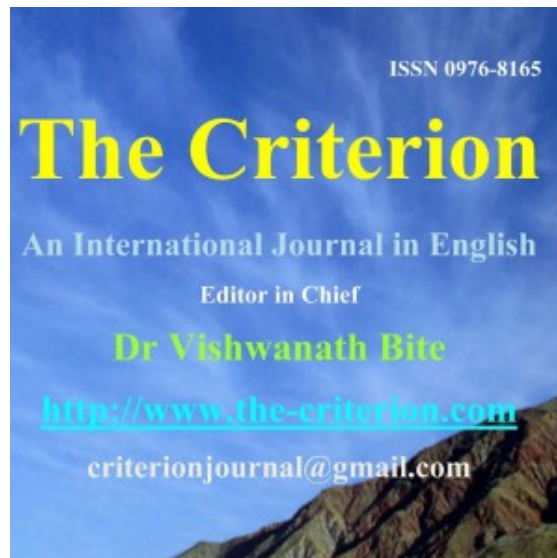


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## **. Making of the New Woman in Shashi Deshpande's Novels**

*Dr. Abhilash Nayak*

Indian women, unlike their western counterparts, have always been socially and psychologically oppressed, sexually colonized and biologically subjugated against a male-dominant social set-up. Any attempt by a woman to rise above the oppressive forces rooted in the middle class margins has either been curbed mercilessly or ignored in the name of social dignity. Shashi Deshpande all through the gamut of her ever expanding creative horizon always makes it a point to provide a separate space for her characters.

Though Deshpande doesn't like to be labeled as a feminist writer she mostly focuses on the issues relating to the 'rainbow coalition of rights, desires, agendas, struggles, victories', speaking for all the women (Sattar, 1993). Just like a staunch feminist she "seeks to discover the female author's quest for empowerment through self-expression by escaping the controlling authority of the male in the realm of social/sexual power" and examines the 'double colonization' of women under imperial and patriarchic condition. She also dares to "expose, question and challenge the age-old traditions and prejudices in male-dominated society" (Kaur, 2009:15- 20). Her novels eclectically employ the post-modern technique of deconstructing patriarchal culture and customs, and revealing these to be man-made constructs (Atrey and Kirpal, 15)

. Deshpande sees the need to harmonize the man-woman relationship as equal partners. There is no victory in the subjugation and destruction of the male. The need is to see each other's need for space, freedom of expression and love (Kaur, 2009: 24). Atrey and Kirpal too reinforce this by quoting Deshpande from her interview with Malini Nair, "aggressive feminism does not ring true in the Indian context and that for Indian women selfhood will only come from 'probing and thinking for oneself'" (07). Deshpande doesn't believe in taking 'the militant anti-men and anti-marriage stance'. We can also hear an echo of this in the following lines from Beena Agarwal, "The fictional world of Shashi Deshpande is not directed towards the annihilation of the existing order but it seeks a reorientation of society where a more balanced relationship might have been possible (217).

Female protagonists in Deshpande's novels stand apart from that of their counterparts in the writings of many contemporary women writers. Sandwiched between tradition and modernity, illusion and reality and the mask and the face, they lead a life of restlessness. Progressing along the axis of delimiting restrictions, self-analysis, protest and self-discovery, they try to create both physical as well as psychological space for themselves to grow on their own. Like the archetypal New-Woman, Deshpande's protagonists are all educated, proactive and progressive, moving on undaunted. They rebel against the dictates of their domestic duties and social sanctions, challenge 'male-devised orthodoxies about women's nature, capacities and roles' (Kaur, 56) and existential insecurity. Transgressing the socially conditioned boundaries of the body, they frankly and frequently enter into a dialogic relationship with their bodies, both within and without; represent values, beliefs and ideas which are modern and stand in contradistinction with the traditional ones. Being the representatives of the new generation of self-actualizing women, they seek to eek out new ways of dealing with their problems, instead of running away from them and realizing that the solutions lie within themselves. They have a balanced, practical approach to their problems. They realize that victory doesn't lie in the subjugation and

destruction of the male, rather than bringing him to see the indispensability of each other's space (Kaur, 91). They start up as rebellious and discontented but end up renewed and rejuvenated.

The New Woman is primarily characterized by the spirit of rebelliousness, visibly exercising its influence on all relationships, the boundaries of time and space notwithstanding. This spirit is manifested through diverse means and modes. A woman's rejection of her assigned role inside the family and society, refusal to follow the traditional paths, inherent revulsion to the idealism associated with normal physical functions of the body such as menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth/procreation which often act as catalysts for sexual colonialism, aversion to the practice of favouring the male child over and above the girl child and disrespect for the social taboos concerning the human body are some of the challenging issues that Deshpande picks up to show how the New Woman conducts herself. The present paper attempts to analyse the progression of women from passive resistance to self-discovery in some of her selected novels.

The plot of *Moving On* spanning over four generations presents a kaleidoscope of relationships –evolving, expanding and dissolving because of the inherent contradictions. The spirit of rebellion provides the right impetus to the characters to move on with confidence, at least with self-awareness. Vasu, Badrinath's wife, widely known for her shyness and reticence, was an ardent advocate of freedom, always wanted 'to be on her own', freedom from *the* constant demands on her, from *the* claims, from the need to be 'aamchi mai'(125)". She spews out her suppressed anger in the form of the stories that she writes. Writing becomes an important means for her to fight patriarchal set up. Its being a symbol of rebellion, Deshpande's protagonists employ it as one of the ways to liberation, to establish independent identity and 'break up of shackles that chain women's creativity and individual talent' as is presented in the novels *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine*, *Roots and Shadows*, *A Matter of Time* and *Moving On*(Kaur, 60 and 93).

Manjari, Vasu's daughter, also opposes the things which she doesn't like and expresses her desire for freedom. Initially she was a nice girl who 'needed everybody's approval' for doing anything and 'was willing to do anything to please others'(69) but she turns into a rebel in the later part of her life. The socialization process in patriarchal societies desexualizes not only the body of a woman but also her mind and feelings. Thus the ideal woman is a castrated creature: a female eunuch. Germaine Greer advises women to take possession of their body and to use it to attain emancipation (Kaur, 27). Shashi Deshpande seems to follow her advice closely and prepare her protagonists to claim their right over their body and sexuality and pave the route to emancipation. Just like a post-modern, progressive woman Manjari makes the desires of her body open before all. She remarks, 'all the confusion had vanished. My body is clear now about what it wanted: it wanted Shyam. It wanted Shyam's love, it wanted his body.'(187). She transgresses the defined domains of her parents and marries Shyam. Towards the end of his life Badrinath himself justifies disobedience and rebellion as an indication of growth. In his own words,

To me, disobedience is not the original sin; in fact I don't see it as a sin at all. It is a part of growing up, of moving on. Without the serpent we would have remained forever our child-selves, living in a state of innocence, nothing happening, our story stalled. We need the serpent to keep the story moving (205).

The beauty and boldness of the body over the mind is so fervidly established in this novel that it comes between the mind and the heart time and again and shakes

the foundation of all the relationships. In the character of Manjari we find the body pulling the strings of her life. She herself delightfully recollects her childhood when she had 'an innocent relationship with *her* body, with *her* unexpressed sexual desires and *her* body's needs' (71). After Shyam's death she thinks of getting united with Raja, her old paramour but Sachi's abhorrence for any relationship with a male member stops her from going ahead. She is completely aware of all the things that she lost because of her relationship with Shyam, because of her obsession with the desires of the body. Hence she doesn't want to stake her life again by getting into a new relationship with Raja. Frightened by the repeated calls from the property sharks, she seeks the help of Raja but doesn't leave the house. She boldly faces the problems of life and tries her best to remain self-sufficient all along.

After Shyam's death Manjari tries to give all attention to her children but the desires of her body distract her again. She tries to compensate her loss through her physical communion with other people. Face to face with Sachi, she thinks that she had wronged both of her children by making herself invulnerable, by being self-sufficient (311). At the end of the novel she isn't successful in going back to Raja but she is contented that her children have found a family in Raja's family. In spite of failures on all sides, she doesn't give in. Like a staunch optimist she still believes in the potentiality that life has to spur us to move on and on .....In her own words:

The search is doomed to failure. Yes, Baba, you are right, we will never find what we are looking for, we will never get what we are seeking for in other humans. We will continue to be incomplete, ampersands all of us, each one of us. Yet the search is what it's all about, don't you see, Baba, the search is the thing (343).

*The Dark Holds No Terror* by Shashi Deshpande is totally different novel in the sense that it explodes the myth of man's unquestionable superiority and the myth of woman being a martyr and a paragon of all virtues (Paul Premila, 30). Remarkable for the exploration of the inner landscape, it unravels the many questions haunting the female mind. It projects the post-modern dilemma of a woman who strongly resents the onslaught on her identity and individuality. Saru, the protagonist in the novel, is a symbol of a progressive woman who tries to exercise her influence over whatever she does, wherever she goes. She always prefers to take the road less travelled. She doesn't like women friends who mould themselves into the traditional stereotypes and remain the silent, nameless waiter at the dining table. On the contrary she has great respect for the dignified, self-reliant teacher-friend Nalu, who despises all compromises and remains single to lead a meaningful life of convictions.

At home she always tries to control Dhruva, her brother and views her mother as a rival in the game of power as her mother always resisted all the progressive moves she undertook and had disproportionate love for her son. She reacts in the same aggressive tone when she attains puberty and her mother tells her that she is a woman now. Saru doesn't want to be placed in the class of her mother. She considers economic independence as an insurance against any subordination. Afterwards she decides to join medical science to be economically independent, in spite of the stiff resistance from her mother. She also marries Manu against the wish of her parents, particularly her mother, severs the umbilical chord as an act of defiance, proving her strength, power and self-reliance. She leaves her parental abode to start her life on her own, putting the first foot towards independence. Her marital life again is not smooth. Manohar, her husband, was the master of the family before she got recognition as a doctor. Earlier she was known as the wife of Manohar but now after the explosion in the factory people recognized Manohar as the doctor's husband. The



explosion provides her an opportunity to prove her worth and assert herself, though unconsciously. But this shatters their family life. Manohar thinks Saru's success as his failure. The remarks of Atrey and Kirpal are noticeable:

Unable to assert his 'manliness' over her(Saru) like a traditional male(that is, in economic terms), he resorts to sexual molestation of her nightly while playing the loving husband during the day. His purpose, though repressed in the subconscious, is to 'punish' her for taking on the 'male' role, and to assert his superiority and power through physical violence (43).

Saru has a tough time during this period because Manu basks in her glory during the daytime but ill-treats her in the nights. Manus's indifference to her becomes intolerable and she uses sex as a tool of revenge and final estrangement. With her responsibilities increasing outside home, she recoils from Manu's love-making and he takes her rejection of sex as a rejection of himself.

In spite of this incompatibility and role-reversal, Saru clings on to this 'tenuous shadow of marriage' whose 'substance *had* long been disintegrated'. She doesn't want to prove her mother right. Not getting disheartened over this, she takes a bold step, puts an end to this façade by moving away from home. This physical displacement from her own home results in her psychological enlightenment, gives her a chance to review her relationship with all. Making a rational analysis of the situation she understands that the problem lies as much within as outside. Earlier it was Manu's inadequacy that she saw. Now she sees her own inadequacy too –her inability to combine roles and be a source of love as a daughter, sister, wife and mother. With the self-realization comes the strength and decision to confront the problems. The metaphor of 'home', used twice in the novel shows her experiments with life, the challenges, the apparent successes and failures which lead to her final reconciliation with her family.

*Roots and Shadows*, as the title suggests, is a symbolic representation of the dialectical nature of man and woman set against each other in material terms for power struggle. Indu, the female protagonist in the novel, is like a bridge between the 'Roots' and 'Shadows'. When the shadows start surfacing at the death of Akka, it is the roots that start disintegrating. The authority and monopoly associated with the roots die a natural death when Indu takes over as the owner of Akka's house. The past, a tradition of unity, of respect and of allegiance, comes to an end and the illusory future sparkles upon the seamy present, full of disbelief and questioning. Meitel rephrases this in the following words:

Roots and Shadows is a symbolic representation of the dialectical nature of man and woman set against each other in material terms for power struggle. "Roots" stands for tradition and "shadows" signifies the marginal culture. The dying tradition is soon to become shadows against a backdrop of apocalyptic change. Also it suggests that over the root is removed; life is bereft of the binding force given way to new possibilities (79).

Indu, an indomitable feminist is independent, uninhibited and insulated against the family influence. She doesn't like the dominance that Akka exercises over the other members of the family, despises all the superstitious traditions, class and caste consciousness which the family strongly encouraged. Indu does not even hesitate to hate her father who deserted her when she was hardly fifteen days old, only because she was a girl. She had been rebellious right from her childhood. Though she was trained to be obedient, unquestioning, meek and submissive, she swore that she 'would never pretend to be what *she* was not'(158). She strongly resents the Hindu tradition of women patiently clearing up the mess with their bare hands after every

meal and women like Kaki even eating off the same dirty plate their husbands had eaten in. She questions to herself “Martyrs, heroines or just fools?” and boldly challenges a tradition like this(73).

Indu’s non-conformist ideas are not directed against Akka, the person but the system of authoritarian ideas, conventional views and superstitions that she represented. When Akka puts her confidence in Indu by making her the heir to her property, all the other male members of the family accept her, but not without reservation. She is educated and is successful as a journalist but for them she is a married woman, an outsider. The women folk in her family treat her as a childless woman, not knowing the fact that Indu and her husband had opted out of it for domestic and personal reasons.

As a young girl, just like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terror*, she liberated herself from the impinging and destructive influence of the family by running away from home as her ancestral home represented ‘an authoritative male voice’(6). She hated and challenged Akka’s domination and too much of authority on matters of love, marriage, education. Everybody at home, except Indu, admired Akka very much because of her leadership qualities and assuring happiness for everybody. But Indu revolted against Akka and decolonized herself by marrying Jayant, a man of different caste, speaking a different language. Unfortunately her marital life doesn’t follow the path she visualizes. It turns into something unpalatable, where the wife is supposed to dance to the tune of the husband. What she demands from her husband is not judgment but suggestion, not criticism but appreciation, emphasis on virtues, not weaknesses. At the beginning of the novel Indu scorns at the institution of marriage which involves no sacred tie between two souls but a conjugation of two bodies with the purpose of sexual gratification.

Her marriage with Jayant was apparently successful initially. In the family she hailed from she was an incomplete human being without a sense of the wholeness of personality but with Jayant she experienced a sense of completion and wholeness. But gradually it faltered and finally resulted in their estrangement. There was disillusion as well as disorientation which forced her to believe that she is an outsider who was not affected by ‘the waves of sorrow, sympathy and comradeship’ rippling around her. She isn’t able to pull herself away from the pangs of the past, even after rejecting her own family long back. On the other hand she isn’t able to find pleasure in her relationship with Jayant. She is quite fed up with the life full of deception. She had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what Jayant wanted to hear. But Jayant betrays her hopes for harmony and integration, peace and happiness.

For her marriage is a complete surrender of her self, a ‘total surrender’ (52), a gate closing all the paths to freedom. In order to maintain domestic harmony she plays the role of an ideal wife but this role-play circumscribes her self-development by expunging her creative potential. While talking to Naren she frankly admits that she felt ‘hedged in’ by her sex and resented her womanhood as it closed so many doors to her and was linked with ‘uncleanliness’. She also doesn’t like to be initiated into the phase of motherhood as it would involve all the pains and problems of child-birth. She thinks both womanhood and motherhood to be the shackles that bind woman down to the ground and delimit their scope to be independent.

She doesn’t even bother to remain confined to the boundaries defined by the society and brushes aside all narrow conventions. In spite of being married to Jayant, she doesn’t hesitate to use words like ‘kiss’, ‘rape’, ‘deflowered’ and ‘orgasm’ while talking to Naren. She even dares to have physical relationship with Naren more than once and is not at all apologetic about it. Affair with Naren becomes a metaphor for



her rebellion against Jayant's humiliation of her for being the initiator in their sexual relationship. The affair acts as a catharsis and frees her of self-imposed limits (*Atrey and Kirpal*, 18). She faces strong resistance from her husband Jayant when she wants to quit the job and decides to become a writer. Jayant is a philistine in search of material pleasures whereas Indu is a writer in quest of her selfhood. However, Indu maintains her resilience and goes back to work silently. Her awareness of the conflicting demands made on her by the society to conform to a cultural ideal of feminine passivity and her ambition to become a creative writer force her to adopt gradual self-alienation. Everywhere, both in her personal life and her professional life, she encounters people who restrict her freedom and force her to submit to their dictates.

The novel is a manifesto of a liberated woman's voice, expressed through her body, her consciousness and her pen. Indu uses these weapons one after another to challenge the male power structure closing in on her from all sides. She tries to redefine herself in relation to others, particularly after inheriting a major chunk of Akka's property and bridges the gap between the two generations. Her enhanced economic position provides her opportunity to have the reins over others.

At the end of her journey away from home she, just like Saru in *The Dark Hold No Terror* and Jaya in *That Long Silence*, realizes that it is she who was to blame for the marital discord that separated her from her husband; she had created a hell out of heaven and had 'locked herself in a cage and thrown away the keys' (85). She decides to go back to Jayant with nothing from the past but with a new resolution that she would leave the job and start writing on her own. Her uncompromising and paradoxical feminine self finally finds its roots in her husband's home, with all the shadows disappearing. Coming out of the emotional wreckage that had shattered her self she decides to start a meaningful life of peace and harmony with her husband. She is very much confident of an existence full of hope. She declares towards the end of the novel:

If not this stump, there is another. If not this there, there will be others. Other trees will grow, other flowers will bloom, other fragrances will pervade other airs .....I felt as if I was watching life itself ....endless, limitless, formless and full of grace (202).

*That Long Silence* is apparently different from the other novels as far the theme is concerned but the motif remains the same. Here also we find the novelist projecting a character who hails from a conservative, middle-class family background, possesses the inherent strength of character but is inhibited by constricting traditional influences. Jaya is in no way different from that of the other female characters of Deshpande in regard to her critique of her relationship with her husband, with her mother, brother, the society and her strong resentment against the social taboos.

Mohan, her husband, is full of praise for his mother who silently bore all humiliations heaped upon her by his father but Jaya has a different interpretation for this. She sees the silence in Mohan's mother 'a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon (36). Jaya too tries to fall into the same pattern by suppressing her own wishes and act according to her husband's intentions. She follows him so closely that finally she's left with no identity of her own, 'just emptiness and silence' (144). She is up in arms against the traditional notion of an ideal marriage. She violently projects her resistance to such a tradition:

If Gandhari who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn't want to know anything (61).

Just like Jayant in *The Roots and Shadows*, Mohan is a materialist who is ready to manipulate all resources to maintain an air of dignity but unfortunately falls into a trap and an enquiry is on. After his suspension from his post of superintendent engineer, he is forced to leave his Churchgate bungalow and accommodate in the humble Dadar flat of his wife. He transforms into a pitiable shadow of his former self as he is no longer able to maintain his aristocratic façade. The process of the dissolution of his dignity sets in. He looks a 'sad, bewildered man', his former self-assurance deserting him completely. He frightened confesses to her, "I don't think I stand a chance. I'm finished" (9). Mohan's loss of personality helps Jaya to gather confidence. At this critical juncture in her life, Jaya doesn't breakdown but falls back upon her inner resources. Remembering her father, a Gandhian freedom fighter, she gets inspired. It was her father who had named her 'Jaya' meaning victory and always motivated her to be courageous and resilient.

In the early years of her marriage she utilized the training that she had received at home to be obedient and submissive. Like 'a pair of bullocks yoked together'(8) she and Mohan shared the burden of life together; people outside their world were left with no clues to understand whether there was love or hatred between them. The mechanicality of this image indicates the loveless life that many partners of marriage are forced to lead. Gradually she realized more and more that the wrong must be resisted. Though she seemed to be passive she continued the 'guerilla war' with her husband for many years (9). In course of time the covert fighter in her becomes an overt one with more confidence and strength.

Many times in her marital life she resents the kind of treatment meted out to her but isn't able to speak it out. One day in a state of sexual ecstasy when Jaya was restless for the passionate response, Mohan withdrew himself from her contact and did not care for her heat of passion.... Jaya is frustrated but instead of being destructive, she endeavours to sublimate her suppressed energy. She decides to revive her career as a journalist(Agarwal, 78). She writes for the newspaper column Seeta in which she portrays the travails of the middle-class wives and becomes very popular. Equipped with the weapons of her imagination and self-assertion she probes the meaning of marriage, love and life. She confronts life through her fiction and writes a story about a man 'who could not reach out to his wife except through her body'(144). The story is considered to be an authentic depiction of life and wins her a prize but her husband Mohan was deeply hurt by this story as he believed it to be a literal presentation of their own married life. But Jaya is too strong to get affected by such minor acts of disapproval.

With Mohan it's mostly "a silent, wordless love-making"(85). Such dispassionate physical encounters lead to her final disenchantment when she no longer gets stirred up by the passions and gets used to sleeping beside him without a desire. When Mohan moves away from home all of a sudden, she ruminates over her relationship with him. She realizes that she and Mohan didn't make up a family, a home. Though they had been married for seventeen years, there were no "bridges of understanding and love between them" (8). There had been only 'emptiness' between them (185). This emptiness provides the base for her alienation from Mohan and illicit relationship with Kamat. He was an intellectual structured to loneliness and it is his intelligence that pulls Jaya towards him. Besides he is warm, friendly and companionable, attentive and considerate towards her problems and treats her as an equal. He reads her stories with attention and provides her valuable suggestions, thus felicitating her intellectual progress. But Kamat dies a sudden death, unattended, alone. Jaya is too afraid to acknowledge her clandestine affair with him and slinks

away without anybody's knowledge. She stands at the crossroads of life when her husband has lost the job, her mentor is dead and their marriage on the brink of breaking down. But Jaya doesn't lose hope. She anxiously waits for the return of Mohan. At one point we are made to feel that Mohan has left home for good but at the end of the novel we understand that he has only gone to Delhi on some personal work, to try to get reinstated. He succeeds in his efforts and sends a telegram to this effect. It seems evident that both Jaya and Mohan are eager to start everything afresh, in spite of the pains and pangs of the past. Jaya wants 'just to live and to know' that 'at the end of the day my family and I are under a roof, safe, enclosed, in a secure world'(181).

Jaya decides to make adjustments wherever possible, through an objective analysis of the situation. As she herself admits, "I've always thought –there's only one life, no chance of a reprieve, no second chances. But in this life itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices" (191-92). In stead of blaming Mohan for every failure of hers she resolves to try to be more introspective and find out means to live life fully. She realizes that everyone should fight his/her own battle, through a balance between ego and self. She is aware that changes don't occur overnight but there is always scope for development. She admits at the end of the novel:

But we can always hope .Without that life would be impossible .And if there is nothing I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible (193).

*The Binding Vine* is another venture in the same direction, showing the trajectory of a woman's predicament, perseverance, perspicacity and victory in a male dominated world. It is through the consciousness of the female protagonist that the novelist describes her search for love, meaning and happiness in life. Following the footprints of other female protagonists of Deshpande, Urmi (Urmila-the central character) is educated, a co-breadwinner and assumes a new role in response to the needs of the hour. As a working woman she has a lot of problems to face both at office and at home. At the office she faces the antagonism from the male colleagues and at home she gets no cooperation from her children or parents. She feels that things would have been different if her husband had extended a cooperative hand to help her out. Though she had a love marriage, she wasn't happy with the way she was being treated. Initially her life was full of ecstasy when her love provided her immense strength but with the passage of time, her confidence wears off and she reels under constant fear of losing her husband but she strives to maintain an independent identity as far as possible. The fine fusion of psychological suffering, physical pain and the exposition of social reality makes this text as a perfect voice of subaltern who pass through the stage of silence to self-realization(Agarwal, 98).

All the marriages, both arranged and love, in the novel are unhappy and fraught with one or the other kind of malady. Urmi calls all the arranged marriages cold blooded affairs because in such marriages the woman never has a choice and suffers all along her life because of her submissive nature. Love marriages are in no way different. The marriages of Mira and Urmi are there before us to see. Both of these are full of hypocrisies and contradictions. Because of an unhappy marriage, Urmi gets trapped in an illicit relationship with Dr. Bhaskar Jain in whom she finds a perfect friend. These extramarital affairs are threats to the age-old institution of marriage but they are inevitable in the life of a woman whose physical needs are relegated in the name of social dignity. These affairs as we have seen in most of her major novels, are happy interludes in their general drama of pain. The protagonists get into these relationships, not out of desire but out of necessity, notwithstanding the disapproval from the society. In times of crisis they need some source of support to

fall back on. When they regain their composure, they either forget these relationships or are forced to turn their backs on them.

The New Woman looks at sex without a spiritual and emotional base from a different perspective and sees absolutely no difference between rape and this kind of forced physical relationship. Gender discrimination is another ailment that women in most traditional societies are subjected to. Urmila remembers Kishore's father who never looked at his daughter Vanaa even though she tried her best to draw his attention, only because Kishore was there. Urmila strongly scoffs at the women who silently tolerate the torture inflicted upon them by their partners. She appeals Vanaa to assert herself and stop crawling before her husband so that he would go on bulldozing her. She becomes furious when she comes to know that Vanaa wasn't given a choice before the medical termination of her pregnancy, though she wanted to have a son. As a woman aware of the new responsibilities in changing times, Urmila speaks highly in favour of the freedom of choice for woman but she, nevertheless, knows well that for a girl marriage is a kind of indemnity which provides her security and safeguards her from other people.

Love, the binding vine, sustains all relationships, provides the strength to survive. Urmila recollects when she finds things slipping away from her hands, "And yet I think of Vanaa, heavily pregnant, sitting by me ...I think Akka crying for Mira, of Inni's grief when Papa told her about his illness ...of the touch of grace ...in Shakutai's hand when she covered me gently at night ..." (203). These gestures of affection show the true value of love, an important ingredient in all human relationships.

An in-depth analysis of Deshpande's female characters reveal the trajectory of the physical, intellectual and psychological growth of the New Woman through their constant resistance, struggle and success. The apparent failures at different phases of their lives don't jeopardize their inherent strength; on the contrary they awaken their superior selves and provide them the impetus to look forward for newer ways of living their lives. Notwithstanding their improved socio-economic position they always try their best to maintain a balanced social relationship. From the quagmire of their troubles and tribulations, they always rise victorious, not vanquished, rejuvenated, and not refurbished. Deshpande, unlike the feminists, doesn't make her characters all time rebels against patriarchic hegemony; she makes them grow with their renewed knowledge of their own selves vis-à-vis the world they live in.

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## Intertextuality in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*

Abirami.V.

Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, is a brilliant example for intertextuality since it is a blend of fact and fiction. Atwood has reconstructed the nineteenth century historical fiction based on a felonious twin murder and this research paper delves into the historical and literary intertextuality focusing on the historical facts along with the fictional elements surrounding the enigmatic murderess Mark Grace. The paper further examines the link between Victorian and the postmodern literature with a special emphasis on Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings* and Atwood's *Alias Grace*.

*Alias Grace*, a mixture of authorial invention and historical facts and fiction, is a rich source of intertextuality. Margaret Atwood has reconstructed the nineteenth century historical fiction based on an iniquitous twin murder trial and this very evident when Grace while adeptly sewing "Tree of Paradise" quilt remarks that she has changed the quilt's "pattern a little to suit (her) own ideas" (459) where the "quilt with a adapted pattern" symbolizes intertextuality. This research paper delves into the historical and literary intertextuality focusing on the historical facts along with the fictional elements surrounding the enigmatic murderess Mark Grace. The paper further examines the link between Victorian and the postmodern literature with a special emphasis on Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings* and Atwood's *Alias Grace*. The paper also focuses on the literary intertextual concepts that Atwood shares with other twentieth century writers.

Margaret Atwood for the second time explores the life and trial of the infamous murderess Grace Marks in her ninth novel *Alias Grace*. Atwood in this historical narrative fiction takes the reader back to nineteenth century by probing into the life and mind of a so called notorious and one of the most inscrutable criminals of those times. Grace Marks is an enigmatic murderess of the Victorian age when women were epitomized both as a symbol of morality as well as evil manipulators and seducers. According to Cristie March "*Alias Grace* is an authorial mosaic which includes the point of view of several characters along with the journal entries, poems, diaries, newspaper reports and letters related to Grace's trial." (1) The novel unfolds as Grace Marks, serving her time in the penitentiary recounts her life story to a young Dr Simon Jordan. It is an open ended fiction with an interesting twist which doesn't identify Grace as guilty or innocent but leaves the readers to make up their own mind.

Reading today has become a journey from one text to another. The meaning of a text lies between the text and the various texts referred and related to this text. This results in the network of textual relations and the birth of intertextuality. *Alias Grace* addresses several themes such as gender, class, history, duplicity, psychoanalysis, intertextuality and ethnicity. Intertextuality was introduced by Julia Kristeva in 1960s and she referred to texts in two different axes: horizontal axes which connect the author and the reader of the text, and vertical axes which connect the text to other texts. These two axes are connected by means of shared codes. But in the recent times intertextuality refers much more than the influences of the writers on each other. Hantui in his literature states that *Alias Grace* employs the post-modern narrative technique in order to explore the instable personal identity and historical knowledge. This fiction is an intertextual novel with multiple voices and is known to employ many sources, inserting authentic letters which are exchanged among a few characters and other types of texts in the narrative. Atwood herself quotes a number of writers who provide their views over Kinnear murders and each of their points of view is different from the other writers. Further the character of Grace in the novel is a portrait painted after taking into account the descriptions of different people in various angles.

Rosario Arias Doblas states that "In the past three decades many women writers are interested in writing fictions set in the Victorian Age and hence there is a proliferation of historic fiction set in the Victorian period." (86) The fictions of several women writers such as A.S. Byatt, Sarah Waters and Margaret Atwood reflect their desire to rewrite history by exploring into the past, in particular the Victorian Age. They further narrow down to investigate the point of view of female characters whose voices were hardly heard in the past.



*Alias Grace* is an amalgamation of scientific, social and psychological issues of the nineteenth century. Further the novel relates to several critical subjects such as slavery, bondage, abortion, the illegitimate relationship between the maid and the master and the like. *Alice Grace* illustrates strong intertextual relationship where the novel primarily holds reference to two other texts which depicts a different version of Grace Mark's life story – Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings* (1853) and Atwood's *The Servant Girl* (1974), a television drama written primarily based on Moodie's version. This fiction is a reconstruction of the past. Atwood herself in her 'Author's Afterword,' gives an account of all those texts used by her to construct *Alias Grace*. All these materials firmly support her to establish a dialogue between the past and the present. In fact the historical event has been interpreted in various forms for more than a century and the above two texts along with Atwood's *Alias Grace* provides an excellent road map for an intertextual analysis. *Alias Grace* opens in 1851 and ends in 1872.

The story of Mark Grace is narrated by Atwood at several levels. Grace herself ponders over her past and the recollections are narrated in the chronological order. Dr. Simon Jordan retrospectively presents the story through his thoughts and action. Further his letters and the reports of Grace develop the plot medically. The quilt-patches, blood and flowers are important metaphors which communicate a deep sense of meaning to the text. Apart from the perceptible narration of events, the plot is also built up on memory and dreams which relates to pre-Freudian psychoanalytical concepts.

The narrative technique employed by Atwood successfully holds a connection between the past and present intact which mirrors a well-known fact that past still lingers in the present and the present is interwoven with the past. Further the fiction is moved to a state of spectral novel by utilizing the literary texts as the voice of spirits and ghosts and thereby maintaining the continuity of the past and the present. Atwood within her own feminist perspective has tried to bring the story of Grace to spotlight with the help of history, science and historiography. Further Shiller states that the neo-Victorian novels are laying more emphasis reconstructing the past and on the events and people left out by history and hence "manage[s] to preserve and celebrate the Victorian past." (541) The presence of intratextual references in the presentation of Grace's story in terms of ballads, letters, newspaper cuttings and other historical documents reflect the myths and fantasies associated with contemporary definitions of Victorian Women. Hantiu rightly points out that "Grace's story is just one of the many telling about the destiny of an Irish immigrant to Canada, a story constructed out of many pieces of evidence but still uncertain. But doesn't history itself mean effacement and mingling of records, isn't clearly marked down as a semiotic of uncertainty?" (8)

I think of all the things that have been written about me – that I am an inhuman female demon, that I am an innocent victim of a blackguard forced against my will ... And I wonder, how can I be all of these different things at once? (Atwood, *Alias Grace*, 23)

Intertextuality is a common element found in most Canadian women writers belonging to different periods and Atwood is no exception. Faye Hamill demonstrates the "interdependent and mutually nourishing" (140) intertextual relationships by drawing various illustrations from novels, letters, magazines, diaries and speeches. Margaret Atwood's reading of Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings* (1853) has brought in a rewarding experience of the writer. It initially inspired Atwood to attempt *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970) by making use of actual excerpts to turn Moodie's experience into a hypnotic mind and sense disorientation trip. On the contrary, it was Moodie's diary which gave the impetus and input to write the much celebrated *Alias Grace*. According to Hantiu,

"What Atwood insists on in her novel is a kind of postmodern loss of identity... In order to replace what she had lost, to reduce the dissonance, she surrenders to the culture of the moment – This is why she assumes either Mary Whitney's or Nancy Montgomery's identity to such an extent that for long periods of time Grace is but an "alias". (4)

The concept of intertextuality is meant to designate a kind of language which, because of its embodiment of otherness, is against, beyond and resistant to truth. (Issig) Earlier Atwood had completely lost trust and faith over a modernist interpretation of truth and knowledge. She assumed that a non-fiction narrates only

truth. Based on this assumption, she wrote *The Servant Girl* (1974) based on Susanna Moodie's *Life in the Clearings* which became Atwood's primary source. But with *Alias Grace* Atwood has successfully deconstructed Susanna Moodie by exposing the errors and biased approach in the non-fictional account of Mark Grace's trial. In the postscript of *Alias Grace*, Atwood herself writes about *The Servant Girl* that it "relied exclusively on the Moodie version, [it] cannot be taken as definitive." (467) But again *Alias Grace* does not attempt to replace the previous play written in 1974.

The roots of *Alias Grace* easily convey the message that it is a historical novel which is based on a sensational twin murder case in the nineteenth century. But Atwood has crafted this fact with all the ingredients of a fiction and has rendered a perfect package to the readers. Along the fictional element of the twin murder, the fictional episodes included are: illegitimate love affair between the master and the housekeeper, protagonist Grace with a distressing Irish background and the vicious murder. Atwood not only bring to light the disturbed psyche of the murderer but also the class distinction, gender discrimination and social status. Though the novel moves centrally around Grace Marks, Atwood reflects the many hues of power relationships in the fiction. In particular the female characters in the novel are depicted with a realistic approach in every sense, bringing the nineteenth century lifestyle live before the eyes of the readers. History plays a crucial role in the narration of Grace's life story and hence holds a story element of intertextuality in *Alias Grace*.

Atwood writes "The Past belongs to us, because we are the ones who need it." (229) Grace is considered to be an unreliable narrator who does not recount the actual truth but what the people around her wish to hear. As a result, there are multiple perspectives surrounding the character of Grace. Though Atwood completely relied on Moodie's accounts earlier, she identified severe contradictions later. But similar to Grace, Atwood believes that every one of us has a multiple perspective and approach. Hence "By reconstructing and renegotiating Moodie's historical past imaginatively, Atwood pays homage to her as a literary foremother who, though dead, continues to live on" Apart from several intratextual references such as papers, poems, articles and scrap book, there are numerous references to intertextual dialogue by employing poetry and fiction of Emily Bronte, Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, H.W.Longfellow, Emily Dickinson, Poe, Tennyson and William Morris apart from the excerpts from Sussana Moodie's *Life in a Clearing*.

The ambiguity in the conclusion of *Alias Grace* reminds us of Charlotte Bronte's *Villette* as Atwood leaves the fate of Grace open. It is up to the mind of the reader to decide whether Grace is haunted by her guilt of the twin murders or her repressed memories of the past. Further Wilson states that

"Although *Alias Grace* is a historical novel, based on the nineteenth century crime, history is as much a construction in this postmodern and postcolonial novel..." (225)

Historical intertextuality is very evident in the postmodern fiction because without the historical accounts of the twin murder, Atwood would not have come out this fiction. Further the influence of Victorian past, the life style of the people, their thought process, their attitude towards various aspects of life and manner are all well captured by this neo-Victorian novelist and has added the spice of fictional element only when Atwood was not able to relate to the historical facts. Apart from the primary literary influence of Susanna Moodie, Atwood has numerous literary intertextuality references in the fiction ranging from Charlotte Brontë to Edgar Allen Poe.

To conclude, *Alias Grace* is a multi-dimensional historical narrative which is sometimes a tales of Scheherazade and a slice of history of the Canadian immigrants and at other times a thrilling courtroom drama and successful reconstruction of Victorian past. It is an amalgamation of narrative, history and storytelling and therefore rightly termed as a verbal quilt. Each of the fifteen sections of the novel is titled in the name of a quilt pattern, an important reflection of intertextual reference and *Alias Grace* does her role extremely well as a skilled seamstress stitching the September 2011 perfection with a figurative movement from the quilt to guilt.

Atwood's use of the quilt patterns, the separate individual patterns beautifully interwoven to craft a quilt is a manifestation of intertextuality in her fiction and the open ended conclusion of the fiction is largely due to the historical and literary intertextuality. Therefore Atwood leaves it to the readers to determine whether Grace is sane or insane, a victim of circumstances or a perfidious murderer, innocent or guilty.

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## Treatment of Puranas in Raja Rao's *Serpent and the Rope*

**Dr. Alka Sharma**

Puranas are not merely fabricated stories .Puranas narrate a sacred history. In other words , Puranas tell us how through the consciousness , a reality came into existence-it can be a complete reality or only a fragment of reality . Infact , Puran is such a dynamic word which always revigorate the old in the new context ( puraa navam karoti) . The Indian-English novelists search and nourish the roots in their own Indian past , discover the myths that facilitate communication in the realm of timelessness and dovetail them with the experience of the immediate present. The attraction towards the wealth of our mythological paraphernalia and its treatment in Indian – English novel has made it a tapestry embellished with mythical spangles .

Age cannot wither , nor custom stale the life blood of the infinitely significant role of Puranas .Puranas are not merely fabricated stories; the man used to treasure these myths in his priceless possession. Puranas are infact, straightforward stories , a narrative which reflects the integrating values around which societies are built and organized. It codifies belief, safeguards morality, vouches for the efficacy of ritual and provides social norms. That's why Bronis law Malinowski describes it as :

“ ...a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or artistic image, but a pragmatic character of primitive faith and wisdom.”<sup>1</sup>

Puranas narrate a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial times.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Puranas tell us how through the consciousness, a reality came into being- it can be a complete reality or only a fragment of reality.

In M.H.Abrams words:

One story in mythology....A system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and action of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, and to establish the eationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which men conduct their lives.<sup>3</sup>

Puranas are a hard working extremely important cultural force. It is a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings , social submissions, even practical requirements. Finally, we can say that Puranas relate past with the present. They are a statement of past, greater and more relevant reality by which the present life, fate and man's course of action is determined. Puranas are preservatives of traditions. They are dynamic and constantly regenerated.

Traditional Indian words are not only impregnated with root based meanings but also have a long traditional meaning which has always influenced the collective Indian mind at different

levels and in different situations of life. These traditional words have “sanskaraised” Indian psyche and as a result Indian’s understanding about the universe is expressed in the terms – Brahman, Purush, Shakti etc. Puran is another such dynamic word which always revigorate the old in the new context (Puraa navam Karoti). That is why Puranas are an expression of man ‘s deepest concer about himself and his place in the scheme of universe, his relationship with man, nature and god. Infact Puranas form a structure of ideas, images , beliefs, hopes and fears, love and hate. Eric Gould observes that myth is a synthesis of values which uniquely manages to mean most things to most men. It is allegory and tautology, reason and unreason , logic and fantasy , waking thought and dream, origin and end.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, the sole function of a myth lies in reconciliation of an original event to interpret and explain human nature in the modern context, and between the new meaning and the old event, this ontological gap is filled by myths .

The Indian – English novelists search and nourish the roots in their own Indian past, discover the myths that facilitate communication in the realm of timelessness and dovetail them with the experience of the immediate present. Indian English novelists have not aped their European counterparts, but they have harked back to the mythology of their own culture to forge significant patterns of fiction. Indian people are closer to their mythology than the modern Europeans The attraction towards the wealth of our mythological paraphernalia and its treatment in Indian –English novel has made it a tapestry embellished with mythical spangles.

If a world-view is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experience, then the Indian epics offer a widely accepted basis of such a common background which permeates the collective unconscious of the whole nation.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the Indian novelists have tried hard to probe deep into the realm of our past experience and, by connecting it with the present one, they have succeeded in making the contemporary reality more clear and more meaningful, giving us an impression that here is god’s plenty. Puranas have lend new meaning to the contemporary events. Puranas are like flesh and blood for the constitution of life. Infact Puranas are the legitimatization of life and life finds self - awareness, self -correction and self -realization in them.

“In Puranic history, women is conceptualized as Shakti, the possession of which is the ultimate quest. She is the one who is ever desired, won and lost again in the endlessly revolving strife for the world dominion between the demon-giants and the gods.”<sup>6</sup>

Shakti is, infact, the mindset of the people, of the society, of the civilization. Shakti is everything and everything is in Shakti. Shakti is union and this unity is truth- the ultimate truth. Prakriti and Purush constitute the ultimate reality – the ultimate truth. Though the two are diametrically opposed to each other, the evolution of the world takes place because of the union of the two. Modern man, like king Surath and vaish Samadhi, has painful realization of his own isolation. There is a mood of total vacancy and dejection:

“There is nobody to go to now; no house, no temple, no city, no climate, no age.”<sup>7</sup>

Preoccupied with the ultimate problems of life, man passes through various situations, making endeavours to transcend the fragmented and splintered worldview to arrive at an integrated one, to reach out to the absolute in order that the relative may become meaningful. It is during these efforts that he mutters to himself, the metaphysical questions like “who are you and whose, whence have you come?” and till he finds answers to these questions, he remains a wanderer, a vagabond on the earth. Feminine Principle is the agency through which self-realization is possible. Shakti is the power through which socio-physical, psychological, cultural union is possible. Womanhood is a vital entity for spiritual development.

Raja Rao in his **The Serpent and the Rope** suggests that Shiva and Parvati are the manifestations of metaphysical truth. Ramaswami, the protagonist, recognizes his identity through the feminine principle in order to gain a true perspective of his quest for wholeness. Both Savitri and Ramaswami achieve self-realization, as in them, the Masculine principle is wedded to the Feminine Principle. On the other hand, the marriage of Rama and Medeleine proves unsuccessful and barren because Medeleine fails to be the true Feminine Principle – the feminine active principle, the efficient and material cause of the universe.

Even the queen of England in the novel is seen to be the feminine principle that makes the universe move. “To Mitra she is Varuna, to Indra she is Agni, to Rama she is Sita, to Krishna she is Radha”(352) She is Savitri for Satyavan. “She is the Prakriti that makes Purush manifest. The matrishakti of Hindu mythology that gains a universal significance through Raja Rao’s panoramic application of it.”<sup>8</sup>

Shakti is active and creative principle and “Maya- Shakti is personified as world protecting, feminine, maternal side, the ultimate Beings. She is the creative joy of life... she instills into us – and she is herself – surrenders to changing aspects of existence. Maya Shakti is Eve, the Eternal Feminine”<sup>9</sup> In the novel, the universe manifests the creativity of Maya.

Woman is the earth, air, ether, sound; woman is the microcosm of the mind... the knowledge in knowledge... woman is the meaning of the world... woman is kingdom, solitude, time ... woman rules, for it is she... the universe... woman is the world. (352)

The position of Shakti is described as :

“the womb (bhaga) represents the great Prakriti (nature)” yet “the possessor of womb (Bhagvan) is Shiva.”<sup>370</sup>

Thus Feminine principle through which Ramaswami realizes the ultimate truth because “the touchstone for measuring the truth and falsity of philosophies, ideologies and people.”<sup>10</sup> That Ramaswami’s quest for truth is scaffolded on the Feminine principle is clear in his relationships



with various women in various forms as Shakti present in various forms – Madeleine, Savithri, Saroja, Lakshmi, Little Mother and Aunt Lakshmana.(170)

Savithri, like her mythical counterpart, emerges triumphant in leading her eternal lover to the path of the knowledge of the self. As an embodiment of the three aspects of the feminine principle – Shakti, Prakriti and Sri. Savithri symbolizes love and the power of devotion which can conquer death itself. 11

Savithri remains a self-effacing, self-negating person who unlike Madeleine becomes 'atman' beyond body. In this way, she becomes a 'hypostatic presence' which he has been looking for and she becomes, as it were, a means of entry into a state where he transcends the dimensions of the ego and annihilates time and place.<sup>12</sup> There is an archetypal relationship between Savithri and Ramaswamy- the seeker and sought. Savithri's love for Rama represents an enactment of myth of the eternal love of seeker unrealized longing for Absolute. To Rama, Savithri is symbolic of Parvati and Radha; to Savithri, Rama is the symbol of Shiva and Lord Krishna. In a passage which recounts the sweet longing of the gopi for Krishna of the soul for the divine, Raja Rao describes Savithri's yearning and devotion for Rama:

A Hindu woman knows how to worship her Krishna, her Lord. When the moon shines over the Jamuna and the lights are lit in the households, and cows are milked, then it is Janki's son who plays on the banks of the Yamuna in Brindavan ... Krishna dances on the red earth....(209)

Savithri's ritual marriage to Rama symbolizes the union of the Feminine principle with the Masculine principle.

Thus in the character of Savithri, Raja Rao depicts woman as the metaphysical counterpart of man – Shakti to Shiva – Prakriti to Purush, as the cosmic energy, vital to the universe – as the sound born of silence as the power born of fire. Perfect union represents the final union with the absolute. Thus it is through a perfect understanding of the Feminine principle that one can learn to annihilate one's ego to transcend the self, and achieve realization. It is in his relationship with Savithri that Ramaswamy realizes the significance of the Feminine Principle for self – illumination.

With the impact of modern literature, we began to look at the gods, demons, sages, and kinds of our mythology and epics, not as some remote concoctions but as types and symbols, possessing psychological background... Passing inevitably through phases of symbolic, didactic, or over-dramatic writing, one arrived at the stage of valuing realism, psychological and technical explorations and technical virtuosity.<sup>13</sup>

It goes without saying that the force Puranas exert on the society is directly related to the credence its members attach to them. This is possible only when in our modern society this Puranic history is knitted in the fabric of contemporary scenario. The most pertinent question is that whether modern woman is empowered or she is an epitome of fulfillment like Durga or Shakti or Puranas? Well friends, I think she has the moral and spiritual power even today. If we talk of power and strength in terms of courage, endurance, self – sacrifice, women is the

supreme power today. The only important thing is that she needs to realize that Shakti Swaroop or herself.

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## Anita Desai's *In Custody* – A War

Anjali Sharma

'In Custody' by Anita Desai is a war between the languages – Urdu and Hindi, innocence and corruption, good and evil, loyalty and deception, success and failure, and poor and rich. It is the custody of the language Urdu which finds a custodian in Deven in the novel but it is not as lucky in real life. What to talk about Urdu only. Even Sanskrit language is also looming under the same fate. India, the country of so many languages is the parent of Sanskrit which further proudly parented many languages.

Anita Desai is a writer consecrated with the art of weaving a fine cloth of entangled threads of hardships – so common and so uncommon- in a very smooth way. The present novel is another example of her fine designs.

In this resonant and realistic novel 'In Custody', Anita Desai endeavours to link the readers' line of thought to the bilingual scene of Hindi versus Urdu before and after partition of India, as Urdu 'language of the court in the days of royalty – now languishes in the back lanes and gutters of the city. No place for it to live in the style to which it is accustomed, no emperors and nawabs to act as its patrons'.<sup>(14)</sup>

The revelation of post colonialism and imperialism tracks a criss-cross of cultures, traditions, displacement, Diasporas, alienations and consequential chain of illusions and disillusion. A parallel is drawn between fiction and history in relation to the languages. A small-town man, Deven, gets the opportunity to interview his hero, Nur Shahjehanabadi, the greatest living Urdu poet. Having always loved Urdu poetry and missed the chance to be an Urdu language professor, Deven is charmed into going to Delhi, the big city by his childhood friend, Murad. Even though he shrinks at the idea of possibly being exploited by sharp but selfish Murad, the dream of meeting Nur draws him on. So he sets off on a number of adventures on Sundays, the one free day that he should have spent with his wife and son.

In his efforts to interview the famous Urdu poet, Deven finds himself entangled in the web of paying Nur's bills for food, medicine, and even maintenance bills of his pets-pigeons. He finds himself paying money to Nur's family even after the latter's death.

'He had accepted the gift of Nur's poetry and that meant he was *custodian* of Nur's very soul and spirit'

Deven's meetings with Murad always made him sense the latter's desire to earn money and be a superior person. Despite the fact that Murad expresses his superficial passion for Nur's poetry. Deven looks at him as a 'chameleon'<sup>(34)</sup>. Nur calls Murad a joker. But since Deven works for Murad's magazine *Awaaz*, he lets himself be a fool in the presence of his hero, Nur since childhood.

This mannerism of Deven is typical to Anita Desai's portrayal through which complex issues are presented in a realistic style. Anita Desai emphasizes on the individual's inner world of sensibility urges and conflicts. The characterization of Deven and Nur has the typicality of Anita Desai's implicit maneuver as usual.

Deven and Murad are childhood friends. Murad has grown up into a smart man who knows how to lure others and get his work done while Deven, a simple teacher has never been able to command the attention of his students. The novel questions the meaning of friendship that stands on selfishness and insensitivity as observed by Deven's relationship with Murad, the bonds of marriage mirrored in Deven's complacent behaviour towards his wife and the educational system of the nation where students with scientific backgrounds are meant for the luxuries of life whereas those with a knack for humanities are shown to rot in dingy classrooms. This fact is also revealed in the way in which Deven's Hindi students take technical classes outside in order to get employment, giving least importance to the learning

of the subject within the college premises. This is a reflection of the fact that the art, culture, heritage and history of the country lies threatened in front of the emerging technological boom of the globe.

Anita Desai is best known for her studies of Indian life. She has been successful in touching almost all the social evils prevailing in Indian society like alcoholism, poverty, superstitions, fight for religion, brain drain, domestic violence, exploitation of poor by the rich etc. Murad earns more but never pays Deven for his contributions as Murad is the son of a rich businessman and Deven of a poor widow.

She has also portrayed the true picture of the plight of teachers, poets and the deprived ones struggling for name, fame and wealth. In the present novel Anita Desai has tried to bring up a new issue of problems of extinction of a language like Urdu after the partition of India and Pakistan.

Deven, the protagonist is fond of Urdu poetry. The whole novel is cleverly woven around Deven's preparations and efforts to interview Nur. Deven has not been able to do much in life. He lacks confidence. In spite of being aware that the people around him are constantly pouring out benefits from his simplicity, weakness of not able to put forth his ideas, and innocence, he acts like a puppet in their hands because when it is a choice between head and heart, he chooses heart. When Murad approaches him to interview Nur, Deven realizes it is a dream come true. Desai has portrayed a weak protagonist who is easily driven by others and who like a true Shakespearean protagonist of a tragedy is held between the decision of whether to interview Nur or not. While climbing up the stairs of Nur's house, Deven lives a whole life and Anita seems to suggest that he will have to climb up very high to reach the status of Nur.

The dirty, old furniture in Nur's room shows the value and status of the old Urdu poet after partition among the rising Hindi poets in India. The room is dark and seems to reflect the true picture of the language Urdu which is in total darkness. And the poet in white clothes sitting in that dark room shows the status enjoyed by him even after partition. The image of Nur as a poet soon shatters when Deven, expecting him to be surrounded by intellectuals and poets of his stature, finds him with people who are more interested in reciting their own poetry. What Deven finds at his hero's house is misery and confusion. Having sunk into a senile old age, surrounded by fawning sycophants, married to a younger calculating wife who wants to use his glory to win herself fame, Nur is not what he once was. Or perhaps he always was this.

'It was clear to Deven that these louts, these lafanganas of the bazaar world-shopkeepers, clerks, bookies and unemployed parasites- lived out the fantasy of being poets, artists and bohemians here on Nur's terrace in Nur's company.'<sup>(55)</sup>

Nur, like a withered leaf waiting for its decay, is barely able to respond. But his weak stature seems to get electrified after he has consumed alcohol. He forgets that he is a poet- rather he behaves like a common Muslim who feels rejected, neglected and dejected. He hates 'Hindi wallahs'. He is trapped in the vanity of Imtiaz Begum, now his second wife, a prostitute who has ruined the life of the poet. She is so called lover of poetry and herself a poetess. She is jealous of Nur's skill and competes with him by holding 'mehfil' of poetry where she recites her poems in public.

Deven, the middle aged man, is drawn to this old poet, wishing to help and protect him though he cannot defend himself. His repeated visits to Nur's place and the experiences chase him even after returning home. He gets acquainted to some new aspects of life. Nur has two wives and feels guilty of not providing a good living to his family. This forces Deven to think that he too does not give any time to his wife Sarla and son Manu. The comparison between his father and his son's father

(himself) brings a change in him. Deven takes his son for a walk after he reaches back home. And Manu notices the change and reciprocates by sharing his secrets about his teacher.

‘He rushed along at his father’s side instead of dragging behind as was more usual with him.....; he too seemed to find something pleasant and acceptable in the uncommon experience of a walk with his father.’<sup>(81)</sup>

Anita Desai always has a character with psychological disorder in her novels. Be it Maya of ‘Cry the Peacock’, Uma in “Where Shall We Go This Summer” or Imtiaz Begum in “In Custody”.

The whole novel portrays a descending trajectory of Deven and the rise of miseries coupled with misfortunes.

After realizing that a very important work of his interest i.e. interviewing the famous Urdu poet Nur, has been thrust on his shoulders, Deven undergoes a lot of pressure and a big change. He becomes more confident and learns tactics. He has now learnt to say no to people like Murad.

‘The breeze enters the blossom on the bough wafts its scent.

The opened window lets in the sweet season, spring.’<sup>(121)</sup>

But very soon he is seized by the fear of being unfit for the project -that - *he was a wrong choice*. The magnificence of the novel lies in the truth that over the plain platform, a dismal strife runs hither and thither conquering, with momentary predilection, the defeated causes of Urdu language and literature promotion. The complexities to undermine the language struggle are political, economic and social. To highlight the desolate morose of the effort, made by the only devoted person, Deven, Anita Desai describes the disturbed family scene in a chain nearing a break between the spouses - Deven and his wife, Sarla.

Here is the occurrence of the failure of tradition and modernity going hand in hand. Urdu poetry is, like any other poetry – divine – based on love but after Indian freedom the practical situation does not help it. The number of readers is on the decline. Post colonial times are of IMF and World Bank. This is presented with the delineation of Murad, Nur, the wives of Nur and the Urdu Lecturer in the college where Deven also serves. Urdu was popular with the Mughals and now Hindi is popular. No sooner does Deven reach Nur’s house, the politics of languages is discussed at large between the two.<sup>(2)</sup>

The latter finds himself frightened but Nur must say whatever comes to his mind. The discussion switches over to the literary awards with such remarks as the general idea in the bazaar is that “Gobind’s latest poem cycle will win the Sahitya Academy Award for Hindi this year”. For Urdu the remark shall be: “No book was judged worthy of the award this year”.

In order to interview Nur and record his verses in his voice, Deven spends more than three weeks in a room of a brothel without perceiving the fact that he may also be misunderstood. People constantly make fool of him and he has to bear the brunt. Every effort made by Deven ends in defeat. He is also a failure like Nur.

In order to save the name and works of Nur for posterity, he decides to record his voice on tape for his small-town university. In the process Deven is exploited monetarily and emotionally, where Nur’s family demands money to keep themselves happy, Murad refuses to pay him for submissions to his self-proclaimed literary magazine. His wife Sarla is indignant at his time away, his fellow professors think he is having an affair in Delhi.

The saddest part is the result of the sessions. Drunk and encouraged by his admirers who follow him along to the sessions, Nur offers nothing new.

Desai has brought a lot of symbolism in this novel. The whistle of the train seems to be the call of life to Deven trapped in his circumstances. When Nur goes up on the terrace, he is attacked by pigeons symbolizing the demand of Urdu lovers demanding protection for the language and Urdu poetry. Pigeons were once used as messengers. So, do they bring here the message of the community that loved Urdu language but now witnessed its downfall? Pigeons also symbolize peace. They surround the poet who has completely lost his peace of mind. His mind is now full of burning political issues of partition and diminishing status of Urdu language. The pace of the novel is very slow. It sometimes gets monotonous. The reader gets impatient and frustrated towards the end.

The novel from beginning till end revolves around Deven trying to interview Nur. He succeeds in recording some verses in the poet's voice but the tapes are in poor condition. The voice cracks and there are many other technicalities. Deven lacks future insight. It is this weakness that delves him into troubles one after another. He thinks he was going to bring the poet out of dark lanes into new lights but he ends up being exploited by all around him including the poet. Nur keeps on sending letters and telegrams to Deven demanding money on one pretext or another. His first wife has already taken money from Deven. After Nur's death, she sends Nur's bills to Deven. Murad demands of copyrights in lieu of help.

The novel can be regarded as an optimistic tale of Deven and Nur in spite of the repeated pessimisms hovering in their lives. This is because Nur at the end finds himself a custodian to breathe to him his life as it actually is and Deven gets the opportunity to take the custody of the divine poet whom he almost worshiped.

It was a name that opened doors, changed expressions, caused dust and cobwebs to disappear, visions to appear, bathed in radiance. It had led him on to avenues that would take him to another land, another element. This is an achievement in itself. Composed by Anita Desai, the novel is a portrait of human lives as it exists in their own exclusive circumstances, of the hypocrisy and pretension lying within the human spirit, of the difference between the town and the city life, of human helplessness and oppression on the road to aspirations.

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## **Srimanta Sankardev's *Ankiya-Nat* (A New Dramatic Genre in Assamese Literature)**

**Archana Bhattacharjee**

Social Scientist Linton said, "Culture of a society is the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they earn share and transmit from generation to generation". A culture however rich it may be fades in the long run unless practiced and promoted by the members of the society. It is an imperative necessity for a culture to grow with society. It should be passed on to next generation with higher values.

History of Indian theatre is spread over several centuries. Early glimpses of its existence can be seen in pre-historic cave paintings. Archeological findings related to Indus Valley Civilization testify to its being in Vedic and later Buddhist literature. Earliest extant dramatic works belong to the fourth century B.C. In the Gupta Age, Indian drama reached its zenith in the hands of Kalidasa.

Dramaturgists in India considered drama as an all encompassing life-size art. To quote Bharata, "There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art, no craft, no devise, no action that is not found in the drama". It was considered as most exalted art and a meeting place of all arts and sciences.

After the decline of Sanskrit drama in India, numerous new dramatic forms in various regional languages propelled by the Bhakti Movement emerged and contributed to the richness of Indian drama. These folk plays lavishly jumbled together, poetry, music, dance, drumming, exaggerated make-up, masks and singing of Chorus. Such art forms cannot be related to any specific authorship. In Assam, such art forms can be found as popular art forms like "Putula-Nach" (Puppet dance), "Dhullia nach" (Drumbeat dance), "Ozapalli", "Kusangan" and so on. These art forms were popular because thematically they deal with mythological heroes; medieval romances and social and political events, and it is a rich store of customs, beliefs, legends and rituals. It is a "total theatre" invading all the senses of the spectators.

Assam is a land of Shankari Culture. Formal history of Assamese drama started with 'Ankia-Nats' of Sankardev dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Sankardev the great Vaishnavite Saint, Poet, Artist and Social Reformer, started disciplined movement in this area of literary and histrionic expression. A much-travelled man, he must have been familiar with such dramatic entertainments as Ramlila, Rashlila, Yatra, Kathaka, Yaksagana, Bhagavatam and Bhawai, popular at that time in other parts of India. On the other hand, there were such rudiments of dramatic entertainments in Assam as Deodhoni-nac, Putala-nac, and Oja-pali performances. Among these Oja-pali was extremely popular and it continues till today as a very common entertainment in the rural areas of Assam. The Oja-pali party usually consists of four to five singers, and is divided into two groups each singing in chorus. The leader is called Oja, and his companions are called Palis. One of the Palis is called Daina-pali, the right-hand companion. The leader extemporises or unfolds the story, recites the refrain, and Palis repeat the refrain by playing on cymbals and keeping with the movements of their feet. In interpreting the verse-narrative, the Oja uses dramatic gestures, expressions, and movements. Occasionally, in the middle of the performance, the Oja pauses and converses with Daina-pali by way of expounding the story in order to give the entertainment the appearance of a dramatic dialogue. Many of the kavyas of Sankardeva were used in this pre-Vaishnavite medium of dance-recitals. Sankardeva realized that the appeal of his kavyas is oracular rather than visual. So with a master-stroke he transformed and elevated his rudimentary play into a kind of drama built on classical concept and grandeur. In doing so, Sankardeva must have harnessed to full the reminiscences of dramatic entertainments he

witnessed during his pilgrimage. Thus Sankardeva organised a dramatic performance styled as *Cihna-Yatra*, which literally stands for a 'pageant on painted scenes.' From the detailed description available in the biographies, it appears that *Cihna-Yatra* was probably a pantomimic show with a scenic background to emphasise the effect. The use of painted scenery so early as in the fifteenth century is a fact of definite significance for it is like a signpost for the question to what extent drama was developed. This pageant show was developed later into regular plays with music, dance and dialogue styled as *Ankiya Nat*. Thus what was merely a slender stream developed into a broad river; and the Vaishnava saint of Assam was responsible for the greatest turning point in the history of Assamese drama and stage. The operating one-act play in classical concept in all its splendour is structurally a beautiful synthesis of classical and folk traditions of the region.

Though this new genre is popularly known as *Ankiya Nat*, it bears no resemblance to the *anka* type of *Rupakas* of Sanskrit. *Ankiya nat* is a generic term in Assamese and means dramatic compositions in a single act depicting the articles of Vaishnava faith. It should be borne in mind that Sankardeva himself called these dramatic compositions *nat* and *nataka* after the Sanskrit terminology. Other titles used by the Vaishnava poets for this type of plays are *yatra*, *nrita* and *anka*.

In technique, these *Ankiya Nats* follow to a certain extent the text on Sanskrit dramatic theory, particularly with reference to the use of Sanskrit verses and *nandi* introduction of the role of the *Sutradhara* and performance of the preliminaries (*Purba-ranga*). Unlike in Sanskrit plays, the *Sutradhara* is an integral part of an *Ankiya Nat*. In Sanskrit dramas, the *sutradhara* disappears altogether after the invocation. But it is different with the Assamese plays. Here, the *Sutradhara* remains all along on the stage. Further, the *Suradhara* in an *Ankiya drama* combines the functions of the producer and a running commentator. He dances with the orchestra, opens the play by reciting the *nandi* verse, introduces the characters, gives them directions, announces their exit and entrance on the stage, fills up lacunae in the action of the play by song, dance and speech. He also delivers brief discourses on the ethical and spiritual points of the plot.

Srimanta Sankardev originally wrote these dramas for the illiterate masses of Assam and the tribal population of Bengal and Bihar and they were performed in *Satras* (socio-cultural and religious centres) and *Namghars* (hall for congregational prayer). Sankardeva's approach was all encompassing and his contribution in building a unified social order was stupendous. He aimed to spread the message of Neo-Vaishnavism to the masses through the medium of drama. What we call today, Assamese Culture actually stands on the foundation of Vaishnavite Culture of which "Ankia-Nat" is a colossus.

Every form of the traditional theatre provides a long series of preliminaries called "Purvaranga" consisting of prayer to the deity, singing with the accompanying music, introduction of the play and then going to its main action. This practice has been taken directly from the classical Indian drama. The purpose of all these preliminaries was to cover the time gap. But more than this the main idea behind these preliminaries was to evoke an atmosphere which goes with the total effect of the play.

The performance of "Ankia-Nat" starts with benediction in Sanskrit followed by eulogy to God in Brajabali. It is performed in four different sequences playing of the *Dhamali*, benediction introduction and presentation of the story or *Nat* and moral instructions or *Mukti Mangal Bhatima*. The play usually starts with playing of the drum accompanied by the big cymbal by the singer musician (*Gayan*, *Bayan*) in a group. The instruments are played in various movements in two paces called *Saru-Dhemali* and *Bor-Dhemali*. After brilliant display of *Purvaranga*, the *Sutradhar* enters the stage and here begins the actual performance. In "Ankia-Nat" the role of *Sutradhar* is most important, in absence of which the drama cannot move at all, whereas in Sanskrit drama the *Sutradhar* disappears from the stage after

invocation is over. As there are no more scenes in the play, the announcement for change of scenes is made by Sutradhar or by Orchestra with singing. As the majority of the audience were illiterate at that time the explanation was required at every succeeding stage of the drama. The Sutradhar had to attend to various tasks viz. production, direction and delivered commentary of the entire drama up to the end. As such, Sutradhar must be an expert in drama, music and acting and like a catalyst keep the drama moving from all angles. Sutradhar in “Ankia-Nat” is really a unique creation of Srimanta Sankardeva and deserves commendation.

Shankardev also made beautiful use of ‘Khol’ (drum) and ‘Tal’ in his “Ankia-Nat” performances. A large variety of dance numbers are sprinkled over the dramatic performance. Ankia-Nat therefore contributed to the healthy growth of the exquisite dance form known as “Satriya Dance”. Masks are important ingredient of Ankia-Nats. These are made of paper, bamboo and textile and are designed to give special facial expressions to the various characters.

The stories and legends of Bhagawatpurana and the Ramayana constitute the plot of “Ankia-Nats”. Bhagawatpurana is considered by the Neo-Vaishnavite Saints and their disciples as their guiding star and source of moral inspiration. Lord Krishna is the pivotal figure of the Bhagawatpurana and the Mahabharata and his activities are considered to be the subject for the authors of “Ankia-Nat”. Besides Srimanta Sankardeva other well known playwright of “Ankia-Nat” are Madhavdeva, Sri Gopal Ata, Ram Charan Thakur, Diatri Thakur and Dviye Bhusan. Sankardeva wrote as many as seven Ankia-Nats out of which ‘Chihnayatra’ is lost and only six Ankia-Nats are available now. These are ‘Kalia Daman’, ‘Patni-Prasad’, ‘Kalia-Gopal’, ‘Rukminiharan’, ‘Parijatharan’ and ‘Ram-Vijoy’.

Thus it can be rightly said that the Vaishnava Culture spearheaded by Srimanta Sankardeva ushered in the Golden period of Medieval Assamese Literature of which “Ankia-Nat” is an offshoot. It is a new dramatic genre in Assamese literature and provides a platform to the multifaceted Saint for the expression of all his creative talent in music, art, literature and drama and serves as a role model for all succeeding generation. Even today his Ankiya Nats are acted, Bargits are sung and kavyas are read with great enthusiasm. They are treasured as a part of Assamese culture and spiritual heritage.

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## Usurped Spaces and Poetic Identity—Anxiety of Influence in Yeats' *Sailing To Byzantium*

Avijit Chakraborty

A quest for permanence across the webs of the temporal is what a reader has to peregrinate through, if he seeks to traverse the scope of W.B Yeats's 'Sailing To Byzantium', and the same apply to John Keats's 'Ode To A Nightingale' as well. Despite the fact, that the two poems are separated from one another by a temporal gap of one hundred years, the string of thematic unity running between the two only confirm the fact, that poetic sensibilities of major poets seems to follow the same course. Both the poems are problematized in and around the recognition of imperfections, consequent upon dichotomous human existence, as also the search for a symbol which would help alleviate that. Structurally too the semblances between the two poems are startling: a world of sensuous details, cushioning within it the semiotics of flux and change on the one hand, and the deemed symbol of perfection on the other. The bridge between the imperfection of life, and the symbol that is perfect is provided by the imagination. Byzantium as conceived by Yeats is an act of imagination, and this is equally true of the Nightingale world of Keats (Rudra 55-56). Prof. Arup Rudra in his comparative study of the two poems, is of the opinion, that Yeats's poem is a victory of the will in that the poem ends with an image of the absorption of the self into the projected image of a golden bird, whereas Keats's poem is a recognition of defeat conditioned by the fact that he has to return to his sole self (55). And furthermore that, "Yeats forces the pace of his imagination to become victorious, yet what stands out with tragic dilemma is 'the tattered coat upon a stick'" (55).

It is precisely with an attempt to unravel the probable cause of this wrestling with the imagination to become victorious, on the part of William Butler Yeats, that I am tempted to offer a different view. I propose that in writing "Sailing To Byzantium", Yeats was under an anxiety of Influence with Keats's "Ode To A Nightingale". That this claim of mine would be open to refutation from various quarters, on the ground that the formative influences upon Yeats was exerted by Shelley, Spencer, the Pre-Raphaelites and the aesthetic movement of the late nineteenth century is something that I anticipate. Also as Harold Bloom in his reading of the Yeatsian poems, had traced the literary source of "Sailing To Byzantium" in Shelley's allegorical epic "The Revolt Of Islam", I presume that I have to grapple with the larger question of authority as well (Bloom, Tower 345). However I would like to counter such objections by citing a line or two from Bloom himself. In the first chapter of "A Map Of Misreading", Bloom maintains, Poetic influence in the sense I give to it, has nothing to do with the verbal resemblances between one poet and another. Hardy on the surface scarcely resembles Shelley his prime precursor. But then Browning, who resembles Shelley even less, was yet more Shelley's ephebe than even Hardy was.... What Blake called the spiritual form, at once the aboriginal poetical self and the true subject, is what the ephebe is so dangerously obliged to the precursor for ever possessing (Lodge 248).

However since the feasibility of my claim is subject to the parameters of Bloom's "Theory Of Poetry", a synoptic overview of "The Anxiety Of Influence" therefore becomes imperative at this stage. The search for poetic space for a "strong poet" according to Bloom essentially entails finding of a voice, that is securely distinctive, and consequently, the act of writing assumes the form of a deliberate misreading, and re-writing of one's predecessors. It is designed to dethrone a strong predecessor, and is analogous to the Freudian castration complex,

which resolves the Oedipus complex of early infancy (5). In framing this theory Bloom was primarily influenced by the philosophy of Nietzsche, the “prophet of the antithetical”, and Sigmund Freud’s “Investigations of the mechanisms of defense and their ambivalent functioning”. Apart from these he also acknowledges the impact of Vico, and especially the latter’s view that “Priority in divination is crucial for every strong poet, lest he dwindle merely into a latecomer”. The interesting part of Bloom’s theory is that beyond merely talking of the “distortion” technically called “misprision”, it goes on to specify the methodology by which this “misprision” (5) is effected – thus facilitating the possibility of a practical criticism. He calls them “revisionary ratios” and they are as follows:

- 1) Clinamen – A swerving away from the precursor’s poem, believing that the “precursor’s poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved in the direction, that the new poem moves” (14).
- 2) Tessera – Antithetically completing the precursor by so “reading the parent- poem as to retain it’s terms but to mean them in another sense” (14).
- 3) Kenosis – “A breaking device similar to the defense mechanisms against repetition compulsions” (14).
- 4) Daemonisation – “Movement towards a personalized counter sublime, in reaction to the precursor’s sublime” (15).
- 5) Askesis – “A movement of self-purgation which intends the attainment of a state of solitude” (15).
- 6) Apophrades – “The return of the dead” (15).

But why “Anxiety Of Influence”? Did not T.S.Eliot in his essay “Tradition and Individual Talent” (1919) declare, that a poet must “develop” a consciousness of the past, maintaining, that if as moderns we know more than the dead writers it is precisely they who constitute what we know (Eliot, Tradition para 7). Sure he did. But Harold Bloom being an interpretive scholar, has contributed in making the study of Romantic poetry far more intellectually challenging. In way of delineating a theory of poetry, alongside a theory of the dynamic of poetic history, Bloom as John Hollander believes, “has pursued a method quite similar to something like depth psychology”. If for Eliot ‘Tradition’ is a process of “handing down” (Eliot, Tradition para 3), for Bloom, it is the transactive antagonism between the ‘precursor’ and ‘ephebe’, which gives rise to poetry. It is this agonizing dynamic that constitutes the privileged locus of “The Anxiety of Influence” as a poetic theory.

However the presence of a stumbling block with relation to Bloom’s poetic theory, as expounded in “The Anxiety of Influence”, needs to be taken cognizance of. Since Bloom has predominantly been an interpreter rather than an explainer, this book does not quote texts in order to analyze or discuss them. Texts are evoked by way of allusion, but seldom to explicate the applicability of the thesis. This paper therefore is not in possession of a critical paradigm that would prove conducive in ascertaining the validity of the search.

In fact a subtle testification of the Yeatsian tryst with ‘anxiety’ over the loss of poetic space, and also in a convoluted form, with the poetic intentions of John Keats can be found in a poem entitled “Ego Dominus Tuus” (1919). Posited in the form of a dialogue between two characters “Hic” and “Ille” (this man/ that man) and literally meaning ‘I am your master’, the discourse in this poem seems to be situated within the context of privileging and subversion—the now much too quoted tension of the centre and circumference – as to whether literature should be an extension of the creative artist’s life (as Hic believes), or be an idealized vision completely antithetical to the artist’s experience. The mechanism of power, involved in the



privileging of a transcendental idealist discourse, coupled with the blatant subversion of realism with its attendant appendages, is what account for the poem's so called meaning. Hic's contention, that the pursuit of poetic truth is to "... find myself and not an image" (Yeats, Ego 11), provokes a defense of the theory of antiself by Ille who retorts by saying,

That is our modern hope and by its light  
We have lit upon the gentle sensitive mind  
And lost the old non chalance of the hand;  
Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,  
We are but critics, or but half create,  
Timid, entangled empty and abashed

Lacking the countenance of our friends (Yeats, Ego 12-18)

Interestingly however, in foregrounding the discourse of the anti-self, Yeats becomes an acquiescent of the mechanism of anxiety – the anti-self with all its fecund of untrodden spaces, or shall we say the agony of usurped spaces – operating within the poetic psyche. The projection of the self as 'timid', 'entangled', but most importantly 'empty' are overtures too obvious to be ignored.

In rebuttal to the view, which sees the artist's work as an antithesis to his life, Keats's lived life according to Hic could be taken as an exemplar: "And yet/ No one denies to Keats love of the world;/ Remember his deliberate happiness" (Yeats, Ego 56-58). To which Ille answers: His art is happy, but who knows his mind?

I see a school boy when I think of him,  
With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window,  
For certainly he sank into his grave  
His senses and his heart unsatisfied,  
And made—being poor, ailing and ignorant,  
Shut out from all the luxury of the world,  
The coarse-bred son of a livery- stable keeper—  
Luxuriant song (Yeats, Ego 59-67).

Anxiety therefore has set in at the level of the poetic impulse—Keats' inability to reconcile the polar opposites of life—and it is my contention that a re-reading of "Sailing To Byzantium" as the output of an anxiety towards Keats' "Ode To A Nightingale" would be useful in situating its exact localization.

In "Ode To A Nightingale", Keats is fundamentally pre-occupied with the bird-song and not the song-bird. His absorption into the symbol possibly stems from the fact that the nightingale "Singest of summer in full-throated ease" (Keats, Ode 10) –that 'full-throated ease' which is so very wanting in any human endeavour, due to the limitations that flesh is heir to. However, as he moves on to embrace the nightingale world, a necessary fallacy creeps in. He equates the bird-song with the song-bird, forgetting temporarily that the bird too is an organic entity subject to the limitations of the flesh: "Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget/ What thou amongst the leaves has never known, / The weariness, the fever, and the fret..." (Keats, Ode 21-23). This fallacious identification however, is not a one way traffic. Keats' poetry is especially marked by dialectic of movement, and in the sixth stanza he reverts to his initial position: "Darkling, I listen; and for many a time/ I have been half in love with easeful death..." (Keats, Ode 51-52). He wavers again in the first line of the seventh stanza, but ultimately realizing his mistake, falls back headlong upon life: "Forlorn! The very word is like a bell/ To toll me back from thee to my sole self! ..." (Keats, Ode 71-72).



If poetic influence as Bloom argues is necessarily “misprision” (Bloom, *Anxiety* 95), Yeats’ misprision possibly stems from the fact that he overlooks the feat of Keats’ being ‘toll’ed back “from thee to my sole self”. It appears to me that in creating his imaginative space, Yeats distorts the poem of his predecessor by situating it within the parameters of the song-bird rather than the bird-song. All that is on our part is to read in and through the lines of “Sailing To Byzantium” to find out how this imaginative space has been utilized by Yeats.

Enmeshed within the organic constructs of augmentation, change and decay; Yeats’ “Sailing To Byzantium” seeks to appropriate the symbol of perfection through the a-temporal essentialism of Byzantine civilization, and in a way becomes an exact corollary to Keats’ similar intentions, though, within the secular paradigm of the Nightingale world. The Keatsian temptation to “fade far away...” is supplanted in Yeats by an invocation to the Byzantine sages:

O sages standing in God’s holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire perne in a gyre,

And be the singing-masters of my soul. (Yeats, *Sailing* 17-20)

So far as the poem goes, it may be said that unlike Keats, and by dint of a predominantly potent poetic will, Yeats achieves the absorption of the self within the metallic frigidity of a golden bird. But why a golden bird? This is the question that stares us in the face.

The influence of Mohini Chatterji on Yeats has been too obvious to be negated. In fact it was he, who preached to the young Yeats the Hindu philosophy of the “Bhagwad Gita”, and the monistic Vedantism of Samkara, the eighth century south Indian thinker, as expounded in his (Samkara’s) “Viveka Chudamani”. Mr Harbansh Rai Bacchan in his book “W.B. Yeats And Occultism” has spoken at length about the impact, Samkara’s “Viveka Chudamani” exerted in way of shaping the philosophical orientation of the mature Yeats. However there is a major difference between Samkara’s basic position and that of the Bhagwad Gita, with regard to the question of emancipation of the soul, from the cyclical bondage of life and death. While the Gita seeks to realize emancipation through “Niskama Karma” (non attachment to the fruit of action), Samkara taking an absolutist stance did away with action itself (22). The reason behind this is the conditional relationship existing between desire and action, which Bacchan quoting Samkara rightly points out: “By the strength of Vasana (desire), Karya (action) is accumulated and by the accumulation of Karya, Vasana increases in the changeful life of the ego (22). The whole emphasis of Samkara’s discourse as Yeats understood it is “on the inner realization and not on any outer action, on desire that would ultimately lead to action” the former’s famous formulation being: “Brahmo satyam jagan mithya; jivo Brahmaivo na-parah”—the supreme spirit is real the world unreal; the individual self is the only supreme self and no other”(23). The factuality of life, for Yeats therefore became synonymous with what Samkara called ‘Maya’ (illusion), something that found explicit utterance in “A Meditation in Time of War”, from the anthology “Michael Robartes and the Dancer”:

For one throb of the artery,  
While on that old grey stone I sat  
Under the old wind-broken tree,  
I knew that One is animate  
Mankind inanimate fantasy.

Yeats’ misprision of the Nightingale ode I believe, stems from an understanding of these oriental philosophical discourses. As we have already seen, Yeats probably read the poem from

the song-bird perspective, so the relegation of the same symbol of perfection as an illusion becomes easier for him. Thus crop up the golden bird image and the poet asserts:

Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come. (Yeats, sailing 25-32)

The golden bird being inanimate is not subject to the bickering of the flesh, and thus stands apart from the bondage of desire and action (vasana and karya). Again since the mineral, vegetable and mineral worlds are related to each other by continuous degrees according to Swedenborg's doctrine; it becomes possible for Yeats to make the symbol of perfection all the more credible.

Moreover, a "Clinamen" it may be claimed has been accomplished here. Unlike Milton's Satan (Bloom's archetype of the modern poet), whose inability of a slight swerve during his fall from heaven led to the creation of the mere opposite; the ephebe in Yeats successfully effects a swerve, and through his much deliberated symbol of perfection (the golden bird), achieves a "misprision proper" that is both "intentional and involuntary". (Bloom, Anxiety 14)

In conclusion a critique of Bloom's theory of poetry as explicated in the "Anxiety of Influence" becomes imperative. Poetic influence says Bloom, always starts by "misinterpretation" and "misprision" according to him is "perverse, willful revisionism". However misinterpretation only becomes meaningful within the context of interpretation. Bloom's theory therefore intends to situate interpretation at the very centre of discourse by making it somewhat normative, and empowering it with what Derrida calls "the metaphysics of presence". It fails to realize, that this centre is perpetually elusive, as projection of an objective paradigm of interpretation is both impossible and absurd. Furthermore it ought to be understood that poets do not necessarily misread or misinterpret, and a subsequent poet doesn't nullify his precursors; he corrects them. Nevertheless the theory still remains as an alternate interpretive method, that by questioning the deep structure of poetry—its intentions, impulses and desires—lays bare the multiple dialectical nuances of the creative process.

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### Abstract

Poetic influence as Harold Bloom theorizes in his "The Anxiety of Influence", necessarily presupposes an oedipal complex situation, whereby a strong poet has to negotiate a Freudian castration complex, involved in a predecessor poet's exhaustion of his (the strong poet's) poetic space. It is this love/hate relationship with the predecessor, which compels him to misread a predecessor poet thereby enabling him to carve out his poetic space. The present initiative was tipped off by an intention to trace the possible 'map of misreading' encountered by William Butler Yeats, which might have been instrumental in providing him with the much needed poetic space in "Sailing To Byzantium".

**Key words:** [Anxiety of influence, castration complex, Bloom, Sailing to Byzantium]

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## Daughters of Mothers, Mothers of Daughters: The Heritage of Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*

Basudhara Roy

The present paper seeks to explore Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* in terms of its intricate web of mother-daughter relationships that constitute the fabric of the novel's structure. What does being a mother's daughter and a daughter's mother imply in a hegemonic man's world is the question that Deshpande attempts to articulate through the various daughter-mothers in the novel. The heritage that these women pass on generation after generation is that of dependence and yet the tenacity with which the dependent vine clings and survives is the triumph of womanhood.

"All our mothers teach us is what they have learned in the crucible of sexism. They cannot give us a sense of self-esteem which they do not possess. We must learn to interpret anew the experience our mothers have passed on to us, to see these lives in terms of struggle, often unconscious, to find and maintain some peace, beauty and respect for themselves as women."

An important achievement of the Second Wave Feminist movement had been the revaluation of the mother-daughter bond and an assessment of its centralization in the family and social structure as well as in the development of the female personality. The urge by feminists like Rich to uncover the voices bespeaking this most precious of female relationships received an overwhelming response from women writers all over the world. The voices have come ringing out of the abyss of silence, documenting the pains, pleasures, struggles and misunderstandings that shade the knowledge of motherhood and daughterhood, "a knowledge that is subliminal, subversive, pre-verbal: the knowledge flowing between two alike bodies, one of which has spent nine months inside the other."

In the realm of Indian Women's Writing, however, the mother-daughter relationship has surprisingly received scant attention. In a land where the birth of a daughter has invariably been a cause for social and religious lamentation, it is strange that women have not come forward to assert the strength and closeness of mother/daughter-hood. The mother's daughter scarcely makes her appearance in Indian fiction and when present, the relationship is either embedded too deep in the central narrative to be overt or too steeped in stereotypes to offer any newness. Of the few Indian women writers who have taken up this closest of female bonds in bold thematic and structural terms in their oeuvre, the figure of Shashi Deshpande markedly stands out.

"In discovering other women, I have discovered myself," says Deshpande and indeed, her fictional attempts are her labyrinthine paths towards the exploration of womanhood, towards a celebration of the self, the body, the small hard-earned victories and the perennially undaunted strength of women. This is not to say that Deshpande is in search of the Essential Woman or that her women figures have no variety. They are presented with all their idiosyncrasies and in their full-blooded and full-bodiedness. What remains largely unchanged is their victimization, their suppression, their individual, social and cultural failure as human beings, fated by their gender. And yet, these women do not give up hope. They are mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters and friends and in their female relatedness and diffuse bondings, there is a strength, a tenacity, that of the binding vine which, with all its fragility, clings on, and flourishes.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1993) is a story of mothers and daughters, of their struggle for selfhood and self-definition in a man's world and of their search for strength in their woman-to-woman relationships, their common victimization and their shared identities. Rooted

largely in the domestic sphere, the novel presents a gamut of women characters – Baiajji, Inni, Urmi, Vanaa, Akka, Mira, Priti, Kalpana and Shakutai, all bonded together by their experiences of womanhood - of daughterhood and motherhood. The novel is structured largely through four mother-daughter relationships – Urmi's uncertain relationship with her mother Inni; Urmi's bereaved motherhood caused by the sudden death of her baby daughter Anu; Urmi's relationship with Mira as a surrogate daughter through the reading of her poems, and Urmi's close understanding of the mother-daughter bond between Kalpana and Shakutai. Interspersed between them are the mini mother-daughter narratives of several characters like Priti, Vanaa and Akka. The central consciousness in the novel is that of its narrator Urmi or Urmila's. Having been sent away in childhood to live with her grandparents in Ranidurg, Urmi has developed an ambivalence in her relationship with her mother, Inni whom, although she does not reject, she fails to identify with. It is her grandmother Baiajji who grants a sense of fixity to her life along with her childhood friend Vanaa. Psychologists define attachment as a process of interaction between a child and his/her primary caregiver (usually the mother), a process which fostered at birth contributes to the child's intellectual, emotional and social growth. In Urmi's case, attachment has been split between the parent-figure Baiajji and the confidante-figure Vanaa, both of whom fail to complement within themselves the role of the mother which subsumes both functions. When the novel opens, Urmi is grieving over the loss of her eighteen-month-old daughter Anu, a grief and an emptiness that cannot be filled till she experiences a connectedness with her mother and the other women in the novel whose lot it is to silently suffer.

Nancy Chodorow writes:

“...the experience of mothering for a woman involves a double identification (Klein and Riviere, 1937). A woman identifies with her own mother and, through identification with her child, she (re)experiences herself as a cared-for child....Given that she was a female child, and that identification with her mother and mothering are so bound up with her being a woman, we might expect that a woman's identification with a girl child might be stronger.”

Seen in psychoanalytic terms therefore, Urmi's grief over her lost daughter is also her childhood grief for the loss of her mother with whom a psychological association had been renewed through her mothering a daughter. Urmi harbours a deep-seated though unexpressed grudge against Inni for having separated her from motherly love. “...she never was the solicitous mother, was she?” she says to her brother Amrut, brushing away his words about Inni's concern for her (p.25).

She is grieved with the memories of her mothering of Anu which are also, psychoanalytically, the memories of her pre-oedipal relationship with her mother:

“...I can smell her sweet baby flesh...my breasts feel heavy and painful, as if they are gorged with milk....I can feel her toes scrabbling at my midriff.” (p.21).

The loss of her daughter leaves her with an absolute emptiness – “As if the core of me has been scooped out, leaving a hollow” (p.17). The dead can never return to the world of the living and Urmi can only fill this emptiness with the realization of and by empathizing with the mutual and cyclical nature of suffering in the lives of both mothers and daughters.

Married to Vanaa's step-brother Kishore whose own mother, Mira, had died in childbirth, Urmi is introduced to Mira through Vanaa's mother, Akka, who hands Mira's trunk of papers to



Urmi as her daughter-in-law's legacy. Through her papers, her photographs and especially her poems, Mira provides to Urmi a companionship that she had failed to receive from Inni:

“...Mira in some strange way stays with me, I know she will never go....It is Mira who is now taking me by the hand and leading me.” (p.135).

She can construct Mira through her writings and know her as intimately as she can know herself – her love for books, passion for poetry, aspiration to poetic excellence, her unhappy marriage and the forced physical associations, her only marital joy being felt at impending motherhood. And yet, it is only after Urmi gets involved in the stranger, Kalpana's tragedy that she can fully apprehend the depth of Mira's pain. Seeing Kalpana's battered, violated body, Urmi instinctively realizes that what had happened to Kalpana had been Mira's fate also. Mira and Kalpana, generations apart, had both been bent against their wills to the wills of men who wanted them. How does it matter that one suffered within the institution of marriage and the other outside it. There is something common in their fates which manifests itself before Urmi again and again. Now begins her proper initiation into womanhood as she, through the stories of Mira and Kalpana's distraught mother, Shakutai enters the world of women where the semiotic mysteries of the hitherto broken pre-oedipal mother-daughter bond begin to disclose themselves to her and help her towards a greater understanding of mothering, suffering and life.

Deshpande very successfully uses the technique of orality to relate the different temporal, spatial and causal planes in the novel in her attempt to link her women as in a musical harmony. Shakutai's oral effusiveness of her hopes and despairs in the privacy of her one-roomed house and Mira's poems, written significantly in her mother-tongue Kannada rather than English, open up for Urmi an intergenerational female world where she experiences at once, the pains of both motherhood and daughterhood, pains denied to her in their completeness by loss of both mother and daughter. Rich says:

“We are none of us, ‘either’ mothers or daughters; to our amazement, confusion and greater complexity, we are both.”

And indeed, it is the recognition of this dual identity that constitutes the heritage of *The Binding Vine*. Mira, the daughter of the bulky woman who, in the family photograph, seems as if “she's unused to being centre-stage, and would be more comfortable being in the background” (p.64) wished to defy her mother's victimization through her high poetic aspirations: “To make myself in your image/ was never the goal I sought” (p.124). Shakutai's daughter, Kalpana was no different. She refused to be tied down to her mother's hopes for her and filled with the vitality of reassuring youth, she sought to define herself through independence, fearlessness, beauty and love. Both daughters and mothers remained unfulfilled in the only way that was possible in a patriarchal world and Mira, despairingly asks: “Mother...why do you want me to repeat your history when you so despair of your own?” (p.126). This is a world of failed mothers and failed daughters, of a cyclical chain of victimization which refuses to break. On the one hand is the mother who, as Susie Orbach points out:

“To prepare her daughter for a life of inequality, the mother tries to hold back her child's desire to be a powerful, self-directed, energetic, productive human being.”

while on the other hand is the daughter who refuses to identify with “a devalued, passive mother...whose own self-esteem is low.” Rich says:

“Many daughters live in rage at their mothers for having accepted, too readily and passively ‘whatever comes’. A mother's victimization

does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates the daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman....The mother's self-hatred and low expectations are the binding rags for the psyche of the daughter."

Mira and Kalpana too wished to defy these 'binding rags' but so did their mothers. The feelings of these women, separated by time, class and cultures home into Urmi's understanding like the different stanzas of a song, each successive stanza building upon the last. Mira writes of her mother's lifelong advice to her:

"Don't tread paths barred to you  
obey, never utter a 'no'  
submit and your life will be  
a paradise, she said and blessed me." (p.83).

Shakutai, blaming Kalpana for her misfortune says:

"We have to keep our places....I warned Kalpana, but she would never listen to me....That's why this happened to her...women must know fear." (p.148).

It is Urmi's destiny to be the receptor of all voices and to experience the agony of both the mother's daughter and the daughter's mother. She reflects:

"We dream so much more for our daughters than we do for our sons, we want to give them a world we dreamt of for ourselves....Do we always turn our backs upon our mother's hopes?" (p.124).

In the world of *The Binding Vine*, the daughters rebel against their mother's shadow, only to conform to it later. Urmi rejects her mother's ideals of beauty and fashion and shatters Inni's dreams of an upper-class marriage of her daughter by marrying the boy-next-door; Vanaa shocks her school-teacher mother with her decision to get married and settle down to family life; Vanaa's still young daughter Mandira rebels against her mother's ways and promises to be 'not like her' when she grows up and Kalpana and Mira pay bitter prices for daring to surpass their lot. The circle must come round and where the mother stands today in confrontation with an unequal world, the daughter must stand tomorrow:

"Whose face is this I see in the mirror,  
Unsmiling, grave, bedewed with fear?  
The daughter? No, Mother, I am now your shadow." (p.126).

Urmi says:

"The past is always clearer because it is more comprehended;  
we can grasp it as a whole. The present, maddeningly chaotic  
and unclear, keeps eluding us." (p.121).

The progress of the novel is, among other things, Urmi's progress in her journey towards self-exploration. Through the stories of Mira, Kalpana, Sulu and Shakutai, Urmi comes closer to understanding her role as a mother/daughter. She, who had been separated from her mother in childhood and managed to achieve a psychological detachment from her, learns the impossibility of shaking off that bond. The firm ego boundaries that she had built around herself begin to give way but it is not until the reason for that childhood separation is disclosed that the boundaries stand completely broken and the knowledge of the past that she inherits, clears her chaotic present. As Inni breaks down to recall her own personal tragedy to Urmi - her unpreparedness for motherhood, hasty childbirth and agonized separation from her daughter following her father's

fury at seeing his daughter entrusted to a male servant - Urmi has the final revelation - "The room seems full of the echoes of an old conflict...." (p.199). She can see on her mother's face "the terror she had felt then, as if she has carried it within her all these years" (p.199). And with Inni's supplication for forgiveness - "I wanted you with us...I wanted you with me...." (p.200), Urmi finally absolves that "girl-mother of long ago" (p.200) of all blame that she had psychologically cast on her. The bond is restored, the importance of the child to the mother has been brought home to her. Mutuality has been achieved and as Inni rests unburdened, Urmi suddenly feels the armour of her assumed self falling away from her, leaving her psychologically naked, acutely vulnerable. Agonized, angry and relieved all at once, she recalls her anguish at being sent away and the theories she had mentally constructed to justify the decision. But the truth confronting her was so simple - the pain was a heritage binding together generations of mothers and daughters. It was the pain of m/othering - the daughter's 'othering' of the mother who had failed to give her child a safe, independent space in a man's world even as she had aspired for it herself in daughterhood; and the mother's 'othering' of the daughter from her aspirations to make her conform to the norm and assure the best that could be available to her in a limiting society. Urmi's realization of the inescapable bleakness and hopelessness of the situation, of the bottomlessness of the chasm, brings to mind the words of Saritha, Deshpande's protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*:

"Do we travel not in straight lines but circles? Do we come  
to the same point again and again? ...is life an endless repetition  
of the same pattern?"

Urmi realizes with anguish that Mira, Kalpana, herself and all women were undergoing their mother's inherited suffering. That was why perhaps Mira had aspired for a son so that she would not have to bear 'this constant burden of fear' (p.150) for a daughter. But bearing a son does not seal off Mira's pain in her past. It breaks loose of its temporality and replicates itself in the pain of Inni, in the fate of Kalpana, in the hurt of Urmi. Deshpande's feminism in the novel, however, exudes forth only in muted colours. The man-woman relationship can never be disowned, both emotionally and culturally and where love is a common human emotion, so is cruelty, and the presence of one, as Urmi herself remarks, does not necessarily rule out the other. Deshpande's men are patriarchal but they are weakened and prompted to cruelty by love. Mira and Akka both become the victims of their husband's obsessive love - one for too much of it and the other for too little, just as Kalpana falls a victim to her uncle Prabhakar's lust and infatuation, and Inni to her husband's concern for his daughter's safety. Urmi is frequently hurt by Kishore's insecurity in his love for her while Bhaskar's presumptuous love is unacceptable. In a world where heterosexual relationships are unequal, unsatisfying, and often fatal, it is a woman-to-woman bonding that makes survival and hope possible for these mothers and daughters. The heritage of these women is that of weakness, subservience and failed attempts; it is the vine of dependence and loss that binds them all but this, as Urmi, finally realizes, is also the vine of love, of emotions and of a shared hope. With her daughter's death, Urmi had lost hope entirely:

"That's what haunts me now, the smell of hopelessness.  
I've lost hope entirely....But hope is a fragile support  
anyway on which to rest the whole of your life. I can  
do without it. I will have to do without it" (p.21).

But her painful memories find an ally in the memories of Mira, Shakutai, Akka and Inni., the mother-daughters who, in the face of their gravest losses had the courage to transform their hope into their strength. They loved and lost but life continued with their hope of a better

tomorrow. The binding vine of love, for all its vulnerability, weakness and pain, cannot be escaped. It manifests itself in all our closest relationships and flourishes with hope.

Arcana writes:

“The oppression of women has created a breach among us, especially between mothers and daughters. Women cannot respect their mothers in a society which degrades them; women cannot respect themselves.”

It is this breach that *The Binding Vine* is founded on but as the various stories of the mother-daughters weave themselves with Urmi's memories and her stream of consciousness, the weakness of the binding vine becomes a strength, the strength to love despite loss and to find in the shared victimization a new companionship and hope. Urmi can now understand how Inni, Akka, Mira and Shakutai had survived it all and how perhaps, she, Vanaa and Kalpana were going to live through it. It was in their shared heritage of womanhood, of love, silent hope and beautiful memories that lay what Mira described as 'the spring of life' (p.203).

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## You Say Utopia; I Say Dystopia: From Idealism to Nihilism in Utopias

Carlos Hiraldo

The article argues for a return to a philosophical and political understanding of utopias that includes intentional visions of the better future and for a move away from understanding the term, like some contemporary academics do, as nothing more than a critique of present social conditions and a vague hope for a better future. The article claims that this shift in intellectual perspective is crucial for understanding why attempts to implement utopian visions will produce dystopian results. It sites as examples of dystopian utopias Kurtz's commercial station in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, small "intentional communities," and the Soviet Union under Stalinism. It compares and contrasts Joseph Stalin with Conrad's Kurtz, employing literary analysis to historical narratives on Stalinism and applying a historical analysis to Conrad's fiction, in order to unearth and highlight the nihilism within utopian visions.

It's safe to say that most human beings hope for a better future for themselves and for their community, however broadly or narrowly they define the latter and however general or specific the acts of hoping become. It's further safe to claim that very few people engage in envisioning utopias whether by describing these in fictional or nonfictional writings, or by actively supporting experimental communities. Yet, works of utopian studies have stretched the definition of the term to the point where it does not only refer to a fairly concrete description of an ideal society and/or an active engagement in establishing such a society, but it can also be used interchangeably with a feeling of hope. In "The Ambiguous Necessity of Utopia," Bill Ashcroft claims that "for most contemporary utopian theory utopia is no longer a place but the spirit of hope itself, the essence of desire for a better world" (8). Equating utopia with hope incongruously makes just about everyone a utopian. The reduction of utopia to one of its elements, that of hope, may have a theoretical rationale and its usefulness for theoreticians, but for practical purposes it obfuscates a term that in popular understanding has clear delineations. Yet, Lisa Garforth's claims in "'No Intentions? Utopian Theory after the Future'" that in its popular understanding the term utopia "remains trapped between the twin poles of, on the one hand, its dismissive association with impractical, fantastical and totalitarian schemes for social improvement and, on the other, its unreflexive use as shorthand for positive or hopeful orientations to the future, however vague and unformed" (5). Her assertion that when used dismissively in popular parlance the term becomes linked to "impractical" and "totalitarian schemes for social improvement" implies that the popular notion of utopia is really much more rigorous than a "vague and unformed" "hopeful orientation."

The popular understanding of utopia is in many ways more precise than its academic permutation, and goes back to works like Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890). In popular parlance, utopia connotes a future ideal society that critiques the present by stretching through an act of imagination, whether in literary or essay form, or through some other artistic medium, present conceptions of justice and egalitarianism beyond what is deemed possible by contemporaneous mores. Though sharing some similar elements with contemporary academic definitions of the term, this is an understanding of utopia that grounds the concept in something beyond ephemeral hope or as Garforth puts it "the moment at which an encounter with a piece of music or a work of art stimulates the apprehension of and yearning for a better way of being" (8). This analogy basically equates utopia with daydreaming.



The vagueness of the academic definition of utopia makes it possible for some historians and political scientists to include within the category of utopias movements that the public would hardly consider utopian. Sometimes included within the pantheon of grand utopian schemes of the twentieth century, the Nazis are a case in point. Scholars who refer to Nazism as utopian also highlight one aspect of utopia and place it above all others. Instead of focusing on hope, in this case, they take the “totalitarian” aspect of utopian visions that detail the comprehensive functioning of an imagined society and conflate this type of “total” approach with “totalitarian dictatorships” that seek to dominate that “totality” of the society they control through violence and intimidation. Indeed, it is my argument throughout this article that attempts to establish utopian nation-states will inevitably lead to “totalitarian dictatorships” and to the massive violence associated with these systems. However, not all totalitarian systems are utopians. Not all promise that the present fear and paranoia that justifies the contemporaneous state of repression will be overcome in an ever approaching peaceful and egalitarian future. The violence of Nazism was not one resulting from an attempt to establish a utopia. As David Wedgwood Benn argues in his article “On Comparing Nazism and Stalinism,” Hitler and his followers “explicitly denied the brotherhood of man” (192). The Nazi vision shun utopia. It explicitly promised no peace for those who it wished to subjugate, and in the case of the Jews completely destroy, and for the “Aryans” who were to remain in a perpetual state of vigilance, more like paranoia, had Hitler’s schemes succeeded. If it was comprehensive at all in its vision of the future, Nazism was explicitly dystopian for both its victims and its would-be beneficiaries. Stalin’s Soviet Union by contrast does provide a clear example of how grand utopian projects lead to mass murder.

Historical narratives about the Soviet Dictator, Iosif Vissarionovich Djughashvili, Joseph Stalin, from Robert Conquest’s *The Great Terror* (1968) to more recent works like Wendy Z. Goldman’s *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin* (2007), move from a few relative achievements to a litany of murderous campaigns while providing only personal or sociological motivations as explanations for crimes of cosmic magnitude. The fault lines, the gaps, in the attempted accounts of Stalin’s actions leave readers of history with a character as mysterious and ominous as Joseph Conrad’s Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1902). Like a chorus of Marlow’s murmuring “no methods at all” (57), historians provide no overarching philosophical rationale for the massive blood-letting of the deportations, the purges, the forced starvations, the Great Terror, and the Doctor’s Plot. I do not claim nor wish to imply here that historians model their accounts of the Soviet tyrant after Conrad’s fictional character. Like good scholars of history, they attempt to decipher the reasons for Stalin’s actions from the historical evidence available—documents produced by Stalin, by leading Politburo members at the time, and by officials of the Soviet bureaucracy of oppression as well as interviews with surviving victims and their descendants. However, I do wish to argue here that in order to better elucidate the historical Stalin, one field of the humanities, history, needs to communicate with other fields, such as literary criticism, utopian studies, and philosophy. A critical understanding of Conrad’s novella and the critique of utopian schemes embedded in its literary portrait of Kurtz leads to a more complete and cohesive interpretation of Stalin’s life and his violent regime.

#### Kurtz and Stalin: Challenges of Comparing Fictional and Nonfictional Characters

Some readers may feel uncomfortable with an interdisciplinary analysis of a historical figure that willingly crosses borders among at least four disciplines: history, literary studies, utopian studies, and philosophy. My interest in historical portraits of Stalin and in literary



critiques of Conrad's novel stem from my belief that they are two archetypal examples, one from the left and one from the right, of how utopian schemes lead to dystopian outcomes. As Garforth makes clear in tracing the academic understanding of utopia, the field requires an interdisciplinary approach because it has evolved from a concern with literary representations of utopias to "debates about the social effects of a much wider range of utopian thought" (6). In some sense, this article moves in the opposite direction of Garforth's historicity. It connects the effects of utopian thought upon the Bolshevik experiment to a literary anticipation of its disastrous consequences embodied in the reign of the fictional right-wing utopian, Kurtz.

From the perspective of utopian studies, objections may be raised against comparisons and contrasts drawn between the ruler of a nation-state and the despotic manager of a remote commercial station. In her article "Strange Places," Lucy Sargisson exposes some of the potential pitfalls inherent to small, utopian communities. These include estrangement from surrounding communities and collective alienation. Small, utopian communities can often move from viewing outsiders as threats to fearing threats from within. As Sargisson explains, "any group that feels besieged or beleaguered can become defensive and increasingly hostile towards its critics. This hostility affects relationships within the group. Internal discipline and dogma intensify under such circumstances, and people (members and non-members) who challenge the belief system or leader come to be seen as enemies" (404). Though Sargisson concerns herself primarily with the functioning of relatively small, "intentional communities," specifically in New Zealand and in England, the core of such an insight applies to communities that set themselves apart as radically distinct ideals to be favorably contrasted with their neighbors regardless of their size, geographical location, and historical context. It is not my intention here to dismiss the differences between running a commercial station in colonial Africa and ruling a modernizing socialist state in the twentieth century. Though I cannot expound on the differences within the scope of this article, I accept that they are there. It is, nonetheless, a useful intellectual project to trace how the distinct social-political entities in the African Congo and in the Soviet Union and their respective rulers elucidate each other. Stalin and Kurtz are useful fonts for comparison and contrast in clarifying how utopian thoughts and practices lead to dystopian outcomes.

Many may accept the interdisciplinary nature of utopian studies and may even find it useful to compare and contrast small, "intentional communities" with larger nation-states, but still pose an ontological objection to comparing and contrasting an actual person, who once lived on earth, to a character, who has had a longer, but less embodied life in fiction. This kind of objection implies that it is only proper or possible to compare two real human beings. In my view, it is impossible to compare and contrast two humans as humans, as living, developing, and ultimately unpredictable biological beings. When we compare and contrast two humans beings, be it mother and father, or two historical figures, like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin who are often incorrectly paired in historical accounts, what we analyze side by side is not the living beings, but our stories of these nonfiction characters. This is especially true when we compare historical figures whose lives have been written about and analyzed to the point that when we read or write about them we are reading or writing in agreement or disagreement with other accounts of their lives.

Historical accounts and fictional narratives have much more in common as texts than would first appear to be the case from a traditional perspective that draws clear lines between nonfictional and fictional representations. Literary scholars have written about the fading line between fiction and nonfiction genres. Kai Mikkonen's, for example, asserts in "Can Fiction Become Fact?" that "there are no isolated features in texts such as single 'fictional' sentences

that can determine whether some text is fiction” (291). In other words, there is nothing within most works of fiction that would announce to readers that these are fictional creations. Certainly, most serious works of fiction do not begin with the announcement, “once upon a time,” or end with the fairytale conclusion, “happily ever after.” Instead, serious works of fiction are presented as framed moments of lived lives. It is our previously agreed upon understanding as readers that works we are reading are either fiction or nonfiction that makes us experience the works as “either or.” Furthermore, even the most fantastic works of fiction do not represent completely distinct universes, totally divorced from the one in which readers and authors live their lives. These creations often rely on the experiences of the authors and deal with issues that the authors are concerned with during their lifetimes. Works of fictions depict characters that grapple with problems and issues of the real world. Without these depictions, fiction would hardly merit reading much less serious academic consideration.

I grant that there is one crucial difference between writing nonfictional biographies and writing fiction about imaginary characters – that difference is documentation. As Mikkonen puts it, nonfiction characters require “the documentation of identity” and the corroboration of “testimony” (293). Historians, in contrast to novelists, need to submit as much independent evidence as possible that their characters existed and that they participated in the actions depicted in the nonfiction narratives. Still, the historical, political, social, and philosophical insights that can be gathered from a good work of fiction are just as valuable as those that can be gathered from a good historical account. Accepting that Kurtz is fictional and that Stalin existed in the world does not prevent us from examining one to attain insights into the other.

#### Strange Bedfellows: Do Kurtz and Stalin Share Anything in Common?

In addition to the differences in realm of existence, Kurtz and Stalin would also seem to have other distinctions. In *Stalin* (2003), Simon Sebag Montefiore describes the “red tsar” as having a “swarthy pock-marked face, grey hair, broken stained teeth and yellow Oriental eyes” (466). The image of the short radical man with the “swarthy face” and the “Oriental eyes” contrasts sharply with a Kurtz to which “all Europe contributed in the making” (Conrad 45). Building on his physical appearance and his Georgian origins, biographies often present Stalin as being born on the periphery of, if not outside, European civilization. Of Stalin’s native land, Montefiore writes, “Westerners often do not realize how foreign Georgia was: an independent kingdom for millennia with its own ancient language, traditions, cuisine, it was only consumed by Russia in gulps between 1801 and 1878. With its sunny climate, clannish blood feuds, songs and vineyards, it resembles Sicily more than Siberia (25-26).” Stalin was a regional outsider to the precincts of the new Soviet leadership, which was still overwhelmingly Russian in its identification. Kurtz’s customs and his values are portrayed as stemming from the best of the West. He is portrayed as a man that belongs to European culture and civilization, not to its periphery like Stalin.

Within the general status of the outsider, we can still begin to draw similarities between the historical representation of Stalin and the fictional portrayal of Kurtz. Conrad’s creation is not a regional outsider like Stalin. Kurtz’s outsider status comes from his class. Marlow speculates about whether Kurtz had been “a pauper” and even claims, “he had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there” (70). This outsider status helps readers of fiction understand the practical, self-interested motivations of a character who finds in the enterprise of exploiting Africans and Africa’s resources a way of gaining entrance into the higher echelons of Europe’s restricted, nineteenth-century class

structure. The outsider status also serves to help readers of history comprehend why a radicalized young man of humble means, coming from the periphery of the Russian Empire, would be drawn to a revolutionary movement that promised equal treatment and opportunity to all the tsar's subjects. Yet, the outsider status by itself cannot account for the chaotic devastation and oppression Kurtz and Stalin unleashed upon their respective subjects.

Politically, Kurtz and Stalin appear to have very different ideologies. As an avowed capitalist, Kurtz works for the benefit of a large, ivory trading company. He harbors the ideal of "enlightening" the native population of the Congo that labor for him with the cultural practices and standards of Western Europe. At first glance, Kurtz would seem a man of the right, a somewhat traditional European imperialist. Stalin, the communist dictator of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953, would appear to be a man of the left, since his regime professed to be working towards a day when all would share equally from the resources of the planet. Indeed, until his crimes were fully aired and became apparent, his regime was held as an ideal within respectable circles of the left in Western democracies. Still, like ends of a horseshoe, the outer limits of the political spectrum come close to touching. This has become a truism in comparative studies of Hitler and Stalin.

The comparisons and contrasts between these two twentieth century dictators as I alluded to above, however, provide little insight to elucidate the roots of their actions. While there is a straight connection between the ideas in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925) and the horrors of the concentration camp, there seems to be a glaring gap between the ideals of fraternity and justice expressed by international communism and the horrors of the prison-extermination system known as the Gulag. Furthermore, as Goldman points out,

[Stalinist terror], with its complicated organizational and psychological mechanisms of self-destruction, differed sharply from the mobile killing squads and genocidal death camps of Nazism. If the rhetoric of Nazism was aimed at the "enemy" without, the rhetoric of the Soviet terror centered on "unmasking" the "enemy" within. In this sense, the analogy between Hitler and Stalin, so commonly invoked, does little to illuminate the dynamics of the Soviet terror. 8

Goldman's account of Stalinist terror touches upon Sargisson elucidation of how "intentional communities" can devour themselves when members are persecuted and "become isolated within the group" (406) because of their perceived challenges to orthodoxy. These small versions of utopian societies apply some of the same mechanisms of oppression and coercion that Bolshevism practiced more violently and writ large. Nazism, by contrast, had external enemies to lash out against. The common comparison of Hitler and Stalin neither elucidates the motivations of the men nor the workings of the totalitarian systems they controlled. As Benn succinctly puts the case, "Nazism was an ideology of German exceptionalism aimed at justifying a purely predatory enterprise of foreign conquest. It was unconcerned with the salvation of the human race; and for that reason cannot be bracketed together with communism" (194). Despite their seemingly different political ideologies, Conrad's Kurtz and the historical Stalin share distinct visions of universal improvement that serve as the underlying impetus for their similar actions. The underlying unity between these visions comes to the fore upon closer examination.

#### The Radical Politics of Joseph Conrad's Kurtz

There has been no dearth of explanations for Kurtz's fictional, but historically accurate, life and for the "darkness" the novel's title alludes to. There have been psychoanalytic, feminist, Marxist, and post-colonial critiques as well as readings of the text guided by all sorts of linguistic

schools of criticism. All approaches have their truths to convey about Kurtz, about European imperialism, and about the historical moment captured in Conrad's haunting story. However, since the text invites political and historical readings centered on colonialism with Marlow's fixation on the differences between Europeans and Africans, critics have mostly ignored how Kurtz's acts of mass murders and his justifications for such behavior anticipate the genocidal rampages that have marked the globe since the start of the twentieth century.

Michael Lackey's "The Moral Conditions for Genocide in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" provides a useful analysis of the ways in which the novel portrays an ideology that begins as a blueprint for the betterment of humanity and ends in mass murder. For Lackey, Judeo-Christian morality comes under attack in Conrad's depiction of Kurtz. Lackey traces the imperial notions of mastery of the earth and the civilizing mission that justified the British and other Western empires to the biblical exhortations from God to his chosen people. According to Lackey, the British saw themselves as heirs to the ancient Jews of the Old Testament. They were the new chosen. The logic connecting the religious notion of the chosen with imperialism worked as follows: "The British have been charged with building the city of God on earth. Therefore, they can take whatever land on the planet they deem fit" (27). In Lackey's view, the Judeo-Christian tradition of the chosen and the saved at war against the heathens not only justified brutality, such as theft, rape, and murder against the non-chosen, the non-people, but it ultimately called for their extermination.

For Lackey, the crimes Kurtz commits in pursuing ivory follow from the civilizing ideals with which he enters the jungle. Early in his mission, Kurtz had claimed that "each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a center for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing" (29). The murderous tyrant Marlow finds in the jungle contradict for him the Kurtz who wanted to "improve" the native peoples of the Congo. As Marlow recalls the image of heads impaled on spikes, he laments, "there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraints in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence" (53). In Marlow's judgment, Kurtz had not only abandoned his zeal for "improving" the moral condition of the Congo's native peoples, but he had also discarded his sanity.

For Marlow, the Kurtz he finds is an African adulteration of the energetic European who had broached the jungle with a dual mission of commerce and civilization. Chinua Achebe's polemical critique of the text in "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" goes too far in singling out Conrad for portraying racial beliefs that were common even with the most liberal of his European contemporaries. Still, Achebe seems to hit at a much more challenging truth when he claims Conrad's work displays a tendency of "Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (2). Achebe makes much of passages where Marlow describes Africa as an early, primitive earth, almost a different planet. Indeed, passages such as these abound in the novel: "The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were — No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it — this suspicion of their not being inhuman" (32). Achebe downplays the insight drawn by Marlow on the ultimate connection between Europeans and Africans, and in the process, skewing a more nuanced critical

perspective, equates the attitudes conveyed by Marlow's most racist words with the beliefs of Conrad the author.

In *The Dialogical Imagination* (1981), Mikhail Bakhtin claims that the central feature distinguishing the novel from other forms of fiction is its use of multiple dialogues, in which one voice is not set up as truly authoritative over any other. Bakhtin identifies this characteristic as *heteroglossia* in the novel. *Heteroglossia*, the competing voices in the world created and reflected by the novel, enters the narrative "as impersonal stylizations of generic, professional, and other social languages - impersonal, but pregnant with the images of speaking persons - or it enters as the fully embodied image of a posited author, of narrators or, finally as characters" (331-332). Authors of novels do not necessarily intend all competing voices to share equal status. However, in order for the world of a novel to seem realistic, it must convey the illusion of equal status to more than one voice. Thus, the novel doesn't only presents multiple voices and multiple perspectives in various characters, but it also presents varied voices and perspectives in a single character. Bakhtin defines this feature of the novel as "hybridization," as one of the devices employed by the novel to "create the image of a language," (358) to make the utterances of a created character or narrator seem as complex as those of a living human being. Hybridization in the novel "is the mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor." Thus, contradictory beliefs and utterances, such as Marlow's expression of shock at Kurtz's treatment of Africans while he articulates some of the same attitudes about them that facilitates such cruelty can coherently and believably coexist within the same character in the novel. The presence of *heteroglossia* and hybridity in the novel makes it a dangerous and problematic critical undertaking to ascertain authorial attitude from the words of a single character as Achebe does with Marlow and Conrad. Lackey's reading of the novel, by contrast, relies more on the narrative arc of *Heart of Darkness* than on the specific words of any character. Therefore, he can complicate Marlow's attempt to trace Kurtz's downfall to the influence of Africa.

Lackey believes that the narrative progression of the story reveals the true nature of the apparent shift in Kurtz. He connects the idealistic imperialist who first enters the Congo with the genocidal maniac Marlow encounters. For Lackey, there is no contrast between the eloquent words in Kurtz's report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs and his scribbled, genocidal conclusion calling for the extermination of "all the brutes!" (Conrad, 46). Lackey claims that the British and European civilizing enterprise could only come to such conclusion. The "Savage Customs" could never be completely eradicated. The colonizers, the minority in the colonized regions, ran the risk of adopting the values of the colonized. According to Lackey, the biblical tradition of destroying heathens justifies itself on the grounds that their refusal to convert exposes the saved to contamination: "If it can be shown that Africans adulterate the spiritual life of the Chosen People, then genocide becomes not just permissible; it becomes a moral obligation" (34). Certainly, the picture we get of Kurtz through Marlow is of someone who has been "adulterated" by his contact with Africans. Marlow makes clear that in his opinion he has found a Kurtz who has degenerated into a primordial, animal state. According to Marlow, Kurtz participates in "unspeakable rites" (45) at nights and crawls "on all fours" (59). Yet, significantly for Lackey, Kurtz's violence and bloodlust is not a further manifestation of his adoption of African customs, but a way to shore up European values. From this perspective, Conrad doesn't aim to use Africa as a foil through "which Europe's own state of spiritual grace



will be manifest” (2), as Achebe contends. In Conrad’s novel, the treatment of Africans by colonizers like Kurtz reveals Europe’s own spiritually and ideologically distorted state. Kurtz’s civilization and enlightenment can only be spread and maintained through violence.

In his article, Lackey correctly traces a continuum between the Kurtz of commerce and civilization and the Kurtz of spike heads and unspeakable rites, but Lackey’s focus on the connection between the Judeo-Christian tradition and imperialist brutality constricts his critical perspective. He argues “that morality is an empty signifier, a semiotic vacuity that dominant political powers can strategically manipulate in order to justify crimes against humanity” (21). It is exactly because morality, a historically and geographically determined notion of the good and the bad, lacks a defining structure that it can attach itself to any contemporaneous ideology, whether allegedly religious or overtly political. While it is logical to attribute Kurtz’s ideology to his Judeo-Christian heritage since he is an advocate of traditional European values, this does not mean that genocide justifying moral arguments cannot be found in more avowedly secular political ideologies.

#### From Dreams of Eden to the Gulag: Camus’ Philosophical History of Rebellion

As Albert Camus shows in *The Rebel* (1951), his philosophical analysis of radical rebellion from the French to the Soviet revolutions, the road from utopian ideals of human progress and improved civilization to arbitrary murder and genocide can be travelled by those on the secular left as well those on the religious right. It is the fall from utopian grace to genocidal rampage articulated in Camus’ work that connects the fictional account of Kurtz to historical accounts of Stalin. Appearing in France less than a decade after the horrors of the Nazis came to full light and while accounts of the crimes committed by Stalin in the name of the workers’ paradise still seeped out of the Soviet sphere, Camus attempted to understand a century that had begun in Europe with so much promise, but had turned into one of the bloodiest in the continent’s history. For Camus, the book was not only a long essay on history and political philosophy, it was a way “to face the reality of the present” (3). The book focuses on rebels and movements of rebellion that were utopian, that attempted to radically transform the cultural foundations of their societies along with their institutional structures. The book doesn’t focus on rebellions that had limited goals from the outset, for example the restoration of an ousted monarch, or revolutionary movements that, like the American Revolution, were tied to moderation because of their leadership’s distrust of human nature and of the power of radical reform to improve it. In his book, Camus explains why movements that had begun with utopian hopes of universal justice and fraternity had degenerated into mass murder. In doing so, he traces a line in the figure of the rebel from the Romantics, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to dictators, like Maximilien Robespierre and Joseph Stalin, who benefited from revolutions that had begun with the promise of justice and equality for all. For Camus, the rebel, like a good utopian, says no to present conditions and yes to a theoretically better, future alternative: “Rebellion is born of the spectacle of irrationality, confronted with an unjust and incomprehensible condition” (10). The rebel is a being of positive negation. He or she denies justification for what is, and seeks the destruction of the current state of conditions in the name of a more just alternative.

The turn of the rebel from liberator to oppressor, and of liberation movements from utopian rites of emancipation to totalitarian mechanisms of oppression can be traced to the impossibility of the utopian alternative to maintain the same structural purity in practice as it once held in theory. Eventually, utopian rebels pick up the same whips they once knocked away



from the hands of the oppressor to lash out in their demands for “order in the midst of chaos, and unity in the very heart of the ephemeral.” In the perpetual attempt to establish a new, perfect order, the rebel justifies continual murder and destruction. Camus could be writing about Stalin by name when he states that the rebel “forgets his origins and, by the law of spiritual imperialism, he sets out in search of world conquest by way of an infinitely multiplied series of murders” (103). When confronted with the failure of their ideals to completely transform reality, rebels from the time of the French revolution to the Soviet revolution have concluded that reality is at fault.

For the rebel, the troublesome vestiges of the past must be eradicated for the good of the whole. The wrath of the rebel is never more chilling than when confronted with vestigial creeds of the old system held on to by those the act of rebellion claimed to liberate. This in part explains the wrath of Stalin and the Politburo against the kulaks, those peasants who held on to the notion of private ownership of livestock and plots of land. In his attempt to collectivize the land and to eliminate the last remnants of capitalism in Soviet farming, Stalin unleashed a campaign of persecution against so-called rich kulaks throughout the 1930s. According to J. Archer Getty’s “Excesses Are Not Permitted,” from mid-1937 to the end of 1938 alone, “767,397 had been sentenced by summary troikas: 386,798 to death and the remainder to terms in GULAG camps” (113). This was part of an almost decade long campaign to collectivize Soviet farming and industrialize the Soviet economy, which resulted in mass deaths through executions and through the bureaucratically indifferent starvation of the countryside. As Monetefiore puts it, “these Bolsheviks hated the obstinate world of the peasants: they had to be herded into collective farms, their grain forcibly collected and sold abroad to fund a manic gallop to create an instant industrial powerhouse” (37). The worker’s paradise could not exist without the industrial workers that Marx had deemed the fundamental component for the realization of communist utopia.

### The Utopian Strain in Scientific Marxism

Marxists may balk at the assertion that the utopian strain in Marxism was responsible for the crimes of Stalin and the Bolshevik system. They may counter that Marx and Engels were staunch critics of what they deemed the utopian socialism of competitors like Charles Fourier, Robert Owens, and Henri de Saint-Simon. However, as David Leopold argues in “Socialism and the Rejection of Utopia” the differences between Scientific Marxism and utopian socialism are not as clear cut as they may first seem. For Leopold, “although utopia is not necessarily socialist, socialism is always utopian” (223). In order to effectively criticize the present injustices brought about by the capitalist system and its unequal distribution of wealth, every form of socialism must provide a vision of a different, better way to be attained in a not-so-distant future. The differences between one form of socialism and another in regards to utopian dreams is a matter of degree not of substance.

Some forms of socialism have provided more details than others as to what the utopian future would look like, but they all have advocated a utopian vision. Marx and Engels could skew details as to what life would be like under communism because of their progressive theory of history. As Leopold contends, “Marx and Engels appear to think that questions of socialist design are redundant because optimal solutions to the social and political problems of humankind are *immanent* in the historical process” (233). While a *non-scientific* socialist like Fourier complemented his critique of capitalism with creative visions that detailed hour by hour the schedule of laborers within his ideal community, Marx and Engels believed that the

inevitable progress of history would take care of the details of their communist society. According to Leopold, for Marx and Engels, there was no point in speculating about what this society would look like in practice because its ultimate structure would be determined by the culmination of history. This perspective is still utopian. It conforms to the utopian undercurrent Leopold finds in all forms of socialism: “socialism contains both a critique of existing arrangements and an alternative vision of what might replace them.” (221). Marxism criticized present capitalist conditions, called for revolution to facilitate historical progression towards a communist future, and had a vision of that future that included certain principles such as the mass control of the means of production and the equal distribution of wealth. That Marx and Engels didn’t go as far as to predict exactly how the means of production would be operated under common ownership and how the equal distribution of wealth would be achieved doesn’t mean their vision lacked utopianism.

Marx and Engels vision of the progressive advance of history toward universal communism does mean that their theory was designed to be completed later by the vision of men advocating universal social change in specific historical, regional, and cultural contexts. The designs of these latter-day revolutionary philosophers didn’t always match the original vision of the founders. For example, Marxist theory set forth their view of the social-economic development of humanity through the ages, culminating in communism. This developmental blueprint set forth when and where communist revolutions would take place. There had to be a certain advance stage of capitalism within a given society before the revolution could succeed. For this reason, Marx and Engels envisioned the first communist revolution happening in England or Germany, not in a quasi-feudal society like tsarist Russia. Thus, the Bolsheviks had to engage in desperate and sometimes incoherent policies to speed up industrial development and create the social classes that were deemed necessary to hasten the founders’ vision of communist utopia. This created a revolutionary atmosphere that was perfect for the persecution and elimination of those who would not comply with the changes required or those, like the kulaks, whose very existence seemed antithetical to the successful transformation desired.

The kulaks served as just one of many escape goats for the failure of Soviet reality to match Marxist utopian theory. During his regime, Stalin unleashed his murderous rampage against technical experts who became “wreckers” when Soviet industry exhibited dangerous inefficiencies; against whole categories of minority populations, such as Finns, Poles, German, and Jews, accused of allegiance to one or another foreign power; against his former friends and allies in the Politburo, who when convenient were accused of treason; and in the end, self-defeating like a good Romantic rebel, he lashed out against the very doctors who could have prolonged his dictatorial reign.

### Stalin as Historical Rorschach Test

Confronted with a Stalin who actively seeks so many enemies and induces so much chaotic and destructive persecution even in the midst of an existential war against Hitler’s Germany, historians seem bewildered by the Soviet dictator. Their approach to Stalin and his regime can be divided into two large schools of thought. One is the “intentionalist” school. This line of thinking goes back to Conquest’s early account of Stalin’s crimes, and manifests itself in decidedly anti-Stalinist works like Nikolai Tolstoy’s *Stalin Secret War* (1981) in which the dictator wields extraordinary influence not only in Soviet territory but in a spy-saturated Nazi Germany and in a gullible Western Europe. The “intentionalists” broadly posit that Stalin deliberately initiated the various terror campaigns of his regime, encouraging the country’s

security services in order to create an all-powerful state with him at the head. A more recent line of thinking on Stalin's regime, known as "structuralism," finds sources in the release of previously classified KGB documents that reveal much about the workings of the Soviet Union. This line of thinking is exemplified in works like Robert W. Thurston's *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (1997), Getty's "Excesses Are Not Permitted," and Goldman's *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin*. In his review of the Thurston book, Alan Wood defines this approach to Stalin's regime as one that examines "the interplay between state and society, by investigating the lives, responses and attitudes of 'ordinary' citizens, and by focusing its attention, not on ideology, politics, or personality, but on social groups and structures at grassroots and local levels" (84). "Structuralists" contend that Stalin and the Soviet people, having emerged from a bloody civil war and having been threatened by foreign powers in the early days of the revolution, feared the presence of foreign-supported enemies within the country. These historians further claim that since many of those caught in Stalin's dragnet were ethnic minorities and/or high to middle-ranking members of the communist party there was a certain mass appeal to these campaigns. Getty argues that the oppressiveness of the regime "point[s] to the importance of the structure of the system to an understanding of events. These terror campaigns had constituencies behind them outside of Moscow" (137). These "constituencies" in Goldman's more nuanced reading of history were formed by mass hysteria: "The terror was not simply a targeted surgical strike 'from above' aimed at the excision of oppositionists and perceived enemies, but a mass, political panic that profoundly reshaped relationships in every institution and workplace" (8). Between "intentionalists" and "structuralists" the explanations shift from the personal to the social, from amateur psychological assessments of the dictator's paranoia (and that of the Soviet peoples) to almost apologetic rationalizations for a regime threatened by real enemies.

In his account of the changing historical reputation of Stalin in the over 50 years since his death, Geoffrey Roberts demonstrates a not uncommon disjointed assessment of the dictator's legacy. Roberts asserts that "the detailing of Stalin's crimes is an important task of historical research, but the greater challenge for historians is the assessment of his contradictory record and legacy" ("Joseph Stalin," 48). Roberts provides a list of faults along with achievements. He states, for example, "Soviet communism lost the political and economic competition with western capitalism but the advanced industrial socialist state created by Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s survived for nearly seven decades." This is jarring because it is well known now that millions of lives were wasted in Stalin's push to industrialize the Soviet Union. It would be difficult to imagine a respected scholar praising Hitler for saving Germany's economy and providing healthy "Aryans" with a benevolent social welfare system as a way of balancing our assessment of the German dictator in the face of our knowledge of his death camps. The ambivalence of historians toward Stalin can be pegged to the gap between the ideals of communism and the oppressive reality of Stalinism. Their approach calls for a broader philosophical perspective from which to make sense of the dictator's actions.

### Stalin, Kurtz, and Camus' Utopian Rebels

Stalin is the self-consuming rebel, the one who denies the old system and ends up denying reality because acts in the murky world in which we live refuse to comply with the pristine theory he holds up as the only salvation. Camus writes of this nihilistic stage of utopian rebellion, "in the moment of lucidity, when we simultaneously perceive the legitimacy of this rebellion and its futility, the frenzy of negation is extended to the very thing that we claimed to

be defending” (83). No matter how hard the rebel works, his or her utopia will never arrive. Not content with eliminating the most egregious elements of the old system, the utopian rebel will continue to look for ways of creating the world anew, whether by eliminating stubborn peasants or by brutally killing recalcitrant natives. Though fueled by a positive vision of what could be, the utopian rebel becomes an actor trapped in constant negation: “Not being able to atone for injustice by the elevation of justice, we choose to submerge it in an even greater injustice, which is finally confounded with annihilation.” This is the philosophical explanation for Stalin’s action, and the essential idea embodied in Conrad’s depiction of Kurtz’s reign in the Congo.

Kurtz’s vision of utopia was ideologically different than the ones held by Stalin and the others mentioned in Camus’ *The Rebel*. As Lackey makes clear, Kurtz was working from a vision that would impose traditional European civilization upon every corner of the planet. Kurtz saw this process of imposition as ultimately benevolent, as a way of bringing the light of civilization to the darkness of barbarity. As he puts it in his report to the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, “by the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded” (45). These are the words of a utopian dreamer. Kurtz expresses the dream of a theory, of an ideology, that can impose benevolence upon reality without constraints. In this sense, though depicted as a man who believes in tradition, Kurtz still rebels. Someone who holds on to a utopian dream unblemished by contact with the world is in rebellion, struggling against what *is* in the name of what *could be*.

The frenzy of insisting upon the utopian dream in the face of chaotic reality explains much of the eloquence and charisma of rebels like Kurtz and Stalin. Though depicted as a man of the nineteenth century, Kurtz’s magnetism anticipates the charismatic, demagogic leaders who dominated the twentieth century. Many characters in the novel speak about Kurtz’s talent for holding people’s attention and their loyalty. The Russian admirer of Kurtz insists to Marlow, “You don’t talk with the man – you listen to him” (49). This talent for rhetorical hypnotism leads the acolyte to excuse Kurtz’s murderous rage against him because “You can’t judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man. No, no, no!” (51). The fictional Russian sounds like a predecessor of the nonfictional Vyacheslav Mikhailovic Molotov, Stalin’s longest surviving associate, defending the reputation of the long deceased dictator until his own death in the mid-1980s, despite the fact that Stalin arrested and exiled his beloved wife, Polina. Kurtz’s old journalist colleague elucidates the underlying political and psychological advantages of a charisma that can enthrall its victims: “He electrified large meetings. He had faith—don’t you see? He had the faith. He could get himself to believe anything – anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party” (67). The rhetorical justification of the genocidal actor, whether from the left or the right, must carry the poetic power to make the ongoing act of murders palatable to himself and to his followers. Thus, mass murder necessitates charisma.

Though Stalin is said to have lacked the rhetorical flourishes attributed to a Kurtz, it was in part the cultivated simplicity of the Bolshevik’s language that garnished the trust and loyalty of the lower cadres of the communist party against the more bombastic Trotsky. Stalin’s triumph over his rival shows us the truths of that common admonishment of composition instructors who tell us, simple language can be more effective and powerful than complex linguistic flourishes. Stalin, furthermore, didn’t lack in other attractive qualities. After all, if he didn’t have the quality to attract and maintain the loyalty of others, his reign would have come to a short end at the hand of the powerful comrades he set to persecute. Montefiore describes Stalin as “mercurial—far from a humorless drone: he was convivial and entertaining, if exhaustingly intense” (49). This description could have easily been worded by Marlow regarding Kurtz.

## Conclusion

I began this article with an account of how the term utopia has been shrunk in certain academic circles to mean nothing more than a critique of present social conditions and a vague hope for a better future. I have argued that philosophical and political studies of utopia should return to an understanding of the term that includes conscious proposals of what the better future would be like. My argument is that when those visions of the better future are analyzed closely we see that attempts at implementation will produce dystopian results. This transition from utopia to dystopia has been exemplified in works of imagination such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in small communities such as those studied by Lucy Sargisson, and in the history of Stalinism. I devoted much space to the novel, but serious academic enterprise of comparing and contrasting the historical Stalin with Conrad's Kurtz, sometimes employing literary analysis to historical narratives on Stalinism and other times applying a historical analysis to Conrad's fictional creation, because this methodology can unearth and highlight the strain of nihilism that dwells within each utopian vision.

A critical understanding of Joseph Conrad's Kurtz elucidates accounts of Joseph Stalin's reign over the Soviet Union. Through his portrayal of Kurtz, Conrad warned the world about the murderous nihilism that frustrated utopian visions will unleash. Most historical accounts of Stalin read as ambivalent assessments of his reign or angry, choppy litanies of his crimes because they lack an understanding of the profound wisdom Conrad revealed in his novella. When first reading accounts of the Soviet Union under Stalin, the reader's head spins and the spirit drops as he or she witnesses a bloody merry-go-round without end. Only voracious, mass spread fears and appetites seem to stand at the center of the disparate crimes committed under Stalinism. The reader of historical accounts of Nazism may close the book in a state of depression for the cruelty humanity can unleash upon itself, but at least he or she may feel some certainty in knowing that racism, the delineation of the human species into hierarchical categories, is the evil to be fought. There is no clear ideology to confront if we take contemporary historical accounts of Stalinism at face value. Socialism by itself cannot take on the role that racism, or anti-Semitism, plays in histories of Nazism. If the concentration camp appears to be the culmination of anti-Semitic pogroms and other forms of European on European ethnic violence, the Gulags do not at first glance appear to be the inevitable consequence of hundreds of years of socialist dreaming and theorizing. When we view the reign of Stalin through the more tangible prism of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we see that any large scale attempt at utopia, whether Christian or Marxist, will inevitably lead to mass murder.

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## **De Constructing Family and Gender Stereotypes in the Selected Novels of Anita Desai**

**Dr.M.Gouri**

Family, as an indispensable social institution has always been a matter of contention and concern for the literary artist. In this new world of the modern and the postmodern, where every conventional idea and concept undergoes change, even the ideas of family, gender roles and the politics of power within the family undergo a phenomenal change. In most of the novels of Anita Desai, females have been portrayed as the custodians of family values, struggling to preserve the familial unit against the threat of cultural and social forces. The writer has often tried to explore a woman's world, most often, through the conventional stereotypes predominant in her times, of women pitted against patriarchy. Yet even in these powerful conventional representations we find some undercurrents of change, a change which intends to break free from the typical and the quintessential norms of womanhood or manhood.

The male characters - Nirode, Arun, Raman, Gautam are individuals who have taken a step forward in creating space for their female counterparts and re-establishing balance and preventing a virtual break down of the family. In most of the cases the male characters have made an effort to come out of the patriarchal mind set. Therefore this paper proposes to study family and deconstruct its conventional readings and foreground the deconstructed gender stereotypes.

Family, as an indispensable social institution has always been a matter of contention and concern for the literary artist. In this new world of the modern and the postmodern, where every conventional idea and concept undergoes change, even the ideas of family, gender roles and the politics of power within the family undergo a phenomenal change. In most of the novels of Anita Desai, females have been portrayed as the custodians of family values, struggling to preserve the familial unit against the threat of cultural and social forces. The writer has often tried to explore a woman's world, most often, through the conventional stereotypes predominant in her times, of women pitted against patriarchy. Yet even in these powerful conventional representations we find some undercurrents of change, a change which intends to break free from the typical and the quintessential norms of womanhood or manhood.

Family is not an individual's private territory as it appears on the surface it is part of a larger social system. Apart from being the most essential part of an individual's life it has to constantly work with other subsystems of the society to function efficiently. In an article on family studies Linda Thompson and Alix J. Walker elaborate –

“The family, as a cultural system of obligation,” a tangle of love and domination”, is distinguished from the household, a locus of labor and economic struggle. Neither families nor households can be conceptualized as separate and solitary spheres.”

From time immemorial the general tendency to look towards the problems of gender and family has been to follow the stereotyped, conventional idea where a woman is supposed to be the ‘marginalized other’ and the man a ‘confirmed patriarch.’ The breaking free of the conventions and stereotypes of gender and family is rather a step towards finding solutions to familial problems.

When we consider the research that has been carried on in this area of family and gender the experts suggest that it is the roles that an individual is assigned within the framework of family that decides their inequality. These roles are socially and culturally driven not only in

India but also in the west. By subverting the hierarchies in a family and giving the females the power to rule does not initiate a valid solution to the problem.

On reading the novels of Anita Desai we see these shifting ideas of gender roles in the characters of Bim, a female protagonist in *The Clear Light of Day*, assumes the role of a Patriarch, a family head after the death of her parents. The reins of power rest completely in her capable hands but this does not in any way improve the situation of the family. Sita in *Where Shall we go this Summer?* Is a woman who has set her own terms and conditions of living and throughout the novel the patriarch seems to be invisible. But even then the problems seem to exist and persist throughout the narrative. All these are indicative of a re establishment of gender roles within the family. A mother in the post modern is not just a caretaker of her family but is also a bread winner. Her roles have shifted from the conventional home maker and a docile care taker Moreover to make it more complicated she may not be the biological mother. Any individual taking care of the house, children and domesticity can be called mothers. They are the mother substitutes or surrogate mother which we find in more than one novel of Anita Desai. Hence a solution cannot be sketched by just allocating roles. A family is only progressive when a flexible approach or plan is laid down.

Therefore the solution lies in drawing a line somewhere in the middle, and re positioning and resituating the individuals in a flexible framework which equalizes the powers and re establishes a more acceptable and peaceful condition.

Therefore this paper proposes to study family and deconstruct its conventional readings and foreground the deconstructed gender stereotypes.

The characters who facilitate the deconstruction of gender roles and help and prevent a virtual disintegration of the family are generally males in the novel, though they are just a few traces that we see in the novels. Therefore I choose to take three novels – *Where Shall we go this Summer?*, *Cry the Peacock* and *Voices in the City* for my present study and analysis.

*Where shall we go this Summer?* is a novel which like most of the Desai narratives focuses round Sita who is the central consciousness. She lives in Bombay with her four children and the fifth child is yet to be born. She has grown up into a lady who prefers to live an isolated independent life. She however does not seem to cherish the idea of motherhood as she says- “Children only mean anxiety, concern and pessimism, not happiness, what other women call happiness is just sentimentality.”(107)

Sita decides to leave her children and her husband and wants to escape to Manori Island where she wants to be all alone, away from the busy, chaotic world that surrounds her and also from domesticity. She wishes to freeze the child who is growing in her womb as she does not want the child to come into a world which is disturbing, violent and uncompromising. She feels there is something magical about Manori island and it will preserve the child in the womb without delivering it. All these are insecurities and complexities of her own disturbed self where she is unable to connect herself to the world outside. She feels that the island which has something magical will prevent the child from being born.

Raman makes all efforts to persuade Sita and tries to convince her to return back to her children who need her more than anybody else. He is worried and scared to know about her plans to live in Manori where medical attention and care will not reach her. He says-

“Any woman- anyone would think you inhuman. You have four children. You have lived comfortably always in my house, you’ve had no worries. Yet your happiest memories are not of your children or your home but of strangers.”(147)

He leaves her and gives up at last. But his words keep echoing inside, forcing her to think and re think over it. And finally she feels she was actually blessed to have him as her husband- “She thought, how nice he really was, how much the nicest man she knew. She allowed him then his triumph purely by being so unconscious of it, so oblivious.”(151)

Therefore here in this novel Sita is a woman who is not forced to fit into the role of a mother or a wife. Raman had proved a good partner. But the freedom to take decisions and lead a life of one's own choice sometimes proves more disturbing and chaotic as we see in Sita's case. When she finally realizes this and reconciles to her present conditions most of her problems seem to get resolved. The insecurities of Sita, her confusions and her anxieties are all resulting in incompatibility and Raman has come out from the constraints of a stereotyped male family head and has helped his wife to introspect and re establish herself by shedding away her escapist attitude and finally re uniting and becoming a better individual, a better householder.

I now proceed to bring my focus to the second novel *Cry the Peacock*. Here again the entire narrative revolves round the couple Maya and Gautam. Gautam appears to be a very insensitive husband and Maya an immature wife. Maya's problems start right from her childhood. She was brought up by her father and absence of the mother, remained one of the most important reasons for her psychological problems. She has been shown as a neurotic who does not get enough attention which she expected from Gautam and she remained a loner. She craves for company and cannot get out of the trauma of the death of her pet for many days. The roles again have changed in Maya's upbringing. Mother has remained absent and a male takes over as a mother substitute. He tries to make his daughter's world as happy and fulfilled as he could but this acts to her disadvantage. Maya was brought up like a princess. Maya has had a perfect childhood, where she did not encounter any adversities. It was a very comfortable and fulfilled life that she led in her father's house. But she failed to see the darker side of life. Gautam realizes this and tries to help her out and never appears as a patriarchal figure. As a mature husband, he gets exasperated by the way she is brought up by her father and through his frustrations and outbursts tries to help Maya and tries to rescue her from her problems –

“What have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence not love and romance, but living and dying and working all that constitute life for the ordinary man. You wouldn't find in your picture books: what wickedness to raise a child like that.”(115)

Therefore in this case the stereotypes are being challenged from a completely different stand point. The male character is using his position as a patriarch to bring some change and maturity in his wife. The effort that is made to bring some positive change in her character and personality is certainly a positive step towards deconstructing the stereotyped notion of family. The fact remains that he does not finally succeed in rewriting Maya's faith, her psychological disorders were deep rooted which could not be erased. But the attempt on Gautam's part certainly is an effort towards reworking for peace and integrity inside the family.

Nirode the central male characters in Anita Desai's novel *Voices in the City* appears are very irresponsible male head. He is not shown to possess any qualities of a patriarchal family head in the family. But he comes out as a completely different and changed individual who rescues his family and prevents the family from virtual break down which is almost obvious at the surface. He has been shown as a man who has gone through major turmoil's. He completely rejected the institution of family and marriage and felt that man was pained the most when he lived in the family. But on losing Monisha, his sister, who meets a very tragic end he is completely shattered. His re awakening and reconciliation in finding his way back is however brought by his sister Amala who is always there to support him.

He takes over the responsibility not as a family head but as a mother to her aunt and sister Amala who are shattered by the loss of their sister Monisha. He consoles them -

“At intervals Nirode said ‘Go and sleep Amla, go to sleep. I’ll stay and his aunt he would say, ‘Go to bed aunt you must have some rest’. He seemed unable to remain still and silent, he was filled with an immense care of the world that made him reach out, again and again to touch Amla’s cold hands when he saw it shake.”(248)

Therefore in almost all these above discussed cases men have set themselves and the family free of the gender stereotypes of patriarchal role within the family. Women certainly have taken the centre stage in almost all the narratives of Anita Desai but through her male characters the writer tries to review the conventional stereotyped notions and places gender roles at a equal level. Responsibility is always a collective effort and is one of the most essential ingredients of a happy household.

Therefore whether it is a male or a female, the problems need a peaceful and permanent solution and if the family comprises of individuals it is these individuals who are to take up the challenges that the family confronts. The distributions of power in the family has to be balanced a scheme which equalizes the power, position and status of every individual. When efforts are made to reach out to people by leaving and coming out of one’s comfort zone and create space for each other family flourishes and the individuals who constitute it get a better life.

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## Love as a Synaesthetic Experience in R. Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage*

Joyanta Dangar

'Synaesthesia' is supposed to be the most complex but effective form of what is called 'sensuousness' in art and literature. Besides, synaesthesia is a medical condition, and it has nothing to do with I. A. Richards's concept of "synthesis", nor with the processes of perception explored in Gestalt psychology. Rajagopal Parthasarathy (b. 1934) is one of the most successful modern Indian poets writing in English to use the device with great ingenuity. In fact, Parthasarathy's fondness for the tool leads him to create a synaesthetic language itself for expressing the predicament of a modern man torn between home and abroad. Above all, employment of synaesthesia helps the poet re-define love --- love as a synaesthetic experience that relieves him for the time being of the pangs of being exiled, though it is not eternal joy or everlasting love.]

A poem ought to, in effect, try to arrest the flow of language, to anaesthetize it, to petrify it, to fossilize it. Ultimately, it is the reader who breathes life into the poem, awakening it from its enforced sleep in the language.

--- Parthasarathy (11)

Whenever I read the oft-quoted line by Robert Burns: "O my love's like a red, red rose", I can hear a tribal beating his kettledrum accompanied by cymbals in a distant valley where the people feed on red petals, despite my disclaimer that I, despite my love for synesthesia, am not a synaesthete. 'Synaesthesia' is supposed to be the most complex but effective form of what is called 'sensuousness' in art and literature. Etymologically, the word is a combination of 'syn' (together), from New Latin and 'esthesia', from Greek *aisthesis* (sensation or perception). Chris Baldick defines synaesthesia as

"a blending or confusion of different kinds of sense impression, in which one type of sensation is referred to in terms more appropriate to another. Common synaesthetic expressions include the descriptions of colours as 'loud' or 'warm' and of sounds as 'smooth'. This effect was cultivated consciously by the French Symbolists, but is often found in earlier poetry, notably in Keats" (1259).

Besides, synaesthesia is a medical condition, and it has nothing to do with I. A. Richards's concept of "synthesis", nor with the processes of perception explored in Gestalt psychology. Diane Ackerman, a poet from Illinois observes in her seminal work *A Natural History of the Senses* (the section entitled "Synesthesia"):

[.....] Those who experience intense synesthesia naturally on a regular basis are rare -- only about one in every five hundred thousand people - - neurologist Richard Cytowic "traces the phenomenon to the limbic system, the most primitive part of the brain, calling synesthetes "living cognitive fossils," because they may be people whose limbic system is not entirely governed by the much more sophisticated (and more recently evolved) cortex". As he says, "synesthesia ... may be a memory of how early mammals saw, heard, smelled, tasted and touched."



Opposed to “the equilibrium of opposed impulses” (197), that is contended by Richards as “the ground plan of the most valuable aesthetic responses”, synaesthesia is a state of distraction.

Many a poet starting from especially Shelley and Keats, the first English masters of the device, has employed it to add to pleasure of poetry. Donne hears a “loud perfume”, Crashaw a “sparkling noyse”. Shelley perceives the fragrance of the hyacinth as “music”; Keats prescribes to “taste the music of that vision pale”. “To the bugle every colour is red”, writes Emily Dickinson. In George Meredith’s “Modern Love: I”, a woman’s heart is found to “drink the pale drug of silence.” Dame Edith Sitwell in her poem “Green Geese” writes: “The moon smelt sweet as nutmeg root/ On the ripe peach trees’ leaves and fruit...”

Though the earliest extant of the use of synaesthesia in Indian poetry in English can be traced perhaps in Toru Dutt’s description of the Semul’s red flowers in her “Sonnet”: “And o’er the quiet pools the seemuls lean, / Red, red, and startling like a trumpet’s sound”, Rajagopal Parthasarathy (b. 1934) is one of the most successful modern Indian poets writing in English to use the device with great ingenuity. In fact, Parthasarathy’s fondness for the tool leads him to create a synaesthetic language itself for expressing the predicament of a modern man torn between home and abroad.

Written over a period of fifteen years (1961-1976) and divided into three parts “Exile”, “Trial” and “Homecoming”, Parthasarathy’s *Rough Passage* (1977) is a sequence of thirty seven pieces, chronicling the traumatic experiences of transplantation. In 1963-64 Parthasarathy had been working as a British Council scholar at Leeds University, which gave him a ‘culture shock’ (163), to use the words of Ramamurthy. In his autobiographical essay “Whoring After English Gods” he records:

My encounter with England only reproduced the by-now familiar pattern of Indian experience in England: ‘disenchantment’.

(qtd. in Ramamurthy 163)

However, Parthasarathy’s penchant for synaesthetic language is evidenced at its best in the second part “Trial”. Celebration of carnal love is central to this part. To the poet exiled into a foreign country for long, life amounts to a state of utter difficulty and, hence “Trial”. And carnal love is a sedative antidote to the present traumatic state. To depict the excitement of physical love Parthasarathy uses a language, both sensuous and synaesthetic, that salvages his poetry from being reduced to gross sensuality.

Learning that “roots are deep” (*Rough Passage* 75) the poet, who had “spent his youth whoring after English gods” (ibid.), tries to mitigate his present agony by remembering the happy days of the past spent in company of his true love, i. e., Tamil language. Regarding the theme of “Trial” Parthasarathy writes:

The second part, “Trial”, written between 1961 and 1974, celebrates love as a reality here and now. Against the turmoil of non-relationship, personal love holds forth the promise of belonging.....The impulse to preserve is at the bottom of “Trial”.

(qtd. in Sahu 79)

In section 1 of “Trial” the poet transmutes Tamil into a beloved and represents the relationship with its characteristic accompanying passion in terms of ‘synaesthesia’:

I grasp your hand  
in a rainbow of touch.

(*Rough Passage 78*)

The metaphor “a rainbow of touch” involves not only a confusion of the senses but also a subordination of one sense to another. It is a touch-colour synaesthesia, the tactile image being expressed in terms of colour. The touch has a sort of prismatic effect in that the poet perceives seven colours by grasping her hand.

In section 2 where the poet goes down memory lane, flipping through the family album, the visual has been subordinated to the auditory:

“I shared your childhood:  
the unruly hair silenced by bobbins  
and ribbons, eyes half shut”.

(*Rough Passage 78*)

As if, the poet, who has been listening to the rustling of her dishevelled hair through the sense of vision, is disappointed to find it stopped by pins and ribbons. The expression “a ripple of arms round Suneeti’s neck” also baffles the reader. Has the poet got the arms with rippling muscles (i. e., muscles which look like ripples)? Does the poet mean that the touch of the poet’s arms has a ripple effect on Suneeti’s body? If we choose the second, then it would be the visualisation of the tactile since rippling is a visual image. English was never Suneeti’s cup of tea; it could not provide emotional sustenance to her. The “spoonfuls of English / brew” never quite quenched her thirst of knowledge. Instead, her imagination was fed on folktales told by the family cook which were tasty and juicy:

“Hand on chin, you grew up,  
all agog, on the cook’s succulent folklore.”

(Parthasarathy 78)

The culinary metaphor involves an intermingling of the two senses - the sense of hearing and the sense of taste, the former being rendered secondary. She rolled herself into a ball the afternoon her father died but “time unfurled you / like a peal of bells.” A precedent of this kind of transmutation of sensation may be found in G. M. Hopkins’s poem “The Windhover”: “High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing / In his ecstasy! Then off, off forth on swing”. In Hopkins the reader can at once perceive that “[g]oing high up there the bird seems to have become a hung bell, as it were, ringing the glory of God”(27), to use the words of Prof. Rama Kundu, the kinetic/ visual being tempered by the auditory. So happens in Parthasarathy here.

Night helps the speaker to achieve a sort of privacy for lovemaking in section 7. In a paradoxical way the body of the beloved that had been dimmed by the harsh light of Time is now being recognised by the opaque lens of darkness:

It is night alone helps  
to achieve a lucid exclusiveness.  
Time that had dimmed  
your singular form  
by its harsh light now makes  
recognition possible  
through this opaque lens.

(*Rough Passage 79*)

It is here worth mentioning that Synaesthetes can visualise colour even in the dark places. To validate the paradox the poet, however, resorts to another startling use of touch- colour synaesthesia:

Touch brings body into focus,  
restores colour to inert hands,

(Rough Passage 79)

How colour can be translated through touch is here exemplified by Parthasarathy. The correspondence between touch and sight is finely delineated in Ackerman's *A Natural History of the Sense* (the section titled "Touch"):

Touch, by clarifying and adding to the shorthand of the eyes, teaches us that we live in a three-dimensional world. [.....]Touch allows us to find our way in the world in the darkness or in other circumstances where we can't fully use our other senses. [4] By combining eyesight and touch, primates excel at locating objects in space. Although there's no special name for the ability, we can touch something and decide if it's heavy, light, gaseous, soft, hard, liquid, solid. As Svetlana Alper shrewdly observes in Rembrandt's *Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (1988), though Rembrandt often took blindness as his subject (The Return of the Prodigal Son, the blind Jacob, and others):

**Blindness is not invoked with reference to a higher spiritual insight, but to call attention to the activity of touch in our experience of the world. Rembrandt represents touch as the embodiment of sight.... And it is relevant to recall that the analogy between sight and touch had its technical counterpart in Rembrandt's handling of paint: his exploitation of the reflection of natural light off high relief to intensify highlights and cast shadows unites the visible and the substantial.** (Bold original)

Similarly, by equating his hands with the mirror before which she undresses the poet shows his fascination for the sense of touch:

A knock on the door:  
you entered.  
Undressed quietly before the mirror  
of my hands

(Rough Passage 79)

Now the 'hand'-mirror makes a woman, whose beauty has been dimmed by Time's 'harsh light', beautiful. Here I feel tempted to mention Ackerman's observation on the effectiveness of touch in the section titled "Touch":

Touch fills our memory with a detailed key as to how we're shaped. A mirror would mean nothing without touch.

[.....]

[.....]But, above all, touch teaches us that life has depth and contour; it makes our sense of the world and ourself three-dimensional. Without that intricate feel for life there would be no artists, whose cunning is to make sensory and emotional maps, and no surgeons, who dive through the body with their fingers.

The poet's obsession with the tactile is further embodied in the following synaesthesia:

[ .....] The touch of your breasts is ripe  
in my arms. They obliterate my eyes

with their tight parabolas of gold.

(*Rough Passage 79*)

Such a multi-sensory metaphor inevitably reminds us of the voluptuous lines of Keats in "Bright Star": "Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast, / To feel for ever its soft fall and swell, / Awake for ever in a sweet unrest." It involves a confusion of multiple senses – tactile, gustatory ('ripe'), and optical ('obliterate my eyes'). Besides, it is a shape-colour synaesthesia in that the lover's eyes are dazzled not by the golden glitter of her breasts but by their tight parabolas of gold. Again, parabolas, which being geometrical shapes are likely to be perceived in terms of vision, are perceived as a tactile experience. Here we get another dimension of the metaphor, that is, shape-touch synaesthesia.

A confusion of the sense of taste, of touch and kinesis also can be traced in the following metaphor:

It's you I commemorate tonight.

The sweet water  
of your flesh I draw  
with my arms, as from a well,  
its taste as ever  
as on night of Capricorn

(*Rough Passage 79*)

Touch along with kinesis allows the lover to taste the 'sweet water of your flesh'.

Under the starlit sky at an august night the speaker gazes at the beautiful hand of the beloved which seems to him a far-flung galaxy. But it is the touch of his telescopic fingers which helps him bring the distant to his reach:

Yet, by itself, your hand was a galaxy  
I could reach, even touch  
in the sand with my half inch telescopic  
finger [.....]

(*Rough Passage 80*)

This is how touch corresponds to vision, adding to the effectiveness of this metaphor.

Is the poet a synesthete? does he affect synaesthetic experience? is he on LSD? are the questions that crop up from the discussion. *Oxford Companion to Body* explains that synaesthetes inhabit "a world slightly, but magically different from that of most people" — a world of additional colours, shapes, and sensations. As Diane Ackerman observes:

Synesthesia can be hereditary, so it's not surprising that Nabokov's mother experienced it, nor that it expressed itself slightly differently in her son. However, it's odd to think of Nabokov, Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, Huysmans, Baudelaire, Joyce, Dylan Thomas and other notorious synesthetes as being more primitive than most people, but that may indeed be true. **Great artists feel at home in the luminous spill of sensation, to which they add their own complex sensory Niagara.** It would certainly have amused Nabokov to imagine himself closer than others to his mammalian ancestors, which he would no doubt have depicted in a fictional hall of mirrors with suave, prankish, Nabokovian finesse. (Bold original)

It is hard to establish that Parthasarathy was a born synaesthete like Baudelaire, Dylan Thomas, and et al. Nor is he known for his any “remarkable tricks of synesthesia” (Ackerman, *ibid.*) like Dame Edith Sitwell who used to lie in an open coffin for a while to harness her senses before she started her writing, or Schiller who would keep rotten apples in his desk drawer and sniff the intense smell to discover the right word to use in his poetry. But Parthasarathy’s liking for synaesthesia is also testified in his another exquisitely beautiful poem “Remembered Village”, where the poet disgusted with the priest’s erroneous Sanskrit in the temple hears ‘Bells curl up their lips’. It shows the transference of both epithet and sense. Preoccupied with the prospects of transferred sense the poet also sniffs the odorous howls of the stray dogs outside:

A black pillaiyar temple squats at one end of the village –  
stone drum that is beaten thin on festivals by the devout.  
Bells curl their lips at the priest’s rustic Sanskrit.  
Outside, pariah dogs kick up an incense of howls.

May be all this is a case of acquired synaesthesia, or the poet consciously affects synaesthetic experiences. The effects of the physical love as celebrated by the speaker here also seem to be similar to those of LSD synaesthesia. Contemporary medical research on hallucinogens shows that a man on LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) may have synaesthetic experience. Dutch author and scientific researcher Crétien van Campen records:

[.....]Often I read wild-sounding descriptions by poets proclaiming the merits of their drug-induced synesthesia, and then I’d switch to science and read the pharmacology and neurology of the same experience and compare notes. The writings in both sections made it clear to me that there is definitely a special relationship between drugs and synes-thesia, but that relationship turns out to be quite different from what I expected.( 104)

He also observes:

In eighteenth-century England, opium was considered a normal medicine and was used in much the same way that people use aspirin today: opium was considered a good remedy for pain, fatigue, and depression and could be obtained at the local shop.

[.....]  
.....] Several English writers and poets of the Romantic period wrote about their opium experiences, including Thomas de Quincey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, George Crabbe, and Francis Thompson. Their descriptions some-times include visions that remind me of contemporary reports by synesthetes. For instance, the poet and opium addict Francis Thompson (1859–1907) noted on one occasion that he saw the sun rise “with a clash of cymbals”; on another occasion, he described how “tunes rose in twirls of gold” when “light through the petals of a buttercup clanged like a beaten gong.” He also heard “the enameled tone of shallow flute, and the furry richness of clarinet”. (*ibid.*)

Nowhere can be found any mention of parthathasarathy's being addicted to any such hallucinogen, although Nissim Ezekiel, one of his contemporaries is said to have experimented with hallucinogenic drugs. Pritha Chakravorty in her essay "Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004)" records:

The 1960s brought major change in his [Ezekiel's] lifestyle, turning a sceptical rationalist into drug-taking promiscuous believer. In 1967 while in America, he experimented with hallucinogenic drugs, probably as a means to expand his writing skills. (65)

And if Parthasarathy be an addict he was addicted to love as recorded in "Exile":

as I walk, my tongue hunchbacked  
with words, towards Jadavpur  
to your arms. You smell of gin  
and cigarette ash. Your breasts,  
sharp with desire, hurt my fingers.  
Feelings beggar description...

(*Rough Passage* 76)

To suppress the agony of exile he uses physical love as a drug or hallucinogen, which results in love as a synaesthetic experience. The excitement of love is so much that one sense overlaps another, creating a sense of confusion as it happens in case of a man on LSD.

Nandini Sahu observes:

It ["Trial"] is a series of 15 love songs suffused with passion and sensuousness. The poet accepts love because it offers him an "unspeakable relief" at the most needed moments. Thus the period of exile becomes a period of conceptualisation. As a development to it, "Trial" is an effort at recapitulation of the poet's youth against the background of the misery and loneliness he underwent during the period of exile. It is an attempt to bring meaning to the present by reassessing the past and by giving shape to his early youth. (84-85)

However, the speaker is also aware of the inadequacies of love as a synaesthetic experience:

[.....] thus celebrate  
Something so perishable, trite.

(*Rough Passage* 80)

It is invigorating and refreshing, but transitory. Regarding this Prof. P. K.J. Kurup rightly comments:

One can go on citing examples showing conflicting passions within the poetic self where the invigorating and refreshing quality of love is juxtaposed with the transitoriness of bodily fulfilment and with the image of death and despair. The predominant voice in each case is one of modern melancholic experience of disappointment with an irritable and unprotesting glumness and a bleak recognition of the self's and life's own limitations. (261)



Parthasarathy's employment of synaesthetic language, rather touch-oriented language, in *Rough Passage* ("Trial") may be justified by the following observation by Ackerman on the symbiosis of language and sense of touch:

Language is steeped in metaphors of touch. We call our emotions feelings, and we care most deeply when something "touches" us.

[.....]

.....] As Frederick Sachs writes in *The Sciences*, "The first sense to ignite, touch is often the last to burn out: long after our eyes betray us, our hands remain faithful to the world.... in describing such final departures, we often talk of losing touch."

And, there is not only a preponderance of the sense of touch, but the tactile sensory input either invades the territories of other senses, or gets invaded by them, making the poem both rich and complex. Far from being "the extraordinary heterogeneity of the distinguishable impulses" (196), that is claimed by Richards as the very hallmark of such poems as "Ode to a Nightingale", "The Definition of Love", "Nocturnal upon S. Lucie's Day" etc., the poem in question is a state of conflicting impulses, where the impulse of touch rules the roost. However, this border-crossing of the senses never limits the aesthetic value of the poem, rather makes physical love more enjoyable by supplementing the inadequacy of one sense by effectiveness of another one. Perhaps no other literary device can express the excitement of physical love in a better way. Above all, employment of synaesthesia helps the poet re-define love --- love as a synaesthetic experience that relieves him for the time being of the pangs of being exiled, though it is not eternal joy or everlasting love.

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## The Themes of Love and Sex in the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das

**Dr. Khandekar Surendra S.**

The present paper is an attempt to focus on the theme of Love and Sex in the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das. They have handled the themes of Love and Sex in their poetry a brilliant way. The contrast, which is glaring between these poets, is 'the restraint' Sylvia Plath has maintained towards these themes. Further, while Kamala Das is preoccupied with these themes, they are only two of the many concerns in Plath. She gains more sympathy from her critics for this quality of restraint than Kamala Das, who cries about her failure in love. The 'self pity' in Kamala Das's poems is completely absent in Sylvia Plath's poetry and she has very few poems on this theme of love, compared to Kamala Das.

Sylvia Plath had an advantage over Kamala Das, if she wanted to emphasize this aspect. She belongs to the permissive society of the west where no brows are raised either at extra or pre-marital relationships. She had more opportunities to mingle with opposite sex.

Sex was not a taboo, at least conversationally. Like other teenagers with a literary background, they relished an image of themselves as mature, adults capable of discussing sex with intellectual detachment.

With this intellectual detachment Plath treats a highly emotional theme in 'Love' which makes her technique superb. Sylvia Plath was born and brought up in an intellectual atmosphere. She could not talk with her own age group who went out on dates and discussed them with excitement. Such type of intelligence was a curse. Her friends felt that she was "Somewhat physically isolated and by nature slightly removed from normal socializing, partially out of shyness and feeling of inadequacy.... perhaps intrigued by the odd combination of social innocence and intellectual precocity."

The emotional void created by her father's untimely death and her mother's involvement in her own career made Plath an introvert, right from her childhood days. For few years, her Intellectual achievements and the scholarships she won were mistaken as a substitute for love. There came a need in her life to assert her as a full-blooded woman. As a teenager at college, she courted and adored a few boys but it was only an infatuation. Her approach towards these dates was quite experimental.

In her confessional novel, *The Bell Jar*, she records her experience with Buddy Willard. Whatever be her intentions, she went steady with him. Buddy tries his best to make her a 'woman'. He pleads with her patiently, showers his affection on her, and takes her out on holidays. His attempts to initiate Sylvia Plath to 'premarital' sex by having her watch him undress. It neither stirs her basic emotions nor evokes any finer sentiments. It is rightly observed:

Her savage, witty ridicule of his male parts in the novel as turkey neck and turkey gizzards results from an almost adolescent disgust with sexuality and highlights the frozen sexual ambiguity at that time.

All the poems written by Sylvia Plath, including the posthumous collection, *Ariel* can be grouped under love poems. She is in love with nature, in love with sea, in love with her dead-father or in love with death itself. The normal erotic love, which she ought to have experienced as a young girl does not make an impression on her as poetic themes. She was utterly disillusioned with the

concept and as a result love in the normal sense of the term is conspicuously absent in her poetry. In the poem 'The Courier' she says:

Acetic acid in a sealed tin?  
Don't accept it. It is not genuine.  
A ring of gold with the sun in it?  
Lies, Lies and a grief.

She had a strong resentment towards marriage. The poem 'The Applicant' ridicules the male ego who treat women as 'it'.

..... here is a hand  
To fill it and willing  
To bring teacups and roll away headaches  
And do whatever you tell it.  
Will you marry it?  
It is guaranteed  
She continues the same tone till the end.  
But in twenty-five years she will be silver,  
In fifty, gold.  
A living doll, everywhere you look.  
It can sew, it can cook,  
It can talk, talk, talk.

Sylvia Plath's search for the right man to share her love and life comes to an end, when she meets Ted Hughes and gets married to him in the year 1956. Both being creative writers with similar tastes in life and literature, allow us to predict a happy marriage. Sylvia Plath's world enlarges when she becomes a mother and she successfully combines her home and career. Children too find their share of love.

All night your moth-breath  
flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:  
A far sea moves in my ear.  
One cry, and I stumble from bed, Cow- heavy and floral  
In my Victorian nightgown.  
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's.

She did not dream that a day will come that she would confess about her broken marriage to her own son.

Sylvia Plath was a young mother of two beautiful children. Marriage was already on the rocks as the clashes had set in, in many fields. She played her part well, bravely and heroically. Ted Hughes's initial fascination started getting worn off and he developed affairs with other women. Sylvia Plath, as a poet, is deliberately silent here. His affair with another lady made Sylvia Plath heart broken and she separated from him and that was the end of her love.

Ted Hughes takes her for granted and ignores the women in her. He assumes that, as an intellectual, she should overlook such affairs as trivial things of life. She cries:

I am not a mystical: it isn't  
As if I though it had a spirit.  
It is simply in its elements.

When her cries were in vain she decides to relinquish the role of a heroine in Hughes' life and she realizes that her spring of love has dried up. Only alternative was to fall in love with death, which seemed to be attractive to her, since a long time.

Love, the world  
Suddenly turns, turns color. The streetlight  
Splits through the rat's-tail  
pods of the laburnum at nine in the morning.

Love has been a major theme in poetry for generations together and a woman plays a major role in the game of love. She is more emotional and sentimental about love than her counterpart. She forgets her identity and completely merges with her lover. She gets a jolt of her life when her tender world, which existed in her imagination, gets shattered. Failure in love as a theme is more powerful in the poems of confessional poets, than its consummation.

Kamala Das, on the other hand, lends a new dimension to her love poetry by revealing her kinship with an interior Indian tradition which has its roots in Indian epics. Search for love is the principal preoccupation of Kamala Das's poetry. She concerns herself with various facets of love. In fact the whole volume of Kamala Das's poetry revolves round this theme, either directly or indirectly. Her shocking confession about this theme has startled equally the critics and the laymen. It was more shocking because it comes from a traditional, Indian woman. She started seeking love and sexual experience, when she was an adolescent.

Devendra Kohli comments in this context: "Almost, all the critics of Kamala Das have been quick to notice that part of the strength of poetry emanates from her powerful personality. But while the vigour of her personality seems to operate rather transparently, and on the surface as it were, it does not detract from the complexity of the women's ambivalence which is the certitude and the precariousness of sexual love."

She makes the theme more complex when she echoes the mythological love. She records her yearnings in her autobiography *My Story* thus:

I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking for the one who  
went to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha. Perhaps I was  
seeking the cruelty that lies in the depths of a man's heart.  
Otherwise why did I not get my peace in the arms of my husband?  
But consciously I had hoped for the death of my ego. The ones  
who loved me did not understand why I was restive.

Kamala Das searches for love in more than one person and this leads her to more complexities. Her advantage is of being a poet of the modern era, in which, the idea of love and sex are discussed without any inhibitions. She is able to present her themes, raw, naked without clothing it with imagery and metaphors. She lived and loved like a 'Radha', like a queen and could not take the disillusionment of living in one room apartment of Bombay. She writes in her autobiography *My Story*: "From every city I have lived I have remembered the noon in Malabar with an ache growing inside me, a home sickness,"

The same sentiment is echoed in her poetry:

..... you cannot believe darling,  
Can you, that I lived in such a house and  
Was proud and loved .... I who have lost  
My way and beg now at stranger's doors to  
Receive love, at least in small change?



This urge for love becomes intense and can be traced in her poetic growth. Many persons entered her life as lovers and she does not make efforts to hide this fact. Her problem was, as she states:

..... Oh yes, getting  
A man to love is easy, but living  
Without him afterwards may have to be  
faced. A living without life when you move  
Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that  
Gave up their search, with ears that hear only.

Kamala Das's need to have many men in her life was justified by her at several places. She yearns for such a love, which does not impede her impulse to freedom. Her concept of ideal love is embedded in the poem 'The Old Playhouse'.

... Love is Narcissus at the waters' edge, hunted  
By its own lovely face, and yet it must seek at last  
An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors  
to shatter and the kind night to erase the water.

Her experiments with love take many turns and in the course, give birth to more frustrations and more poetry. She wanted a love of her liking and become 'The Prisoner' in that gladly.

As the convict studies  
His prison's geography  
I study the trappings  
Of your body, dear love,  
For I must some day find,  
an escape from its snare.

The search for ideal love is continued throughout her poetry. Her concept of love takes a new turn very often. In 'Love' she confesses:

Until I found you,  
I wrote verse, draw pictures,  
And, went out with friends  
For walks .....  
Now that I love you,  
Curled like an old mongrel  
My life lies, content,  
In you ... ..

She was sick of love, which was just skin-deep. With her strong aversion to lust, she questions her readers:

... .. 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 clouds  
at noon.

Her ideal love, which she seeks, had her grandmother's love, her parental love and also the soft lesbian love, which she had experienced at school. She failed miserably but quite gracefully and poetically. This helpless feminine anger on her husband, lovers and society made her passion cruel. She says:

I wanted him to surfer from incurable love. This cruelty is typical  
of women when they are in love.

Sometimes she mistakes these concepts of love and lust one for the other. She fails to  
draw a line between them. She gets vexed and sighs desperately.

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.

Kamala Das too, like Sylvia Plath had an encounter with death, but luckily she was saved  
from its fierce grip. Her quest for love continues to be the theme of her poetry, which projects her as  
an optimist. A series of her love pomes were published in the *Youth Times* and a few more in the  
magazine *Pamparam*, her own publication. The tone now is more compromising, than repentance.

Kamala Das's bold expression of her frenzied love, expressed without any restraint got  
her both bouquets and brickbats. But no critic could complain against her technique. Her poetry of  
love is condemned as a sheer exhibition of permissiveness. Sometimes she ignores sometimes gives  
a befitting rejoinder to these remarks through her articles. She sometimes lashes out, sometimes  
speaks convincingly:

If my mode of writing is striptease, let it remain so. There is a great  
difference between a patient exposing his nudity to her doctor and  
a cabaret artist baring herself to be provocative. The motive of the  
one is not vulgar, but a peeping Tom, looking through the keyhole  
into the doctor's chamber, the nudity may seem exciting.

Kamala Das says that she was never a nymphomaniac and rejects that her poems are  
pornographic in tone. In her over-anxiety to expose dark areas hidden in her subconscious and also  
to expose the society of its inhibitions, some of her poems have turned out to be crude and hasty  
compositions. It would not be an exaggeration to say that she is the first Indian woman who could  
use love as a theme, so sustaining through her poems, in multi-colored dimensions.

In conclusion someone can say that the theme of love and sex had used by Sylvia Plath  
and Kamala Das in their various poems.

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## Girish Karnad: A Man and Artist—Evolution of His Dramatic Genius

Dr. Krishna Singh

Girish Raghunath Karnad is a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic, translator and cultural administrator all rolled into one. He has been rightly called the “renaissance man” (Kalidas & Merchant.”Renaissance Man”); whose celebrity is based on decades of prolific and consistent output on native soil. He belongs to a generation that has produced Dharamveer Bharati, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar who have created a national theatre for modern India which is the legacy of his generation. Karnad is the most famous as a playwright. His plays written in Kannad have been widely translated into English and all major Indian languages. Karnad’s plays are written neither in English, except few, in which he dreamed of earning international literary fame, nor in his mother tongue Konkani. Instead they are composed in his adopted language Kannad thereafter translated by himself into English—a language of adulthood. When Karnad started writing plays, Kannad literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in Western literature. Writers would choose a subject which looked entirely alien to manifestation of native soil. Conflicting ideologies, political freedom of India, modernity versus indigenous traditions supplied the specific backdrop to write plays. During his formative years, Karnad went through diverse influences that went long way into shaping his dramatic taste and genius. The earliest influence was that of the *Natak Company* that was in vogue in Sirsi. The *Yakshagana* plays which he used to see with the servants also appealed to him by their buffoonery and horseplay. But the greater influence came from the naturalistic drama of Henrik Ibsen and through him of G.B. Shaw. Karnad was also influenced by Shakespeare considerably. But the influence of Kannada drama was quite profound and deep on him. Karnad represents the best traditions of the Kannada drama which was quite rich with romantic plays, tragedies, comedies, poetic and blank verse plays. Karnad took keen interest in all these kinds of Kannada plays. He was exposed to a literary scene where there was a direct clash between Western and native tradition. It was India of the Fifties and Sixties that surfaced two streams of thought in all walks of life—adoption of new modernistic techniques, a legacy of the colonial rule and adherence to the rich cultural past of the country. Karnad has acknowledged this fact:

My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It therefore had to face a situation in which tensions implicit until then had come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self-justification: tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries. (“Author’s Introduction” *Three Plays*.1)

Under such context, Karnad found, “a new approach like drawing historical and mythological sources to tackle contemporary themes” (Wikipedia “Girish Karnad”). R.K. Dhawan examines the impact of contemporary socio-cultural and literary milieu: “Karnad was fascinated by the traditional plays; nonetheless the Western playwrights that he read during his college days opened up for him a new world of magical possibilities” (14). M.K. Nayak observes, “the most significant plays of the last two decades have come from two playwrights, who interestingly enough, represent a generation each: Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani” (*Littcrit.* 43). Karnad’s plays had effectively demonstrated how Indian English drama could

revitalize itself by employing indigenous subjects, characters, language and Folk and Natak Company conventions and de-colonize Indian English Drama. M. K. Naik has justly commented that Karnad knew it well that,

If Indian English drama wishes to go ahead, it must go back first, that is, only a purposeful return to its own roots in the rich tradition of ancient Indian drama, both in Sanskrit and folk drama in Prakrits, can help it shed its lean and pale look, and increase its artistic haemoglobin count, and make it cease to be the 'sick man' of Indian English Literature. (*Ibid.* 43-44)

Karnad has emerged as a living legend in the contemporary Indian English drama. His output which ranges from *Yayati* to *Wedding Album* marks the evolution of Indian theatre since four decades. "He represents", Saryug Yadav considers, "synthesis of cultures and his formal experiments have certainly been far more successful than those of some of his contemporaries" (9). His technical experiments with an indigenous dramatic form "opened up fresh lines of fruitful exploration for the Indian English playwright" (Naik. *A History of Indian English Literature*. 263). P. Hari Padma Rani also gives credit to Karnad to Indianize the form of drama in English: "Girish Karnad has attempted to Indianize the form by using some of the conventions of Indian Classical drama and some of those of the folk theatre and by blending them in a singular style of his own" (15).

Karnad was born on 19 May 1938 in Matheran, a town near Bombay. He hails from a Saraswat Konkani family of Manglore. His childhood was spent growing up in a small village Sirsi in Karnataka where he had first-hand experience of the indigenous folk theatre. The influence of the theatre was immense on the making of Karnad as a playwright. He happened to see with his father the performances of the touring Natak Companies. These Natak Companies were the off-shoots of the Parsi theatre. Karnad wrote:

In my childhood, in a small town in Karnataka, I was exposed to two theatre forms that seemed to represent irreconcilably different worlds. Father took the entire family to see plays staged by troupes of professional actors called *natal companies* which toured the countryside throughout the year. The plays were staged in semipermanent structures on proscenium stages, with wings and drop curtains, and illuminated by petromax lamps.

Once the harvest was over, I went with the servants to sit up nights watching the more traditional *Yakshagana* performances. The stage, a platform with a black curtain, was erected in the open air and lit by torches.

By the time I was in my early teens, the *natak companies* had ceased to function and *Yakshagana* had begun to seem quaint, even silly, to me. Soon we moved to a big city. This city had a college and electricity, but no professional theatre. ("Author's Introduction" *Three Plays*.1)

As a young man studying at Karnataka University, Dharwar, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mathematics and Statistics in 1958, Karnad dreamed of earning international literary fame, but he thought that he would do so by writing in English. Upon graduation, he went to England and studied at Oxford where he earned a Rhodes scholarship and went on to receive a Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. During his stay at Magdalen College, Oxford, Karnad felt immensely interested in art and culture. On his return to India in 1963, he joined Oxford University Press, Madras. This offered him an opportunity to get exposed to various kinds of writings in India and elsewhere. Such influences made an indelible mark on the creative genius of Karnad. In 1974, he received an important assignment and was appointed Director of the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. In 1987, he went to the



U.S.A. as Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago. From 1988 to 1993, he worked as Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy for Performing Arts), New Delhi. In 1994, he was awarded Doctor of Letters degree by the Karnataka University, Dharwad. The awards conferred to Karnad testify his recognition as a contributor to art, literature and cinema. Karnad's awards include the Mysore State Award for *Yayati* (1962), the Government of Mysore Rajyotsava Award (1970), Presidents Gold Medal for the Best Indian film for *Samskara* (1970), the Homi Bhabha Fellowship for creative work in folk theatre (1970-72), the Sangeet Natak Academy (National Academy of the Performing Arts) Award for playwriting (1972), the Kamaladevi Award of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh for the Best Indian play of the year for *Hayavadana* (1972), the National Award for Excellence in Direction for *Vamsha Vriksha* (shared with B.V. Karanth - 1972), the Mysore State Award for the Best Kannada film and the Best Direction for *Vamsha Vriksha* (1972), the Presidents Silver Medal for the Second Best Indian film for *Kaadu* (1974), the Padma Shri Award (1974), the National Award for the Best Kannada film for *Ondanondu Kaaladalli* (1978), the National Award for the Best Script for *Bhumika* (shared with Shyam Benegal and Satyadev Dubey - 1978), the Film Fare Award for the Best Script for *Godhuli* (shared with B.V. Karanth - 1978), the Best Bengal Film Journalists Association Award for the Best Actor in *Swami* (1978), the Karnataka Nataka Academy Award (1984), the Nandikar, Calcutta, Award for Playwriting (1989), the Golden Lotus for the Best Non-Feature Film for *Kanaka Purandara* (1989), the National Award for the Best Non-Feature Film on Social Issues for *The Lamp in the Niche* (1990), "Writer of the Year" Award from Granthaloka Journal of the Book Trade for *Taledanda* (1990), Karnataka State Award for the Best Supporting Actor in *Santa Shishunala Shareef* (1991), the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the Most Creative Work for *Nagamandala* (1992), the B.H. Sridhar Award for *Tale-Danda* (1992), the Padma Bhushan Award (1992), the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for Best Play for *Tale-Danda* (1992), the Booksellers and Publishers Association of South India Award (1992), the National Award for the Best Film on Environmental Conservation for *Cheluvi* (1993), a Special Honour Award from the Karnataka Sahitya Academy (1994), the Sahitya Academy Award for *Tale-Danda* (1994), and the Gubbi Veeranna Award (1996-97), and the Jnanpith Award (1999). He also served as Director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974-75), President of the Karnataka Nataka Academy (1976-78), Indian Co-Chairman for the Joint Media Committee of the Indo-U.S. sub-Commission on Education and Culture (1984-93). In recognition of his meritorious contribution to art, culture and theatre, the President of India awarded him Padamshri in 1974 and Padambhushan in 1992. Karnad won the prestigious Gnanpith Award in 1999. He is a gifted genius and a man of excellent intellectual abilities. He strikes a balance between intellect and emotion in his plays.

When Karnad was preparing to go to England, amidst the intense emotional turmoil, he found himself writing play. It was just a chance that Karnad became a dramatist. He himself tells us: "I wanted to be a poet, the greatest ambition in my life. At the age of 22, I realized I would not be a poet, but be only a playwright" (27). He finds it difficult to describe the trauma created by decision to go abroad for further studies. Karad was surprised to see that instead of becoming a poet he had become a playwright. He himself recounts some reasons behind it:

Going abroad was a much rare occurrence in those days; besides, I came from a large, close-knit family and was the first member of the family ever to go abroad. My parents were worried lest I decide to settle down outside India, and even for me, though there was no need for an immediate decision, the terrible choice was implicit in the very act of going

away....While still preparing for the trip, amidst the intense emotional turmoil, I found myself writing a play. This took me by surprise, for I had fancied myself a poet, had written poetry through my teens, and had trained myself to write in English, in preparation for the conquest of the West. But here I was writing a play and in Kannad, too, the language spoken by a few million people in South India, the language of my childhood. A greter surprise was the theme of the play, for it was taken from ancient Indian mythology from which I had believed myself alienated. (“Author’s Introduction” *Three Plays*.2-3)

Karnad’s plays include *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1964), *Hayavadana* (1971), *Anjumallige*, Kannada version published by Manohara Grantha Mala, Dharwad, 1977. The English translation by the playwright as “Driven Snow” is as yet unpublished. *Hittina Hunja*. 1980, published as *Bali: The Sacrifice* [along with *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*] New Delhi: OUP, 2003. *Nagamandala: A Play with a Cobra*. (1990), *Tale-Danda* (1993). *The Fire and the Rain* (1998). “The Dreams of Tipu Sultan,” *Theatre India*. No.1 May 2000: 47-85. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* and *Bali: The Sacrifice*. New Delhi: OUP, 2004. *Two Monologues: Flowers and Broken Images*. OUP, 2005. *Wedding Album*. OUP, Nov, 2008. Karnad’s first play *Yayati* was the result of intense emotional crisis he felt while going to England for further studies. To escape from his stressful situation, he began writing a play based on the myth of Yayati from *Mahabharata*. The play that reflects his mental condition at that time is a self-conscious existentialist drama on the theme of responsibility. He combines native subject with existential philosophy and juxtaposes past and present together. The play reveals the existentialist view that each man is what he chooses to be or makes himself. The play doesn’t glorify son’s obedience to his father who exchanges his curse to his son Pooru is contrary to the original myth. Karnad raises practical question what would be the reaction of Pooru’s wife? Chitrlekha’s protest attacks male-chauvinism and subverts patriarchy. Karnad being a problem playwright deals with soci-political and cultural concerns of the contemporary life. *Yayati*—unheroic hero stands for modern man inhabited by worldly desires, sensual pleasure, and irresponsible exercise of power and utter forgetfulness of the imperishable values of life. In *Yayati* Karnad reinterprets an ancient myth from the Puranic past to make a statement in the form and structure he borrowed from the Western playwrights. The play was a great success on the stage. Karnad’s second play *Tughlaq* is a historical play on the life of fourteenth century Sultan of India—Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Karnad has always found it difficult to find a suitable subject for writing plays. He read the history of Kannada literature by Kirtinath Kurtkoti and learnt from him that Indian history has not been handled by any Indian writer the way it has been done by Shakespeare or Brecht. Karnad was very much impressed by this statement; he went through a book of Indian history. And when he came to Tughlaq, he exclaimed, “Oh! Marvellous. That is what I wanted.” That was a subject in tune with the times. In those days, existentialism was quite in vogue. Everything about Tughlaq seemed to fit into what Karnad had surmised from Kurtkoti. He felt that in Tughlaq he had hit upon a fantastic character. He realized that he had absorbed this character and it was growing in front of him,

certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures. After a reign distinguished for policies that today seem far-sighted to the point of genius, but which in their day earned him the title ‘Muhammad the Mad,’ the sultan ended his career in bloodshed and political chaos. In a sense, the play reflected the slow disillusionment my generation felt with the new politics of independent India: the gradual erosion of the ethical norms that had guided the movement for independence and

the coming to terms with cynicism and realpolitik. (“Author’s Introduction” *Three Plays*. 7)

R.K. Dhawan explores several resemblances between Karnad’s *Tughlaq* and Shakespeare’s *Richard II*:

Like King Richard, Muhammad-bin-Tughlq is temperamental and whimsical. Events in both the plays centre around the eccentricities of their protagonists. Again like Shakespeare, Karnad presents the historical events and complexities of the time with perfect objectivity of a true historian, throwing upon them the beautiful colouring of art. He exhibits without concealment the weakness of the king’s character but spares no pain to evoke our whole-hearted pity for him in his fall. (16)

The political chaos which Karnad depicts in *Tughlaq* reminded many readers of the Nehru era in Indian history. Karnad finds this similiarity accidental. U.R. Anatha Muthy considers the play

more than a political allegory. it has an irreducible, puzzling quality which comes from the ambiguities of Tughlaq’s character...all other characters are dramatized aspects of his complex personality....But it would be unjust to say that the play is about an ‘interesting’ character, for the play relates the character of Tughlaq to philosophical questions on the nature of man and the destiny of a whole kingdom which a dreamer like him controls. (“Introduction” *Tughlaq*. viii-ix)

*Tughlaq* had a tremendous success with the reading public and it achieved greater popularity on the stage as actors have liked to do the role of the emperor. As opposed the first play, Karnad wrote this one in the convention of the Natak Company. For form of the play, Karnad was no more interested in John Anouilh. He divided the play into scenes in the indigenous fashions of the natakas—*shallow* and *deep scenes*. The shallow scenes were played in the foreground of the stge with a painted curtain—normally depicting a street—as a backdrop. These scenes were reserved for ‘lower class’ characters with prominence given to comedy. They served as link scenes in the development of the plot, but the main purpose was to keep the audience engaged while the deep scenes, which showed interiors of palaces, royal parks, and other such visually opulent sets, were being changed or decorated. The important characters rarely appeared in the street scenes, and in the deep scenes the lower classes strictly kept their place.

*Hayavadana* (1970) is the third and the most representative of his plays. It deals with archetypal theme, underlying mythical patterns, identifiable character-types, folk theatre conventions i.e. use of mask, curtains, dolls, story within story, use of images of Kali, Ganesh, Rudra etc, allegorical significance of the play are the characteristic features of the play. It was originally written in Kannada and it was persuaded by Rajinder Paul to translate the play into English and first published this translation in his journal *Enact*. It was Mrs. Laxmi Krrishnamurthy and Mrs. Yamuna Prabhu who jointly produced it for the madras Players at the Museum Theatre, Madras on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1972. The plot of *Hayavadana* is derived from Somdeva’s *Brihadkatha Saritsagar*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. The central episode in the play—the story of Devadatta and Kapil—is based on a tale from *Vetala Panchavimshika*, but Karnad has borrowed it through Thomas Mann’s novel *Transposed Heads*, a mock-heroic transcription of the original Sanskrit tales. Whereas the sub-plot—horse-man’s search for completeness, is Karnad’s original invention. *Hayavadana* is a play on the “mad dance of incompleteness? (57) and search of identity in a world of tangled relationships. Devadatta, the intellectual, and Kapila, the man of body, are intimate friends who represents two extreme opposites—one Appolonian; another Dionysian tendency. Devadatta marries Padmini. Padmini

and Kapila fall in love with each other. The two friends kill themselves. In a highly comic scene which is of great dramatic significance Padmini transposes their heads, giving Devadatta Kapila's body and vice-versa. It results in a confusion of identities which reveals the ambiguous nature of human personality. The situation gets complicated. They fight a duel and kill themselves again. Padmini performs *sati*. Karnad delves deep into the traditional myths to spell out modern man's anguish and dilemmas that are created in his mind. S.Ramaswami has rightly commented:

Karnad transmutes and transforms his source material to such an extent, being an actor and theatre man himself, that the modern, contemporary, individual talent incorporates the tradition into a transcreation that is rich and strange. The Rhodes scholar and practical man of theatre and cinema blend into a recreation of the myth and legend of India with a novel blend of traditional material and contemporary narrative technique which is quite challenging in bringing folk and elite theatres together. (21-22)

Karnad's play in a characteristic way begins where the 'Vetal' story ends. How would the woman take it if it really happened and would it ultimately solve the problem for her? are the fascinating questions the artist in him faces. Karnad doesn't satisfy with Pooru's acceptance of his father's old-age and *Yayati* uses this only as a starting point. If young Pooru had a wife how would she feel about Pooru's extraordinary decision, becomes the nucleus of his exploration of the problem raised by the mythical story. In *Hayavadana* what Karnad wants to suggest is that for us King Vikram's solution does not solve the problem. In fact, the real problem begins when it appears to be solved. That could be reason why he dropped the version of *Vetala Panchavimshika* which had the "incest" theme at its core. He also makes significant departures from Mann's story. Shubhangi S, Raykar analyses thus: "In all his plays Karnad takes this kind of leap from the original story and develops it further. This further development is the play of artist's imagination and it challenges the glib solution offered in the original stories" (48).

*Naga-Mandala: Play with a Cobra* (1990) is a play based on two oral tales of Karnataka narrated by older women of the family while feeding children in the kitchen or being put to bed. The other adults present on these occasions are also women. Therefore these tales, though directed at the children, often serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family. These tales Karnad heard from Professor A.K. Ramanujan thereafter he transmuted them into dramatic form. First is the traditional tale of a cobra turning into man at night and visiting a married woman; and the second is based on the popular belief that a night long vigil in a temple can ward off death. Karnad himself commented on the role and significance of these tales:

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

The play presents a tale of male chauvinism to give the message that it debilitates and degrades both sexes. In modern ambience, men and women have to work in tandem to maintain this pace of progress. Women have shown that they have drive to and enterprise as much as men have. Though to our misfortune we find that there are innumerable cases of exploitation of



women, yet it is more than clear that Rani can not be incarcerated any more. We shall be “worse than blind Kurudavva if we fail to give women their due place in the society and worse than Cobra if we fail to appreciate their potential. Rani’s and Naga’s ultimate act of reconciling with the situation is edifying. It is no wisdom to remain stuck to the past, when future beckons us” (Prem Sagar “Preface”). The play deals with gender-bias and the subjection of woman in patriarchal Indian Orthodox society. The female protagonist—Rani and Kurudavva, other female character, are generic creations stand for Indian woman. Though the play is a richly textured dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka, Karnad delves deep to explore contemporary socio-cultural and philosophical concerns giving them modern validity. Rani is placed in a world where orthodox social conventions, cultural taboos and coercive forces work; patriarchy is established which proves greatest blow to the existence of Rani. Apart from overt patriarchy, she is socialized to internalize the male superiority—an invisible conspiracy to derogate and marginalize her position in the society. She adopts new ways to transcend age-old subjection of woman. Rani is surrounded by evil social forces where she finds herself helpless; tortured by alienation and despair but she never surrenders and continues her struggle for identity—as a woman, as a wife and as a mother. Karnad’s solution appears, at the first observation odd, unconvincing and unconventional violating traditional mode of treatment. Message is clear: despite alienation, despair and antithetical conditions a woman must continue her struggle for her existence and transcend “nothingness” in life and manipulate co-existence as a means for self-existence. Patriarchy, socio-cultural practices, parents of Rani, Appanna, Village Elders, Naga, Dog, and Mongoose etc are the tools to perpetuate exploitation of Rani. M.K. Naik has explored the symbolism embedded in the play:

The two folk-tales are deftly blended in presenting the two allied themes of the nature of art and the relationship between art and imagination on the one hand and mundane reality on the other. The tale of the failed playwright seems to suggest that art demands everything from the artist and that he will die if he cannot fulfil his mission. The Rani-Appanna-Cobra tale is evidently an allegory of the nexus between the world of art and the world of reality. Rani, who whiles away her time making up fairy tales, is the artist, and the Cobra, the power of imagination, while Appanna represents the work-a-day world. The fact that the Cobra assumes the form of Appanna suggests that Art is, and also is not, the same as reality. That the Cobra finally finds permanent refuge in the hair of Rani is perhaps indicative of the permanent alliance between Art and Imagination. (46)

*Tale- Danda* (1993) derives its story from the life of a Kannada saint Basavanna who resisted ideologically against the prevailing evils of caste hierarchy. Like *Tughlaq* and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, it is a historical play. History and its urgent relevance to the present continuous have always fascinated Karnad and *Tale- Danda* illustrates this fact. Explosive situations after the official endorsement of Mandal Commission Report and Mandal issue in 1989 motivated Karnad to work on subaltern issue and highlight, “how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and the religious fanaticism that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered” (Karnad “Preface”). And the historical context, deeply implanted in his mind proved catalytic to his plays. Drawing our attention to the genesis of the present, the play illuminates the endemic affliction of the caste and class politics infecting our body politic in the medieval period of history. It was the strong sense of history, which has nurtured in Karnad a dominant will for social justice, a sincere compassion for the socially oppressed and subaltern. Karnad doesn’t offer any solution to the problem; but raised the subaltern issue for discussion

and common consensus. Under Basavanna, a social reformer of the 12<sup>th</sup> century assembled a congregation of poets, mystics and social revolutionaries and philosophers formed the *Lingayat* faith, giving impetus to courageous questioning and social commitment. The abolition of caste, equality of sexes, rejection of idol worship, repudiation of Brahminism, and of Sanskrit in favour of the mother tongues i.e. Kannad; were the main tenets of subaltern revolution. The resentment reaches its climax when Madhuvarsa, a Brahmin gives his daughter Kalavati in a marriage to an untouchable—Sheelvanta. This last act opposing caste hierarchy, not just in theory but in practice also, brought down upon the wrath of orthodox; the movement ended in terror and bloodshed. The playwright wants to suggest whenever such important issues are not considered seriously and solutions offered by these thinkers go unheeded, disastrous results would follow again. Rupalee Burke finds Karnad a playwright with a difference whose motive behind playwriting is to catch the:

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

Basavanna's vision of egalitarian society and spiritualized politics was the vision of Karnad himself. He raises many questions and few oblique suggestions provide but more are left to the audience to think and get them resolved.

*The Fire and the Rain* is a far more successful play based on the myth of Yavakri (or Yavakrita) which occurs in Chapters 135-138 of the Vana Parva (Forest Canto) of the *Mahabharata*. It is an English translation of a play in Kannad *Agni Mattu Male* by the playwright himself. It took thirty-seven years time to live with a myth and develop into the present form for a workshop with professional actors at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. Years spent in the company of South Asian scholars at the University of Chicago stimulated his interest in orthodox Hinduism and the complex organization of the Hindu society. The most spectacular and successful production of the play was by Arjun Sajnani in English (Bangalore, 1999), subsequently, Sajnani reworked the play as a commercial Hindi film titled *Agnivarsha* (casting Amitabh Bachchan as Indra). Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker has examined the genesis and evolution of the play: "Karnad reimagines the world of Hindu antiquity and constructs a story of passion, loss, and sacrifice in the contexts of Vedic ritual, spiritual discipline (*tapasya*), social and ethical differences between human agents, and interrelated forms of performance still close to their moments of origin" ("Introduction" Vol. Two. xvii). The 'fire' in the title of the play is the fire of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, treachery, violence and death. The 'rain' symbolizes self-sacrifice, compassion, Divine Grace, forgiveness, revival and life. It is narrated by the ascetic Lomsha to the Pandavas during their exile. But Karnad gives a contemporary meaning to an old legend, which stresses the dangers of knowledge without wisdom and power without integrity. The myth cautions about the misappropriation of power that human beings receive from the gods after great penance. Yavakri, the son of sage Bhardwaj, acquires knowledge of the Vedas directly from Indra after ten years rigorous penance. Though his father regarding acquisition of divine power warns him, Yavakri uses it to molest the daughter-in-law of sage Raibhya, whom he resents. Raibhya in retaliation creates a demon (*Brahma Rakshasa*) and a spirit in the form of his daughter-in-law, Vishakha, both of whom pursue Yavakri and kill him. Bhardwaj curses Raibhya—that he will die at the hands of his own son—and then kills himself in remorse. Sometime later Parvasu indeed mistakes the deerskin his father Raibhya is wearing for



a wild animal, and accidentally kills him. Involved with his younger brother Aravasu in a fire sacrifice, Paravasu initiates another cycle of evil when he falsely accuses the latter of patricide (hence of brahiminicide). Aravasu then begins his own penance to the Sun God, and when granted a boon, asks for Yavakri, Bhardwaj, and Raibhya to be restored to life. Lives that were destroyed due to human lapses are restored through divine intervention. Karnad has forged closer connections between the principal characters and created them into rounded personalities. Yavakri and Vishakha are not strangers but lovers whose relationship both precedes and follows Vishakha's marriage to Paravasu, making her more than merely a passive object of Yavakri's lust. Her marriage itself appears to be an arid contract: after a frenzy of sensual gratification Paravasu has left Vishakha to Raibhya's care, and the relationships between the three are startling in their lovelessness and malevolence. Similarly, Paravasu kills his father out of hatred rather than ignorance. Karnad has also invented a love episode between Aravasu and a tribal girl Nittilai, and develops a contrast between the life of discipline and sacrifice with the life of instinct and emotion—opposition between Brahmin and Sudra, with Aravasu working as a connective link between the two appositive worlds. Karnad's note on "Drama and *Purushartha*" in *The Fire and the Rain* endorses his unequivocal interest in the doctrines of *Purushartha* towards which a work of art should draw mankind. Karnad himself has pointed out the structure of the play resembles that of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy, the chief motifs in which are the protagonist's home-coming after a prolonged absence; human frailty and temptation and crime; the operation of the supernatural in human life; and Divine grace. With its solid thematic richness *the Fire and Rain* is, "perhaps the finest of Karnad's plays so far" (Naik 48).

*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997) draws its plot from the history of Tipu Sultan. It follows the model of the history play established in *Tughlaq* and *Tale- Danda*. It was first written as a radio play for BBC to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence in 1996. The plot obviously deals with some aspect of Indo-British relation. It primarily explores the secret inner world of a man whose public life was a continual war against British colonialism. It was late A.K. Ramanujan who drew his attention to the record of his dreams maintained by Tipu Sultan himself. Karnad, like many other playwrights was fascinated by the valour of Tipu Sultan who continued to inspire folk ballads in Karnataka. Tipu Sultan is viewed as one of the most brave warriors, political visionary and dreamer; one of the most politically perceptive and tragic figures in modern Indian history. The radio play was broadcast by the BBC on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1997 and was directed by Jatinder Verma of Tara Arts with Saeed Jaffrey playing the role of Tipu Sultan. Karnataka Nataka Rangayana staged the Kannad version in the periphery of Daria Daulat, Tipu's summer palace in Srirangapatna, to commemorate his 200<sup>th</sup> death anniversary in May 1999. Later it was entirely re-written for the stage. The play blends historical sources to portrait major characters and develops an imaginative plot and resonant dialogue to reflect their experience. Tipu stands for a force fighting against British Colonialism. The image in the play of polity in crisis, both because of internal dissensions and the presence of a powerful alien adversary, "carries the same potential for application to contemporary problems that had made the history of *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda* politically relevant in present day India" (Dharwadker, Vol. Two. xxiii). The characters major as well as minor are put together, language and dialogue apt to create the air of Sultanate period of India. Tipu, Haider Ali, Nana Phadnavis, Lord Cornwallis, Arthur and Richard Wellesley against a less prominent historical figures i.e. Kirmani, Tipu's queen and sons, courtiers, ordinary citizens and soldiers. Karnad avoids any partisan parade of heroes and villains, rather creates black sheep in both the camps. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker rightly comments: "Karnad interlineates 'textualized' history with legend, lore, and memory

because all these modes of transmission are germane to the story of Tipu” (*Ibid*, xxiv). Karnad has also projected Tipu in multiple and contradictory roles—as a beloved ruler, legendary warrior, loving father, and visionary dreamer, but also a Machiavellian schemer who plots with the French against the British, the defeated soldier who enters into humiliating treaties with the enemy, and the gullible commander who is eventually betrayed by his own side. Tipu’s decline destroyed a visionary who had progressive ideas to modernize his empire on the European line.

*Bali: The Sacrifice* discusses conflicting mindsets with religious beliefs, simultaneously exposes the hollowness and futility of age-old rituals. The plot of the play has drawn upon the thirteenth century Kannad epic *Yashodhara Charite* by Janna, which in turn refers back through an eleventh century Sanskrit epic by Vadiraja to the ninth-century Sanskrit epic *Yashastilaka*, by Somdeva Suri. The play is “a tribute to astuteness and sensitivity of Mahatma Gandhi that he saw so clearly the insistence of non-violence to the cultural and political survival of India” (Karnad. *Two Plays*. 69). Anshuman Khanna observes that the play, “Offers a fresh perspective of approach vis-à-vis man’s psychological struggle and manoeuvres. It presents the cultural, moral and religious dialogic in the context of the warfare between the losing grounds of reality and conscious right to social survival—a conflict between the effete essentialist position and the conceptualized work of living” (106).

It explores the existential dilemma of passion and violence posed by an ancient Jain myth. The myth is less concerned with actual violence than with the morality of substitution, which permits violence, a wider and subtler play by masking its true nature. Violence has been the one of the crucial subjects of debate in the history of Indian civilization. Vedic sacrifices, conducted by Brahmin priests, involved the slaughter of animals as offerings to the gods, which the Jains found repugnant. To the Jain, indulging in any kind of violence, however minor or accidental, meant forfeiting one’s moral status as a human being. Later Buddhists too advocated non-violence. The issue found some resolution when the Brahmins renounced blood sacrifice. Miniature figurines, made of dough, were substituted for live animals, a practice that continues to this day. Despite this change, Jains objected this process of substitution that carries the original violent impulse within them which was no less dehumanizing. Karnad came across the myth of the Cock of Dough when he was in his teens and the myth littered with discarded drafts of dramatized versions of it. The myth revealed unexpected meanings with long ponderings over it and *Bali: The Sacrifice* is the result of over two decades evolution. Karnad transforms the story of the dough figurine that comes alive at the moment of sacrifice into a mature philosophical exploration of love, jealousy, desire, betrayal, and violence between men and women who are bound by the ties of blood and marriage, or encounter each other in the perfect freedom of anonymity. Novelty of the play lies in the unconventionality of its major characters, and the seriousness with which it yokes intimate personal acts to structures of religious belief and practice. Subaltern issue and the feminist study also make the play more valid in the present context. Mahout represents subalternity and his anger, frustration and disgust are very much generic; whereas old Queen (King’s mother) and Queen Amritawati underline two sets of women—one traditional, blind adherent to age-old rituals indulging in sacrificial acts for material gains; second a woman of practical vision thwarting any form of violence. She even ridicules the morality of substitution. All the four characters are set of opposites—old Queen and Queen; King and Mahout. Vinod Mishra finds in the play, “a voice of reason against a saga of myths” (104). Subha Mishra has seen Foucault’s Panopticism in *Bali: The Sacrifice* which implies deconstructing the established beliefs.

The two short monologues in English—*Broken Images* (2004) and *Flowers* (2004) mark significant change in subjects and forms. *Broken Images* takes up a debate on the politics of language in Indian literary culture. Particularly in relation to the respective claims of the modern Indian languages and English which must also be recognized now as an Indian, though not an indigenous language. Manjula Nayak, the play's only character, is a writer of short and long fiction in Kannada and teacher of English in a Bangalore college, succumbs to the temptation of larger audience and money making; she involves in plagiarism and exposed thereafter. She herself confesses while talking to her own television image that she is an imposter who has passed off her dead sister Malini's novel as her own. She has tried to cash in on a dead sibling's talent. This Anglophilic attitude, comments Dharwadker, "can only lead the Indian language author to prostitute herself" ("Introduction" Vol. Two. xxvii). It deals with problems of authenticity and bad faith created by globalization, through a confrontation between a writer and her electronic image. When Karnad takes on literary politics in the play he immediately relates language to genre. The central issue in the play doesn't involve drama at all but the radically unequal status of fiction written in two contemporary languages, Kannad and English. Manjula Nayak is an epitome of an Indian woman emerging in a changed world order. How modern women can lag behind their male counterparts even in literary writing or plagiarism? Both Majula and Malini are contrasted—one is an invalid another ready to exploit whatever is commercially significant.

*Flowers* (2004) in contrast, returns to the world of folktale, and is the first work in this genre to focus on male rather than female desire, thus registering a small but important shift in Karnad's dramaturgy. The legend of Veeranna on which the play is based belongs to the Chitradurg region, and became widely known when a Kannad writer T.R.Subbanna included it in his novel *Hamsageete* (1952). The married priest has been passionately in love with a mistress to whom he takes the offerings from the temple after the every prayer. One day the *palegar* (chieftain) discovers a hair in the *prasada* and demands an explanation from Veeranna, who claims that the hair belongs to God. Challenged by the chieftain to prove the truth of his claim the priest in turn challenges god to display hair or accept his head in punishment, and enters a meditative trance to the accompaniment of Venkatasubhayya's song. When the chieftain arrives the next day to expose Veeranna's lie, the *shivalinga* has indeed sprouted long silken hair, and when (urged by the singer) he pulls out a tuft to test its authenticity, blood begins to ooze from the crown of the *lingam*. Overwhelmed by a sense of sin at having injured his deity, Veeranna beheads himself in the sanctum. The conflict between religious devotion and erotic love—mingling of spiritual and carnal is central. The miracle of the *shivalinga* confirms the power of the priest's worship and marks him as one of the chosen, but it also ends his life. Sudhir K. Arora has pertly commented:

Thematically, both the monologues are sound and once again, Karnad has introduced his well-known confrontation—between love and duty in *Flowers* and authenticity and duplicity in *Broken Images*. Hence, *Folwers* spiritualises the aesthetics of floweres while *Broken Images* breaks the ethics of pseudo-images regarding the questions related to languages and the originality in literary world. (233)

Both the monologues were originally written in English and later translated into Kannada reversed the common feature of Karnad's writing. *Flowers* is a narrative and *Broken Images* dramatic in technique. Both are the result of complex structural design and thematic innovation which mark a turning point in the long dramatic career of Karnad.

*Wedding Album* (2008) is the latest play of Karnad directed by Lillette Dubey and performed in Bangalore July 10-11, 2008 thereafter in Delhi, Chandigarh and Ludhiana with grand success. It's a contemporary play with "humorous insight into the country's traditions and culture...explores the traditional Indian wedding in a globalised and technologically advanced India" ("Express News service"). It's a delightfully poignant tale of love and longing in a shining India. According to Karnad:

This play has been, in a sense, 30 to 40 years in the making. When his sister got married, he watched the members of his family gathering together, and observed the resultant interpersonal dynamics and tensions...he found it a combination of "celebration and anxiety", and tucked it away in his mind, to emerge much later. He didn't want to write it as a "story" play, though, and the form that it has taken now is satisfying to him. (citizenmatters.in)

*Wedding Album* deals with an urban middle-class Saraswat Brahmin family of Nadkarni: a daughter who lives in Australia (Hema) with her professional husband, a son (Rohit) who is a software designer, a younger daughter (Vidula) willing to marry a suitable boy from America she has never met, a doting mother (Mother) and a cook (Radhabai). The family is educated, liberal and modern. Each snapshot shows its members "frozen in an attitude of respectability, yet each figure has a double image with a penumbra of a hidden life... It's a wonderful comic drama that is deeply revelatory about the India that we live in today" (Deopti "Wedding Album"). According to Lillette Dubey, director of the play, "*Wedding Album* is full of sharp, pithy, and observant comments. Just because the play is not heavy, it doesn't mean it doesn't have muscle and content" (Qtd. in Deepa Mohan). The *Wedding Album* which is structured into nine scenes deals primarily with women and their two different worlds i.e. traditional and modern cyber world. But both of them merge into each other. Even the traditional elder women are fused with energy, hope and modern sensibility. Younger sorts enjoy liberty in education, love, courtship via 'distance' technology; and marriage. The play marks the highest evolution of feminine psyche. Amrit Srinivasan has observed:

the constellation of sexual, conjugal, caste, class, and age-related behaviours and attitudes of selfishness and sacrifice, chastity and commerce, obedience and authority, all integral to modern Hindu marriage, forms *Wedding Album*'s central narrative thread...works as modern myth, whose condensed logic straddles both the real and the tech-simulated world of today, to help us confront our own mixed-up, amoral, craven, unhappy selves...*Wedding Album* encourages us to examine the growing fundamentalism of the Hindu *middle class* family, which is largely 'missing' from social science scholarship on India today. ("Foreword" ix).

Karnad is an innovative, multifaceted and problem playwright who imbibes several personalities in one. He has contributed a lot to enrich Indian English Drama through playtext, performance, acting, and direction. Moreover, like his contemporary playwrights Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, and Mahesh Dattani he has reshaped Indian English Drama. But unlike his contemporaries, he adapts mythical and historical material with a view to giving it a psychological interpretation. As a modern playwright, Karnad is always engaged in the act of "deconstructing myths. He takes up mythical and legendary tales from his own culture and unfolds them in the light of modern sensibility. This deconstructing myth becomes an act of self-searching for the playwright...he combines the past and the present into a unity that bespeaks of tradition and modernity in his art of playwriting" (Gill 8). Karnad upholds the rich cultural heritage of India and endeavours to fight against the legacy of colonialism by advocating Indian values and

cultural ethos of India. Subjects from the native soil, characters deeply rooted in indigenous culture, English very much Indianised to suit the context and create feel of Indianness, and folk and classical theatre traditions endorse his well- thought design to set free Indian English drama from the colonial yoke. Indian imagination and sensibility can be easily seen throughout his plays.

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## Detective Techniques Used In Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* And *Reckless Eyeballing*

Dr. R. Krishnaveni

In viewing the peripheral world of wild and black folk culture as a passive spectator of a thematic that does not touch the modernity, rather than as a constitutive moment of modernity. African American writer views the crises of modernity and the subsequent post modern critique solely within the white European – North American moment. Wild, black folk culture and the periphery are the other face, the alterity, essential to modernity. Ishmael Reed's novels are modern paradigm and assume planetary post modernism.

In his novels, Ishmael Reed uses Jazz age and Harlem Renaissance to undermine instrumental reason and to show how the novel and Western metaphysics are constructs, and thus why certain issues of heterogeneity, difference, and fluidity and the critique of closure linearity and absolute truth do not belong exclusively to a European-centered post modernism. But, unlike other African American writer, Ishmael Reed uses Jazz and other African American cultural symbols more visibly in the novels. The novels begin like a film: the action starts *in medias res*, like a detective story, before the title page. Only after the initial reports of the spontaneous epidemic one can get the title, publisher, date, epigraph and dedications. Then, like a film, it returns to the story.

This paper analyses the technique of detective stories, in the linear form of narrative and intertextuality and also focuses how it resembles a typical dime-store detective novel or television movie and the adherence to a singular truth supported by the Western detective story. Ishmael Reed in *Mumbo Jumbo* writes a detective story that shows it as a linguistic invention. The novel dramatises the direct confrontation between European and African Centric thought and culture. As the novel opens, there has erupted what Ishmael Reed, signifying on Harriet Beecher Stowe, calls a 'Jes Grew' epidemic, which he associates, specifically, with African religious practice and dance. Jes Grew, writes Ishmael Reed, is "an anti-plague" which enlivens the host; it is as electric as life and is characterised by ebullience and ecstasy. Establishing, from the outset, the schism between Western and African sensibilities and recalling Loop Garoo's Innocent VIII, Ishmael Reed adds that terrible plagues are due to the wrath of the Christian God; but Jes Grew is the delight of the African gods.

From one side march the protectors of the great Western way-Ishmael Reed calls them the "Wallflower Order," and links them with the Knights Templar. The Order, in turn, is described as being a part of the "Atonist Path" (ADIC 4) - after the Egyptian King Akhenaton, a sun worshipper who, like Blake's Urizew, or Saint Paul, attempted to establish The One Law, ending polytheistic worship and effectively severing human ties with the natural world in a variety. The Order's twentieth-century goal is the same as it has been historically: to stamp out native religions and their texts. In this case, the ancient, lost Book of Thoth, which one can learn, has surfaced after centuries of absence.

Opposing the Atonists is LaBas, who unlike his antagonists, is a pluralist, and a player, like the Egyptian mythological figure Osiris, whom Ishmael Reed discusses in the long fifty second chapter of *Mumbo Jumbo*. The climax of the novel embodies an exquisite parody of the traditional detective novel's scene of confrontation and disclosure. LaBas gathers together the book's living principles in Villa LeWaro and

proceeds to explain the Atonists' active role in the suppression of Jes Grew's Text. He tells, as well, of the reason for Jes Grew's recent eruption:

The Text got out, falling into the hands of a Black Muslim named Abdul Sufi Hamid, who rendered its Egyptian hieroglyphics into English with the idea of publishing it. (ADIC 4)

Harold was found out by the Atonists, who killed him yet failed to recover the Text, the Book of Thoth. LaBas, on the other hand, seems to have done so, locating the Book's jewelled holder – only to discover, in a moment of counter – epiphany that the case is empty, the Book of Thoth having presumably been burned by the prudish Hamid, who felt that the Book depicted rites which were “nasty and lewd decadent” (MJ 231). Meanwhile, Hamid's translation, spurned by an indifferent publisher, has become a casualty of the postal system. With the written text of Jes Grew gone, its manifestations once more recede. But as LaBas explains to his assistant, there is no need for alarm, since Jes Grew's true text is not a book but a feeling or perhaps more precisely a state of mind and being. LaBas tells Earline once that Jes Grew has no end and no beginning. Ultimately, Jes Grew is the music of Charlie Parker, the ‘second line’ in a New Orleans funeral procession, the African American literary tradition.

The novel is interlaced with a plethora of pictorial and textual elements borrowed from external, and in many cases nonbellettristic, sources. There are photos, posters, and drawings; dictionary definitions, anagrams, and epigraphs; symbols, graphs, and newspaper clippings. And at the book's end there appears a hundred and four-item bibliography drawn from such diverse disciplines as psychology, history, dance, religion, mythology, music, economics and the life sciences.

In *Mumbo Jumbo*, Ishmael Reed signifies on the disclosure of truth pattern of detective fiction, in the process of undermining the notion that truth is just one thing-or anything. For, Ishmael Reed, truth, as a character states at the end of his novel, *Flight to Canada*, is “a state of mind” (MJ 178). It can be experienced, felt, but not confined in a single form or shape. The way of singularity is the way of the Atonist Path. It is the way of western thought and culture and the way of the traditional detective novel, in which the one or ones who done it are exposed. The African way however recognises plurality, multiplicity, and indeterminacy. The novel actually has a legitimate detective in LaBas, and there is an actual pursuit of the crime. But Ishmael Reed does not let the form confine him. When LaBas opens the box supposedly containing the text, he finds only “a Sycamore box and under the sycamore, me bony, and under this ivory, then silver and finally gold and then empty” (MJ 196).

Science fiction is a genre of fiction. It differs from fantasy in that, within the context of the story, its imaginary elements are largely possible within scientifically established or scientifically postulated laws of nature (though some elements in a story might still be pure imaginative speculation). Exploring the consequences of such differences is the traditional purpose of science fiction, making it a literature of ideas. It is largely based on writing rationally about alternative possibilities. The settings for science fiction are often contrary to known reality, but the majority of science fiction relies on a considerable degree of suspension of disbelief provided by potential scientific explanations to various fictional elements.

To take, diverse or disparate elements and give “them same kind of organic unity, to make a collage”, Ishmael Reed in *Mumbo Jumbo* mixes romance, New Orleans jazz, necromancy, Voodoo theories of history, American civilisation, Western history, movie techniques, black dance, a science fiction story and a fantasy tale with the detective story.

The reader does not know whether *Mumbo Jumbo* is a novel, a history book, a spell, or a Voodoo narrative. In his words, the novel has all kinds of techniques. There are some passages which do what painters do, using peripheral information to explain an event, meshing the factual and the imaginative.

The novel tells the reader that sixty-one lynching's occurred in 1920 alone, that sixty-two occurred, in 1921, and that "some of the victims were soldiers returning from the Great war ...after fighting and winning significant victories" (MJ 30), he is referring to historical facts, or at least to something that can be verified in the annals of history. On the other hand, he mixes these verifiable historical figures and events with a kind of alternate mythical history in a detective way. The story of Jes Grew develops simultaneously with the story of Buddy Jackson. The reader witnesses the effects of Jes Grew before he is informed of its first trace and dispersed improvisational throughout the novel are photographs of people dancing, marching, singing, and being alive – obviously as signifiers of Jes Grew. This placing of photographs, along with drawings, anagrams, graphics, dictionary definitions, and newspaper clippings throughout the text, functions not to illustrate scenes from the plot, as in a traditional novel, but to reinforce visually certain messages, feelings, ways of defining the world, and images.

These appropriated, improvisational placed modes, breaking the linear flow of the detective story, to undermine the very notion of linearity and the idea of an absolute, total history. They signify other forms of narrative that are excluded by the linear one. In exposing the Atonist's strategies of exclusion and repression, Ishmael Reed in the novel shows that Western civilisation is not natural, not a metaphysical certainty, but makes together. Finally, by undermining closure or mastery through interpretation and mastery through interpretation and language, he plays with linguistic one that becomes fundamental to the text through the pervasive signifiers of Jes Grew.

Jes Grew is at the core of the novel; it is impetus, it is *raison d'être*, it is organisational common denominator, but Ishmael Reed withholds Jes Grew. As much as a modern reader may desire a referent for Jes Grew and as easily as he may believe he has uncovered it, the text does not have one. "Jes Grew cannot be summed up in the simplicity of the present" (MJ 66). Jes Grew traces in jazz, ragtime, the store fronts, the band on the Apollo stage, the blues, and the Creole band. It is never mastered in the text through interpretation and language, Jes Grew is never successfully labelled and classified. Like a jazz composition, which has not final chord, *Mumbo Jumbo* as a text is never final.

Without a beginning and an end, the novel is both jazz and postmodern. Both operate from notions of indeterminacy, fluidity, and incompleteness. Without origin, the novel is much like a bebop composition, in which the end often mimics the beginning. This follows the pattern such as: two horns, trumpet, and saxophone, announced the theme in unison. Ishmael Reed's novel remarks, agitates, and refuses to conform to the desired of many readers. It holds Jes Grew "in preserve and refuses to give it" (MJ 358) to them. Looking at Jes Grew as a jazz bebop number, *Mumbo Jumbo's* inconclusive ending has a type of tradition in jazz composition. But the inconclusive ending can also be interpreted postmodern. Jes Grew's absence of a referent is the postmodern.

Throughout the novel Jes Grew is associated with black expressive cultures such as voodoo, jazz, and blues and as such seems to function like the blues which according to Houston A Baker, comprises a meditational site where familiar antinomies are resolved in the office of adequate cultural understanding. To compare Ishmael Reed to other postmodernist fiction writers, Ishmael Reed challenges society with the racialised,

marginalised and subaltern subject. The way Ishmael Reed presents Voodoo in *Mumbo Jumbo* is less as a religious orthodoxy with rigid rules, norms, and conventions than a way of living in the world that values flexibility, adaptability, heterogeneity, mystery, and individual creativity. In the novel, Ishmael Reed wants to preserve the power and the value of individual differences. He wants to acknowledge discontinuous African American experiences:

Individuality. It could not be herded, rounded-up; it was like crystals of winter each different from one another but in a storm going down together. What would happen if they dispersed, showing up when you least expected them; what would happen if you could not predict their minds? (MJ 140)

Ishmael Reed also shows that there is difference, subjectively, and agency within Atonism, and Voodooism. It is clear from the beginning of *Mumbo Jumbo* that he constructs a clear binary in fact, he seems to construct the typical Western binary of exclusion, here between the Atonists, on the one hand, and the followers of Jes Grew – LaBas, Berbelang, and Black Herman – on the other. But even with this most basic binary appearing to emerge from the *Mumbo Jumbo*, Ishmael Reed finds ways to undermine it.

The technique of the novel is hard to follow like James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It is a celebration of idiom and an eclectic collection of cultural myth. Ishmael Reed mixes the technique of detective stories, Voodoo, and academic burlesque, providing unexpected visuals, news stories, history and stream-of-consciousness technique. The novel subverts the readers' expectations for the typical story. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr, notes, the plot of the novel signifies on the typical detective shown formula in which a goal must be reached: Jes Grew's desire would be actualised only by finding the text. The novel's parodic use of the presented story stated this desire. The solution of the novel's "central mystery would be for Jes Grew to find its text" (MJ 18). However, Jes Grew does not only find the text, but it does so without fanfare. And, despite the detective action, it sometimes seems like a dream. The novel seems to stop being a detective story and turns out to have been an academic lecture. It has been largely overlooked by academic critics. His brilliant comic vision of American history brings together the basic ingredients of black culture in a rich musical- dramatic form.

His expansion of language into a radically personal style points to the richness of that culture as a story telling source. His wide interests in traditions outside the received mainstream of "Western Culture" courses, in magic, myth and ritual makes him a prolific writer in the novel. He expands on the Neo-hoodooism of the Loop Garoo Kid, in an effort to create and define an African American aesthetic. It is based on Voodoo, Egyptian mythology, and improvisational musical forms, an aesthetic that can stand up against the Judeo-Christian tradition, rationalism, and technology.

The novel's title is double-edged. It is a racist, colonialist phrase used to describe the misunderstood customs and language of dark-skinned people, an approximation of some critics' description of Ishmael Reed's unorthodox fictional method. But it also refers to the power of imagination, the cultural alternative that can free African Americans. A text of and about texts, it combines the formulas of detective fiction with the documentary paraphernalia scholarship: footnotes, illustrations, and a bibliography.

The detective story's attention to space reflects a larger preoccupation with spatial matters on the part of the Enlightenment – based cultural logic out of which the detective story was born. As David Harvey argues, along with the Enlightenment consciousness's impulse to solve, the conquest and rational ordering of space are an integral part of the

modernising project. It is created a new organisation of space dedicated to the detective techniques of social control, surveillance, repression of the self and the world of desire.

These are, of course, the very techniques employed by the detective in his efforts to maintain the social fabric, meaning the detective both relies upon what Deleuze and Guattari term the striating logic of Western science and also - particularly in his surveillance of the city perpetuates that logic by rationally ordering the spaces he observes. In Lefebvre's comments regarding the link between space and subjectivity, the classic detective can, in fact, be seen as the specialised subject par excellence in that his primary function is to restore order, to put everything and everyone back in its ideologically designated place or space.

In Ishmael Reed's method, Jes Grew represents that spiritual part of his writing technique and intent which is positive. It may take on any number of stylistic, guises, but its intent is to illuminate and enliven the reader. In the course of the novel, Islam and Christianity are taken to task for their failings and their infringements on the ego and individual expression. Again, one can easily see here Ishmael Reed responding to his critics under the guise of LaBas. Christianity is called 'Atonism', a word with its origin in the worship of the one, true sun-god, Aton of ancient Egypt. Atonists are forever at war to stamp out Jes Grew, as it threatens their way of doing things and their base of power. Variations of Atonism in the United States, including the Mormons and the Nation of Islam, are attacked vigorously. And one sees in the word Atonism the cognate of the word atone, another negative aspect of a guilt culture.

Abdul Hamid, the Muslim character, is trying to convince others that the way to black solidarity and prosperity is through the promotion of one religious platform; in this case, a platform composed of the belief in Allah and Islam. In the course of his diatribe, he shows how flimsy a base a religion can be constructed upon and the total lack of importance as to the shallowness of that base to its believers. The only important thing is winning through one's belief: and in American terms, winning means translating one's beliefs into money, land, and power in a detective story. Hamid says:

If we Blacks came up with something as corny as the Angel of Moroni, something as trite and phony as their story that the book is the record of ancient Americans who came here in 600 B.C. and perished by A.D. 400, they would deride us with pejorative adjectival phrases like 'so-called' and 'would-be'. (MJ 42)

Ironically, later Hamid's own monotheistic religious views which prompt him to burn the ancient scroll of Thoth, the text Jes Grew had been searching for since it became jots after being placed in a tabernacle by Moses. The Atonist order does not simply war against non-whites and non-Christians. It is equally intolerant of whites who are not following the Atonist path. Ishmael Reed asserts that the Knights Templar, one of the military, Christian orders during the crusades, was slaughtered by the Teutonic Knights because the Templars had attained too much power and are threatening the Atonist hierarchy.

Here, again, one sees the use of one of the novel's major stylistic tropes: the use of facts the historical existence of the Teutonic's and the Templars to further fictional ends the demise of the Templars. Thor Wintergreen, a white member of the Mu'tafikah, a multi-ethnic gang which liberates Third World countries art from Western museums, is killed by another white. Biff Muscle white, head of the 'Center for Art Detention' in New York Wintergreen is audacious enough to side with those of different ethnic backgrounds. By giving an explanation of the Atonist cause and showing the danger to



that cause by blacks like the smart and stubborn Berbelang (formerly LaBas's assistant), Muscle White gets Wintergreen to free him from where the Mu'tefikah have him imprisoned:

Son, this is a nigger closing in on our mysteries and soon he will be asking our civilisation to "come quietly." This man is talking about Judeo-Christian culture, Christianity, Atonism, whatever you want to call it. The most note worthy achievements of anybody anywhere in the ... the...whole universe. (MJ 114)

So it is a battle for supremacy between powers which see the world in two distinct and opposed, ways. The separate visions are endemic to the two human types involved; one, expansive and synergetic; the other, impermeable and myopic. Ishmael Reed's battle with the critics surfaces in the polemics of the Atonish. Von Vampton is searching for a 'Negro Viewpoint', a black who can write what Von Vampton wants him to say about the black community.

The reader 'feels' [the emotive response to the structure of the text] that all of the catalytic actions in the individual cardinal units are the magically and rhetorically related – because they all seem to have significance to each other, carried by the fact that they all seem to be happening in the same narrative time frame. For example, the end of chapter twelve, a key chapter which includes the 'battle of religions' discussion section with Hamid, and the discussion of LaBas's *Mumbo Jumbo* Cathedral and Hoodoo practices, ends with the denouement of the religious/mystical disagreements between blacks at the Rent party.

In the novel, chapter thirteen begins with no transitional or relational segment and bricks up the story of Earline and BerbeLang, former assistants to LaBas, as they discuss Berbelang's differing and expanding concept of Hoodoo and his relationship to LaBas and the *Mumbo Jumbo* Cathedral. This discussion relates the opening of chapter thirteen to the closing of chapter twelve in similar theme, but uses present tense verbs to anchor chapter thirteen simultaneity. In a comment which relates to both his use to time and his use of fiction-filled news – flashes.

Reed's *Reckless Eyeballing* is not so much a jab as a bludgeon aimed at a corner of the cultural establishment. The novel is really an extended joke with a series of set pieces on feminism, anti-Semitism and militancy. Jokes are a concoction of image, timing and language. One missing piece, a dull stretch, an error of diction, and the whole contraption falls apart to the silence of the crowd. Richard Pryor is a brilliant satirist because of the sharpness of his images and mimicry, the timing of his spiels. Reed has been as funny as Pryor at times but he seems off his game here. His one-liners are lame and "his figure showed him to be losing a private Battle of the Bulge" (CLC 300). The episodes are mainly long, spoken riffs on the particular idiocies of the heater and it is attendant politicians. The feminists, the academic black Marxists are all figures who seem more appropriate to a work of a decade ago.

In some of his earlier work, he had a voice that could be at once giddy and razor-sharp. He had a real voice, distinctive, insulting, wild, a voice that answered to no political or aesthetic dogmatic only to him. *Reckless Eyeballing* however is recklessly casual. An American Journalist, David Remnick opines:

The prose is dull. The worst has happened. Ishmael Reed does not sound special. The ethnic jokes are so dull that they read unintentionally like the diatribes they are supposed to satirise. (CLC 301)



Reed's fiction has always bristled with parables, asides, voodoo rituals, razor blades and spikes enough to vex even the most competent plot summariser. The novel displays the familiar malice and discursiveness. And though it bludgeons several ideologies and individuals – Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry, feminists, New York intellectuals, anti-Semites, neoliberals and the new right among them-its central animus is clear. Reed is angry about what he perceives to be negative characterisations of black men in detective fiction. He is livid about Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*, which shows up, Tremonisha Smarts 'Wrong-Headed Man'.

The male character in this novel is Ian Ball, a black playwright who has suffered several flops because of Becky French's sex list. Like Reed himself, Ian finds his chief critics are women who view his works as muddled and sexist, though he thinks of himself as misunderstood, even persecuted. Ian also functions as Reed's attempt to blow a kind of raspberry at certain readers. Ian's fixation on breasts and buttocks is brought to the reader's attention again and again, as is his suspicion that, given the chance, he could seduce his way out of any difference of opinion with a woman.

He is the novel's least damaged black male character only because his contemporaries have been driven to artistic impotence and near madness by feminists'. Through considerable interruption from parallel plots they try to watch the goings-on surrounding the detective novel. The first of Ian's plays in which women keep their clothes on and have strong roles. The only male character is to be the skeleton of a black man who was lynched for raping a white woman with his eyes that is, for eyeballing recklessly. Wanting to remove all doubt of the dead man's guilt, the offended woman has him exhumed and retried.

When Ian's Jewish male director is beaten to death by the audience at an anti-Semitic play, *Reckless Eyeballing* falls under Becky's control. She delegates the directing chores to Tremonisha and diverts funds from the play to a production she hopes that rehabilitate the reputation of Hitler's mistress Eva Braun. Thrown together, Ian and Tremonisha affect a rather lopsided rapprochement. Tremonisha denounces *Wrong-Headed Man* as a pandering piece of finishing school lumpen forced out of her by Becky French. She moves to a sleepy town in California, where she takes good care of her man promises to get fat, have babies and write plays in which the husband and wife live happily ever after.

As if, a second black feminist playwright, the author of *No Good Man*, suffers about with cocaine addiction and recants too, pledging to lay off black men, to write only plays that she can read in Church on Sunday morning and by all means to keep her distance from those horrid white feminists. Ian meanwhile forgives those who have transgressed against him by forbidding their students to write dissertations on his *Oeuvre*, for example and decides, after working with Tremonisha, that the girls are not so bad after all they can change.

If this resolution seems forced - and it does - keep in mind that Reed sometimes views his fiction as a form of Voodoo ritual, a literary gris-gris doll that focuses a psychic fix on anyone he perceives to be an enemy of his tribe. Given this, certain writers might do well to drape the appropriate talismans around their word processors lest they share the fate of their sisters in this novel. In *Reckless Eyeballing*, Reed occasionally produces genuine terror within farce -not at all an easy thing to accomplish. The novel, however, may serve well as incantation or rage or as a literacy gauntlet hurled down, but its symbolism is heavy-handed and the spell suspending disbelief is often broken. Many of the characters are mere effigies tortured on the author's rack and made to issue the

requisite confessions. Moreover, he seems to want his novels to be hard work. A devilishly funny plot line is obscured by arcane asides and sorties on ideological camps he wishes to demolish. Early on in *Reckless Eyeballing*, Larry Mccaffery observes that:

Throughout history when the brothers feel that they're being pushed against the wall, they strike back and when they do strike back it's like a tornado, uprooting, flinging about, and dashing to pieces everything in its path. (CLC 301)

This passage provides a perfect entryway into Reed's novel, for like many other black men, he obviously feels that the brothers' are catching it from all sides and not just from the usual sources of racial bigotry, but from 60s liberals then turned neo-conservatives, from white feminists who propagate the specter of the black men as phallic oppressor and other racial minorities anxious to wrest various monkeys off their own backs but the central betrayers in Reed's new novel are blacks themselves, especially black feminists and artists whom he presents as having sold out and joined the white conspiracy to keep black men in slavery. So, in the novel, his striking back by creating a literary tornado, a book so irreverent and sweeping in its condemnations that its certain to offend just about everyone. *Reckless Eyeballing*, like Reed's other novels, self-consciously appropriates aspects of familiar forms – in this case, the detective formula and the search for selfhood motif-but then demolishes these structures by introducing his own distinctive blend of discontinuity, verbal play and jive talk, and outrageous humor.

The book's plot revolves around Ian Ball, a native Southern playwright who has been sex listed by feminists for his first play. But who has then arrived in New York City with high hopes for a new play, *Reckless Eyeballing* in which, as ball puts it, the women, get all the good parts and best speeches. Ball initially has the support of several powerful allies notably Jewish director Jim Minsk and feminist producer Barbara Sedgwick.

The novel is a satirical narrative that mocks racial and American sexual taboos in the manner of George Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931) or Chester Himes's *Pintos* (1961). When one young black detective complains of a black woman playwright, "She makes out like we are all wife beaters and child molesters", an older black (male) playwright says:

It's these white women who are carrying on the attack against black men today, because they struck a deal with white man who run the country. You give us women the jobs, the opportunities, and we'll take the heat of you and put it on Mose, it the deal they struck. They have to maneuvered these white boys who run the country, but they have keep the persecution thing up in order to win new followers. (RB 97)

The question is whether Reed has uncovered a rift or a rivalry between black men and black women. His characters compete to have their plays produced. In one scene Ian Ball is in a meeting with the white feminist producer Becky French and her protege, the black feminist playwright Tremonisha Smarts. They are discussing his play *No Good Man*, which he has written according to the feminist line. It should be remembered that "reckless eyeballing", was an expression used in the South to describe a black man's glance- which a white women could accuse him of and get him lynched. He thought of them in the same households all over the Americas while the men are away on long trips to the international centers of the cotton or sugar markets. The secrets they exchanged in the night when there were no men around, during the Civil war in America when the men were in the battle field and the women were in the house. There is something going on

here that made him, a man, an outsider, a spectator, like someone who had stumbled into a country where people talked in sign language and he does not know the signs.

This is among other things, a paranoid update on the theme of the conspiratorial intimacy between Simon Legree and Cassie. Though variously described as a writer in whose work the black picaresque tradition has been extended, as a misogynist or an heir to both Hurston's folk lyricism and Ellison's irony, he is, perhaps because of this, one of the most underrated writers in America. Certainly no other contemporary black writer, male or female, has used the language and beliefs of folk culture so imaginatively, and few have been so stinging about the absurdity of American racism.

Interestingly, *Reckless Eyeballing* is one of the most accessible, even realistic, works. Perhaps this has something to do with the constraints imposed by the subject matter. But it is also very different from other fictions that approach the subject of sexuality and black life works in the naturalistic tradition like Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) or James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962).

Since postmodernism represents a decentered concept of the universe in which individual works are not isolated creations, much of the focus in the study of postmodern literature is on intertextuality: the relationship between one text [a novel for example] and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. Critics point to this as an indication of postmodernism's lack of originality and reliance on clichés. Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or the adoption of a style. In postmodern literature this commonly manifests as references to fairy tales – as in works by Margaret Atwood, Donald Barthelme, and many other – or in references to popular genres like detective fiction.

An early 20th century example of intertextuality which influenced later postmodernists is "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" by Jorge Luis Borges, a story with significant references to Don Quixote which is also a good example of intertextuality with its references to Medieval romances. Don Quixote is a common reference with postmodernists, for example Kathy Acker's novel *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream*. Another example of intertextuality in postmodernism is John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* which deals with Ebenezer Cooke's poem of the same name. Often intertextuality is more complicated than a single reference to another text.

In Reed's view, *Reckless Eyeballing* is the title of a play by Ian Ball a young black writer, Ball's play *Suzanna*, had won critical acclaim but earned Ball a place on the notorious sexlist maintained by the feminists, who have seized control of the literary journals, publishing houses and theaters. Much of the novel recounts Ball's struggle to restore his literary career by appeasing the feminists. Hence, the novel resembling the Emmett Till case, recounts the lynching of a black sexual molester, whose corpse is exhumed, tried and judged guilty by his victim and a group of feminists. Getting the play staged, however, is not so simple. When Ball's director, Jim Minsk is murdered by a gang of anti-Semites in a perverse ritual supposedly re-enacting the Leo-Frank case, Ball is left at the mercy of Becky French. French wants to give precedence to a play exonerating Eva Braun, who epitomises women's universal suffering.

Becky moves Ian's play from The Lord Mountbatten, the main stage, [to The Queen Mother, a small annex. With these names, Reed takes a swipe at the Anglophile of United States artists. The name Ian Ball, invoking John Bull, indicates that Reed's protagonist is hardly exempt]. Though, *Reckless Eyeballing* ultimately receives a successful opening, reader never learn whether Ian's career is restored. The novel's main

subplot involves 'The Flower Phantom', a mysterious figure who punishes certain black women writers for their disparagements of black men by tying them up and shaving their heads, as the French did to women who collaborated with the Nazis.

One of the novel's central issues is whether the Phantom is a misogynistic psychopath on an underground hero. The reader is encouraged to infer the latter. The Phantom's first victim is Tremonisha Smarts, the author of *Wrong Headed Man* a play which climaxes when an ape – like black man beats a woman and hurls her down the stairs. The plot of *Wrong Headed man* brings to mind Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls*, but its movie version by the director and producer of *Little Green Men* links it to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

Indeed, his characters all ultimately emerge as idiosyncratic and distinctive individuals, not merely as representatives of some type. His hostility seems to be directed at the ideology of feminism which, in his view creates victims, distorts history, and denies or thwarts individual desire, enterprises and aspiration. The ideas of female quality, independence, and professional achievement are taken for granted in the novel. Reed's thoroughly comic vision sets him apart from most other contemporary writers who address serious political questions. Since he sees all people as flawed and quirky he pokes fun at everyone to varying degrees. Though he clearly has preferences, he does not claim superiority for any particular group over any other.

The main point of his satire is to deflate such pretensions. He seems willing to forgive people's foibles but not other exploitative designs. Ian Ball, the hero, is clearly an opportunist whose main concern is just to make it as a writer. By the end of the novel, Tremonisha Smarts as a troubled and rather confused but well-meaning writer who has been exploited by white feminists to advance their own designs. Obviously, Reed's caricature of feminism grossly oversimplifies a broad and diverse social movement, equating the whole with one of its minor and meanest elements. His distorted caricature of feminism may outrage many readers, causing them to overlook his valid and unobjectionable point that all individuals deserve to be respected and allowed the opportunity to succeed or fail on their own merits. This formulation lays bare the conservative libertarian underpinning of Reed's social philosophy.

Unfortunately, he also makes the error which characterises most of the contemporary conservative thought. In extolling individual liberty, he forgets that society itself is the organisation of individuals, whose interests both converge and conflict. Society does not exist without organisation. To focus exclusively on individual concerns leads merely to favoring one selfishness over another.

In *Reckless Eyeballing* this philosophical error causes Reed to neglect an essential distinction. The fault is far from Becky French to abuse her position of power, not for her to occupy that position. In spite of this fault, the novel is a fascinating one to read because of its pointed comments on literary politics and its thoroughgoing good humor. Furthermore, despite his strong views and polemical manner, he displays far more generosity of spirit than has generally been recognised. As it winces at his caustic remarks on United States culture, one should also note his/her profound affection for the vitality and diversity of the culture. He raises questions about romantic love, machismo, the dedicated artist, civilisation and slavery as well as racial neutrality in a detective way.

In his novels, he most effectively uses and experiments most freely with the Hoodoo concept of time for the ends of literary method. To conclude, in addition to improving on the detective story, Ishmael Reed challenges the reader through exaggeration

to abandon simplified nationalisation and the notion of an absolute truth. He gives enough facts to make the novels sufficiently plausible that the reader cannot reject it.

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## **Emancipation of the Woman: A Study of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House***

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**&**

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Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. Mathew Arnold defines literature as a criticism of life. It means that literature is an interpretation of life. As per Johnson's definition, literature is a mirror of life as life is being reflected through literature. The success of literary art is determined not only by the awards given to it but also the understandability to the common people and its impact on the people.

Henrik Johan Ibsen projects the woman's place in the society, one of the burning topics of the day, in his play *A Doll's House*. In this choice of theme, he was more influenced by his own convictions than the growing movement for the emancipation of woman. He is regarded as the father of the modern drama and the prophet of new morality. He stands supreme among the moderns. He is often considered as the greatest dramatist next to Shakespeare.

He is a social realist with a sense of commitment. In all his social plays, he focuses on the contemporary ailments of the society, which cry for remedies. Ibsen, for the first time, turned the social drama into "The drama of ideas". In his plays, he questioned the settled ideas, beliefs, and opinions which governed the life of his society and its members. Shaw substantiates it as the drama arises through a conflict of unsettled ideals rather than through vulgar attachments, capacities, generosities, resentments, ambitions, misunderstanding, oddities and so forth as to which no moral question is raised.

Ibsen blazed a new trail in the field of modern drama that was admired by great personalities such as Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, J.M.Barrie, Gilbert Murray and H.H.Asquith. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is a masterpiece of compact dramatic structure. It has a minimum of dramatic character and maintains a dramatic unity of place, time and action. In the play, he uses some technical factors which contribute to the apparent realism of his play. The detailed stage directions, employment of everyday prose and elimination of soliloquies and 'asides' are also included. His stress on the visual concreteness of his settings and characters help him greatly in making his plays look life – like.

The characters are drawn from real middle-class set up. The problem posed in his play is the problem of subservient women in that period. In pre-emancipation days, when women were considered to be subservient to man and wives merely existing through their husband's will, Ibsen weaves his characters with flesh and blood to make them come out with the pressing social conventions and customs which leads to the freedom of the individuals in society. He gives more importance to the delineation of his characters than his plot and he enables his viewers to get a full and perfect picture of his characters.



*A Doll's House* is a naturalistic or realistic play. It is an anti-romantic play both in its theme and setting. It deals with the problem of man – woman relationship through the mirror of marriage. The play deals with variety of themes. The Chief among them is “the liberation of the individual from the shackles and restraints of custom and convention”

Conscience and moral laws are of two kinds, one for men and another is quite different for women. They do not understand each other; but in practical life, woman is judged by masculine law, as if she was not a woman but a man. A woman can not be herself in modern society. It is an exclusive male society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess feminine conduct from a masculine standpoint. A mother in modern society has undergone a lot of suffering inflicted by masculine community. Finally, she expires after she has done her duty by propagating the race.

The play *A Doll's House* bears a close resemblance to a typical intrigue play. Nora, the heroine is guilty of committing forgery. This act of indiscretion makes the villain, Krogstad, blackmail her. She has committed this incriminating deed in order to save the life of her husband, Torvald Helmer. But Helmer, instead of appreciating the sacrifice of his wife, indicts her as a liar and criminal, unfit to rear their children any longer. However, she is ultimately saved by the intervention of her old friend (of her school days), Mrs. Christine Linde, who manages to bring about a change in the heart of Krogstad. Helmer is willing to forgive Nora for her rash act. Krogstad frees Nora from exposure and shame. But, Nora does not stay with her husband. She leaves her home and children to learn the way of the world and experience the brave new world.

Nora readily adjusts the traditional role of a puppet wife and a doll – mother for the sake of gaining self-liberation, individuality and independence. The play tries to probe the true base of the man–woman relationship in its most intimate forms of marriage. Nora is perfectly aware of outsider's opinion about her. They opine that she is a wasteful, silly young woman without character. She becomes very much annoyed, when she is told by her friend Mrs. Christine Linde that she knows “so little about the troubles and hardships of life”. She is proud of her act in borrowing money to save her husband's life without his knowledge. She understands, however, that if Helmer knew of her independent act, it would affect their healthy marital relationship. She knows her husband's whims and fancies thoroughly. She helps to keep his proud image of himself as the head of the family. She knows that he loves her for being pretty amusing.

Nora's ability to get on with her husband well does not come to her aid in her dealings with other. When Krogstad threatens her, Nora tries her various tricks without any avail. She can not understand that the world outside her house is often ruthless and that it does not submit to tears airs of superiority, or romantic notions of duty. Having a very high opinion of her motives, Nora can not believe that she has done wrong in forging her father's signature to obtain money or that the law will punish her, or that Krogstad would do anything to disrupt her happy and comfortable family life.

All actions of Nora are governed by her relationship with her husband. At first, she does not tell him the truth about her debt to Krogstad, because she is afraid that it will destroy his love for her. Later when the crisis strikes her, she will not tell him the truth because she imagines that he will take the guilt of the forgery to save her. Now, Nora becomes obsessed with ways to save him. She tries to borrow money from Dr. Rank by a

slight exercise of her feminine charms over him. When it fails, she thinks of committing suicide.

Ibsen in his play *A Doll's House* highlights the day-to-day contemporary reality of a middle class family. Though the play projects the male chauvinistic society, it also deals with various problems. A doll with a human figure is normally found in the hands of children, who make the doll act according to their wish. Similarly, Nora is a doll in the hands of three persons, namely Torvald Helmer, Krogstad and her father. Nora is judged from the eyes of men. To them, she has committed forgery and is a cheat but it is not so. She has done everything only for the betterment of her family. Not even a single room is given for her wish or her passion or her emotion; rather she is treated as a puppet, whose acts are controlled by their masters.

Right from the beginning of the play, we can witness male chauvinism and the pathetic figure of Nora who is scapegoat for male chauvinism. She is being treated as a doll throughout. Torvald Helmer wishes that Nora should act according to his wish. Nora is protected, petted, dressed up, given pocket money but she is not allowed to be herself. Though Torvald Helmer is a lawyer by profession, he is the representative of male chauvinism who thinks that his orders has to be carried by her wife, as he is the head of the family. It is he, who holds the key to the letter box in his house. It is Torvald Helmer, who has full control over his wife in every aspect. She plays the doll with her husband just to please him.

Eight years elapsed, since Nora, the wife of Torvald Helmer, got married and had 3 issues. She is an enigmatic character, for she wears a mask. She has borrowed money and enslaved herself in order to save her husband Torvald's life after a physical break down. For seven long years, she has borne the cross in silence. She is sustained by a lack of self awareness and by a false romantic image of her husband.

When Helmer received the second letter, which was written to Nora, he feels happy, knowing that Krogstad has sent her IOU back and he regrets and apologies for what he has done. Helmer forgives Nora but Nora is not able to forgive Helmer. She tells Helmer that three days were a battle of life and death to her. Helmer is happy saying that "It's all over! It's all over! But Nora tells her that she does not seem to realize that the worst is over. Helmer knows whatever she had done is out of love for him. But, he had failed in rescuing her from danger. He had forsaken her. So, Nora decided to emancipate herself. In spite of Helmer's apologies, Nora slammed the door against her husband. George Bernard Shaw says, "The slam of the door behind her is more momentous than the cannon of Waterloo or Sedan". Nora takes with her only the things which belong to her. She bids good bye to her husband and goes out of home for self-edification.

In the marvelous design of the action, Ibsen shows Nora painfully acquiring those attributes, in effect recapitulating the development of the race as she moves from, metaphorically; the role of a little animal, a lark, a squirrel, to a new – born human self with some thing of the tragic sense of life. In this play *A Doll's House*, the protagonist, Nora hides her true feeling so as to please her father and her husband. There is a conflict between what she pretends to be and what she really is. Her spouse, Torvald Helmer, was just a father substitute. She is not happy with him. Torvald promises to treat her as she would wish him to do. She refuses to stay. He reminds her of her duty as a wife to him and as mother to her children. Ibsen has chosen a very apt title for his play. The title, *A Doll's House*, also highlights the principal theme of marriage and subservient role of

women in society. It symbolically suggests that true marriage is not based on illusions and phantasies. It does not work like the mechanical manipulation of the dolls. True marriage will depend upon the perfect understanding between the couple by each respecting the individuality of the other. Emancipation of Nora is a trumpet call for the women of the day to raise banner of revolt to press for their lost rights.

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## R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* : A Socio-Economic Discourse

Leena Sarkar

The article examines the socio-economic problem of the novel *The Guide* by R.K.Narayan. The characters are situated against the backdrop of Post-Independence economic theories of India and analysed in the light of those theories. There is also a discussion of the impact of westernization and modernization and how the new culture, new ideologies, new trends, gradually transform the idyllic mindset of the protagonist, Raju. The article tries to extol human relationship, one of the essential characteristics of the novels of R.K.Narayan. Since the article deals with socio-economic discourse, it, therefore, critically analyses the text and the characters against the background of societal changes.

*The Guide* which won for Narayan huge accolades shows the novelist's skill in placing the orient into focus for occidental eyes. In this novel Narayan depicts a comprehensive picture of human activities, the comic and the tragic, the silly and the serious, the ridiculous and the sublime. Here we witness the spectacular representations of an ordinary man who eventually becomes a Mahatma as he begins to identify himself with the world and takes the terrible decision of sacrificing his life for a noble cause. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly holds the view:

Speaking generally, Narayan's is the art of resolved limitation and conscientious exploration; he is content, like Jane Austen, with a 'little bit of ivory', just so many inches wide: he would like to be a detached observer, to concentrate on a narrow scene, to sense the atmosphere of the place, to snap a small group of characters in their oddities and angularities: he would, if he could, explore the inner countries of the mind, heart and soul, catch the uniqueness in the ordinary, the tragic in the prosaic.(360)

So a critical study of this novel gives a complete vision of free India with all its varied economic, social and spiritual problems.

Narayan's novels represent a section of Indian society where life is steeped in middleclass consciousness. His characters portray certain characteristic features - either they are docile, timid, adhering to traditional values and pacifist by nature or they appreciate vulnerability, violence and excessive greed for money. In this context we can expound the fact that Narayan studies economic problem minutely and exquisitely and thereby frames several economic groups. While Marco and Rosie represent the well-to-do class, Gaffur and Joseph denote the low wage earner. In the character of Sait, the money-lender, we find a wealthy person one who amasses and hoards wealth thriving upon the troubles of other persons. Then there are the rich lawyers, who make huge amount of money at the expense of the clients. This class is shown through the character of the star lawyer of Raju in the case instituted by Marco against him. Further, the whole episode in which Raju is taken to be the saint is set on the axis of economic life. In the words of Prof. Krishna Sen,

At first sight, the world of *The Guide* seems to be structured along simple binaries- Malgudi and Mangal, the town and the village, urban sophistication versus rural simplicity, modernity versus tradition, and cynicism versus faith. On closer inspection, each of these components reveals itself to be highly problematic, full of hybridities, fissures and contradictions. As with the binary that Shakespeare created in *As You Like It*, settings off the court against the Forest of Arden, but with positive and negative elements existing within each ideological space so here too Malgudi and Mangal stand for cultural locations that appear to be simple only from a distant view. (17)

At the beginning of the novel we observe a clash between the ideologies of the father and son. Raju wants to study in a fashionable school whereas his father thrusts him to a pyol

school. Raju says, "I don't know on whose advice my father chose to send me here for my education, while the fashionable Albert Mission School was quite close by. I'd have felt proud to call myself an Albert Mission boy. But I often heard my father declare, I don't want to send my boy there; it seems they try to convert our boys into Christians and are all the time insulting our gods" (86). The entire passage clearly indicates how westernization seeped into the sap of the society. Raju's father prefers to send him to the traditional school where as Raju wants to enjoy the ambience and glamour of Christian School. The change in Raju's attitude towards education advocates the impact of westernization on society. Raju's father adheres to traditional method of education because it is his conviction that Raju would be able to build his career under the supervision of the ancient master. His father says, "Many students who have passed through the hands of this ancient master are now big officials at Madras, collectors and men like that..." (25). From the quotation we can deduce the fact that Raju's father envisages his son to be financially independent with a social nomenclature. Here Narayan seems to be influenced by The Second Five Year Plan, Nehru-Mahalanobis Model, as it intended to foster a self-generating path of development with an assurance to common man that poverty, unemployment, disease and ignorance would be removed so that individuals could realize their potential with the extension of social and economic opportunities. Nehru in his economic thought advocates for modern Indian society having international economic and fiscal cooperation.

Along with *The Financial Expert*, the issue of monetary pursuit also regains momentum in *The Guide* where Raju, the protagonist of the novel, is possessed with greed for money. To ensconce this statement we have to retrace our steps to the beginning of Raju's life when he initiates his life as a 'Guide'. In one of the fascinating passages Raju articulates:

You may want to ask why I became a guide or when. I was a guide for the same reason as someone else is a signaller, porter, or guard. It is fated thus. Don't laugh at my railway associations. The railways got into my blood very early in life. Engines, with their tremendous changing and smoke, ensnared my senses. I felt at home on the railway platform, and considered the stationmaster and porter the best company for man, and their railway talk the most enlightened. I grew up in their midst. (26)

From the very beginning of his life, Raju identifies himself with the railways-which mark him out as the post-colonial man. The railway originally symbolizes the intrusion of colonial culture and Western attributes into a traditional, a non-descript hamlet Malgudi. The new culture, new ideologies, new trends in society, gradually transform the idyllic mindset of Raju, and he embraces the transformation in society. It is through Raju that Narayan explores the problems and possibilities of spiritual transcendence in a materialist world. At the onset of his life Raju observes the extravagance of his father and the frugal nature of his mother. Raju's father bought a brown pony for the luxury of the family but his mother shows her displeasure at the unnecessary expense of his father. The author comments "she viewed it as an extraordinary vanity on my father's part and no amount of explanation from him ever convinced her otherwise. Her view was that my father had over-estimated his business, and she nagged him whenever he was found at home and the horse and carriage were not put to proper use"(10).

In this context we may say that Narayan was inspired both by Gandhian and Nehruvian economic thought. We can definitely reiterate the economic philosophy of Gandhiji when we come to the character delineation of Raju's mother. One of the ingredients of Gandhian economic thought is simplicity or simple living and high thinking. Raju's mother has a firm faith in this thought and so gets extremely displeased with extravagance. In the words of O.P.Misra:

Gandhi's plea for minimization of wants is the only way that gives an escape from the dilemma of limited resources and unlimited wants. As he was fully aware of the evils



of Western Civilization-mad race for money, craze for money, craze for satisfaction of increasing wants, callous exploitation, sturdy imperialism, bloody carnage, and etc-he laid stress on curtailment of wants. (38-39)

This shows that in *The Guide* we observe both traditionalism and westernization in its thematic construction.

If we situate the novel against the backdrop of Post-Independence economic theories of India, we find the prevalence of both the Gandhian economic thought and the Nehruvian economic thought in the narrative of the novel. Raju's father and mother eulogizes the age old values of the society, on the contrary Raju shows his inclination towards the new values, supported by the influence of Industrial Revolution. Gradually as we move from the domestic life of Raju to his educational life we once again perceive the impact of Gandhian economic theory. While conversing with his master Raju says, "After all, self help is the best help... (17)". The articulation of Raju has great significance. Through Raju Narayan reiterates another ingredient of Gandhian economic theory – sanctity and dignity of labour. O.P. Misra observes that "Gandhiji made an advocacy for manual labour for all irrespective of caste, qualification and occupation. He was a thinker of a different genre who made labour as dignified as mental or intellectual labour (46)". Here Narayan reveals the consequences that we would have to face if we rely too much on machines for each and every requirement of our life. Although Narayan here adheres to the principles of Gandhiji, he is not against Industrialization and Economic Development of the nation. As we progress with the novel we can also get an idea of varied aspects that the novelist explores. Raju continues to introduce himself as a guide as from chapter five where he himself says: "I came to be called Railway Raju (19). The dramatic change in Raju's simple life comes with the appearance of Rosie. The introduction of railways paves the way for westernization to percolate into the traditional society of Malgudi. Initially Raju seems to be dedicated to his profession and considered the couple as the tourist who has come to get the beautiful view of Malgudi, but when he comes to know about the complexities of Marco and Rosie's marital life, he seems to empathize with her. As Raju moves about with them he comprehends the characteristic difference between Marco and Rosie. Rosie appears to Raju as an embodiment of emotion and sentiments. Her innocence and simplicity can be compared to 'Duchees' of 'My Last Duchees' by Robert Browning. She appreciates the beauty of nature and when she observes the rich vegetation, "She ran like a child from plant to plant and cries of joy, while the man looked on with no emotion. Anything that interested her seemed to irritate him (55)".

This characteristic difference between Rosie and Marco brings a catastrophe in their marital life. Rosie, despite being an M.A. in Economics and a talented dancer, is abused and ostracized by the patriarchal society as she hails from the class of 'Devdasis'. Just for being illegitimate she is looked down upon and categorized as a low caste. Even Marco, who willingly ties wedlock with her in spite of knowing her origin, affirms patriarchal norms by forcing her to lead a submissive life and also forbids her to perform dance in public functions. This is also an outcome of materialistic society in which values are compromised for wealth and status. According to Rosie the solemnization of her marriage is occasioned by Marco's status and position in society. Rosie says:

But all the women in my family were impressed, excited that a man like him was coming to marry one of our class, and it was decided that if it was necessary to give up our traditional art, it was worth the sacrifice. He had a big house, a motor-car, he was a man of high social standing; he had a house outside Madras, he was living in it all alone, no family at all; he lived with his books and papers (76).

Here Narayan through Rosie enunciates the position of women in Indian society. Moreover when Rosie shares her sorrows with Raju and looks down upon herself for originating from a low class, Raju seriously protests against it. He firmly says: I don't believe

in class or caste. You are an honour to your caste, whatever it may be (85). This statement of Raju testifies to the fact that he believes in true modernization. Gandhian revolutions against caste distinction and Nehruvian ideas of advancement in science and technology perhaps have influenced him and so he breaks the chain of conventions and accepts Rosie. He wants to go against society. Perhaps 'Sarvodaya' (Welfare of All), one of the ingredients of Gandhiji's economic thought must have influenced the author and so his spokesperson expresses his respect for every human being irrespective of their caste or creed. Gandhiji's 'Sarvodaya' (Welfare of All) or Gandhian Socialism, struggled for creating an integrated man instead of supporting an economic man of Adam Smith and political man of Machiavelli.

The character of Marco is projected in a very interesting way. He is a completely different man, away from the mundane activities of the world, emotive gestures, and sentimental outbursts. He is an embodiment of impracticability. On the contrary Rosie is a dreamer, lost in her world of love, emotion and compassion. In accordance with the above mentioned points we can consider this passage:

I was accepted by Marco as a member of the family. From guiding tourists I seemed to have come to a sort of concentrated guiding of a single family. Marco was just impractical, an absolutely helpless man. All that he could do was to copy ancient things and write about them. His mind was completely in it. All practical affairs of life seemed impossible to him; such a simple matter as finding food or shelter or buying a railway ticket seemed to him a monumental job. Perhaps he married out of desire to have someone care for his practical life, but unfortunately his choice was wrong – this girl herself was a dreamer if ever there was one. (84)

While staying so close to them Raju develops a familial attachment with Rosie and Marco. Love, sex, marriage play a significant role in the life of an individual and so they are presented in such a way in *The Guide*. Raju is tempted and allured by Rosie's mesmerizing or charismatic appeal and is slowly and steadily driven towards her. When their clandestine relationship is exposed, Marco shows extreme displeasure but does not misbehave or thrash her harshly. By his indifferent behaviour and attitude he compels her to move away from his life. Rosie's plight is pathetic as Marco never tries to understand her nature either as a human being or as his wife. To Marco Rosie is just a feminine character with no voice to express her feeling. Under such circumstances she takes shelter in Raju's house irrespective of the societal problems. Raju supports her physically and morally and for this he expresses his dissent against his mother and refuses to accept the codified laws of the society. After this tumultuous situation in Rosie's life she decides to perform art publicly. Her public performance brought name, fame and money in her life. Gradually due to her popularity Raju's craze for money increased and he makes her work like a machine. An unhealthy competitive spirit develops in Raju and he is only after the money that every dance concert fetches her. It is money which brings a climactic change in Raju's flourishing life. Raju even tries to forge Rosie's signature with roughish intention of misappropriating her jewels and converting them into easy wealth. Just like Margayya Raju's latent ambition is to become a rich man with high status in the society. Since status of a man in modern society is very much linked with money, both the protagonists try to achieve that in their life. Money works miracles and corrupts the man. In modern society corruption has become widely rampant, and Malgudi is no exception. Raju's status in the society as described in the novel is through Nalini's dance concerts. This excessive lust for money is an outcome of the materialistic and consumerist society. In the wake of economic progress, mankind usually moves towards financial prosperity and desire for money increases inexplicably compared to tradition, culture and social values. As we move into the deeper analysis of the socio-economic perspective of the novel we come across several components relevant to the principles of westernization and urbanization. C.D. Narasimhaiah in R.K.Narayan's *The Guide* espouses

this in his critical perception: "There is a clash of castes, classes and interests in the persistence of time-honoured customs and the old values on the one hand and the weakening modern social and moral structure on the other. All this is concretely realized in terms of interaction of characters" (113). Raju's mental turmoil crops up owing to his obsession for Rosie. He himself says: "The only reality in my life and consciousness was Rosie" (132). He feels disinterested in his profession and seldom attends his shop. Altogether he is ripped between anxieties and sense of insecurity and this is clearly perceived by Gaffur, the taxi driver. Gaffur says: "You are becoming rather stuck-up nowadays, Raju. You are not the old friend you used to be" (118). Among the economic groups Narayan projects in the novel, Gaffur belongs to the low wage earner's group but he is sensible and rational. He is firmly rooted in his soil and is extremely traditional. He is professional and dedicated to his service. Indirectly he tries very hard to rescue Raju from the emotional tentacles of Rosie. Gaffur in his interaction with Raju throws some stinging remarks against modernization, emancipation of woman and urbanization. Marco leaves Rosie in the hotel and keeps himself engrossed in his archeological survey. As a husband he fulfils no responsibility and keeps her in isolation. In this context Gaffur comments: "After all mechanical brakes, you know; I still maintain they are better than hydraulic. Just as an old, uneducated wife is better than the new type of girl. Oh, modern girls are very bold. I wouldn't let my wife live in a hotel room all by herself if I had to remain on duty on a hilltop" (115). The remarks reveal Gaffur's patriarchal attitude to life. Raju is broad minded and has a respectable approach towards the feminine gender but Gaffur believes in gender discrimination. He is sceptical and cannot rely on the feminine sex. He is against freedom of women and prefers to keep the rein of his wife in his hand. This is a unique feature of the traditional Indian society. The intrusion or percolation of western values in Indian Society was appreciated and accepted by a particular class of the society whereas majority of the population still adhered to old values of a traditional and rigid Indian society. It is a fact that in the post colonial era modernization and westernization was instrumental. The Nehruvians wanted to marry Indian culture and Western culture and sought to implement particular secular western set of cosmological beliefs whereas Gandhians sought to resist modernization for fear as it would lead to westernization.

This controversy, contrasting features are clearly visible in the concrete interactions of characters. Gaffur and Raju are the epitomes of two extreme fundamentals of society-conventionality and modernity.

The promiscuous relationship between Rosie and Raju continues with intermittent compunctions of Rosie. Rosie is asked to leave the house, and she takes a shelter in Raju's house. From then onwards Raju emerges as a guide of Rosie and his only objective is to fulfill her goal in life. Gradually Rosie becomes a reputed public figure and this increases the greed of Raju by leaps and bounds. Raju from the beginning shows his inclination towards high caste. Incidentally due to Rosie's fame and prosperity, Raju also mingles with high class people. He comments: "They addressed me as 'Raj' familiarly. I liked to hobnob with them because they were men of money or influence" (115). Raju becomes greedy every day. He begins to consider Rosie as his own property to earn money. Rosie is implicitly portrayed as a monetary resource. Rosie is exploited lovingly by Raju and he enjoys the pomp and grandeur of the high class society. Rosie is just opposite in nature. She is a perfect worshipper of art. She enjoys the charm of dancing the whole day and captivating the audience in the hall but she is not after money. She does not imbibe the greed for money from Raju rather she wants to lead a simple and normal life just like a next-door girl. When Raju tries to develop her sense of superiority, so that she can reject and abhor the company of ordinary people, succinctly she says: "That's more money, she said. I don't care much for that sort of superiority" (189). Here Narayan wants to evoke Gandhian economic theory through the character of Rosie. In Gandhian economic theory man is a supreme consideration and life is

more than money. He wants to elevate modern economic philosophy from its materialistic base to a higher spiritual plane where human actions would be motivated by social objectives rather than by individualistic and selfish considerations. In order to make her understand the significance of money, Raju philosophically says: "If we don't work and earn when time is good, we commit a sin. When we have a bad time no one will help us" (190). In response to this convincing statement Rosie articulates something more philosophically: "Is there no way of living more simply" (195). This assertive statement of Rosie is a clear indication of her firm faith in Gandhian economic theories of 'Simple living and High Thinking'. Raju's ideologies are much more practical, quite oxymoronic to Rosie's ideas of life. Breaking away the adamant chains of rigidity imposed by Marco, Rosie is now like a free bird, exploring her life and art. Her life force is her art and she is controlled by rationality of Raju. In the words of Prof. Krishna Sen: "The modern Malgudi society that Raju embraces during his days of prosperity is hardly any better, either from the point of view of morality or humanity" (195).

Raju fully utilizes the power of money to get the permission for liquor from the government which was prohibited at that time. The author says:

'Permit Holder' became a social title in our land and attracted men of importance around me, because the permit was a different thing to acquire. I showed respect for law by keeping the street window shut when serving drink to non-permit folk. All kinds of men called me 'Raj' and slapped my back...Through my intimacy with all sorts of people, I knew what was going on behind the scenes in the government, at the market, at Delhi, on the racecourse, and who was going to be who in the coming week. (184)

Thus Narayan endorses a very ruthless and merciless and uncompromising picture of official and social cooperation existing in the society at that time just after the independence. In this context Prof. Krishna Sen remarks:

To these people culture is a commodity that is valued for the material benefits that it brings-they would have looked down on Rosie and her dance had she still been a devdasi, but now they lionize her because she is rich and famous. To a considerable extent, Raju's moral lapse in bending the law to gain a personal advantage (when he forges Rosie's signature) is symptomatic of this morally lax society, and not just an individual aberration. (196)

As days passed Rosie gets fatigued with the shows, name, fame and glory. She feels "like one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs, or a performing monkey" (84). She suffers from remorse for being untrustworthy to her husband, Marco. The traditional bond of marriage suddenly ignites her soul and she cries out: "After all, after all, he is my husband" (203). This is where the author extols the ethos of Hindu Marriage. She realizes her fault and pangs for her legitimate relationship with her husband. We can say Narayan espouses this relationship notwithstanding the influence of modernization. There is a constant shift in between conventionality and modernity in the novel. Marco exhibits his progressive nature when he allows his wife to stay alone in the hotel at the same time he is traditional when he defines her art as 'street acrobatics'.

Narayan in one of his short stories titled 'Selvi' from the collection 'An Astrologer's day' projects a similar character like Rosie. Here the story is named after the protagonist Selvi because all the events in the story, the various nature of human behaviour are centered round her. Here Mohan can be compared to Raju for his monetary pursuits. Like Rosie Selvi also is considered as a source of money. Mohan controls her financial matters and tries to accumulate more wealth by exploiting her talent. Selvi is benign, simple and her ignorant appeal gives Mohan more opportunity to exploit her. Regarding Mohan the author comments: "He was a financial expert who knew how to conjure up money and at the same time keep Income Tax at arm's length. Pacing his lawns and corridors restlessly, his mind



was always busy, planning how to organize and manoeuvre men and money” (201). Mohan is considered almost a replica of Raju in financial matters. Selvi is kept away from the society and almost confined in a room. He considers her as his own property towards financial achievements in life. The rhythm of Mohan’s prosperous life is changed by his own behaviour. When Selvi wants to contact her mother, he is reluctant to give her permission because of her difference in social standard. Eventually she gets the news of her demise and this brings a complete change in Selvi. For the first time she becomes voluble and she says: “Please leave me out of all this, leave me alone, I want to be alone hereafter. I can’t bear the sight of anyone...” (158). Thus Selvi revolts against her ruthless husband and her stoic resignation shows her self-determination and mental strength. She is quite similar to Rosie as she also rejects Raju for his act of forgery and the revolting figure of Rosie adds a new dimension to the novel. It seems that Narayan satirises the western influence on Indian life. East and West conflict is always prevalent in Narayan’s novels and *The Guide* is not an exception to it. Raju goes against the conventional society when she keeps Rosie as a mistress within his own premises. It is a fact in Indian life, society is of supreme importance and severe restrictions are imposed on the individual by the society. Raju breaks a moral code of the society and pays a huge penalty for it. If we consider the mythological background of Indian Literary Resource, we can astutely compare Rosie/Nalini with ‘Mohini’ because she entraps and seduces Raju into ways of life for which he was not prepared. Rosie in *The Guide* is portrayed as an embodiment of the ineffable principle of ‘maya’. She is a symbolic representation of ‘maya’, seducing and imprisoning Raju in his world of illusion. According to John Thieme :

*The Guide* employs a complex contrapuntal structure. The movement between the story of how Raju becomes a putative Sadhu in the present and his account of his past, which centres his activities as a tourist guide and his affair with Rosie, a married temple dancer from Madras, involves a dialectical interplay between the two modes of narration as well as the two actions. The first person narrative clearly enlists sympathy for a character whose transgressive behaviour might otherwise seem reprehensible, while the third person ‘camera eye’ view of him in his sadhu persona withholds judgment on the issue of whether the former tourist guide can now reasonably be viewed as a spiritual guide. (164)

The novel ends with Raju’s transformation from tourist guide to a spiritual guide. Raju is perceived to be a holy man by the innocent villagers of Mangal. Raju’s redemption comes with his attachment with villagers. At the end of the novel Raju becomes a saviour. The novel is open ended as it is not stated whether the village was totally drenched by heavy shower with the death of Raju, but at least we can state that Raju tries to save the villagers from their precarious state. In assuming the sincere responsibility of a redeemer despite his imperfections, Raju plays a significant role out of the versatility that he has shown in the novel. The theme of the novel can also be compared to Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat*. In the words of Sarala Krishnamurthy: “Raju the protagonist of *The Guide* and Mugo the protagonist of *A Grain of Wheat*, respectively, stand in front of the general public exposed in their shameful ignominy. Both are surrounded by thrumming sea of humanity, the multitudinous ness of life ebbing and flowing around them with absolute indifference and rigour. Raju dies with the hope of rain in his eyes and Mugo is led away by the prison guards”(107).

At the end of the novel Narayan has drawn the picture of his protagonist with the skill of an artist. Raju, the egoistical character throughout the novel, who exploits Rosie’s innocent character, ultimately succumbs to death in a pathetic way. He always struggled to gratify himself and at the culmination he struggles with his life for spreading happiness among the villagers of Mangal. The denouement is neither a rejection nor a defence of the Hindu faith-it



gestures towards the complexity of life, in which there are no simple solutions. The novel also follows the cinematic technique. The novel is interspersed with two personas of Raju. The sections leading up to and dealing with Raju's fast are narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator. It is followed by the confessional first-person account of his former life, as narrated to one of the villagers, Velan. I would like to end my article by contrasting the analysis of two critics- C.D. Narasimhaiah and G.S. Balarama Gupta. C.D. Narasimhaiah considers "Raju a transformed man in the end, someone who has attained authentic sainthood: With all his limitations Raju's is a rich and complex life-achieving integration at last..." (106). In contrast, G.S. Balarama Gupta believes that Raju is a "Selfish swindler, an adroit actor, and a perfidious megalomaniac..." (127).

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## **Edward Said's "Imaginative Geography" and Geopolitical Mapping: Knowledge/Power Constellation and Landscaping Palestine**

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Attempting to explore Said's concept of "imaginative geographies," this paper presents Said's theoretical understanding of imaginative geographies, by probing his writings on Orientalism, and pointing to the ways in which his theoretical work relates to current geographical accounts. In maintaining that, I make brief stops in the fields of postcolonial, postmodern theory and cultural geography, and their various intersections, in order to consider how imaginative geographies have been re-conceptualized. The paper looks to new horizons in our understanding of Said's geographical imagination. In *Culture & Imperialism* Said pointed to how none of us are completely free from the struggle over geography, over territory, over space, and over place; this fact continues to be evident in the Palestinian struggle that Said has so eloquently articulated. The paper also seeks to build a theory and critique of power and the development process by fusing geography, history, and political economy while maintaining a commitment to a scholarship of activism and critical engagement with the world. Moreover, the paper attempts a close reading of the role of politics and state's ideology in creating a geopolitical space through examining the colonial and imperial geopolitical mapping, and how this map is institutionally purported by the Orientalist/colonialist discourse of the "Same" and the "Other". In particular, the paper takes the Palestinian landscaping as a case in point of how devastating the colonial project had been on both land and identity. The colonialist/Orientalist legacy has created split in the human space, mapped by geopolitical frenzied totalitarianism.

Introduction:

Attempting to explore Said's concept of "imaginative geographies," this paper presents Said's theoretical understanding of imaginative geographies, by probing his writings on Orientalism, and pointing to the ways in which his theoretical work relates to current geographical accounts. In maintaining that, I make brief stops in the fields of postcolonial, postmodern theory and cultural geography, and their various intersections in order to consider how imaginative geographies have been re-conceptualized. The paper looks to new horizons in our understanding of Said's notion of "imaginative geography". In *Culture & Imperialism*, Said pointed to how none of us are completely free from the struggle over geography, over territory, over space, and over place; this fact continues to be evident in the Palestinian struggle that Said has so eloquently articulated. The paper also seeks to build a theory and critique of power and the development process by fusing geography, history, and political economy while maintaining a commitment to a scholarship of activism and critical engagement with the world. Moreover, the paper attempts a close reading of the role of politics and state's ideology in creating a geopolitical space through examining the colonial and imperial geopolitical mapping, and how this map is institutionally purported by the Orientalist/colonialist discourse of the "Same" and the "Other". In particular, the paper takes the Palestinian landscaping as a case in point of how devastating the colonial project had been on both land and identity. The colonialist/Orientalist legacy has created split in the human space, mapped by geopolitical frenzied totalitarianism.

Though the term "geopolitics" is generally difficult to define, I will specify it as the practice by which intellectuals of statecraft and political cultures give meaning to "world politics" and the place of their state in the interstate system. Geopolitics, thus, requires us to examine state cultures and the mechanisms by which these construct the world. This active social

representation of the world has been termed “worlding” by certain theorists or “geo-graphing” by others, literally the writing of global political space. To examine this will require asking philosophical questions about how cultures construct meanings, how these meanings are central to the development of state institutions, how states develop geopolitical cultures, what debates and traditions characterize these geopolitical cultures and how these cultures operate on a daily basis, at “high” or formalized sites, like in universities and think tanks, and “low” sites, like in newspapers, films, magazines and popular culture. It also requires thinking through the relationship between geopolitical discourses and foreign policy institutions and practices. And it requires thinking about the relationship of these discourses and institutional practices to process of globalization and transnationalization. More specifically, the term was used in the twentieth century to describe the broad relationship between geography, states, and world power politics. In the conventional conceptions that dominated the twentieth century, geopolitics was a panoptic form of power/knowledge that sought to analyze the condition of world power in order to aid the practice of statecraft by great powers. Embedded within the imperialist projects of various states throughout the century, geopolitics generated comprehensive visions of world politics.

Our imaginative geography for the processes of cultural intervention has been shaped by the long tradition of efforts to forge effective political formations in times of global crisis, efforts with transnational ambitions that have profoundly shaped the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—including, in particular, the legacies of anti-colonial movements and other internationalist thought. The global war prison can simply be framed as a dispersed series of sites where sovereign power and bio-power productively struggle for a room for action. In a situation like this, terms such as “clash of civilization”, “permanent war” and “cultural dichotomy” become concepts that incited critical speculations on the importance of geography. As a result, more attention has been paid to the spatial paradigm in the scholarly as well as artistic or fictional works. This tremor is characterized by a rhetorical address which shows how various individuals see their positions with broader political realities. This, of course, navigates those questions and interventions regarding the politics of space in providing a critical voice on contemporary concerns of the oppressed individuals and minorities.

“Imaginative Geography”, Geopolitics and Postmodern Condition:

The recent postmodern turn and concomitant reconceptualization of space in social theory have encouraged numerous investigators, cultural theorists especially, to augment, even to replace, material with metaphorical space; one whereby “geographical imaginations” play constitutive roles in space - society relationships. A leading contributor has been Edward Said, who aims at refashioning spatial sensibilities not only in traditional “geographic” terms but in a broader epistemological sense. Committed to transgressing established borders, Said invites us to imagine new topographies, in which units heretofore deemed separate -- cultures, professions, realms of experience -- become inescapably hybrid and interpenetrating, or what he terms as “intertwined histories and overlapping territories”.

It can be noted that for Said history is not “preordained” since it can be influenced by ideas and not by economics alone, as maintained by orthodox Marxists. He believes that all events and ideas are historicized and contextualized in time and place, and universal ideas are part of the hegemonic exclusion in which imaginative geography has been a key-factor. This explains why he considers the vitality of language as a dramatic and active social construction that plays a material role in creating the social history of the world. In this regard, *Culture and Imperialism* is significant for its global range and scholarly references that give the reader a well-researched and imaginatively recreated history of the last two centuries of European imperialism,



stretching from Romanticism to the contemporary postcolonial/postmodern scenario, with the intervening period of nationalist struggles of modernism. Said has contended that “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.” (xii)

In essence, and in light of Said’s concept of imaginative geography, there is this question which goes beyond Said’s critique of Orientalist/colonialist and imperialist discourse to a wider range of postmodern and transnational bondings: If postmodernist theory gloats in difference, hybridity and indeterminacy, how can it answer the proposition that inequality among races is reduced only to “difference” and pluralism, and how can geography become a free human space? In order to relate space to culture, Said has directed our attention to the “privileged role of culture” in directing our geographical map, and insists that “the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth-and early- twentieth century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadows over our own times” (5).

Said’s concept of imaginative geography celebrates a postmodern receptivity in the sense that it rejects the idea of an enclosed space. “I have kept in mind the idea” argues Said “that the earth is in effect our world in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually don not exist. Just as none us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from struggle over geography, that struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms , about images and imaginary (7). With the presence of infinite possibilities of meaning, reality almost certainly begins to crumble. However, to say that postmodernist views of history are nihilistic is to miss the main argument: no one has ever denied that history can be written. Postmodernists do not ignore logical arguments, verification and archival research. But neither do they maintain that all interpretations are valid. Postmodernism only asserts that there is never only one meaning. Postmodernists question the efficacy of truth since they believe that actuality is only a historical and cultural fabrication. They are not of the view that history is only creative fiction, as is commonly assumed, or that every perspective on the past is as valid as the other. According to Sad, this is “a kind of geographical inquiry into historical experience (7).

“Truth” and “representation” are the two postmodern concerns that flashed throughout his critical and theoretical works. He incessantly shows his disavowal of the Orientalist (mis)representation and (mis)conception of the other people, regions and cultures. Therefore, an imagined spatial and cultural distinction has been created by Orientalist discourse that reduces human geography into a space of inequality and difference rather a space of hybridity and intertwined partnership. Said has speculated on this issue in the following lines:

this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I use the word “arbitrary” here because imaginative geography of the “our land—barbarian land” variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our own minds; “they” become “they” accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from “ours.” ... The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is “out there,” beyond one’s own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the un-familiar space outside one’s own. (*Orientalism* 54)

Moreover, the relationship between national subjectivity and imagined geographies has been theorized in such a way that it becomes possible to think through imagined geographies in disparate national contexts. Indeed, Said's concept has attracted both the postcolonial and postmodern scholars who examine the relation between power and space in the creation of national or transnational identity respectively by focusing quite specifically on the (trans)national dimension of imaginative geographies. This becomes clearer when we examine first Said's idea of the production of distance through imaginative geographies; how distance, difference, and sameness all go into the production of place, or how a given space becomes associated with notions of belonging or non-belonging. Second, it can be looked through the relationship between ideas of space and the production of identities. Third, it can be traced through its endorsing of the importance of seeing space as a performance, as something subjects "do" in the everyday. My aim here is to demonstrate how space and subjectivity are mutually constitutive.

It may be alleged that sustained labels such as "postmodern", "postcolonial" and "poststructural" are administered hegemonically to cultures and texts to prevent the infiltration of non-European presence into an ascendant European system. And even though such "neo-universalisms" constitute liberating practices from the discourse of the colonizer or the master narrative, they have also been interpreted as a shrewd means of controlling the "Other". The controversy of "Self" and "Other" brings about the crisis of defining one's own generic forms and space. Postcolonial politics has, therefore, to be seen as integral to postmodernism. The practice of history writing has to be integrated within poststructuralist theorizing about representation, subject, gender and the interaction of discourse, geography and power. Therefore, Said believes in the origins of the text which determine the materiality of production as well as the ideological circumstances which have a direct bearing on its form and content.

Substantially, reading Said's concept of imaginative geography beyond its postcolonial positioning reveals how the ambivalence between material and the metaphoric, between the linear and the contrapuntal, and between the local and the global drive home his critical methodology which underscores his dislocation and multiple positioning. Any attempt at resolving these polarities would in all probability be falling back into the arms of absolutist or linear master narratives. Hence, the emphasis on the simultaneity of conjunctions and disjunctions is the basis of his historical approach. The streak of postmodernism in him, therefore, cannot be denied.

Power and Geopolitical Knowledge:

The constellation of geographical knowledge and power that was and still persists in the contemporary world politics has established a universe of research problematizing the production and use of geographical knowledge in various orders of power and space. In their essay entitled "The Critical Geopolitics Constellation: Problematizing Fusions of Geographical Knowledge and Power," Simon Dalby and Gearoid O Tuathail maintain that, "Places constituted in political discourse need not be stable to be politically useful; multiple narratives can sometimes render a particular place or state in a number of ways simultaneously... The ideological production and reproduction of societies can, in part, be understood as the mundane repetition of particular geopolitical tropes which constrain the political imaginary." (451)

Knowledge, power and geopolitical mapping are the three aspects that compose the Orientalist/colonialist discourse so that one should not be studied without the other. For Said, the creation of the modern nation-state system was constituted against the backdrop of the imperial geopolitical imagination, for geopolitics is world space as charted by colonial power. Moreover, based on Said's conceptualization of cultural geography, then, issues of culture and of geography

are central to understanding how colonial “pasts” bleed into contemporary Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. Drawing upon Said, Derek Gregory in his *The Colonial Present* (2004) details colonialism as a cultural process: “Culture involves the production, circulation, and legitimation of meanings through representations, practices, and performances that enter fully into the constitution of the world” (8). Since none of us is “outside” or “above” culture, we are all in one way or another bound up in ongoing processes of colonization, “the performance of the colonial present” (10).

Subsequently, alienated selves, displaced subjects, exiled, floated identities, and segregated groups--integrated in Said’s concept of “intertwined histories and overlapping territories”-- are the major animated issues that grapple the postcolonial and postmodern man and critic alike. This ambivalent and quibbled texture of hybridity and difference necessitates a reworking of the geopolitical mapping that built on the notion of the “Same” and “Other”. This is what has been done by Said especially in his books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Said’s idea of the centrality of spatiality in the Orientalist/colonialist discourse is echoed in Clarke Doel and McDonough’s statement that,

Physical space literally amounted to nothing, unless it conformed to a very particular configuration of cognitive, moral and aesthetic codes. The attempt by states in our contemporary world to violently engineer space (social, cognitive and aesthetic, all of which are entwined with the territorial) to fit their nationalist, exclusionary and racist visions of the perfect order is unfortunately still part of global politics. (qtd. in Dalby and O Tuathail 453)

It is of a chief concern in this paper to expound how the important themes of territoriality and governmentality are being rearticulated in the postcolonial world. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of governmentality linked to sovereignty and territory, the paper explores the contemporary reconfiguration of power and space in a global transformational zonality. All this suggests zones of contra-governmentality where the traditional claims to sovereign power that structured realist understanding of politics are practically subverted. A critical view of the geopolitical mapping thus suggests interrogating the significance of particular terrains of resistance wherein power is not being simply a matter of elite control or state rule but also a matter of contested localities where rule is resisted, thwarted and subverted by social movements. The flexible spaces of rule and resistance are part of counter-hegemonic struggles and can be understood if these facets of struggle are investigated in particular contexts. However, the visions of global space were irreconcilably Manichean ones that “smoothed away the messy, teeming complexity of everyday global politics, reducing it to a transparent surface of struggle with an implacable and irreducible “Otherness”” (453).

The entwining of aesthetics, communications, media and the politics of identity in the production of geopolitical knowledge and the nation was an effectively operational and irredeemably functional concern in Orientalist/colonialist geopolitical mapping. In his discussion of the concept of imaginative geography, Said expounds that struggle for land has its root in the artistic narration which maps out its affiliation. He argues that, “To speak, as O’Brien does, of “the propaganda for an expanding of empire [which] created illusions of security and false expectations that high returns would accrue to that who invested beyond its boundaries” is in effect to speak of our atmosphere created by both empire and novels by racial theory and geographical speculation”. He goes on to argue that “the phrase “false expectations” suggests *Great Expectations*, “invested beyond its boundaries” suggests Joseph Sedley and Becky Sharp, “created illusions” suggests “*Illusions perduse*—the crossings over between culture and

imperialism are compelling” (6). Subsequently, Said is keen to relate the universalist European discourse as a compelling space that renders the “Other” as a “homeless” subject “out of place”.

On the other hand, the representation of spatial identity in the Western popular culture reflects the deep-seated spirit of Orientalist/colonialist discourse that treated the “Other” as a verminous threat that should be exterminated and cleansed away. “*The Digest*,” argues Joanne Sharp “[does] not only represent external “Others” who can be portrayed as a threat ..., but functions to establish a series of subjectivities through which such threats can be resisted (qtd. in Dalby and O Tuathail 454). Thus popular culture is complicit in maintaining hegemony, not only by its representations of geopolitical spaces, but by the practical construction of the subjectivities that can be politically mobilized in defence of “our” space against a threat originating from “their” space. The idea of constructed subjectivities has its common relationship with the ideas of colonization and attachment in the colonial era, and enclosure and commodification that characterized the production of “space” and “nature” in the contemporary global politics. These problematic concerns cast their shadow on the construction of national identities and the importance of taking seriously the question of citizenship in the constitution of national spaces.

Substantially, Derek Gregory provides a welcome extension of Said's “imaginative geographies” to analysis of “real spaces” in his discussion of the lived, human geographies of Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq as well as the geopolitical entanglement of these spaces as a by-product of those imaginative geographies, and colonial geopolitical and politico-economic mappings. Gregory shows how geography is implicated in our cultural judgments and evaluations that underlie the ongoing exercise of colonial power. Intertwined constructions of difference and distance continue to “licence the unleashing of exemplary violence” (16) against “other” people and places. Importantly, Gregory insists that “imaginative geographies” are “performances of space” (19). He also directs our thought to the fact that imaginative geography has dominated the geopolitical mapping and “Orientalism itself never loosened its grip on the modern colonial imagination. He conspicuously illustrates that “wars in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq confirm [that] Orientalism is still abroad: emboldened and aggressively exorbitant.” (xiv)

The perceptual shifts from the epistemological, to the cultural and then to the spatial turn in the field of cultural studies have tempted a great number of writers and scholars to investigate the validity and efficacy of Said's concept in the formulation of a cultural critique. In her recent essay entitled “Surprising Geography”, Rosalyn Deutsche has described the newly popular field of spatial-cultural discourse as “a convergence between arguments being made in cultural studies about the importance of the spatial to cultural politics, and the way many geographers are now theorizing spaces places and landscapes as culturally constructed and contested”(169). This convergence is clearly signaled by Stuart Hall as “one of the key discourses in the systems of meaning we call culture” (181). On the other hand, Gillian Rose in her article “Spatialities of ‘Community’, Power and Change: The Imagined Geographies of Community Arts Projects”, argued that, “certain forms of cultural identity are imagined through a profound sense of belonging to a bounded and stable place”. (2)

It can also be argued that the understandings of identity depend more on notions of global mobility and connection. Any difference between these geographies of identity can be understood in terms of cultural politics, in this instance of “race” as a segregated place. “Othering” becomes an essential part of the Orientalist discourse, and that the constellation of knowledge and power has created not only an epistemological distinction but also an ontological difference among humanity. Therefore, Said believes that “Orientalism is a field with

considerable geographical ambition” (*Orientalism* 50). Furthermore, Orientalism was basically based on racist discourses constructing racialized identities in part by erecting supposedly impermeable barriers which depend on an essentialist understanding of difference.

#### Spatiality and Identity Formation:

What ruminated in postmodern and postimperial juncture was one way of challenging that spatialized essentialism of “Same” and “Other” so as to imagine a fluid of hybridizing cultural intersections. In this regard, Said critique of Orientalism as institutional and corporate system and imperialism as a theory of expansion has a humanistic goal toward creating a human space free from ideology. Cultures are hybrid, and historical experience is a shared event so that no one can claim its singularity in its mapping out its events and locale. In order to achieve this goal, Said adopts the method of contrapuntality by which we can get a clear vision of a “wordliness” world of human co-existence. He insists that to imagine a community, say, the “Oreint”, through the same spatiality as that through which power produces its margins is only to reproduce that marginalization. Therefore, Said’s view seems to be ideally a utopic vision of community for which a different spatiality is necessary if a different community is to be articulated; a dynamic spatiality where nothing is fixed forever, where there are no essentializing inclusions and exclusions, and no hierarchies of power.

A dominant vision of essentialized community was extracted by a spatiality structured and territorialized by power into a centre and a margin. It is this spatiality that was complicit with colonialism, the phallogentric constitution of sexual difference, and the bourgeois construction of classed difference. And this is also the spatiality that Said has castigated and denied in his critical ensemble. All this suggests the desire for a space constitutive of fantasies of identity. In this way, community need not be mapped in the dualistic spatiality of power/knowledge. Community must be thought of through a space which does not structure essentialized identities. This rethought “community” must be mapped in a spatiality which can acknowledge partial and changing membership; contingent insiderness; uncertainty, loss and absence. Therefore, identity has been given spatial forms as articulations of power discourse which engender “a spatial order”. It is through such complex discursive ensembles that spaces, places and landscapes become meaningful in the context of power-ridden social relations, and why dominant forms of spatiality can be contested. It is also through such contested vision of mobility of identity and interaction of time and space in the creating of the historical moment or “historical experience” as Said incessantly reiterates that his concept of imaginative geography acquires new meaning and significance.

In light of Said’s concept of imaginative geography, one comes to understand how identify and its geopolitical formation was bound by power/knowledge constellation. Thus, one needs to think of what Gillian Rose reiterates: “to change oppressive definitions of identity it is also necessary to rethink the spatialities which give both material and symbolic structure to those definitions”. Rose asserted that “the first dimension of the spatiality of power is zonality. Powerful institutions are understood as producing a territory divided into a centre and a margin” (“Spatialities of ‘Community’, Power and Change” 1, 5). This territorialization occurs because power is understood as dividing the social into the acceptable and the unacceptable. The spatiality that power produces is also understood as hierarchical. The locations of power can be described as “high” and the places marginalized by power as “low”, and this is the hierarchy produced by the actions of power. To be marginalized is simply to have parameters binding your actions; it is to be constrained.



Moreover, Said's concept of "imaginative geographies" can be productively used to think through how particular national geographical configurations are constituted. For instance, state structures and practices, such as national education, are often at the forefront of creating and maintaining imagined geographies. In this way, state schooling presents citizens-to-be with the official version of a national geography through an understanding of national borders, and important internal geographical and topographical features such as rivers, mountains, and provincial or state boundaries. Alongside this official nationalism, popular, non-formal geographies are produced and circulated. Consequently, any national imaginative geography must necessarily be informed by official and popular accounts of national space. In view of such conceptualization, the need for citizens of the nation to place themselves imaginatively within a "known" territory, and to possess a "geographic common sense" of belonging are part of the processes which produce and sustain nationalisms.

Nevertheless, Siad's concept has genealogically foreshadowed the contemporary geopolitical discourses and practices which have been transformed by three boundary challenging processes: globalization, informationalization, and the global risk society unleashed by advanced modernity. A re-conceptualization of Said's concept, thus, suggests and gives rise to a postmodern geopolitical condition which renders the spatial imaginations associated with modern state-centric geopolitics as increasingly redundant. In his essay "The Postmodern Geopolitical Condition: States, Statecraft, and Security at the Millennium," Geroid Ó Tuathail has advanced this idea further, arguing that the postmodern geopolitical condition revealed the necessity for remapping the colonial and postcolonial space wherein geographical boundaries have traditionally acted as a constructed socio-political codes and produced new identities. With the emergence of diasporic identities, refugees and displaced citizens the national identity reaches crisis. The relation between the cause and effect is what governs the colonial and postcolonial geopolitical imagination. Driven by the concern of national security and redemption, the colonial and imperial powers saw in the "Other" nations and geographies a source of threat and advancement. In the same fashion, the postcolonial resistance movements search for their identity in the nativist and national tradition. The postmodern condition according to Ó Tuathail refers to spatial logics beyond the modern geopolitical imagination -- with its hard borders and easy distinctions between inside and outside, domestic and foreign, East and West, "us" and "them" (166- 169). The fact that these logics are increasingly evident and articulated in discourse, however, does not mean that the modern geopolitical imagination has been transcended or left behind. The postmodern geopolitical condition problematizes the spatial reasoning associated with the modern geopolitical imagination, but it does not erase its use. Read this way, geopolitics is seen as a cultural and political practice rather than a manifest reality of world politics.

In fact, Said's proposed term "imagined geographies" has inspired many critics to write about the geopolitical and geo-cultural ideologies that dominated the colonial and imperial agencies in the past and present. As they are central for the postcolonial writers and critics, representations of other places, peoples, landscapes, cultures and natures and the ways in which these images reflect the desires, fantasies and preconceptions of their authors and the grids of power between them and their subject are also predominant postmodern themes and geo-cultural concerns. It is possible to derive from Said's discussion several significant differences between an 'imaginative geography' as he conceived it and the concepts of "mental map", "behavioural environment" or "perceived environment" then current in behavioural geography. In the first place, Said's emphasis on power was alien to behavioural geography, and drew attention to the



“non-innocence” of any act of representation. In one sense, perhaps, Said’s formulation anticipated ideas of the situatedness of knowledge and the positionality of the viewing subject. But he was most concerned to disclose the privileges that European and American authors typically arrogated to themselves when representing other cultures and hence the asymmetric grid of power within which “the West” watches; “the East” is watched. In the second place, Said’s emphasis on viewing, watching, looking, observing “on vision and visibility” drew attention to the cultural construction of the gaze. Unlike “mental maps” and the other constructs of behavioural geography, imaginative geographies are never the product of purely cognitive operations. Their images are animated by fantasy and the play of desire and carry within them comparative valorizations” or what Said, following Bachelard (1969) called a “poetics of space” by means of which places are endowed with “figurative value”. In the third place, Said argues that those figurative values enter not only into the production of alterity (other/otherness) but also into the identity-formation of the viewing subject. Imaginative geographies sustain images of “home” as well as images of “away” or “abroad”. Therefore, “imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away” (Said, *Orientalism* 55). In the fourth place, “dramatization” is not quite the same as “falsification”, and Said’s discussion undercut the distinction between “real” and “perceived” worlds on which behavioural geography depended. This is the most complicated and contentious part of Said’s argument. There are certainly passages where he contrasted what he called “positive knowledge” with imaginative geographies produced under the sign of Orientalism. And yet, if imaginative geographies are “fictions” in the original Latin sense of fiction “something made, something fabricated” this does not mean that they are necessarily without concreteness, substance and, indeed, “reality”. On the contrary, Said emphasized that imaginative geographies circulate in material forms and they become sedimented over time to form an internally structured and, crucially, self-reinforcing “archive”. This “citationary structure” is also in some substantial sense performative. It shapes and legitimizes the attitudes and dispositions, policies and practices of its collective audience, so that in this way imaginative geographies spiral into and out of a sort of cultural paradigm of “Otherness”.

There have been several studies of imaginative geographies that, while they may have been inspired by Said’s original formulations, retain at best a loose affiliation with his work. Thus, for example, Carter’s (1987) project of an avowedly spatial history that seeks to show how the landscape of Australia was brought within the horizon of European intelligibility through a series of explicitly textual practices. The concept of an imaginative geography has also been developed in directions that Said’s original discussion left largely unremarked. For example, feminist scholars have shown how the production of imaginative geographies intersects with gender and sexuality, and the very idea of an “imagination” has been extended through geographies indebted to various forms of psychoanalytic theory for an understanding of the operations of fantasy, desire and the unconscious. What has been clearly retained from Said’s account, in large part a result of his initial debt to Foucault, has been an interest in recovering the imaginative geographies of other “spaces” produced under the signs of colonialism and postcolonialism (See Jarosz, 1992; Radcliffe, 1996).

It should be noted that there has been a long tradition of reading nominally fictional works as expressive of “imaginative geographies” in a far more limited sense as Said had in mind. This approach to the text has usually been naive in the extreme, with little or no engagement with literary or critical theory and an extraordinarily weak understanding of the

work of re-presentation. Said's concept of an "imaginative geography" is not confined to ostensibly fictional works. On the contrary, there is an important sense in which all geographies are imaginative, even the most formal, geometric lattices of spatial science are at once abstractions and cultural constructions, and as such vulnerable to the critical readings proposed by Said and other scholars.

Orientalism and the Formation of Colonialist and Imperialist Geopolitical Paradigms:

Said's concept of imagined geographies has basically evolved out of his critique on Orientalism. In this term, "imagined" is used not to mean "false" or "made-up", but "perceived". It refers to the perception of space created through certain images, texts or discourses. Imagined geographies can be seen as a form of social constructionism tantamount to Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. The gist of Said's argument in *Orientalism* is that western culture had produced a view of the "Orient" based on a particular imagination, popularized through academic Oriental studies, travel writing and a colonial view of the "Orient". According to Said, the "Orient" as a space and area was feminized as an open, virgin territory, with no ability or concept of organized rule and government. Imagined geographies are thus seen as a tool of power, of a means of controlling and subordinating areas. Power is seen as being in the hands of those who have the right to objectify those that they are imagining. This Orientalizing and exoticizing of the "Orient" was a tool to colonize the area. Romanticized as a place of "strange" and "alien", the "Oriental" subject and place has been transformed from an imagined space to an objectified material territory suffering from the colonial and imperial exploitation and displacement. In line with this thought, the "War on Terror" shows a continuation of the same imagined geographies that Said uncovered. The Islamic world is portrayed as uncivilized and is labeled as backward and failing. This justifies, in the view of those imagining, the military intervention that has been seen in Afghanistan and Iraq. This reminds us of Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* which was based on geopolitical knowledges and forms of imagined geography in which the Occident-Orient dichotomy takes an established ontological and as well as epistemological positionality.

In the second part of Chapter One of *Orientalism* entitled: "Imaginative Geography and its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental," Said argues that Orientalism relies heavily on the production of geographical knowledge in the imperial centre, since for him any representation of the "Orient" is necessarily spatial. Yet, beyond the techniques of mapping that underplayed the imperial project, he is interested in teasing out the cultural and symbolic domains of this geographical understanding, since it is the cultural politics of space and place that he is primarily concerned with uncovering. Thus, his is not a typical geographical undertaking, one that seeks to direct us to the cartographic techniques of what he calls the Orientalizing process. On the contrary, Said's aim is to trouble common-sense understandings of space, in this case of the "Orient", in order to destabilize the spatial, and might I add, racial order upon which Oriental knowledge is produced.

To further develop the tension between the material and symbolic that he is looking to trouble, Said uses the metaphor of the inside of a house to direct us to how objective spaces acquire a sense of intimacy, secrecy and security due to experiences that seem appropriate to it:

The objective space of a house—its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms—is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel; thus a house may be haunted or homelike, or prisonlike or magical. So space acquires emotional and even rational sense

by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here" (*Orientalism*, 55).

Said here makes a rather provocative statement that the objective space of a house is far less important than what he calls "the poetics of space". Through such poetics, the space of a house, its material dimensions if you will, are endowed with imaginative value(s) through which a range of cultural meanings are attributed to a particular space. In this way, through this imaginative process, space gains a whole series of meanings that are otherwise not naturally embodied in any given material space. A house can be haunted, a city can be cosmopolitan, a nation can be evil, yet none of these meanings come to the space naturally. It seems Said wants to direct us to the processes through which material spaces come to be understood in relation to the symbolic.

To develop this idea further, Said also demonstrates how this same process operates in relation to time. He argues that seemingly settled temporal markers such as "long ago," "the beginning," and "at the end of time" are useless unless they are endowed with some additional meanings. For example, for a scholar of Medieval Europe, "long ago" has a much different meaning than for an evolutionary biologist, in much the same way that my sense of the material space of my childhood home is qualitatively different than my father's. Consequently, Said would have us think through how space and time converge together to form a particular understanding of the "Orient". In his words: "there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away." (Said, *Orientalism* 55)

The question that arises here is how related is Said's concept of "imagined geographies" to his concept of Orientalism? Or what does this have to do with Orientalism, and how Said's determined attempts operate to underline the power relations at the heart of the imperial order? To answer this, is first to understand two key features of Said's imaginative geographies. The first feature refers to the dramatization of distance and difference involved in the imaginative geographical process. Key to Said's theorization is the folding of difference through a series of what geographer Nicholas Blomley calls "spatializations", or a set of geographical markers such as grids, surveys, and territories, among others. Said argues that these partitions and enclosures work to more clearly demarcate a familiar space that is "ours" from one that is "theirs." To illustrate this, he gives the example of a group of people living on a few acres of land who set up boundaries and call the territory beyond these boundaries the "land of the barbarians." Clearly this distinction is arbitrary, in that it does not depend on the so-called barbarians to acknowledge the "our" land-barbarian land distinction. Said goes on to explain that it is thus enough to set up the distinction in our minds: they become "they" and us becomes "us" in relation to territory, and perhaps other factors such as social, ethnic and cultural markers. Considering this reveals that the heart of Said's geographical project lies in his explication of how distance itself is not fixed, in the same sense as the corridor or closet in the inside of our homes, since the idea of distance is created and made intelligible through cultural practices, such as the poetics of space, where, "the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here" (55). Thus, Said lays out the cultural practices that produce Western knowledge about the "Orient" throughout *Orientalism*.

Fragments of the second key feature of the concept of imaginative geographies can also be found in Said's gestures to how imaginative geography can "help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself" (55). As we all know, Said argues throughout *Orientalism* that far from being an innocent project of imperial meaning-making, Orientalism has helped to produce

European imperial subjects. Thus, the role imaginative geographies play in forming a sense of place through understandings of belonging and non-belonging in space also forcefully produce a sense of self, an imperial identity. For Said, there is an intimate connection between the spatialities of various imaginative geographies and the production of identity. One could say, in a gesture to Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, that space and subjectivity are mutually constitutive, in that subjects define a particular space in the ways Said discusses, and a given space produces particular subjects. It is the interplay between space and subjectivity that is to be highlighted here in relation to Said's notion of "imaginative geography".

An exciting theoretical key point regarding Said's notion of imaginative geography comes from cultural geographer and postcolonial theorist Derek Gregory who has most usefully theorized Said's notion through a series of book chapters and journal articles dating back to over a decade especially in his *Geographical Imagination* (1994). Building on Said's work on the production of distance, sameness and difference, Gregory proposes that we see imaginative geographies as performative in the sense that they produce the effects that they name. In this case, space is not just a material domain, as in the walls of the house I presented above, but more to the point, space is a "doing". And in this vision of space, performance necessarily creates newness, however conditional and precarious, which allows one to know spaces differently. This understanding of space as a "doing" moves us beyond an understanding of space as primarily imagined, since it also concretely points to the practices that produce a given space.

Said's concept of "imaginative geography" is a key idea in geopolitics and postcolonial theory. Said's emphasis on Orientalism as an "institution", and the materiality of its constellation of power-knowledge is highly significant. While he was keenly interested in the production and circulation of imaginative geographies of the "Orient", he insisted that Orientalism was not merely "an airy European fantasy about the 'Orient', but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been considerable material investment" (Said, *Orientalism* 6). What gave Orientalism its peculiar power and also confounded its constructions was its exteriority. From the perspective of Orientalism, "what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts, but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West" (40). It was this, above all else, that so deeply implicated the discourse of Orientalism in a constellation of colonizing power. It made the "Orient" appear as "an essentialized realm originally outside and untouched by the West, lacking the meaning and order that only colonialism can bring." (Mitchell, 313)

Said's characterization and critique of Orientalism had its origins in his political commitment to the Palestinian cause and while his work has met with vigorous criticism, it has also proved to be of the utmost importance to the political-intellectual corpus of postcolonialism. Mapping the complexity of Orientalism's discursive terrain has qualified the exteriority of Orientalism. Said recognized that Orientalism was a gendered and sexualized discourse, but he was always much more interested in its metaphorical codings ('the Orient as feminine'), and feminist scholars have paid much closer attention to the gendered and sexualized experiences, practices and representations of Orientalist travellers, artists and writers.

However, the concept of imaginative geographies and its geo-cultural constellations has its worth deployment by several modern and postmodern writers and theoreticians. It becomes a common revisited concept by the critics of identity, nation, multiculturalism and global world politics. Modernist writers and critics refer repeatedly to the role of imaginative space that reinforces the alienated self. On the other hand, for the postmodern and postcolonial writers and

critics “imaginative geographies” is a referential point when the discussion of the national subject and fragmented identity is at hand.

Space and politics together form the geopolitical mapping. Early in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* the reader encounters an auditory image of the infantile artist’s first experimentation with language:

O, the wild rose blossoms  
On the little green place.  
He sang that song. That was his song.  
O, the green wothe botheth. (7)

The prototypically modernist linguistic play of “the green wothe botheth” establishes a problem of imagining to which the young Stephen returns, “You could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could” (12-13). In its encoded contestation of national and poetic imagery (the Irish green, the poetic rose), Stephen’s “green wothe” is an exemplary geopolitical image. It posits a form of cultural and political identification whose difficulty Stephen later finds inscribed in and around the “picture of the earth on the first page of his geography” textbook. (15)

However, the meaning of “geopolitics” as a term used to describe global political problems is by no means easy to pinpoint. Its increasing use as a keyword in critical theory and cultural studies signals a need to theorize what Homi Bhabha has recently called “the geopolitics of the historical present” (210). As part of that critical effort, a number of studies of geopolitics have appeared, including Gearóid O Tuathail’s recent *Critical Geopolitics* (1996). The genealogy I offer here emphasizes two features of the formation of what O Tuathail calls “classical geopolitics” (22): the suppressed importance of anarchism in the formation of imperialist geopolitical paradigms, and the fate of nineteenth-century ideas of “culture” in the formation of twentieth-century geopolitics.

The history of geopolitics may be summarized as the failure to constitute the discipline of geography as a scientific field of study, a failure on which the very success and persistence of reactionary geopolitical paradigms are premised. At issue is the ensemble of residual problems and questions that come to mark the wider sense of “geopolitics.” Stephen’s problem of imagining a “green rose” is exemplary of this ensemble of questions because it offers not a definition, but a problem: “It pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended” (Joyce 17). It is in fact Stephen’s problem of identification that is the focus of this essay.

Furthermore, Said’s conceptualization of geopolitical Power/knowledge can easily be approached through H. J. Mackinder’s hypothesis of culture, and the formation of geopolitics, chiefly, his “heartland” thesis. Mackinder’s thesis projects global political power as naturally pivoting around Central Asia, the “heartland of land-based power”, or what Mackinder sees as the fundamental strategic and historical interplay of land and sea. He calculates that, “Who rules East Europe commands the Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island Who rules the World-Island commands the World (*Democratic Ideals* 194).

However, Said’s main concern was to produce a “human geography” against the modern geography which was in the service of an expansionist, imperialist politics. It is hardly a surprise that the formation of geopolitics coincides with the rise of “new imperialism” in Europe in the late nineteenth century, although its full scope and importance for the foundations and legitimation of the modern discipline of geography have only recently been addressed. Said’s concept of imagined geography helps illustrate the wider cultural crisis within which geopolitics



take shape, and the logic by which the formation of geopolitics reconfigures nineteenth-century notions of culture. The imperialist scope and methods of geography is suggested in the final section of J. Scott Keltie's *Geographical Education: Report to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society* and also quoted by O Tuathail in *Critical Geopolitics*, with its significant emphasis on the term "culture":

A systematic scientific conception of geography will take the whole earth's surface as the subject of its comparative studies, and all the more when at the present time European culture is pressing forward on every hand with rapid progress. In consideration, however, of the historical task devolving on Europe, to become the representative and leader of this world-wide culture, the student in his historico-geographical studies will specially apply his mind to the appreciation of the physical configuration of Europe, and how it exercised such influence on its inhabitants as to qualify them for such a mission. (Keltie 111; O Tuathail 84-85)

Here, perhaps, it is more than an embryonic version of the U.S. fascination for "think and act geopolitically." This is the discourse of geopolitics which takes shape in formulation of "European culture," with an entanglement of geography and culture that Said was keen to disestablish. For Said, as it was for Elisée Reclus, the argument of geography was a matter of human emancipation:

Human beings, these "reasonable beings" who love so much to boast about their free will, nonetheless cannot make themselves independent of the climates and of the physical conditions of the country they inhabit. Our liberty, in our relations to the Earth, consists in understanding the laws of these relations to confirm the liberty of our existence. (qtd. in Giblin 64)

The central place of emancipatory principles and progress in nineteenth-century geography shows through even in the "new imperialist" rhetoric and Orientalist rubrics which characterized Europe's "mission" as representative and leader of this world-wide culture. This made European geography the condition for imagining what principle of development or culture connects European culture with the history of all humankind. The specifically geographical formulation of eurocentrism in this hypothesis of culture conditions many of the most ambitious nineteenth-century narratives. G. W. F. Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization*, and Karl Marx's *Capital* are some of the more influential. Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, noted for its emphasis on the influence of geography on human history, provides a useful point of reference for the geographical formulation of eurocentrism:

Looking at the history of the world, as a whole, the tendency has been, in Europe, to subordinate nature to man; out of Europe to subordinate man to nature. . . The great division, therefore, between European civilization and non-European civilization, is the basis of the philosophy of history". (1: 115)

This emphasis on the rhetorical power of "imperialist geography" underscores the central place of visualization or the "geopolitical gaze" in that rhetoric. The European geographical discoveries placed politics at the heart of geography and created a configurationally great ruptures in the map of the world. The historical meaning of the Columbian discoveries can best be realized by turning a terrestrial globe so that Europe became the centre and at the point nearest to the eye.

Emphasizing the difficulty of representing the true geographical "image" of humankind without distortion, Said invokes a humane perspective. His imaginary picture illustrates the

problem of human perspective that must vanish in the production of the geopolitical image. Said's geopolitical image thus constitutes the riddling afterimage of all those attempts to systematize and explain human history as the cultural development of all humankind. The black and white spaces, the East-West division, South North classification, or the First, Second and Third Worlds categorization are seen by Said as an ideologically political confusion that entails an ontological vision.

This perceptual play of figure against ground is reminiscent of the perceptual experiments in literary and artistic modernism discussed by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* and Rosalind Krauss in *The Optical Unconscious*. The narratives of empire were enormously invested with the art geography and the interplay of sea-power and land-power. Similarly, the curious effect of the photograph of a globe is, in part, produced by the visual contrast of white continents and black seas, juxtaposed with the white seas and black continents of the preceding image. There is good reason to recognize here that the rhetorical power constitutes the central paradigm of geopolitics, at least one of its most characteristic abbreviations of world history.

Said's analysis of cultural imperialism emphasizes that geopolitical image of the West is shaped by the geographical image of the Mother Land, and the hegemony to maintain its relation to its (Daughters) colonies in order to assure the means of conquest and domination. However, the very terms of national sovereignty and imperial power call attention to the fact that imperialist geopolitical image and its very power depends on the anarchist thesis that the nation-state is a merely transitory form, a thesis that geopolitics articulates in the ambiguous imperialism and anarchism of its own image.

Hence, heartland thesis -- the dichotomy of land and sea, and the distribution of the continents -- is an extended argument for welding the British nation to its imperial system. What gives the "geographical pivot of history" strategic interest, after all, is not the fixed position of the state within a set global order, but rather the very instability of political forms in a changing international "balance of powers" (Mackinder, *The Scope and Methods* 43). What is most revealing here is the consequences with which the Eurocentric imperative for hypothesizing the connection between European culture and the cultural development of human history as a whole. According to such a view, Europe had become the centre of equilibrium between the forces of the human race.

Subsequently, Said's notion of hegemony and domination is premised on a Eurocentric articulation of the accelerated unification of the world under the forces of global capital. Such forces involve a process of "Europeanization". As a result, all parts of the world will be drawn into the atmosphere of a general culture of a predominantly European type. This formulation of the connection between European culture and the global strategies of domination and conquest comes close to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony of Western culture over the whole world culture. The affinities are interesting to note since Gramsci's concept of hegemony has played a particularly important role in current cultural studies, opening with nineteenth-century formulations of culture to anticolonial contestations of Eurocentric assumptions. But, the formation of geopolitics over the turn of the century is not a history of geographical institutions. It is, rather, the story of imaginary institutions of geography. Indeed, the history of geopolitics is a genealogy of an imaginary institution whose contours are defined not only by the reactionary politics of European imperialism, but also by the emancipatory politics of European socialism and anarchism. Geopolitics is formed by the rejection and incorporation of various forms of representation. Therefore and for its essentially formulative position in the Orientalist/colonialist project, Said devoted to the concept of "imaginative geography" an important part of his

*Orientalism*. According to Said the perception of the colonial space is determined by images and discourses created and spread by those who detain power. Describing the “Orient” as a blank space, the colonial empires tried in fact to justify the cultural annihilations and political invasions they committed overseas.

Said argues that Huntington’s categorization of the world’s fixed “civilizations” omits the dynamic interdependency and interaction of culture. All his ideas are based not on harmony but on the clash or conflict between worlds. The theory that each world is “self-enclosed” is applied to the world map, to the structure of civilizations, to the notion that each race has a special destiny and psychology. According to Said, it is an example of an imagined geography, where the presentation of the world in a certain way legitimates certain politics. For example, interventionist and aggressive as it seems, the concept of civilizational clash is aimed at maintaining a war-time status in the minds of the Americans. Thus, it continues to expand the Cold War by other means rather than advancing ideas that might help us understand the current scene or that could reconcile the two cultures.

Viewed by Said as “a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another”, culture in this sense is relegated to “practices like arts of description, communication, and representation...which were immensely in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences” (Said, *CI* xiii, xii). From such perspective, imperialism can be described as a geopolitical expansionist system which entails the creation and maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural and territorial relationship based on domination and subordination. According to Said, imperialism has been a predominantly western project and form of dominance that has been shaped by Western overseas expansion initiated by Portuguese and Spanish mariners in the fifteenth century and reached its territorial and ideological climax in the early twentieth century, when many European states were engaged in “the scramble for Africa”. Imperialism is closely affiliated with colonialism for both processes are intrinsically geographical dynamics that involve the extension of the sovereignty of a ruler or nation-state over the land and lives of an alien people through a mixture of military conquest, colonial settlement, the imposition of direct rule, or the creation of informal empires of trade and political supervision.

In any case, if we approach the concepts of territory, home, lands, nation, etc., from the postcolonial perspective, the notion of space becomes problematic for two aspects. First, we have to take into account the initial approach the colonialist made towards the new unknown territories, and the transformations they forced upon the lands in order to make them *sound/feel/look* familiar to them. The second is the postcolonial repercussion of counter-approach of territories that resulted in *imaginary lands*. Edward Said describes this two-fold process as follows:

Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of the locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through imagination. (Said, *NCL* 77)

With the dissolution of colonial empires, “imperialism” has gained other connotations. The term is now used to describe variously the global economic influence the USA; the webs of neo-colonial dependency spun by multinational corporations; the international spheres of intervention cultivated by the USA; the USA’s recent military campaigns in the Middle East and

Central America; and the fashioning and management of the Third World as subordinate to the West. In recent years, there has been considerable discussion of the cultural geography of imperialism. It is becoming increasingly apparent that modern imperialism was characterized by a tension between the universalization and differentiation of European culture and power, bringing back to the fore the concepts of nationalism and Eurocentrism. Imperialism fostered, and was fuelled by, what Gregory describes in his *Explorations in critical human geography* (1998) as the “production of Europe” as a sovereign and composite subject at the centre of an imaginative grid that positioned all the other continents in subordinate spaces. Many imperial projects were inspired by the idea that Europe was the hearth and pinnacle of civilization the pivot of world “history” and “geography”, and had the special task of completing human development by bringing the rest of the world up to its mark. Imperial expansion was then conceived in triumphalist terms, as a universally beneficent agent of progress and an inevitable consequence of European superiority. Nourished by the Orientalist discourse of “Othering”, Europeans saw the world as their rightful inheritance and represented colonial intervention as a response to the appeal of land for astute use of its resources, to the calling of humanity which searches for universal betterment and for the need of the colonized who wait for redemption from their own ignorance and violence. These were compelling fictions that had profound material consequences. The geopolitical configuration of non-European lands and peoples as uncultivated or backward, and hence in need of domestication and rule, is an intrinsic feature of colonial and imperial mappings.

The operational link between Orientalism, imperialism and colonial geopolitical mapping has been shown by Said in the way in which the West engaged (and continues to deal) with the East. The West resorted to justify its colonial intervention by elaborating imaginative geographies of “us” and “them”, and by representing cultural and geographical differences as unchanging essences. The West fabricated binary oppositions between a dynamic/rational/masculine/ democratic ‘Occident’ and an eternal/excessive/ feminine/despotic “Orient”. Said has also brought to the fore how travellers, geographical societies and professional geographers contributed to empire, and how imperial categories of thought and colonial practices have been shaped by explorers, travel-writers, cartographers, surveyors, photographers and landscape artists. In short, imperialism was conceived by Said as a multifaceted “struggle over geography” (Said, *CI* 7). Said’s conception suggests that geography should be treated as both a discipline and discourse of empire; as a set of geographical ideas, institutions and practices that induced and legitimized territorial expansion; and as a dynamic medium through which European attitudes of dominance and metropolitan-colonial relationships were imagined, represented and negotiated.

Imperialism, and no less colonialism, was driven by covetous national agendas and by a range of imperial ideas that revolved around the utilization of space. Imperial differentiation also stemmed from what might be called the intensive and extensive geographies of European movement, interaction and expansion. These tensions of empire are imbued with the perspectives of postcolonialism and postmodernism. A considerable critical attention has been paid to the Eurocentric dimensions of imperialism particularly the nature of colonial discourse because they point out that while colonial empires have been largely dissolved, global relations are still structured by imperial attitudes and the affairs of postcolonial societies are still shaped by western frameworks of knowledge. Such recognitions have generated new debates within and beyond geography about the nature of “Otherness”, the legacies of colonialism, and how the West continues to engage the world in imperial terms. European politicians struggled to

administer large, sprawling settler empires and sustain firm metropolitan-colonial bonds. European colonists forged identities that diverged from metropolitan visions of empire and led colonial societies out of empire. Such insights fracture and pluralize stark oppositional models of Europe and its (inferior) “Others” and prompt us to think about imperialism as a geographically variegated system of power and knowledge.

Said has explained how art is implicit in the meaning of “geography” through its embrace of pictorial representation and imaginative appeal. Hence, geography takes the form of a politico-cultural expression and shares the epistemological fixation with fictive representation on which western imperial project has converged. Thus Said has directed our attention to the fact that European oceanic exploration and nation-building was closely dependent on geographical knowledge. Furthermore, recent work in the history of geography has also drawn the attention to these issues through a critical interrogation of geopolitical complicity in the adventures of colonialism and imperialism and, in particular, of the reciprocities between the intellectual formation of the discipline and the political trajectory of European expansion, exploitation and dispossession (Driver, “Geography’s Empire” 24-26). Although the contemporary Anglo-American discipline has become sensitive to its intellectual formation as a situated knowledge, it continues to rely on what D. Slater has called a “Euro-Americanism” that projects its own situations as “lineages of universalism” (1). Understanding geographical knowledge as a situated concern can mean several things. Geographical knowledge cannot be understood as something set apart from the intellectual, social and political milieus of its time. In this sense, geopolitical knowledge emerged as an institutionalized academic subject, leading scientific ideas, such as neo-Lamarckianism and Darwinism. (Withers 4)

In such sophisticated and collocated matter, indeed, it is difficult to think and write about knowledge without evoking spatial vocabularies, from metaphoric ideas about fields of expertise, to the specific institutional spaces in which science is located, and the landscape imaginaries against which European ideas about nature, bodies, and cultural practice are shaped. A focus on the geography of knowledge draws attention to how different kinds of knowledge are co-constituted through particular places, and embodied practices. From this perspective, knowledge emerges as hybrid, embodied and historically and spatially contingent (G Davies 294).

This colonizing gesture was explicit and obvious in the formulations of classical spatial science, whose supposedly general models were almost invariably predicated on specifically European and American cases. Geography in the sense of discourse rather than discipline has a much more general involvement in Eurocentrism. European colonialism worked on certain conceptual strategies that entered directly into the formation of its colonial policy. By absolutizing time and space, European meanings of history and geography were taken to be natural and inviolable, as marking the centre around which other histories and other geographies were to be organized. Similarly, through the production of spaces of inclusion and exclusion, the Europeans had normalized the subject-position of the white, while subjected the “Other” to a configurationally abnormal position. The production of geographical knowledge has always involved claims to know “space” in particular ways. This recognition of an intricate connection between power, knowledge and geography has transformed the ways in which we conceptualized human geography and space. From the Kantian perspective, space (like time) is conceived of as a universal of human existence, an external coordinate of reality, an empty grid of mutually exclusive points, “an unchanging box” within which objects exist and events occur (Smith 67-8).

It has become commonplace to treat space as a basic organizing concept of the geopolitical mapping in which not only the spatial relations that matter in geography but also power,



knowledge and economy. This movement involved an interrogation of the substantive processes that were inscribed on and which operated through the production of spatial systems and spatial structures. From such a perspective, concepts of space were not to be adjudicated by appeals to the courts of philosophy or science, but through the conduct of social and political practices. As D. Harvey put it, “The question what is space? is therefore replaced by the question how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?” (*The limits to capital* 14)

In his landmark study *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and The Production of Space* (1984) N. Smith had described capitalism as a continuous, but jagged process of expansion into absolute space through the advances of colonialism and imperialism until those absolute spaces were differentiated and transformed within the production of a larger and highly unstable relative space (69). It is apt here to quote what N. Smith and C. Katz emphasized in this regard as the way in which these material productions were elaborated in ideological registers, thereby forging a powerful connection between “material” and “metaphorical” spaces:

The emergence of capitalist social relations in Europe brought a very specific set of social and political shifts that established absolute space as the premise of hegemonic social practices. The progressive, outward expansion of European hegemony through the conquest, colonization and defence of new territories; the division of global space into mutually exclusive nation-states: these and other shifts marked the emerging space-economy of capitalism from the sixteenth century onwards and represented a powerful enactment of absolute space as the geographical basis for social intercourse. (75)

History, Geopolitics and Landscaping Palestine:

Theorizations of space were all significant ideas which were extended and reworked through other politico-intellectual traditions in which the production of space was caught up in the production of “race”, gender and sexuality. This underscores the significance of cultural formations, cultural practices and cultural politics in the production, interpretation and transformation of space and geo-cultural map. The most significant contributions to re-theorizing space in these terms have concerned both epistemology and ontology in which claims to knowledge about space have been registered. Landscape and maps are conceived of as functioning as representations; as orderings of space, re-describing their naturalization as the product of cultural-political practices that called into question the systems of power. This epistemology involves human geography in analytical gestures that invoke through a particular conception of space both colonizing white mythology.

It is perfectly true that constellations of power and knowledge are typically elaborated through a spatial system of inclusions and exclusions: most generally, through the demarcation of a space of the “Same” from which the “Other” is supposedly excluded. This also involves what G. Rose refers to as “imagining a “somewhere else”” (*Feminism and geography* 153). For Rose this possibility is central to a feminist imaginary, whereas other writers have drawn attention to the emancipatory recognition of similarly hybrid spaces under the signs of postcolonialism and transculturation.

The dualism between “real, material, concrete space” and “non-real, imagined, symbolic space” Rose claims, constitutes the performances of normative power within a masculinist geographical imaginary:

[Real space] is simultaneously concrete and dynamic, yet both these qualities signify the masculine; the non-real is simultaneously fluid and imprisoning, but always engendered as feminine. Material real space could thus be re-described as the effect of masculinist

power; its very materiality also its particular masculinity; but non-real space is also the effect of masculinist power, its lack of reality the sign of its feminization. [T]he distinction is a dualism which reiterates the constitutive relation between the masculine “Same” and the feminine “Other”. Through trying to fix difference, they fix the same. (Rose, “As If The Mirrors Had Bled” 59)

On another plane, language is a proxy for power. Accordingly, those in power use language to disseminate truth selectively through a process of representation and concealment. When applied to the Israel/Palestine issue, this insight reveals how the interplay of representation and concealment permeates the exercise of power, and why there is little reason to expect any progress in the situation. This geopolitically unfolds the strategies of dominant powers which inhere within the productions of space that seek in order to confine “Others” to their “proper” places.

When the history of Palestine is invoked, the idea of concealing the history and experiences of a people under occupation permeates the language of the powerful side on housing for Jewish settlers. The land is then rezoned for housing by Israeli planning authorities while the former users, invariably Palestinian farmers or shepherds, and the former uses are declared absent and nonconforming. So successful is the Israeli discourse of concealment on this issue that it has managed to convince American news organizations to refrain from mentioning the words “settlement” or “illegal” when referring to these installations. The preferred term has become “Israeli neighborhoods.” Housing built by the occupier in Palestinian Territory is actually but one element in a broader Infrastructure of domination referred to by the Jerusalem-based, Israeli Committee to End House Demolitions as “The Matrix of Control.” From the occupation, to the settlements and the Wall, the entire apparatus behind the Matrix of Control is illegal under provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and now most recently by the Opinion of the International Court of Justice. But, it is said that those who control the present control the past, and those who control the past control the future. As long as the powerful side in this conflict continues to exercise control over the present, it will conceal the history of the “Other” as a means of perpetuating its power into the future. In truth, the conflict in Israel/Palestine is not about the Infrastructure of Terror, but geopolitically it is about the fact that one group of people dominating and subjugating the other. It is about discursive rationalizations that justify such domination and render the people under domination invisible. It is only when these facts on the ground are dismantled, and the discourses justifying them cease, that there can be any starting point for justice in the region.

In the case of the Palestinian plight, for instance, the emphasis focuses on geographical landscapes as representations and instruments of power, and the practice of “territoriality” which refers to the power of human agency to influence patterns of development in a place by asserting control over a geographical area. The question here is: How do territorial landscapes communicate the power of dominant groups to reorganize patterns of material life, politics, and culture in particular places, and how does landscape itself become an instrument of dominant groups to control subalterns in this process of transformation?

The use of power to reshape landscapes is a historically enduring phenomenon in the making of modernity, present in both major routes to the modern world, capitalist development and nation-building. This geo-cultural landscaping reveals how the imperial and colonial business uses force to reshape the economic and physical landscape, and uses this corporate power to rearrange elements on the land. This focus on the interplay of power and landscape in Palestine shows that geography of fragmentation and dispossession in Palestine marks a

longstanding pattern of territoriality. In this pattern, dominant group --inspired by the discourses of entitlement to a “promised” land backed by the state -- re-imagines the landscape and recasts its socio-economic, demographic, and physical character to fit this imagined vision. According to Gary Fields landscaping is used by practitioners of power to “promote systems of segregation and control movements of groups designated as threats by virtue of their representation as “Other”” (2010, 63). In his essay, “Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror”, Fields argues,

What is occurring on the Palestinian landscape is a program of re-making land and shifting populations that is different from the partitioning of space in the walled borderlands, the gated communities and the fortified enclaves. It is a landscape aimed at transforming the economy, demography, and culture of territorial space itself through a time-honored practice -- the practice of *enclosure*. (63-4)

As a geographical concept, “landscape” is a social product (Cosgrove 13–14). It represents the outcome of human interaction with human subjects and material objects that reorders the surface of land. Yet, landscape is more than a plot of ground. Landscape can also be understood as a dynamic political process. “To “landscape”” argues Fields “refers to a *process* in which human agency transforms what is occurring on land. Both product and process, landscapes are representations of the societies anchored to them and the relations of power that govern them” (“Landscaping Palestine”, 64). In this sense, the Palestinian landscape has been transformed by processes of geopolitical powers from an imagined place of “land without people” into a “redeemed territory” materialized in the creation of Israel. Modern geopolitical mapping has created a different set of imperatives for exercising power and maintaining the social order. In this new historical environment, power evolved into a more subtle but no less formidable mechanism by controlling individuals’ spatial environs. In this way, power as a form of control over human beings emerged for Foucault as a thoroughly spatial phenomenon (Philo 121–28).

Although theorists of territoriality draw upon this insight from Foucault about the interplay of power and space, it can be broadened into two important ways: first by emphasizing the socially constructed character of geographical landscapes and the power of human agency in transforming geographical space, and second by acknowledging the role of subalterns in resisting power and thus helping shape territorial outcomes. Briefly, territoriality is human action exercised on space. It refers to the efforts of individuals or groups “to affect, influence or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area” (Sack 19). What emerges from the insights of Foucault and territorial theorists influenced by him is a narrative of power. The landscape of Palestine today is part of this ongoing spatial history in which dominant groups and subalterns confront one another in an effort to impose and defend competing visions of life on the land.

This type of territorial ambition and narrative of power, which involve re-imagining the character of land and reinventing the notions of who is rightfully entitled to it, are part of a more generalized cultural process, described by Said as *imaginative geography*. Said’s concept of “imaginative geography” suggests, among many other things, the way actors with territorial ambitions reinvent meanings about the landscapes they covet and frame discourses justifying why they belong on, and are entitled to take control of, the landscapes they reinvent. Although acknowledging the incentives for territorial expansionism to be material, Said argues that the inspiration for controlling other places and people is rooted in culturally shaped attitudes and

ideologies. He insists that reimagining landscapes—making new meanings about places—is but a first step to remaking them.

In Palestine, this began with an imagined geography first popularized in the late 19th century by Theodor Herzl to solve the problem of anti-Semitism by creating a state haven for the Jewish people. This imagined vision also represented a redefinition of property rights in seeking to remake the land where Palestinians resided. In justifying Palestine for the project of building a Jewish state, Herzl characterized the Palestinian landscape as primitive, absent cultivation with low levels of development. European Jews, by contrast, with their experience of commerce and economic development, would improve this land. In this way, Zionists crafted a redefinition of rights to land based on an imagined vision of Palestine as a landscape not only historically Jewish, but also in need of development (Shlaim 13–17; Zerubavel 14–17). When this process of moving populations spatially and socially to remake land assumes geo-cultural dimension, enclosure is achieved and land assumes a new identity. The result is a forced exile, displaced refugees and conflictual identity formation.

Enclosing landscape in Palestine is a story driven on an “ethnocratic” aim to “unmake” Palestine as Palestinian and to “redeem” it as Jewish. Such a project of “de-Arabising” and “Judaizing” Palestine was at the heart of the colonial project which sees in Israel as the extended part of the West in the center of the East. The geo-cultural and geo-historical mapping of Palestine has been situated as the key-point in the Orientalist/colonialist discourse. According to Fields, “Within a process of “imagining” landscape, enclosure on the Palestinian landscape is part of a historically enduring interplay of power and space” (“Landscaping Palestine” 79). As a result of this ideologically imagined vision of land, the Israeli violence against Palestinians appears to be rooted in a more historically longstanding narrative about power, property, and socially constructed notions of progress, along with practices of territorial dispossession and conquest -- “This practice of constructing alternative representations of places and people is what Edward Said refers to as the crafting of “imaginative geographies”” (Fields, “Imagining Geography” 234).

In a significant essay entitled “Invention, Memory and Place” published two years before his death, Said treats imaginative geography as a form of invention used by practitioners of empire--and Zionism as well--to re-interpret the meaning of certain territories and create discourses justifying the need for control over such re-imagined places. For Said, this exercise in imagination begins by reconstructing the history of those places coveted by empire builders. Such a process of recasting the historical geography of places, however, fuses two key themes one focusing on *property rights*, the other on *progress*. For Said, geography is “a socially constructed and maintained sense of place” (180). Said has extensively shown how scenes of the Palestinian nativity and landscape, for instance, appear in European Renaissance paintings as taking place in a sort of denatured Palestine, since none of the artists had ever seen the place. Such an idealized landscape gradually took shape and sustained in the European imagination for hundreds of years. These scenes of memory, according to Said, led Bernard of Clairvaux to announce a crusade to reclaim Palestine and the holy places from the Muslims, and that after hundreds of years of living in Europe Zionist Jews could still feel that Palestine had stood still in time and was theirs, despite millennia of history and the presence of actual inhabitants. This too is also an indication of how geography can be manipulated, invented, characterized quite apart from a site’s merely physical reality. (180-1)

Imaginative geography, in effect, is a precondition for the politics of territorial conquest. It is also the imaginative geography of Palestine, put into practice by early colonial Zionists and

their present-day descendants, that is the source of all aggression against the Palestinians today. In fact, Said's crafted concept of "imaginative geographies" has explained in depth the formation of ideologies aimed at controlling places and the people living there. Thus for Said, imagining geography is a cultural process of creating representations about places designed to reinforce and at the same time justify the conquest of territory and the subjugation of its people. This cultural process of ideology-making refers to the way groups with power invent the meaning of geographically-placed landscapes while reinterpreting notions of who *belongs* to the places being imagined. For Said, such conquests of territory begin with the practice of inventing new meanings about territory and re-imagining systems of sovereignty on the landscape. Gary Fields has avowedly stated that "State terror against Palestinian civilians has its origins in an imagined vision about the landscape of Palestine" at the core of which "geographical imagination was a vision of "Judaizing" and "de-Arabising" this territory" ("Imagining Geography" 243). The historical geography of the Palestinian landscape attests to the thoroughness of this effort at both imagination and implementation.

Located within a historically geo-political contestation, violence against the Palestinian population committed by the Israeli state is rooted in the convergence of two historically created discourses about land and landscape. The first derives from nineteenth-century nationalism affirming the legitimacy of culturally differentiated groups to statehood, and the influence of this ideology in convincing European Jewry of its right to a territorial "container" within the modern state system. The second is rooted in notions of entitlement to property and ideas about land improvement. From this convergence evolved the idea of a "Jewish state," along with a specific ideology for remaking Palestinian territory, the ideology of Zionism. At its core, Zionism was an exercise in re-imagining the geography of the Palestinian landscape as a Jewish landscape. Although secular as an ideology, Zionism drew from the belief of many Jews and Jewish organizations in the right of the Jewish people to return to Palestine as part of God's will (Taylor 151-162). Hence, dispossession, whether from British enclosure, American expansion, or Israeli occupation, is an ongoing story of the same historical lineage of what Said has termed "the politics of dispossession."

To admittedly conclude, Said's engagement with the notion of imaginative geography and landscaping comes from his own experience as an exiled subject living "out of place", attached to the place of belonging. He writes in the "Introduction" to *Orientalism*:

My own experience of these matters is in part what made me write this book. The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America, is disheartening... The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. (27)

Recalling personal memories, Said's intellectual work must be understood in the context of the Palestine question, for at the heart of both is the idea of dispossession, be it the actual dispossession of Palestinians or the intellectual dispossession of the colonized who are robbed of their voice and represented through the prism of Orientalism. The condition of exile that was placed on Said was intrinsically related to the "in-between" character of his academic work.

However, Said's dialectical method shows how as a Palestinian intellectual experiencing double displacement and alienation is living "out of place". At the same time, it also states how exile has given him the pleasure of being an insider and an outsider. Exile was for him also a way of being attached to a wider space of humanity, belonging to one common world of human geography and of possibly overcoming narrow-mindedness and taking an outside view on an



ethical cosmopolitanism, which takes common humanity as its goal. This universalism that is developed through a continual taking of another's place is a lived one, rather than the false universalism that is based on abstraction and cannot really take into account the other. As Aijaz Ahmad has pointed out, "In the field of cultural studies, Said is our most vivacious narrator of the history of European humanism's complicity in the history of European colonialism." (99)

Substantially, for Said dialogue was the ability to engage on the level of social reality with literature and society, rather than depicting it from above in sweeping generalizations. Politically, he emphasized how this ability to dialogue presupposed equality of the interlocutors rather than establishing it as its end. This point connected neatly with Said's critique of the Oslo Accords and the subsequent Israeli-Palestinian "peace process". The co-existence he fought for was not to be reached by subsidiary Palestinian negotiators at America's behest, but in real dialogue in which public intellectuals could play a role through the expansion of horizons.

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## Language, Character and History in Postmodern Drama: Towards Formulating a Poetics

Mufti Mudasir

The present paper is an attempt towards formulating a poetics of postmodern drama, based on the theoretical insights of some of the foremost postmodern critics and dramatists. It seeks to underline the importance of a poetics of postmodern drama keeping in view that unlike other genres of literature, especially the novel, postmodern drama has received little critical attention. Drawing upon the works of Linda Hutcheon, Jeanette Malkin and Deborah Geis, the paper tries to examine the bearing of their insights on our appreciation of postmodern dramatic practice. It argues, contrary to some contemporary voices which regard all forms of postmodern art as hermetically sealed and hence devoid of referential value, that postmodern drama foregrounds the notion of 'self-reflexive referentiality' by challenging the conventional notions of language, character and history.

Although the term postmodern drama has been in use for quite some time now, there are still those who dismiss it as an empty signifier. One of the main reasons often cited for this is that postmodernism implies a rejection of mimetic status of the drama and thus strikes at the roots of representation through it. An example of this attitude is Stephen Watt's *Postmodern/Drama: Reading the Contemporary Stage* (1998) in which the author uses a slash in the title between postmodern and drama to indicate that the relation between the two is at best oxymoronic. Watt announces the "failure of the term postmodern drama," (Watt 25) and is of the opinion that it is largely "an empty intellectual marker," (39) This, he believes, is due to the fact that postmodernism challenges the privileging of the play and the playwright and undermines the essential difference of drama from other forms of literature and art. Despite this he, ironically perhaps, laments the lack of consideration for contemporary drama by postmodern theorists.

Watt's somewhat dismissive attitude toward postmodern drama as a valid term is, however, not shared by certain other writers who have taken up the study of contemporary drama with a recognition that an identifiable shift has taken place in the foundational dramatic categories of character, language and representation since modernism. Some of these works include Deborah Geis's *Postmodern Theatric[k]s: Monologue in Contemporary American Drama* (1993), Jeanette Malkin's *Memory Theatre and Postmodern Drama* (1999), and Nick Kaye's *Postmodernism and Performance* (1994), to name a few very important critical examinations of postmodern drama. The present paper aims to combine some of the insights provided by these critics with the theoretical framework of postmodernism presented by Linda Hutcheon to examine the possibility of a poetics of postmodern drama. The purpose is to see how recent changes in the contemporary drama can be examined in the light of postmodern theory and hence, an attempt is made to identify the specific areas of conflation between postmodern theory and drama.

In the 1980s, C W E Bigsby had remarked that the English theatrical scene of the late 1950s presented an anxiety that found expression in ontological and epistemological questions and reflected a condition where "the social order, character and language are shown in a state of disrepair" (Bigsby, "Politics of Anxiety" 393). In a somewhat similar vein, Ruby Cohn noted that since the 1950s, a departure from "the mimetic representation of contemporary middle class reality" (Cohn 1) is to be witnessed in the British theatre. The two elements she finds most noticeable are "theatre in the theatre and split character" (18). Although both Bigsby and Cohn acknowledge that a shift has occurred in the contemporary drama, neither relates it to the critical category of postmodernism. As we shall see below, these changes are more rigorous and fundamental than

some critics have assumed, and as such require a thorough reformulation of the theoretical paradigm for examining the salient concerns of the contemporary dramatic practice.

Of the several theorists of postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon's highly persuasive work that appeared in 1988 under the title *A Poetics of Postmodernism*:

*History, Theory, Fiction*, merits the most serious critical attention. The strength of Hutcheon's theoretical model can be attributed to her appropriation of the seminal ideas of the leading French poststructuralists including Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lyotard, in her discussion of postmodern literary theory and practice. But what is very striking about Hutcheon is her firm stance, cogently defended, that postmodernism is neither ahistorical nor apolitical, instead it retains a critical edge towards reality, an idea further explicated by Hutcheon in her *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989). A remarkable feature of Hutcheon's formulation of a postmodern poetics is her recognition that such a project should derive from an analytic study of the postmodern works, that is, the literary practice itself. She thus arrives at a poetics of postmodernism from the study of postmodern artifacts themselves, and yet very perceptively, relates the postmodern literary practice to a theoretical basis provided by the poststructuralist thought.

Her critical project, therefore, has the value of recognizing and incorporating the poststructuralist insights while maintaining that postmodern literary works retain a referential and critical edge, and hence cannot be dismissed as irrelevant, to the contemporary social and political reality. Hutcheon stresses the point that postmodernism is doubly-coded, one that is self-reflexive and referential. She remarks that "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts the very concepts it challenges" (*Poetics* 3). Hutcheon's thesis takes seriously the tendency to regard postmodern art as entirely self-reflexive, thereby divesting it of any representational value. For its detractors, liberal humanists and Marxists alike, postmodernism ends up as a dishonest refuge from reality, content with social and political quietism. Hutcheon tries to reveal the flaw in this argument by affirming that postmodernism can never be equated with aesthetic formalism. The following observation made by Bertens on Hutcheon's model is worth quoting in full:

Hutcheon's attractive (and immensely successful) model has the great advantage that it, in her own words, gives equal value to the self-reflexive and historically grounded and can thus retain a political dimension (even if it simultaneously calls political commitments into question). Because of its refusal to surrender to sheer textuality, it can, with a certain amount of credibility, investigate the determining role of representations, discourses, and signifying practices. It can, in other words, address the matter of power. (Bertens 78)

For Hutcheon, 'historiographic metafiction' is the representative postmodern art form, one that offers the model of self-reflexive representation. 'Historiographic metafiction' both installs and subverts what it installs only to problematize our notions about history and its truth-value:

In challenging the seamless quality of the history/fiction (or world/art) join implied by realist narrative, postmodern fiction does not disconnect itself from history or the world. It foregrounds and thus contests the conventionality and unacknowledged ideology of that assumption of seamlessness and asks its readers to question the process by which we represent ourselves and our world to ourselves and to become aware of the means by which we *make* sense of and *construct* order out of experience in our particular culture. We cannot avoid representation. We *can* try to avoid fixing our notion of it and assuming it to be transhistorical and transcultural. We can also study how representation legitimizes and privileges certain kinds of knowledge including certain kinds of historical knowledge. (*Poetics* 23)



Hutcheon emphasizes the double-codedness of postmodernism and its self-consciously contradictory nature to distinguish it from modernism. Postmodernism, she insists “takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement” (*Politics* 51). And one of the most successful strategies to create a contradictory stance on any statement is the use of parody. The use of parody in literature is quite old but the term has all long been taken to mean a ridiculing imitation of a previous work of art. Already in her *Theory of Parody* (1985), Hutcheon had argued that the concept of parody needs to be freed from the constraint of the traditional definition. Parody, according to her, is a much profound literary concept than is ordinarily understood. She states, “the kind of parody I wish to focus is an integrated structural modeling process of revisiting, replaying, inventing and trans-contextualizing previous work of art (*Parody* 11). She regards parody as an apt postmodern form because of its potential to critique the traditional humanist ideas about art and its relation to reality. For her, the parodied text is not a target but a weapon, underscoring that the scope of parody is much broader than merely ridiculing some other work. It is a form of auto-referentiality fraught with ideological implications. While Hutcheon states that, “parody often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality—is usually considered central to postmodernism, both by its detractors and its defenders,” (*Politics* 93) she departs from the prevailing interpretation that postmodern parody is ultimately value-free and devoid of any critical potential.

It has been argued that Linda Hutcheon’s thesis of postmodern poetics focuses exclusively on a specific literary genre ‘historiographic metafiction’ to the exclusion of other postmodern literary forms. Stephen Baker in his *The Fiction of Postmodernity* largely agrees with Hutcheon’s thesis but is uneasy with what he calls “Hutcheon’s identification of postmodern fiction as ‘historiographic metafiction’ ” (Baker 5). A closer look at Hutcheon’s arguments reveals, however, that her examination of the ideas like language, human subjectivity, power, intertextuality and discourse, which she uses to characterize ‘historiographic metafiction’ as typically postmodern, can prove equally illuminating for the study of drama. In fact, Hutcheon herself alludes to this in her discussion of the avant-garde and Brecht’s theatre, both of which share many significant features with postmodernism. Hutcheon suggests a similarity between parody and Brecht’s aesthetic distance, both of which “involve both artist and audience in a participatory hermeneutic activity” (*Poetics* 220). Both ‘historiographic metafiction’ and Brecht’s Epic theatre “place the receiver in a paradoxical position, both inside and outside, participatory and critical” (*Poetics* 220). Both challenge the concepts of linear development and causality, and foreground the process of subject’s construction by the cultural and social structures. And ultimately both are subversive in their critique of representation as complicitous with the power structures.

Postmodern drama can be best approached from the Hutcheonian perspective of a simultaneous inscription and subversion of the basic dramatic categories of character, language and reality. The notable aspect is the essential double-coded nature of postmodern drama whereby it relies on these categories, but questions the assumptions on which they are based. Although postmodern drama attempts to lay bare and thus demystify the ideologies in which the whole dramatic apparatus including the playwright, character, language and the audience are situated, it suggests that the awareness of these ideologies itself constitutes an ideology. It is this aspect of postmodern drama that makes it comparable to parody and ‘historiographic metafiction’.

To examine these features in the contemporary American and European drama, one has to turn to some of the most influential playwrights of the recent past which include Sam Shepard, David Mamet, Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, Heiner Muller, Thomas Bernhard and Tom Stoppard, to name only a few whose works can offer illuminating instances of postmodernism in drama. All of them have, in somewhat similar ways, challenged the traditional dramatic conventions. Their innovations in exploiting the theatrical apparatus serve to highlight the areas of conflation between the contemporary theatre and postmodern theory. It is, however, essential to trace these

developments to the two foremost European dramatists, Brecht and Beckett. It is highly interesting to note that Roland Barthes was the first critic to see a connection between poststructuralist ideas and Brecht's theatre. In the 1955 article '*La Revolution Brechtienne*', originally an editorial in *Theatre Populaire*, Barthes summarizes the assumptions that Brecht's Epic theatre challenged. These assumptions, Barthes believed, were rooted in the Western tradition and create a myth of naturalness in the place of constructedness. Barthes seems to have been highly impressed by Brecht's critique of the notions of essentialism, especially the notion of character. His critical analysis of how signification is naturalized owes its strength to his early recognition of Brecht's strategies of disrupting the ideology of the theatre. Barthes's theory of semiotics, with the explicit aim to deconstruct dominant ideologies by demonstrating the meaning-constructing activity of signs, came only after he observed how Brecht carried out a similar task in the theatre.

Brecht's challenge to the realist dramatic narrative based on linearity and to the human subject has had an enormous influence on the subsequent dramatists who perceived that he had marked an irreversible break with the realist tradition. Deborah Geis comments on the significance of Brecht for postmodern drama in these terms:

Brecht's theory often serves as a paradigm for the challenging or displacing these conventional strategies of representation. In Brecht's "A-effect", the ongoing refusal to permit audience empathy---or the concomitant distinctions between actor/character and story/history---allows for a constructive disengagement (or, more accurately, a historicized "reading") of the speaking body and its signifiers.

( Geis, "Wordscapes" 292)

Postmodern drama presents the condition of the human subject as essentially decentered, an idea central to the poststructuralist theories. This decentering is suggested mainly in two ways: by revealing human subjectivity as an ideological construct being constantly reproduced by cultural and linguistic codes, or by showing it as fundamentally fragmented, without a core, a self or a past. Brecht is probably the first European playwright who wrote with a strong conviction against the notion of essentialism of the human subject. His Epic theatre situates the subject against a particular social and historical background to suggest how subjectivity is shaped by forces operating on it from outside.

The most important dramatist to influence the concept of human subjectivity in postmodern drama, however, is Beckett. It is noteworthy that while Brecht contested essentialism of the subject by always historicizing and contextualizing his characters, Beckett achieved the same purpose by reversing Brecht's method. His characters, stripped of all remnants of the past are thoroughly decontextualized, as the plays themselves tend to take place in some spatial and temporal void. J. Malkin makes an important remark in this regard:

...postmodern drama has no psychologically endowed characters who can act as the locus of recall. For postmodernism, individual recall is no longer the relevant paradigm, since the rooted, autonomous self, the subject-as-consciousness, is no longer available. When, as in Beckett's late plays, recall appears to arise from a specific subject, that subject is him/herself fractured, "falling to bits", and placed at a remove from the "remembering" voice(s). The link between an experiencing subject and articulated recall is severed, as is the faith in memory to capture truth, find origins, or heal.

(Malkin 7)

According to her, Beckett represents most forcefully the concept of fragmentation of the self:

Hollowed out, lacking an ego or a core of human essence, these are not characters who develop in time and inspire audience identification..... The fragmentation of experience and the dissolution of the unified self---basic topoi of postmodern thought--- banish memory from the security of individual control, rendering it sourceless.

(Malkin 7)

Malkin's basic thesis which she derives from her perception that postmodernism marks a foundational shift in the way memory operates, provides an important insight into how postmodern drama treats the concept of the subject's relation with its past :

Where once memory called up coherent, progressing narratives of experienced life, or at least unlocked the significance of hidden memory for the progressions of the present, this kind of enlightenment organization has broken down in postmodernism and given way to the nonnarrative reproduction of conflated, disrupted, repetitive, and moreover collectively retained and articulated fragments. This shift in the workings of memory is reflected in plays shaped through fragmentation, recurrence, and imagistic tumult.

(Malkin 4)

A somewhat similar thesis underlies Deborah Geis's argument which focuses on the representation of monologue in postmodern drama to suggest decentering and multivocality. She remarks, "perhaps the ultimate manifestation of the decentered subject is the increasing precedence that monologue takes over dialogue in postmodern drama"(Geis 35). For her, monologue in postmodern drama does not emerge from a unified subject, "monologue does not necessarily emerge from one coherent 'voice' or 'self'; the monologic texts, rather, are similarly fragmented and given multiple voices" (Geis 35). In fact, monologue can be seen as a medium through which the decentered subject dramatizes the fragmented condition of its memory. Installing fragmentation at a site where the subject usually assumes the sense of a unified self is a powerful method of suggesting its dispersal.

Sam Shepard offers a prime example of this idea in a number of his plays such as *Chicago* (1965), *Tooth of Crime* (1972), *Action* (1976), *Buried Child* (1978) and *Fool for Love* (1982). For both Malkin and Geis, Shepard's obsession with the theme of disintegration of the human subject is a feature of postmodernism. Malkin comments thus on Shepard's concerns:

His characters constantly transform, perform, speak in "voices." Parallel actions and generic shiftings undermine any possibility of stability, even within a theatrical code. This postmodern rejection of essence and foundation of "metaconcepts," or what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls "master narratives," supplies the frame of Shepard's imagistic plays.

(Malkin 117)

David Mamet's drama shares some essential features with Shepard's, and in the plays as *American Buffalo* (1976), *A Life in the Theatre* (1977) and *Water Engine* (1977), surface realism is constantly subverted by undermining its assumptions about character and linear progress. Bigsby remarks that Mamet's realism is, "fully informed by absurdist assumptions about the pressures which offer to dissolve character, aware of the displacement of the subject, the deceptions of language and the cogency of entropy as image and fact" (Bigsby 266). In Mamet's plays there are unmistakable signs of pressures under which the characters seem to be losing their sense of a concrete self. Bigsby sums up the state of Mamet's characters: "unable to act, to commit themselves to the casualities of a moral existence, the characters allow their impulses to be deflected into language which must then carry the weight of their blunted aspirations" (Bigsby 266).

The use of language in postmodern drama calls for a special critical attention because postmodern thought foregrounds the role of language in constructing both the epistemological discourses and the human subject. Language can never be a neutral medium for representation, but is rather always already inflected with power relations. In the words of Paul de Man, "no such thing as an unrhetorical, natural language exists that could be used as a point of reference; language is itself the result of purely rhetorical tricks and devices" (de Man 35). Postmodern drama inscribes language but subverts its neutral status by revealing its complicity with discursive practices of various types. Language, therefore, is shown to be a medium that can manipulate and hide the truth as much as it can express and reveal it. Moreover, postmodern drama demonstrates the condition of the human subjectivity as a function of linguistic codes, an

idea expounded by theoreticians such as Benveniste. Language as such is shown not to be merely reflective, but constitutive of what is termed as reality. The linguistic codes, thoroughly social in their character, cannot be used merely as tools for expression. They are, instead, inflected with prior meanings and traces from usages in different contexts, and thus shape the subject's perception of itself and reality. The use of dialogue borrowed from other texts, yet another feature of postmodern drama, simultaneously challenges the notions of the autonomy of the dramatic world inhabited by characters and their consciousness as the origin of language. The characters, held within an unbounded signifying system, are often at the mercy of various codes which manipulate them after they have been internalized by them.

Another characteristic feature of postmodern drama relating to language is its exploitation of the linguistic indeterminacies and semantic pluralities to the effect of destabilizing the link between the sign and the referent, the signifier and the signified. Here too, Beckett can be seen as a powerful representative of the idea. Andrew Kennedy has rightly observed in this context:

Beckett, who used to read Mauthner's *Critique of Language* aloud to Joyce, has woven a far reaching epistemological skepticism about all language into all his texts; and his dialogue is shot through with the pathos of man's insuperable need to go on talking without end.

(Kennedy 4)

Postmodern drama follows Beckett in dramatizing the Derridean notion of the infinite play of signifiers through a refusal of narrative closure, an idea which often finds expression in its tendency to embrace contradictions instead of resolving them. In some cases, this idea gets manifested through open-ended debates on epistemology, arts and ethics, all of which are shown to be inextricably bound with the problem of linguistic signification.

The theatres of Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson offer apt illustrations of this kind of drama that uses language to disrupt the assumptions of linguistic signification. Foreman's Ontological—Hysteric Theatre which he himself describes as

a form of concrete theatre in which the moment-to-moment resistance and impenetrability of the materials worked on stage are framed and reframed so that the spectator's attention is redistributed and exhilaration slowly invades his consciousness as a result of the continuous presentation and re-presentation of the atomic units of each experienced moment,

(qtd. in Davy xviii)

can be seen as an attempt to make the theatre viable in an age where communication of meaning has become increasingly difficult. Foreman's manifestoes which he used to corroborate his theatrical practice offer useful insights into the manner language operates in his theatre. Some of the important manifestoes read as follows:

Theatre in the past has used language to build: What follows/ We use language not to destroy, but to undercut pinnings of *there*. (qtd. in Davy xviii)

And:

Dissonances, dissociation, discontinuity, dehuman-ization/ and GAPS remind one of what is true; that man is always shipwrecked/ That he will never WIN/( Which is different from saying that he cannot/ PLAY magnificently and joyously—in which/ case not-winning is hardly a case for sadness). (qtd. in Davy 147)

Foreman argues that language should not be used primarily for its referential purposes because referentiality itself stands deeply problematized. His plays such as *Hotel China* (1972), *Pandering to the Masses: A Misrepresentation* (1975) and *Penguin Touquet* (1981) are attempts to explore the possibilities of a theatre that is based on the recognition of an inherent semantic dissonance of language.

A somewhat similar idea about language is presented in Robert Wilson's theatre of images that refuses to engage with either the psychological concerns or the plot development. Instead, what is



highlighted is the severance of language from its supposed origin, the human consciousness. His plays such as *A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1974-5) and *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) subvert language by, “hollowing it out, establishing a series of disjunctions between word and act, word and context, word and gesture” (Bigsby 181). Language as a part of the medium of the theatrical representation is used to pinpoint its problematical nature. Bigsby comments on Wilson’s use of language in these terms:

The language is deployed in part as a kind of jazz scat or a form of mantra. He uses language against itself. On the one hand he relies on a certain associative power. He wishes to press his model of simultaneous experience into the realm of language while at the same time wanting to dis-assemble it. (Bigsby 178)

It is however to be noted that the aim of both Foreman and Wilson is to break free from language, an idea premised upon the faith in the human ability to capture a pre-linguistic essence. This idea, however, is radically contested by postmodernism. Nevertheless, both these playwrights have marked a significant point of intersection between theatre and the recent poststructuralist theories.

The question of language is thus central to postmodern drama even if certain practitioners are motivated by a desire to escape its determining influences. Postmodern drama does not abjure reference to reality in spite of its disruption of linguistic categories. This can be seen in the way in which the past is both inscribed and subverted. Like ‘historiographic metafiction’, postmodern drama revisits the past ironically. History assumes importance not because it reveals the past as it was, but because it enables to perceive that our retrieval of it can never escape the conditions of textuality. The challenge of inscribing the past on the stage is met by postmodern drama by either projecting characters reminiscing about a collective or individual past, or by presenting different time-frames simultaneously or alternately on the stage. This calls for redefining the narrative in non-linear terms that alters the manner of conceptualizing time. In the words of Elizabeth Deeds Ermath:

The best definition of postmodern narrative might be precisely that it resolutely does not operate according to any form of historical time, that is, representational time, and in many cases directly parodies or disputes that time and the generalizations it allows to form. (Ermath 43)

By rejecting the notion of linearity of history, postmodern drama also rejects the related notion of progress. J. Malkin’s remarks in this regard are worth quoting:

Ideologically, postmodernism differs from the modern in terms of the foundational concept of “progress”. Progress implies linear and causal increase through time, development, improvement, teleological faith. The virtues of progress and goal-oriented history – compromised beyond repair by this century’s ideological excesses – are rejected in postmodernism and replaced by concept stressing synchronicity, the simultaneous, repetitive, plural, and interactive. (Malkin 10)

Malkin’s assertion that postmodernism stresses synchronicity should not be construed to suggest that it abjures the past. On the contrary, postmodern drama revisits the past precisely to disrupt the notion of linear progress underlying the assumptions of the Enlightenment Rationality. A very remarkable instance of this is Tom Stoppard’s plays such as *Travesties* (1974), *Arcadia* (1993), *The Invention of Love* (1997) and *The Coast of Utopia* (2002) all of which are situated in the past and feature historical figures and events. They offer a striking parallel, in the dramatic mode, to Linda Hutcheon’s conceptualization of ‘historiographic metafiction’ as a mode of writing that problematizes the referential status of history. One of the most prominent characteristics that these plays share with ‘historiographic metafiction’ is that they freely mix historical and fictional elements, often situating historical figures in purely imaginative situations. The device calls attention to the inherent functionality of history as a narrative. They also share with ‘historiographic metafiction’ the idea of the human subject as a point of intersection of multiple



and even conflicting discourses and its ultimate situatedness in the ideological matrix, thereby undermining the notion of a vantage perspective on history and the past.

Malkin takes up Heiner Muller and Thomas Bernhard, the two German dramatists, to substantiate the argument that postmodern drama revisits history with irony in order to question its epistemological status. Muller's *Germania: Death in Berlin* (1971) and *The Battle* (1974), and Bernhard's *Eve of Retirement* (1979) are examples where history is presented in the form of a collage and mixed freely with purely imaginative elements. In a scene of *Germania*, for example, a rather grotesque version of the battle of Stalingard is presented, where the real historical figures as Napoleon, Caesar, and the Nibelungs engage in farcical acts. In yet another scene Frederick II appears as a vampire. This device of fiddling with history is a potent way to engage with it ironically. Bernhard's *Eve of Retirement* too treats history with complicitous irony, conflating the realms of the past and the present, while simultaneously presenting a proliferation of perspectives, fragmentation and radical indeterminacies. Malkin sums up the manner in which postmodern dramatists engage with history in these terms:

Postmodernism involves an explicit (and always "loaded") utilization and reflection of the past, confounded by memory, by a destabilized perspective, or by other deconstructive tactics. Bernhard, like other postmodern dramatists--- Heiner Muller, Sam Shepard--- depends on the audiences' knowledge of the past, of how the past is usually imaged, in order to shock and draw irony through multiple, or conflated perspectives. These are often provocations which challenge the usual representation of that past, or of the present in its light.

(Malkin, "Pulling the Pants" 106)

Moreover, postmodern drama inscribes a relation with the present as much as with the past. All representations, whether belonging to the past or the present, are shown by it to be constitutive of reality. This means blurring the traditional distinctions between reality and its representation and hence fact and fiction, an idea which is presented through the use of self-conscious theatrical devices such as the play-within-the-play. Postmodern drama, like other postmodern art forms, engages critically with reality. This is, however, done by simultaneously throwing its own representational status into question, confirming Hutcheon's thesis that postmodernism is a paradoxical and self-contradictory enterprise. Nick Kaye substantiates this point in his analysis of postmodern performance:

The postmodern [drama] indicates a calling into question of the languages, styles and figures through which it is seen..... It follows that the postmodern in art is subversive and transgressive, that is occurs as a critical and skeptical stepping beyond bounds, a disruption that purposefully upsets the terms by which the "work of art" would constitute itself.

(Kaye 19)

Postmodern drama, to use Barthes's terminology, *dedoxifies* our modes of thought and perception which provokes a rethinking of these modes. A recognition of this fact enables us to dispel the notion that postmodernism implies an infinite regress into textuality with no referential value. Hutcheon's thesis can be seen to be endorsed by Kaye who sees postmodern performance as an art form with a deconstructive potential. Kaye remarks that, "performance may be thought of as a primary postmodern mode," (12) because it has the potential of "making visible [of] contingencies and instabilities,.... A disruption of the move toward containment and stability" (23).

A similar view is expressed by Philip Auslander in his *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance* (1992) where he sees postmodern performances as fraught with political implications for the contemporary postmodern commodification. Mark Forties describes Auslander's position thus : "Auslander argues that although, all cultural production is politically compromised; postmodern performance restores critical distance which strategically allows us to reconsider the world we

live in, thereby, performing a resistant political function” (Forties 123). It is this deconstructive impulse of postmodern drama that vindicates its value as a mode of critical engagement with the contemporary culture and politics and establishes it as a significant artistic category capable of both reflecting and commenting on the contemporary reality.

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## Robert Frost's Conception of Poetry

**Dr. Neena Sharma**

Every poet has his own idea of writing poetry. This paper focuses on the conception and twin purpose in the poetry of Robert Frost. In his concept, poetry displays marriage of mind and emotion. The combination of mind and emotion is deepened in to the poet's mind. In his conception of poetry, there are two purposes of poetry. It is delight and wisdom. His poem begins in delight and end in wisdom Robert Frost's conception deals with his general view of existence. To man, Frost believed that the universe is almost chaotic. The universe is a confusion in which he could find meaningful ideas by facing difficulties. It is shaped in to a poem by Robert Frost. The manner of rural life in his poetry is easily comprehended.

Robert Frost was the most popular, famous and influential American poet. He held the same position in his country as Chaucer had held the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Every poet has his own concept of writing poetry, Alexander Pope Alfred Tennyson Wordsworth and Emerson produced a genre of poetry which may be said their own. Robert Frost was also a highly conscious artist. He was a poetic theorist and rebel against the poetic creed of the olden times. He wrote to his friend John Barlett-

'I am one of the most notable craftsman of my  
time.....I am possibly the only person going  
who works on any but a worn out theory of  
versification' 1

Robert Frost's conception of poetry and practice are occasional and scattered through letter and public speeches and prose works. If a series of his letter are read it can be defined in many ways. He was always primarily a poet, secondly a critic and prose writer. He did not value his prose highly. His greater emphasis was on poetry. In contrast to Wordsworth, Emerson and other writers Robert Frost thought of himself as a craftsman. He considered the term 'poet' a praise word. Robert Frost thought a good deal about the nature of poetry.

"Poetry is a process  
Poetry is the renewal of words.  
Poetry is the dawning of an idea.  
Poetry is that which tends to evaporate from both  
Prose and verse when translated.  
Poetry is the liberal arts.

Robert Frost has his conception of poetry. He has offered a good many definitions of poetry. Most are fragmentary.

"A poem is the emotion of having a thought while the readers wait a little anxiously for the success of dawn."

"Every poem is an epitome of great predicament, a figure of the will braving alien entanglement."

"A poem is momentary stay against confusion"

"My definition of literature would be just this words that have become deed."

In his concept, poetry displays marriage of mind and emotion. The combination of mind and emotion is deepened in to the poet's mind. Robert Frost's conception deals with his general

view of existence. To man, Frost believed that the universe is almost chaotic. The universe is a confusion in which he could find meaningful ideas by facing difficulties. It is shaped in to a poem by Robert Frost. What is man's problem? According to his poetry man's problems lie in obtaining the right relationship with the confusion of his surroundings in the universe. Man must attain a middle ground of his confusion.

Robert Frost maintained with Wordsworth and Emerson that certain general speech patterns were to be found specially in rural areas. He adopted the many of the principles expressed in Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical ballads' in diction'. Like Wordsworth he chose incidents and situations from common life .he described them in a language used by men. He preferred people in low and rustic life, because they speak in a plain language. According to Robert Frost, the manner of rural life is easily comprehended. The people in 'North of Boston' he himself, included in his role of rural thinker. He included their way of talking and their natural speech rhythms.

For Robert Frost, poetry was life. He made perpetual efforts to relate poetry to life and life to poetry. He refers to poetry as beginning in delight and ending in wisdom. He has in his mind the balance of sensibility and substance ,of emotion and thought. According to him, a poem must not be merely a trick , but a performance. He mixed his conception of poetry the sense of emotion and the mind. He wrote-

“Enthusiasm passed through an idea” is what poetry must become if it  
aspires to the height”

Robert Frost remarked that modern poets forget that poetry must include, the mind as includes the emotions. They only emphasized on emotions of the speaker in their poetry. They did not include mind in their poetry on this basis that mind is dangerous. To include the mind in poetry is not good for poetry because it dominates emotions of human being. So mind must not be included. But Robert Frost thinks that mind must be included in poetry. Poetry displays the mixture of mind and emotions. In Robert Frost's poetry mind is kept with fact and emotion with fancy. Fact and fancy constitute to major place in the world of Robert Frost's poetry. He considers that Fact deals with practical life and fancy deals with imagination. In the mind of Robert Frost, there is a delightful interplay of fact and fancy.

Robert Frost's poems express his personal thought and feeling. In one of his poems 'Home Burial' from the volume 'North of Boston' the lines from the husband's first speech display the combination of mind and emotion. Wife is emotionally hurt by the death of her child, but the husband is practical in his life.

“The little graveyard where my people are!  
So small the window frames the whole of it....  
But I understand; it is not the stones  
But the child's mound”

It does not mean that husband is not hurt by the death of his child but his emotion do not find place over his mind. He felt towards his child like his wife but he accepted the fact of life that if there is life in the universe, there will also be the cold hands of death in the universe.

In his another poem 'Birches' from the volume 'Mountain Interval' there is a mingling of fact and fancy throughout the poem. A mingling of wisdom and fancy makes it a delightful poem which consists of a combination of mind and feeling. In this poem the speaker's emotion compel him to escape from the difficulties of the world and the universe. He will have to face many difficulties in his life. The poet would like to climb a birch tree, which is directed towards



heaven. The climbing is partly escaped from the difficulties of his life. But in spite of this earth is the right place for love for him. In this poem the poet adopts an intellectual attitude to live on the earth. He gives up the idea of escaping from the difficulties of the universe. His intellectual attitude dominates his emotional attitude. In this poem again there is the unity of feeling and mind in his poetry.

There are two major constituents in the world of Robert Frost's poetry. In this connection Robert Frost can be compared with T S Eliot. For T S Eliot, emotion recollected in tranquillity is in an inexact formula. He regarded the poet's mind as a medium rather than a personality. He feels his thought as immediately as the odor of the rose. Thought is transformed in to feeling to steal its way in to the reader's heart. If there is no union of thought and feeling, the result is dissociation of sensibility means bad poetry. In Robert Frost the state of poet's mind is notable. He gives importance to the unity of mind and emotion in his poetry. For him, poetry is not recollection in tranquillity. He was a supporter of combining mind and feeling.

After reading his poem it can be said that must be aware of his delight in clarifying thought,, in play of mind and poetry displays the marriage of mind and emotion in his conception of poetry. Poetry is an art of imitation. It is representing counterfeiting of figuring both. As regards the function and purpose of poetry, it should both teach and delight. The poetry is superior to all other branches of learning. Science like Astronomy, Mathematics are subordinate sciences because they do not serve the true end of all learning which is self knowledge. The end of all learning is virtuous action, and poetry serves this end.

Poetry is superior both to history and philosophy. Philosophy presents merely abstract precepts, which can be understood by the young poet. History deals with concrete fact or example of virtue but from these fact the reader must themselves derive universal and general truth. But poetry combines both these advantages. Its general truth can be easily understood because they are conveyed through examples and its examples are drawn from an ideal world. These are more vivid and effective. It teaches virtue in a way which is effective even to ordinary men.

In his conception of poetry, there are two purposes of poetry. It is delight and wisdom. His poem begins in delight and end in wisdom. Robert Frost wrote-

"No tears in the write, no tears in the reader"

Robert Frost's volume ' A Further Range is totally an expression of delight and wisdom. It solves his purpose of poetry. He has expressed his view in this volume in a moralizing tone. He spent much of his time in teaching so made his purpose of poetry to delight and to teach. His best poem "Two tramps in Mud Time" from the volume "A Further Range" expressed the writer's delight. It is a delight in the skill which he has acquired through his experience of life.

"Good block of Oak it was I split.

As large around us the chopping block.

And every piece I squarely hit

Felt splinter less as a cloven rock."

Poetry imitates like the other fine arts, but it is not mere mimicry, a mere slavish representation of surface reality. It imitates imaginatively and so gives us a higher truth, and a higher reality. In his conception of poetry he emphasizes also on the contact with reality. In his century and country Robert Frost saw the reality consisted of the condition of the people who are living in America and in the universe. Robert Frost in his conception of poetry insisted on the poet's faithfulness to reality. He did not insist that all true poets should choose as their subject

matter biology and politics etc. He should know about the reality of life. The poet who are not very good or if they are mediocre, they will mirror the surface of reality. The great poet will discover the interior or spiritual life. Robert Frost again and again emphasizes on the contact with reality in poetry. In real life also there is a mingling of the good and evil, joy and sorrow, tears and smile. So his poetry is a mixture of these emotions which deal with real life. Tragic-comedy is nearer to life and so it combines within itself the pleasure as well as the instruction of both.

Poetry does not merely give us knowledge of virtue. It also motivates for virtual action. This is so because its truth is conveyed in a delightful manner. The purpose of poetry is primarily to delight. It gives the readers aesthetic pleasure and instruction is only a secondary function. These qualities of Robert Frost give him a touch of reality in his poetry.

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## **Delineation of inner turmoil in Female Protagonists of Margaret Atwood and Shashi Deshpande (A special reference to *The Handmaid's Tale* and *That Long Silence*)**

Dr. Nishi Bala Chauhan

The comparative method of studying a piece of work invites a host of associations involving a great scope. A comparative study of literary works casts a qualitative impression on the readers and touches the fringe of their hearts. The variety of literatures reflects a regionally diverse and multicultural society.

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* are the two novels taken for comparative study. Both novels are an effort of these two writers to break the long silence that has surrounded women, their experiences and their world. The present study traces the female protagonist's passage through a plethora of self doubts, fears, guilt, smothered anger and oppression of individuality and silence towards affirmation and individuality. The intention of this study is to examine the silent female protagonists' need for voice and words for their subdued silence.

**Key Words:** Voice and words, Protest, Reclaiming Self through communication, Silence.

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian novelist, literary critic, essayist, and environmental activist. She is among the most eminent authors of fiction in recent history. She is a winner of the Arthur C. Clarke and Prince Of Asturias award for Literature. Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished and versatile contemporary Indian women writers in English. Her novels and short stories explore the psyche of the educated middle class Indian woman. With rare sensitivity and depth, she portrays the dilemma of the Indian woman trapped between her own aspirations as an individual and the forces of patriarchy which confine her. Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* published in 1983. It received the Sahitya Akadami Award in 1991.

In *That Long Silence* Shashi Deshpande delineates the joy and despair of the narrator/protagonist Jaya "caught in an emotional eddy, endeavors to come to terms with her protean roles, while trying, albeit in vain, to rediscover her true self, which is but an ephemera .....an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and a failed writer" (Times Of India 2)

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* narrates the tale of Offred (Handmaid) in Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian and theocratic state that has replaced the United States of America. Because of dangerously low reproduction rates, Handmaids are assigned to bear children for elite couples that have trouble in conceiving. Offred serves the Commander and his wife. Offred is not the narrator's real name. Handmaid names consist of the word "of" followed by the name of the Handmaid's Commander. Atwood recognizes the subjugation and marginalization of women in patriarchal society. The powerful people cannot tolerate woman's consciousness to communicate. Atwood gives a voice to the suppressed thoughts of her female character Offred and suggests to express anger and find a way for change.

Offred and Jaya both are meek, submissive and denied to communicate and express. They are deprived of even their original names that are a token of identity. They are put in the different slots of a mother, a wife, a friend, and a mistress. In an anxiety to fulfill multiple functions and in performing different roles Jaya and Offred both are in crisis on all fronts.

Gilead is a society founded on a "return to traditional values" and gender roles, and on the subjugation of women by men. Women in Gilead are not only forbidden to vote, they are forbidden to read or write. Similarly Jaya too loses her identity and has to forge a new identity

and name suiting her husband's desires. Jaya means victory but her husband calls her Suhasini that means a placid motherly woman. Name is the only component that makes a person unique but with the loss of her name she lost her identity. Shashi Deshpande makes her central character Jaya to tell her story. Jaya puts herself in the slot of a mother and a wife. She puts her husband and children also into the slots and feels disappointed when they refuse to confine themselves there. In her anxiety to fulfill multiple functions Jaya is in crisis on all fronts – as a mother, a wife a sister, a friend and above all an Indian woman.

Despite her marriage to Mohan and becoming a mother of two children, she is lonely. Mohan moulds her feelings as he likes and Jaya remains silent. She is torn from within. Jaya moulds herself perception and she assesses her worth not as an individual but by her capability to model herself upon the dreams of her husband. She reconciles with the pattern of the docile and silent women of Mohan's family. She swings between desires and disgust and tries to bridge the gap between the mythicized wife and mother and her own experiences of being a wife and a mother. She accepts her identity of Mohan's wife of Suhasini, and adjusts as a "Smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who coped." (LS-15) Offred's name is not original but imposed. Offred says: "My name is not Offred. I have another name, which nobody uses now because it is forbidden .....name is like your phone numbers useful only to others" (HT-79-80) Like Offred Jaya suppresses her desires and loses her identity even in petty day to day affairs. She is afraid that a frank admission of her desires may disturb the delicate balance of her relationships. To survive emotionally she prefers to live in a make believe world of her own. Through timidity, awkwardness or laziness she surrenders her decisions to her husband. Jaya teaches herself to wait in silence. She feels bewildered when she thinks about her –"Self", "To know what you want .....I have been denied that .....Even now I don't know what I want." (LS 25) She feels suffocated and sometimes thinks to escape from the grim realities of life but escapism is not a solution for her. A permanent solution comes from within, not from outside. So she makes a compromise as a survival strategy for getting happiness from conjugal life. It is the outcome of her long silence and maturity which Jaya undergoes. Suhasini and Jaya, these two names symbolize two aspects of the same personality. The former Jaya symbolizes victory, the desire of her father and later Suhasini represents her husband's expectations from her that is flattering submission "Though, when he wrote my name, it had been 'Suhasini', not Jaya. And if I disowned the name, he had never failed to say reproachfully, 'I choose that name for you'". (191)

In *The Handmaid's Tale* Gilead promotes fragmentation. The women are divided in different classes according to their set roles and are identified with their uniforms.

The new world of *The Handmaid's Tale* is a woman's world, even though governed by men. Its female population is divided into classes based on household functions, like - dull green for the Marthas (houseworkers); blue for the Wives; red, blue and green stripes for the Econowives (working class); red for the Handmaids (whose function is to bear children to the head of the household) brown for the Aunts (a thought-control force). Offred considers herself "a distorted shadow, a parody of something, some fairytale figure in red cloak" (HT 19) Because of dangerously low reproduction rates, Handmaids are assigned to bear children for elite couples and such subjugation creates a society in which women are treated as subhuman. They are reduced to their fertility, treated as nothing more than a set of ovaries and a womb. Gilead seeks to deprive women of their individuality in order to make them docile carriers of the next generation. "we are two legged wombs that is all: sacred vessels" (HT-146)

The handmaid is declared unwoman if she fails to conceive and consequently she is

banished to the colonies where women clean up radio active waste as slave labourers. Offred comments “ there are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren this is the law” (HT-57) Offred wants to survive, and the best way to survive is to learn to bear her chains. When she bears them too well, they become almost comforting to her. Her captivity becomes familiar, and the prospect of a new, free life becomes scary. Jaya and Offred keep on swinging in opinions and choices. They recall the past of their life and confront with the truths of present.

In her anxiety to fulfill her role as a wife Jaya has not done justice to her human instinct also. This is what happens in Jaya’s relationship with Kamat. Jaya was more free and uninhibited with him than she was with her husband. But in Indian society this kind of friendship is always looked upon with suspicion and disapproval. That is why when Jaya had found Kamat lying dead on the floor, she left the place in silence. But what really upsets her was the fact in order not to damage her married life. Offred too has same experience. She thinks of the Red Center, and how Moira was brought there three weeks after her own arrival. Moira and Offred pretended not to know one another because friendships aroused suspicion. They arranged to meet in the restroom to exchange a few words, which made Offred feel terribly happy .

Freedom of speech is officially forbidden in Gilead because it is an offence for the women. Gilead creates an official vocabulary that ignores reality in order to serve the needs of the elites. Having made it illegal for women to hold jobs, Gilead creates a system of titles. Whereas men are defined by their military rank, women are defined solely by their gender roles as Wives, Handmaids, or Marthas. Stripping them of permanent individual names strips them of their individuality. There are prescribed greetings for personal encounters, and to fail to offer the correct greetings is to fall under suspicion of disloyalty. The use of language has become illicit for women. It renders the illicit use of language almost sexual. Offred may think so fiercely of words and take such solace in the repetition of memories because doing so helps her to retain her knowledge of language. When the Commander allows Offred to read or plays scrabble with her, she realizes they are practicing a kind of "kinky" sexual act. Now it is forbidden for us now it is dangerous. It is indecent” ( HT-149)

Jaya too faces restrictions on communicating her inner feelings. Although Mohan takes pride in her hobby yet he snatches the intellectual freedom from her which is essential for the free expression of her hidden thoughts and longings for a satisfied life. His objection is why did she writes a story about a couple where the man could not reach his wife except through her body. Mohan is worried that people will take him as that man. He objects “ And you, how could you write these things, how could you write such ugly things, how will you face people after this?” (LS 143) Kamat who is critic friend of her suggests her to reveal her anger and strong feelings through her writings but she follows Mohan to whom “ A woman can never be angry, she can only be neurotic, hysterical and frustrated.” (LS-147) Her ‘Seeta’ stories are not what she wants to write but what Mohan wants her to write. In the words of Guru Charan Bahera “ It is about a writer self consciously trying to put into words her own experiences which brings in the act of writing itself. It is replete with reflections on literature particularly women’s writing, a woman engaged in the activity of writing confronting the masculine gaze.” (Naik 131)

A study of these novels shows that the female protagonists are subjugated by patriarchal power. They have lost their names, identity and their freedom is curtailed for communication. They are mere helpmates and pushed into one corner. They have severe restrictions on their free movement. Offred lives in a room fitted out with curtains, a pillow, a framed picture, and a braided rug. There is no glass in the room, not even over the framed picture. The window does not open completely. There is nothing in the room from which one could hang a rope, and the door does not



lock or even shut completely. Looking around, Offred remembers how Aunt Lydia told her to consider her circumstances a privilege, not a prison. In the same way the exile at Dadar flat serves to show to Jaya that she has distanced herself from her inner self because she has forgotten that she is an individual too, requiring a self definition in her own right.

Offred is confused about her identity and even starts to accept the role that has been imposed upon her. It seems strange that one might accept such radical changes so easily. Offred has been manipulated into believing that this sinister system was designed for her own good. Peter S. Prescott says: " Offred at first accepts assurance that the new order is for her protection." (Naik 151) She even starts to measure her self-worth by the viability of her ovaries and this negatively affects her self-image. This is how Offred characterizes the deploring act : "The commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I don't say making love because that's not what he is doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate because it would imply two people, when there is only one. Nor does rape cover it. Nothing was going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice, but there was some and this is what I chose." (HT 121)

This statement is very dangerous. It shows how Offred has convinced herself that this deploring act is not so bad. It also shows how she is beginning to embrace the system and justify the violations that are being committed against her. By calling it a choice she has shifted the blame from her oppressors to herself and labeled the blatant crime as a mere ritual. She has memories of a life that has ripped from her. She can remember years before, when she had a husband and child, when she had a job, money, and access to knowledge. All of these things conflict her perception of Gilead and make her want to rebel to get them back. Jane Gardam argues: "There is even a horrible beauty in the heroine's plight her quiet reverie of better days, her dignity, her sorrow, her courageous rationing of recollection of times past so that she will be able to bear them." (Balachandran 152) She is fighting to keep her past alive and not be sucked in entirely by the system that restrains her. She harbors a vague love, hope, and desire to see her daughter and husband someday. So she must survive for their sake because she needs to believe that they are still alive. Her dreams and reality become intertwined and this makes her fight for her sanity. Rebellion is an instinct and all people have. It's an inherent thrust for fighting oppression. Offred is driven by a thirst for freedom to love and be loved. "People don't die from lack of sex, but from lack of love". ( 131) All true rebels have a cause and this is Offred's.

Similarly in Jaya's case through the process of thinking and writing down her thoughts, she retraces her life back to her childhood, through the disorderly, chaotic sequence of events and nonevents that made up her life, and purges herself of her burdens she was carrying within herself. She thinks of the words, "Yatheccchasi tatha kuru Do as you desire", which Krishna tells Arjuna after giving him a sermon on the battle field of Kurukshetra. Jaya interprets Krishna's words as meaning, "I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours. Do as you desire." By the time Jaya has finished writing down her life, she is ready to face life anew, with Mohan. She decides to speak and to listen, to erase the silence that was between her and Mohan, between them and the children. She realizes " I will have to speak, to listen, I will have to ease that long silence between us". (LS 192) Jaya hopes, and knows that life has always to be made possible. The novel ends with Jaya's thoughts that " we don't change overnight. It is possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that life would be impossible." (193)

Offred and Jaya manage to communicate through words and language as a weapon to give a voice to their suppression. . Offred often secretly listens to Rita and Cora, the Marthas

who work in the house where she lives. Offred wishes she could talk to them, but Marthas are not supposed to develop relationships with Handmaids. She wishes that she could share gossip like they do—gossip about how one Handmaid gave birth to a stillborn, how a wife stabbed a Handmaid with a knitting needle out of jealousy, how someone poisoned her Commander with toilet cleaner. Offred remembers renting hotel rooms and waiting for Luke to meet her, before they were married, when he was cheating on his first wife. She regrets that she did not fully appreciate the freedom to have her own space when she wanted it. She remembers examining her room in the Commander's house little by little after she first arrived. She saw stains on the mattress, left over from long-ago sex, and she discovered a Latin phrase freshly scratched into the floor of the closet: *Nolite bastardes carborundorum*. Offred does not understand Latin. It pleases her to imagine that this message allows her to commune with the woman who wrote it. Jaya is empowered by her intellectual competence. She manages to reveal her 'Self' through her writing skill. The truth dawns upon Jaya that she had shaped herself absolutely according to Mohan's desires and that was the reason of blankness and silence in her life. But she suddenly realizes "what have I achieved by writing this?" She only finds that has become confident and has gained courage to 'plug the hole in the heart', to "erase the silence between us", to speak sanskrit instead of 'Prakrit' and make the life possible. As she says "well, I have achieved this. I am not afraid anymore. The panic has gone. I am Mohan's wife, I had thought and cut off the bits of me that has refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible" (191) She decides to write what she wants to write and not to look up at Mohan's face for an answer she wants. Sumitra Kukreti remarks, "The realization that she can have her own way—yathaeccchasi tatha kuru—gives a new confidence to Jaya. This is her emancipation" (197)

These two novels have been peculiarly characterized by silence. The protagonists of these writers belong to a class where silence has been imposed on women. Silence or effective silence, not being heard is a mark of women's repression in a masculinist culture. It is, indeed, a mark of victimization. Atwood and Shashi have exposed the repressive taboos that crush a woman's individuality. They employ the language of the interior to delineate the inner turmoil of the characters. The important insight that Atwood and Shashi impart us through Offred and Jaya that women should accept their own responsibilities for what they are, and they should realize how much they have contributed to their own victimization, instead of putting the blame on everybody except themselves. It is only through self analysis and self understanding, through vigilance and courage, they can begin to change their lives. The heroines of Deshpande and Atwood are shown in a state of confusion at the beginning. Slowly as the novel unfolds, they go through a process of introspection, self analysis and self realization. At the end they emerge more confident, more in control of themselves and significantly more hopeful. As Jaya in *That Long Silence* concludes: "...there is always hope." (193) Similarly in *Handmaid's Tale* Offred is tired of silence. She is "tired of this melodrama. I am tired of keeping silent". (305)

Thus these two authors represent different cultures but what brings them together is how they present their characters in a similar predicament. It is interesting to see how these women give the limited capabilities to their heroines to either succumb or to overcome a tight situation. But their failures, in most cases do not deter them to go ahead to meet life's challenges. A study of this paper enables the reader to have a better understanding of the similarities in their writing. There are certain themes that recur in the fiction of these novelists. Their protagonists are always explorers through tradition and myth in search of a new identity and in search of a voice, a tongue, a language, an art, with which to proclaim that identity.

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## The Theme of Isolation in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*

**Dr. H.B. Patil**

The human being in modern life has become victim of frustration, loneliness, loss of communication and isolation. Harold Pinter, the British playwright reflects exactly this state of human being in his play *The Caretaker*. His well known plays are *The Room*, *The Homecoming*, *The Birthday Party*, etc. But his real breakthrough came with the publication of *The Caretaker*. Harold Pinter's works present directly or indirectly the influences of pre-war and post-war incidents. The sense of rootlessness, loneliness and isolation can be seen in his characters. The audiences are made to laugh but at the same time they are threatened by violent action that destroys the central character.

*The Caretaker* discusses the critical condition of characters in the play. All the three characters Aston, Mick and Davies do represent their isolation with more or less intensity. This play of Pinter opens the life in general and life in 1950s England in particular. The isolation is either forced on them or it is selected by them on their own. His characters do not allow themselves to form good relationship with others. From the very beginning of the play, the realistic details occur. Aston lives in a room of an apartment that is owned by his brother Mick. Though they are brothers there is no proper communication between them. Aston lives the life of mentally retarded human being because of the electric shock treatment given to him. The very isolated condition of Aston suggests the critical existence of man in the modern world, who may live the life as mentally retarded person like Aston. Aston not only rescues Davies but helps him by providing with tobacco, a pair of shoes, bed and above all allowing him to share a room with him. Aston's activities of helping Davies express Aston's need for companionship. He expects Davies to stay with him. Aston realizes his isolation and when he gets the opportunity to end it, he tries to cherish it. Davies is also badly in need of companionship. He says to Aston:

"You been a good friend to me. You took me in. You took me in, didn't ask me no questions, you gave me a bed, you been mate to me." (1982: 75)

Davies is cut off from the society and he is outcast. He lives his life in dirt and nearly all dislike him. It is Aston who shows some kind of kindness to Davies. He is brought home by Aston and is offered everything that Aston could offer. Aston also offers him the job of caretaker. Davies fails to enjoy this situation. He accepts everything but with complaining nature.

Though Aston and Davies feel isolation and are in need of companionship, both are different in their nature. Aston is in his late twenties or early thirties. He is generous and co-operative. He has some qualities of Lord Buddha, as the statue is placed in Aston's room. Aston not only rescues him from cafe fight but also places him in sound position as needed for Davies. It seems that Aston was intelligent and gave harsh comments on some of the issues in the society. However the society represented through the character of Mick, does allow him to express his comments. Therefore Aston is unwillingly forced by his mother and brother to accept the electric shock therapy. The shock treatment leaves Aston mentally retarded person. He is forced to be isolated. However he is good even after becoming mentally retarded. He does not take revenge of the society. He works for compromising with society. Unfortunately he fails to get proper response from Davies. His dream to build a shed and develop communication with Davies result into frustration.

On the other hand Davies is old tramp probably in his sixties. He is homeless and badly in need of companionship and a house. He gets the opportunity to stay in Aston's room. Rather than cherishing the chance, Davies always complains about the inadequacy of things. He blames others for his own mistakes. He disturbs Aston but does not accept the charge. He seems to be racist, as he charges the black people without any fault of them. He is no doubt isolated. When he gets the chance to end it, he tries to dominate it. Davies takes the help as it is his right. He is offered a job of caretaker by Aston as well as Mick. But he does not like to work, he excuses of his documents and papers that he has kept in Sidcup. It was expected that he should decrease the gap between the two brothers, but on the other hand it is Davies who not only increases the gap but also tries to separate them completely. Mick comes to know Davies's intentions and decides to speak in favour of and to support Aston, his brother. Davies's isolation thus continues.

Like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* Harold Pinter uses limited characters and presents the absurdity of life. Pinter's play begins and ends in that isolated room in an apartment. Davies's isolation looks self imposed because of his greedy nature. He is aggressive and unstable. He disturbs others and is thoroughly unpleasant person. Though Davies is poor he fails to receive sympathy from the audience. One might feel that Davies's isolation is inevitable for what he is. He seems deceptive as he postpones his visit to Sidcup where, he says, he lived before and where the documents are kept.

Aston's isolation is not as simple as that of Davies. Aston's isolation springs from different causes. Davies trusts no one and turns on them who help him. Aston believes even a person like Davies. Aston's fault is that he trusts people too much. He says :

“ I thought...they understood what I said. I mean I used to talk to them. I talked too much. That was my mistake.

The same in the factory.” (1982: 54)

Aston's reward for too much trust is that he is betrayed by not only an intruder like Davies but also by his mother and brother. And the result of this is the isolation.

The isolation in the play can be seen from very setting of the play. In many of Pinter's plays, the setting is an isolated place and the isolated place is “the room.” Actually this domestic setting provides a serviceable environment for the action. The room literally expresses limitation of characters. The characters stay within this limitation. However they try to dominate one another in this limitation, win over each other and possess the place where they stay. Pinter has said:

“ I have usually began a play in quite a simple manner ;  
found a couple of characters in a particular context ,  
thrown them together and listened to what they said ,  
keeping my nose to the ground...” ( 1998: 17)

The particular context is the isolated room in which normally two or three characters could be found. These characters do not communicate properly with each other. As in the play , *The Caretaker* the two brothers fail to communicate and both of them lead isolated life, particularly Aston. The third character, Davies also lives the life of outcast and isolation. His greediness of nature does not allow him to enhance the communication either with Aston or with Mick. Davies, then, continues to be the victim of isolation.

Harold Pinter's many plays present the intruder who disturbs the privacy of a character. The privacy of these characters is not accepted by themselves but it is forced on them. Therefore they are not happy in their privacy. The character like



Aston needs the company of someone. He feels that as Davies is outcast, isolated and helpless in his condition, Davies could be the best partner to end his isolation as well as of Davies's isolation. Aston helps Davies, brings him home though Davies is not a good man. Davies complains as soon as he enters Aston's room. As Aston has failed to develop proper communication with his own brother, Mick; Aston turns to Davies for help. Aston does not want Davies to leave the room. He offers everything that he could offer to Davies. This illustrates Aston's strong wish for communication.

Pinter's character tries to identify himself within the limited space of the room. Sometimes the character seems to be happy with the place that he lives in. It seems that the character himself wants to lead the life in isolation. He tries to avoid the communication with the outer world. He does not give complete information about himself. Davies's identity depends on the papers that he has kept in Sidcup. He does not go to Sidcup or postpones his visit. Therefore his identity is doubtful. This is one of the reasons that Davies leads the life of isolation. It is not clear in the beginning of the play where from Davies comes and it is not also evident where Davies goes at the end of the play. However one thing is quite clear that Davies was isolated and is isolated. At the end Mick seems to be on good terms with his brother, as both Mick and Aston smile looking at each other. This is a sign of need for communication. However, Mick does not stay with his brother and leaving everything in charge of Aston, he goes. Though there is slight hope of collaboration between the brothers, they do not live together. The play ends where it begins. All the three characters are separated from each other and continue to live the life of isolation.

Aston was very talkative kind of person before he was given the electric shock therapy. He used to ask a number of questions about the certain things in society. He had certain doubts about such things in life. As it was dangerous to the society, his questioning ability was hampered by electric shock therapy. He is made mentally retarded. Then Aston not only loses questioning ability but also fails even to communicate properly. It is his questioning nature and goodness that makes him a mad person. Thus he becomes the victim of isolation. It seems that Aston himself knows that his mental illness can be cured by developing communication with others. He tries his level best to establish communication with Davies, but unfortunately his fate does not allow it to happen. As Aston fails to improve communication with Davies and Mick, he continues to be a mentally retarded person. The person like Aston faces the punishment of isolation without any fault of him. The so-called society does not allow him to be the part and parcel of society. Therefore Aston is forced to lead isolated life and the character like him is given inferior treatment in the society.

Mick and Davies represent society. Mick does not like his questioning nature. He supports the electric shock therapy to be given to Aston. Mick probably knows that the therapy would hamper Aston's questioning ability. The therapy rather than curing Aston turns him into an abnormal human being. Aston continues to speak but illogically. Mick's non-communication with Aston increases Aston's problem. The fact is that a mentally retarded person can be cured properly by emotional attachment along with medical treatment. It was Mick's responsibility to treat Aston with brotherly affection. Unfortunately Mick treats Aston as 'the other'. Mick indirectly forces isolation on Aston. Though Mick smiles at looking Aston at the end of the play, he does not stay or live with him. He also does not allow Aston to be part of society. However his attitude towards Aston is not as harsh as of Davies. Mick gives the authority to do whatever he likes to do with the room and apartment. But Mick leaves the room at the end; Mick leaves Aston again in isolation.

Aston tries hard to be the part of society. He does help Davies who in one way represents society. He is an abnormal but behaves like a normal and very co-operative human being with Davies. On the contrary, Davies who is a normal human being, behaves abnormally. By helping Davies symbolically he wants to be the part of society. However the society in the form of Davies treats him as mad and abnormal human being. Davies declares Aston does not understand anything. One really feels extremely upset that Aston is rejected in the society and that he has to continue his life in isolation. Aston's helping nature results into nothing but in frustration.

The term isolation is different from solitude. The isolation is normally forced on human beings. It becomes a punishment for the isolated person. Solitude is something that is willingly accepted. The solitude can be creative. It can provide peace of mind. The isolation of a human being may result into frustration. Harold Pinter tries to say that the human beings are destined to be isolated and lonely. Therefore his characters prefer to live in isolation. His characters fail to improve proper communication with others. Davies is completely isolated, whereas Aston has a brother who gives his support at the end. Mick says:

"Aston can do it up, he can decorate it, he can do what he likes with it. I am not bothered. I thought I was doing a Favour, letting him live here. He's got his own ideas. Let him have them. I am going to chuck it in." (1982: 74)

Pinter through his play, *The Caretaker* suggests that the isolation is inevitable companion of life. Davies's isolation is result of selfishness and lack of proper attitude. Aston's isolation is the result of his too much trust on others in society. Aston's isolation is not the fault of him but of the society.

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## **The Zeitgeist of the Second World War Society in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient***

**M. Preetha**

The contemporary world is filled with the echoes of chaos and disruptions effectuated by the process of colonisation. The dismayed social and economic conditions of the colonised countries embody the savagery of the colonisers who posed threat to the serenity of the world by exercising their power and money to dominate the colonial subjects. The capitalist ideologies of exploration and ascendancy over the unexplored parts of the world served as impetus to the warring between the nations. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the wide scale explorations of the European countries in America, Africa, and Asia. They assailed most parts of the world for material and economic pursuits. They expanded their empires in the belief that a bigger empire would credit them with more power. The tensions that aroused as a result of the competition between different countries ensued in the world wars.

The world wars distorted the lives of millions of people. The advancements in the field of science and technology that was initially aimed at uplifting the existing condition of man were deployed for destructive purposes. The atomic bombs corroded the entire world with its massive destructive power. The life expectancy of people also minimised to a considerable level owing to the dangers of the world. The horrendous events of war made life more dubious, disruptive and tenuous. Moreover, the imperialistic policy of the colonised countries destabilised the cultural condition of the colonised countries. The intermingling of people from various countries during the process of colonisation has led to the multicultural atmosphere in the colonised countries. The hybrid nature of the people along with the detestable living conditions of the world epitomises the decline of the entire civilisation.

In the novel *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje foregrounds the repercussions of Second World War on the life of the people in the postmodern world. He exposes the somber pictures of the post World war horror by exposing the ravages brought about by the colonial aggression. He evinces that the evanescence of the delicate feelings of love and affection dehumanised the life of the human beings. The life in the aftermath of world war was very unstable and horrendous. They were haunted by the impending sense of dangers around them. The random violence that occurred during the war threatened the peaceful existence of the people even after the end of the war.

Ondaatje avouches that the colonisers' prospect of civilising the colonised countries was in reality aimed at expanding their sphere of influence. They believed that by charting the geographical terrain of the unknown lands that had been in existence from times immemorial, they become the discoverers of the land, "[t]he ends of the earth are never the points on a map that colonists push against. . . the first step by a white man across a great river, the first sight (by a white eye) of a mountain that has been there forever" (150-151). They exploited the natural resources of the countries for their materialistic benefits. The financial and military despotism of the colonisers helped them in claiming power over the third world countries of the world. They espoused the concepts like trade and power, money and war as the guidelines during the period of colonisation.

Ondaatje avers that the Western world had averted the interest towards the desert for hundreds of years. He remarks that the period between 425 B.C. to the nineteenth century was completely devoid of any explorations except for the few rivers seekers of the nineteenth

century. He explicates that the twentieth century saw a quantum leap in the spirit of exploration due to colonisation. The British developed correspondence with the Geographical society and employed several expeditions to map the unexplored deserts of the world. They promoted the enterprise of the explorers by providing them with the manuals of exploration that is prepared by privately funded agencies. They also organised several lectures at the Geographical Society in London at Kensington Gore. Ondaatje mentions that “[t]hese lectures were given by sunburned, exhausted men who, like Conrad’s sailors, are not too comfortable with the etiquette of taxis, the quick, flat wit of bus conductors” (141).

The outset of the world war urged the colonisers to map the greater part of the Gulf Kebir Plateau and the Libyan deserts of Africa. The mightiness of the countries is determined by the extent of the area occupied. The desert became a strategic arbiter of military wins and losses. Robert Clark observes in the article “Knotting Desire in Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*” that “[m]aps are laws inscribed on the earth. They mark jurisdictions and possessions; they include and exclude along a line where the power of one ruler comes up to another” (65).

Ondaatje enunciates the experiences of the explorers like Almasy and Madox to adjudicate the destructive impact of the colonisers on the real nature lovers. These romantic explorers were involved in mapping North Africa during the inter-war period. They left the safe domains of their home in search of adventure, ready to face the primitive challenges of the desert. They had the ability to recognise any part of the town by glimpsing at the skeleton of its map. They intermingled their culture with that of the Bedouin tribes of the desert, “We were German, English, Hungarian, African – all of us insignificant to them. Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states” (147).

Almasy considers the desert as a safe haven for the people as it evades the markers of race and ethnicity. He believed that power and finance were temporary things as time evanesce the claims of having been the first eyes, the strongest army and the cleverest merchant. He quotes Herodotus who asservates that “*for those cities that were great in earlier times must have now become small, and those that were great in my time were small in the time before . . . Man’s good fortune never abides in the same place*” (151). His sole aim was to render a unique contribution to the society by sharing his experiences of exploration with the people around him.

Almasy composed his experiences in a book so as to expose the tremendous glory of the deserts of Africa. They were regarded as the point of reference for the future explorers who undertook expeditions to desert. His accounts of the explorations in the Egyptian and Libyan Deserts successively became “one of the theatres of war” (143). The knowledge that they gain from these explorers are in turn utilised to destroy them. He and his colleagues were selfless and dedicated in their pursuit of knowledge but their expertise became one of the instruments of Empire. In the article “Pastiche and Archetypal Symbolism in Michael Ondaatje’s *The English patient*” A. Clare Brandabur posits that “the expertise of the Orientalists of the nineteenth century, the archaeologists and drawers of maps, the specialists who loved the desert but whose findings were used by their various governments to exert power over the Third World” (108).

Ondaatje avouches lie and ownership as the two vices of war. He represents the pure scientific aspect of exploration through Madox who commits suicide when he could not tolerate the cruel realities of war, “[s]omeone’s war was slashing apart his delicate tapestry of companions” (256). The explorers sacrifice their life for the sake of expedition but their contribution was considered trivial. They do not eulogise the loss of the people who die as a result of extreme heat, windstorm or due to the ice in Antarctica. Instead, they encouraged the contributions of the members of the expedition who betrayed the sanctity of the desert.

The scientific aspect of explorations was replaced by the camouflage of agents like George Clifton whose motive is to exploit scientific knowledge for colonial expansion. Clifton, who belonged to the British Intelligence and who had joined the Almasy-Madox expedition during 1931-37 as an amateur, was actually spying on the group as the desert was being controlled by the armies during the war. "He was not just an innocent Englishman . . . . As far as the English were concerned, he was keeping an eye on your strange group in the Egyptian-Libyan desert" (267).

The conflict between the nations degraded the feelings of humanity and compassion towards the fellow beings. The war made the people very wary and suspicious of everything around them. Almasy, who had been in deep love with Clifton's wife, Katharine rescues her burnt body from the plane crash. He sought the help of the officials to assist him in nursing her back to life but they hauled him up into the truck as they suspected him to be "a possible second-rate spy. Just another international bastard" (267). He could not save her life as his movement was constantly spied over by the Allied troops. He was able to find only her decayed body when he managed to enter the cave with the help of the German spies. Her whole body was covered in bright pigments that reflected the work of cartography marked by nature, by herbs, stones and the ash of acacia.

Ondaatje exposes the horrors of the Second World War on the European countries by presenting the damaged condition of Italy within the larger context of Europe in ruins. In this scenario of chaos, the villa that is located outside Florence metonymically represents the destruction of civilization. The villa, which draws together the central characters in the novel, is in a state of despair. The hill town in which it is found was besieged for a month during the war and the building and another homestead were the focus of much of the bombing in the area. The hill town is torn apart by fire shells; parts of the villa's top storey have crumbled under explosions. There was no electricity and so the villa became an unwelcome beacon for robbers. The villa is damaged in such a way that "there seemed little demarcation between the house and landscape, between damaged building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth" (45).

The Second World War littered the entire country with dead, half-eaten animals and with the rotting bodies of people hanging upside from the bridges. He evinces that the city is also considered unsafe for people to live. The delayed action bombs were mined into the walls of public buildings and nearly every vehicle that crossed the road was rigged. The retreating German army had left pencil mines within the musical instruments with an intention that the returning owners who opened up the piano would face the danger of losing their hands. They retaliated by killing ten Italians for every German killed. The bombs were sometimes attached to taps, to the spines of books, into the fruit trees and so the apple that would fall from the branch would detonate the tree in some cases. The harbor scuttled ships were freshly mined and a German confesses that "there were thousands of bombs hidden in the harbor section of the city that were wired up to the dormant electrical system" (294).

The war office took over responsibility for bomb disposal, and then it handed it over to Royal Engineers. Twenty five bomb disposal units were set up during this period. "Eighty percent of bombs dropped by airplanes over Britain were thin-walled, general purpose bombs. They usually ranged from a hundred pounds to a thousand" (195). The most dangerous bombs were those dropped from low altitudes, which were not activated until they had landed. These unexploded bombs buried themselves in the cities and fields and remained dormant until their trembler contacts were disturbed by a farmer stick, a car wheel's nudge, the bounce of a tennis ball against the casing – and then they would explode.



The sappers became permanently suspicious of any object placed casually in the room. They found it impossible to trust anything as concrete at the time of war. They realise that even the concrete thing like buildings and landscape had become just a temporary thing and there is no permanence to it. Even those murdered by the retreating army are still dangerous. The corpses that were hanging down from the bridges were sometimes mined and were blown up in the mid air. They realized that the life became plainly absurd by the end of the war. They overcome the disillusioned that the war is over and everybody can simply go home once the fighting has ended. Ondaatje presents the post world war society as

*The Heroic Age of bomb disposal, a period of individual prowess, when urgency and a lack of knowledge and equipment led to the taking of fantastic risks . . . It was, however, a Heroic Age whose protagonists remained obscure, since their actions were kept from the public for reasons of security. It was obviously undesirable to publish reports that might help the enemy to estimate the ability to deal with weapons (196).*

Ondaatje views the process of setting mine fields as the most abominable strategy of treating an entire civilian population as the enemy. He condemns the manipulations of the constructive power of science for destructive purposes. Natania Rosenfeld comments in the article “Less Light: The End(s) of Aestheticism in Pater, Ondaatje and Sebald” that the novel highlights “the incongruity of natural and manmade disasters. The flash of a bomb blast may resemble lighting, but the former indicates man’s terrible manipulations of nature, not his harmony with, or even his mimesis of natural world” (358-359).

Ondaatje imputes the machinations of capitalist reification by presenting the appallingly high casualty rates in bomb disposal units mass in 1940 when Britain was caught in a state of siege after the falling of France. The life expectancy of the sappers during this period was about ten weeks. In the month of August 1940, the blitz had begun and the sappers noticed that there were almost 2,500 unexploded bombs mined in all parts of the country. The roads were closed and the factories and streets were deserted owing to the dangers of the bomb. The ration increased gradually and by the month of September the number of live bomb had reached 3,700. The death toll increased continuously during this period

Ondaatje considers that the Second World War has destroyed the utopian vision of the world. The modern inventions of man like Atomic bombs and other delayed action bombs ruined the peace of the people. There was no safety and security for the lives of the common man who remained ignorant of the devastating schemes of the rulers. He regards that the instrumentalisation of reason in technology has taken one of its most perverted forms. The linguistic adaption to death contains the schema of modern mathematics. “If a man’s life could be capitalized as X, the risk at Y, and the estimated damage from explosion at V, then a logician might contend that if V is less than X over Y, the bomb should be blown up; but if V over Y is greater than X, an attempt should be made to avoid explosion in Situ” (212).

The war disillusioned the lives of the people. The routine life of the people was almost completely shattered with the explosion of the atomic bomb. Almasy finds it difficult to continue reading after the war, since the war has ended with an event so terrible that even the act of lighting a match feels dangerous. He alludes to the world wars as the most terrible incidents in the history of the world. Sudha Rai in the article entitled “Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*: Ideology and Form” examines how Ondaatje’s the novel is placed against “the backdrop of war are wounds, burns and scarring memories, as permanent in their residues as the mutilation of limbs and the agonized deaths of victims of the war” (158).

Ondaatje presents a vivid picture of the horrors of the war so as to avert the world wars in the future. He appeals to the humanity in general to foster a sense of loyalty and kindness to the fellow beings. He ascertains that only when the boons of science and technology is mobilised in a constructive way, the life becomes meaningful. He calls for a utopian society where human beings can live without the horrors and terrors of the outside world.

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## The Village by the Sea: An Ecocritical Reading

**Raj Kumar Mishra**

Ecocriticism is a conscious-raising phenomenon about environment. To the students or scholars of literature, 'ecocriticism is a critical development to spread consciousness about ecological concerns. It is a multidisciplinary approach. Numberless development programmes are being executed not being with ecology instead at the cost of ecology. Ecocriticism as a literary ecological philosophy provides a reliable framework or mechanism to analyze cultural and literary texts which are directly/indirectly preoccupied with ecological concerns and contexts. Moreover it looks at the depictions of natural sights and landscapes along with people's attitudes and attention towards nature; may be favorable or unfavorable. In fact this sort of attempt negotiates between literature and ecology.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecology, Deep Ecology, Environment Justice Movement etc.

We look  
But at the surfaces of things; we hear  
Of towns in flames, fields ravaged, young and old  
Driven out in troops to want and nakedness:  
Then grasp our swords and rush upon a cure  
That flatters us because it asks not though:  
The deeper malady is better his,  
The world is poisoned at the heart.

(The Borderers)

Today we live in a world of tropical warmth, chronic drought, desertification, deforestation, acidifying of oceans, frequent coastal inundation, tsunamis, cyclones, increasing food and shelter shortage, accidents at nuclear power stations, oxytocin applied vegetables, industrial pollution, and many more lethal activities. It is most pressing need to keep our environment safe so that we can live and let other beings live and survive too. Environment affects and even largely determines all things ranging from food, fashion, technology to race, class, gender, sexuality, mentality, nationality, law, religion, economics etc. Eco-imbalance is not specific (one nation, one place, or one city) problem. It is a global phenomenon. Hence whole world unanimously whether partially or fully affected, should come forward and launch a global campaign with honesty for the service of environment and the restoration of healthy environment. In wake of global ecological crises and resultant life-threatening effects prompted literary thinkers to formulate an eco-oriented approach called 'ecocriticism'. It came off as a new feather to the field of literary criticism. Today the world peace is threatened especially by our blind exploitation of nature. If racism was 20<sup>th</sup> century disease, ecological problem is 21<sup>st</sup> century trouble. We have several eco-philosophies and organizations for the sake of environment. Some of them are Deep Ecology, The Environment Justice Movement, Earth First!, Ecocriticism etc. These are solely intended "to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive that is inherent in our prevailing and paradoxical attitude toward nature. The conceptual and

practical problem is to find the grounds upon which the two communities- the human, the natural- can coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere (Rueckert 1996:107)".

Ecocriticism as a literary ecological philosophy provides a reliable framework or mechanism to analyze cultural and literary texts which are directly/ indirectly preoccupied with ecological concerns and contexts. Moreover it looks at the depictions of natural sights and landscapes along with people's attitudes and attention towards nature; may be favorable or unfavorable. In fact this sort of attempt negotiates between literature and ecology. Ecocriticism as a literary and cultural theory is burgeoning since 1990's in Europe and America chiefly. However seeds were laid around four decades ago in Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973) and Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975). Cheryll Glotfelty simply defines 'ecocriticism' as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment...takes an earth centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty, 1996: xviii). However some critics attribute the birth of the term 'ecocriticism' to US critic William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism"(1978). By 'ecocriticism' he means application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Bate, the first British ecocritic sees 'ecocriticism' double stranded approach. The first explores human attitudes towards nature; and the second, the relationship between man and nature depicted in various literary texts.

Since 1970s a need was continually being experienced to give due representation to ecology into literary studies. The result is 'ecocriticism'. A number of equivalents to 'ecocriticism' can be suggested such as 'ecopoetics', 'ecological literature', 'ecoliterature', 'environmental literature', 'environmental literary criticism', 'green studies', 'green cultural studies', 'green literature', 'nature writing' so on and so forth. As a literary field of study, it seeks to relate humans to non-human environment. Moreover it evaluates prevalent ideologies towards nature spread over literary and cultural texts. Ecocritics are so enthusiastic that they blur the line between human and non-human world. Like Wordsworth they see nature as living personality.

Ecocritics flamboyantly disapprove of the notion that non-human world is subordinate to human. Ecocritics view all literature in terms of place, setting or environment. Ecocriticism as a critical perspective looks at the relationship between human and extra-human world. Ecocritics not only worry about wild life and wilderness but also human health, food and shelter. Almost all human activities today are engaged in the blind exploitation of nature. Consequently he/she is enjoying the deadly dance of destruction without any complaint. Industrial pollution is the main threat along with destructive ways of consuming natural resources, such as excessive fishing and the 'clear cut logging of forests'. (Kerridge 2006: 533). Ecocritics argue for sympathy towards both pet and non-pet animals.

Deep Ecology is the radical form of environmentalism conceived by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in early 70's of 20<sup>th</sup> century, seeks to shift 'anthropocentrism' (human centered) into 'ecocentrism'(environment centered). 'The Environmental Justice Movement' refers to 'the efforts of poor communities to defend themselves against the dumping of toxic waste, the harmful contamination of their air, food, and water, the loss of their lands and livelihoods, and the indifference of governments and corporations'.(Kerridge 2006:533).

The novel *The Village by the Sea* (1982) by Anita Desai is set in the lush green surrounding of Thul, a village located by the Western coast of India. In this village 'large or small, rich or poor, each had sacred basil plant growing in a pot by the front door.' (p. 28). At its surface level, it is a story of Lila of thirteen and her brother Hari only of twelve who are left to themselves. They feel responsible for looking after their two younger sisters – Bela and Kamal, ailing mother, and drunkard father. But at the deeper level, it is more than a children novel. It is at least two stranded novel. If the struggle of Hari and Lila forms the main strand, the 'environment justice movement' of poor villagers of Thul, Rewas, Alibagh, etc. and few Bombay men shapes the second strand of the story. Like other novels, Anita Desai this time again didn't forget conveying her message to the people and the government officials. It is a purposive novel. Both strands are interwoven perfectly. The novel in a sense contrasts Bombay city having filth and dirt with lush green aura of Thul village. Bombay city is designated in the novel as 'cruel city', 'friendless city', 'city of dust and soot'. Moreover city people had poor memories as Mrs De Silva denies recognizing Hari.

Hari in the novel is depicted very sensitive. One day, he meets Ramu and asks whether something new is being seen in the village. Ramu told him that "The Government is going to build a great factory here. Many factories, hundreds of them." (p13). Hari could not reconcile himself with Ramu and asked, "And what will happen to the hill and the temple on top?" (p.13). Hari is worried about the prospect of the village. The city people will come and befool innocent villagers. But Hari was not ready to be fooled by city clever tricksters. Nonetheless, out of his penurious family condition, Hari is hopeful to get a job to restore and redeem his family.

Biju, a notorious smuggler while talking to the stranger ( a man posted to look after the factory area) came to know that the government is going to build thousands of factories on their farmlands. Biju gets angry and challenges the stranger, "No one can take our land.... It is ours, and we will not sell." (p.60). Biju continues, "GO build your factories where the land is barren and nothing grows but stones and thorns." (p.60). Biju asks the stranger, "And what about us who already live here?" (p. 61). The stranger waves his hand as if he were cutting down weeds. "Like that – your village will go. In its place, factories will come up, fertilizer will be made, gas will be produced, many jobs will be created." (p.61). Further he says, "You mean these boys are to give up their fathers' land and boats and go to work in factories like city people?" (p.61). The stranger told Biju that there would come engineers and machines to operate factories. This puzzled Hari and Ramu and other fellows.

Meanwhile a young man from Alibagh comes over who asks all Thul cottage dwellers to join and oppose government plan of erecting factories over agro-lands. The young man says, "Every one of us is threatened. Our land is going to be taken away.... Our crops will be destroyed so that their factories can come up instead. All the filth of their factories- for when we produce fertilizers a lot of effluents are created which have to be disposed of – these will be dumped in the sea and will kill the fish for miles around. How will we live without our land, without the sea?" (p.62). He also clarified to Thul villagers that the government will befool us in the name of jobs. The factories will be run by trained engineers. They do not need us. In this way we all shall be fallen to hard times. He told further that we already tried to inform to government officials but we were driven away by batons of police. So we can no longer stand police rule. Finally it was decided to



take out a demonstration before chief minister office. Finally the band of farmers, Hari one of them, reached to Bombay. An elderly man with white beard of Bombay, who was leading them took the megaphone and said, "I have come here to speak to you, and speak for you, because your green fields and the sea are valuable to all of us as they are to you. Our trees, our fish, our cattle and birds have to be protected...."(p77). This man was stranger to the men from Alibagh. Hari was taken aback and wished to know why did he care so much? The man sensed the feelings of Hari and told that "All the citizens of Bombay are concerned. These factories...will pump deadly chemicals into the air-fertilizer cannot be manufactured without polluting the air for miles around. Sulphur dioxide, ammonia, and dust will be scattered far and wide."(p.77). By one ruling no factories will be build within fifty miles of big cities. Thul and Rewas are very close to Bombay. "Bombay is heavily industrialized, crowded, and polluted. How much more pollution can we stand?"(p. 77). In Japan, organic mercury was pumped into the sea, it poisoned the fish and the fish poisoned the people who were unlucky enough to eat them. As such the entire eco-system destroyed.

Sayyid Ali another speaker talks of Alibagh geomagnetic observatory, the only one of the type in the world. If factories came up, this observatory would stop working for good. After sometime they decided to march *Mantralaya* and make Chief Minister aware of. But nobody is talking of Thul and its problem. As one young man says, "Preseve a rotten old observatory just because it is so old? What about our farmers, our crops, our boats? That is what we have come here to see about- not that man's dusty old office or his files or his jobs." (79). As the procession ended, all villagers went back to their homes but Hari stayed back. Hari after several hours came into contact a coconut seller. The coconut seller asked him why he had left his home. Hari told him that he came with a procession against government plan of setting up a factory in their village farmlands. The coconut seller tells about government's callousness. He said, "Ask, ask, ask the government all you like. Do you think the government has ears and can hear? Do you think the government has eyes and can see? I tell you, the government has only a mouth with which it eats- eats our taxes, eats our land, eats the poor." (85). Hari to see 'the factory belt of Thana, pouring out evil-smelling smoke and chemicals into the discolored sky, all the land around blighted and bare, not a blade of grass to be seen and the few remaining trees coated with suffocating dust. He wondered if this possibly be the way that the green coastline from Rewas to Alibagh would look like one day." (135).

Finally Hari returned to his home. One day he was talking to Birdwatcher Sayyid Ali Sahib. He told him that he was one among agitators in Bombay. We wanted to stop building up factories over our farming lands. At this the birdwatcher sighed and said, "So you're one of those who put up a fight. You've lost the fight, you know- we lost the case in court. The politicians won- so they can make plenty of money from the sale of land and licences in the name of progress. Thul is lost...."(p.154). He further says, "Everything is doomed. The fish in the sea will die from the effluents that will be pumped into the water. The paddy fields will be built over by factories and houses and streets. My little baya birds will find no more paddy leaves for their nests." (154). Hari said to the birdwatcher, "Why do you care so much about the birds, sir?"(p.154). The birdwatcher answers, "The birds are the last free creatures on earth. Everything else has been captured and tamed and enslaved- tigers behind the bars of the zoos, lions stared at

by crowds in safari parks, men and women in houses like matchboxes working in factories that are like prisons.” (154).

To the end it can be said that *The Village by the Sea* is an interesting text for eco-readers. In it, Anita Desai stands out as a socialist, environmentalist, and eco-friend.

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## Mulk Raj Anand's Humanistic and Bold Portrayal of His Protagonists

Rajni Tiwari

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, through his rare prolificity, bold experimentation and aesthetic sensibility, has made immense contribution to Indian as well as world literature in English. His choice of unconventional subjects and characters has been determined by his Dickensian humanistic philosophy. He set up new trends by introducing negative hero/anti—hero in his novels. His fictional world is peopled by characters from various strata of society- from the lowest to the highest rungs in the hierarchy. Anand has revealed exceptional, psychological insight in the portrayal of these characters who “once were real men and women” and are not mere phantoms of fantasy. However, his otherwise authentic and objective delineation of character is superb which the chief requisite of a work of art is. This paper presents a confrontation and interaction between Anand's *métier* as an artist as a compelling demand of his humanistic creed. Not that humanism is, in any way, contrary to art. It will not be far from truth to assert that all is, at bottom, humanistic even though not expressly “a criticism of life”. The greatness of an artist lies in synthesizing art and reality. When he handles reality imaginatively and presents it artistically, the result is great aesthetic delight both for the reader and the artist but it is when humanism obsesses the mind of the artist so strongly that he is ready to make out subservient to his philosophy, that the artist's failure starts. The present study discusses the oscillation of Anand between his integrity as an artist and his enthusiasm as a reformist.

Mulk Raj Anand, the most prolific and the most widely criticized Indo-Anglican novelist, feels that characters in his novels have been the motivating force- rather the chief cause- behind the writing of his novels. In Anand's novel, it was not the action that decided the choice of characters in his novels. The action instead, was chosen according to the characters he decided to write about. His characters are mostly people who once were ‘men and women’. Anand, in his childhood and youth had been intimate with them. He had himself shared their feelings, thoughts, action reactions, troubles and joys. And he had studied their emotions from such close quarters that he could easily identify himself with them. Anand's complete identification with his characters accounts for the remarkable authenticity in their portrayal.

The choice of characters in a novel is determined to a large extent, by the exigencies of the period in which the novel is written and by the writer's own interest, wims, and idiosyncrasies. That is why there is a noticeable change in the concept of hero from time to time. Tom Jones, Moll Flanders and Huckleberry Finn of the early and middle eighteenth century with its love for travelling and adventures gave place to Emma, Elizabeth, and Mr. Bingley enjoying the unperturbed, easy and comfortable life of upper middle class society of the decade of the same century. They, in their own term were replaced by David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, and Nicholas Nickleby by fighting the naked and hard facts of life in the nineteenth century. In the modern age with its complexities and interest in psychology, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce rang the knell of the traditional hero and introduced heroes sans heroic qualities. About Indo-Anglian fiction, Williams aptly remarks that “it too seems to have begun with unheroic”. Infact,

Indian literature in English came to be written when India was engulfed by innumerable and enormous, social, political and religious evils. The nation was under the suppressing yoke of foreign rule. The British rulers subjected the poor Indians to slavish, subhuman existence the rigid class and caste structure of India itself caused intolerable sufferings to people. The exigencies of the situation demanded an exposure of these evils and agitation against them. The World was unrealistically and hopelessly dismal. To relief the gloom, he provides a ray of hope in the form of these selfless, benevolent, and beginning savior characters. The presence of savior heroes in these novels, according to the Anand, is not intentional, but is a consational to life. About the savior figures he absorbs “actually the saving graces were not created in the novels with the intention to show every time that there is one character that may retrieve the situation. In life there are always such people. And in the presentation of contraries of good and evil, the leafs hope against despair. Despite Anand’s assertion that the people like his savior characters are found in life, the fact remains that in the fictional world of Anand, many times these savior characters appear unwelcome intruders. Every often they appear to happen have been forced in the novel with the purpose to preach. They are often used as lifeless instrument to voice Anand message and often they preach the message so overtly that authorial presence is all too palpable. Unable to conceal his purpose in the vile of art, try to “put his thumbs in the scale, which, according to Lawrence is immoral on the path of the novelist.

Anand’s choice of characters – both sufferers and saviors –is consistent with his theory of literature and life. Anand has not given a well organized theory of literature, nor does he feel the need of formulating one for writing literature. As Anand absorb “people who say I have no theory of friction are mopre or less correct. And yet one does not need to formulate a systematic theory to write friction or to react its various impressions, to enjoy its flavors and even to write some criticism of one’s own.” Anand realizes that the social content of the Indian novelist is different from that of the European writers. He wants that “we have, however, in our newly emergent societies, to understand that we are not the middle classes of Europe and America. we must see our self as we are, we are struggling about the days contempt of the caste order, emancipating our minds from the submission to our man rule, we are dimly becoming aware of nature of our hopeless resignation in the past to the unknown faith, the supreme God Vishnu who will not wake up to help us, because the Kalyug is not yet over.” In such a period of transition Anand felt that “the old world was dead and gone only lingered in the minds of the sentimentalists who always dote on the past. And the old humanism, of which is old world was the product was a spent force,” but people were still grouping for mooring in change world because the “individual disrupted by the commercialism which resulted through the industrial revolution that science had helped to perfect. And the ordinary human values, love, justice, beauty, prayer consequently perverted and destroyed. Like Mathew Arnold and felt torn between two worlds- “one dead and the other powerless to be born”.

In this period of confusion, Anand felt that one could depend more on art and literature for solace than on religion and philosophy. According to him “literature, music and art are better able to fulfill the needs of our time than religion and beauty is better worth worshipping than God or a Deity for whom the sanctions lie in the institutions of a few mystics.” The fact that

Anand uses literature as a means to modify society has led critics to dub him as a propagandist, despite his repeated emphasis on the fact that Indian content demands art with purpose. He boldly accepts the negative appellation, as he observes: "All art is propaganda. The art of Ajanta is propaganda for Hinduism. The art of Ellora is propaganda for Hinduism. The art of western novel is propaganda for humanity against bourgeois. Gorky as a humanist dared to speak of man, man's condition, not only to say how awful it is, but he also suggested what man could be. And thus he did propaganda for man." Anand, a great admirer of Gorky's fiction about Squalor and dirt, regards him "the prophet of new literature." And he tries to do in India what Gorky and Dostoyevsky had done in Russia.

Anand's concepts of literature as closely related to life are a by-product of his humanistic ideas. It is his own ardent love for human beings and his pity for the suffering, wretched, downtrodden humanity that lead him to believe that all writers for the sake of man and the function of literature is to enable man recognize his dignity. Anand calls his humanism "comprehensive historical humanism" and discusses it in detail in his *Is There a Contemporary Indian Civilization? Apology for Heroism, Hindu View of Art*, and *Prolegomena to a New Humanism* incorporated in *Lines Written to an Indian Air* with many scattered remarks in his articles, essays and letters. His humanistic faith has been discussed with minute observation by Margaret Berry in the *Mulk Raj Anand: The man and The novelist* and Balarama Gupta in his famous *Mulk Raj Anand: A Study of His Novels in Humanist Perspectives*.

Anand is a "comprehensive historical humanism" because he derives much from the history of Indian religious and philosophical thought and blends it with modern scientific ideas so that his theory achieves universal significance and comprehends the whole of mankind. The traditional values which Anand wants to be operative in modern times are universalism, "intolerant-tolerance" and compassion. Universalism has been inherent in Indian tradition since very remote periods of his history. Anand traces this element in the Vedic hymns in the "simple universal values of mankind, in their worship of nature and their bold speculative outlook about the meaning of creation." Anand is intolerant of orthodoxy and irrational taboos of Indian religious thought, but he is full of admiration for the human values which have percolated through traditional history to modern periods.

Anand is an admirer of humanistic philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra -nath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru. But he does not accept the ideology of any one of them unconditionally. He owes much of his love for the down-trodden humanity to Mahatma Gandhi and his synthetic approach towards the ideologies of east and west to Rabindranath Tagore. He is full of praise for the socialistic pattern of society as preached by Jawaharlal Nehru and stands for his humanism laced with a scientific approach, but he differs from Mahatma Gandhi's capitalistic ideas and from the spiritual sanctions which Tagore and Gandhi find for their philosophies. He wants to strike a combination of Gandhian love for humanity and Marxian gospel of classless and casteless society. He admires the ethics of Tagore based on a deep study of eastern and western cultures but he does not approve of spiritual sanction in his philosophy.



Anand pins his hope on ameliorations of mankind on *karma* and *bhakti yoga* that dead against fatalism of another Indians, he wants men to organize themselves and dedicate themselves to the cause of mankind. It can be possible if there is a feeling of brotherhood among man and if they selflessly fling themselves in the arena to fight against all those forces which condemn them and their breathe to sub human life. This feeling of brotherhood, again, can further by art and literature. Anand's faith as a humanist and his faith as a writer are well revealed in his speech delivered at the second Afro-Asian writers' conference held at Cairo:

*"Our literature and arts are thus the weapons of the new concepts of man- that the suppressed, disinherited and the insulted of Asia and Africa can rise to live, in brotherhood with other men. But in the enjoyment of freedom, equality and justice, as more truly human beings individuals, entering from object history, into the great history when there will be no war<sup>4</sup>, but love will be rile the world, enabling men to bring the whole of nature under self conscious control for the uses of happiness : as against despair."*

And he dedicated the gathering of the conference "to the task of healing the wounds of the insulted and injured, through full engagement in the widest areas of knowledge and action, so that all the tears of all the children can be wiped and in the words of the Spanish poet Garcia Lorca "the black boy come announce to whole of the world the beginning of the rain of an year of corn." He reiterates his faith in the capability of artist to liberate mankind from the shackles of pain: "this, then, seems to me true mission of the writers today. To act as the conscience of the people be aware of their pain. To have a creative mission of all that efforts joy in life, to realse the vital rhythms in the personality, to make man more human, to seek appreciation of freedom from all forms of slavery and to give this freedom to other throughout the world – in fact to awaken men to the love of, liberty, which brings life and more life." and that is what Anand himself is doing vigoursly even at the risk being called a writer with propagandistic leanings.

Anand's humanistic philosophy is sufficient explanation for his choice of characters- the sufferers and the saviors. The sufferers reveal the real plight of contemporary India and the Saviors provide hope against despair. They reveal Anand's existentialism combined with a streak of an optimistic attitude towards life. The relation between the two heroes however differs in various novels. The present study categories my paper on the basis of the relationship between the sufferer and the savior. The relationship depends on the suffering hero's own personality. When he is too passive and weak to fight, a savior figure is introduced from a higher stratum of society. When the sufferer attains maturity of sensibility and strength of mind, he himself fights for the liberty of all those who suffer like him. And when the plight of the sufferer is beyond redemption, and when he is a man of high social profile, no savior character is brought in. In other words, no savior characters are introduced when either the suffering protagonist himself is strong and combative enough to throw a challenge to the iniquitous and suppressive forces of society or when the conditions are so terrible as to be irremediable. In addition there are also some novels in the Anand canon which are fairly free from the shadow of suffering syndrome and therefore have a more disinterested aesthetic dynamic of their own. This study intends to trace the effect of the introduction of the savior characters on the overall aesthetic appeals of Anand's novels.

The greatness of Anand lies in his bold stride both in the choice and treatment of themes. He fearlessly chooses his protagonists from the “dregs of humanity” and tries to identify them with the so called high-caste and high-class people. Anand’s delineation and use of the sufferer and savior characters is all his own, and to me, it seems to be a very important features of his fictional output, right from *Untouchables*. The present study proposes to analyze this essential component of Anand’s fictional art and use.

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## Representing the Postcolonial Subaltern: A study of Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*.

**Ram Bhawan Yadav**

The politic of literary representation is supposed to be deliberate and complex in its nature and approach. The motivation, intent and agenda that direct such endeavor often result in domain of conflict, which leads to the crisis of literary, social and political representation. As Simon Featherstone points out, "In postcolonialism it [the crisis] is a truism that touches upon the crucial issues of representation and upon the economic and ideological control of production and reproduction of narratives of 'other' cultures (48). In this paper, I am concerned with two dimensions of subaltern representation in literature which I have divided in two sections. In the first section I have attempted to present the dominant discourses of Subaltern issues and its representation in literature. In the second section my concern is to study Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* in the spectrum of these discourses i.e. how domination and power exert in subaltern discourses. Within postcolonial discourses, I argue that these two issues are interconnected in the representation of marginal and explore the voices of unheard in reconfiguring of subaltern theorization. The subaltern theorization is directed to touch upon the core issues of cultural and economic power and the representation of marginal that are at centre in the politic of discipline itself. The notion of representation of postcolonial subaltern is based on argument that discursive focus can be shifted from hegemonic to marginalized. The main motivation of this transaction is to centralise subaltern's marginal position in society in terms of social and political, both of which is outcome of systematic and structural marginalization. The concerns about the representation of the marginalised group in national historiography prompted a group of Indian historians to form the subaltern studies group.

The subaltern studies project initiated by progressive historians aims to revise and rewrite Indian historiography from Subaltern perspective. This is highly revisionist project which is stated by Spivak as "The most significant outcome of this revision or shift in perspective is that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the 'subaltern'" (330). The main agenda of this project was focused on a large number of issues including peasant and insurgencies in colonial and postcolonial India, was motivated to compile them as strong and viable historical evidence that needed to be taken in gamut of Indian history. In the realm of literature, Spivak heralded the subaltern discourse with the publication of her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and in her reply she said "no" (Spivak, 309). She further clarifies that when a subaltern does speak she/he is no longer a subaltern. I perceive that Spivak's argument is slightly related to speech than power and ability of subaltern to make them heard. It is her conception that subaltern studies group, even as a non-subaltern mediator is conduit to record subaltern narrative. She labelled it as distinctive self consciousness of locating the "subaltern" as the "subject" of history and not its object. Ranjit Guha has stated as in the first subaltern series "Yet we propose to focus on this consciousness [subaltern] as our central theme, because it is not possible to make sense of the experience of insurgency merely as a history of events without a subject" (11). So what is the meaning of this subaltern consciousness and how it is different from other? Partha chaterjee opined on this as:

"Subaltern consciousness as self-consciousness of a sort is what inhabits the whole area of independent thought and conjecture and speculation...on the part of the peasant...what offers the clear proof of a distinctly independent interpretation of [Gandhi's] message".(172)

In the other dimension it can be stated that it is self consciousness that underwrites all innovation of will of subaltern.. John Beverley in “The Subaltern and the Limits of Academic Knowledge” states that the very idea of “‘studying’ the subaltern is catachrestic or self-contradictory” (21). Postcolonialism as a literary, historical and political theory has multiple recourses to study various representation of subalternity. Who can speak for whom, how discourses can best represent and interpret the experiences of subalternity, and who bears the cost? My approach in the selected text is to focus on the self consciousness discourse of subaltern representation. My aim in reading Adiga’s *The White Tiger* is to take into consideration the different social constructions of subalternity. Of being various social constructions, the common narrative should subvert the homogenous and “corrective” consciousness of subaltern. The novel *The white tiger* which deals with subaltern characters. I have attempted in the text to prove that “subaltern can speak” and to retrieve that subaltern narrate his/her own subalternity that presents the indictment of dominant cultural positions.

In the introduction of *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, Vinyak Chaturvedi pointed out the argument which Said in forward to the *selected subaltern studies* did as one when subaltern studies was articulated as postcolonial project. It has some strange difference with other postcolonial theoretical concepts. For instance, one of the criticisms of postcolonial studies as a discipline has been the blurring of oppositions. Maxim Silverman locates one of the major problems in postcolonial/poststructuralist strategies of reading and resistance the tendency to “occasionally lose (s) sight of power relations altogether in an effort to break the monolithic dualism of the master/slave model ()”. From Spivak’s seminal essay that she answers with a qualified “no,” to various literary representations of the subaltern in texts that are part of an emergent canon, the subaltern and his/her other is represented as a binary (even a complex binary) of the oppressed/oppressor. To the extent that subaltern is made central character, literary discourse complements the agenda of Subaltern Studies group. However, in addressing the subject, literary discourse takes on the role of the “intellectual” who speaks for the subaltern, “granting” literary space but not voice. This is in keeping with Spivak’s conclusion that subaltern who does speak is not a subaltern. Consequently, representations of the subaltern function within that dichotomy of can/cannot speak. Within such a framework, there is no room for subaltern consciousness to be read as a complex negotiator of its own positional dilemmas and political impotence, which is transformed even as it is transformative of its environment. As Homi Bhabha suggests in “The Commitment to Theory”, variant representations can only be understood if “we understand the tension within critical theory between its institutional commitment and revisionary forces” (27). For Bhabha, the task of postcolonial representation is simultaneously a rejection of the West as the centre and a renegotiation of an accommodating, continuing conversation with the imperial centres. As he explains:

My use of poststructuralist theory emerges from this postcolonial contra modernity. I attempt to present a certain ‘defeat’ or even impossibility, of the ‘West’ in its authorization of the ‘idea’ of colonization. Driven by the subaltern history of the margins of modernity—rather than by failures of logo centrism—I have tried, in some small measure, to revise the known, to rename the postmodern from the position of the postcolonial. (175)

## II

*The White Tiger* (2008) as its title symbolically suggests the subversion of oppressed/dominated, in wider context colonized (domestic/stately), into oppressor/dominator. It records the story of oppressed/dominated man (Balram Halwai) and his big fabricated events that make up the fabric structure of novel in the small village of

Laxamarganj situated in the darkness of India, Jharkhand and consequently moving to Delhi and Bangalore. The existence of the small people in the novel is portrayed in the subordinate condition of big people who are oppressor or dominator who shape and control their lives. Adiga has commissioned a novel in which representation of subaltern and their resistance for their identity and status is presented as their struggle aspiring to be from periphery to centre. The novel has been written in the epistolary form and for this Adiga explains the reason like this:

It is a story he can never tell anyone because it involves murder in the real life; now he tells it when no one is around. Like all Indians, who are obsessed (A colonial legacy, probably) with the outsider's gaze he is stimulated to think about his country and society by the imminent arrival of a foreigner, and an important one. So he talks about himself and his country in the solitude of his room. (*The Sunday Times*, April 6, 2008).

However, within the spectrum of postcolonial subaltern representation, *The White Tiger* is one of the Magnus opus literary efforts to bring into notice the issues of subaltern and their miserable condition before the world audience. Adiga's novel exposes the difficulties that accrue the task of recuperating the consciousness and the voice of the oppressed and their subjugated histories in India. Taking this text in ambit of discussion of subaltern discourse, I think that subaltern resistance and voices in the novel is different from the canonised definition of these in postcolonial literature that is more complex for the understanding of subaltern engagement.

So, what is the type of undertaken action of subaltern character in the novel? How are the social hierarchies characterized and how does the narrative interpolate them? If the subaltern's acts can be termed as "rebellious," how do they serve those who perform them? The binary structure of reality and representation has remained a source of contentious debate. For the presence of these two parts, while logically allowing a differentiation between them, also inevitably leads to hierarchization and evaluation, so that representation is often conceived of as opposition between originality and derivativeness, authenticity and fakeness, which are attributed to the parts of the binary (Chow, 39). My central concern in novel is Balram Halwai, rickshaw puller, driver, murderer and finally business man and other characters like his father, vijay, his brother, aunt etc to study them from the subaltern marginalised and oppressed point of view. It is through the struggle of Balram that other characters are also discussed in the novel. They also for varying reason represent subaltern positions within the dominant structure of Indian society. They along with Balram struggle with the forces of class, caste and gender. Marx a social and political philosopher categorised existing society in two functioning group: Bourgeois and Proletariats- exploitative and exploited. Adiga has converted these two notions as men big bellies and the men with small bellies- the rich and the poor. Politically it may be ruler and ruled. The theory of resistance or subversion is the major themes in *The White Tiger*. The master- servant relationship that exists between Balram and Ashok. His transformation begins with his resistance to the exploitation by his grandmother Kusum and his landlord and masters the stork, the mongoose (Mukesh) and the lamb Ashok. Laxamangarh is always addressed as the darkness and there only poor people lived and who worshipped Hanuman because, "He is shining example of how to serve your master with absolute fidelity, love and devotion" (19). The plot of the novel lingers around Balram Halwai, in Adiga's imaginative village Laxamangarh, where the villagers, family and friends are subjected to exploitation, torture and torment by the village landlord. Balram by nature is ambitious and try to improve his social position. It brought him to Delhi as the driver of one of landlord's westernised son Ashok. Delhi is the place where Balram feels the great gap between rich and poor and between two castes: the men with the big bellies and men with the small bellies, those who eat and those who are eaten. All these



social, political and economical disparities gradually inculcate in Balram's mind the spirit of revolt, resistance and vengeance, which remained suppressed for sometime in Balram's unconscious mind. His father's plan or cherished dream for his son might have inspired him constantly to resist and improve his subaltern or subordinate condition. "And when you see these strict men, think of my father. Rickshaw –puller he may have been a human beast of burden- but my father was a man with a plan. I was his plan"(27). "When he caught his breath, he said, 'my whole life, I have been treated like donkey. All I want is that one son of mine- at least one-should live like a man'" (30). The novel exposes the subalternity which is deeply rooted malaise of casteism and class consciousness in Indian society. In novel Balram's position is subaltern who as a subaltern belongs to the subaltern section of society and low caste and become mouthpiece of numerous marginalised, poverty stricken Indians. Adiga through the presentation of Balram Halwai presents that how the low caste people are treated by the high caste people. Balram's struggle to shed off oppressive forces is evidence to the fact that low caste people remain concern and deprived of all that goes with the plenty and the high caste. A place that is reserved only for high class people with having the authority of domination, exploitation and oppression. They use their high class or caste to subjugate or dominate the lower one. Balram, who first dreams and dare to enter in the restricted domain created by oppressor and revolts and gets success and recognition at any cost, thus he gives the voice to his oppressed, abused and exploited brethren.

In the postcolonial subaltern discourse or representation the notion of class is interpreted as binary division. The novel explicates in its theme the dominating issues of class conflict which shows the big gap in the life of the rich and poor people (half baked people). The attempts and resistive medium undertaken by Balram from Munna to becoming Ashok Sharma is tug of war between rich and poor. The dominator- rich or high caste people attempt to keep status quo in their favour while the deprived and disadvantaged ones strive for their rightful place in the world. The story commences from Bihar (Darkness) and ends up at Bangalore, symbolically from darkness to light, exposing two Indias, separated not only by geographically but also culturally, socially and professionally.

Balram is from backward village Laxmangarh situated near Bodh Gaya in Bihar and belongs to a poor family with low caste *shudra* which is a badge of shame and humiliation as he admits "like all good stories; mine begins far away from Bangalore. You see, I am in the light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness" (14). His father who has been living like a 'donkey' wants at least one of his sons should live like a man. Balram who is named as 'white tiger' 'the creature that comes along only once in a generation, by a visiting inspector of schools, could not continue his schooling due to poverty. Balram is allured to be a driver in the imitation of Vijay by seeing his satisfactory life. As a driver number two in Dhanbad at stock's house hold who is man of big bellies, suffers humiliation, exploitation and torture finally reaches Delhi as driver of Ashok and Pinky Madam. Gradually he became more and more ambitious and result of it that he murdered his master and with the booty reaches Bangalore and starts his journey as an entrepreneur thus he overcomes to challenge or subvert the social hierarchy and subaltern ideology imposed on him. In the social fabric of Indian society one's fortune is determined by his religion caste and sex. Everything in the life is predetermined – who will do what and how he will have to conduct in the society. In the village of Laxmangarh the reign, oppression and domination of four big guns – Buffalo, stork, wild Boar and Raven are perceptible and the rest of the villagers depend on their exploitative mercy. Balram is made to realise that driving is not the job for low people; it belongs to particular castes, and not of lowly *shudras*. The old driver tells Balram, "how can you learn to drive . . . it is like a taming a wild stallion- only a boy from the warrior castes can manage that. You need to have aggression in your blood. Muslims, Rajputs, and Sikhs – they are fighters, they can become drivers" land lord is also very much concern with Balram's caste

and family background, “are you from a top caste or bottom caste, boy... all our employers are top caste” (64-65). The dominant class’s oppressive view comes to the light even in the hiring servant for their daily uses. It is also evident that subjugated or subaltern are also conscious about the status provided by their master. The consciousness of the servant reflects even for the possession of the small object too- as who will drive Honda city and who Maruti 800. The disparities between the religions are also presented in the novel. A man is himself forced to change his religious identity only for getting a job as a driver. And when it is revealed he is forced to quit his job. Religious impediment is evident in the fact when stork ordered his grandson to call himself Gavaskar rather than Azharuddin while playing cricket with Balram. The landlord- the buffalo, the stork, the wild boar, the raven have been represented as retaliation what they once attributed to the subaltern, as shorts of animals without the propensities in them. Their name has symbolic connotations. These animals treat the low caste people like Balram as animal as or worse than them. Balram is chided and abandon by the Nepali servant when he handles brutally two pomerians in chains: “Don’t pull the chain so hard! They are worth more than you are!”(78). this comment shaken Balram’s inner consciousness and accelerates his rapacity to get success in his life at any cost. In the term of colonialism and exploitation the relationship between colonizer and the colonized is like master and slave. In India, this relationship is noticeable in novel *The White Tiger*. Indian has no respect for their service providers – cooks, drivers, sweepers- whatever the nature of their job may be; they just fit into one class – servants or slaves. The slavery is prevalent only in the third world countries not in the West. Ahsok while boasting about India tells his wife, “we have got people to take care of us here- our drivers, our watch men our masseurs, and where in New York will you find someone to bring you tea and sweets biscuits while you are still lying in the bed, the way Ram Bahadur does for us?”(89). Adiga has represented in the novel two kind of India one presenting the darker aspect in other words – the world of subaltern or subjugated and the other of light means the world of colonizers/dominator/ oppressor and exploiter. The first represents the backward poverty ridden cow belt North India where the feudal Lord are the master of the life of the suppressed masses, and the progressive shining, educated south India where even the sun shines on the ‘half baked’. In India poor have no right to be part of democratic process. On the day of voting, they are brought like herds and do whatever they are asked to do. They are subject to be ruled by the bourgeois class and have to follow the rules set by the master. This is the case with the people of Laxmagarh, during elections, the hopeless and helpless people as described by Balram, “like eunuchs discussing the *Kama Shutra*, the voters’ discuss elections in Laxmagarh” (98). The people of the village feel rejoice when the oppressor are humiliated by those having the ‘bigger bellies’ like the great socialist and keep on voting for their enemy’s enemy, as Balram gives a piece of his mind when great socialist humiliates Balram’s master, “That was the positive side of the great socialist. He humiliated all our masters- that is why we kept voting him back in”(105). The real education of Balram to penetrate the restricted domain for subaltern began when he initiates to acquaint himself with metropolitan city and its life style. The initial attempts executed by him is even not enough to situate his status as respectful being for he is hired servant to his master. And in his attempt to educate himself to subvert the bourgeois ideology he is subjected for humiliation and exploitation by Pinky Madam and Mukesh, “You are so filthy! Look at you, look at your teeth, and look at your clothes! There is a red *Paan* all over your teeth, and there are red spots on your shirt. It is disgusting! Get out- clean up the mess you have made in the kitchen and get out” (146). The domination of upper class people is revealed when a child is killed by the Pinky Madam while driving the Honda city and the responsibility is being entrusted on Balram’s head by stork family. Balram is hunted by the scene of hens and rooster situated behind Jama Mahjid and concludes that they have no option to escape so is the case with the lower class people.

Despite being conscious of their exploitation and vulnerability, they cannot come out of the hibernation. The 'rooster coop' symbolises Balram's conscious expression to describe the oppressed, confined and helpless condition of the average Indian people. Sudir Apte writes, "This 'Rooster Coop' analogy is just one of the many devices that make *The White Tiger* a fun read, despite being such a depressing subject: the terrible caste subjugation, regular rigging of elections, and poor people's votes being cast for them by their masters, are heavy topics, but when we read that the 'villagers excitedly talk about local elections like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra, we get it right away". The representation of Balram's status in the beginning of the novel is like subaltern destitute, but when he accumulates wealth, he becomes then like landlord, a position which was ideologically and socially restricted for him. He achieved this higher status through manipulation, murder and acquisition of wealth.

The novel demarcates a long conflicting gap between the educated, wealthy bourgeois and the rural rustic, illiterate proletarians. The subjugated or subaltern people are subject to suffer culturally, socially politically and professionally by the hand of bourgeois class. They are helpless to raise their voice and powerless to resist the exploitation and humiliation entrusted on them. Through they remain inarticulate but they have strong desire to come out of this mess in which their destiny has confined them. They have the instinct of rebellion, but keep them checked, by remaining in the service of their masters; they become well acquainted with the life style of their masters, their strengths and their vulnerability and then wait for the opportunity to strike back at the 'beast' in order to get the ultimate goal of being counted. They also have the seed of evils in them and this evil finally forces them to challenge the existing order- the man made order of discrimination on the basis of caste and class- the downtrodden people revolt against their oppressors. This is done by Balram in the novel.

The implication of the theory of resistance in the novel is not instance but it has been implicated gradually with the development of Balram's character. In the beginning he seems to be meek, soft fellow and religious too but the growing circumstances forces him to change his attitude for his master by serving his hypocritical and rotten masters. At the same time his attitude for his family members also undergoes a drastic change and he stops sending them money. He turned his concern about them except Kishan who has become 'thinner and darker' and imagines that instead of chicken the woman 'has served me flesh from kishan's own body on the plate'. He abandons the marriage proposal put forward by his Granny. He wants to sleep with blonde and drink English wine which rich people do. As stated in the review, "The New Morality that his [Balram's] compatriots have embraced is soon grasped with both hands by the man from the darkness who thought that he had seen the light. Like the stork, like Mr. Ashok like the corrupt ministers, industrialists, judges' generals and bureaucrats, like the pickpockets, pimps and prostitutes. Balram too becomes an entrepreneur of the new India. Through his methods to resist and get success is unethical but according to the author 'he has violated the trust reposed in him by his master, but that is the way to get out of the jungle'. He showed his countless brethren, the depressed, and oppressed and subjugated one the way to the top. He gave voice to the hushed silence of those silenced people and also hope that even 'half baked' can have light in their life. Thus the story of Balram expressed the optimism that the lot of low class will change and they will become the makers of their own destiny.

The conclusion of the novel is that in contemporary India, there is a wind of change; people now generally don't choose their profession as per their caste. There is no caste disparities to some extent but its presence cannot be denied to the some rural and backward areas. The castesim and class consciousness has sunk into two categories the men with big bellies' and the 'men with small bellies'.

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## Concept of Honour Killing: A study of Manjul Bajaj's *Come, Before Evening Falls*

Dr Randeep Rana

During the last few years extensive reports have appeared in Newspapers and Television channels all over the country about the brutal killing of young boys and girls in the name of 'Honour Killings'. The practice of murdering young boys and girls, who fall in love or tie nuptial bonds, against the wishes of their family has been rampant in several parts of India in general but North India in particular. The socio-economic dominant castes are usually accountable for these unlawful, callous acts against inter-caste relationships. "In the name of preserving 'social order' and saving the 'honour' of the community, caste or family, all kinds of justifications are pressed into service" (Singh 1).

The history of Human evolution is a witness that women have been mortified and treated viciously since the rise of city states-about BC3600-3100. Women have been viewed worldwide as an incarnation of sin, adversity, dishonor and indignity.

During the Roman period issues of honour, shame and sexual purity were of key concern. Several statesmen, Philosophers, thinkers and literary writers of repute such as, Cicero, Seneca, Tacitus, Horace and Juvenal are on record to have discussed these issues. Seneca considered the lack of feminine chastity as the prime sin of his time, Juvenal recommended wives be restricted in the house in order to be kept chaste and in Cicero stated that sexual contravention of a woman brought disgrace to the entire family and ancestry.

In many European countries women were burnt to death for committing adultery, unmarried pregnant British women were confined to lunatic asylums. Even the great William Shakespeare has discussed this issue of 'honour Killing' in one of his gruesome plays, *Titus Andronicus*, where, "The hero's daughter Lavinia has been raped and mutilated, and Andronicus is contemplating her "honour" killing. Titus: Die,die,Lavinia's and thy shame with thee, And with thy shame thy father's sorrows die"( The Tribune 13).

S.D.Lang considered honour killing as the, " most commonly a premeditated murder of a girl or woman, committed by her brother, father... in the name of restoring the family's social reputation" (55).The hypothesis is that fidelity and marriage is not a issue between husband and wife, but relates to the family, and that a woman's betrayal reflect on the honour of the whole family.

The idea of honour is of a primary significance in communal societies because the ignominious behavior of a woman can bring shame, dishonor and reflects upon the other members of the community. Infact , in the words of Farzana Bari, a lecturer at the Qaid al Azzam University in Islamabad:

Honour for men is connected with women's behavior because they are seen as the property of the family- and of the community... They are not independent human beings. Men also think of women as an extension of themselves. When women violate these standards, this is a direct blow to the man's sense of identity"( qtd in The Tribune13).

Even Aristotle, the great philosopher, considered women as subordinate by social necessity and inferior to man both physically and mentally. But he did not approve of beating or killing the woman for adultery.



Honour Killing is a ghastly uncalled and undesired act for the brutal murder of the female for violating sexual norms set up in a patriarchal society. In the twenty-first century under the impact of globalization, modernization postmodernisation in the postcolonial India, the age old conventional rural social setup is on the verge of collapse. An easy access to internet and television has resulted in the increased proximity between young boys and girls and illicit relationships are on the rise. According to a noted sociologist, D.R. Chaudhry, “So long as these relations remain under wraps, there is no problem. However, when it takes the form of marriage, this is taken as a violation of social mores which invites barbic edicts” (The Tribune 13).

Khap panchayats performed positive role during the ancient and mediaeval periods such as promotion of education, settling the community disputes, donation of lands for the opening of schools, curbing lavish display of wealth during marriages to name a few.

At the same time, these Khaps over the centuries have not approved inter caste or class marriages. These marriages were and are considered immoral, deserving rigorous reprimand, and developed a culture of intolerance. Fear of being ostracized force the parents of these errand boys and girls to be a part in the ‘jacobean’ murder, which is considered as a heavenly duty and the executioners feel proud in displaying their cruelty.

Suppression, cruelty, and commodification of women have been a world-wide phenomenon, since times immemorial. The most dominant weapon that men exert over women is the idea of ‘Honour’. Women, prior to her marriage, as a daughter and a sister, represents the ‘Honour’ of her father and brother. After her marriage, as a wife, she represents the honour of her husband and as a mother, she symbolizes the honour of her sons. According to Hussain, “When it comes to the demand of sacrifice, no religion, no sect, no group is different from another. The concept of women as symbol of honour makes them into mere signs in which the actual flesh and blood woman disappears” (qtd in Jafri 32).

*Come, Before Evening Falls*, by Manjul Bajaj portrays a deep insight into the sociological and cultural practices in rural Haryana. The novel is a critique on the Jat family of Ch. Hukam Singh residing in a village, Kala Saand in Rohtak district governed by strict marriage rules and diktats of the khap panchayat.

The present paper is an attempt to depict an agonizing portrayal of two young lovers ,Jugni and Rakha , who fail to unite and marry fearing reprisal from their families. The novel is a heart rending love story set against the Kangaroo courts or Khap panchayat diktats and politics.

The novel is a poignant tale of a love affair between Rakha, a gurukul educated young man and Jugni, niece of Ch. Hukam Singh . The story is set in the year 1909 in Rohtak Division of the erstwhile Punjab Province and modern day Haryana. Rakha goes to a village Kala Saand on a teaching assignment as a teacher. He is greeted by a well known Zamindar/Landlord of the village, Ch. Hukam singh. As a custom, he is given a warm welcome and soon becomes the blue eyed boy of the entire village. Displaying his academic acumen he is able to create a niche for him in the heart of Hukam Singh’s family. Dr K.K Sunalini rightly observed, “ Though the narrative has past historical reference, it has the stark and brutal choices that confront young people as they try and find a way between the impulse of love and the dictates of duty to their families, remain largely unchanged”( n.p.).

But Rakha had nefarious plan. He appeared to have arrived in the village with an agenda. Right from the beginning , he eyed Jugni and decided to marry her. Initially , Jugni ignored Rakha’s advances but couldn’t control her feelings. They , on one pretext or the other start meeting frequently and their affair develops not before it is suspected by Kamala a village

potter's daughter employed by Jugni's chachi, both as a spy to keep an eye on Rakha and to also to help the family in household chores.

Finally Jugni's arranged marriage is fixed. Rakha seeing his plan going astray forces Jugni to elope with him, "Far away, to a place beyond gotra rules, the dictates of the Khap" (Bajaj 143). He could not bear the thought of Jugni getting married to somebody else. But Jugni, fearing her family's reputation and prestige refuses to go with Rakha fully aware that, "Her Tau would never be able to lift his face in the community. ... His neice, a runaway before her wedding day. The grief would kill him sooner than any disease could get him" (Bajaj 206). His love for Rakha meant disgrace, dishonor and death. Moreover her uncle's remarks always haunted her:

A family's honour was everything. A family was like a tree; its honour was not to be violated like this. Honour was the main trunk, if you struck at it, everything else- the branches, the leaves, the flowers, the fruit- they just fell, collapsing a dead heap around it. A tree is more than the sum of its parts. (Bajaj 199)

She was also aware of the fact that, "girls, who fell in love became corpses hanging from trees." (Bajaj 105). She rejects Rakha's proposal knowing fully that love is not an option, her beloved uncle/Tau, whose unspoken favourite she has always been will die if he ever learns of this betrayal of family's honour. Her brothers, her grandmother who brought her up and her family's age old reputation in the village will be lost for ever. She would also end up a corpse hanging from a tree.

She is reminded of the brutal murder of Sheilo, a village girl, who had decided to elope with her paramour on the eve of her marriage. She remembered that:

Men with lathis, kerosene lanterns flame torches. Sent by khap panchayat. Shouting; slapping sounds. Tears. Blood. Then a single scream that pierced the night '*Maa manne bachha le!*' Mother, save me! Before everything fell into a deadly silence. It was not sheilo's voice. It was the voice of a bird being strangled, an animal being slaughtered, a star being plucked out of the sky... Erring daughters were worse than dead. They were simply obliterated. As if they had never existed. Not a whimper, not a stain. Not a memory, not a trace was allowed to remain. (Bajaj 105-106)

The novelist highlights a very pious and significant practice of widow remarriage quite rampant in rural Haryana. Jugni's 'chachi' lost her husband and she was married to Jugni's 'Tau', a widower. "It makes no sense for a widower and a widow to live separately under the same roof," she'd told the village cronies who had come in to gossip. "We are not like Rajputs, burning up their daughters-in-law on funeral pyres or like brahimins, who shave their heads and send them off to Kashi to fend for themselves, God only knows! Call them upper castes, hah!" (Bajaj 15).

This act of the Jats certainly celebrates the glory of ancient vedic culture and highlights the progressive approach of this community in, "supporting widow remarriage through the Jat custom of karsewa, which allowed a widow to take the protection of another male of her own choosing from her husband's family, after her husband died" (Bajaj 170).

Eventually, Rakha's hidden illicit relations with Jugni's chachi are discovered after her Tau's death. Rakha and Chachi tie the nuptial knot despite protest from the other members of the family. This enrages the family members and Rakha and chachi meet their tragic end. But before dying, Rakha accuses Jugni for creating all this mess and ruining his life. Jugni considers herself responsible for Rakha's death. The truth was that, "She could never erase Rakha from her memory ... She knew that the love that Rakha and she had felt for each other was something larger than themselves, something infinitely older, stronger and more indestructible than the brief

drama of their time together” (Bajaj237) .It was for the sake of her family pride and honour, she sacrificed her love. Little realizing:

In hinterland Haryana, falling in love can get you killed.In those parts, Khap Panchayats are the Law. And wise old men, hookah in hand ,are its keepers.anyone who dares go against them can be battered pulp,have their face blackened and asked to leave the village.and those are the lucky ones. (TOI n.p.)

Despite appeals from certain sections of intelligentsia and society there is a rise in these ghastly acts. Every now and then, such killings take place. Finally, the Apex court had to intervene and passed an order recently:

Deprecating the caste system in the country, the supreme court on Tuesday declared illegal”khap panchayats” which often decree or encourage “honour killings” or other institutionalized atrocities against boys and girls of different castes and religions who wish to get married or have married.(The Hindu)

This menace can be tackled and sorted out, if the intellectuals, social, political thinkers and writers dare to contradict it. Honour killing is undoubtedly a barbaric and shameful act reminiscent of feudal mindset. There is a pressing call for the society to build a vibrant counter culture and creation of a more compassionate society.

At last, Manjul Bajaj has dared to reflect that a woman’s way is really different from that of a man’s, whereas violence is latter’s way of life, resilience is former’s. Jugni through her sacrifice, angst and misfortune is able to keep alive the conviction that life matters and must be conserved for its own sake.

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## **The Image of Problematic City in Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *Freedom Song***

**Dr. Dhananjoy Roy**

### **Introduction**

Since its earliest days, the city has always been considered as, to quote Raymond Williams, “an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light” (Raymond Williams, 1) and of culture and employment as well. There can hardly be any controversy to this view. But there is another important factor that the cities have always been problematic too; starting from the aboriginal cities that were established on the alluvial plains of the Near East in the Neolithic period through the Mesopotamian cities, or the cities of the Harappa civilization to the post-industrial cities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and even to the ultra modern cities of the present digital era, the cities have always been found problematic. Therefore, what Burton Pike, in the ‘Preface’ of his mammoth work, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (1981), has spoken of any Western city only: “The city in Western culture has always been problematic” (Pike, 1), is equally true to all even an eastern city like Calcutta. And nowhere in literature than in the novels of Indian Diaspora, especially those which are written on and about the city of Calcutta and its people, this image of problematic city has been portrayed so much realistically. Among the city novels written by the writers of Indian Diaspora on different themes related directly or indirectly to the city of Calcutta, Amit Chaudhuri's two novels viz. *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991) and *Freedom Song* (1998) do have a special focus on some of the leading problematic aspects of the present day city of Calcutta. The present paper, therefore, proposes to single out and critically examine some of the major problematic aspects of the city of Calcutta that are represented by Amit Chaudhuri in these two novels.

### **In *A Strange and Sublime Address*:**

Amit Chaudhuri's first novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991) is about the two summer vacations enjoyed by a Bombay (now Mumbai) based young boy named Sandeep at his Chhotomama's (maternal uncle's) house in the southern part of Calcutta. Though the plot of this novel like many of Chaudhuri's other novels and stories, is not of any particular essence, its representation of some of the images of the hazards of urbanity in the contemporary city of Calcutta (Kolkata) is an extremely vivid one. There are, for instance, evocative images of Calcutta as a city of dust, as a city of intolerable traffic jams, as a city of frequent power cuts and the others.



### **A City of Dust:**

Chaudhuri views the city of Calcutta, in this novel, as “a city of dust” (Chaudhuri, 11). He reflects in his text how the dirty granular particles of dust which are present in the air of the city gradually engulf the whole of the metropolis:

If one walks down street, one sees mounds of dusts like sand-dunes on the pavements, on which children and dogs sit doing nothing, while sweating labourers dig into the macadam with spades and drills (Chaudhuri, 11).

Chaudhuri further writes of how the power of dust slowly transforms the city: Trenches and mounds of dust everywhere give the city a strange bombed-out look. The old houses, with their reposeful walls, are crumbling to slow dust, their once-gleaming gates are rusting. Dust flakes off the ceilings in offices; the buildings are becoming dust, the roads are becoming dust. At the same time, dust is constantly raised into startling new shapes and unexpected forms by the arbitrary workings of the wind, forms on which dogs and children sit doing nothing (Chaudhuri, 11).

There is a strange poetry in the movement of the dust, and Chaudhuri himself waxes eloquent when he speaks about the city ‘disintegrating into’ and ‘rising from’ dust like that mythological bird, the Phoenix:

Daily, Calcutta disintegrates, unwhispering, into dust, and daily it rises from dust again (Chaudhuri, 11).

To get rid of all this dust daily, a household in Calcutta needs floors to be swept and household goods cleaned at least twice in a day – once in the morning and again in the evening. It is because of this that the family of Sandeep’s Chhotomama in the novel employs two maidservants, Saraswati who polishes the floor with a moist rag in the morning, and Chhaya who cleans the house for the second time in the evening. Besides, Sandeep’s Chhotomamima (maternal aunt) “religiously” (Chaudhuri, 11) dusts the furniture of their household daily. The author’s description of the dust in the houses of the city sometimes seems almost fabulous to the reader:

She [Chhaya] would sweep the floor – unending expenses, acres and acres of floor – with a short broom called the jhadu, swiping away the dust in an arc with its long tail, which reminded one of the drooping tail of some nameless, exotic bird (Chaudhuri, 12).

Chaudhuri’s repetitive use of the image of ‘dust’ in the text is in one way indicative of the atmospheric dirtiness present in the city of Calcutta. The term ‘atmospheric dirtiness’ means “the overall soiling capacity of the air: it indicates the total degree of pollution,” as Dipankar Chakraborty in his essay “Calcutta Environment” has defined it. The dirty granular particles of dust, nevertheless, cause many heinous diseases including respiratory diseases. The

author's repetitive use of the image of dust in this novel, no doubt, has a witty concern to this.

In Chapter 2 of this novel, again, the novelist, while writing about the dilapidated roads and the streets of Calcutta, which are always, as he observes, "being dug up" either for the ongoing construction of "the underground [metro] railway system [of 1984]" (Chaudhuri, 11) or for some works like the replacement of underground pipes, reiterates the image and considers the city of Calcutta as full with "mounds of dust."

### **A City of Traffic-Jams:**

Calcutta as 'the city of traffic-jams' is also a prominent image recurrently appears in *A Strange and Sublime Address*. The predicament of traffic jams is one of the many features that typify the city of Kolkata. It is due to traffic jams that the flow of vehicles in many streets of the city often turns to a state of complete standstill. Historically speaking, traffic-jams have always plagued the city of Calcutta, particularly since the 1930s. Jagannath Chattopadhyay, in an article "Howrah Bridge: Akhon o Takhon" ("Howrah Bridge: Now and Then") published in the Sunday special supplement "Rabibar" in the Bengali daily *Bartamaan* (Calcutta, July 03, 2005), records how the movement of traffic on the Pontoon Bridge — the old Howrah Bridge — was always impeded by huge traffic jams created mostly by the carts and hand carts that crossed to and from the city of Calcutta during the 30s and 40s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chattopadhyay also tells in his essay that these huge traffic jams were one of the major causes behind the erection of the new Howrah Bridge or Rabindra Setu (1943) over the river Hooghly. Sukanta Chaudhuri, in his essay "Traffic and Transport in Calcutta," (1990) speaks much about the traffic-jams of Calcutta and also mentions a number of causes that create tedious traffic-jams in the city. Some of these are: limited road-space in the city of Calcutta (only 6.5% of the total area of the city is devoted to roads); shortage in the number of bridges over the river Hooghly to connect the city with rest of the country; an abundance of slow vehicles like hand carts, rickshaws (including hand rickshaws), push vans and other small vehicles; shortage of one-way roads in the city; an acute shortage of parking spaces in the city which compels people to park their vehicles on the streets or roads; an excess of street hawkers or footpath venders whose "stalls tend to cluster at road junction" (Sukanta Chaudhuri, 149); and voluminous pedestrian traffic that stops the normal flow of the traffic every now and then. Really, the list is almost endless!

In *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Amit Chaudhuri too reflects upon this perpetual problematic of traffic-jams in the city of Calcutta and refers to this at several places in the text. For instance, we are told how Sandeep in the novel is accustomed to hear the blowing of horns in the first traffic-jam of the evening in the road near Chhotomama's house in the city:

He [Sandeep] heard car-horns blowing in the distance. He

heard shouts — a taxi driver must be insulting a bus driver. It was the first traffic jam of the evening, punctual, ceremonial and glorious (Chaudhuri, 80-81).

Chaudhuri's use of the adjectives 'punctual', 'ceremonial', and 'glorious' for "the first traffic jam of the evening" is an instance of a mellowed irony. As a Calcuttan, Chaudhuri seems to smile along with the inconveniences caused by traffic jams in the city. Thus when the traffic resumes its flow and everything becomes normal again, the author implies that not only the flow of the traffic but also the flow of the natural world had been halted, and that life comes back to the city with the cleaning of the jam:

The two hours of golden stillness has ended. The cars and the crowded buses were on the roads again; Abhi and Babla [The two cousin brothers of Sandeep] would come back home from school [for their school bus might have been halted in the traffic jam]; pigeons flapped their wings and rose above rooftops, a clean universe of rooftops and terraces (Chaudhuri, 81).

Of course traffic-jams in the streets of Calcutta sometimes do have their serious consequences too. The novel shows how Sandeep's Chhotomama, who already had had a heart attack, suffered another attack in the car itself, because the car by which Chhotomama had been taken to the hospital for immediate treatment was caught in a traffic-jam:

On the way to the hospital, Chhotomama had another attack. He vomited on the floor of the company car [the car of the company where Sandeep's father worked]. The driver, caught in a traffic jam, shook his head from side to side. He [the driver] had seen these things happen to his elder brother, who had died in half an hour (Chaudhuri, 93).

This is a very common and appalling phenomenon that the city of Calcutta witnesses almost every day.

### **A City of Frequent Power-Cuts:**

Frequent and uncertain power-cut, another major problematic aspect of urban life in Calcutta, has also a vivid representation in *A Strange and Sublime Address*. The author, in the novel, gives as much as five references to the intolerable frequent power-cuts of Calcutta which no doubt exemplify unwanted and tedious disruption in the flow of the common urban life in the city. The first reference, as for instance, is made in Chapter 4 of the novel when we are given a picture of Chhotomama's household on an "unbearably hot" (Chaudhuri, 25) afternoon while all the members of the family are striving hard to beat the heat which is doubled by a sudden power cut:

They [the members of Chhotomama's family including Sandeep and his mother] had shut all the windows and closed the shutters so that the room was a large box covered by a lid,

cool and dark and spacious inside. And they were like tiny insects living in the darkness of the box, . . . whenever there was a power-cut, they fanned themselves meditatively with newspapers or bamboo fans, and the children deserted the bed and lay down or sat down on the floor, because the floor was a stone slab of coolness, an expanse of warm ice that would not melt. Sandeep's aunt and mother lay on the bed, murmuring to each other, and each time they turned, there was a shy and subtle clink of bangles. And whenever the power returned, the fan whirled at full speed, and the silent room filled with its gentle, understated hum (Chaudhuri, 26).

The author's detailed observation of every particular thing and movement of the people in the house is certainly noteworthy and his use of the oxymoron 'warm ice' is striking enough.

There is a second reference to a power-cut in Chapter 7 of the novel. It was at six o'clock on a Sunday evening when the power was suddenly cut, and this led to the utter disappointment of "the two servant-girls and their little brother who had come downstairs and plopped shyly on the floor to watch the Sunday film on television . . ." (Chaudhuri, 47). When they turned back home disappointedly, Sandeep's mother comforted them with an assurance: "I'm sure they'll [the television broadcasting centre] show us a better film next Sunday . . ." (Chaudhuri, 47). The third reference to frequent load shedding in the city is akin to an extended metaphor. On one evening of a power cut, Chhotomama took the three children, Sandeep, Abhi and Babla to a nearby field — a big "maidan" (Chaudhuri, 49) which was fully engulfed in darkness but also full with all sorts of people, "college boys, schoolboys, couples, unemployed men, families, hawkers, groups of girls" (Chaudhuri, 49). The author's description of this scene in the novel is extremely evocative:

As they [Chhotomama and the three children] came closer, they noticed that the field was full of people whom they had not been able to discern at first in the darkness: now they came slowly into focus in the moonlight, like a negative becoming clearer and clearer as it was developed in a darkroom. . . It was a strange scene because in spite of the number of people who had congregated together, there was scarcely any noise. The shadowiness of the place made them speak in low voices, as if they were in a theatre or auditorium where the lights had been dimmed meaningfully, and a film or a play were just about to begin (Chaudhuri, 49).

The irritating reality of power-cuts in the city of Calcutta is made something beautiful here. It is as if the evening power-cut in Kolkata has a conjuring power to draw all the people of the city from their houses to a moonlit-*maidan* for an evening walk, casual interaction and generous *adda* (gossip). The *maidan* here is almost an epitome of the whole city of Calcutta completely

transformed by the magic spell of an evening power-cut. And Chaudhuri perceptively adds that:

If there had been no power-cut, or if it had still been light, the maidan, needless to say, would have throbbed with its own din and activity (Chaudhuri, 49).

The novelist also gives a hint of the magic spells that an evening power-cut casts over the people of Calcutta when he says:

But the darkness had brought a strange lethargy and even peace to these otherwise highly strung men and women, and there was a perceptible sense of release, as if time was oozing by, and the world happening elsewhere (Chaudhuri, 49).

Poetic reflection apart, the author, however, is often critical of the government for the frequent and tedious power-cuts in the city. This he denotes through an incident that happens in Chapter 12 of the novel. It was around eleven thirty in one morning when Sandeep's Chhotomama had a heart attack even as he "was planning to take a late bus to work" (Chaudhuri, 90). When the other members of the family were trying to give him relief before taking him to the hospital, "There was a [sudden] power-cut", which made the patient's condition more critical. Sandeep's mother went on constantly fanning "her brother with a newspaper" (Chaudhuri, 91), but the situation became so insufferable that they all began to criticize the government "for its inability to rectify the power shortage" (Chaudhuri, 91) in the city. Historically, it was on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1899, that is over one hundred and twelve years back from today, that electricity began to be supplied for domestic consumption in the city of Calcutta (Cathcal.com, May, 2008). That a period of a century and a decade is not sufficient for a developing metropolis like Calcutta to meet the requirement of power is a sad reflection of our capabilities. That this is a haunting issue for Chaudhuri is revealed in the last chapter of the novel which is entitled "Coolness," which begins with the words: "THE POWER-CUT had begun at seven in the morning. Now it was twelve" (Chaudhuri, 173). The author's use of capital letters in the words, "THE POWER-CUT" denotes his virtual protest against the nonchalant attitude of the authority towards this problematic issue of the city. It is true that in almost every reference to power-cut in the novel, the author more or less tries to romanticize the situation, but here he clearly indicates that he has a serious apprehension too for this problem.

### **Drooping Condition of the Calcutta Telephones:**

Amit Chaudhuri's observation on the indescribably poor condition of the telecommunication department in the city of Calcutta especially during the 80s and 90s of the last century has also been very critically represented in *A Strange and Sublime Address*. Since its birth, telecommunication, however, has been a vital landmark in the development of human civilization especially the urban civilization. In fact, Telecommunication and Information and



Technology are the two departments which have reached to such a height of development today that one can hardly think of any existence in the present world without receiving any help from these two benefactors. This is important to note too that the city, at the same time, also plays an immense role in properly bringing about man's exceeding development in these two major areas of human civilization. In fact, one is the supplement for the development of the other. Quite naturally, Calcutta as a city must have such a place of pride. But, unfortunately enough, Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* gives us a different image; here Chaudhuri has represented the very worse condition of the telephones and the telephone department in Calcutta during the 80s and 90s of the last century. He has called the Calcutta Telephones as a "creature" (Chaudhuri, 169), and commented that "A telephone in Calcutta is quite useless" (Chaudhuri, 169). The author very eloquently refers to the age-old comic artist, "Charlie Chaplin eating a shoe with great relish in *The Gold Rush*" and he wonders "what Chaplin would have done with this telephone [of Calcutta]" (Chaudhuri, 169). This perception of the author is no doubt highly witty and satiric. However, the condition of the Calcutta Telephones has gradually become much more praiseworthy in the later decades.

### **In Freedom Song:**

Somewhat like *A Strange and Sublime Address*, Amit Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* (1998), also tells the story of two middle-class families in the city of Calcutta — one of Khuku Biswas and the other of Mini (Supriti Biswas). The novel describes how the members of an ordinary middle class Bengali family, though somehow radical in mind and heart, residing in a city like Calcutta, manages to marry off a troublesome young lad named Bhaskar. This telling is intermingled with details of the friendship of Khuku and Mini along with their respective families. But here also Chaudhuri has done well with the photographic detailing of the minutiae with special reference to the troubles of urbanity in the modern city of Calcutta. And, interestingly enough, Chaudhuri here in this novel has dealt with a cluster of those problematic aspects of urbanity in Calcutta that he has not represented in the earlier novel.

### **Problem of Generation-Gap:**

Images of radical changes in life style, education, culture and the language of daily conversations of the new generations of Calcuttans are reflected upon in Chaudhuri's depiction of Calcutta in this novel. A clear difference in the culture and the life style between two different generations of people — the old and the new — can be noted in Bhola and his children, Bhasker, Manik, and Piyu in this text.

Differences between the two generations can be found in their distinct ways of regarding the city of Calcutta as a place to live in. We are told by the author that old people are content to stay in the city till their last breath, while

the young ones are anxious to leave the city for one cause or the other. Thus has Khuku's son, Bablu gone to America (California) to complete his research in Economics, while Bhasker's second son and Bhola's brother, Manik has gone to Germany to obtain his graduation degree from there. And the author anticipates that he (Manik) will never return to Calcutta because:

Recently he'd written from Germany that he wanted to study management in America once he'd graduated . . . (Chaudhuri, 400).

On the other hand, the older generation returns back to the city after retirement. Khuku, Bhola's sister, thus returns to Calcutta from Shillong with her husband, Shib after his retirement. "The young leave this city if they can," she says, "the old, it seems return to it . . ." (Chaudhuri, 453). Moreover, Khuku also anticipates that Mohit, her late elder sister's grandchild, will also leave Calcutta within two years for America:

But he would not be here long. Little did he know that two years from now he would be in America. Around him, the city decayed ... It would give way to a brief adolescence and then he would be gone to America, where his uncle [Manik] was. Before long he'd sit for his Scholastic Aptitude Test (Chaudhuri, 360).

Contrarily, Bhasker's father, Bhola, "a German-trained engineer" (Chaudhuri, 402) has a special fascination for the city of Calcutta. The author's extent about Bhola's love for Calcutta is noteworthy:

Her husband loved this city [Calcutta]. He loved its fish, rui and katla and koi [different varieties of fish] with black oily scales, and during the monsoons he would cry out a truism that he repeated with great ardour at this time every year: 'Ilish is the king of fishes!' . . . Thirty years ago, he had come to this city and got married. Since then, its air had changed, till now a nimbus of smoke and dust and fumes surrounded it always. But he loved it as one who had come here and made his life here. Here he had launched his small business, here he had had his children, Bhasker, Manik and Piyu; . . . and in them, in the way they spoke and in what they spoke of, he saw Calcutta more truly than himself; they were the children of this city (Chaudhuri, 325).

But this vision of the city of Calcutta in Bhola's eyes is however shattered:

But three children had become ghosts as three children had grown up, and only he [Bhola himself], it seemed, had remained the same. Who was he? Time and Calcutta seemed to pass through him like water (Chaudhuri, 325).

It is for this reason that he feels depressed. Immigration from a city like Calcutta to other places including foreign countries for some specific purposes is an important and well debated issue that appears as an iterating image

especially in the novels of Indian Diaspora written in English. Kunal Basu's *The Opium Clerk*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and *The Calcutta Chromosome* and Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* are a few among the others where this image has appeared very prominently.

Differences between the two generations, however, can also be found in their common life style. When the aged Bhola, who puts great faith on everything that is old and traditional, turns the knobs of their old radio to catch an audible radio station to hear the news of the day, his two children, Bhaskar and Piyu watch an English movie on the television:

. . . while Bhasker and Piyu watched the English film on television downstairs Bhasker's father turned the knobs for the medium and short wave on the radio — to listen who knows what — . . . (Chaudhuri, 323).

The act of watching a film by the young when compared to an old man's inquisitiveness about the news of the day, indicates an essential difference between the two generations.

### **A Mirage and A Nightmare:**

The image of newness of Calcutta has had a fine reflection in Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song*. But the icon of newness of Calcutta also leads the novelist to describe the city as a "mirage" (Chaudhuri, 336) and a nightmare. While giving the minutiae of a nursing home at Dhakuria in South Calcutta, where Khuku and Mini, the two childhood friends go twice a week for their routine physical checkup in their old age, Chaudhuri comments:

Because the building itself was new, with a flat white façade that had red borders, it looked like a mirage, as all new things do in Calcutta. (Chaudhuri, 336)

He repeats this when he describes how Khuku and Mini reach the building after passing through the glaring streets and lanes of the city in Khuku's family car: "The nursing home rose before them like a mirage" (Chaudhuri, 337). 'A mirage,' according to the *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*, is an "optical illusion caused by atmospheric conditions . . ." (*Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 476). A mirage appears to have an existence particularly when it is observed from a certain distance. And so when Chaudhuri says that whatever is new in Calcutta is like "a mirage," he implies that all the new things in the city, are without any real substance, solidity or permanence that may lead one to nothingness.

Elsewhere in the novel, Chaudhuri, while speaking about Puti, the only daughter of Khuku's dead elder sister and her only son, Mohit, has described Calcutta as a city of "bad dream[s]" and an enticing city:

Yet this city that Mohit had been born into seemed sometimes like a bad dream to Puti, with posters, and endless peeling political messages on the walls (360).

### Communal Riots:

Distinct episodes of communal riots have often troubled the urban life in Calcutta. Like Amitav Ghosh in his *The Shadow Lines*, Amit Chaudhuri in his *Freedom Song* also represents Calcutta as a city of riots, curfews, and communal feuds and turmoil. But there is a difference in this regard between the two novels, for while Ghosh's novel highlights the riots of the 1970s in the city of Calcutta, Chaudhuri's novel represents the riots in the city in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, Riots in the history of the city of Calcutta are nothing new. Between 1911 and 1992 the city witnessed at least six major riots most of which erupted due to communal issues. There was a riot between the Hindus and the Muslims in 1911 in Calcutta, and again another one on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1921 between the Hindus and the Anglo-Indians of the then Calcutta. The city also witnessed a large-scale of Hindu-Muslim riot in the month of September 1918 which was caused by, to quote Suranjan Das, "the economic marginalization of Muslims [by the Marwaris] in Calcutta . . ." (Das, 75). Then there occurred another communal riot in 1926 caused similarly by ". . . a significant increase in the general Muslim antagonism towards the Marwaris, an anger intensified by the economic boycott of Muslims by the Marwais" (Das, 75).

Das also records that "Between 1911 and 1921 alone, nearly 90,000 people were displaced from their slums, most of whom were Muslims" (Das, 75). Then, there was the Great Calcutta Action Day or the Direct Action Day of 16 August 1946 (just one year before the Independence) that continued in the city for a whole week. Suranjan Das in his essay "The 1992 Calcutta Riot in Historical Continuum: A Relapse into 'Communal Fury'?" (Das, 283) puts the number of casualties within the first three days of the riot as exceeding 4,000, with more than 10,000 residents left homeless in the city. The communal riot again relapsed in the city when Bangladesh got its independence in 1971. This heinous communal violence between the Hindus and the Muslims in Calcutta recurred once again towards the end of 1992 and in the beginning of 1993 after the historical demolition of *Babri masjid* in Uttar Pradesh on December 6, 1992, and serial bomb blasts in Bombay (Mumbai) in March 1993. A huge communal turmoil appeared in Mumbai and whole of the nation immediately after the serial blasts which resulted in immeasurable bloodshed nationwide. The city of Calcutta too could not able to appease its people in such a disturbing circumstance. As N. L. Gupta has indicated in his book *Communal Riots in India* (2000), in Calcutta the death toll was at least 9 (Gupta, 307). Amit Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song*, however, has recorded the latter two major communal riots of Calcutta and not all the historical riots that erupted in the city. There are some episodes in the novel that refer to the communal violence of Calcutta in 1992 and 1993. In some of the conversations between Khuku and Mini in the novel, Chaudhuri tries to represent the riot stricken city of Calcutta during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In one such conversation, Mini while traveling with Khuku in a car down Southern Avenue and upon

observing a billboard that proclaims “Hindu and Muslim amity,” asks Khuku: “When do you think it’ll [the communal violence] end?”, and the author describes thereafter, “. . . the signs of upheaval were still there, the daily killings . . .” (Chaudhuri, 353). There are also some references, in the novel, to the curfew that was imposed in some sensitive parts of the city of Calcutta during this time (December, 1992). In describing the silence in Khuku’s house, the author says: “It had not been so silent since the days of the curfew” (Chaudhuri, 340). Jochna, the maid-servant in Khuku’s house had been absent for two days, and the author’s grim concern to this curfew is expressed thus:

During the curfew a month ago, all had been disorder and silence, Jochna, who was becoming increasingly pretty, had not been able to come to work for two days; there had been tension in her area and fear of violence (341).

The subsequent dislocation in the lives of thousands of poor people in the city is made further clear by the novelist in his words:

It was at such times that the sketchy unfencedness of their existence became palpable, that they must lead lives perpetually and nakedly open to duress. The Muslims had taken out a procession; at night . . . with a tremulous sense of something about to happen, Jochna and her family and other Hindus in the basti [slum] had been moved to a nearby Christian school, while the furious Muslims apparently congregated and went about shouting and protesting (Chaudhuri, 341).

Finally, there is another reference to a fearful situation in Calcutta towards the end of the novel: “an explosion in Central Avenue, not very far from Mini’s building” resulting into a common panic and terror among the inhabitants of the city like Khuku, Mini and a lot of others (Chaudhuri, 452). However, they are later much relieved to learn that the explosion had nothing to do with any riot or violence, but that “it was the arsenal of a local hoodlum that had blown up by accident” (Chaudhuri, 452).

However, along with all these, Amit Chaudhuri, in these two novels, has also hinted upon some of the other problematic aspects of the city of Calcutta such as the issue of unemployment and economic liberalization, the gradual declination of the industries especially the small and indigenous industries and enterprises in the city, alarming condition of health and hygiene in the metropolis, the ever haunting issue of the extended population in the city of Calcutta, and the issues concerning social life and relationship in an age-old metropolis like Calcutta. Problematic aspects apart, Chaudhuri, nonetheless, represents the city of Calcutta in his novels too “. . . like a work of modern art [too] that neither makes sense nor has utility, but exists for some esoteric aesthetic reason” (Chaudhuri: *A Strange and Sublime Address*, 11).



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## The Professional World in David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*

Sanchita Das

*Glengarry Glen Ross* (1984), a play for which Mamet was awarded Pulitzer Prize actually concerns a group of real estate salesman whose company has imposed a ruthless regimen. The most successful will receive a Cadillac, the runner-up a set of steak knives; loser will be fired. It is a neat paradigm of a competitive capitalist society. The key to success lies in securing the addresses of likely buyers. Since priority is given to the successful, this is a world in which success breeds success. Such is the pressure that it encourages unscrupulous methods with respect to the clients and ultimately with respect to the company. Increasingly desperate, one of the salesman, Shelly Levine, breaks into the office and steals the address list of potential clients. The crime is investigated by the police. The salesman's own fraudulent activities, by contrast, in deceiving their customers, is regarded simply as good business, sanctioned by the ethics of a world in which success is a value and closing a deal an achievement. My paper maps a search of a genuine, innocent voice whose consciousness is not terrorized by the consumer society.

The ideological world of Mamet's play is not the legal institution of the Roman law, but rather the economic institution of American capitalism (mythologized as the American Dream), within which Mamet's characters are constituted as salesmen, pivotal figures in the economic world of business. The institution has already predetermined how the salesmen will define themselves, their relationship to each other and to their conditions of existence, and how they will employ language to compose those definitions. Defining America has been both an American and a foreign preoccupation. It is part of a familiar triangulation process by means of which individuals and societies locate themselves, geographically, politically and culturally.

America is for many a fiction rather than a reality. For most societies, it existed as idea before being realized as fact, and fact had then to be pulled into line with myth, a great dream of avarice. Mamet places his own country as an artificial gathering of men from different languages, customs, and traditions whose only common denominator was having been condemned by history to live together without knowing or loving each other. America too, is not America; it is compounded of myths to do with freedom and equality, of yeoman farmers and sturdy individuals, of spirituality and material enterprise. It propounds a dream of increasing wealth and perfectibility; it propounds a singular identity forged out of difference. It talks to itself in the dark for reassurance about its special status.

In *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), Mamet writes about his experiences in a real-estate office. He wrote the play thirty five years after the first performances of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in February 1949. *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) had its premiere at London's National Theatre in September 1983. Both the dramatists see that archetypal American figure, the drummer or salesman, not only as the representative of a capitalist system which is ruinous to personal decency and to relationships but also as its victim.

Those who thrive in the marketplace are morally, emotionally, spiritually damaged; those who do not continue to thrive fast become disposable. On the other hand, those classified as rejects protest, sometimes invoking the very values they have wilfully or unknowingly subverted but they soon discover they are subject to the same laws that are applied to mechanical objects. They are the disintegrating old bones in the society whose own survival is at risk. In *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), Mamet's four salesmen, Roma, Levene, Moss and Aaranow, are busy beguiling gullible Chicagoans into investing large sums in an

undeveloped Florida land which has been given an exotic Scottish name but is probably fit only for ants or alligators. These salesmen are socially more marginal, their aggressiveness greater, their scruples non-existent and are observed with greater detachment. They are never seen in their domestic environment and have less chance to engage sympathies from their audience. It is difficult to speculate about the home lives of Mamet's salesman. Only a few words from Levene suggest that any of them have any personal relationships at all, but at work they seek only to keep their jobs and make money, largely at each other's expense. Camaraderie is sometimes as sham and often a ruse.

What is stinging in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) is not just that its salesmen are battling by foul means to offload worthless property. It is that Murray and Mitch, company directors who remain safely offstage yet are frighteningly omnipresent, have introduced a system which means that those salesmen are not merely in competition but effectively at war with each other. The man who sells the most land will win a Cadillac. The runner-up receives a set of steak knives. The other will be fired. At the beginning of the play, it appears that Roma is just one sale away from Moss who is running second, followed at no great distance by Levene, followed by Aaranow, seemingly the least aggressive, dishonest and therefore productive of the sales force.

The first act consists of three short scenes, each set in a booth in the same Chinese restaurant. These demonstrate how a successful salesman, namely Roma, softens up a possible buyer and how the less successful Levene and Moss behave when they feel insecure, threatened and resentful. The second of these scenes also sets the main plot in motion. Moss wants to persuade Aaranow to raid the office, steal the "leads", and give them to him to sell to a rival estate called Jerry Graff.

The burglary occurs in the interval, leaving the play's second act to deal with its aftermath. The office is in chaos, a broken plate glass window boarded up, glass all over the place and the leads are missing along with phones and other equipment presumably taken to suggest to the police that this was not an inside job. But the detective, Baylen is not convinced on the case. He interviews the staff in a side office and he gets his man. Moss persuaded Levene to carry out the burglary. Levene ends up admitting to the office manager, Williamson that he stole and sold the leads. This is the play's least convincing encounter, since it depends on an experienced salesman, adept to every variety of slippery behavior, not merely failing to cover up a small verbal slip but giving way to uncharacteristic weakness and trust. On the other hand, the incident provides yet more evidence of Levene's insecurity and decline.

The subplot involves Richard Roma, who has spent the final part of the first act talking to a solitary fellow-diner called James Lingk. During the interval, he has been to Lingk's home and persuaded him and his wife to sign a contract for Florida land. For him, this is a reason for rejoicing, since it means that he has now won the office contest and the Cadillac. But then Lingk appears at the real-estate office, desperate to renounce an agreement to which his wife now fiercely objects. It looks as if Roma's stratagem will win back his buyer; an inept Williamson makes an interpolation which Roma ensures that sale is lost for now.

The play ends with Levene about to be arrested and Roma returning to the place where he discovered Lingk and presumably hopes to find other prospects. A crime and its solution change nothing. This sleazy operation will continue as before. Salesman will have their triumphs and their failures; ordinary people will be duped and fleeced. This is not the play's only subject. It's great strength is its uniquely detailed account of the language of manipulation. It also has plenty to tell us about the experience of becoming and being. As Gordon W. Allport says, "...life is a hard struggle for existence ...when ...there appears to be

‘no exit’ (Sartre).” (Allport 81). The business ethics of America inspires such ‘hard struggle’ for good economic and social reasons. It is worth re-emphasizing that Mamet’s portrayal of his microcosmic real-estate office embodies his views about the macrocosm outside.

Both Levene and Roma are nostalgic for the old ways of closing a deal which is both risky and daring. They have a particular contempt for Williamson, whom they see as a “secretary” or “white bread” (*GGR* 77). He sits in the office distributing leads while they are out in the real world, in Levene’s words, walking up to the doors of people they do not know and “selling something they don’t even want” (*GGR* 77). Roma goes even further. His myth of himself is of a frontiersman, boldly venturing where others fear to tread.

This is most evident when Williamson inadvertently contradicts a lying Roma by telling the frightened Link that the cheque he wrote out at the salesman’s bidding has already been cashed. When Link runs out in panic, Roma turns on Williamson, calling him “a fairy”, “a fucking child” and worse. (*GGR* 96). Towards the end of the play, talking to Levene, he makes his view still clearer: “It’s not a world of men ... It’s a world of clock watchers, bureaucrats, office holders... there’s no adventure to it... we are the members of a dying breed” (*GGR* 105)

Through Roma and Levene, Mamet tries to question the pioneer myth which he himself has disowned. It is an ethic that gives Roma and Levene a gratifyingly macho rationale for playing on the greed of, and economically enslaving, the common men and women of modern Chicago. Mamet brings in Thorstein Veblen’s *Theory of Leisure Class*: “Sharp practice inevitably shades over into fraud. Once someone has no vested interest in behaving in an ethical manner, and the only bounds on his behavior are supposedly his innate sense of fair play, when fair play becomes an outdated concept” (Bigsby, 95). *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) makes it clear that such behavior is not purely an individual decision. The code of an institution ratifies us in acting amorally. The play teaches us that we do not exploit the possible opportunities not only are we being silly but also we are being negligent.

The endemic attitude is very evident when Roma berates Williamson for telling a “truth” that is actually a miscalculated professional lie. He adds to the pressure exerted by Murray and Mitch outside the office. Such an action will inexorably lead to men being consigned to the trashcan at a time and in an age when re-employment will be tough to find.

So the play not only exposes an ugly business practice but it also implicates an America that, as Mamet has said, is “a very violent society full of a lot of hate: you can’t put a band-aid on a suppurating wound.” (Bigsby, 96). On the other hand, the play relieves the salesman of some of their responsibility for terrible conduct

Aaraw does not refuse to sell land, he at the same time does not fail to show interest when Levene implies he might get a job with a rival estate agent who is himself corrupt enough to agree to buy stolen leads. At the same time, when Moss suggests that Murray and Mitch are ripping off the salesmen, he defends them by pointing out that they have overheads to pay. When the office he refused to burgle is trashed, he worries about whether it is insured.

Mamet shows that Levene has a good personal reason for panic. In the opening scene, he claims to have left his wallet in his hotel, so cannot pay his share of the restaurant bill, again he comes up with the \$100 bribe Williamson demands for giving him better leads. Two words, “the gas”, suggest that he cannot afford to fill up his car. He has someone he cares for and uses as the basis for his plea for help both here and after the burglary: “my daughter”, (*GGR* 26) he says, with the written text italicizing the noun each time and on the first occasion demanding a long pause before the phrase. There are many pauses and silences in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) for the actors to fill with emotion or mental calculation or both. Here, we can sense the pain of a divorced man who has lived precariously but takes pride in



having put “the kid through school” (*GGR* 77). Mamet has a mixed feeling about his salesmen when they are operating professionally.

Levene, in the first scene, attempts to persuade Williamson to give him better leads. His argument is that he is a fine salesman who is the victim of “bad luck”, and should be helped through his losing “streak” (*GGR* 16) because he has done excellent work in the past. He has made large profits for Murray and Mitch, once effectively paying for the latter’s car and buying the former a trip to Bermuda: “Those guys lived on the business I brought in” (*GGR* 22). But there is a major flaw in his argument. Levene is invoking triumphs in 1970s, even in the 1960s, and this is a world where history, loyalty and friendship count for nothing. “Not lately it isn’t” (*GGR* 17) is Williamson’s story response to Levene’s claim that his ability is greater than Moss’s.

Levene runs down Roma (“he’s throwing the leads away”) as well as Moss (“he’s an order taker”) in sales pitch for himself that becomes more angry and desperate as it continues. He tries to play on Williamson’s guilt-feelings, his humanity which wants no pity or charity. But subsequent events indicate that Williamson does not feel secure enough in his job to succumb to emotions that he anyway does not appear to possess. He tries to remain cool when the office manager becomes hostile to him as if he is a loser. In the end Levene even fails to offer money as bribe to save himself.

The second scene suggests that Moss is far better as a salesman. He too fails in his aim to manipulate Aaranow into carrying out the burglary of the office. He plays both on the sense of justice, though he retains unease and unhappiness in the job. The pressure created by Mitch and Murray is “too great”. A competition weighted in favour of already successful salesmen is “not right”. Moss even agrees with Aaranow when he adds that “it’s not right to the customers” (*GGR* 31).

Moss is ready to excite Aaranow’s displeasure. The two of them are slaves of people, who instead of building up their sales force, offer them meaningless prizes, treat them like children, and axe them, “fuck them up the ass” (*GGR* 36). “You’re absolutely right”, says Moss, strengthening their consensus by falsely implying that these criticisms were initiated by Aaranow, and moves a crucial step further. Someone should “strike back” to steal the leads. Aaranow can be asked a question, “what could somebody get for them?” (*GGR* 38) which is sufficiently enough to describe his intention.

Since Aaranow knows the inner story, Moss threatens him to perform the break-in and if he refuses, he might have to bear the consequences. When Aaranow enquired of his fault, “Because you listened” (*GGR* 46), comes the brusque brutal answer. Manipulation has become domination, and though later Aaranow opted for “out”, a powerful, plausible threat silenced him. If that scene shows why Moss is ahead of Levene in the Cadillac stakes, the next explains why Roma is at the front. He can pick out a stranger and then prepare him for a “sit” and a sale. At the end of a long day, he relaxes sharing casual thoughts about life in general with a friendly face. Not until the very end, by the time his quarry has been readied for the kill, does he move into salesman mode and then in a way which off handedly suggests that he is not especially interested in making a sale.

It is from Roma’s speeches that we come to know about Lingk’s passive and repressed nature and how he is fundamentally scared of his wife. Roma appeals to a side of him that is not wholly intimidated by conventional morality. He says to Lingk, “When you die you’re going to regret the thing you don’t do” (*GGR* 47). Flatteringly, he implies that the man whose macho self he hopes to discover and exploit is like him a world – weary stud: “The great fucks that you may have had. What do you remember about them?” (*GGR* 48).

Like Moss with Aaranow, Roma is creating a shared sense of values, experience, sophistication and identity. Though Lingk is all but silent, he is being cajoled into “the habit

of saying yes" (*GGR* 48). Roma now appeals to his conventional, conscientious and perhaps his guilty self. He tries to reconcile the opposite aspects of Lingk's personality by manoeuvring him towards the paradoxical belief that to take risks is to achieve security, for instance, by investing sight unseen in Florida land. It is Roma's spiel at Lingk's home which convinced Mrs. Lingk to have second thoughts about the contract that she and her husband have signed and send him to renege on the deal. Roma is able to entice Lingk back into his clutches by simultaneously acknowledging the good husband and appealing to the suppressed man: "You have certain things you do jointly, you have a bond there ... and there are other things. Those things are yours. You needn't feel ashamed. You needn't feel that you're being untrue ... or that she would abandon you if she knew. This is your life." (*GGR* 93). It is not untrue that Lingk defies his wife by preparing to go for a drink with the salesman.

Roma's psychological insight is awesome. He has an ability to exploit words that captivate, enchant, confuse, tantalize and convince his clients. As Bigsby says, "one sees the similarities between the drummer, who must persuade or perish, and the dramatist, whose own professional survival depends on the wit and skill with which he wins belief for fictional situations and passes off chimeræ in Florida or Arizona as plausible realities" (Bigsby, Christopher. *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet* (Bigsby 100-101). Mamet's achievement in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) is to show a virtuosity of words which enables him to sell his own vision.

Here virtuosity of words means the language in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), which is often brusque and brutal but has a texture which is scarcely found in American or English drama today. Mamet always tries to repeat the trivialities of speech with unfinished sentences, twists, redundancies, emphases and muddles. Thus, Levene exhilarated by an improbable sale says, "And, and, and, and I did it. And I put a kid through school. She ... and cold calling fella. Door to door. But you don't know. You don't know. You never heard of a streak" (*GGR* 77). The speech reflects the vindictive triumph of the moment and also Levene's impulsive, erratic character and chaotic state of being.

Though the salesmen share jargons, they use language differently. The bullying Moss is candid, punchy; Aarano more tentative, Roma canny and intricate. Their language leaves us with a feeling that Mamet is the bard of streetwise brutality, the laureate who is an expert in recording everyday speech in urban Illinois. In his business plays, he has described America as "spiritually bankrupt" (Bigsby, 101). He says that the spirit has to be renewed. But such spirit can never be renewed if material wants and needs define and diminish virtually every human contact and where relationships ultimately become hostile.

What I find in this play is that he is in search of a genuine, innocent voice whose consciousness is not terrorized by the consumer society. He wants to regain the status which has been lost in contemporary America. To move along a revolving axis of American cultural histories from an early version of commercial-technological man to his far more complex modern counterpart. American theatre has done much to shape America's changing sense of the human, which in turn is intimately connected with their relationship to the land. The mythic prototypes that embody the relationship are inseparable from what they are and what they have been and what they can be. As they re-create and relive these prototypes in their understanding of national purpose, the dichotomy illuminated looms as a matter of both being and becoming. Mamet wants his character to stop relying upon these artificially created prototypes in order to escape reality. He exposes violence through language what he considers a corrupt and venal culture – a culture that has exchanged the golden vision made possible by the American Dream for the tinselly ostentation of a society of excess. He exposes the role of capital or money as terroristic, where the relation between an object and a man is dependent on the use of value and a transition to an exchange value. The society

becomes an object and money tries to copy the image of that object. The characters try to choose that object with the help of code called language. This code leads them to a complex pattern. The code, i.e., language generates a fantasy on them and their desire to choose the next. Such fantasy can come into play in the form of a game. It invades their consciousness and when it gives no satisfaction, it creates confusion and misunderstanding in their life. They lose their peace of mind gained from the past and a lust for gaining an object takes over their real. They are caught in the chain of transition when their real self becomes virtual, only by looking at the world; just as one becomes a part of a movie just by looking at it. For them, comfort becomes consumption and capital redefines human relations. They are thrown into a space from where they can never return. This is how Mamet sets out to demonstrate the awful barrenness that exists in American society

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## The Poetic Genius of Sudeep Sen: A Critical Perspective

Dr.Sandhya Tiwari

The work of an artist is appreciated over a period of time; but, there are a few who will attain great height and success at a young age. They, blessed by the muse, are fortunate to appeal to the literati who endorse and value their creative acumen. The present article is a study of one such literary genius, who has altered the people's perspective of looking at poetry. In this article a study is conducted to explore what is the uniqueness of Sudeep Sen's poetry, which fascinated the litterateurs and critics. He is the recipient of the prestigious 'Pleiades' honour, 2004, at the world's oldest poetry festival— the Struga Poetry Evenings, Macedonia — for having made "significant contribution to modern world poetry". This study is to highlight his creative output and versatility. It is unfortunate that we hardly come across some secondary sources on the enormous work produced by such great poets. This article is a humble attempt to share with the readers of your journal and add, enhance the existing literary cornucopia of Contemporary Writers and Poets.

Sudeep Sen is born on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1964 in New Delhi, India. After completing his honours degree in English Literature at the University of Delhi, he spent a year as an International scholar at one of the leading liberal arts college in North Carolina and then went to Virginia to complete his masters in Literature. He started of his career in New York working as an editor for a corporate consultancy in Manhattan, then as an assistant editor of a leading literary journal Boulevard. On his return to Delhi worked as a journalist and a documentary film maker. Spent winter of 1992 and 93 as an international poet-in-residence at the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburg, and later moved to England to write on full time basis.

Sudeep Sen published his first work at the age of eighteen years the compiled collection of his fledging verse entitled *Leaning Against the Lamp Post*. The work displays Sen's exquisite sense of rhyme and rhythm. This can as well be because of the childhood influence on Sen as he hailed from a family which had aristocratic lineage to Raja Raj Ballabh Rai. Quality exposure to music, literature, art etc. at home have greatly shaped Sen's outlook and expression. His fondness for form - the poem as a carefully crafted artifice can be avowed to his reading the works of the likes of Pablo Neruda, John Donne, Ezra Pound, T.S.Eliot etc. He was enthralled by the world of sound, rhythm, word-patterns, ideas, syllabics, music, and language itself.

Sen's dozen books include: *Leaning against the Lamp-Post* (1983), *The Lunar Visitations* (1990), *Kali in Ottava Rima* (1992), *Parallel* (1993), *New York Times* (1993), *South African Woodcut* (1994), *Mount Vesuvius in Eight Frames* (1994), *Dali's Twisted Hands* (1995), *Postmarked India: New & Selected Poems* (1997), *Prayer Flag* (2003), *Distracted Geographies* (2004), *Rain* (2005), *Aria* (2009) which was awarded A K Ramanujan Translation Award, *Letters of Glass* (2010), and others. His forthcoming book is entitled *Blue Nude: Poems & Translations 1977-2012*, which is bestowed with the Jorge Zalamea International Poetry Award. He has also edited several important anthologies, including: *The Harper Collins Book of Modern English Poetry by Indians* (forthcoming), *The Literary Review Indian Poetry* (2009), *Biblio South Asian English Poetry* (2006, a portfolio), *Midnight's Grandchildren: Post-Independence English Poetry from India* (2004), *Index for Censorship [Poems] Songs of Partition* (1998, a portfolio), *Lines Review Twelve Modern Young Indian Poets* (1996), *Wasafiri Contemporary Writing from India, South Asia and The Diaspora* (1995), and others.

The literary genius of Sudeep Sen is recognized and appreciated and his poetry and literary prose have appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Independent*, *Financial Times*, *London Magazine*, *Literary Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Telegraph*, *Hindu*, *Outlook*, *India Today*, and broadcast on BBC, CNN-IBN, NDTV & AIR. Sen's recent work appears in *New Writing 15* (Granta), *Language for a New Century* (Norton), *Leela* (HarperCollins), *Oxford New Writing* (Blackwell), and others. His poems, translated into over twenty-five languages, have featured in international anthologies by Penguin, HarperCollins, Bloomsbury, Routledge, Norton, Knopf, Everyman, Random House, Macmillan, and Granta.

A close look at the works produced by him would indicate the versatility of Sen as a poet. He is ever experimenting, innovating not just with the themes but also with the structure of his collections and compilations. Especially in case of Translation, retaining the originality intact is very challenging task, but Sen is successful not only in retaining the beauty of expressions rather glorified it by making it possible to reach to majority of the readers.

“Sen is amongst the finest younger English-language poets in the international literary scene. A distinct voice: carefully modulated and skilled, well measured and crafted”.

- Gregor Robertson on *BBC Radio*

The compilations of poems by Sen are representative of his choice as a poet. His obsession for control, symmetry and order in the selection shows the kind of meticulous detail that only a maturing vision could smooth into poetic song of immense grace and eloquence. His poetry has a string of an artist who is immensely self conscious effort balanced around the themes of humility and self-importance. The first official book of poems *The Lunar Visitations*, brings to the forefront the growing artistic flair to tackle complex issues of love, death, politics, longings etc. Though he is presently a full time, with full grown career, a resident writer labroad, most of his early life was spent in India. This has a tremendous impact on him which became the ready raw material to go through the poetic mold of Sen. Having come across face –to-face with social realities like poverty, culture, tradition, etc. Sen's work is etched with the remarkable presentations in an intriguing way.

The poems in *The Lunar Visitations*, published in the year 1990, range the powerfully imaginistic ‘*Valley of the Gods*’, an intimation on the meaning of morality; death, reason, passion couched in an autobiographical narrative set in Colorado; to the lyrical intimation of love, ‘*the Lovers and the Moon*’, to the clearly political and deeply fatalistic ‘*Calcutta Vignettes*’, which showcase the brilliance of Sen's passages which symbolize the convergence of the sacred and the profane, art and stark reality:

Far away behind the Park Circus graveyard  
where death overrides the dirge, sits a prophet,  
his skeletal figure cracking.  
He plunges his bony hands  
through a bowl of boiled rice,  
grain by grain, with a hope  
that tomorrow may be brighter than today.  
How long will the people here recline and bask  
“in thy days of glory past,”  
of Dutts, Derozios and Tagores?



In *The Lunar Visitations*, by employing the natural phenomenon of day and night the scheming and styling of dark and light is awe inspiring. The flight of poetic fancy appended and aided by the realistic application brings the rich hues of mystic construct. The canvas of Sen's poetry is vast where he paints the bleak and bizarre. Not surprisingly, therefore, a distinguished historian and literary critic, Angus Calder, has perhaps paid the greatest tribute so far to Sen's artistry: "At 29, he's probably as good as Louis MacNeice was at the same age, and he often reminds me of MacNeice, of 'the drunkenness of things, being various.'"

In this collection of fifty-odd poems, the reader will be struck by the intuitive quality of his writing. The poems in this anthology expound the body's desire to remember struggles against the opposed desire to free itself from all remembrance on every page. The combination of Kali, the Indian deity with the Italian poetic form of Ottava Rima – a highly challenging task was accomplished very well by the poet. Most of the poems deal with themes which are more or less Indian but presented in the intricate form of ottava rima, the heart of western poetic structure and tradition. The voice is transparent, personal and at times cynical grasping the absurdities of the democratic system of Indian life. Another poem is the voice of Kolkatta, the powerfully rendered "Durga Puja" which celebrates the might of the deity in true Indian spirit. The delicately fashioned rhyme scheme and the shifting rhyming couplets draw their essential cadence from the Sanskrit *sloka* structure bestowing the incantatory appeal as if the ritual recitation produces a delightful effect. Though this poetry is made up of images that are tersely presented and placed with a very individualistic sense of significance, it attracts universal attention avowed by the creative genius. The intense sophistication and the spiritual grounding are exemplary of Sen's deep rooted conviction of Indian experience wedded to poetic vision.

"The poet possesses a measure of precision and skill with words which along with an unfettered imagination, allows him to draw on his erudition without giving way to any obtrusive influences. The poems veer from realistic narratives to experiments in surrealism showing the poet's familiarity with craft. He often aims at a lingering effect".

- *The Independent*

*Rain* is another beautiful, inspiring treasure of a book, published in the year 2005, Sudeep Sen reflects on rain - its passion its politics, its beauty and fury, its ability to douse and arouse. He ultimately explores the various moods that water and fluids inherently unravel. The chapters contain descriptions and pictures entitled air-conditioner, rain; fern frost; monsoon greens; night rain; longing, rain; shower, wake; rain charm, rain, kiss; drizzle, climax; drought, cloud; and others. Sen's writing here is crisp and tightly wrought, the pacing swift and cadenced, and the mood desirous. Commenting about his work *Rain*, Amit Chaudhari in *The Statesman*, 'Best Book of the Year' remarks: 'I read *Rain* with considerable admiration and pleasure. It is a word-perfect collection and its subject matter is both the measure of the rain and the spoken line'.

The poems of Sudeep Sen are unique at least in one way the theme of each poem is exquisitely dealt and the structure is a perfect combination of creation and implementation. Each word encapsulates the vigour of the poetic mind. For example the poem "Bharatnatyam Dancer" in *Postmarked India* symbolizes Sen's rich portrayal of the classical dance form. The abacca...dbdeed...fbfggf...rhyme scheme records and reflects the actual classical dance pattern. The technicalities, structure, indentation, alignment etc. speak of the poet's sense of precision and perfection. It is difficult even to give a passing commentary of each work in an article of about 2000 words, but it is definitely the tip of the iceberg for the readers.

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## Maresh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*: A Study in the Treatment of Incest

Santosh Kumar Sonker

Maresh Dattani is an Indian English Sahitya Akademi Award winning playwright who has trained his critical gaze at depicting the ground reality of the Indian society which is often side tracked in spite of the fact that it is quite noticeable. In his play, *Thirty Days in September*, Dattani has dramatized the most heinous issue, child sexual abuse. Dealing with the child incest, the play throws more light on the effects of the forced sexual relation on the individual's psyche, which gets intensified with the passage of time, than the issue itself. The protagonist of the play, Mala, is molested by her maternal uncle before reaching her puberty. Her mother does not raise voice against her daughter's molestation. As she grows, she becomes physically vulnerable and sexually addicted. The play also highlights the mother's silence against her daughter's molestation resulting in a conflict between them which ends with the mother's revelation that she herself was molested by the same person in her childhood.

Critically examining Maresh Dattani's play, *Thirty Days in September*, the present paper reveals and criticizes such social stigma as the practice of incestuous relationship, the social taboos which define women as pain bearers, and the effects of child sexual abuse on an individual's psyche. The play deals with the most heinous issue, incestuous relationship, which not only shakes humanity but also damages the equilibrium of an individual mind, when it is forced on a child.

Dattani, in the play, *Thirty Days in September*, first performed at Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai, on May 31, 2001, has dramatized the issue of child sexual abuse and its effect on an individual's psyche which becomes more poignant when it involves the gamut of incestuous relationships. The play portrays the issue of incest through Mala and her mother, Shanta. Both the daughter and the mother are sexually molested in their infancy by the same person Vinay, who is Shanta's own brother. The sexual molestation affects both of the victims differently as one is dragooned into bearing it silently due to social pressure and taboos and the other revolts against it.

The play opens with Mala talking to the counsellor, which reveals her puzzled state of mind. Exploiting the counselling and the recorded voice on tape as methods of self-revelation, Dattani unveils the conflict of Mala's conscious and unconscious mind. Mala frankly reveals her real name, Mala Khatri and confidently asserts that it is the person, who molested her, should hide himself from being recognized because she has not been a participant but a victim of his beastly passion. Mala's voice on tape which is played in the black-out takes her back to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and presents her as a more confused and to a great extent, a nervous person. She assumes herself responsible for the havoc which turned her attitude to life; sometimes she suspects that it is her mother who is behind her destruction. She, being a victim of sexual exploitation before reaching her puberty and in early youth, and of betrayal at the hands of her mother becomes indecisive about her action: "I—I don't know how to begin . . . Today is the 30<sup>th</sup> of September . . . 2001, and my name is . . . I don't think I want to say my name . . . I am sorry . . . I know it is all my fault really . . . It must be. I must have asked for it . . . it's not anybody's fault, except my own. Sometimes I wish that my mother . . ." (*Collected Plays* II 9). Later she says: "The only person who can, who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot from happening . . ." (*CP* II 18). Mala not only bears the pain of sexual assault in her childhood but also equally suffers the emotional hurt caused by

her mother's silence against her molestation which subsists in her unconscious mind. As she grows, her traumatic experience of physical exploitation and her mother's indifferent attitude towards it starts coming at the surface level resulting in a lifelong clash between mother and daughter. The realization of betrayal on her mother's part upsets her mind and she interrogates her mother:

Where were you when he locked the door to your bed room while I was napping in there? Where were you during those fifteen minutes when he was destroying my soul? Fifteen minutes every day of my summer holidays, add them up. Fifteen minutes multiplied by thirty or thirty-one or whatever. That's how long or how little it took for you to send me to hell for the rest of my life! (CP II 53)

To avoid the horror of the exposition of reality, Shanta tries to divert Mala's mind by calling her horrifying experience a story which intensifies Mala's anger and she retorts:

I am not talking about a bad dream! I am talking about the time when uncle Vinay would molest me. When I was seven. Then eight. Nine. Ten. Every vacation when we went to visit him or when he came to stay with us. You were busy in either the pooja room or the kitchen. I would go to papa and cry. Before I could even tell him why I was crying he would tell me to go to you. (CP II 25-26)

Sexually molested by her maternal uncle, Mala faces betrayal at the hands of her mother. According to Beena Agrawal: Mala, the protagonist, is the victim of this abuse but she maintains silence against injustice. As soon as she comes to the stage of adolescence, she finds that the world is hostile and human relationship is a betrayal" (118). Portraying the relationship between mother and daughter, Dattani has tried to shed light on the fact that betrayal in any close relationship, as Mala realizes, is as painful as sexual abuse. In his conversation with Lakshmi Subramanyam, Dattani says: "Though sexual abuse is at the core of my play, the mother-daughter relationship is equally important. The main protagonist, who has suffered at the hands of her uncle, feels a deep sense of betrayal that her mother did not stop the abuse and failed in her role as protector" (133). Facing the lack of communication with her mother, Mala consequently becomes contemptuous and accuses her mother of ignoring her, "I don't know whether you are telling the truth or simply trying to escape as always . . ." (CP II 22). Criticizing her mother for stuffing her with food instead of consoling her, Mala expresses her mother's insensitivity to her pain:

Oh yes, you would remember that I always like alu parathas because that's what I got whenever I came to you, hurt and crying. Instead of listening to what I had to say, you stuffed me with food. I couldn't speak because I was being fed all the time, and you know what? I began to like them. I thought that was the cure for my pain. That if I ate till I was stuffed, the pain would go away. Every time I came to you mummy, you were ready with something to feed me. You knew. Otherwise you wouldn't have been so prepared. You knew all along what was happening to me . . . (CP II 24)

Her anger towards her mother becomes more violent when her mother, instead of talking to her, escapes to the Pooja room; Mala detains her from taking shelter in the image of God, "Tell me. No don't look at your God, look at me, look me in the eye and tell me—'yes, that is all that you are talking about'" (CP II 25). Shanta fails to pacify Mala who continuously attacks her mother's conscience and forces her to face reality. In order to divert Mala's attention, Shanta calls her heart-breaking experience, a story, which enrages Mala against her mother. Her suppressed desires against her mother's cover of silence start coming out in the form of rebellion and she cries out, "I won't let you get off so easily. There is only

one way I can make you listen to me” (CP II 26). She goes to the pooja room and throws the portrait of the God out. It breaks Shanta’s patience and she accuses Mala of her willing participation in sexual pleasure. Ultimately Shanta is forced to accept that it was the financial assistance which kept her silent. Mala cries out, “He bought your silence. So that you can never tell anyone what he did to your daughter!” (CP II 52). Thus, along with the humiliation of her body, her spirit, her privacy and her innocence is also raped. In this way, Dattani has tried to focus that the forced physical relations which signify man’s victory over woman can ruin her life completely. Molested and deceived by her uncle and ignored by her mother, Mala expresses her painful longing for love:

You know, I couldn’t say anything to you. You never gave me a chance to. If only you had looked into my eyes and seen the hurt, or asked me ‘beta, what’s wrong?’ Then may be, I would have told you . . . But ma, I did look to you for help, while you were praying, your eyes avoiding mine, and I knew, deep down I must have known, that you will never ask me that question. Because you already knew the answer. (CP II 53)

Thus, Mala’s anguish and pain is intensified from her realization of her mother’s betrayal. In this regard Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri observes: “Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and a lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused” (73).

Sexual molestation in childhood in *Thirty Days in September* breeds a sense of guilt consciousness which has been discussed by Dattani in his earlier plays such as *Tara*, *Final Solutions*, and *Bravely Fought the Queen*. In *Tara*, and *Final Solutions* he has elaborately dealt with the theme but in *Bravely Fought the Queen* he has only touched upon the issue. The sexual assault on Mala in her childhood and betrayal at the hands of her mother not only affects Mala’s psyche but also develops a sense of guilt consciousness in her mother, Shanta. Both of them suffer pain of their sexual exploitation but with Mala it becomes more effective. To compensate for her guilt of being silent to the injustice meted out to her girl, Shanta requests Deepak to marry Mala but to no avail. She turns down Deepak’s proposal for marrying her arguing that they would not be compatible. Being exploited in her infancy Mala becomes physically vulnerable and starts seeking the company of men for sexual gratification. When Deepak asks what she likes the most, Mala fingers at the man sitting at the table next to their’s and complains against his staring at her, which enrages Deepak and he starts beating him but in the meantime Mala takes Deepak back to their table and reveals that it is not true; she made it up and she did it just to gain his attention towards her which would enliven her. She says, “. . . If he had looked at me, I would have felt—I would have felt truly alive” (CP II 31). She dances with the ‘Man’ in the party and grasps him in the presence of his fiancée, Radhika. When “Man” denies her proposal to take her to his room, she becomes restless and says: “Do whatever you want with me, but take me with you now” (CP II 21). Answering Deepak’s question as to what she likes the most she expresses her true plight: “He wasn’t staring at me . . . I wanted him to . . . You want to know what I feel most? . . . if he had looked at me, I would have felt—I would have felt—truly alive” (CP II 31). At the end of the play when, after the revelation of the reality that she was molested by her maternal uncle, Deepak asks her to come with him but she refuses and says “You don’t understand! YOU JUST DON’T UNDERSTAND!! I cannot love you” because “I see this man [her uncle, Vinay] everywhere. I can never be free of him. Even if I was, I am not sure whether I have the ability to love anyone . . . else” (CP II 54). Her molestation is ingrained in her mind to such an extent that she can rationalize all arguments except her guilt. She speaks boldly, “By staying silent doesn’t mean I can forget! This is my hell. . . . It is your creation, Maa! You created it for me. With your silence!! You didn’t forget anything, you only remained silent!” (CP II 54). In this way, Mala fails to reconcile the reality which has ruined



her femininity and keeps haunting her mind, and becomes more intense with the realization of her mother's silence against her exploitation. Shanta also suffers a guilt consciousness. Like Bharati, in *Tara*, who becomes more affectionate towards Tara to hide her guilt, Shanta also expresses her love for Mala to compensate for her guilt. She feels herself guilty of Mala's pitiable plight and accepts: "It is always my fault . . . I-I forget things. I am the one to blame. But she is a very nice girl at heart" (CP II 15).

Moved by Mala's pain, Shanta reveals the reality of her life and the reason for her keeping her lips shut:

I was six, Mala. I was six. And he was thirteen . . . and it wasn't only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years!! (*Pointing to the picture of God.*) I looked to Him. I didn't feel anything. I didn't feel pain, I didn't feel pleasure. I lost myself in Him. He helped me. He helped me. By taking away all feelings. No pain no pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off somewhere. I didn't use it, no. I cannot shout for help, I cannot say words of comfort, I cannot even speak about it. No, I can't. I am dumb. (CP II 55)

Her mother's revelation of the fact that she also suffered the molestation for ten years by the same person when she was six, moves Mala and she regrets: "While I accused you of not recognizing my pain, you never felt any anger at me for not recognizing yours. We were both struggling to survive but—I never acknowledged your struggle" (CP II 58). Thus, it is Shanta's silence which creates misunderstanding between them, and they start distrusting each other. As the silence is broken, they find each other on the same plane. Mala is filled with remorse for torturing her mother mentally: "It's not your fault, mother. Just as it wasn't my fault. Please, tell me that you've forgiven me for blaming you. Please tell me that . . . I know you will, mother. I know you have" (CP II 58). In a conversation with Anitha Santhanam, Mahesh Dattani remarks: "It's the silence and the betrayal of the family that affects me the most. Like in this case, the mother knew that her daughter was being sexually abused by her uncle, but still chose to keep quiet. It's the silence that makes the abused feel betrayed." In this way, both mother and daughter share the same fate. Both suffer molestation in their infancy which affects their lives—Shanta becomes senseless to pain and pleasure but Mala always feels longing for sexual gratification. Shanta's silence, which she takes as Shanti, ruins two lives—hers and her daughter's. Her silence against her daughter's sexual abuse and even against herself symbolizes two things—the first, degrading Indian morality, and the second, the stereotypes for women which present them as objects of male gaze.

After discussing Shanta's image of traditional woman as a bearer of the pain by keeping their voices silent, and Mala's as a girl with modern sensibility who revolts not only against her mother's silence but also challenges male supremacy by rejecting Deepak's proposal for living together, it will be better to focus on the character of Vinay, who represents the male chauvinistic picture of society. Vinay's attempts to molest both Shanta and Mala do not only challenge the Indian morality but also reflect the male hegemony over female. Vinay has no feeling of remorse or sympathy for Shanta and Mala who undergo mental and physical sufferings. He does not feel shame when he is called 'Bhaia' by Shanta, instead he confidently claims to act like a father figure when Mala's marriage is concerned. He, who ruins Mala in her teens, does not hesitate in using the expression "She is like my daughter." Thus, in the play, Dattani has mocked at the traditional concept of relationship which explains the purity of the relationship between brother and sister etc. and warns the society of being cautious of relatives like Vinay. The conflict between tradition and modernity also figures in the play. Shanta, who has a strong belief in God and keeps herself always busy with praying, represents the traditional figure of women who never dares to protest against their molestation. Contrary to her, Mala is a *new woman*. She, being

financially independent, gets angry at her mother's silence against her molestation and questions her uncle's financial assistance. She frankly turns down Deepak's proposal of marriage and reveals to him her passion for sex with several people.

Thus, in *Thirty Days in September*, which is essentially a family play, Dattani has raised his voice against child sexual abuse, especially in the case of incest which ruins the lives of the victims breeding not only the physical anguish but also the mental distortion, and has challenged the social customs which define women as a silent receiver of pain by presenting the clash between mother and daughter.

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## The Road To Wigan Pier: Labyrinth Of Poverty

Dr. N R Sawant

George Orwell was the social rebel, and the ardent liberal. He personally experienced the pangs of the downtrodden. He toiled his whole life and career for their emancipation from their oppressors. He used his talent against injustice and totalitarianism. He aspired for common decency embedded in Democratic and Ethical Socialism. He is acknowledged as one of the most significant writers of the twentieth century. Even after forty seven 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.

*The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is a landmark in George Orwell's career as a novelist. In 1946 he wrote : "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism as I understood it. But I could not do the work of writing a book, or even a long magazine article if it were not also an aesthetic experience." (Orwell 1976, p. 28). It is discernible that whatever the views, opinions Orwell has expressed, he has put forth them in a proper artistic form and with an aesthetic concern. Even present work *The Road to Wigan Pier* is concerned to recreate the experience of an atmosphere than to communicate or classify a mass of carefully collected data.

In January 1936 Orwell was commissioned by Victor Gollancz to make a study of unemployment in the depressed areas of the north of England and to write about what he had seen. Orwell accepted the offer at once and embarked on a tour of North of England, Lancashire and Yorkshire and was there from 31 January 1936 to March 1936. Travelling partly on foot and partly by public transport his journey took him to Coventry, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Macclesfield, Manchester, Wigan, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Barnsley. Throughout this period he met miners, trade union officials, officials of the National Unemployed Worker's Movement and others in an attempt to study housing conditions and to see for himself the effects of poverty, malnutrition and unemployment on the lives of ordinary people. He recorded his impressions in a diary which is published in the Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters. This diary, vivid and moving in its sincerity, formed the basis of the novel which became *The Road to Wigan Pier*. In this novel Orwell has transformed his immediate day-to-day impressions into a social document of enduring worth. It is a piece of reportage which is now acknowledged as a classic of the genre and as one of the seminal works. It is the work of a man who was seeing a landscape and people from a completely fresh standpoint, without inside knowledge and without prejudices. The result is a work of passionate, almost painful honesty.

It can be said that the title of Orwell's novel is a variation of Kipling's *The Road to Mandalay*. The title is suggestive and the road to Wigan is road back from Mandalay with the full implications of guilt and penitence. It is a re-writing of personal history in such a way as to conform both the release from existential nausea and the possibility of restoring emotional balance and integrity.

The novel is divided into two parts almost equal in length. The first part contains seven chapters which describes social conditions amongst the miners, and the unemployed of Lancashire and Yorkshire and their mighty manual work in the mines. The second part contains six chapters and is a long autobiographical statement of Orwell's approach to socialism, his attitude to the vexed

question of class. First part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* containing seven chapters is obviously documentary in nature.

Out of the seven documentaries, the first two are delightful examples of Orwell's amused eye resting upon people and their surrounding and of his power in describing what he saw in prose as clear as a window pane. His documentary power seems to be superb. The opening chapter is written in a very different style from the remainder of the book. In tone it resembles the opening section of a novel. There is no preface or introductory statement explaining the origins of a book. Instead, the reader is allowed to take a plunge immediately into a northern industrial milieu. The novel is remarkable for its extraordinary vividness.

The picture of Mr. Brooker's lodging house in the first chapter is documented in such a skillful way that the documentation creates vocal and verbal pictures in the minds of the readers. Orwell sketches the comic portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Brooker who kept the lodging house and a tripe shop along with it.

The second documentary takes us to the very core of the mine and miner's life which is like inferno. It describes a descent into a coal mine. It is a remarkable piece of writing, executed with a kind of unemotional honesty which Orwell rarely equalled. Orwell visited three mines-one at Wigan and two at Barnsley-but it was the impact of the Wigan experience-Crippen's mine which he found so memorable. Orwell's technique is to describe as simply and matter of fact as possible the experience of journeying into the mine as it happened to him. In a series of striking images, he evokes the descent into the coal mine, the painful walking to the coal face, the heat and noise, the sheer physical drudgery in cramped and dangerous conditions. The chapter has force and vigour, so the feel of the mine is ineradicably communicated. Hence for its picturesque documentation, the chapter has been separately published as '*Down the Mine*'.

In contrast to the description of slack dereliction of the opening chapter, the documentation of miner's picture toiling at the coal face is brilliant one. It pulsates with the new zeal after witnessing the stupendous work of the miners. The second chapter takes us to the interior of the work in the mine. One feels that the mine is like hell. The narrator feels that most of the things one imagines in hell are there heat, noise, confusion, darkness, foul air, and above all, unbearably cramped space. The filler's do the super human job. They look as though their bodies are made up of iron. The narrator documents the stupendous work of the miners deftly : "But the fillers look and work as though they were made of iron. They really do look like iron-hammer, iron statues-under the smooth coat of coal dust which clings to them from head to foot. But nearly all of them have the noblest bodies; wide shoulders tapering to slender supple waists, and small pronounced buttocks and sinew thigh, with not an ounce of waste flesh anywhere. You can never forget the spectacle once you have seen it - the line of bowed, kneeling figures, sooty black all over, driving their huge shovels under the coal with stupendous force and speed" (Orwell 1937 p. 21). There is danger at every step to the life of a miner of the explosion of the poisonous gas, of falling of the roof. This documentation of an electrically-driven coal cutter, running horizontally instead of vertically, with teeth, a couple of inches long is also superb. The narrator feels that miner's world is a different universe.

Third chapter describes the miner's life, pithead baths, housing, budgets, accidents and his diseases. There follows a series of chapters concerning housing, malnutrition and social conditions in the depressed areas. Throughout these chapters Orwell is not content merely to describe poverty, mining and the social consequences of unemployment and poor housing, but seeks at each stage of his exposition to arouse the anger and engage the emotions of the readers. Moreover, his approach

throughout is one of compassion and a deep sense of outrage at the affront to human decency represented by squalid housing, poverty and malnutrition.

The fifth chapter realistically portrays the effects of unemployment. Orwell states that more than one out of three of total population of England was living on dole at that time. Life on dole created a frightful feeling of impotence and despair which was almost the worst evil of unemployment, far worse than any hardship, worse than the demoralization of enforced idleness and any less bad than physical degeneracy. Sixth Chapter describes the diet of the industrial workers, employed or unemployed and the people's pitiable scramble for coal on slag-heap and the undernourishment resulted in physical degeneracy of the workers. Even the death rate and infant mortality of the poorest quarters were always about double those of the well-to-do-residential quarters. Orwell's dreary picture of unemployed people scrambling on a slag-heap for burnable fuel or coal is pathetic where the people like fleas swarm on the waste coal to find out a tiny part of coal. Seventh Chapter describes the North-South Antithesis wherein Northern part of England is described as superior to South.

Thus the first part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* realistically documents the filthiness in the industrial towns of North, the interiors of coal mine, pocky houses of workers, the physical and psychological effects of unemployment, the diet of the unemployed and the ugliness of the industrial north along with a comment on the North-South rivalry. Orwell did not merely visit miner's homes, he actually lived in them, he did not merely gain information concerning housing and nutrition, he experienced these things at first hand. It is this quality which illuminates the Wigan Chapters with such a strong sense of immediacy.

Chapter Eight shows the significant issue of class difference which has its roots in Orwell's childhood days. In this chapter Orwell tells us how the issue of class difference was inculcated in him by his middle class relations. Orwell feels that the snobbish middle class and upper middle class people sow the seeds of class difference in their early stage of life. Chapter Nine of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, contains segments of autobiography. Early in his school days Orwell had a feeling of disgust against the rich, particularly those hoggish people who had become rich within short time. This was his step towards formation of an ardent revolutionary and socialist as he considered himself at his age of seventeen. At the age of twenty, Orwell went to Burma to join the Indian Imperial Police. After the tormenting experience, Orwell found that he was in the police, which mean he was a part of the actual machinery of despotism. Moreover, in the police, he saw the dirty work of empire at close quarters. He was ashamed and disgusted of himself as he saw the worst phase of British Imperialism of which he was an inseparable part. His conscience did not allow him to retain his position as a Police officer in Burma and to be a part and parcel of evil despotism of British Imperialism. He expresses the prick to his conscience, a weight of guilt that tortured him. He explains: "When I came home on leave in 1927 I was already half determined to throw up my job, and one sniff of English air decided me. I was not going back to be a part of that evil despotism. For five years I had been part of an oppressive system, and it had left me with a bad conscience. Innumerable remembered faces-faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate" (Orwell 1937, p. 129).

Hence to expiate himself from the guilt of serving in an unjust British Imperialism in Burma, Orwell turned immediately towards the extreme cases, the social outcast: tramps beggars, criminals, prostitutes to whom he considered the 'Lowest of the low' and with whom he wanted to get in contact. He desired to see what their lives were like and wanted himself to be part of their



world. Orwell's detour of North of England was also motivated to see the life of lower classes of people and to have a peep into the labyrinth of poverty so that the so called elite -the people of high class of society should think sympathetically about the worst condition of poor people and should bring reform in their lives. It can safely be said that the genesis of reforms in the life of poor classes of people seems to be in the efforts of intellectuals like Orwell who tried to change not only the lives of poor people but also tried to give a new direction to the outlook of elite people by taking them into the labyrinth of world of poor people wherein lies the complex structure of their individual, social, cultural, political and national life and who continue their rigmarole due to lack of conducive infrastructure.

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## Gender Assertion in Colonial India: A Study of Paromita by Sumathi Sudhakar

**Shalini Yadav  
Krati Sharma**

Sumathi Sudhakar's novel *Paromita* sets in 19th century Bengal when revolutionary ideas were in the air. The concept of "equality" and "Feminism" were completely alien in the early nineteenth century until liberally exposed Western-educated Indians and social reformers introduced it. Feminism in India was initiated by men to uproot the social evils of sati (widow immolation), to allow widow remarriage, to forbid child marriage, and to reduce illiteracy, as well as to regulate the age of consent and to ensure property rights through legal intervention. Women in this phase were categorized along with lower castes as subjects of social reforms and welfare instead of being recognized as autonomous agents of change. The emphasis was on recreating new space in pre-existing feminine roles of caring. The women involved were those related to male activists, elite, western educated, upper caste Hindus.

It was the time of awakening and renaissance, when social reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy were at the forefront. These reformers also gave much importance to the education of the girls which was considered essential for the development of their personality. The hurdles and obstacles were ill-practices like the customs of polygamy, the parda pratha, the denial of woman's rights over property, child marriage, Sati Pratha, the denial of right of education and denial of remarriage to widows which prevented the young girls and the women of that period to seek their gender identity. Paromita is the story of a young girl's rebellion against a society which subjugates women. Says the author,

*"Girls have been girls all along. Their impulses and feelings, likes and dislikes, and desires could not have been too different from what they are now. Only circumstances were different."*<sup>1</sup> (pp.xiii-xiv)

Paromita or Paro as she is known to all her family and friends is a charming little girl of about 9 years old whose laughter "*sounded like then gurgling of a river.*"<sup>2</sup> (pp. 1) With two deep dimples, soft pink cheeks and dancing eyes she is popular with all the children of the village and most of the adults too. Paro loves friends and playing games; but what she mostly desires is to go to school. But in those days girls were usually discouraged from going to school and in Paro's case a girl's school was too far away from where she lived. But she is different and has a dream. Her dream and desire is to get education and then to impart education in the young girls of her village. Only one thing which could stop her to become wild and uncontrollable is:

*"the sight of school children walking down to the school, with their books, slates and chalk pieces. She loved to watch them rush to school and she loved to listen to them recite poems and lessons in their classroom. She would often stand motionless outside the school, listening to the teacher teach them to write and count, and tell them all about the wide world. It made her want to study too."*<sup>3</sup> (pp. 4)

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the status of women in Indian society was very sorry indeed. Girls were not sent to school, they were married at a very young age and often to much older men. As Raja Ram Mohan Roy points out,

*“Although a woman is recognized as being half of her husband after her marriage, she is in fact treated as worse than inferior animals, and is made to do work of a slave in the house. She has to get up early in the morning and has to scour the dishes, to wash the floor, to cook night and day and then serve the same to her husband, father- and mother-in-law, brother-in-law and friends and connections and at the end of all this she is humiliated for the slightest shortcoming. After all the men have eaten the women content themselves with what may be left, whether sufficient in quantity or not.”*<sup>4</sup> (pp. 53)

The discrimination of Patriarch father Hariprasad is seen clearly in the concern of education of both children. Debu, the elder brother is going to school while she is not sent to school and restricted to home. The passionate commitment of the reformists like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar to encourage people to get their daughters educated is clearly mentioned in this novel. The reforms which were introduced in the nineteenth century had a tremendous impact on the generations that followed. In every town and village schools were opened for girls to study. Vidyasagar in Calcutta and many other reformers in Bombay set up schools for girls. When the first schools were opened in the mid nineteenth century, many people were afraid of them. They feared that schools would take away girls from home and prevent them from doing their domestic duties. Moreover, girls would have to travel through public places in order to reach school. They thought that girls should stay away from public spaces. Therefore, most educated women were taught at home by their liberal fathers or husbands. As early as 1820, Raja Ram Mohan Roy argued that despite being,

*“in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy, women were in no way intellectually inferior to them: in fact... as to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity?... Women were generally kept devoid of education and acquirements.”*<sup>5</sup> (pp. 52-3)

Paromita also gets excited when the girl's school in Sonapara was inaugurated by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Many people from Gobindopur visited and promised to send their daughters in school in the influence of Vidyasagar but soon they forgot all their promises. The influence of magnetic attraction of the girl's school on young Paromita was immense. She wonders, *“what new thing would they learn today.... If only she could go to school...!”*<sup>6</sup> (pp. 6) Finally one day she expresses her desire, *“Baba, send me to school too!”*<sup>7</sup> (pp. 6) Father Hariprasad has his constraints and he cannot send her because *“It would never do to irk this society's wrath by educating a girl. The society did not approve of such things. Girls should be married young and live a demure life of service.”*<sup>8</sup> (pp. 7) Her father was an orthodox and a path follower of societal set norms. He has no courage to face society's opposition if he sends her in school. It clearly reflects that he is follower of the conventional societal norms. Krishna Mohan felt that many more parents would have educated their girls *“if their reputation and perhaps caste were not at stake.”*<sup>9</sup> (pp. 80) Marriage at the age of eight or nine years was regarded as optimum for upper class Hindu girl, although these little girls viewed their departure for unknown homes with fear and anxiety. In his sketch 'A Sketch of the Condition of the Hindoo

Women', presented in January 1839 Mahesh Chundra Deb spoke at length on the position of women who were forced into early marriage. He commented on their situation,

*"Indeed, we are married at an age when neither the graces of the mind nor of the body are sufficiently, if at all developed. We have not a single opportunity of judging for ourselves with respect to either of these until it is too late.... Whatever be the physical or mental recommendations of a youth, they are scarcely taken into account, if unaccompanied by the most important qualification, kul..... the result of these incongruous matches felicity which is universally observable amongst the natives. It is however the women that are by far the greatest sufferers from these ill assorted marriages."*<sup>10</sup> (pp. 98-9)

Debu another young male figure in the house who represented the young generation of early nineteenth century was in the favour of her education and even taught her to read and write. Debu was the first to react when his father announced that Paro is being married off to a man Manik Babu who is old enough to be her grandfather. Debu shouted hysterically: *"Na, na na! That old man may die any day and what will happen to poor Paro? Do you want to make a sati like Nandana!"*<sup>11</sup> (pp. 11) By these lines Sumathi shows that elder brother is not an orthodox and does not want to push her sister into a painful marriage. Debu is a bright boy and he knows the further effects of this ill match marriage so he raises his voice against the decision of his patriarch father. This gives a blow to Hariprasad as he never dreamt of such situation occur in his home by his decision. Being a father he wanted to give all comforts to his daughter and the groom being Zamindar can afford all the luxuries for his young bride.

Debu's objection caused a crease on Paro's brow. Paro remembered about Nandana, her friend's sister who was married to an old man and after some months her old husband died. She heard the rumours of the young girl Nandana who *"was dragged through the streets screaming with terror, and being thrust into the funeral pyre."*<sup>12</sup> (pp. 13) Everyone in her village being conventional thought that *"it would be a shining example to generations of young women in the village,"*<sup>13</sup> (pp. 12) when Nandana had to become Ma Sati. Though this time Sati was banned by the colonial government and its practice was a punishable offence still people of remote area practiced it.

In the nineteenth century the wise men of Bengal said, *"becoming a sati was an important social custom and hence, must be accepted stoically."*<sup>14</sup> (pp. 13) One view known about Sati Pratha was that the woman and man are two bodies but one soul and hence death of one should be result in death of another, which would bring fame to the women for her faithfulness and loyalty. So women in ancient India being big-hearted enough used to join their husband on funeral pyre. And it was simply accepted as a part of Hinduism as a traditional practice. But in the eighteenth and nineteenth century the young widow were forced to enter the funeral pyre of their husbands and for self-immolation by the orthodox members of the society. Vidyasagar's soft heart melted at the pain and suffering imposed by the society, often in the name of religion, on Indian women. All of this distressed him immensely. Pleading the case for the remarriage of widows he lamented:

*"Oh poor India!...you think the woman whose husband dies immediately turns into a stone; she does not have sorrow anymore, cannot feel pain any more and all her senses of passions and sensualities disappear without trace suddenly! But you well know that such notions are based on false pretences as evidence to the contrary abounds. Just think how these erroneous notions are poisoning this world. How sad! The country, whose male population is*

*unkind, unreligious and unaware of the distinction between the good and the evil and don't care about justice and fairness and where abiding the rituals is the chief preoccupation of religion, should not give birth to girls!"*<sup>15</sup> (pp. 59-60)

Shattered and disillusioned by the memories of her friend's sister Nandana, Paro thinks, "Dada was right. What if her old baur too died very soon.....would she has to become a sati?"<sup>16</sup> (pp.13) But she did not want to become sati. She wanted "to go to school and study, write on the slate and read books, wear spectacles and look wise and when she grew up, teach other little girls like her! She did not want to be cast into the fire.....how hot the flames must be!"<sup>17</sup> (pp. 13-15) Paromita as a member of Zamindar family is well aware about her fate of being a child bride on the contrary being an enlightened girl she was aware of its consequences. Her tender age did not allow her to be burnt in the hot flames of the opposition by the orthodox family and society as a whole.

But Paromita determines to take destiny in her own hands to fulfill her dream of being educated at the cost of her marriage day and then Paro makes a decision,

*"No! She could not let that happen!"*

*She would not let that happen!"*<sup>18</sup> (pp. 15)

Sumathi has clearly depicted here assertion and determination of a nine year old girl towards her future. And that day a girl with twinkle in her eyes and dimples on her tender cheeks was lost somewhere in that patriarchal society and the quest for her identity could be seen at stature. Paro vows to herself, "I won't become a sati like Nandana."<sup>19</sup> (pp. 15) Then Paro goes in Kalibari temple and asks for strength in such a way, "Ma, give me strength. Take care of me. Make me a strong girl."<sup>20</sup> (pp. 17) There she encounters Mastermoshai Biswajit the teacher who started first girls school in Sonapara first time. When Mastermoshai was introduced to her by her friend Sarbari, she impatiently asks to Mastermoshai, "Mastermoshai, will you take me to school?"<sup>21</sup> (pp.19) But she feels disappointed when Mastermoshai said to her to take her orthodox father's permission. Then Paro says to Mastermoshai, "Baba won't listen! He sends Dada to school.... but he won't send me. He says girls must not go to school."<sup>22</sup> (pp. 21) Paro knows her father and she does not want her father to know about her desire for education. On the other hand Biswajit being a responsible and sensible individual considered that the it is better to take father's permission before educating the young little girl.

The discrimination between boys and girls in the colonial period can be clearly seen in this novel where the education of girls was denied and restricted and reins that were firmly grasped by a heartless society. Malavika Karlekar states in her book "Voices from within" about education of girls in colonial India:

*"Boys were enrolled in school early, while girls remained at home, the argument being that boys and not girls had to look to a future which involved employment."*<sup>23</sup> (pp. 6)

Two days before her wedding Paro absconds. Everyone was shocked. There was panic, anger and hysteria in the Zamindar's house. Paro's elder brother is in a state of dilemma and worries about her. His mental situation is clearly revealed here:

*"Debu was confused. He did not know whether to be happy or upset; happy, because Paro had escaped that hateful marriage, and upset because who knew where his darling sister was and what trouble she was facing? .....Was she safe? Could she be in danger? Did she need help? Would they see her again? What would happen if she was caught and*



*brought back? And again what would she do all alone in the big world, a little girl with nobody to help her to take care of her? These and many more questions whirled past one another in his mind, and caused deep furrows to appear on his young forehead”*<sup>24</sup> (pp. 27)

On the other hand, Paro, in search of her gender identity, sets a target for herself to go to Sonapara to meet Mastermoshai and decides not to be discouraged by thorny ways and obstacles. The young girl, her heart thudding with fear, set her foot to cross the narrow bridge of the river to go to Sonapara in darkness although it meant a tiresome walk. In meanwhile her brother Debu also escapes to find and support her. Paromita reaches Biswajit's house and meets his wife Dipali who takes gentle and firm control of the situation. When Dipali offers her food at night, Paro feels surrounded by the memories of her affectionate mother and her tender care. But being assertive and firm towards her aspiration of getting education, she brushes off her tears which threatened her. Then she plans to reach school and get admitted somehow and stop the marriage immediately. Although she wants to create her own identity but still thinks about her parents:

*“After she began reading and writing, they would be proud of her. But her father did not understand the importance of all that to her. And so she had to work out a plan for her future.”*<sup>25</sup> (pp. 44)

While the need to change women's lives through reforms and the introduction of education was gradually gaining ground in the nineteenth century Bengal, Mastermoshai being a generous and liberal husband teaches his wife Dipali. He says to her, “*In a few months from now, you must be able to independently handle classes and I shall turn my attention to recruiting more girls to our school from the villages around us...*”<sup>26</sup> (pp. 46) According to Mastermoshai Girl's education was not only essential for their self-esteem but also for the general advancement of society. Krishna Mohan observed,

*“Many Hindus of respectability are, I know from personal observation, very desirous in the abstract of instructing their females. They see the palpable benefits which education has conferred upon their Western sisters and often wish they could boast of such accomplished wives and daughters as those of their European neighbours.”*<sup>27</sup> (pp. 190-1)

Debu being a responsible and mature brother supports her younger sister and takes charge of paying her school fees. But when Biswajit comes to know about her marriage which is going to be held on next day, he says them to go back home. On the other hand Dipali, wife of Mastermoshai takes a firm stand against child marriage and says to Debu, “*Both boys and girls must be married, but not at your age. At your age, both girls and boys must study equally.*”<sup>28</sup> (pp. 50) In the introduction Malavika Karlekar writes about the impact of learning and education on a few Bengali women, “*the role of education in promoting new ways of viewing the world.*”<sup>29</sup> (pp. 2)

Mastermoshai being rational and logical when encountered with this reality that Paro has run away from home says with affirmation to his wife about their society and people's outlook on an escaped bride, “*you know our society. They do not look kindly on girls who have disappeared for a day or two, and that too, just before her marriage. The girls' marriage will break up. And in the future, who will marry her?*”<sup>30</sup> (pp. 50) Here Biswajit gives an idea about the conventional thinking of Bengali society towards girls who escape from their houses. Dipali being a woman of the nineteenth century who knows the significance of girl's education argues and tries to convince her husband, “*Paro needs the support of education.*”<sup>31</sup> (pp. 51)

On the other hand, Paro also with her back and call reminds Biswajit about his mission. Paro wants to make a place for herself in this society. Paro challenges the gender roles set up by the society. She is very firm to take education and wants to be educated like her brother. This is push and pulls which made her even furious and she asks, *"This is a school for girls, isn't it? Then how can you deny me permission to study? You're a teacher. Should you not convince girls to attend school? And when I come seeking a place in your school, you want to send me back?"*<sup>312</sup> (pp. 51) She struggles for her self-identity.

Then Paro's father Hariprasad puts a case of kidnapping of his kids against Biswajit in front of the colonial master Inspector Jones who is progressive and fair enough in his judgments and believes in the mission of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Being Zamindar Hariprasad wants to show his power by punishing Biswajit. But Inspector Jones understands the situation and dismisses the case and he says, *"I've known Biswajit for many years now.... He is an associate of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He is a city-bred boy who has come all the way to Sonapara to carry forward Vidyasagar moshai's campaign for girl's education. So kindly stop imagining things. He is no kidnappers."*<sup>33</sup> (pp. 61) Even Inspector Jones admonishes him for getting his beautiful little girl married to an old man who is older than Hariprasad. Indeed, the redefinition of women's position seemed increment while India was supplanted from the pre-colonial state into colonial state. It shows that colonial government also rebuked the meaning less traditions of the natives and as the agents of the progressive western civilization; they could not turn their back against the rising progressive elements of the Indian society. The reaction that the colonial government as well as the officials expressed about the "barbaric practices" and their propaganda as the agents of civilization helped the social leaders to look into the state of affairs in colonial India.

The canons of the reform movements were exercising its influence not only on the native but also on the colonial master and under its impact women were becoming consignors of their gender identity. In the era of 19<sup>th</sup> century orthodoxy, superstitions and discriminations were at their peak and the reform movements were the torch bearer to show path to the men and women who wanted to shackle off the conservative norms to have their identity. In the article "Women Education in Colonial India" Hemant Kumari Chaudhurani quotes:

*"In fact, the Bengal Renaissance of consciousness, intellectuality and cultural pursuits, ushered in a phenomenal rebirth or Renaissance of the consciousness of women's well-being amidst the prevalent tyrannical society."*<sup>34</sup>

Hemant Kumari further pointed out in her article that improvement in the position of women came about from the nineteenth century onwards which is the result of a process of conscious assertion on the part of Indian women, but through social reforms devised and carried out by Indian men and the colonial state.

Hariprasad brings back the kids at home but the atmosphere is changed now. Paro announces at home with her firm voice, *"...there is no marriage happening here."*<sup>35</sup> (pp. 67) These lines show a new avatar of Paro who is bold and confident. She decided to have her gender identity any how. Paro rejects the marriage without taking permission from her parents. She is focused for self-identity and self-assertion and not to be lost like other child bride of her own age. She announces her decision to her relative who are the part of stereotype society. Paro's mother feels astonished to see the change as she remains silent observer and with an image of 'good and obedient' wife at home. The courageous Debu and Paro both challenge the conventional societal norms by running away and by taking the reins of their life in their hands.

Biswajit decides to help out Paro in her aspiration. He reaches her home and bears hostility of Hariprasad and anyhow takes his permission to have a discussion. The heating debate is being heard outside the closed room. Paro wants to be a part of it when her mother asks her to be away from the door but Paro says, “*Na, ma, my life depends on this.*”<sup>36</sup> (pp. 68) Paro is called inside and everyone thinks about the end of Paro’s ambition. It is interesting to see the change in the Hariprasad conservative attitude to a progressive attitude with the words of Biswajit. He understands that there is no match in marrying a girl at such young age with an old man. It is his duty to educate her to make her stand in the society. He gets courage to go against the society and follows the dream of her dear daughter Paro. Hariprasad looks at society with the new light. Here the mission of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar transformed not only the life of Paro but also his father. Malavika Karlekar states in her book,

“*it was a handful which was prepared to grant daughters the privilege of stepping out of the home into a new world of experience.*”<sup>37</sup> (pp. 160)

Paromota gains her gender identity with this push and pull of the events in her life. It is her determination that she challenges the society and makes them realize that women are not submissive or passive and they have their dreams and desires to be fulfilled and they have their identity which should not be concealed.

Because of women’s assertion and decisiveness, their education started spreading its wings and the result was the advancement of the nineteenth century generation of the “new women”. The latter half of the 19th century was considered as the period of the rise of Indian womanhood to freedom and assertion. In this paper, we have looked into the history of women in colonial India in the radiance of new notions of gender which has made the study of gender assertion in colonial setting more attention-grabbing and demanding.

#### Notes:

**1. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar** (26 September 1820 – 29 July 1891), was an Indian Bengali polymath and a key figure of the Bengal Renaissance. He was a social reformer, philosopher, academic, educator, writer, translator, printer, publisher, entrepreneur, reformer, and philanthropist. His efforts to simplify and modernize Bangla prose were significant. He also rationalized and simplified the Bengali alphabet and type. Vidyasagar championed the uplift of the status of women in India, particularly in his native Bengal.

**2. Raja Ram Mohan Roy** (22 May 1772 – 27 September 1833) was an Indian religious, social, and educational reformer who challenged traditional Hindu culture and indicated the lines of progress for Indian society under British rule. He is sometimes called the father of modern India. He founded an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement during the Bengal Renaissance. His influence was apparent in the fields of politics, public administration, and education, as well as religion. He is known for his efforts to abolish the practice of sati, the Hindu funeral practice in which the widow immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre. 3.

**3. Parda Pratha** is the practice of requiring women to cover their bodies so as to cover their skin and conceal their form. In nineteenth century India, Parda pratha coupled with early marriage became very popular in Hindu society, which led to the women to gloomy situation.

**4. Sati** was a religious funeral practice among some Indian communities in which a recently widowed woman either voluntarily or by use of force and coercion would have immolated

herself on her husband's funeral pyre. From about 1812, the Bengali reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy started his own campaign against the practice. He was motivated by the experience of seeing his own sister-in-law being forced to commit sati. Among his actions, he visited Calcutta cremation grounds to persuade widows not to so die, formed watch groups to do the same, and wrote and disseminated articles to show that it was not required by scripture. On 4 December 1829, the practice was formally banned in the Bengal Presidency lands, by the then governor, Lord William Bentinck.

**5. Sonapara** (West Bengal) was one village of Bengal in India.

**6. Gobindapur** (West Bengal) was one of the three villages which were merged to form the city of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) in India. The other two villages were Kalikata and Sutanuti. Job Charnock, an administrator with the British East India Company is traditionally credited with the honour of founding the city.

**7. Baba** is used to address father.

**8. Old baur** – old husband

**9. Ma-** Mother

**10. Dada-** Elder brother

**11. Mastermoshai-** Teacher

**12. Zamindar-** A landowner in a village who owns a big area of land and hires workers to work.

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8. Ibid, pp. 7.
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## Metaphor of Body in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

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&

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*The Edible Woman* was written in the 1960s, when the society was dominated by men. In this period of time, post-war feminist movements were trying to conquer the patriarchal model of family and femininity and to distance themselves from the position of consumers. Traditional gender roles such as mother, wife, housekeeper, or lover were improper for modern women. They looked for some options, but the only one which was delivered by the social system was a position of a worker stuck in a dead-end job. In the absence of any realistic possibilities to change their condition, women uttered their objections, frailty, and anxiety through their outlook toward food and, as a result, through their bodies. This condition led to the rise of feelings of frustration, anger, and unfulfilment among feminists. The novel's publication coincided with the rise of the women's movement in North America, but it is described by Atwood as "protofeminist" because it was written in 1965 and thus anticipated feminism by several years. The female protagonist, Marian MacAlpin struggles between the role that society has imposed upon her and her personal definition of self; and food becomes the symbol of that struggle and her eventual rebellion. Margaret Atwood employs an eating disorder in her novel *The Edible Woman* as a metaphor of a revolt and protest. Atwood in an interview says:

It's a human activity that has all kinds of symbolic connotations depending on the society and the level of society. In other words ,what you eat varies from place to place, how we feel about what we eat varies from place to place, how we feel about what we eat varies from individual as well as from place to place. If you think of food as coming in various categories: sacred food, ceremonial food, everyday food and things that are not to be eaten ,forbidden food, dirty food, if you like- for the anorexic ,all food is dirty food. (lyons 228)

The main protagonist of the novel, Marian MacAlpin is a young, triumphant woman, working in market research. Her job, private life, and social relations seem to be idealistic, but when she finds out her boyfriend's consumer nature during a talk in the restaurant, she can't eat. Marian's initial lack of desire for food finally leads to an eating disorder, very similar to anorexia nervosa, which is her body's response to the society's effort of imposing its policy on the heroine. Moreover, the three parts of the novel propose the course of this eating disorder. Background causes are shown in part one, Part Two indicates the mind/body split and Part Three reflects the spontaneous declaration of the problem.

In the essay, "Reconstructing Margaret Atwood's Protagonists," Patricia Goldblatt states that "Atwood creates situations in which women, burdened by the rules and inequalities of their societies, discover that they must reconstruct braver, self-reliant personae in order to survive." At the end of *The Edible Woman*, Marian partially reconstructs that new persona or concept of self through a renewed relationship to food. Non-eating in *The Edible Woman* is mainly a symbol of the

denial of the patriarchal model of femininity. Although the protagonist is an educated bright woman who lives on her own, she feels manipulated and unable to take decisions for herself. Her fiancé Peter, Ainsley, Clara, and three office virgins as well as her own friends believe in traditional values and try to make Marian think in an old-fashioned way and accept her gender role.

However, once Peter proposes to her, she loses this sense of self and becomes a victim to the male-domination that females in society are used to. Marian does not make decision anymore and relies heavily on Peter to choose what to do. Astonishingly, Marian actually loses her ability to control her own life. It is claimed that the heroine is doubtful about who she is and who she might become. Atwood uses a switch to the third person to show this change though the story still follows Marian through “she”, not “I”.

The kind of pressure that drives her towards the marriage institution is by no means imposed from above: “the pressure is rather psychological and cultural which have structured her subjectivity that constantly stops her from thinking or doing anything which is socially abnormal. Marian notes that she and Peter have never fought. There has been nothing to fight about because Marian’s social conditioning has helped her to accept the victim role. She does not understand her feelings initially because, according to the way she has been conditioned, she should not have these feelings.

Marian’s character is formed first by her parents’ plans for her future, then by Peter’s. Marian fears Peter’s tough personality will ruin her own delicate identity. This subconscious perception of Peter as predator is shown by Marian’s body as a lack of ability to eat. Marian’s rejection to eat can be seen as her struggle to being strained into a more feminine role. Following her engagement, the change to third-person narrative shows that Marian’s story is restricted by someone other than Marian herself; following Marian’s regaining of identity, Atwood returns to first-person narration.

Marian’s distancing from her body permeates the novel. It is perhaps most obvious in the disrupted narrative, which shifts from first- to third-person narration in order to convey Marian’s increasing distance from her somatic self. Marian’s disassociation is reminiscent of the attitudes of some early second-wave feminists, to whom it seemed necessary to minimize, or even ignore their bodies and their maternal possibilities. Theoretically, by erasing the body, women can evade patriarchal control. As Marian comes to learn, however, the body will not be disposed of so easily. In a scene symptomatic of Marian’s corporeal estrangement, her body is forced to make its presence known:

After a while, I noticed with mild curiosity that a large drop of something wet had materialized on the table near my hand. I poked it with my finger and smudged it around a little before I realized with horror that it was a tear. I must be crying then! (70)

Acceptance is what her body is crying out for; it refuses to be dismissed. In abstaining from certain foods, Marian faces ‘each day with the forlorn hope that her body might change its mind’ (178). Her rejection of food acts as a metaphor for her rejection of the male-dominated society to which she belongs. Her whole life is run by men. When Peter proposes, Marian’s body starts to refuse food and she is unable

to eat. Because she feels like she is being consumed by Peter, she cannot consume food. Not only has she lost her appetite, but also she has lost her sense of self. In order to show how limited are the models offered by society to adult women, Atwood uses food imaginary. The menu, which appears when Marian goes to the restaurant with Peter, represents an illusion of choice. Even though Marian can choose anything from the list of meals, she cannot get anything else. This situation suggests that the heroine is trapped by the options presented to her at work and in her personal life. What is more, the fact that it is Peter who places an order in the restaurant emphasizes Marian's passivity and dependency on others:

“It got rid of the vacillation she had found herself displaying when confronted with a menu: she never knew what she wanted to have. But Peter made up their minds right away.” (147)

The moment, in which the heroine finds out that she is expected by society to adjust to the role of a wife and mother, she loses the ability to eat. The sudden and spontaneous reaction of Marian's body to the events happening around and to her are the first step on her way to regaining independence. As she slowly discovers the nature and causes of her eating disorder, she starts to understand her own needs and feelings. One of the symptoms of her unconscious inner rebellion against adjusting to the role of the mother that Clara embodies is her body's refusal to eat dinner with Peter, even though she is hungry.

Marian's both the body and the feelings have gained independence from her conscious intentions and that they will keep on behaving in an unpredictable way till she acknowledges and integrates them, in fact, it is just once Marian has assimilated mind and body that she retrieves her narrative power. Marian's reply to gendered binaries is to isolate herself from her body; by enabling Marian's body to protest against that detachment, Atwood denounces the repressive dichotomies that order society. In this novel we can see the oppressive control the female body endures under patriarchy. Atwood indicates that the solution is not to acknowledge and to become accustomed oneself to authoritarian culturally-defined conventions, but to re-write them.

Interestingly, Marian considers herself to be acting of her own free will, in spite of the fact that it is Peter's prompting that causes her to endeavor into the salon without regard for her own console. In this episode, female space is not a place for women to accomplish their own desires, but a space created for women to fulfill the desires of men. Atwood's clinical treatment of the beauty salon is a reflection of the scrutiny patriarchy inflicts on the female body. Arguably, the beauty salon episode is an example of patriarchy encroaching on female space to control the female body. Marian is extremely conscious of the heavy burden patriarchy forces upon her bodies. In this case Peter is pictured as a physician that inspects her body in detail. After making love, his visual approach is comprehend by the feeling of his hand “gently over her skin , without passion, almost clinically , as if he could learn by touch whatever it was that had escaped the probing of his eyes”. The distressing portrayal of Marian as a patient on a doctor's examination table clearly signifies the sexual politics at work within the relationship between the protagonist and her husband-to-be. Marian's body turns into a tangible space whose surface and visible elements are subjected to a medical glance that examine her in order to grasp her

deep and hidden psychological entrails to control and dominate her subjectivity. Peter's medical glance is an invasive, and violent, intrusion within Marian's selfhood. Thus Marian turns to a person who desire to please Peter's expectation and to embody the patriarchal idea of femininity. As Susan Bordo states, these practices of femininity may lead women to "utter demoralization, debilitation and death." As the feminine ideal becomes increasingly confining, she imagine herself disappearing. Sitting in the bath, Marian is suddenly overwhelmed by the fear that she is dissolving, 'coming apart layer by layer like a piece of cardboard in a gutter puddle' (218). This image is initially introduced by a dream:

I [Marian] had looked down and seen my feet beginning to dissolve, like melting jelly, and had put on a pair of rubber boots just in time only to find that the ends of my fingers were turning transparent. I had started towards the mirror to see what was happening to my face, but at that point I woke up. (43)

With profound perception, Marian imagines her colleagues as edible women: 'They were ripe, some rapidly becoming overripe, some already beginning to shrivel; she thought of them as attached by stems at the tops of their heads to an invisible vine, hanging there in various stages of growth and decay.' (166-67)

In *The Edible Woman*, Atwood disassembles the patriarchal concept of femininity and offers a new account of the female body. By re-appropriating the body, Atwood is able to articulate women's anxieties over her oppressive cultural experiences as well as confront that oppression. Her fiction exposes the falsities of mind/body dualisms that alienate woman from her body, and drive her from her somatic self. In so doing, Atwood proposes a transcendence of those falsities and the restricting boundaries they promote. For Atwood, the body is a means by which woman can assert *her* existence, and not a manipulated existence defined for her. In her fiction, Atwood employs a corporeal language of resistance. The female body manifests female powerlessness while simultaneously protesting against it, adapting the eating disorder to this purpose. Atwood's consideration of the female body as a site of power and resistance is one of the most crucial and profound statements of her work.

Typically, some critics have studied Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* as either an optimistic celebration of female "liberation" or a materialist-feminist protest. But the style which Atwood uses is primarily her manipulation of a shifting narrative point of view and her use of an unbalanced, tripartite structure--reflects a more complex picture of capitalism and female subjectivity in the 1960s.

The last part of the novel describes how the desire returns and at the same time Marian comes back to herself. This is illustrated by her choice to make a cake in the shape of a woman, a picture of herself? When Peter, the groom, refuses to eat the substitute for his bride and takes to flight, Marian devours it. The stomach of the hungry woman returns to normal. The edible woman can eat again.

Marian desires a classical, clean and proper body. She has mixed feeling towards pregnancy, motherhood and full female bodies. If we combine the feminist and the anorectic aspects of the story, it seems that the unconscious of the young woman protests against the conventional female role that Marian is expected to enter

by marrying Peter. When the relation with the lawyer becomes more serious and he proposes to her, Marian's reaction is pictured in these words:

"I drew back from him. A tremendous electric blue flash, very near, illuminated the inside of the car. As we stared at each other in that brief light I could see myself, small and oval, mirrored in his eyes."  
(83)

Step by step, the items that remind Marian of a human body become inedible and they seem to be reminders of her own bodily existence and her identity and position. It appears that food is too similar to herself, to her body: she is an edible like the foodstuffs she detests. She suddenly finds herself identifying with the things being consumed. She can cope with her tidy-minded fiancé, Peter, who likes shooting rabbits. She can cope with her job in market research, and the antics of her roommate. She can even cope with Duncan, a graduate student who seems to prefer Laundromats to women. But not being able to eat is a different matter. Steak was the first to go. Then lamb, pork, and the rest; next comes her incapacity to face an egg. Vegetables were the final straw.

After discovering that more than mere prevention was essential, Marian takes a fundamental step to win back her identity. A very brave move on Marian's part is symbolically showing Peter that she can no longer be controlled. She does this by designing a cake in the image of a male's ideal woman. In the end, Marian is able to eat again. She is free to hunger, no longer estranged from her own body. Marian is absorbing the power of woman and her body that she has ignored till now. In fact, she literally eats herself and then the sense of self, and the "I" returns. The leading metaphor of the novel, an edible –woman in the symbolic shape of a cake, which Marian bakes and ices for Peter, is both the ultimate image of bodily dismemberment and also the sign of Marian's recovery and finding self-identity. The baked woman is a duplication of Marian as an item of patriarchal consumption. When Peter refuses to eat it, she suddenly feels extremely hungry and starts devouring the cake. Instead of being consumed by the male-dominated society, Marian chooses to consume herself, thus demonstrating that Marian is, once again, in control. She progressively becomes fully aware of the degrading effect these male-oriented cultural values have on her identity. She becomes her own person and her own decision-maker. With Marian McAlpin, Atwood is defying the conventional female figure and breaking the "wife" mould that most females were expected to play during the 1960's. Waugh observes: "by her act Marian has registered a voluntary and international protest which release her body from its involuntary rejection of food" (Waugh 181).

In this way Marian is saying no to the rigid form of femininity and curing her damaged female –self. She is capable of thinking for herself and making choices accordingly. She has become self-aware. Marian achieves self-knowledge by asserting against her passivity and rejecting Atwood's caricatures of the roles of the underpaid worker, the ideal of femininity, the mother \ wife oppressed by society, the lover alienated by her emotions. She decides to act and no longer be acted upon. However, though she is capable of expelling Peter from her life, she has not achieved independence from degrading effect on her identity. "I realized Peter was trying to destroy me. So now I'm looking for another job," (73) explain Marian to Duncan over the phone before she invites him for the tea. As Atwood states: "my heroine's



choices remain much the same at the end of the book as they are at the beginning; a career going nowhere, or marriage as an exit from it. But these were the option for a young woman, even a young educated woman, in Canada in the early sixties”(76).

Atwood suggests that in conventional society, women are edible. They are swallowed up by their male counterparts. Marian accepts this and decides that if she must be eaten, then she will take control of her own life and eat herself. The objective of this novel is to present female confrontation to social expectations and demands, which is inseparably associated with the female body. Eating disorders in Atwood's works are therefore employed as symbols of women's bodies' responses to social pressure. Even before Marian returns to first-person selfhood, she sees that there might be a way out, that becoming trapped by a repressive or unsatisfying role need not be the end of the matter. In order to do that, they first have to realize that any act of patriarchal surveillance and control is learned, cultural, and ideological process that can and must be dismantled. Atwood is urging women to assert their right to eat and re-inhabit their own bodies:

Trough this novel, Marian examines and rejects the roles presented to her by society and also rejects domination of social conventions in order to achieve self –identity and self –knowledge and self-awareness. In the last part which is only five pages long Marian comments: “I was thinking of myself in the first person singular again.” (278)

This suggests that the narrator has been Marian all the time, but during the engagement she had distanced her former self into the third person narration. The cancellation of the wedding and the engagement changes the narration and perspective:

Before devouring the cake, Marian talks to her creation: You look delicious (...) Very appetizing .And that's what happen to you; That's what you get for being food(...) she felt a certain pity for her creature but she was powerless now to anything about it .her fate had been decided .(270)

The cake and Marian are delicious edibles, made for other people's pleasure, not their own. The fate of cake and a bride are decided upon and determined beforehand. They will be consumed and eaten. At work, Marian is assigned the task of gathering responses for a survey about a new type of beer. While walking from house to house asking people their opinions, she meets Duncan, an English graduate student who intrigues her with his atypical and eccentric answers. The self absorbed English graduate also functions as another mirror image for Marian's anxieties and bodily extinction.

To sum up, the novel reflects the constant theme of lack of distinct identity. In this case the character demonstrates the large quantities of strength necessary to protect her own individuality, which was slowly degenerating all because of the communities in which she lived. In the novel Margaret Atwood represents the inner strength that she believes is in all women. By recognizing the hardships that daily activities bring, the necessity for all women to be able to stand up for themselves is emphasized. Finally, women cannot give in to the distorted preconceptions that they must be gentle, soft-spoken and submissive.

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## Nature and Ecocriticism in *Cry*, *The Peacock* and *Fire on the Mountain*.

C.G.Shyamala

The study of the relationship between literature and the environment has fostered human attitudes toward the environment as expressed in natural writing. In the essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," Rueckert defines ecocriticism as 'The application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the bases for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and the future of the world' (102). Ecological criticism shares the obvious concern that human culture is inextricably linked to the physical world.

The connection between nature and man is pivotal in *Cry*, *The Peacock* and *Fire on the Mountain*. An eco-critical approach brings out the importance of the environment to the major themes in her works. Nature imagery in her fiction allows the reader to perceive the unexplored realms of the female psyche. Heise believes that ecocriticism 'investigates how nature is used literally or metaphorically in certain literary or authentic genres and tropes, and what assumptions about nature underlie genres that may not address this trope directly' (4). Desai's images- zoological, botanical, meteorological and colored represent actions, approaches, feelings and states of mind of particular characters or situations. Through the evocation of images, Desai transcribes the human condition and predicament.

Nature images in *Cry*, *The Peacock* explore the emotional world of Maya the protagonist, and travel down her psychology to unravel her distorted world. The images are poignant expressions of an extremely sensitive personality that borders between neurosis and insanity. The first zoological imagery of Toto, Maya's pet dog is used 'as a structural device that is not only integral to the novelist but also to the theme' (Prasad 363). This animal image introduces the theme of alienation and the death motif as the primary indicators of Maya's psychic disorder:

All day the body lay rotting in the sun. It could not be moved on to the veranda for, in that April heat, the reek of dead flesh was overpowering and would soon have penetrated the rooms. Crows sat in a circle around the corpse, and the crows will eat anything – entrails, eyes, anything. (Cry 7)

Maya is so obsessed with the death of her pet dog that she fails to realize that death is a natural phenomenon one has to accept. Later, she claims 'childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets...' (Cry 15). Maya is a victim of alienation and loneliness. Gautama, her husband is cold to her desires. 'Gautama,' she says, 'Giving me an opal ring to wear on my finger, did not notice the translucent skin beneath, the blue flashing veins that run under...' (14). As tension mounts, her erratic moods create creatures that appear to gnaw at her. She feels:

It was that something else, that indefinable unease at the back of my mind, the grain of sand that it irked, itched, and remained meaningless...the giant shadows cast by trees...with horrifying swiftness... I leapt from my chair in terror, overcome by a sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling their moist limbs about me, of evil descending ...heralded by deafening drum beats. (17)

The shapes formed in her mind are projections of an unknown terror, of rejection, of being in solitary confinement, bereft of a companion. She engages in comparing her

rather insipid life to nature that provides a temporary relief from the tension mounting up in her. The minute details in nature reach out to her physical and emotional turmoil.

Maya's infertility is another reason for her restlessness. The use of the botanical images relate to her barrenness. She notices:

Leafless, the fine tracery on the naked neem trees revealed unsuspected, so far carefully concealed, nests, deserted by the birds....Down the street, the silk-cotton trees were the first to flower: their huge, scarlet blooms, thick petaled, solid-podded ... then dropped to the asphalt and were squashed into soft, yellowish miasma, seemed animal rather than flowerage, so large were they, so heavy, so moist and living to the touch. (34)

The 'silk -cotton trees' with 'huge blooms' that are now 'squashed into yellowish miasma' suggest the painful reality of her aridity. The deployment of different images, intermittently is crucial in understanding the fact that Maya is self-conscious of the reality around her.

When the pigeon's nest in the verandah of her home is filled with babies, and the doves coo to mate, Maya is reminded of her loveless life and her childless condition. Her unfortunate plight is aggravated when she sees rats. She says, 'Rats will suckle their young most tenderly. I know this as now I lived quite near one, with seven young ones nestling between their legs' (107). The acceptance of barrenness and virginity is a sign of disaster. Her deranged mind is filled with thoughts of snakes that crawl to the lure of 'chaste sweet white flowers' (107). Lizards seem to crawl, beckoning her. She adds:

Of the lizards, the lizards that come upon you, stalking you silently, upon clod, toes slipping their clublike tongues in and out, in and out with an audible hiss and a death's rattle, slowly moving up, closing in on you... rubbing their cold bellies upon yours...rubbing and grinding.... (108)

Later, when Gautama enquires about the giant lizards called Iguanas, Maya exclaims, "Iguanas!" my blood ran cold, and I heard the slither of its dragging tail even now, in white daylight. 'Get off-I tell you, get off! Go!'"(108) These images capture the predatory sensibility in Maya spontaneously and unconsciously. As Iyengar puts it, 'Her forte is the exploration of sensibility-the particular kind of modern sensibility that is ill at ease' (102). Maya is so shocked at the unpleasantness of the slimy creatures that she detests any animal, even her pet cat for a moment. Yet, her mind continuously churns up revolting images that provide testimony to her sordid state.

Maya realizes that her quest for a fruitful life would not materialize. Both of them are poles apart in sensibilities. She is like 'the beds of petunias...sentimental irresolute flowers,' while Gautama resembles 'the blossoms of the lemon tree ...stronger, crisper character' (21-22). Maya identifies herself with the peacocks that keep 'pacing the rocks at night- peacocks searching for mates, peacocks tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love, peacocks screaming with- agony at the death on love'(146). Gautama is unresponsive to her desperate calls for intimacy. She recalls how lonely she had felt even in her own home. She recalls, 'I was caged in this room that I had hated -severe, without even the grace of symmetry' (85-86). Marriage too does not provide a solution to her loveless life. The resulting chaos in her mind is suffocating and the external images succinctly associate with the mounting pressure that is beyond endurance.



The albino astrologer's prediction of the imminent death of either Gautama or herself draws Maya into the quagmire of the need to live or die. While she contemplates death, she ironically decides to murder Gautama, the root cause of her unfulfilled life. The astrologer's warning works on her imbalanced mind and she constantly engages in deciding how to execute the crime, justifying the need to act at the first opportunity. The fissure generated by the emotional and intellectual alienation between partners need culmination and the sapless existence of the couple is finally resolved:

He had no contact with the world, on with me. What would it matter to him if he died and lost even the possibility of contact? What would it matter to him? It was I, I who screamed with the peacocks, screamed at the sight of the rain clouds, screamed at their disappearance, screamed in mute horror. (149)

Desai exploits the ravages of nature and the botanical images to heighten the malicious influence of Maya on Gautama.

In the meantime, Maya's father, to take complete rest, decides on a European tour and asks the couple to accompany him. Gautama decides to move to his own house for a few days instead. At the railway station Maya sees cages of 'laboratory' monkeys bound for Bombay. Their pitiable sight is unbearable and is symbolic of her despicable situation:

And one that I saw was perfectly still and quiet.... Its bow was lined with foreboding and the suffering of a tragic calamity, and its hands, folded across its thin belly, waited to accept it. Then it spied something on the platform beside it ....It was only a monkey-nut shell, empty. A small whimper broke from the animal...then was silent again, waiting. (130)

Maya is agitated because the monkeys are thirsty and hungry and there is 'not even a bowl of water for them' (130).

In Gautama's home Maya finds relief in the company of her mother-in-law and Nila, her sister-in-law. Yet, she cannot restrain the thoughts of murder that keep her engaged 'relentless as a well-aimed arrow' (131). She finally decides to kill Gautama without further delay. She says:

Storms I had known before. Rain storms, thunder-storms, dust-storms....But this waiting with not a rumble of thunder, not a whirl of wind to mark the beginning of the end.  
And it was the end that I waited for. The beginning had begun long ago, was even forgotten.... I had waited too long – another day would be one too many. (154)

When the dust-storm finally approaches, Maya believes 'the time came for annihilation' (156). She knows that the time for 'release and liberty' (158) has arrived:

Ah, storm, storm, wonderful, infidel storm, blow, blow! I cried and ran and ran on and on from room to room, laughing as maniac laugh once the world gives them up and surrenders them to their freedom.... Frightened? No! I ran from the thought, laughing. Oh no, what need for fright.... It is only relief I promise you, you shall see – I swear – survive.... (158)

As the evening approaches, Maya asks Gautama to accompany her to the roof instead of walking down the garden. As they keep talking, Maya realizes that it is 'Poor Gautama, poor dear Gautama who was so intense and yet had never lived, and never would' (173). She makes him pause at the parapet edge and when Gautama makes a

casual gesture in front of her as they talk, she pushes him 'to the very bottom' screaming 'Gautama!' in fury (173).

The death of Gautama is a rude shock to the families. When asked about the reason for the act, Maya justifies by saying that 'it was an accident' (180). She feels no remorse and moves about with merriment. She has avenged the wrong done to her. Maya's unpredictable behavior is watched suspiciously by Nila. A month after Gautama's death, the three move into Maya's home. One day, Nila and her mother hear 'the patter of a child's laughter cascading up and down the scales of some new delight – a brilliant peacock's feather perhaps? Then it stopped, suddenly they heard a different voice calling...calling out in great dread' (184). Maya's mother-in-law rushes to the balcony, and in an effort to stop Maya from any untoward action disappears with her 'into the dark quiet' (184). Nila is dumb-struck! Maya has escaped pain as peacocks do. "Pia, pia" they cry. "Lover, lover. Mio, mio, - I die, I die" (82). Just as peacocks fight before they mate, Maya has killed her husband and dies in love with life.

*Fire on the Mountain*, Desai's sixth novel, centers on Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. According to Choudary, '*Fire on the Mountain* displays skilful dramatization of the experiences of certain women embroiled by the crossway of life' (77). The characters respond to certain situations in their lives and the imagery employed in the novel abounds in the externalization of the inner consciousness of the three women. Nature images have been employed to examine human relationships and their significations. Swain acknowledges that "There is in her a persistent search for the most appropriate symbols and images in the expression of the subterranean and the subconscious" (131).

The aged Nanda Kaul decides to spend the rest of her life at Carignano, in Kasauli all alone. She believes she has completed her duties in life and has decided to 'be left to the pines and cicadas alone. She hoped she would not stop' (Fire 3). At this stage in her life, Nanda 'wanted no one and nothing else. Whatever else came, or happened here, would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction' (3). She is grey, tall and thin and she fancies 'she could merge with the pine trees and could be mistaken for one. To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she was prepared to undertake' (4). Critic Indira says, 'Nanda's sense of identification with the pine trees suggests her desire for absolute stillness and withdrawal from life' (97). Nanda is attracted to Carignano for 'its barrenness.' (Fire 4). Nanda is like Carignano, stark, alone and barren. The lonely house is symbolic of the solitary life of Nanda. The barrenness and starkness associated with it symbolizes an essential human condition- alienation. The sight of an eagle or a bright hoopoe served to delight her otherwise solitary existence.

The postman early morning is an unwelcome sight. She understands that her great-grand daughter, Raka would be staying with her for some days. Ram Lal the cook and caretaker is the only person who she maintains contact with. Raka, as Nanda understands, has suffered from typhoid and the fever has made her weak. She is being sent to Carignano to convalesce. Raka has been asked to stay in Carignano as part of her medication. Desai describes Nanda's anger and reluctance in welcoming her great-grand daughter thus:

One long finger moved like a searching insect over the letter on her lap, moved involuntarily as she struggled to suppress her anger, her disappointment and her total loathing of her daughter's meddling, busybody ways, her grand daughter's abject helplessness, and her great grand daughter's impending arrival here at

Carignano. (Fire18)

Nanda has no option but to receive her great-grand daughter. As she sits alone, she sees an eagle, 'its wings outspread, gliding on currents of air without once moving its great muscular wings which remained in repose, in control. She had wished it occurred to her, to imitate that eagle – gliding, with eyes closed' (21). Nanda is desperate for a life without worries. She is forced to accept Raka into her house. Her mind is filled with thoughts about freedom. Added to this, a few days later she hears 'A burst of crackling and hissing, as of suddenly awakened geese, a brief silence, then a voice issued from it that made her gasp and shrivel...' (22). It was the voice of her friend Ila Das who wanted to spend some time with her friend Nanda. As Nanda talks to Ila over the phone, she watches 'The white hen drag out a worm inch by resisting inch from the ground till it snapped in two. She felt like the worm herself, she winced at its mutilation' (23). Nanda feels she is being persecuted like the worm in her desperate attempt to escape Ila. 'Still staring at the hen which was greedily gulping down bits of worm, she thought of her husband's face and the way he would plait his fingers across his stomach...' (24). This prey-predator image of hen pecking at a worm is a cruel reminder of her past suffering at the hands of the adulterous husband and her present awareness about the harsh realities of life. Her husband had an extra-marital affair with Miss David, the Mathematics teacher. Now, Nanda is helpless as she has to welcome Ila, which means disturbing her tranquility.

Though Nanda is determined to remain unaffected by the happenings outside, she cannot help but listen to the quarrel of the monkeys and the shrill voices of the parrots. As Nanda decides to take a walk on the lawn, she spots a lapwing that gets agitated on her unexpected arrival. Nanda thinks 'that hunted, fearful bird, distracting and disturbing' (28). Nanda is compared to a bird that has been aroused from its serenity at the arrival of Raka and Ila. D. Maya observes that "In the evocation of images that transcribed the human conditions and in the poignant fictionalization of the human predicament, Anita Desai's skill is incomparable" (135-136).

The arrival of Raka, though unwelcome is looked up by Nanda as a responsibility. To Nanda 'Raka meant the moon, but this child was not round faced, calm or radiant' (Fire 43). Nanda thinks the girl 'looked like one of those dark crickets that leap up in fright but do not sing, or a mosquito, minute and fine, on thin precarious legs' (43). As Raka slowly approaches her great grand mother, she makes the 'old lady feel more than ever her resemblance to an insect' (43). Raka's illness has proved detrimental and her great-grand mother is her only solace. To Raka, the old lady is 'another pine tree, the grey sari a rock – all components of the bareness and stillness of the Carignano garden' (44). In contrast, Raka is 'an intruder, an outsider, a mosquito flown up from the plains to tease and worry' to Nanda (44). Without any warmth or show of affection, Nanda welcomes Raka into her abode of isolation and introspection.

Ecological criticism envelops not only ecological concerns, but also those landscapes that employ images that contribute to a meaningful link between the various aspects of animate and inanimate relationships. Howarth mentions:

A future sense of cultural history may be landscape ecology which avoids distinction between natural and disturbed regions and uses a new spatial language to describe land by shape, junction, and change. They also provides metaphors for land – such as mosaic, patch, corridor.... (76)

Raka is left to herself at Carignano. She spends her time talking to Ram Lal and moving around the hill side with its only vegetation of a blighted gorge. The factory at this hill station resembles 'a square dragon, boxed, bricked and stoked' (Fire 46). She clings to the rail and slides across the length of the outdoor kitchen 'lizard-like' (46) and finds the room empty. She sees Ram Lal and enquires about the mad dogs and jackals that roam on the hill sides. In a desperate attempt, to enjoy the holidays, Raka decides to explore Carignano. But Nanda is indignant when she sees Raka roaming around 'as if she were a thousand black mosquitoes, a stilly humming conglomerate of them, and did not know whether to contain or release this dire seething' (49).

The sudden arrival of a dust-storm, yellow and fierce, engulfs Kasauli, blotting out the view, the sky and the air in a gritty mask. 'The sun ... lighting them up in a great conflagration - splendid bonfire that burned in the heart of the yellow clouds. The whole world was livid, inflamed' (58). Raka is astonished at the sight and enquires whether it would set the hills on fire. Ram Lal says that 'this is how forest fires do start. I can't tell you how many forest fire we see each year in Kasauli.... You can see how many trees are burnt, and house too' (58). The symbolic implication of the forest fire is reinforced by the title of the novel, *Fire on the Mountain* and is highly significant from the thematic point of view. The mountain symbolizes Nanda Kaul and the fire is symbolic of Raka's wild nature. "Nanda is the 'rocky belt', dry, hardened by time and age. Raka is silent, swift and threatening like the forest fire. The novel may be considered as a story of inability of human beings to ignore the world, to place oneself in another's position" (Choudary 79). Forest fire is one of the major concerns in the mountainous regions. It could be accidental or intentional and results in loss of lives, property and the depletion of forest resources. Hill stations have been pleasure spots for tourists and passer-by who often 'scratched their names into their succulent blades and there they remained – names and dates, incongruous and obtrusive as the barbed wire' (Fire 63). 'Garden House' that was once the most beautiful garden in Kasauli is now used as an army billet. This reminds one of the insensitivity of man to nature. He has reduced nature to an object for his own use and pleasure.

A few days in Carignano, Raka proves that 'she was no long the insect, the grasshopper child. She grew as still as a twig' (79). Both Nanda and Raka usually avoid each other; though Nanda has developed a liking for her great-granddaughter. Nanda and Raka, on this particular day sense 'a copper glow that outlined the shoulder of the hill in the east... a livid radiance in that cinereous twilight' (81). It is a forest fire – a big one. It could either be the work of poachers or thieves, let alone dust-storms. Images of insects like lizards, birds like eagles and parrots, and 'the thematic image of the 'fire' with its connotations of violence and urgency occur at regular intervals, warning the reader of the impending tragedy' (Indira 96).

The arrival of Ila reminds Nanda of the younger days. Raka does not interfere with the old women and she is taken in by 'the scene of devastation and failure' of Kasauli that somehow 'drew her, inspired her' (Fire 99). To Raka, Carignano is 'as dry and clean as a nut but she burst from its shell like an impatient kernel, small and explosive' (99). Raka is so involved with Carignano that she raises herself on 'to the tips of her toes – tall as a pine – stretched out her arms till she felt the yellow light... till she was alight, ablaze' (100). Nanda understands that Raka is agile and she is 'the elusive fish, the golden catch' (108).

Ila is aware that all forms of exploitation take place at Kasauli. She is a person who fights for justice. Ila recalls the incident where Maya-devi's son dies of tetanus. Superstitious beliefs in Kasauli are so rooted that the priest-man is revered and the doctor is shunned. Ila is involved with the lives of the people in Kasauli as she has recently joined in the capacity of the welfare officer by the government. She is against child marriage that prevails in Kasauli and prevents the marriage of Preet Singh's seven year-old daughter to an old man in a neighboring village. Hence she has incurred the wrath of the priest and Preet Singh, who has decided to take revenge on Ila for interfering in his affairs. Though she is aware of the dire consequences of her deeds, she is committed to the welfare of Kasauli.

One day, when Ila is out visiting Kasauli, she finds that the work would take too much time. Though alone, she is determined to walk the long distance down the desolate hill side to reach home and is interrupted by 'a black shape' (155). She recognizes Preet Singh who has attacked her. Defenseless against the powerful assailant, she is raped and brutally killed. The news is a rude shock to Nanda. She is invited by the police to identify the dead body. At that moment, Raka runs to Nanda telling her 'I have set the forest on fire' (159). To Nanda, Ila's death is like the fire that has been set. The young girl sees Nanda 'on the stool with her head hanging, the black telephone hanging, the long wire dangling' (159). She does not realize that her great-grandmother is dead. In this novel, 'the story element is very thin and there is practically no action except for the tragic end' (Indira 96).

Vassanji opines:

Anita Desai's novels do not deal with the large movements of history but with the struggles of human soul; not with the exuberance, the contradictions, the fascinations of India, its thrillingness and rawness that so easily fascinate the non-Indian reader; rather she looks at the invisible and private, and shall we say darker world of the self. (Introduction xiii)

Anita Desai has the power to express sensibilities in her canvas using images from nature. Since most of her novels are explorations into fundamental conditions and hapless situations, the use of imagery from nature has contributed to the themes in her novels in a substantial manner. She is an artist who has the ability to carve such deep emotions within her dexterous use of imagery that they announce the introduction of the explorations of the selves within the ecological framework.

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## English Giant Poets in First World War Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) and Keith Barnes (1934-1969)

Tahir Mehmood

Poetry! The gift of God, Poetry is the best way of expressing oneself and when a soldier writes poetry in war by describing the realistic scene of war it becomes a master piece.

There are good reasons for looking at these two English poets together. Both died too young, Owen at 25 and Barnes at 34, both were great admirers of Keats who also died at the age of 25. The causes of these early deaths are not the same, but in each case are entirely in accord with their time. Keats died in Rome in 1821, of tuberculosis inaccurately described as 'romantic', Owen in 1918 in France, laid low by a hail of machine-gun fire in the attempt to cross the Sambre canal with his company exactly a week before the armistice, while Barnes, in Paris, was swept away in three weeks by unstoppable leukaemia.

And the silence of a poet who has died too soon is deafening in that anyone who has been touched by his voice can never accept that he is silent for ever and can never rest until it is heard. We can read Wilfred Owen today because Siegfried Sassoon — also an officer in the First World War, who returned from the front and was in the same hospital near Edinburgh as Owen in 1917, who became his friend and was also a poet, who had made the war and the horrors of war the subject for his poetry — opened the way for his work to be published, enabled the publication of four of his poems in *The Nation* in his lifetime and then ensured the publication of his work in 1920 and 1921.

The reason that Keith Barnes's voice is also heard today is that, not content with what was published in his lifetime (several poems in the United Kingdom, the United States and France, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Observer*, *Time & Tide*, *Tribune*, *Ambit*, *New Republic*, *Mademoiselle*, *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, and also his first collection of poems, *Born to Flying Glass* (1967), published in New York by Harcourt, Brace & World), I have persisted both in translating his collected poetry and in seeking, in *K.B.* (published by Maurice Nadeau in 1987 in Paris), to restore his 'image', his life, our life, the sequence and development of his writing and, finally, it is because I am determined it make it heard and known.

Keith Barnes read Wilfred Owen and deeply appreciated his work, as one of the great sources of his inspiration — no doubt because what he had lived through in the London Blitz of 1940 and later, when the V2 rockets were hammering London once again, enabled him to understand and to feel deeply the experience and feelings of Owen, whose four months of 'active' war and five weeks in the front line had shaped his most fully developed poems. He also admired his straightforward and direct style.

But in addition, when we look more closely, we see that they have much in common. Owen was born in Shropshire, the county to which Barnes was evacuated, as were many London children, after the Blitz; both, although they demonstrated gifts and interest in music and the arts — all arts — attended technical schools, their fathers being, in Owen's case, a railway official and, in Barnes's case, a telephone technician. Owen's mother painted and Barnes as well with his grandfather, both loved life, neither of them foresaw an early death ...

Both were totally committed to their poetic path and chose to use the language of everyday life to express what they had to give to the world. The subject of their writing, rising from the heart, was experience; it was also and above all the truth, held as the prime value. And both could have taken up the first line of Keats's *Endymion*: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever'. Owen suffered terribly from the ugliness of the winter of cold, mud and sacrificed dead, some of them gassed as well. Barnes could not *put up with* the ugliness of England in those post-war years, of hasty reconstruction, privation, grief still raw, the feeling of depression.

Thus we find in each of these poets an acid reality, a biting irony and at the same time a sensuality which in Owen's case had no time to flourish and, for Barnes, formed the substance of the poems of his maturity. Owen's initial optimism was permanently transformed in the bitter reality of battle, of successive killings, of the dead in and around the trenches. He had already lost his faith, he did not recover it, questioning how it was possible to be Christian and to respect the commandment not to kill one's neighbour. Barnes, on this point, was never merely sarcastic. 'Normal' people too easily became murderers, so much is man's humanity also made of the too easy resurgence of his animal nature.

Clearly, there are always some human beings who will become the enemies of the killers. How effective is their action? At least their voice is heard, they create emotion, they do their duty: they *warn*, one of Owen's aims. And this is also what Barnes achieved: clear observations, warnings. And now, when what they described and denounced is arising once again in front of us, we remain stunned by the reality, the actuality of the vision of both men.

With Sassoon — who had after all already been decorated for his actions — Owen was one of the first to overturn the concept of hero. He took up arms (in his letters as much as in his poems) against the self-righteous attitude of comfortable civilians, always in favour of the war, with their sound conscience, while the butchery continued furiously. He defined himself as 'a conscientious objector with a very seared conscience'; his sensibilities were aroused and he had reached the point of seeing the war as absolute evil. Yet he was not a pacifist either. Nor was Barnes. Both expressed their feelings through bitter outcry, a tone of mingled anger and irony.

The Second World War was the natural consequence of the first: once the problems were ill concluded, each side made preparations by drawing on the lessons of their own past experience. Across the Rhine, preparations were made, amongst others, for rapid offensives, a sweeping onslaught, a psychological war designed to avoid, in the initial stages, the bloody impasse situations of the Somme and Passchendaele. In Britain, full note was taken of the states of shock suffered in these places and treated in several hospitals — including Craiglockhart, to which Owen was transferred and where he met Sassoon.

When the Blitz struck London, and in particular the East End, the young Keith Barnes was six years old, the very recent experience and the studies of cases of prostration and neurasthenia resulting entirely from terrible trauma suffered during the First World War meant that the civilian population was to some extent prepared. Faced with fire from the skies, the population — in other words, that Cockney population which was Barnes's origin — reacted with sang-froid, courage, determination, even a degree of humour, which were renowned, a triumph for the whole of Great Britain.

The young Barnes reacted like many children throughout the world when war strikes; witnesses (when they are not direct victims) and also wanting to play with everything around them, even with fragments of shrapnel still hot from their explosion. The reaction of a child is not necessarily the fear of danger and trauma, it may be one of excitement at the novelty of the circumstances. Yet he was marked for ever by the experience. *Born to Flying Glass* is the title of his first collection of poems. And he knew how to resist, as, when necessary, 'his' people had done when faced with the unacceptable.

Whatever the circumstances, and although each generation proved itself overall to be entirely heroic, the feeling that prevailed — the feeling of poets such as Sassoon and Owen, then Barnes — was that the notion of 'hero' itself was no longer valid. A metal disc round the neck of a corpse had not become a desirable end, bathed in general admiration. The sound of the bugle was no longer perceived as a musical note to stir souls, leading into battle with a song, banners floating in the wind were no longer necessarily overwhelming symbols. The notion that some wars could be avoided was born. The very idea of war became wholly detestable, even if some wars remain justified, necessary, inevitable.

In 1956 the Suez campaign provoked in Barnes a sense of panic for which he felt no shame. The possibility that it should perhaps 'be put off', the feeling of revolt, the gut-reaction of rejection, swept him away to the extent of looking with disgust at any form of militant engagement. His national service passed in torpor, a state described about himself by Owen, and with the idea that he had more fruitful seeds to sow. As poets, Owen and Barnes were only too well aware of their lost futures, their potential destroyed; the music unwritten, the books never to be printed, the projects doomed to remain unfulfilled, the children never to be born. In this, both echoed the feelings already expressed by Stephen Crane (1871-1900) in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), a book written when he was 24; and he too died in the fullness of his youth.

Barnes lived longer than Owen. He had the time to develop the themes that worried him and/or inspired him. One of these they had in common as we see appearing in Owen — the concept of social conscience and unacceptable injustice. Owen would no doubt have taken this up and amplified it. His feeling of sympathy for 'the other', individual or a group, was intense, profound. Owen was sensitive and tender, he radiated understanding. This as also true of Barnes. Both men, of course, were loved in return.

But in the case of Barnes, who had the time to observe, to live and to describe all the facets of social reality in the post-war years and the 1960s, the result was an acerbic and biting poetry, which did not please everyone. For example his second collection of poems, *The Thick Skin* was considered 'exaggerated' by his publisher's new reader. 'You are hard on your readers' was the accusation put to him. This book was published in Berkeley in 1971, in an edition that remained private (The Koala Press) and he had no time to finish his third collection *Ain't Hung Yet*, the title which he had chosen himself.

As for the theme of love, dear to all poets, Owen had only experienced the beginnings; we can feel something hatching within him, but his earliest poems are academic in style, inspired by the Ancients (however glorious they may be) and remain platonic. With Barnes it is entirely otherwise, who at least had the opportunity to foster the flourishing of his sensuality. Some of his love poems are among the finest. Love, in all its stages: meetings, flowerings, boredom, separations, jealousies, joys, tenderness, happiness, fulfilment ...

Thanks to decisive encounters, both men had the previously undreamed of opportunity to succeed with their writing, then of being published and recognised, this second phase being in progress for Keith Barnes. Siegfried Sassoon gave Owen the encouragement which he needed, the recognition of the quality of his writing, he introduced him to his equals: Robert Graves, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells. After his death, it was Sassoon who gathered the collection of his war poems and had them published. For Keith Barnes, France and now Belgium have played, and still play, an essential role. He also received support and recognition. However, in contrast to Owen, Keith Barnes had no doubt of the value of his work. At his innermost heart was a rock of certainty.

All Keith Barnes's poems have been translated into French, a selection from his three collections accompanies the narrative *K.B.*; virtually all his poetic work has appeared in French journals and the bilingual complete works is planned for editions d'écarts in Paris, in the spring of 2003. Wilfred Owen's poems have mostly been translated into French and published, but not yet in full.

Owen and Barnes loved France and both died there, and we may quote in reference to them *The Soldier* by Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), one of the most famous poets of the First World War, who lies' in an island in the Aegean Sea:

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England.



## POWER, LANGUAGE AND CONTEXT: THE SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF BILL CLINTON'S *BETWEEN HOPE AND HISTORY*

Uzoechi Nwagbara

This paper explores the importance of language in gaining power as well as in appealing to one's audience in diverse contexts. Thus, this paper will be considering Bill Clinton's book, *Between Hope and History: Meeting America's Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1996) from a sociolinguistic perspective to underscore its significance in terms of power, appeal and ideological persuasion to the American voting public. Published in New York by Random House, the book deals with how President Clinton used the agency of sociolinguistics and well crafted language to achieve power that resonates with his winning the presidential election for the second term. Also, it will be argued in this paper that a sociolinguistic reading of the book brings out the author's general political and philosophical worldview. It has to be noted that though a sociolinguistic study, only the diction, lexis and semantics of the language used in the book will be analysed.

Keywords: Clinton; Context; Ideology; Language; Power; Sociolinguistics.

In a society such as ours...there are  
manifolds of relations of power that  
permeate, characterise and constitute  
the social body, and these relations of  
power cannot themselves be established,  
consolidated nor implemented without  
the production, accumulation, circulation  
and functioning of a discourse.

--- Michel Foucault, *French philosopher and theorist*.

### Introduction:

A sociolinguistic reading of *Between Hope and History* unpacks the thrusts of the book that are couched in Bill Clinton's overall political and ideological philosophy as well as the achievements of his first tenure of office as President of the United States of America. The book also states the hallmarks of his campaign manifestoes for his second term through the use of apt linguistic and sociolinguistic elements. The acknowledgement of language as a medium for acquiring power is integral in all communicative situations aimed at rhetorical or sociolinguistic value. An outstanding feature of Bill Clinton's *Between Hope and History: Meeting America's Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is its attention to the demand of sociolinguistics, which is amply demonstrated in the book to be an effective method of achieving political and ideological ends as well as reaching out to the electorate. Call *Between Hope and History* a panoply of President Bill Clinton's political apparatus, his campaign rhetoric for winning presidential election of 1996 or "a snapshot of President Clinton's 'New Democratic' philosophy as he segues from his first to (he hopes) second term" (Toner: 1996: 1), the book trenchantly assays the Clintonian "the age of possibility" rhetoric. Clinton's "the age of possibility" language is couched in the triumvirate: opportunity, responsibility and community – which are the three main divisions (chapters) of the book. It is on this tripod of political, philosophical and ideological ethos that Clinton's second term rests; it is on it that part of the political achievements and policies of his first term rest as well. In substantiating this, Clinton makes the same point in his acclaimed autobiography, *My*



*Life* (2005). As Bill Clinton asserted the book “highlighted the policies of my first term through stories of individual Americans who had been positively affected by them, and articulated where I wanted to take our country in the next four years” (Clinton 2005: 722).

#### Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical method used in this study in relation to how the social constitution of Clinton’s audience shapes his use of language is sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the effects of context, expectations, norms and mores among others impact on language use in a particular social setting. Downes (1984) defined sociolinguistics as “that branch of linguistics which studies just those properties of language and languages which require references to social, including contextual, factors in their explanation” (1984: 15). In the same way, for Coulmas (1997), “the primary concern of sociolinguistic scholarship is to study correlations between language use and social structures” (1). The foundation of sociolinguistics is to interrogate the effects of contexts on language use. This is crucial in apprehending the book being investigated.

#### Language and Context: Appeal, Effects and Power:

In the preface to *Between Hope and History*, Clinton takes cognisance of the visionary failure of the preceding administration; he also comments on the moral, economic, political and leadership deficits of Republicanism, which is enmeshed in trickle down economics that constantly holds the populace down in political calculus. To this end, Clinton makes allusion to the Bible for sense of vision and morality to shepherd Americans out of their economic and political stalemate. Therefore, by understanding the need for inclusive and populist-oriented government that takes full responsibilities of its citizens against the backdrop of “Reagan Revolution”: the precursor to Bush administration that preaches “less government is almost always better than more of it” (Clinton 1996: 89).

Thus, Clinton’s understanding of the social and political context of that period is needful in making apt statements relevant to the occasion as exemplified in the book. It is a type of government that stands between responsibility and opportunity – the one that brings about community, what Nigel Hamilton calls “society as community” (2003: 228). Clinton makes this attempt in recognition of the mistakes and inaction that permeate political sloganeering in projecting electioneering manifestoes and vision:

In the last four years, we have pursued this responsibility in four broad areas: first, strengthening individual and community responsibility through, among other things, welfare reform and crime prevention; second, meeting public responsibilities better by reinventing the federal government; third, encouraging businesses to take more responsibility for the welfare of their workers and their families; fourth, working at all levels of society to address our responsibilities to future generations by improving how we protect our natural environment. (65)

Said within the borders of power acquisition, Clinton in the above statement uses apt language – exemplification, reference and concrete instances to establish the possibility of his “the age of possibility” political ethos, which can be deduced from his lexical choice as well as clear demonstration of his political and ideological leanings.

### Ideology, Language and Power:

Language is a major means for the transportation of ideology and power. Simpson (1993) sees ideology as “ways in which what we say and think interacts with society” (5). The definition of ideology offered here has strong relationship with the use of language in the context of power acquisition. Bill Clinton exemplifies socio-linguistic based words to convey power and ideology. Clinton’s appropriate, effective use of words engrained in well tailored expressions for political and ideological effects are quite illustrated in the book. As an ideologue, Clinton asserts

that words matter that they have a power that can change  
men and their worlds, sometimes dropping the scales from their eyes  
or shackles from their hands. Ideologists believe in the power of the  
idea as vested in the word. (Gouldner 1976: 27)

In supporting the above, Clinton believes that people are open to suasion capable of changing political culture by appealing to their ideals and political attachment through appropriate language use.

Thus, appropriate use of language within the right context places premium on sociolinguistic elements capable of igniting some effects: this amounts to ideological persuasion that foregrounds power. In this connection, Anton Pelinka therefore says that

Language reflects power structures – and language has an impact  
on power structures. Language can be seen as an indicator of social  
and therefore political situations – and language can also be seen as  
a driving force directed at changing politics and society. Language  
is an in-put as well as an out-put factor of political systems:

It influences politics – and is influenced by politics. (in Wodak 2007: 1)

Thus, the language of *Between Hope and History* is mainly about discourse of power and ideology mediated through recognition of what word is capable of doing if applied in the right sociolinguistic setting.

### Diction and Purpose:

The use of appropriate vocabulary in a given sociolinguistic setting or context is an important step in determining the meaning, attributes and value that are attached to a people, and, which therefore impacts on the subject positions being set up. In the statements to be analysed here, there are diverse ideological based lexes that carry different meanings as well as political positions which are coded in vocabularies used. Accordingly, the use of right vocabulary is a form of persuasion that is ideologically motivated. This is even more crucial as we live in the present order that Fairclough calls era of “linguistic turn” (1992: 2), a period in American history where there is “a pitched battle for the hearts and minds of U.S” public (Kopperud (1993: 20). The battle referred here is the one aimed at ideological dominance and power acquisition.

Talking about community, in the third segment of the book, Clinton warns that for the American people to live as a community, they must know that it is a function of responsibility and opportunity. After acknowledging that “The most fundamental responsibility of any government is to protect the safety of its citizens” (75), he goes ahead to assert that responsibility is a duty every citizen owes: the government, parents, churches, civil society, among others (71). And in corroborating the opportunities that his administration has made available to the American people, Clinton uses the right vocabulary to articulate a major aspect of the opportunities. This aspect deals with education, a focal point of Clinton’s administration; Clinton sees this area as a driver of other facets of opportunities, especially in the present

global economic order: a period Peter Drucker dubs “knowledge worker” (1999) age. Clinton states downright that

we have moved into a world where knowledge, which has always been a key to individual opportunity, is now the key to the success of the whole society and is literally the dividing line between those who can continue to do well for a lifetime and those who risk being left behind. (50)

Regarding diction, for stylistic felicity, appropriate use of words couched in texts whose various parts are semantically balanced demonstrates coherence, balance and symmetry. Such textual arrangement calls for appropriate locution that has direct relationship with the context. Thus, the use of required diction – choice of words – enhances the sociolect adopted as well as brings the situational constraints responsible for the textual variation used in the context.

In considering how apt expressions could galvanise support as well as provoke right political thinking, President Bill Clinton places premium on good language choice (diction) that wrings out the saliency of his politics. His idea here is similar to Edward Sapir’s when he reasoned that

Language is not ordinary thought... it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for the society. (1929: 29)

The significance of relevant words for communicative effectiveness and sociolinguistic appeals are what the above quote depicts. The sociolinguistic tradition which consigns contradiction resulting from using the same expression for different situations for power is what Alvin Gouldner tagged “paradoxical linguistic liberalism” (1976: 52). In recognising the pitfalls of this sociolinguistic pattern, Clinton uses language nuanced with apt diction that agrees with the social condition of his readers or voting public for maximum political ends. In advancing this,

in the face of bewildering, intense, sometimes overpowering change, people react differently... And there are those who embrace the future with all its changes and challenges and engage in what Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once called “*the action and passion*” of our time... F. Scott Fitzgerald, said we grew up “*to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in man shaken*”. In the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, we embraced a view of ourselves and our democracy that Franklin Roosevelt described as “*built on the unhampered initiative of individual men and women joined together in a common enterprise*”. (15-16)

Through the use of appropriate language choice based on relevant metaphors as well as references, Clinton takes a deep into the sociolectal importance of word choice. Thus, by referring to past distinguished American Presidents – even Theodore Roosevelt, who is not a Democrat, Clinton’s statement transcends party line as well as adumbrates the realities of his credential regarding contesting for the second term. In another instance, Clinton uses the right diction for effect: “We have been expanding our vision of a ‘united states’ ever since the failure of the Articles of Confederation caused the states to agree on a national Constitution...” (88). Clinton’s use of such phrases like ‘United States’, ‘vision’ and even ‘failure of the Articles of

Confederation’’ portend his idea about community and ‘‘big government’’ (88) ideal that is couched in re-inventing ‘‘America’s oldest democracy’’ and making the people the reason for governance.

#### Conclusion:

This study is based on how the agency of language verged on socio-linguistically conscious expressions could galvanise power, appeal and ideological persuasion given varying contexts. Thus, this is crucially important in order to appreciate the imports of President Bill Clinton’s *Between Hope and History: Meeting America’s Challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Also, it has been stated that a sociolinguistic reading of this text that runs within the axes of diction, semantics, power and contexts will bring the essence of the book within the parameters of Clinton winning the second term as well as gaining the trust of the American people. This is achieved by Clinton’s use of appropriate words to suit the contexts in which they are applied.

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## The Dalit and Non-Dalit Women Autobiographies

Yeshwant Madhav Radhakisan

Woman from Maharashtra was introduced to education which was her path to literature. The Marathi Autobiographies translated to English are the examples of the two different perspectives of Upper caste women and Dalit women. The critical reading of 'I Follow After' (Laxmibai Tilak) and 'The Prisons We Broke' (Baby Kamble) focuses on the philosophy and way of life of the two streams. The religious conversion and domestic life are observed as theme. But both of them differ in their basic instinct to compose autobiography. The open and close access to their writing deals with feminist argument about masculine influence and the egalitarian principle.

For the upper caste woman her family is her world and for the Dalit woman her community is her family. The first argue for self-modification and the second for community upliftment. In short, the study of these two autobiographies is parallel to the individual liberalism and communitarianism.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule was a 19<sup>th</sup> c. social reformer who took initials to introduce education to women and downtrodden people in India. Once he had asked his students to write essay about their plight as if they were describing it to Queen Victoria. Mukta Salwe, a girl from Mang community has expressed her life experiences which may be considered the first dormant autobiography of Indian woman. No doubt, in the recent past Indian women used to express through the lyrics on the grinding stones in which the grief, emotion, passion, hopes and glorification of their day-to-day life peeped out. This type of autobiographical literature was the initiatives for the main stream autobiographies of women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the independence when education reached to the humble huts of Dalit people, the Dalit women also started to express themselves in various literary forms. Marathi Dalit literature has the evidences of such type of writings but we have to wait up to 1980s to see the autobiographical work by these women. Women from Maharashtra are expressing various issues in the autobiographical form. Some exceptional life experiences on the part of the women have attracted the attention towards their autobiographies. Otherwise women's autobiographies have common aspects which revolve around their domestic life. The noteworthy fact is that though the domestic life is the major aspect of their writing; the autobiographies of the main stream women are different than the Dalit women's autobiographies. The basic reason is that the discourse in which they lived was different for both of these women. It affected the total colour of their literary composition. The rift of life pattern is visible in these two types of autobiographies. The grounds for life struggle, its philosophy, and their perspectives for life are totally different.

It is interesting to study an autobiography of a Brahmin lady, who got converted to Christianity following her husband in the contemporary conservative period, in comparison with an autobiography of a Dalit woman, who also got converted to Buddhism following the rational grounds of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Yes, I would like to look at Laximbai Tilak's autobiography *Smritichitre* in Marathi which has been translated in to English under the title *I Follow After* and Baby Kamble's autobiography *The Prisons We Broke* an English translation of *Jina Amucha*. Laxmibai Tilak was married to a whimsical poet Rv. Tilak. He got converted to Christianity out of the principles of humanity in it. But it becomes very difficult to a Brahmin wife to live the life of 'a wife' whose husband has converted to Christianity. She was sympathized as a widow and was offered with every kind of relief at the sake of her detachment



from her husband. She has to undergo terrible psychological crisis while taking the right decision and following the path of her husband. These life experiences and urge for expression made her autobiography interesting. At another hand Baby Kamble was born and grown up as a Mahar girl. She has witnessed and suffered to be a Mahar. Her life experiences are interesting because they are the sagas of sufferings and revolution when the untouchables changed the religion for emancipation. Her autobiography claims to be probably the first autobiography by a Dalit woman not only in Marathi but in any Indian language.

These two autobiographies have difference in their intensions, inner arguments, and grounds for complexities. The aim of this paper is to compare these two totally different autobiographies. Let's see the difference in more elaborate way. These two women autobiographies from Maharashtra belong to the same century but the authors have completely different perspectives for their lives. The major difference is that the author of the former belongs to upper caste Brahmin family converted to Christianity whereas the author of the later belongs to Mahar caste family converted to Buddhism.

Laxmibai Tilak has followed her husband in his every adversity. She got married at age 12<sup>th</sup> with Rv. Tilak. He was intelligent as well as whimsical by nature. Her social condition was quiet problematic when she was treated in a different way by relatives after Rv. Tilak's conversion to Christianity. It is an interesting journey in her life up to the time when she herself realized the humanistic approach of Christian religion and got converted. But in this case the moral obligation of a Hindu wife i.e. to follow the husband has much in force. So after the death of her husband when she started to feel lonely, her son Devdatta asked her to write the biography of Rv. Tilak to memories the past. She composed those memories and they become the testimonials of her autobiography i.e. *I Follow After*. Baby Kamble is an activist of Ambedkar Movement. She is aware of the oppressions under which the Dalit community people have to suffer. She is proud of to be a Mahar community woman. She asserts herself as a real inhabitant of the land which is named after their caste i.e. land for Mahar is Maharashtra. But as true activist she is upset by the social condition of her community people, she wants to orient them, she wants to introduce the new generation with the life of Dalit during the last fifty years. This is her intension behind the autobiography so it is the history of her community people rather than the routine description of the author's family matters.

*"In one sense it is more of a socio-biography rather than an autobiography."*

We can say that Laxmibai Tilak has **different intension** to memories the past in the silent days of life for the sake of time pass. But on the contrary Baby Kamble, as an honest activist in the caste struggle wants the next generation should forget the legacy of sufferings through which their generations passed.

Another difference which stands for an aspect of orthodox society is that Devdatta himself gives **open access** to Laxmibai Tilak and encourages her to write though writing was a challenge for her. But Baby Kamble has **to hide** her composition for twenty years up to the time when it was published accidentally in *Stree*.

The next point of difference about *I Follow After* is that it is composed under the **masculine influence**. As it has been mentioned above that it was an effort of Laxmibai Tilak to write the biography of Rv. Tilak, so that she composed his memories. But those memories were none other than her entanglement with her husband to the extent that it becomes her autobiography. If Devdatta would have asked her to write of her autobiography then there would have been no different material than she had produced under the title *I Follow After*. She is always presented as meek, substitute and a true Hindu wife in each and every memorable



incident of her husband's life. She got converted as a Christian and proclaimed, '*I will not follow untouchability and caste distinction*', but the motive behind it is quiet ambiguous. Sometimes she becomes bold and takes decision but those never go beyond the circumference of her husband's authority. For example she decided to eat the food prepared by Aashamma bai at Mahabaleshwar. On her way at Pipurde, she sheltered a girl Nakushi and asked her to come along with them. She says that she was firm to the fact that her husband would have never restricted her from doing so, so that she declared it to her husband that she (Laxmibai) has taken her (Nakushi) with them. In the due course of adversities when she happened to travel for Karachi, she felt helpless in the absence of male supporter. She says,

*"We were at a side and Dattu at another. No male with us. Though we were in company of two males; they were mere useful for meals and not for support. One male was of two and half years old and another was one and half years old."*

Baby Kamble has lived in the same social structure of Hindu society in which woman is considered as subordinate to the husband. She was subjected for her husband's doubts and harsh beating. But her autobiography deals with grandparents, parents and her community people. The age old tradition like Rede jatra and certain religious conventions are the integral part of her autobiography. The tone of the autobiography is **egalitarian** and it is not influenced by masculinity. The adversity is an equal challenge for wife and husband. They started vegetable merchandise in their locality and added provisions like oil, salt and such other stuff. Her husband used to look after the business in the morning till she finished her household chores and once she came he left for the market to buy provisions. They played the role of business partner rather than one substitute to another. As far as the composition of autobiography is concerned, we find that Baby Kamble was not requested to compose it, on the other hand it was her inner inspiration which made her to express about her community people. If somebody would have asked her to write about her memories then she would have written the same that we read because she says,

*"The suffering of my people became my own suffering. Their experiences became mine. So I really find it very difficult to think of myself outside of my community."*

The two autobiographies can be observed in respect of their **themes**. The people surrounded and religious complexities are the same line for them. After Rv. Tilak's conversion to Christianity, the relatives and family members developed a kind of aloofness from him. But as a true wife in Indian context, Laxmibai followed him with her all **religious complexities**. She found it trilling to describe how her perspectives changed when she drunk and omitted the water brought by a Muslim fellow. Her introspection on the occasion indicates how does she come out the religious complexities and foregrounds for the journey towards her conversion to Christianity. She introspected about the notion of castes among the human beings and its absence among the animals, the man made difference among men. She thought that Shudras' are not attributed with any kind of vulgarity and Brahmins are not decorated with any kind of holiness. There is difference only among men and women. And she decided to eat and drink from all without any caste based distinction. Such type of argument on the part of Laxmibai indicates herself as a Hindu lady becoming more secular to follow the path of Christian religion. Half of the autobiography deals with framing the ground i.e. Laxmibai as Hindu Brahmin and the remaining part of the autobiography is about how she excels in the Christian religious practices. She tried to maintain all the Hindu religious behavioral patterns after her conversion also. Kamalabai Deshpande quotes in the Introduction, '*She is Christian for the sake only! If we go to her home and communicate with her then we feel as if we are talking with a Brahmin from Kokan.*' In short, the autobiography becomes an instrument to reason the complexities regarding

her religious conversion and life after conversion. Baby Kamble handles the same issue of conversion. She describes an anecdote of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's speech at Jejuri. For Baby Kamble conversion is satisfying the **logical rationality** and winning the struggle of emancipation which was not possible for them in the circumference of Hindu religion. Hindu religion is bunch of ugly customs, exploitations, superstitions and detachment from education for the downtrodden. Buddhism has the potentials to give them recognition as human beings and rights of equality along with education.

*'Gradually, the wind of Ambedkar's thoughts turned into a whirlwind. Everybody began to understand, argue and consider. The dead cells in their blood were charged with a new life. Blood began to flow through their veins with new vigour.'*

Her autobiography deals with these two contradictory approaches for two religions in which the logical rationality, self-awareness and struggle for emancipation are important aspects. In short we can say that the basic difference between these two autobiographies is that the former finds romance and thrill in the conversion whereas the later deals with the utter need of conversion as means of emancipation for each and every type of adversity in the life of downtrodden.

Laxmibai Tilak's autobiography is titled as *Smritichitree* in Marathi. It means the pictures in the memory. She has come across some persons from her childhood. These are the family members, relatives, her husband, in-laws and the near and dear people of her husband. Her mother, Nana (her father), Bhikutai, Nanasaheb Pendase (Bhikutai's husband), Her Aunt, Govindrao Khamdote (her Aunt's husband), Narayanrao Tilak, Mahadeo, Dr. Balantain Saheb are the central figures. All other characters come occasionally and depart after playing their due roles. But the interesting fact is that Laxmibai's circle widens day-by-day regarding her acquaintances with the society to the extent that when she started to work as matron after the death of Rv. Tilak, she felt herself as responsible member in the family of Mumbai Mission. **Her family is her world** for which she sacrificed and reconciled throughout her life and she always remained dependent on her relatives, husband and son. No doubt the circle of the family got widen slowly. But in the case of Baby Kamble, **the whole community is her family**. At her mother's natal village Veergaon, there are sixteen families and all the heads of those families are just like maternal uncles for her. She was a member of the community more than her family. The adverse conditions of the neighbourhood families were shared by her grandmother when the women from those families group for meals and eat stale bhakris with onions. Her father Pandharinath Kakade always considered surviving the community members as his moral responsibility. The sufferings and agonies of the community members never remain their own but shared by everybody. *The Prisons We Broke* starts with this particular sense i.e. the community as a family and at the end we find Baby Kamble has given slight references of her own family because she finds it very difficult to think herself outside of her community but it does not mean that she is dependent on anybody. On the contrary she shares the earning source with her husband as a business partner. Even her marriage is not her personal matter; it can't be in Indian context. But it does not remain as a matter of two families rather it becomes an experiment of the community people to walk on the path of Dr. Ambedkar by arranging it in a different way.

In short, it is considered as the basic difference between the two autobiographies that the former stands for the self-modification and changed perspective due the self-modification on the part of the author. At the same time the later stands for the community upliftment rather than self-development. It is the difference like western modernity and eastern communitarianism.

As far as the language of these autobiographies is concerned we find that Laxmibai has used mild language of compromise which reflects her life style. But the language Baby Kamble used is quite bold and complaining about the age old agonies of her community people.

In this way we can say that though these two are women autobiographies from Maharashtra but they differ in the basic structure as per the need of the authors to express themselves in public. Their tone and matters satisfy the authors' urge to enclose their perspectives to the readers. These autobiographies are from two streams so they stand for two different arguments.

### Works Cited:

Mang is one of the untouchable castes in Maharashtra.

e. g. *Sangate Eka* by Hansa Wadkar and *Me, Durga Khote* (tr. I, Durga Khote) by Durga Khote. etc

Ranade Ramabai. *Amchya Ayushyatil Kahi Athavani* (Marathi), *Himself the Autobiography of a Hindu lady* by Ranade Ramabai. Longmans Green and Co, 1938

Shantabai Kamble's *Majya Jalmachi Chittarkatha* published as a complete book in 1986 but presented to readers and television audiences in serial form through the early 1980s, is considered the first autobiographical narrative by Dalit woman writer. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shantabai\\_Kamble](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shantabai_Kamble)

Maya Pandit in the Introduction of *The Prisons We Broke* Pp. xiii

Laxmibai Tilak was taught by Rv. Tilak and she was always in trouble to spell the difficult words in Marathi.

Maxine Berntson, a sociologist happened to see the notes of Baby Kamble and she talked about it to Vidya Bal, an editor of the women's magazine *Stree*

In her introduction to *Smritichitree*, Kamalabai Deshpande says, '*It is very difficult to say that which the real force was whether self- realization or reconciliation with husband by following his wish*'.

Buffalo fair conducted during the festivities for the mother goddess

English translation of Marathi quotation, done by me.

Dr. Ambedkar has asked rational questions to the Dalit masses regarding God Khandoba and has asked them to follow the path of dignity.

Roti made from jowar flour

Baby Kamble. *The Prisons We Broke*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009

Laxmibai Tilak. *Smritichitree*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1994

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## The Jigsaw Puzzle

M. David Hornbuckle

Alabama, USA

The sun. It's been one of the hottest days of the year, mid-July, but the sun is finally starting to descend behind the tree line. The laundry is clean. The dishes are clean. The kitchen and bathroom floors are mopped. Everything has been dusted. The shower curtain has been replaced with one that is fresh and free of mildew.

Vera takes the old shower curtain and wraps it around the large oak tree in the back yard, secures it with duct tape. This too will be a clean transition. They can wrap her up in it. No mess at all. She's a little woozy. That'll be gone soon. She points the rifle toward herself. But something is wrong. The trigger is too far away. She can't reach it.

\*

Ms. Rogers:

I was inspired by your personal story of surviving breast cancer. My husband Ray suffers from prostate cancer, and he was moved as well. We watch your news show every night at six before we eat dinner. I wondered if you would run a story about how to quit smoking. Ray and I have both been smoking cigarettes for over thirty years, and we've tried everything in the book. My first husband died of lung cancer, and that didn't even deter me! Can you imagine?

Thank you very much,

Mary Jane Grosnick

\*

"Your sister tried it again, this time with a gun."

"A gun? Where the fuck did she get a gun?" Mary Jane is seething. She knows very well where the gun came from—it came from him, Vera's idiot husband Gene who is on the other end of the phone with her.

"It was one of the ones from the house." He sounds to her even more clueless than she could have imagined.

"After all her suicide attempts, you still have guns in the house?"

“Luckily, I'd taken the cartridge out.”

“Cartridge? What kind of gun was it?”

“An M16A2, semiautomatic. Not much use really in keeping a gun like that around if it isn't loaded. By the time you need it, if it isn't loaded, doesn't do much good. But, thankfully, at this time, it wasn't loaded.”

Mary Jane hangs up. Then she remembers she forgot to ask what hospital Vera is in, so she calls Gene back.

\*

Vera is familiar now with the nurses who work on the psych ward, which ones are overly surly and which ones are too bubbly. There is no happy medium, no Goldilocks of the mental unit to make her feel comfortable without making her feel like a helpless child. Perhaps she is a helpless child. Her brain is broken. People without broken brains do not repeatedly try to kill themselves. She can't control herself, so she has to let someone else be in charge of her for a while, and though she knows that as a fact, her broken brain can't seem to really process it and she doesn't know what to do with herself. She sits at a card table and works at a jigsaw puzzle. She knows there will be pieces missing, but she doesn't even care. She finds that kind of symbolism tiresome.

The nurses who are overly surly tend to wear the tackiest, silliest scrubs, the ones with patterns of children's cartoon characters or smiley faces. Once she saw one where the smiley faces had head bandages, and she thought that was appropriate. The head nurse, apparently, didn't think it was appropriate because that nurse got scolded and never wore those scrubs to work again.

\*

Ms. Rogers:

Thanks so much for your special on how to stop smoking. As I mentioned in a previous letter, my first husband died of lung cancer, and my current husband Ray (I've mentioned him to you before) has prostate cancer. I didn't mention that a husband in between died from brain cancer, and when I was single I dated two men who had throat cancer. I guess you could say I'm a cancer groupie. Do you think there's something wrong with me? Lol.

Thank you very much,

Mary Jane Grosnick

\*

On the way to the hospital, Mary Jane sits in the back seat, her husband Ray in the passenger side front, Gene in the driver's seat. Gene says, "So y'all are both on the patch now? How's 'at going?"

She knows he's just trying to make conversation, but the question itself makes her want to smoke more than ever, makes her want to shove an entire pack of cigarettes in her mouth and light it aflame, and then she would like to light Gene aflame for good measure.

The patch has been playing tricks on her brain. For about three days, Mary Jane had been convinced she'd won a million dollars from a scratch off game at Taco Bell. Ray believed her when she came home and told him about it. Then she thought she had lost the ticket or French fry box or whatever it was with the prize on it, and then she realized a couple of days later it had all been a patch-induced hallucination. Fortunately they had decided to keep the whole thing under their shirts until the winnings were confirmed.

\*

Vera looks up from the jigsaw puzzle just in time to make eye contact with Gene as he approaches the nurses' station, her sister and brother-in-law in tow. She doesn't want to talk to them. One of the too bubbly nurses comes bounding over to the table. Before the nurse can make her overly bubbly announcement, Vera says she knows. Waves them over.

Hugs. Not tender ones. Shoulder pats. They see her as delicate now. There are four chairs around the card table so they all sit. They ask her what she's working on. Jigsaw puzzle. Duh. And don't ask what it's of. The box is right in front of you.

Mary Jane says, "What's it of?"

Vera pushes the box in her direction. It's flowers. Mental patients are supposed to like flowers she guesses. We find them calming.

She assures them that she feels okay and the staff is taking good care of her. That's all they want to know. Nothing is resolved. No sort of resolution is attempted. She knows they are thinking she is safe here and maybe she'll get better this time. Vera is just biding her time until they let her go home.

On the other hand, she hopes they do keep her here a while. It is quiet mostly, and it's very clean.



\*

Ms. Rogers,

I am shocked and incensed at the story I saw tonight when I got home about this new sales tax they want to start charging. For schools? Yeah, right. That money goes right in the pockets of you know who. My brother-in-law has a large gun collection. I have a mind to borrow one of those guns and tote it right down to the capital building.

Thank you very much,

Mary Jane Grosnick

P.S. I saw you coming out of the Publix this afternoon, and I didn't quite realize what I was doing at the time, but I sort of followed you to your neighborhood. Local news anchors must not get paid as much as I would think. Was that your daughter with you? She's lovely.

\*

Vera looks for those last couple of pieces of the jigsaw. They must be under the table somewhere. She gets down on her knees, combs through the gray-blue low pile with her fingers. Her hair falls down into her face. She can't see anything anyway. She gives up. An urge to just lie down there on the floor comes over her, but she resists. How can she be so exhausted when all she has done for three weeks is sleep, go to therapy, and work on this jigsaw puzzle?

When she returns to her plastic chair, Mary Jane says, "We're the only normal ones here, aren't we?"

Vera doesn't answer.

## Olympia

E. Eller

San Francisco USA

If there is a dark and hostile power which traitorously fixes a thread in our hearts in order that, laying hold of it and drawing us by means of it along a dangerous road to ruin, which otherwise we should not have trod--if, I say, there is such a power, it must assume within us a form like ourselves, nay, it must be ourselves; for only in that way can we believe in it, and only so understood do we yield to it so far that it is able to accomplish its secret purpose.

- E.T.A. Hoffman, The Sandman[1]

I wait.

Seth says he's on his way. He said so just before midnight and now it's 1:30 in the morning. I don't expect him to show up until 3am or 5am or 7am. He's done this before. He's said he'll come over and then doesn't show until hours later. He comes once everyone else in my building, the neighborhood, the entire city, falls into a state of slumber so complete, we find ourselves truly alone together. No one else has ever even seen us together. No one knows we know each other. We become the only people awake on Tuesday at a time in the morning that does not even exist for those who are asleep. We build upon the allotted number of hours in the night. When he comes, the night seems to go on forever. The little game we play is a matter of preying on one another. Right now he has the advantage because he's not here. He hasn't come yet like he said he would so I suppose I'm at his mercy because I'd rather he was here.

"On his way," he said. Which is to say his way is the way he goes. His way goes on. The onward way is his. When words go through so many iterations, meaning collapses. The repetition falls flat and what remains is only an echo of an echo. That's where art comes from – echoes. Sometimes, I feel like it's not him I'm really after, but some kind of performance, as if he and I were an artwork, being created. "On his Way." Is it true? Is he really on his way? I don't want to lose sight of this. And how can I keep it here unfolding still, my hope.

If Seth came to me earlier during the hours when people are awake, it might seem like we were a couple. But I'd never call it that. And besides, I wouldn't want to have an audience. I wouldn't want anyone to know. I like secrets because they give me something to think about when everyone else is talking about one thing like the way hair grows on a newborn and my thoughts are somewhere else, somewhere unattainable. Behind the daytime, our hours stay hidden. And if my friends knew what I have been doing, they'd try to stop me. They'd think I have a psychological illness. Am I hurting myself? Should I be cured from this self-loathing that is so exquisitely my own and which Seth enables me to express?

In the hours I spend with Seth we don't seek to remedy this. We spend our time doing cocaine usually or sometimes we drink cheap Chardonnay, listening to opera. If at some point we can find the edge of things, the edge of feelings, then we see something light up. We see the material of this behavior, like finding the paint on the canvas and seeing it for what it is, a *trompe l'oeil* illusion. That is enough. One time he tried to suffocate me with a pillow. He fucks with my head. I don't care if we ruin ourselves. That's why we meet when no one else is awake to criticize. Our time follows a different clock. Our time ignores the overbearing system, which insists on mindless cooperation. It is the only time we really have, to make of our time what we will, because it is actually so rare to be able to fill the time without any consideration for others.

I pinch my own nipple to stay awake as I lie on my bed. All around, I see things that I would clean up if it were the daytime. Toenail clippings. Eyelashes. Dust. Brown leaves in plant-pots. The tangled folds of blankets. I wonder if he notices these things. Thumbtacks in the wall with necklaces hanging down from them. Stacks of coins. Fuzz pills on my sweater under the armpit. A brochure about bookbinding. I rub my cold, callused feet against one another. My picture frames match the wall color, stark white. Blank index cards are stacked next to the blank CDs. Slatted doors. Plastic drawers. Cords lie on the floor that each draw lines from the desk to the printer on the other side of the room. Headphones hang on the wall. A USB cable and a gold chain bracelet are intertwined. A clipboard holds scrap paper with the blank sides up. Some of the cords lead towards hidden electrical outlets. A heavy curtain bears down on a weak curtain rod. Everything is held together with safety pins. His tie hangs on a coat hook. I don't know if he knows I still have it. I get up and put it around my neck.

My face goes by in the mirror. I've already applied mascara to my eyelashes so they flicker, as if separating scenes in a movie when I blink. They're like little black-feather-fans. From behind these tiny feathers, I gaze at the wall. My feet sink into the floor until I'm sitting cross-legged down there. I lay down with my eyes still swimming through the contents of the tiny room. As usual they pause on Olympia who is pinned up on the wall.

Olympia. Take that word and unfold it. It's an unfolding word. Any iteration of Olympia is packed with countless contradictions. Form lashes out at content. It is an endless duel. And yet I can only approach Olympia from a great distance, as a satellite. I have to see her as though she were something apart from me, outside of myself. It's because I can't see what he sees. I look at her as if I were Seth, looking at me.

It is Manet's painting of Olympia, painted in 1863. It displays a prostitute, a rich French courtesan lying in pose, copying the pose of Titian's Venus, painted in 1596. She looks out, square to the viewer's gaze with a look of certitude. She accepts flowers from a dark skinned slave. A reprint of the painting is framed on my wall. My father picked it out of a stack of prints from a street peddler outside the Louvre. He took me to Paris to visit my great grandmother's gravesite. He and my mother had just divorced. I was only nine, but I remember him choosing Olympia. It was odd of him to choose a naked woman as a gift for me. In the familiarity of my room my eyes land on her unintentionally. This room is the only room that can't keep secrets from me.

Not a day goes by without the vision of her face appearing in my head between sips of coffee or the sight of her arms, while I walk by parking meters along the sidewalk. Here in my room I indulge again, seeing a bouquet of flowers painted pink, white, green, held by the slave who is painted as but a shadow of thick paint next to Olympia's blinding porcelain complexion. Whore. Olympia accepts what she can take from suitors and from slaves. Prostitute. Supplicant for previous artworks, repeated artworks that disseminate over time. She's holding a pearl. This painting caused a scandal, they say. To declare this whore's portrait a piece of art was an outright insult to the established protocol for true, pure, sanctioned art. And with the burgeoning modernist impulse, this protocol suspended in thin air, becoming an unattainable edict, an unsupportable construct even though Manet painted rich fabrics in an overly planned composition.

Isn't she pretty with those glittering eyes, glittering jewelry, and porcelain skin? She's the representation of a real-live model who waits for the painting to cease so she can let down her hair and unlatch her choker from her elongated neck. She can accept kisses up her arm, laugh at desire, run with desire, fondle Manet's desire, and then steal his paintbrush to paint the face of a

clown on him. When alas, his masterful paintbrush drips down the side of his legs, she lines her legs with stockings and stuffs his money in her purse. Olympia, the sweet delicate thing, who is situated on a pedestal, must have performed wondrously on the elaborately staged bedding for Manet's delight.

He must have acted on a lark. He simply understood how the goddesses of the past were the whores, transvestites, and suicides of the future. The canvas is a Trompe l'oeil illusion. He did what the authorities told him he shouldn't have done. By doing so, he opened the hatch into the future where the walls accept the filth of each anus and injury as expressive communication. Decency was destroyed by a few strokes of paint bristle. Voices murmured in the art-pulpit, voices that instructed the painter to denounce his own work. Voices organized an orderly fascist future to ensure that no such indecency would slip through. Each artwork would be catalogued and approved based on standards. Pornography would not be accepted into the official record. Pornography would be exiled to the dark corners of the collection, the bathroom stalls, pages landing in the living hands that jitter with excitement, enclosing a member that erupts onto the broken floor. Manet's Olympia lands in an uncertain space. It lands somewhere at the end and somewhere at the beginning. And still I wonder in vain if his depiction of the slave is meant to be ironic.

When you are not fully awake and you haven't slept for hours and too many hours have already past to try to sleep, your mind goes into a sleep-like state. The person inside of you slows down into a rhythm as gradual as plant growth. An empty pocket of time appears and you realize it increases by halved increments and will continue in an eternal half-life of time. If pressed for answers to trivial questions like those that they ask at airports...do you have any liquids in quantities greater than 4 oz, you might answer with a delayed response, pondering such scrutiny over liquids. You might answer with a question...no, but do you have any solids greater than 4oz?

I realize that its possible he won't come over to spend time with me. I'm no longer certain whether she is inside of me or outside of me. He keeps saying he'll only be 10 more minutes by text message, but that was hours ago. Now it's nearing 5am and the window of opportunity is almost lost. I'm not even sure if its really him anymore sending the texts because they feel more like an automated reminder just to keep me up, keep me waiting, to induce this odd state.

"10 more minutes," then 45 minutes later, "10 more minutes," then an hour later "10 more minutes." This is torture. It is not unlike guards who keep their prisoners from falling to sleep with drops of water or with little jolts of electricity once on the hour, every hour. These text messages do this to me, put me in a state of tortured sleep-loss.

The sun has begun to sneak into the sky and I already miss the darkness. I know I'll probably only begin to suffer the result of this sleepless night when I'm at work, when I'm called upon to remember the collections data of my boss's most bankrupt clients, the ones who I'm supposed to convince to pay him for work done months ago. I'd rather be trying to convince them to donate to my liquor fund or my refrigerator fund, or just try to get them to pay my rent. Instead, they conveniently leave the country for nine months. My boss's photographs sit in his client's portfolios and they collect dust. The patrons of these designers have run dry of funds. And my boss is no less dependent. The invoice I sent months ago for payment sits in a file cabinet somewhere. But those are all daytime concerns and I have a buffer of four hours before they should even cross my mind.

Manet wasn't the only one who painted Olympia. Other painters liked what he did and they wanted to take it further, to play around with his ideas and use her for their own purposes. One

of these artists was the American born Italian painter, Cy Twombly. His Olympia is strange graffiti on a giant canvas stretching the length of a hall. I saw it in Houston in the Menil Collection. The painting does not depict a person. The fleshy colored spots appear like stains, bloodstains mixed with urine and cum. He writes in charcoal or anything nearby, an available pencil, graphite, or perhaps a sharpened stick dabbed in dust. He writes in an almost illegible script, "Fuck Olympia."

He wrote it and people understood.

"Fuck Olympia."

Smear the blood from a derelict woman's body, like a dismembered peach. Or worse, from our own self-inflicted knife wounds, expressions of somber disillusionment. Death, Morir. Olympia will crumble, shatter. Something of hers is bursting in a quake of somber violence, unperturbed. Destroy a canvas, destroy a canvas, life is a canvas, morir. Scatological graffiti lingers like traces of abominations, shit on the floor, shit danced upon with violent feet, slipped on, stumbled upon, crashing to the ground from high, high above. Death is a canvas too, a fallen canvas pulled off the erect wall. There is a stage full of mythological ghosts who are scribbled away, painted over, erased. These are the departed gods of classicism, ripped from the canvas and set free like a flock of pigeons who provide a harangue of birdcalls, licking our ears along with sirens and screeching utility. Mechanical ghost cries tear the sound from the canvas, clipping the canvas into an evening gown to house defecation.

Under the vast canopy of a canvas there is room to smear the traces of these excretions. Pull them over the fibers to create a big memory of the walls' utility, a place to wipe your hands clean in public. The perceived walls of a city become new walls of a cave, enclosing our memory of bison, and there we spill our own blood for the forgotten creatures and yank them out of our veins, sharing blood on the surface of an art-work. Death, Morir.

Olympia lunges into the valley looming like a plague, a million faces in one face, a goddess, a foul goddess to be fucked. This face, this sour face erased, scribbled out, blotted out, forgotten under the trace, the lingering memory was just the ludicrous violent mess-making in feigned lust, a destructive lust to spoil a peach the defecation on a peach, the mistaken peach, rotten. Red as a fresh corpse, Olympia's face is a million fresh corpses, lying in the sunlight where they will dry into a vast artwork, pulled from the precipice to lie flat on the ground, soaking into the soil, sinking into the mud.

Fuck a dialectic of high and low or life and death and with each exhale, let a cursing utterance climb up the canvassed walls to infuse them with structural weakness. Whispered 'Fucks', breathy 'shit-heads', yawning 'cunts' aimed at Olympia, the soft fortunate beauty that blinded us into retaliation.

Like I said, I saw Twombly's painting in Houston. This was where my dad received treatment for cancer last Christmas. They had to cut into his skull to reach his sinuses, where the cancer had manifested. It is a metastasizing cancer that will likely spread, but his Radiologist hoped that with this procedure, it would not spread to his brain.

I saw Rothko's non-denominational church in Houston, too. It's a church that is painted all black. When I got back to San Francisco from Houston, I dreamt that everything in my house was painted black, like the Rothko chapel. I was in a room full of people, but I was the only one standing. Everyone else floated waist-high, horizontally, like floating logs, bumping into one another. People's arms and legs rolled towards me, bumping my body, each shaded to the utmost degree. I stood at the center of the room, looking around for someone. I saw my father off in the corner and waded through people to get to him. When I reached him, I tried to lift him into

upright position. I lifted his hand and it was a heavy stone, which dropped like a paperweight back to his horizontal side. I woke up to see Manet's Olympia on my wall. I prayed to her. Give me back my hope, Olympia, soften my injuries. But she only said in reply, "Death, Morir," My trip to Houston resulted in seeing Olympia's estranged godlessness through the eyes of Cy Twombly. She became for me nothing more than a fortune-teller's scribbles on canvas. I know that my dad will likely die from his cancer. I'm waiting for it. My mom is waiting, even my grandmother. We wait in sustained lament.

I also wait for my lover. I keep texting him back. My words drop into an abyss. The names I write to him aren't nice, but at least I mean no harm, I only mean to tease him. I call him dirty girl-names like "cunt," "bitch-slut," "knife-wound." But he ignores these messages. He writes back asking if I'd like him to bring a dildo to strap on and fuck him with. I don't know if he's serious or not. He's probably been with someone else all of this time that I've spent waiting, maybe even a boyfriend. He'd take anyone who he could practice a different set of scripted lines on. He needs an audience, I guess. Then he'll come to me with what's left. Who knows whom his other lover is. It could be my neighbor, my boss, my best friend. It's been almost two years now. And still, it feels as if we've only just begun.

These have been confusing years for my parents who keep asking about my love life. They want me to tell them if I have boyfriend or not, if I've been dating. It seems that now more than ever, my dad wants to know that maybe I'll have children someday. In part I think it's because he's afraid I might not. In part it is also because he's begun to die. I don't quite know if he believes he'll survive the cancer. It is an uncommon form of melanoma in the sinuses and there have only been about one hundred similar recorded cases in all of medical history. I know his wish for me is to ensure that he lives on, in me. And all of the while, underneath my adamant abstinence from any portrayal or depiction of courtship to ease my parent's minds, there was this: Seth and me and our little rendezvous.

Perhaps the times we meet are less real to me than those other parts of my life like my job and my family because there is no proof of him except for his tie. The secrecy of it makes it more like a dream and certainly the state of mind I'm in when he rolls around makes it less real to me due to sleep-loss. I feel like the hours we spend together are exiled from my other hours. They are hours imprisoned by his determination to exclude me from his regular life and confine me to those few hours before the break of day, or just after dawn.

There is another Olympia painting I know of, painted by Jean Michel Basquiat. His Olympia is less discreet than Cy Twombly's, if there could be such a thing. He explores the filth that Manet didn't even know he had kept intact. The painting is called Three quarters of Olympia Minus the Slave and I saw it in New York City during my first year in college. As if my father's trips to museums hadn't been ample introduction, I decided to study painting. As Basquiat's title suggests, there is no black servant in the painting. Basquiat's whore is a man. It is a transvestite who touts an almost-etched coat of arms above his head. There are almost-hands painted in completion but they are disassembled lines. There is no black servant. Perhaps it is supposed to be the vision of the room seen from the black-servant's perspective, a parody of Manet. There are no flowers. There is not a pose. There is just an ugly piece of art that contrasts stunningly with Manet's pretty little thing. The rich, white courtesan is dismantled in Basquiat's depiction. She is long forgotten. There are mismatched eyebrows. There is no head of hair. An inscription reads, "Woman dry her neck by Edgar ©." The French word, "Absinthe," is only almost legible. It is painted over in big scouring gestures of white paint. There is red paint, too. There is blue paint, too. It looks like some kind of bitten thumb aimed at the French.



The abjection, the casting away of Manet and his Olympia, is like the gesture that Manet wanted to make but couldn't because he was first and foremost a Frenchman. But Haiti was the country where some of Basquiat's ancestors lay dead, a country ruthlessly fucked by the French. There is no grace in Basquiat, only big ugly gestures to make a scene, a vivid piece of art that nearly mimics refuse. If this refuse is where Olympia landed after she was pillaged by the future, there is nothing but a disassembled mess and squiggly lines. There is a face with a row of teeth and mismatched eyes. This is Olympia, this man is Olympia, this bald-white-sketch-of-a-man is a French-like thing.

There is no culture to feign, any longer. There is just a brash gesture to aim at the long, lingering past like a missile. Launching missiles to cover the past in paint gestures, not kidding. Not struggling under the heavy-handed dissipation of arms that forces nations into secret retire. There is no bureaucracy in Basquiat. There is just a handy gesture dragged over the surface with fucked-up concentration. There is no black servant. There is no over-arching adherence to aesthetic wit. His wit is defiantly ugly, blocking out the pretty whores that run rampant all across the other canvasses. There is nothing to incite desire or lust. This canvas incites a wide-eyed laughter. This art is a funny thing, fucking with the past.

At 6:45am Seth sends a text that says, "Here."

I go down to open the gate for him, down the three levels of stairs that lead to my bedroom. He is on his bike. He has a bottle of wine and he's smiling. Sort of. He says he's been riding his bike all night. He says he came from a strange party. He acts very self-important.

"You're strange," I say.

"You're strange, too," he replies.

For a second, his eyes are a blank stare. I only notice because I've been haunted by a blank stare. Eyes, cheeks, the fragile skin below the eye, the skin draping cheeks, jaw, stretching over a chin. The eyes are calm, too calm, too distant, vacant. This is the face I have been anticipating. This is the face that will be the look of death on my father, soon. I look into windows and see this face, in the eyes of a cat or a child, faces so plain their eyes merge with the background, pinned to the backdrop, unchanging. When I look into the mirror and this face appears performing a trick of the eye. It is a moving face, an animation staring back at me, but it's not me. The disconnection of his blank stare from my thoughts makes my mind go blank. That face and my thoughts stand in utter separation. No trail of thought could be salvaged from the tiny electric currents that go quiet when it is before me. And now I see it in Seth's eyes.

One day I visited home and my father walked beside me. I tried to say something to him as we walked, anything, but the blank stare that I could see in his eyes kept me in a state of stupor. I could not pick up on any of the threads that were woven with our superficial hellos. We had no news to explain, or I had no way of explaining it. I had not seen him for months. We went to lunch and before we ordered I stepped into the bathroom. The mirror looked at me from across the room. It kept my memory concealed, buried into a tight, flat corridor behind that head of hair in the reflection. I faced my reflection and she blinked again. She reached for me, feeling the mirror, searching for a way out, a way to reach through the borderline, to me. Her finger pointed at my left eye and it turned, touching my own finger and our fingers locked together in symmetry like the wings of a butterfly. I put my hand down, but hers remained, scratching at me, sucking me in, and I coughed. I ran out of the bathroom and looked at my father with wide eyes. I gave him my blank stare, my death wish. He has it still, knowing he'll die soon.

I take Seth upstairs. Ever since I cut my hair, we have the same hair-do. Upstairs, in my bedroom, he sits. He begins to open a bottle of wine.

He says, "We need glasses. Get us glasses."

I hate to follow his orders, but I do anyway. When I come back, he's got my camera ready and he says, "Sit down over here."

I say, "We have the same hair. Did you ever notice, before?"

He acts appalled, "You're right –"

He takes a picture of our hair side by side as he balances a glass of wine in his teeth. Hair overlapping hair, we don't know whose is whose. I don't know why he only drinks white wine. I offer him Fernet, but he won't drink it. I offer him whiskey too, but no. Apple Juice? Out of the question. As I aim with the camera, his hand lifts up to me and then it is upon me. His fingernails gently scrape the skin of my arm, leaving tracks. My skin writhes. I want to push his hand away, but I don't.

Maybe there are other people who behave worse than this. For me it's bad, anyway. I know I'm being bad. I'm going through my worst time, in a way. The suspension of death hangs over my head each moment. These hours with Seth are to help reach for it. They are the means for me to travel towards my father's death, in slow motion, in waiting. I'm in a zone of loss, predicting loss. It is my own expression of loss, via decadence. But the loss hasn't come, yet. It is suspended. I've known about the cancer for over a year now.

Seth patterns a line of cocaine on the back of a book of Pasternak's poems with the title, *My Sister – Life*. In Seth I find a strange sense of possibility. Seth is the agent that pushes me to embody the deployment of the death that I know belongs to me. He rolls a dollar bill into a cone the width of a nostril. Somehow in my slippery logic, I'll be the death of my father. It's both an honor and a curse. I'm tearing apart my bond, my familial bond, and replacing it with something recklessly worse. He dips his head toward the book, positioning the cone over the line of powder. This is rebellion, kind of. It is rebellion mixed with inevitable loss. My dad is almost dead now. It's coming like a storm. Or this is the storm. The dust flies up the rolled bill as Seth sniffs. It disappears and he falls backward onto my pillow the book still dangling in his hand.

"I love this book," he says. He passes it to me along with the dollar bill.

I haven't told Seth that my father has cancer yet and that he's dying right now, as we sniff cocaine. And the reason is that I don't know if he would care. When I finish snorting my line, he grabs the book back from me and starts to read as if performing a soliloquy. Through other texts or paintings, we rehearse life. Art becomes us as we become it. I want him to stop reading it, but he can't. He is so full of the sound of his own voice and his overly emphasized syllables with their thick, thick crust of speech. After he's done with the poem, he drops the book on the floor and starts searching in his bag for his tobacco and rolling papers.

Seth is getting older. He's in his thirties already. He has dark under eye circles and an almost insulting smile. But there is charm somewhere. He rolls a cigarette and then sits back on the bed, lifting his legs up and stretching them out. He leans back like James Dean, like he's practiced this pose. He smokes in my bed.

"Call me Olympia," I say. I pull my sweater over my head and drop it on the floor. I walk over to my vanity and put on a necklace that my grandmother bought me from Tiffany's and I spray perfume on my wrists. Olympia slips like a djinn into my body.

"Do you know about Olympia, Seth?"

"No. Tell me," he says.

"Olympia is the name for whores who have been appropriated by artists, eaten up then spit out. Both immoralized and immortalized."

"Come here," he says.

"I'm the same Olympia, a round version of Olympia. An Olympia cut out of middle class ideals and a conditional loss of morale. Tear me down, Seth. Toss me in the trash, like a scrap of paper, an unfinished bit of pornography."

He smokes a cigarette, letting the ash fall onto my bed until it is gone. I sit down beside him, twirling my hair around my finger. He rolls another cigarette. When finished, he says, "Give me a light. Is this all you wanted to do tonight? Sit around fantasizing?"

"It's not easy being me," I say. I stand up on the bed and wave the flame from the lighter at him.

"Put your mouth on my cock," he replies, softly. He says it while smoking, not even taking the cigarette out of his mouth. Soon he'll ask me to light another for him. Then he'll ask me to go fetch him a different outfit from my closet for him to put on, something more comfortable. He'll ask me to prepare him a line of coke. I put my mouth around his cock and it grows, as cocks do. It grows for a while and then it plateaus. Nothing really happens, but he stays hard for a long time. I lean back and stare at him.

"Turn around," he says, "I came here just to remember you from behind."

"Remember?"

"I want to be sure I remember you," he says.

"But you see me all of the time," I say.

"I won't be able to, soon. I'm leaving San Francisco. I'm moving to Vegas."

Moving. The thought bounces around inside the walls of my skull. Without him there would be none of this.

"But how can you move? I need you," I plead. "You hardly know me."

"Is that what this is about?" he asks. "Turn around. Give me the tripod."

He puts up the camera.

"I don't want to do this anymore," I say. "You're an asshole. Do you know that?"

"Put the camera here. Here take some of this," he hands me a tiny plastic bag of coke.

"I don't want to do this anymore," I say.

"Take it. Come on. What's the matter with you?"

I take it and dip a key into the bag. I sniff it up my nose from the key tip.

"Turn on the camera," he says.

"I don't think it's such a good idea," I say, without much conviction.

"Fine, do you want me to do it? Is that what it is? You want me to turn on the camera. Fine. Fine, I'll do it. Turn around."

I turn around. He puts his hand over my mouth and fucks me in the ass, slowly. It hurts. It goes in and then pulls out. In and out and hurts the whole time. But in a way, in a terrible way, I think that I feel something. But then again it might just be the drugs. I wonder if I've confused loving him with needing him because of the drugs. I may have even confused him with my father. I confused death with waiting. I confused art with life. I confused too many things.

We rest, sitting back, laying down. He still has not come, but the camera has run out of batteries.

"I think the problem is that I am repressed," I say.

"No. I don't think that's it. You're not repressed. Where are the matches?" "Are you sure?"

"Listen, you have no taste," he says, pointing to the cotton nightgown I've given him to wear, smiling, "but you're not repressed."

"I don't know what to do. I don't want to do anything anymore. I don't think I'll survive it. I don't have anything to survive for. I don't really like doing anything. I don't really want to be here or anywhere, anymore. Maybe it's that I want to die," I say.

"You worry too much," he says, rolling another cigarette.

"Maybe what I need is to die and come back to life again. Or maybe never really die, just to make myself believe that I can start again. I don't want to think anymore. I don't want to think about the filth that has built up inside of me. Maybe I just need to die, but not really die, just sort of go away for a while and come back again."

"Listen. You just stay here. You're fine right here. I'm the one who's going," he says.

"I know. You said so. But I – don't go," I say.

"I'm going. For good, I'm going. You know I'm moving in about a month, and I'm not coming back."

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?" I ask, helplessly.

"Listen, it's got nothing to do with you."

"But how do you know? I want to tell you something."

"Give me a light?"

"Listen to me. I want to tell you something. I worry about you," I say, not quite knowing how to say it, "I worry about my body, for example. I have no idea if I've contracted a disease."

"Don't say that."

"How would I know?"

"Don't say that."

"Don't you think I know about the others?"

He laughs when I say this. He laughs heartily as if it were nothing.

"What others?" he asks with his awful smile.

We spend another hour sipping wine, reading lines of Pasternak and dressing in different outfits from my wardrobe. "I'm Russian," he says, "Pasternak is real Art." We sniff a few more bumps of cocaine, undressing and redressing until all my clothes are scattered on the floor. And then we spend more time fucking. Ass fucking. All the while, I know that what we are doing is not heroic or even very sexy, coating our emotions under the guise of art. With Seth, I pretend to indulge in books and in art, all the while swimming in self-loathing. I wonder if he would rather be in the arms of a man and if he just comes to my house to appease me as some kind of compromise for his lack of interest. Perhaps in some way, he likes my attention. Or maybe he simply likes my ass.

The voice in my head is telling me that the artistic ideal crumbles like a broken shell over the brutal reality. Just before exiting my house, Seth motions for me to come say good-bye. He is leaving me to my own devices to scrape together the semblance of hygiene and work-wear for the new day. He whispers the word Olympia into my ear.

"Seth," I ask, "What does Olympia mean to you, right now, this morning?" I just want to hear him tell me something, anything, to hold on to before leaving me.

He ponders for a moment and says, "When did you last realize that no one knows who you are anymore?"

He voices it as a question in general, into the stillness of the air. Perhaps he has posed the question to me, perhaps to himself.

"Ach," I sigh just before the shrill sound of my alarm interrupts my thinking. I jump at the sound. We both look over at the clock. It shakes furiously on my nightstand.

"I have to go to work now," I say while the alarm continues to ring.

"Spin round, wooden doll," Seth says, putting on his dark sunglasses. The ringing seems to grow louder. At once it was as if there is only darkness where Seth's eyes had been. I search for his eyes for the last time, but they have fallen into nothingness behind the blank surface of his opaque lenses. I keep staring at him as my heart pumps louder and louder and a wash of blood blooms

beneath my cheeks. It is the last time I'll see him. The minute hand shifts to its next increment. The alarm quits ringing. The lenses of Seth's glasses stand erect over his eyes like the blank black panels of the Rothko chapel. Silence slopes between us. Perhaps I say nothing because I'm afraid to disrupt the apprehension that hangs in the air amidst Seth's stale cigarette smoke. We hold the next minute between our gaze in silence, neither one of us moving. We stand stiff as two walls containing an abandoned courtyard. He finally lifts his hand to embrace me. I politely kiss his waxy cheek. My lips are afraid. His hand grips my neck with abandon or even frustration and then it releases. I quietly dismiss him for the last time by whispering, "Goodbye, Seth Coppelius."

He nods and says, "Wish me luck."

"What for?" I ask.

"So I don't end up dead or lonely."

"But you already are dead and lonely. I see it in your eyes."

"That's why I hide them. I don't want anyone to see how dead I am," he says as he lifts his eyebrows from behind the glasses. His cold voice follows him out the door while he continues with his dismissive joke, "dead, dead, dead...dead."

I look out the window and think of the future.

## Inside Passages

**Charlotte Lenox**

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### I.

No roads led in or out of Juneau, sealing off a silent city from a silent world. Traffic never clogged its only highway. Houses were vacant, the cars and boats in their driveways still bright and shiny. Yet, somehow, Brown Bear Groceries was always well-stocked with food that never spoiled. Movies at the cinema played on endless loops. Water dripped from faucets, and electricity raced through power lines heavy with the weight of winter. The seasons turned, and the sun rose and set on a city that was empty, save for one.

Sometimes Jonathan, who lived deep in the city's suburban valley, wondered why he couldn't remember seeing another person even though he occasionally felt watched. But despite his suspicions, life moved on. During the week, he woke up to dawn's powder blue light, ate cereal, and watched reruns after getting ready for work. All of his energy went into filing papers downtown--no one was there to do it for him or tell him to do otherwise. No one was there at all, and his car was always alone in the parking lot. At home, he sank into his chair and read. The day's work, as always, joined his blurred memories of the past.

On weekends, he slept late and went to the store for groceries. On his way in, he always turned his head away from the connecting hallway of the gutted Mendenhall Mall. Thoughts of its darkness and vacancy made him nauseous, made him want to run home and drown out the shadows he felt reaching for him as he hurried by. On each trip, he quickly took what he wanted--there was no one to pay--then left without a backward glance. At home, he would fret about the hallway and its phantoms while taking out the garbage (which would always be gone by morning) even as daylight faded and other shadows stretched their fingers from houses onto streets. After a night of pastel dreams, the hallway would always diminish, then finally disappear. At work, he turned on the breakers for his floor and continued filing.

His life always fell back into a rhythm that adjusted as seasons came and went. When it snowed, he shoveled it off his car. Sometimes the door froze shut, but he was never late for work. When the sky warmed to a softer blue, he slung his coat into the back seat of his car and forgot about it until it rained. The only sounds that filled his day were the shuffling of papers, the creaking of his chair, the whisper of the wind through cottonwoods and spruce boughs, the roar of the Mendenhall River, and occasionally the rumble of snow falling down Thunder Mountain. When had he last heard his own voice?

His life was a series of days passing, of waves hitting the shore one after the other and foaming in the seaweed. But as he aged, he increasingly felt uneasy. Sometimes he wanted to go to the beach. Other times, he caught himself looking down the street, glancing into a window, rushing around a corner, only to find nothing there. What was he looking for? The eyes he sometimes felt trained on him? No, he could sense that this was different, as if something was missing but desperately needed.



One evening, a gallon of milk he had taken home the day before went sour. Perplexed, Jonathan decided to take it back and exchange it for a different one, not knowing what else to do even though there was no customer service desk to accept it.

Entering the store, he paused, suddenly unsure of himself. Was this really what he was supposed to do? It made as little sense as paying a ghost at the register. What then, put it back on the shelf? This had never happened before--there was no routine to follow. The problem so distracted him that before he knew it, before he could turn away, he found himself staring down the mall's musty hallway and at the barren storefronts, dirty carpets, and motionless mirrors of the ceiling. His stomach churned and bubbled up into his throat, the same sensation that warned him to keep moving every time he passed the hallway, but this time he couldn't look away. A heart-clenching cold suffused him, making him want to cry out into the void of his life if only for the hopeless chance that someone, somewhere, might hear him. But his voice would only echo back to him, a reminder of the emptiness surrounding him. Deeper inside, shadows were clotting beyond the dim light from the grocery store. He was sweating profusely, now, as he stared and stared into the worst thing he had ever felt. The gallon of milk slipped out of his clammy hand, hit the floor, and exploded in a shower of white. The shadows rolled toward him, his mind screaming at him to get out of there, to run away before he lost himself, before everything he knew fell apart. Run! GET OUT! FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, RUN! But he couldn't--the hallway and shadows had taken hold of him.

Jonathan slipped in the puddle of milk and came crashing to the floor.

Those who were studying him wondered what he had seen and felt.

###

## II.

On his way home, Jonathan was shaking so violently that he almost swerved the car into the river. What was worse, he wasn't even sure that he cared if he did. The world had suddenly stopped making sense. Distraught as he was, he didn't notice that the boats in other driveways had filmed over with mildew since his trip to the store.

That night, hours passed before he could fall asleep, only to be later awakened by reaching out to touch the unoccupied side of the bed. He rested his hand on the sheets, wondering why he thought anyone else should have been there, why he even slept on one side of the bed. His fading dream echoed the cold hollowness that pervaded him then and the day before: There were blurred greys, greens, browns, blues--none of the comfortable pastels from his usual dreams, but dark colors that made him recall the river and his swerving car.

Jonathan lost himself in his thoughts--preferring to think about anything other than the hallway or the river--and nearly missed getting ready for work. The colors of the strange dream puzzled him throughout the day, but all he could grasp from them was a name: Lena. At first he thought it was a woman's name. But it was only when the dream returned a few days later that he could piece together the full name: Lena Beach.

He wasn't sure what to make of it, since he'd never been to the beach. But he was certain the dream would come back, and there was only one way to find out what it meant.

One morning, Jonathan sat up in bed and watched dawn's solemn glow sieving in through his curtains. His legs itched to get him out of bed and ready for work, but his mind was again on Lena Beach. September rainclouds would be rolling in and frozen ocean winds would be scouring its shore. Jonathan shivered, slowly sliding his legs out from the covers and placing his bare feet on the icy carpet. The sensation briefly jolted him back to the present. Time to head downtown, where a new stack of papers would be waiting for him.

After his usual morning routine, Jonathan climbed into his car, suppressing Lena Beach. All along Riverside Drive, he felt the pressuring need to turn left at the light towards work. Wrongness hounded him all the way to the intersection, but once he was there, he gave in to where he had to go, what he had to know. He turned right.

Jonathan's breath became ragged. As the road stretched out behind him, he was certain that there was no going back, not since the milk had gone sour. Before he knew it, he was passing Auke Bay Harbor, where numerous Bayliners bobbed against their moorings. As he drove further away from home and work, the houses thinned and the evergreens and cottonwoods gathered. It was just as well that the trees swallowed the houses, since Jonathan found them increasingly difficult to look at without thinking of their dark windows and stale air. At the same time, however, he was keenly aware of leaves rustling as wind ripped them free of branches before the coming rain.

Eventually, he passed the ferry terminal, where the MV *Columbia* sat moored with its loading bay open. When he saw the green sign just after the terminal marking the entrance to Lena Beach, he turned down the narrow road and drove until he found an opening in the trees. Already he was shaking again and had trouble rolling the window down to let in the pounding of the surf. Sprinkles of rain dotted his hands, dashboard, and wheel, spilling into the car along with the pungent smell of the tide.

Jonathan left his car parked alongside the road and slid down the dirty slope, avalanches of dead needles following in his wake. When the brown trunks pulled away, they revealed green mountains, slate blue ocean, and silvery-grey clouds barreling close to earth. The colors of his dream resolved into the damp, foreign vista around him, but as of yet, nothing looked out of place. Bleached tangles of driftwood rested in beds of shell and gravel. Dried kelp seeded with dead crabs marked the high-tide line. Nothing living was visible.

But once the heart thumping in his ears subsided, he could hear a sound he had never heard before--a harsh, distant buzzing noise. Jonathan searched the horizon for the source. Near one of the islands of the archipelago was a small white shape: a fiberglass boat, no canopy, barely more than a smudge against the mountains. Squinting, he saw two shapes sitting in the boat. People, Jonathan thought. There were people in that boat. And this time, they were real. Time stopped as he watched.

But when it resumed, he saw the boat moving away from him. Anxiety dissolved into fear, and fear into desperation.

As Jonathan stumbled down the beach, once tripping and skinning his hands on shards of shell, he felt a surge of the terrible emptiness from the hallway. He yelled at the top of his lungs for the boat to come back. More than anything, he wanted those people to hear him and come back for him, talk to him, touch him, tell him he had found what he had been searching for. He screamed and shouted until his throat was hoarse, waved his arms, threw rocks out into the water--anything to get their attention. He couldn't go back to the way things were, never again. He had found them and his heart was close to bursting. Still, even as the patch of white shrank, he begged and pleaded for them to come back. He went so far as to wade out into the freezing water as if every inch of distance he closed between himself and the boat mattered.

But the boat disappeared from view as it rounded a peninsula, leaving Jonathan alone on the deserted shoreline. Still he shouted until he lost his voice altogether and, without registering the movement of his legs, trudged backward out of the water. He collapsed on the gritty debris; for the first time in his life, his insides were knotting up and he wept. The boat and people were gone, taking the sound of its outboard motor with it.

###

### III.

Everywhere he went, the silence haunted him. Even when the sky cleared and the sun painted leafless trees golden, all he felt was hopelessness and the penetrating cold of autumn's early onset. The sun, which had always cheered him after Juneau's long stretches of rain, didn't matter. Not anymore.

The loneliness was tearing him apart. He had long since stopped going to work and instead took to wandering the useless streets, screaming since no one could hear him anyway, since his world was a farce. When he could no longer bear seeing all of the peeling and slumping houses he passed, he stopped getting out of bed, laying there until lonely dusk turned into lonely dawn. All he could think about was losing sight of the boat as it rounded the peninsula. The people were all that mattered, but they were gone.

A whisper in his head told him that he should end his life. At first he was frightened, but the voice steadily convinced him that there was nothing worth living for in this world. His whole life had been a sham--he couldn't even remember his childhood, his parents, friends, college... he must have had all of these things once. What was going on, and why hadn't he questioned his existence before? Because doing so would lead to this? No going back, now. But would he, given the chance?

He got as far as pressing a knife into his wrist before deciding to step outside his front door one last time. A line of blood was already welling up around the blade's edge, and tears soaked his face.

Outside the day was brilliant, casting deep slices of shadow on Thunder Mountain and making the aluminum Lund skiffs sitting in driveways difficult to miss. Every one of them, flashing under the light of noon, made him think of the fiberglass boat and made him drive the knife deeper, but something else was stirring in his mind the longer he looked at them. Jonathan began trembling uncontrollably, imagining the waves beating against the hulls of the skiffs sitting quietly in front of him. Suddenly he lost his nerve as the thought hit him: What if the boat passed by that peninsula every day? What if he could reach it, instead of vice versa? There still might be a chance. Everything else followed a routine--why not the boat? The knife dropped from his hand and clattered on the porch. The realization shook him, especially in light of what he had almost done. If he still had a chance, he'd almost lost it.

Hope flared anew, but he had to hurry. Something told him that if he had broken routine, the boat might soon break it as well. Perhaps it already had, but the dream still came to him every night since that day at the beach--he couldn't let himself believe it was gone forever after such a realization.

In his car's rearview mirror, Jonathan saw a dust cloud rising off Thunder Mountain and felt rumbling vibrations in the air and ground. A rock slide tumbling down the mountain. Over the skeletal trees, the tip of Mt. McGinnis was already gone, replaced by a halo of more dust. The very earth seemed to be giving way, now that his plan was set.

Slowly but with urgency, Jonathan backed his car into a driveway and secured the skiff's trailer to the ball hitch, pinching his fingers in the process. He cautiously towed the skiff to Auke Bay, afraid of seeing it jump off the hitch and roll down the hill. He consoled himself that he could always go back for another, though it would waste precious time and behind him--his mouth gaped--new cracks were opening in the pavement, following the back of the trailer. Every minute that passed, he felt the boat (and the rest of his world) slipping farther and farther away. It would take him with it whether he wanted it or not.

When he reached the top of the road that curved down to the harbor, he caught his breath. Gliding through the harbor toward open water was the sought-after bit of white: the fiberglass boat. He backed his car catawampus down the launch ramp, then got out and fumbled with the skiff's restraints. He heard more rumbling in the distance and tried to hurry. Thankfully, the Lund unexpectedly slid off the trailer, prompting him to splash after it through the green shallows to keep it from drifting away. The skiff, with Jonathan hauling himself into it, moved just far enough into the harbor to avoid what he saw coming down the hill. Petrified, he watched as a land slide surged into the water, sweeping his car with it and submerging part of the floating dock. He desperately held on as the resultant wave carried him into the other moored boats, the impact forcing him to his knees. When the skiff remained upright, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Once the waves subsided and after some trouble lowering and starting the outboard, he found himself zig-zagging through the harbor and past the breakwater, the Lund's bow slamming into every wave and jarring the senses from his head. He did his best to ignore the bite of the wretched end-of-summer breakers that splashed onto his legs and instead tried to keep his goal in mind. Despite the cold, sweat glued his shirt to his body.

As daylight faded and the sky clouded over, Jonathan shouted over the noise of his outboard, but neither the boat nor its passengers turned in his direction and instead chose to continue ignoring him. Low-hanging clouds bled rain on his face. He used his free arm to wipe it clear, but his vision only blurred and made tracking the boat difficult.

It was now or never, though--the aberrant boat and dreams of Lena Beach would soon disappear from his life along with the rest of his world. He squeezed the last of his flagging strength into his grip on the outboard's rubber-coated handle, as if every ounce of effort would lend it speed. Regardless, the boat seemed to pull away. The clouds plunged into the water and further obscured its shape. Somewhere beyond, tumbling bits of the world were thundering into the ocean, marking the time he had left.

But as his Lund struggled harder through the waves, the white boat finally drew near enough for him to see its registration number. Soon he would be on top of it; he tried to yell even louder but failed to raise his voice through the scratching pain. The two figures in the boat, a man and woman both roughly his age, kept their backs to him despite his proximity. The man was in the captain's chair, listening to the woman as she pointed to different gauges and rested his hand on the throttle. But even when Jonathan reached over and banged on the fiberglass hull, the woman didn't pause her instruction, and the man kept his gaze straight ahead of them. Jonathan might as well have been invisible, the destruction non-existent. It was only when the man finally turned in response to something that Jonathan saw the real face of another human being for the first time, only it wasn't what he had expected.

The man's face mirrored his own exactly, lines and grey hairs and all. His eyes--Jonathan's eyes--were far away, as if he was also looking for something but had no hope of finding it. As if he had already given up, much as Jonathan almost had.

Seeing that face, Jonathan almost released his grip on the side of the boat, but he couldn't let this moment go. He reaffirmed his hold, wincing as the boats scraped and thumped together and jerked at his arm with every wave. His mirror image pointed, water droplets shattering on his fingers; he said something lost in the noise of the outboards and collapsing mountains. The air between them turned soft and thick like butter, but painfully charged with static.

Desperately, without understanding why, Jonathan reached out for the other's hand.

When their fingers met, an explosion of white pain knocked Jonathan free of his consciousness. His last thought was that he had chosen wrongly.

But when he could see again, he knew that he wasn't dead. Instead, he felt numbingly cold and gasped for air. Through his hazy vision, he saw that his world had completely changed: Autumn had reawakened as spring, and sun had replaced rain. The silken water, choppy only moments before, was now glassy with wavering threads of light. At first, he thought that he had lost the white boat and awakened the next morning.

But his hands were strangling the wheel of the very boat he had been chasing. Gradually, he slowed his breathing and loosened his cold-stiffened fingers, then leaned back in the chair to

stare up at the sky--it was such a deep blue, he could feel it saturating his eyes. Cessnas whirled, and puffy clouds trailed across the zenith. Sunlight warmed his face, melting his body into floods of pins and needles as feeling, real feeling, finally returned. Tears streamed across his cheeks as he choked back a sob. He'd found it, after so many years. The part of him that dreamed its own dreams for so long had reawakened. As the memories of both halves merged inside a throbbing headache, Jonathan understood at last.

"Jonathan, what's wrong with you? Are you all right?" The woman behind him asked.

His voice coarse from disuse, Jonathan said, "Yes... yes. It's finally over. I can't believe it." He had by now completely broken down. His other half's memories--now his own--told him about the terrible accident some years ago that had caused the partial loss of his mind. No doctor had thought he'd recover from it, but they were all too eager to study it. They were wrong. He'd made it through.

The woman frowned, creasing her weather-beaten features. "What are you talking about, Jonathan? What's over?" She asked slowly.

Through his tears, tears of happiness he never thought possible, Jonathan said, "Amy, I love you. So much." And he really did love her for never giving up on him, for never again leaving his side after the accident. He smiled. Amy sat in stunned silence; then, whispering his name, let her face crumple into tears as she wrapped her arms around him and held him tightly. Jonathan buried his face in her hair, never wanting to let her go.

Those who watched him went out to get a late lunch, also smiling.

### **Vice, virtue or something of that sort**

*Translated Story by Gopa Nayak  
From Original in Oriya by Paramita Sathpathy  
You'll need to find the e-mail for this one*

"Your case is amazingly complicated. We have to treat it some what differently from other divorce cases. We need your complete cooperation in this. I hope you understand."

"Yes, I do."

"You believe that your wife has developed some mental abnormality".

"Yes."

"However, the specialist has reported that her mental state is not at all different from any normal individual."



“Agreed, but Dr.Chopra also feels that such a thing is impossible to happen without any mental abnormality.”

“Now, could you please some more questions? When did you get married?”

“Almost two years. The marriage took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, 1984”

Did you know Ms Snigdha before marriage?”

“Yes.”

“For how long?”

“One year before marriage. Atanu, her elder brother was my classmate. We were studying together in Rourkela. Once I had been to Atanu’s house with him during our holidays. After that.....”

“Now, something about your personal matters. How was your conjugal life?”

“Fine”

“Any difference- I mean any serious difference any day?”

“No, never. I don’t remember anything serious happening.”

“When did the event happen?”

“It is almost six months now”

“Did your wife make any effort to explain it to you?”

“Yes she did. But she is gone mad that’s why she is talking that way. You must have come to have the same opinion.”

“So you want to establish that your wife has become mad and that is why you are seeking divorce. Your Honour, according to the report of Dr Chopra Ms Mishra does not have any sign of any mental abnormality. You may go now.”

There was a hushed disturbance in the room. The court room was small. There was not much of a crowd. A few lawyers who were loitering on the veranda without any assignment had entered into the room out of sheer curiosity. Only they seem to be discussing something in low voices. They also seem to be very excited. Snigdha turned slightly from her seat. Pradipta was sitting across with his back towards her. Amar and Dinesh have also accompanied him. None of them are looking towards her. All three of them are discussing something quite casually. Her parents-in-law have not come. This episode would not have appealed to them anyway. Snigdha looked towards the chair beside her from the corner of her eyes. Her mother was looking very sad as if

some one has drained every drop of blood from it! Her father was sitting on the chair as if someone has tied him to the seat; appearing as if he wanted to flee from the place under some pretense. He looks very disgraced and offended. Maybe the final order would not be given today.

“I am Mr. Choudhury.” Snigdha looked up.

“I was interrogating your husband. Perhaps, you don’t know me. Mr. Mahapatra had given me the case history. I had been to your place once or twice but was unable to meet you as you were not at home. It would have better if I had heard it from you. Anyway it does not matter. There will be no need for the case to go to the highcourt. It is a matter of separation. The order will be passed on today. Only thing is that we will not accept the allegation. There is no evidence of insanity. The doctor also denied it. You need not worry.” The lawyer took a deep breath. “Do you want to have something? Tea, or cold drinks?”

“No, thank you” Snigdha smiled a little.

“Dr Behera is here so we will start our work again.” Choudhury left quickly to take his seat.

“Hello Snigdha! I was a bit late.I hope there is no problem.”

“It’s alright. Please take a seat.”

“Dr Behera, please come here”

“I will speak only the truth and nothing but the truth.” Dr Behera touched the *Gita*. She arranged her saree took out a hand-ker-chief from her purse and wiped her face.

“Do you know Mrs Mishra?”

“Yes, she was one year junior to me in college studying ISC. Moreover, since we both live in this town we often get to meet each other.”

“You have done the abortion for Mrs Mishra. Could you tell us how old the child was?”

“It was just an embryo of two and a half months only.”

“Did Mrs Mishra give you the cause behind her getting an abortion?”

“No, she said that she did not want the child at that time.I had asked her about Pradipata’s opinion and had suggested that he should have come. Snigdha told me that both of them had the same opinion and he was out of town for ten to twelve days on an official tour. I knew her for a long time that why.....”

“Okay. Did you come across this case before?”

“No.”

“Do you think whatever Mrs Mishra is saying is possible?”

“I have no idea.”

“Still, as a doctor, have you read or come across any other case like this?”

“No, not yet.”

“This could have happened as a result of some mental abnormality of Mrs Mishra. What do you think?”

“I cannot answer that. I am only a gynecologist.”

“Okay Mr Chaudhury, now it is your turn.”

“Abortion is legalized now”

“Of course, yes.”

You have started practicing only recently. Perhaps, you have never come across such a case. But can you vouch that such a case can never happen?”

“To be frank with you, I have really no idea about this. I have never come across such a case in our profession. If this is true, then it is possible that this is the first case of its kind.”

“Do you think that Mrs Mishra had developed a temporary condition of abnormality?”

“I have never found any abnormality during the thorough check up. Moreover, I had never felt her being unnerved.”

“Do you think you would have believed her, had she told you the real reason?”

“Perhaps, I would not have believed her. I would have asked for Pradipta’s to come over to know his view on the abortion.”

“You may go now. Your Honour, Mrs Mishra had her abortion without her husband’s knowledge. This could be a valid reason for separation. However, the allegation of insanity has to be withdrawn. Both the doctors have reported her to be normal after thorough diagnosis. There is no chance of her being abnormal. Moreover, why is such an event not possible?”

Hushed noises and laughter was heard.

“Now Mrs Mishra, please come over.”

Snigdha took the oath.

“Mrs Mishra- How is your relation with your husband?”

“He is a nice person.” Snigdha looked towards Pradipta. Pradipta had, as if, vowed not to look at him.

“What was reaction when you came to know that you had conceived?”

“I was very happy. My mother-in-law had come to know even before I told her and she informed Pradipta. That day there was a festival kind of atmosphere at home. The same night, I had written to my parents about it.” Snigdha’s face lighted up.

“Then why didn’t you inform Mr Mishra about the abortion?”

“He wouldn’t have agreed.”

“You should have respected his opinion because it is his child as well.”

“I had no choice.” Snigdha had a straightforward answer. She looked at her mother. Her mother and her father were sitting with their heads towards the ground appearing as if they were reading something from the floor.

“Your husband has complained that you have developed some kind of insanity. Can you give a detailed description of the whole incident.”

“I have already told him.”

“Even then you have to describe it again for the court so that a decision can be made.”

“It was June the 5<sup>th</sup>, last year. My mother-in-law was not at home. She had gone to visit my sister-in-law. Pradipta was supposed to have his food at the club. Both me and my father-in-law had a light supper. I was feeling very sleepy. I asked the servant to open the door when Pradipta came home and went to bed. Suddenly I woke up in the middle of the night. It was 1.30 in the morning. Pradipta was snoring lightly.....”

“Hang on. How did you know that it was 1.30 in the morning?”

“There was a table clock on the table next to the window. The digits of the clock were shining. It was a moonlit night. We used to keep the window open because it was quite hot those days. The window let in moon light and cool breeze. The whole room was bright. Suddenly I heard some one calling – ‘Maa , Maa’. Where was it coming from? Who was crying out for her in such a sweet melodious voice? I heard the sweet and soft call again. This time I came to know that the voice was coming from inside me. Who is calling? I felt my hand standing on end. Then I heard the pleading call of desperation. It was coming away from afar. I had never heard such a voice before. It was not a voice but appeared as if a soul was speaking! As if life had turned into words! I realized that the girl inside me was speaking.”

“Wait. How did you know that the sound was the voice of your daughter? It is not possible to know the sex of the child by that time.”

“I have indeed heard the voice of my daughter. I can never go wrong on this. I can make out from the softness of her voice. Moreover, only a daughter’s voice can be so heavy and pleading. I was feeling very light- I was overwhelmed. Again the same pleading voice came sweeping- Don’t bring me to this world. Don’t let me suffer in this system from birth to death-Please heed to this request of mine, my mother. Maybe you are imagining that you will be excited with the surreal and amazing presence of this doll made of flesh and blood. Maybe you are thinking that through me you will chant some mantra and breathe life into the drying buds in the soft branches and make them bloom again. But I am suffering, my mother, the ground under my feet is trembling. It is all going down. Dear mother, where will I put my feet and stand straight? How pathetic is her voice! How painful her words! Streams of tears were flowing down from her eyes. In that haziness I could see- there was no bed, Pradipta was also not there-no walls, no floor, no room. I could not make out if there was the sky, the earth or even the mountains. I could only see that my daughter standing alone- only my daughter was standing. I put my hand forward longingly -to see her face and her smile. I wanted to embrace her and hold her close to my chest-to kiss her face and her body. I remembered everything that I had imagined after I realized she had taken her place inside me. But what is my daughter saying? What is she blabbering? My darling- please, come to my lap. I screamed. It appeared as if the moon let a silver stream flow on her. The moonlight was shining on the body of my daughter. I saw, I indeed saw- Snigdha’s voice started trembling. Streams of tears were flowing down my daughter’s eyes. She did not even stretch out her hands. Her lips were trembling in making an effort to speak but only blood was coming out of her mouth- blood started coming out of her eyes, nose, face, legs and arms- her whole shape became a pool of blood. What is this that happened to my daughter? I was impatient to ask everyone and felt like waking up everyone from sleep. But how could I say? Who was with me? Slowly my daughter disintegrated before me. The walls came into existence; the windows, the floor and the bed – everything was put into place. Pradipta turned in his sleep. I was sweating profusely. I thought of waking him up. But I resisted because I thought he will advise me to sleep and stop dreaming. I was lying in that half asleep state. Pradipta got up after a while-took a glass of water from the table and drank it. Perhaps, he was not aware that I was awake. After a while I felt a bit cold. The cuckoo’s voice could be heard from the mango tree on the garden behind the house. I realized that the sun was going to rise soon and I had decided by then what I needed to do. Snigdha was silent.

Suddenly there was pin-drop silence in the small court room for a while. Snigdha’s parents had lowered their heads even more as if they were engrossed in deep prayer. Pradipta and his friends were also sitting with their eyes to the floor.

“So you put an end to a human life in your own sweet will just because she pleaded with you. Will you kill Mr. Mishra or even your parents if they asked you to do so?” The lawyer fighting for Pradipta put forth this argument after a while.

“Never, why must I kill people? Are you suggesting that I have killed my daughter? I loved her dearly but why couldn’t anyone do anything- neither me nor anyone. Why did I feel that my daughter was suffering from abject pain? Who inflicted that pain on her? How could she not find

a place to put her soft feet? What else could I do? How could I tolerate her suffering? Do I have any right to put her through the suffering? Snigdha was, as if, posing these questions to herself.

“Indeed, but you have served a severe blow at motherhood”. Pradipta’s lawyer heaved a sigh.

“I have only made an attempt at understanding motherhood.” Snigdha raised her head.

“But surely you would not have dared to do this in case abortion was not legalized” Pradipta’s lawyer struck the last weapon in his armour.

“I would have taken the same course of action even if time had gone back a thousand years, and had the events shaped up like this then.”



## The Bright Drop

Melissa Studdard  
Houston, USA

Sitting still, he was inside a vortex, suspended in time and space – a cosmic sojourner without leaving earth. He was the absence of all that was and all that had ever been – the vast sweep of existence contracted to a single point, a point on a point, the shadow of point on a point. But he was also the expansion of this point back out - out so wide that it glowed brighter than eternity. He was the nothingness left after nothingness evaporated, and he felt the emptiness around him, how it swirled its orbit like stardust looking for a home.

This was how the elders had taught him to do it: three days of fasting – no food, no sleep, no conversation. Then, at the end, the sitting.

There was a tree near their stream – it seemed to be a grove – like a hundred trees or more, but it was only one, one set of roots beneath the earth, one thirsty life absorbing river and rain, a hundred sturdy trunks poking through the loam. This tree was the cradle of their tribe, the place they went to be still. And it was there that Chandra sat, his hands pressed together at his chest with his index fingers pointing to the heavens in Uttarabodhi Mudra, the gesture of supreme enlightenment. In this space there was only Chandra and Uttarabodhi Mudra, Uttarabodhi Mudra and Chandra. Like a reflection of the moon in water, they were one, and the rest of the universe fell away like soil shaking off a stepping foot. Indeed, if Chandra had thought, he would have wondered if he actually existed at all. But there was no thinking. There was only being – the steady hum of warmth from the mudra up the arms, past the shoulders, to the head and then, like a quick unzipping – down the body. Chandra was open, empty and available to be filled.

But he did not seek. That was the key to it all – to be available to receive whatever was offered without asking. And if nothing was offered, well, then one just sat, and in this sitting lived, and that was enough – to hold the breath inside the body and then give it back and pull it in again – that ordinary miracle. Many times Chandra had been the void and nothing more, had returned to his people after a seven day sit and picked up his work exactly where he'd left it – in the middle of a row of planting, or at the flap of a half-built tent. No one ever asked.

But sometimes there was more, something born of the void (which Chandra could not describe with words), and the original forces would settle into his silence and grow within him like seeds and then buds and then vibrant, unfolding petals in powdery, sun-kissed red. The blooms would be in his heart and in his mind and attached to the very foundation of his soul, and when, after the sit, he walked back to his people, the petals would flutter inside him as if lifted and dropped and lifted by a delicate but mischievous breeze. Often, as he walked back, a word, just one word, might enter his mind – something like “whimsical” or “steadfast,” and it would be Chandra's job to find the universe of meaning that existed before the word took its place. If he was lucky, he

would be rid of the word before he arrived at the tents; then he would signal his people to follow him down to the river, and they would return with arms overflowing with clippings of the plant.

These were the busy times, when the middle aged and elderly worked together to extract sap from the plant – to stir elixir in large batches before the sun crawled behind the mountains for the night. In the dirt, the youth used sticks to draw bulls and birds and rabbits, and they placed moonstones and opals where the eyes and nose would be. They were preparing for the ritual, and because this time it was Chandra's own mother who would go, Chandra did not stay with the other middle-aged men to watch the elixir bubble and boil over the fire, but instead, he stood with the youth, drawing images in the earth. His depiction was of a disc-shaped chariot led by ten horses and an antelope, a chain of moonstones for reins. When Chandra finished, he knelt and kissed the dusty earth, and then he licked his thumb and pressed it to the antelope's forehead, right between the two opal eyes.

"Breathe and burn, my friend," he said, allowing himself, finally, the use of language. "Breathe and burn."

"Breathe and burn!" said the children, dancing around Chandra's drawing.

"Breathe and burn!" chanted Chandra's mother, stirring the elixir with a silver handled ladle.

Night had begun to fall, and the sun winked one last time before dipping behind the mountain and turning guardianship of the earth over to his sister, the moon. The elixir's sweet aroma began to dance and flirt on the wind, seducing everyone to the cauldron to sip from the ladle.

After Chandra took his drink, he walked forward and started a new chant, and the others followed, in a wavy line that fluttered like a wing before rounding into a circle. Chandra's mother sat in the middle, atop the disc Chandra had drawn, ladle to her lips, eyes pressed shut like two sleeping babies, the corners of her mouth turned up in that peaceful half smile so common to mystics.

"I'm ready," she said, taking her final sip and setting the ladle on the ground.

The circle broke back into a wave as each person came forward and kissed Chandra's mother on the forehead, between her two eyes. Chandra was both first and last, two kisses for his mother – a perfect circle. Chandra's mother nodded her head, a half bow to Chandra, and Chandra made a full bow back, then took his place among the others. He looked up. The sky had begun its show.

Pink, yellow and tangerine lights swerved and danced in streaks across the dark canvass of night. Stars transformed themselves into bulls and bunnies and birds, animated by the scent of divine elixir. Chandra's mother stood and closed her eyes, and when she opened them again, the moon, that big bright drop, had lowered and swooped her back up with it, and they rode like sisters into the distance, across the night, pulled by a team of horses with an antelope at the lead. Chandra's

mother's silver hair glistened in the night like waves of tinsel or the slippery sides of fish. She was moving to the space between breaths, between thoughts, between lives. Going there to stay.

"Sing eternity, Mother," Chandra said, waving an arm up towards the sky, his voice filled with emotion. "Sing eternity on bright lungs!"

"Sing eternity," the others called as they waved to the disappearing streak of hair.

And soon Chandra's mother was no more than a twinkling in the distance, and the moon had gone back to her proper place above the mountain, and Chandra gathered up the others to head back to the tents. Like always, they needed a good night's rest. In the morning there was planting to be done.

## **The caterpillar**

**Amitava Nag**  
India

She, a brutal commoner  
He a poet,  
And both tread the annals of togetherness,  
The moving images leave  
Between dawn and dust,  
They enter the cocoon  
And wait for a caterpillar  
To paint colours.

## **The Nobody Child**

**Barbara Towell**  
London, England

You look at me with fire in your smile,  
Yet all I want is to help you.

A raised fist flickers in your eye.  
Blink.  
Knuckles raised above your bleeding lid.  
Half a woman with your chestnut hair  
Pale like a bone, with a split lip.  
A grimace filled with hatred.

Hunched in the corner,  
A mane of greasy locks  
Frames the hungry stare.  
Retreating, hunted, your shrill howl fills the air  
As you struggle to separate me  
From him  
And me from her.

Silence speaks.  
Baffled.  
My hand outreached  
Haunts you as you creep away  
Expecting it to knock you into next week,  
Knock you into the nobody  
You recognise in the mirror each day.

You look at me with ice in your smile.  
I try, but cannot erase the years  
Nor crack that barrier to help you, child.

## Initials carved in driftwood

**Charles F. Thielman**  
Eugene

Her son's tight-roped breath fogs  
zig-zag down to the shore

as he igloos into the ice heart  
of a storm's approach,

the lake's thick ice groaning.

Butterfly tattoo near her jugular,  
she paces the ridge, watching.

So like his distant father, she's  
determined he'll not absorb their angers.

Dragging her bag of assorted echoes,

she recalls a rain of touches building  
into layers of liquid heat, recalls

how a waxing moon snipered  
a magnetic line between drapes.

His laugh arcs up from shoreline birch.

She inhales an eclipse nightly, love's initials  
carved in the driftwood of time lost.

Her son's hazel eyes still follow  
the veined wave-crests of dreams,

his skin luminous.



## Hunger

**Arijit Ghosh**  
Puducherry, India

The stinging of hunger  
The rattling of batteries  
The former is liquid  
The latter is onomatopoeic  
Both kills

Hunger turns liquid into d-r-o-p d-r-o-p thirst,  
thirst for power, oil, blood and water.

My woman, my child & myself  
Lay clad in war-stripped rags.  
d-r-o-p d-r-o-p d-r-o-p thirst of tingling  
Sizzling hunger-viper entice us.  
We were silently gaping at the sky  
Our eyes wide open were protruding out of sockets.

Three well-bred penises took charge of our bodies.  
Like towers, they grow into skyscrapers rooting them into us.  
We all laugh in pleasure! Oh what a pleasure!  
My child giggles vomiting uranium!

Few yards away  
In my delirium I see Mother Kali standing stripped  
Protruding her dried tongue and her breasts wrinkled.  
Shiva who usually sleeps beneath her feet is missing  
He has gone to fetch a can of Cola.

**Costa Rica Haiku 2011****Ian Prattis**  
Canada

Day One – April 1

Nine mist laden guardians  
geothermal travel  
volcanic rim Las Pailas

Day Two – April 2

Strangler vines holding aloft  
dead trees still screaming  
rainforest rhythm

Day Three – April 3

Waterfall La Cangrela  
high mountain goddess  
pacific casas sustain

Day Four – April 4: Sacred Chant Retreat

Sacred chants awake our worlds  
Snatam's swift arrow  
tranquil hearts break wide open

Day Five – April 5: Sacred Chant Retreat

Fierce sound currents freely roar  
silence breaks the dawn  
howler monkeys disagree

Day Six – April 6: Sacred Chant Retreat

Chant alive primal ocean  
vortex spiral turns  
stillness harvests timeless waves

Day Seven – April 7: Sacred Chant Retreat

Zen archer draws the great bow  
arrow tipped with joy  
striking his stillpoint of heart

Day Eight – April 8: Sacred Chant Finale

Peaks of ecstasy abound  
universal gift  
now cook scrub floors do laundry

## Imagining you there on the Shore

**Marjorie Bruhmuller**  
Quebec, Canada

My camera cannot emulate  
the crisp white blocks along the shoreline  
across so much sea, the blue  
so deep it fills you— peoples' lives  
strung along the shore like pearls.  
Soon they are your family, and you are theirs.

They wave from under lush trees—  
olives in their fingers, baskets on their arms,  
and everyone, those in bobbing boats  
or fishing off the pier, in restaurants  
leaning in to watch you pass,  
or from a kitchen window high up the hillside—  
a woman looking out from a sink of dishes,  
a sudsy hand reaching up, a ruddy smile  
caught in the rays of sun—and you wave back,  
“Mamma,” you whisper, her dimples  
deepening as she slaps her heart.

And as the coast disappears into the swell of night  
and the low stars of people's lights switch on,  
you feel a whole galaxy is yours, a family—  
that your relatives are still waving  
across the channel, the strait,  
the ocean, the sky.

## THE JOURNEY

E. Joyce Moore

It's a fine line to walk.  
between the most fragile of lifedreams and reality.  
The surest path to take  
where the lines blur into one sure passage  
is that along which pure truths are sought;  
no longer bending what is real  
to fit a self-made course  
justifying the road chosen.  
We can have the right dreams  
on the wrong path.  
or  
the wrong dreams  
on the right path.  
The end result is the same.  
Seeking pure truth, no matter how painful  
giving all the power  
to its realization -- a singular, exquisite crystal of time  
frozen in a brilliant moment, a second of forever  
changing everything or changing nothing.  
Ours to choose.  
Eyes wide shut  
discounting,  
dismissing,  
minimizing,  
justifying  
the collateral damage  
as nothing more than what it took to say: I won.  
Eyes wide open  
accounting,  
assessing,  
examining  
the fruits grown from the seeds planted.  
gaining courage should the journey require  
a retracing of steps in order to find the right direction  
or just cutting down the tree and starting over.  
Pure truth, no matter how painful  
gives all the power to  
its realization -- a singular, exquisite crystal of time  
frozen in a brilliant moment, a second of forever  
changing everything or changing nothing.  
Choose.

## Another View of a Grand One

**Whinza Kingslée Ndoro**

New Jersey, USA

\* after seeing the Grand Canyon

Vistas, rag-rugged edges, much our crown as a heron's  
Comb overcome the greening shrubbery and overgrowth,  
But meandering way below gushes the river Colorado.

Stand, breathlessly, enthused before fence-barred edges  
On either its more peopled South rim, or lesser visited  
North rim, and swallowed in its rust-rock expanse,

A catharsis of sorts rekindles, intoning archaic dreams  
Dear their top tier totem: however prickly we reach,  
Unlike here—we may not touch our Tao of love.

Genie to ingénue withstanding the zenith intricacies  
Of said loss sure superseded this place's mysteries,  
Unscripted, spirited like some wounded person,

God, mourning covenant irrevocably broken—  
Plummeted causing this second Eden.

## Red Sea

**Lakshmi Priya**  
Kerala, India

I feel the quake  
in my abdomen.  
The city crumbles  
over its abandoned lanes.

### II

The million men army,  
The intruders on an island  
Cheat in the dark  
Slay the other  
and drip out.

The dead men's sea  
Drops of holy white.  
Oozing cleft from the  
inner courtyards  
of the temple shrines.

### I

My city,  
with its map less contours,  
spread like a dissected frog  
breathe heavily  
over passions fed.

Kisses uprooted  
in the desert storm,  
By-lanes of her body  
fade in the sandbanks  
of he-sweat.

Bosoms dissolve  
for the sprouting volcanoes,  
That hiss venom  
For the life to be.

### III

Passion is sin



for this Adam and Eve  
A sin, rewarded  
With fruits of heaven.

They are the perfect out castes,  
on earth  
spinning splendid  
in pageantry show  
of flesh and skin  
and copulation,  
invoking gods of sterility.

I

Yet,  
Its carnival bout  
and she is beautiful today  
drenched in her night rains of red sea.  
Droplets of rubies thrashing past  
her cities of crimson silk goddesses.

She is  
the ritual, the sword, the coitus,  
the earth, the sky, the red mountains,  
the lucky red seeds,  
upon the holy yards and bed spreads.

Scarlet of the black magician,  
The sindoor bath of the female god,  
She gushes out the sacred cut.  
The deluge between her legs.

## SELF

**Richard Shelton**

Los Angeles, CA 90039

One can do well with a thing given,  
Find comfort in the bought,  
Seek solace in the found  
Whether solid as in matter  
Or formless as in thought.  
One can do well with a thing,  
With many things,  
With anything tangible,  
But given just a self,  
That which is so, oh, basic,  
Given just that  
One can do nothing with it  
And less without.  
For that which one wonder with  
One always wonders at,  
Never knowing,  
Never finding mind  
At ease with body  
Or a world the kind  
One imagined in the mind.

## A Pain, An Ache, A Drizzle

**M Scott Craig**

Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

Here's to all that have split hairs, raised hairs,  
Split colors, becoming an isthmus for lovers  
To hang onto. The world can only hold so  
Many of us upward. The rest fall into a trough  
Where they remain, unexposed.

To all the little pricks that run through Amsterdam,  
They come for little pageants in the streets, and  
Follow every scent, then give blood for fuel.

To every brown or golden nipple in the ruins  
Of a long continent, with sunshine marks and  
Hairless crescent, who give men thought of  
Running with vintage cloaks through Norway.

Easy kisses to all kneecaps that have left  
Imprints on leather couches and in sand boxes.  
The arch of a smothered back that is handled  
By a merry-go-round of fingers.

There just aren't enough shiny tomorrows  
And sun-breathed waterways to flow away on.  
All paths lead all of us to us, to find us,  
To make more of us, to us being in us.  
It's not a racket. It's life and love and living life.

Here's to all the blood-ripe fullness, the blue  
Swelling under the skin, the triggers of skin-dipped  
Mechanisms that fire when stroked, touched heathens,  
Unexamined mouths that heave into a snail's labyrinth.

For all the wells where souls fill after colliding,  
For all the weaved fingers moistened, there  
Is more, there is much more, more to feel, more  
To dilate, more to congregate. There are still places  
And parts that can be kneaded.

To anyone who hesitates upon romantic sentences  
With fear of overexposing, a salute. Dip yourselves  
Into a bugged conversation and then run a gamut  
Of easy verbs into your stomachs. Choke on nouns

And fingers and prepositional phrases that  
Fill all space with tongue's emission.

Here's to all misprints on fogged windows,  
Where happy quotes from The Wizard of Oz  
And Pygmalion have been remembered and  
Stuck to walls that have had warm bodies and  
Breath smashed diligently. And to the paint  
Left on someone's nape and rump. To those  
That traced that line. That sucked it down.  
That drove it in between freckles.

For all spasms that have been squeezed out of  
A pleasure for pleasure, for the pleasing of  
Someone's pleasurable delight.  
Any who can climb down the stem of pleasure,  
Do so now and then again.

To those who say thank you to velvet and slick  
Nerves whose existence remains to resuscitate  
Your endless motions.

To those who love to be entered by gremlins  
From China and edicts from Spain and bossa novans  
From Argentina. There is a superfluous form  
All entrance makers take, bowing, migrating.

Let us all drizzle out and slide into the abyss.

## Aparna Mukhedkar interviews M Scott Craig

Aparna Mukhedkar

M. Scott Craig, author of *Cacoethes*, was born in the Rio Grande near Del Rio, Texas, and broke a lot of piñatas while growing up. He is a helicopter pilot and currently in the Masters Publishing program through the University of Houston-Victoria. He lives in Central Missouri with his wife and still maintains that he is the archenemy of William Shakespeare. Learn more at [www.mscottcraig.com](http://www.mscottcraig.com)

1. What inspired you to write the book? How did you come up with the title?

I learned of cacoethes as a word about three or four years ago, by chance, which is probably how most of us notice all great words, and it seemed tattooed to my brain for weeks. The word sounds beautiful as it is, but it stands for an insane passion or desire for something, anything. Imagine how more edible life would seem if we all took more risks and followed our passions, how ecstatic we might all be for living, for educational adventure, for our family and friends. Some people might get on our nerves, like the ones who already seem too invested with super-nauseating vigor, but, for the most part, we could all be kicking some serious butt in the world. That feeling we get when someone suddenly overwhelms our senses and we can't wait to feel inebriated by them again, and then again, and then we dream about that person and it feels like we have entered another atmosphere, how the world could leave us behind and we'd be just fine with that – yeah, that's cacoethes, and well worth it. The word summons internal fire, and let's face it, some of us need more fire.

My parents lived in a world of love for 44 years before my mother passed away recently of cancer. From the two of them, as they were a perfect example of great love, and from observing friends, I learned all the good things I wanted in a relationship. I also paid attention to my own thoughts, because admit it or not, we all want something great for ourselves. Instincts are there for a reason. We as a society don't take advantage of our instincts enough, and that's probably because we don't trust trusting others enough.

So love came about in a story I was writing, and then another, and in poetry came another free and open dimension of it, and then more, and then dreams, and before long, I started logrolling through the forest and cities picking up on all the lovely bits. I'd like to think I'm an optimist and a realist at the same time, but I know it's hard. Every union in the world is affected in some way by love, so it's out there, waiting for us, we're just afraid of fire sometimes.

2. The entire book to me is like a festival of senses. It is intriguing and also maddening, because at first you don't really understand what is going on. But, then it starts to make sense, as the short paragraphs are interlinked with ones that come later. Explain the process of how all the information from your mind was transcribed on paper.

That's tough to think about, huh? Imagine it in my head, because, when I was writing it, it came out the way it did all on its own. It made sense to me to scramble stories through the book

because, in real life, our thoughts in a relationship are not only scrambled, but they keep returning at other times, say three weeks or four months down the road. So it made absolute sense to me, but many people have said the same thing, that it takes just a little while to realize that all the stories work together.

When we date, we run questions through our minds like little microbursts. And that happens a lot. A month into a relationship we might start doubting what we're doing right or wrong. We may start thinking about the other person's background more frequently, and doubting what they're about. We interrupt ourselves and seem to destroy what the relationship is built on to see if the foundation is strong enough to continue onward. It's a self-defense mechanism most likely. I think most of us do it. Then after that interruption is out of the way, everyone goes back to feeling giddy or loving or lustful or crazy or renewed, and a lot of the early feelings in the relationship return to be used again. Or many relationships are built on the same arguments, so those same feelings keep popping up. Therefore, the book is organized in a manner so that all these feelings come together at different intervals throughout the book.

### 3. How did you arrive at the titles of each of the short paragraphs?

I like titles. I think they can offer a lot of the story before the story ever begins. How the title flows usually tells me how a story will flow. Same for poetry.

I wrote all the poetry and fiction with a theme in mind, but individually. The titles didn't have to relate to each other, just the works themselves since they're themed together, but I spend a great deal of time creating a title that I think perfectly fits whatever words it prefaces. One of my wife's favorite pieces is "Like To See You..." and that was a title that came naturally from the words in the poem. One of her favorite short stories in the book, "A Color The Sun Puts On A Woman's Skin," came from many drafts. That was a story I edited several times, and after each revision, I had a new title, or a variation of the final result. I think the title makes wonderful sense after you read the piece, but not at the beginning, or even halfway into it. You should see some of the titles in the third book, *Inhale*.

### 4. The poems are absolutely brilliant! They are sensual, passionate, soul stirring and funny at times. What was the process of incorporating the poems into the book?

Thank you, I appreciate that. That comes from recognizing that love and sensuality can be funny, through awkwardness or curiosity, and what we think about even when we're in the middle of love. It's not always love we're thinking of.

Regarding placing poetry in the book, it came down to me considering the 'why vs. why not?' 'Why not' obviously won out, because the poetry enhanced the entire book's theme just as well as the fiction. Besides a few anthologies I've read, I can't really name you any books out there that have a collection of fiction and poetry mixed together except for a few that are discussing their own work or someone else's. I understand it's hard to mix fiction and non-fiction, but both



fiction and poetry can represent so many ideas, and can offer so much freedom and imagination. Both forms of expression can take you anywhere, everywhere, and in between.

A lot of my poetry met the theme of *Cacoethes* and the others as well, and...why not? I know fiction and poetry sections are split in bookstores, but there are plenty of men and women who have written in both styles. I guess if I was smart I'd write separate books so that my work could be represented on different aisles to match various tastes, but bookstores are already supposed to be that smart for us. They'll know what to do.

Plus I feel the combination of poetry and fiction somewhat symbolizes the contrast between two people trying fit their worlds together. Two people are naturally going to have varying solutions and plans and ideas, and things can occasionally get confusing. Going into the speed of one story, say "It Happened So Fast," into the poetry that follows it, and actually from that which precedes it, signifies the conflict of rhythm that two people trying to form a relationship often endure. I think rhythm is one of the least considered factors in what makes two people exist in beauty.

5. What is *Cacoethes* attempting to convey besides what I believe to be this fascinating journey into the physical, mental and emotional depths of human frailties and intense passion?

Actually, you just said it quite well yourself.

Frailty and passion cover the subject well. We all feel it, whether we admit it or not. I wrote the book essentially because that's the mood I was in, but maybe I think the words inside the book can help improve one's senses? I don't know. Wouldn't it be nice to say I wrote the book that changed the world? I don't think I did it with *Cacoethes*, but maybe one day. This book is for men and women of all ages, all adult ages anyway. It's not a self-help book, or an instruction manual. It's intelligent pleasure reading. I just want people to use their senses and explore people better. If the world isn't about survival, it's about love and recognition.

6. How long did it take you to complete this book?

I was traveling around northern California in the summer of '09 and started a few sprinkles of this book. Just some words as I sat along rivers and dams. I picked them back up in January of 2010 and started something new that I wasn't aware I was doing. I had been writing off and on for years without any true reason or identification, just getting ideas down I guess, but for some reason, when I picked it back up my voice had changed. I would wake up on some mornings and put two short stories down in a few hours, come back the next night and read them, and change very little. Some of the poetry I wrote long ago and I rewrote it simply to clean it up a little, but mostly everything for *Cacoethes*, and the two collections that follow, I wrote in 2010, from nearly the first day of the year to the last. It was printing material out and my wife making me look at book sizing that proved to me I had material for more than one book. I was writing on a full page and not considering that the book size of 5.25x8 inches instantly tripled the amount of

material I had. And it just kept coming out. It still is. It's like blood coming out of a tiny wound that won't coagulate.

7. You were born and raised in the Rio Grande and have lived all over the country. What elements of your surroundings are represented in the pages of *Cacoethes*? The descriptions and imagery particularly in the poems are stunning!

Probably more than I realize. My memory is quite potent. I remember certain bookshelves in Savannah libraries, homeless people living in Cadillacs in downtown Los Angeles, snow at the top of the tower I worked in Chicago and the girl in the blue skirt that stood at the window with me who I never saw again. I remember what books I read on what subways in which cities, though I only read underground. I remember random dogs and cricket infestations around Bakersfield and some random wild-haired gent who had an envelope of songs he wanted me to carry to Nashville, whether I lived there or not. I remember our Hungarian tour-guide on Cheyenne Mountain and that my horse was a follower, not a leader. Same for the horse that threw me in a thornbush in Palo Duro Canyon after sitting in bat guano in a cave we had a hard time getting out of. The ants there were as big as my thumbnail.

I could go on, but looking back on this list and your curious he-can't-be-serious-about-the-ants look, I'll just admit that a lot of my work is somewhat biographical. Writers never intend it to be, but it mostly always is. But, for me, I mean that in the sense of small things only. I don't believe I've written more than two or three stories total that are based on an actual event. I just mean the small things. No matter a person's depth of imagination, writer's still write to some extent, maybe even to a great extent, about what we know, even if it's just a small thing someone said in real life that inspired something in a story, or a backdrop, or a tree limb we saw on a trip, anything like that. Let real life be a basis, and writing will come endlessly.

8. What authors were you most influenced by?

That's always been an interesting question, one I'm not sure I have an answer for. There are many a many great writers out there who I love to read, but none that I like entirely. Is that mean? That's natural, just as I wouldn't expect anyone to like every little thing I write in my life. Lawrence and Joyce and Hemingway have some beautiful pages, filled with lyrical silk, but they have some other works I wouldn't care to read to my dog after dinner. David James Duncan and Donna Tartt each have a novel I simply get lost in and finish in a very short time because their characters and settings are so defined and contagious, but none of their other works really compel me to take a shower. Chekhov, Shepard, Williams, they can all write scripts, fiction, and verse that makes me want to play naked in sugar and cinnamon, and some other work that makes me feel like volunteering to get bucked off a horse. Reading Neruda to my wife before bed causes luscious moments, while reading Neruda to my wife outside is like instant citronella. The bugs won't come near us. Borges and Wilde and Dubus provide such eloquent dialogue and comfort, but I can only take them in short doses or I'll break out in a lovely rash.

So, all in all, the names I just mentioned are the ones that cause the most ignition inside me, more than any other I suppose. Perhaps I have literary issues. But there are many others too, such as Chandler, McMurtry, Hammett, and Miller. I loved a lot of the earlier work of King and Clancy. I read just as much about math and science as anything else these days, and biographies. Did I even answer the question?

9. What did the experience of writing this book teach you about yourself?

Perhaps that I'm just as inquisitive and curious and full of desire as a man as I would be if I were a woman, which means I'm probably just wanting and searching in general. I've been told by readers that I write equally well from a woman's point of view as that of a man's, and the vignettes I write are rather open-minded for the women as well as the men.

I used to think I'd never make the age of 40. Not necessarily because I was living in a den of drugs and vamps and recklessness, but because I participate in a lot of activities that are not always thought out. Someone says let's go skydiving, I'll say ok. Someone mentions diving off the coast with sharks, I won't hesitate. I fly helicopters, I hang from and jump off 80 ft. cliff walls (into water of course). I'm not bragging, and all of these activities are at least somewhat done carefully, it's just that I figured my lifestyle would catch up to me accidentally one day. I won't drag race or bungee jump because I just don't trust those things, no matter what the stats say.

But now I'm married. I have to live until I'm 40. 50 and 75 and 95 too. If I'm on machines at some point, I think she'd understand, but otherwise, we plan on going down many tree-blossomed avenues together. My wife is no one I could have imagined, only someone I could have hoped for. Luckily, she thinks I'm from another planet. So now, understanding a woman like her, I think I understand the character of a woman better and can sympathize with certain life lessons from a woman's point of view. I could write women before, but now I have a better edge.

10. Tell us about your upcoming projects. Will your other books be written in the same style as *Cacoethes*?

Yes, *Thoughtica* and *Inhale* will both be out, hopefully and planned, by the end of 2011. As the material for all three bundled high into the sky, I tried to recognize how the pieces could be organized. It worked its way out rather well. *Cacoethes* is a themed compilation, with all the work, poetry and fiction, arranged in an order from a relationship's beginning until the very end, with all the little highs and lows and interruptions in between. So it has a bit of it all, but mostly it's an emotional ride.

*Thoughtica* follows the same formula, only the poetry and fiction contained in this volume are arranged to make your brain suffer surrender. *Thoughtica* pertains more to the physical aspect between people, albeit of the intelligent nature. It's not dirt and smut. It's stimuli for the brain. And then comes *Inhale*, which is primarily what's left: the grit. Not every bit of love can end happily. In fact, probably 98% of all relationships end with separation. Think about all the people

you've dated, even just once, and then magnify that by the world's population, versus the average amount of times a person gets married (or devoted without marriage), which we'll say in this day and age is probably around 1.4 times. It can't be just an average of 1 time anymore, can it? So between the three we have love, lust, and despair, with all the adjectives and adverbs and delightful bullshit that can be adjacent to all three. Love can be a massacre, or it can be brilliant. It's rarely both.

Coming up in 2012 is my first novel, *Conscious*, a story set against the Italian backdrop of World War II. Does that sound familiar? I hope not. I don't believe in rehashing or reinventing old stories.

#### 11. What is the best advice you can give to aspiring writers?

In addition to reading tirelessly, if for no other reason than to find out what you don't like to read, and to place yourself in an environment conducive to writing, and to hang out with people who are smarter than you, or those who are at least trying to improve your intelligence, my advice would probably be to work for yourself. I could easily say when I wake up tomorrow that the hot market is teenage vampires and magicians. I don't know a damn thing about teenage vampires and magicians, or adult ones even. I don't really want to write about that subject, no matter how much money that market seems to be offering. In fact, I wouldn't mind writing about flawed vampires and werewolves and their demise just to mess with the laws of fantasy, but in 2012, no one would probably buy the book. Maybe in 2018. I have several children's stories in the mix, but none that are follow mainstream subject material. That they aren't mainstream isn't the reason why I haven't finished them. I'm not close to finishing them because those books aren't my main focus at the moment.

This is what's key for me. As I said before, it wasn't until the start of 2010, when I started rewriting some of my older work, that I found the voice with which I wanted to write. Now I have it, and the voice matches the material of these books and the next several books I have ready to publish. I have several books lined up after that. It's not a problem of ideas for me, it's a ratio issue. Writing all day long I still couldn't keep up with my ideas. I just can't write as fast as my mind is producing the material. Now in five years, or maybe ten, my voice might change, like mid-life puberty I guess. I might be ready then to take on these children's books I have half-written and finish them into something I'm extremely happy about. But at the moment, my mind isn't organized for that type of fiction.

We have to follow our voice and our strengths, and especially when we feel they're changing. Our voice is the verbalization of our mind at work, spoken or written. Our strengths serve our voice, so why betray ourselves? We should write what's comfortable, not to what the market says we should be comfortable with, otherwise we'll always be staying up late at night thinking that what I really want to be working on is *this*, yet I'm actually working on this. Isn't that like most of life? Why like her, when I could love *her*?

My degree was in acting. My parents advised me to at least minor in something else, but at the time I knew 100% I was going to be an actor, and that's exactly what I did for ten years. I was

fortunate to work on stages all over the country, but I was doing a show in Chicago, a five-week run, and during the third week, sitting backstage at intermission, a wall of bricks and plaster fell on me, and I realized I was done with acting. There just wasn't any challenge in it for me anymore. I wasn't the perfect actor by any means, but the thrill of the challenge of acting had somehow been stripped away, and that was the last show I ever did. A couple of times shortly after that I thought about it, but I didn't feel it strong enough to pursue a return. Instead I learned to fly, and continued to think of character origins rather than how to act characters out. That's probably how I came to be an author. It was my travel through the world of performance that brought about my real desire to create the story instead.

My voice in college gave me the opportunity to act, and then it changed. I had to follow it.