core, a godself that is both ourselves and, at the same time, something more than our individual selves. It's not just within us; it's part of the vast expanse of being, too. Some traditions call it the unmanifest. Some call it the soul or spirit. Science calls it nonlocality. In *Six Weeks to Yehidah,* it's conceptualized a little more specifically, as a divine yehidah endowment. All of the answers we seek are there, and it's a place where we can shape our futures and discover the important roles that we are each meant to fulfill. Everyone's life can have deep meaning if they allow it, and everyone can find a way to connect to this meaning by slowing down and really paying attention.

You also asked about practices. One of the ways to connect to the godself and know ourselves better is to practice listening to our nighttime dreams, like Annalise does when she needs to solve a problem. We should also each practice some form of meditative activity daily, whether it's literally sitting in meditation, jogging, painting, praying, walking along the shore, or singing – it should be something that clears the workaday mind, connects us to the unconscious mind, and helps us to be present in our lives and not just bumbling through the days. Then, like Annalise, we can tap into the incredible power of the unconscious and conscious aspects of mind working together in harmony.

Through Hagski, we also see that the energy we project has a far greater impact on others than we've so far been willing to take responsibility for and that we should be more cognizant of this. Hagski shows us, additionally, that we're often our own worst enemies, and that we need to pay attention to how we talk to ourselves in our own minds – because the experience we draw to ourselves often mirrors our own inner states. I'm not saying that we're responsible for the bad things that others do to us, but I am saying that just as Annalise is able to draw the musicians into quiet by quieting her own thoughts, we can change life patterns and situations by changing ourselves.

I believe, as well, that all of life is interconnected, and we should behave accordingly. *Six Weeks to Yehidah* is filled with interconnected webs, threads, passageways, stairways, walkways, elevators, paths, tunnels, portals, trails, and other symbolic and literal connectors that act together as a motif to reflect this point. The practices associated with this concept are acted out by characters such as Bob, Tony, and Kána, who model love, kindness, respect, understanding, and tolerance of ourselves and others.

In addition to these larger concepts, there are also many, many more specific and smaller concepts present in the book that are very important to me, ideas about things such as how to behave around the dying or the importance of humor to spirituality.

9. What spiritual masters were you influenced by while writing the book? Why?

This is a very complicated question because an entire lifetime of reading and study are embodied in this book. Some influences could be there at such a subtle level that I may not even be aware of them. That said, the influences that were at the forefront of my mind were the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament; the teachings of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama; and the teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh the Buddhist monk who was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize by Martin Luther King, Jr. All of them teach love, and that's what *Six Weeks to Yehidah* is ultimately about.

There are more influences, of course, and it occurs to me that some of the people I'm about to mention would loudly object to being called spiritual masters, so I'm going to just say that what follows is a list of people, movements, books, and organizations whose theories, spiritual guidance, or modeling impacted *Six Weeks to Yehidah*.

Among them were two magazines: Andrew Cohen's evolutionary enlightenment journal, *EnlightenNext,* and Donna Baier Stein's spiritual literary journal, *Tiferet*, for which I am now an editor. In *Tiferet*, for instance, there was a wonderful essay by Rabbi Lenore Bohm about labyrinths, which, of course, informed the creation of Annalise's labyrinth.

Some authors and books that influenced *Six Weeks to Yehidah* were The Old Testament, The New Testament, The Bhagavad Gītā*,* Wesselman and Kuykendall*'s Spirit Medicine*, The Tao, Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying,* Kenneth Wilbur's *A Brief History of Everything*, Gina Cerminera's *Many Mansions*, The Jātakas, Thyme and Orion's *The Lemurian Way*, Christopher Hansard's *The Tibetan Art of Living,* Viktor Fankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, *A Course in Miracles; and in a more general sense* Julian of Norwich, Socrates/Plato, William James, St. Thomas Aquinas, Natalie Goldberg, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Huston Smith, Deepak Chopra; Thomas Moore, Eckhart Tolle, Robert Monroe, Rūmī, Carl Jung, Hildegard of Bingen, and Joseph Campbell. I also read extensively about meditation, world religions, mysticism, Edgar Cayce, the ancient cities of Atlantis and Mu, physics, biology, psychology, lucid dreaming, NDEs, consciousness, and so forth. But again, as with the "research" about pueblos, this reading was done purely out of interest and not in preparation for writing a book.

Some groups that influenced me were the Chung Tai Zen Center of Houston, The Houston Theosophical Society (particularly Fali Engineer), the Association for Research and Enlightenment, the Transcendentalists, and the Unitarians.

I also attended Natalie Goldberg and Jeffrey Davis's writing workshops in Taos, which were both very spiritual experiences and strong influences on my thinking.

I'm having a Whitman impulse here, wanting to list everything. I could go on for pages, but let me just stop here, knowing that it's inevitable that I've forgotten something or someone very important.

10. Let's talk about some of your favorite children's/young adult authors. Who are they, and why are they your favorites? How were they influential in the composition of *Six Weeks to Yehidah*?

Oh dear. Here I go with the lists again. Lewis Carroll and L. Frank Baum are huge favorites and obvious influences. I love their imagination, their imagery, the new worlds they create, their sense of wonder,

and the journey-based narratives. Norton Juster's *Phantom Tollbooth* is a favorite for humor and imagination, and for the journey, as well. Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* is a model for a young book-loving protagonist. Madeline L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* is a model for adventure and the journey, and Chris Van Allsburg's *Jumanji* is a model for the out-of-control animal scenes.

There were also some authors of adult literature that I felt were big influences on the book in one way or another, though those influences may only be apparent to me. These were Jonathan Swift, Elizabeth Cunningham, Homer, T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, Sophocles, Cervantes, Emily Dickinson, James Redfield, Dorothy Bryant, and Wu Cheng'en.

The film *What Dreams May Come* was also heavily on my mind as I wrote this book, as were the guided meditations of Melissa Rose.

11. What comes next? Is there a sequel in the offing?

The ending certainly allows for a sequel, or even a series, if interest is there. I didn't plan it that way, but people are starting to ask, and I'm not at all opposed to the idea. I'm working on some other projects right now – a literary short story collection and a collection of interviews I've conducted for *Tiferet Journal*, both of which will be released later in the year. Once those projects are completed, and *Six Weeks to Yehidah* has been out for awhile, I'll decide whether the next novel will be a sequel or something new.

12. What was one surprising thing you discovered about yourself while writing the book?

That I *can* write a book. This is a life-changing discovery. For years, I've been writing and publishing shorter works – poems, short stories, essays, book reviews, academic articles – but I'd never completed a book-length project before *Six Weeks to Yehidah.* I didn't think I had the time or the lifestyle for that kind of sustained attention to a single project. Now that I've done it, it seems strange to me that it felt so daunting before.

13. You are a children's writer, poet, fiction writer, professor, editor, talk show host, and mother. How do you manage all of these roles and find time for yourself?

I love to do all of those things, so when I'm doing them, that *is* my time for myself. For instance, the things I love most about teaching are being in the classroom and reading great literature. When I'm in the classroom, and I can see that the students are inspired by what we've read, and we're having this great discussion, that is my time for me within teaching. I feel the same way when I get to read a wonderful piece of literature. Sure, I'm preparing for class, but if I truly had free time, I'd want to spend it reading that literature anyway.

In regards to managing the roles, a few years ago I learned about this wonderful thing called asking for help when you need it. I'm able to do so many things because I have so many wonderful people – friends, family, colleagues, neighbors – helping me with almost everything I do. I'll even ask my daughter's friends to help with chores if they're hanging around a lot. I mean, why not? I'm feeding them, driving them everywhere, entertaining them. It's not going to kill them to set the table. In fact,

they like it because they know it creates time for me to take them for ice cream or to play a game with them after dinner.

I also meditate every day, and I think that's the key to everything. Meditation is one of those great activities, like exercise, that seems to somehow create more time than it takes.

14. As an author, what is your advice for up and coming writers who are inspired by what you have accomplished here and hope to also complete a novel someday?

Before we close, Aparna, I want to say that you ask great questions, and it's been a pleasure having this exchange with you. Thank you.

I think it would take a book to answer this question, but here are a few tips that have served me well.

You should always remember that you're the only person who can speak your truths, and you are worthy of being heard. Nail this reminder over your desk. Tattoo it to the top of your hand. Make it your screen saver. Do whatever you have to do to remember it every time you write.

Become a great and regular reader. It's unlikely that you will ever become a great writer without being a great reader.

Set a schedule that works for you. Be realistic so you don't give up. If you schedule writing twice a week for two hours a pop, so be it. The writing will accumulate over time. If it's eight hours a day, five days a week, even better. The important thing is to thoroughly incorporate writing into your lifestyle as fully as you would anything else that really mattered to you. Don't think of it as optional. If you had monthly appointments to take your child to a pediatrician, and you missed one, you would re-schedule it. Do the same with your writing. Try to never miss the appointments, and if you do, re-schedule them. The first time you tell someone you can't get together because you have a writing appointment, you'll realize how powerful this is. Soon you'll be scheduling doctor's appointments and other important events around your writing time. If you treat writing like a hobby, it will most likely only ever be a hobby. Instead treat it like what you want it to be.

--Be patient and keep after it and write without ridiculous expectations. Sometimes your writing won't be good, but you have to write through that to get to the good stuff. Quitting writing won't fix anything. Don't be wary of writing the bad stuff. Just laugh at it, think of it as practice, don't show it to anyone if you don't feel like it, and keep writing until the good stuff starts flowing again. Just do not stop writing. Do not stop writing. Do not, for any reason, ever, stop writing.

Reliving the DAAD Experience with " der deutsche sommer"

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MRP : Rs.150(available now with flipkart,Indiaplaza,infibeam,rediff books and India Reads)

Author- Arnab Chakraborty

May the 3rd, 5 pm – Sitting in the waiting lounge of the Calcutta International Airport, images of my family, relatives, my friends, with whom I have shared my every emotion till date, begetting my fond memories of this land, ran vivid. A couple of hours left to board Air India flight AI 9263, my feet stayed numb on the floor. Probably the toughest moment for me till date to control my feelings, reserved they were but yet ready to fly. The joy of matching new people, new place and new hopes along that comes with it. I did manage to stand up, walk through the check in corridors in my blue gown harboring the tri-color near to my heart. This is the story of "der deutsche sommer"- reliving the experiences of a 21yr old DAAD scholar flying to the Deutschland, exploring a new world, excavating the land of hope, land of technology and where industrial revolution saw its inception. Explore Europe through the eyes of this young lad who parades through the fairylands of Germany,Austria, Nederlands, France and England where he meets his dream walking through the tunnel of the Emirates stadium- Home of Arsenal.

A student from NIT Warangal, who currently is a GET with the NTPC, the author did his high schooling from the DPS. Counting on his experiences in this creative world, he now tends to initiate the creative platform "Les Pelican" nurturing the young talented minds in India who are creative potentials but only lack in proper support and guidance.

Title: ***Indian Writing in English: Critical Perspectives***
Editors: Dr. Vishwanath Bite, Dr. Arvind M. Nawale
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Reviewed By:

Mrs. Madhuri Bite
Editor,
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Indian Writing in English: Critical Perspectives is compiled of twenty well researched articles on various authors from the canon of Indian Writing in English. These articles contributed by scholars, teachers, academicians and critics of repute, study in depth Indian Writing in English exploring variety of themes and aspects. Indian Writing in English has very recent history to explore hence, the attempt made by the writers to probe national literature of India written in English is worth reading.

Dr. Vishwanath Bite in his insightful article about Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable American*, focuses the journey of Gopal, the protagonist, to America. The present article highlights the journey of the Indian boy, into brave new world. It is brave because for Gopal the Americans are too forward and knowledgeable and the world is also new to him as he is from Indian orthodox family. In his scholarly article on Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* Dr. Arvind Nawale presents two different faces of woman living in two different sections of Indian society- modern civilized society and age-old primitive society. The article delineates the strange case of the protagonist Billy Biswas and his association with two sorts of women- Meena Chatterjee who represents materialistic modern society and Bilasia who represents primitive society. In her article Mrs. Madhuri Bite examines the thematic observations in Gita Mehta's *Raj*. She observes the themes of *Raj* from postcolonial point of view. Dr. Dipanita Gargava in her article on Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* examines the perspective view of time and events, of lines that bring people together and hold them apart, lines that are clearly visible on one perspective and nonexistent on another. Lines that exist in the memory of one, and therefore in another's imagination. Dr. Arjun Jadhav and Prashant Mothe in their well researched article attempt to explore the linguistic behaviour of the characters and their interpersonal

relations in the two plays of Girish Karnad against the backdrop of some concepts and theories in pragmatics.

Zeenath Mohamed Kunhi in her article on Arundhati Roy's scholarly essay *Baby Bush Go Home* discusses Bush's monologic principles. In his article Dinesh B. Chaudhary studies Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and states that women are engaged in the complex and difficult social and psychological problem of defining an authentic self. In their article Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha & Dhritiman Chakraborty argue that Arundhati showcases that rare breed among Indian English writers who has dared to carry forward her fictional issues through the constitution of a radical redressal of socio-political pathologies and they differentiate Arundhati`s fictional outpourings with her non-fictional dynamism. Dr. S. B. Bhambar in his insightful article analyses the three selected novels of Anita Desai, Prakash Deshpande and Paulo Coelho with comparative perspective. The novels represent a height of artistic vision independently achieved by the writers belonging to different cultures: Occidental and Oriental. The similarities in the theme and technique of these novels, obviously, show the universality of vision and unity of human experience in spite of the cultural, racial, national and temperamental differences among the selected writers. Dr. Ramchandra Hegade in his scholarly article on Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* examines the novel as the political novel in the mode of documentary realism.

Krati Sharma in her well researched paper discusses the use of the genre of autobiography by Marathi Women writers especially Laxmi Bai and Durga Khote who, under the influence of reform movements and social activists not only read but also wrote. She further states that the women writers used the genre not only as a tool for self expression but also to crusade the cause of their liberation. Dr. Gunjan Jain in her article explains the theme of women's freedom with reference to Mulk Raj Anand's novel *The Old Woman and The Cow*. She also argues that while stressing the need for the emancipation of women Mulk Raj Anand suggests that women themselves should break the ties that bind them to the hearth and boldly venture out into different activities. In her insightful article Dr. K. K. Sunalini analyses the moral vision in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. She further states that the search of a typical Shashi Deshpande protagonist is usually to work out a satisfactory relationship with the other human beings and to evolve a satisfactory moral ethic in a complex world. Dr. Marie Josephine Aruna

critically evaluates Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel.* She analyses that men everywhere are the same while women's subservient condition under them is also the same across the world and explains that women tend to explore their desire and connect with other women dealing a double existence –one in their official role as slave and the other as women of the harem. Dr. Pradnya V. Ghorpade in her well researched article discusses the self-assertion of women in the works of Mulk Raj Anand. She says that though woman is suppressed in India, Mulk Raj Anand is aware of her dormant capacities which are seen in some of his women characters.

In her article Dr. Vimmie Manoj examines the portrayal of women's status through symbols and images in the novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. She says that Jhabvala uses other symbols and images that are universally relevant, for example the symbol of sky, colour and car-ride and images universally acclaimed, for example the images of relationships, animals, mountains, rains and houses and she also uses these devices to depict women's status against the backdrop of the clash between the oriental and the occidental, traditional and modern. HCS Chauhan & Lt. (Dr.) Satendra Kumar in their joint article scrupulously examine Shashi Deshpande's fictional world, she has created in her women protagonists, heroines who do not merely stand for themselves but also for the artistic ideas the author wishes to convey. It is not so much the survival of the female figure that is central to her stories. A clear cut solution to the female conflict is, from the author's view point, not important for the survival of the protagonist. Their article throws flood of light on her creative sensibility. Dr . Manisha Gahelot studies the emergence and shaping of Indian literary canon taking its background from language issue and the then used terms for the national literature. Her short and scholarly survey is helpful in understanding Indian Writing in English against the cultural encounters. Rukhaya M. K. in her scholarly article examines the sound of silence in the *Silence! The Court is in Session*. She observes that the court is just a metaphor of the patriarchal society we live in. The monologic verdict is the final decree, that the woman has to abide by. The only thing she has to protest with is her Silence, as that is the only aspect attributed to her. Dr. Vishnu K Sharma and Mahesh Kumar Sharma study language and discourse in *The White Tiger*. They found the novel fully reveals that Linguistic systems co-evolve with socio-cultural conventions of language use and thus the context of use is as relevant as rule of usage. In reality language is subject to great change and variation. One who aims at studying the phenomenon of language has to take into

account cultural and social factors that are involved in human linguistic behavior. Authors have explored the novel with the tool of language.

Title: ***The Concept of Anti-Hero in the Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee***
Author: R. P. Singh
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158 pp.

Reviewed By:

Mrs. Madhuri Bite
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Upamanyu Chatterjee is a social realist for whose creative endeavour the over-arching theme of identity and its plight in a hostile world forms what may be called the bed-rock. He has written three novels- *English August: An Indian Story* (1988), *The Last Burden* (1993) and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000). The common thread that binds all the novels is the anti-heroic image of the protagonists and other characters. The concept of anti hero which we find in the novels of Chatterjee is central to the colonial disruption of the urban Indian educated personality in terms of multiple splits. There are splits between man and his traditional moorings, between man and his family, between man and his environment; and lastly the split between man and his inner being. Chatterjee in his novels is deeply concerned with the consequences of the encounter between the British colonialists and the Indian society.

According to R. P. Singh, anti hero is a product of the (post) modern socio-cultural condition. The purpose of the study of Upamanyu Chatterjee's antiheroes, it's quite relevant to assess what the elite of the colonial moment did to transform itself from being 'native' to becoming 'foreign'. While discussing the societal roots of the antihero, he mentioned the Bengali *bhadralok* which signified a social class. The antiheroic protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee and their milieu find clarity of intelligibility when put in the perspective of the influence which the *bhadralok* culture exercised in a long process of acculturation. A close reading of the socio-cultural realism of Upamanyu Chatterjee, as manifested in all the three novels provides us a hindsight which creates a sense of dramatic irony in our mind. The concept of anti-hero as reflected in the major characters of Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels rests on this divorce of the urban educated man from the different segments of society and its institutions. The most devastating and so most potent factor in creating fertility for the production of anti-heroic denizens of society is the exhaustion and collapse of the force behind motivating ideas and ideologies. In the post-modernist jargon, these have been collectively called 'grand narratives' or 'meta narratives'. The fictional world of Upamanyu Chatterjee is a postmodern world marked by the visible symptoms like collapse of the grand narratives of Indian values and an emphasis on consumerist style of living. It is remarkable, in the context of Upamanyu Chatterjee, that the postmodernity which we encounter in his novels is just a socio-cultural condition which traps the anti-heroes, not an intellectual stand adopted by serious postcolonial thinkers. The unmistakable

message from the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee is that antiheroes like Agastya Sen, Jamun and their lesser varieties are bound to appear in the Indian society, bound as it is with the global cultural dynamics.

Upamanyu Chatterjee has emerged as one of the most compelling new voices in the domain of Indian novel in English. His debut novel *English, August: An Indian Story* is a fascinating metaphor of contemporary English educated Indian urban youth's failed quest for self-realization. Agastya Sen, the antiheroic protagonist of the novel *English, August: An Indian Story* is a victim of the bureaucratic system he comes to join. Agastya Sen the antihero represents his time, i.e., the last quarter of the twentieth century Indian urban life at multiple levels. The focus of Upamanyu Chatterjee in the novel *English, August: An Indian Story* is on the fact that the urban Indians like August are victims of an alien cultural discourse which has been internalized by them in the course of their educational cultural nurturing. The concept of anti-hero as we find in this novel reflects very sharply on the pathological careerism of modern Indian youth. One very important aspect of this novel is the message that the Indian society did not undergo cultural decolonization. The central opinion of Upamanyu Chatterjee in this novel is that the careerist English educated Indian urban youth suffers alienation at his deeper psychic level from his roots and becomes doomed to a life of unhappiness and boredom.

The novel, *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000) is a sequel to Upamanyu Chatterjee's debut novel *English, August: An Indian Story* (1988). The novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* is a mirror in which the multi-departmental decay and depravity of the Indian state gets reflected in their bitter details that are horrifying. The title is quite suggestive in the sense that it conveys the resourcefulness of the corrupt elements managing the politics and bureaucracy to milk the system in the interest of their own personal and familial aggrandizement. The central fictional emphasis here is on the antiheroic turning upside down of the putative system of the state bureaucracy as a system of delivery of benefits to the deprived sections. The very title of the novel suggests, in its suggestive bareness, a routine of daily, rather hourly, milking of the docile, inexhaustible and seeming land of abundance that is the 'Welfare State'. A close reading of these novels reveals that their antiheroes and their families have failed to understand the meaning of reality, having forever mistaken the trapping for the real thing. The dominating presence in this novel is of the antiheroic deeds of the mandarins and politicians of the Welfare State, because the purpose of this novel is to display a canvas of sordid personalities indulging in their sordid deeds. Upamanyu Chatterjee created the anti-hero Agastya Sen in *English, August: An Indian Story* and devoted another novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* to his dull, unchanged and insipid life.

In the novel *The Last Burden* (1993) we see the anti-hero as trying to shed the 'burden' of family ties, the terrain of his operation being the personal world of familial relationships. The antiheroic protagonist of *The Last Burden*, Jamun, reflects the average Indian growing up in an Indian megapolis and feeling constantly that he will be more at home in New York or London than in a small place of India. The antiheroic protagonist of *The Last Burden* is born into a

family which is hate-filled. The social realism of Chatterjee turns its focus to the issue of relationship in an ordinary middle class family, thereby exploring the state of Indian antiheroic personality. After a close textual analysis, one can't help the impression that in the novel *The Last Burden* the family relationship itself appears to be a

Title: ***A Study of Love, Sex and Marriage In Anita Desai's Novels***
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Anita Desai, a well-known Indo-Anglian Novelist of Post-Independence era. Her contribution is considered as more significant in the development of Indian Novel in English. Most of her work deals with inner life which is crowded by psychological problems. Her novels highlight the themes of love, marriage and sex. Her characters are usually women who are haunted by a peculiar sense of doom, withdraw themselves into a sequestered world of their own, become Neurotic, self destructive and unhappy. These women characters are too introverted to be able to cope with their personal circumstances and adjust themselves to life and meet its problem both courageously and adequately.

Anita Desai, one of the most distinguished among the younger set of Indo-English writers. She presents powerful characters with full enthusiasm and encouragement in every circumstance and in each and every walk of life. Sensitiveness is a dominant feature in all her novels. She portrays the pathetic picture of a lovely married Indian woman who aspires to triumph over the chaos and suffering of her rather unusual existence. In most of her works she compares the life of women belonged to East as well as West. She observes that the life of women in India is slow and empty but in the West it is hurried, busy and crowded. While making conclusion she states that both types of lives in the East and West cannot give full satisfaction to the heart of woman. Marriage, love and sex are dominant themes of her novels. In this book the author presents Anita Desai's views on the major themes of marriage, love and sex. Marriage is a social institution and also a partnership between husband and wife. It is the social recognition of the relation between man and woman. Economic relationship, mutual understanding and love are the foundation of the institution of marriage. The institution of marriage plays an important role in the building of the structure of society. 'Love is an itching of the heart that cannot be scratched.' There is a great deal of truth in this definition because it is love on which human existence rests. Love is the basic need of human life and without it human existence becomes dry and mechanical. Love before marriage is totally different from love after marriage because before marriage, there is only love but after marriage, duties, responsibilities, ego all become the parts of human life and love is changed into anger, irritation, hatred etc; sex is also not less

important in life. Love, sex and marriage are contemporary to each other and without sex married life is not supposed to be happy. Thus marriage is a social recognition of sex between two persons.

Creative writers are often objective artists but the fact that the making of their genius is the outcome of the influences- hereditary or environmental- cannot be ignored. They consciously or unconsciously manifest their faith, aim and their compulsions. The formative influences in the making of the genius of Anita Desai need a microscopic vision. Anita Desai was born on 24th June, 1937. Growing as a blooming artist at the age of seventeen she started her career by writing prose, mainly fiction and these pieces of art were published in children's magazines. With diverse influence to fertilize her career as a writer of Indo-Anglian fiction, Anita's first novel *Cry, the Peacock* was published in 1963. Her second novel, *Voices in the City* was published after a couple of years. After obtaining a reputed place in the literary world she published her third novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* in 1971. *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is her fourth novel published in 1975. Her fifth novel *Fire on the Mountain* published in 1977. Lastly comes her mature fruit of fictional career- *In Custody* published in 1984. Thus, the impact of her knowledge in English classics and her knowledge of Hindu Scriptures especially *The Gita* make her prolific novelist of Indo-Anglian fiction gifted with feminine sensibility had raised English language to lyrical heights. Through her novels Anita Desai has tried to raise the question of Indian woman's unhappiness after her marriage. The question of woman's superiority or inferiority to man is irrelevant. In all her novels Desai describes the helplessness of millions of married women, the emotional world of women and their sensibility as well as psychology. Anita Desai describes the marriages in India and the various complexities involved with them.

Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* is the story of a hypersensitive young woman, Maya, who cannot get over the trauma of a prediction. An albino priest forecasts death for Maya or her husband, in the fourth year of their marriage. Hearing this prophecy she loses her peace of mind. And this is the reason that Gautama's long discourses on detachment appear to her life-negating. In a fit of insanity she kills him in order to find life for herself. So the philosophy of detachment is the main cause of the failure of their married life. In her second novel *Voices In The City* Desai tries to present a touching account of the life of Monisha, the married sister of Nirode. Monisha's miserable life is empty from within and without. She is married to Jiban and her relationship with him is marked "only by loneliness" because of the carelessness of Jiban, or their misunderstanding. Monisha tries to search for a real meaning of her life but at the end, she feels frustration. Monisha is always suffering from mental agony. The absence of love in her life, mal-adjustment with husband, loneliness- all these torture her mentally and make her shriek in agony.

Bye-Bye Blackbird is the third and different kind of novel by Anita Desai. Though the theme of loneliness is explored in this novel also yet the technique and the intention are different. Sarah, the heroine of the novel has withdrawn from the world of her childhood. She does not want to look back and in this respect she is different from Maya and Sita. The sense of nostalgia is become a narrative technique in this novel. Anita Desai depicts the theme of love and marriage

very beautifully and minutely in her fourth novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* It seems to be an epitome of an irresistible yearning for a purposeful life. The heroine of the novel Sita, is a highly sensitive girl. With the help of marriage one cannot revive the heart-beating troubles or pains or the happiest moments of other's life. Marriage needs more faith. Anita Desai studies the marital discords resulting from the conflict between two untouchable temperaments and two diametrically different ideas represented by Sita and her husband Raman. The conflict is going on from beginning to end between Sita and Raman. Thus Anita Desai has dwelt upon the problem of marriage, love and sex in her own way. She thinks that marriage alone does not provide a solution of life's tension and chaos. Mental satisfaction and happy married life means better understanding between husband and wife. But Sita and Raman fail to come to a harmonious whole.

In her fifth novel, *Fire on the Mountain* Anita Desai paints wonderfully observed pictures of Indian life, and an unforgettable portrait of old age. The novel explores the alienation of Nanda Kaul and her grand-daughter Raka. In comparison with other novels isolation plays an important role in this novel. That is why the heroine of this novel Nanda Kaul always likes loneliness after the death of her husband. The married life of Nanda Kaul is not life of the ordinary people because there are no emotions and feelings. Her relationship with her husband was nothing beyond the duties and obligations they had for each other. Anita Desai in the novel, In Custody, presents the thematic problem of love and marriage in a very exquisite manner, analyses the problem of Deven Sharma, an impoverished college lecturer. After his marriage with a sullen and dull wife, Deven sees a way to escape from the meanness and hopelessness of his daily life. Anita Desai deals with such common problem of post-marital life in this novel. Deven often feels as if his marriage has stood behind his imagination like a heavy weight. As regards her problems of love Anita Desai has tried her best in her novel *The Village By The Sea*. In this novel she deals with such a traditional community of fishermen. The story of the novel is woven around an alcoholic fisherman, his sick wife and their four children – Lila, Bela, Kamal and Hari. Anita Desai describes human relations, man's relation with woman, man's relation with God in the real village Thul, situated in the western coast of India.

Anita Desai's sixth novel, *Clear Light of the Day*, describes the emotional relations, the emotional reactions of two main characters- Bim and her younger sister Tara, who are haunted by the memories of the past. The novel highlights the theme of the effect of the remembrance of the past on the chief protagonists. The novel deals with the theme in relation to eternity.

Anita Desai's vision and art centers round her preoccupation with the individual and his inner world of sensibility- the chaos inside his mind. This is the keynote of her unique vision of the predicament of the individual is contemporary Indo-English fiction. This distinguishes her from other Indian women novelists. Anita Desai, among all women Indian-English novelists has discussed the art of fiction most comprehensively. She is not only well-versed in the theory and practice of the novel but also in vision and art. She analyses her creative self and explores the inner dilemmas and resources of her characters. Dealing with inner world, her fiction grapples

with the intangible realities of life. She delves deep into the inner most depth of human psyche and discovers the inner turmoil and the chaotic layer of mind. Desai looks into the inner world of reality and prefers it to the outer world of reality. She reiterates the difference between truth and reality. For her truth is synonymous of Art, not of reality, so her novels discover and convey the significance of things. The search for truth, she believes, consists in the life of the mind and the soul- the inner life. She captures the prismatic quality of life in her fiction. With this vision and art of Anita Desai, her novels deal with the problems of love and marriage along with other human problems.

Anita Desai's vision of life centers round the nucleus of internal states of mind of her characters. Therefore her images, symbolic and myths are written in the language of interior thoughts. All these images reveal the inner nature of her character with their obsessions, changing moods and psychic aberration. Her novels bear the testimony of this fact. All this illustrates her handling of situations and the problems of love and marriage, along with other human problems.

Dubey has scrupulously analyzed the works of Anita Desai, the book will prove to be a masterpiece of a critical comments on Anita Desai's fictional world.

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Stephen Gill, a well-known poet of the 21st century was born in Sialkot, Pakistan and brought up in India. He is an eyewitness of the forces of violence and terrorism. *The Flame Unmasked* is an epic poem by Stephen Gill which exhibits the poetic genius of Gill. With an identity as a skilled poet, he is also recognized as a thinker and a philosopher.

The Flame Unmasked, an epic poem by Gill is written in 8 parts, 62 cantos and runs into 152 pages. Dealing with the theme of terrorism, the poem gives a moral that all is not lost. The poem is intertwined with the threads of poet's past memories, his consciousness about the present situation and his vision about the future of human beings.

The present book comprises a collection of 18 scholarly papers which attempt to explore various critical perspectives. R. C. Shukla's article deals with the speculative solemnity in Gill's *The Flame*. Sandhya Saxena in her scholarly article studies *The Flame* and *Paradise Lost* with the comparative perspective. Sudhir K. Arora in his insightful article studies *The Flame* in the light of rasa theory where he rightly observes that Stephen Gill's *The Flame* makes the reader fall in love with the eternal flame, makes him angry at the destruction, lets lose hatred at the destructive dance of the terrorists, creates fear making him believe that it may happen to him also, touches the string of sorrow, displaying the dismal scene, arises pity, playing the cord of the heart. Madhubala Saxena's scholarly article examines Gill's epical poem *The Flame* focusing cruel terrorism. The monster terrorism has totally rocked the structure of the building of the peace without sparing any creatures creating fear and horror in them. Next article by G. L. Gautam is a comparative study of Shelley's *Triumph of Life* and Stephen Gill's *The Flame*. Both the poems perceptively deal with the politics of their time and give graphic descriptions of nature, making readers aware of their environment that faces threat on global scale.

The following article explores multifarious manifestations in Stephen Gill's *The Flame*. In all the religions of the world god is the source of life force and the eternal flame is the another manifestation of that omnipresent lifeforce. The poet ends his narration with his firm determination with a glimmer of hope. The multilateral manifestations add to the beauty of Stephen Gill's *The Flame*. Anuradha Sharma studies revamping roles of terrorism in *Ramcharitmanas* and *The Flame*. Both the poets have their own enigmatic ways of presenting

their views. Tulsidas presents the blood-bathed scenes in a language that is no ugly, while Stephen Gill according to his own tenets and time quibbles the rules of poetry to bring to the surface of ugliness of human nature. Tulsidas and Gill both long for the peace that is shattered by some mislaid individuals.

Chhote Lal Khatri's qualitative article examines symphony of music, imagery and thought. Khatri observes that *The Flame* offers us a bouquet of poetry with brilliant poetic flashes that animate a reader with its thought, music and imagery in symphony. In another article Sudhir Arora compares Gill's The Flame with Niranjan Mohanty's prayers to lord Jagannatha and writes that both the texts have religious connotations and are replete with the devotional touches though they focus contemporary reality. K. V. Dominic in his research article states that Stephen Gill's *The Flame* is an epic on anti-terrorism. He further tells that terrorism is an extreme form of ambition for power to rule others. Terrorists carry out the bloodshed of innocent citizens to gain political, national or religious power. They have no respect for human life and values.

Satish Kumar and Anupam Bansal in their insightful article study *The Flame* in comparison with *The Bhagavadgita*. They explain that both *The Bhagavadgita* and *The Flame* can exercise a tonic influence on humanity in the present age of disillusionment, dishonesty, corruption, chicanery, moral turpitude and global terrorism. There is something living and vibrant in them. The sublimity of their thoughts and feelings enlightens and sublimates the readers. K. Balachandran studies *The Flame* at a glance. He observes that the flame stands for sharing compassion, sacrifice, courage and witness. It is the visible form of fire. He further states that flames bring peace, warmth, happiness, contentment, if used in the rightful way; and if it is used in the contrary way, hatred, unhappiness, destruction and dissatisfaction. In his another article Sudhir Arora deals with *The Prophet* and *The Flame* from the comparative perspective. The comparative study between The Prophet and The Flame reveals similarities and dissimilarities as the two texts are written in different environments. The present dismal scenario has forced Gill to pen against the terrorism, the monster that has swallowed the lives of the countless children, women and men. His aim is to awaken the people who are being cheated by the maniac messiahs. On the other hand Gibran talks of the secrets that make life meaningful and worth living.

Alka Agrawal discusses Gill's attachment with nature. She says that it is nature that has gone deep into the psyche of Stephen Gill so much that he cannot separate himself from nature. Arun Kumar Mishra says in his article that Gill's The Flame is an anatomy of terrorism because Gill uses the most vibrant genre of literary expression as a medium to deal with the burning issue of global terrorism threatening the peace and stability in the modern world. G. Dominic Savio and S. J. Kala's paper aims at identifying the type of disaster discussed in *The Flame*. The heinous occurrence, its characteristic features and its cause, the magnitude of the mayhem caused and its impact are to be analyzed to prove the points of discussion. Ruchi Shinghal in her scholarly article states that Stephen Gill's *The Flame* is a celebration of peace. She further

explains that message and philosophy of peace and love is recommended for the welfare of the humanity. The poem is an yearning for peace. One can fight against the demon of terrorism only through uniting efforts following peaceful means. In his another insightful article Sudhir Arora discusses the crafting technique used by Stephen Gill in *The Flame*. He comments that Stephen Gill follows the tradition of Wordsworth not because of his poetry which is certainly not the case but because of writing 'preface' which reflects the very poetic idiom that he has applied in his poetry.