

Vol. 17

No. 2 (December 2017)

ISSN 0974-7370

INDIAN JOURNAL OF
POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

(An International Refereed Biannual Published in June and December)



POST GRADUATE & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

NEWMAN COLLEGE

THODUPUZHA, KERALA, INDIA

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‘Eco-consciousness’ in the Poetry of the Early Indian English Poets

Anup Nair

Henry Derozio, Michael MadhusudanDutt and Toru Dutt are, if not unsung but at least, undersung protagonists, claimants from the nineteenth century of unfulfilled renown, who set stage for the beginning and development of Indian English poetry. Their lives and literary careers reveal them as microcosmic representatives of the young generation of the period.

This article attempts to trace the eco consciousness in the poetry of these poets through an analysis of their select poems. Possibly under the influence of the English Romantics and more so because the Indian psyche, especially in the pre-colonial and early colonial times, had been more eco-centric, these poets display a very high eco-consciousness in their poems.

Derozio’s masterpiece ‘The Fakeer of Jungheera’ is set in landscapes that reflect the emotional state of the central personages. ‘Nature’ seems to be sensitive to the travails of Nuleeni and is shell shocked at her plight, much unlike the Chorus of Brahmans or even the Chorus of Women. Years of initiation into the patriarchal discourse results in the Chorus of Women speaking the same language as the Chorus of the Brahmans. Thus the exploited lisps the tongue of the exploiter. The Chorus of Women sings of the bliss that awaits the widow in the world beyond and decides on her behalf that it is best for her to leave this corrupt material world. Nature, however empathises with her and as she mounts the pyre and watches stunned:

Now all is silent, sad and still,
As moonlight on a heath-clad hill;
No insect’s wing is heard to whirr,
The very air has ceased to stir,
And expectation breathless bends,
To watch the pile that grief ascends. (Derozio, *Song* 119)

'The Neglected Minstrel' too dwells on the theme of Nature being empathetic to the miseries of the protagonist in stark contrast to the cold insensitivity of fellow human beings and therefore hints at the need to preserve Nature, our sincerest friend. This poem is narrated in a dramatic manner with a bard singing to his beloved, the tale of another unfortunate bard's tragic fate. This poem that describes a lonely life and a miserable death too is prefixed with an epigraph that suggests the theme of a genius living an unappreciated life. The setting in which this 'nightingale' sang his lay was 'sylvan' but save from the world of nature none from the world of human habitation gave him company. The poem begins with the poet in a 'Wordsworthian' use of memory trying to rekindle, in the mind of his beloved, the beautiful moments of love spent in the lap of nature, before veering on to narrate the story of the luckless bard and his tragic life and finally closing by finding similarities between his own fate, the fate of the bard of the story and the fate of all the gifted souls caught in a hopelessly material world.

The poet narrates how the bard in question was in love and how his "young heart will open like a rose" and how the joyous moments were forever recorded into his psyche. Rich in natural imagery, the poet suggests how a sensitive soul would be sensitive not just to the charms of his beloved but also to the beauties of nature. He writes how the splendours of God's creations had hastened the muse in him:

And when he heard upon a moonlit night
The voice of the blue river as it passed,
He peopled it with creations of his brain
The soft melodious wave, and fondly deemed
It was a spirit speaking to his soul,
Even from beneath the water. But the Breeze,
The evening breeze which from its cavern crept
Like music from a shell, woke blissful thoughts
Like fragrance out of flowers in his fond breast,
And delicate as those which float in dreams-

The essence of delicious Poesy! (*Song* 179-180)

When after the death of his beloved, his friend betrays him, it was too much for the sensitive soul to bear and thus disillusioned, he breathed his last. Even at the end of the poem when though the world of human beings had deserted him, Nature still sides with him:

Their fragrance flowers around are flinging
To consecrate this beauteous spot,
And winds a requiem wild are singing
Which man, inhuman man, forgot. (*Derozio, Song* 182)

‘The Poet’s Grave’ is a statement of despair at the materialistic world’s inability to appreciate the fine art of poetry. What is again noteworthy is how Derozio emphasizes the kinship shared by Nature and the poet. Shunned by the society that the Poet lived and died in, it is Nature that gives him companionship, in life and death. When he lived, Nature inspired him through its myriad beauties and when he died it was Nature that lamented his demise:

There, all in silence, let him sleep his sleep:
No dream shall flit into that slumber deep-
No wandering mortal thither once shall wend,
There, nothing o’er him but the heavens shall weep,
There, never pilgrim at his shrine shall bend,
But holy stars alone their nightly vigils keep! (36)

Many of Derozio’s sonnets are those that strike a note of melancholy and reflect his disillusionment with the happenings of this world. ‘To the Moon’ is such a sonnet that uses of the moon as the metaphor to comment on the sad state of affairs on the earth. The poem begins with the poet questioning the moon as to why it was guiltily wandering through the skies as if it had done some grave act of misconduct. He then wonders whether the moon is sad because its hopes have been dashed and then finally reaches the conclusion that its gloominess is caused by its proximity to the earth which was brimming with all sorts of sorrows. It is the ceaseless gazing on the thousand showers of ill that inundate this world of ours that has touched its heart. Thus Nature is seen to mirror the human predicament.

'To the Dog Star' is a romantic address to Nature to bless his mother with the joys that only Nature can give. Here too, the distance between hope and reality is categorically mentioned, when he writes: "There dost thou shine, and shine like Hope afar" (Derozio, *Song* 44) In lines that remind us of the English Romantic poets, Derozio sings of the beauty of the Dog Star and the effect of its heavenly beauty on his psyche: "...this to my heart such rapture brings, / As never may be told!" (44) The beauty of the star reminds the poet of his mother who too was perfect and thus the last five lines of the poet the subject of discussion changes from the star to the lady:

.....Thy lovely light,
Eternal Sirius, calls one dear to mind;
For oh! her form was beautiful and bright,
And, like thy ray, her soul was most refined,
And made for tenderness, and purest love;-
Then smile on her, bright star, smile sweetly from above. (44)

When Derozio talks of the "withered bough" or the sighing breeze in 'The Harp of India' it is emblematic of the decadence into which the country had fallen. Thus by implication to restore the country to glory the bough needs to gain its foliage back and the breeze needs to regain its freshness and vitality.

Commenting on the influence of the English Romantic Poets in the way the early Indian English Poets approached Nature Rosinka Chaudhuri says:

Often, a line may evoke an indisputable resonance from the English Romantics, such as: 'I wandered forth alone, I knew not where...' The language used is representative of readings in English poetry: 'The lark springing from his bed, / With loud acclaims to every grove and bower, / Did trumpet forth Day's nativity...' Such essentially English features emphasize the dislocation in these poems as a result of the colonial encounter, and indicate their textual origins. (Chaudhuri 102-103)

Like the English Romantic poets, Madhusudan's poems have frequent references to Nature. Besides this, his early poems show his fondness for the scenic beauty of Sagardanri (Jessore), where he spent his childhood, and which left an indelible impression on psyche of this budding poet. In many poems Madhusudan recreates the environs that nurtured him in his

childhood – the trees, the river Kpotaksha, the giant banyan tree that stood on its bank, the storms that frequently lashed Sagardanri, the beauty of its starry night among other things. For instance, in a poem dedicated to Bysac he writes of how, “The spreading Banyan’s shade, the warbling breeze / Could charm my soul!” (Gupta 494) In lines which combine Keatsian sensuousness with Wordsworthian idea of Nature offering a panacea for all ills, Madhusudan writes in a poem titled, ‘Composed During a Morning Walk’:

I love to see you streamlet gaily run
And blush like maiden Beauty meek and fair,
When the bright beams of yon refulgent sun
Crowd on her trembling bosom pure and clear;
All these I love, and Oh! in these I find
A balm to soothe the fever of my mind! (Gupta 491-492)

He is conscious also of the violent and destructive aspect of Nature. Having experienced the ferocity of the storm in his childhood, he just needed to peep into his past to paint a picture of, what he dubs as it’s ‘dread majesty’. In a poem titled ‘A Storm’, he writes:

Hail his dread majesty!
He comes! the Sun himself has fled,
As if affrighted, from the sky;
Lo! every tree he passes by,
Submissive bows its leafy head: (Gupta 496)

S.C Dasgupta also notes the influence of the English romantics in Madhusudan’s poetry, “The English Romantic poets worked on Michael Madhusudan’s poetic temperament in great manner as it happened with early Indian poets in English. Like Derozio and Toru Dutt, Madhusudan was highly influenced by the English romantics.” (186)

Like the Romantic poets, Madhusudan excels in the description of nature, visible also in this very initial effort of his. For example, he describes in words that sound similar to Wordsworth’s nature poems, the hermitage nestled in beauty:

It was as if some joyous fairy Queen

Had rear'd this spot of Love the nest to be;
How lovelily the Moon there cast her sheen
And fring'd with sparkling silver every tree!
How gaily every warbling breeze perfum'd,
Came there to woo the rose that in soft brightness bloom'd. (Gupta 503)

His early poems show his fondness for the scenic beauty of Sagardanri (Jessore), where he spent his childhood, and which left an indelible impression on psyche of this budding poet. In many poems Madhusudan recreates the environs that nurtured him in his childhood – the trees, the river Kpotaksha, the giant banyan tree that stood on its bank, the storms that frequently lashed Sagardanri, the beauty of its starry night among other things. For instance, in a poem dedicated to Bysac he writes of how, “The spreading Banian’s shade, the warbling breeze / Could charm my soul!” (Gupta 494) In lines which combine Keatsian sensuousness with Wordsworthian idea of nature offering a panacea for all ills, Madhusudan writes in a poem titled, ‘Composed During a Morning Walk’:

I love to see you streamlet gaily run
And blush like maiden Beauty meek and fair,
When the bright beams of yon refulgent sun
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MadhusudanDutt, infatuated with the Albion shore and its 'Its valleys green, its mountains high' paints the landscape of the coloniser's land, a land of prosperity and freedom, in a glorious hue. Thus a lush green environs seems to be symptomatic of material and spiritual richness. Nature is foregrounded in many poems like in 'Written at the Native College by a Hindu Student' where he expresses his joy at observing the 'future flowers' of his country.

Baugmaree' and 'Lotus' are two sonnets that show Toru's love for Nature and the scenic atmosphere at Baugmaree, where the Dutts lived. She describes the garden that surrounded her house, a veritable Eden:

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
Sharp contrast of all colours here are seen:
.....One might swoon
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
On a primeval Eden, in amaze." (Lokuge 210)

'Our Casurina Tree' is perhaps, the most well known of Toru's poems, perhaps the poem that first strikes the mind, when her name is mentioned. Harihar Das opines: "For its rich imagery, the music of its verses, and the tenderness and pathos with which it is instinct, we would place this poem second to none in the volume."(128) It summarizes all that Toru was, believed and wrote. The way Toru Dutt fuses the image of the her motherland and the memories of the time spent with her dead siblings with that of the Casurina Tree in 'Our Casurina Tree' is fascinating. The Casurina Tree battles the pythons that wrap her in a vice like embrace just mother earth fights senseless human assaults on it, yet never for once shying away from harbouring and protecting the diverse life forms that inhabit it's thick boughs. The poem goes down the memory lane, to those days when her brother and sister were alive and they indulged in innocent play in the serene atmosphere of their garden house at Baugmaree. The Casurina Tree stands as the deathless witness of her joyful childhood. Toru nostalgically remembers those days which would never again come back. Toru loved the tree because the tree was with her in when life was full of blissful companionship:

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:

Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,

O sweet companions, loved with love intense.

For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear! (Lokuge 211)

The poem begins with a description of the grandeur of the Casuarina Tree, its huge structure, the creeper that climbed upon its rough trunk and it being an abode of myriad birds, bees and a grey baboon. At night, the tree was the source of harmonious music: And oft at nights the garden overflows / With one sweet song that seems to have no close, / Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose. (Lokuge 211) The wailing of the tree in the fourth stanza is like a requiem song for Abju, who died before Toru and Aru went to Europe:

Ah , I have heard that wail far, far away,

In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,

When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith

And the waves gently kissed the classic shore

Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,

When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon,

And every time the music rose,- before

Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,

Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime

I saw thee, in my own loved native clime. (Lokuge 211)

The poem ends with Toru writing a 'lay' to immortalize the Casurina Tree with other 'deathless trees' of Borrowdale. Toru may have had the intuition that like the deaths of her brother and sister, the tree soon would witness her death too. So she consecrates a poem to the eternal symbolization of the immortal tree:

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay

Unto thy honour, Tree, beloved of those

Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,

Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!

Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done

With deathless trees- like those in Borrowdale. (Lokuge 212)

Thus the poems of the early Indian English Poets reveal them as poets who believed that Nature was inextricably linked to human existence. Though human beings abandoned each other or was insensitive to Nature, like a mother, Nature never did relinquish its duties or concern for our welfare and in times of crisis proved to be the only source of succor for human beings.

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A Post Colonial Reading of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

Arya.S.Nair

*At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps,
India will awake to life and freedom.
Jawaherlal Nehru - Tryst with Destiny*

One of the theories that exerted a strong influence on Indian English Literature is that of Post Colonialism. And literature is the reflection of true life with wide variety of universal emotions. A close study of Indian English Literature too bear more testimonials to it. These days are the flowering days of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation. India is a land of diversity and its business world opened in 1990 –1991 through the trade liberalization policies of P V Narasimha Rao Government .

Post Colonialism is a literary theory that focuses on the notion of Eurocentricism. Famous literary theoretician Edward Said is said to be the pioneer of this renowned approach to literature with his path breaking literary creation *Orientalism* of 1978. According to Said “Orient is the primitive, uncivilized other in contrast to the advanced and civilized west”. Another significant book that contributed to the development of the fastly growing postcolonial studies is *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft in 1989. Techniques like magic realism was brilliantly used by Gunter Grass in his most famous literary creation, *Tin Drum* and Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his phenomenal work *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Magic realism is a technique that encapsulates magic and reality in a literary creation. New field in this extensive researched field is the notion of Neo Colonialism that give supreme significance to Capitalism and the corrupting role of multinational companies.

This article explicates a subaltern study by incorporating the studies of the major Indian Postcolonial writers Homi K Bhaba and Gayathri Spivak. Homi K Bhaba's idea are well

elucidated in the book *The Location of Culture* that was published in 1991. His key concepts include (i) Hybridity - the emergence of new cultural forms from multiculturalism. (ii) Ambivalence - it consists of opposing perceptions and dimensions in a post colonized region. (iii) ThirdSpace - it acts as an ambiguous area that develops when two or more individuals or cultures interact. (iv) Enunciation - it is the act of utterance or expression of a culture that takes place in the ThirdSpace. (v) Mimicry - it appears when members of a colonized society imitate and take on the culture of the colonizers. In essence the cultural diversity is opposed to cultural difference. Gayatri Spivak in an article written in 1985 titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?: Speculations on Widow Sacrifice" describes the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman that indicates a failed attempt at self-representation. Because her attempt at "speaking" outside normal patriarchal channels was not understood or supported, Spivak concluded that "the subaltern cannot speak". Gayatri Spivak clearly claims that the women of the Third World are oppressed completely by the terrible force of patriarchy.

Amitav Ghosh, the master of travel narratives gave to the anxious readers the famous island literature, *The Hungry Tide* in 2004." The novel is set in Sundarbans, an immense archipelago of islands and the notorious Morichjhapi massacre of 1978 - 79 forms the backbone of the entire novel. It is the arrival of Piyali Roy and Kanai Dutt that disturbs the delicate balance of the island and the villagers strongly believe that any human being without a pure heart who ventures into the watery labyrinth will never return. The novel reflects the author's experience as a sociologist with a PhD from Oxford University. The themes of this diasporic literature include knowledge, belonging and dispossession. The mangroves of the Sunderbans forest "recolonise the land, they erase time"(Ghosh 50). Many characters like Fokir, Tutul, Kusum and Moyna too play prominent roles within *Hungry Tide*.

Kanai Dutt is a forty two year old Delhi based sophisticated business man and a translator who returns to the island on the request of his aunt Nilima."Language was both his livelihood and his addiction and he was often preyed upon by a near - irresistible compulsion to eavesdrop on conversations in public places"(Ghosh 4). He is a perfect epitome of a modern Indian gripped intricately in the hapless hands of globalization.

Piyali Roy was a cetologist who researches on 'Oracaella Brihirostrius'. She was born in Kolkata but was brought up in the United States of America. She did her post

graduation at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California. . ‘This was what Piya loved best about her work :being out on the water alert and on watch with the wind in her face and her equipment at her finger tips’(Ghosh 72). Looking in the post colonial perspective both Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy are the colonizers of the tide country who made the tides to turn hungry. In this novel, Homi K Bhaba’s terminologies of hybridity and ambivalence can be found in apt proportions. As a result multiculturalism operates in the entire background of the novel and the third space develops as a result. The concept of multiculturalism closely comes as one of the major characteristics of diasporic literature.

The postcolonial dimensions of this literary product enlarges with the destruction of the Tide Country by human beings and the deadly wild faunas like the tigers and the crocodiles. The consequences of both these violences were the unprecedented dispossessions and chaos within Lusibari and other neighbourig islands. The historic incident of Morichjhapi rebellion of 1978 – 1979 is dynamically represented in *The Hungry Tide* in its violent culminations. But still peace persisted in one way or the other. The people who came to settle in Morichjhapi were the refugees from Bangladesh who had to lose everything including their homeland because of the political decision of the partition of the country. The government of India agreed to accept responsibility for those coming from East and West Pakistan. Hundreds and hundreds of people from East and West Pakistan were forced to leave their home to save their lives due to the communal riots. And when they came to India what awaited them was the abject poverty. After the miserable period they had to spend in the refugee camps, they were sent to Dandakaranya for settling there. “They couldn’t speak the languages of that area and the local people treated them as intruders, attacking them with bows, arrows and other weapons” (Ghosh 118). After spending several hopeless years there, they felt the need to think otherwise. And the vacant or unoccupied tidal lands of the Sundarbans were the alternative that came to their mind. So they headed for it ‘by train and on foot’, ‘in the hope of settling in the Sundarbans’ (Ghosh 118). But soon the things began to rotate in a different phase with the West Bengal Government’s interference. Even though there was an uprising from the refugees, the ruling government suppressed it brutally. The huts of the people were burnt down. Mos of the women were raped to death and dumped into the deep waters of Sunderbans. The notorious Morichjhapi incident also brought an untimely death to Nirmal, husband of Nilima who was the aunt of Kanai. In the novel, it is the diary of Nirmal

that portrays the pathetic and evil realities of the Morichjhapi incident. The word “Morichjhapi” means pepper island. The Morichjhapi incident occupies an “unhomely” space in the postcolonial studies. The supreme problem of dispossession of the refugees can also be seen in it. The dispossessed seek a new home that drives the search for familiarity, since familiarity is an “uncanny doubling”. All the refugees aspired to do the following: “to plunge their hands once again in our soft yielding tide country mud” (Ghosh 164 - 165) that is to return to a place that recalls their home land.

For S Daniel, the founder of the Tide Country, the Tide Country symbolized the following : “He wanted to build a place where no one would exploit anyone and people would live together without petty social distinction and differences. He dreamed of a place where men and women could be farmers in the morning, poets in the afternoon and carpenters in the evening.” Various religious practices like the offerings to a deity by chanting the Hindu and Muslim prayers provides an added impetus to the mentioned dream. The mystic myths surrounding “Bon Bibi” is another legendary episode of the novel. Bon Bibi is the Goddess of the forest. People of Lusibari believe that she rules over all the animals of the jungle. Even Sunderbans is the home to a large number of wild animals. For the wild animals it was the natural right of survival and for the human beings it is the unofficial settlement right. Hence the nature - man coherence was not to be seen as there were frequent violent attacks between the two.

Dalit study is a part of Subaltern Study. Dalits are the oppressed sections of the society who are marginalized in all aspects. Dalits are considered to be the untouchables of the Indian society. According to Gayatri Spivak “subaltern is not just a classy word for “oppressed”, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference”. And the pathetic stories of the Dalits are not at all different in Sunderbans too. Most of the inhabitants of Sunderbans are Dalits who are “unhomely”. The notion of “unhomely” includes the following dual meanings: (i) the people who have no houses. (ii) the people who do not have the virtue of being stable. Since the emancipation of our nation from the cruel clutches of Britishers, Dalits were treated as oppressed people in all respect. They were not even considered as human beings and were denied all sorts of basic rights. The weapon of language was effectively used by Dalits as the ardent path of self-expression and medium of resistance. The atrocities the Dalits had to face in the hands of the upper caste people were myriad .

Movements and Organizations like Dalit Panthers Movement and Dalit Sangarsh Samiti were formed to put and show forward the various atrocities faced by Dalits. Dr B R Ambedkar was a prominent figure in the history of the Dalit Rights Movement. Even today the situation of Dalits are not different as the common incidents of burning of Dalit children in North India. The most bewildering fact regarding this maltreatment has to be read in the light of Fundamental Rights section of the Indian Constitution which states the following through its articles: (i) Article 14 - Equality before Law and (ii) Article 17 – Abolition of Untouchability.

The subaltern characters of *The Hungry Tide* include Horen, Kusum and Fokir. Horen was a fisher man who lived in the island of Satjelia. He was married at a tender age of fourteen and hence became the father of three children in his teenage. Kusum too was from the village of Satjelia. Her father died while foraging for firewood in a place that was off - limits to the villagers. He had not been in possession of a permit at that time, so Kusum's mother did not receive any compensation. With no means of livelihood she was reduced to a state of destitution and was helped by a man named Dilip Choudhury who was disguised as a landowner by profession. In reality Dilip Choudhury was an agent of gang that trafficked women. For him, Kusum was of supreme significance than his mother. Smelling out the danger involved Horen saved Kusum and put her in the custody of Women's Union in Lusibari. But tragically Kusum was killed in the notorious Morichjhapi massacre of 1978 - 79.

Of all the downtrodden characters the most significant character of *The Hungry Tide* is Fokirchand Mandol, who was the son of Kusum. After Kusum's death, Fokir was brought up by Horen. Even though he was an illiterate he had thorough knowledge of the deep waters of Sunderbans. In perfect contrast to him his wife Moyna Mandol was an educated lady who really aspired for an excellent nursing profession. Like most of the loving couples they had constant fights between them.

The arrival of Piyali Roy drastically changed the situation of Fokir. It was the five meter long boat of Fokir that helped Piya to unravel the secrets of the Tide Country. The lower caste people were expected to behave in humble and helping manners to the upper caste people. Here one can note the threads of Antonio Gramsci's concept of Cultural Hegemony. In Marxist philosophy, the term cultural hegemony describes the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulate the culture of

that society — the beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values, and mores — so that their ruling class world view becomes the worldview that is imposed and accepted as the cultural norm as the universally valid dominant ideology that justifies the social, political, and economic as natural, inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone, rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit only the ruling class.

Like most of the subaltern people, Fokir helps Piya in all ways he could. He even cooked food for her. On the other hand, Piya was a highly modern girl who was wrapped in the winds of globalization. She used the advanced technologies like G.P. and binoculars. Fokir himself is described as "utterly informed" a primeval quality, Kanai thinks that attracts Piya"(Ghosh 319). Fokir is in essence the indigenous product of the Tidal Country which itself represents the space of refuge, resistance and disturbance. Language was never a barrier between the talkings of Piyali Roy, who was an excellent speaker of English language and Fokir who only knew the native Bengali language. Rather the communication between them was perfectly between their minds through gestures. Here one can crisply say that Fokir is a great psychologist who can dwell into the depth of psyche in a different approach.

Like the tide that washes away, the rights of the downtrodden are too crippled. Fokir was too an "absent presence" in his home who refused to acknowledge his visitors. Fokir had high profound knowledge of the river and other natural resources of that particular area. In most part of the novel, Fokir engages in the return of the repressed and oppressed ideologies of post colonialism. To oppress means to keep someone down by unjust force or authority. To repress is (i) to hold back, or (ii) to put down by force. Suppress, which is broader and more common than the other two, means (i) to put an end to, (ii) to inhibit, and (iii) to keep from being revealed. Fokir feels home on the river and feels "out of place" on land. Kanai recognizes this difference in feelings of at "home-ness" and pose questions to the authority: It was as though in stepping on the island the authority of their positions had been suddenly reversed"(Ghosh 325). Towards the end of the novel, its undoubtedly Fokir's wisdom and hospitality that saves Piya. Hence Piya decides to live in Lusibari and started to learn Bengali, something she hesitated to learn in the past. Piya also decided to build a memorial for Fokir. Through all these actions the real attitude of Piya to Fokir is clearly revealed. To sum it all Piya with all her worldly knowledge was able to understand the worth of a dalit named Fokir.

In a nutshell, it can be accurately stated that the Dalits are represented in a slightly different manner in this noted diasporic novel *The Hungry Tide*. The most outstanding of all the downtrodden characters is that of Fokir. Fokir was the bridge for Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy to discover the mysteries of the Tide Country since he understood the psychology of both of them in a perfect notch. As a Dalit, Fokir is given an apt position in this wonderful caricature of literature through his sparkling dialogues and mind blowing actions. The Third Space which developed as a result of his interference in correct proportion merges the notions of hybridity and ambivalences eliminating the barriers of cultural differences. In a subaltern approach, the voices of the so called hapless downtrodden people are given due importance. Looking from a rational angle it can be clearly concluded that downtrodden like the Dalits always die for the benefits of the upper caste people. Even though Amitav Ghosh gave a strong representation of a marginalized human being through the character of Fokir, the tragic death of this noble and humble human being brings a wave of surprise to the readers. Hence Fokir with all virtuousness and integrity surrenders boldly to the mystery called death.

Towards the end of this novel, the storm that took away the precious soul of Fokir and it sapped away the diary of Nirmal that crisply deals with the infamous Morichjhapi massacre. But Kanai returns from Lusibari with the hope of publishing a book on the notorious Morichjhapi incident. And Piya decided to stay in Lusibari by adjusting to all its troubles. Hence the element of ambivalence and the nuggets of neo colonialism began to disappear from Piya gradually. The profound lamentations of the Dalits did end in a new dimension. The lacunae of utter dejections and miseries of the downtrodden people usually culminates in the reality of death which is a great leveler. *The Hungry Tide* narrates in a thought provoking language evokes the poignant tale of alienation and dispossession of a Dalit named Fokir. Literature is always a mirror to nature and *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh proves it in a well articulated discourse.

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Poetics of the Marginalized: A Reading of Phill Moncrieff's Poem "My Mother the Land"

Priyanka.M.C

Colonial interventions can completely alter or else modify a country's culture. Its far reaching impact on a country's future cannot be neglected at any cost. Australia's history is no exception as the arrival of the Europeans to the Australian virgin 'lands' can be considered as one of the tumultuous turning points not only in the history of Australia itself but also in the history of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The present paper explores at length the difficulties faced by black Indigenous people in the name of civilization and highlights the different areas where the discourse of power permeated. Land, culture, language, and belief systems come under the radar for being different from the mainstream culture. The tensed relationship between indigeneity, settler colonialism, and white supremacy become more visible and acute as the discussion proceeds further.

Australian indigenous literary output cannot be completely understood by dissociating it from its historical and socio-cultural context. In fact, such literary collages "writes back" to the Empire (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 6), challenging their "possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipsitz 1) and their contradictory positioning of indigenous people as "colonial subalterns" (Mignolo 381). Mostly centered on land rights and cultural self-determination, this literature unravels without fail indigenous community's cultural and political milieu, their divided ambitions, grievances, struggles and alienation. The 1988 Australian bicentennial celebration brought in a sea change in the attitudes of the wider Australian public towards Aboriginal people and their literature and culture (Wheeler 1). This resulted in a bona fide outpouring of indigenous Australian works on various genres including autobiography, fiction, poetry, film, drama, and music in the contemporary literary arena.

Phill Moncrieff is not only a prolific singer but also a sporadic poet, a human rights activist and a Stolen Wages campaigner for victims of the Stolen Wages in Western Australia. His creative undertakings include indigenous and multicultural identities, beliefs, gospel

spirituality, etc. He is a Christian Yamatji from the Ningaloo Coast located in the North West coastal region of Western Australia. Yamatji is “commonly used by natives in the Murchison for anyone of Aboriginal descent who was born in the district” (Douglas 199). The poem “My Mother the Land” is a eulogy for planet Earth wherein the poet converses directly with the land that is personified as a living being. The poem consisting of roughly around 50 lines is structured as a lengthy conversation, where the land becomes a passive listener to the poet’s verbal volley of pain, anger and distress. He vocalizes the interminable suffering experienced by the Australian Aborigines over the years through a first person narrative which diligently communicates the grief, anguish and lost pride of a race that was mercilessly castigated for the so called nation - wide civic betterment. The heart - touching wail of the speaker gives the poem the much - needed oomph as well as the reality quotient to make it appealing for the varied reading public. The poet provides ample mitigation to the Aborigines through his efficacious representation and discusses not only adversities and afflictions but also tries to unearth the faults in the White society. The use of end rhymes adds rhythm and music by augmenting the internal tempo of the poem. This is clearly indicated through the words- “today”- “dismay”; “curse”- “disperse”; “last- past”; “accept me”- “hold me”; “broadly”- “Godly”; “raging- changing”; “years”- “tears”; “sand”- “land” etc.

The first line “You are my Mother, my Mother the Land” at once shows the intensity of the poet’s feelings towards the land brilliantly. The second line “Your bloodline aches today” unveils the hidden pains and agonies of generations who have had to go through hellish experiences in order to safeguard the sanctity of their bloodlines from the Whites. Blood metaphors dominate in collective discourse among both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people. It denotes the inherited behavioural traits passed down from generation to generation through lines of kinship descent. The possession of pure Aboriginal blood bestows solidity and even evades miscegenation concerns. According to Robinson, Indigenous people possess “bloodline(s) to country through creator and ancestral birth” (335). Bloodlines are really potent, and can serve as a panacea for insecurity and uncertainty; it has therapeutic power, and can also act as a catalyst for cherished social relationships. Being of the same blood grants individuals within that group certain privileges, liberties as well as responsibilities and obligations. The eugenics movement engineered by the Whites aimed to bring every native into the white fold using Mendelian genetics of crossbreeding, with the supposition that whiteness was the dominant trait or stronger gene. The ulterior motives of these policies were

to rid Australia of people with dark skin. An article in the *West Australian* of July 22, 1933 testifies to the above fact:

The application of Mendelianism is the only solution and that urges the mating of the half-caste with the quadroon and the octoroon, so that the confirmed infiltration of white blood will finally stamp out the black colour which, when all is said and done, is what we really object to. (qtd. in Schimmel 41)

The prominent belief then was that it was the White man's duty to "uplift a despised race" and this paved the way for the idea of "breeding out the colour" in Aboriginal Australia (Scott 27). The colour white is predominantly seen as a symbol of purity, religious devotion, and nobility (Bonnett 16). The pale complexion of the Whites became the standard physical marker for certifying their noble descent. In fact, paler skin segregated noble people from the toils undertaken outdoors by those of a lower social status (Dyer 57). Dyer affirms that "to be white is to have expunged all dirt, faecal or otherwise, from oneself: to look white is to look clean" (76). Hence the poet is vehemently against racial mixing and the lines "...but the feeling was gone, brown children now born/ Not black like you gave in the past" (11-12) articulate the changes that have come over as a result of liquidation. The question of genocide cannot be evaded from discussions of settler colonialism. English settlers engendered terror and genocide on indigenous Australians to seize their economic resources and to confiscate their homeland. These anti-humanitarian deeds continued until the people dwindled in numbers and the sovereignty claims over their land was wholly transferred to the English colonial settlers and their descendants. The colonial settlers and their brood justified the extortion and thievery of the resources of the indigenous people utilizing the discourses of race, backwardness, civilization, and modernity. According to Michael Cannon:

white newcomers were determined that the whole continent of Australia should belong to them—the soil, the beasts and birds, the rivers and fish, the minerals and trees. A dream of total possession had taken hold of normally stolid men. Such lust for new lands ran through the whole British race that monarch and lowliest labourers alike glowed with the glory of creating a new empire. (1-2)

The poet mourns over the losses incurred by genocidal societies over the years including those who were insidiously massacred by white men and he observes that as their "spirits dispersed" those who survived were so flustered that they turned to Earth, their symbolic mother for "comfort" and "refuge" from their archenemies. Land therefore becomes the

archetypal foundation of their identity, social instincts, spirituality and systematization. Judy Atkinson in her phenomenal ethnography of healing among Aboriginal Australians, *Trauma Trails*, records the import of place and location. For Aboriginal people "... Land holds the stories of human survival across the generations. Land shapes people, just as people shape their countries" (27). Connection to land is gained through distinct understanding of a region's natural history combined with intricate analysis of past personal and family experience via traditional stories and beliefs. They view the environment as a comprehensive landscape rather than as individual ecologies i.e. flora, fauna, water bodies, caves, mountains, rock formations become an integrated whole. In fact, no Aboriginal "questioned his ability to survive in the places, and by the methods, of his ancestors. He was at one with his environment, neither its slave nor its master" (Stanner 88). Hence, land becomes the prime requisite for all Aboriginal relationships, economies, identities and cultural practices to proceed smoothly and thereby act as a natural trope for human mindscapes in the long run. While the settlers regard the nation's landscape as patches of land to be explored and conquered, the natives find it in their consciousness. The poet scoffs at the imperialists' lopsided vision and sketches vividly the deep-seated relationship between the aborigines and the land. Undeterred by the loss of access to land through expropriation, Indigenous people retain their association with lands and water bodies through storytelling, ceremony and political activism. By underestimating peculiarity, place, bearings and chronology, colonizing frameworks perceive places as lifeless expanses best suited for the inscription of human projects. On the other hand, obligations towards the mother land are at the centre of aboriginal civil, ethical and religious life where even nonhuman life forms become fictive characters. Often at odds with the technology induced productivity culture offered by the settlers, indigenous people are nonchalant in their native environment and settings, yet again addressing the rift between Aboriginal cultural meaning, land use perception, and colonialist technology.

In the lines:

Please take me back my Mother the Land

The white man he'll never accept me

The milk that you part will soothe my heart

And your spirit of place will hold me. (13-16)

the poet requests the Mother (land) to take him back, to enfold him in a comforting hug as he proved rather incompetent in creating a space for himself amidst the white people. Colonization and racist slurs rip apart the indigenous society in multifarious ways. Colonizers regularly practiced segregation tactics to justify their oppression. Racism, simply put, is discrimination and intolerance towards others based on the innate belief that his/ her race is genetically superior to another. Racists presume that “race” decides human and social peculiarities such as intelligence, perception, innovation, skin colour, societal codes, etc. Hence Aboriginal people regularly face discrimination from varied quarters which further annihilate their remaining ounce of self respect. The speaker’s tone suggests an impeccable identification with the Aboriginal plight. Spirit of place, here refers to the peculiar and revered aspects of a place which perennially connects the cultural, physical and the interpersonal. Humanitarian values are denigrated and condemned as frailties by the whites who believed in slaying, conquering and enlarging their empires. They preferred adrenaline – raising endeavours and activities which enabled them to show their prowess and power to those who believed in simple living and cohabitation. Hence, the poet yearns to be one with the nature and escape from the haunting realities and trauma – inducing events once and for all. Even though the Aboriginal relationship with the land has undergone massive changes, the underlying belief that the land is sacred, loving and all- embracing still hold its place. The poet’s prayer is utterly powerful and poignant at the same time. Indigenous people are systematically cast aside until or unless they are ready to integrate into the mainstream corpus and lose their ethnic and cultural status. Moreover, inequality, violence, scorn, stigma, and irreverence in the public realm, especially, from the part of the host community threaten their very existence. The colonial masters devised deviant curricular models for the colonial subjects particularly through the education system. Colonization created a new language hierarchy wherein the language of the colonizer was transcribed as the most illustrious and appropriate one to spearhead the administrative and commercial set - up of each colony. This primarily interrupted the opportunities for the functional development of the Aboriginal languages and the colonizer’s language became a necessity for all those who wished to proceed socially and participate in the colony’s public domain. The colonial language was presented as a gift that could precipitate the sterile mind of the Aborigines to the present day enchantments and make them civilized, modern human beings. Moreover, they were portrayed as champions of culture, history, intelligence while the colonized were seen as lacking in these vital characteristics (Pennycook 47-66). Aboriginal languages were soon sidelined and exclusive sovereignty was ascribed to

the colonial languages mainly because of the absence of a writing system and a literary body. By endorsing English language “as the only lingua franca,” it intended to “reinforce the dominant ideology which presupposes that English is the most eligible language for virtually all significant purposes” (Phillipson 42). Many Eurocentric concepts were loudly avouched as crucial components of state ideology. This entailed “self- exaltation on the part of the dominant group which creates an idealistic image of itself, the devaluation of the dominated group, and the suppression and stagnation of its culture, institutions, life-styles and ideas...” (qtd in Phillipson 38).

On the contrary, oral traditions truly preserved the history of Aboriginal people by transmitting cultural information from one generation to the next through historical and cultural narratives, keen ecological awareness and maintenance, close bonding with the land, and passionate recitals. The poet utters in tones of tenderness and fervour, the Aboriginal tradition of sitting around campfires to narrate the day’s events. Such cultural exchanges enable them to safeguard not only their civilization, but also help them learn key survival tactics to sustain themselves in unfamiliar environments. The lines “...black faces smile broadly/ As they talk of the day, in the Aboriginal way/ And the power of the land, so Godly” throw more light on their aspirations and what gives them happiness at the end of the day. The poet in a few bold verbal strokes inverts the colonizer’s supremacist claims and exclaims:

You are my Mother, my Mother the Land
You provide me for thousands of years
But now your soul, like a rock waterhole
Is drenched, not from water, but tears. (25-28)

The nurturing qualities of the mother land and the importance of preservation and sustenance are reiterated yet again by the poet. Though she has been providing food, fuel, and other amenities for her reckless children without fail for ages, presently, she is terribly sad at the plight of her children – many massacred, others disrobed, looted, arrested, left to die and forced out of her abode without her permission. The poet effectively utilizes powerful similes to translate the motherland’s current state– her soul is compared to a “rock waterhole” submerged in “tears”. The use of apt words and figurative symbols add to the poetic quality and overall ambience of the poem. The numbing agony of the mother land is unabashedly interpreted by the poet in the next quatrain wherein she is forced to be a mere onlooker while

her children are persecuted and anglicized. The symbolic mother (land) undergoes the same pain, trauma and anxiety when she witnesses her children being driven away savagely. She remains alone, unattended and forsaken after being separated from her children who respected her willfully and sincerely. The lines: “The white system of life, it cuts like a knife/ And the old people are weary and worn” suggest the inefficacy of the latter in fully embracing the former’s lifestyle, language and principles. In the last quatrain, the poet speaks directly to the white man and tries to make him understand the consequences of his wayward actions. He divulges the ugly truth that his Mother is suffering solely because of the white man’s self-centredness, and today she is in desperate need of his compassion. The Earth has lost her equilibrium and balance, both much - needed for life’s sustenance. She is crying out in pain from the physical injuries caused by technological misuse, overexploitation of natural resources, environmental pollution (air, land, water), destruction of bio-rich areas, etc. Excessive commercialization and pecuniary greed have led to the exploitation of Mother Earth on a large scale. The need to cultivate greater veneration for all forms of life and endorse an ethical life style, based on conservation and preservation towards the natural world become more important than ever before. The poet through the poem has shown us exactly what happened years ago in Australia, when the English set foot on it.

The poem is a deconstruction of the white man’s mainstream history and the revival of the lost voice of the Aboriginals. It questions the elemental presumptions and philosophies of the white European civilization in an apparently subdued tone indubitably concealing the layered touches of irony judiciously crafted by the poet. The poet’s matured and objective take on historical events brings alive the repetitive cycles of racial victimization and genocide and give the brutal and transient facts a mythic force. The underlying storm which lingers throughout the poem intensifies towards the end. The poem is a fitting lament for a whole tribe of men, women and children whose voices never reached our ears. All these painful thoughts gnaw the poet’s heart and he ends the poem on a sorrowful note bringing out the intense agony of the soul. The voice clearly rings with pathos but it also urges the Whites to part with their petty racisms and join hands for an ideal state of mutual amity and comity.

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Protests of a New Kind: An Analysis of #me and Breastfeeding campaigning in Kerala

Nithya Mariam John

The #me too campaign was triggered off in October 2017 with Hollywood star Alyssa Milan protesting against sexual harassment in the hands of Director, Harvey Weinstein. She posted a screenshot that read “If you have been sexually harassed or assaulted write “me too” as a reply to this tweet”. She later credited this movement to Tarane Burke who initiated it ten years ago. The hash tag spread virally on online social media in a matter of days and across almost 85 countries including India. It helped women to voice themselves about the ways in which they were harassed especially in work spaces. The aim of the movement was largely to help the survivors in the process of healing, promote sex education in schools and colleges and reinforcing and implementing laws against harassment. The movement rapidly spread in our country since almost all women have been victims in one way or the other in the past-verbal, physical, mental or sexual. “Eve-teasing” is quite common in India and almost every woman has been either “bumped” into or groped about while travelling on public transport or walking down the streets. It has become quite *normal* that sometimes girls do not even recognize it as a kind of harassment. The hashtag was quickly linked to 2012 Delhi gang rape case and became popular in the wake of sexual assaults during New Year Celebrations, 2018.

In Kerala, the hash tag was well received. Quite contrary to the usual “prestige- silence” observed by Malayalee women even when brutally treated, many stepped out of their traditional upbringing to reveal that they were harassed. From film stars to college girls, women declared their visibility via the hashtag. Actors Parvathy and Rima Kallingal extended their support at the onset itself, and so did Director, Sreebala K Menon. Parvathy as reported by the *Newsminute* in “Actors Parvathy, Rima join Me Too” said, “Society has taught me that all this will happen to me; but it never taught me that I’m entitled to protect myself”. The recent statistics published by National Family and Health Survey revealed that women in Kerala, were victims of domestic

violence. Mathrubhumi reported on 16th January 2018 that “69% Kerala Housewives ‘approve of’ domestic violence”. Though many feminists in Kerala including J Devika protested online that the report in the newspaper was misleading since it just highlighted partial truth, it still remains a fact that many women in Kerala are violated right inside their own homes. Such atrocities seldom come to light.

The reason for perpetuation of violence at home can be ascribed to fear and also to the way in which girls are brought up in God’s own country. In “Women, Violence and Male Power”, Mary Maynard and Jay Winn says that fear of violence affects “what they can do, where they can go and with whom they can go” (178). The threat of violence always acts as a form of control over women in Kerala. They are silenced by their fathers, husbands and brothers. Often the exhibition of ‘manliness’ threatens the women of the household. In the national survey conducted, it was noted that a majority of Keralite women justified a thrashing from their husbands for one of the reasons like ‘not properly looking after family and children’, ‘disrespecting in laws’, ‘bad or careless cooking’, ‘refusal to have sex’, “leaving home without husband’s permission’, ‘doubtful of having an affair’ etc. This attitude reflects in their workplaces too. A boss is justified in many ways for his misbehaviour. In spite of having laws to protect women against sexual harassment in workplaces (Supreme Court judgement 1997, Vishakha vs State of Rajasthan), women suffer because of lack of awareness and courage. The women keep silence and bow their heads to religious and traditional dogmas in which silent and bearing women are glorified. A girl in Kerala is asked to be obedient to her father and elder brothers, and later in life to her husband. She is asked to shut up when she raises her voice or complains. She has to get back home by 6 or 6.30pm. She is seldom allowed to roam around the city freely. If she violates any rule she will be punished. Since this is almost natural in traditional homes of Kerala nobody even feels something is amiss. And then the statistical evidence need not really raise our eyebrows. This exactly shows why only 12% Kerala women travel alone, while in the neighbouring state Tamil Nadu it is 54% and Karnataka 31% according to the national survey reports. Almost 15% of women in Kerala said that they had experienced physical assault in one or the other after turning 15 years.

The #me too campaign happened just a few months before the statistics was published by International Institute for Popular Sciences. If these many women have come out and testified on a social media platform that they have been harassed in the past, then there is hope. Changes can happen only when the victim rises to the level of a survivor. In the process of healing, visibility is necessary. In “Scars, seen and unseen”, Mini P. Thomas quotes Shinie

Antony, a writer, “It was always there in the subterranean realm, now the whispers have risen above the basement” (20). And another positive side according to Malavika Iyer, a bomb blast survivor is that it had helped many people know that they were not alone (20). The collective strength of the movement is laudable. The mental or physical abuse gaining visibility on an online platform underlines the visibility of women’s bodies. In Kerala, women are asked to hide behind their clothes. And so do their scars. Nivedita Menon in her *Seeing like a Feminist* quotes the example of a Kerala born and brought up, former Chief Justice of Karnataka and Supreme Court who piped that immodest dressing was the cause of increasing crimes against women (113). Menon quotes him, “Nowadays women wear such kind of dresses even in temples and churches that when we go to places of worship, instead of meditating on God, we end up meditating on the person before us” (114). In just a sweeping sentence he had asked women to cover themselves and hide their wounds. But with #me too the mutilated, violated and assaulted bodies have been brought to public view. The effect is to be noted. The silence breakers surprised many men that those who they saw everyday at their workplaces, in their neighbourhood or at home were violated by someone in the past. Many men too put up the tag revealing that they were not spared either as young boys. Many men in Kerala joined the campaign. There was even a #forgive me by men who had violated women asking for forgiveness. The campaign became a reason for discussions on gender disparity in schools and colleges. It was an eye opener for women too. They knew that they were not alone in their suffering and liberation. As Divya Diwakaran, an activist and teacher says in Abha Raveendran’s report in *The Hindu*, “Girls who encounter sexual offences do not reveal it most of time. But when you see another person speaking out, it gives you the energy to open up too”.

There were many discouraging, sexist comments too. There was also criticism that Dalit women, uneducated girls and prostitutes were sidelined from the movement. But that does not necessarily mean that the campaign should not have happened. This is one of the ways in which the patriarchal land of Kerala awakened to the harsh reality around them. As Winn and Maynard opine, activities which involve feminist responses to abuse “signal that those who have been beaten, raped and sexually assaulted can develop strategies to enable them to cope with their ordeals and devise techniques of resistance” (179). In one sentence the hash tag provokes the conscience of those who blame the victim. After all, the victim has risen to the level of the survivor. #me too cries out to the world STOP BLAMING THE VICTIM.

The March issue of *Grihalekshmi* magazine came out with the cover page of actor Gilu Joseph feeding a baby. The headline read “Keralathodu Ammamar:Thurichu Nokkaruthu.

Njangalkku Mulayootenam” (Mothers ask Kerala not to stare. We have to breastfeed). The magazine also included interviews with mothers about their experiences of feeding babies in public. Hune Hannam in “Women, History and Protest” says that the methodology to counter patriarchy always includes experiences of ordinary people and hence oral history (81). The magazine including oral narratives on breastfeeding experiences clearly voice its political and social positions. It was reported in BBC News on 1 March 2018 that it was the first time that an Indian magazine has published a cover image of a woman breastfeeding. Paul Zachariah, a noted Malayalam writer hoped that “this revolution in breastfeeding in public” doesn’t end up as usual with an apology note from the editors. Thankfully it has not, till now.

The editors said that the campaign was triggered off by the experiences of Amritha whose photos of feeding her baby in public was posted by her husband on facebook. It received severe criticism from all sides. Amritha later recounted how even in the hospital she was ridiculed for breastfeeding openly. Gilu Joseph, the model, was attacked vehemently on social media platforms. The actor later came out saying that she did it because she believed it to be a noble cause and she had the rights over her body as mentioned in Shewali Tiwari’s article “Magazine’s Cover Shows Woman Breastfeeding”. The magazine was appreciated by UNICEF INDIA for supporting breastfeeding every child the first six months, and it was also welcomed on a national level by progressive thinkers. The cover intended to question the Malayali conscience which always had problems with feeding in public. From the time a baby is born, it is a mother’s duty to find a corner to feed the baby. We lack feeding rooms in bus stands and railway stations. Though everyone would support that a crying child must be given milk on the spot, how many would find a comfortable space for the same? Feeding in a cramped room or adjacent waiting rooms to toilets have been options, but quite uncomfortable. It is quite difficult in our state to unhook a blouse and breastfeed baby without avoiding the menacing stare of eyes on the opposite berth in a train. This does not mean every Malayali men; still you cannot choose who sits opposite to you. It is a common fact that we live in a patriarchal land where many eyes pry deep in, to measure the breadth and width of what lies beneath. There are also men who proudly declare to each other the measurements which they found out in such pastimes. But when Gilu Joseph *chose* to expose her breast in public, she was demeaned to the status of a slut. Why? In *When I Hit You* Meena Kandasamy says, “Slut is not only a woman who wants sex, as in English. In this part of India, it is the dirty woman, but also the disrespectful one, the fight-loving woman, the quarrel-monger” (172). The moment a woman steps outside the *normative* she becomes disrespectful, slut. There stands the often quoted,

proud Nangeli, blood all over, who chopped off her breasts and presented to the tax collector who came seeking fee for covering her breasts. Bloody breasts can unnerve you with its revolutionary spirit, sexy breasts always intoxicate you, then how about a breast which feeds a starving baby in public?

There were a few criticisms. First, the model is an unmarried woman who has not yet experienced the ‘pleasures’ of motherhood. Second, she is feeding a sleeping baby who has rights of its own. Third, it was sheer marketing technique of *Grihalekshmi* and nothing else. The first criticism exposes the traditional Malayali attitude to unmarried, single women who try to raise a baby on their own. In spite of leading feminists arguing for empowerment and women’s liberation in Kerala, why are we still behind when it comes to recognising women who are unmarried or divorced and raising children by themselves? The very concept of the ‘pleasures’ of motherhood is linked with the patriarchal ties of a normal, married, heterosexual relationship. Gilu holds the baby very close to her lovingly and does not manhandle the child in any way. In which way is the baby’s rights violated? Every woman who wishes to be a mother holds such tender sentiments even before giving birth to a child. It is not just the hormones that work it out. And she looks directly into the camera, the prying eyes of Kerala, challenging the abusive glances.

Marketing has two sides- to uphold virtue or promote vice by commodifying the worst. Which magazine does not market, and if for a noble cause, why not? In Nov 2016, the U N Human Rights Commission issued a joint statement on protection, promotion and support of breast feeding. They said that artificial milk powder and “promotion of breast milk substitutes that compete with breastfeeding” undermine the efforts world wide to promote breastfeeding if possible till three years of a baby. Baby food companies continue to give discount on their products through commercial sites, although they have been prohibited to do so. Proper health care and nourishment is often avoided with such products. Aren’t we drastically violating the rights of a child in such cases of negligence of breastfeeding? *Grihalekshmi* campaigning opens our eyes to the necessity of feeding babies in public and private so that they get ample nourishment for their future.

#me too and *Grihalekshmi*’s breastfeeding campaigning address two important threads in the lives of women- the need to break silences and the need to claim rights over bodies. Both are connected and essential for total liberation of women. Both urge women to step out into the public sphere. Visibility is the first step to counter any tyranny. And reclaiming the

spaces follows. Protests of these kinds are very much indispensable in our social and political conditions. There should always be a re-narration of history, and in 21st century, it includes social media history, especially online history. Let us hope that our country awakes to ‘a haven of freedom’ where every head is held high, irrespective of body-identities.

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Richard III : Disability in Shakespearean Body

J.S. Jahangir

In August 2012, a team of archeologists from the University of Leicester, uncovered a crude grave hidden in an unassuming plot. The site, long ago in the medieval times was Grey Friars friary. It is now served as a parking lot for Leicester City Council Social Services and, to much excitement; the long lost burial place belongs to England's one of the most controversial Monarchs: King Richard III. By February 2013, scientist had identified with supposed identity via technologically advanced mitochondrial DNA testing that the buried remains were of Richard III (Burnes). Since after the identification of Richard III's body, historians, literary scholars, fans and detractors alike have challenged the accuracy of this discovery and its impact on knowledge that has surrounded a King traditionally deemed a cruel ruler, "determined to prove a villain/and hate the idle pleasures of these days"(Shakespeare 1). Four years later, on 25 March 2016, Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev Justin Welby, presided over the service of the reburial of Richard III and Actor Benedict Cumberbatch, a distant relation of the king, read a poem by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy.

It is quite interesting that long after his death and during the recent time of his resurrection, Richard III's body takes the centre stage. Renaissance writers and historians from Thomas More to Edward Hall and Holinshed to Shakespeare were obsessed over Richard's physical shape. To the credit of latest Ricardian news, there is a detailed and painstaking description of Richards's skeletal remains that elaborates his habitus. I sketch some records:

The skeleton is in good condition apart from the feet, which are missing as a result of later disturbance...He had severe idiopathic adolescent scoliosis...Unaffected by scoliosis, he would have stood around 5ft8in (1.73m) tall, above average height of a medieval man, though his apparent height may be decreased as he grew older and his disability may have lifted his right shoulder higher than his left. (Buckley et al 536)

Marjorie Garber claims that Richard's deformity is "transmitted not genetically but generically through historiography and dramaturgy" (69). He further comments that Shakespeare "was himself shaping the facts of Richard's physiognomy and character for political purposes or he was taken in by Tudor revisionist desire to inscribe a Richard 'shap'd' and 'stamp'd' for villainy"(64).

In William Shakespeare's play *Richard III*, the body of the king has always been at stake. The play, which features a protagonist with a famously distinctive body, charts Richard's rise to power and his brief tenure as king. Throughout the play, characters discuss and describe Richard's body in a number of ways: Richard describes himself as "cheated of feature"(7), "deformed, unfinished;(7)" Anne and Elizabeth deride him as "thou lump of foul deformity(19)", "thou dreadful minister of hell(19)", "hedgehog(21)", "bottled spider(45)", and "poisonous bunch-backed toad(45)", terms which all link insult to anomalous and inhuman body.

The distinguishing feature of Richard is his self-consciousness of his own status as disabled, and this contribution of self-consciousness adds numerous key tenets. First and very firm, Richard establishes that people with disability will become self-conscious naturally. Second, Richard emblemizes the capacity to question and to manipulate the misleading representation of disability by which the disabled people are put at violence and social exclusion. He exposes the falsehood and superstitions by which religion, moral and social institution represent disabled people as inferior to the non-disabled persons. Shakespeare's likely motivation for portraying Richard as a "demonic cripple" was to support and perpetuate the negative view of Richard and the Plantagenet line which was held by then current monarch, Queen Elizabeth I. The first historical descriptions characterizing Richard in such a manner may be attributed to Elizabethan devotee Sir Thomas More in 1513.

I would like to argue that in both the English Renaissance and now, it has been of utmost importance that Richard's disability be representational, not literal, in order to, as Stephen Greenblatt suggests, "heighten dramatic effect and to intensify the political, psychological, and metaphysical dimensions of Shakespeare's villainous anti hero"(508). The discovery of Richard's spinal deformity has encouraged reading his impairment. As Robert McRuer explains, "Richard III is one of the two most despised characters in literature. The distaste for Richard in disability studies is not particularly difficult to comprehend, given the ways in which the monstrous body logically explains his logical deeds. His deformity is in other words, is causally connected to his evil machinations" (McRuer 295).

Richard III is the original site of stigma in English literature, beginning with the Tudor chroniclers who decried his villainy alongside his deformity. Richard was also Shakespeare's first study of stigma, and his most meticulous, stretched across three plays. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare outdid himself by deepening his study of stigma, Richard becoming a perverse narcissist who takes pleasure in the image of his own deformity who tries to transform the very meaning of that deformity. In this play, it delights Richard to descant upon his deformity as he dissembles its meaning. Usually, he does so by shifting attention from his body to his face and clothes.

David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder read Richard as a character who is given a "misshapen" form by nature, and they accord him agency through manipulation of the meanings of his form. Although they reject critical conceptions that read deformity as malignant motivation or moral failing, they nonetheless take Richard's physical anomalies as the site of disability in the play: "Richard's character fashions disability, then, as a full-blown narrative device that accrues force for his own machinations. He sets to work performing deformity" (103).¹ While Mitchell and Snyder describe Richard's deformity as disability, they also differentiate the kind of early modern disability Richard displays from contemporary discourses of disability. Positioning the play at the "threshold" of scientific attention to disabled bodies in the eighteenth century, they describe the play as "a Renaissance version of late medieval attitudes toward deformity" (102). Their focus attempts both to preserve "disability" as an identity category that occurs later than the early modern period and to provide a trans-historical account of its emergence as identity. However, the oscillation of "disability" (Richard's deformity is disability, yet his character is not quite "disabled" in the contemporary sense) remains unclear about the contours of Renaissance disability and the variety of representations of distinctive bodies in the period.

In disability theory, Richard's character is often taken up as Shakespeare's clearest foregrounding and interpreting of physical difference. Here, I want to examine Richard's place in the accounts of disability studies to explore how his characterization in the play can expand current notions of "disability" in the Renaissance. Attention to the play in disability studies has made two key critical moves: critics conflate "disability" with the language of "deformity," which Richard himself deploys in the play to describe his distinctive body, and thus fail to distinguish between the plethora of characterizations of his body. At the same time, critics read Richard's relation to his body through the lens of a pre-modern notion of disability that construes bodily deformity as the visible sign of moral evil. Resulting readings

of Richard thus highlight his place in a trans-historical narrative of disability yet limit their claims about disability in the early modern period. This critical tendency results in “disability” signifying bodily impairment and not a more complex relationship between Richard’s body and his audience within and outside the play.

Shakespeare also employs Richard’s physical condition to explore the idea of isolation. Richard’s physical condition as compared with other characters is visually distinctive offering a clear demarcation of normality and abnormality. Socially too, Richard is clearly isolated as he offers in his first soliloquy, confiding that “But I, am not shaped for sportive tricks/Nor made to court an amorous looking glass....And that so lamely and unfashionable/That dogs bark at me as I halt by them” (Richard III 1.1.15-16 and 23-24). This separation from society is described by Richard as having forced upon him by his physical condition, and implies that it is a consequence over which he has no control. He adds that even animals are alarmed as he passes emphasizing the monstrous nature of his appearance as markedly inhuman. This is also important because it implies that he is unable to form solidarity or companionship with any creature – human or otherwise. This theme is reemphasized in the wooing scene between Richard and Anne when she declares “Villain, thou knowst’ not law of God nor man./No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.” Several times in the play Richard is described in animalistic terms, as a hedgehog, and a toad. But the assertion that Richard is not even on the level of an animal, but rather is spurned even by animals, and does not even have the endearing qualities of an animal demonstrates how completely ostracized Richard has become. The sense of separation or not belonging is palpable “for Shakespeare’s characters with disabilities or deformities...they were separated with an added dimension from other characters not lacking disabilities.”

This social isolation to which he has been relegated by fate defines our reading of Richard and his motivations. His lack of personal relations and interconnectedness is an important feature of his identity. Shakespeare frequently explored issues of identity and humanity in his plays like *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, in which characters like Lear and Prospero withdrew socially, only to be redeemed by their relations with others. He does not offer that remedy for the character of Richard. Richard is keenly aware of his separation from others, and this is especially clear in Act 5, Scene 3 when he is visited by the Ghost of his wife Anne. He bemoans this lack of fellowship and communion crying out “I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;/And if I die, no soul will pity me” (5.3.201-202). He states simply that there is no

one to whom he feels allegiance or love for but himself, stating, “Richard loves Richard; that is, I and I” (5.3.184).

Richard’s employment of his deformed body to distract from political maneuvers and project imaginary social behavior culminates in the bid for power he puts forth before his aristocratic rivals. To dispatch Hastings and secure the support of the nobles, Richard again draws attention to his body, telling his audience what to see and, crucially, what the sight should mean: “Then be your eyes the witness of their evil / Look how I am bewitched! Behold mine arm / Is like a blasted sapling withered up” (3.4.67-69). Using his arm as proof, Richard marshals the visible resources of his body for his pursuit of power. Thus, even as Richard manipulates the meanings of deformity that spins around him, we must not lose sight of the complex relation between his distinctive body and power.

Perhaps one of the most stimulating mechanisms of the nature of Richard is the paradoxical arrangement of self determination and predetermination. Shakespeare produces a fictionalized account of a historical episode, which entails a predefined conclusion, one that must take into account the penchants of the current power structure (Queen Elizabeth I). Shakespeare also recognized the need to provide an ending in which misdeeds were punished and injustices rectified. He also needed to create a character and resolution for that character which was supported by cultural beliefs. However Shakespeare’s creation of Richard III challenged the notions of control over one’s fate. He created Richard as a disabled figure who refused to have his actions or identity defined solely by his physicality. A character, who though disabled demonstrated remarkable strength and ability both in the political arena, and also on the battlefield, stirs emotions audiences which are unsettling.

Disability studies is ready to seize upon Richard as a central figure in Renaissance notions of distinguishing bodies since Richard’s importance is on his deformed body and the multiple bodies that he shifts in the due course of the play. Richard’s character in the path of disabled identity offers to Shakespeare studies a wealthy prospect for novel understanding of *Richard III* as a play about the power of the deformed body. The play has the potential to open up new possibilities for thinking disability in the Renaissance.

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Beyond the Flood: An Ecofeminist Critique of Animal Agency in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy*

JiluAni John

Since the human beings are gradually assuming the capacity for annihilation of entire life on earth, it is imperative that we question and reconstruct the discursive hierarchical constructs that maintains the majority of earth's inhabitants in thrall to the privileged minority. Ecofeminists are keen about articulating this challenge. They hold that sexism, racism, classism, speciesism and naturism are mutually reinforcing forms of oppression. One task of the ecofeminists was to expose the western intellectual tradition that has resulted in devaluing everything associated with women, emotion, animals, nature and body and the consequent elevation of men, reason, humans, culture and mind.

Ecofeminists hold that any plan for a sustainable future will necessarily involve a radical reworking of how humans co-exist with other species, including the ones they engineer. Interspecies relationships are complex and changing rapidly: laboratory animals are used as human stand-ins, factory farms go for exponential growth every year. An attempt at negotiating this situation raises a series of questions concerning speciesism. Should/can the species that exist now always exist? Can a species be conserved without conserving the entire ecosystem? Why revere some animals but ignore, eat, or abuse others? and the ultimate question-why do people rely upon animals to define what is human? Questions like these form the core of Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, comprising *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). Published over the span of ten years, the *MaddAddam* Trilogy comprises the single male account of a post-apocalyptic world of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the parallel female perspectives of *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and the concluding *MaddAddam* (2013), where the two storylines merge and the palimpsestic male and female human narrative voices are supplemented with a posthuman's 'postscript.' All three novels voice a distinct critical engagement with ecology/environmentalism, global warming,

biotechnology/genetics, interspeciesism and, in short, humanity's legitimising claim of superiority over everything non-human stemming from an ingrained binary logic. In these stories, set in the near-future United States, a human-engineered global pandemic wipes out most of the human race. Readers experience both the pre-pandemic world of unchecked corporate greed and extreme economic disparity, and the post-pandemic world in which a handful of human survivors attempt to build a community with and among the other survivors: genetically engineered animals and a newly-created human-like species.

In *Oryx and Crake* nature, all living creatures, and ultimately the human race itself, fall victim to the unscrupulous manipulators of the biological sciences. The scientific focus in the Trilogy rests mainly on genetic engineering. Populated as it is with strange lab-created creatures, the trilogy can appear on the surface as a warning against the dangers of runaway biotechnology. One of the first striking images in the novel is of the animals destroyed on a bonfire, looking at the young Jimmy "reproachfully out of their burning eyes" (13). At OrganInc, pigs called pigoons are used as vessels in which to grow human organs suitable for transplantation, swelling them up like balloons. These uncanny frightful animals, it is implied, with understated horror, end up 'on the staff café menu' (OC:27), which Jimmy the protagonist feels embarrassed to consume. "Jimmy didn't want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself" (OC: 24).

The horrifying images soon give way to the startling corruption of the food chain occurring within current farming practices. The Watson-Crick institute is not conducive to animal liberation and they manipulate animals in ways as terrifying. Whilst Jimmy casually watches 'Felicia's Frog Squash' and other 'animal snuff sites' on the internet, reflecting that 'one stomped frog, one cat being torn apart by hand, was much like another', his father's colleagues play at 'create-an-animal' in their laboratories (OC:93-94). In a number of reckless experiments, toads are genetically spliced with chameleons, snakes are blended with rats, raccoons mixed with skunks and chickens are horrifyingly manipulated genetically until they bear closer resemblance to octopi, growing 'bulbs' of meat and lacking eyes and a beak as apparently they don't need those.. Jimmy meets a woman who has created "a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing" (OC: 202). This "thing" is a chicken, alive but reduced to its parts, where its "parts" are constituted entirely as food. The creature described above produces only breasts; another produces "drumsticks too, twelve to a growth unit." Jimmy is shocked less by the multiplicity of the chicken parts than

by a crucial absence: “there aren’t any heads.” The creature, called a ChickieNob, has no face. Its head has been reduced to a point in the centre with “a mouth opening at the top, they dump the nutrients in there. No eyes or beak or anything, they don’t need those” (OC: 202). The female scientist explains that the creature is modelled on a sea anemone, which must surely be an equally legitimate mode of organic existence to chicken-hood.

The progress supposedly assured by science is turned on its head with the overlooking of the human lot and disruption of the balance of the ecosystem by many of the hybrid animals that are let loose. The green rabbits breed with the wild population and become a nuisance (OC: 110), the ‘wolvogs’ have no trouble reversing its nature, killing and eating all the domesticated dogs (OC: 125), the ‘bobkittens’ which are created to cull the green rabbits instead end up attacking dogs, babies, and joggers (OC: 192-93), and by the end of the novel the ‘pigoons’, some of which may have been implanted with human neocortical tissue, ominously roam free in a world from which the human race has almost obliterated itself.

The bodies of animals are, in *Oryx and Crake*, the more explicit sites of scientific exploitation. Jimmy/Snowman’s earliest memory is of thousands of animals killed by a “hostile bioform” being burned in a quasi-scientific ritual of purification. Jimmy is five and a half years old and still coming to terms with the idea that meat is animals, that animals are food. He makes the transition of awareness from “food” to “meat” to “animal parts” individually. Jimmy is “anxious about the animals, because they were being burned and surely that would hurt them” (OC: 17). His father, attempting to reassure him, tells Jimmy that “the animals were dead. They were like steaks and sausages, only they still had their skins on” (OC: 18). Jimmy is on some level aware that steaks and sausages come from animals, but the immediacy of animals’ individuality and suffering nonetheless takes him aback. His father’s remark that the animals simply “still had their skins on” causes Jimmy to add: “And their heads . . . Steaks didn’t have heads. The heads made a difference: he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out of their burning eyes. In some way all of this – the bonfire, the charred smell, but most of all the lit-up, suffering animals – was his fault, because he’d done nothing to rescue them” (OC: 18).

The value of species in the pre-pandemic world is assigned based on how useful they are to humans, or how tasty. These value rankings and the categories created for animals—“pets,” “friends,” “pests,” “meat”—are highly correlated with economics. The well-to-do in *MaddAddam*’s gated Compound communities can afford to keep their pets’ heads frozen,

alongside their own, incryogenics compounds (YF 295). But out in the pleeblands, abandoned pet stores symbolize the increasing economic disparity. Passing by one, a character notes that there is “not much call for pet pampering” in the pleeblands, “because if you did have a cat there it was likely to end up in someone else’s deep fryer” (YF 184). When society crumbles, animals and the marginalized people are the first to be seen as expendable.

The commodification of animals assume different dimensions in the Trilogy. Nature and wild animals have all but disappeared in *MaddAddam*’s world, but animal symbols have not. From the benign to the insidious, over and over again the objects of capitalism are marked with representations of animals. Atwood populates her world with giraffe wallpaper lighters shaped like frogs, clocks with bird calls, kangaroo pajamas, whale-patterned underwear (OC 50), comforters with cats playing fiddles and laughing puppies and curtains with cartoon fish. None of these representations are about the actual animal, of course, but about the anthropomorphized caricatures, using animal images to reflect the human.

This commodification gradually emerges as violent objectification of animals.

There are websites “where you [can] shoot exotic animals online without leaving your office chair” (MA: 194). A store called Slink trades in the skins of endangered species: “they killed the animals on the premises because the customers didn’t want goat dressed up as oryx or dyed wolf instead of wolverine. They wanted their bragging rights to be genuine” (YF: 31). For entertainment, in between watching child pornography and live executions, high schoolers Jimmy and Crake sometimes watch “animal snuff sites” like “Felicia’s Frog Squash,” although they get bored with them quickly because “one stomped frog, one cat being torn apart by hand, was much like another” (OC 82). Another site features contestants eating live animals, competing for “prizes of hard-to-come-by foods.”

The animal gaze whereby animals assert their subjectivity and agency is a strong referent in *Madd Addam*, the third installment of the trilogy which lies in sharp contrast with *Oryx and Crake* where animals are reduced to mere objects. Central to all of the theories of gaze is the construction of power, the argument that the one who gazes is the subject, defining the worldview, and the one who is gazed upon is the object. That is why when the object returns the gaze, it is so powerful and destabilizing. It imputes agency. In *MaddAddam* Toby visits Pilar’s burial place necessitated by the fact that three of the female God’s Gardeners and MaddAddams fall pregnant and the male Crakers are the most likely fathers. It is in such a state that Toby experiences the gaze of the sow whose mate she has killed. When, standing at

Pilar's elderberry bush, Toby asks Pilar questions but receives no answers, she turns her head and sees a huge pigoon sow with five farrow. Zeb is ready to shoot the sow but Toby asks him not to:

The sow stops, turns sideways: a perfect target. She looks at Toby out of her eye. The five little ones gather in her shadow, under the nipples, which are all in a row too, like vest buttons. Her mouth upturns in a smile, but that's only the way it's made. Glint of light on a tooth. The sow does not move. Her head remains up, her ears pricked forward. Huge ears, calla lilies. She gives no sign of charging. The piglets freeze in place, their eyes red-purple berries. Elderberry eyes. The next moment, the sow and her young have vanished. Blackbeard turns to smile at Toby. "She was here," he says. What does he mean?

"Crap," says Shackleton. "There go the spare ribs."

So, thinks Toby. Go home, take a shower, sober up. You've had your vision. (*MA*: 223)

Toby has been subjected to the destabilising experience of the gaze of an individual animal and is no longer able to eat the flesh of a pigoon. Indeed, she goes on, as mediator, with the help of Blackbeard, who can communicate with the pigoons, to negotiate a treaty between the surviving humans and the pigoons, although it is the pigoons who initiate this pact, thus demonstrating animal agency (*MA*: 270). The terms of the treaty are that the pigoons refrain from eating humans and raiding the humans' vegetable garden and bee hives on condition that the humans do not kill the pigoons for meat (*MA*: 270, 370, 378). They also agree to join together to fight the remaining painballers and an unknown third man.

In spite of being a tragic story of the human and non-human world the *MaddAddam Trilogy* can also be read as a story of recovery and renewal for the ecosystem as a whole. A glimpse into a post-capitalist world, even if it is created by catastrophe, can open up new ways of thinking about the same old problems even while in the throes of capitalism. The cornerstone of the Gardeners' theology that the concept of nature-human interconnectedness and the realization that all living things, and not just humans, are essential to the created world thus forms the pivotal point of the Trilogy's narration.

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Historicising Rohinton Mistry and Textualising Indian History

Maria George

The late 1970s and early 1980s caught a clarion call for a varied intellectual orientation with new interests in literature and history. It reached the public under the denomination of 'New Historicism'. New historicist approach, advocated by the American critics, tended to make a parallel reading of literature and history without privileging either one of them. Texts need to be contextualised as they are neither stable entities nor sole products of a creative genius whom we call the author. Texts, including their writers, are formed by the contexts that they have been a part of. In turn they make ripples in the very contexts that have created them. It is no one way process. Consequently context, which we usually name by the term of history, needs to be textualised. Textualising history would result in the production of histories. And the common current underlying both a text and context get exposed as nothing other than the play of power.

A study of new historicist practices reveals that the American literary theorists, Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose, focused on the productions of Renaissance. They got immersed in the engagements of Shakespearean productions with the conduct of the time. Elizabethan plays were read in parallel with the culture and context of the time to expose the patterns of power. New historicists worked to trace the colonial policies of the English, indirectly interwoven in the Renaissance writings. Later critics like Catharine Gallagher, Jonathan Arac, Hayden White, Alan Liu, Jon Klancher, Stephen Bann, and others made extensive efforts to practise new historicism. Texts from varied contexts and from different disciplines can all be brought under the frame of new historicism. But the frame had a special nature of being quite frameless. And this is the alluring part of a new historicist approach. As Catharine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt explains in the introductory part of their book *Practicing New Historicism* "new historicism becomes a history of possibilities" (16).

Over the ages new historicist approach has widely been applied in the post colonial Indian context. Texts of Salman Rushdie, Manohar Malgonker, Sashi Tharoor etc. are read on

a new historicist plane. Apart from these writers many others also open up vast opportunities from a new historicist perspective. This is how our respective author, Rohinton Mistry, and his texts come to the limelight.

The renowned new historicist, Louis Montrose, comments in “The Poetics and Politics of Culture”, “By *the historicity of texts*, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing” (20). Texts cannot be isolated from their contexts and no writer is in a state of *tabula rasa* and thus the historicity of the text becomes a matter of great concern. Contextualising Rohinton Mistry demands attention to the mixed identities and historical turbulence that the writer is related with.

Rohinton Mistry is an Indian born Canadian writer with a deep sense of Parsi identity. His identity is formed on mixed grounds of being an Indian, being a Canadian and also being a member of a minority community in India. He was born in Bombay in 1952 and in 1975 he immigrated to Canada. Being a Canadian does not prevent Mistry from coming back to the homeland memories. Three of his novels include *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1996) and *Family Matters* (2002). *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) is his short story collection and *The Scream* (2006) is his novella. Rohinton Mistry’s novels have historical events forming the narrative context. *Such a Long Journey* is set at the time of Bangladesh challenge, *Family Matters* is set in post 1992, the year of Babri Masjid crisis in India and *A Fine Balance* is set in the Emergency of 1975 to 1977 in India.

A Fine Balance, with the Emergency as its context, is a documentation of human endurance in a bitter and brutal period of time. Caste related questions come to the focus as a major plot in the novel. The two *chamaars*, Om and Ishvar Darji, expecting an escape from the casteists of the village, come to the city. The widow, Dina Dalal, takes them as tailors and gradually a family feeling is build up. But situations turn for the worse with the emergency and common men lose their dwellings. Government runs family planning missions widely and wildly. Om and Ishwar are caught and sterilized brutally crushing every one of their dreams to the ground. Consequently they become beggars in the street, the ones who had come to the town with loads of dreams.

Rohinton Mistry tries to construct and reconstruct a past that he has witnessed. For him the context turns out to be one unparalleled in Indian history. He writes of an India that he has experienced and has read about. In an interview with Veena Gokhale Mistry admits: “My novels are not ‘researched’ in the formal sense of the word. Newspapers, magazines, chats

with visitors from India, chats with people on my infrequent visits to India-these are the things I rely on” (The *Times*, 1996. 3). Mistry seems to question societal injustices by taking the contextual base of his time. Parsi creativity and religious inclination to act had played largely into the making of his thinking and writing. This is an attempt to ‘right’ history. In *Parsiana*, the International Zoroastrian Community Magazine based in Bombay, Rohinton Mistry is cited as one who takes “writing as an act of faith, and not a competitive sport”(21 June 2015). The religion of Parsis, Zoroastrianism, demands the pious followers to establish good in society and contest the evil in the name of their God Ahura Mazda. This religious base in the consciousness of the writer makes him create texts and characters of such orientation. Though her name is not mentioned in *A Fine Balance* there is conspicuous evidence of the author’s dissatisfaction with and revolt against Indira Gandhi especially regarding family planning and forced conduction of vasectomy. The author laments in the voice of one of his characters, Valmik: “What are we to say, madam, what are we to think about the state of this nation? When the highest court in the land turns the Prime Minister’s guilt into innocence, then all this” (651).

Mistry’s Parsi identity also weaves a tight thread regarding displaced existence. Parsis were a group who migrated to India from Iran between the eighth and tenth centuries of CE unable to suffer the cruelties of the Muslim Arab invaders. The pain of displacement runs deep in the blood of each Parsi and no different is Mistry. There is no wonder the pain gets reflected when Mistry presents his characters. “Our village is far from here,” said Omprakash. “Takes a whole day by train- morning till night-to reach it.” “And reach it, we will,” said Ishvar. “Nothing is as fine as one’s native place”. (7) But home is no more home for the chamaar caste and neither is any other place. Turning the pages we can see that nothing is as difficult as one’s native place. The village from where the Chammar came is an area of caste discrimination. Mistry says, “the ethos of the caste system was smeared everywhere” (*A Fine Balance* 106). Chamaars are addressed as “Chamaar donkeys”. Even the birth of a male child in a Chamaar family is taken to be quite offensive and profane by the upper caste. They say: “Why two sons in an untouchable’s house, and not even one in ours?” What could a Chamaar pass on to his sons that the gods should reward him thus? Something was wrong, the Law of Manu had been subverted”. (*A Fine Balance* 111) The plight can easily be connected with a Parsi consciousness. Every Parsi can understand the pain of ‘placelessness’ in one’s own place and a total displacement in another’s place. Mistry also tries to portray religion based questions in India especially with regard to the partition and the challenge of Bangladesh.

History documents that the whole of Pakistan was formed on the demand of a land of religious unity. The very term, Pakistan, is a Persian derivation wherein *pak* means pure and *stan*, country or land. But on its formation a homogenous religious identity failed to work and we see the conflict between East Pakistan and West Pakistan and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh. Though East and West regions had a religious homogeneity, for which they initially demanded freedom, the same ideology abandoned them sooner or later. There is an indirect questioning of this in Mistry's selection of the respective contexts. Mistry, a member of a religious minority, also portrays the emptiness of religious fanaticism. In *A Fine Balance* the author grooms up a family feeling between the Chamaars and a Parsi widow irrespective of religious differences. There was a time when the Parsis, in their land, had to bow down to Muslims for having a different religious orientation. Mistry, a man of such lineage could easily associate the pain in the Hindu-Muslim conflict that grappled (is grappling) India for centuries. This particular consciousness had worked in his selection of the context of East-West Pak conflict in *Such a Long Journey*.

Such a Long Journey also reflects the pain that the writer's community once had to endure. Mistry fictionalises the historical Nagarwala case in the novel trying to reconstruct a (his) story that would suit his community. Nagarwala, the Parsi secretary to Indira Gandhi, was accused of amassing a huge amount, was caught and died in custody. In Mistry's novel, the Nagarwala substitute, Jimmy Bilimoria is portrayed as a scapegoat. In Bilimoria's words: "it is beyond the common man's imagination, the things being done by those in power" (280). The character voices author's concern over a matter that has once painted his community black.

While the historicity of the fiction of Mistry is revealed, it is also on the affirmative that the fiction has participated in making the history of its time. As theory contends "literature does not simply reflect relations of power, but actively participates in the consolidation and construction of discourses and ideologies. Literature is not simply a product of history. It actively participates in the making of history" (Bertens 177). Mistry, being a Parsi writer, has been engaged in an expository effort to project the process of subjugation in society. But on publication of Mistry's texts they themselves have fallen victims of the very process of subjugation. This is well recorded in the wide ranged protests on Mistry's texts.

There have been upheavals on the publication of Mistry's novels. It is documented that the Rashtriya Shiva Sena group demanded the Mumbai University to withdraw Mistry's novel,

Such a Long Journey, from the B.A. syllabus condemning it for anti Shiv Sena comments. And quite literally the university had made the book disappear the very next day. The play of power politics had worked into the denial of the book by the powerful. This had in turn stabilised the process of injustice that the book had always been contesting against. In Mistry's own words this was an "appeal to the worst in human nature". Just when the writing and the writer tries to reveal the injustice at work, the same injustice waits at the reception dusk. Thus texts write a history that has always already been engaged in writing the text.

In new historicism attempts queue up to know how the past has formed the present and how the present has reshaped the past. Renaissance critics like Louis Montrose have tried to show how life creates literature and literature in turn affects lives. In *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* it is detailed:

Thus, the cult of the Virgin Queen is both fostered by literature like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and a whole range of court masks and pageants, and at the same time generates such literature: life and literature stimulate and play upon each other. Elizabeth can project herself as the Queen whose virginity has mystical and magical potency because such images are given currency in court masques, in comedies, and in pastoral epic poetry. Conversely, the figure of Elizabeth stimulates the production and promotion of such work and imagery. (Barry 173)

History is treated in a similar way in the the text of Rohinton Mistry. Rohinton Mistry tries to 'write and right' history. Mistry is making an outright claim in *Such a Long Journey* that "this tragedy is not a fiction. All is true". There are historical reasons for a Parsi Indian writer to be turning against the Prime Minister of the emergency period and creating a historical fiction against the rule as he does in *A Fine Balance* and also in *Such a Long Journey*. Mistry makes one of his characters utter: "The Prime Minister cheats in the election, and the relevant law is promptly modified. Ergo, she is not guilty. We poor mortals have to accept that bygone events are beyond our clutch, while the Prime Minister performs juggling acts with time past (563). In *Such a Long Journey* Mistry tries to 'right' the Nagarwala case written in history. This is also an extended attempt to challenge the metanarrative of history. The concept is quite explainable with an example from the historical naming of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 as India's first War of Independence by the Indian patriots and as *Sepoy Mutiny* by the colonisers. Thus history varies and there is the birth of histories. Mistry's had been an attempt to make a history among the existing histories. The basic reasoning behind this is that the

dream of an ‘autonomous subject who knows’ (the ultimate truth) is only a dream. In new historicism the ‘one who knows’ is only a construct.

Historical texts on India also have stories of their own especially on turbulent times. There are varied perspectives, from the part of different historians, on Mrs. Gandhi. While there are historical pieces that blame it on Mrs. Gandhi others try to save the face of Indira Gandhi by directing the accusing hand on to others. For instance a writer like Coomi Kapoor can be quoted from her book, *The Emergency: A Personal History*, “The number of those in Indira Gandhi’s prisons during the Emergency far exceeded the total number jailed during the 1942 Quit India”. But P.N.Dhar, one of the closest advisers of Indira Gandhi, interpreted Emergency as an act against political corruption. Many other historical records have a negative portrayal of Indian Emergency. That is, history is also a text and hence the textuality of history.

Reading Mistry is such a great experience that we get to know of Indian history as well as the making of histories. It is especially engaging when the text is theoretically read under new historicism. Both the historicity of the text and the textuality of history can be analysed in Mistry. The power base that is the basic functioning in a society is at exposure in his text. Mistry tries to write a history to echo the unheard notes and right a history that echoed suppressing notes. Here history is written from a writer’s point of view to uncover the neglected chapters. This is in turn the basic reading of new historicism that has taken stands from Michel Foucault. There are a lot of possibilities when the freedom associated with new historicism is applied to the writer’s text. Thus Mistry and History make a play of reading under the aegis of the theory of new historicism.

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Understanding the Patterns of Growth of Indian New Woman through a Comparative Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapur, Rupa Bajwa and Shobha De

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Feminist historiography, feminist writers and critics from the West as well as East have already done a commendable job by revealing the historical process of women's subjugation, their rising out of various suppressive power structures and occurrence of the phenomenon called 'new woman' in society as well as literature. A systematic exploration of western feminism & feministic theories underlines seven types of feminist thought that had also some impact on the women of emerging countries like India. These are: Liberal, Marxist, Socialist, Radical, Psychoanalytical, Existential and Post-modern feminism. It also brings out various socio-political, historical and economic factors that led to the emergence of new woman in 19th century. But this image of new woman never remained static rather it kept on assuming various forms and shades over the time. Since 1980s, the standpoint feminists of the West have emphasized that feminist movement must address those concerns that are rampant at the global level such as sexual assaults, unlawful carnal knowledge or adultery etc. They have taken feministic trends beyond the trivial politics of equal rights and opportunities thereby giving birth to a new wave of feminism i.e. the New Feminism. The New Feminism is a kind of post-feminism that became famous in the 1990s and focuses on a younger generation of women who express their desire to fashion new styles of feminism. New feminism provides an optimistic and celebratory picture of a confident, assertive group of young women who are reporting high levels of achievement and success across private and public sectors. But it also stresses on the relevance of feminism in the modern day female existence. As Natasha Walter states thus:

Feminism is still here, right at the centre of these new lives' where it is needed to address a central paradox of this 'brave new world'. In effect, the New Feminism presents a contradictory picture of unprecedented female freedom and independence coupled with continuing blatant inequalities...The average woman, 'with all her new dreams and beliefs', still faces a number of concrete, economic and social injustices,... and an increased chance of living in poverty. (Walter 67).

New feminism claims itself as more recognized, more comprehensive, more enthusiastic to hold power, more liberal in crossing political restrictions, a feminism that belongs to men as well as women, conformists as well as socialists. In the West, where the new woman of the 19th century was audacious, stylish, educated, and fervent to revolutionize everything and even took sexual liberties too, the new woman of the twentieth century came out as a rational, contradictory character, introvert and caught in the web of conflicts and tensions. The thoughts and movements of Western new feminists and their representations of their female subjects have some impact on the women of emerging countries like India where a number of post colonial female writers have tried to visualize their dream of women empowerment through their fictional new women. With the rise of new feminism across the world, a new group of Indian feminists has come forward to struggle for the individual sovereignty, freedom, rights, open-mindedness, education, support, sexuality, bias, patriarchy, chauvinism, abortion, birth control, divorce, equal pay, maternity leave, and prostitution.

The present article is an attempt to explore the patterns of growth of new woman in Indian society and fiction in its pre and post independence era through a comparative analysis of selected fiction of the Mahasweta Devi, Shobha De, Manju Kapur and Rupa Bajwa. It also highlights how the concept of 'new woman' in India has emerged as a by-product of feminism. In India, since ages, women have been leading their lives as per the dictates given by their society. The allegory of the "angel in the household" held a woman and her virtuousness high on a pedestal and eventually her role was declared to be confined to the domestic household only where she as a meek creature, was expected to abide by the decisions of patriarchy. Defining patriarchy, Catherine Thankamma in her work entitled "The Women Patriarchy Created" (2000) opines thus: "Patriarchy is the system that traces family descent and economic inheritance down the male line. in a joint family the senior most male is the head, the patriarchy, while in the nuclear families of today, it is the father" (Thankamma 42). Consequently, females in a house begin to develop disbelief in their self-esteem and deem their lowliness as pre-ordained.

The article investigates various social, political, economical and cultural reasons which brought about the emergence of a new woman in the fiction of select Indian authors and their selected fiction which includes Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali* (1979), Shobha De's *Starry Nights* (1991), Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998), Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop* (2004). Selected authors belong to the different time periods, social backgrounds and cultural milieus thereby projecting different facades of Indian new woman. Fictional lives of the female characters in selected novels have been used to trace the chronological journey of development of Indian new woman. It starts with Mahasweta Devi's sympathetic representation of subalterns immediately after decolonization i.e. the post-independence era and then proceeds towards frank narratives of Shobha De on the new woman of urbanized elite segments of 1980's and 1990's and finally to the picture of 21st century new woman as presented by contemporary writers like Manju Kapur and Rupa Bajwa through their discourses on issues of women like education, marriage and divorce etc. The objective is to highlight the fact that if the social situations, economic scenarios and religious patterns of female characters of each of the chosen authors are diverse, their forms and manifestations of growth are also varied.

All the writers under study are similar in the sense that they refuse to be associated with any specific school of feministic thought but apparently represent their own feminist mindset. A mere set of demands for fundamental rights for women is not the agenda of their discourse rather an honest representation of what actually is going on in the society and to what extent women can go to establish themselves as an essential part of society is the underlying design of their discussion.

Mahasweta Devi has used her ingenious not to discover the reasons for their endless sufferings in the patriarchal society but to recommend a way out which in her view "lies in the hands of the oppressed, when they rise and fight back, only then history can be changed". It is her radical feminist realism that persuades her women to find a solution out of the problem as we see in the case of Sanichari and Bikhni in *Rudali* who, eventually grow up to take advantage of their repressive exploitative structures. An extensive assessment of personality of Aasha Rani in *Starry Nights* brings out De's sexist outlook in her handling of women's questions. She raises her protest against the malist culture and endeavors to deform the traditional good old image of woman 'as a subordinate' who voices for independence and parity but her cries go unattended to. Through Virmati and Shakuntala in *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur accentuates the fact that her new woman should not be branded as a mutineer. A 'new woman' is one who happily and sincerely performs her duties in all domains of her life and also wants to be

considered as an equal individual to men though with a different biological composition. Her new women are neither egotistical nor mutinous rather are brave, educated, self-sustained, sincere and resolute. *Virmati* and *Astha* exemplify what Susan Polis Schultz states that “the new woman arises full of confidence, she speaks eloquently, and thinks independently, full of strength. She organizes efficiently and directs proudly” (Schultz 39).

Bajwa’s women also lead a life of empowerment, personal preferences and self-determination as we see in the case of *Rina Kapoor*, *Mrs. Sachdev*, *Mrs. Bhandari* and *Mrs. Gupta* etc. Besides presenting the vanities of upper middle-class women, Bajwa also sympathizes with the miserable condition of the women whose families are the victims of capitalistic culture. Thus, it can be said that a truthful and sensitive portrayal of Indian women’s subjugation, their resultant rebellion perpetually add feministic elements into works of all the writers under study. Except for *Mahasweta Devi*’s new women who were not much exposed to the impact of industrialization, education and western culture, the new women of *Shobha De*, *Manju Kapur* and *Rupa Bajwa* exhibit the traits of post-feminists as they lead a life of empowerment, personal choices and autonomy and are driven by consumer culture.

One common underlying factor that brings about the emergence of new women in the works of writers under study is that all these females are the part and parcel of post independent Indian society. The scientific and industrial developments in post- independence era, the widespread of education and western culture motivated Indian women to reject the patriarchal hegemony and strive for their individuality. New values and cultural transformation which urbanization brought in its wake altered the psyche of women. Moreover, the ideas of the welfare state and new rights preserved in Indian Constitution further led to women empowerment.

This factor of post-independent social and political awareness is less significant if one talks about the growth of new woman of *Mahasweta Devi* because the underlying purpose of her fiction is to hold a mirror to the lives and problems of all those people who have no voice elsewhere and to create a forum of expression for the same. *Devi*’s narratives of activism on tribal realities- their dispossession, poverty, abuse and the struggle for survival cover her own observations and involvement in various social and political events of colonial India such as World War II, the Quit India Movement of 1942, the Bengal famine of 1943, the division of 1947. Just as globalization in the name of technological, scientific and business advancements has left the third world countries (developing nations) marginalized, the same way political

independence of our nation from colonial rule has not provided assured growth and freedom to all the segments of society. Devi's narration proceeds to question the relevance of various social and political objectives of a newly independent nation which is evidently directed towards the growth of materialism, capitalism, democracy, and nationalism.

Having played a determining role in personification of idea of women empowerment in India, Devi never thought of women as separate beings rather believed in the fact that their subjugation was a part of the oppression of class and caste. Mahasweta Devi in an interview with Anjum Katyal in Calcutta on May 26, 1993 stated that "set against the exploitative system is the issue of survival. 'Rudali is about... "how to survive"... "bread and mouth". It is very important in my story. The whole system is exposed through this" (Katyal 9). Apart from this common factor, the growth of all new women discussed in present paper is led by their respective socio-cultural backdrop, prevailing economic conditions and the purpose of their creator. That's why the tools used by these female characters to achieve success are relative depending on their situation. Heilmann and Beetham rightly remarks thus:

The common feature which recurs again and again in different cultures is the identification of the New Woman with the modern and with the disruptive, that is with challenges to existing structures of gendered identity. Resistance to the New Woman frequently calls on traditional, cultural or national identities. (Heilman and Beetham 2)

In *Rudali*, it is the matter of sustenance, shelter and economic security after the death of her son Budhua that force Sanichari, a woman of immediate post independent era to take up the work of a mourner. The evolution of Sanichari and her friend Bikhni as new women lies in their courage, strength and willpower to which they turn a social ritual of mourning into a profession. Eventually, Sanichari is able to understand weaknesses of the same exploitative system of sinful wealthy lords at whose hands she and her family had been suffering for so many years. To these exploiters, if sorrow on the death of some dear one is just a public show of effective mourning by hired rudalis then these depraved women shall leave no chance unused to turn this profession into regular business. Thus Sanichari uses her exploitative system as a tool to come out as a new woman.

The gomastha would agree to everything himself. What option did they have? Everyone wanted them after seeing their performance at Bhairab Singh's funeral. They were professional. The world belongs to the professional now, not to the amateur. In big cities, the prosperous prostitutes competed for such jobs. In this region, it is Sanichari

who has taken up this business. After all, this is not the big city. There are no prosperous prostitutes thronging Tohri. So, he has to agree to Sanichari's demands. (Devi, *Rudali* 74)

The growth of Sanichari is modeled on what Gayatri Spivak states "when the subaltern 'speak' in order to be heard and gets into structure of responsible ... resistance, he or she is on the way to becoming an organic intellectual" (Spivak, *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* 215). The author is not bothered about bringing to the forefront various gender-based issues rather she is focused on providing a solution to the subjugation of tribals in general and of women in particular. The character of Dulan "might be perceived as a male playing mentor and guide to helpless females is not a concern of author's and as a Dulan and Sanichari interact as peers, unselfconsciously free from any hint of asymmetry" (Katyul 10).

Despite its criticism for blatant description of sex and sex exploitation, Shobha De's works are serious attempts at discovering Indian society through Indian eyes. Each and every aspect of her writings may not be commendable yet her dealing with the challenges, dilemmas, principles and present-day urban Indian way of life is her most noteworthy contribution. Aasha Rani is led by her intense career-orientation, her innate instinct to live an independent and successful life and her craving for authority to govern money-matters. She wants to enjoy this authority and even fight to obtain and hold on to such authority. These goals of life force her to go for the sensational and demanding careers of modeling and acting. In fact, the strategy used by De's new women against men, to achieve material success in their careers is sex. That's why they have come to be recognized as new urban women in 20th century. For all intents and purposes, Aasha Rani is liberal about her sexual life. She is well conscious of her sexual potential which she can use to make the men fall at her feet. She flouts all the sexual taboo like anything with great courage and enjoyment. By the reward and punishment, she obviously means providing and withdrawing sexual pleasures. Aasha Rani says to Kishanbhai: "All of you are just the same, but wait I will screw you. I will screw you all, beat you at your own game" (Shobha De, *Starry Nights* 26). To the conventional middle class Indian society, this subverted kind of lifestyle is very unwanted. That's why, they have been labeled with the adjectives like 'modern', 'westernized' and even 'characterless'. Still, the union of bodies has its own meaning and significance in De's fiction. Repetitive sexual & psychological abuse continued existence despite a succession of shocks and separation from a loving husband cannot restrain Aasha's inborn instinct to live an independent and successful life. The way Aasha boosts her sister Sudha to fulfill their appa's dream by reestablishing their studio and

making films illustrates her traits as a new woman. “Our name will rule the industry and the studio will regain its glory. I promise you that, appa. You will see that I shall do it and prove it to you” (Shobha De 234). Herein, one finds the growth of new women of Shobha De.

21 century writers like Manju Kapur and Rupa Bajwa, through their discourses on sociologically and psychologically responsive issues of women like education, marriage, identity crisis, divorce, and polygamy etc, have tried to project the new women of post modern era. A thorough examination of Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* brings home the fact that she has tried to portray a new visage of Indian women who are self-determining enough to condemn their age-old slavery to conventions and make their society a place where ‘self’ has occupied the centre and values, ethics and morals have become secondary. Taking up those subjects on women that are so widespread in India, she has made her readers understand how hard it has been for the women to reach such developed state of mind already caught within a complex milieu of religion and ritual. In *Difficult Daughters*, Virmati’s evolution as a new woman is because of her intellectual longings, her love for a scholarly man and her desperation to be socially recognized as the legally wedded wife of a Professor. She uses her education as a tool to counter resolutely the family’s pressures for her marriage. Veena Singh (2000) rightly states that “for Virmati herself Education is an escape... an escape from the reproaches of her family from and her mother’s silent disapproval” (Singh 165).

Thus by deciding the priorities of her life, she is able to win her independence. “Insisting on her right to be educated, she manages to leave home to study in Lahore” (Rollason 2). The success of Kapur’s art lies in the manner the journey of her new women is explored through the depiction of three generations of women in *Difficult Daughters*. Furthermore, this journey is narrated through the perspective of Ida, a woman of the young generation of contemporary India. The role of women in Kasturi’s generation was as ordained by the society i.e. childbearing and domestic work. Virmati, Shakuntala and Swaran Lata from the second generation are aspiring individuals and must be admired for their resilience and strong will power in their insistence on their right to be educated, their participation in the political movement for India’s independence, their economic sovereignty, and their social repute. They reject the kind of life led by their mothers Kasturi and Lajwanti. The second generation is against the first one and the third generation is the second one. Virmati dares to puncture the patriarchal code of morality and laws to lead an independent life. Just as she proves a ‘difficult daughter’ because of her craziness for education, freedom, and individuality, Ida too like her mother becomes a ‘difficult

daughter'. She is sincere to the core of her heart and remains with Harish under all good and bad circumstances and liberty-loving woman.

Through Virmati, Shakuntala, Swaran Lata and Ida, Kapur gives us new women of 21st century whose passion for education, self-sufficiency, equality, and individuality become instrumental in their fight for liberation from financial, political and social repressions prevalent in their contemporary society. Dora Salvador Sales (2004) in her notes to her Spanish Translation of this novel points out,

Kapur emphasizes the efforts made at that time by numerous women who, while demanding equal opportunities, equal access to education and life opportunities going beyond convention were a visible force in the non-violent resistance to the British. (Sales 361)

Like a rich collection of sarees in Sevak Sari Shop, one finds an array of women characters in Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop*, all distinct and apart in style, language, mannerism and ideology. Like Kapur, her new women are also astute, self-conscious, intellectual and ingenious. They use their resourcefulness, education, and position in society as the weapons to solve disputes and counter all the challenges against their career, within and outside their home. Rina Kapoor, Mrs. Sandhu, Mrs. Gupta etc. have been presented in one way or other the products and victims of the commercial world. They include the domestic housewives of rich & affluent families and the learned working women. What brings them together under the umbrella of new women is that they are led by their inclination towards education, modern shopping culture, style, fashion, hybridism, and absurdity. Rina is a 'new woman' in the sense that she is progressive, open-minded and socially conscious. "I am not one of those girls who'll just marry a rich man and go to kitty parties. Besides, I don't really need any more money" (Bajwa, *The Sari Shop* 82). Mrs. Sandhu signifies 'power psychology'. Chander's wife Kamala and Sudha are the representatives of economically weaker sections of society, who work hard a lot to earn their bread and butter and seek shelter. These women are courageous enough to stand against the patriarchal suppression and the corrupt economic system of Indian society though their raised voices get subdued in a highly selfish world. Thus, Bajwa's new woman emerges in the context of her socio-cultural ethos and economic standards prevailing in the society. Teresa Sebastian (2013) states thus:

The chasm that separates the privileged and the less privileged in a multicultural, multilingual Indian urban society is deep. One can find here, at the same time, an

emancipated woman and her emaciated counterpart. But the women in India cannot confidently embrace their own power unless they balance the disparity between the economic classes and free all women from the strands of victimization. (Sebastian 6)

There is a point of similarity between the renowned German psychologist Karen Horney and the characters of Aasha and Virmati. Just as Karen had “poor history with regard to relationships with women (estrangement from her mother and daughter) but particularly men, with many affairs in which she sought desperately to be loved... (qtd. in Ridgway 3), these women also suffer disaffection and distancing in relationships because of the basic anxiety in their personality. This anxiety is created by their own over idealized self. Even a stage comes when these women appear problematic. Now the question arises what is there that takes them to the stature of new women. It is their voyage from neurosis to self-realisation that paves their rise as new women.

The tradition of marriage is of unparalleled implication in the life of young people, particularly in India. It has always been a period of blossoming and growing in the life of the woman. It has always served human society and culture with affection, safety, and family. But in the present times, due to sexual promiscuity, increasing economic independence of women and increased number of divorce, the superlative of marriage has lost its age-old significance. Today, a woman who earns sufficiently with a roof over wants to marry someone because she wants to share the joys and sorrows of her life with somebody in true sense not because she wants some bread winner. Such a woman can also not be compelled to perpetuate a failed marriage.

Talking from the perspective of roles and responsibilities in marriage, we find that De's new women stand apart from the new women of rest of the authors. Economic factor being an indispensable part of their power struggle compel them to enjoy sexual liberty at the cost of marital responsibilities and mutual commitment. De suggests that women must develop in themselves qualities such as command, capability, confidence, and boldness as these traits have always been considered as the special inheritance and safeguard of men only then she can come out of their protection shield and face the real world. It is appropriate to state here what Bhaskar Shukla (2006) opines thus:

Educated, attractive, confident and assertive socialite women in Shobha De's novels define marriage afresh, in which mutual fidelity till death (Anticrime) is replaced

generally by sexual freedom. The change in attitude towards marriage represents, according to Shobha De' a big step forward. (Shukla 119)

On the contrary, Devi's Sanichari sets an example of a fully devoted wife, caring daughter in law, responsible mother and a loving grandmother. From the beginning of the story until the end, she is seen taking care of her sick mother, supporting her husband, after his death bringing up her son Budhua and after Budhua's nurturing her grandson Haroa. Even Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* considers it as moral transgression on her part to continue her physical and emotional relationship with professor without getting married to him and is anxious to give it a social name so she instantly gets ready to become his second wife. Her wish is fulfilled though it is not the end of her unhappiness rather beginning of her life of social isolation. She tries her best to become a responsible wife and dedicated daughter-in-law though the stigma of having become the second wife of Harish doesn't let it happen. In Amritsar, "Virmati went to the *angle* to bring the clothes in. The line was bare except for her own, hanging forlornly at the end..." (Kapur, *Difficult Daughters* 215).

When compared to their male counterparts, the female characters of both Mahasweta Devi and Shobha De are more audacious and remarkable to fight the system and take a lead for their reasons. They resemble the 19th century new women from the West. The males in Devi's fiction seem to be deficient in understanding into what is happening to their existence and are unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Sanichari's husband Ganju is a relevant example of such males who act as an inert audience when their wives pass through tough situation created by the same unconcerned establishment. Ganju's attitude on the death of his mother, his brother, and sister-in-law is passive. "When her mother-in-law died, Sanichari didn't cry... Dragging the neighbors home with her, and handling all the arrangements for the cremation, she was so busy that there was no time to cry" (Devi, *Rudali* 54-5). Even Aasha in *Starry Nights* is also more methodical and sensible as compared to her companions, who appear meek, indifferent or even feeling less.

The new women of De do not feel culpable about their moral laxity and attitudes or to put it another way the question of morality and ethics cannot stop them from marching ahead successfully on the difficult road chosen by them. Indeed a daring woman, Aasha in *Starry Nights* should be appreciated for her fortitude and patience. Had she been a traditional woman, she would have succumbed to the deadly evils prevailing in the pseudo-glamorous world of Bollywood. She also comes out as more commanding and gutsy than Akshay. Even the meeting

between Aasha and her sister Sudha towards the end of the novel is a perfect example to show that regardless of so much moral laxity to climb the ladder of success, somewhere in her conscious, Aasha still values relationships. Vats (2010) opines that “despite her indulgence in indiscriminate sex and professional opportunism, Aasha Rani has a critical eye for the sanctity of relations, which she unconsciously cherishes like a wish” (Vats 63).

To sum up, we can say that Mahasweta Devi has brought in her new women Sanichari and Bikhni to make an appeal to the subalterns to find out, not the causes but a solution to their subjugation out of prevalent power system itself. Subaltern women must learn not to accept their suppression as ordained by their destiny rather stand up and understand the lacunas of repressive economic and social structures and prepare themselves accordingly to make the exploitative system addict to their strengths. Shobha De, through her artistic brilliance, has gifted her new women a skill to pierce into men’s psyche. Frequently men in her fiction are unresponsive and feel endangered by self-possessed and self-dependent females. Her women puncture the conventional image of Indian womanhood both in expressions and actions, be it their career or carnal pleasures. Her new woman symbolizes that frailty is no more a synonym attached to her if gets a chance she turns to be a woe-man. Like other writers of their generation, both Manju Kapur and Rupa Bajwa have also made their new women their spokespersons to emphasize the significance and essence of emancipation and learning for Indian women. Neither they hold high nor they add any special importance to the Indian womanhood rather keep the focal point of their discussion on the manifestation of woman as a woman, woman as a human being, woman within her family, woman outside her family and woman in her private relations. Through Virmati, Rina Kapoor and Kamala, they uphold their concern for women “with a missionary zeal and seems to suggest that a married woman’s job is not to complete wifing, child-bearing and housekeeping but to do something more” (Singh, *Indian Woman Novelists* 65).

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Animal Farm: Power Corruption Leads to Annihilation

Dhanya Panicker

Annihilation means complete destruction or obliteration. To explain what it is, we have to first define power. Who has it? How they use and abuse it? How they are manipulated and oppressed by it?

“It is said that power corrupts, but actually it’s more true that power attracts the corruptible. The sane are usually attracted by other things than power”

- David Brin

Power always falls into the hands where it will be corrupted. This corruption of power always ends in annihilation. In the novel *Animal Farm*, we can see how George Orwell has powerfully delineated the corruption of power and the theme of annihilation through animal characters. Orwell uses his political satire to show how power manipulates human beings as well as animals. The one who is enjoying power always look down upon others, even his fellow beings. Power can destroy the relationship between people. Friends become foes and in every way all good relationships die under the control of power. This corruption of power and its aftermath can be traced back in history too.

Animal characters in the book correspond to real historical figures. Old Major is Lenin. Napoleon is Stalin who captured power and became a dictator after Lenin’s death. Snowball is Trotsky, the creator of the Red Army who was later debunked by Stalinist historians. The issue of the windmill highlights the difference of opinion between Trotsky and Stalin, the former giving importance to industrialisation and the latter to agriculture. The Battle of Cowshed represents the Civil war in which counter revolution arises aided by British and French forces were defeated by Bolshevicks in 1919. The Battle of Windmill stands for the German invasion of 1941 which was finally repelled. Napoleon’s dogs that pounce upon other animals are Stalin’s secret police who silenced all voices of dissent. The Seven Commandments represent

the revolutionary ideals amended by the new regime in the Soviet Union. Orwell implies a parallel between the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Both raised great hopes and expectations, but both ended in a reign of terror.

When the story opens, we can see the power in the hands of Mr. Jones, the owner of the Manor Farm. He exerts his power over the animals. He is a master who behaves very rudely to his animals. As the owner of the farm, as well as the master of the animals, he misused his power. He used to ill-treat the animals of his farm. The animals being exploited brutally developed a feeling of disgust towards Jones. Under the leadership of their father figure Old Major, the animals held a meeting. Major told the animals that man was only responsible for the miseries of animals. He expresses his hatred towards men and describes the oppression suffered by the animals and predicts the day when they could overthrow their human masters and build an impartial society where all animals would be considered friends and all human beings enemies. So he appealed to them to fight for their freedom. But three days after his speech, the Major died. The animals were so much affected by the speech that they united and revolted against the tyranny of Jones. They succeeded in driving him and his men from the farm. Thus Manor Farm became Animal Farm. Thus Mr. Jones who exploited his power was expelled from the farm. Now Orwell portrays how power corrupts the mind of animals too. Power corrupts the human beings as well as the animals.

The animals decided to run the farm by themselves. The pigs who considered themselves intelligent among the animals decided to become the leaders. Thus two pigs, Snowball and Napoleon became the leaders of the animals, as well as masters of the Animal Farm. They declared the Seven Commandments as the guiding principles of Animalism.

All animals worked under the leadership of pigs and their hard labour resulted in a good harvest. Napoleon argued that the pigs needed special food because they did brain work. The pigs no sooner weasel their way into power than they start taking milk for themselves.

Jones managed to get the support from the villagers and decided to recover the farm. But the animals got the news of impending attack and got ready for defence. The men were beaten and forced to leave the farm. The animals rejoiced their victory and praised the bravery of Snowball and Boxer. They conferred military honours on both. They called the event “The Battle of Cowshed.” Napoleon didn’t take part in this battle.

The mystery of power is that it can manipulate as well as corrupt people. It can destroy the relationship between people. Friends may become foes and in every way relationship

dies. Here too power began to play his dirty game on Napoleon. Snowball who was his counterpart became his enemy. Jealousy began to work in his mind. Napoleon began to oppose Snowball who had many followers among the animals. Snowball had prepared a scheme for the construction of a windmill in the farm. But Napoleon opined that the windmill was not beneficial to the animals. As days passed Napoleon's hostility towards Snowball increased and the ferocious dogs trained by Napoleon attacked Snowball and consequently he ran away from the farm. Napoleon thus eventually succeeds in driving out Snowball. Stalin's ruthless oppression finds its parallel in the actions of Napoleon.

After Snowball's exit, Napoleon wielded absolute power. Though he had objection to the construction of windmill before, he started it again. The animals worked hard and the construction was completed. But a storm destroyed it. A propaganda war was launched against Snowball and he was condemned a traitor. When some of the animals protested, Napoleon's dogs attacked and subdued them.

For the namesake, Napoleon is, the Emperor Napoleon himself. He is introduced in Chapter two as a "large rather fierce looking Berkshire boar...not much of a talker out with a reputation for getting his own way". He himself is a product of Animalism. But when he rises to power, he forgets Animalism, the ladder which helped him to climb to the peak. He later abolishes animalism. He is a dictator who wants to keep everyone under his control. At first he expels his rival, Snowball from the farm tactfully by convincing the animals that Snowball is a traitor and he is the spy of human beings. He represents the human desire for power.

Napoleon trains puppies into fierce-looking dogs and it is with their assistance that he is able to drive out Snowball and seize power and to keep the subjects in fear and submission. He becomes popular among the pigs for his distribution of milk amongst them only. By degrees he is able to reach a stage when he enjoys unlimited power.

After gaining their victory over Jones and his fellow men the animals became masters of themselves. The seven commandments are engraved on the walls of the barns. The seven commandments now become the guiding principle of Animal Farm. But in course of time the seven commandments are violated by pigs, under the leadership of their master Napoleon. On the very first day of the founding of Animal Farm, the first commandment that is, "all animals are equal" became violated. The milk yielded by the cows is reserved only for pigs and is denied to other animals on the plea that it is the pigs who do brain work. For that, they require a diet of milk and apples. The very essence of animalism has been violated without the animals

in the least knowing or understanding. Pigs began to enjoy more and more privileges. They merely supervise the work while other animals have to work exceedingly hard. “Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy”- the commandment is violated when Napoleon himself established trade relation with neighbouring farms through a man named Whymper. The commandment, “no animal shall sleep in bed” is also violated when the pigs began to move to farmhouse and sleep in beds. The commandment is modified by adding these words, “no animals shall sleep in beds with sheets”. There is the public violation of the commandment “no animal shall kill any other animal”. Napoleon uses his ferocious dogs upon pigs, hens and sheep that are killed on the spot. This commandment is changed as “no animal shall kill any other animal without cause”. The commandment which is read as “No animal shall drink alcohol” is violated when a case of whisky was founded by the pigs. They taste it and then they go on drinking it regularly. The commandment against wearing clothes is violated when Napoleon himself wears the clothes of Mr. Jones and also uses the pipe. The most important commandment, “all animals are equal” is modified as “all animals are equal but some are more equal than others”.

Thus Napoleon who considered himself to be in the intelligentia section uses his intelligence to establish his dominance and power over other animals. He succeeds in his venture. He is more practical in his approach. His cruelty, callousness and indifference towards the rest of the animals are to be noted first. The violation of the commandments which was the foundation of Animalism is caused by the selfish motives of Napoleon and other pigs. It exposes the hypocrisy practiced by them to gain power and privileges.

Napoleon is now corrupted by power. Moreover corrupted absolutely to that inevitable animal-human contact which is the basic divergence from the real spirit of Animalism. He even fell a prey to some of the classic “deadly sins”. His egotistical pride in himself and his regime, his wrath as it shows itself in the acts of cruelty, his essential envy of man’s status and belongings, an enormous lust for power and dominion, his gluttony, his sensual propensity, his avarice and gradual self-indulgence are some of these. Napoleon is of course a perfect deceiver, a cynic, an agnostic and a humbug. He is portrayed as a dictator who wants to keep everyone under his control. He is a leader who takes advantage of the revolution for appropriating all power to himself.

His desire for power finally leads to annihilation. Annihilation can be destruction in one way or the other. In the last chapter we can see that the pigs are neither pigs nor men. They lost

their real self. They even walk on two legs like human beings. The animals realize with horror that they can no longer tell the pigs' faces from the human ones. Orwell rightly remarks,

“The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.”(*Animal Farm*, 120)

Animal Farm is a vigorous indictment not only of the communist state but also of capitalism. Orwell satirises the expediency and opportunism of Western democracies through Jones and his allies. Their changing attitudes to the communist state are traced through the events that bring Jones and Napoleon together.

The appeal of *Animal Farm* is universal in that it exposes the exploitation of the poor, the ignorant and the credulous by the crafty, the selfish and the power-hungry which is as old as history. It also exemplifies the truth, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”, by Lord Acton and it is perfectly demonstrated in the novel *Animal Farm*.

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Reworking the Matrix of Virtual Semantics: A Postcolonial Digital Humanities Metamorphic Potentiality

Anusha A J

Engaging the perceptions of the technologically imbibed anthropos is a gargantuan institutionalised hierarchy palpitating within the veil of a mediated module. The repercussive narratives tightening around postcolonial subject perpetuates primitivism in its antediluvian formulation of incapacitation of the other. The hypotexts and hypertexts present to the point of saturation are a cunning elaboration coagulated to a definitive enhancement of variant spatial coordinates marking the cognitive order. Circumventing these synchronised databases frequently ensures the entrapment of colonised within the psycho political semantics of the colonial and its convoluted tryst with the self proclaimed masters. The temporality silhouetting this enterprise may have witnessed a paradigm shift in the artefacts of representations but the incentive to condescend and pursue manipulation reverberates across discourses surpassing the paraphernalia of digital or print.

Postcolonialism critically traverses the actively construed strokes of exploitation conjugated to the overlapping hermeneutics of race, culture, ethnicity, gender and the like as its locus focii. Imperialistic surcharges triggered deliberations to assuage a project detrimental to the consciousness of the native. The indelible consequences of the aforementioned reformatory discussion, aligned in the superstructures of cultural production, reconstructed the national culture; corruptive renderings for the determined disavowal of what in Frantz Fanon's terminology catalogues as the "reality of national culture"(67). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels fervently declared, "It is not consciousness that determines life but life that determines consciousness"(36). The perseverant and consistent engagement with the schema of obfuscation guaranteed the legitimisation of the colonisation of the psyche wherein the appropriation and

reappropriation operates annihilating the indigenous, interpellating them to the subaltern. Postcolonialism extrapolates to a political project shooting out from its theoretical outcries in proverbial defiance of the modern rationality monopolist European imperialists. Suffusing the parlance of critical theory with a pseudo concrete conceptual framework over the years - from among selves categorised by the Western intelligentsia as the primitive, passive, sans intellect, and foremost sans participatory power in the dominant socio-political cartography - Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi.K.Bhabha and Edward Said. Referral to the poststructuralist grounding of the theory assures entanglements with the transdiscursive semantics of Jacques Lacan, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida etc., denouncing the narrative as a true blue concoction of the empire writing back. The existential juggernaut exponentially increased upon pervaded by the complexities surfacing with globalisation, the proponents in the critical arena forced to demystify the subsequent theoretical conundrum. Revolutions in the psychosocial space, genesis of which lay in the transformation of the discursive column to virtuality, necessitated novel power narratives or as Trevor Haywood pinpoints “With the introduction of any new technology we enter an initial period when the missionaries enthusiastically declare new scriptures”(50). Colonialist invasions into the billboard of digital topography sprouted permutations and combinations of biased digital artefacts and hegemonic cyberspace. Decoding the hierarchies cloaked beneath the phenotext sensible to the world has been the epicentre of theorists and thinkers or rather the theory circle that is enamoured with the positive and negative potentialities of World Wide Web 2.0. Systematic collaborations and information exchange with the architects in the fields of enquiry of new media studies, cultural studies and the like simmered cauldron of possibilities.

The transdisciplinary label of Digital Humanities situates itself as a fluid interface at the point of interaction between the human and the coded, more appropriate elaboration exudes the idea as that between the traditional discipline of humanities and metaphor for modernisation, information and communication technologies. The navigational engagements partaken by the digital citizen over the networked social space, exciting his myriad sensibilities, masks inclusion of apparatuses deeply entrenched in the fabrication of the visible form, delivering applications of data storage and retrieval, digital communications, collaborative web projects, data visualisation, data mining etc. at unprecedented levels. Consolidating the ace duos of digitized and born-digital materials of consumption, this umbrella term acts as a signpost to a discipline devoid of definitive methodologies from its own repertoire but rather draws freely from the

traditional humanities disciplines including that of medicine, history, art, philosophy, literature and social sciences, complemented by tools of computing. Kathleen Fitzpatrick explicates:

Digital Humanities as a nexus of fields in which scholars use computing technologies to investigate the kinds of questions that are traditional to the humanities or as is more true of (her) own work, who ask traditional kinds of humanities oriented questions about computing technologies. (43)

The epithet network society put forward by Manuel Castells' as contemplative for contemporary hyper textual social sphere, revels in the continuous sophistication of technological installments bearing the techno-integrated physiological and psychological space it inhabits. Substantial multiplication in the availability of economically unburdening applications at the touch of your fingertips enhances the matrix of perspectives attributed to Digital Humanities. However, this computational humanist discipline surpasses the significations primarily associated with the signifier 'digital' and Jeffrey Schnapp, one of the foremost recognised thinkers of Digital Humanities, offers an elucidation of the term and the discipline in the following often quoted words:

Digital Humanities refers to new modes of scholarship and institutional units for collaborative, transdisciplinary and computationally engaged research, teaching and publication...is less a unified field than an array of convergent practices to explore a universe in which print is no longer the primary medium in which knowledge is produced and disseminated...but is not solely about the digital (in the sense of limiting its scope to the study of digital culture). Nor is Digital Humanities only about the humanities as it is traditionally understood since it argues for a remapping of traditional practices. Rather Digital Humanities is defined by the opportunities and challenges that arise from the conjunction of the term digital with the term humanities to form a new collective singular. (121)

Potentialities serenading the ever- expanding ambit of Digital Humanities subsumes to the metamorphosis of *neuvo* instruments of inquiry and meaning making: reinvigorating outdated systems; reconfiguring the peripheral markings pertaining to the social sciences, the natural sciences, arts and humanities; sensible inclination towards perfect trajectory of development for humanist scholars of the time ahead by the juxtaposition of project based learning and institutional lectures and experimentations furthering the scope, reliability, durability, visibility and qualitative potential of research.

The epistemological underpinnings of the magnetic structures of Digital Humanities are founded in the path breaking computational programming of Robert Busa who in the 1950s technically conjured up an automated attribute for computers to logically sort, list, count and word search, enabling a more comprehensive processing of exhaustive set of the digital texts. The publication of a journal *Computers and Humanities* featuring the framework of growth of an emerging specialisation shouldered the discipline. Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) and Extensive Markup Language (XML) rendered vantage points of initiation of linguistic analysis, witnessed the massive follow up of revolutionary ideas that forged a digital plain upon which our self courses through for existence. The historiography charted the construction of World Wide Web, taking the world by storm in its surge to seed globalisation and engineered to succeed, rousing from the information retrieval feature of digitality. From the above mentioned first wave of technical experiments and inventions, Digital Humanities has been sweltering in the flames of criticism, paving way for a second wave which so far has been crowned a more generative and qualitative approach. These contemporary critical persuasions within and outside the discipline, has therefore been instrumental in its reformative replenishment as a transformative discourse for the marginal.

The recent theoretical interrogation of the information and communication technologies engages in a revelational submission of omnipotence of the politics of gender and race, forfeiting the reality of cyberspace the postcolonial subject is deserving of. Critical Race theory and Marxist theory has been at the core of analytic stride initially. The Racial Formation theory proposed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant intercepting the junctures of race, digital culture and globalisation renders ineffective for a methodical exploration of the same ,as the argument of rejecting the systematised racialism is levelled against it. Postcolonial Digital Humanities has been an symbiotic initiative, employing the circuits of digitality to expose, invade and slowly position the subaltern barring the Phallogocentric/ Eurocentric hegemonic binary in the virtual panorama of deliberations. The website existing as a discursive spatial hypermedia opens up vistas for transcending the normative. Scholars Adeline Koh and Roopika Risam, the founders ,having a profound sense of the computing universe, comprehend the imperativeness of theorists like Walter Mignolo 's considerations of the equanimity of modernity and colonialism. Twittersphere boomed with a pliant understanding of their reformatory trending threads #transform DH and #DHPoCo, reflexive of the penchant for structural and sociological change. Situating themselves as the critical navigators of the digital artefacts, luminaries in the fields of Digital Humanities, New Media Studies, Cultural Studies

and Postcolonial Literature, have time and again exposed the perverse logic of coloniality. From Martha Nell Smith, Kavitha Philip, Tara McPherson and Lisa Nakamura to Peter Chow-White, Stephen Ramsay, Rishab Aiyer Ghosh and Walter Mignolo, critical suppositions galore, the inevitability entailing the decolonisation phenomenon is perpetually undeniable. Alondra Nelson and Thny Linh Tu's collaborative output *Technicolor: Race, Technology and Everyday Life* (2001), Anna Everett's *Digital Diasporas* (2009), Pramod K Nayar's *New Media and Cybercultures* (2010), Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White's *Race After the Internet* (2012) represent the discursive manifesto which has been part of the proceedings of structuring the contemporary praxis and theory of Postcolonial Digital Humanities. The simulation of the hegemonic social categorisation commutable the Semic and Cultural codes, enamoured the theorists into the formation of sub disciplines of Digital Literary Studies and Postcolonial Computing. While the former survives as an arena within whose purview comes the "digitisation of literary texts, preservation and representation of digital texts, computational data analysis and new ways of data visualisation"(xix), the latter rigorously pursues the wayward ramifications of structures of power and influence as deployed across cultural productions. A quixotic culturalistic presupposition favouring the European can be enlisted as one of the latter's shortcomings. Scholars like Syed Ali make the clarion call for Decolonial Computing, a counter strike against the colonial elements, viewed with an anti-European stance. However with Postcolonial Digital Humanities, there is a broader scope of the tag 'humanities', ascribing to the humanistic value and a featuring a proposal to unsettle the power relations by decentring the dominant structures of meaning making, thereby jumping the Foucault bandwagon of understanding power and knowledge. The discursive forum of the discipline deliberates on the historical narrative has shaped up the undertakings of colonisation, postcolonial, neo-colonialism and decolonisation in the virtual entities. Secondly, it scrutinises the critical convergence of humanities disciplines including the cultural productions of performativity and non-performativity with the tools of digitisation, reviewing the construction, reconstruction and performance of colonialism. Making a motion for *neoteric* cutting edge technologies or substitute mechanisations or newly discovered variant advantages of the present technical framework that impeaches the colonial legacies, Postcolonial Digital Humanities wages a war against the turbulences conditioned by colonialism. Decolonial space in the future as targeted by the artists and scholars can materialise through the diligent persistence of grappling the 'dead/living white men's history', engaging in carving out spaces for the people of colour and women, archival architectures of existence, programming games and publishing and

recovering textual corpora to break the canon. As digital topographical cartography in the forms of PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones flourishes, the settler-native narrative strengthens the status quo, for the consumption soars.

The content and form of connectivity perpetuate imperialism - not just cultural imperialism but technological imperialism...Empire is not simply an endeavour of the nation state – we have empire through technology and now technology industry as empire. (Walters)

Colonisation's rationale of modernisation is a flamboyant trap, deprived of an escape route. Awakening of the fractured self owing to the quasi- liberating anti-imperialist stature, desiderates a revolutionary predilection in the past, present and future. Decoding the inequalities in the structures of automation calls for its scrupulous examination, and in this scenario is powered by the tools of computing, marking the concept of what Derrida propounds is Metaphysical Complicity, the evaluation of a subject matter adopting its own contraptions.

The cosmic digital scholarship bracketing websites, blogs and the interactive social media platforms of Twitter and Face book possesses a rhetoric aggrandised by visualisation and simulation. Consumed with a passionate determination, the coded mechanism transcends the electric phase into a colonial cyberspace upon the interception of the digital terrain by the digital setter, articulating new reality for the digital native. During the period of inception of the World Wide Web, critical thinking inclined towards the availability of an unfettered space and optimistic propositions surged through. Hypertext theorist Jay David Bolter's anticipation expounds in the following use of the semantics scripting it as portal encouraging the relinquishment of the notional excellence of the high cultural matrices as a homogeneous entity while providing lacunae for presence of "network of interest groups" (233). The aspirations for a heteroglossaic narrative were unfounded, as an island of biases strategically surrounded the assets of creation. Debates in the computing circle reverently ruminated on the formulation of the Open source software as the most effective means to further extend the myriad possibilities, reasoned to be inherent within the building capabilities of the digital tool. The comprehension of the automated hieroglyph by such a mode contrived to topple the invisible shackles of marginalisation by offering the endowments of accessibility, simplicity, affordability and transparency. The quintessentially lucid syntax featuring in the HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and the XML (Extensible Markup Language) codes, the encoding document formats of World Wide Web, meticulously structures the textural, textual

and visual canvas of the pages strewn across the web. Despite both being catalogued under the prototype of open source software granting source code pinned with a license to examine, transform and circulate to any parties, the metalanguage HTML's *modus operandi* in presenting structured data cleaves to an algorithm of predefined presentation semantics. The systems of classifying, organising and interpreting the databases never possesses neutrality that it lays claim to, for they are ideologically inscribed at the time of production. Martha Nell Smith condemns the theory of neutrality as follows:

HTML, SGML, XML - the codes that make words and images, texts, processable and TEI conformancy are supposedly gender, race and class neutral. The codes always work, and the principles always apply, whatever one's personal identity (or so many seemed to believe). It was as if the matters of objective and hard science provided an oasis for folks who do not want to clutter sharp, disciplined methodical philosophy with considerations of gender, race and class determined facts of life... But texts are social instruments and so can never really be free from all of that messiness. (4)

TEI guidelines dictated the use of cardinal 1 to signify the sexuality of the male and 2 was assigned to the female. Upon being faced with grave criticism, the item tagged as sex value has been revisioned in 2013 as the equivalent linguistic signifier. The socio-cultural and politico-economical hegemonic knowledge production arrangement resulting from the lack of technical and financial infrastructure for the conception of software applications and programs, absence of skilled programmers, uneven access, monopolistic linguistic trope of English, economic exploitation of the consumer and control over search algorithms by MNCs like Google, Yahoo! exacerbates the digital divide of the Global South from the Global North.

The critical reflections on the colonisation of the cinematic and the televised merchandise has been probed and prodded essentially as a quantum of Digital Postcolonialism and the interdisciplinary area of inquiry of Cultural Studies. Measured appearances of stereotypes (or in Lisa Nakamura's coinage, cybertypes), racial slurs and the ideological construction of the Orient in the corporate driven Hollywood cinema are tactics to consistently stroke the superiority complex in lieu of marring the other; and these repetitive placements within the text are also the skilful means to stabilise the sign. The Anglophone films trump the visibility of the variant national cinemas, the cultural sites of resistance and revolutions, across the global circuit. Despite the recent plummeting participation of Asians, Africans and Latin Americans, especially women in the mainstream, the tag of 'exotic' gobbles up their identity

and are demanded to undergo appropriation of the self, in terms of language, principles and behavioural patterns, making dormant their own cultural codes. Also bearing the signature of significance is the relational equation of Game studies or video game studies to the postcolonial, most often its virtual reality being an alternate reality supposition. The capitalist synapses of power meshes into the technological implements to supplant the universal psyche with symbols of covert and overt racial and gender stereotyping. Alex Galloway in *Does the Whatever Speak?* equivocates their digital imagery to a technique of symbolic racism by declaring racial coding has not gone away within recent years, it has only migrated into the realm of the dress rehearsal, the realm of pure simulation and as simulation it remains absolutely necessary (117).

The games of the mode *Tropico* (2001) and *Empire: Total War* (2009) indulge in the play of political consciousness with the colonialism and capitalism. Gender bias also stubbornly pervades the highly pro-phallic consortium of game developers, players and the visual signifier and albeit the presence of warrior woman cipher, the seamless objectification for the pervasive male gaze nullifies the earlier attributions of power, potency, fortitude, skill and intelligence.

Delinking the psyche from the manipulative tendencies of the colonial necessitates ensuring the visibility in regard to performances of decoloniality. Rebellious executions to invert the longstanding arrangement conditions no groundbreaking formulation but workable solutions meticulously pursued till the realisation of decolonial knowledge and being. Erasing the colonial virtual memory is improbable but the ramifications of incriminating the colonial power holders' exclusion of indigenous historiography, languages and artefacts bring forth an understanding of the matrix of conundrum they inhabit. Digital locales offer a discursive platform for creating, editing, deleting and thereby transforming the lived experience with what Lyotard calls an incredulity towards metanarratives. English monopoly over the web denying the existence of around 6,000 languages endangers the vernacular and the associated cultural productions. Micheal Krauss' article "Endangered Languages" (1992) served as a premonition which encouraged documenting languages in the form of archives. The empowering audio-visual features enable the recording of the manifold languages, considering the hurdles in accommodating the scripted form. Postcolonial Digital Humanities calls for the formation of minority historical records and incorporating the prolific movements and subjects, thrown to the periphery reasoned by social and gender roles. *Digitizing Chinese Englishmen: Representations of Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century*, an archive by Adeline Koh and projects including *Rewriting Wikipedia*, *Women Who Rock*, *Fem Bot Collective* initiates

the invasion of the digital territories via the drafting of collaborative pedagogical and cultural structures of resistance aided by technological advances. Smoothing the rough patches of social atrocities, relying on transformative enterprise, begins its journey to fruition as software designs and creativity intersect in Micha Cárdenas 'mixed reality performance'. The critical label of 'decolonial art' emulates transgression. Suggestive of an expository avenue it is,

art that enacts these critiques by exposing coloniality and its injustices and contradictions, often using juxtaposition, parody, irony, or simple disobedience towards the rules of art and polite society, so that the viewer or participant is not swept up in the sublimity or beauty that is the Western ideal, but in feelings of sadness, indignation, repentance, hope, and the determination to change things in the future (Michelle).

Third Cinema encompasses such a decolonial creative endeavour positing a plethora of representations of the Third World, stripped of the perspective manifestations of the First World. With the relative ease of accessibility of technical resources in the digital age, artists have plunged into the foray of short film making, documentaries, animation cinema, charting archives of liberative hypermedia, disseminated through the portal of Youtube. Publishing anthologies of writings of people of colour, the modes of counter-gaming, digital graffiti and comics broaden the possibilities of the discipline.

The dynamic predilection to decolonise transpires from the desire to make visible the very essence of the structures of their being, upon the realisation of its spatial /historical passivity. Decolonisation, therefore, begins by deseeding the colonial hegemonic sensibilities from the psyche and shaking off the bonds of decolonial aesthesis, the inferiority complex parasitically occupying the colonised's consciousness, entails the experience of coloniality. With its collaborative, progressive and subversive intelligibilities, Postcolonial Digital Humanities is an enterprising harbinger of a possible decolonial future.

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Magical Feminism and the Feminine Voice in Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*

Lynda Stanley

Latin American author Isabel Allende has earned international acclaim through works depicting a unique style of blending the magical with the real. She incorporates aspects of feminism and traditionalism in her stories which reflect personal viewpoints on political and social issues, and she challenges the reader to evaluate these issues through the perspective of culture. Magical realism is the amalgamation of the realistic and the fantastic. It blurs the distinction between the two in a way that the real seems to be imaginary and the imaginary turns out to be real. In magical realist novels, fantastic events happen as if they are scenes of everyday life. This creates a sort of narrative, which distorts the conventionally immutable picture of reality, thus helping the author to reverse the hierarchical order in a subversive way and therefore, reshape the dominant hegemonies of society. In its deconstruction of current ideology, magical realism becomes a quest to voice the other(s) of the world. Women, who, according to feminist theorists, have traditionally been under the reign of patriarchal society, gain their voice in magical realistic novels. The mode, when enfolding feminist elements, becomes a tool for emancipation and empowerment of the seemingly weaker sex.

In Isabel Allende's novel *The House of the Spirits*, the female characters take center stage, framing and constructing the narratives of their lives in direct opposition to patriarchal silencing tactics. Using her own family history as a base, Allende details the lives of the Trueba family living in an unnamed Chile in the mid-20th century, following in particular three generations of women: Clara, her daughter Blanca, and her granddaughter Alba. *The House of the Spirits* is a family saga, based on her family members with extraordinary embellishments, and a political testimonio, a societal portrait of a contemporary postcolonial

history, blended together with magical realism. She wanted to bear witness to socio-economic class lines, women's repression, and political violence – having been motivated by her traumatic experiences from the betrayal and resulting death of her uncle, President Salvador Allende, by right-wing conspirators and their U.S. counterparts and the brutal dictatorship that ensued. Yet, in her novel, one gathers that the military coup and reign of horror that follows is somehow a broader range of the Patriarchy at its ultimate using what it knows best – violence – to terrorize and suppress those who deems it as dissenters and subversives from its power over society. Moreover, Allende's novel shares the lives of four generations of the del Valle-Trueba women, all of whom are feminists, each fighting within the confines of their respective generations.

Allende wants to tell us a story based on the recent history of Chile. Her political and social motivations, her exile to Venezuela and the desire to preserve memories triggers the need to tell the family story in *The House of the Spirits* in 1982, her first novel. The story is told from the point of view of Alba and her grandfather Esteban Trueba. Alba and Esteban Trueba's voices are integrated to create a new story which meshes male and female perspectives of historical events of the past. Their voices represent women and men in the making of the social and political reality of Chile from the beginning of the 1920s to the 1970s.

Magical realism as a literary device re-emerged in Latin America and, indeed, it was Allende and her magical realist novel *The House of the Spirits* that opened the door for other Latin American women to have their stories published during the Post Boom era of the Latin American Renaissance.

In this section of my research, my analysis focuses on the interactions of the characters in *The House of the Spirits* to create the new historical novel in Latin America, where women and the marginalized are given a greater voice. The characters in the novel are from different social classes and represent a different segment of society and their interaction tells a national story of the 20th century in Chile, particularly in the 1970s. The novel shows the evolution of a society that looks for social justice and the equality of women and for those who are at the margins of society. Collective memory, magical realism and marginalized women and men's voices are combined to give a close-up view of women's and lower-class people's role in history in Latin America.

Allende envisions a heavily patriarchal society in which men exert their control over women through rape, physical and verbal abuse, and the imposition of limitations on verbal

communication. As a result, the women of this novel must navigate their society through their own unique means. In order to disrupt the hold that their patriarchal society maintains on speech, Allende's three main female characters rely on alternative modes of communication, such as the use of deliberate silence, writing and journaling, art, and spiritual powers, including clairvoyance. While these methods are granted to the characters in order to prevent them from speaking, the characters and Allende herself use these alternative modes to create their own spaces free of patriarchal restriction.

In *The House of the Spirits*, Clara, a clairvoyant child who converses with spirits and possesses telekinetic powers to move objects, is the central character. Allende uses magic to portray Clara's powerful spirituality and the collective memory of women. Nora defines memory as "affective and magical" and Allende chooses Clara to be spiritual and magical who is an agent of change. Clara is "a rather eccentric creature not particularly well suited to the duties of marriage and domestic life" (p. 105). She has "no interest in domestic matters" (p. 149) and is so preoccupied with a world of her own that she seems to be "as distracted and smiling" as "in everything else; relaxed and simple, but absent" (p. 150). Clara, over the course of her life, subverts the typical patriarchal narrative of submissive silence, instead finding strength within the power of silence. For instance, Clara chooses to remain silent for nine years after the death of her older sister Rosa, a choice she makes after witnessing her sister's autopsy. The death of her sister hurts Clara deeply, but while she recovers from it with time, she still does not utilize her voice. She subsequently chooses to stay silent simply because "she did not feel like speaking," rather than being physically or emotionally incapable of speaking. Though initially her muteness resulted from trauma, similar to the silence forced upon numerous traumatized women who have no outlet for their pain, Clara subverts this state of affairs by choosing to remain silent even in happiness, finding inner clarity in her decision and gaining strength within her own spirit.

The novel clearly has many layers of meaning, and the marriage between Clara and Esteban Trueba rests at the heart of its complexity. Their relationship, a mismatch, enables Allende to examine two radically different ways of perceiving and reacting to a violent, often inexplicable world. Specifically, she plays Clara's respect for the integrity of the individual and for the magical side of life off of Esteban's authoritarian machismo. Through this contrast, she exposes the limitations and dangers of the patriarchal power structure prevalent in Latin America.

The clairvoyant Clara embodies the novel's comic spirit, for she believes that the world is not "a vale of tears but rather a joke that God had played and that it was idiotic to take it seriously if He himself never had." Clara's almost playful attitude is linked to her transcendent awareness that existence is not only governed by reason and by natural law but also by mysteries outside human knowledge. Thus, by communicating with spirits and performing psychic experiments, Clara persistently resists the masculine expectations that she stand firmly within the reality of everyday domestic life. The magical Clara represents change in the story as she influences others with her spiritual world. Her spirituality is magnified by magical powers: she can predict events, communicate with spirits and move objects.

Clara's world of magic unquestionably subverts the rational world of Esteban Trueba who is affected by this world of "feminine-magic" sensibility and irrationality. At the end of the story, he is softened by Clara's influence. As she faces her oppressive husband, Esteban Trueba, Clara functions beyond reason as she is guided by tradition passed from one woman to another through gestures, body language, silence, and other performances.

Clara is an agent of change not only in her family but also in society. She has a special relationship also with Pedro Segundo, the peon who helps Esteban Trueba in *Tres Marias*. Without words, they almost instinctively form a union of solidarity to defy Esteban Trueba who represents the establishment. Pedro Segundo becomes Clara's support in the management of *Tres Marias* after an earthquake that causes great damage to the Estancia. Clara and Pedro Segundo join their efforts to run *Tres Marias* as Esteban Trueba is seriously injured and they become very close. They both count on each other and enjoy their moments together, though they fear Esteban Trueba. Both Clara and Pedro Segundo despise Esteban Trueba who treats them harshly having them under his control. Thus, they unite in their struggle against his oppressive power. Clara, again, is an agent of change as she breaks class barriers by creating this relationship with Pedro Segundo. The novel fosters the desire for the unity of classes: the upper class women and working class men in *Tres Marias* both struggling for social equality. As those who are on the margin, women and working men become allies in their struggle for social change.

The special relationship that Clara and Ferula, Esteban Trueba's sister, develop represents another alliance, similar to the one between Clara and Pedro Segundo. They also form solidarity against the oppressing Esteban Trueba. Clara senses Ferula's death and announces it: "Clara opened the eyes. She was still having difficulty breathing, and tears were running down her

cheeks and neck, staining her blouse. (“Ferula is dead”), she announced. (149). Both Clara and Ferula care for each other, and their emotional connection infuriates Esteban Trueba, who becomes jealous of their relationship. Esteban Trueba even accuses Ferula of witchcraft and Clara of having a lesbian affair with his sister. That is why, when Esteban Trueba finds Ferula sleeping in the same bed as Clara, he loses his temper and prohibits Ferula from seeing his family again. Clara and Ferula’s caring relationship forms an alliance that defies Esteban Trueba’s power. However, their characters are different. Ferula accepts her position as a woman in a traditional society that dominates her voice and induces her to be silent and do as the norms of society stipulate. Her silence means acceptance, as society forces her to take care of her mother and not to speak up for her dreams and rights.

Clara, on the contrary, challenges the traditional role of women in society, and paves the way towards women’s liberation as she fights oppression by living in her spiritual world, defying Esteban Trueba with silence. Clara’s silence is a means of rebellion as she uses it as a way to stand up for herself when Esteban beats her. Clara does stay with her husband but she decides not to speak to him again, using silence as a form of oppression for Esteban Trueba. Esteban is the prime patriarch of the family, and Clara’s refusal to engage within his oppressive verbal space represents her rejection of the patriarchal narrative of the silenced woman by turning it on its head. Clara knows that she cannot directly speak out against her husband’s actions, even his violence, understanding that his behaviour is condoned by and in line with society—he has, for example, abused and raped the women of Tres Marias in the past, but as the patron of the area, he never experiences any legal opposition or societal condemnation for his actions. Esteban’s treatment of his wife and child will warrant no repercussions, so Clara, rather than speaking against him, chooses to punish him directly through her silence. This active silence subverts both “patriarchal social and literary scripts,” as it is a result of her own choice rather than Esteban’s (Jenkins 64). Rather than arguing with Esteban in a space where he holds the most power, Clara creates her own space under her total control.

During her silences, Clara turns to the one realm in which she can fully control her voice: writing. As a young girl Clara begins to record the details of her life in notebooks, and she continues to keep these notebooks, supplemented by letters written to and from her daughter Blanca, until she dies. In her silent periods, she uses a slate to communicate, writing notes to her family—but never, in her last silence, to Esteban; instead, as stated above, she uses her children as messengers, thereby refusing to grant him access to her aural voice. Through writing, she is able to construct the narrative of her life by her own hand. Historically, the

narratives of women have been primarily authored or altered by men, if they were even published at all, but Clara retains full control of her notebooks, and later transfers that control to her granddaughter Alba. Through her writing, Clara constructs a narrative that authentically recounts the experiences she, her daughter, and her granddaughter endure, free of patriarchal alterations. Clara serves as an example to the audience—like Clara, readers also have the ability to construct their own personal narratives, and deny outside forces the option of altering their lived experiences.

Clara retreats into her world of fantasy to escape the dysfunction of her family. This can be construed as weakness, but it could also be construed as a way to go inside herself and gain the strength she needed to survive. The problem is that the reader knows too little of her inner thoughts to be sure if her method of dealing with her situation is effective. Blanca does not have any magical aspects to her really. She is quite practical. She does stand up for herself, unlike her mother. She falls in love with a lower class native and they have a child together. Despite this rebellion, her father still exerts a great deal of control over her, and she is forced to marry a French man. The strongest sign of Blanca's feminism is how she reverses the tale to become more focused on the women in the family. Alba is the only one who truly stands up to her grandfather, the male patriarch of the family. She is the only one who got to know him and stopped being afraid of him as mother and grandmother were.

Blanca, Clara's daughter, lacks her mother's clairvoyance, but mirrors her mother's habitual writing through her letters to her Clara, which they exchange whenever she and Clara are apart. During particularly busy times in Clara's life, Blanca's letters replace the notebooks as a form of record-keeping. However, while her mother and daughter express their emotions through writing, Blanca instead primarily gives shape to her voice through the visual arts. When she and her lover, Pedro Tercero, finally consummate their relationship, Blanca is unable to tell anyone of her experience. Instead, she channels her feelings into "insipid watercolors"; the meaning of these paintings confuses Clara until she discovers her daughter's romantic relationship (Allende 157). As an extension of this interest in visual arts, Clara convinces Blanca to work with her hands during periods of sadness or illness in order to busy herself, and so Blanca finds her true creative passion: clay pottery. Old Pedro Garcia, the grandfather of Pedro Tercero, teaches Blanca to shape clay into cookery (173). Growing bored with this kind of output, Blanca creates a vast array of human and animal figures out of clay, expanding into the world of the imaginary with fantastical hybrid creatures.

While Blanca lacks her mother's spiritual powers, Alba appears to inherit a version of Clara's precognitive skills, and later, her ability to speak to spirits. Alba meets Esteban Garcia, the illegitimate grandson of Esteban Trueba, twice as a child, during which he assaults her both times out of jealousy towards her legitimate status and his desire to exert control over others due to a lack of control over his own life. After these incidents, Alba has nightmares involving Garcia as a "green beast" that tried to suffocate her "by shoving a slimy tentacle down her throat"; the narration notes that, these nightmares are a "premonition" of future events (328). This shared power reinforces the connection Alba and Clara experience, the connection that makes Clara the strongest presence in Alba's life. Though Alba's purpose in writing is mainly to record her family's history from a female perspective, she also has her own motive: she writes to survive the trauma she has undergone and begin her life anew. Alba remembers and records not just her own memories, but also those of her female ancestors from several generations before her. Alba begins to write (mentally and literally) in order to survive, but once she is set free from political prison, she continues writing, fuelled by her determination to keep on living with purpose. Her personal and familial motives are connected in the way that she halts the bloody history of patriarchy and the government by inscribing a new version of events.

While writing *The House of the Spirits*, Alba asserts, "I have to break that terrible chain. I want to think that my task is life and that my mission is not to prolong hatred but simply to fill these pages while I wait for Miguel, while I bury my grandfather, [...] while I wait for better times to come, while I carry this child in my womb, the daughter of so many rapes or perhaps of Miguel, but above all, my own daughter" (Allende 432). It is important to note that Alba is not blindly optimistic about the future. She will never forget the hardships she and her family have experienced. Alba does choose to forget, however, the many possible "fathers" of her daughter, instead claiming the baby in her womb as "above all, my own daughter," and the next strong woman in the del Valle-Trueba legacy. Alba's own struggle parallels the struggles of Latin American women, rewriting their own history, inserting their unique perspective as well as incorporating a strong sense of hope.

Magic is unattainable for the men of *The House of the Spirits* especially Esteban Trueba, the patron. He deems magic "like cooking and religion" an exclusively "feminine affair" (Allende, 158). Unable to understand the reality of the magic, Esteban stubbornly believes that there is "clearly need for a man among so many hysterical women" (133). Trueba, patriarchy incarnate, seems to be unable to understand women's fantastic abilities. He calls them

“hysterical” and “mad”, labels applied to women who do not conform to principles of mental health in the phallogentric cultures.

Allende’s narrative is double-voiced with the female sex at the upper hand. In doing so, she re-genders magic and clairvoyance, empowers her sex by giving women the right of naming children and story-telling, and then, modifies the mutations of the Ave/Eva or virgin/whore dichotomy (Hatjakes, 54). Magic, however, is undermined in the second part of the novel but it does not fade out. While Patricia Hart (1987) argues that “the novel consistently undercuts the importance of magical events portrayed, and leans over more strongly toward human solutions to mankind’s problem” (237), Allende seems to be in love with magic since she finds it as an invisible foundation to liberate the female sex. Hart goes even further and puts the “feminist twist” of the novel “in doubt” (235). Allende’s women find empowerment through subtle things such as love, memories and spirituality during Latin American revolutionary times and when hostile dictatorships forced women to come out of their home to participate actively in the political and social world.

The restrictions placed on Clara, Blanca, and Alba are subverted and redirected to create a narrative entirely controlled by female voices and experiences. Similarly, Allende herself constructs a narrative with the goal of establishing a feminine voice that is granted the agency typically denied to female voices by the dominating patriarchal discourse, creating a space in which female narratives are both fully realized and, most importantly, accessible to future generations.

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Death and Transmutation in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson and Marjorie Pickthall: A Comparative Study

Venkatasamy Ayothi

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Marjorie Pickthall (1883-1922) belonged to the patriarchal culture. They started writing poetry when they were still in their teens. Both the poets turned their gaze inwards to find in the landscape of the soul of all sorts of fine sunrise and moonlight effects. Sometimes they sing like lone nightingales to cheer their loneliness. They wrote their poems as they lived their lives in extreme individuality, at the same time surrounded and partly bound by conventionality. They have exhibited in their poetry a sense of wording, a sureness of feeling and a passionate grasp of life. To use a well-known cliché, Emily Dickinson was far ahead of her time. Her genius found expression in an idiom which struck her contemporaries as odd and even unpoetical. Pickthall, whose career ended abruptly at the age of 39, was hailed as genius and seer by Canadian critics of the early twentieth century. E.K. Brown wrote in 1943, "More than any other poet of this century, she was the object of a cult . . . unacademic critics boldly placed her among the few immortal names" (65). To Archibald MacMechan, Pickthall's death meant the silencing of the truest, sweetest singing voice ever heard in Canada (47).

The themes of Pickthall and Dickinson include the changing seasons, singing birds, love, death and immortality. They were preoccupied with death and they seem to accept death as a female space; but rather than be condemned to be eternal silence which death implies, they turn silence into a female aesthetic. As daughters of inarticulate Mother Nature, both the poets struggled against the silence which was their female inheritance.

To Pickthall, death serves as an end to the struggle of life as a tranquillizing and unifying force. Her strongest and clearest voice emanates from the unquiet grave of "The Wife":

Living, I had no might

To make you hear,
Now, in the inmost night,
I am so near
No whisper, falling light,
Divide us, dear.
Living, I had no claim
On your great hours.
Now the thin candle-flame,
The closing flowers,
Wed summer with my name,
— And these are ours.
Your shadow on the dust,
Strength, and a cry,
Delight, despair, mistrust, —
All these am I.
Dawn and the far hills thrust
To a far sky.
Living, I had no skill
To stay your tread,
Now all that was my will
Silence has said.
We are one for good and ill
Since I am dead. (Pickthall 201)

Surely, the most silent woman in patriarchal culture is the betrayed wife. This wife fails in her attempt to make her unfaithful husband listen to her complaints while she is alive. She had no might and skill to stop him. But death has put an end to all her problems. Therefore,

she has accepted death and she is dead and peaceful in her grave. Through the eloquent silence of death, she can finally exert the force of her will. The narrowness of her life, like the narrowness of her grave, is reflected in the 'narrow' shape of the poem on the page. Her repeated statements, "Living, I had no might", "Living, I had no claim," "Living, I had no skill" imply the repeated shocks and oppression she got from life for she has always been a victim. After death she is a powerful reproach. Her husband never cared for though she loved him very much. But, now, after death and having merged with the elements of nature like dawn, the sky, the hills and seasons, the woman has absorbed the power of nature's silent speech. Her sinister silence will forever haunt his shadow, his strength, the sound of his own voice. The penultimate line mocks their empty marriage vow, "one for good and ill" because only death and not life, has the power to make them one for good and ill. It is no coincidence that the thrice repeated statement "Living, I had . . ." is a poetic rendering of "self definition" before "self-assertion." What this poem is saying is that the poet, having found out how her self is defined, is now asserting that self. It is, of course, a poetic or fictive self but personal experience is also integrated here. She looks back to the period in her life in which she became defined by the oppressive culture in which she had existed.

Like Pickthall, Dickinson also finds solace and strength in Death and goes a step ahead of her in welcoming Death as her lover. In her poem "Because I could not Stop for Death," she prepares herself to receive death politely as befits a gentle woman receiving the attention of a gentlemen caller.

Because I could not stop for death,
He kindly stopped for me;
. . .
And I had put away
My labour, and my leisure too,
For his civility. (Oliver 332)

Like Pickthall, Dickinson accepts death as a fact. What makes death fascinating to the poet is that it is the 'hyphen' between the mortal life and the dream of immortality. Death is endowed with admirable qualities and honourable intentions; it is stripped of all its cruelty qualities and horror. Death, when it comes, can have no terror for Dickinson because she

waits for it with the eagerness of a beloved waiting for her lover. The idea that it is different from a common place domestic occurrence is suggested obtrusively.

The carriage held but just ourselves

And immortality. (Oliver 332)

Both the female poets repond to the invitation of death willingly. Both find relief and pleasure in the kingdom of death. In this, both are helped by what their religion has taught them, namely, that death is not annihilation but the gateway of immortality and eternal life.

Pickthall's poem "Love Unfound" and Dickinson's poem "I Never Lost as Much But Twice" deal with their experience of the death of their dear ones, who have left them at a loss. Pickthall's poem is an intense search for a lost female ancestor and Dickinson's is for her beloved friends. Perhaps Pickthall is expressing the loss of her mother, Lizzy Pickthall, in the following lines:

She was earth before earth gave
Me a heart to miss her;
Stars and summers were her grave,
Any rains might kiss her;
Wild sweet ways love would not cross
Curbed in sorrels and green moss.
She's been dust a hundred springs;
Still her face comes glancing
Out of glimmering water-rings
Where the gnats are dancing;
Loosed is she in lilac flowers,
Lost in bird-songs and still hours.
If I'd lived when kings were great, —
Greater I than any, —
I'd have sold my olden state

For a silver penny,
Just to find her, just to keep,
Just to kiss her eyes asleep. (Pickthall 126)

The poem is subtitled “A Portrait,” but clearly the image of this dead female ancestor is not a painted portrait but a landscape painting. Even a hundred years after his disappearance from memory, traces of her image are still recognizable in the landscape which has absorbed her. As the last stanza suggests, even if the poet could exchange her female powerlessness for the male power to change the world, she could still not reclaim her lost matrilineal heritage. Indeed, so irrevocably lost is the identity of this ancestor that it is beyond even the highest order of male power to recover it. Dickinson describes a similar ‘loss’ as follows:

I never lost as much but twice,
And that was in the sod;
Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!
Angels, twice descending,
Reimbursed my store.
Burglar, banker, father,
I am poor once more! (Oliver 309)

The loss which made Dickinson a beggar at the door of God could mean the departure of Mr. Emmons or the death of Mr. Humphrey, her close friends. But this loss was reimbursed in the form of another friendship with Rev. Charles Wadsworth, whom she called “my closest earthly friend.” But that also withered away, and she is “poor once more.” Hence, she is angry with God and calls him a burglar and a banker. However, the tone is one of familiarity, and tenderness, unmistakable even in the voice of righteous indignation.

Pickthall and Dickinson thought that death might result in a total loss of their identity; their identities might be erased through merger with nature. The universal fear of poets — the fear of leaving “No word,” “no following voices” and the fear of becoming a “nobody” — are undeniably present in the poems of the two poets. In the following lines, Pickthall communicates her loss of identity as the silenced woman and the silenced poet:

She went, She left no trace to find her
No word with wind or flower
No rose, no rose let fall behind her
That lasted but an hour.
She went. She left no following voices,
No sign with star or stream,
Yet still the dreaming earth rejoices
It knew her from a dream. (Pickthall 200)

This poem has a “pre-conscious” feel to it. The female figure depicted here is lost to human history. The negation made explicit through the six-fold repetition of the word “no,” makes it difficult to deny that the intention is to emphasize the unequivocal silencing of this female figure. A similar awareness makes Dickinson write:

I’m nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there is a pair of us — don’t tell !
They’d banish us, you know.
How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a fog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog! (Oliver 317)

The poet longs to be “somebody” because there is every chance of she becoming a “nobody.” The total loss of identity may be compensated with a new friend. Dickinson had already found fault with God for having taken away all her friends. She is at last left with no name or fame and no friends. She is not even given the choice of living with her close friends.

The images of forgotten woman and inarticulate poet are strong in Pickthall’s poem “Theano”:

All you who spared lost loveliness a tear,

All you who gave some grief to beauty fled,
Go your ways singing. Grief is ended where
Theano laid her head.
She was so merry. Winter did her wrong.
She was so young. Spring proved her unkind.
It loosed her like a bird without a song,
A flower upon the wind.
Here in the shadow and the heat I stray,
Spring's hand in mine, her music round me flung,
Seeking the bird that fled me yesterday
With all her songs unsung. (Pickthall 199)

Theano is one of those minor figures in classical mythology whose identity is so fragmented and scattered throughout the myths it can be said of her that she has no identity at all. She is such a shadowy figure that her life must go unsung, her death ungrieved; she is "loosed . . . like a bird without a song." The poet sums up Theano's life in four short, almost monosyllabic statements. It is all that she could do because it seems that spring had been as unkind to her as it was to Theano; the poet strays through "the shadow and the heat" in search of her lost muse; like Theano it has disappeared "With all her songs unsung."

As the poem suggests, it is silence rather than speech which calls for interpretation. As daughters of inarticulate Mother Nature, both Pickthall and Dickinson struggled against the silence which was their female inheritance.

Pickthall complains in her poem "Exile," that even the choice of selecting the burial ground was not given to her.

I chose the place where I would rest
When death should come to claim me,
With the red-rose roots to wrap my breast
And a quiet stone to name me.
But I am laid on a northern steep

With the roaring tides below me,
And only the frosts to bind my sleep.
And only the winds to know me. (Pickthall 77)

Dickinson and Pickthall successfully managed to transform female silence into a song. They discovered that separation from Mother Nature means loss of Identity by Mother Nature. Mother Nature's womb is also a tomb, and for these two female poets, identified as they are with non-transcendence and fatality, death is essentially a female space.

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Language of Power: AnandNeelakantan's Retelling of the Mahabharata as the Narrative of the Authoritative Feminine

Lekshmi R Nair

The female body/being has been for centuries regarded as the site of dominant/subordinate ideological as well as cultural articulation. Epics, myths, fairy tales and folklores have been the source of perennial interest and deliberations in that they have offered insights into the way gender roles were constructed and practiced in ancient times. These depictions have certainly influenced the cultural and ideological constructs of femininity over the ages. With the advent of modern feminist discourses challenging patriarchal delineations of gender roles, classical depictions of femininity in epics, myths and fairy tales have become the source of renewed critical explorations and interpretations. AnandNeelakantan's retelling of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* forays into the field of gender discourse and daubs epic femininity with fresh and vibrant colours. Spread out in two volumes, *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* and *Ajaya: Rise of Kali*, Neelakantan's retelling is the narrative of the vanquished, the downtrodden and the less fortunate who failed to claim a place of their own in popular renditions of the saga of the Kuru Clan and the epic battle of the Kurukshetra fought between the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

Popular narratives often tend to designate female characters as 'good' or 'bad' depending on their ideological contributions to the masculine narrative. The author bestows these female characters with a rare sensitivity and sexuality and elevates them above and beyond the dichotomous categorizations of good and evil. Draupadi, Gandhari, Kunti, Subhadra and Bhanumati are caught in an intricate web of social relationships, cultural beliefs and ideological preconceptions that dictate the terms of their existence in a masculine world. Their command of language itself suggests the existence of a counter-power that undermines the masculine power and male subjectivity.

The blind-folded Queen of Hastinapur, Gandhari finds herself preoccupied with countering her sister-in-law Kunti's moves to claim the throne for her eldest son. "The palace crackled with intrigue and conspiracy between the two powerful women, fighting for the future of their children" (*Roll of the Dice* 27). Shakuni, Gandhari's brother regards her as the most powerful woman in the entire sub-continent and the real power behind the blind King. He is intimidated by her commanding presence and feels exposed before her. She was assertive without being rude and even the old regent Bhishma rarely overturned her decisions. She admits that she had been full of spite for the people of Hastinapura in her younger days as a newly-wed. But with the prospect of her son Suyodhana being the King of the vast Kuru Empire, she is ready to bury her hatred for Hastinapura for stealing her sight and destroying her beloved Gandhara. She does not fall for the lowly tricks of her scheming brother and warns him to stay away from her children. "Keep your schemes, intrigues and those blasted dice, which you claim to be made from our father's thigh, away from my sons" (*Roll of the Dice* 140). She despised Kunti and regarded her as a devious ignoble woman. She does not acknowledge Kunti's sons as the legitimate heirs of the Kuru Clan and categorically states that such bastard sons have no right to raise a claim to the throne of Hastinapura. She doted over her eldest son and was proud of his nobility. At the same time, she feared for her son. "In the world inhabited by Shakuni and Krishna, she knew her son was all alone, fighting a fool's battle" (*Roll of the Dice* 314). She was convinced that her son would one day fall victim to the treachery of Kunti and her sons.

Gandhari is a woman of honour and who would not tolerate any atrocities. When she learns about Draupadi's disrobing in the court, she rushes in and slaps Suyodhana hard on his face. "I am ashamed. Where were the Acharyas and Gurus when a woman was being humiliated in our own Sabha?" (*Rise of Kali* 33) She is well-versed in the art of governance that even the King Dhritarashtra pays heed to her words of wisdom. She advises Suyodhana: "A good politician knows when to act noble and when to be ruthless. Politics is the art of using others to achieve your goals" (*Roll of the Dice* 189). Once the Kurukshetra battle is over, Gandhari comes to the battle field and questions Krishna about his *dharma* and accuses him of gifting the Pandavas a consciousness riddled with guilt for killing their kin in the most unfair manner. She was ready to forgive the unfair killing of her children but not the inhuman treatment meted out to her blind husband sunk in grief at the death of all his sons. When the old King is made to look like a fool and his grief and blindness is made the object of ridicule, she lashes out at Krishna, convinced that he deserves the worst. She curses him for making a mockery of

all that is fair and true, for bloodshed and misery, for the violence he has unleashed and for confusing people about *dharma* and *adharma*. “I curse you. May your tribe butcher each other to death and cousins turn on each other. . . May you die an inglorious death, hunted like an animal!” (*Rise of Kali* 464). From a strong Queen and a proud mother of hundred valiant sons, Gandhari finds herself reduced to being a woman, embittered and gravely wronged by life.

The mother of the Pandavas, Kunti is portrayed as a conniving woman of strong character and intelligence who would stop at nothing to ensure the throne of Hastinapura to her eldest son, Yudhishtira. Tactfully she aligns herself with the brahmins in the court and holds more fundamentalist views than even the priests. She is not afraid to speak out her mind before the elders in the family and demands justice for her sons whom she claims are the legitimate heirs to the throne. She harshly criticises Bhishma’s interventions in Suyodhana’s favour when the court is in session: “Your heart has become as hard as a rock, Lord Bhishma. You do not know what a mother feels. You have never married nor do you know what children mean to their parents” (*Roll of the Dice* 154). She is determined to stop Suyodhana from inheriting his father’s throne. She is remorseless as she traps the nishada woman, her five children and the seven guards inside the house of lac using food as bait. She is willing to sacrifice the lives of innocent people for what she considers a worthy cause for the sake of dharma. She is an ambitious and ruthless former queen who believes that she had lived a miserable life on the fringes of a great kingdom that rightfully belonged to her dead husband, King Pandu. She is constantly seen manipulating others in favour of her sons and instigating hatred for Gandhari’s sons in the minds of the Pandavas. Kunti is quick to sense the jealousy of her other four sons towards Arjuna for having won the hand of the Panchala Princess Draupadi in a contest. She takes a momentous decision to have Arjuna share his wife with his brothers which alters the course of history forever. Once the war is over Kunti is disheartened by the deaths of her grandchildren and requests her sons to spare the life of Aswathama. Gandhari and Kunti find themselves united in grief. All their lives the two of them had waged bitter battles for their sons and now found themselves weeping over their lost youth, lost sons and grandsons and “for the life they had forgotten to live in their pursuit of power” (*Rise of Kali* 480). Both these women question the authority of the patriarchal system and makes crucial interventions, influencing, moulding and redirecting the course of the future history of the Kuru Empire. The power and authority that these women exude is immense and they are never intimidated or cowed down by their male relations. They stand their ground even in adversities and the

language that they speak breaks apart all traditional conceptions of the female as docile, unreceptive and subservient.

Draupadi is yet another female protagonist of the epic narrative distinguished by her fierce independence, courage and determination. A woman with high self-esteem she often displays strength of character and fortitude in the face of adversity which her demi-god husbands pathetically lack. She buries her love for Karna forever in the inner recesses of her consciousness. She burns with indignation as Kunti refers to her as just 'it', "a thing without heart and feelings; to be bartered, shared, fought over, and pawned when its use was over" (*Roll of the Dice* 330). She explodes in rage, unable to remain silent in the face of such humiliation: "Am I a prostitute to share the bed of all your sons?" asks a spirited Draupadi to Kunti (*Roll of the Dice* 331). She questions Arjuna's righteousness and ridicules Kunti and her concept of *dharma* in severe terms: "Mother, I hope these are all the sons you have. . . . So I do not wake one day to find myself wife to half a dozen men. I am sure there are enough scriptural authorities to prove that too, would be my *dharma*" (*Roll of the Dice* 332). When she learns that she had been pawned and lost by Yudhishtira in the Court, she contemptuously challenges his authority to stake her: "Am I your chattel to pawn when you wish, share when you want, and sell when you fancy?" (*Rise of Kali* 27). She realises that her husbands were mere cowards - "puppets controlled by priests and obscure texts" incapable of defending the honour of their wife (*Rise of Kali* 29). The atrocities committed against her in the Kuru *Sabha* make her spiteful and avows to have her revenge on the Kaurava clan. She resolutely declares that she will not tie her hair until her husbands are men enough to kill Sushasana. The horror of war strikes her with overwhelming force. She loses all her five sons in the battle and in a moment of utter grief she lashes out at Kunti: "You poisoned your sons' minds and created this war. You made me marry your five sons and ruined me" (*Rise of Kali* 468). From a wrathful woman who wished to drink the blood of her enemies she had been transformed into a mother who had sacrificed her children in a war that ironically, had no winners. As death finally claims her she utters Karna's name - a testimony of her true love for the Suta whose affection she had so heartlessly shunned and shamed in the past in the name of honour.

The other two prominent characters in Neelakantan's re-telling of the epic tale are Subhadra and Bhanumati. Subhadra is Krishna's sister and is depicted as the love interest of Suyodhana. She shares his passion and assures him of a life of love and togetherness. But without offering any explanation she rejects his love and elopes with his cousin Arjuna, for whom she suddenly develops affection. She is not embarrassed to be in Suyodhana's presence

and acts as if nothing had transpired between them in the past. Her nonchalance surprises Suyodhana and he is tempted to think: “Did my love mean nothing to Subhadra?” (*Roll of the Dice* 370). Like Draupadi, Subhadra is a woman who is not ashamed to speak out her true feelings. They discuss the men they know in very casual terms ridiculing their inadequacies and admiring their courage and valour. They openly admit that had Karna been a Kshatriya, they would both have chosen him above all others as a future husband. She meets Suyodhana stealthily at night and requests him to spare the life of her only son, Abhimanyu in the battle of Kurukshetra. Unashamedly she asks him: “Do you still think of me?” (*Rise of Kali* 328). She tries to ignite the old passion in Suyodhana and force him into emotional submission to her will and thereby rescue her son’s life. When she realises that her efforts are in vain she turns vindictive and threatens Suyodhana: “I will tell my son not to flinch if his arrow points at you. . . .keep away your Lakshmana Kumara from the battlefield. If the royal poet shows his face to Abhimanyu, you can start making the funeral arrangements for your son” (*Rise of Kali* 331). Subhadra had perfect faith in her charms and does not find it unbecoming to meet her old lover at night without her husband’s knowledge. She has no qualms about playing with his emotions and quickly changes stance when she realises that things are not turning out as she had expected. She had such confidence in her ability to melt Suyodhana’s heart in her son’s favour that she is angered and embittered by his rejection. Her parting words have the effect of a curse and are reflective of her arrogant, determined and free-willed nature.

Bhanumati, the wife of crown prince Suyodhana, is a woman of unwavering instincts who is never afraid to confront her husband about his decisions. She loved her noble husband and was always scared that some harm may befall him. It causes her great anguish and pain when she realises that her husband loved and trusted his friend Karna more than his wedded wife. She had the nagging feeling that her husband’s friends would one day be the cause of his ruin. However she strongly disapproves of Suyodhana’s treatment of Draupadi in the *Sabha*: “It is you who should be asking forgiveness, Suyodhana, for the way you treated Draupadi When has disrobing women become a Kshatriya trait? You talk about a caste-free society, yet stand on Kshatriya pride” (*Rise of Kali* 67). She was always distrustful of Abhimanyu and when her son Lakshmana Kumara is killed by him, she wails like a mad woman and asks her husband to avenge their son’s death: “I want to see your Subhadra weep like me. Go! Get me Abhimanyu’s head! Give me your word as a man that you will kill him” (*Rise of Kali* 376). She tells her husband that he had turned her into a monster. Bhanumati is disconsolate when she learns from Aswathama that Suyodhana had not mentioned her in his dying moments. “It

was always Karna . . . only Karna. The day the Suta entered Suyodhana's life, he was cursed" says Bhanumati in utter anguish. (*Rise of Kali* 473).

A deep sense of loss and hurt pervades the life of all these female characters. They come to terms with their grief exhibiting a rare strength of character and understanding. Even in their moments of absolute torment their words reflect a strong sense of honour and rectitude that the men around them find hard to refute or negate. Neelakantan's narrative forays into the intricate edifices of femininity and female subjectivity. All these women exhibit unreserved adoration for their loved ones and are prepared to go to any extent to warrant their safety and happiness. Against popular conceptions of the epic female as the loyal and devoted wife, they discuss other men and openly admire their valour and good looks. In one of their conversations, Draupadi admits to Subhadra that Yudhistira was a boring husband and how she could have Bhima do her bidding. It is an open secret that Draupadi still harbours feelings for Karna and is not at all perturbed when Subhadra alludes to it mischievously. She plays along and joins the fun. The camaraderie that exist between Subhadra and Draupadi who share a common husband, Arjuna, and between Bhanumati and Subhadra, who had been the former lover of her husband Suyodhana is very fascinating revealing and subverts our notions of the jealous and possessive female.

The re-telling offers a distinctive insight into the interface between gender and identity. The author attempts to reclaim the female agency and establish the complex relationship between womanhood and vengeance. Gandhari, Draupadi, Subhadra and Bhanumatiturn vindictive and demand retribution for the wrongs done against them. Life-long misery and denigration makes Kunti bitter and rancorous. Their wrath burns down a whole dynasty and the feminine subjectivity transcends the binaries of gender distinction. The author subverts the binary construct of femininity as meek, passive, silent and accepting of male superiority and vests his female characters with intelligence, independence and aggressiveness. They are hot-tongued detractors of the actions of the male protagonists in the narrative and are often dangerously assertive of their views. Their dialectal pre-eminence is manifested in a number of instances and actually dictates the terms in which future history is enacted. As a defining cultural narrative of masculine and feminine gender constructs, the re-tellings of the Mahabharata has substantially revamped our notions of gender and identity. Neelakantan's female characters determine the course of future history and dominate their respective spheres of authority so much so that his retelling of the history of the Kuru Clan

becomes a narrative of the authoritative feminine and an exploration of epic feminine subjectivity.

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Identity of a Second Generation Coloniser- Choice, Genes, or Destiny in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*

Anna George

This article attempts to understand the complex identity of colonisers who have been raised in colonies and enquires in what ways and liminality can a coloniser be influenced by the culture of the colony with reference to the novel *Kim* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling. Homi K Bhabha describes how colonisation of the mind encompasses essentially idolisation and imitation of colonisers. But when a coloniser stays in the colony and if his progeny grows up among the people in the colony, it is curious how the child of a coloniser, (referred to as second generation coloniser) born in a colonial state with little idea about his own nation, will shape his/her identity.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was a writer born and raised in colonial India and his familiarity with colonial India can be seen in many of his works. He lived in a period when colonisation was celebrated as benevolence and necessity of a colonised nation. He saw the colonial venture lose its grandeur. His eponymous novel *Kim* depicts the story of Kimball O'Hara junior, a white orphan raised in the bazaars of Lahore with little contact with his race or country. The novel is set at the end of 19th century. In the novel, Kim becomes a Tibetan lama's disciple and eventually becomes a secret service agent in the British army. The shifting political stances and Kim's self-discovery gives us a vivid but narrow minded picture of how a coloniser looked at India and what a coloniser's child was expected to be.

“Not so very long ago, the earth numbered 2000 million inhabitants, that is, 500 million human beings and 1500 million natives.” (Sartre 153) Sartre presents a macabre picture of European ideology which can be traced as an undercurrent in many literary works published and promoted in English. The notion that anyone outside Europe was subhuman and uncivilized was one of the motivations that glorified colonisation for ages. A coloniser may have started his journey because he has encountered problems in his motherland (not necessarily though).

Sometimes, it was the conflicts in religious and political areas that caused migrations while sometimes it was a thirst for adventure and requirement money and resources- that is a picture we get from novels like *Heart of Darkness* and *Robinson Crusoe*. But once a coloniser reached a colony, he tried to recreate his homeland with alterations of his choices- he named places in the colony after the place names in his country, he christened his servants and slaves with European names and constructed Victorian style monuments in colonies. Differentiating oneself from the natives was of paramount importance for establishing and maintaining superiority, particularly when a coloniser stayed in the colony. Hence, it can be assumed that though the coloniser left his country, he holds his nationality as a part of his identity and uses it to dominate foreign lands. It seems that this was a major concern for many colonisers from the very beginning of colonial ventures. But the crux of the problem was to gain support and trust of a few natives while guarding one not to be one of them. The political and psychological balance would eventually bring a sense of admiration towards the European coloniser among the local population.

The First War of Indian Independence of 1857 referred as Sepoy mutiny in the nineteenth century British newspapers, brought important changes towards the approach of British colonisers towards Indians. The problem that triggered the mutiny was the lack of understanding of cultural nuances of India and as Karl Marx remarked that the reason for the bloodshed was the ongoing exploitation of Indians. However, “the lack of acknowledgement of the people and the varied cultures, the dehumanisation and lack of empathy caused an upheaval not just in Indian but in several colonies in the nineteenth century”. (Chakravathy 127) The British newspapers were appalled by the war. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Christina Rossetti wrote poems praising the soldiers who fought against the mutineers. But there was an attempt to move from the British authorities to appease a selected few Indians and understand the people to rule them with less hassle.

The new Royal government took charge of rule in India and they kept away from Christian missionaries. It was felt that religious sentiments were hurt when missionaries converted Hindus and Muslims. The huge parades, or durbars, at which the new empress of India received the allegiance of the hierarchies of traditional India through her viceroy, seemed to symbolise the new conservatism of the regime. (Marshall 326)

One could be British and superior to Indians, better than Indians at their forte, even if the British have no contact with the British lifestyle. It is safe to mix among the masses and

bazaars of India though it may seem repulsive because ethnicity and genes never change. It is possible to train British students in a proper fashion different from Indians and mould them into British in culture even before they visited Europe if they are given proper training. This is one obvious idea Kipling puts forward in *Kim*.

To justify colonisation and highlight the necessity of it, there is a fair attempt to glorify colonisation that too quiet bluntly. It is exalted when the religious differences spark conflicts among Indian characters in the novels and when Indians clearly show respect and camaraderie towards British government officials in the novel. The First war of Independence in 1857 is glanced when a soldier in the British army narrates his experiences to Kim and lama. The soldier admires the courage of the British officers, referred to as 'Sahib', in the novel. He sings a song praising John Nicholson, an army officer who died during the First Independence war of 1857. The resistance against colonisation is looked down upon by the Indian soldier. Another character Mahmud Ali is involved with British intelligence agencies and admires the way the Sahib has taken so much pain for the nation and their discipline in the army throughout the novel. Kim grudgingly accepts favours from Mahmud, however, a prejudice has in his mind because Mahmud is a Muslim. Kim's father was a man respected as he was a soldier. Kimball O'Hara senior was heartbroken by his wife's death. After his wife's death, Kimball ignored his son and got addicted to opium and before he died he bequeathed his son Kim just one thing-Kim's birth certificate that showed his connection to the Masonic lodges in Britain. There were no relatives or other socially upward whites to take care of Kimball O'Hara. Though charity organisations tried to help the child they could not. "Kim was white- a poor white of the poorest.... Though. Chaplains tried their best to help him, O'Hara drifted away after his wife died... took opium and learned the taste and died as poor whites die in India. His estate consisted of three papers.... Those things, he would say, in his glorious opium hours, would yet make little Kimball a man." (Kipling 2) The museum curator, Colonel Creighton, Father Victor are all respected by the Indians around them. The novel makes it a point that British ruled the nation not just due to their racial superiority but also because of the difficulties they took and sacrifices they made for the Indian population. To rule India was not easy but a risky and miserable ordeal for the British, according to Kipling's novel.

We witness in postcolonial India, that the precolonial culture was marred by the social brainwashing and imitation which gradually led to complete alternation of the colonised culture. "Culture, as a colonial space of intervention and agonism, as the trace of displacement of the symbol to sign can be transformed by the unpredictable and partial desire for hybridity."

(Bhabha 164) The novel *Kim* is a specimen for how subtle and persistent the attempt to create a cultural displacement was. In the novel, Kim travels across North India with the Lama on a pilgrimage. The roads, the trains, all British made- seem sophisticated for the people Kim meets. Lama meets the curator of the Lahore museum and he is astounded when the curator knows so much about Buddhism while many in Lahore look at the Lama as if he is an. Lama was astounded when the curator shows him paintings of Devadatta, Kusinagara and Budha's meditation under the Bodhi tree. "Here is the little door through which we ring wood before winter. And thou English know of these things too? He who is now Abbot of Lung Cho told me, but I did not believe. The Lord- The Excellent one- He has honour here too?" (Kipling 11) The curator explains that the British have attempted to chronicle and collect details on Buddhism more than anyone before and that makes the Lama cry. "For the first time, he heard of the labours of European scholars who by the help of these and hundred other documents have identified the Holy Places of Buddhism.... The old man bowed his head over the sheets in silence for a while, and the curator lit another pipe." (Kipling 13-14) Such sentiments are common to many writers even today. Holmes says the humongous task of ruling 629 princely states and assures that the "British did bring free trade, the rule of law and relatively incorrupt market" (244) When a person does something undesirable, the character in the novel promptly blame him/her and the religion that person belongs to. When characters like Mahmud Ali, a Muslim and the lama, a Buddhist monk is met with hostility by other characters in the novel, there is a mild suggestion that the nation, India, never would have been together had it not been for the British colonisation. The justification of colonisation and the need for it to continue makes a reader believe that it is necessary for both the colony and the coloniser to continue living in the colony.

The term 'hybrid' is popularly used in postcolonial academic discourse as a paradigm that varies when one culture meets another to influence one another causing economic, social and psychological tensions. Hybrid, in the biological sense, is a progeny created artificially by combining two varieties. Kim, the protagonist in the novel, is a European, raised as an orphan in Lahore. When a colonised native, tries to imitate and adopt the ways of a coloniser, he reaches a limbo where he neither resembles his ancestors nor the colonisers. Even if a colonised individual, a native, undergoes a complete transformation, cuts oneself off his roots to the society he belongs to, it is impossible to be accepted as an equal among the colonisers, because of one's ethnicity. This was an observation made by Fanon when it came to Blacks in the Caribbean. "The civil state is the intimate expression of the innate ethical and rational

bent of the human mind; the social instinct is the progressive destiny of human nature, the necessary transition from nature to Culture.” (Bhabha 61) But when a White coloniser learns the ways of a native, it does not deny him agency and access among the colonisers. This can be observed in Kim’s journey from a street urchin to British secret service officer.

In the beginning of the novel, the writer makes it explicit that the protagonist was just like the native. Though the colour of his skin was lighter, he could easily be mistaken for an Indian (native, the term in the novel). This adaptability is a key skill that helps Kim when he works for the British intelligence. Kim is familiar with everyone in the streets of Lahore. Even on the road to Lucknow he is fondly called ‘friend of the world’ by his friends. The spiritual ways of the Tibetan Lama inspire him and he decides to be his chela (disciple). When the Lama insisted on begging for food on the pilgrimage to find the River of the Arrow, Kim went to his friends in Lahore to get food for the lama. He can easily build a rapport with any Indian he met. He could disguise as a student at a madrassah for a mission. The people he met on the journey to Lucknow- the soldier, the Kulu woman- all eagerly share their stories with him. It would be difficult to recognise he was a white unless one paid close attention to his skin tone. As Father Victor tells Father Bennet, “You see, he is not very dark.” (Kipling 177) Kim is a carefree independent kid for his age. He survived in areas that would have been too decrepit for an English boy, unlike Kim was familiar with the cities in India. He is familiar with religious beliefs of Hindus and Muslims and understands them as his Indian friends do and this is an ability his superior officers in the Secret Service are unable to achieve in spite of spending years in India. Lama got confused about the location of the River of the Arrow and unfortunately becomes a pawn of a Russian scheme against the British. British officers grow suspicious of Lama but Kim redirects the Lama and helps him reach his goals and attain Moksha.

When Kim accidentally enters an army camp, he falls into the hands of army officials who understand that this is no regular urchin but the son of a war hero. The army officials want to educate him to be a proper British citizen but Colonel Creighton had it in his mind to train him to be a secret service agent. Creighton finds it impossible to completely understand the natives. Many British officers face this problem and develop a prejudice towards the natives. In Kim, he finds a new range of colonisers who can disguise as a native, understand a native but be a Sahib. This is not an altruistic act but a more concrete way of ensuring that the colonisation would survive for long. Listening to the lifestyle of Kim, father Victor is shocked to see that “O’Hara’s boy had leagued with powers of darkness.” (Kipling 156) The

Lama decides to take care of his expenses and asks Kim to stay at school. The first school the army sent him was under the control of Father Bennet and Father Victor. Just like the new British government after 1857 Kim found it irksome. He misses home, his friends, the lama and tries to run away. Hence within two weeks, he is sent St. Xavier's School, a prestigious school under the initiative of Colonel Creighton. Once he is there, Kim adjusts to the new world of discipline and learning easily. He hardly misses the Lama, Mahmud Ali or the woman who raised him in Lahore. His sharp wit and learning ability make it easy for him to belong to the school. He gets well trained in manners of a Sahib quickly. At a very young age, he is recruited to be the part of the Great Game, a secret British intelligence mission against Russia. Once he passed from his school he is and enjoys being a Sahib though can pretend to be like natives.

Towards the end, Kim successfully completes the first mission he was given. He found his goal and he helped the Lama achieve his goals. He has a wide range of experiences that would make him an asset to the Secret Service. But, for a moment, he is haunted by the existential question of who he is. He practised Buddhism, was familiar with Hinduism and Islam and had converted to Christianity. He could easily live as a Sahib or as an ordinary citizen in India. The ending remains abrupt.

Both the Indian and the British influence together gives Kim his many abilities. He is selected by Creighton to the army because of his understanding of his natives. Kim's journey was relatively easy but it was not a cakewalk. "St. Xavier's detested boys who were too native." (Kipling 242). But he learnt Indian languages with accuracy, improved his social skills because of the exposure he had before he joined the school. Col. Creighton tells him, "You are in a subaltern debt." (Kipling 189)

But why did Kim have the luxury to choose, a freedom that even the writer does not intervene, is a blatant signification that this option is open only for whites. The boundary between Indians and British is partially permeable from one end. Kim can be Indian or British, as he chooses. A coloniser can be like a native and but real life experiences even in 21st century shows us that a native can never be accepted as one and equal among the colonisers. They may be accepted for a while, depended and rewarded for their services, like Mahmud Ali, but there is a chasm separating them which can be crossed only by a coloniser. The threshold is approachable and even inviting for the socially backward a people living on the fringes of a colony. But deep down both the coloniser and the natives would have accepted the

difference unquestionably. Kim, like many colonisers, can select the qualities he likes from the East and the West and choose to be any at any point of time. Even at the ending, Kim's choice is left unsaid. It implies the autonomy Kim has an individual because he is a Sahib. When there are worried discussions about migrations from Asian and African countries to the West where the colonisers had migrated and settled a century and when the world's most powerful nations involve in the domestic issues of nations which were once colonies in the name of democracy and concern, it shows how the colonial prejudice and racism still exists.

“The hybrid object, on the other hand, retains the actual semblance of the authoritative symbol but revalues its presence by resisting it as the signifier of *Entstellung*- after the intervention of the difference.” (Bhabha 266) To conclude it can be said that the concept of hybridity was once an anxiety for the British colonisers. But it was used with interests that served the colonisers during the colonisation. The novel *Kim* is an excellent example of the subtle shades of colonisation which made it look less brutal and more empathetic as and justifies indirectly the concept the colonisation was a necessity for the progress of colonies, and it was a burden European colonisers had graciously accepted. The darker and complex colonisation after the 1860s in India acts as a metaphor to initiate dependency and the imbalance is polished with the rapidly changing scenarios. Colonisation might be over but the aftermath still is present and its transient presence is felt in multiple dimensions because of this approach as can be seen in *Kim*.

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Larval Subjects on the Move: A Deleuzian Reading of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*

Neenumol Sebastian

An established voice of the Indian diaspora, Bharati Mukherjee addresses the issue of immigrant identity in a fresh light, contrary to the traditional perspectives that read displacement as a condition of loss and dispossession. Her writing is impacted by her own experience as a migrant in the United States and Canada. Her novels including *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997) and *Desirable Daughters* (2004), and short story collections like *Darkness* (1985), *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) and *Wanting America: Selected Stories* (1995) delineate characters who cross borders and fluctuate between spaces.

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's theories open up fresh paths in the analysis of diasporic fiction, leaving away the oft-beaten track of rootlessness and yearning for home. First published in French in 1968, his *Difference and Repetition* was a revolutionary treatise that shook traditional philosophical structures. According to Deleuze's concept of difference and repetition, in repetition nothing is ever the same: there is only difference, everything is constantly changing, and reality is a becoming, not a being. Two seemingly contradictory principles dominate his treatise on difference and repetition. The first principle implies that it is best for our actions to connect with all the things that have brought them about and that they can bring about. The second principle is that it is best to select our thoughts so that everything is left behind. Hence there is difficulty in acquiring a fixed identity.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is the saga of the eponymous heroine who undergoes violent transformations in her life. The novel's epigraph is taken from James Gleick's *Chaos*: "The new geometry mirrors a universe that is rough, not rounded, scabrous, not smooth. It is geometry of the pitted, pocked, and broken up, the twisted, tangled, and intertwined" (qtd. in Mukherjee 1). The tangled web of the heroine's experiences spreads among places and the

narrative moves back and forth in time. Jasmine is remoulded with each experience and has no roots to hold her to a particular place. In the *Preface to Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes: “Following Samuel Butler, we discover Erewhon, signifying at once the originary ‘nowhere’ and the displaced, disguised, modified and always re-created ‘here-and-now’. Neither empirical particularities nor abstract universals: a Cogito for a dissolved self” (xxi).

The novel’s opening sentence seems to proclaim the heroine’s fate: “LIFETIMES ago, under a banyan tree in the village of Hasnapur, an astrologer cupped his ears—his satellite dish to the stars—and foretold my widowhood and exile” (Mukherjee 3). But she is not ready to accept it blindly and tells the astrologer that he doesn’t know what her “future holds” (3). The sage’s advice, “suit yourself” (3), is remarkably significant for Jasmine because what ensues is rather unanticipated for Jasmine as well as the readers.

From the Indian village of Hasnapur, the narrative shifts to Iowa where Jasmine is living with Bud Ripplemeyer, a banker. She is pregnant, but they are not married. They have adopted a Hong Kong orphan named Du Thein. Jasmine can easily adapt to situations. She compares her partners: “Bud’s not like Taylor” (12). The connectedness of contemporary world is emphasised: “Fates are so intertwined in the modern world, how can a god keep them straight?” (15). She feels “the tug of opposing forces. Hope and pain. Pain and hope” (21). At times, memories of her earlier lives haunt her: “In the white lamplight, ghosts float toward me. Jane, Jasmine, Jyoti” (21). But Jasmine doesn’t want to carry the memory baggage with her. She is comfortable playing different roles without getting emotionally involved: “BUD calls me Jane. Me Bud, you Jane. I didn’t get it at first. He kids. Calamity Jane. Jane as in Jane Russell, not Jane as in Plain Jane. But Plain Jane is all I want to be. Plain Jane is a role, like any other” (26). Of course, it is painful when old ties are severed and new challenges are battled: “There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remake oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the images of dreams” (29).

Jasmine is born into a family and society which considered “daughters were curses” (39). Her experiences take her away from home, homeland and expected conventions of femininity: “My grandmother may have named me Jyoti, Light, but in surviving I was already Jane, a fighter and adapter” (40). During her childhood, Jasmine’s “whole world was the village of Hasnapur” (44). She was brought up in a society which thought that “village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go” (46). Her Masterji

saves her from a marriage to a widower. When she announces her wish to become a doctor, her father and grandmother conclude that the “girl is mad” (52).

Jasmine falls in love with Prakash, a boy from Amritsar. Jasmine’s interest in Prakash is due to his education and modernism. She is ready to migrate: “I felt ready to leave for Germany, the States” (68). She is aware of the infinite possibilities that life opens: “I was a sister without dowry, but I didn’t have to be a sister without prospects” (70). She is always optimistic: “Good things were about to happen” (70). Marriage with Prakash leads to Jasmine’s first remoulding.

Pygmalion wasn’t a play I’d seen or read then, but I realize now how much of Professor Higgins there was in my husband. He wanted to break down the Jyoti I’d been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name: Jasmine. He said, “You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume”. Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities. (77)

Ambitious Prakash plans to migrate to America in order to “have a real life” (81). Professor Devinder Vadhera invites him to America. Migration, for Jasmine, is a way to alter fate: “If we could just get away from India, then all fates would be canceled. We’d start with new fates, new stars. We could say or be anything we wanted. We’d be on the other side of the earth, out of God’s sight” (85). But Jasmine is violently thrown out of her comfortable life with Prakash just when she feels that it “was the beginning of the real life we wanted, needed, to live” (93). Her husband gets killed in a bomb attack by the terrorist group, the Khalsa Lions.

But there is no reverting to old life: “There is no dying, there is only an ascending or a descending, a moving on to other planes. Don’t crawl back to Hasnapur and feudalism. That Jyoti is dead” (96). With the help of her brothers, she arranges illegal documents which would take her to America. From the “House of Sorrows! House of Ill Fortune!” (98), emerges a new Jasmine, who is bent on fulfilling the dream of her husband.

Jasmine is a nomad who reaches America by routes, vehicles and conveyance modes which lie outside the official scrutiny: “THERE are national airlines flying the world that do not appear in any directory. There are charters who’ve lost their way and now just fly, improvising crews and destinations ...” (100). Deleuze and Guattari speak of the smooth and striated space in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Smooth spaces are the territory of the nomads, while striated spaces are created by the sedentary: “The primary determination of nomads is to occupy and hold a smooth space” (Deleuze and Guattari 410). Smooth space is occupied by

events and intensities. Jasmine says: “The zigzag route is straightest” (Mukherjee 101). She travels in trawlers and stays in bunkhouses.

With the forged American passport, Jasmine feels rejuvenated: “On the train I weep at the beauty of the visa stamps Hari-prar has bought me. I feel renewed, the recipient of an organ transplant” (103). On an illegal shrimper *The Gulf Shuttle*, she heads for Florida. The captain, *Half-Face*, takes her to a motel. Half Face’s advice to Jasmine has deeper implications in the context of Jasmine’s rhizomatic existence: “Travel light, sweetheart, always travel light” (114). Jasmine kills Half - Face who rapes her. She starts her life anew. She is “reborn, debts and sins all paid for” (121).

Jasmine comes out of the motel after killing Half – Face and walks along a dusty trail. She is rescued by Lillian Gordon, a kind Quaker lady who doesn’t care much about past: “She had a low tolerance for reminiscence, bitterness or nostalgia. Let the past make you wary, by all means. But do not let it deform you” (131). She urges Jasmine to shed her shyness and don confidence. Within a week, there is another transformation for Jasmine into Jazzy: “I checked myself in the mirror, shocked at the transformation. Jazzy in a T-shirt, tight cords, and running shoes. I couldn’t tell if with the Hasnapuri sidle I’d also abandoned my Hasnapuri modesty” (133). From Lillian’s home, she moves to Professor DevinderVadhera’s house in New York.

For Jasmine, life is “running” (142). She couldn’t tolerate the boredom which she feels in Professor Vadhera’s house in Flushing, though it is a safe place. One day, Professor finds Jasmine weeping in the bathroom and agrees to arrange her green card. Later it turns out that Professorji is an importer and sorter of human hair, not a professor. Professorji has been doing a work which he actually doesn’t like, living in an alien land: “His real life was in an unlivable land across oceans. He was a ghost, hanging on” (153). But Jasmine lives many real lives, combining old ones with the new ones, when necessary: “Each transformation in Jasmine does not necessitate or call for her to abandon one way of lifestyle to replace an earlier one ... Every time Jasmine attains a new self, she adapts her cultural past and merges it with present” (Naiker 10).

Jasmine joins Taylor and Wylie Hayes as the caregiver of Duff, their adopted child: “Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family” (Mukherjee 165). Jasmine is forever in the process of becoming. She is always a learner: “I took in everything. Every morning, the news sank into my brain, and stayed. Language on the street, on the forbidden television, at the Hayeses’ dinners ... all became *my* language, which I

learned like a child, from the first words up. The squatting fields of Hasnapur receded fast” (174). Taylor gives the new name: “I liked the name he gave me: Jase” (176). Wylie, Taylor’s wife falls in love with an economist. Wylie requests Jasmine to stay with Taylor and Duff and leaves them. The changes that come in her life are something which Jasmine wilfully achieves: “I changed because I wanted to. To bunker oneself inside nostalgia, to sheathe the heart in a bulletproof vest, was to be a coward. . . I bloomed from a diffident alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase” (185). One day, she is shocked to see Sukhwinder, the man who killed her husband, in the park. She decides to leave New York and go to Iowa. Once again Jasmine learns the hard lesson of life that nothing is fixed: “In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn’t shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn” (181).

Jasmine meets Mother Ripplemeyer in Iowa when she is in search of a job. Mother Ripplemeyer arranges the job for her as a teller in her son Bud’s bank. She begins to live with him and gets pregnant. Later she leaves Bud and moves to California with Taylor. She is “greedy with wants and reckless from hope” (241). She is always on the move and is never settled: “Selves are larval subjects; the world of passive syntheses constitutes the system of the self, under conditions yet to be determined, but it is the system of a dissolved self” (Deleuze 78).

Jasmine’s life undergoes multiple remoulding. Life teaches her the lesson: “Too much attachment, too much disillusion” (Mukherjee 200). She is not rooted anywhere so as to form a fixed identity. What constitutes her life is the repetition of differences. Her self can never be complete and is forever in the process of becoming: “That is why the individual in intensity finds its psychic image neither in the organisation of the self nor in the determination of species of the I, but rather in the fractured I and the dissolved self”. (Deleuze 259). Jasmine’s self is an assemblage which eludes the conventional concept of stable identity.

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***Wolf Totem*: A Paradigm of ‘Networked’ Discourse on Nature**

Anto A Paul

A plethora of meta-narratives on nature intended to derive a balanced discourse, have turned out to be another grand narrative, portraying nature as a subverted and polarized category. As a result, the pristine nature prevailed to be either part of the endlessly narrowing other or part of the ever-domineering self. Both views have been obnoxiously ruled out as unfair and prejudiced; because, their articulations are essentially favouring the parties involved. Hence, inventing a true narrative which might render nature as an essentially networked entity, is the need of time.

The novel *Wolf Totem* (2004) by the Chinese author, Jian Rong, poignantly portrays the organised attempts of the Chinese to disturb the networks of nature that enabled them to articulate a false narrative of Civilization. From the outset, it details the measures that Chinese undertook to position themselves as a major economic power in the aftermath of Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1960s. But at a deeper level, by portraying the marginalized existence of the Inner Mongolian Race, the author derives a networked view of nature which the Chinese intentionally ignored. The Mongolian predicament is not antithetical to that of the Chinese. It vindicates how nature is to be perceived despite the fact that unpredictable and untamed forces of nature may put the very existence of a race at stake. Most important is to preserve the nature-self interconnectedness which enabled the Mongols to retain their identity.

Humanity is living in era of environmental cataclysm and *Wolf Totem* as an ecological narrative may address some of the environmental issues that Glen Love enlists in his essay:

The catalogue of actual and potential horrors is by now familiar to us all: the threats of nuclear holocaust, or of slower radiation poisoning, of chemical or germ warfare, the alarming growth of the world's population, mounting evidence of global warming,

destruction of the planet's protective ozone layer, the increasingly harmful effects of acid rain, overcutting of the world's last remaining great forests, the critical loss of topsoil and groundwater, overfishing and toxic poisoning of the oceans, inundation in our own garbage, an increasing rate of extinction of plant and animal species (Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader* 225).

A deeper analysis reveals that the novel is not merely a detailed account of the tragic existence of the Mongols whose environmental conscience poses a threat to the Chinese notion of civilization. Their problem is not being what they are; but becoming what they are not. A sense of loss and a fear of becoming what they are not is reflected at the beginning of the narrative, "In this remote area, where heaven is high and the emperor far away, the Red Guards' fervent desire to destroy the Four Olds – old ideas, culture, customs and habits- had not yet claimed Bilgee's tapestries or rug"(Rong 20). The protagonist Bilgee is an epitome of a holistic view on nature. He is an old herdsman in the Inner Mongolian grassland of Olonbulag; and in the Mongol language *Bilgee* means "Wise One". Olonbulag is a strange and uncanny landscape; it defies and eludes any kind of essentialist view of nature - the egocentric and the eco-centric - claimed by the Chinese and the conventional ecologists respectively, find no place in this mythical landscape. It is an ideological battlefield where both the Chinese cultural paradigms and the Mongolian ecological conscience are at war, yet denying an absolute victory to both.

In the novel, the Chinese cultural concepts problematize that of the Mongols. The Mongol's ecological notions with a keen sense of interconnectedness of natural beings undermine the Chinese notions of development; and Bilgee's claim proves their will to power and shape their identity confronting the untamed and unpredictable forces of nature: "You Chinese have the courage of sheep, who survive by foraging grass. We Mongols are meat-eating wolves, and you could use a bit of wolf courage" (Rong 21). To understand how the Mongol's ecological models are superior to that of the Chinese, an analysis of the networks operational behind their articulations is required.

It is not entirely mistaken to think of the Chinese as intent on the deconstruction of tradition; they aim to dismantle the metanarratives of early Chinese history. Their categorical denial of the validity and historicity of much of the Mongol's ecological canons are carefully structured to render the Bilgee's grassland existence as a marginalised one. The Cultural Revolution has turned the traditional life of the grassland upside down. Thus, the Chinese cannot comprehend the Mongol's ecological ways of tending sheep and hunting wild animals.

While the Chinese consider the murderous-looking, ferocious wolf as an animal to be hunted for their skin; the Mongols worship them as their totem, the protective spirit of the grassland. The wolves are instrumental in ensuring their ecological balance. Mongolian custom on the grassland demands that if someone dies in the family, they give away the dead body for the wolves to feed. Whereas the Han Chinese put the dead body in a box and bury it in the ground. Tengger is Mongol heaven; and it is also worshipped as their father, and the grassland is their mother. The wolves kill only animals that harm the grassland. The gazelles that 'run like the wind' keep the rabbits off the field. The wolves prevent the gazelles from eating up the whole grassland. Without this pastureland in reserve, neither the Mongols nor their animals would survive in the hostile landscape. At the same time, they kill the wolves to ensure their survival. This strange dynamics of killing and worshipping the wolves at the same time are deeply rooted in their belief that nature is essentially a networked entity. Any attempts to derive it an absolute category is to undermine the first Law of Ecology: "everything is connected to everything else." (Commoner 84). The Mongolians believe that the wolves are sent by Tengger to safeguard the grassland. Without them, the grassland would vanish. And without wolves, the Mongols would not be able to enter heaven. Bilgee sighs, "Protecting the grassland is hard on us. If we don't kill the wolves, there will be fewer of us. But if we kill too many of them, there will be even fewer" (Rong 123). This strange but mystical truth internalised by the grassland herdsman seemed a non-sensible paradox for the Chinese.

The wolf extermination campaign of the Chinese signals their attempts to disturb and subvert the ecological networks of the Mongols. They intent to derive a quasi-network of development and modernity. Such a project stems from their desire to rewrite the Chinese history in ways that would undermine the Mongols and their customs as uncivilized and nonsensical. As much as they needed to subvert and thereby ignore the Mongolian myths that comprised so much of early Chinese history, they needed also to create a viable Chinese mythology, one that could stand side-by-side with the great mythic traditions of the Greeks and Romans on the stage of world history. They needed to do this at least in part because the very notion of modernity, wherever it is to be found, has always been forged in opposition to a certain configuration of what modernity stands opposed to, the past. Defining the past in a way that can be broken off from the present means formulating dichotomies: rational vs. irrational, scientific vs. superstitious, historical vs. mythic etc. This need for a demonstrable break from the past is crucial to the project of modernity. Such a dichotomous relationship between the Chinese and the Mongols runs throughout the narrative. Towards the end of the

novel, Olonbulag has been transformed into a mayhem of unsustainable networks of development replacing the viable Mongolian model. Chinese conversion of the grassland into farmland, introduction of birth control measures among the Mongols are to be considered as part of their project for civilisation. Chen's observation is worth noting in this regard, "Temperament not only determines the fate of a man but also determines the fate of an entire race...the world's four great civilisations were agrarian nations, and three of them died out. The fourth, China, escaped that fate only because two of the greatest rivers - the Yellow and the Yangtze - run through her territory" (Rong 174).

The dutiful sage and invincible son of the grassland, Bilgee is dead at the end of the novel; or amidst the aggressive modernising campaign, he may have wilfully embraced death to be fed by the wolves. His disciple, Chen Zhen laments the tragic predicament of the race. "Shepherds now use motor cycles, a sign of prosperity they show on television. Horseback races have turned into motorcycle races, and may one day evolve into a race of ecological refugees. We have witnessed the 'impressive victory' of an agrarian society over a nomadic herding society...Mice are kings on a wolfless grassland" (Rong 510). Chinese attempt to raise an abandoned wolf cub by feeding it on Yir's (a bitch dog) milk can only be considered as programmed steps to rewrite the Mongolian identity, and ultimately the Chinese history itself. Breeding and domesticating a totemic wolf is unimaginable for the Mongols. The presence of wolves was the ecological index to the existence of the grassland. When the wolves are gone, the grassland loses its soul. Yang Ke, a fellow herdsman of Chen, proclaims that the Hans Chinese are capable of distorting Mongolian custom of worshipping wolves and treating them as mentors. He champions the Chinese grand narrative of civilisation.

Mongolian view of grassland ecology is networked in nature; it is a never-ending circuit of life. They believe that they are part of systems larger than themselves. Sue Ellen Campbell argues that "post-structuralist ecological theory criticise the traditional sense of a separate, independent authoritative centre of value or meaning: both substitute the idea of networks" (Glottfelty, 131). What Mongols are, depends on all kinds of influences outside themselves: the wolves, horses, gazelles, Tengger, grassland etc.; and it inculcates a belief that they are part of vast networks, woven by larger and stronger forces. Bruno Latour's post structuralist discourse of Actor Network Theory is relevant in understanding the Mongolian ecological conscience.

ANT identifies the social-natural dichotomy as root cause for the ecological problems of the century. Binarism refers to the habit of understanding the world in terms of conceptual dichotomies, such as human-environment, local-global, mind-matter, subject-object etc. This age old dualistic perspectives emerged with Cartesian dictum “Cogito ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am). Latour believes this mind and body divide was a fundamental shift in the way we constructed realities. Louis Althusser refers to this historical divide with his favourite expression “epistemological break” (Althusser 233). ANT contends that this retention of the human–nature binary is immensely problematic and tries to subvert it on various grounds. The Chinese problem too emanates from this nature/culture division. The whole ecosphere (grassland) is a constituent part of the Mongol’s identity. For the Chinese, it provides an opportunity to fill their coffers with the blood of exterminated wolves that benefits them to make the finest woollen clothes in market.

Mongols advocate and practise a view of ecology that is symmetrical in nature; and it is opposed to the asymmetrical view of the Chinese which demands the centrality of human being. They ascribe agency to every trivial organism in the hostile Mongolian grassland- from the microcosm to the macrocosm without any hierarchy. Campbell argues,

A deer, for instance, has no being apart from things like the presence or absence of wolves, the kind of forage in its environment, the temperature and snowfall of any given winter, the other animals competing for the available food, the number of hunters with licenses, the bacteria in its intestines that either keep it healthy or make it sick. ... there is no such thing as a self-enclosed, private piece of property, neither a deer nor a person nor a text nor a piece of land (*The Ecocriticism Reader* 133).

ANT advocates that binarist thinking ultimately forces the analyst to make a choice: to prioritise one or the other domain or actor on ontological, causal or normative grounds. It has inadvertently led to a certain asymmetry, an exclusionary logic of political representation, in that the natural is seen as merely a construct of the social. The outcome is an anthropocentrism in which, ultimately, nature can only be understood and valued in humanistic terms. Against this, ANT proponents like Michael Callon and John Law argue for a more symmetrical articulation of nature, in which nature is recognized, not on eco-centric grounds, but on a hybrid basis where both human and nonhuman are adequately represented. In a world where social and the natural are co-constitutive elements within a network, a symmetrical perspective is the only one that is viable.

Wolf Totem foregrounds a quintessentially failed and unviable Chinese model of civilisation and progress that do not account for ecological egalitarianism. A symmetrical ecological discourse ensues a fair treatment of all animate and inanimate objects in the ecosphere. The reason behind the failure of the Chinese model towards the end of the novel can be attributed to their asymmetrical treatment of ecological entities. What we witness is signs of false prosperity; and the Inner Mongolian grassland had died off, in its place “Nomadic herding had clearly been replaced by settlement grazing to have flocks that big (Rong 514). It is pathetic to see that the Chinese false discourse of development is so powerful that perturbs even the Mongol custom of sky-burial, the practise of giving the dead body to the wolves to feed. By the time Bilgee dies at the end, two of the three sky-burial grounds had already been abandoned due to Chinese practise of aggressive and mechanised farming. Thus, some of the herdsman had adopted the Han custom of underground burial. Chen Zhen is content with the reality that although Bilgee had suffered the most as a herdsman on the grassland, he was also the luckiest, the last Mongol to have a sky-burial and return to Tengger.

Humanity is witnessing a paradigm shift in its view on nature and it has led him/her to the alluring world of scientific developments. At the same time, s/he was unconsciously transported to a labyrinthine world of ecological disasters. The Chinese model stands no exception to this predicament. In the binarized world of eco-centric and egocentric articulations on nature, the only sustainable model is that of the Mongol’s ‘networked’ view. Their world is, as Fritjof Capra contends a “complicated web of relations between various parts of the whole”(Capra 71).

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In Search of “She” in *her*: A Critical Reading into the Female Stereotyping in the Sci-fi Movie *Her*

Jessy Varghese

Feminist media studies is an area which is rapidly gaining momentum in research field. It tries to understand the correlations, subversions, representations with media and female psyche, “desires to understand new images and cultural constructions, how they are connected to patterns of inequality, domination and oppression”(7). It also creatively interprets how media react and respond with audience and vice versa. It also studies “how media images relate individual’s sense identity and subjectivity”(8). It also raises some critical vocabularies against gender stereotyping and representations.

Early feminist media critique focused mainly on the studies made by university scholars who made analysis of why women are blind grey shades of media; “reporting of demonstrations and industrial disputes”. They were upto the problems of male drawn lines. The second phase focused on the limited representation of female gender within and outside of media. They began to get agitated by the stereotyping and the patronizing of patriarchy. Many early studies revealed the fact that women were represented as “decorative objects” and portrayed as “unintelligent”. The later studies followed opened up new vistas “how they operate to produce meanings , which produce dominant ideologies of gender” as noted by McRobbie. There were many works related to ‘culture and representation in the battlefield of feminism’. Naomi Wolff(1990) *The Beauty Myth* concerned with the onerous cultural messages about women’s appearances and bodies. Camille Paglia’s (1990) *Sexual Persona* studies the recent cultural struggles in femininity, masculinity, and the construction of male and female subjectivities.

Thus media play a major role in controlling the stereotypical and ideological values about men, women and cultural constructs. Another major research area named audience studies has also drew on encoding/decoding model suggested by Stuart Hall (1973), “First that the same event can be encoded (represented) in more than one potential way ,secondly

the message will always contain more than one potential meaning besides the preferred encoded one ; and thirdly the messages therefore have the potential to be real in different ways”(17).

Science fiction films are the media-genre that uses speculative, fictional science based depictions of phenomena that are not fully accepted as mainstream science such as extra terrestrial life forms, alien worlds, extra sensory perception and time travel along with futuristic elements such as spacecrafts, robots, cyborgs, interstellar travel or other technologies. Science fiction films have often been used to focus on political or social issues, and to explore philosophical issues like human condition, reality and rationality. According to Vivian Sobchack, an American cinema

And media theorist and cultural critic: “Science fiction film is a film genre which emphasizes actual, extrapolative, interacting in a social context with, with lesser emphasized but still present transcendentalities in magic and religion, in an attempt to reconcile man with universalities”(Sobchack 63). Cultural theorist Scott Bukaman has proposed that science fiction film allows contemporary culture to witness an expression of the sublime, be it through exaggerated scale, apocalypse and transcendence.

Her is an American romantic science fiction film written , directed and produced by Spike Jonze. The film portrays the life of a solo man Theodore Twombly (Joaquin Phoenix) who develops a romantic relationship with an artificial intelligent system Samantha. He works in a firm which makes personal or formal correspondences for the customers on request. He is a lonely man who gradually learns to play life objectively. He encounters with a phone sex worker, who is supposed to be an ideal of the pornographic media message, which is clearly “female oppression”, a woman is being gazed as a body, not a human female. He buys an operating system, AI which as the manufacturer says “it is an operating system that assists you, understands you and knows you, it s a consciousness. Later we see Theodore programming the AI as female, a self-sufficient and intelligent voice” marred by the fantasy of womanhood of the male protagonist”. Samantha initially is untroubled, well equipped with her skills in operations .but later the AI is gradually troubled by her disembodied state. David Edelstein has remarked that the relationship between Theodore and Smantha is one of “Literally transcendent”. Eventhough though the body of the main female protagonist is absent, she is a substitute for distorted version of female oppression. Female characters are obsessed with sexually oriented words throughout the film. Amy is his close friend, a video programmer married to Charles, she is also under the barbes of male definitions. She gets divorced for not

being physically tune with the male partner. The sexist content in the movie is easily identifiable as Beasley observes,” a film or television company is mini sexist society.

The film introduces an AI assisted video game called Alien Child, which dislikes women as they cry all the time. The character in game is a prototype of Theodore himself who continuously deteriorates the female characters, knowingly and unknowingly. It also legitimizes the stereotyping of gender. Amelia is another major appearance in the film who is “beautiful and brainy” but has very little role to play. She also poses as the sex siren with the intimate talks, but easily gets hurt and moves away when Theodore fails in her emotional wants. As Simone de Beavoieur observed “one is not born a woman, but made a woman”, the female gender is being conceptualized in the film as an empty subject, as there are no strong female characters, but only traces of real woman, who actually is a representation of the male desires. Most of the female social roles played in the film are deeply oppressed with various forms of patriarchy.

Samantha chooses a surrogate sex partner for Theodore, she comes to her flat and is silent all the time. She advances for a relationship but fails. Both the woman and Samantha fail to actualize their true self. The introduction of such a character in the film is an ideological creation of a gendered framework which only satiates the physical need of the male for the survival.

Catherine his ex-wife stands as a symbol of the futuristic enlightened woman, who is some what free from the male defined lines. In a meeting she admits that she can't be all that he wants. She stresses for her individuality which cannot be dwindled by the patriarchal rules. She gets upset by Theodore love advances towards a “machine”, and openly criticizes for finding an emotional substitute in a machine. Taking marriage with all its challenges is the place where Theodore failed, she observes.

The movie *her* poses many difficult questions before humanity. Can there be machines who can think like humans? Can machines replace life partners? How much autonomous can machine can become? Is there a possibility of overpowering the human race by machines? Whether women still remain as the secondary netizens in future as well? .though the movie

fails to locate the real She in *her*, there are wide scope for research on the topic women and computer.

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Toni Morrison's *Paradise*: A Saga of Women in Distress

Sebin Justine

Acclaimed as one of the pre-eminent figures in contemporary American fiction, Toni Morrison has won worldwide fame for her novels in which she examines the role of race and gender in Black American Society. A professor of Princeton University since 1989 with a grounding in European literature from the great French and Russian classics to Jane Austen, Morrison is firmly grounded in African culture. It is exactly this rootedness that gives a special quality to her work. Morrison has declared that she is not like James Joyce or Thomas Hardy or William Faulkner. Her novels defy those critical straitjackets which seek to analyze and define strictly within the contexts of either Freud or Marx, psychoanalysis or politics. But her works are always political, always concerned with racial prejudice, class distinctions, and always deeply psychoanalytic. Using unconventional narrative structures, poetic language, myth and folklore, Morrison addresses such issues as Black victimization, the emotional and social effects of racial and sexual oppression, and the problems African Americans face while trying to achieve a sense of identity in a society dominated by the White cultural values. A marvelous wordsmith, a political activist, erudite scholar and a passionate humanitarian, Morrison is a charismatic voice of contemporary American fiction. Though a recipient of the highest awards and prizes including the Nobel Prize, it is her literary legacy that defines her stunning success. Her stories are explorations of the darkest recesses of human soul—especially wild and untamed female psyche—in its stormy moments of agony and rejection. In her explorations of such social, political and racial issues, Morrison agrees that reality is ambiguous and that truth is frequently impossible to grasp.

In the classic plight and protest style, Morrison's novels present the trauma of Black life, with Blacks becoming the victims of apartheid. The racist oppression to which the Blacks have been subjected and the picture emerging of Black life is indeed harrowing. All her characters exist in a world defined by its Blackness and by the dominant White society that

both violates and ruins it. Their brutality takes the form of outright physical as well as psychic violence. Their savagery is nothing short of a systematic rejection of the reality of Black lives. Thus, the readers are forcefully reminded that the disruptive presence of the Blacks in America pervades Morrison oeuvre. Her novels provide a template for the study of American life from the callous years of the Middle Passage to the present.

Her novels provide the readers several roads toward understanding the role of race, gender, class, social, political and economic status, as well as definitions of self and community. They present a spectrum of human life that exposes and exceeds the traumatic African American experience. The novels bring to light the frailties and virtues, the selfishness and generosity, and ultimately what is explicitly human in all people. This is what we get in the last of the trilogy—*Paradise* (1998).

Having finished *Jazz* (1992), Morrison focused on a little-known bit of African American history for her next novel, *Paradise*: after the Civil War, groups of former slaves travelled to Oklahoma and other western states to set up all-Black towns. One of the Black communities in Oklahoma had a most unusual way of organizing their town—their *Paradise*—in terms of colour. The novel unravels the story of this community. During the 1880s a group of ex-slaves from Louisiana and Mississippi travelled West on foot to settle in the Oklahoma territory. At the end of an arduous journey, they reached Fairly, Oklahoma, an all-Black town and asked its leaders if they could stay. The Fairly people gave an emphatic “No”. Why? The citizens of Fairly were light-skinned Blacks; the new comers were very dark “8-rock” black men and women (194) with skin the color of coal from deep in the mines. “They were too poor, too bedraggled-looking” (14). That denial, which the outcasts called the “Disallowing” became the defining event in their lives. With dogged determination, they built their own home, which they called Haven. It was in 1890.

By 1945, Haven as a community collapses both economically and socially. The population shrinks and farming fails, offering a picture of Black erasure in White culture. The remaining inhabitants including the Morgan twins—Deacon and Steward—headed West to found a new town. It was 90 miles away and they named the town Ruby in fond memory of the twins’ sister Ruby who had died as she had been denied medical help in the Whites only hospital. The nearest institution to Ruby was a huge old house 17 miles away that the Ruby men called the Convent.

As Ron David observes, *Paradise* is a “dazzling narrative montage, one part of which describes the creation and development of the all-Black town of Ruby, and the other part portrays the chance assembling of a group of lonely social misfits, all women, in the Convent” (154). Slowly but surely Ruby community loses its protective sense of home when individuals begin to value their own needs over those of community. The members of the community take delight in the failure of others, gloating in complacency. The sense of a community in which people either succeed or fail together as a group vanishes. While Ruby becomes a cancerous sore, teeming with greed and rivalry, the Convent becomes a refuge for the forlorn and unwanted women who reach there mostly by happenstance. And on several occasions, the Convent serves as a refuge for Ruby men in distress.

The novel’s opening is thoroughly intentional:

They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time. No need to hurry out here. They are seventeen miles from a town which has ninety miles between it and any other. Hiding places will be plentiful in the Convent, but there is time and the day has just begun. They are nine, over twice the number of the women they are obliged to stampede or kill...(3)

Shooting the white girl first makes us read this book as a testament of racial differences. But the story is not about race. Rather, it is nearly about the riddle of race. The novel begins with the slaughter of the inmates of the Convent, killed intentionally and ruthlessly by nine men from Ruby for some amorphous “wrongs” done by the Convent women. The inherited trauma and a racist culture render Ruby’s men vulnerable, and they respond with violence against the women at the Convent whom they see as “sick” and a threat to their male-dominated position. Thus the women at the Convent became scapegoats, blamed for all of the evils that befall Ruby. “Before those heifers came to town this was a peaceable kingdom” (276). By protecting their own insecurities on to those at the Convent, the men store up their own positive image in order to protect their homes and families. They act out their ancestral trauma of degradation by lashing out. Yet this violence against others is not the answer to their problems.

The novel is divided into nine sections, naming each section of the book for a woman—”Ruby”, “Mavis”, “Grace”, “Seneca”, “Divine”, “Patricia” (a Ruby women), “Consolata”, “Lone” (another Ruby woman) and finally “Save-Marie”.

In contrast to the Ruby community, the female community at the Convent physically and spiritually provide for the women in distress who seek a positive identity and new selves.

Their broken family lives have resulted in fragmented selves. These women—all of them the victims of abuse—represent the same psychic trauma that Sethe and Beloved experience in *Beloved*. For the refugees at the Convent, memories are painful. The Convent serves as a vehicle for psychic healing—protects them by providing a safe environment where they can associate with others.

While unveiling the picture of Ruby, Morrison slowly divulges the secrets that haunt the proud 8-rock people. We get the secrets of the women who have walked the 17 miles between Ruby and the Convent in times of trouble. For over twenty years Lone DuPres has observed Ruby's walking women. "Only women. Never men. . . Back and forth, back and forth: crying women, staring women, scrawling, lip-biting women or women just plain lost" (270).

Mavis' home life is plagued by poverty fear and inadequacy. She lives in an unending cycle of poverty. Mavis feels unprotected, scared and utterly incapable of coping with her husband Frank who "throws her night gown over her head" when he screws her (*Paradise* 26). He does not make love to her, he just screws her. Frank regards her as the "dumbest bitch on the planet, and when she runs away, she felt her stupidity close in on her head like a dry sack" (37). She wants to escape her husband's wrath and her children's scorn. She is looking for a new physical space to get healed. The twenty seven year old fugitive Mavis reaches the Convent after accidentally suffocating the newborn twins by leaving them in the car while she ran into the store for some weenies. Believing that her abusive husband and three surviving children, are trying to kill her, Mavis steals her husband's Cadillac and begins driving West, picking up hitchhikers to help fund the journey. She runs out of both money and gas near the Convent. Instead of panicking or waiting for help, she walks to the Convent. When she reaches Connie's Convent "she felt safe" (41). Mavis decides to stay at the Convent because of the comfort and support of home: "Connie had stuffed and roasted a chicken. But her decision to stay on was mostly because of Mother" (46). From Connie's home-cooked food to the eerily soothing presence of the dying holy mother, Mary Magna, the Convent forms an instant home for Mavis. Her new supportive, protective environment allows her to see herself as capable, confident and successful.

After entering the Convent, Mavis begins to hear the laughter of her dead twins. Under the loving care of Connie, the ghostly presence of the ever-growing twins, and the aggressive night time, sexual dream-visits of a strange man, Mavis has an uneasy life in the Convent. But she is safe from both her husband and the law.

The second of the Convent woman Gigi, finds the Convent in the midst of an escape. She is running from the blood and violence in Oakland, California. This sex bomb gets off the bus in Ruby a couple of years after Mavis stopped by the Convent looking for gas. Gigi is such a Tootsie Roll that the mere sight of her crossing the street stunned all the sidewalk studs to silence. K.D Morgan, the nephew of the Morgans—Deek Morgan and Steward Morgan—is sexually attracted to her. Gigi reaches Ruby as she is attracted by a story told by a man on her train about the fabled “ecstasy” provided by two trees in Ruby, Oklahoma (66). She puts off her journey to her grandfather in Mississippi to probe a possible source of pleasure to heal the pain of bloodshed and the loss of her love, Mickey. On hearing about the magical place in Ruby near a lake where two fig trees grow together, entwined like lovers, a liminal space where the sacred-ecstatic and physical-sexual are conjoined, she wants to try it. “If you squeezed in between them in just the right way, well, you would feel an ecstasy no human could invent or duplicate. “They say after that can’t nobody turn you down”, Gigi is told (66).

As she takes a quick walk through the town looking for a motel, Roger Best comes by in his ambulance on his way to the Convent to pick up the body of the old nun Mary Magna. Finding Consolata alone, drunk and almost passed out on the kitchen floor, Gigi decides to stay on in the Convent. She finds a haven in the Convent despite her constant fights with the more conservative Mavis. Mavis disapproves her sunbathing naked, and wearing few clothes. During her stay at the Convent, the love she might have found with K.D vanishes as he is forced to marry Arnette. Her flaunting of her sexuality and her battles with other women provide Gigi with the feedback she craves to make her feel needed and worthy of attention. But she only finds inner peace when Consolata forces her to confront the source of her trauma through her body template. A study in contrasts, Gigi is a shameful woman, “an exhibitionist bitch” (167), in the view of Mavis, and yet she is also suggestively called “Grace” by Consolata.

Seneca, a painfully timid 20 year old, has flashbacks about being abandoned at the age of five: Thrown out by Jean—whom Seneca believes is her sister but who, in fact, is her mother—Seneca spends four nights and five days knocking on every door in her public housing building during her search for Jean. On the fourth day of Seneca’s search, a tall crying woman walks past the window. This crying woman becomes permanently associated in Seneca’s mind with the loss of Jean as a kind of “heartbreaking dream” (167). This crying woman mirrors her inner turmoil and becomes etched in her psyche. Sweeties’ crying figure reactivates Seneca’s previous trauma, and Seneca rushes to comfort and protect her. Her nurturing gestures,

which she herself lacked in her own time of need, help Seneca to reenact her own pain. She will spend her life helping others: “Always the Peacemaker. The one who said yes or I don’t mind or I’ll go. Otherwise what. They might not like her. Might cry. Might leave” (131). Her fear of desertion, reactivated on a bodily level, controls her life.

Raised in Foster homes, Seneca takes scolding quietly and never cries. Blaming herself for being abandoned, Seneca hopes that “if she did everything right with being told, either Jean would walk in or when she knocked on one of the apartment doors, there’d she be! Smiling and holding out her arms” (127).

When she is sexually abused by a foster brother in one of the homes, she discovers the secret and shameful habit of self-cutting in order to achieve relief and garner sympathy. She cuts herself with a razor making fine, straight “roads” that flood with blood and look surgical in their precision. “It thrilled her. It steadied her. Access to this under garment life kept her own eyes dry, inducing a serenity rocked only by crying women, the sight of which touched off a pain so wildly triumphant she would do anything to kill it” (261).

Her boyfriend, Eddie Turtle, has been convicted for the hit and run death of a child, and Seneca has been unsuccessfully attempting to get money for his defense from his mother. When the rich and beautiful Norma Keene Fox finds her, she offers Seneca a job “complicated and easy” (136). After three weeks of being Fox’s “personal assistant” and sexual play toy, Seneca is paid six hundred dollars and sent on her way, confused and afraid to return to Eddie. She later thinks that her unworthiness led to her three weeks of play and abuse with Mrs. Fox “The chauffer had picked her up for Norma like a stray puppy...like a pet you wanted to play with for a while—a little while—but not keep. Not love. Not name it. Just feed it, play with it, then return it to its own habitat” (138).

Becoming involved in exploitative relationships—with a boyfriend who ends up in jail and a rich woman who uses her as a sex toy—Seneca stows away on trucks. While hitching rides to nowhere in particular, when from the back of a pickup truck, she sees a weeping Sweetie Fleetwood, walking down the road through an approaching blizzard. Sweetie reminds her of another crying Black woman she saw, when she was five.

Her low self esteem and need to feel loved kept Seneca a perpetual victim. When she lands at the Convent, she finally finds the home she has been lacking, people to call her by her

name, feed her, and want to say: “Seneca? Come on baby, we’re waiting for you” (138). Having no one and no place to go, Seneca stays at the Convent, attempting the hard job of keeping peace between Mavis and her new sexual partner Gigi, and making the newcomer Pallas Truelove feel at home.

Pallas, presumably the “white girl” whom Ruby’s men shoot first, arrives at the Convent in 1975, sixteen years old and pregnant. She is yet another socially shamed type wrecked into silence by bad love. A sexual victim, she too is a mother-abandoned girl. When Pallas (also called Divine, which is her mother’s nickname) while living with her rich lawyer father, falls in love with Carlos—a would-be sculptor—the two travel to New Mexico where they stay at an artist’s colony, with Pallas’ painter mother Dee Dee. After a few months of Bohemian life style, Pallas happens to see her lover and her mother making love in the grass under the stars. She blindly drives off. She is chased by some boys in a truck, forced off the road, and then raped. In order to escape her attackers, she hides in the black water of a nearby lake. “The nightmare event that forced her to hide in a lake had displaced for a while the betrayal, the hurt, that had driven her from her mother’s house. She had not been able even to whisper it in the darkness of a candle lit room” (179). Brought to Demby by an Indian family, Pallas vomits behind the clinic where Billie Delia finds her out. Billie knows that the cure for what ails Pallas resides at the Convent. Pallas will find the comfort there of “a grand mother rocking peacefully, of arms, a lap, a singing voice soothed her (177). In this place that feels “like a protected domain”, Pallas senses that “she might meet herself here—an unbridled authentic self” (177). Connie’s gentle rocking gives Pallas back her voice and the ability to verbalize her trauma. She briefly goes home, hoping to resume her life with her father. The rejection by her high school peers leads her to return to the soothing comfort of the Convent, where in 1976 she delivers a baby boy. In that community of nurturing women, she can face her motherhood and discover the inner strength to begin her own life, away from her parents and Carlos. The trauma that triggered her lingering nightmarish image of the prostitute with gold teeth on the mall escalator at X’mas will fade. To Pallas, the Convent is a place that feels “permeated with blessed malelessness, like a protected domain, free of hunters” (117). Her erasure of herself in her mother’s shadow will give way to a new sense of self. And yet at night the sniffing of the traumatized and pregnant Pallas—“the sad little rich girl with the hurt but pretty face” (279)—can be heard all over the Convent.

One of the Ruby's walking women is the pregnant Arnette, who goes to the Convent in 1970, and after giving birth, abandons the baby that dies after a few days. Morrison, in her usual peacemeal fashion, unveils the humiliating facts surrounding Arnette's baby. The author explains how Arnette, who viewed her pregnancy with disgust, relentlessly pounds her stomach and repeatedly inserts a mop handle into her vagina in an attempt to "bash the life out of her life" (250). After giving birth to the baby, Arnette discards it that dies after a few days. In 1974, after four years, Arnette returns to the Convent on the day of her marriage with K.D and screams for her "maybe-baby" she "had not acknowledged, announced or delivered" (144). In accusing the Convent women of killing her child, she transfers onto them her own disavowed guilt and shame.

Sweetie Fleetwood is another woman who walks the road between Ruby and the Convent in troubled times. As this self-sacrificing mother strides toward the Convent, she is joined by a hitch-hiker, Seneca, who becomes one of the inmates of the Convent. On reaching the Convent, Sweetie who has spent six years caring for her damaged children, views the non-8-rock Convent women who has welcomed her as demons. Later when she is reunited with her husband, she accuses the Convent women: "They made me, snatched me" (130). By blaming the Convent women Sweetie refuses to acknowledge her own wish to walk away from her damaged children.

While Connie serves as the healing source for the pain and shame of the social misfits who come to live at the Convent—Mavis, Gigi, Seneca and Pallas—the novel provides mysterious hints of the liminality of the Convent world they inhabit with Connie—Consolata. She herself finds solace at the Convent after being raped and kidnapped from her home in Portugal when she was nine. Consolata spends many years as the devoted servant of Mary Magna who rescued her from the Brazilian slum (223). Consolata, who was molested when she was nine, remains celibate for thirty years until she meets Deacon, a man who reminds her of the black people from her home. During their affair, they meet in the magical place where the two fig trees grow entwined like lovers. Connie's affair with Deacon moves her to want to keep him with her. Yet after she fixes up a place for them in the cellar, her bestial passion to consume him scares him away. He is horrified of her animal-like performance during mating.

Mother Mary Magna had provided Connie with her only positive identity. When Mary Magna dies, "Consolata, fifty four years old, was orphaned...she felt like a curl of paper—nothing written on it—lying in the corner of an empty closet" (247). She becomes a

helpless and hopeless alcoholic full of self-loathing. Consolata craves oblivion, and eventually turns against the women she has harboured, viewing them with contempt. On her worst days, Consolata wants to kill them.

But eventually, we find that the alcoholic Consolata, though tormented by feelings of debilitating self-contempt, becoming the spiritual leader of the Convent women. Consolata, who comes to practice the African-Brazilian religion Candomble—a hybrid mixture of Catholicism and African spiritual worship—initiates Convent women into the occult knowledge of the ancestors, thus helping them discover “their authentic and divine part of the self hidden behind the socially constructed layers of personality”, as Bouson observes (209).

The Convent women, under Consolata’s guidance come to meet the beloved part of the self—“the unbridled authentic self” (177). She instructs them to lie naked on the stone floor of the Convent basement. “Eve is Mary’s mother. Mary is the mother of the Eve”, Consolata tells them as she teaches them the ancient wisdom that conjoins the opposites of body and spirit (263). They dance in the purifying rain, entering a state of religious ecstasy that heals them of their sorrow and pain. The rain washes them clean of their trauma-filled pasts. They become “holy women dancing in hot sweet rain” (283). They learn to love themselves. By articulating their pain and nurturing their souls, they release themselves from the bonds of their trauma. Their liberation enables them to work together in harmony as a community. Afterward, the women listen to Consolata’s soothing stories about the mystical, poetical Piedade a “singing woman who never spoke” (285).

The novel closes with images of the women finding peace by reuniting with family members on their own terms. Those healing reunions transform traumatic memory.

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Resistance and Re- Presentation of African Women in Yvonne Vera's Literary Works

Roshni C

If speaking is still difficult to negotiate, then writing has created a free space for most women – much freer than speech. (Yvonne Vera 3)

In her preface to an anthology of contemporary African women's writing, entitled *Opening Spaces*, Yvonne Vera argues that literature provides a discursive space for subjects otherwise silenced by dominant socio-political practice. She focuses, in particular, on the transgressive value that literature holds for African women who, "without power to govern, often have no platform for expressing their disapproval" (2). Vera argues that writing provides a forum for such women to articulate forbidden views; a "free space" that is not available to them in spoken discourse: "The written text is granted its intimacy, its privacy, its creation of the world [...] It retains its autonomy much more than a woman is allowed in the oral situation" (3).

Vera belongs to a generation of Zimbabwean authors, who grew up during the tumultuous years of the anti-colonial struggle (the second Chimurenga), and later witnessed the failure of decolonisation to improve the conditions under which the majority of the country's impoverished and subjugated citizens exist. Like the work of several of her contemporaries, including Chenjerai Hove and Dambudzo Marechera, Vera's writing is critical of both colonial and post-independence forms of oppression, and her prose consistently disrupts the discursive spaces of colonialism and post-colonial nationalism. Vera is, furthermore, centrally concerned with the ideology of patriarchy that underpins both colonial and nationalist systems of domination, and her protagonists are all women who courageously venture to defy its oppressive laws. Like Tsitsi Dangarembga before her, Vera explores women's struggles to gain autonomous identities within a world that is hostile to their dreams of independence.

Since her untimely death at the age of forty on April 7, 2005, Yvonne Vera's reputation as a groundbreaking African feminist writer has been increasingly secure. Vera's major published works include a short story collection, *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals* (1992), and five novels, *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (1998), and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). The author's work is characterized by her unflinching confrontation with taboo topics. She has written about incest, abortion, rape, infanticide, civil war, and the violence of Zimbabwe's independence and post war eras. Just as striking as these sometimes gruesome themes, though, are Vera's female protagonists, who strive unrelentingly not merely for survival in their hostile worlds, but for pleasure and autonomy. With the important exception of her first novel *Nehanda*, about the female spirit medium of that name who helped lead Zimbabwe's first chimurenga, or uprising against British colonialism in the nineteenth century, Vera writes what she calls "the biographies of unknown women." Because of her interest in "our national history," that is, the history of her country Zimbabwe, she always quite explicitly sets her novels in a specific historical and geographical context (Bryce 2003, 223). Mazvita, the protagonist of Vera's second novel, *Without a Name*, arguably exemplifies the prototypical features of the "unknown women" who populate Vera's later novels and who include Phephelaphi of *Butterfly Burning* and the sensual and enigmatic Thenjiwe of *The Stone Virgins*. In 1977, the year in which *Without a Name* is set, the guerilla war of the second chimurenga had escalated to its most violent peak. It is against this background that Mazvita's quest for freedom is played out, especially via her unabashed pursuit of pleasure.

The mainstream literary tradition in which many African women writers are read and marketed usually places undue emphasis on the difficult circumstances of their lives. Reflecting stereotypes about the hopeless victimisation of marginalised people, this tradition also fixates on the tragic circumstances of their deaths. This is well illustrated in the case of another Southern African woman writer, Bessie Head, whose writing is often believed to testify straightforwardly to her painful exile, illness, social alienation, poverty and early death at the age of 48. In the wake of Vera's death, it is disturbing to consider that this writer too might be popularly cast mainly as a poignant victim – of Zimbabwean politics, of patriarchal nationalism, of disease.

In the five novels which Vera published during her lifetime, she consistently sought to realise the potential of literature to 'open spaces' for the articulation of previously suppressed narratives. She steadfastly endeavoured to imagine the emotional and psychological lives of

Zimbabwean women and to disclose the histories of violation and brutality responsible for their silences. Her novels represent an unwavering confrontation with traumatic and “taboo” (Preface 2) subject-matter, such as rape, incest and abortion; experiences that “all too often remain unspoken and unspeakable” (Primorac, “*Borderline Identities*” 86). While there is a central focus on women’s relationship to discourse and agency in Vera’s writing, her texts are also crucially concerned with tracing the suffering of a broader subaltern community, whose narratives have been excluded from the dominant versions of Zimbabwe’s history. The characters that populate her novels are subordinate, disempowered men and women, whose suffering is disregarded by the dominant system, and Vera seeks to imaginatively reclaim their histories of struggle and survival. Her fiction is thus often regarded as “[speaking], in a specific manner, for the Zimbabwean voiceless” (Primorac, “*Borderline Identities*” 86). Her inventive use of the novelistic genre enables Vera to illuminate the complex subject-positions of Zimbabwe’s displaced and often brutalised subaltern subjects, and suggest that her fiction can be read as an engagement with the transgressive potential of poetic language to (provisionally) afford agency to their narratives. At the time of her death in April 2005, Vera was already considered one of her country’s foremost authors, distinguished from other prominent female Zimbabwean writers like Tsitsi Dangarembga and Nozipo Maraire by the sheer regularity and number of her publications (Primorac, “*Iron Butterflies*” 101). Her first work of fiction, a collection of short stories entitled *Why Don’t You Carve Other Animals?*, was published in 1992 while she was completing her doctoral thesis in comparative literature at York University in Toronto. The following year she returned to Zimbabwe and wrote her first novel *Nehanda*, which was followed in quick succession by *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996) and *Butterfly Burning* (1998). Her final novel, *The Stone Virgins*, was published in 2002 and won the Macmillan Writer’s Prize for Africa that year, one of many prestigious international literary prizes which her writing has earned.

While Vera’s writing strongly condemns gendered, racial and postcolonial injustices, her literary vision has always been richly productive. As an artist whose work demonstrates such breadth, the enduring power of her work and ideas about artistic creation can never be forgotten.. It is no coincidence that Vera’s first novel *Nehanda* (1993) was inspired by a woman spirit medium who was a major leader in Zimbabwe’s first uprising against colonial rule. As conceived by Vera, *Nehanda*’s leadership provides a metaphor of visionary resistance to all forms of tyranny. The path taken by the novel’s central character therefore exemplifies the thrust of Vera’s oeuvre as it exposes different facets of oppression and affirms liberating ways

of seeing and living. Zimbabwe's official history includes campaign speeches, press releases, stories told on television and the state-controlled press or radio, and school textbooks. These stories rationalise myriad injustices: the oppression of peasants and workers, the subordination of women and the ruthless suppression of all forms of dissent.

Vera's first novel strives to banish the "ineffectual gods" of postcolonial rule; by telling a story upholding values very different from those in the stories that routinely circulate in Zimbabwe, she creates visions of society, human dignity and perception that provide liberating codes by which to "imagine" the self and the nation, and therefore, by which to live. Her later novels continue to narrate repressed stories, with the writer sifting through public and visible narratives to uncover those that are usually silenced or invisible.

In her first novel, *Nehanda*, Vera deploys what Terence Ranger has called a "matrilinear mode of history-telling" ("History has its ceiling" 205), in order to challenge both European historicism and male dominated narratives of Zimbabwean history (Bull-Christiansen 38). The novel articulates a version of the 1896 anti-colonial rebellion (the first Chimurenga) that asserts the triumph of the spirit-medium Nehanda, who was hanged by the settler government for her participation in the uprising. In Vera's narrative, Nehanda transcends her physical death to take her place amongst the mhondoro, who guide the struggle for freedom from the colonialists. As Vera suggested in one interview, Nehanda was written as a conscious defiance of colonialist historiography and its reductive representation of Zimbabwean history:

History begins in 1896 when the Europeans came here, and it continues like this: the spirit medium Nehanda did this, in such and such a year, in such and such a year she was hanged on 27 April... And I realised, No, no, no! Our oral history does not even accept that she was hanged, even though the photographs are there to show it, because she refused that, she surpassed the moment when they took her body, and when they put a noose upon it, she had already departed. Her refusals and her utterances are what we believe to be history. What was the nature of that departure, and why we believe in it so much as a nation, when the history books say something else, were questions which were very important to me. (Vera in Bryce, 221)

Nehanda can thus be understood as a form of "counter-history" (Bull-Christiansen 22) of the truncated narratives of European historicism, and the novel exemplifies Vera's concern with restoring the manifold and complex narratives which make up her country's past. In *Nehanda*, Vera seeks to assert the validity of an oral history, which has been ignored

in the “history books”, because it cannot be verified by the systems of Western empiricism. This “discredited” (Vera in Bryce, 221) oral history resonates, for Vera, with a “spiritual” truth that official historiography does not. She claims that it is an “intuitive” understanding of her country’s past which she seeks to communicate in *Nehanda*, and she compares her role as writer of the novel to the spirit-medium who acts as a vessel for the wisdom of the mhondoro: “[*Nehanda* was written] almost intuitively, out of my consciousness of being African, as though I were myself a spirit medium [...] I wrote it from remembrance, as a witness to my own spiritual history” (Vera in Bryce, 220).

In telling these stories, Vera often turns to peripheral places, experiences and people: to Zimbabwe’s townships and rural areas, to the experiences of poor rural women, to violent, dehumanising and “irrational” acts that expose deep layers of trauma. This trauma is explicit in her second novel *Without a Name* (1994). The central woman character here is totally disconnected from the heroic project of nation-building. Mazvita has been raped, and travels despairingly around Zimbabwe without any true sense of “home”. She carries on her back a bundle that turns out to be the child she has killed, and which she will bury at the scene of her violation. Mazvita’s journey is shown to be a painfully solitary struggle, one of the many struggles that entirely elude the populist narrative of national liberation from colonial rule. Like *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* (1996) deals with violence directed at women by focusing on incest in the context of the liberation struggle. Zhizha, the main character, is sexually abused by her father. She battles to make sense of her experiences and, like Mazvita, must deal alone with a trauma that her family and community neither prevent, nor assist her with.

Vera’s fourth novel, *Butterfly Burning*, is also set in Zimbabwe’s colonial past, but this text moves away from the mysticism of *Nehanda* in its exploration of the theme of colonial domination. Set in the 1940s, also presents the painful isolation of one woman’s struggle. Phephelaphi is a young woman from a township who applies to train as a nurse in the colonial context of Rhodesia. But her ambition is interrupted by an unplanned pregnancy. The novel ends with this character setting herself alight in view of the father of her unborn child.

It is concerned with the formation of individual identities and inter- personal relationships within the restrictive confines of the colonised terrain, and vividly depicts the complex dynamics which operate in the subjectivities of the colonised. In this regard, the

novel seeks to transcend what Homi Bhabha refers to as the “stereotypes” (70) of colonial discourse, which, he argues, “construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest” (70). The novel re-maps the power relations in the colonial setting to foreground instances of agency and resistance operating within its margins, thus providing the discursive space in which alternative identities for Rhodesia’s colonised can be imagined. While Vera’s re-articulation of her country’s colonial past comprises an important aspect of her work, it is her rewriting of its more recent liberation and post-independence history that is increasingly gaining critical attention. Her work is regarded as forming an important part of an emergent Zimbabwean literature, which is contesting the suppressive narratives of ZANU (PF)’s official nationalism (Kaarlsholm 13-15; Bull-Christiansen 26- 31). Vera is amongst authors like Shimmer Chinodya and Charles Samupindi, who have sought to rewrite Zimbabwe’s war of liberation from a critical perspective, revealing the traumas and sufferings belied by ZANU (PF)’s glorification of the second Chimurenga.

Vera’s last novel, *The Stone Virgins* (2002) is distinctive in covering both pre- and post independence periods in Zimbabwe. It directly contrasts the euphoria associated with the coming of independence in 1980 with the start of a civil war in Zimbabwe’s southern province of Matabeleland during the mid-1980s. Vera connects personal with collective violence in her story. The characters’ experiences are rooted in the period when President Mugabe mobilised armed forces to destroy political opponents in Matabeleland. This led to the widespread slaughter of numerous Zimbabweans, and brutalised those who fought in the name of defending the party in power. The novel graphically confronts the impact of this violent environment on individual Zimbabweans, and especially on women, who are primarily targeted in atrocious acts of torture. By voicing this silenced period of her country’s post-independence history, Vera’s novel critically contests the truncated narratives of ‘patriotic history’ currently disseminated by ZANU (PF)’s third Chimurenga discourse.

Even an extremely cursory review of the plots of Vera’s novels reveals that her work has been unflinching in confronting historical events, and the personal and political challenges experienced by numerous Zimbabweans. Vera’s characters struggle with colonial violence, infanticide, physical and emotional torture, rape, incest and civil war. They also struggle with forms of betrayal that exemplify the corruption of hopes and ideals in the postcolonial period. At the same time, her novels unravel the complexity of personal relationships, and refuse to limit these to norms of political correctness; nationalist orthodoxy or the various taboos

entrenched in literary traditions and social conventions. Because of the intricacy and depth of the author's personal and political subject-matter, her novels have a compelling relevance to circumstances and experiences beyond the immediate context of colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe. She urges her readers to consider different forms of marginality, silencing, and violation, and insists on the need to hear the voices of those that are powerless and victimised. Or she traces the confluence of courage, determination, futility and despair in the struggles of those whose voices are not heeded in society. Her writing therefore opens up expansive visions of freedom and ever-widening paths of resistance. In an environment where African women's writing is often believed to offer insights only into very particular experiences, Vera's writing challenges the reader to explore a vast network of emotions, politics and values. Her tools are words that encourage readers to do far more than recognise real-life situations or existing political circumstances, words that gesture towards the immense possibilities for living, seeing and thinking beyond repressive social structures, relationships, fictions and silences. The power of her tools revolves considerably around the poetic force of her language.

In her novels, Vera generally uses a lyrical style, with her minimalist, opaque and symbolically charged writing often suggesting poetry rather than prose. It is often assumed that politically engaged writing must be realistic and mimetic, and that highly poetic and lyrical writing inevitably signals political escapism or obscurity. Yet the powerful poetic cadences of Vera's writing form part of an insistent call for political action. In the face of a utilitarian mindset that limits notions of politics and social relevance, Vera insists on the continuities between activism, visionary storytelling and imaginative cultural production.

It is significant that Vera worked as the Director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo from 1997 until 2003. Transforming the Gallery's colonial legacy, she encouraged the unfettered imaginative expression of those usually excluded from canons of visual art. The Gallery was changed into a dynamic cultural centre, and provided studios where artists could work and freely interact with one another, and with visitors. The Gallery's atmosphere of vibrancy, accessibility and community – so different from the elitist and aloof atmosphere of many gallery spaces. Many of the artists were women, whose embroidery, beadwork and batiks – often seen merely as spontaneous “crafts” – were properly recognised by the Gallery as powerful artistic creations. As Director, Vera also organised outreach programmes to encourage drawing, metalwork and woodwork by children and women in rural areas. Much of this work was exhibited at the Gallery, or reproduced in postcards that were sold there. Like the artistic creation she sought to encourage, Vera's storytelling is not simply ancillary, or a form of

preparation for action. The expansive meanings configured within her texts actively constitute political action in challenging a present world and pointing towards a society that is possible but also “not yet”. The current backlash against feminism, and the consolidation of power in a neo-liberal globalised world, mark a new intensity in the way threatened ruling elites are marshalling knowledge and information to endorse the persecution of oppressed peoples around the world. Such information and knowledge are increasingly threatening to drown out liberatory expression. This partly explains why many radical feminist writers today insistently affirm new ways of thinking and speaking, and the pursuit of what is “visionary” and “imaginative” (see, for example, McFadden, 2002, hooks, 2000 and Pereira, 2002). Challenging us to transcend neo-imperial and patriarchal boundaries, these feminists suggest that it may be in imaginative expression that we can find the most abundant sources to resist the coercive powers of our present discursive context.

Vera’s death has occurred at an age when many writers were only starting to publish the works for which they become best-known. At the time of her death she was in fact working on a new novel, *Obedience*. But the body of work that she has left us is an inspirational call to take up the collective challenge articulated by one of Nehanda’s characters: “to accompany the story-teller on the journey which may not be embarked on alone. The story-teller needs an accompanying tongue” (1993: 60). As an author who was both preoccupied with disclosing violent histories of subjection and with imagining ways to transcend them, she will certainly be remembered in the manner that she hoped: “As a writer who had no fear for words and who had an intense love of her nation” (Vera in Mutandwa)

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Compulsive Intersections: Reading the Politics of Dispossession in the Writings of Tenzin Tsundue

Shalini Rachel Varghese

I am Tibetan

But I am not from Tibet

Never been there

Yet I dream

Of dying there. (“ My Tibetanness”, *Kora*.13)

The writer of these lines is the inheritor of a unique legacy in the spectrum of diasporic writing and a distinctive voice of the exile perspective. Tenzin Tsundue, the Indian -born Tibetan activist is a writer whose writings hold forth an overtly political stance. The very rationale of his creative expression is to highlight the issue of the Tibetan nation and its independence, to represent the aspirations of freedom for six million Tibetans scattered around the globe and kindle the seeds of democracy into young and independent minds. The difference in this exercise emanates from the conscious quest for allegories and images of Tibet’s half-century long struggle to break free from Chinese control, in imagining a nation that is no longer a political reality or even a geographical image (for he is Indian-born). The endeavour in this paper is to explore ideologies of ‘home’ and nation, the exilic perspective and questions of identity with attendant notions of belonging, ‘national origins’, assimilation and acculturation.

Displacement of people on a large scale and the dispersal of populations across the world have been the occurrences of the past century primarily as a result of major political upheavals, among the two European wars, decolonisation and the cold war. Displacement of a different kind followed this long process in the relatively shorter span of globalisation,

spurred by free trade and increased capital flows and new technologies of communication information travel. This displacement is indicative of not only the movement of people but commodities, ideas and cultures across the world. Hence the phenomenon of diaspora is regarded not as a singular one but as historically varied and heterogeneous in its aspects and the transnational mobility of people may be the result of forced or voluntary migration, of self-exile or expulsion. Refugees then by definition are people 'in transit', being the product of war, ethnic conflict and natural calamity. If neo-colonialism is often viewed as a demonstration of power and politics of exploitation not directly giving off the aforesaid conditions, Tenzin Tsundue, the 'Indian' 'refugee from Tibet' is the direct product of the brutal occupation policy of our times. A homeless poet, born in Manali, India and educated first at Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh and later in Madras, Ladakh and Mumbai, Tibetan poet and activist Tenzin Tsundue has never felt he belonged anywhere. The writer carries his exile within himself. Dreaming of a homeland that is eternally put on hold plays out an existential paradox that is both the source and end of the writer's art. As Ajit Baral remarks in his interview with the writer,

Tibetan poet, writer and activist Tenzin Tsundue is the anguished voice of those Tibetan exiles who exist in a paradox: in 'reality', a country named Tibet does not exist, at least in the official diplomatic world. Tibet is an 'autonomous region' and an 'integral part' of the People's Republic of China since 1949, when its army seized the Tibetan's homeland and put in place a brutal occupation policy.

In the interview Tsundue narrates the emotional trauma of having to renew his documents on which he is described as a 'refugee from Tibet', an exercise which leaves him boggled that the Indian government gives him those documents but does not recognise the existence of a country called Tibet. Being born a Tibetan refugee stands stark as the propeller of Tsundue's sensibility as an activist first and a writer afterwards.

The poignancy of displacement is intimately captured in Tsundue's poem titled "Refugee",

When I was born
My mother said
You are a refugee
Our tent on the roadside

Smoked in the snow

On Your forehead

Between your eyebrows

There is an R embossed

My teacher said

I scratched and scrubbed

on my forehead I found

a brash of red pain

I am born refugee

I have three tongues

The one that sings

Is my mother tongue

The R on my forehead

Between my English and Hindi

The Tibetan tongue reads:

RANGZEN

Freedom means Rangzen. ("Refugee" *kora*. 14)

The raw pain of dispossession is ironically conveyed in the Tibetan word for freedom that Tsundue solicits his reader's attention to. Being born a refugee is being perpetually on the run, apparently in a state of escape but permanently desperate for the loss of a homeland. Hence freedom for Tsundue is decidedly a political term, the search for a home and certainly not an escape from it. 'Homeland' for Tsundue is a political term rather than a creative one and his sense of exile is collective rather than personal. Tsundue's comments on his activism

leading to his status as a writer amply substantiate this endeavour. As a Tibetan refugee in India, he narrates the tragedy of the child's realization that he does not belong here and that he cannot own anything here

My parents escaped into India in 1960 after the Chinese occupation of Tibet. We were constantly told that we would return one day and that the life in exile was temporary. My school years in the 1980s and 1990s were spent in anxiety to grow up fast to do something in the freedom struggle. Today I am an activist. My writings are my expressions. As a kid I killed many Chinese soldiers in our Chinese-Tibetan war games. I used to go door to door in our refugee camp to call people to our village meetings. ('I am born refugee': an interview with the author, *Kora*.2014.50)

The idea of 'homeland' for the activist asserts the sense of community and mutates to a statement of nationhood in a poem like "My Tibetanness". A country lost has to be re-established almost as if it were anecessary precondition for the writer to survey the world and write further. To quote from the poem, "My Tibetanness",

Thirty-nine years in exile
Yet no nation supports us.
Not a single bloody nation!
We are refugees here

People of a lost country.

Citizen to no nation
Tibetans: the world's sympathy stock.
Serene monks and bubbly traditionalists;
One lakh and several thousand odd,
Nicely mixed, steeped

In various assimilating cultural hegemonies ("My Tibetanness" *Kora* .13)

Tsundue reconstructs a 'small nation'-to use a Said-ian term with strong local roots and pride in ancestry. Nationalism, in this sense is no intellectual meditation or burden as it seems to be for all nationalist intellectuals, rather it is a matter of life and death. The brand of unarmed nationalism that Tsundue represents is a resistance of the successful exile or émigré,

and hence the tireless voice of a nation that has been thwarted by might and power. Instilling the idea of a nation is a burden upon himself as a writer that Tenzin acknowledges in his poetic expression as well as his personal interviews. The nature of this exercise is seen as expedient from his exile perspective. Tibetans have to be drawn out of their bewilderment towards this cause before they and their Tibetanness are wiped out altogether. He is seen ruminating on the history of the Tibetans before and after the Chinese invasion in his interview with Ajit Baral,

Before the (Chinese) invasion, Tibet was that powerful country where spiritual pursuits were the dominant activities in people's lives. They were nomads and farmers who lived far from the politics of the capital Lhasa. Occasionally, they would see a government babu collecting taxes. Otherwise, there was no relationship between the centre and the periphery.

These Tibetans were suddenly struck by the tragedy of foreign invasion- that too inexplicably from their neighbour and friend, China. Even today, after 45 years of grooming the exiled Tibetans into a democratic, participative community, the nation-building often fails to touch their individualistic lifestyles. And the notion of 'nation' itself is a new concept to the world. India, Bangladesh and Burma are now new nations. They were only regions like Tibet (I am born refugee: an interview with the author. *Kora*.49)

It is little surprise then that the Tibetan freedom movement is principally led by exiles, the Tibetan diaspora in countries like India and the U.S and is hence a movement of the crushed and the uprooted. Nationality politics however, is not a legacy that the Tibetan exile can lay claim to. Sociologists constantly remind us that nationality politics did not originate among the crushed and the uprooted; that its primary source was the nouveaux riches or upwardly mobile of the early modern times in Holland, England and France. Tsundue's status can hardly be called that of the upwardly mobile, successful exile and he is at best a nationalist intellectual who has had the privilege of university education in the country of exile. He may even be perceived as an intellectual earmarked for successful metropolitan assimilation who has turned back and tried to assume the burden of those left behind' This in the words of Edward Said is a crushing burden (and not without its contradictions. The nationalist consciousness for Tsundue is a necessary paradigm constructed upon the cultural tradition of Tibet and the elders' lives as children of farmers, herders or traders or as young monks and

nuns in monasteries. Though he does not detail the religious and spiritual tradition of Tibet or the Buddhist monasteries, he dwells upon the influence of these in everyday life and perceptions of Chinese occupation. In his essay "My kind of Exile" which won the Outlook-Picador Non-Fiction Competition 2001, he brings out the tragic ephemerality of the reconstructive efforts of the Tibetan exile, the mythicality of a 'home away from home', bringing out the pain and precariousness of resettlement,

When the Tibetans first settled in Karnataka, they decided to grow only papayas and vegetables. They said that, with the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it would't take more than ten years to return to Tibet. But now even the guava trees are old and withered. The mango seeds they dumped into the backyard are bearing fruits. Coconut trees are brushing shoulders with our exile house. Old folks bask in the sun drinking chang or butter tea, chatting about the good old days in Tibet with their prayer wheels in their hands, while the youngsters are scattered all over the world, studying, working. This waiting seems to be redefining eternity.

Money plants crept in through the window

Our house seems to have grown roots,

The fences have grown into a jungle,

Now how can I tell my children

Where we came from? ("My Kind of Exile" *Kora*.30)

The ideas of nationhood and borderlessness clearly provide two contradictory vantage points for the writer, the experience of each or both being a prerequisite in order to define the other. The acute loss of identity that the writer faces is the problem of many such "nationless", rationalist intellectuals and yet a unique challenge to his sensibility and imagination, one that deprives him of the self-worth that makes life meaningful even as the subject makes his effort to assimilate. The poignancy of this experience in "My Kind of Exile" is narrated thus,

In October 2000 the world was tuned to the Sydney Olympics. On D-day we were all glued to the TV set eager for the opening ceremony to begin. Halfway into the event I realised that I couldn't see anymore and my face felt wet. I was crying. No it wasn't the fact that I dearly wished I was in Sydney or the splendour of the atmosphere, or the spirit of the game. I tried hard to explain to those around me. But they couldn't understand, couldn't *even begin to understand*.... How could they? They belong to a nation. They

have never had to conceive of its loss, they have never had to cry for their country. They belonged and had a space of their own, not only in the world map but also in the Olympic games. Their countrymen could march proudly, confident of their nationality, in their national dress and with their national flag flying high. I was so happy for them. They talked about borderlessness and building a brotherhood through the spirit of sports. From the comfort of home they talked about coming together for our humanity and defying borders. What can I, a refugee, talk about except the wish to go back home? (“My kind of Exile” *Kora*.28 . Italics mine)

Tsundue’s consciousness here and elsewhere takes on the writer’s role to reinterpret the world, to grasp the initiative in cultural self-definition, what in postcolonial criticism is seen as the process of national self-making in story and symbol, often called imagining the nation. He sees the prose and poetry of his imagination, all of his creative literature, as constituting not a supportive role, but a basic, sustaining force in a liberation struggle. Tibetanness or the idea of Tibet for those 100000 odd shrinking population of Tibetan exiles is defined in his writings by the notion of the independent nation-state which may be said to represent the most empirical form of self-realisation for oppressed peoples. By the very nature of their long history of occupation and displacement, the Tibetan nation in Tsundue’s poetry is an “imagined political community”, to quote a term from Benedict Anderson, where individuals think they are a part of a greater collective and that they share a “deep, horizontal relationship” (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.7). The images and cultural references of rootedness that articulate such a greater collective are painstakingly picked up by Tsundue in his poems such as “Losar Greeting”, woven around the spirit of Losar, the Tibetan New Year usually falling in February or March of the Gregorian calendar. To quote,

TashiDelek!
Though in a borrowed garden
You grow, grow well my sister
This Losar
When you attend your morning mass,
Say an extra prayer
That the next Losar
We can celebrate back in Lhasa.

When you attend your convent classes, learn an extra lesson

That you can teach children back in Tibet.

Last year

On our Happy Losar,

I had anidli-sambar breakfast

And wrote my B. A final exams.

My idlis wouldn't stand

On my toothed steely fork,

But I wrote my exams well.

Though in a borrowed garden

You grow, grow well my sister.

Send your roots through the bricks

Stones, tiles and sand.

Spread your branches wide

And rise

Above the hedges high

TashiDelek! (“Losar Greeting”, *Kora*,10)

TashiDelek is a Tibetan greeting, said especially on the New Year proclaimed to symbolise the hope of coming together as a national collective. While it is a friendly, peace greeting, the proclamation uttered from the confines of his exile status carries with it the effect of scaling the citadel and unfurling the flag of a new nation, akin to the act of protest that the writer-activist carried out in climbing the 14th floor of the Oberoi Hotel in Mumbai and unfurling a ‘Free Tibet’ banner during the visit of the Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji’s visit to India in 2007. The idea of spreading one’s roots through, runs parallel with the act of spreading one’s branches wide and rising above the obstacles. The exile’s anxiety of belonging can only be quelled by holding on to cultural roots, and in the instance of the Tibetan dispossessed, they are very tiny and fragile roots offered by the surviving Tibetan elders. For Tsundue, the ‘roots’

and “branches”, by their implication of simultaneous downward and upward movement is a poignant awareness of the “national “ and “universal” tendencies of cultural resistance.

What is seen here is a positive acceptance of the diffusion process that occurs as a result of displacement and migration even though it may not be smooth, along with the strong resolve to preserve aspects of the Tibetan national culture and its distinctiveness (as experienced by the writer in the practices and reminiscences of elders around him) at the same time. His idlis may not have stood on his toothed steely fork, but he wrote his exams well. Growing in the borrowed garden is about growing strong roots and spreading out in vibrant green. Losar and its traditional and its traditional greeting stand for the particular cultural values that have been neglected and even disparaged as a result of homelessness and migration while “morning mass” and “extra Prayer” signifies assimilation of a religious practice and culture that is borrowed or foreign even in the context of the national culture of the receiving country (and hence twice removed to the Tibetan exile), that is India. A measured and studious acceptance of co-option, that inclines towards a world culture, with its values of democracy and tolerance, the humanism of many sages happens here. It strikes the reader that this is the writer’s awareness of the expediency of a way out, even in the struggle for national identity: that only these values show the way to overcome the provincialism and the obscurantism of cultural particularisms.

A look at Tenzin Tsundue’s witty, passionate poems, stories and essays perhaps helps best to look at how subject positions are being transformed or produced in the course of the unfolding of the new dialectics of global culture, where globalisation and ethnicity seek each other’s discourses and practices to validate themselves. In “ My Mumbai Story” one sees how Tsundue admits to having more Indian friends than Tibetans and being comfortable with the Mumbai mindscape, language, culture and the conciliatory attitude. In his words,

In the cosmopolitan city that is Mumbai it’s such a joy to talk and laugh in Tibetan. On rare occasions like the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the few Tibetans living in Mumbai would gather for singing, dancing and good Tibetan food. Somebody would break into a mountain song to a background of traffic noise and Bollywood film music blaring from the nearby *chawl*. We take our Tibetan guests to Marine Drive to the expanse of the sea, while we train new arrivals joining us to live in the city on the Mumbai local train during such rush hours.(“My Mumbai Story” *Kora*.42)

Tsundue draws attention to the fact that the forced exiles have picked up multiple cultural identities and continue to do so. However Tsundue does not have the luxury to look at this process of shifting identities and the question of ethnicity from a privileged corner of the process. He has not the privilege perspective of the western critic, or even the exile in the west, but one of the exile in the third world, is a refugee without a nationality and hence marginalized many times over. In the untitled poem of his collected works *Kora*, he muses,

I am tired,

I am tired selling sweaters on the road side 40 years of sitting in dust and spit.

I am tired

Eating rice 'n dal

And gracing cows in the jungles of Karnataka

I am tired dragging my *dhoti*

In the dirt of ManjuTila.

I am tired fighting for the country I have never seen. (Untitled, *Kora*. 18)

The spacial reference to 'ManjuTila', the Tibetan colony in Delhi called Manju-Ka-Tilla is a moment of realization for the poet that there can be future for a culture only within the political frame work of a Nation state. Tsundue addresses the great threat to the Tibetan cultural identity here and in many other poems. However he also takes up the challenge of having to salvage his metaphors from the deep trough of defensive exclusivism that national exhortations often tend to be. Hence the idea of Tibetanness that Tsundue constructs is structured on the consciousness that they, the Tibetans are an ethnic group like any other native people with something of a long history but not quite in their favour because they have always been 'invisible' in the power structures of the world.

Stuart Hall in his essay "The Local and the Global" highlights the significance of historical space in the discussion of ethnic groups,

But ethnicity in the sense that this is that which speaks itself as is it encompasses everything within its range is after all a very specific and peculiar form of ethnic identity. It is located in a place, in a specific history. It could not speak except out of a place, out of those histories. It is located in relation to a whole set of notions about territory, about

where is home, and where is overseas, what is close to us and what is far away. (*Culture, Globalisation and the World- System*.21)

The expediency of the cry for a homeland, a nation-state, “our primary cultural container” as stated by Immanuel Wallerstein in his essay “The National and the Universal”(*Culture, Globalisation and the World-System*.92), is the plea for this place of specific history from where the writer can speak and write. It serves to draw the attention of the postcolonial nationalities elsewhere that while they, of a nation reflect on such ‘pressures that exist’ making them assert their cultural differences, here is the ‘nationless’ exile pleading for that existential, empirical space from where he can piece together the vestiges of his dwindling culture.

Tsundue speaks of the Tibetan as apart from the brand of Buddhism and the colourful Tibetan culture, currently selling in the west, rather drawing the attention of the reader to the issue of Tibetan freedom. In “My Tibetanness” quoted elsewhere here, he shows how there is an overwhelming bewilderment of identity in assimilation into “cultural hegemonies”. He speaks in the poem as a citizen of the lost country thus,

At every check-post and office

I am an “Indian- Tibetan”

My Registration certificate

I renew every year with a *salaam*

A foreigner born in India.

I am more of an Indian.

Except for my chinky Tibetan- face.

“Nepali?””Thai?””Japanese?”

“Chinese?” “Naga?””Manipuri?”

But never the question- “Tibetan?”(“MY Tibetanness”. *Kora*.13)

One observes how Tsundue’s creative act of circumventing cultural hegemonies opens up the intersections of the politics of dispossession, pointing towards the redefinition of cosmopolitanism, the question of identity, processes of assimilation and acculturation and questions of origins and race in an active bid to create a nation. Tsundue is thus seen contributing in very specific and mediated ways to the formation of a national cultural identity that seeks

to precede a national formation and perhaps a national economy- this idea is under considerable pressure for nations with a long history of dominance, like the U.K, but for those seeking visibility and a starting point as it were, this is yet an attempt and a possibility. The inability to create an embattled defensiveness of a narrow national definition of Tibetan cultural identity remains the reflexive strength of this mediated discourse.

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Contrapuntal Power Relations in Vijay Tendulkar's *Dambadwipcha Mukabala*

Radhika. K. M & Marykutty Alex

Drama emancipates itself from the textual clutches to a much larger and communicative arena of theatricality hence it occupies a predominantly ideological as well as independent space in art and literature. It explores the visual and collective representation and demands an active participation of the audience present by questioning their blind allegiance to the existing culture and tradition. Thus theatre turns itself into a powerful media to address innumerable social, religious and political issues by overtly converting the space into a potential and powerful media for expression. The history of political theatre has a very ancient tradition of performances addressing current and relevant issues in the most effective manner, striking hard at the injustices found in the political scenario. The Greeks performed ritualistic as well as socially significant plays in amphitheatres which helped the rulers for a self-examination. European masters like Shakespeare dramatized political situations reflecting the passions, complexities and struggle for power of the rulers in plays like *Macbeth*, *Henry IV*, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*.

Politics in the Indian theatre revealed on the stage various phases of the Indian political scenario right from the pre independent era with a depiction of the cruelties of the colonial rule, evoking the nationalistic feeling, embracing the theme of Independent India to fight against the British. The post Independent theatre on the other hand stressed on the frustration and depression of the common people as they found to their distress the life they had dreamed after independence was nearly shattered by the power struggle of the rulers which astonished them. The Marathi theatre claims a prominent position in the history of Indian theatre from 1843 onwards when *Sita Swayamvar* was produced by Vishnudas Bhave for the Raja of Sangli. Even poems were dramatized so that illiterate people could be made aware of the injustice conferred upon them, and this inculcated a social and political awareness in the people.

Vijay Tendulkar is hailed as a trail blazer in modern Marathi theatre, whose plays revealed leaders of the nation being smitten by the bug of power. His plays dealt with socially relevant themes with such stark reality that the audience as well as his readers severely criticized him for his open depiction of violence and sex on the stage. Tendulkar revolutionized Indian theatre with his bold, innovative themes and chilling representation of violence, corruption and degradation existing in the socio-political milieu, emphasizing the plight of women, lesbians, people belonging to the third gender, Dalit, and other marginalized groups. His plays drew great attention due to the innovative treatment which plunged the viewers into the thickness of action eliciting raw emotions and pulsating passions. Most of his plays dealt with the victimized sect of the society and he was constantly drawn to the authenticity of iniquities and gross injustices of life rather than the exhilarations exhibited in the peripheral level and diving into the profound abyss has always been his domain of immense interest. His women characters though in the stage exhibit immense grit, towards the end succumb to the existing, contaminated and corrupt organization of the society which desists from tolerating any kind of tampering with the conventional ways of society which is cemented with the religious, social and traditional ingredients.

His first political play *Dambadwipcha Mukabalais* in the form of a political allegory which was written and produced in 1968. It is a satire on the Indian society and reveals the political situation of India during the 60s. Actually this play formed the foundation for his much more celebrated political play *Ghashiram Kotwal* produced in 1972, which was severely lambasted for its depiction of its hero Nana Phadnavis, its attack at the feudalistic Brahmanism which was very much prevalent in Poona.

The play opens with King Vichitravirya celebrating his sixtieth anniversary of coronation. Prannarayan who is a member of the harem belongs to third gender and he acts as a chorus in the play. The statesmen of the court – Vrasyasom, Bhagandata, Karkashirsha, Pishtakeshi and Aranyaketu are introduced and Tendulkar describes them as “All are old; all are bored” (Collected Plays 272). There is a subtle dig at the contemporary political scenario where the young is often side-lined by the decrepit old men despite their ill health when the question of power arises. The king enters with great pomp splendour and the very proclamation of his arrival reveals the hollowness and hypocrisy involved in politics:

The Most Mighty Sovereign of Umbugland, the All-Virtuous, the All Eminent, the Warrior Omnipotent, in all knowledge, Arts and Government, Most Resonant, the True Living,

the Truth Inspiring, the All Knowing, the All Discriminating, the Ever-youthful, the Ever-Pure, the Ever- Living, the Remover of All Affliction, the Protector of Umlugite Nation, the Holder of Imperial Dignity, Our Saviour from Iniquity, the cleanser of All Sins, His Supreme Majesty King Vichitravirya approaches oh o! (275)

The king, addresses his ministers and declares that power is not something which could be easily handled and gives a sermon on what power is as he feels that he is the most apt person to define power as he has been experiencing it for the past 60 years:

Power is a crown of thorns. Power is a sword hanging over you! Power is bread you eat at the stake! Power means responsibility! Power means problems and painful decisions. There is no headache like power. There is no trouble like power. We are always saying that we would not wish even our enemies to be punished with power. (270)

Though he describes power in this manner he himself is not willing to hand it over to anyone else is ironical enough. However, while the celebration of his 60th year of coronation, proceeds all of a sudden the king passes away when he was posing for a portrait of his own to be painted. The sudden demise of the king now gave birth to a grave question: “After Vichitravirya who?” (284) Number of critics read a simulacrum to the contemporary political Indian situation created by the demise of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964 when Indira Gandhi with her limited political exposure appeared as a potential contestant in the Congress Party for the post of the premiere. However, with the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966, who succeeded Nehru, Indira makes her way to Indian politics. “Soon after becoming the Prime Minister she crushed incidents of unrest with a brutality that presaged increasing state control” (Silva46).

The death of the king gave way to chaos as the ministers could not reach a consensus as each of them wanted to hold the reigns of Umlugland. The argument continues when all of a sudden Princess Vijaya enters and it dawns upon Vratsyasom that the princess ascend the throne of King Vichitravirya and the sentences later uttered reveal the crookedness involved at taking such a decision: “ His Majesty’s heir! This one in front, five of us behind! She’ll be the rule, we’ll be the rulers! An excellent plan till we agree on a firm decision!” (293). To this plan all the Ministers agree in unison because they all are aware that Princess Vijaya is just an inexperienced silly girl who is not much bothered about ruling the land. But the calculations of the ministers went astray as she turned out to be very obstinate on the very day of her coronation when she insisted on cutting the legs of the throne so as to suit her height. Moreover,

when the ministers gathered for their first official meeting commenced by the princess she warns them not to use any terms of endearment with which she used to be addressed erstwhile. She insists that she should be addressed only as Her Most Virtuous Majesty which was the second shock the ministers received. They soon realize that she is not the little girl with whom they were familiar, but a very diplomatic woman capable of taking stringent measures without any hesitation.

Prannarayan, her friend advises her to use diplomatic language which he explains as speaking exactly the opposite of what one feels which may to some extent even be lies. He defines politics as sweetly smiling enmity with a show of sacrifice that is always profitable. Vijaya admits that she is terrified but feels much relaxed and courageous only when Prannarayan is by her side. With the constant support of her friend and guide, she starts handling complicated issues with ease. The major event when she started her rule was the riot of the Kadamba tribe but she visited their huts and even kissed their children which immensely increased her popularity. The hostility of the ministers was unimaginable as they feared that her rule was causing harm to their welfare and feel that their very existence would be challenged. They are shocked to find that she cannot be confined to the frame they had prepared for her. Karkashirsha blurts out: "I regard a woman who feels that making an exhibition of herself is more important than matters of State as – woman though she maybe – a hundred times, a thousand times too contemptible for words" (312). Pishtakeshi on the other hand vouches that a photograph of the Princess along with a foreign ambassador which was published in the newspaper made him feel ashamed: "I have never seen such a parade of shamelessness in my life! Her saree had fallen down a good three to three and a half inches! I lowered my head with embarrassment. Aranyaketu. What must the world be saying?" (312). Tendulkar makes a keen observation of how powerful and successful women are regarded by less powerful and unsuccessful men. Usually Tendulkar's women characters, are bold enough in the beginning they succumb to the unbearable male supremacy. However, with Vijaya he comes out with a woman who is unbeatable, and dominant – the picture of an emerging new woman with the vigour and capability which the men surrounding her cannot cope up with.

The ministers find out that the high hopes they had nurtured while making her the ruler have all proved to be futile and they plan to depose her but the same old question of who would succeed the princess emerges and they plan for a better option of non-cooperation with the Queen's strategies. Vijaya, after her celebration of the first anniversary of her rule is seen to be in a very confident and exhilarated mood and she seeks the support of the Cabinet to

approve her intention of rehabilitating the Kadambas, the original tribe of the island of Umbugland. The response from the Ministers were negative as they argued that they could not be even considered as human beings as they are traitors who are extremely filthy. Vijaya objects to the terms filthy and traitors and claims that she has acquired an intimate knowledge of the tribe by mingling with them and that they are filthy only because they have not been provided basic amenities like toilets. She feels that it is high time to redress the wrongs endured by the tribes for centuries and that this exploitation of the tribe remains a great stigma on humanity. The Ministers however, disapprove and remonstrate that in spite of the equal opportunities provided, the Kadamba tribe had fallen back for which no one has to bear the stain. Besides they consider this tribe immoral as they consume liquor and the women of the tribe often have more than one husband at a time. Apart from all these they are totally disgusting and continuously rebel against the constituted authority. After listening to all their arguments, Vijaya still remains adamant of carrying out her plans and persuades the Cabinet to put their signature of consent for the plan. This infuriates the Ministers who walk out dissenting the plan which ends in a grave Emergency and the encounter begins between the Queen and her Ministers.

The Kadamba incident, as Vijaya Mardhekar observes, has much in parallel to the Indian political scenario of the Congress government led by India Gandhi. A rift arose between herself and the Syndicate as she introduced radical measures such as cancellation of the Privy Purses and nationalization of banks. This eventually led to split in the congress party in 1969:

With the advantage of hindsight one can see how the Kadamba tribe Plan, Vijaya's advocacy of it and the council's total rejection of it symbolize the many events both contemporary and later ones in the Indian political scenario...the populist slogan "*GaribiHatao*" (Remove poverty) on the strength of which she came to power in the 1972 General Elections and the notorious Twenty Point Programme of the Emergency Period (1975-77). (Madge *Vijay Tendulkar* 109)

The Queen however, decides to execute the plan without the approval of the Ministers and the Cabinet plans to stir up a riot against the Queen. Meanwhile the Supreme Court Orders stay for rehabilitation of the tribe. Vijaya, with the help of Prannarayan's spy work learns that the Ministers have recruited famished criminals in the costumes of Kadamba tribe who have been stuffing their bellies with food behind the palace for the past two days. In addition to that a host of burglars, thieves and pick-pockets are let loose in the precincts of the

palace in the guise of common people on the basis of daily wages. The Kadamba tribe does not realize the intentions behind this plan that it is being executed for their welfare. They too, in turn, join their hands together against her. The Ministers instigate the mob secretly and even provide weapons to the rebels who have come to destroy the palace. As the mob turns violent and uncontrollable Vijaya confronts it boldly. Initially the mob stones in her direction and shower protests against her but when she hears slogans against the implementation of the plan, she suddenly reverts the complete episode and agrees with the mob to revoke the plan of rehabilitation which she claims was the idea of the Ministers. She also promised that she would strive for their welfare and declared the abolition of various taxes. When she saw that the mob was quiet and listening intently to her she declared that she would institute a public enquiry into the private property of the Ministers who have turned against the interests of the people and promised to punish severely those Ministers who are found guilty and shouted: “Down with the Plan – and the ministers who made it!” (354) the crowd shouted back: “Death to Vratyasom! Death to Karkashirsha! Death to Pishtakeshi! Death to Aranyaketu” (354). While the crowd was shouting, the Queen even promised that she would hand over the Ministers to them. As Shylaja Wadikar observes:

The character of Vijaya, in the play *Encounter in Umbugland*, differs from other women characters in Tendulkar’s plays. Through her, Tendulkar successfully portrayed, like Ibsen’s Nora or Shaw’s Candida, a “New Woman” who is courageous, emotionally restrained, morally strong, clever, clear-headed, and determined. She is also one of those women of contemporary Indian culture who have initiated new conventions and new traditions. (126-27)

The Ministers who had plotted against the Queen beg her mercy and on their request she gives each of them disguises to escape from the palace. As the play ends the Ministers are standing with their backs to the audience and Vijaya walks round them like a ring master haranguing them and giving a visible sermon to them. Prannarayan, comes to the forefront of the stage and facing the audience, he talks on behalf of the Kingdom. He says that he has never been a fighter in his life and has grown up in the women’s apartments, in the palace:

For I am of the – er – third sex. A bat hanging on the tree of life. I only saw the world upside down. And the amusing part is, that from upside down the people of this world seem the wrong way up but I see the truth straight! I see you upside down, a formless, characterless, lifeless, existence gathering. The blind, deaf and dumb spectators of the

whole encounter – who allow men to become politicians, politicians to become statesmen, statesmen to become robots, mechanical men. You are a force that claps its hands, makes strange noises with its mouth, an amazing untiring force. (356)

With the immense importance given to Prannarayan, a member of the third gender, a sect belonging to the marginalised, Tendulkar makes a deliberate shift from the mainstream. Another point that he highlights is the plight of the Kadamba tribe. This knowledge of the tribal people comes from the real life experience of Tendulkar as he had visited a number of tribal areas across India. He makes an interesting observation that he is born and brought up in the heart of Mumbai and is taught the history of England and the War of Roses in school but not aware of the tribal people, the *warlis*, who lived in the same country, in the nearby district of Thana. The articles which appeared dealing with the *warli* struggle gave importance to the arson and killings which looked “incongruent, uncultured and uncalled for” (Tribals 269). They had an image of a pack of fanatics or primitive species. Later on he came to know of the terrible exploitation and torture they had to undergo at the hands of their landlords through the communist mouth-piece, *LokaYuddha*, and the red pamphlets which influenced him greatly. It was a time when violence was considered as a political matter which has no connection with the normal urban life. Thus the tribals lived largely oblivious and disinterested in the current reality except during special events dancing with the Prime Minister or as part the Republic day parade.

Tendulkar, however created opportunities for himself to live and have close contact with different tribes like the Bhil, *MadiasPardhis*, and *Nagas*. His first-hand experience of their pathetic lives makes him observe that we have a criminal ignorance of our own tribal population and their culture:

The criminal neglect of their culture, traditions, ways of life and problems we have shown for generations ...they are the show-pieces, a faceless, decorative crowd dancing on the roads of Delhi on the Republic Day, or behind our heroines and heroes in films; a colourful drop for our vulgar film culture... What happens to them, their actual lives is none of our business. Their eviction from their traditional homelands, their uprootment, their dying culture is none of our business. (Tribals 277)

The *pardhis* tribe was branded as criminals by the British but even after their rule they still were considered in the same terms and had been “hounded, beaten, raped, tortured and lynched by the police and the local upper castes on every trivial pretext, as if they are perpetual

criminals” (Tribals 280). He reminds us that even in this age when the term human rights has become one of the key words, we are not bothered about the rights of the tribals and they are excluded from the list of our concerns. No forceful intervention has occurred so far in favour of this underprivileged sect of the society. Moreover, they are treated as secondary or sub-standard citizens who are to be punished and ruthlessly crushed on the smallest pretext. Tendulkar wonders whether anyone has ever enquired the tribals whether they are satisfied in their lot and are willing to stay in their own places or whether they would love to stay in the city experiencing the pleasures and conveniences of an urban life.

The themes Tendulkar specifically deals with in the play are power as well as gender politics and he substantiates his stand by unveiling the dirty tricks politicians play in order to attain power. He brings the sidelined sects – women, third gender and the tribals to the forefront. Vijaya represents the New Woman who is courageous and capable to break the glass ceiling above her head. Thus both Vijaya and Prannarayan project the emergence of the marginalized with a new vigour.

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Smileys

Sheena Kaimal N.

My cutie girl
Paints the walls
Red and blue, yellow and green

Flowers, moons, rabbits
Frogs, stars, suns
Balloons, butterflies, cats
Different shades and colours
Play their roles on the walls.

Long ago the suns and moons,
Balloons and cats.
Round and round and round
Play the rabbits and frogs.
Smiling stars are blue
Kind cats at rats
Lovely tigers and wolves
Balloons pulling the kids up
Signature with smileys.

Lost in the Divine Bliss
My girl goes on and on
Painting yellow clouds
And dancing forests toooooo.....

Encounter

Latha Prem Sakhya

I met him one afternoon.
The merciless scintillating sun
Drove every critter to siesta
So only me and him –
He on the other side of the wall.
His glistening, rhythmic body
Fascinated me, as he swam
Upstream, head held high against the current.

Mesmerised, I admired him, over the low wall
Sensing me, his serpentine movement suspended.
His eyes glued on me, an intruder, I felt
Spying on his mysterious journey
For a rendezvous, else where.

His snaky gaze and his fearlessness
Shook me, to call out to my partner
But he balanced, unperturbed
The watery stream, rhythmically
Swaying his undulating body.

“Oh my, he is a beauty, a cobra”.
My partner’s presence, and his appraising voice,
Disturbed him, slowly he retreated
His glassy stare still on us
As he vanished beneath the undergrowth.

A Mite's Tale

Latha Prem Sakhya

“Amma” she shrieked,
I tried to hide in my transparent home.
“Look there it is,” amma laughed.
“Where? Over there.” she pointed to my corner.
“Oh my, it’s such a mite’.
“No, I don’t want it here, I won’t sleep,
He will come on to my bed”.

Amma rolled up a newspaper
Sweeping me out of the corner
Threw me out along with the paper.
Immediately I sprang up on the jasmine vine
Tomorrow I, will be there, I was equally adamant.

I resumed my arduous journey back
But in the night, the same drama was repeated
But I was resolute, it was a good corner,
I caught enough mosquitoes for my food
My nook was safe and comfy, this continued for days.
I took it in the spirit of a game.

Amma was really sorry for me I think.
One night I heard her say,
“Let it be mone, he will never harm you,
He will eat all the mosquitoes and insects”.
But she was terrified of spiders
And amma had to throw me out.

One day I was fed up of this game
Rainy nights were truly arduous.
Weaving a fresh web everyday also tired me,
I decided to move off.

Fortunately I found a safe place,
A secure corner under the kitchen slab
Where I knew my web would be safe
I was sure amma wouldn't mind
Sharing her space with me.

A Spirit's Perception

Jeswin Siby Joseph

Amongst the tides in the seas was I
In the winter of mid-April nineteen ninety nine
The sun drowned by the clouds nearby
A sound of a soul crashing into mine

Many a story were told all around
But once did I spend my life with her
Like the prettiest pearl to be ever found
Her heart, her soul how pretty they were

Her shadows merged into mine
That fragrance of the finest wine
On that day didn't she just outshine,
The sun the moon the stars in twine?

I walked I swam I drowned to that horizon
I followed the morning star to the end of the seas
The distance weakened, but then did I wizen
Her brightening reflections, I was brought to my knees

Wasn't I the only one in travels
There were a thousand more
My path, filled with a hundred gravels

She was the one, my heart wished for.

The winds guided my spirit to its ambition
Nevertheless, I followed the road to perdition
Her viable absence worsened my condition
In vain, I needed her to be my acquisition!

To a land of green pastures was I guided
As I walked beside the darkest valleys
A thickening mist of darkness collided
I sighted the butterflies moving in rallies

As the mist subsided, the fawns appeared
Their eyes so miraculous, so spectacular,
Just like hers, her presence I felt as I neared,
Leaving nature in light distress yet vernacular.

The heavens opened in harmony
The clouds opened themselves in tears
The flowers bowed down in disharmony
As my wits began fighting their fears

Sprinting to me appeared a dark horse
Jumped onto it, in unanimous haste did I
It changed its color as I moved in course
Witness did I, a rainbow lighting the sky

I rode and I rode until the roads departed

Had to choose one among those two
Her lingering presence into me, imparted
She whispered what I was supposed to do

The road to the right in awe, I rolled
To seek the place she was abode
Her voice was just like the angels foretold
So silkening in beauty, didn't I implode!

Into my ears, the winds did speak
A language I couldn't understand
I saw a light shining at the highest peak
And below were diamonds n' golden sand

In a fraction of time, the ground disappeared
A huge abyss stood against my horse
All hopes and harmony were lost, I feared
But a wild connection, did I feel another force

The northern lights lighted up the skies
Soaring down, a pair of glittering wings
Lifting me up, higher beyond the cries,
I felt the spring, the peace, it's strings

Lost the rivers of conscious did I,
Then the same dreams flashed again
That lady with the curls, Oh My!

Her smile dissolved me into the rain

Consumed myself, these hallucinations
Darkness filled my mind with temptations
But I could feel her heart's vibrations
Was she the reason for these sensations?

I woke up by the rattling of the leaves
A mountain, above the horizon did I see
The clouds together rolled up their sleeves
While the rains began their killing spree

But among the rains did I witness a vision
A vision of a lady in dazzling white
Was this the vision taking me to excision?
As I could never afford to lose my sight

A train of thoughts came crashing into me
Never gave up did I, t'was a leap of faith!
Climbing that mountain to set me free,
Was my intention, but I fell in wraith

Every time I rose and rose above
I was swept away by the winds n' storms
I was a fool to give anything for true love,
My intentions had no different forms

My dream was a wish, my heart made

When promise and hope started to fade

My heart and my soul relentlessly prayed

For His answer, I hopefully stayed

In desperation, I closed my eyes for a moment

Never a superstition, I felt His surprising bestowment

But I couldn't afford to break into another fragment

As my soul was never qualified for an atonement

Like a perpetual journey with a surprising end

She held out her hand and lifted me up

I witnessed our broken hearts beginning to mend

She dried the tears from my measuring cup

I looked at her eyes that revealed a thousand secrets

I held her hand and the world stopped spinning

I drowned into her heart, an ocean of secrets

But this was a departure for another beginning

I was among those constellations in the stars

Her gorgeous eyes put me behind bars

Lady, touch me and let go of my scars

And save me from disasters and wars

Closed my eyes did I, interstellar

Her beauty locked me up in a cellar

You know, allow me one, a dweller

Let me dwell in you, my story teller

Let's start this now my love
And soar up high above
Higher than the snowiest dove
You make mine, a life behave

Between her curls, the sun went down
In her eyes the moon, the stars came up
Her heart, my throne, I laid with a crown
With love and wine, she filled my cup

In this unexpected journey of hope
She remained, the only wonder I know
For you the feelings I had, was my only trope
Our future flashed in every seed we sow

And once again, we're living the dream
Inconsolable, will you be unmistakable?
Take me down to this endless stream
And make this, our bond unbreakable

I'm like a house of rock in a hurricane
Her smile breaks into mine, so divine,
She takes away my sorrows and pain
She gives me that desire, to make her mine

Why these feelings just don't let go?
How these memories just live within?

What's brighter than her eyes that glow?

When'll her heart just consume me in?

Let's mark the beginning of a forever

You are the most wondrous wonder ever

Falling again was rightfully my endeavor

Leaving for some other, no, I will never

With you and only with you my love

There'll be music and magic everywhere

As the angels come down from above

They give me the elations that I can bear

With you and only with you my woman

There'll be happiness, there'll be light

Nobody will ever turn again inhuman

Because you are the one that make things right

Because for the love of forgiveness

I'm getting what I've ever dreamt of

To abandon my world of loneliness

Let's just begin again my love?

All these thoughts rushed into hers as well

I saw it all, her soul whispered it all

Her heart was the place I chose to dwell

My life, my world, I never felt so small

She lifted me from a depressing crevasse
She turned into an angel that helps me soar,
My promise, even if years of a million pass
I swear, I'll love you for a million more

When we became the reason for the world's existence
Darkness rose, but never did we attack
Because when death smiled at us from a distance
We stood together smiling back.

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