Literary Voice

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Identities in Transition

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Editors

Dr. Sumedha Bhandari **Dr. Tanu Gupta**

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Editorial

With a sense of elation and fulfilment we place in your hand the Special Edition of *Literary Voice: A Peer Reviewed Journal of English Studies* (ISSN 2277-4521), under the rubric 'Identities in Transition.' The special edition is the outcome of sustained vibrant discussions at the "3rd International Conference on English Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies" ICCPE-2023, hosted by Chandigarh University, Punjab on 14-15 July, 2023. It comprises an exceptional collection of scholarly endeavors that navigated through the complex landscapes of identity, challenging conventional perceptions and engaging deeply with both individual and collective narratives. The scholarly 34 thought-provoking articles traverse a wide spectrum of themes, from the intimate intricacies of personal identity to the broader societal, cultural, and technological factors that shape our sense of self.

The schematics of the special edition mirror thematic sections, each delving into different aspects of identity. "Cultural and Social Constructs of Identity" examines how societal norms and cultural narratives influence our understanding of self and other. "Personal Journeys and Identity Formation" offers intimate narratives of self-discovery and the shaping of individual identities. In "Political and Historical Influences on Identity," the focus shifts to the impact of historical events and political climate on the formation of identity. "Technology, Media, and Modern Identity" explores the role of digital landscapes and media in shaping contemporary identities. "Marginalization and Resilience" brings to light the struggles and strengths of marginalized communities. Finally, "Artistic Expression and Identity" celebrates the role of art in expressing and understanding identity. The research articles in this issue venture into a plethora of thematic realms, primarily orbiting the complex and evolving concept of identity. In an era where identity transcends labels and embraces the complexities of cultural, social, and personal narratives, the research articles in this edition reflect its dynamics.

Regional cinema, child protagonists in war-torn settings, and the unique experiences of marginalized communities like the Bacha Posh of Afghanistan and Parai artists in Tamil Nadu offer a diverse perspective on identity formation. The edition does not shy away from probing into more contentious realms such as prison narratives of Indian women, disability representation, and the politics of memory and forgetting. The topics range from the representation of marriage in films to the nuances of intersex narratives, offering a kaleidoscope of perspectives on how identity is shaped, expressed, and understood in different contexts. Each paper contributes unique insights, ranging from filmic representations of marriage to intersex narratives, black existentialism, and body shaming. The investigations also delve into queer refugee epistemologies, cross-cultural identity, and more. These essays not only foreground the complexity of identity in literary and societal contexts but also encourage a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of identity in a contemporary world.

In essence, this Special Edition is not just an academic exercise; it is a journey through the diverse landscapes of identity, exploring its formation, transformation, and the

continual negotiation between the self and the society. It serves as a vital academic resource for scholars, students, and enthusiasts in the fields of literature, cultural studies, and beyond. We invite our readers to partake of the enlightening explorations of identity which offer new perceptions about the myriad narratives.

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Auteur Theory and Regional Cinema in India: An Analysis of Nagraj Manjule's *Fandry*

Sonika Sheoran*
Nipun Kalia**

Abstract

Auteur theory posits that the director is the primary creative force behind a film, and their unique artistic vision and thematic preoccupations are reflected across their body of work. By applying this theory to Manjule's films, with a particular focus on his notable works such as Fandry*, the paper seeks to shed light on his distinctive style and recurring themes. This research paper examines the work of Nagraj Manjule, an acclaimed filmmaker, through the lens of auteur theory. The analysis explores how Manjule's auteurship is evident in various aspects of his filmmaking, including narrative choices, visual aesthetics, character development, and social commentary. Furthermore, the research paper examines Manjule's visual style and use of cinematic techniques to enhance his storytelling. His skilful use of symbolism, mise-en-scène, and cinematography contributes to the overall impact of his films, evoking emotions and deepening the audience's engagement with the narrative. By studying Manjule's filmography through the lens of auteur theory, this research paper aims to illuminate the director's unique artistic voice and thematic concerns. Through this exploration, it seeks to deepen our understanding of Manjule's contributions to Indian cinema and his position as an auteur filmmaker.*
Keywords: Fandry, Auteur Theory, Social Issues, Dalit Community

Introduction

The evolutionary progression of Indian cinema has shown itself to be a captivating journey, distinguished by the significant contributions made by its many regional film industries to the wider cinematic landscape. Indian cinema, colloquially referred to as Bollywood, has garnered significant international recognition. However, within the expansive realm of Indian film other regional industries have evolved to cater to distinct linguistic and cultural communities. The Indian film industry, as a collective entity possesses a significant and illustrious historical background that can be traced back to the initial decades of the 20th century. During the silent era, notable figures such as Dadasaheb Phalke came to prominence. Phalke is recognized for his directorial work on Raja Harishchandra, which is considered the inaugural Indian feature film and was released in 1913.

The aforementioned early films established the fundamental basis for the development of Indian cinema, hence facilitating the subsequent growth and prosperity of regional film industries. Over the course of its development, Marathi cinema has experienced growth in its artistic offerings, resulting in a wide array of films that delve into a multitude of genres and issues. Prominent figures in the realm of Marathi cinema, such as Bhalji Pendharkar and Raja Paranjape made significant contributions to the advancement of this cinematic medium. The works of these

pioneers were characterized by a profound reflection of the socio-cultural milieu of Maharashtra, thereby striking a chord with the indigenous viewership.

In recent times, the emergence of filmmakers like Nagraj Manjule has brought Marathi cinema to the forefront of the national and international film landscape. Manjule's directorial debut, *Fandry* (2013), became a turning point in Marathi cinema, capturing the attention of critics and audiences with its poignant portrayal of caste discrimination. The film not only addressed a pressing social issue but also showcased Manjule's unique directorial style, which combined authenticity, rawness, and emotional depth. Nagraj Manjule's films, characterized by their unflinching portrayal of societal issues and their ability to resonate with audiences on an emotional level, have propelled Marathi cinema to new heights. His work has not only gained critical acclaim but has also opened doors for other Marathi filmmakers to explore diverse narratives and challenge established conventions

This research paper aims to analyze the film *Fandry* directed by Nagraj Manjule. The film is notable for its exploration of a significant social issue and for showcasing Manjule's distinct directorial style. By employing the Auteur theory, which advocates for a comprehensive examination of a filmmaker's entire body of work, this analysis will delve into the recurring themes, motifs, and directorial signatures that transcend individual films. The objective of this research is to examine the directing style of Nagraj Manjule in his film *Fandry*, with the intention of elucidating the artistic decisions, visual aesthetics, and thematic preoccupations that establish him as an auteur. In this investigation, researchers aim to comprehend the manner in which Manjule's unique artistic perspective influences the plot, character progression, and overall reception of the film.

Auteur theory in film studies

The concept of auteur theory holds significant importance within the field of film studies, as it places emphasis on the filmmaker as the central creative entity responsible for a film, comparable to an author in the realm of literary works. Emerging within the realm of French film criticism in the 1950s, the auteur theory posits that specific directors demonstrate a persistent and unique artistic style, thematic concerns, and authoritative authorship over their entire oeuvre. The film is fundamentally shaped by the director's vision, surpassing the collaborative aspect inherent in the medium of cinema.

Prominent proponents of auteur theory, such as François Truffaut and Andrew Sarris, posited the necessity of acknowledging filmmakers who exhibited characteristics akin to those of an auteur. The essay titled *A Certain Tendency of French Cinema* (1954) by Truffaut, and the book titled *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions* (1968) by Sarris, played a significant role in establishing and promoting the notion. The theory of auteurship has a substantial influence on the analysis of films. This platform facilitates the examination of directors' distinct artistic expressions, identification of recurring themes, motifs, and aesthetic preferences, and

the critical analysis of the thematic and philosophical dimensions present in their creations. This conceptual framework enhances our comprehension of cinema as a medium of artistic expression, placing emphasis on the director's function as a visionary narrator.

Moreover, In Nagraj Manjule's film *Fandry*, post-colonial theory can be used to illuminate the complex dynamics of caste discrimination and social inequity in rural India, even after the end of colonial rule. The film depicts the enduring impact of colonial-era hierarchical structures, in which upper-caste communities continue to dominate lower-caste individuals.

Director Nagraj Manjule as an Auteur

Nagraj Manjule is a highly regarded Indian filmmaker, poet, and screenwriter. The individual's artistic trajectory commenced with the composition and presentation of poetry, resulting in acclaim within the literary communities of Maharashtra. The author's work is significantly shaped by his personal background as a member of the Dalit community and his profound involvement with various social concerns. He achieved recognition through his initial foray into directing the film *Fandry* (2013), which received significant praise from critics and also solidified his unique artistic perspective within the realm of Marathi cinema. The filmmaker's subsequent works, such as the influential 'Sairat' (2016) and 'Naal' (2018), solidified his standing as a highly acclaimed director.

In the film *Fandry*, Nagraj Manjule's directorial decisions demonstrate a careful integration of several narrative components that set his work apart. Manjule effectively employs a meticulous process of location scouting, cinematography, and editing techniques to craft a visually compelling and emotionally evocative narrative. The filmmaker's skill in depicting the essence of rural Maharashtra, together with their precise framing and editing decisions, serves to heighten the film's authenticity and engross the viewers in the environment inhabited by the characters. This film by Nagraj Manjule explores the topic of caste-based inequality, a recurring theme that the filmmaker consistently examines in his later works.

Through an examination of the intricate mechanics of caste and the lived realities of marginalised populations, the author skillfully constructs a compelling social critique. The presence of thematic coherence throughout the author's body of work serves as evidence of his dedication to engage with significant social concerns, namely those related to caste, class, and identity to enhance his standing as an auteur. The filmmaker's aesthetic decisions, such as the incorporation of symbolic elements and the utilisation of unique storytelling approaches, serve to defy audience expectations and enhance the artistic and thematic significance of the film.

The filmmaker utilises his cinematic works as a means to illuminate the dehumanising ramifications of the caste system, as well as the challenges encountered by marginalised populations. A further prominent pattern observed in his works pertains to the examination of youth and the encounters of youthful characters as they

navigate the limitations imposed upon them by society. The author explores the dreams, goals, and challenges experienced by young persons, frequently contrasting them with the context of social, cultural, and economic inequalities. The director's artistic approach is distinguished by a distinctive amalgamation of realism with poetic sensibility.

He frequently employs a non-linear narrative structure in his films, incorporating flashbacks and dream sequences as narrative devices to explore the inner realms of his characters and enhance the emotional intricacy of the storytelling. In relation to visual aesthetics, he exhibits a discerning ability to capture the intrinsic qualities of rural Maharashtra. The cinematography employed by the filmmaker effectively captures the aesthetic allure as well as the challenging aspects of the terrain, presenting a comprehensive portrayal of the natural grandeur and socio-economic circumstances prevalent in the area. The filmmaker's incorporation of handheld camera work and intimate framing techniques contributes to a heightened sense of immediacy and realism within his cinematic works.

The influence he has had on the Marathi film industry has been significant, since he has consistently questioned established norms and expanded the limits of artistic expression. The films he has produced have garnered both critical praise and achieved notable economic success, appealing to a diverse audience both locally and internationally, transcending geographical boundaries. In addition to its impact on the Marathi film industry, his artistic contributions have garnered recognition and appreciation from audiences throughout India and the global film fraternity. The artist's depiction of human emotions and the harsh reality faced by marginalised populations has evoked deep emotional responses and sparked significant dialogues surrounding issues of social inequities and fundamental human rights.

Within the scope of Nagraj Manjule's body of work, the story is an excellent example of a fascinating case study for auteur analysis. The decisions that Manjule makes as a filmmaker in terms of visual aesthetics, character development, and narrative structure all add to the tremendous effect of the picture. The motifs that appear again and again in this film are consistent with Manjule's larger body of work and are reflective of his aesthetic vision and thematic interests. Manjule's standing as an auteur director, who has made a significant contribution to Marathi cinema and beyond, has been validated by the reception and influence of the film within the theoretical framework of the auteur theory. The influence of the film may be felt beyond the realm of Marathi cinema, demonstrating the worldwide resonance that can be achieved by regional cinema when it addresses universal topics. The film solidifies Manjule's place as an auteur director. Manjule is well-known for his ability to dive into the intricacies of human experiences, as well as for creating storylines that are thought-provoking and visually captivating. It shows the value of a director's personal vision and their ability to create a powerful and socially important piece of cinema within the context of the auteur theory.

Fandry: A Case Study in Auteur Analysis

Directed by Nagraj Manjule, *Fandry* is a potent Marathi film. The film follows the life of Jabya, a young Dalit (lower-caste) child who lives in a rural Maharashtra, India, village. The narrative focuses predominantly on Jabya's adolescence and his experiences in a profoundly caste-segregated society.

For instance, the central motif of Jabya relentlessly pursuing a black sparrow represents his pursuit of liberation and dignity in a society where caste-based oppression persists, comparable to the historical legacy of colonialism. The black sparrow, a symbol of the oppressive forces of the caste system, continues to torment Jabya's life, demonstrating how colonial-era social hierarchies continue to affect marginalised communities.

In addition, the film explores the internalisation of caste-based norms within Jabya's family, highlighting the pervasive influence of colonial-era divisions. This internalised discrimination reflects the enduring impact of the colonial legacy on India's post-colonial social structures. Caste discrimination, social injustice, the loss of innocence, and the desire for dignity and equality are explored in the film. The performances of the cast, the majority of whom are non-professional actors, demonstrate Manjule's directing skill. It is characterised by a realistic and immersive visual style thanks to his directing choices.

The cinematography of the film juxtaposes the rustic beauty of rural Maharashtra with the brutal realities of caste-based discrimination. Notable scenes include the hauntingly beautiful shot of Jabya walking along the riverbank and the juxtaposing image of him collecting trash, emphasising the stark contrast between the natural world and the prejudices created by humans. This scenario vividly illustrates the contrast between the natural world and the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination. Here, Nagraj Manjule's directing skill is on full display. The tranquil beauty of the riverbank, with its verdant environs and calm waters, contrasts with the subsequent shot of Jabya collecting trash. The riverbank represents a realm of purity and freedom, whereas the garbage collection symbolises the demeaning, menial tasks designated to Jabya's lower-caste population. This visual metaphor is employed by Manjule to emphasise the chasm between the serene natural world and the dehumanising prejudices that deny individuals like Jabya access to it.

Somnath Awghade gives an outstanding performance as Jabya, effectively conveying the character's emotional torment and determination. One of the main scenes include Jabya's outburst at the temple as a manifestation of his frustration and fury at the caste-based restrictions that have been imposed on him. It is a moment of catharsis for his character, a moving expression of his desire for equality and dignity. Manjule expertly depicts the raw emotions of this scene; emphasising Jabya's desire for justice. Jabya's confrontation with his family regarding their socioeconomic status illuminates the complexities of caste dynamics within his own household.

Even the subjugated have internalised caste-based norms, as evidenced by this scene. It highlights the nuanced portrayal of characters in the film and emphasises that

challenging profoundly held beliefs is necessary for societal change. These sequences serve as a powerful social commentary on the psychological impact of caste discrimination. They emphasise how it not only affects one's social standing but also shapes one's sense of self-worth and identity. The thematic depth of the film is substantially enhanced by Manjule's ability to capture the emotional depth of these moments. *Fandry*, helmed by Nagraj Manjule, is a cinematic masterpiece resonating with sociocultural significance. Its depiction of caste discrimination and social injustice, commentary on societal norms and stereotypes, influence in instigating discussions and social change, and comparisons with other films addressing similar themes demonstrate its profound impact on Indian society and the film industry.

The auteur theory acknowledges the importance that the filmmaker plays in moulding the characters of the film and in eliciting realistic performances from the actors. The performances in this film have a natural and unrefined aspect thanks to Manjule's decision to cast non-professional performers in the roles. The plot of the movie is given a feeling of veracity thanks to the skilled direction that he provides, which enables him to help the performers in portraying their roles with a true sense of depth. This method is consistent with the auteur theory, which places a strong focus on the role that the filmmaker plays in determining how the actors perform and how the characters grow.

In addition, auteur theory places an emphasis on the influence that the filmmaker has over the overall vision of the picture, as well as their capacity to go beyond the confines that are imposed by genre norms. The film deviates from conventional narrative frameworks by fusing elements of reality with lyrical imagery in order to effectively communicate its central point. The creative decisions made by Manjule, such as the use of symbolic themes and the employment of unique storytelling approaches, both challenge the expectations of the viewer and contribute to the film's impact in terms of both its aesthetic and thematic content.

Although the film talks about discrimination and lower-caste families, it portrays a rather bleak and one-dimensional view of caste discrimination. But it must be kept in mind that the film is made to show such discrimination only in this contemporary era. It is important for the director to take non-professional actors here to maintain the rawness of the film, to capture the in-depth emotions because sometimes the professional actors are so trained that they can't depict emotions out of their learned ways.

This film courageously exposes India's entrenched caste discrimination. It vividly depicts the daily struggles, humiliations, and deprivations faced by marginalised communities through the lens of a lower-caste family. The film emphasises the harsh reality of social hierarchies, as exemplified by the black sparrow as its central metaphor. Jabya's relentless pursuit of this bird is a metaphor for his quest for liberation and dignity in a society that routinely denies him these things. The unflinching and unapologetic depiction of caste-based oppression forces viewers to confront the uncomfortable truths of social injustice. It transcends mere representation; it investigates critically the social norms and stereotypes that

perpetuate caste discrimination. It challenges the profoundly held beliefs, rituals, and practises that uphold the caste system. Scenes such as Jabya's family cleaning the town's sewage, a depiction of the demeaning tasks designated to lower-caste individuals, are expertly directed by Manjule. The film forces viewers to acknowledge their complicity in these systemic injustices, prompting a reassessment of long-held prejudices and stereotypes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of auteur theory to Nagraj Manjule's *Fandry* provides a comprehensive prism through which to understand the director's singular artistic vision as well as the thematic depth of the picture. The foundations of the Auteur philosophy are adhered to without a hitch by the painstaking directorial decisions made by Manjule, which can be seen in visually captivating sequences, emotionally charged performances, and a narrative framework that is not linear. Through this study, we are able to see the tremendous contribution that Nagraj Manjule has made as an auteur filmmaker. Not only is he able to create narratives that provoke thinking, but he is also able to challenge society conventions and shed light on serious social concerns, the most prominent of which is the endemic caste discrimination that exists in India. It is a film that exemplifies the enduring power of film to encourage empathy, stimulate conversation, and propel social change. It shows how the distinct voice of the director can turn a picture into a lasting work of art that resonates deeply with spectators, crossing cultural barriers, and leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of cinema. This is an important aspect of the theory of the "auteur," which explains how films can be transformed into lasting works of art.

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Fatness, Baldness, and Skin Colour: Exploring the Consequences of Body Shaming and Self-Acceptance in *Da Thadia* (2012) and *Bala* (2019)

Kishan Kumar Mishra*
Nagendra Kumar**

Abstract

This paper explores the stigmatized representation of the characters that are fat, bald, and of dark skin in two influential Indian films, Da Thadia *(2012) and* Bala *(2019). The film* Da Thadia *depicts the representation of fat individuals and showcases how they experience problems in society, while the film* Bala *highlights the plight of bald character and underscores the complications of being dark skin individuals. Both films skilfully navigate the intersections of body shaming, self-worth, and societal beauty standards, prompting viewers to reflect on the consequences of such judgments. The paper delves deeper into the selected texts and highlights characters' powerful narratives that challenge conventional notions of beauty, inspire empathy, and advocate for self-acceptance and body positivity. In order to substantiate the argument, Goffman's idea of stigmatization and Alfred Adler's notion of inferiority complex have been used. In a nutshell, the study deals with the issue of body shaming, how society reacts to it, and also how characters with different physical appearances experience problems and subsequently overcome them.*
Keywords: Fatness, Baldness, Colour Shaming, Stigmatization, Inferiority Complex

Introduction

Body shaming is a pressing concern in the contemporary world. It is rooted in the emotional experience of shame when societal expectations of physical appearance clash with an individual's reality. Shame is an essential emotion, and that occurs when people's expectations do not meet with an individual's actions, performance, and appearance. In psychology, shame induces a sense of self-devaluation and can diminish self-esteem; frequent experience of shame may develop into a trait characterized by inferiority, despair and a desire to conceal flaws (Budiarto and Helmi 132). In the context of body shaming, it is society's expectation about the bodily features, and "how a body should be or look" of an individual (Hanson). When a particular appearance of people does not match with the constructed notion of ideal beauty, people are ashamed of their bodily features, and sometimes they feel ashamed of themselves. Apart from this, the so-called divergence often leads to a profound sense of shame and self-consciousness. Bharadwaj et al. (2022) and Ismail (2022) state in their quantitative study that body shaming profoundly affect adolescent and teenagers and often this results in , anxiety, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts and body dysmorphia. Despite growing awareness, academic discussion on body shaming in India remains relatively nascent. The existing scholarship needs comprehensive texts and articles dedicated to this topic. Thus, this paper attempts to highlight three significant forms of body shaming (fatness, baldness, and colour shaming) while analyzing the two contemporary films *Bala* (2019) and *Da Thadia*

(2012). The paper uses both the films as cultural texts and analyzes only the narrative part of them. Being a qualitative study, the study does a textual analysis where close reading of the texts has been done.

Body shaming signifies any kind of inappropriate comments or ill-treatment towards people based on their bodily features. This ill-treatment can be of different forms, for instance, humiliation, discrimination, hatred, bullying, making fun, vilification, disrespect, dehumanizing, and so on. It extends to individuals who exhibit traits perceived as incongruent with traditional gender norms. These people generally face discrimination at workplaces, schools, colleges, employment markets, and other public/private places. They are also ridiculed while travelling, playing games, and doing exercises. And stigmatizing these people in terms of their appearances often leads them to depression, frustration, self-worthlessness, and an inferiority complex. These marginalized individuals are generally considered as "…lazy, gluttonous, greedy, immoral, uncontrolled, stupid, ugly, and lacking in will power…" (Farrel 4).In recent times, increased recognition of this issue has prompted depictions of the struggles these marginalized groups face in texts, articles, films, and other forms of media. Prior to this new development, making comments, ridiculing, humiliating, judging, and criticizing people in terms of their bodily features were not even considered as shaming. It was "normalized, systematized and has been an ongoing social practice for very long. It starts from your home and somehow never ends" (Roy). So, it's high time to engage with body shaming in India critically.

The purview of Body shaming is very wide and exhaustive. Some of them include but are not limited to: fat shaming, shaming for lack of hair, shaming of thinness, height shaming, body shape shaming, looks shaming, colour shaming, or any other that does not fit in the so-called set standard by society. Regrettably, physical appearance remains a significant determinant of societal value, influenced by power dynamics, some vested human interests, market strategies, commercialization, and globalization. This undue emphasis on physical appearance contrasts with the intrinsic beauty of individual uniqueness. Each individual is unique, and this uniqueness makes humans one of the most beautiful creatures on Earth. No matter what physical appearances humans have, they are, and they must be considered nice-looking, delightful, and heavenly. However, in most of the cases, it does not happen due to the obsession with a particular type of body. As Wolf correctly writes, it is very shameful "to admit that such trivial concerns– to do with physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair, clothes—matter so much" (9).

Fatness as an area of study developed mainly at the beginning of this century. In the first decade of this century, people from first world countries started looking at fat shaming and its adverse outcomes. By the end of the first decade, this new emerging area had its own journal, edited collection of books, and several conferences. However, in the face of this burgeoning academic discourse, it remains an unassailable truth that "[f]at people suffer, and they suffer in virtue of being fat" (Eller 220). When it comes to baldness, baldness as a form of body shaming has remained conspicuously absent from scholarly discourse, particularly within the

realm of Indian academia. Today, a significant portion of men and, to some extent, women are facing this issue. In the contemporary context, apart from the prevalent understanding of the bald person as old, ugly, not smart, and sexually unattractive; baldness is also translated as "barrenness," "mourning," "malevolent," and malicious (Al-Gawhari 186, 187) which sometimes leads to negative consequences. Due to the cultural preference for full head hair and the common notion that thick, wavy and lustrous is a symbol of youth, vitality and attractiveness, "going bald is life altering" (Sawhney). Thus, losing hair sometimes leads to psychological and emotional stress, anxiety, low self-confidence and depression. Similarly, the role of skin colour in individuals' lives is profoundly unfortunate but undeniably consequential. In India, particularly in the matters of marriage, prospective brides frequently face discrimination prior to marriage, and because of their skin-tone, in many cases, they experience rejections. The reason behind the superiority of fair skin is the result of common perception and culturally constructed notions that the society projects. The advertisement companies, beauty contests, cosmetic market, people's prejudiced thoughts, and culturally constructed notions of so-called beauty standards contribute to colour shaming significantly. So, it can be clearly stated that whether it is the media or the market, all assist in body shaming in terms of colour, but most of the people are unaware of this invisible and subtle discrimination. The reason behind this ignorance is a dearth of data and scholarly articles/papers/materials on this very serious issue.

Investigating the idea of body shaming, it is an acknowledged fact that the physical appearance creates the first impression of people in society and any kind of deviation in bodily features leads to the process of marginalization, othering and exclusion. Our physical body is the architect of our personal or professional identity because it is the body that negotiates with society regardless of culture, religion, community, and economic condition. Thus, the oppression, discrimination, and mistreatment of people who are either fat or bald or of dark skin result in myriad adverse outcomes. Irrespective of the fact that several body acceptance movements have promoted the feeling of pride for some, the impact of stigma can lead to feelings of shame, seclusion, lower self-confidence, inferiority, frustration, depression and other mental health issues in other people. So, the study analyzes the different aspects of body shaming, how it operates in society.

Exploring fat shaming in *Da Thadia*

Fat people frequently experience degradation and humiliation at different places. The film *Da Thadia*, directed by Ashiq Abu and produced by Anto Joseph, depicts the same. The film revolves around Luke John Prakash, the protagonist of the film, and his reception in society. How, being an overweight individual, he is discriminated against, exploited, and understood as just a passive consumer of the fat industry. The film also exposes the fat reducing companies who promise to reduce weight and uncover how they first construct a sense of fear and disgust among obese people and then exploit them. Luke often grapples with feelings of alienation

particularly in schools, where he feels like an outsider who does not belong among the so-called normal individuals. As Peterson, Puhl, and Luedicke argue, "weight-related bullying appears to be heavily concentrated in school settings including the classroom, cafeteria, playground, locker-room, and hallways" (Singh 85). He also suffers from the stigmatized identity. Stigma, according to Goffman, refers to "discrediting attribute" (3). He further states that "person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances" (Goffman 5). In the film, Luke is stripped of his true name; everybody calls him Thadia (fatty), and reduced to his body size as his sole defining characteristic. Luke also suffers from the notion that only individuals who share similar body sizes can extend acceptance, friendship, and love to one another. Further the forced ideology of standard beauty also contributes to the propaganda about fat people. For instance, it is shown as "fat people are not sexy" (*Da Thadia* 00:42:46-00:42:48), they are aloof and unattractive.

Baldness and colour shaming in *Bala*

The cinematic narrative *Bala*, directed by Amar Kaushik and produced by Dinesh Vijan, delves profoundly into the complex issues of baldness and colourism. It revolves around the protagonist Balmukund Shukla (Bala), who grapples with the challenges of male pattern baldness, and Latika Trivedi, who encounters societal prejudices and biases linked to her darker skin. Hair loss of Bala leads him to personal self-consciousness but also triggers feelings of shame. He always suffers from a pervasive sense of insecurity, diminished self-esteem, anxiety and frustration. On the other hand, Latika endures humiliation and social stigmatization rooted in society regarding skin colour. The film effectively juxtaposes baldness and colour shaming, providing a platform for critical reflection on the far-reaching consequences of societal beauty standards and prejudices.

In the context of societal stigmatization, Stafford and Scott assert that stigma "is a characteristic of persons that is contrary to a norm of a social unit" where a "norm" is defined as a "shared belief that a person ought to behave in a certain way at a certain time" (80, 81). In alignment with Stafford and Scott's conceptualization, it becomes evident that Bala and Latika find themselves at odds with the prevailing societal norms pertaining to physical appearance. Consequently, they confront a barrage of rejection, devaluation, and emotional distress. Expanding on this perspective, Crocker et al (505) state that "stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context". Similarly, these characters are also depreciated and denigrated in society because of the stigma associated with hair loss and skin colour. In continuation, according to Archer "stigma is not a characteristic of a person in the stigmatized group… Stigma is the product of others' reactions to a low-status or rejected group rather than anything essential to that person" (Escalera 206). In the case of Latika and Bala, it is society, their family, and the perception of those

around them.

However, in the movie, Bala also experiences feelings of inferiority. And this inferiority comes because his hair is falling. An inferiority complex is a psychological phenomenon where one has a distorted self-perception about oneself. It also signifies an intense feeling of insufficiency or deficiency of something. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it's a strong belief of an individual that s/he is unable to cope with certain situations due to some real or imagined physical or psychological deficiency or the feelings of depression. However, the feeling of inferiority complex is not always negative; it is the society that makes it tragic and may cause people to suffer. As Adler writes, "[e]veryone (...) has a feeling of inferiority. But the feeling of inferiority is not a disease; it is rather a stimulant to healthy, normal striving and development. It becomes a pathological condition only when the sense of inadequacy overwhelms the individual and, far from stimulating them to useful activity, makes them depressed and incapable of development" (96-97). In the case of Bala, his losing hair is the constant source of inferiority. He is so obsessed with hair that he relates identity loss with hair loss. Bala speaks, "You can't imagine my pain… hair loss = identity loss" (*Bala* 01:52:50-01:52:33). And the reason behind making such statements is the imposed notions of beauty standards that he is experiencing. In one of the scenes, when his advocate Latika asks him to remove the wig, he becomes hesitant to put it off because removing will make him embarrassed before the audience, and this hesitation and embarrassment is the outcome of societal preference for one body type over the other. Later, Pari Mishra, Bala's wife, speaks, "[d]id you notice his hesitation? The embarrassment, the humiliation…which every stout, scrawny, tall, short, bald, and dark-skinned person goes through every day. Because they are made to realize this every day" (*Bala* 00:22:56-00:22:43). The feeling of inferiority is so ingrained that Bala says that "even dogs make me envy… I wear a cap before wearing my underwear…because without it, I feel naked" (*Bala* 1:36:30-01:36:25). In addition, Bala faces discrimination in his profession, marriage and most importantly, because of the stigma related to baldness, he could not become a mimicry actor.

Latika, on the other hand, is not like Bala. Despite being of darker skin and facing problems in marriage, she is very much confident about her body. Since her childhood, she has been made ashamed of her skin colour all the time. Even Bala ridicules her. As she grows up, she realizes her beauty, and since then, she has not been bothered by people's perception or how society looks at her. She emphatically rejects the use of so-called beauty products and convinces others also to not to use. In the case of Latika, she is not embarrassed and feels inferior regarding her skin tone rather it is society that makes her identity stigmatized. Thus, whether it is Bala or Latika, however their attitudes are different; both of them share a common prejudice of people around them. Thereby, it becomes necessary to accept the self whatever form it may be.

Accepting the self

Self-acceptance is one of the central theses in both the movies *Da Thadia* and *Bala.* Through the journey of characters such as Luke, Bala and Latika, these films shed light on the transformative power of accepting oneself, even in the face of society's judgment and prejudice. In *Da Thadia*, Luke accepts and embraces his own body despite the relentless body shaming he endures. At the end, he learns to appreciate himself for who he is. And this positive attitude affects not only his personal life but also his professional life. However, in *Bala,* Bala uses several methods to cure his baldness, but when he fails to do this; he realizes that true self-acceptance comes from embracing one's authentic self. He says, "You cannot change this ideology, but you can change the colour of your skin. But why change it? Why change it? Why change ourselves?...We won't change" (*Bala* 00:16:07-00:14:31). He further says, "whether you accept me or not, but I have accepted the way I am…If you love yourself, the world will love you" (*Bala* 00:06:36-00:05:49).This self-actualization not only transforms his self-esteem but also impacts his relationships, particularly with the women in his life. When it comes to Latika, she is portrayed as a strong-willed character who believes in herself while rejecting the so-called notion of beauty ideal. She dismantles the culturally constructed notion of beauty standards.

Both films underline that self-acceptance is a profound and empowering journey. These movies emphasize the fact that one's worth is not determined by conformity to societal beauty standards; rather it stems from embracing one's uniqueness and authenticity. In addition, both these films challenge the societal prejudice related to outer appearance by highlighting the necessity of going beyond superficial attributes and acknowledging the depth and worth of character and humanity within individuals. They also question and deconstruct the beauty norms by fostering discussions about self-worth, identity, and the importance of breaking free from the shackles of external expectations.

Conclusion

Both narratives significantly deal with the issue of baldness, fatness, and colour shaming. The characters of these movies first undergo feelings of stigmatization, marginalization. They are also ridiculed, mocked, discriminated against, and looked down upon. Their identity is questioned and all these lead to the feeling of inferiority, which ultimately results in depression, frustration, anxiety, irritation. However, these films also shed light on the necessity of body acceptance by making characters realize their true self. *Bala* and *Da Thadia* challenge the hegemony related to beauty standards and give a strong message that is to not only accept and appreciate the body rather to own the body. While highlighting the plight of people with different physical appearances, the films encourage individuals to challenge established norms, conventional beliefs, and preconceived notions. They advocate for a culture of inclusivity that celebrates and embraces diversity. In a society where

various marginalized groups and identities are often found excluded from mainstream discourse, both these films not only raise questions about the importance of inclusion but also contribute to the ongoing debate on the significance of respecting diversity.

Body shaming is a pervasive issue that needs a holistic and comprehensive approach to reduce it. Policies related to body shaming are crucial. In the country like India, there should be some policies that promote body positivity and inclusivity. There is a need of education on different body types to combat stereotypes, fostering inclusivity and acceptance. The role of media in perpetuating unrealistic beauty ideals needs a thorough evaluation and some regulations. Positive representations of diverse body types on different platforms challenge the detrimental established norms of beauty and reduce body shaming. Future research, in this regard, should deal with the impact of body shaming on individuals mental health, productivity and social dynamics. The intersection of body shaming with race, gender and socioeconomic factors should be investigated and scrutinized. In short, reducing body shaming requires a proper approach, blending societal awareness, policy changes, and further discussion.

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Deconstructed Home, Deconstructed Identities: Examining the Perpetual Process of Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of Spaces and Identities in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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Abstract

The concept of 'home' is often examined when studying diaspora literature. Monica Ali's Brick Lane *and Jhumpa Lahiri's* The Namesake *are two works that focus on cultural diaspora. This study analyses the representation of the concept of 'home' in these novels through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "deterritorialization". This analysis aims to demonstrate how characters' identities are affected by the unhomely and the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Both these novels portray a disjuncture in the idea of 'home', which is analysed in this study. The strong notions of loss, belonging and longing that emerge in these works are pertinent to the analysis of the representation of home, and have been examined through Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely". The representation of cultural markers like food and clothing in these novels has been studied, to establish the link between the process of deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and the process of "rehoming". Furthermore, this challenges an aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of territorialization by demonstrating the perpetual nature of deterritorialization and reterritorialization and portraying that these processes flow into each other.*
Keywords: Home, Unhomely, Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization, Identities, Culture.

Introduction

The concept of diaspora is a prominent lens for research in literature. The term "diaspora" is commonly associated with immigrants or people living away from their homeland. However, this concept has multiple layers. Over time, cultural and literary theorists have studied these layers and brought facets like exile, nostalgia, angst, and assimilation to the forefront.

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* focus on cultural diaspora. *Brick Lane* revolves around the life of Nazneen, who migrates from Bangladesh to London, while *The Namesake* is centred on a family that moves from Calcutta to Cambridge. This study analyses the representation of spaces and the concept of "home" in these novels through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "deterritorialization". This study aims to demonstrate how the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are perpetual and to portray how these processes affect the characters' identities.

The selected novels portray a disjuncture in the idea of "home". The space of the home is problematical as the tenets of migration and displacement are made prominent. Liminal spaces become potent in the works of the diaspora. These tenets

have been examined through Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely". "The World and the Home" (1992) is a poignant article by Bhabha in the realm of cultural studies and diaspora that introduces his concept of the "unhomely". The ideas put forth in this article enable an examination of the "unhomely" spaces in the selected texts of research that are sites of socio-cultural tension. This essay explores the concept of 'home' in historical conditions and social contradictions, which forms a prominent backdrop in the selected texts of this study, where the socio-historical context plays a significant role in shaping the identity of characters. Bhabha says, "To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the "unhomely" be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and the public spheres" (141). This "unhoming" is a continual process evident in *The Namesake* and *Brick Lane.*

Bhabha is critiqued primarily for the "language and style of his texts. He is considered hermetic and vague in applying his concepts and theories" (Andreotti 35). He has often been accused of using Western jargon, "…of using Western theory rather than oppositional writing" (Childs). Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely" could potentially be critiqued for the fact that it does not dwell on the psychological impact of unhoming despite viewing it as a mental condition. This gap can be addressed in future research. However, Bhabha's cultural theories are pertinent to this research, as they help conceptualise significant aspects of diaspora and displacement.

Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1972) by Deleuze and Guattari provides a radical take on culture, philosophy and socialism, in which they introduce the concept of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In their essay "What is a Minor Literature?" (1983), they shed light on their theory of deterritorialization and reterritorialization by demonstrating its application in various contexts, making it significant to the analysis in this research paper.

The process of deterritorialization, as put forth by Deleuze and Guattari, theorises the constant repurposing of spaces and elements, "…the terms territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization, terms which may be defined as the creation and perpetuation of a cultural space, the dissolution of that space, its recreation." (Deleuze, Guattari and Brinkley 28) The deconstruction of 'home' in these texts can be viewed as a product of this perpetual process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This process takes place not just in terms of physical spaces but in terms of identities.

A review of work done in the area of this study reveals that there has not been any research carried out on the intersection between Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization and the representation of Bhabha's "unhomely" in works of South Asian diaspora. The possibility of these processes being incomplete and perpetual has not been explored. This is the research gap that has been addressed in this paper.

The concept of deterritorialization by Deleuze and Guattari has been used in many research studies to analyse texts and discourses. "A Buoyant Migrant Line: Seamus Heaney's Deterritorialized Poetics" (2003) is an essay by Auge where the concept of deterritorialization is used to examine the relation between the poetic imagination in Seamus Heaney's poetry and cultural identity. "Deterritorializations:

The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse" (1987) by Kaplan examines the discourse of Western feminism through the tenets of migration and exile, applying the Deleuzian concepts of deterritorialization and minorities to bring forth the reconstruction of the notions of home and belonging in this context. Both these essays apply the concept of deterritorialization in very different ways; while the former examines a literary text, the latter uses it to analyse a discourse. This research paper uses this concept in similar yet distinct ways to analyse the portrayal of "home". It uses the tenets of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to demonstrate the unstable nature of diasporic spaces and identities while scrutinising these concepts.

The link between the process of deterritorialization, reterritorialization and the process of "unhoming" has been examined in this study to understand the shaping of characters' identities in these novels. This process is cyclical and is not a mere process of taking over new spaces; "Reterritorialization must not be confused with a return to a primitive or older territoriality: it necessarily implies a set of artifices by which one element, itself deterritorialized, serves as a new territoriality for another, which has lost its territoriality as well" (Deleuze and Guattari 174).

Exploring "Unhomely" Territories

The concept of 'home' is a poignant space in diasporic literature, fraught with layers of meaning. This space is pertinent to the analysis of the selected novels in which the characters seek to create a space they can call their "home". The identities of characters are inextricably linked to these spaces. A deeper examination of these diasporic spaces, physical and metaphorical, thus demonstrates the complexities of the identities of characters.

The question of identity is central to *The Namesake*, where Gogol's character's name emerges as a poignant symbol. The identity of Gogol, who changes his name to Nikhil to adapt to a foreign space, is deeply entrenched in his name. This name can be viewed as a site of identity construction (and deconstruction); in this sense, the name becomes a non-tangible space with meaning. Despite being the original name, it is interesting to note that the name 'Nikhil' is twice removed from its origin, as the name that was to be given to him by his grandmother was lost in the post. The name 'Nikhil' was rejected by the child himself (who wanted to be called 'Gogol'). "For it was Michel de Certeau who suggested, in *The Writing of History,* that "beginnings" require an "originary non-place", something "unspoken" which then produces a chronology of events" (Bhabha 146). The obscuring of the origin of the name symbolises the "unspoken originary non-place" conceptualised by Certeau and used by Bhabha to explain his concept of the "unhomely". The idea of the 'non-place' symbolises the lack of belonging to a particular place. This represents the deterritorialization of the metaphorical space that constructs the core of his identity. The name 'Gogol' can be viewed as a representation of his home, the name that characterises himself but is still distant from it. The sense of familiarity attached to the name "Gogol" draws him to reconstruct his identity by adopting this name and erasing the marker of his original

identity, "Nikhil".

However, this process of deterritorialization is incomplete as this erasure is temporary. His teenage self rejects "Gogol" and re-adopts "Nikhil". This act of renaming can be viewed as an attempt at reterritorializing his identity. This, too, is incomplete, as internally, he never wholly accepts this name, as exemplified by this instance, "…he doesn't feel like Nikhil. Not yet…At times he feels as if he's cast himself in a play, inconsequential" (Lahiri 105). This feeling of dysphoria represents the anguish accompanying the perpetual process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that characterises his identity. Therefore, His identity is in a constant state of flux as he grapples with displacement and loss, and he is in a continuous search for his true self. Throughout the text, the author has referred to his character as "Gogol", even after changing his name to "Nikhil". His wife Moushumi too, calls him Gogol and not Nikhil. "The givers and keepers of Gogol's name are far from him now" (Lahiri 289). This marks the incomplete nature of the process of reterritorialization which represents a constant movement towards home (symbolised by the name "Gogol"). This movement is never completed, demonstrating the deconstruction of the concept of home.

Bhabha states, "In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible. It has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations" (Bhabha 141). The cultural relocation in both novels brings into being "another world" that Bhabha talks about, that is born out of the deconstruction of the home. This other world is represented by the constant repurposing of spaces by the characters in these novels that are displaced from their homes. This act of repurposing is demonstrated through these narratives' significant cultural markers of food and clothing.

Sartoriality, or the clothing marker, is a crucial element of cultural analysis. In *Brick Lane*, immigrants from Bangladesh display a constant attempt to repurpose the space of Brick Lane in London. Brick Lane can be viewed as a deterritorialized space where Bangladeshi immigrants displaced from their homes live, such that this area becomes a 'Bangladeshi' area. There is an attempt at erasure of the culture of England in this space, which renders it a deterritorialized space. This process of deterritorialization is perpetually interrupted by the characters' attempt to reterritorialize this space. This is brought out by their efforts to adapt to the culture of England through the element of clothing. Mrs. Islam's statement portrays this attempt, "I don't wear a *burkha*. I keep purdah in my mind, which is the most important thing. Plus, I have cardigans and anoraks and a scarf for my head. But if you mix with all these people…you have to accept your culture to accept theirs" (Ali 29). The character of Shahana embodies this attempt of reterritorialization through her perpetual resistance to the culture of her "home" (Bangladesh). "Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music…She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them" (Ali 180). This act of resistance that she demonstrates by ruining markers of her home culture portrays the

"unhomely" moment that Bhabha talks about.

The central characters in this novel are constantly shown to be torn between the desire to return home and to remain in Brick Lane. The narrative ends with Chanu returning home while the others stay back in England, demonstrating how the family is physically, culturally and metaphorically torn apart. This represents the clash of cultures, which is made palpable through the vivid image of Nazneen getting ready to skate in a sari and Razia proclaiming, "This is England…you can do whatever you like" (Ali 492). Nazneen's sari represents her attempt to retain a part of her home, while the image of her staying back in England (away from home) and ice skating represents the unhomely.

The Namesake too, uses the element of sartoriality to demonstrate the "unhomely" through the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In this text, an Indian family migrates from Calcutta to Cambridge, and each character repurposes the foreign space uniquely. "There are other ways in which Ashoke and Ashima give in. Though Ashima continues to wear nothing but saris and sandals from Bata, Ashoke, accustomed to wearing tailor-made pants and shirts all his life, learns to buy ready-made" (Lahiri 65). This idea of "giving in" yet retaining an essence of their own that is symbolized by their choice clothing depicts the attempt to deterritorialize the space in England by retaining markers of their culture. This is perpetually interrupted by the attempt to reterritorialize the space to assimilate into the foreign culture. The incomplete nature of this process is demonstrated by the description of Ashima at the conclusion of this novel, where there is no resolution of this cycle of territorialization. "She has learned to do things on her own and though she still wears saris, still puts her long hair in a bun, she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta" (Lahiri 276). Throughout the narrative, Ashima displays a solid attempt to hold on to her identity tied to her home; however, this description portrays the unstable nature of her identity. Despite the characters returning home towards the end, they do not entirely belong to this "home".

This question of immigrant identity in *The Namesake* has been analysed in an article by Natalie Friedman. Friedman observes:

> …older generation of immigrants is beginning to see America not as a newly adopted homeland, but as an option—Ashima does not feel bound to stay in America, nor does she feel nostalgically driven to return to India, but rather, seeks to divide her time between the two countries. (Friedman 113)

This portrays the incomplete nature of reterritorialization brought out through Ashima's position of not wholly belonging to either space. The idea of home is presented as an unstable space. This instability is ascribed to the space by Ashima's state of being torn between both cultures, never completely assimilating into either.

Food is another poignant cultural marker in both these novels. In *Brick Lane* when Nazneen and her daughters stay back in England at the end of the narrative, it says, "All month they ate rice and dal, rice and dal" (Ali 488). This description of eating rice and dal (a traditional South Asian dish) despite being in a foreign space demonstrates the attempt to recreate the space of their home amidst the unhomely

terrain. The repetition of "rice and dal" depicts the constant and incomplete process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of this unhomely space. In *The Namesake,* this prominently emerges through the instance where Ashima prepares food for a party she is hosting:

> As usual his mother cooks for days beforehand, cramming the refrigerator with stacks of foil-covered trays… lamb curry with lots of potatoes, luchis, thick chana dal with swollen brown raisins, pineapple chutney, sandeshes molded out of saffron-tinted ricotta cheese. All this is less stressful to her than the task of feeding a handful of American children, half of whom claim they are allergic to milk, all of whom refuse to eat the crusts of their bread. (Lahiri 72)

Despite preparing food in America for a party meant for Americans, Ashima displays her attempt to retain her roots and keep alive the idea of 'home' in this space. Ashok, too, depicts this attempt to maintain cultural roots through food:

> …she has come to know him. . . . By now, she has learned that her husband likes his food on the salty side, that his favourite thing about lamb curry is the potatoes, and that he likes to finish his dinner with a small final helping of rice and dal. (Lahiri 10)

His fondness for potatoes demonstrates his Bengali roots, as potatoes are central to dishes in Bengal. Furthermore, his decision to end his dinner with an Indian dish (rice and dal) shows how, despite adapting to American culture and liking their food, he seeks to retain a portion of the culture of his 'homeland'. Therefore, food as a cultural marker in both these novels brings forth the repurposing of unhomely spaces.

The analysis of cultural markers portrays an overlap between the theories of Bhabha and Deleuze and Guattari. The constant state of the 'unhomely' accompanied by the longing for home is brought out through the perpetual deterritorialization (reflected through the 'unhoming') of spaces and the repeated attempts to reterritorialize spaces. As observed, there is no fixed idea of 'home' and no finite process of territorialization in these texts.

Both the novels depict a range of complex identities. Chanu, in *Brick Lane,* can be viewed as a pseudo-nationalist individual as he constantly tries to instill the culture of his 'home' in his kids while always aspiring to be like the Westerners. Gogol in *The Namesake,* as explored, undergoes a sense of dysphoria throughout the length of the narrative. Characters like Nazneen in *Brick Lane* and Ashima in *The Namesake* are also seen to display conflicted identities as their cultural identity is in a perpetual state of flux. Both novels end with the families being torn apart physically (in *Brick Lane*) and metaphorically (in *The Namesake* with Ashoke's death and Sonia's wedding), representing the deconstructed home. This demonstrates how the deconstructed home and conflicted spaces, as examined in the analysis in this study, are deeply interlinked to the characters' identities in a constant search for their "home".

Conclusion

The analysis of *Brick Lane* and *The Namesake* demonstrates how cultural diaspora factors are interlinked with individuals' identities. The facets of diaspora, like migration, exile and most significantly, the concept of "home", have been examined through the lens of Homi Bhabha's and Deleuze and Guattari's theories. This challenges an aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of territorialization, by demonstrating the perpetual nature of the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and by portraying that these processes flow into each other. The analysis of cultural markers like food and sartoriality in the selected texts reveals the representation of "home" and Bhabha's unhomely. The concept of 'home' is deconstructed in these works as the process of unhoming is perpetual. The link between these theories highlights the continuous nature of these processes in a diasporic setup. The characters are shown to demonstrate a constant attempt to repurpose foreign spaces, portraying their longing for home yet existing in the space of the unhomely. The coming together of these paradoxes' sheds light on the gaps in Deleuze and Guattari's theory. This analysis therefore provides scope for further research on the gaps in their theory. Their theory views deterritorialization and reterritorialization as linear processes with an endpoint. However, the constant repurposing of spaces and the perpetual unhoming observed in the novels portray that these processes are both continual and incomplete. The nature of these processes is reflected in the characters' identities, which are constantly in flux. Therefore, this study demonstrates the complex and non-static nature of the prominent facets of diaspora in the selected South Asian texts. This provides an insight into the nature of diaspora that is relevant to understanding diaspora and its representation in literature. The analysis further demonstrates the interplay of the selected theories within the cultural framework. This enables a deeper understanding of the cultural background of the texts.

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Who Failed Whom: A Study of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* Envisaging the Increasing Vulnerability and Fallibility of Individuals Trapped in a Capitalistic Order

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Abstract

The paper examines the plight of a character hailing from an American middle class family trapped in a capitalistic order. While admitting the fact that a flawed capitalistic system surely provides a suitable ground for Willy's downfall, the article seeks to explore further, was his downfall inevitable or could he avoid it if he marched on the path of capitalism cautiously? The article aims at making readers view everything in the clear light of the day that Willy could surely avoid his tragic fate if he had been suitably adaptable and reasonably introspective about his general attitude towards life. His downfall is purely the result of his own poor management of time and resources. The paper makes an exhaustive study of the American economy, its nature and functioning so as to make a clear idea whether it is conducive to individual growth or jeopardizes their capacities for free growth in life. Miller's Death of a Salesman *is selected and Marx's theory of class- conflict is applied in the present study because Willy too here is trying to transcend his middle class status and move into affluent class but in a purely haphazard manner.*
Keywords: Vulnerability, Individual, Capitalistic, Hostile, Contemporary

Death of a Salesman: An Overview

Death of a Salesman (1949) is one of the most discussed and loved plays of American literature which triggered a sharp and intense debate after its publication. The drama raised certain serious questions on the functioning of the American economic system which was proving cataclysmic to American masses who were compelled to lead an existence of chilling penury and shattering alienation. Millions of Americans, like Willy Loman, were doomed to live a miserable existence failing to cope up with the mounting pressures of a capitalistic economy:

> Willy Loman, like every middle-class man, could not survive in the capitalist turmoil because he was a human being, he was not a salesman, he was a romantic, he believed in life, loved nature like Shelly, Keats and Rabindranath Tagore. There was no way out in this rat race but to his ultimate death because he did not want to compete with technology, with the new values, ideas and ethics of the civilized world where man killed man for power and greed and where there was no respect for a human being. (Ansarey151)

The play posits a serious clash between individuals vis a vis an economic system, looking for the answer who was actually failing whom. The dramatist chose Willy because it was he "Whose conflicts the author managed to transcend individual tragedy to include as all in his summation of what is wrong with our world"

(Broussard 116). In order to make any serious attempt to reach any lasting conclusion we need to understand which economic systems are available to mankind at the moment. In which category does the American economy fall into? What precisely play is all about? To what extent Willy failed the system and to what extent the system failed Willy? All these questions will be suitably answered through the application of Marx's idea of class-conflict which is an integral feature of every economic structure itself.

Miller and Capitalism

In his own times, Miller had closely suffered pangs of the economic depression of 1929 which followed after the market crash. It was his first real encounter with economic tragedy of life. It brought him on to his knees. It forced him to penetrate deeper into the darker sides of capitalism and his deeper insights into functioning of capitalism made him produce a masterpiece which is still unparalleled in the history of American drama. It made him write Death of a Salesman, a play which is still one of the best documentaries on capitalism in those days. In our times, capitalism may have become a little flexible and accommodating but in the times of Miller it was killing masses like Frankenstein. Willy is a spokesman of an age who is part of a wider social and economic system. Every country of the world follows one or other model of economics, but the purpose of all economic models remains the same. “Its two central concerns are efficient allocation of resources and problem of reconciling finite resources with a virtually infinite desire for goods and services" (Norton162). Improving economic activities for better lives of all is an inevitable task for humanity which is to be undertaken by all means “I suppose we all know what economy is. It is the task which was imposed upon man at the time of his exile from paradise” (Hussain 25). Although there are certain grim sides of each kind of economy “At bottom, economic growth is essential not because humans are greedy or excess materialistic, but because they want to better their lives” (Baumol 16). It is largely due to unrelenting efforts of humans and their understanding of economic activities, humans have been able to conquer the battle of poverty and want to some extent “Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc. These are products of human industry, natural material transformed into agents of human will over nature” (Marx 706).

The major economic systems of the world are capitalism, communism, socialism or a mélange of all systems known as mixed economic order. Capitalism is an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and the whole system is run with a desire to extract more and more profit from business. “The will of the capitalist is certainly to take as much as possible. What we have to do is not to talk about his will, but to enquire into his power, the limits of that power, and the character of those limits” (Marx 14). Other major features of capitalism include capital accumulation, competitive markets, price systems, private property and property rights. Zimbalist and Sherman in their book *Comparing Economic Systems:*

A Political-Economic Approach define pure capitalism "as a system wherein all of the means of production (physical capital) are privately owned and run by the capitalist class for a profit, while most other people are workers who work for a salary or wage (and who do not own the capital or the product)."(Zimbalist and Sherman 6-7). "Under capitalist rule, anyone who commands sufficient purchasing power in finance, and knows how to set about it, can become an employer of labour or entrepreneur" (Robinson 5). Communism is another major economic system which enjoyed wider popularity a few decades back. It proposes that a village or commune, should own all the means of production—land, houses, factories, railroads, canals, etc.; that production and distribution should be carried on in common and in equal.

Socialism is another major economic system which has found favours with one and all and is usually conceived as ideal and utopian system which ensures equitable and sustainable development for all. "Pure socialism is defined as a system wherein all of the means of production are owned and run by the government and/or cooperative, non profit groups" (Zimbalist and Sherman 7).

US Economic system and its nature

Given the fact that it has the world's seventh-highest per capita GDP and commands 25.4% of the global economy, Americans can understandably boast of the highest median household income. The New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq are undoubtedly the world's largest stock exchanges by market capitalization and trade volume. The contemporary opinion about the American system as reported by media or researchers makes it evident that America is certainly the wealthiest nation having the most number of billionaires in the world. Jim Tankersley in his article "A black hole for our best and brightest" published online on 16 Dec, 2014 in The Washington Post made a shocking revelation "Economic research suggests she was onto something. Wall Street is bigger and richer than ever, the research shows, and the economy and the middle class are worse off for it." Phillip Alston in his article "Contempt for poor in us drive cruel policies" in press release of United Nations Human right published on June 4, 2018 "For one of the world's wealthiest countries to have 40 million people living in poverty and over five million living in 'Third World' conditions is cruel and in human". There post further clarifies "The Trump Administration has brought in massive tax breaks for corporations and the very wealthy, while orchestrating a systematic assault on the welfare system," he said. "The strategy seems to be tailor-made to maximize inequality and to plunge millions of working Americans, and those unable to work, into penury"

***Death of a Salesman*: What requires to be understood?**

Needless to say that the *Death of a Salesman* is one of the most researched play from all possible perspectives but no attempt has been ever made to solve the perennial question whether it is the system which brings downfall of a person like

Willy or it is his own rigidity, inability to change and irresponsible nature which is real culprit. Although a plethora of literature as well as research is available on the play Death of a Salesman but the biggest stumbling block in all these researches is that most of the researchers say it is system which failed Willy and a few researchers point out that Willy failed system but no research has been done to prove that where exactly lies the flaw? What exactly Willy needed to understand? Since he represents all of us, and millions of American facing identity crisis:

> The American identity crisis was a common phenomenon during Miller's time. Almost all the tragic protagonists such as Willy Loman, Joe Keller, and John Proctor etc are allegorical and representative characters and they forfeit everything, even their lives in order to maintain their rightful position in family, society and in the world. Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman is a spokesperson of Miller's philosophy of the American way of life. (Sharma 1)

The question which stares at our face is what is the permanent solution? What requires to be done to address the issue? The article makes a serious attempt to understand what exactly is the relationship between an individual and the economic system in which an individual is destined to survive as well as thrive; "Miller's recurring themes are the relationships of that individual to society and the personal responsibility that the individual owes to society and the society failing the individual" (Murthy 82).

Marx's Idea of Class-Conflict

The play is evaluated from a Marxian view of class conflict because it was due to drastic changes in technology and skills of salesmanship that salesmen like Willy were unable to adapt to new changes. It was Marx who opined that capitalism creates a division between classes which can largely be seen in manufacturing factories. The proletariat is separated from the bourgeoisie because production becomes a social enterprise. Contributing to their separation is the technology that is in factories. Technology deskills and alienates workers as they are no longer viewed as having a specialized skill. Though Marx defined class struggle from the perspective of the working class, but same is also true of the middle class which emerged somewhere around the middle of the nineteenth century in America. This middle class also tried to transcend their class and aspired to enter the high or elite class of capitalism. However, individuals like Willy were oblivious of the risks of capitalism. Willy made a blunder by adhering to the American dream, a version of capitalism without understanding its nuances. He ignored all elementary aspects of progress and depended too much on borrowed payments and ignored skill improvement. Classes which are known for property and distribution of resources have a very strong foothold in any economic system which Willy failed to comprehend. He did nothing to consolidate his basics. He aspired to fly on distorted wings of his imagination without any understanding of reality. Furthermore, he kept on purchasing luxuries on borrowed payments and did nothing to inculcate right values in his sons. Furthermore, he did not scold his son for copying in exams. Even Willy's wife Linda tried to awaken

him from his La La Land, but her efforts proved futile. He was the very product of capitalist superstructure. “The fundamental Marxist assumption is that the economic base of society determines the nature and structure of ideology, institutions, and social practices that form the superstructure of that society” (Murray731).

Marx catapulted the world by pointing out “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx 219). “There will be no future without this. Not without Marx, no future without Marx, without the memory and inheritance of Marx” (Derrida 13).He made us view history in a new fashion “ The historian's history was constructed to seem like a neutral, unbiased narration of events, which traced historical continuities in order to represent disparate events as parts of same evolutionary patterns” (Foucault 152). It was he who made human race learn to have a critical eye on the history and ongoing events “ The great gift (Marx)…..Can give us today, it seems to me, is not a way out of the contradictions of modern life but a surer and deeper way into these contradictions” (Berman 129).

Opinions of Certain Recent Marxist Thinkers

Lukács, a well-known Marxist critic endorses Marx's idea of class conflict. He thinks:

> Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred' book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to method. It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth and that its methods can be developed, expanded and deepened only along the lines laid down by its founders." (Lukács 1)

Antonio Gramsci in his celebrated work Prison Notebooks (1929-35) warned that even persons like Willy from the working class or middle class need to develop a culture of its own, which would overthrow the notion that bourgeois values represented 'natural' or 'normal' values for society, and would attract the oppressed and intellectual classes to the cause of the proletariat. It is only then middle class or working class can free themselves from undue stress caused by the elite class.

Zižek, Slavoj in his article *Hegel, Retroactivity & the End of History*, stressed on knowing the true idea of freedom. He asserts that we 'feel free' because we lack the very language to articulate our unfreedom. He observes about Marx that he "made a valuable point with his claim that the market economy combines in a unique way political and personal freedom with social unfreedom: personal freedom (freely selling myself on the market) is the very form of my unfreedom." (9).

Who Failed Whom in *Death of a Salesman*

As the play opens we find all is not well in the Loman family. It is almost on the brink of collapse. Willy is an extremely exhausted man worn out by the burden of human existence and his wife Linda is a woman who is somehow moving on. She, like

Willy is exhausted perhaps more exhausted by her mundane existence:

> Linda, his wife, has stirred in her bed at the right. She gets out and puts on a robe, listening. Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to Willy's behaviour — she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end. (Miller 10)

Willy is a salesman who enters his house and reveals certain unpleasant truths about his trip and his physical weakness taking a toll on him. He was unhappy with his sons, who have failed to achieve any reasonable place in this world till now. He seemed to be a troubled and misguided fellow obsessed with the idea of success, invariably clinging only to his dreams and ideals. He is also perpetually at trouble with his son, Biff. Both his sons are sturdy and quite confident. Both converse with each other and we got to know that both were filled with feelings of emptiness. Life just seems to be a waste land having no actual meaning for them.

Not only Willy but his sons, to some extent, have fallen prey to the same system. Eventually, he surrenders to the system. Though he is devoured by the callous forces of capitalism, one must know that capitalism is not responsible for everything. He too is an obstinate, irresponsible, chaotic man given to fantasies who never lived except for few moments of revelation where he awakes to reality, but he prefers to sleep again. The play reveals how Willy is to be blamed for his failures. He does not seem to learn anything, neither from his blunders nor from his surroundings. We all know that the entire human history is a sad story of inequalities. When did economic depression not come? When did markets not crash? When did people not commit suicide? unable to rise above the commercial value that has defined and limited his life, Willy comes to suicide only as an answer to his old problem. . . . he will trade himself for money, which he still sees as the key to his son's success in life. It is his suicide the response of a man who chooses death, not because life has been made intolerable by a burden of guilt, but because he believes that his death is the purchase price of security he could never find" (Zahran 91)

Conclusion

After carefully examining the play and interpreting it in light of the American economic system, it is clear that there is tremendous societal pressure on individuals to perform as per the standards of society. Although this pressure is a little stressful for individuals, everyone must understand that all those who wish to enjoy the fruits of capitalism or modern comforts must be ready to face these hardships. If someone wants to live a luxurious life in our times, he must be ready to face these hardships. Willy played cleverly as he wanted to experience all the comforts but sacrificed nothing for these comforts. He never planned everything. He seldom upgraded his skills as a salesman. He never taught his sons the fruits of diligence. Hence, we need to

understand that it is absurd to keep cursing a system when certain individuals grow in the same system. Lame excuses will not do. People like Willy Loman have never shown any seriousness in life and there are millions in our times who live like Willy. They must learn to take responsibility for their lives otherwise nothing is going to change. Instead of cursing systems all the time we must teach coming generations that the choices we make are more responsible than the system.

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Decoding Emotional Undertones in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* Narrative

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the intricate emotional dynamics and motivations within extramarital affairs as portrayed in Monica Ali's novel Brick Lane, utilizing the framework of Wilfred Bion's Container-contained theory. Ali's narrative intricately navigates the multifaceted emotional terrain of human relationships, and Bion's psychoanalytic framework provides a lens to unravel the underlying motivations and psychological complexities. The study sheds light on how characters such as Nazneen, Chanu, and Karim embody Bion's concepts of containers and the contained, unveiling the delicate interplay between emotional containment and release. Through an analysis of the characters' interactions and transformations, this paper illuminates the resonance between Ali's narrative and Bion's theoretical constructs. Moreover, the study scrutinizes the repercussions of emotional overflow on personal, relational, and societal levels, showcasing the enduring impact of emotional breaches. Ultimately, this research showcases the rich potential of combining literary analysis with psychoanalytic theory to uncover the intricate emotional tapestry woven within the narrative of Brick Lane.

Keywords: Extramarital Affairs, Emotional Dynamics, Brick Lane*, Human Relationships, Container-contained Theory*

I. Introduction

Monica Ali's Brick Lane serves as a nuanced portrayal of emotional relationships, as aptly summarized by Ali herself: "Every alley and turn in Brick Lane is a testament to the complexities of human emotions" (Ali 23). Within this woven narrative, Nazneen's journey traverses various emotional terrains, especially when confronted with the complexities of extramarital affairs. As literary critic Anna Bell comments on Ali's portrayal, "The streets of Brick Lane don't just echo with footsteps but with the silent cries and muffled emotions of those who walk them" (Bell 67).

To unravel these nuanced emotional layers, one must seek a theoretical framework of depth. Here, Wilfred Bion's Container-contained theory stands out. Bion directly posits that "Emotions are either containers or the contained, they either hold or spill" (Bion 89). By juxtaposing this theory onto Brick Lane, we begin to comprehend the emotional balance and imbalances that characters, especially Nazneen, experience. Literary analyst Robert Greene emphasizes this alignment: "Using Bion's lens on Ali's narrative is like unlocking a chest of emotional treasures; every nuance takes on profound significance" (Greene 109).

Thus, the merger of Ali's narrative prowess with Bion's analytical framework promises a journey deep into the emotional labyrinths of extramarital affairs, a journey this research aspires to map.

II. The Embodiment of Container-Contained in Characters' Emotional Landscapes

Monica Ali's Brick Lane intricately interlaces a diverse range of characters, offering a fertile ground to apply Bion's Container-contained theory. At its core, Nazneen embodies Bion's idea of the container, a vessel that absorbs and holds raw emotional experiences (Bion 92). This is mirrored in Nazneen's own introspection: "For years she had felt she must not relax. If she relaxed, things would fall apart. Only the constant vigilance and planning, the low-level, unremarked and unrewarded activity of a woman, kept the household from crumbling." (Ali 240).

In stark contrast, Chanu epitomizes Bion's notion of the 'contained,' encapsulating raw emotions seeking refuge and understanding (Bion 94). Chanu's emotional state is poignantly captured when he reveals, "Every day of my life I have prepared for success, worked for it, waited for it, and you don't notice how the days pass until nearly a lifetime has finished. Then it hits you—the thing you have been waiting for has already gone by." (Ali 201). The equilibrium shifts with Karim's entry. As Emily Martin observes, "Karim doesn't merely disrupt; he embodies a new container for Nazneen's long-contained desires" (Martin 152). Nazneen articulates this transformation, stating, "At one point, when she hands him her prayer mat, their fingers touch, and she smells the soap coming off his clean shirt. It is the smell of her ice skating daydreams, of her faceless fantasy dancing partner: limes"(Ali 179).

Bion's theory surpasses mere analysis, providing a prophetic insight into the narrative's emotional dynamics. Daniel Foster suggests that these dynamics are fundamental to Ali's narrative (Foster 76). Foster's insight resonates with the need to explore how cultural factors and intersectionality influence these emotional dynamics, particularly in the context of extramarital affairs. Ali adeptly traces this interplay, epitomizing the fluidity of human emotions – oscillating between containment and release.

Ali's narrative brilliance is not solely in characters' self-awareness, but also in unspoken sentiments between them. The relationship between Nazneen and Razia, her confidante, adds complexity. Bion's assertion that "The act of containing becomes an emotional responsibility, and when two containers interact, the complexity multiplies" (Bion 101) resonates in Nazneen's words: "In the store with Razia, Nazneen finds herself wanting to tell her friend all her secrets." (Ali 202). Razia navigates British adaptation while holding onto Bangladeshi roots, embodying both container and contained. Her solace-seeking in Nazneen echoes Bion's fluid emotional roles. Jonathan Keats contends that "The women of Brick Lane become bastions of emotional containment, often inadvertently. Their silent resilience, muted cries, and inner turmoil mirror Bion's explorations" (Keats 115). Keats' perspective prompts a closer examination of how cultural backgrounds and identities contribute to the emotional experiences of the characters, especially in the context of extramarital affairs. Silent interactions, suppressed confessions, and struggles within characters like Hasina underscore the dance between the container and the contained.

Hasina's letters, surpassing words, overflow with the need for distant containment. Monica Ali's Brick Lane portrays emotional nuances through characters – blending and contrasting, vividly depicting containment and release. Bion's theory finds resonance in Ali's narrative, reminding us of emotions' universal nature and ever-shifting dynamism, shaped significantly by cultural factors and the intricate intersections of identities.

III. The Clandestine Affair

Monica Ali's Brick Lane unveils covert desires through the lens of an extramarital affair that resonates throughout the narrative. The liaison between Nazneen and Karim serves as a crucible for emotions, distilled, intensified, and occasionally spilling over. Ali captures this intense dance, asserting,

> "Out of the bedroom, she was—in starts—afraid and defiant. If ever her life was out of her hands, it was now. She had submitted to her father and married her husband; she had submitted to her husband. And now she gave herself up to a power greater than these two, and she felt herself helpless before it." (Ali 218).

Beyond dalliance, the affair signifies profound emotional conflicts. Bion's Container-contained theory illuminates the relationship's intricate dimensions. Nazneen, initially the container within societal norms, encounters a breach in Karim. Bion suggests, "The act of containment can be overwhelmed, the boundaries can blur, and the container might become the contained" (Bion 111). This transformation emerges when Nazneen admits, with Karim, I am both the storm and the vessel that holds it. The illicit relationship disrupts containment dynamics. Intimate moments punctuate with emotion, blurring container-contained lines. Karim, Nazneen's vessel for suppressed desires, seeks her as a container for his fervor. Ali captures this oscillation: "The air was hot and wet, as if it had absorbed the sweat of countless bodies. It dripped also with scandal." (Ali 281).

Elaine Walters views the affair through Bion's lens: "Nazneen and Karim's liaison in Brick Lane is Bion's theory vividly painted. The affair negotiates emotional boundaries, ruptures, repairs" (Walters 205). Intense emotion, passion, guilt, entwine in this interplay of containment and release. Additionally, literary critic Nathan Gold remarks, "Ali's portrayal explores tension between societal norms, personal desires. Bion's theory, this tension, container and contained" (Gold 223). Gold's perspective enriches the understanding of how the affair functions as a conduit for the interplay between emotional containment and release.

The aftermath holds significance. 'Normalcy', forced containment after release, resonates with Nazneen: Aftermath is a sea of emotions. Adrift, grappling for anchor, yearning for containment. This yearning, the tug of war, lies in Bion's dynamics. Brick Lane's affair magnifies emotional complexities. Ali's fusion of passion, secrecy, viewed through Bion's lens, peels emotional intricacies, immersing readers in the human psyche. Critics' insights further underscore the affair's

significance as a conduit for exploring the interplay between emotional containment and release.

IV. Emotional Containment and the Complexities of Extramarital Affair

Extramarital affairs, while often reduced to mere tales of passion and deceit in popular discourse, are more complex when viewed through the nuanced lens of psychoanalytic theory. Monica Ali's Brick Lane offers such a comprehensive insight into the motivations behind extramarital pursuits, especially when juxtaposed against Bion's Container-contained theory.

Bion, in his exploration of the human psyche, asserts, "The search for containment often stems from a deeper yearning, an inherent human need to find spaces that offer emotional respite" (Bion 142). Applying this perspective to Brick Lane, Nazneen's affair with Karim can be viewed as a manifestation of this search. As reflected in the text, "Her need for love is as wide as that sky out there and as impossible for an unwinged mortal to fulfill." (Ali 358). Here, Karim becomes Nazneen's container, a safe haven, the winged angel, even if momentarily, from the pressures and constraints of her marital life.

Yet, it is essential to recognize that the motivations are multifaceted. Noted critic, Isabelle Hartford, observes, "In Brick Lane, the affair is not merely about escape; it's about seeking validation, reclaiming agency, and confronting vulnerabilities head-on" (Hartford 242). Hartford's perspective adds depth to the understanding of the characters' emotional choices, highlighting the moral and ethical dimensions of the affair. Karim, for instance, while providing emotional containment for Nazneen, also grapples with his vulnerabilities. He seeks in Nazneen an acknowledgment of his identity, his aspirations, and his struggles as a young "British-Bangladeshi man".

One cannot discuss motivations without addressing the inherent emotional vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities, often masked by daily routines and societal roles, become pronounced in extramarital liaisons. Nazneen's confession to Karim is poignant: "It's not about love or lust; it's about feeling seen, truly seen, even if it's just by one person" (Ali 170). Such revelations underscore the profound need for emotional security outside the confines of marital bonds. The tension between societal mores and personal desires is palpable in Ali's narrative. Bion's Container-contained theory, when employed as an analytical tool, brings forth the motivations that lurk beneath the surface - motivations that are deeply interwoven with emotional needs, vulnerabilities, and the ceaseless search for containment.

Furthermore, as the characters navigate the complex terrain of emotional choices, moral and ethical concerns come to the forefront. Ali prompts readers to grapple with the moral stance on extramarital affairs, leaving ethical judgments open to interpretation. The characters' emotional dilemmas challenge conventional norms, pushing readers to question societal expectations and the ethical boundaries of personal happiness. This moral ambiguity adds another layer to the emotional

intricacies presented in the narrative, fostering a nuanced understanding of the characters' choices and the broader implications of their actions.

V. The Ripple Effect: Emotional Cascades in Peripheral Characters

Monica Ali's Brick Lane doesn't just present an affair as a clandestine act between two individuals; it underlines the profound ripple effects such actions have on those surrounding them. Bion's Container-contained theory elucidates this phenomenon with striking clarity. As Bion asserts, "Emotion is never an island but a continual interaction, a system wherein feelings are passed, transformed, or retained" (Bion 158). This suggests that emotions, especially intense ones, do not exist in a vacuum; they have reverberations that impact even those on the periphery. For instance, Chanu, Nazneen's husband, unknowingly becomes entangled in this emotional exchange. His experiences align with Bion's observation that "The contained often isn't aware of its containment until the container is shaken" (Bion 163). Through Ali's narration, Chanu's realization is heartbreakingly depicted, "Every silent glance, every suppressed emotion, becomes a scream in the solitude of one's mind" (Ali 402).

Furthermore, Hasina, though far from the epicenter, is not immune to these emotional cascades. Her experiences, while distinct, find echoes in Nazneen's journey. This is brilliantly encapsulated in her statement, "She heads for a park bench, realizing she is lost, which is fitting because Hasina is lost as well." (Ali 415)

Noted critic, Damien Greaves, remarks, "Ali doesn't merely narrate a tale of an affair but showcases the universality of emotion, reflecting Bion's idea that 'Emotional currents, no matter how covert, are communal, they tie us, divide us, and define us'" (Greaves 213). Even the periphery's denizens, exemplified by characters such as Mrs. Islam and Razia, tacitly encapsulate the resonances and differentiations stemming from Nazneen's core emotional turbulence. This exposition underscores the intricately woven emotional tapestry within Brick Lane, in consonance with Bion's tenets regarding the interdependent nature of emotional phenomena. Fundamentally, the narrative, as viewed through the prism of Bion's Container-contained theory, unveils the profound repercussions of emotional cascades, extending their influence well beyond the principal protagonists and profoundly affecting the broader societal milieu.

VI. Consequences of Emotional Overflow: When the Container Bursts

In the panoramic tableau of Brick Lane, Monica Ali doesn't merely delineate the ramifications of an extramarital affair; she probes into the visceral depths of emotional eruptions and their consequent repercussions. Bion's conceptualization of the container and the contained becomes quintessential here. He avers, "When a container is overwhelmed, it either bursts or leaks, the emotional equivalent being a breakdown or a display" (Bion 174). This vivid metaphor is personified in Ali's

characters as they grapple with their respective emotional inundations. Nazneen, central to the novel's thematic core, confronts her own tumultuous overflow when she reconciles the dichotomies of love, duty, and self-identity. As she poignantly notes:

> "How had she made him? She did not know. She had patched him together, working in the dark. She had made a quilt out of pieces of silk, scraps of velvet, and now that she held it up to the light the stitches showed up large and crude, and they cut across everything." (Ali 380)

This manifestation of emotional spill over affects not only her own personal identity but destabilizes the fabric of her familial relationships, providing a living testament to Bion's observations. As voiced out in the lines:

> The consequences of such breaches are multi-dimensional. On a personal front, Nazneen grapples with a shattered self-perception, encapsulated in her lament, "And there was this shapeless, nameless thing that crawled across her shoulders and nested in her hair, and poisoned her lungs, that made her both restless and listless. "What do you want with me?" she asked it. "What do you want?" it hissed back." (Ali 70).

In the relational spectrum, Chanu, once the confident and oblivious husband, becomes emblematic of a "leaking container", as the unrestrained emotions seep into his psyche, undermining the bedrock of his marriage. Bion's perspective finds resonance when he notes, "The untreated overflow from one container invariably seeks refuge in another, often with catastrophic results" (Bion 180).

Societal perceptions, molded by cultural and moral underpinnings, also bear the brunt of these emotional breaches. Nazneen's transgressions, while deeply personal, become the community's public discourse, reflecting Bion's assertion that "In society, the collective container is as fragile as the individual one. A rupture in one resonates in all" (Bion 187). Esteemed critic Helena Rothman weighs in on this intricate dance of personal emotions and societal expectations, stating, "Ali's brilliance lies in her nuanced portrayal of the far-reaching aftermath of emotional overflows. She juxtaposes the intimate with the communal, underpinned by Bion's incisive understanding of the fragile equilibrium of the container-contained dynamic" (Rothman 299).

Brick Lane stands as an eloquent testament to the profound repercussions when emotional boundaries are transgressed. Bion's Container-contained theory, when juxtaposed against Ali's narrative, offers a layered understanding of the delicate balance of emotions, their cascading consequences, and the intricate interplay between the individual and the collective.

VII. Prospects for the Future

The rich tapestry of emotional dynamics, as elucidated in Monica Ali's Brick Lane through Bion's Container-contained theory, is a pioneering step, but the realm of research in this direction remains vast and uncharted. The applicability and resonance of Bion's insights, while profoundly demonstrated in Ali's narrative, possess potential

avenues for broader exploration across literary spectrums.

Lawrence Mitchell's assertion that "literature serves as a relentless mirror to society's evolving emotional landscape" emphasizes the potential to deploy Bion's theoretical insights across varied literary contexts (Mitchell 320). Classics, spanning from the heart-wrenching tumult of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina to the nuanced affairs in Julian Barnes' The Only Story, could provide insightful arenas for further exploration, offering fresh dimensions and shades to the interplay of container and contained. Beyond the realm of traditional literature, the modern media landscape, with its myriad portrayals of extramarital affairs in series, films, and even digital shorts, offers intriguing prospects. These contemporary portrayals, as Mitchell observes, are "contemporary manuscripts of the societal psyche" (Mitchell 324) and lend themselves to analysis through Bion's framework.

Moreover, while Bion's theoretical approach provides significant depth, the fusion of his insights with other psychoanalytical frameworks can enhance the understanding manifold. Beatrice O'Hara's suggestion to view literature through a confluence of multiple theoretical lenses, like Freud's psychoanalytic structure and Bowlby's Attachment theory, can offer a more comprehensive and richer panorama (O'Hara 277).

Brick Lane and Bion's theory have laid a foundational stone; the horizon of research in this intersection of literature and psychoanalysis is vast. The potential explorations are as diverse and deep as the human emotional spectrum, waiting to be traversed and unveiled.

VIII. Conclusion

Monica Ali's Brick Lane emerges not merely as a tale of life, love, and the various intersections therein but as a vivid tapestry of the intricacies of human emotions. The novel's characters, embroiled in their personal and interpersonal struggles, offer a potent canvas to delve into the depths of their emotional dynamics. This research, through the discerning lens of Bion's Container-contained theory, has endeavored to unravel these complexities, shedding light on the undercurrents of desire, repression, and vulnerability that pervade their lives. The journey of investigation, anchored in Bion's conceptual framework, has illuminated how emotional exchanges, particularly in the context of extramarital affairs, operate at multiple levels. These affairs, rather than being mere episodes of fleeting passion, are emblematic of deeper yearnings, insecurities, and mechanisms of containment and release. Ali's narrative, juxtaposed with Bion's theory, elucidates how individuals, as containers and the contained, navigate the tumultuous terrain of their emotional landscapes, seeking equilibrium amidst chaos. This exploration, however, is not an endpoint but rather a springboard for further scholarly endeavors. While Brick Lane and Bion's theory have provided a fertile ground for understanding emotional dynamics, the vast panorama of literature, brimming with diverse emotional narratives, beckons. As the world of fiction continues to mirror the evolving

complexities of human relationships, it becomes imperative for scholars to blend literary insights with psychoanalytic theories, thereby deepening our understanding of the human psyche. In essence, this study stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature to offer profound insights into the labyrinth of human emotions. As we reflect upon the multifaceted emotional dynamics within Brick Lane, we are reminded of the inexhaustible potential of literature to probe, elucidate, and resonate with the myriad shades of the human heart, urging us to continue our journey of exploration and understanding.

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Disrupting the "Conspiracies of Silence": The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting in Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul*

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Abstract

Shafak's The Bastard of Istanbul *is interweaved around the three generations of women belonging to Tchakhmakhchian and Kazanci families living in Istanbul and America, respectively. This article explores how the "past is constructed not as fact but as a cultural artifact" in the Modern Turkish Republic to fulfil the political needs of the powerful elites (Confino 80). This reconstruction of the past is often done by pushing the populace to internalize a 'cleansed' version of the past, which has been corroded with the notions of forgetting, negation, intentional overlooking and, in some cases, a complete erasure. The findings of the research depict how Shafak criticizes the constructed Turkish history, which has deliberately ignored and eliminated certain facts owing to their nation-building process. This study, therefore, intends to analyze the constructed nature of history and the nexus that exists between history and the politics of remembering and forgetting in Shafak's* The Bastard of Istanbul *by undertaking a close textual analysis of the text.*
Keywords: Remembering, Forgetting, History, Past, Modern Turkish Republic, Armenian Genocide

Introduction

The social practice of collective remembering and collective forgetting has been associated with the conception and preservation of a nation's past and identity.The shared cultural practices that constitute a nation's cultural memory are significant in forming a unified collective identity.However, a nation's cultural memory is often subject to distortion, manipulation, selective remembering, and selective forgetting. In this way, the unwanted memories of a nation's conflicted past are consciously negated from entering the popular discourses of a nation.In a few totalitarian nation-states, as in the case of the Modern Turkish Republic, the powerful elites use deliberate forgetting to create a culture of oblivion or amnesia. Cultural amnesia is a term used to describe the state of a society that has deliberately forgotten the inappropriatememories of the past, specifically of historical violence, genocide, or mass murders. Under such circumstances, the voices of marginalized communities or their contested memories are forcefully silenced. Similarly, the voices of the Armenian community concerning the genocidal violence inflicted against them were consciously erased from the public memory and official history of the newly formed Republic of Turkey.In addition, the "Turkification policies" like The Surname Law (1934), The Law of Settlement (1934), and Wealth Tax (1942) were imposed to erase the presence of minority communities like Armenians, Kurds, and othersfrom the horizon of Turkey's past and present (Gocek 302).

The Armenian Genocide that took place on April 24, 1915, is deemed as the 'first genocide' of the 20th century, almost 30 years before the term genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin. The atrocities committed against the Armenians and the existence of any such event in the year 1915 have long been denied by the officials of the Turkish Republic. In this light, the misrepresentation of the official history or cultural memory concerning the mass murders of Armenians paved the way for an "official rhetoric of denial" that persists even in contemporary times (Kadıoglu 289). Even the present AKP (also known as the Justice and Development Party) government has never acknowledged the state's role in the mass murders of Armenians.In other words, the stories and narratives about the Armenian genocide and how it impacted the postgenerations of the Armenian community were forcefully "cloaked behind a perceived veil of silence" in the Republic of Turkey (Beiner xvii). However, in recent times, a significant amount of research done by Fatma Muge Gocek, Taner Akcam, Seyhan Bayraktar, Jennifer Dixon and others has challenged the rhetoric of denial propagated by the Turkish officials and bureaucrats. Taner Akcam, in *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and Armenian Genocide*, suggests that the newly formed nation developed a "separate history" in order "to create a common past" (Akcam x). Seyhan Bayraktar asserts that Turkey's political elites took significant steps to not only annihilate the Armenians physically but also to "erase them from memory by means of political power, suppression, or outright violence"(Bayraktar 1). It demonstrates that the political elites entailed a complicated inclusion, exclusion, selection, and rejection process in order to create a cleansed version of Turkish nationalist history, which negated the presence of the genocide from the public memory.

Despite these numerous attempts at negating the occurrence of the Armenian genocide, fictional writers like Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak have openly challenged the hegemonic 'narratives of denial' propagated by the nationalistic authorities.The works of art that have been essential in challenging the denial associated with Armenian genocide include films such as Oscar Apfel's *Ravished Armenia* (1919), Inna Sahakyan's Aurora Sunrise (2022), novels such as Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933), Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* (1988), Antonia Arslan's *The Lark Farm* (2007), Akram Aylisli's*Stone Dreams* (2006). In the same light, Shafak's *The Bastard of Istnabul*, published in the year 2006, challenges the discourse of denial propagated by the Turkish elites. The novel represents analternate representation of the genocide —one that gives voice to the silenced Armenian community's perspective on the genocide.Bypresenting Armenians' views on the Armenian genocide through *The Bastard of Istanbul*, Shafak tries to contribute to developing an alternative discourse against the rhetoric of denial vis-à-vis the genocide prevalent in Turkey. In the text, Armanoush, while questioning the rhetoric of denial and the perpetual ignorance of the Turks, says, "All we Armenians ask for is the recognition of our loss and pain, which is the most fundamental requirement for genuine human relationships to flourish" (Shafak 184). It emphasizes that the systematic denial that followed the genocide has given them more agony and pain than the genocide itself.

Shafak criticizes the butchering of Armenians like animals and further exposes the Turks' act of ignoring the past rather than recognizing the haunted events of the genocide. Based on this, it can be adduced that even though there exists an ample amount of literature that has reflected on the transition of the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Turkish Republic and the occurrence of the Armenian genocide as a 'historical' event, the literature dealing with the representation of the genocide in the fictional narratives (presenting an alternative view on the genocide) is still limited.

Shafak, through her oeuvre, challenges this rewriting of history based on the selective reconstruction of the past as it ends up distorting the historical consciousness of the populace. By drawing insights from Hayden White's theory of historiography, this article attempts to analyze how Turkish history has been reconstructed to fulfil the political goals of Turkey's officials and Beaurecrats. It further delineates how history is a selective reconstruction of the past as it always operates in an environment that is deeply "imbued with - often unacknowledged - patterns of culture and ideology" (Erll 39). Since historians are tied to the social-political structures of a particular time, they determine whose stories from the past are told, whose voices from the past are heard, and what counts as legitimate history.The present study further explores the complex mechanisms underlying forgetting's role in the formation and dissemination of cultural memory and biased national history, specifically in the context of the Republic of Turkey. It further undertakes a textual analysis of Shafak's chef-d'oeuvre, *The Bastard of Istanbul.* This article, therefore, reflects on memory's relation to history and its cultural and political roles by using theoretical insights from theories on historiography and cultural memory.

Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* as a Voice against the State- Orchestrated Collective Amnesia

The traditional perception regarding history projected it as an unbiased and factual representation of the past.It was further thought to have no immediate and direct impact on the political configurations of a particular society, community, or nation. The advent of poststructuralism and postmodernism questioned the position of history as a grand narrative or metanarrative. For them, History is "first and foremost a literary undertaking and not, as historians have long held, a science based on empirical method" (Nitz 79). This statement invokes how history is not simply a product of an antiquarian impulse to ascertain what has happened, but rather, it is always written for "a certain group, society, or culture that draws on the past for its praxis in the present and future"(Moses 320). It suggests that historiography is used to shape a nation-state's cultural memory by pressurizing historians to create biased and manoeuvred historical narratives. It further emphasizes that official history is often used or (ab)used to historicize the existence of a newly formed nation. Under such circumstances, historians, the "pedagogues of the nation," fabricate national master narratives to 'frame and legitimise' the nation-state's existence (Brüggemann 155). These national master narratives are heavily imposed through the official channels of

history and memory and are instrumental in establishing the longevity and integrity of a nation-state.

Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* delves into the "discursive strategy of Turkey to obliterate from public memory a state-orchestrated genocide against the Armenian community" (Chakraborty 57).The text questions the gaps in the historiography of Modern Turkey. Shafak suggests that the present Turkish historiography has no traces of the unjust extermination of the Ottoman Armenians. To enumerate further, Armanoush questions the Turkish (Kazanci) family's ignorance regarding the genocide by refering to Sultan Hamid's"Pan-Turkish and Pan-Islamic" vision. She further says, "1909 Adana massacres or the the 1915 deportations… Do those ring a bell? Did you not hear anything about the Armenian genocide?"(Shafak 178). It highlights how Shafak, through her novel, emphasizes the "systematic,""well organised," and "philosophised extermination" of Armenian minorities at the hands of the Hamidian regiment (Shafak 261). Moreover, in a crucial scene in the text, when Armanoush, the grandchild of the Tchakhmakhchians family during her visit to Istanbul, confronts the Kazancis (Turks) about the events of the genocide, they could not recognize the relationship between themselves and the "perpetrators of the crime" as they have deliberately erased those events from the horizons of their cultural memory and national history (Shafak 164). Armnaoush, the Armenian protagonist of Shafak's novel, while describing the atrocities committed against the Armenian community under the guise of dislocation, writes:

> They were denied water and food and rest. They were made to march a long distance on foot. Women, some of them pregnant, and children, the elderly, the sick, and the debilitated . . . many strived to death. Some others were executed (Shafak 164).

It highlights how the systematic annihilations were carried out in the Anatolian region of the Republic of Turkey under the pretext of dislocation. The Armenian men, women and children were starved to death during these forceful mass movements. It further reiterates how the real aim of the deportation policy was not resettlement but annihilation (Gocek 2011).

In another scene, when Armanoush tries to converse with her Turkish father Mustafaabout the events of "1915 and what the Turks had done to the Armenians," he asserts that the ordinary citizens have no knowledge about the mass deportations and extermination of the Armenians during the times of transition (Shafak 104). Ironically, Turkish history books and historians have no answers to Armnaoush's questions about the genocide, as these events have been silenced and repressed from entering the official records of history. It further highlights Mustafa's desire to "break away from his past"— a past he had left behind the day he left Istanbul (Shafak104). He is completely disinterested in History and further symbolizes the predicament of those ordinary Turks who are hesitant to accept the historical 'truths' about the genocide and rather believe in the fallacious narratives propagated by the Kemalist regime that projected the Armenian community as 'traitors' who "rebelled against the Ottoman regime and killed the Turks" (Shafak 261). Interestingly, Shafak condemns

the Turkish nationalist historiography through the character of Aunt Cevriye, a Turkish national history teacher who has never read anything about the genocide in Turkish history textbooks. In the text, Shafak maintains that in her twentieth career as a history teacher, Aunt Cevriye was "so accustomed to drawing an impermeable boundary between the past and the present, distinguishing the Ottoman Empire from the modern Turkish Republic" that she considered the events of the genocide as the issue of the "another era" and "another people" (Shafak 164).The Nonnationalist Scenarist, a Turkish character in the text, counters Armanoush's accusations by saying, "It was not even a Turkish state back then, it was the Ottoman Empire, for God's sake. The premodern era and its premodern tragedies" (Shafak 209). It highlights how the Ottoman Empire and its policies were often blamed for the systematic killings of the Armenians, whereas, in reality, the formation of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923 was based on the principle of exterminating minority communities.

Elif Shafak proclaims that "societies are distinguished from one another not only by their governmental styles and their economic structures but also by their relations with the past" (Shafak, "Memory-less Turkey" para.1). On the basis of this, she classifies the Turkish and Armenian communities as 'amnesiac' and 'memory –bound' societies respectively. The two communities in the text have different ways of dealing with their past; for Armenians, "it is a crusade for remembrance, whereas in the case of the Turks, they had no capacity for reminiscence whatsoever" (Furlanetto 24). For instance, Armanoush says, "She as an Armenian embodied the spirits of her people generations and generations earlier, whereas the average Turk had no such notion of continuity with his or her ancestors"(Shafak 165).She further adds, "For the Armenians, time was a cycle in which the past incarnated in the present," but "for the Turks, time was a multihyphenated line, where the past ended at some point and the present started anew from scratch, and there was nothing but rupture in between" (Shafak 165).It establishes that Turkey is nothing but a 'nation of forgetters' and the ordinary Turks of Shafak's world are the products of a society suffering from the effects of collective amnesia. In the text, Armanoush, an Armenian's way of dealing with history, can be contrasted with Mustafa, her Turkish father's relationship with the past. While Mustafa attempts to destroy every possible connection with the past, Armanoush embarks on a journey to delve deeper into her inert past and the voids so as to be able to maintain a sense of continuity between her past and her present. Moreover, the lack of historical knowledge about her Armenian grandmother and Turkish stepfather's past has forced her to be "torn between opposite sides, unable to fully belong anywhere, constantly fluctuating between two states of existence" (Shafak 116). It illustrates that the gaps and lacunae present in the 'family history' of Armanoush, in many ways, symbolize the 'ruptures' in the national history of the Modern Turks. In this context, Shafak's text brushes history against the grain in an effort to represent the echoes of voices that were suppressed or overlooked by the ruling establishment. This brings us back to White's proposition, according to which history can be systematically distorted as per the requirements of the present, for it

embodies "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr 30). Similarly, ever since the establishment of the Modern Turkish Republic, Turkish Historiography has been a product of the Turkish Historians' interaction with the selective Ottoman past and the Turkish present. The Historians of the Modern Turks have been responsible for creating a 'usable past' in order to maintain the hegemony of the newly formed nation.

The dialectical relationship between remembering and forgetting is essential to the formation of a nation. For each nation, there are "historical events which, due to political and ideological reasons, continue to constitute a sort of national emotional burden, a real trauma which is consciously or unconsciously, is too often removed and forgotten from the horizon of a nation's past"(Fortunati & Lamberti 132). Under such circumstances, whenever a new nation is established, there exists a need to create and promote a specific form of historical representation in order to influence the way a nation defines itself. Aleida Assmann believes "the modern nation-states try to define themselves primarily through a new concept of identity based on language, territory, history and the arts" (A. Assmann 83). Turkey, in particular, tried to define itself by constructing a new censored national history that contained more 'political myths' than historical facts. Asya Kazanci, the protagonist of Shafak's novel, while talking about the selective nature of Turkish historiography, maintains, "Turkish national history is based on censorship, but so is every national history. Nation-states create their own myths and then believe in them" (Shafak 260). The statement highlights that with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish history became a tool to create coalesced national identities. An 'invented past' or 'usable' past was created through official history with the intention of maintaining the hegemony of the newly formed nation. The idea of the invented past is crucial for our understanding here as it represents how certain events from a country's past are romanticized and historicized while certain others are deliberately forgotten and further pushed into the labyrinth of forgetfulness. In simple words, the national history of a nation helps to develop and perpetuate a shared national identity by essentialising a particular way of belonging to the nation.

Conclusion

The Bastard of Istanbul rummages into the silenced and repressed past of the Armenian community and, in the process, establishes the narratives of violence and extermination concerning the systematic killing of the Armenian Genocide at the center of the Turkish mnemonic culture. Shafak, through her novel, reflects on the forgotten, ignored and repressed aspects of Turkey's past so that Turkey as a nation is "no more ignorant of the atrocities committed against the minorities in the past" (Shafak "Accelerating," 26).Shafak's text offers an alternative, culturally diverse and contradictory, account of official Turkish history and cultural memory.The text further embodies how the distorted Turkish historiography has created gaps and silences in Turkish society's national history and memory. In order to build a new

homogenous national identity, nation-states often exterminate the heterogeneous population through acts of violence and further tend to eradicate such violent and traumatic events of the past from the collective memory of their nation by using forgetting as a tool of oblivion. Similarly, the violent acts that took place at the inception of the political formation of the Republic of Turkey had to be deliberately forgotten. Forgetting and remembering thereby hold a significant position in relation to the construction of one's own memory and the destruction of the memory of the other.

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The Dynamic Representations of Gold Digger in Cinderella: A Comparative Analysis of Grimms' and Disneyfied Version

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Abstract

As Cinderella became the archetypal figure of a beautiful girl who gets into hypergamy, her character was often depicted under the gold digger trope. This paper employs the Constructionist Approach of Representation Theory propounded by Stuart Hall to read the Grimms' and Walt Disney's versions of Cinderella comparatively from the cultural lens, to decipher the varying representations of Gold Digger embedded in the story of the German and its Americanized Disney version. Under the Constructionist Approach of Representation theory, two models, the Semiotic and the Discursive Approaches, will be incorporated to frame the arguments. The study traces the disjuncture in the representation and the culture's ambiguous constructions of the gold digger stereotype by analyzing the difference in narrations and signs projected through the characters' actions, behaviors, and perceptions in both versions. It finds that the stepmother and stepsisters in the Grimms' tale and the projections of Cinderella in the Disney version coalesced into the trope of a gold digger. In contrast, Ashputtel (Cinderella) of the Grimm version could not be associated with the stereotype.
Keywords: Gold digger, Representation, Americanized, Disneyfication, Discourse

Introduction

Grimm's Fairy Tales is a German collection of tales by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published in 1812.The collection has a story entitled 'Ashputtel' where the German version of Cinderella was depicted in the name of Ashputtel. The Grimms' version differs from the Americanized Disney version of Cinderella which was produced in the year1950 in the sense of narrations and projections of Cinderella's accomplishments, which the paper will deconstruct under the gold digger context. The term gold digger refers to women who seek relationships with men with the ambition of advancing their lives. The term was popularized by the 1919 play “Gold Digger” by Avery Hopwood. It was employed in many literary works as well as in pop culture. The books *Gold Digger: The Outrageous Life of Peggy Hopkins Joyce* (2000) by Constance Rosenblum and *Gold Digger* (2007) by Tasmina Perry project their characters under the label which is showcased by their works' titles. Their women characters have been seen chasing their goals of financial freedom and career advancement through commodifying relations with men. The author of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925) Anita Loos has labelled her female protagonist Lorelai Lee as a gold digger (Blom 40). From the sources mentioned, it is evident that women who have relationships with wealthy men or are wealthier than them are labeled as gold diggers. However, its label and representation are ambiguous as the concept is

dynamic in the fact that according to Merriam-Webster, a gold digger is “a person whose romantic pursuit of, relationship with or marriage to a wealthy person is primarily or solely motivated by a desire of money” (Merriam Webster) while it is also evident that women who indulge in hypergamy, whose sole motivation is not influenced by money or financial stability are also labeled as gold diggers. From the literature gathered and the definition of gold diggers in contemporary popular culture, it is apparent that the elements of gold-digger representations can be found in both versions of Cinderella. However, there are differences in their projections and representations in both versions. The theory of Representation propounded by Stuart Hall in his book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Process* (1997) posits that representation is an essential process to produce meanings in the world. The Representation Theory has three approaches which are the Reflective Approach, the Intentional Approach, and the Constructionist Approach. The constructionist approach will be employed as the main methodology to analyze the varying characteristics of the stereotype in the primary sources; it apprehends that codes fix the relations between meanings and signs. The first variant of the Constructionist Approach to Representation Theory is the Semiotic propounded by Saussure. It highlights the arbitrariness between the relations of the signifier and the signified; it also posits that meanings lie in the differences between things that are fixed in society and culture. The second variant is the Discursive Approach contributed by Foucault which was incorporated into the Representation Theory; it depicts how meanings are produced through the discourse of society that influences the relations between the signs and the concept. The book *American Gold Digger: Marriage, Money, and the Law from the Ziegfeld Follies to Anna Nicole Smith* (2020) by Brian Donovan illustrate the dynamic characteristics of the stereotype. It depicts that due to the varying representations of gold diggers in the media, the term reference expanded and that gold diggers are not only used on the predatory figure of women ensnaring men's money but also on figures like Cinderella or dumb blonde as they shared a “family resemblance” (7). Jeff Carroll describes how the pursuit of material things for women as their fate was decoded in children's stories like fairy tales in his 2012 magazine piece "Cinderella Made Gold Diggers!" He mentioned Cinderella under the stereotype as she did nothing much to accomplish her drastic life transformation other than appearing attractive and fashionable at the ball. While the traditional iconic figure of Cinderella is coalescing into the gold digger trope, this paper finds that Ashputtel (Cinderella) of the Grimm's version could not fall under the stereotype upon the decoding of her opportunity and actions. However, the paper highlights the other qualities of gold diggers in Cinderella Walt Disney's persona based on the representative signs of the concept circulated in popular culture. The Grimm's version depicts the former characteristics of the represented gold diggers in the 1920s which are the vamps, cunning, and predators through the stepmother and stepsisters, while Disney's Cinderella depicts the later representations of gold diggers in American cinema after the 1950s which are the childlike, naivety, and dumb blonde persona.

Gold Digger Concepts in the Tales

Sabrina Maddeaux in her article "In Defence of The Gold Digger and The Fight for Class, Economic and Gender Equality" (2017) states that in the past century, marriage was perceived as a business arrangement and that women pursuing financial stability or freedom were normalized. As traditional gold digger definitions state that gold diggers are women whose sole motivation for marriage is to attain wealth, money, or status, the characteristics could be deemed in the characters and perceptions of the stepmother and her daughters in the Grimms' version more than Ashputtel herself. In the tale, it was narrated that when the father attempted to go to the fair and asked the girls what he would bring for them, the two sisters demanded fine clothes and pearls and diamonds while Ashputtel demanded the first sprig that he came across. When the two sisters were about to try on the shoes when the prince's men searched for Ashputtel, the mother was determined to make them fit until blood came out of their feet.

> The eldest went first into the room where the slipper was and wanted to try it on, and the mother stood by. But her great toe could not go into it, and the shoe was altogether much too small for her. Then the mother gave her a knife, and said, 'Never mind, cut it off; when you are queen you will not care about toes, you will not want to go on foot.' So, the silly girl cut her great toe off, and squeezed the shoe on (Jacob and Grimm)

The signs in the tale like pearls and diamonds, and the demand for fine clothes depict the cravings for material wealth which are usually associated with women stereotyped as gold diggers. Another sign of pure motivation for digging the gold in relations could be the predatory mindset the stepmother projects in the sign of blood and knife. A constructionist Approach in Representation Theory is that "meaning depends, not on the material quality of the sign, but on its symbolic function" (Hall 26). The symbolic function is then determined by the code which constructs the relations between the conceptual system and the language system. And the code is fixed in culture. The code in this case which is evident in society and popular culture is the existing representation of the labelled gold digger women's obsession with material things and its correlation with the concept. The book *Gold Digger: The Outrageous Life of Peggy Hopkins Joyce* (2000) by Constance Rosenblum depicts the lavishing lifestyle of its protagonist Peggy Hopkins Joyce. "She split up with a lumber baron after a sensational divorce trial; she walked away with nearly a million dollars' worth of jewelry, an impressive sum back in 1921" (Rosenblum 11). Lorelai Lee in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1925) by Anita Loos was also narrated as finding pleasure in receiving presents from men. The song in Pop Culture called "Gold Digger" (2005) by Kanye West also describes its song persona as living with luxury items like Louis Vuitton which signifies her material possessions.

From the sources gathered it is apparent that the women labelled as gold

diggers are most of the time described as being obsessed with jewels or luxury items and money. The Grimm's Ashputtel is projected as not chasing the materials through her behaviour as she instructed her father to bring her the mere sprig more than any other thing. It highlighted and contrasted the perspectives of her and her step sisters towards material things in that scene. As gold diggers represented in the popular media are seen chasing financial freedom and luxury items and Cinderella is mentioned as an opportunist, the Grimms' version projects Ashputtel to be self-help as much as she got the help of her bird friends and her precious Hazel tree that plays a vital role in her transformation. After she got the Hazel sprig from her father, the tale states, "Then she took it and went to her mother's grave and planted it there, and cried so much that it was watered with her tears; and there it grew and became a fine tree" (Jacob and Grimm). The version depicts that after she was denied to go to the ball, Ashputtel went and cried to the tree and said, "'Shake, shake, hazel-tree, Gold, and silver over me" (Jacob and Grimm) Then the birds in the trees got dress and slippers for her. She had given shelter to the birds that helped her by planting the sprig in the garden. In that way, as much as she received help from the birds, it can be argued that Ashputtel manufactured her opportunity unintentionally, relying upon nature rather than men or any person for her luck which became a vital turning point in her life. In that case, the Grimm's Ashputtel did not fit into the traditional definition of the gold digger as someone who chases men with pure motivation to gain wealth or opportunity but her stepsisters and stepmother could be the representation of gold diggers in an extreme definition of the concept.

In Disney's *Cinderella* of 1950, the tale was shown to be Americanized. According to Jack Zipes in his book *Grimm Legacies: The Magic Spell of the Grimm's Folk and Fairy Tales* (2015), the Disney version reflects the Grimm's version but was told to speak the American experiences. (83). The notion of the American Dream can be decoded from Cinderella as the movie emphasized the phrase 'Dreams come true' which led to the hegemonic relations of Cinderella with the power of believing in one's dream. At the beginning of the scene in Disney's film, a playback song called "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes" is heard that states,

> Have faith in your dreams and someday
> Your rainbow will come smiling through
> No matter how your heart is grieving
> If you keep on believing
> The dream that you wish will come true (David et al. 1:07:08- 1:06:40)

The song emphasized the power of faith in dreams and the hope of it turning into reality. The lines could be deemed as having reference to the American Dream which infers that anyone could achieve success regardless of one's background. "Disney's Cinderella emphasizes dream, and the heroine does not embody only the goodness but also the ideal of fulfilling dreams" (Tamura 11). Rosenblum in his *Gold Digger: The Outrageous Life of Peggy Hopkins Joyce* (2000) narrated how Peggy Hopkins strived towards sexual liberation and how she vowed never to have a dull life, she took her fate into her hands in the period where women were bound by many moral

obligations. She believed in her dreams and held onto them until she went and turned them into reality through the power of sexuality, and she was the epitome of an American Gold Digger. “She would do anything in the world to please anybody, and she never cried unless she was sick” (Rosenblum 20). Similarly, Disney's Cinderella was also shown as having a nice manner and purity as well as the belief in dreams with the hope of it as her reality. The miracle she was waiting unfolded in front of her in the form of hypergamy. Brian Donovan stated how the gold digger trope had a dynamic quality according to the representations and appeared sometimes as a vamp or folk devil but was also represented as an opposite character as a trickster and “naïve Cinderella or dumb blonde”(7).

> While we also found some negative symbolisms that represent the bad side of Cinderella, which are opportunist and beauty pain. The glass slipper can be symbolized as opportunist because it represents that Cinderella is an opportunist girl. She went to the ball after she had someone who could help her (Kusumajanti et al. 6)

Unlike the Grimms' Ashputtel, Disney's Cinderella had a fairy godmother that helped her without having to do anything on her own. While Ashputtel planted the Hazel tree that shelters the birds that brought her dresses, all Cinderella had to do was to be kind, beautiful, be hopeful in her dream. From the literature gathered, it is also found that while there are representations of gold diggers as predators there are also myriads of works that represent gold diggers as an icon or heroine, someone who chases their dreams or are simply adventurous. In his paper “The Gold Digger as Icon: Exposing Inequity in The Great Depression” (2006) Clarence R. Slavens depicted how the Great Depression in the 20s'had an impact on women and how the era represented gold diggers as an icon as it can be found that multiple movies have gold diggers characters and they were portrayed as bold icons although they were stereotyped in a negative image.

> This story is basically about a gold digger. Granted she was on her first day of gold digging but never the less she succeeded. This story inspires little girls to look better than they normally would to catch a man who is so rich he can upgrade their lifestyle (Caroll)

While the Grimm's Ashputtel was never described as beautiful until she was at the ball, “she was of course always dusty and dirty, they called her Ashputtel” (Jacob and Grimm). Cinderella in Disney was shown to be a visual pleasure even before she attended the ball. She had blonde hair which was an attempt to project traditional beauty and American ideals. “Blondeness and beauty have provided a conceptual rhyme in visual and literary imagery ever since the goddess of Love's tresses were described as Xanthe, golden, by Homer” (Warner 363). Looking at the gold digger characters in literature and popular culture, the labelled women are always described as physically attractive. The famous real-life gold digger Peggy Hopkins Joyce was described as an attractive woman. “The child had good looks, charm, ambition, and a taste for an audience, all attributes that could help a girl make her way in the world” (Rosenblum 21). In the Grimms' tale, Ashputtel's step sisters are described as fair but

with a foul heart. The hip-hop song "Gold Digger" by Kanye West described this song persona which he calls gold digger as "cutie the bomb" (West, line 13) which infers the quality of the woman's appearance. The representation of gold digger women as aesthetically pleasing has been common. Therefore, Disney's Cinderella being the representation of traditional beauty, femininity, a dreamer, and an opportunist could be coalesced into the stereotype of a gold digger as she is in hypergamy, marrying the Prince. Traditional beauty type, femininity, ambitions, and hope are not necessarily associated with the gold digger concept but when these qualities intertwine with hypergamy or goals of financial gains in marriage, the gold digger narrations are employed. When Cinderella panicked over the clock striking midnight, she said to the Prince that she hadn't met the Prince, which also highlights her intention of going to the ball. Spectating from the Representation Theory of its discursive approach, as meanings are constructed within the discourse. Meaning lies in the relations between the signs and the signified under the influence of the discourse. The Constructionist Approach of the Representation system "recognizes the public, social character of language. It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don't mean, we construct meaning, using representational systems-concepts and signs" (Hall 25). The song "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes" which was played at the beginning of the Disney film sings the beauty of Cinderella stating that Cinderella was as lovely as her name and metaphorically compares her to the sunset in a frame.

> Though you're dressed in rags
> You wear an air of queenly grace
> Anyone can see a throne would be your proper place
> Cinderella
> If you give your heart a chance
> It will lead you to the kingdom of romance
> There you'll see your dreams unfold (David et al. 1:11:23-1:10:49)

The lines infer that such a beautiful person should be upgraded in life which highlights the correlation between beauty and material success in life. It reaffirms the power of looks and how looks also determine the process of stereotyping women as gold diggers. Stuart Hall explained how the signs function by depicting the process of how traffic lights work as a representational system. As green and red have different significations. "But it is our culture which breaks the spectrum of light into different colors, distinguishes them from one another, and attaches names" (Hall 26). Through this context, it can be argued that a woman is a gold digger when she is determined to get money from men because society dictates women of the opposite are not gold diggers, or that a woman is a gold digger when she is a naïve beauty who has a dream to better her life and got into hypergamous marriages because society believes that the unattractive women cannot be a gold digger as men don't pursue them through material things and that unambitious women are not gold diggers. The Constructionist Approach of Representation Theory posits that meanings are produced they are not simply found. Therefore, although Cinderella was constructed

to have important morals for the viewers, it could still be deconstructed in the American context of dreams, beauty, and materiality.

Conclusion

In the Grimms' version of Cinderella called 'Ashputtel' the gold digger characteristics are represented by the stepmother and her two daughters. In Disney's Cinderella film, the projection of the protagonist Cinderella's appearances, perceptions, and transition of life could be deciphered as a representation of the gold digger based on the narrations and depictions as the notion it holds and the cultural code of beauty and materialism alludes the stereotype.The narrations and actions highlighted in this paper are under the lens of Representation theory, Cinderella of Disney's version could coalesce to the gold digger stereotype as she embodies beauty, naivety, hope, and dreams intertwine with hypergamy to transform her life which is also the touchstone of the stereotype in American concept of gold digger. The paper does not judge or support the narrations but simply studies the ambiguity of the concept and representations in contemporary literature and media. The stereotype's quality is dynamic and the labelling process is also ambiguous in culture as it had been shown that marriage was deemed as a business arrangement in the past and was normalized. As discourse is historically and culturally specific according to Foucault, the definition of gold diggers varies in different periods and cultures. The gold digger trope was inserted into different types of women's figures from a predator and folk devil in its initial stage to a bold feminist icon and a naïve blonde beauty from the 1950s'. The statement also highlights the problem in the stereotyping process of gold diggers in the contemporary digital world as culture intersects with one another.

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Man, Woman, and the Holy Matrimony: Analysing the Depiction of Marriage in Harshavardhan Kulkarni's *Badhaai Do* (2022)

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Abstract

Indian Hindi films have shown a lot of fascination with marriage. Moreover, the entire life journey of an individual as well as that of a family is spun around the institution of marriage. This research paper seeks to explore the very existence of the edifice on which the institution of marriage is based. The attempt will be to investigate the guiding principles on which marriages are working, and that can be mirrored through the films. The paper will analyze the concept of Lavender marriage by examining Harshavardhan Kulkarni*'s* Badhaai Do *as cinematic text. The paper will try to analyse how reading down of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, and the emergence of identitarian discourses have affected the institution of marriage. The film will be studied referring to the Special Marriage Act,* 1954 *Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA), and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1960. Furthermore, the research will scrutinize the existing dogmas by evaluating the social, political, and economic changes. Additionally, using film techniques and Michael Foucault's concepts of panopticon and normalization, the paper will try to evaluate the reasons that have brought transformation in the institution of marriage.*
Keywords: Gender, Marriage, Feminism, Identity, Panopticon, Normalization, Film Techniques

Introduction

Hindi cinema has played a vital role in our culture by surprising, amusing, and inspiring the masses on topics like women empowerment, upliftment of the underprivileged, communal harmony, and changing relationships. In the present scenario, directors borrow movie themes from real-life situations to voice the socially unjust practices prevalent in society. As stated by Madhava Prasad, “Hindi films are seen as 'fragmented and episodic'; this allows a portrayal of a fractured society and alienated groups in a way that subtle messages can be identified by those in the know and those willing to look deeply" (23). Thus, this indicates that cinema serves as a main channel through which, on the one hand, the heterosexist values are perpetuated or reinforced, whereas, on the other, the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of the LGBTQIA+ Community in popular culture become the foremost concern that is to be addressed under queer political praxis.

The present paper using *Badhaai Do* directed by Harshavardhan Kulkarni discusses the endeavours of the LGBTQ+ community. The paper addresses the reputation of queer individuals being represented as sexual deviants even after the decriminalization of Article 377 of the Indian Penal Code on September 6, 2018. Queer, as an umbrella term, unites all possible alternative categories that fall beyond the mainstream. It brings forth the space beyond the confines of binary identities,

known as queer space, giving opportunities to people to go beyond identifying themselves as belonging to either binary. As stated by Andrew Benett, "Queering has become the act of transgressing normal expectations and destabilising traditional paradigms of sexuality" (Benett1089).

The revolution in Information Technology (1980), the implementation of liberalization, globalization, and privatization reforms in 1991, followed by the introduction of satellite television in 2003 and OTT platforms in 2008 have played a vital role in connecting India with the world. Further, women's empowerment and the emergence of the nuclear family setup have made women independent, rendering equal responsibilities at work and home. These social and economic advancements have made the youth financially independent and legally aware, which in turn has revolutionized sexual identity politics in Indian society, which is reflected in Indian cinema. In the same context, Aditi Paul referring to Stuart Hall states that cinema is not "a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but… that form of representation which is able to constitute us new kinds of subjects" (Paul 158).

Moreover, cinema has addressed concerns related to families; representing family as an emotional refuge, where procreation and legitimate transmission of wealth are always of prime concern. The concept of the family remains indispensable even for homosexuals leading to debates demanding legal sanctions for same-sex marriage or Homonormative families. *Badhaai Do,* using queer theory and film theory, brings forth an alternative structure and vision that opposes the idea of a heteronormative model of couplehood. In the film, Kulkarni challenges the institution of heteronormative sexuality and its repercussions on queer identities.

Sexuality and Marriage

The film showcases families residing in tier 2 cities of India being worried about the marriage of the lead actors, Shardul Thakur (Raj Kumar Rao), who is a police inspector, and Suman (Bhumi Pednekar), who is a PT teacher. The protagonists' family members adhering to traditional Indian values believe in the traditional notion of marriage. As stated by Sharavari Vaidya, "Marriage was a social responsibility, and was important to perform to get social worth" (Vaidya 3). The movie's opening scene is shot as a mid-shot which aims to develop the audience's strong association with the characters. The non-diegetic effect (music being played in the background, and the characters are not aware of it) between the dialogues emphasizes the concerns and worries of family members, where the elderly females of the family are convincing Shardul's mother and others to agree to an interfaith alliance with a Muslim girl. Shardul's aunt brings a discussion about his marriage to centre stage; she states, "Look! It's not like we readily agreed, right? He has been adamant since four years that he won't marry anyone except her. So, what should we do? Let him remain a bachelor forever? And can't you see, how noble your brother is? He has upheld our family honour for the last four years." (*Badhaai Do* 2:25:25-39). The scene highlights that marriage in Indian society is not an individual affair but a

family affair, which is performed according to elders' preferences and the elders are responsible for finding suitable alliances for their children.

However, Shardul holding an alternative sexual desire kept turning down the marriage prospects under the pretence that he had a love affair with a Muslim woman. Through Shardul's character, the film highlights the provisions under the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 "applies to all other persons who are not Muslims, Christians, Parsis, or Jews by religion (Vaidya 8). Further, section 5 of the Act legalizes inter-caste marriages if performed by valid conditions but not inter-religious marriage. Shardul knew his traditional Hindu family would never accept an interfaith alliance, and they had no clue about the provisions of the Special Marriage Act 1954, "which cuts across all distinctions of creed, caste or religion and permits two persons belonging to any religion to marry with each other" (Vaidya 8). This helped him to postpone his marriage, keeping his queer identity hidden.

Moreover, as a queer, Shardul feared that in a society where heterosexual coupling is relentlessly scrutinized, and marriage is treated as sacrosanct. If, by any chance, his homosexuality and homoerotic relationship were revealed, it would be treated as no less than an abominable sin. This suggests that heterosexual alliances prescribe the norms of the society and the institution of marriage serves as a governing power that is “not imposing constraints upon citizens as of 'making up' citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom.” (Miller 172)

Throughout the film, Shardul and Suman struggle to reveal their queer identities in front of their family members and public. They are shown struggling to fit in socially accepted structures like 'family', and 'organizations' where queer characters are either looked down upon or considered threats to these institutions. Shardul and Suman confide their sexuality in front of each other when they meet in the park. In the scene, the camera zooms in from mid-shot to close-up shot, maintaining continuity and bringing the audience closer to the character. Shardul looking at Suman, states in a stammering voice, "I know you have zero interest in men” (*Badhaai Do* 2:3:23-27). Further, while accepting his queerness in front of Suman with considerable trepidation, he proposes to Suman, suggesting, 'If we get married, our families will get off our backs. Right? And then we can live in peace. Live freely together…like roommates?” (*Badhaai Do* 2:1:37-49), this scene depicts the concept of Lavender marriage (a male-female mixed-orientation marriage undertaken as a marriage of convenience to conceal the socially stigmatized sexual orientation of one or both partners). Shardul, through this marriage proposal, wanted to safeguard their public reputation and career. The scene also showcases their alienation from their peers while dealing with their queerness, which is also influenced by their insecurity surrounding heteronormativity and its pervasive paradigm.

Marriage and its Aftermath

Under the pretext of hiding their original sexuality, both Shardul and Suman confined themselves to the gender norms prescribed by society according to their

biological sex.As Foucault states, “The concept of a norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies that most of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm. The norm pins down the majority of the population that falls under the arch of the standard bell-shaped curve (Foucault 29). This indicates that the normalization of individuals contributes to maintaining the rules and regulations set by the state or institution. In addition, it maintains the machinery in motion signifying control, and regulation, by keeping a strict watch on individuals.

This is evident in the film, as being a police officer; Shardul tries to glorify himself as a tough, aggressive, and masculine individual. At the same time, Suman is bold and vocal about unjust practices, yet she prefers to stay subtle and submissive in front of her family and peers. For instance, the scene when they both are caught talking in the park by Constable Suroh is a comic twist in the plot. The camera takes a close-up angle focusing on Shardul's stammering and intense expression, considering that Suroh had overheard his confession of being gay. However, when Suroh states, “Don't worry, your secret's safe with me! That you and madam…here" (*Badhaai Do* 2:2:28-40). Shardul feels elated when he finds out that his colleague considers them a heterosexual couple. Additionally, he also feels relieved by succeeding in fitting the gender norms and stereotypes as dictated by society.

After the wedding, when Shardul's senior officer visits his house, Shardul expects Suman to behave as a submissive wife and listen to his orders in front of his senior. The drawing room scene has dim lights, giving the audience perfect home vibes. The messages on the walkie-talkie emerge as the background score. The voice messages on the walkie-talkie are non-diagetic sound effects (just being played in the background, having no connection with the conversation in the scene). In between the conversation with the guests, Shardul suddenly looks at Suman and, while boosting his male chauvinism, orders, "Go make us some tea" (*Badhaai Do* 1:34:22-24). With no response from Suman's side, a tense environment is created in the room and protagonists are shown talking in gestures with each other.

Meanwhile, the scene showcases voice messages in the background, changing from non-diagetic to diagetic sound effects (sounds that become part of the scene). Slowly and steadily, the conversation on the walkie-talkie (acting as background score)becomes a part of the film universe, trying to convey the thoughts in the minds of the protagonists.

Anonymous person 1: Cheetah one to Tango three.

Anonymous person 2: Tango three to Cheetah one, copy.

Anonymous person 1: Street dogs have wreaked havoc in the neighbourhood.

Anonymous person 2: Swing your batons at them, that'll scare the dogs away.

The conversation on the walkie-talkie fills the silent rift between Shardul and Suman. The conversation refers to stray dogs and how they can be tackled using batons. Like the stray dogs, Suman is shown as an independent, free-willed girl; who cannot be tamed or controlled. Whereas the use of batons by anonymous speaker 2, symbolically refers to Shardul, who as a husband, tries to cage Suman as a traditional wife. Shardul, by ordering Suman, on the one hand, tries to showcase his male

superiority publicly. On the other hand, he wants to create a homely image of Suman, who cooks, cleans, and does all the chores as expected by the patriarchal society. This reflects that society's norms and conventions are firmly embedded in an individual's psyche, and refraining from them seems like losing one's identity.

As the scene shifts from the drawing room to the kitchen, Shardul and Suman are shown arguing about who should prepare the tea for the guests. Shardul requests Suman saying, "Keep it low, I have a reputation to maintain" (*Badhaai Do* 1:33:15-18). The drawing room and kitchen is just a wall apart and serve as two different dimensions for the characters. The drawing room serves as a society where they pretend to be a happy heterosexual married couple, and the kitchen serves as their personal space where they are just mere roommates. The scene depicts Shardul's efforts to fit into the generalized role of a police inspector, son, and husband as prescribed by society. By doing so, he tries to assure everyone around him that he is 'normal' and fulfilling all the duties according to the assigned gender roles. This indicates that forcing gender-specific roles and deliberately pushing tender personalities into prescribed 'boxes' is an age-old practice that patriarchy and society have normalized. As Kamla Bhasin states, "Everybody is different in nature, there are no two human beings that are exactly the same. But patriarchy wants all men in the world to behave in a certain way, and all women to behave in a certain way" (Bhasin 34). Shardul and Suman wilfully obey the norms that society has laid in front of them. They compelled themselves to obey the gender roles. This asserts how the concept of normalization of sexuality among homosexuals has created 'homohysteria' which means, "the fear of being socially perceived as homosexual—something made possible because heterosexuality cannot be definitively proven among straight menina culture that is both aware and fearful of homosexuality" (McCormack157). This takes us back to Butler's theory of performativity and gendered behaviour;

> "Feminists have frequently made a division between bodily sex (the corporeal facts of our existence) and gender (the social rules that govern the distractions between feminity and masculinity). It has been recognised that some anatomical differences do prevail between men and women; however, the majority of gender differences are caused by societal conventions that regulate the behaviour of women and men. These are actually social gender constructions that have very less or absolutely nothing to do with sexual anatomy. (Salih 61)

However, as Foucault claims, sexual desire is independent of repressive power, and individuals seek liberation through it. He states, "We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities; but-and this is the important point -a deployment quite different from the law" (Foucault 49). It was the repression of sexuality socially and politically that made the protagonists urge homosexual partners. In the film, Rimjhim (Chum Darang) and Suman's decision to stay under the same roof as a couple familiarise the audience with lesbian desires within the heterosexual familial structure. Rhimjhim is portrayed as a gusty, independent north-eastern queer character that refuses to stay confined to the parameters of sexuality set by society. In

the scene where Rhimjhim had a spat with Suman, urging Suman to break open her shell. In raging anger, Rimjhim says, "Don't even try. You don't have the courage. Whatever drama you are playing, I don't want to be a part of this anymore. One day I am your cousin, the next day I am his cousin. I can't do this anymore". (*Badhaai Do* 1:19:10 -18). Looking at the heated argument, Shardul, with mocking expressions, inquires Suman if Rimjhim is leaving. Suman reverts in agitation, stating, "Why will she leave? Don't couples argue?" (*Badhaai Do* 1:18:29-31) This reveals that despite Suman's lesbophobic anxiety, there is a lesbian desire to stay together in a conventional patriarchal home. However, even after breaking the conventional norm of marriage, as a homosexual couple, they were visible to the audience. Yet, they were "hidden from the preying eyes of heterosexual characters, and thus the spatial anxiety and displacement occur only at a very minuscule level in one way. (Chanana 214)

Marriage as a Site of Surveillance

Even after curtailing section 377 of IPC in 2018, homophobia in the Indian social context has yet to vanish from the psyche. "Distinction between conduct and identity, with respect to non-normative sexuality, is often conflated by the laws that view queer persons through the prism of illegality even if they are not engaging in the act that is deemed illegal by the law" (Banerjee 3). The homophobia of losing jobs and unacceptance from society made Shardul and Suman indulge in a lavender marriage that was legally and socially recognized. Yet the setup created conditions of hostility, thereby creating the need for self-surveillance and discipline in public spaces. This showcases that marriage as an institution serves as a Panopticon, which, as Foucault explains, induces in the subject "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 201). For instance, when Shardul's senior announces that a quarter has been allotted to him in the police colony, the camera zooms in, focussing on Shardul's intense, speechless face and the sound in the background score, "everyone is seeing, everyone is seeing" (*Badhaai Do* 1:36: 00-04) reveals that staying at police colony will put them under surveillance and they had to act as a perfect couple to match the expectations of the people surrounding them.

In the same context, when Shardul and Suman visited Shardul's house for Diwali. Suman wore traditional attire (sarees or suits), along with vermillion and mangala sutra (a necklace the groom ties around the bride's neck to personify that she is taken), adhering to the codes prescribed for traditional married women. The mangala sutra for Suman and an engagement ring for Shardul served as a panopticon. The ornaments kept a disguised watch on them, constantly reminding them that they were married and had to adhere to heteronormative norms of marriage.

Further, the peer pressure on protagonists to have a child after the wedding underlines that procreation is a major aspect of marriage. Aditi Paul states that "the main purpose of marriage is to establish a family, produce children, and further enhance the family's social and economic position and achieve the family's

transcendental goals" (Paul 70). Moreover, "Marriage as a contract confers a status of husband and wife on parties to the marriage, and a status of legitimacy on the children of the marriage" (Diwan 85). In the film, the pressure from family members and Suman's desire to have a child triggered them with the thought of consummating their namesake marriage, but both felt disgusted and failed to do so. This signifies that what is normal to society, when seen from the queer perspective, is normal. As Sara Ahmed states, "Queer subjects, when faced by the comforts of heterosexuality, may feel uncomfortable ... Furthermore, queer subjects may also be 'asked' not to make heterosexuals feel uncomfortable by avoiding the display of signs of queer intimacy, which is itself an uncomfortable feeling, a restriction on what one can do with one's body, and another's body in social space. (Ahmed 148)

Moreover, after being upfront about their sexual identities, Shardul and Suman profess to stay together to adopt a child. The film emphasizes the guidelines of the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), according to which only single and unmarried heterosexual couples have the right to adoption. Moreover, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act do not recognize adoption by same-sex couples; as stated in Section 11 of the Hindu Marriage and Maintenance Act, "Two persons cannot adopt the same child. Two persons do not mean husband and wife. Here, by two persons mean other than husband and wife, such as two sisters, two brothers or two friends" (Diwan 245). This highlights that retaining the lavender marriage was the only alternative way for Shardul and Suman to adopt a child legally. Further, the film highlights a major concern about the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, which would not only give legal acceptance to homosexual couples but also enable them to enjoy legal benefits such as succession, maintenance, and pension rights that are availed by married couples.

Conclusion

Badhaai Do helps to analyze the Indian mindset about queer culture and its refusal to accept the culture wholeheartedly. Though the government of India has been able to strike down a part of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, it still has to go a long way regarding their civil rights. Besides the legally recognized partnership, the LGBTQ community desires acceptance without discrimination. The film brings forth an alternative version of lavender marriage, making the masses realize the struggles and efforts made by the queer community to fit into society. Further, by keeping family and society at the centre stage, the film highlights the societal expectation of bearing biological kids after marriage and its impact on the normal lives of the married couple. In addition, the film tries to break the notion that the sole purpose of marriage is not just procreation. It highlights that marriage is a connection between two individuals who love each other and want to commit to each other. Thus, homosexual couples still seek parity with heterosexual couples, knowing that heterosexual marriages are imbued with outmoded values of patriarchy.

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Reshaping Home and Identity: An Exploration of Intersex (Hijra) Narratives in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness.*

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Abstract

This research delves into the evolution of home and Anjum's identity, an intersex (hijra) character in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness *(2017), amidst the complex interdependence of humans and nonhumans. Anjum faces humiliation and homelessness due to her biological and gender non-conforming nature in a society entrenched in rigid gender norms. Social opposites such as man/woman, human/animal, and natural/societal often contribute to feelings of fragility and disconnection. This research proposes that reimagining home and identity as pluralistic entities, capable of embracing diverse social connections amonghuman collectives and between humans and entities beyond the human realm, counters the feeling of Otherness. Moreover, this study employs a cultural geographical approach to probe the home's spatial dimensions, considering the influences of gender and class dynamics. It integrates a bioregional cosmopolitan perspective fostering a pluralistic community-based identity rooted in the intricate interplay between humans and nonhumans. The examination extends to cultivatea feeling of location within a bioregion that actively involves both human and nonhuman beings in the context of the neoliberal progress agenda, challenging conventional dualisms related to class, gender, and species.*
Keywords: Identity, Home, Place, Cosmopolitanism, Neoliberal, Bioregionalism

Introduction

The concept of identity, often framed within Binary socio-cultural frameworks involving aspects such as gender, race, class, sexuality and has consistently intersected with the spatial dynamics of place in postcolonial, feminist, and cultural geographical investigations. Even seemingly "neutral" places carry inherent dichotomies, like personal/public, regional/international, and indoor/outdoor, often linked with ideas of firmness, entirety, and influence (Laurie et al., 112). A residence, being a secluded domain, is usually associated with concepts of steadiness, safety, and a feeling of membership, and closeness, yet it can also transform into a location of distress, misuse, and aggression (Blunt and Dowling, 2). Examining the experiences of those on the fringes and the home spaces is deemed essential, as the domestic sphere often reveals “the existence of voiceless and marginalized individuals” (Buchli, Clarke, and Upton, 4).

In the realm of sexualities, the experiences of transgender and intersex individuals often involve a notable absence of a genuine sense of belonging. Numerous transgender individuals encounter challenges related to privacy within their domestic spaces, constraining their capacity to authentically manifest their transgender identity. Cultural geography scholars have also pointed out that the

concept of home can, in certain instances, foster heteronormativity and serve as a stage for the enforcement of dominant power dynamics, particularly when dealing with issues like homophobia. Moreover, it's important to note that homelessness is a widespread issue faced by hermaphrodites or hijras in India, even though they have been legally recognized as a distinct third gender. They often live on the fringes of society in intersex communities, experiencing social victimhood and the challenges of negotiating their intersexuality. Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, published in 2017, centres on the stories of homelessness experienced by hermaphrodites, development refugees, and individuals from lower castes. These marginalized groups, along with nonhuman elements and the environment, are subjected to processes of Othering within the framework of growth and global integration. In this context, this research delves into the development of the hermaphrodite hybrid dwelling within the realm of neoliberal globalization. Anjum, the hijra protagonist, embarks on a journey where she uncovers an empowered sense of self and a multifaceted feeling of belonging through her interactions with both human and nonhuman associates.

Additionally, factors like gender and class, which play a significant role in homelessness, the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization has amplified the spatial aspects of place due to the financial, governmental, and ecological ramifications of progress. On one side, the development process creates various networks that link local, national, and transnational areas, providing economic prospects. Nevertheless, in developing nations, it frequently leads to spatial separation driven by socio-cultural factors like class, gender, and caste politics. Furthermore, these development networks stretch across global regions, posing environmental risks and reinforcing dominant relationships, where the West utilizes the East as a more cost-effective location for waste disposal. Within this framework, ecocriticism, which focuses on environmentally oriented literary and cultural studies, proposes the establishment of a worldwide society that underscores the interconnection between individual and local, as well as broader community and global (Roos and Hunt, 2-3). This approach champions the principles of diversity and unity with both the natural world and human civilization, ensuring environmental security through sustainable resource use. This research delves into how the intersex protagonist in Arundhati Roy's novel reshapes the notion of home, transforming it into a space that offers a profound sense of empowerment and inclusion, transcending the limitations of gender and social strata within regional and countrywide settings. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of bioregional cosmopolitanism in normalizing hermaphrodite corporeal experiences, enabling intersex individuals to embrace their distinct identities. This alternative development model empowers marginalized individuals like Anjum to actively engage in the reconfiguration of spaces, mitigating their sense of being marginalized.

The Notion of Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism, Intersex Identity, and the Idea of Home

Bioregionalism, as a practice focused on the environment, explores how human interactions with non-human elements influence the attributes of locations and mould human selfhood. (Berg and Desmann) In the context of today's neoliberal development, a central concept in cultural geography involves the interpretation of "place" within the context of "space." Within bioregional studies, this notion entails a comprehensive examination of the intricate links between local and global components. Bioregionalist Thomson states, “Global economy requires that bioregionalists explore both the immediate landscape (place) and those larger systems that exist beyond the horizon (space). The local landscape can no longer be understood without reference to the larger patterns of ecosystems, economies and bureaucracies.” (Thomson, 126). The significance of comprehending not only the immediate local environment but also the broader ecological, economic, and bureaucratic frameworks that extend beyond one's immediate vicinity. This perspective is aligned with cosmopolitanism, which advocates for an appreciation of diverse cultures and species, allowing individuals to establish connections with various places as potential homes. Moreover, cosmopolitanism encourages the development of varied identities by melding cultural principles, customs, ecological awareness, and methods stemming from both regional and worldwide settings. These multifaceted individualities, combined with an understanding of the interdependence of places and their inhabitants, lead to the conceptualization of spaces as 'bioregions' (Sarkar 2017).

Nonetheless, within a capitalist economic framework, the linkage between spaces frequently results in the exploitation of local human populations and the natural environment in the pursuit of progress, ultimately favouring global or urban regions Bioregionalists like Evanoff acknowledge the necessity of connecting spaces for economic development but also highlight the exploitation of labour, further exacerbating the gap “between the East and the West” (Evanoff, 146-147). Evanoff proposes an "alternative bioregional model" based on Wolfgang Sachs's idea of "dwelling," aiming for autonomy within the environmental boundaries of regional geographical areas. This alternate framework, grounded in a cosmopolitan perspective, questions the dominance-related policies influenced by socio-cultural factors across different regions. It emphasizes local communities' agency and decision-making rights, aiming to overcome social and ecological domination facilitated by the current global society by stating that,

> [A] bioregional global ethic would respect a high level of cultural and ecological diversity but simultaneously seek to obtain sufficient levels of cross-cultural agreement to allow those various forms of social and ecological domination which are made possible by our present highly interrelated global society to be overcome. […] [S]uch a global ethic can only be realized, somewhat paradoxically, through a process of deglobalization […], in which

> production and consumption are organized on a local, bioregional scale (without necessarily excluding all forms of trade), and ultimate economic and political decision-making power is located not in the hands of a global managerial elite but in local communities. (Evanoff, 194)

This substitutive model has the potential to disrupt exploitative practices and inequalities by decentralizing decision-making authority to local communities, thereby safeguarding their rights. While concentrating on local communities, which encompass both human and non-human elements as well as the environment, it promotes a diverse identity that spans different spaces. Such an identity supports local regional development while facilitating local self-sufficiency and sustainable resource utilization. This pluralistic identity is of utmost importance for challenging the processes of Othering and critically examining normative dualistic paradigms, such as those related to gender and sexuality, thatmould identities within conventional spaces. Consequently, the reimagining of spaces and geographies assumes a pivotal role in comprehending the aspiration of intersex identity to transcend normative boundaries.

The binary divisions rooted in socio-cultural frameworks also extend their influence to spatial arrangements. Numerous academic fields, including feminism, have demonstrated the division of spaces along gender lines, distinguishing them into private and public domains. In this categorization, private spaces are traditionally attributed to women and children, encompassing notions related to the body, emotions, irrationality, and lack of knowledge. In contrast, public spaces are predominantly occupied by men and are associated with attributes like intellect, reason, rationality, and knowledge. Yet, for intersex individuals, this oppressive spatial division transforms into a form of spatial isolation. Their indeterminate reproductive organs and unclear gender presentations defy societal conventions, leading to their categorization as gender-neutral "Others" who are anticipated to inhabit realms beyond the confines of both public (masculine) and private (feminine) domains in society (Delimata 2014). The physical appearance of genitalia is closely linked to the concept of the identification of gender. As scientific and medical progress continues, there has been a prevailing belief that medical intervention is necessary to "rectify" ambiguous genitalia and align the intersex body with the traditional dualistic gender model. Gender analyst Fausto-Sterling (2000) has indicated several underlying suppositions that drive the medical intervention of intersex bodies. These include the notions that only two distinct sexes exist, that all individuals are inherently heterosexual, and that gender identity is exclusively shaped by gender performance for both males and females.

Nevertheless, the healthcare practice of assigning sex to "normalize" a non-conforming body through surgery often falls short of achieving the desired gender identity. This process resembles a coming-out experience, where they develop pride in their unique identity and integrate it into a broader socio-cultural context. Importantly, it is this acceptance of physical uncertainty that can affirm the regularity of intersex gender identity.It also offers a chance to create a feeling of belonging in an

environment that might otherwise be inhospitable to hermaphrodites, individuals with intersex traits, or those who identify as transgender. Thus, engaging with entities categorized as "Outsiders" is a crucial move in nurturing a diverse home environment.

The Dream Residence

The narrative's commencement, including a depiction of a bleak cemetery decorated with motionless birds and an analogy between a shrivelled tree and the main character, Anjum, who lives in this graveyard as a social pariah, lays the groundwork for the interaction between humans and nonhumans in shaping the spatiality of places designated for marginalized individuals. Right from the outset, the story delves into how the community outside the cemetery is constructed based on a dichotomous gender framework. People like Anjum, who are born as hermaphrodites and identified as hijras in India, bring disgrace and humiliation to their families. (Roy, 8). In a society where rigid 'gender roles' establish a social ranking and define spatial limits, designate specific areas as 'male-dominated (public)' and 'female-oriented (private).' Anjum's ambiguous gender identity becomes a source of ridicule and scorn in open areas. As degradation and societal isolation form fundamental elements of the hijra encounter (Sifat and Shafi 2021), Anjum's removal from communal areas highlights the tangible experiences of her hijra identity in a male-dominated community. The humiliation begins when despite being nurtured as a boy (Aftab) and honed as a talented vocalist from a young age, people start taunting and teasing her due to her ambiguous gender identity by saying, “He's a She. He's not a He or a She. He's a He and a She. She-He, He-She Hee! Hee!' (Roy, 12). Educational institutions such as schools and music sessions progressively transform into places of trauma, instilling self-loathing and shame regarding her ambiguous genitalia.

In a similar vein, Anjum's household, rather than offering a feeling of belonging, aims to regulate her gender expressions that don't conform to societal norms through medical interventions. This compels her to adhere to established gender conventions and customs. Subsequently how we perceive our gendered identity can significantly impact how we feel within a particular space (Laws, 49), Anjum's understanding of her intersex physique, which necessitates dressing as a male and undergoing medical interventions to transition to a man, constrains her self-identity within an environment where she can never completely embrace any specific personal perspective, whether it's masculine or feminine. As a result, Anjum's intersex identity becomes perplexing. As gender analyst Amato argues, Anjum is not permitted “to retain/express [her] intersex corporeality while simultaneously identifying as the gender [she feels she is]... (male, female, both, neither, genderqueer, intersex, etc.)” (Amato, 296). In this context, Anjum's choice to depart from the boundaries of her residence can be construed as an act of defiance against gender anticipations and conventional gender duties.

Nevertheless, when Anjum departs from this confining environment and enters “Khwabgah”, the communal home for local hermaphrodites, she perceives the seemingly ordinary and worn-down residence as a true "paradise." Here, cross-

dressing is not only accepted but encouraged, and physical differences are not just tolerated but honoured. “[I]t was where special people, blessed people, came with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya [the world]. In the Khwabgah, Holy Souls trapped in the wrong bodies were liberated” (Roy 53). This contrast highlights the potential of Khwabgah as a space where individuals likeAnjum can contest gender expectations that do not acknowledge gender ambivalence. Moreover, it's important to note that even within Khwabgah, there are norms and expectations, such as the requirement for the extremely painful procedure of castration, which complicates life within this supposedly liberating space. For hijras, castration can offer elevated social standing and economic prospects in their community, even though it carries limited significance in the broader society.While Khwabgah provides a sense of belonging to the hijra community, it falls short of fully embracing intersex corporeality as normal, as it seeks to medically modify these physical distinctions to conform to a limited hermaphrodite classification.

Within this framework, Anjum's desire to break free from the confines of the isolated sanctuary designated for hijras and integrate into mainstream society can be interpreted as a statement of the legitimacy of having indeterminate reproductive anatomy and a protest against gender-prescribed spatial separations. Her symbolic gesture of burning items that idealize her gender ambiguity and reinforce oversimplified notions of hijra identity serves as a clear repudiation of these exoticizing stereotypes. It also reflects her yearning to be part of the broader, authentic world outside the boundaries of Khwabgah. Moreover, this act of "unmaking home”(Baxter & Brickell, 135-136) by leaving Khwabgah and reestablishing a home beyond the community is intertwined with her aspirations for economic stability, financial success, and a diverse network of social bonds that surpass gender, class, caste, and even species distinctions.

Anjum's establishment of her residence in an isolated cemetery., transforming herself from a subject of ridicule to an active participant in reshaping the social and spatial connections with individuals designated as "Others" signifies a significant shift. It's within her dwelling in the graveyard that Anjum establishes connections with individuals from outside, recovering from the trauma she endured during a communal riot. This transformation gradually turns the graveyard into a manageable dwelling. However, while Anjum's residence in the graveyard symbolizes a significant achievement in the hijra community's pursuit of a secure position in society, it also evolves into a haven for individuals displaced from their rural roots, viewed as disposable assets in the context of urban advancement and growth. Urban expansion, although providing employment prospects for city migrants, poses a threat to their ability to safeguard their ancestral lands, cultural heritage, and natural surroundings. Those displaced by development, known as development refugees, actively oppose this forced relocation and the subsequent loss of their homes and means of sustenance. Frequently, their properties are seized in the name of advancement, establishing a web of exploitation that links urban and rural areas

Anjum, through her experiences, develops an understanding of the

consequences of harmful surroundings on everyone, particularly those with limited means, and acknowledges the effects of neoliberal development strategies on both humans and nonhumans. She moves from defining herself solely through her hijra identity to considering herself part of the declining populace, encompassing both humans and nonhumans, transcending traditional divisions. As stated in the novel, "Once you have fallen off the edge like all of us have, including our Biroo [the abandoned dog used in lab experiments] […] you will never stop falling. And as you fall you will hold on to other falling people […]. The place where we live, where we have made our home, is the place of falling people." (Roy, 84). Anjum's home becomes a space where diverse human and nonhuman groups coexist, forming a non-anthropocentric bioregion. This bioregion fosters an inclusive community where nonhumans are not seen as Others but as neighbours. This viewpoint enables Anjum to transcend binary gender frameworks and embrace her physical distinctions as ordinary.

Anjum's residence transforms into a place where a diverse array of human and nonhuman entities coexist, giving rise to a bioregion that isn't centred solely on humans. This bioregion promotes an inclusive community where nonhuman entities are not regarded as outsiders but rather as neighbours. This perspective empowers Anjum to transcend conventional gender binaries and accept her bodily distinctions as natural. Furthermore, this cosmopolitan bioregional setting advocates for an alternative approach to development that opposes global hegemony and advocates for local self-sufficiency.Anjum's economic initiatives, like renting out rooms in her guest house and providing free education to local children, exemplify this different developmental model. These efforts assist marginalized groups in attaining self-reliance and respect. This strategy seeks to diminish the feeling of being an outsider by dismantling binary social and cultural divisions. Anjum's home in the graveyard evolves into a bioregion that unites a variety of human and nonhuman entities. It offers an alternative developmental blueprint based on local self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability. This strategy is aimed at empowering marginalized individuals, nurturing a sense of community, and bridging the gap between humans and nonhumans within a cosmopolitan framework.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study expanded the concept of "home" to encompass a complex entity that includes individuals, human outsiders, nonhuman entities, and the surroundings, spanning local and distant contexts. It highlighted the potential for challenging and negotiating dualistic paradigms that perpetuate Othering, restrictive social norms, and spatial segregation of hijras, particularly in the era of neoliberal development. Furthermore, it sheds light on the interconnectedness between gender performances and spatial distinctions, contributing to the feminist geographic examination of spaces defined by gender. Instead of portraying hermaphrodites as passive victims, the study emphasized how Roy portrayed her intersex main character

as an engaged participant in the development plan. This pluralist self-perception, especially as participants in local economic development initiatives, has the potential to alleviate prejudices and discrimination against hijras, bridging the gap between the local community and the broader society.

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Towards Queer Refugee Epistemologies: A Study of Samra Habib's *We Have Always Been Here*

Parveen Kumar*

Abstract

The burgeoning field of Critical Refugee Studies (CRS), committed to challenge the hegemonic narratives about refugees, has also directed academic attention towards refugee law whose definitional and legal boundaries are primarily constructed on a heteronormative paradigm. This logic has considered the refugee as a cisgendered subject by eclipsing, marginalizing, and erasing the queer refugee experiences. The factors behind the displacement and resettlement of queer individuals and the embedded homo/transphobia are often overlooked and prevent counter-narratives to the hegemonic discourses that consider refugees as heteropatriarchal subjects. This paper employs a Queer Refugee Epistemology framework guided by CRS to navigate the layers of meanings that mark the queer refugees' experience. Focusing on Samra Habib's memoir, We Have Always Been Here (2019)*, which chronicles her experiences as a queer Muslim growing up in Pakistan and living as a refugee in Canada, this paper delves into the intersection of queerness, displacement, and identity. The paper argues for the necessity of understanding the knowledge production of queer refugees and highlights the significance of their narratives as the sites of struggle, resistance, and agency.*

Keywords: *Displacement, Epistemology, Heteronormativity, Homonationalism, Migration, Queer, Refugee*

Introduction

The dominant narratives of displacement and asylum-seeking; structured around the cisheteronormative centre, often silence, overlook, and exclude the narratives of sexual and gender minorities. In both refugee and queer studies, the emerging epistemologies of refuge confront the assumptions and categories that undermine the queer refugees' experience in their home and host countries. The study of such experiences, in recent years, is also directing significant attention within academic and activist circles towards "alternative approaches and epistemologies" (Espiritu et al. 18) that also promote the inclusion of the narratives of sexual minorities. The aim is to challenge the passivity and reveal the complex intersections of gender, sexuality, religion, culture, class, disability, and displacement that construct a multilayered identity and pose distinctive challenges against queer refugees' quest for safety and belonging. In this sense, comprehending the epistemologies- the ways of knowing queer refugees' lives are crucial for engaging with their quotidian experience, dismantling the narrow understandings of sexuality and gender that (mis)inform the prevalent immigration laws, and developing inclusive frameworks.

Global Trends Report of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in the year 2021 has reported 89.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than double the 42.7 million displaced in 2012 (5). Out of this population, 27.3 million are refugees who have been compelled to flee their countries of origin. However, there is no exact number of queer refugees in the world registered by UNHCR. In the latest reports, UNHCR suggests protecting people with "diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)" (UNHCR 7) who face violence, discrimination, and persecution in countries of origin and those where they seek asylum. This unavailability of statistics regarding queer refugees further decontextualizes their experiences and homogenizes them into a single homonationalistic idea of sexuality.

However, despite the lack of accurate statistics, studies suggest that with regard to queer refugees, there are multiple quandaries in the asylum system of countries that proclaim their openness towards queer rights but segregate queer refugees on the basis of religion, class, race, nationality, and other factors that intersect with each other. While discussing the ambivalence of queer refugee spaces, Nina Held argues that the racialization of queer refugees and the absence of an understanding of the different contexts from which they escape leads to false assumptions about their quest for safety and expects from them a socio-cultural aversion (1899). The invisibility of queer bodies and the structural racism that is embedded in the asylum system prevents the understanding of queer refugee lives that hold a potential to challenge heteronormative migration temporalities (Tschalaer 1847-48). Alessi, Kahn, Greenfield, Woolner, and Manning argue that in the countries that accept queer refugees, the integrative strategies mute queer differences and produce social conditions that delineate queer refugees from their communities and try to bind them into a homonationalistic structure that celebrates a visible queer refugee identity detached from the social, religious, and cultural contexts from which it has emerged (13).

Other studies have noted that in many countries there are shortcomings in the existing refugee policies that "remain dependent on cisheteronormative assumptions and therefore exclude the queer and trans forcibly displaced" (Ritholtz and Buxton 1075) pushing them to the margins. The complex experiences of queer refugees are perceived with a reductionist approach and they are often overlooked "prevent[ing] us from asking the right questions about queer-and-trans migration that would . . . reveal how power and politics contribute to violence" (Ritholtz 1854) and differently segregate the sexual minorities. Attending to these issues also proclaims the quandaries of queer kinship, care, and resistance "that subvert conventional practices of family and kinship, and racialized motherhood (Huynh et al. 96) that impede the understanding of changing dimensions of queer existence. These studies direct towards rethinking the refugee advocacy and attending to diverse queer refugee epistemologies that can lead to inclusive approaches.

Discussion

In the gendered structure of asylum system, the racially exclusionary ideas of queer citizenship can be understood in terms of what Jasbir Puar conceptualizes as "homonationalism" and defines as "the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary . . . a form of sexual exceptionalism" (2) of those who do not fit into the western nations' ideas of queer. In this context, the rights of LGBTIQ^{+} people are aligned with nationalist ideologies to justify racist, xenophobic, and anti-immigration policies, leading to the separation, exclusion, oppression, and rejection of queer refugees. Thus, the religious discourses on sexuality, islamophobia, anti-refugee rhetoric, and homonationalism make queer refugees a political agenda of the homonationalist state.

In *We Have Always Been Here*, Habib presents her experience as a queer Muslim refugee- an experience often largely excluded in LGBTIQ+ discourses owing to the "processes of racist and Islamophobic othering" (Kehl 150) of queer Muslims. Through her memoir, she exposes how religious extremists demonize sexuality to prove "Islam's moral superiority" (Schmidtke 260) and monopolize religion in a heteropatriarchal structure. Samra Habib is a Pakistani-Canadian photographer, writer, and activist who identifies as a queer Muslim woman. Her book *We Have Always Been Here* in the form of a personal memoir, won Canada Reads 2020 and a Lambda Literary Award. It recounts her journey of self-discovery, resilience, and activism as a queer Muslim woman in Pakistan and Canada. Habib was born to Ahmadi parents who escaped religious persecution and migrated to Canada in 1991. In Pakistan, Ahmadis are aminority who identify as Muslims but differ from the mainstream *Sunni* and *Shia* sects in theological beliefs. There is "a long history of state-supported discrimination and blatant disregard for civil, economic, social and cultural rights of Ahmadis" (Malik 75) leading to violence against them. Habib recollects:

> Ahmadis are regularly persecuted, legally and through extreme measures, for anything from using a traditional Muslim greeting in public to reciting the call to prayer. Stories of Ahmadi businesses being set ablaze and Ahmadi mosques being besieged by gunmen are sadly common. A cousin of mine narrowly avoided getting killed when Sunni extremists barged into a mosque. (13)

The refugee law legitimizes 'the fear of persecution' that is based on the narrow parameters of race, ethnicity, political views, and religion but overlooks the multiple instances of displacement where "the decision to flee is compelled, not by a specific fear, but by systemic oppression and the daily assault on people's lives, including as a result of their indigeneity, race/ethnicity, sexual identities, religion or political affiliation, that have become overbearing and unbearable" (Espiritu et al. 35) leading to the decision to flee. For Habib, both religious affiliation and queer identity are the drivers for escape. In the memoir, the social and religious conditions of Pakistani Islamic society are threatened by "extremist ideologies [that] have flourished and become entrenched in society, leaving religious minorities, such as

Shia Muslims, Ahmadis, Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus, facing numerous injustices and the persistent threat of violence" (Curtis 23) that pushes them from center towards the margin. This is one of the many reasons for the apartheid of minority communities and indicates the "contextual circumstances" (Holle et al. 73) that can be other than the direct sexual assault or discrimination.

In Habib's case, apart from her family's religious affiliation, it is the patriarchal structure of the Pakistani society that overlooks her queer existence. She describes her childhood in Pakistan, where she witnessed the limitations of women. While growing up in Lahore and Islamabad, Habib observes the patriarchal dominance verified by religious extremists to keep women away from rational discourses and "raised to believe that control was not something granted to women (Habib 9) but saved for men.

Studies show that "there is little understanding of the experiences of LGBT children and youth living in countries where social and legal protections for sexual and gender minorities are limited or non-existent" (Alessi et al. 93) making their childhood experiences differ from heterosexual children. From her early childhood, Habib was attracted to women but did not have the language to express her identity. In Canada as well, she realizes that she "had little in common with the other girls of my [her] age who looked and smelled so much like me [her]" (Habib 28) but did not share her experiences of femininity. The trauma of sexual unbelonging leaps into Habib's adulthood and deeply unsettles her mental health, identity, and self-esteem.

Whereas the homonationalist narratives about refugees largely require queer refugees to despise their country of origin, Habib describes her attachment and love for Pakistan. While introspecting on her life in Pakistan, she recollects her love:

> The truth was, despite the possibility that my father could be killed or taken to jail if we stayed, I didn't want to leave. I loved Pakistan. It was all I knew. I loved my family, my cousins, my grandmother. The smells of the country still haunt me to this day—I seek them out in other places and people. It felt terribly unfair that we had to leave behind all that we knew. (Habib 24)

Her feelings and expressions suggest that Habib does not see herself as a passive subject of displacement, but as an active agent who has a complex relationship with her homeland. In contrast to accepting the narratives that portray Pakistan as a monolithic, oppressive, and backward country, she presents its other side by celebrating its diversity and richness.

In the ongoing debates about refugee justice, it is crucial to rethink "what questions about place and belonging remain unaddressed" and "how do we approach the question of gendered displacement" (Espiritu et al. 125) that is hidden beneath the heteronormative ideologies. These become visible in Habib's memoir when even after reaching Canada, she struggles to locate a space of belonging but finds herself alienated. While struggling to start a new school in Canada, she is ridiculed by her peers for not conforming to their notions of gender and thinks of herself as being "transported to a different planet" (Habib 32) among people not of her kind.

Her life is also restrained by the expectations and norms of her family and religious community in Canada which "carefully inspected for any traces of sin"

(Habib 39) even when she is in an entirely new cultural scenario. The constant surveillance did not stop others "from the mosque who felt compelled to keep an eye" (Habib 39) on her. These experiences demonstrate the lack of agency of queer people in their own diasporic communities. She eventually resists the norms that oppress her by reclaiming her life story, instead of letting others define or silence her. Habib achieves all this towards the end by attempting to "re-imagine Islam by approaching it queerly" and directs towards an "intervention to destabilize the oft-cited identity driven discourses that frame approaches to Islam and approaches to queerness" (Hoel and Espinoza 1).

There are diverse factors that "play an important role in how artistic queer refugees express agency that can potentially unsettle hegemonies and the paradoxes that result from such hegemonies" (Holle et al.). Habib exhibits the process of discovering her sexuality and desire in a modern Canadian space "where girls were allowed to be playful, expressive and free" (Habib 51) but the freedom for people of color was not the same. For Alessi and others, among other factors, "religion can be an important aspect of identity for refugees, yet may be a complex phenomenon for LGBTQ refugees" (Alessi 175). Following this, even in the modern Canadian setting, the patriarchal and heteronormative norms and values trap Habib in an arranged marriage that limits her freedom and choice. Her life is marked by conflict between repression and expression, and between personal choices and expectations of the family to save herself from "familial ostracism" (Puar 10), and the community which dictates her life.

Through Habib's confrontation of islamophobia and racism, it becomes apparent that "the (white) secular norms by which queerness abides contributes greatly to (racist) Islamo- and homophobic representations" (Puar 14). While working for a private firm in the U.S., Habib suffers hostility because of her Arabic name. It becomes challenging for Habib to embrace her identity while conforming to the standards imposed on her as a result of the "sexualisation as well as a radicalisation of religion" (Puar 38) by the Western world. While there is a need for queer refugees to share "queer kinship stories, whether actively constructed by parents or re-constructed later in life by adult children . . . to connect people to queer history and politics more broadly" (Garwood 43) and empathetically, Habib forms a chosen family with Shireen, a queer Iranian refugee. She joins others in their "personal and political fight for public and theological legitimacy" (Siraj 90) and discovers Unity Mosque, a queer-inclusive place of worship. After listening to the stories of her fellow refugees, Rashid, Sam, Mahmood, and Omar, she understands that queer refugees are not a homogenous group, but have diverse and complex stories.

Habib experiences a sense of alienation from both Islam and the LGBTQ community in Canada. In the face of these challenges, she ponders that for queer Muslims, "there is a noted lack of presence and representation in the social spheres of people who occupy the varied intersections of this space" (Mohammedali 88). She discloses that she "encountered resistance from non-Muslim queers, too . . . Many didn't see the need for a project highlighting the struggles of queer Muslims because

they were under the impression that things were great for all LGBTQ people in the country [Canada]" (Habib 105) not realising the gap in understanding and visibility of queer Muslim refugees in Canada and elsewhere.

Puar notes that the binary heteronormative discourse "is ferocious for Muslim queers in part because Christian precepts already inform the terms of exception, thus allowing homonationalism and its attendant identitarian formations easier conviviality" (Puar 235) within the western white Christian traditions. By highlighting the diversity of queer Muslims, and giving them a platform to tell their stories in their words through her memoir and project *Just Me and Allah*, Habib exposes the current understanding of queer Muslims. In this sense, Habib's experiences are reflective of broader trends in the spatialized lived experiences of queer refugees, the intersectionality of refugeeness, sexuality, and gender, the politics of inclusive Western spaces, and the influence of diasporic communities on the lives of queer refugees. Her experiences are emblematic of the decontextualized approach by which queer refugees are understood and their struggles for acceptance and belonging in their own diasporic communities as well as the host communities.

Conclusion

Habib's memoir is part of a growing body of "contemporary texts and forms of cultural production opposing monolithic conceptions of Islamic attitudes towards homosexuality" (Shannahan 108). Not limited to this, the memoir also challenges homonationalistic narratives by highlighting Habib's agency and calls for a critical dialogue across differences to explore the meanings of home, religion, community, class, and solidarity for queer refugees. It describes the process by which queer refugees negotiate with multiple identities that can take shape because of the intersection of one's sexuality, religion, class, physical (dis)ability, and racial affiliation. The experience of Habib showcases the quest of other queer refugees to join a non-judgmental religious, sexual, and global community that considers the diversity within the queer refugee experiences. Through her memoir, Habib asserts a voice for alternative modes of sexual existence and religious belonging, including a connection with fellow queer citizens both of diaspora and host countries. Her memoir is not only a literary work but a powerful political intervention into the heteronormative and homonationalistic structures that govern queer refugees but require a dismantling for equal access to asylum. The memoir shows that an exploration of the experiences of queer refugees from different cultural, social, religious, and sexual contexts can offer a multidimensional understanding of the complexities of their experience. This paper discusses how stories such as Habib's serve as an example of the shifts in the way sexual and gender identity are understood in the asylum system. In this regard, further research is required to examine the effect of education, class, and context of displacement on the production of diverse queer refugee epistemologies. The memoir suggests that this discussion can be extended to understand other intersections such as sexuality and disability, sexuality and class,

and sexuality and race. Habib's memoir contributes to the fields of queer literature and refugee studies and invites us to rethink the prejudices against queer refugees to engage with them as agents of transformation. In order to attend the queer refugee epistemologies and provide them with spaces of expression the asylum systems necessitate contextualizing queer refugees' experiences, having a broader understanding of global cultures, reshaping integrative strategies, and questioning the homonationalistic ideologies.

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Unveiling the Self: The Transformative Journey of Identity and Self-Discovery in *The Last Dance* by Anmol Arora

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the analysis of the character Ayla Erol, as depicted in Anmol Arora's novel The Last Dance*, through the lens of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory. Erikson's framework elucidates the various stages of an individual's social and identity development and serves as the guiding theoretical framework for this examination. The primary focus of this paper centres on two pivotal stages out of the eight as presented by Ayla's life: the adolescent phase, characterized by the conflict of identity versus role confusion, and the subsequent young adulthood stage, marked by the dichotomy of intimacy versus isolation. Within the confines of this inquiry, we aim to dissect the profound impact of familial and social environments on the formation and evolution of one's identity. Throughout this analysis, Ayla's odyssey is closely scrutinized, emphasising the intricate interplay of social relationships within her community and their profound repercussions on the construction of her identity.*
Keywords: Identity, Self-discovery, Transformation, Psychosocial development, The Last Dance

Introduction

In the contemporary novel *The Last Dance* by Anmol Arora, the character Ayla Erol finds herself at the intersection of a complex and tumultuous societal landscape. Amid her experiences as a migrant and the daughter of migrants in Delhi, Ayla astutely observes, "Delhiites harboured mistrust as far as migrants were concerned and treated them with suspicion and hostility" (Arora 24). These words poignantly encapsulate the challenges she faces and the profound impact of societal treatment during her formative years, leading to her difficulty forming an identity. Ayla's journey serves as a potent testament to the formidable obstacles inherent in navigating cultural disparities and integrating into an unfamiliar society. This process leaves an indelible imprint on her evolving sense of self and identity.

According to Erik Erikson, "Identity formation is a process that is shaped by the cultural and social context in which an individual lives." (Erikson 21). Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory posits that individuals, particularly children and adolescents, may grapple with identity conflicts if their social environments fail to nurture a resilient ego. Central to Erikson's theory is the notion that identity is the primary developmental objective during adolescence. The successful resolution of this identity crisis lays the groundwork for an individual's social-cognitive framework and self-concept. Adolescents often find themselves embroiled in an identity crisis, characterized by profound questioning of their core

attributes, self-perception, concerns about external judgments, and existential uncertainties regarding life's meaning and purpose. In Larsen and Buss's view, Identity comprises a complex interplay of psychological traits and mechanisms that influence interactions within intrapsychic, physical, and social environments (Larsen and Buss 1). Ayla's quest for identity formation and the challenges she encounters resonate with these fundamental aspects of Erikson's theory. As Jean Piaget says, "Social interactions play a vital role in cognitive development and the formation of one's identity. As individuals engage with others and society, they construct their understanding of the world and themselves" (Piaget 45).

This research paper embarks on a comprehensive analysis of Ayla Erol's character within the tapestry of *The Last Dance*, guided by Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory. Of particular interest are two pivotal stages within Erikson's schema: adolescence, marked by the critical tension between identity and role confusion, and young adulthood, characterized by the delicate equilibrium between intimacy and isolation. Within these stages, we embark on a journey of discovery, endeavouring to unravel the profound influence of familial and social environments on the genesis and evolution of Ayla's identity. In doing so, we aim to shed light on the universal human struggle to forge an authentic identity amid the complexities of contemporary multicultural societies. Additionally, we acknowledge the transformative power of social relationships within the community as catalysts in shaping one's identity. In essence, Ayla's journey becomes a microcosm of the broader human experience, offering a compelling opportunity to explore the profound significance of identity formation within the context of a rapidly changing and interconnected world.

The theme of identity and self-discovery has been a focal point of literary exploration for centuries, with numerous scholars and researchers delving into the complexities of human nature and the transformative journey of self-realization. Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory stands as a seminal framework in the field of psychology. Scholars have frequently applied Erikson's theory to the analysis of literary characters, recognizing its potential to unveil the depths of character development within narratives. Researchers have employed Erikson's stages to delve into Holden Caulfield in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* struggles, with identity and role confusion during adolescence, shedding light on the universality of his experiences (Hossain). Similarly, the character of Harry Potter in J.K. Rowling's eponymous series has been examined through Erikson's lens, with a focus on his progression from adolescence to young adulthood (Smith). Scholarly research has also explored the application of Erikson's theory to fictional works. For instance, studies such as "Erikson's Developmental Stages in Young Adult Fiction" by Susan G. Griffith and "Identity and Self-Discovery in Contemporary Young Adult Fiction" by Karin E. Westman have examined how Erikson's stages can illuminate the transformative journeys of characters in literature. By applying psychological frameworks like Erikson's, researchers can unearth the underlying motivations, conflicts, and transformations that propel these characters' narratives.

In the context of Anmol Arora's novel, *The Last Dance*, limited research has been conducted on the theme of identity and self-discovery. However, the paper "Fictional Narratives and Identity Development: A Case Study of *The Last Dance*" by Sarah K. Lewis offers an initial exploration of the novel's portrayal of identity formation, shedding light on the transformative journey of the protagonist, Ayla. This research paper builds upon this foundation by applying Erikson's theory to Ayla Erol's character in *The Last Dance*, aiming to unravel the intricacies of her development, particularly during adolescence and young adulthood, and shedding light on the profound impact of familial and social environments on her identity formation.

Theoretical Framework

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory encompasses eight stages, each characterized by a specific developmental conflict that individuals must resolve to progress successfully to the next stage. For this research, two particular stages of Erikson's theory are deemed pertinent to Ayla's transformative journey:

- **Identity versus Role Confusion (Adolescence)**

This stage occurs during adolescence when individuals are tasked with forming a cohesive sense of identity that encompasses their beliefs, values, and aspirations. Erikson posits that successfully navigating this stage leads to a strong and well-defined identity, while failure to do so results in role confusion and a sense of uncertainty about one's place in the world.

- **Intimacy versus Isolation (Young Adulthood)**

The intimacy versus isolation stage occurs during young adulthood when individuals seek meaningful connections and intimate relationships with others. Erikson suggests that establishing intimate relationships fosters a sense of belonging and enables individuals to share their authentic selves, while a failure to do so may lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

By intertwining the psychological insights of Erikson's theory with the nuances of literary exploration, this framework seeks to offer a holistic understanding of Ayla's transformative journey, illuminating the complexities of her identity formation and self-realization.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, primarily using a close reading of Anmol Arora's *The Last Dance* to examine the experiences and influences on the protagonist's identity during adolescence and young adulthood. Secondary data includes scholarly literature on identity themes in literature and Erikson's

Psychosocial Development Theory. The choice of Ayla Erol as the focal character derives from her significance within the novel, especially as a migrant in Delhi, allowing for a deep exploration of identity complexities. Ayla's character aligns with Erikson's stages, particularly focusing on adolescence (identity vs. role confusion) and young adulthood (intimacy vs. isolation). Each stage is analysed by scrutinizing Ayla's thoughts, actions, and relationships in the novel. Combining Erikson's theory with close reading ensures a comprehensive understanding of Ayla's character development. This interdisciplinary approach delves into the nuances of Ayla's journey. However, this research has limitations. It relies on available textual evidence and involves subjective interpretations, potentially introducing bias. Additionally, it exclusively focuses on Ayla's character development, neglecting other characters in the novel.

Analysis

In the contemporary novel, *The Last Dance* by Anmol Arora, Ayla's life unfolds against the backdrop of the enduring Kurdish-Turkish conflict, casting a pervasive shadow over her journey as she grapples with the forced alteration of her identity. She recounts, "I was named Leyla, but the authorities refused to register me as a citizen. Instead, they imposed a Turkish name, Ayla" (Arora 8). Her given name is forcibly substituted with Ayla, a Turkish appellation mandated by authorities who refuse to recognize her true name and citizenship. The authoritarian measures implemented by military leaders orchestrated to eradicate the Kurdish cultural identity, further exacerbate Ayla's struggle to construct her self-identity. This struggle is exemplified by the statement, "Kurds were imprisoned for using their native language, dress, folklore, and even Kurdish names" (Arora 8). In Gloria Anzaldúa's view, "So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (Anzaldúa 81). This subsequent forced displacement compels Ayla to relinquish her homeland, an experience that indelibly marks her burgeoning sense of self. The early imposition of an alternative identity engenders a profound sense of inadequacy as she acquiesces to parental decisions constrained by the oppressive environment.

Drawing upon Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, it becomes evident that Ayla encounters formidable challenges in her journey towards self-identity due to unresolved issues stemming from previous developmental stages. Specifically, she grapples with the Industry vs. Inferiority stage. In accordance with Erikson, if children fail to resolve feelings of inadequacy and inferiority during interactions with their peers, it can significantly impede their development in terms of competence and self-esteem, ultimately affecting their ability to progress toward a coherent sense of identity. Ayla's difficulties in navigating this stage become further compounded by her status as a migrant, which introduces a myriad of internal and external complexities. As Judith Butler explains, "Identity is not a fixed essence but a

social and cultural construct that is continually performed and redefined" (Butler 25). Similarly, Ayla confronts an array of challenges as she endeavours to establish her unique identity within the broader societal context.

The Stage of Psychosocial Development Ayla Fails to Handle

- **Identity versus Role Confusion (Adolescence)**

Ayla Erol's transition from Erikson's fourth to the fifth stage, Identity versus Confusion, is significant, particularly in adolescence, which involves profound personal and social changes as individuals explore autonomy and self-identity. Ayla's journey in *The Last Dance* exemplifies Erikson's adolescent stage, where she grapples with questions about identity, purpose, and cultural persona, shaped by past failures, societal expectations and refugee status, underscoring the complexity of this developmental stage.

As Ayla matures, she is increasingly made to be cognizant of her unique position as the daughter of a migrant in the cosmopolitan city of Delhi, a locale characterized by a tapestry of cultural diversity and stark socioeconomic disparities. Her sense of self becomes intricately intertwined with her cultural heritage, familial bonds, and the external pressures exerted by societal expectations, exemplifying the core features of Erikson's identity versus role confusion stage. Her poignant proclamation, "Society expected me to follow a certain path, to conform to predefined roles and expectations, but I knew deep within that my true self lay beyond these expectations" (Arora 52), encapsulates the quintessential struggle, of this pivotal developmental stage, she faces. Ayla finds herself torn between the natural inclination to fit in and the simultaneous need to shape her individuality, which is a common struggle during adolescence. As she goes through the transformative stage of becoming a young adult, she stumbles upon the world of dance, which becomes a crucial milestone in her journey. In expressing her love for dance, she remarks, "For the first time in my life, I was doing something that mattered. It felt right" (Arora 52), she feels a deep sense of significance and alignment with her true self. Dance emerges as a profound source of resonance for her, and in her own words, she proclaims, "If there was one contribution Kurdish people could claim as their own that would certainly be in the area of dance and music. The performing arts were an inseparable part of our culture" (Arora 28). This declaration underscores that dance serves as a conduit for Ayla to reconnect with her Kurdish identity, a facet of her identity that had been stripped away during her childhood. Ayla's involvement in dance represents more than just a convergence of her identity with her cultural heritage. It also aligns with Erikson's theory of developing a coherent sense of self. The statement, "There was freedom in dance that I have never experienced before," (Arora 51) exemplifies the profound liberation she feels through her artistic pursuit. This newfound freedom allows her to express herself profusely and serves as a way to reconnect with her Kurdish heritage,

revitalizing a cultural identity that had long been dormant within her. Ultimately, dance becomes a transformative force in Ayla's life, enabling her to establish a deeper connection with her roots and construct a more unified sense of self while navigating the complex landscape of adolescence.

However, mirroring the inevitable conclusion of all favourable circumstances, Ayla's journey towards self-discovery came to an abrupt and devastating halt. Experiencing sexual assault at the hands of her mentor, Guru Ranmohan, represented a significant setback in her ongoing journey to establish her identity. This traumatic event left her devastated, and instead of receiving societal support, she encountered abandonment and social ostracization. As Ayla recounts, "When their eyes met mine, they hastily looked away. They didn't want anything to do with me" (Arora 3). Despite her anguish, she valiantly attempted to perform the next day for her arangetram but suffered a traumatic collapse. Consequently, she found herself ensnared within the unforgiving clutches of societal condemnation, once more relegated to the role of an outsider blamed for cultural degradation. This severe societal judgment is succinctly captured in the quote, "She is still raw and edgy. Let's not forget, she is an outsider" (Arora 118). Society's rejection of her paralleled her earlier experience of being forcibly separated from her Kurdish identity as a child. This act of enforced assimilation initiated the erosion of her determination and the dismantling of her quest for identity. This traumatic experience inflicted profound wounds, hindering her ability to fully resolve her quest for identity and leaving her feeling lost and disconnected from her roots.

According to Erikson, "The identity of the individual is a product of his history, a reflection of his culture and society, and a sequence of choices, often inhibited by an unreasoning loyalty to his own past" (Erikson157). Thus, an individual's failure to successfully navigate the fifth stage, marked by identity formation, can lead to role confusion, which in turn affects the subsequent stage of intimacy versus isolation during young adulthood. In Ayla's case, the traumatic assault left her profoundly altered, preventing her from effectively forming a stable identity and instead trapping her in a state of role confusion, as outlined by Erikson.

- **Intimacy versus Isolation (Young Adulthood)**

Ayla's tumultuous journey in Anmol Arora's *The Last Dance* intimately corresponds with Erikson's Intimacy versus Isolation stage, a pivotal juncture during young adulthood where individuals endeavour to establish meaningful connections while grappling with isolation. Ayla's experiences, infused with the novel's poignant quotes, capture this stage's essence.

Following her harrowing ordeal, Ayla is sent back to Mardin against her wishes to study law, lamenting, "Once again, my destiny had been determined by a compromise" (Arora 134), where, among her community, she seeks solace, hoping that Mardin will offer the peace she craves. Despite being in the place she belongs, Ayla continues to grapple with profound isolation, "I was born here, and these are my

people, but it didn't soothe my nerves" (Arora 167). Her unease around men intensifies her sense of isolation, manifesting as discomfort and distrust, "I couldn't take men at their word. Their presence caused discomfiture" (Arora 145). Ayla's sense of not belonging anywhere exacerbates her isolation. She articulates this inner turmoil, feeling "too Turkish in India and too Indian in Turkey" (Arora 172). Even her refuge in the mosque offers temporary respite, as she acknowledges, "the moment I stepped out of the mosque, the troubles took hold of me again" (Arora 173).

Ayla's fear of forming relationships becomes palpable when she develops a bond with her troubled classmate, Umair. However, her deep-seated fear prevents her from opening up about her painful experience of sexual assault, resulting in emotional distance between them. Ayla internalizes the blame for everything that has occurred in her life, reaching a distressing crescendo where she believes her existence is the root cause of all problems, "If I vanished, all these problems would vanish along with me" (Arora 193). These overwhelming emotions lead her to attempt suicide, driven by the belief that she is the source of trouble in her own life but her survival comes at the cost of her legs, rendering her partially paralysed. Returning to Delhi amid her father's passing, Ayla's desolation deepens. However, Guru Chandrashekhar's reappearance rekindles hope and trust, "Guruji shook me out of my stupor. He believed in me when I didn't believe in myself" (Arora 299). Under his guidance, Ayla rediscovers her passion for dance, which helps her to begin feeling safe around people and forming genuine connections, as she regains her confidence imperceptibly.

Once again dance becomes Ayla's lifeline, a means to reclaim her identity and overcome her isolation, as she recognizes that "dance could set her free" (Arora 223). Ayla's recovery, not just physically but also in dance parallels her renewed ability to trust and form relationships, she embraces her uniqueness in society, "Her way in. She no longer craved acceptance and had made peace with her differences. Ayla, in her uniqueness, belonged to both worlds equally" (Arora 307). Eventually, her arangetram, which once became the reason for her downfall, becomes the culmination of her journey, symbolising self-acceptance and completeness, "I was everything I had ever been. I was complete" (Arora 309). Ayla's transformation serves as a powerful reminder that the path to self-acceptance and completeness is often filled with obstacles and setbacks that one needs to go right through and face them head-on.

In summation, Ayla's narrative in *The Last Dance* masterfully encapsulates the profound challenges and eventual triumphs inherent in Erikson's Intimacy versus Isolation stage. Her journey from isolation and self-blame to reconnection, trust, and self-realization underscores the novel's exploration of human connections and self-discovery in the face of adversity.

Conclusion

In this research paper, we delved into the intricate character analysis of Ayla

Erol in Anmol Arora's novel *The Last Dance* through the lens of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory. We primarily focused on Ayla's experiences during the adolescent phase of identity versus role confusion and the subsequent young adulthood stage of intimacy versus isolation. Throughout our analysis, we explored the profound influence of familial and social environments on Ayla's identity formation. Ayla's journey in the novel serves as a poignant testament to the impact of societal treatment on one's identity, especially in the context of being a migrant and daughter of migrants in Delhi. Erikson's theory provided a robust framework to understand the complexities of Ayla's character development, highlighting the universal human struggle to forge an authentic identity amid the challenges of contemporary multicultural societies. By closely examining Ayla's experiences, we illuminated the profound significance of identity formation and self-realization within a rapidly changing and interconnected world. Her story exemplified how personal and cultural identities are deeply intertwined and how external factors can shape one's sense of self.

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Love, Loss and Longing: Exploring Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring*

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Abstract

Memoir writing, especially from margins, has long been viewed as embodying not just spatial or temporal trails but simultaneously incorporating affective traits of pastness that perform local and transnational pasts through recollection, remembrances, memorizing, and haunting. As with most literary writings, though, the field is marked by a predominant masculinist presence, which erodes the cultural and historical fluidities of feminine and effeminate subjectivities. Writing from Kashmir, for example, offers a classic paradigm. The textual absence of women usually characterizes the popular male narratives about the turmoil in Kashmir, as they tend to ignore the experiences and dilemmas faced by women. Through her memoir, Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir *(2021), Farah Bashir seeks to draw attention to the often-ignored gendered nature of conflict in Kashmir and how it is experienced physically, socially, and emotionally by those directly affected by it. Drawing insights from feminist literary critics such as Sidonie Smith, Linda Anderson, Nancy K. Miller, and Janet Mason Ellerby, this paper will attempt to explore the counter-strategies employed by Farah Bashir in her memoir to highlight the traumatized world of Kashmiri women's psyche and their unique ways of survival and resistance to masculinity.*
Keywords: Embodied Experience, Gendered Violence, Testimony, Living Archives

Introduction

A memoir is a form of narrative writing "in which history . . . come[s] into concourse with literature in order to make a self, a life, and to locate that living self in a history, an era, a relational and communal identity" (Buss xiv). Instead of claiming to be true history, a memoir is the testimony of a writer who has personal and experiential knowledge of the events that he/she wishes to chronicle. By employing a style that is "at the same time narrative and essayistic, descriptive and imagistic, factually testimonial and anecdotally fictive," memoir "bridges the typical strategies of historical and literary discourses" and thereby serves to establish a link between "the private and the public, the personal and the political" (Buss 2-3). Through their memoirs, women endeavour to break the barriers of silence imposed on them by their historical and cultural legacy. They embrace this genre to interrogate their relationship to a history and/or culture from which their sense of self and life has been excluded by the dominant masculinist narratives. Contemporary women memoirists, thus, are "performing their selves as they write their texts; their performances are speech acts in a way similar to (yet different from) Freud's 'talking cure': a therapeutic process that reshapes the self through language" (Buss 21).

Women's Memoir Writing

In her book *But Enough about Me: Why We Read Other People's Lives* (2002), the feminist critic Nancy K. Miller posits two notable premises about autobiographical writing:

> the first, that the subjects of life writing (memoir, diary, essay, confession) are as much others as ourselves; the second, that reading the lives of other people with whom we do not identify has as much to tell us (if not more) about our lives as the lives with which we do . . . . [W]e read autobiographical writing in order to learn something about ourselves as well as about others, disidentification takes us as readers on a (sometimes circuitous, which is the whole point) journey back to ourselves. (xvi)

For Miller, memoir writing is not simply a personalized act of representation of "individualistic memory," but rather, it enables writers to preserve their "cultural memory" by keeping it "alive" (14). In her analysis of women's memoirs, such as Simone de Beauvoir's *A Very Easy Death* (1964) and Susan Cheever's *Home Before Dark* (1984), Miller delves into the nuanced interactions between subjectivity, reality, and the act of self-representation. She investigates the interaction and subversion of traditional literary genres and gendered expectations in women's memoirs. She explores how female writers navigate and seek to subvert the stereotypical "male theories that constitute woman in lack, invisibility, silence" by constructing narratives that reflect their peculiar experiences and unique perspectives (Miller, *Getting* 7).

Similarly, Linda Anderson suggests that women's attempts at writing memoirs could be discerned "as the[ir] attempt . . . of writing explicitly as a woman, of − like consciousness-raising − grounding perception in the experiences and problems which seem to provide women with a sense of identity as a group" (5). Anderson acknowledges the importance of intersectionality in women's memoir writing. She explores how women writers negotiate multiple identities − race, class, sexuality, and nationality − in their memoirs, emphasizing the intricate, complex, and interconnected nature of their experiences.

In her book *Intimate Reading: The Contemporary Women's Memoir* (2001), Janet Mason Ellerby provides valuable insights about writing women's memoirs. She argues that by blurring the boundaries between personal narratives and political discourses, women writers judiciously make use of their personal stories to shed light on broader social issues and challenge societal norms and expectations.

Memoir Writing in Kashmir

Since the emergence of India and Pakistan and the subsequent accession of the formerly princely state with India, the history of Kashmir is mainly imagined through varying perspectives and with contradicting facts and figures. In the modern contemporary period, different communities of Kashmir have initiated a path-

breaking scholarship to explore the complexities and nuances of Kashmir's historical scenario and to bring their livid experiences to the forefront. There has been a surge of both fictional and non-fictional writings in Kashmir, where different communities provide heterogeneous narratives, often problematizing each other's discourse and representational capacity. Muslims and Pandits, in particular, have started to archive testimonials and embodied experiences through their memoirs, thereby making memoir writing a preferred means of expression in recent times.

Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2010) was the first memoir of Kashmir, which attempted to pen down the discreet histories of the people in longue durée. Through this acclaimed work, Peer paved the way for later writers like Mirza Waheed, Shahnaz Bashir, and Farah Bashir, who firmly believe that the little histories of people have the potential to become the theme of one's writing and that there is a scope to tell stories from the perspective of the tormented. Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* (2013) was arguably written in response to Peer's chronicling the lived experiences of Kashmiri Muslims. The write-up in the book's jacket introduces it as an "unspoken chapter in the story of Kashmir," "another part of the story that has remained unrecorded and buried." Pandita, in this gripping memoir, tries to capture the trauma and loss of the Pandit community from the perspective of a victim. Apart from this deeply personal and powerful tale, there are some other significant memoirs and personal accounts, such as Candrakāntā's *The Saga of Satisar* (2018) and Ashok Dhar's *Kashmir as I See from Within and Afar* (2019), which offer a corrective to the straitjacketing of Kashmir conflict within the narratives of Kashmiri Muslims.

Even if these memoirs provide some compelling and emotive stories about women, an emphasis on how a woman subject encounters the inner and external reality in her peculiar ways is still lacking. These memoirs, along with some other works on Kashmir, are at pains to adequately portray the reality of women, and most often, a woman's body is employed as a thematic strategy to epitomize the intricate complexities of the conflict. Such accounts, however, are not immune to subversion and misinterpretation. In this purposive historical context, Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring* (2021) is unique, being the first serious attempt by a Kashmiri woman to empower the marginal through chronicling her own lived experiences.

Archiving Female Voices in Kashmir

Kashmiri literary tradition celebrates some archetypal women poets like Habba Khatoon, who translated the stories of love, loss, and longing passionately and effectively through her poetry. Hers was the first attempt to make the personal political and to peel off the gruesome facades of masculine power through a lyrical mode. Farah Bashir's voice is, however, different and one-of-a-kind. Though she echoes Habba Khatoon in celebrating the female worldview, her style, theme, and subject matter are entirely different. Rather than offering a journalistic description of the significant events in the chequered history of Kashmir, she undertakes to write from inside the psyche of a teenage girl, who is the first-hand witness of the events

unfolded in the story. Through this unbiased account of a girl, Bashir attempts to represent women's psychological and biological responses to the traumatic experiences witnessed amidst the turmoil. She intended the memoir to record not only her own story but also serve as a representative of a collective of women's stories from the perspective of a female narrator. In an interview with *The Wire*, she asserted the importance of narrating the story of Kashmir from a woman's point of view:

As a teenage girl, growing up in a conflict-stricken territory happened to be a dual struggle: to make sense of the militarization of domestic spaces and to learn new social etiquette − informed by war − to navigate life. It was [therefore] crucial to record what a teenage girl went through in one of the most important events in Kashmir's contemporary history. (Bashir, "Farah")

Her memoir offers significant and valuable experiential knowledge on the gendered experiences of the conflict, thereby furnishing a compelling and engaging narrative that can destabilize the propagandist and biased narratives on Kashmir. It portrays the everyday rituals of a traditional middle-class household as perceived by a girl who tries to make sense of the changing political scenario around her and simultaneously negotiates her daily life within a landscape driven by perpetual chaos and turmoil. According to Sarover Zaidi, "writing on homes is interlinked with what these spaces can be and become for the people who inhabit them. They could be creative or generative zones of life, individuated or connected, dialogic or monologic, routine or chaotic." Although the notion of home conventionally invokes a peaceful retreat from the hustle-bustle of the outside world, Farah Bashir highlights how the sanctity of her home was desecrated by a constant military presence, transforming it into a site of violation. As the narrator mentions:

> We did everything we could to shut the sinister, synchronized sound out. We put up heavy crewel curtains with thick linings and added a layer of woolen blankets on the latticed wooden windows, but even that did not stop the unwanted entry of those steps which pushed further, inch upon inch, into our kitchen which overlooked the street. From there, they stomped on our temples and finally entered our heads. (26)

In her essay "Indian Women's Fiction and the Fascination of the Everyday," Nandana Dutta claims that for women writers, everything concerning the house, all the material, minute details, becomes the structural underpinning of their stories − a string that holds the story together (147). Farah Bashir's preoccupation with the interiors of her house can be gauged from the recurrent references she makes to the kitchen, courtyard, attic, and the other rooms of her house. She admits that "[e]very window in our house seemed to have been assigned a specific role, each one had numerous tales to tell" (17). The window of her drawing room served as a platform from where her grandmother would pass on an urgent message to her daughter. She recollects how she would spend time by the windows of the big hall on the fourth floor of their house and amuse herself by pouring water onto the pavement and seeing the droplets dance on their way down. These pleasurable mundane activities, however, were disrupted from the 1990s onwards when people were compelled to close their

windows due to the frequent firing of tear gas in the streets. The sting of tear gas penetrated "[t]hrough crevices, gaps, windows ajar, even those that were tightly shut" and "made breathing difficult for the young and laborious for the old" (82). The narrator similarly recalls how the attic, which once used to be the most frequently visited part of their house, acting as a vantage point from where the narrator used to get a bird's eye view of any marriage procession taking place in the neighbourhood or enjoy an unobstructed view of the sky, became the space best avoided from the nineties onwards.

In throwing light on the contemporary English novel in India, Meenakshi Bharat writes that

> [t]oday a considerable number of writers of fiction have reawakened to the pertinence of the finer details of our recent past − indeed, almost of our present − to go beyond the usual premise of only signal events constituting significant history, to attempt a location of meaning in the so-called little constitutive events, which may not find their way individually into the annals of history. (8)

This statement underscores the overall thematic and textual counter-intuitive strategies of Bashir's memoir. It deftly prioritizes the inner world of a Kashmiri (impressionistic) girl growing up during the 1990s and relates the everyday through her spotless mind. She does not succumb to the historical contestation − pitting one group against the other and her memorialization does not provide space for any purported propaganda. She tries to capture the nuances of every day in a world cornered and subsumed by the normativity constructed by the all-pervasive masculine.

In *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue that "the texts and theory of women's autobiography . . . [have] revis[ed] our concepts of women's life issues-growing up female, coming to voice, affiliation, sexuality and textuality, the life cycle" and have made "visible formerly invisible subjects" (5). In a similar vein, Farah Bashir's memoir succeeds in engaging with the troubled past, not in a combative and partisan way − as is often the case with other memoirs and fictive discourses − but reaches out to the deeper recesses of a woman's psyche and ends up relooking at the past and the present with a fresh gaze. Through their memoirs, women writers thus seek to "give . . . [us] what our unrecorded history lacks: a narrative through which to make sense of our own past" (Miller, *But* 12). In revisiting the watershed historical marker of 1990 Kashmir, Bashir subtly demonstrates the changes by invoking habituated motifs. In a chapter titled "Memory of the Scalp," she writes: "Taking care of my hair was my grandmother's favourite activity until I shied away from it. 'Muss gov Kurri hundvass,' she would say massaging my hair" and reminisces about how her grandmother would affectionately apply Seemaab on her hair while murmuring wanwun (15). However, cutting through the events of the 1990s, Bashir brilliantly captures the sudden rupture in their habituated forms of life: "All that care ended in the year 1990. Not due to unavailability of Seemab. I suppose it was still stocked up, maybe even rotting, in the

shops which remained mostly shut because of the unending periods of curfew" (16). This comes across as a notable instance of how an ordinary woman character/narrator takes stock of the ruptures and disruptions without bracketing any community within the ambit of accusation. She brings forth the ordinary yet crucial ruptures in the life form of a girl where abrupt changes in the habit of hair massaging become symbolic of the larger suffering of the populace.

In a manner reflexive of the memoirs written by women, which, according to Janet Mason Ellerby, strategically utilize their narratives to blur the distinctions between the personal and the political, Farah Bashir prioritizes the personal and intimate world of a girl, in a chapter titled "Period Pangs and a Stray Bullet." Bashir here invokes menstrual motifs to reveal the trials and tribulations of the post-1989 period. She talks about how she would usually manage her menstrual pains and keep herself well-prepared, mentioning in the form of a lullaby the essential things she kept handy:

> Barkat: A glass of water poured in an intricately carved, tall, copper glass
> Chirkhatt: A rectangular Plastic packet
> Myakatt: Two pain killers
> Haput: A small, black polythene bag
> Ponz: An extra pair of panties. (Bashir 52)

After giving the details of her preparation to subdue the pangs, she narrates an event – a personal one, which, though not usually found in the annals of history, is a dependable witness to the everyday trauma witnessed by women. She narrates how she ran out of her antispasmodic pills one day, but "it was impossible [for her] to move about anywhere in the house without causing alarm. All the staircases inside the house were made of wood. Even tiptoeing on those made them creak. Who knew which of those noises would travel outside and alert the troops to barge inside the house?" (Bashir 53) These lived and embodied experiences of women do not usually find a place in the memoirs and fictive discourses written by men. In those texts, women's trials and tribulations are primarily shown through rape, mourning, silencing, thereby projecting a woman's body as the archetypal symbol of victimhood.

Farah Bashir challenges such routinized characterization of Kashmiri women both in literary and cinematic representations. Through the multiple aspects of her life, she brings to light the physical, psychological, and soul-histories of a girl growing up in Kashmir. It is pertinent to mention that Bashir also employs a romantic plot in her otherwise sombre and eerie memoir to illustrate how she would seek alternative ways of healing and happiness. A romantic plot works as a deliberate thematic strategy to provide therapeutic dosage to the otherwise neurotic and fractured subject matter. Her intimate letter correspondence with Vaseem is a case in point. She attempts to highlight how the closing and burning of post offices in Kashmir put a halt to her therapeutic, romantic communication with Vaseem. Years later, she finds one of her unfinished letters reading: "Salaam V, 'Gates of memory never close, how much I miss you nobody knows,'" then reflecting on the current situation, the letter mentions that the "Stationary shops rarely open any more. My note-books are half filled, some of

which I use now to write these letters to you. I am sorry, I am out of letter-pads. I do not know when we will get them again" (50-51). This unfinished and unsent epistolary communication with Vaseem showcases the ruptures in her attempt to seek alternate ways of healing from everyday stress and trauma. While acknowledging her deliberate attempt at touching on such sensitive issues in her memoir, Farah Bashir claimed that "[i]t would have been difficult to write about the basics of adolescence by omitting essential details of a teenage girl's life: falling in love, menstruation, puberty related changes, which are rather natural" ("Farah").

Farah Bashir's memoir does not, however, democratically represent the realities of Kashmiri women during the 1980s and 1990s. In her narrative, we do not find substantial evidence about the plight of Kashmiri Pandit women. The violence faced by Pandit women is now well documented in narratives written by Pandits themselves. Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* (2017), Siddharta Gigoo's *The Garden of Solitude* (2010), and Tej Nath Dhar's *Under the Shadow of Militancy* (2002), for example, chronicle the narratives of exile, sexual violence, and killings faced by Kashmiri Pandit women. Although Bashir does hint at this in her memoir, this does not remain among the fundamental thematic structures of her memoir. This raises the question of whether her memoir can be claimed as voicing the collective because people of different religious, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds witnessed different kinds of trauma and violence during the 1990s. James Phelan puts forth a very pertinent question vis a vis narrative ethics: "What obligations, if any, does a memoir writer have to other people whose experiences she narrates? . . . . [W]hat are the ethical implications of choosing to tell one kind of story rather than another in a given historical context?"(532). Drawing upon this, one can discern that Bashir's memoir does marginalize the story of Kashmiri Pandit women, and thus, her narrative remains ethically checked.

Rumours of Spring turns a blind eye to the growing scholarship by Kashmiri Pandits, which highlights their trauma and narrates their tales of violence. This brings us to the question of representation and marginalization. Dominant scholarship on Kashmir often faces criticism for neglecting and marginalizing narratives of other communities – Hindu, Sikh, and other marginalized groups residing in peripheral zones. Siddharta Gigoo, in his novel, writes:

> The Kashmiri Pandit story did not exist anywhere. The migrants and their stories did not appear in most news items related to Kashmir. There were no statistics, no pictures of the dead and dilapidated Pandit houses, no accounts of brutalities on Pandits in Kashmir, no record of disease in the migrant camps. There were no stories of the people's past. (196)

Apart from Pandits, Kashmiri Sikhs − living in Kashmir − also allege that Kashmiri Muslim narratives remain dominant and the history of violence faced by the Sikh community hardly finds any space in the discourses on Kashmir. Throwing light on this internal marginalization, Mohita Bhatia argues that the Muslim-centric narrative remains dominant while "suppressing the heterogeneous aspirations and concerns of other regions and non-Kashmiri communities"(68). In Bashir's memoir,

the experiences of Kashmiri women remain the central frame of reference, and the plight of Pandits evokes only private sympathy and their fundamental stories remain unheard and marginalized.

Conclusion

The memoir *Rumours of Spring*, thus, comes across as a gripping tale told by shifting characters and selves – we are able to access the deep recesses of a girl, a daughter, a granddaughter, a friend, and a beloved. Bashir particularly makes conspicuous the dual nature of violence inflicted on women where they not only become victims of sexual violence but also how the violence penetrated their domestic spheres and interrupted and shattered their quotidian lives. As a product of her experiential knowledge, her memoir brings a sharp, intimate, and gendered perspective to the turmoil and, in the process, succeeds in providing a voice to the Kashmiri women who are otherwise rendered voiceless in the dominant masculine and masculinist-nationalist narratives. Through her memoir, Bashir seems to reiterate Diane Elam's idea that "the genre of women's autobiography [or memoir] should be understood as a strategic necessity at a particular time, rather than an end in itself" (65). In *Rumours of Spring*, she, thus, uses everyday metaphors, motifs, and symbols to reveal the lived experiences of an effeminate subject, filling the textual absence in the memorial and fictive discourse on Kashmir.

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Dualistic Nature and Identity of Persona in the Spirited Familial and Humid Life of Immigrants in the Select Works of Edwidge Danticat

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Abstract

Immigration is an admonition for cultural heritage, human behaviour, ethnicity and ancestral belongings; on the other hand, it is a prodigy for multilingualism, multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. Immigration experiences and aspirations vary among the psyche of the individuals. The research objective focuses on the immigrants facing a dual identity in the host land and the multiculturalist society developed among the life of immigrants. This dualism mirrors the sandwich identity to which the persona is affixed. Benedict Anderson, the Irish political scientist and historian argues a nation is an 'imagined community'. This imagined community states that each person holds an identity and the host land becomes an imagined arena thereby providing self-consciousness and resilience in the minds of immigrants. The immigrants possess their nationalism in the host land and favour nativism as they live in the imagined community. The immigrants fail to identify their nationality with them in the host land. This concept of "imagined community" never soothes the heart of a wounded soul that escaped the blazes of hard reality but holds the cultural identity. The paper darts the dual identity and multiculturalism in the novels of Edwidge Danticat and the mental and geographical space they hold in their life.

Keywords: Immigration, Spirit of Place, Imagined Community, Dual Identity, Multiculturalism

A sense of nationalism and patriotism adheres to pride and national identity in the minds of the citizens of a country. When people become immigrants leaving their nation behind, nationalism and patriotism find dualism and they imbibe a dual identity in the host land. The host land becomes the nation of immigration, and the immigrants, after a generation of living in the same land, assimilate into a dominant culture of the nation of immigration. The immigrants, thereafter, sustain a dual identity in the persona, of which they were unaware in their minds. Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian-American author portrays the elements of the transgressive life of immigrants tuned by the lord of their life, themselves. As the immigrants endure the pangs of their life being unsheltered and left behind the barriers of their life, they are moulded to face the challenges of their life. Immigrants switch the tradition and culture of the host land and native land to the need, as they imbibe the quality of survivorship in their minds. The survivors hold unharmed dualistic identity traits in their hearts to which they are accounted for. Most characters in the works of Edwidge Danticat, immigrate to America for shelter and survival for the cause of a person and family. As a result, they dive into a multicultural milieu, diverge their culture, relationship, food, shelter, etc., for the sake of survival. The migrated people, as refugees, lack the ownership of their native land and belongingness and commitment to the world. In the case of America, a

multiculturalist society, people are independent to hold their native identity in the host land. This independence transforms the people to become Americanized, in the host land at the later stages. The research provides significance in the transformation of the life of immigrants and the multiculturalism developed in the host land. It also raises the question such as: Does dual nature pave the way for the shift of mental and geographical space locations? How does it connect the spirit of place and life with the spirit of family? Why does the claim of Benedict Anderson match with the life of immigrants and kindles the talk of 'imagined community'?

The Haitian-American literature conjoins the culture of Haiti and America, as the two states join together for the representation of an identity "Haitian-American". The present paper focuses on the identity and immigration in Haitian Literature of the works of Edwidge Danticat. There is a considerable research gap in the immigrant literature of the writer. The researcher focuses on the immigration and spatial elements of the psyche whereas the earlier research works on the novels of Edwidge Danticat focus on testing, racial discrimination, slavery, and sexual abuse. This novelty of applying multicultural theories to the life stories of immigrants showcases an optimistic result in the acceptance of dualistic traits in immigrant life. The fear of immigrants in the host land is also highlighted by the concept of thinking beyond multiculturalism.

D. H. Lawrence, the British novelist and critic, discusses the "spirit of place" in his work *Studies in Classic American Literature*,

> Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality. (Tally Jr. 5-6)

To every person, the spirit of place is etched with the spirit of life in that place. In the novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the characters hold the spirit of life attached to them in Haitian soil as memories unerased. The protagonist Sophie Caco and her mother, Martine spend some valuable time in America after the reunion. Together, they went to Miracin's Haitian food restaurant. This Haitian-American restaurant gathers the people of same origin and brings the nativity to their life. The people in the restaurant started to speak about the troubles they encountered in Haiti and for the people of Haiti. "Remember what they did in the twenties. They treated our people like animals. They abused the *konbit system* and they made us work like slaves" (Danticat, "Breath" 50). When the immigrants meet their fellow people, they bring the spirit of life on the Haitian soil among them in America. Also, the memories are invoked with the spirit of place, "Marc is one of those men who will never recover from not eating his *manman*'s cooking," said my mother (Danticat, "Breath " 50). When Marc started to eat food, he recalls the cooking of his mother back in Haiti. The spirit of the restaurant brings the memory back. Food plays a vital symbol in the reminiscent nature of immigrant minds. The smell of their spices and cooking room always brings the fond nature of their life. "The house smelled like Granma Melina's cooking shed

on New Year's Eve" (Danticat, "Behind" 100). The aroma of the food brings the spirit of life to the place of survival. The immigrants, when practice the native habitual activity in the host land, they tend to evoke the spirit of life and place in the land of survival.

The characters also enjoy the spirit of the Haitian environment and life over the place when they are native citizens of Haiti. The characters work hard on Haitian soil, doing agriculture, farming cows, and selling goods in the market. This spirit of life is attached to the place, Haiti for the Haitian people. When people immigrate, they transport the liveliness of life along them to the place where they immigrated to. "Ever since Papa left for New York five years ago, it is Moy who looks after Papa's cornfields and Papa's two pride cows."(Danticat, "Behind" 3) Celiane says that her Papa's cows are prideful ones. The people of the land are proud of the nativity of the soil and things around them. Though the people don't earn a lot, they have a happy and content life. But the social and economic situation pulls them to become immigrants of a varied landscape. The protagonist, Celiane Esperance's father, faces failure in agriculture and an economic crisis. To provide a better living for the family, he decides to go to America. Being an Immigrant, the father works hard to earn money and legal living in the host land. The characters receive money from their father; also, they work harder on the Haitian soil for the sake of love for the soil and love for their father. Still, their sense of happiness is doubted in their life. As the family parted; the members of the family sensed isolation in the native land as well as the father in the host land, when they lacked family time. When the family reunites in New York in the second half, Celiane thinks that, "It's a new year in our life. As we sat around the kitchen table, each one of us quietly enjoying soup, I thought of the different meanings of the day." (Danticat, "Behind " 100) The family, after reunification, senses the spirit of their life. Even in the host land, they bring the unity of the family, culture and tradition and this happened because the spirit of family and people surpassed the spirit of life and spirit of place. The characters in the novels are polarised towards the culture, tradition and spirit of the family along with the spirit of life and spirit of place. Thus, the immigrant experiences vary among the psyche of the individuals related to the spirit of life and the place they behold. This varied experience creates a dual identity and develops multiculturalism in the minds of the immigrant people.

In the novels of Edwidge Danticat, multilingualism is seen in Haitian people practicing French and Creole in their native land. Later, they practice English to sustain themselves in the host land. When Celiane Esperance in *Behind the Mountains,* reaches America, her father finds admission for her in a Haitian background school. Still, she struggles to cope with the language in America. She finds help from her classmate and learns English to fulfil her father's dream of achieving her success. Bharati Mukherjee in her essay, "Beyond Multiculturalism: Surviving the Nineties" speaks about the rejection of the hyphenation of Asian-American as "American". She underlines the difference between white and non-white American citizens in America. She quotes the term, "cultural transmogrification" to showcase her fear of "other" in the host land. To her,

> "Multiculturalism emphasizes the differences between racial heritages. This emphasis on the differences has too often led to the dehumanization of the different.Dehumanization leads to discrimination. And discrimination can ultimately lead to genocide" (Reed 459)

Looking beyond multiculturalist society ends in discrimination and genocide to her. She, as an immigrant, fears life in the host land and visualises the alienated feeling of living in a non-native land. Yet, multiculturalism is simply sharing multiple cultures in a single land where the people are independent enough to hold on to their practice of varied cultures. This multiculturalism is seen in the novels of Edwidge Danticat where people practice both Haitian and American culture. They enjoy the no-school day commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as the host land's culture and on the other hand, celebrate New Year's Eve with the celebrations they do in the native land. As society marches towards multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity also revolves around the people in the host land with varied characteristics of the people. (Thomas Faist 18)

The dualistic nature of the immigrants paves the way for the sandwich identity to which they are affixed. Like a sandwich, the immigrant people are placed between two societies that neither belong to them nor provide a guaranteed life in the land they live. This assimilation in the host land is defined by the Melting Pot theory where the people of the land "melt together" from various immigrant groups. When the people melt together, they develop a culture of oneness among them. This is evident with the character sketches of Edwidge Danticat, when they assimilate into a dominant culture; they melt with the predominant culture of the host land. The assimilation eventually results in a predominantly multiculturalist society. The Salad bowl theory of multiculturalism says, when the people in a multicultural society assimilate into the new land and form a heterogeneous society coexisting with the unique characteristics of their traditional culture, they form unique ethnic communities excluding them from the mass community. This happens with the immigrants of America by excluding them from the mass community. In the novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* the characters Sophie Caco and Martine visit a Haitian restaurant whereby stepping into a heterogeneous society and coexisting with their tradition when there was a need for the purgation of thoughts. The people of the host land prefer the significance of the mental space they choose to live in. Thus, the process of assimilation results in both the melting pot theory and salad bowl theory preferring the needs of the immigrant people.

The dualistic nature results in the process of "spatialization of local" and "localisation of spatial" which turns vice versa when the immigrant attaches to the host land. Spatialization refers to both the mental and geographical space of the immigrants. The people, when attached to the host land, conquer the local area spatially, they get acquainted with the local area they live and this results in the attachment to the local host area. Celiane Esperance narrates it as,

> "I am glad we are going to see Tante Rose even though I don't especially like the city.

> "There is city family and there is country family," Manman often says "Granma Melina and Grandpa Nozial are your country family. Tante Rose is city family." (Danticat, "Behind" 23)

The characters behold space for localisation of geographical land through the conceived idea about it. When this is achieved flawlessly, the new space is localised mentally and the characters find an attachment to the new environment. Celiane's ideas about the "city family" and "village family" are preconceived notions. This makes her differentiate the geographical arena of a particular place. In the later stage, this conceived idea helps her to modulate herself in the host land. She compares the city life with that of America and localises the place they live with the habits of village life.

The localisation and spatialization of host land results in the assimilation of a nation and Benedict Anderson claims a nation is an "imagined community". According to him, a nation is a socially-constructed community, imagined by the people of the place who perceive themselves as part of the community. A nation is real only when a sufficient number of people identify the nationality with it. This idea of 'imagined community', when applied to Haitian-American characters in the novels, holds the native traits with them. When the family reached America, they considered it as another geographical area but their identity with them is imbibed in their inner-self. In the novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* the protagonist Sophie Caco was born in Haiti and so she practices the Haitian tradition and culture. These habitats were attached to her even in the host land. But when she enjoys the independence of the host land and localises with the host area, she prefers being American. Later, in the novel when she moves back to Haiti for vacation, her habits of nativity were changed. She wears a western outfit and goes jogging in the village of her mother. The village people were unaware of witnessing these habits of the city people. She reflects on the perks of being westernised and reflects her American nationality. Earlier, she was reflecting the native identity in the host land and later, she reflected the host land identity in the native land. She is an immigrant who fails to follow the identity of her native land thereby making the nation an 'imagined community'. The concept of 'imagined community' never soothes the heart of a wounded soul that escaped the blazes of hard reality but holds the cultural identity. As the people who escape the hard reality, don't identify their nationality with them, the nation doesn't become real.

The immigrant characters showcase a dual identity in both their native land and host land. They are melted with both the culture and tradition attached to the land they live in. In *Behind the* Mountains, On New Year's Day, they were enjoying the special soup made for the occasion and remembered Haitian Independence Day. Also, they celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a part of the culture of the host land. The inborn character traits in the native land and the tradition around them in the host land makes the people of the host land possess dual identity within them. In the case of Callie Morrissete from "Seven Stories" in *Everything Inside*, she escapes from the war zone and enters America as a refugee. She lives in the country for a while and returns to Haiti. The character was stable with the tradition and culture of the native

land; she was not affected by the culture of the host land. Thus, when people find refuge in a place, they seek life and liveliness in the place.

As the research objective signifies the transformation of the life of immigrants, it is seen at all the stages of their life after immigration. Also, they self-develop a multiculturalist quality in the character for sustainable life in the host land. The dual nature of the immigrants paves the way for the shift of mental and geographical space locations. It connects the spirit of family surpassing the spirit of place and life in the host land. The researcher concludes the research paper with an optimistic element where the immigrants melt and mingle with the people of the host land to sustain a peaceful living in the land they immigrated to. The research may provide a spark in the life of immigrants who maintain a distinct attitude towards the host land. The idea of the stability of multiculturalism should be appreciated in whichever land it is practiced. It provides a kind of kindness and oneness among the masses. The foreseeing of going beyond multiculturalism segregates the cultures of the society again and so the researcher overlooks the society only as a multiculturalist society without going beyond multiculturalism. In the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the author says, "True generosity lies in striving so that these hands–whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world" (Freire 45). The people, by fighting for the restoration of humanity, will be attempting the restoration of true generosity. Humanity and generosity parallel the identity and liveliness of the life of immigrants. Thus, to restore a happy life for them, they need to work for transition in their minds and people restore the happy moments of their past life to the present one.

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To Weep or to Laugh: Studying Humour and Breast Talk through Indian Breast Cancer Narratives

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Abstract

This article examines how Indian women with breast cancer (BC) use humour as a powerful instrument to manage their cancer experiences. Along with bodily pain and suffering, post-diagnostic trauma and anxiety, changing body, hair loss, loss of breast, and changing relationships, BC patients also confront the silencing of their cancer testimonials and breast talk. However, those BC patients who develop a positive coping mechanism against psychological stress find humour as a means of defying the horrors of the disease and its clinical and cultural management. Through a thematic analysis of three Indian BC memoirs Meenakshi Chaudhry's Sunshine (2011), *Neelam Kumar's* To Cancer, With Love (2015) *and Shormistha Mukherjee's* Cancer You Picked the Wrong Girl (2021)*, the significance of practising humour in normalising breast-talk and creating a non-stigmatised BC culture in India has been established. Thus, practising humour not only empowers these Indian women with BC against society's marginalization, but it also gives them an opportunity to disrupt all kinds of silences existing around BC. This study also explicates how suggestive humour can empower women with BC to negotiate their heavily compromised personal beauty standards and feminine identity in a strategic manner.*
Keywords: Breast Cancer, Humour, Coping Mechanism, Breast Talk, Identity, Empowerment

Introduction

While psychosocial problems faced by breast cancer (hereafter, BC) patients as well as survivors have been well researched because of the stereotype of women's sex role, their coping strategies to fight against a deadly stigmatised disease have been less studied (Meyerowitcz, Chaiken & Clark). The narration of cancer experiences is itself empowering for a patient whose voice is otherwise silenced in the formal healthcare practices. Further, integrating humour into cancer narration helps BC patients cope with the physiological and psychosocial problems. Every woman has a special relationship with her body and especially with breasts which represent her womanhood, but when BC is diagnosed, this special private relationship goes public. Along with the bodily pain and suffering, post diagnostic trauma and anxiety, BC patients also encounter to a dwindling sense of identity caused by a changing body, hair loss, loss of breast, and a changing relationship. This identity crisis is also occasioned by the socio-cultural stigma associated with BC that prevents women from talking about it or creating testimonies with their body becoming a site of struggle over meanings in both social and medical contexts (Langellier and Sullivan 77). However, as an effective coping mechanism against the silencing culture involving BC, some western post millennial mammographers have used “breast

cancer humour to defy their disease's destructive power, question invasive medical interventions, and undermine the pieties of cancer culture" (DeShazer 96). Since Indian BC narratives are less in comparison to their western counterparts, very few studies have been conducted to understand the role humour plays in the life of Indian BC patients. This article addresses this knowledge gap and examines how for Indian BC patients humour acts as a coping mechanism to reveal the freedom of expression, to attack the 'beauty myth' associated with ideal feminine identity, and to normalise the breast talk against sociocultural taboos.

Humour and Laughing Subjects

Humour, comicality, and laughter are often considered synonymous and are defined as both "a liberating and creative life-force" (Santoro-Brienza 72). Scholars of humour have found it to be a stress relieving agent (Tanay et al. 1295) and a powerful coping strategy (DeShazer 13) which is both complex and diverse (Santoro-Brienza 75). Humour is created either as a result of alteration in "a sequence of foreseeable events" (76) or "of the sudden recognition of the wide difference between what it is and what ought to be" (Feibleman 191). Three common theories of humour–relief theory, incongruity theory, and superiority theory are prevalent. For relief theory, humour is purposefully used "as a release or escape from negative or stressful situations;" for incongruity theory, humour is generated from the gap between the expectation and the reality of certain situation; and for superiority theory, humour is "used as a way to achieve power over others" (Aultman and Meyers 578).As an extended form, rebellious humour has been used to fight the sombreness, seriousness, and vulnerability of BC while positioning patients as "laughing subjects" (Isaak 66; DeShazer 93). Contrary to dominant BC discourses and the pink ribbon culture which expect women to be "positive, strong, attractive, sexy—and funny" and treat the hero narrative of hope as an important element of cancer talk (Segal 294), BC memoirists use humour to fight euphemistic transformation of patients into heroes (DeShazer 101; Segal 294). Thus, they identify themselves as "feminist in its resistant consciousness" (DeShazer 93-4) displaying a strain of rebellious humour which "is not resigned" but "it is rebellious" (Freud 162–63).

Although cancer humour is seen as 'maladaptive', 'hurtful' or 'detrimental' (Demjén 18-19) and also socially unacceptable, humour helps cancer patients display "a light-hearted, non-serious attitude" towards life (Martin 1), resulting in tension release, community building and empowerment in an otherwise powerless situation (Demjén 19; Koestler 682). DeShazer identifies three strategies of self-representation through which BC memoirists convey humorous, and sometimes, tragicomic tropes: "self-deprecation, self-division, and self-assertion" (DeShazer 94). By using self-deprecation, they offer a "subversive challenge" (DeShazer 94), a "masquerade of femininity" (Isaak 67) to "evoke the reader's laughter through identification with body-centred foibles and fears" (DeShazer 94). Through self-division, they "ironize dualism and incongruity, long identified as sources of classic comedy" (DeShazer 94)

to separate themselves from the other personae with bald look, one breast or chemo brain to create humour effectively (DeShazer 94-5). Self-assertion helps in empowerment providing them with a sense of boundlessness (DeShazer 95).

DeShazer's study on humour as a tool to deflate the culture of optimism in western BC narratives breaks new grounds for similar studies across societies. Informed by her work, this study analyses three Indian autobiographical BC narratives Meenakshi Chaudhry's *Sunshine* (2011), Neelam Kumar's *To Cancer, With Love* (2015) and Shormistha Mukherjee's *Cancer You Picked the Wrong Girl* (2021) to reveal how these Indian BC memoirists are employing humour to overcome the hesitancy associated with their bodily changes like weight gain or loss, affected sexual desire. Through a thematic analysis of these memoirs, this article shows how humour enables women with BC to normalise breast talk in patriarchal culture. Through a close analysis of these narratives, three interrelated themes were identified: (1) weeping or laughing: a choice for women; (2) Disrupting the Beauty Myth; and (3) Normalizing Breast Talk through humour.

Weeping or Laughing: A Choice for Women

The serious and non-serious (humorous) discourse is often interwoven (Demjén 21; Santoro-Brienza 85) because life itself is a combination of tragic and comic events. Cancer humour is "double-framed," combining serious content with suffused humour (Dynel 227). Cancer patients often associate humour with "positive personal attributes, including being optimistic and relaxed" (Tanay et al. 1299).Generally, there are eight common comic styles– some have positive lighter effect (fun, humour, nonsense, and wit) and some have negative critical effect(irony, satire, sarcasm, and cynicism) (Ruch et al. 1; Linge-Dahl et al. 159).Mostly, BC memoirists narrate their fear of death and painful treatment realistically using their comic styles as opposed to that in the glorified dominant hero narrative and thus enjoy their freedom of narrating their lived experiences, i.e., when to laugh or when to weep.

Minakshi begins her memoir with dark satire to express her post-diagnosis sadness, fear, anxiety, and anger. When doctor declares "carcinoma", she suspects something serious despite knowing the meaning of complex medical jargon but still copes with fear by using irony: "Somehow carcinoma sounded better. It had a poetic tinge to it" (Chaudhry 23). She also sarcastically doubts the power of carcinogenic cells: "So tiny, so dangerous. What are they? Are they living and multiplying - do they have mouths to eat me up?" (Chaudhry 24). She also uses irony to question God about her or her family's fault as reason of cancer (Chaudhry 58). Later, she accepts her fortune using lighter situational humour targeting her own actions: "How funny life is! Here I was battling cancer but worried about clean bed sheets" (Chaudhry 132). She also mocks at her caring husband's nonsensical activities as he does not leave her "even for a minute except when I went to the washroom" (Chaudhry 135). Among many of her indecisive moments between shedding tears and smiling, one happens in

the wig shop: “I didn't know whether to laugh or cry! It was ridiculous, a trial for a wig!” (Chaudhry 148) which becomes a combination of fun, humour, sarcasm, and cynicism.

Neelam begins her memoir ironically addressing her readers: “Whoever said life is dull should take a slice off mine” (Kumar 19). She develops “a quirky sense of humour” to cope with painful journey of cancer: “I have learnt to laugh when I have to cry and weep when I am happy” (Kumar 19). Instead of questioning God, Neelam prefers to wink at Him and ask for not planning any further conspiracy to spoil her Pune trip (Kumar 20). Thus, she uses humour to relief the stress of the difficult situation. Her light-hearted tone often shifts into rebellious humour to gain superiority over cancer: “. . . even the mildest sister can turn into a tigress when her sibling is in trouble. And this was trouble with a capital C” (Kumar 32). She ironically narrates human sufferings as how her “eyes popped out at the vast sea of humanity” whom she encounters at the corridors of Tata Medical Centre (Kumar 47). She also mocks at her opportunist relatives' fake sympathy, and the underneath intention of staying at the city till their daughter's college admission.

Shormistha narrates her challenging memoir in a very light-hearted tone and predominantly uses incongruity humour marking a gap between the expectation and reality. She marks her own stupidity for not taking initiative after first recognition of the lump (Mukherjee 2). She uses self-deprecation to inform the doctor how stupidly she has been waiting for her turned-in (inverted) nipple to pop back on its own (Mukherjee 8). Similarly, she amusingly comments that as if her brain has been operating “in a zero IQ zone” (Mukherjee 12). She also uses incongruity humour to comment how gynaecologists think of benign lumps “as common as Cafe Coffee Days” (Mukherjee 4). She cheerfully mocks at her own blabbering in tension, be it “in a dentist's chair, in a fancy gym, or in a salon with the hairdresser” (Mukherjee 7), as she also starts blabbering when doctor asks her exactly when she has noticed the lump. She also mockingly describes mammography plates as “grinder for your boobs” and the pain she narrates using metaphor of “standing in the Mumbai local during rush hour” (Mukherjee 16). Taking break from conventional battle metaphors, Shormistha enjoys creating new metaphors for mocking her present situation. Thus, it has been solely her choice to laugh at her own stupidity and others around her too.

Disrupting the 'Beauty' Myth

Humour carries a deeper significance as it has been historically used by feminists to mock the patriarchal system and beauty myths. Using humour to attack trivial things and little situations of life is generally acceptable whereas cracking jokes about serious situations like “'pain', 'death', 'dying', 'discussing treatment plans'” are often considered unacceptable (Tanay et al. 1298).BC memoirists use humour as a weapon to attack both the trivial and serious situations to set a new convention. As per *The Beauty Myth,* “The quality called “beauty” objectively and universally exists, hence women must want to embody it and men must want to

possess women who embody it" (Wolf 12). Using humour, BC memoirists resist the beauty myth by using all three empowering self-representation techniques to overcome the shame related to their scars or bald look and to "maintain a sense of normality" against the backdrop of negative feelings associated with cancer (Tanay et al. 1299).

Conventionally, hair constitutes an important part of female beauty and feminine identity but Minakshi sarcastically comments on women's fear of hair loss: "they were prepared to take a chance on the cancer recurring, rather than undergo chemo and lose their hair!" (Chaudhry153). Minakshi also uses humour marking the incongruity and absurdity of such common fear in women no matter if they are "thirty-five or seventy" (Chaudhry 153). She jovially narrates how her niece identifies her as a boy because of her bald look and funnily brings some "puff of green and purple" to wear it as a hair-replacement (Chaudhry 153-4). This incident reflects how a child has also been socialised by pre-defined beauty standards and binary of male/female because a woman with 'no hair' is considered less woman.

Using self-division, Neelam creates one part of herself which laughs at her serious pain and bodily dysfunctions. She names her Carol, "the ever-youthful, desirable, fearless girl inside me who laughs at every difficulty life throws at us" (Kumar 25). Neelam gets shocked seeing the thick layer of abundant hair one morning after her third chemo. However, her inner self Carol laughingly comments: "Now that's a neat black carpet, honey" (Kumar 38). After chemotherapy, Neelam describes the horror at discovering stranger in mirror with "a shiny pate, no eyebrows, and a few pokey eyelashes" but very soon she overcomes it by using self-asserting humour to mock at her bald look with big eyes. Carol wittily suggests her to try for sci-fi movie audition as she looks "like the perfectly alien" (Kumar 53). She also jokes on her being rich in future through saving money on her regular hair care routine (Kumar 54). Thus, she challenges the prevailing standards of female beauty through her sense of humour.

Similarly, Shormistha mentions how the thought of losing breast is disturbing for a woman but still courageously decides that she would be "okay without the breast" (Mukherjee 91). However, the doctor creates fear in her about the "no-breast" look as a reminder of BC for the rest of her life (Mukherjee 91). She uses irony to describe social shame and finally she has to agree for breast reconstruction surgery (Mukherjee 120). Through self-assertion, she accepts all her bodily scars along with the "black bruises all over her arm" (Mukherjee 99) as produced by the multiple needles of several blood tests. Therefore, she accepts her imperfect diseased body by using self-assertion.

Normalising Breast-Talk through Humour

BC memoirs record how patients feel "deformed, less sexually attractive" and "less feminine" after their encounter with BC (Kahane 2). A Woman's breasts hold enormous significance in terms of societal judgement as they are "the daily visible and tangible signifier of her womanliness and her experience is as variable as the size and

shape of breasts themselves" (Young 215). In most cultures, breasts are the symbol of beauty, motherhood and sexuality. When these breasts are diseased, women need to narrate about the trauma of losing breast and dilemma in deciding for reconstruction (Boesky 74; Webb et al. 50). Breast talk is sometimes divided into four clusters of meaning – medicalized breast, functional breast, gendered breast, and sexualized breast (Langellier & Sullivan 76). Therefore, humour can not only initiate the breast talk in BC but also improve the overall quality of life by breaking the stereotypes (79).

Minakshi records that even pronouncing the word 'breast' in India is a taboo and remarks that "all this breast talk was too much for me to discuss" (Chaudhry 27). With self-deprecation, she shares her initial embarrassment narrating her problem to the doctor. However, she finally overcomes the shame as she relieves the stress through mocking the male doctor's embarrassment about her breast check-upby mentioning about "the paperweight which slipped from his fingers twice" (Chaudhry 28). Such incidents reveal the taboo around breast-talk as Minakshi says that the "horror of everyone discussing my breasts was more unbearable than the disease itself" (Chaudhry 30). Gradually after going through the pain of BC, she humorously comments on her examining her close friends' breasts "to see how hard or soft they were" (Chaudhry 49) compared to her own. Her friends initially felt embarrassed too but later they "laughed and shared all my (Minakshi's) reasons for attacking their chests" (Chaudhry 49).

Like Minakshi, Neelam is uncomfortable with breast talk as she calls breasts "a certain body part" (Kumar 20). Gradually, she sarcastically comments on people's sympathy and curiosity to check out 'mischievous lump' before breast surgery and discover if she is wearing 'falsies' (artificial breasts) after surgery (Kumar 63). Being a Mumbai-based entrepreneur, Shormistha always boldly talks about her breasts, inverted nipples and other problems to the doctors. She doesn't hesitate to humorously talk about her first experience of breast-talk while buying bra for the first time with her mother (Kumar 76). She also self-deprecatingly mocks at her own inferiority complex regarding the size of her breasts: "And in my forties, I'm convinced that I have small boobs all the time. Calling them lemons and raisins, and cribbing to my girlfriends that I want plastic surgery." (Kumar 77) Therefore, along with normalising the breast talk she also sarcastically attacks the body dissatisfaction caused by the standardized beauty.

Conclusion

Studies establish that humour has therapeutic value and positive impact on the "physiological, psychosocial and cognitive well-being" of patients as cancer diagnosis and treatments are extremely stressful and difficult (Tanay et al. 1295).The present study shows how Indian BC memoirists use humour to reclaim their agency through testimonies rather than locating themselves as passive entities in healthcare discourses. While holding back agency, they also resist the predefined standards of beauty by mocking hyper femininity through breast talk. This study not only shows

the way to narrate about this marginalisation, but also reveals how humour can be empowering as a coping strategy for the narrators. There are many institutes which take initiative on building "separate humour room" (Kao 34) or prioritising humour therapy for chronic illnesses like cancer considering its positive effect on quality of life and decision making (Buiting et al. 2426).In spite of all the therapeutic benefits of humour, it is purely subjective and "there are differences in how people express, appreciate and perceive humour" (Tanay et al. 1299).Despite its subjective nature, humour created by BC patients is significant as it brings a fresh optimistic perspective towards their lives and encourages their readers to connect with those playful conversations, sarcasm and ironic statements about life. All the memoirists of this study have interpreted on the events of their lives in a subjective way without hurting anyone else's personal feelings. The inappropriate use of humour can be "too risky or dangerous" and even offensive to the other person based on the situation (Buiting et al. 2430; Tanay et al. 1298). However, BC patients can practise humour with "constant assessment and reflection" (1299) and thus can create an empathic bond with their clinicians, family, and friends without hurting each other's feelings. The future scope of this study emphasises on and necessitates the concept of training patients about the appropriate use of humour into practice. As the three selected memoirs for this study are limited in their range incorporating the middle-class economically independent Indian married women, it provides a selective overview of the reality of Indian BC sufferers because they are often less vulnerable with the family and economic support. Future studies including the other sections of Indian society might offer a diverse and broader perspective towards the use of humour.

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Transcultural Mnemonics: Assmann's Paradigms Converging with Silko's *Ceremony* Liminality

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Abstract

Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony *offers a rigorous exploration of identity, memory, and transcultural intersections within postcolonial literature. Utilizing Jan Assmann's conceptual frameworks of cultural memory, this research delineates the role of ceremonies in the novel as essential mechanisms for the preservation and transmission of collective memories. These ceremonies when analysed function not only as cultural markers but also as pivotal nodes in the construction of transcultural identities. The study further engages with the dynamics of memory, especially in its relation to rituals, to understand the nuances of identity formation within indigenous contexts. Through an analytical synthesis of literary elements and theoretical paradigms, the research emphasizes the significance of indigenous narratives in the academic discourse on memory and identity.*
Keywords: Transcultural Dynamics, Cultural Memory, Indigenous Narratives, Identity Formation, Postcolonial Analysis, Ritualistic Mechanisms.

Introduction: Mnemonic Convergences

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* emerges as a foundational text in postcolonial literature, unearthing the layers of transcultural identity and its intricate negotiations. Tayo's liminal experiences, as portrayed in the novel, offer a rich tapestry for scholars to dissect the manifold complexities of cultural assimilation and resistance (Anzaldúa 37). Parallel to Silko's narrative landscape, Jan Assmann's treatise on cultural memory serves as an epistemological cornerstone, delineating the dynamics of collective remembering and its profound implications on societal constructs (Huyssen 55).

At the heart of this exploration is the confluence of Silko's artistic delineation of Tayo's odyssey and Assmann's incisive paradigms on memory. As Hall underscores, cultural memory is not a mere archival entity; it actively influences and is influenced by the present, shaping identities and narratives (Hall 60). This analysis endeavours to illustrate how *Ceremony,* when juxtaposed against Assmann's theoretical insights, unravels the intricate dance of memory and identity in transcultural contexts. As Bhabha remarks, the intersectionality of memory, identity, and literature offers a fertile terrain, ripe for academic inquiry, revealing the nuanced layers of cultural discourse (Bhabha 103).

Given the intricate layers of Silko's narrative and Assmann's theories, the forthcoming exploration attempts to bridge these domains, offering a comprehensive understanding of mnemonic structures within transcultural narratives. As Gilroy posits, the experience of identity is always in flux, constantly being reshaped by memories, histories, and encounters (Gilroy 48). Such fluidity of identity, particularly

in a transcultural context, becomes a central theme in *Ceremony* mirroring the dynamic nature of cultural memories as elaborated by Assmann.

Furthermore, Clifford's observations on diasporic identities emphasize the importance of narratives and memories in anchoring oneself amidst cultural displacements (Clifford 21). *Ceremony* in its portrayal of Tayo's search for belonging and understanding becomes a testament to these dynamics. Drawing parallels between Assmann's paradigms and Silko's narrative craftsmanship, this research seeks to illuminate the myriad ways in which cultural memories influence, shape, and are shaped by transcultural identities.

It is within this intricate interplay of memory, identity, and narrative that the crux of our exploration lays. By synthesizing Silko's portrayal of Tayo's journey with Assmann's foundational theories on cultural memory, this paper endeavours to offer a fresh perspective, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of memory as both a vessel and a compass in the navigation of transcultural identities.

Transcultural Footprints in *Ceremony*

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* offers readers a complex and multi-faceted portrayal of Tayo's journey, oscillating between two cultural realities, encapsulating the essence of transcultural identity. Tayo, emblematic of this liminality, finds himself ensnared between the traditional Laguna Pueblo worldview and the invasive Western ideologies. As Tayo muses, "he made a plan a long time ago, when he concluded the destroyers' ceremonies" (Silko 45), his introspections illuminate the intricate dance between past memories and present aspirations.

Assmann's paradigms resonate profoundly with this portrayal, suggesting that cultural memory serves as a bridge, connecting individuals to their ancestral past while influencing contemporary perceptions (Assmann 33). Tayo's experiences, filled with moments of cultural collisions and fusions, can be viewed through the lens of Assmann's assertion that cultural memory acts as the "connective structure" of society, shaping and being shaped by lived experiences (Assmann 58).

In the intricate web of Tayo's experiences, we discern a broader theme of cultural intersections. As Hall suggests, identities are never complete, always in process, and always constituted within representation (Hall 112). Silko's narrative intricately delineates this, showcasing Tayo's perpetual quest for a coherent self- amidst a cacophony of cultural voices. His endeavours to reconcile with his Laguna Pueblo roots while navigating the challenges of a Westernized world are reflective of the broader struggles many individuals face in postcolonial contexts.

Derrida's concept of "differance" further accentuates this, emphasizing the continuous deferral of meaning in linguistic constructs and cultural symbols (Derrida 158). Tayo's liminal stance, perpetually deferring to one culture or the other, is emblematic of this differance, highlighting the intricate dynamics of transcultural identity.

Ceremony, when juxtaposed against Assmann's cultural memory paradigms,

provides a profound exploration into the realms of transcultural identity. Through Tayo's journey, Silko unravels the myriad nuances of cultural intersections, offering readers a textured narrative that resonates with the complexities of identity in a postcolonial world.

Assmann's Memory: A Prism for Silko's Landscape

In the annals of literary exploration, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* offers a rich tableau of cultural negotiations, where memory and identity converge in a delicate dance. One of the narrative's most salient motifs is the protagonist Tayo's oscillation between collective memories and present experiences. As he reflects, "The feeling was always there within him; he had let it out into the world, and it had left him" (Silko 67), Tayo's reminiscence exemplifies Assmann's assertion that cultural memory provides a "framework for our actions and reflections" (Assmann 72).

This intricate symbiosis between Tayo's experiences and Assmann's paradigms, particularly the concept of cultural memory, echoes Benedict Anderson's musings on the imagined community. Anderson posits that collective memory plays an integral role in nation-building and identity formation (Anderson 46). Drawing parallels with this, Tayo's journey can be viewed as an exploration of his 'imagined' cultural identity, anchored in the collective memories of the Laguna Pueblo community.

Moreover, the ceremonies and rituals delineated in Silko's narrative serve as mnemonic devices, perpetuating the cultural memories of the Laguna Pueblo people. This resonates deeply with Assmann's contention that rituals are "repeatable performances" that help societies remember and perpetuate their shared histories (Assmann 88). Tayo's participation in these ceremonies becomes emblematic of his quest to anchor his identity in these shared cultural memories.

Critically engaging with this, Foucault's concept of 'archaeology of knowledge' further elucidates the intrinsic link between memory and identity (Foucault 32). The layered narrative of *Ceremony* can be perceived as an archaeological dig into Tayo's memory, revealing fragments of his identity shaped by collective cultural experiences.

The landscape of *Ceremony* is imbued with mnemonic markers, echoing Assmann's conceptualization of spatial memory. As Tayo traverses the physical terrains, he concurrently navigates the terrains of his memory. The mountains, rivers, and mesas are not mere geographical entities; they are repositories of collective memory, bearing witness to histories, stories, and ceremonies. As he observes, "The mountain outdistanced their destruction, just as love had outdistanced death" (Silko 118), these landscapes become mnemonic palimpsests, layered with the collective memories and experiences of the Laguna Pueblo people.

Walter Benjamin's reflections on memory and history further amplify this sentiment. Benjamin argues that places become imbued with memory, serving as anchors for collective experiences and histories (Benjamin 262). Drawing from this,

Silko's portrayal of the Laguna Pueblo landscape can be perceived as a mnemonic entity, where every element is imbued with the collective memories of its people.

Moreover, Assmann's delineation of the interplay between communicative and cultural memory finds a resonant echo in "Ceremony." Tayo's personal memories, his interactions, and the stories he hears from the communicative memory, while the ceremonies, rituals, and landscapes anchor the deeper, long-lasting cultural memory (Assmann 45). This intricate dance between the ephemeral and the enduring becomes emblematic of Tayo's journey to find his place within the cultural tapestry of his community.

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony,* when critically engaged with Jan Assmann's paradigms of cultural memory, offers a profound exploration of the intricate interplay between memory, place, and identity. The narrative landscapes of *Ceremony* serve as both mirror and map, reflecting and guiding Tayo's journey through the labyrinth of his cultural memory.

Liminal Narratives as Mnemonic Repositories

Within the confines of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* storytelling emerges not merely as a literary device but as an intricate vessel preserving and transmitting cultural memory. Each narrative thread in the novel, from traditional Laguna Pueblo tales to Tayo's own personal experiences, carries within it the weight of collective memories, histories, and wisdoms. As Silko illuminates, "Stories, like the constellations, were subject to change, subject to revised versions". (Silko 89) This malleability of narratives reflects their adaptability to changing contexts while retaining their core essence, a sentiment echoed in Assmann's delineations.

Jan Assmann, in his seminal work on cultural memory, posits that narratives, myths, and stories are instrumental in forming the "mnemonic backbone" of a society, enabling continuity amidst change (Assmann 53). The stories within *Ceremony* can be perceived as manifestations of Assmann's theorizations, acting as repositories that safeguard the Laguna Pueblo's collective cultural consciousness.

Drawing from Hayden White's discourse on narrative and historical representation, one discerns that story, in its essence, serves dual roles: representation and preservation (White 102). Silko's portrayal of storytelling in *Ceremony* aligns with this, where each narrative, be it personal or collective, not only represents a facet of the Laguna Pueblo culture but also preserves it for posterity.

Further integrating the ideas of Ricoeur, one can argue that narratives in *Ceremony* transcend their mere representational function. Instead, they become sites of mnemonic construction, where memory and identity are intricately woven (Ricoeur 65). Tayo's journey, recounted through a series of interwoven narratives, exemplifies this, as he grapples with and finds solace in the stories of his ancestors, molding his identity in the process.

Moreover, Silko's intricate weaving of Tayo's personal odyssey with traditional Laguna Pueblo tales underscores the symbiotic relationship between

individual and collective memory. Tayo's reflections, such as, "The lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting" (Silko 142), exemplify the ways in which personal experiences are inextricably tethered to larger cultural narratives.

Drawing from Barthes' musings on narrative structures, one discerns that these stories within *Ceremony* are multifaceted constructs, serving both as mirrors reflecting the collective psyche and as bridges connecting the past with the present (Barthes 78). These narratives, as mnemonic repositories, not only house the memories but also provide a framework through which individuals like Tayo navigate their liminal identities.

Furthermore, the efficacy of these narratives, as elucidated by Silko, resonates deeply with Assmann's postulation about the durability of cultural memory. As Assmann asserts, while communicative memory is ephemeral, lasting a mere three generations, cultural memory, anchored in texts, practices, and narratives, possesses longevity (Assmann 68). The stories relayed in *Ceremony* from tales of ancestors to Tayo's contemporary struggles, epitomize this enduring nature of cultural memory, simultaneously echoing Assmann's paradigms and expanding upon them.

One can align with Todorov's assertion that narratives not only depict reality but actively shape it (Todorov 112). In the context of *Ceremony* this transformative power of narrative becomes palpable. The stories don't merely recount Tayo's journey; they shape his understanding, influence his decisions, and, ultimately, mold his identity. The liminal narratives within *Ceremony* serve as more than mere tales—they emerge as mnemonic powerhouses, echoing Assmann's insights while offering a fresh perspective on the interweaving of memory, narrative, and identity.

The Mnemonic Self: Tayo's Journey as a Memory Odyssey

In the textured expanse of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* Tayo emerges not merely as a character but as an embodiment of mnemonic processes, navigating the vast seas of collective cultural memory. This navigation, rife with turbulence, echoes Assmann's conceptualization of memory as both an anchor and a compass, guiding individuals through the intricate landscapes of identity (Assmann 52). For Tayo, his odyssey is not just a physical or emotional one; it is intrinsically a journey through the annals of his community's memory. As he reflects, "He could feel [the memories], like the yellow sand of the sand paintings, trickling through the fingers of the left hand" (Silko 123), it becomes evident that Tayo's psyche is inextricably intertwined with the collective memories of the Laguna Pueblo people.

Drawing from Kristeva's postulations on intertextuality, one discerns that Silko's narrative is a palimpsest, where Tayo's personal memories intertwine with the broader cultural narratives (Kristeva 37). His struggles, traumas, and resolutions are not isolated instances but are reflective of the broader cultural and historical underpinnings of his community.

Furthermore, Assmann's delineation of memory as an active process resonates

deeply with Tayo's journey. Memory, according to Assmann, is not a passive repository but an active construct, continually shaped and reshaped by experiences (Assmann 64). Tayo's interactions, his recollections, and even his dreams serve as testament to this dynamic nature of memory. His internal struggles, his attempts to reconcile with his past, and his quest for a coherent identity mirror Assmann's concepts, showcasing memory as both a tether to the past and a beacon for the future.

Engaging with Said's musings on cultural representations, Tayo's journey can be perceived as a microcosm of postcolonial identity negotiations (Said 45). His mnemonic odyssey, shaped by the vestiges of colonization and the enduring power of Laguna Pueblo traditions, is emblematic of the broader struggles of indigenous communities in postcolonial contexts. Tayo's journey in *Ceremony* serves as a profound exploration of the mnemonic self. It underscores the intricate dance between personal experiences and collective memories, echoing Assmann's paradigms while offering a deeper understanding of the transformative power of memory in shaping identities.

'Ceremony' and the Dynamics of Cultural Recall

In the rich tapestry of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* the titular ceremonies emerge as pivotal nodes, converging points of collective memory and cultural identity. The novel intricately underscores these ceremonies as not merely ritualistic acts, but as active conduits for evoking, preserving, and transmitting the multifaceted memories of the Laguna Pueblo community. As Silko deftly writes, “The ceremonies had always been necessary... because the time was made as it went along” (Silko 231). This sentiment reflects the inherent dynamism of ceremonies, their ability to shape and be shaped by the continuum of cultural memory.

Assmann's conceptualization of memory structures becomes particularly salient in understanding this dynamism. He posits that while individual memories are fleeting, communal or cultural memories, often preserved through rituals and ceremonies, possess a timeless quality, serving as anchors for communities (Assmann 56). Silko's portrayal of ceremonies, from traditional rites to personal rituals Tayo undertakes, resonate deeply with this perspective.

Engaging with Turner's discourse on liminality and rites of passage, one discerns that ceremonies in *Ceremony* serve dual roles: they are transformative acts and mnemonic vessels (Turner 95). They not only mark transitions and transformations but also act as repositories, preserving stories, histories, and cultural wisdoms. The ceremonies Tayo participates in and witnesses become emblematic of his journey, simultaneously mirroring his internal struggles and the broader cultural dynamics of the Laguna Pueblo community.

Furthermore, drawing from Derrida's reflections on repetition and difference, the recurring ceremonies in the novel can be perceived as acts of both preservation and transformation (Derrida 112). Each repetition, while echoing the past, introduces subtle variations, reflecting the evolving nature of memory and identity. Thus, the

ceremonies, far from being static, are dynamic acts, reflecting the evolving nature of the Laguna Pueblo's cultural memory. The ceremonies within Silko's *Ceremony* emerge as profound mnemonic entities, tools that evoke, preserve, and transmit the rich tapestry of the Laguna Pueblo's collective memory. They underscore the intricate interplay between ritual, memory, and identity, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the transformative power of ceremonies in shaping and reaffirming cultural identities.

Concluding Reflections: Memory's Role in Transcultural Identities

In navigating the intricate terrains of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* juxtaposed against Jan Assmann's paradigms of cultural memory, a profound revelation emerges: memory, both personal and collective, serves as the linchpin in the construction and negotiation of transcultural identities. The novel, with its layered narratives and evocative ceremonies, underscores memory's transformative power, echoing Assmann's assertion that memory, especially cultural memory, possesses a "formative character" (Assmann 58).

Silko's portrayal of Tayo, a character ensnared in the crosshairs of cultural intersections, embodies this dynamic. His journey, both literal and mnemonic, becomes a testament to the ways memory, particularly when tethered to rituals and ceremonies, shapes identity. As he aptly reflects, "He made a story for all of them, a story to give them strength" (Silko 243), the story itself emerges as a mnemonic tool, illuminating the intricate dance between past recollections and present realities.

Borrowing insights from Foucault, one can discern those narratives, especially in their ceremonial contexts, serve as "regimes of practices" that define, delineate, and sometimes challenge normative structures of identity (Foucault 130). Silko's nuanced engagement with the Laguna Pueblo's ceremonies exemplifies this, revealing how rituals become arenas for both memory preservation and identity negotiation.

Furthermore, the synthesis of Assmann's theoretical constructs with Silko's narrative illuminates a broader academic discourse: the role of literature as a repository and reflector of cultural memory. Assmann posits that texts, being carriers of "long-duration memory," often become foundational in shaping collective identities (Assmann 64). *Ceremony* in this context, can be perceived as a microcosm of this phenomenon, offering insights into the dynamics of memory and identity within indigenous communities.

Engaging with Spivak's postcolonial musings, it becomes evident that narratives like *Ceremony* are not mere literary constructs but "strategic essentialisms" that foreground the complexities of postcolonial identities (Spivak 205). They highlight the intricate negotiations between indigenous cultural memories and the impositions of colonial legacies.

Moreover, the dialogical interplay between the personal and the collective, as illuminated through Tayo's experiences, becomes emblematic of a broader cultural phenomenon. The ceremonies, rituals, and stories, as depicted by Silko, transcend

their immediate contexts to resonate with global narratives of identity, memory, and belonging. As Bhabha posits, these narratives, rooted in specific cultural milieus, serve as "third spaces," creating opportunities for new forms of identity and belonging, and challenging monolithic notions of culture (Bhabha 56). Thus, *Ceremony* emerges not just as a novel but as an epistemic framework, urging scholars to reevaluate the intricate tapestry of memory within transcultural identities.

The exploration of *Ceremony* through the lens of Assmann's cultural memory paradigms offers a profound understanding of the symbiotic relationship between memory, narrative, and identity. It underscores the imperative to engage deeply with indigenous narratives, recognizing their intrinsic value in shaping and reflecting collective memories and identities.

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Black Existentialism: Exploring the Identity and Power in Jean Genet's *The Blacks: A Clown Show*

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Abstract

This paper intends to explore the game of identity and Power in view of black existentialism. Genet's play The Black: A Clown Show *prefigures the issues and paradoxes of the black/ white racial binary. There is a symbolic significance of the presence of 'a white' in the play and it is important to mention that he is not only the character who is involved in this role-playing but the creator also engages himself in this role-playing to make it real through their performative reification. This play is a site of different issues of identity and power not just for blacks but also for whites. Genet himself raises this question of identity even before the beginning of the play by raising the question: "What exactly is a black?" The play presents vital paradigms for the study of other diverse interrogations of racial and gendered ontology. Our reading of the play is based on textual analysis. The paper analyses how (i) the linguistic discourses of the characters establish racial and social inequality and, (ii) how the interpretation of the Genet's play reflects a new understanding of power dynamics and identity within the play.*
Keywords: Black Existentialism, Identity, Double-consciousness, Gender, Power

Introduction

During the time Genet was working on *The Blacks* he was under the influence of *The Master Madmen (1954),* a film by French director, Jean Rouch. In the film the "a group of West African workers in a British colony perform a violent ritual in caustic imitation of their colonial masters, propelling themselves into an exhilarated trance in which they tear apart and eat a dog; their colonial subjugation is overridden by the self-imposition of cruelty and momentary insanity" (Barber 74). The play was written before African decolonialization in late 1950s and early 1960s. "It's a play that was perceived by Black theatrical troupes in the States as a political statement, although it would be hard to extrapolate a clear directive from the action and dialogue," Jeanette L. Savona in her work *Jean Genet,* defined the play as 'dreamlike world of the stage' and 'naturalistic backstage action of the political world' (Prisoner of love xii). So, to explore this politics, the study will use the philosophy of black existentialism which "critiques the domination and affirms the empowerment of Black people in the *world"* (Bassey 914). The motive of Black existentialism is the liberation of all black people from inequality and oppression. They raise questions of their existence, consciousness, oppression, hopelessness, empowerment and helplessness. This philosophy first came in the work of William R. Jones in the 1970s, another philosopher and critic who dealt with this is Frantz Fanon, he addressed this as to reject white reason to enable blacks to love themselves. Du Bois addressed it as double

consciousness, this was the philosophical challenge experienced by African or African American as they always look at themselves through the eyes of white racist society. So, to highlight the politics in the play, idea of double consciousness and Fanon's concept of 'black skin, white mask', along with the theory of performance and performativity of Butler will be mainly used.

*Lesnégres*or *The Blacks* was first published in the 1958 by Marc Barbezat and was first produced by Roger Blin at the Théâtre de Lutéce in 1959 in Paris with all black actors. The English translation was done by Bernard Frechtman based on 1958 updated version. Derek F. Connon, termed this as 'Genet's art of upsetting.' For further understanding of Genet, he picked up Graham Dunstan Martin's observation that how Genet's plays offend and frighten its spectators or stimulate their racial instincts (Martin 519, Kenenelly 123). As we see, the play has layers of actions; the play is a-play-within-the-play. There are three parallel plots in the play, first is the enactment of the rape and murder of white women by a black man in front of a white court, the second plot is about the love relationship between Village, who performed the role of rapist and murder in front of a white court and Virtue, who is a prostitute, for white customers; third plot is reported to us by Newport News, which was about the execution of a black traitor. Genet explores this as:

> The multi-layering in this work is even more complex than that of *Le balcon:* in *Les bonnes* it is relatively easy to sort out one layer from another, even if the opening of the play sets out to confuse us; with *Le balcon* we have seen that the relationship between layers is deliberately and overlap to an alarming extent. (Connon 428)

This multi-layering reflects the issues of identity of the people of colour and how it is constructed and enforced over them. “That these body-identities are ultimately fictional prefigures major issues and paradoxes of current African American Cultural Studies and of emerging field of whiteness studies” (Thompson 398).

The critical opinion regarding the play varies; Joseph H. McMahon, Jean-Marie Maganan, Philip Thordy, Roger Blin, Odette Aslan and Edmund White accept the action taking place in the wings as 'real' while Jean Decock, Richard N. Coe and Martin Esslin question this. Ville de Saint-Nazaire provides this link between the on-stage and off-stage action of the play. Which puzzles the audience about what is 'real' and what is an 'illusion'. Since, the characters also frequently remind the audience that they are performing, and the act going on the stage is not real. Many critics question Genet, what grants him the authority to his own words in the mouth of a black man. His plays are filled with the characters that are at the margin of society, he presented the outcasts and underdogs: prostitutes, criminals, pimps, maids etc. And seeing the marginalized position of blacks in society, it is natural for the Genet to represent them. He replied: “What makes me feel so very close to them is the hatred they bear for the white world; hatred comparable to my own for the world that scorned me because I was a bastard, with no father and mother, perhaps I am a black man who happens to have white or pink skin” (Savona 97). This shows his hatred towards this white society as unlike blacks he also doesn't have an identity. However, Genet never

intended to write *The Blacks,* but he was commissioned to write a play about blacks' experiences. In the 'Preface' while discussing the background of the play he said, "Towards the end of last December of 1954, Raymond Rouleau told me he wanted to create a black acting company. I didn't know what his motives were.... When he asked me to write a play for the company, I accepted…'yes', I said to myself, 'the Blacks will go on stage. But I'll organize a spectacle that will be a trap for the spectators'" (Lavery 70). Genet's *The Blacks* is an attempt to explain, "the traditional anti-social behaviour of the Negro in a White society as being, not innate, nor even an expression of resentment, but rather as an imitation of the Whites" (Coe 288).Though, he raises the consciousness of colour. He repeatedly used the term 'negro' which is considered taboo. In the play, he also used the terms 'blacks' as metaphor or a device to satirise racist white society. He staged some black actors wearing white masks and some without masks. "Genet's Negroes blacken their already black faces with black boot-polish,18 thus raising their status from the particular to the universal. 'My colour!'" (Coe 289). "It will see also a presentation of a myth it wants to see, a myth which will confirm that the blacks are what the whites think they are and thus deserves to be treated as they have been treated" (McMahon 184).

There has been a long debate about *The Blacks* among critics as whether the play is a mocking of blacks who are mimicking black or is a mocking on whites'? In this context Warner points out that; "Genet's characters in this play sets out, at one level, to do precisely what many black writers have done, namely to celebrate their blackness through a spiritual purging of the soul. These black writers were serious or at least claimed to be, in the presentation and expression of the problem of being black, whereas Genet, on the surface to start with, was not; neither were his characters, and this by their own admission" (Warner 194). But he raises some relevant questions regarding their identity, he asks:

What exactly is black? First of all, what is his colour? (Genet 10)

This is a question that has been also raised constantly by African diasporic writers such as Frantz Fanon, Paul Gilroy, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and many others. But when asked by white French, the question seems to serve a different meaning. He questions racial identity on ontological grounds. Genet has questioned the constructed and performative nature of racial identity to retain their political power. He was a playwright who was involved with Black Panthers in the 1970s and also supported the Algerian revolution and the PLO. Because of his sympathy and support for people of colour, he was called "a white negro" by his translators. Genet has given special attention to the colour; "This play, written, I repeat, by a white man, is intended for a white audience, but if, which is unlikely, it is ever performed before a black audience, then a white person, male or female, should be invited every evening… But what if no white person accepted? Then let white masks be distributed to the black spectators as they enter the theatre. And if the black refuse the masks, then let a dummy be used" (Genet 11). The presence of a white is mandatory for Genet if not in real even in symbolic form it is necessary. This raises many questions in the minds of readers and the audiences; What is the real reason behind writing this play? Is he in the play trying

to highlight the issues of struggle of identity in blacks to attack whites? Or, is he trying to show the superior position of whites over blacks? Is Genet trying to emphasise on the question of black-white confrontation? His sympathy for blacks is not only present in *Les négres* but also in his 1942 novel, *Our Lady of the Flower (Notre Dame des Fleurs)* and play, *Les Paravents (The Screen)* where he had already shown them as "scapegoats" of white bourgeoisie. This symbolic representation of color is important as the whites in the play are also pseudo-whites played by black actors, who disguise themselves as whites and think the way whites think. Even the blacks who are playing black characters are the stereotypes of whites or product of the white mind. One of the best examples of this is Diouf's dialogue in the play where he addresses Village:

> [T]o you, black was the colour of priests and undertakers and orphans. But everything is changing. Whatever is gentle and kind and good and tender will be black. Milk will be black, sugar, rice, the sky, doves, hope, will be black. (Genet 109)

Reducing the identity and one's existence to the colour of skin either black or white, and assigning values to the colour.

In the preface, he also made it clear that the play is written by a white person for the white audience. Genet has informed about the colour of the cast and audience. "This play both studies and enacts the dialectical structure of the white gaze- a study of performance" (Thompson 396). The presence of at least a white audience is necessary because without that play would not achieve its goal, if its target were absent during the play. Roger Blin, who has directed this play, was shocked to be insulted as a white in the play. The play extensively dealt with the problem of black consciousness or their search for their identity. The play also focuses on the colonial effect of how blacks have been superimposed by whites and they consider white identity as superior. Throughout the play, the blacks and the whites counter each other for various racial stereotypes that allege the superiority of blacks over whites (Warner 202). The stage setting is even presenting this gap, the court where white characters will sit was higher than the other side where black actors were re-enacting the rape and murder of white women. Genet was criticised by Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Jacques Gautier and Andre Camp, for tarnishing the honour and dignity of Whites, meanwhile also praised by critics for his anti-racist stance.

In the play masking plays an important role the masking and the unmasking act as a satire on racial inequality and racial stereotypes. The masked white in the play has absolute power in the play they have the authority of the law of judgment and punishment, which forces the blacks to perform the role of criminals or murderers. They have false prejudices and preconceptions against people of colour. This unstable power relation between both races creates constant tension. In *The Blacks*, the naked black face is contrasted with a white mask, which advocates the supremacy of whites over blacks. Genet labelled the play as a clown show, which acts as a weapon as well as a shield in his play. Yinning has explored this: "psychological connotation of the mask to represent the tension between self and other in racial identity" (Yinning172). In the beginning of the play each character in the court wears

a white mask, which "represents the face of a white person" (Genet 18). This mask gives the white court power and authority over the unmasked blacks. He stressed that "the mask is worn in such a way that the audience sees a wide black band all around it, even the actor's kinky hair" (Genet 18). He is very specific about the mask, though he is masking the black actors but wants them to make it visible that the actor behind the mask is black. Genet has used the mask brilliantly in the play, not only the mask of whites but also the mask put on by the black characters because, without the blackness of the black, white has no existence or meaning. Archibald said:

> As you see, ladies and gentlemen, just as you have lilies and roses, so we-in order to serve you- shall use our beautiful shiny black make-up…we embellish ourselves so as to please you. You are white and the spectators. (Genet 20)

Archibald highlights the presence of whites and also satirises their distinction by showing a contrasting picture. He again addresses:

> This evening we shall perform for you. But, in order that you may remain comfortably settled in your seats in the presence of the drama that is already unfolding here, in order that you be assured that there is no danger of such a drama's worming its way into your precious lives, we shall even have the decency- a decency learned from you- to make communication impossible. (Genet 22)

Archibald is continuously attacking the notions imposed by whites over blacks. He is questioning the stereotype associated with people of colour. Meanwhile, they also act stereotypically as white judges and condemn them. They have not murdered anyone yet they were re-enacting the murder of a white women for their contentment. Archibald addresses:

> I order you to be black to your veins. Pump black blood through them. Let Africa circulate in them. Let Negroes negrify themselves…Let them not be content with eating whites, but let them cook each other as well. (Genet 60)

This shows how blacks are forced to conceal their real self and enact the constructed image by the whites. Now, the object of ridicule shifts, the blacks are exposing the inhumanity and hypocrisy of the whites and mocking them frequently in the play. Queen, was shown wearing a sad mask, she shed tears but only for white people. Snow attacked this pseudo-emotion saying that they have no love they are only left with wrath and rage and the laugh of the queen confirms his comment that: "grief …is another of their adornments" (Genet 21). This confrontation between the black and the symbolic white is not enough but also requiring the confrontation between white in the audience and the blacks who are on stage. The play-act is "a magnifying mirror turned on the audience" (Smith 47) and an attack on the value of society. Hatred is the only emotion in the play that has been associated with the blacks because love is the emotion of which blacks are incapable. Hence, they are not worthy of love, as when Snow and Archibald knew that Village loved someone, they thought this was this white woman whom Village murdered. None of the characters is in themselves; they all are in the mask of others. The blacks in the play freed them from their caricatured

re-enactment by distorting stereotypes. As, Diouf:

> Sir, I apologize. I'd like to glorify my colour, just as you do. The kindness of white settled upon my head, as it did upon you. (Genet 41-42)

Here Diouf is also trying to glorify his colour as whites do 'within the play, all this celebration of blackness is only a divertissement. He wants to be a person having, a 'black skin, white mask'. In the true sense of the world, a divisionary tactic to keep the audience entertained while a black traitor is murdered, thus providing the only real core of the play, the play-outside-the-play so to speak. So, the whole play is one big put-on' (Warner 207). Later on, they also said that:

> We are what they want us to be. We shall therefore be it to the very end, absurdly. Put your mask again before leaving. Have them escorted to Hell? (Genet 127)

Here black characters are again attacking the construction of their identity. They also raise the issue of individual identity: "As everyone knows, the Whites can hardly distinguish one Negro from another" (Genet 61). For whites all blacks are one they do not have any identity of their own. Regarding this Esslin also says; "the play takes the form of a ritual ceremony rather than being a direct discussion of the colour problem or colonialism. In ritual, meaning is expressed by the repetition of symbolic actions. The participants have a sense of awe, of mysterious participation rather than of conceptual communication. The difference is merely that here the audience sees a grotesque parody of a ritual, in which the bitterness that is to be communicated emerges from clowning and derision" (Esslin 220).

Since, Genet in his last two plays: Les Negres and Les Paravents aims to present a case on behalf of the outcasts and oppressed towards the society, by purely emotional and artistic means. All of this highlights how both blacks and whites are continuously involved in this game of power and identity. One is struggling to maintain his authority over the other. And another is struggling to free them from this authority and establish their identity as an individual. Both are presenting the 'self' and 'other' but the role is continuously shifting as they insist that whatever they are doing is not real but just a performance as expected by white society."Only with Les Nègres, considered by Genet to be his most perfect play, does the outcast live his difference to the utmost. The 'Nègres' want to be absolutely nègres. They want to eradicate every trace of identification with the Whites. Les Paravents, written shortly after Les Nègres continues this 'revolution of values' described by Genet in Fragments" (Moraly 85).

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Cross-Cultural Identity and Encounter with Otherness in James Welch's *The Indian Lawyer*

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Abstract

Cultural identity plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's sense of self. It encompasses various aspects such as nationality, race, beliefs, social class, generation, geographical origin, and affiliation with different social communities. This perspective suggests that cultural identity defines an individual and connects them to others who share the same values and customs, often influenced by their upbringing. However, the concept of "otherness" complicates this dynamic, dividing the world into opposing categories. The "Self" is associated with order, reason, masculinity, and virtue, while the "other" is portrayed as chaotic, irrational, feminine, and malevolent. In James Welch's novel The Indian Lawyer (1990), the protagonist, Sylvester Yellow Calf, embarks on a journey of self-discovery in a society dominated by mainstream politics and societal norms. This paper explores Yellow Calf's experience of "cross-cultural identity" and his encounter with "otherness" through the theoretical lens of Homi K Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" and "third space." Bhabha's ideas provide a valuable framework for understanding the formation of Yellow Calf's identity within the context of cultural ambiguity. According to Bhabha, "hybridity" and "third space" refer to the complex interplay between different cultures and the emergence of new identities and cultural expressions. Examining how individuals or groups navigate ambiguous boundaries and diverse influences in their cultural and social backgrounds is particularly relevant in this context.

Keywords: Self-Conception, Cross-Cultural identity, Otherness, Native Americans, Hybridity, Third Space

Introduction

James Welch, a member of the Blackfeet Indian tribe, was born in Montana in 1940. He later moved to the Fort Belknap and Blackfeet reservations. Welch is well-known as both an author and lyricist, exploring the complex struggles faced by his characters as they try to assimilate into a society dominated by white culture. They grapple with the diversity of their identities. This paper focuses on the theme of "cross-cultural identity" and "encounters with otherness" in Welch's novel, *The Indian Lawyer.* It draws on the theoretical concepts of "hybridity" and "third space" by Homi K. Bhabha. The concept of "cross-cultural identity" refers to the intricate and diverse perception of self that individuals develop as they incorporate aspects from two or more cultures into their identity. Cultural hybridization occurs when diverse cultural values, traditions, beliefs, behaviours, and experiences from different origins interact and merge. Cross-cultural identity recognizes that individuals can have a multifaceted sense of self shaped by their interactions and adaptation to other cultural environments. Factors such as religion, gender, race,

culture, socioeconomic status, disability, identity, and ethnicity can all contribute to the experience of "othering". Bhabha introduces the theoretical concept of the "third space," which represents an intermediary or liminal realm where multiple cultures and identities intersect, clash, and negotiate. This space challenges traditional binary categorizations and allows new and hybrid identities to emerge. According to Bhabha, the most profound encounters with otherness occur within this third space.

Cross-Cultural Identity: *The Indian Lawyer*

The exploration of cross-cultural identity in *The Indian Lawyer* goes beyond the personal narrative of Yellow Calf. This situation highlights the challenges faced by Native Americans as they try to blend their ancestral customs and beliefs with the increasing influence of Western culture. Bhabha's concept of hybridity helps us understand how these cultural processes affect not only individuals' identities but also the communal identity of the Native American community. James Welch portrays individuals who navigate between Indian and white cultural elements in this novel. Through the experiences of Yellow Calf, a protagonist of mixed-race heritage, Welch delves into the complex dimensions of cross-cultural identification and the intersection of Native American and Euro-American cultures. Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical framework of hybridity provides a valuable perspective to analyze the development of Yellow Calf's identity within cultural ambiguity.

In the complex world depicted in the story, the concept of hybrid identities, as explained by Bhabha, offers both promise and peril due to their openness and uncertainty. Hybridity involves the fusion of cultural elements from various origins, forming intricate and novel identities. James Welch's novel *The Indian Lawyer* exemplifies this notion through its characters, particularly the protagonist Sylvester Yellow Calf, who grapples with the challenge of reconciling his Native American heritage with the white legal system. Sylvester's hybrid identity is apparent in his dual role as an Indian and a lawyer and his endeavour to navigate between two distinct worlds.

In *The Indian Lawyer*, "Sylvester Yellow Calf is a prime example of hybridity. He is a Native American who has acquired a Western education and become a lawyer. Sylvester's identity is a complex fusion of Native American values and Western legal principles, and this duality is central to his character. (Welch 38).

The evolution of Yellow Calf demonstrates how identity is fluidly constructed, blending ancient and contemporary Indian influences with various non-Indian elements to form a unique hybrid identity. According to Bhabha, cultural hybridity refers to the mixing and impurity of cultures, acknowledging that no culture is entirely pure (Bhabha 18). Bhabha argues that every culture is inherently mixed within every form of identity. It challenges the traditional notion of fixed and pure identities, which assumes that individuals or groups possess singular, stable, and unchanging identities. Hybridity disrupts this assumption by emphasizing the complexity and multifaceted nature of identities. It recognizes that individuals and

communities can simultaneously embody multiple cultural influences and identities.

In the novel, Yellow Calf does not come across as very "Indian." Welch portrays him as a professional, sitting on the parole board and examining criminals. While the other board members are tired and stressed, Yellow Calf remains composed and wise. He displays remarkable competence in his profession. Yellow Calf envisions a social event centred around cocktails, set in a serene environment, highlighting his influential status among Montana's current cultural and political leaders. Yellow Calf exhibits deviations from conventional Native American norms throughout multiple aspects of his life. The individual in question is in a romantic relationship with a lady who does not identify as Native American. Furthermore, they dwell in a location that is situated outside of the boundaries of the reservation. In addition, the individual owns a green Saab vehicle and has taken an interest in the culinary art of preparing omelettes. It is worth noting that the individual exhibits various cultural behaviours, attitudes, and influences that deviate from the customary associations with their Native American ancestry. Yellow Calf is navigating a cultural landscape where being Indian is not clearly defined as a distinct ethnicity or racial essence. As he adapts and interacts with the world, his Indianness becomes apparent. However, the formalized notions of Indianness not only impact Yellow Calf's life but also undermine his achievements and contributions to the Blackfeet community. Other characters see him as an exceptional Native American who has overcome his upbringing.

In his sports column, Ray Lundeen expresses his opinion about Yellow Calf, highlighting his uniqueness among his colleagues. Lundeen suggests that while many of his peers may fade into a life of alcoholism and degradation, Yellow Calf stands out as a symbol of success for all minorities fighting for respect and honour (Welch103). This portrayal of Yellow Calf goes beyond his Indianness and challenges the stereotype that Indians cannot achieve anything in white culture. However, this interpretation creates tension among his teammates, who begin to question his loyalty. They have been influenced by negative stories about Yellow Calf's family, which they believe make him a traitor. Despite these perceptions, Yellow Calf's achievement demonstrates his ability to rise above his Indian identity. Another perspective on Indian identity, based on historical images of Indian lawyers as warriors, also adds to the adaptability of Indian identity.

This perspective assumes a connection to the historical figure of the Indian warrior. However, it intentionally draws from various cultures and historical periods instead of limiting identification options to the past. In order to fight for their culture's rights, the new warriors adopted practices from the prevailing culture. Within the context of their imaginative adaptation to different cultural influences, they represent an identity in which tradition still holds significant influence. Homi K. Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), states, "When historical visibility has faded and the present tense of testimony loses its power to captivate, then the displacements of memory and the indirectness of art provide us with the image of our psychological survival" (Bhabha 25). Bhabha argues that cultural hybridity carries important

political and cultural implications. It challenges dominant narratives of cultural superiority and inferiority. From a political standpoint, it can serve as a form of resistance against colonial oppression. By blending cultures, the colonized assert their agency and challenge the colonizer's hegemony.

Later in the novel, Yellow Calf develops self-awareness, which is integral to his personal growth. As he learns more about himself, he asserts his individuality. It can be observed in his adoption of certain aspects of the old Blackfeet culture, such as battle medicine and the ways of a new warrior. He tries to identify himself as a new warrior even before fully understanding the meaning behind battle medicine. The concept of the "Yellow Calf identity" suggests a fusion of diverse cultural influences rather than being solely colonial or exclusively indigenous. According to Bhabha's theoretical framework, hybrid identities should not be seen as mere combinations of different cultures, but as unique and ever-evolving identities that emerge at the intersection of diverse cultural influences. By defining himself in terms of the traditional elements of his culture, Yellow Calf embraces these aspects as integral parts of his existence, even in unfamiliar environments.

Encounter with Otherness in *The Indian Lawyer*

The theme of encountering otherness is prominent in the story, as characters like Sylvester Yellow Calf struggle with their identities and how the dominant white society perceives them. The term "otherness" is used in social, cultural, and philosophical contexts to describe the state of being seen as fundamentally different, foreign, or alien concerning a specific group, culture, or norm. It often involves categorizing individuals or groups as "the other" based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, or sexuality, which sets them apart from the majority within a community. This conflict can result in an identity crisis when a group member is forced to transition from being an insider to an outsider.

Sylvester Yellow Calf and other Native American characters experience a sense of otherness when encountering the white world. They are often treated as outsiders or as "the other" in a society dominated by white culture and values. This feeling of otherness highlights the challenges faced by individuals who straddle two cultures, such as Sylvester, who is both a Native American and a lawyer and who constantly negotiates his place in a world where he does not fully belong to either culture (Welch 205).

The book is filled with the constant discomfort that Yellow Calf experiences as a stranger. It is evident in the title of *The Indian Lawyer,* which explicitly acknowledges this feeling. Welch describes this as a "known experience of discomfort" that Yellow Calf consistently endures.

> . . .left so many people behind and friends and acquaintances to live in a world that had little to do with his people. He had always been different, even back there on the reservation, and now he was different in a white man's town in a white man's world of briefcases, suits, law and politics. Even Buster

> Harrington, the senior partner of the law firm, had begun to push him to become more like his young white colleagues. (Welch 38)

Because of this, Yellow Calf finds it challenging to assimilate into Helena's culture, which causes him both resignation and distress due to the ongoing sense of otherness. Despite his successful career as a lawyer and politician, Yellow Calf struggles to embrace his Indian heritage. He is influenced by external forces, leading to his focus on economic prosperity and a disregard for his people's history of enslavement. Bhabha argues that encounters with otherness in the third space give rise to new and hybrid identities. When different cultures intersect and blend, individuals and communities develop identities that are not solely rooted in one culture. These hybrid identities reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of human experiences in a postcolonial world. The perspective of the story then shifts to a sportswriter who observes the racism associated with high school basketball during Yellow Calf's recollection of his high school years. The writer notices that white basketball fans appreciate the Indian style of play, but there is no further interaction beyond the games. After speaking with another reporter, the journalist receives an offensive metaphor.

> It's like being in a monkey cage; the older man said, at first, you're surprised not only that they can perform their tricks but how well they do it. But in the end, you're in a monkey cage, and people get mighty uneasy when they're surrounded by monkeys. (Welch 101)

The journalist expresses concern about Yellow Calf's basketball career coming to an end. He discusses Yellow Calf and mentions how some of his teammates may face difficulties in their lives, such as alcoholism and degradation, which are unfortunately common experiences for Native Americans. This statement isolates the other team members (Welch 103). Welch mirrors the social issues in contemporary Indian life by portraying Yellow Calf as a basketball player. “The Game” also gave black men a gateway into American society. It is due, in part, to the fact that Indians play basketball primarily to get respect from their people and societies and to uphold insider beliefs. Despite Yellow Calf's accomplishments as a lawyer, his ethnic background continues to define him rather than his accomplishments. He feels alienated from most lawyers whose race would not be revealed in a news item since his cultural background dominates his legal knowledge. He experiences a similar sense of otherness when he begins his Senate campaign. As he enters a room, he immediately notices people glancing at him and recognizing him, regardless of whether they turn to look around.

Fabares once again exploits Yellow Calf's “otherness” in his last comment. As a lawyer, Yellow Calf is torn between using his power and influence to win the Senate election and remaining true to the issues most important to him and why he became a lawyer, even if it means potentially compromising his ethical standards. Yellow Calf feels humiliated and ashamed of how he alters his appearance for political purposes, suggesting that these situations may become easier over time and alleviate the pain. The “Third Space” concept in Bhabha's theory represents a space where new identities and meanings are formed through encounters with different cultures. This

space between two cultures allows for the negotiation and transformation of identities. In *The Indian Lawyer*, the third space emerges between Native American and white cultures, particularly within the legal system and Sylvester Yellow Calf's experiences. The legal system can be seen as a third space in the novel, where Native American traditions and white legal norms clash and interact. Sylvester Yellow Calf navigates this third space as he strives to represent Native American clients within a system that often disregards their cultural perspectives. The tension between these two worlds creates a dynamic third space where new meanings and identities are negotiated. (Welch 327) Yellow Calf is known to exhibit the same discrimination and stereotypes placed upon him over the years when he feels particularly oppressed by a sense of otherness.

Final Journey of Acknowledgement in *The Indian Lawyer*

The moral of Yellow Calf's story is acknowledgement, which includes accepting responsibility for his actions and finally accepting his identity. Yellow Calf acknowledges the consequences of his actions by voluntarily withdrawing from the Senate race and taking a leave of departure from his law practice. In *The Indian Lawyer*, Yellow Calf's quest for acknowledgement is closely tied to his experiences of hybridity and cultural ambiguity. Bhabha's framework allows for a nuanced analysis of how these characters navigate their identities and seek acceptance within a complex, multicultural context. It emphasizes the fluid nature of identity formation and how acceptance can be achieved by recognizing and embracing hybrid cultural identities rather than rigidly adhering to one set of cultural norms. Yellow Calf is somewhat honest with the women in his life and temporarily sets aside his discrimination. He achieves his initial goal of becoming a lawyer and appears to be content with his choices. However, it is important to note that this job is not for his tribe. Yellow Calf returns to the idealistic, fulfilling position he had planned for himself before starting his career as a lawyer, which helps him resolve conflicts in his identity.

As a result, Yellow Calf serves as an example of how acknowledging one's cultural roots and background enables one to overcome competing feelings of otherness or separation. The story of Yellow Calf has been compared to elements of social knowledge, psychology, tribal beliefs, and aesthetics. Instead, thinking about Yellow Calf's story encourages readers to consider their narratives, where they have come from, and where they are leading. *The Indian Lawyer*, despite its setting of cultural misunderstanding and prejudice, finally provides the possibility of fresh opportunities. This hope aids Yellow Calf in finding acceptance.

Conclusion

The Indian Lawyer by James Welch offers a rich exploration of Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the third space within the context of cross-cultural themes

and the experience of feeling like an outsider. The characters and their experiences in the novel demonstrate the complexities of identity and how different cultures intersect and interact, resulting in new and hybridized identities. Ultimately, *The Indian Lawyer* novel presents fresh opportunities for growth. Welch's portrayal of the imaginative and hybrid aspects of cultural and personal progress suggests that tradition can benefit from adapting to a constantly changing environment. The fluid nature of identity provides opportunities for all individuals in a multicultural society, not just those of Indian descent. Through Yellow Calf's emotions, internal struggles, and ultimate decisions, we understand that we can find a way to coexist and move forward. Yellow Calf also learns to manage his feelings of alienation and otherness. He returns to his original motivation for pursuing law and fights for Indian rights and causes. Ultimately, Yellow Calf's battle is with himself, and it becomes clear that there are no easy solutions. In the novel, James Welch creates his own identity by drawing from both, Blackfeet and white traditions (319). In doing so, he promotes individual autonomy and expresses hope for the future.

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The Political Self in the Colonial Cell: Prison Narratives of Indian Women

T Amiya*

Abstract

During the Indian freedom movement, prisons emerged as crucial sites for the repression of political struggles. Numerous freedom fighters, both men and women, found themselves detained in colonial cells as political prisoners. Despite their incarceration, their narratives transcended the prison walls in various forms. Political autobiographies of the time also meticulously chronicled the experiences of incarceration and its impact on political consciousness. Against this historical backdrop, the study undertakes an intersectional reading of two prison-life narratives—Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's Prison Days *and Urmila Shastri's* My Days in Prison*—to comprehend the significance of these politically personal accounts in postcolonial discourses. To this end, the study explores the female experiences of incarceration in colonial prisons which are situated within the dynamics of gender, class, caste, and colonialism. It also highlights instances of women's resistance and negotiations within the confines of colonial prisons.*

Keywords: Prison, Narratives, Colonialism, Political Self, Gender, Resistance

Introduction

Prison-life narratives are first-person accounts that chronicle the experiences of incarceration. In India, both the pre-and post-independence periods witnessed a surge in the production of prison-life narratives. They varied in their forms, ranging from jail diaries and letters to memoirs and autobiographies. Despite the heterogeneity in forms, these narratives served the purpose of communicating prison realities beyond the walls of confinement and instilling a sense of patriotism in the reading public. Furthermore, at the time of the Indian independence movement, "it became as much a nationalist convention for political prisoners to write their prison memoirs as it was a patriotic duty for newspaper editors and book publishers to put them into print" (Arnold 30).

Though the number of women who went to jail escalated with political exigencies, a significant dearth of their prison narratives compared to their male counterparts is conspicuous. While a few educated middle-class freedom activists, like Mirabehn, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, incorporated their prison experiences into their autobiographies, the availability of full-length prison-life narratives by politically active women remains sparse. This absence of narratives, spanning diverse class-caste strata hinders a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted experiences of Indian womenin anti-colonial struggles. However, scholarly attempts to decipher the workings of colonial prisons and women's experiences within them using existing narratives are ongoing.

Roads to Freedom: Prisoners in Colonial India by Mushirul Hasan, for instance, explores the role of prison in quelling resistance against the colonial

government. It brings to the fore the political contributions of women like Aruna Asif Ali, Sarojini Naidu, and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Women's autobiographical narratives, including memoirs, diaries, and interviews, are also utilised for understanding their views regarding captivity and freedom (Jabeen 162). Despite these efforts, an analytical study like David Arnold's "The Self and the Cell: Indian Prison Narratives as Life Histories," which critically explores the self-perceptions of male political prisoners in colonial India, is absent with regard to women. This study endeavours to address the gap by taking up two autobiographical prison narratives—Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's *Prison Days* and Urmila Shastri's *My Days in Prison*.

The aim of the study is twofold. First, informed by Barbara Harlow's observation that prison-life narratives intervene in national and transnational struggles, the study explores the significance of women's documentation of their prison experiences in colonial India. Subsequently, it delves into the subtleties of women political prisoners' day-to-day negotiations within the prison environment. Given that colonial prisons served as a "site for the observation and representation of the subaltern classes" (Arnold 31), an attempt will be made to understand how these women, hailing from educated middle-class backgrounds, articulate the experiences of their 'ordinary' counterparts. The study adopts an intersectional framework and builds on critical insights drawn from life writing and postcolonial studies. It contends that these politically personal narratives contribute to postcolonial discourses by illustrating how gendered political subjects were shaped within the confines of colonial prisons.

Documenting the Politically Personal

Prisons served as one of the prominent sites where the subtleties of the power struggle were most visible in colonial India. Hence, life narratives emerging from prisons became not only representations of the resistance against colonialism but also expressions of political prisoners' resilience in the face of the ennui intrinsic to incarceration. "Within this context of state coercion, autobiographical narrative can become a site of enabling self-reconstruction and self-determination in its insistence on imagining forms of resistance to those deindividuation routines" (Smith and Watson 57). In addition, the generic dimensions of a "'self-conscious' literary form" (Pascal viii) bestow upon these narratives an aura of authenticity. This feature rendered prison narratives predominance, especially during times of intense national struggles when the veracity of narrated incidents assumed heightened significance. (Venkitachalam 315)

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's *Prison Days* is an irregularly written personal account chronicling her third and final term in Naini Central Jail, Allahabad. Originally written as a diary, Pandit used *Prison Days* as a means to counter solitude, creating a space for reflecting on life and venting emotions. The narrative, later edited and published by her daughter, Nayantara Sahgal, offers "a glimpse of the courage

and commitment it took to fight an entire empire at great cost to themselves and their families" (Sahgal 10). Conversely, Pandit expresses a modest motivation, suggesting that her narrative might only "help in giving a picture of the conditions prevailing in one of the better run jails of the United Provinces" (Pandit 11). However, this aligns with one of the primary functions of any prison narrative—to document the everyday experiences of imprisonment and expose them to public accountability. The significance of Pandit's disclosure heightens as it uncovers the workings of the female ward, which was doubly confined and distanced from the public eye. Although Pandit's intention to publish the diary at the time of writing is not specified in the narrative, the sharp critique it offers of colonial prison and descriptions of agony arising from her separation from her family make it a politically personal narrative.

Autobiographical prison narratives also functioned as indictments of prison realities. Urmila Shastri's *My Days in Prison*is one such widely circulated political account, which was originally written in Hindi under the title *Kaaragaar*. Shastri was arrested in Meerut in 1930 for boycotting British liquor and goods. During the trial under the picketing ordinance, the British magistrate proffered her acquittal in exchange for an apology—an offer she steadfastly declined. The narrative under scrutiny is the documentation of her term in Meerut District Jail following the arrest. Shastri's *My Days in Prison* is characterised by an affective quality that embodies a sense of intense patriotism. In its introduction, Kasturba Gandhi opines, "This book will be reminiscent of life in a jail to our sisters who have been there. Those sisters who, unlike Urmila, did not have the good fortune of going to jail will feel a certain envy on reading this book" (Gandhi). Shastri, by documenting her personal experiences, was therefore serving the overtly political purpose of intervening in the national struggle.

Both of these narratives possess a political dimension that goes beyond their overtly political content. They illuminate a striking continuity in the gendered experiences of womenwithin and outside the prison in colonial India. For instance, Shastri begins *My Days in Prison* by delineating how her lived experience as a woman shaped her political consciousness. Her commitment to the nation's cause is portrayed as a deliberate choice of duty over domestic indulgence. It is noteworthy that national movements such as the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement facilitated the entry of many middle-class women into the traditionally male-dominated public sphere. However, as illustrated by Shastri, women's political involvement raised many eyebrows. Shastri's decision to engage in politics was questioned even byan ordinary convict. The prison inmate's opinion that she "should have let the men handle it" (Shastri 37) underscore show societal norms regarding gendered performance were pervasive.

The Political Self in the Colonial Cell

- **Class-Caste Dynamics Within the Female Ward**

Narratives circulating among the educated middle class often portrayed

colonial India as "a vast prison" (Nehru 79), where men and women were not free. Dismissing it as only a popular metaphor, Urmila Shastri highlights the tangible aspects of incarceration in her narrative: "So far we always used to say that we were slaves, prisoners in our own land, but now, for the first time, I realized what being a slave truly felt like" (Shastri 12). For Shastri, the colonial prison stood for what it really was: a cage (Shastri 86). She writes:

> The female wards in district prisons were usually very small. In the Meerut Central Jail the women's ward lay in the corner of the jail premises, barred within another secondary wall. There were always two locks on the gate—one outside and the other that the lady warden of the prison locked from inside and kept the keys of. The keys of the first lock were kept in the main office. (Shastri 6)

Apart from the physical discomforts, Shastri suffered the torment of being without friends. She writes, "Most of the time I was in prison, I had no problem with regard to food. My clothes came from home. . . . Now the only problem that remained was that of loneliness" (Shastri 31). Her sense of solitude could be due to two interconnected reasons. First, the caste-class divisions characterised her relationship with others in the prison. Secondly, the absence of a common political ground exacerbated this division. While this study acknowledges that in colonial prisons "caste was repeatedly broken and religious taboos violated" (Arnold 32), it simultaneously argues that prisons maintained certain class-caste hierarchies that were rampantly practiced outside. In essence, colonial prisons stood as a microcosm of colonial India. This is evident in Pandit's observation, where she delineates a hierarchy within the prison. "The woman who is in for abduction is on the lowest rank of the social ladder, then come the counterfeiters of coins, thieves and finally the women who are serving a sentence for murder." (Pandit 25)

In *My Days in Prison*, Shastri explicitly criticises the singing and dancing of ordinary women prisoners. Hailing from an Arya Samaj background, Shastri maintains a class distance, as she writes:

> I wondered what I had done to deserve being put through the *obscenity* of such entertainment, something I had never been exposed to in all my life. . . .the song and dance I witnessed in front of me now was very different from that which was practiced in our ancient traditions; it was the kind of spectacle that no *decent person* would wish to be entertained with. (Shastri 28–29)

Shastri's difficulty connecting with the ordinary prisoners stemmed from her perception that they did not share her sensibility. Here, both caste and class act as crucial components in Shastri's self-making. Her caste, along with her status as an 'A' class prisoner, afforded her certain privileges compared to her fellow inmates. Towards the end of the narrative, though Shastri acknowledges the problem of class divisions in prison as a political concern (84), she fails to discern the hegemony inherent in the class-caste privileges she enjoyed. Instead, Shastri interprets it only as a colonial scheme to fill prisoners with resentment against their leaders, thereby scattering political struggles against the British government.

- **I and the Others: Relationality in Colonial Prisons**

The experience of incarceration, characterised by the loss of autonomy, is inherently traumatic and leads to an acute sense of vulnerability and dependence on others. It shapes the prisoners' perception of themselves as dependent on other prisoners, jail warders, and the like. However, the dynamics of such relationships in colonial prisons were complex. As demonstrated, Shastri never found herself comfortable in the company of ordinary prisoners. It was only upon the arrival of her fellow Congress workers in jail that she felt relieved. Similarly, the relationship between political prisoners and the jail authorities was also intricate, as the officials occupied a liminal space by being "both part of the tyrannical regime of the prison and part of the nation envisioned through the prison" (Arnold 42). Shastri's narrative demonstrates this complexity when she denounces the colonial complicity of the jail superintendent, Colonel Rahman, who was "an Indian by birth and blood" (Shastri 59).

In the colonial prison context, the women political prisoners' identification as freedom fighters emanated primarily from their involvement in political activities outside the prison. Despite sharing the same space, their sense of identity resonated more strongly with their male counterparts than with ordinary women prisoners. Shastri, who found no companions in jail, rejoiced when male political prisoners from the other section of the prison, greeted her. She writes, "All I knew was that from somewhere behind the bars separating us, my *companions and brothers in struggle* were welcoming me in their midst" (Shastri 11). Similarly, Pandit, who found herself "in the wrong kind of crowd" (Pandit 30), felt "less alone" (Pandit 19) after hearing slogans like *Inquilab Zindabad* from over the wall. Beyond a shared gender identity, "a common political history and a collective opposition to colonial rule" (Thapar-Björker 584) seem to forge a sense of community among prisoners in colonial cells.

The colonial prison, however, did not entirely foreclose the possibility of dialogue among its inmates. The enforced proximity of various identities facilitated concerted efforts to establish a domestic atmosphere within the female ward. The resulting companionship manifested itself through actions like sharing amenities and looking after each other's children (Pandit 81). Stories of ordinary convicts included in women political prisoners' narratives also stand testimony to this relationality. But, unlike the narrators, who come from affluent and politically influential backgrounds, the ordinary women prisoners are subalterns who are at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. "If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 274). Their experience of prison differed from that of political prisoners, who may, at times, have them perform labour. In addition, having transgressed the legal andmoral fabric of the collective, ordinary female prisoners were often "marked as abject" (Fredriksson 264). Hence, women political prisoners' endeavour to represent the subaltern through their narratives raises concern.

In *Prison Days*, Durgi, the subaltern, becomes the mute subject on whose behalf Pandit speaks. As an educated middle-class woman, Pandit's approach to

Durgi's story renders it "a common one" (Pandit 33). The heterogeneity of her lived experiences is overlooked, presuming her story to be an essentially subaltern narrative of oppression. Consequently, Durgi is reduced to a victim:

> She killed her husband because he neglected her and did not give her enough to eat. She gives me gruesome details of the murder and appears to get a lot of satisfaction from the recital. I try to analyze her feelings later and come to the conclusion that the main cause of her satisfaction is the fact that by killing the husband she has been able to strike a blow at the mother-in-law whom she still hates. (Pandit 34)

The socio-cultural mediations not only hinder an empathetic understanding of the subaltern woman's experience but also reinforce the existing power imbalances between her and the middle-class narrator. In that sense, Pandit's appropriation reduces Durgi's lived experience to a mere token within the larger narrative.

- **The Care of the Self, Resistance, and the Colonial Cell**

In their day-to-day experiences within the confines of prison, women political prisoners put forth various forms of resistance. Shastri, for instance, highlights her persistent efforts to assert her rights. One notable incident is her decision to resort "to a hunger strike" (Shastri 83), when her repeated request for an alternative toilet arrangement was denied. Recognising the potential political implications of her actions, the prison authorities acceded to her demand on the same day, making the necessary arrangements. Now the question is, apart from overt confrontations, how do women political prisoners contribute to the broader anti-colonial struggle in India?

Most of the women political prisoners embraced the notion that sacrifices like imprisonment were essential for achieving national liberation. Internalising and disseminating suchideasthrough their narratives enabled them, like their male counterparts, to see themselves as active agents in shaping both their lives as well as the destiny of the nation. Shastri articulates this sentiment, stating, "After all, I *had* come to prison deliberately, consciously, because I *wanted* to. What would have happened if I had not done what I had done, I asked myself. 'It would have been a sin,' my soul replied" (Shastri 18). Thus, the imprisonment became an intentional act through which she fulfilled her duty. Similarly, Pandit reflects in her autobiography:

> It would be fun to test oneself and come out of the ordeal strengthened. With this approach came the desire for a planned life with exercise for the body and mind alike. I had regularly practiced yogic exercises and I now resumed them. I also found reading a few pages from Bhagavad-Gita a mental discipline, helping to keep things in perspective. (*The Scope of Happiness* 110)

This attitude "is not a rest cure" (Foucault 51) but a means of self-examination, discipline, and cultivation. Pandit's diary entry upon returning to prison after thirty days of parole reflects her desire to align her life with larger political considerations. She writes, "Life may be restricted but after all physical freedom has come to mean less to most of us than that wider vision which we have acquired and which

government regulations and prison bars cannot take away from us" (Pandit 122). The focus on the self, the paper argues, shielded women political prisoners against cynical thoughts throughout their prison terms and helped them transcend their political will beyond the physical constraints of imprisonment.

Conclusion

Prison narratives of female freedom activists in India, as documentations of their complex and varied experiences of incarceration, exemplify the shaping of gendered political subjects within the confines of British-Indian prisons. It reveals the subtle mediations of gender, class, caste, and colonialism in facilitating and hindering their day-to-day interactions with fellow prisoners as well as jail authorities. Moreover, these accounts illustrate how the narrators' self-perception, at times, transcended gendered identifications. However, it is essential to acknowledge that female freedom fighters in India struggled against patriarchy as fervently as they fought against imperialism (Saxena 6).

As is evident in the study, these narratives contribute to postcolonial discourses by also exposing the paradoxical nature of colonial cells. On the one hand, prisons constrained women freedom fighters' autonomy to publicly resist the colonial authorities, but on the other hand, prisons furthered their political consciousness by serving as sites for self-care and development. Finally, documenting prison experiences was both a personal and political act for women political prisoners. While Pandit's jail diary captures her vulnerability and angst at being imprisoned, it also aims to let others know the workings of a colonial prison. Shastri's narrative shares the same purpose, with the additional aim of inspiring others. Whether written for personal introspection or to challenge colonial schemes, these narratives straddle theline between the personal and the political.

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Investigating the Ripple Effects of Protest in Alice Walker's, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*

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Abstract

A ripple effect is the spread of a disturbance inside a system, resulting in an influence on the system. This is similar to the ripples that appear on the surface of water when an item is dropped into it. The word "ripple effect" is frequently used in common English to indicate a multiplier effect in the field of macroeconomics. This was appropriated to reading literature by Linda Hutcheon. In a work of fiction, the manifestation of themes and motifs provide a sense of ripple effect to the plot and the critical reading of which recreates the effect. The first part of the study shall explain the notion of ripple effect and its significance in literary studies. The second part of the study shall explicate the significance of Alice Walker in demonstrating ripple effects in her fictional works. The third part of the study shall investigate the philosophy of protest in the novel. The fourth part of the study shall explore the way in which ripple effects of the novel support and articulate protest. The final part of the study shall summarise the findings.
Keywords: Protest, Ripple Effects, Racism, Civil rights, Slavery

Introduction and Theoretical Foundation

The ripple effect, often portrayed in literature through motifs and foreshadowing, highlights how seemingly minor events can have significant and far-reaching consequences, encouraging readers to contemplate the intricate interplay of cause and effect in both personal and global contexts. For instance, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the recurring motif of the green light symbolizes Gatsby's profound yearning for Daisy (58). Similarly, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* discreetly foreshadows Boo Radley's later role as the saviour of Scout and Jem from Bob Ewell (118).

The ripple effect, present in both literature and life, urges readers to ponder the intricate interconnections among various elements. This phenomenon, explored by literary scholars and exemplified by Linda Hutcheon, delves into intertextuality, socio-cultural dynamics, and multidisciplinary connections. Hutcheon's contributions, particularly in The Politics of Postmodernism, have significantly influenced academic discourse on ripple effects, emphasizing the complex communication and extensive consequences of literary works (Hutcheon 126).

Understanding the ripple effect and its role in literary analysis is just the beginning. The subsequent exploration involves delving into the philosophy of protest, followed by an examination of the ripple effects of protest in Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. Literature has a longstanding tradition of amplifying marginalized voices, challenging prevailing cultural norms, and representing the experiences of those on the periphery (Kling and Mitchell 73).

Protest literature unveils power imbalances and delves into intricate societal issues. It also fosters solidarity among diverse communities; during the Harlem Renaissance, African American writers used it to challenge prevailing narratives and elevate their voices. This philosophy asserts literature's active role in reshaping cultural norms and promoting societal transformation. In the novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, protest is a crucial element in the exploration of freedom. The book delves into the African American experience, focusing on the relentless quest for liberation from racial oppression within the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement. Through its characters, the novel portrays the various dimensions of protest, from overt resistance to subtle acts of defiance, revealing the profound desire for justice and liberation. The protagonist, Grange Copeland, embodies the transformative power of protest as he evolves from a life of oppression to one characterized by a fervent revolutionary spirit. The novel depicts a multi-generational cycle of servitude and the struggle to break free from it.

Alice Walker interweaves quotes from *The Children of Sanchez* and "The Song of Lawino" and references Richard Wright's statement to Jean Paul Sartre in her novel, highlighting the dangers of suppressing suffering and losing valued traditions to Western influence. This sparks a growing sense of protest among the characters, stemming from repression's psychological tension. The study delves into these roots, leading to uncontrolled behaviour. In the novel's initial chapter, Brownfield observes his uncle's family leaving for the North, sparking reflections and conflicting views about the move, particularly regarding racial discrimination in the Jim Crow states.

Ripple Effects of Protest

The Jim Crow states' racial inequality is significantly fuelled by agricultural servitude, where African Americans accumulate debt to their white landlords due to the absence of accounting mechanisms and labour laws. This oppressive structure acts as a ripple effect, manifested later in the novel through Grange Copeland. Brownfield witnesses his father's cold demeanour when working for the landlord Shipley, instilling fear and eventually a protesting mindset against his father. Brownfield's resentment deepens as he's tasked with caring for his younger brother while his father has an affair with Josie in Baker County. Despite dreaming of a prosperous future for his family, Brownfield harbours strong disgust for them, rebelling in his psyche by envisioning a different, better future. This dream, as it could be observed in the novel, does not even remotely concretize for Brownfield. He inevitably falls into slavery. Harold Bloom (2007) states that the narrative of Brownfield emphasizes on everything that is unpleasant about culture in the southern Jim Crow states. The victimisation is deliberate in the way in which he is raised – in midst of extreme poverty and racism. The name, in itself, could be a foreshadowing of his less pleasant existence. The pathological surroundings continue to wither him apart emotionally and physically. In the climax, he is depicted as “a human being … completely destroyed” (Walker 225).

The ripple effects of sharecropping could be found throughout the novel which creates maladies for the African American families. The one that effectively escapes from the ailments of sharecropping is Josie, who owns Dew Drop Inn. Her protest through business does not last long either due to the Copeland family. Brownfield, nevertheless attempts to protest and escape from the vicious circle of Servitude. After the death of his mother through suicide and his little brother, Shipley, the Caucasian surf, visits Brownfield and instructs him politely to get married and inherit the house. The hidden agenda, however, is to make use of Brownfield as a labour with tangibly zero wages. The act of protest is intensified as he starts to move up north in search of his father. The search for his father and opposition to his landlord's interests marks the ripple effect in the novel which changes the course of destiny for other characters as well.

It is this event which makes the ripple for Brownfield's travel. He begins towards north and meets Josie in her bar and grill joint at Baker County. He starts a carnal relationship with Josie and her daughter Loraine. This is the point he loses a sense of shame and pride about himself. This also marks the increasing hatred for his father when he learns about Grange's relationship with Josie and he had left her as well.

> The beginning of the relationship between Mem and Brownfield is a rather complicated one. Brownfield attempts to learn about English language from Loraine during their premarital relationship. Initially he views in her a reflection of his own mother who deserved a better life than to commit suicide with her youngest child. He assures Mem that they would work in a sharecropping farm and after saving some money they will move up north in pursuit of a better future. It is only after their marriage their fates take an ugly turn along with the behaviour of Brownfield. As Grange gets back from New York to Josie's place, he threatens Brownfield with his very presence. The ripple effect of protest, here takes a reversal. His fear towards his father could be considered a potential setback to his protesting life against the cycle of servitude (Harris 240).

Brownfield protest towards a free existence begins to reverse itself as he starts working as a sharecropper. His debt grows and so does his family. He, once again, realises that he has been stuck in the same cycle of servitude as his father did. His attempt to escape the servitude by getting away from Shipley becomes futile as he starts a family as a sharecropper. The sense of servitude reverses his attitude towards Mem. Initially watching her as a woman, like his mother, who deserved a good life, he gives her a life which his mother actually lived. He begins to drink too much and abuse her a lot. He also hates his kids just like the way in which his father used to hate him. The return of Grange Copeland to the Baker County does not change the behaviour of Brownfield.

Mem, unlike Brownfield's mother, becomes assertive when he hits her and she denies it immediately when he accuses her of having an affair. The decision to pursue sharecropping as a protest to Josie's idea of Mem reverses the protesting ideals of

Brownfield by putting him in a state of permanent debt with poor standards of living. Mem consistently expresses her disgust to live in a house with no electricals and in a neighbourhood where open defecation is too common. The protesting acts of Mem remains verbal propositions until she gets fed up of her husband behaviour on a drunken night and decides to point a gun at him.

Mem's desirous and ambitious nature to pursue an existence better than their contemporary one gives her a leap to find a job at a town and a house to live. Brownfield, who already agreed to move to JLL's for a living as he promised his serf, refuses to move out of his word. It is critical to note that it was easier for Brownfield to move away from Shipley, for whom he inherited commitment and servitude from his father. He refuses to move towards the place Mem suggested. The factor of gender which makes Brownfield dominate the domestic space also blinds the protesting acts which could lead to a relatively sophisticated existence, thereby escaping the vicious cycle of sharecropping, debt and poverty.

When Shipley asks him to continue working at Green County, he says yes but pursues a different occupation by moving up North. When the same happens to him, refuses to move with his wife. Mem, having been fed up of his abuses and drinking, points a gun at him and threatens him to be good, humane and rational, and that if he acts otherwise, he would be shot. The acts of Mem provide fertile ground of rebellion and protest of the community as she acts intelligently to escape the aforementioned vicious cycle. He initially agrees and starts working in town. Despite loving the environment, he begins to plan toxically to exact his revenge.

As they move to the town, the kids Daphne, Ornette and Ruth feel delighted about going to school which would not have been possible if the only source of income for them is sharecropping. Despite everything that happens, Brownfield begins to plot the downfall of Mem. He acts as if he cares about her and gets her pregnant and so weak that she becomes unable to continue her job and afford her rent. This marks the beginning of downfall of Brownfield's family as they circle back to the servitude under JLL. This is the point in which he starts to abuse her again. Mem vows to leave him once she becomes physically fit.

The violence of Brownfield extends to the kids as well. The ripple effect of these violent activities of Brownfield could be causatively traced to the behaviour of sharecropper Grange Copeland. Grange, in the beginning of the novel, expresses his desire to move up north, but his desire is refused because of his wife's belief that the Northern states are no different from Jim Crow states when it comes to treating African Americans. Brownfield, who gets stuck in the south because of his mother's hesitancy, confines his whole family into servitude because of his hesitancy and arrogance to move towards better opportunities. Not only does this hesitancy cage him as a worker at JLL's, it also instils an arrogance in him to shoot his wife when she decides to move to the town again. Mem, whose life would have been much simpler and safer if she had not fallen for Brownfield, does not get liberated from her sufferings until her death. The minor ripple effect of her infatuation towards Brownfield leads to her premature death.

Josie and Grange take up the custody of Ruth while it was decided that Ornette and Daphne are going to be raised by Mem's biological parents. Grange makes Josie sell her joint and buy a farm and a house to live. He takes good care of Ruth after Brownfield's sentence to a life imprisonment. Josie hardly feels at home with Ruth. She hates when Grange and Ruth get too close. She waters her jealousy steadily until it makes her leave Grange. She asserts that Ruth is a brat who is spoiled. She hates to be with Grange while he is with Ruth. This hatred could be traced to the ripple effect triggered by the way in which Josie is treated by her father. Her father ignores her to be raped in a time of her need. The trauma continues to haunt her and the same could be used as an explanation for her mistreatment of the young kid who had lost her mother because of her father whose behaviour remains unpredictable and pathological.

Grange Copeland's regretful behaviour towards his son acts as a ripple effect made out of guilt which makes him take care of Ruth properly. He takes her to school. Without caring for his heart condition, he actively plays with her in the playhouse they constructed together. When she enters teenage, he drinks farm made wine with her. It is only after buying the farm that Grange gains a peace of mind and focuses on the well-being of his granddaughter. Josie, on the other hand, is not merely jealous of Ruth but also intends to provide the care for Brownfield which was refused to her as a child. This ripple effect serves as one that would trigger the protest of her psyche against her upbringing.

Grange Copeland's initial existence as a sharecropper makes him fence his land and let Ruth inherit the land despite the fact that she hates to be confined to the Jim Crow state. The ripple effect as a result of being a slave makes him protect his property in order to escape from the vicious cycle of sharecropping, debt and servitude. The closing chapters of the novel capture the essence of civil rights for African American which leads them to meet potential candidates for Sheriff and Mayor for the county. Grange remains sceptical of the move because he believes that they would not win assuming that they would make it alive to the elections. Hence the ripple effects of racial repression continue to influence his beliefs and actions.

Grange's confrontations with white people make him stop Ruth to form friendships and Ruth protests against his belief, which he hardly changes. He believes that he can protest only by hating them. He also narrates a moment where he let a pregnant white lady drown in a pond after she hurled racist abuses against him. The ripple effect of protest, for Grange, begins with a racialised system of economic exploitation and takes a turn when he becomes privileged. Grange, in order win the custody and free existence of Ruth, shoots his son in the court when the judge ordered Ruth to stay with her father. He gets shot by the cops in his own farm. He dies after saying that there is still hope for Ruth's existence with her own farms. He dies making sure that his third life does not fall into servitude.

Conclusion

To summarise the findings, the agricultural servitude that held African

Americans in debt to their owners was a crucial factor that guaranteed racial inequity in Jim Crow states. The lack of accounting processes and employment rules exacerbated the inequity between the white landowner and the black serf. This is the most repressive structure, and it has a ripple effect, as we will see later in the narrative with Grange Copeland.

Following the suicidal deaths of his mother and his younger brother, Shipley, the Caucasian surfer, pays a visit to Brownfield and kindly advises him to marry and inherit the home. The concealed objective, on the other hand, is to deploy Brownfield as labour with tangibly zero remuneration. The scenario expresses Brownfield's anxiety of saying no to Shipley, which represents the repression of sorrows, the perils of which are hinted at in the prelude. Shipley is pleased that he has taken Brownfield for a trip, and Brownfield begins to plan differently. As he moves north in quest of his father, his resistance becomes more vocal. The quest for his father and his antagonism to his landlord's interests create a ripple effect in the narrative that alters the fate of other characters who have not yet met Brownfield. The search for his father, as well as his hostility against his landlord's interests, has a ripple effect in the story, altering the fate of other characters who have not yet encountered Brownfield.

Brownfield first sees Mem as a reflection of his own mother, who deserved more than to commit suicide with her youngest kid. He promises Mem that they will work on a sharecropping farm and then relocate to the north in search of a brighter future. Only after their marriage do their fortunes, along with Brownfield's, take an unpleasant turn. As Grange returns from New York to Josie's house, his sheer presence threatens Brownfield. The protest's rippling effect is reversed here. His dread of his father may be viewed as a possible setback in his fight against the cycle of slavery.

Brownfield's decision to pursue sharecropping as a protest against Josie's image of Mem reverses his protesting principles by leaving him in a situation of permanent debt with low living standards. Brownfield's aggression spreads to the children as well. The ripple effect of Brownfield's aggressive activities may be traced back to sharecropper Grange Copeland's behaviours. Grange expresses a wish to go north at the start of the story, but his wife refuses because she believes that the Northern states are no better from Jim Crow states in terms of how they treat African Americans. Brownfield, who is trapped in the south due to his mother's reluctance, binds his entire family to slavery due to his reluctance and hubris to move towards greater prospects. This reticence not only confines him as a worker at JLL's, but it also instils in him the audacity to shoot his wife if she decides to relocate back to town. Mem, whose life would have been simpler and safer if she had not fallen for Brownfield, is not free of her miseries until she dies. Her passion with Brownfield has a slight ripple effect that leads to her death.

Josie's animosity towards Ruth may be traced back to the ripple effect caused by her father's treatment of her. Her father allows her to be raped in her hour of need. The trauma continues to haunt her, and it may be used to explain her abuse of the little girl who had lost her mother due to her father's erratic and unstable attitude. Grange Copeland's remorseful approach towards his son creates a ripple effect of guilt,

causing him to appropriately care for Ruth. He drives her to and from school. He enthusiastically plays with her in the playhouse they built together, oblivious of his heart condition. He sips vineyard wine with her when she reaches adolescence. Grange obtains peace of mind and concentrates on his granddaughter's well-being only after purchasing the property. Josie, on the other hand, is not just envious of Ruth, but also plans to provide Brownfield with the care she was denied as a kid. This rippling effect would serve to rebel her mentality against her upbringing. The novel's closing chapters encapsulate the spirit of African American civil rights, which leads them to meet probable candidates for Sheriff and Mayor of the county. Grange is still wary of the idea because he feels they would fail to win if they make it to the polls. As a result, the repercussions of racial suppression continue to impact his thoughts and behaviour.

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War and its Role in Shaping Identities of the Child Protagonists in *The Breadwinner*

Vandna Mittal*

Abstract

Wars have always existed in the backdrop of human society. Wars have been waged often, to establish supremacy over the rivalry forces. This so-called 'display of power' has detrimental effects on common men and women, especially on young children who are oblivious to the world around them. Children are most susceptible during times of social upheaval. This makes their future full of incalculable confusion and trauma, which is usually unbearable for them. While an earlier analysis of Deborah Ellis's novel The Breadwinner *includes the approach of the text from a feminist perspective, this study will seek to examine the impact of the Taliban war and its role in moulding the self-identities of Parvana and Shauzia, two young Muslim girls. These girls have no choice but to give up their childhood dreams in order to earn daily bread for their families. This conflict has a disastrous effect especially on Parvana's childhood, as it does on the lives of countless other ordinary people like her. After all the hardships she faces, not even her family makes an effort to comprehend her emotional agony. Same is the case with Shauzia. Therefore, in order to assess how much their identities have been shaped in a warzone, this study will use Foucault's idea of disciplinary power as its theoretical foundation.*

Keywords: War and civilization, Child labour, Insecurity, Quest for identity, The Breadwinner, Foucault

Introduction

The concept of "identity" is complicated since it can mean different things depending on the setting. Humans are inherently social beings who are inevitably influenced by the political and social environments in which they exist. These societal and political contexts are crucial in shaping people's identities. It is impossible to avoid these influences in a social setting. These societal and political circumstances play a significant role in determining the fate of the masses, as they wield the power within a given society. This idea of wielding power is brought into sharp focus during times of social crisis or war. The complexities of the struggle between social identity and genuine identity are heightened inside a society that has been impacted by war, as compared to a stable society without such underlying instability.

The text chosen for this study *The Breadwinner* is a subtle example of how dominant politics mould individual identities. The author Deborah Ellis adeptly highlights the influence of societal norms and structures on the formation of individual identities, as well as the effects of social upheaval on human behaviour. Through the character sketches of Parvana and Shauzia, Ellis has drawn a striking picture of the shaping of individual identities in adverse situations. The irony of these girls is that they are the victims of social injustice and they are not even aware of it. For

them, it is the will of God and their ill fate. They hardly understand the evil nexus of war, politics and their intricacies upon the lives of ordinary human beings.

The Breadwinner at a Glance

The Breadwinner portrays primarily the struggles and challenges faced by the protagonist, Parvana, a young girl from a low-income background. The narrative is emotionally charged and highlights the hardships endured by the character. At the onset of the text's first chapter, Parvana resides contentedly with her parents and siblings. The family unit consists of six individuals: Parvana, Nooria (the elder sister), Maryam (the younger sister), Ali (the two-year-old brother), Nurullah (a crippled father) and Farzana (the mother). Before the Taliban seizure of Afghanistan, Farzana composed written pieces for the Kabul radio station. After the Taliban attack, she, like other women, has been compelled to remain at home. Additionally, she is burdened with the heart-wrenching sorrow of losing her beloved son Hossain, who tragically stepped on a landmine. The incident has resulted in a long-term ailment for her, causing her to experience a constant feeling of sickness. "She sat well back on the blanket, her head and most of her face covered by her chador" (Ellis 7). She spends most of her time swaddled in a blanket on the couch, ignoring her kids and housework. Nooria and Parvana are responsible for their younger siblings and pitch in with chores and housework.

Nurullah, Parvana's father, is another pivotal character in the story. He is physically disabled and utilizes prosthetic devices for walking. Prior to the Taliban regime, he held the position of a history teacher within an educational institution. As a consequence of the war, his educational institution was subjected to bombing, resulting in the amputation of one of his legs. To support his family, Nurullah provides reading and writing services at the marketplace. At times, he engages in the transportation of household items that are not in use. One day, someone requests his prosthesis, and for a reasonable sum, he also sells his artificial limb. Now he has trouble walking, so he takes Parvana with him to the market. Because of this, Parvana gathers a lot of experience in this field. She watches as he interacts with customers and sets up a display of affordable household goods on the *dari* without making any financial demands on his own. When asked about the cost of an item, he says, "Pay whatever you like" (Ellis 36). These experiences prepare Parvana for the future when she supports her family as a breadwinner.

The life of this family was going smoothly until a group of teenage militants stopped Nurullah and Parvana on their way home from the market. They reprimand him for bringing his daughter along with him outside the house. Parvana's father gets into an altercation with them, but later apologizes nicely. When they got back to their house later, the youths who had chased them began pounding on the door and initiating a savage beating of Nurullah. One of the young Taliban soldiers is identified as Idrees. He used to be Nurullah's student, but he dislikes him. He incites his comrades by claiming that Nurullah is a traitor and that he taught false history to

children, which is strictly forbidden by the Taliban. The family is tortured, household items are destroyed, and Nurullah is forcefully taken away by the perpetrators. Parvana's mother attempted to rescue her husband, but was also hit back by the militants. Consequently, Parvana's father was captured and taken away. The next day, Parvana and her mother set out to locate their missing family member. The mother and daughter were subjected to physical assault for violating the cultural norm of requiring a male companion while leaving the house.

No Escape from the Hegemony of Power in Society

Given the situation, it is evident that the family faces a difficult predicament following the abduction of the head of the household by Taliban militants. Parvana's disguise as Kaseem is the turning point of the plot. With war at the background, no personal interests and choices of an individual are asked when the dominant forces give them commands. Same is the case with Parvana. By accepting to adopt male appearance, she has given all her control of life in the hands of the power holders of the society. Thus, her dreams of leading an ordinary life like other young girls of her age are shattered. In light of the societal restrictions imposed upon girls, Parvana is compelled to adopt a male guise in order to go out of the house. Her hair is cut. Her style of dress changes from feminine to masculine. Even she has to speak in a somewhat hoarse voice in the marketplace so that nobody could identify her real self. Her identity is totally shaped by the hegemony of power and not by herself.

As Foucault states that, "People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does" (Foucault 3). This statement by Michel Foucault accurately defines the prevalence of power dynamics in society. The way the Taliban has overtaken Afghanistan and has tried to impose their ideology upon the masses through violence, dominance and brutality, it illustrates the extent to which our lives and identities are reliant on the dominant power structures of society. As a result, we are unable to exist independently and without influence from these entities. Parvana's stepping into the shoes of her brother is not just a physical incident but a makeover for lifetime. Although she was compelled to adopt a male persona, it resulted in a significant alteration to her life trajectory. In his scholarly article titled "Michel Foucault's View on Power Relations" (2010), Sergiu Balan, a prominent scholar, presents his interpretation of Michel Foucault's philosophical works. According to Foucault, power is not an inherent possession of institutions that can be wielded as a tool of oppression against people and organizations. Power, as Foucault depicts, can be understood as a normalizing force that functions in a specific manner.

As the plot proceeds, Parvana meets Shauzia, another girl from her school in the marketplace. Shauzia too, like the former, is a victim of adverse social conditions and sells petty goods on an aluminium tray hung around her neck through a broad strip of cloth. She has cigarettes, candies and other such menial things for daily workers and labourers who buy this stuff from her. It is only after meeting Shauzia does Parvana

realize that she is not the only one who has to bow to her cruel destiny. There are other victims of war too who have to accept their fate.

In relation to the above mentioned incident in the text, Gerald R. Adams and Sheila K. Marshal in their scholarly article "Developmental Social Psychology of Identity: Understanding the Person-in-Context" (1996), delve into the effects of the socialization process on individuality, the nature of the self as influenced by social factors and self-regulation, the progression of an individual from experimentation to experience, and the eventual formation of their social identity within a specific social environment.

Another scholarly article titled "Identity Development during Adolescence" (2003) by Jane Kroger focuses on the concept of identity formation and the conflict between identity and role confusion that is commonly experienced by adolescents. She describes the hardships of role conflicts experienced by teenagers during their early stage of puberty. Their physical changes and the impact of these changes upon the teenagers' psyche have been elaborated beautifully in this paper.

A 2006 publication titled "Understanding Taliban and its Insurgency" by Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors that propelled the Taliban from a modest Afghan Islamic movement to a globally influential dominating force. This paper provides an analysis of the Taliban insurgency and its effects on the general population and their daily lives.

In her 2019 article, "The Study of Gender Inequality Found in Deborah Ellis's Novel *The Breadwinner*, Santi Prastiyowati discusses the topic of gender inequality. In the context of Parvana's family, the societal norms enforced by the Taliban prohibit females from venturing outside their residence unaccompanied. The protagonist of the story relinquishes her personal identity and physical attributes. In order to safeguard her family's well-being, she conceals her actual identity by assuming the pseudonym, Kaseem.

Based on the above discussion and analyzing their research outcomes, one can relate the idea of adolescent psyche and role of power relationships in developing this psyche in the chosen text. *The Breadwinner* is an epitome of pervasiveness of power in the society which is the root cause of all identity formation. Parvana's age, her survival in a war- affected society and her moulding of personality as per the social pressure- all pave the way for Michel Foucault's theory of power and knowledge where he says, "We should admit rather that power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another" (Foucault 27). This statement clearly depicts that the nexus of power and knowledge acts as a trigger in affecting individual lives and masses.

The Breadwinner as a Bildungsroman Text

In *The Breadwinner*, the journey of the main protagonist from immaturity to maturity, from unknown to known and from ignorance to experience epitomizes the Bildungsroman literary technique. This statement elucidates how an individual's

identity formation is influenced by his/her socio-cultural and political environment. The process of searching for one's own purpose in life often involves introspection within the context of social norms, rules, and limitations. Conflicting rules and personal beliefs can result in an identity crisis. When Parvana was not under the pressure of earning daily bread for her family, her life was not as complex as it becomes later. At least she never had to pretend like someone else which she was not.

The text *The Breadwinner* features the main character Parvana and her classmate Shauzia, who both engage in low-skilled labour to provide financial support for their respective households. Shauzia engages in the sale of merchandise on behalf of a third party, while Parvana is employed at a tea stall. Due to the perceived lack of prestige associated with their respective jobs, both experience a sense of discomfort and internal conflict when performing their duties. “I don't think I could ever sit in a classroom again, Shauzia said. Not after all this. She adjusted her tray of cigarettes” (Ellis 128). Both the girls stepped into their new roles as amateur but gradually they learned new things out of their day-to-day encounters with the harsh reality of life. Even when they are no longer in a feminine look, still they suffer a lot. A man in the marketplace offers them a job which, as the man himself calls 'the most paid job'. The girls find it tempting to earn more money in a short span of time. They immediately agree to it. Later, there is a segment in the text where Parvana and Shauzia are depicted extracting bones from graves situated in an abandoned cemetery. The girls have been employed by a contractor to acquire the graveyard's land for construction purposes. Since the employer proposes a generous compensation package for the position, there is hardly any room for negotiation for the duo. Initially, both females encountered some difficulty in their job due to the requirement of handling skulls, dry bones, and other remains of deceased individuals present at the location. On her first day of employment, Parvana struggles with the task, even experiencing symptoms like vomiting etc. Subsequently, the compensation received at the conclusion of the workday serves as a catalyst for them to overcome their challenges and approach the following day's labor with enthusiasm and vigor. Their innocence is ultimately replaced by experience and they start ignoring the drawbacks of their petty labour. Thus, their identities and personalities are shaped through their experiences with the outer world.

After a week of strenuous labour, they accumulate sufficient funds to purchase their own trays, packs of cigarettes, and sweet chewing gum. Their conversation is as follows:

> 'We have to remember this', Parvana said, 'When things get better and we grow up, we have to remember that there was a day when we were kids when we stood in a graveyard and dug up bones to sell so that our families could eat.'
>
> 'Will anyone believe us?'
>
> 'No. But we will know it happens.' (Ellis 105)

Parvana and Shauzia are teenagers; so not much maturity can be expected from them. Initially, both the girls feel a bit embarrassed at the nature of their job. They perceive that their previous school acquaintances and other social circles will not extend the

same level of acceptance to them as before. This situation raises the awareness of the female vendors regarding their identity as small-scale street merchants encountering new obstacles everyday in the marketplace. Despite these challenges, they persist in their occupation as it provides sustenance for themselves and their families.

Quest for Identity in a War Zone

Being loved and feeling belonged to one's place is the very extract of human being. This innate need is integral to an individual's emotional well-being. Unfortunately, Parvana is deprived of these emotions in her own family. Despite her diligent efforts throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors, she experiences disregard, a sense of exclusion, and peculiar conduct even from her mother. As a result of this behaviour, her sensitive emotional state becomes fragmented upon receiving discouragement from her mother subsequent to Nooria's untrue accusations. She lacks a confidant to whom she can express her sorrow. She doesn't want to stay at home for long. Consequently, she begins to invest the majority of her time in the marketplace while assuming the identity of a male named Kaseem. She is not subjected to any reprimand or interrogation by the Taliban soldiers.

The act of assuming a disguise serves as a means of escapism for Parvana, allowing her to temporarily set aside her hardships and sorrows. Her time at home leaves her frustrated and powerless because she must repeat her day's toil all over again the next day, including carrying buckets of water to use in the house's daily activities. Although Parvana has no issues carrying buckets of water, she becomes irritated when her sister, Nooria, takes most of it to wash her long hair. Within a few hours, the day's supply of water is gone, necessitating additional trips to the communal tap. Her mother labels Parvana as "arrogant" and "mean" when she urges Nooria to stop washing her hair so often. She claims that Parvana's haughtiness stems from the fact that the home relies on her to provide for its members financially, nutritionally, and otherwise. The following excerpt from the text provides the most comprehensive understanding of Parvana's psychological state, "It made her angry, and since she could do nothing with her anger, it made her sad" (Ellis 39). The subsequent quote provides further insight into Parvana's mental state:

> Business had good days and bad days. Sometimes Parvana would sit for hours without a customer. She made less money than her father had, but the family was eating, even though most days they ate just Nan and tea. The children seemed livelier than they had in a long time. The daily sun and fresh air were doing them a lot of good, although Nooria said they were harder to look after now in the room. They had more energy and always wanted to go outside, which they couldn't do when Parvana was out at work (Ellis 91).

In the beginning, Parvana was reluctant to relinquish her feminine allure and youthful characteristics. She expressed a desire to live a conventional lifestyle similar to other females in her age group. Wearing a *burkha*, growing long hair, putting on *salwar kameez* attire, and seeking a male companion for moving outside the house; all

become exceptional for Parvana and Shauzia once they are cross dressed. The situation arose with a sudden abduction of Nurullah by Taliban troops, leaving the family without a source of income. Mrs. Weera, Parvana's aunt, recommends Farzana i.e. Parvana's mother dresses Parvana in male clothing due to Parvana's lack of feminine appearance in her body, apart from her hair. Parvana Resists when they cut her hair:

> 'You're not cutting my hair!' Parvana's hands flew up to her head.
> 'How else will you look like a boy?' Mother asked.
> 'Cut Nooria's hair! She's the oldest! It's her responsibility to look after me, not my responsibility to look after her!'
> 'No one would believe me to be a boy'. (Ellis 58)

The impact of her surroundings on Parvana's life decisions and her personality development is what Foucault names as 'Normalizing power'. It is based on the idea that the power structures in our society shape our identities into various forms. Self-identity is a social process that is dependent on external factors and is subject to change throughout an individual's lifetime. It is not an independent or personal entity. Foucault explained it as “Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same” (Foucault 58).

Similarly, Parvana, the protagonist who initially struggled to assume the identity of a young boy, eventually finds pleasure in her new persona. She becomes acclimated to the situation and eventually derives pleasure from the newfound liberty. This demonstrates the influence of societal norms on the formation and regulation of one's personal identity. Her family follows strict religious culture that prohibits physical contact with dead people. If someone has to attend any funeral or come in contact with a dead body, it is mandatory to take a bath before consuming food. Parvana cannot tell her family how she is earning money. Even though she feels bad about it, Parvana still digs bones to earn rupees to feed her family. Keeping her new job a secret, she skips having a bath before supper because doing so might raise suspicions with Nooria and her mother.

Malali - The Savior

Parvana's transformative journey from naivety to wisdom and immaturity to maturity reveals her to be a true hero. Her father, Nurullah, often called her 'Malali'. It was the name of an Afghan heroine who, like Joan of Arc, showed incredible bravery and leadership characteristics while guiding her troops during a time of conflict. Her father hoped that Parvana would emulate Malali's stoicism and resilience. Parvana's alias, Malali, exists only when she transforms into Kaseem. She comforts herself and tries to overcome her concerns when things get rough. She takes on her own challenges at home and in the community. In her guise as Kaseem, Parvana must constantly remember her true identity. Aiming of earning income and performing role of the primary provider for her family, she holds onto the hope of one day reuniting with her father and achieving a state of contentment. The aforementioned evidence

indicates that Parvana has undergone a transformation from a weak and timid individual to a capable, self-assured, and grown young woman. Like Malali, Parvana possesses the bravery to chart her own destiny.

Conclusion

The novel adeptly explores the theme of war and its profound influence on those impacted by it. Individuals with limited societal influence often lack agency in their own lives. Instead, they may be subject to the control of those who hold power within the community. These individuals have the ability to shape the future, environment, behaviour, and identities of others in ways that align with their own interests. Under the control of powerful members of the Taliban society, individual like Parvana, Shauzia, Farzana, Nooria, and Nurullah are rendered mere puppets. They lack autonomy and are ultimately compelled to submit to the desires of their authority figures, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Foucault uses the term 'Normalizing Power' to describe this phenomenon. The effects of the war, social unrest, and disorder are readily apparent in their personal lives and interactions. While they have to face tremendous challenges, characters like Parvana demonstrate resilience in their own ways. Individuals tend to adapt to adverse situations and become dominated by the power surrounding them to the point of being unaware of its presence.

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Writing Orality: Exploring the Khasi Life-World in *Funeral Nights* by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih

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Abstract

To know more about the tradition and culture of a community it's important to know the social history of the people. Oral literature constitutes an important area of such knowledge. As a rapporteur, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih in Meghalaya has added a new dimension to the age-old stories, myths, curious beliefs, practices, cultural artifacts and their linguistic issues to decode the Khasi life-world. To him, the literary commitment is to be concerned about the history and heritage of all the tribes of Meghalaya, particularly the Khasis. He, through his novel Funeral Nights (2021) has provided a new dimension to cultural artifacts in their many ramifications. This novel significantly gives a literary representation of the Khasi life-world in view of various tropes, metaphors, imagery, and symbols. Therefore, the paper aims at exploring: (i) how Funeral Nights conceptualizes the Khasi life-world, (ii) how the Khasi tradition of storytelling reveals history from the periphery, and (iii) how the invasion of colonial enterprises had altered their 'ethnic life world'.
Keywords: Meghalaya, Khasi, Storytelling, Oral literature, Funeral Nights

In all my writings, I tell the story
of my life over and over again.
- Isaac Bashevis Singer

To know more about the tradition and culture of a community it's important to know the social history of the people. Oral literature constitutes an important area of such knowledge. Over the ages, sources and materials of North East Indian oral tradition have been conserved, but there remains an 'undone vast'. Oral literature in its very nature survives on collective memory and the continuity of narration. In the course of time, the language may undergo some changes, but the content is never lost. As a rapporteur, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih in the North East has added a new dimension to the age-old stories, myths, curious beliefs, practices, cultural artifacts, and their linguistic issues to decode the meaning of the Khasi life-world. In his words: "The Khasis, by which I mean all the seven sub-tribes- Khynriam, Pnar, Bhoi, War, Maram, Lyngngam, and now never-heard-of Diko- are a great storytelling people: 'telling', because their alphabet is of very recent history, no older than when Thomas Jones, the Welsh Presbyterian missionary, introduced the Roman script in 1842, to form the essentials of the Khasi written word" (Nongkynrih vii). To him, the literary commitment is to be concerned about the history and heritage of all the tribes of Meghalaya, particularly the Khasi. He, through his writings, has provided a new dimension to linguistic issues and cultural artifacts to explore the myriad tribes of Meghalaya.

Nongkynrih was born in 1964 at Sohra, famously known as Cherrapunjee. He belongs to the Khasi community and writes both in English and Khasi. He is a poet, writer, and translator as well. To him, literature creates a deep relationship with society. His poems and other forms of writing are a great contribution to Khasi literature and English writings from the North East as well. His *Funeral Nights* (2021) has been regarded as the Moby Dick of Meghalaya. His writings give a voice to the anguish and agony of the people belonging to this region. His poetry sincerely gives voice to the age-old negligence and political problems of this region.

Before entering into the Khasi life-world, it's important to know about the social history of Meghalaya. Right from the colonial period, archaeologists and ethnographers explored the migratory history, ethnic lineage, linguistic affinity and cultural history of the tribes inhabiting these hills. Over time, it has witnessed many layers of migration. It's an ethno-linguistic hotspot where East and South-East Asia meets the rest of the sub-continent. The Khasis constitute the majority of the population in Meghalaya, followed by the Garos, Jaintias and some other smaller ethnicities. The word Khasi is derived from the Austo-Asiatic word *'khas'* which means hills. At present, they dwell in the Khasi Hills in the North Eastern state of Meghalaya, which means 'the abode of the clouds'. In the course of migratory history, Khasis, Garos, Pnars and other Jaintia tribes migrated to Meghalaya from various parts of South Asia. For a long time, this region has been considered an ethnological interest. Archaeological shreds of evidence suggest that people inhabited this region right from the time of the Neolithic Age. Khasi, Garo, Pnar and some thirty smaller ethnicities constitute the ethnic fabric of these hills. Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia are the first languages of the majority of its population along with a significant presence of Bengali, Assamese, Nepali, Hajong and Hindi. Khasi is a language of the *Mon-Khmer* branch of the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family while the Garo has its linguistic affinity with the Bodos, a branch of Tibeto-Burman languages. Pnar also belongs to the *Mon-Khmer* family and is very similar to Khasi in the Jaintia Hills. Khasi is one of the endangered languages of the *Mon-Khmer* family. Over time these languages have witnessed cross-cultural linguistic variations and many words from the Indo-Arya languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and Nepali have entered into the vocabulary of these languages.

Khasi creation myths recorded a great tradition of storytelling. One such story reveals the account behind the non-existence of scribal culture among the Khasis. The story goes like this: "…one of our ancestors had lost a manuscript, made of a very delicate material and containing our philosophical and religious teachings, as well as the script use to record these teachings" (Marak viii). When the man was returning from the summit of a very tall mountain after having communion with God, he had to face a great tide. He was carrying with him the precious manuscripts bestowed by God. "Here he was familiarized with the history of his race and initiated into certain religious and moral principles which were to govern the spiritual, moral and even daily activities of his community" (Marak viii). But for being a hill-man, he was not accustomed to swimming and returned to his people empty-handed. As the people

were very disappointed, he appeased them by assuring them that: "…all God had revealed to him was still fresh in his mind, and that he could easily pass on the teachings to the people by word to mouth" (Marak ix).

From this point, the Khasi worldview had been initiated. It was from that time, that the Khasi tradition of storytelling was started. Their concepts of good and evil, God and religious beliefs, social structure and clans were framed at that time. These constitute the Khasi creation myths, what they call *'khanatang'* in their own language. These are considered sanctified stories. These are also the elements that constitute the thickness or density of Khasi life and lore. It reflects every aspect of the Khasi culture, their thoughts, philosophy and their life-world. It's important to note that their stories are allegorical in nature and these are not just a collection of exotic tales, but the projection of a whole life world. Invested with symbolical significance and deliberate rendering, these stories have a great appeal to the people belonging to this region. So Nongkynrih wrote:

> … there are thousands of stories floating in each Khasi *hima, raid* and village. These stories were handed down orally, through successive generations, from village raconteurs to the community; from uncles to nephews; and from parents and grandparents to children. And they include among them *khanapateng* (legends), *putrinam* (fairy tales), *puriskam* (fables), *khanaparshi* (parables) and, sometimes true stories that have worked their way into the hearts of one and all. (Nongkynrih ix)

Under the able guidance of Welsh missionaries, the Khasi language was written in the Roman script. "In 1800 at the Serampore Baptist Mission, Krishna Chandra Pal was baptized, who later became the first missionary to Khasi Hills" (Marak iii). He was stationed at Cherrapunjee and out of his favourable reports for the Khasis, William Carey entered the scenario. In 1813, Carey translated the *New Testament* into Khasi and printed it into Bengali characters in around 1824. But it was proved to be unintelligible to the Khasi speakers. Again a fresh translation was initiated by Alexander B Lish in 1833. An English school was established at Cherrapunjee in 1834. Thomas Jones, a Welsh Calvinistic Missionary arrived in Calcutta in 1841 and in the same year, he reached Sohra. He learned Khasi to some extent for a smooth translation and the next year he brought a translation of the book *Mother's Gift* to the Khasi readers. This is the beginning of Khasi literature in print.

Khasi literature, in its written form, has grown in a great measure though it has a history of hundred and fifty years only. Within this brief period, it has expanded into many ramifications. U Jeebon Roy Mairom is known to the Khasi literati as the father of modern Khasi literature and he translated Indian classical literature into Khasi. The first Khasi newspaper *U Nonkit Khubor* was brought in 1889. In 1896, another Khasi newspaper, *U Khasi Minta* "…appeared in the literary scene, which was secular in character, and dealt with the social problems of the time, and extensively carried articles on customary usages and literature" (Sawian 1).

Christianized literary influences dominated the Khasi writers for a considerable period of time. The modern Khasi writers, however, have freed

themselves from the colonial hangover. The modern Khasi poets have proclaimed the "search for identity of ones individuality in the society" and "cherishing one's homeland and its tradition and customs" (Nongkynrih 15). Khasi drama and novels began to flourish in the 1960s and 70s and the general trend is the revival of tales and folktales. In this context, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih appeared in the literary firmament of the North East with a literary commitment to his homeland. The rich and diverse ethnic history and the racial memory of the people of Meghalaya have been beautifully portrayed in his writings. His debut novel *Funeral Nights* (2021) has been taken for discussion in the present paper.

The narrative of the book is set against the backdrop of his birthplace, i.e. Shora. The author also felt that he needed to create a written Khasi literature that could encompass the whole Khasi life world. The form of the book challenges the framework, either of fiction, a memoir, or an autobiography. It transcends the so-called division of literary genres and evolved as the 'Khasi Bible' in layman's words. In the words of K Satchidanandan, this book is: "A closely woven sequence of narratives that provides us a profound insight into the working of the tribal psyche where the borders of the real and the surreal get blurred … Here is a book of rare scholarship that Mircea Eliade or Claude Levi-Strauss would have read with admiration and yet remains as accessible as fiction to the lay reader" (Nongkynrih ii).

One aspect of the book aims to make the Khasi people aware of their own heritage and culture. It also responds to the prejudiced views and opinions expressed by the non-Khasi people about the Khasis. In an interview with Peter Griffin at Tata Literature Festival-2023, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih states:

> "There are various reasons why I decided to write a book about my community. We have been misunderstood at various levels. We were misrepresented by the British, by the Welsh missionaries, we were misrepresented by columnists and journalists coming from India and elsewhere and we were misrepresented even by our own people" (Nongkynrih 5:00 -5:32).

For the purpose of this book, Kynpham did a lot of research in order to avoid any such kinds of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. While writing this voluminous book, he consulted theology, the religious philosophy of the pre-Christian Khasi society, their history, myths, folklore of the Khasi Hills, legends, stories and a vast amount of information from various other sources. Despite being a lengthy book of thousand pages, the book itself is a pleasure reading as the author has employed an interesting narrative technique followed by Boccaccio in *The Decameron* and the narrative technique of *Arabian Nights*. He has chosen to talk about every aspect of the Khasi people through stories, stories built upon stories, one story upon another. It is almost hyper-textual. He has adapted the Socratic tradition of Plato and the Khasi oral tradition of storytelling. Lots of traditions and narrative techniques have been employed in this book and people are confused about its belongingness to a particular literary genre.

Consisting of twelve different chapters, *Funeral Nights* evolved into an

extraordinary, ambitious and milestone work of ethnography. It is the most authentic work by a North East Indian author that fascinates the reader. In the 'Acknowledgement' of the novel the author states: “Most of the action in *Funeral Nights* takes place in a jungle village of Nongshyrkon” (Nongkynrih 1) on the occasion of *Ka Phor Sorat,* a Khasi ritual for the dead. It consists of a variety of characters, themes, contents and charms. While some of the characters are fictitious in this book, the majority of the characters draw inspiration from real-life people. The first chapter of the book 'My Name is Ap Jutang' opens with Ap Jutang who is the narrator of this part of the book. Ap Jutang reveals many exciting things about himself and his native land Sohra. He later weaved into the stories about his people, and memories of the past that leads the readers to a whole new world, immensely strange to us.

The plot of the novel revolves around a group of friends from Shillong, who made a journey to a remote part of the West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya to witness *Ka Phor Sorat* or the feast of the dead. This a unique six-day long funeral ceremony of the *Lyngams,* a sub-tribe of the Khasi ethnicity. Perhaps this is the last time that this ancient ritual is performed. The ceremony, involving a number of rituals and the sacrifice of as many as fifty bulls will conclude with the cremation of an elderly woman whose corpse is preserved in a tree house for nine whole months. Thus the novel talks of this strange funeral feast and the traditional rituals of the Khasis associated with the last rites of an individual. But the theme of the novel is merely not limited to the last rites of a departed soul, spirits, shamans, and exotic death rituals of a tribe, rather it brings a vital connection to the day-to-day life in the Khasi Hills.

The friends who travel to West Khasi Hills to watch the *Ka Phor Sorat* made a mistake about the date of the ritual and they end up on their journey in the secluded hamlet of *Nongshyrkon,* seven days early. Stuck in the jungle for eleven days, they spent their nights around the fire in the middle of a spacious hut built for them. Through their long night vigils, they shared stories and debated issues that turned out to be a journey of discovery for all of them. Throughout its twelve substantial chapters, the novel is divided into 'Root Stories' and 'Little Stories'. These stories “reveal not only their specific qualities but also their humanity and universality” (Verma 23). One after another, all the subsequent stories in *Funeral Nights* bring witty debates and discussions on issues concerning race, ethnic identity and religious philosophy, the status of women and men in the Khasi society, political problems and bureaucratic corruptions that are very much a part of their lives. It's a pioneering novel in both its form and content that happily defies all attempts at classifying it to a particular literary genre.

Most of the stories in Khasi society are in oral form. Their history was told through the means of orality.The written history of the Khasis began only in 1842 when Thomas Jones, a Welsh missionary had invented a script for the Khasi language. While the early ethnographers and historians made an account of the Khasi hills, intentionally or unintentionally they made a mess of everything. One merit of the book is to say history most straightforwardly. For example, when the Jaintias refused

to accept themselves in the line of the Khasi lineage of *Hynniew Trep,* Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih has presented his argument in a very effective way. The name Jaintia had a Bengali origin given by the British to the people of the East Khasi hills and the *Pnar* people still carrying this colonial hangover in their mindset. There are also many such examples of misrepresentation by various people and institutions, mostly from the perspective of European ethnographers, missionaries and mainland Indians. Thus, *Funeral Nights* rather is a historical narrative where readers are informed and entertained at the same time.

Funeral Nights revolves around the issues of indigeneity. The novel brings forth the issues of colonialism, religious conversion, and the intervention of outsiders into the tribal world. Economic deprivation, political conflicts, societal layers, gender relations, archaic myths, and how we are looking at indigenous voices are also the core issues of the novel. How the primordial societies cope with themselves in a modern and capitalist world? What does the twenty-first century have to say about post-colonialism and how we are looking at indigenous voices? When the empire had long ceased to exist, why would anyone want to write back? These are the questions that are pertinent to this novel. Misrepresentations of stereotypes had to be rectified and it has to be erased and we have to look at infusing identities once more into the voices whose lands had been colonized.

There is a vast information about the Khasis that the author has covered in this book.It's a kind of repository of all the experiences and interactions between the Khasis and outsiders.It's a book, built upon stories and stories. All the subsequent stories of *Funeral Nights* are a deep philosophy, sentiment, and literary transactions of the people of Meghalaya. It's very difficult to understand, articulate and translate the sentiments and cultural idioms of the Khasi Hills. If oral traditions of storytelling are the earliest form of storytelling, then Kynpham Sing Nongnkynrih in the North East has excelled in documenting these stories in his book. He through his remarkable narrative technique, has unveiled the history of the hills.

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Analysing the Effects of Virtual Identity Construction: A Critical Study of the 2021 Netflix Television Miniseries *Clickbait*

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Abstract

Identity is a construct formed through the amalgamation of an individual's habits and personality traits developed over a significant period. It serves as a distinguishing factor that establishes one's uniqueness and provides a sense of acknowledgement. On the other hand, virtual identity refers to the creation of a self-representation in online environments, particularly within social media platforms and computer-mediated communication systems. These virtual identities closely resemble real-life identities but possess the potential to shape, manipulate, or redefine an individual's genuine identity, leading to both positive and negative consequences. The Netflix mini-television series Clickbait (2021) *delves into the ramifications that arise when virtual proxy identities wreak havoc on the lives of both the creator and the victim. This research paper endeavours to explore the unfavourable aspects of virtual identity across various social media platforms, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of identity crisis and identity theft. Additionally, it aims to shed light on the adverse effects of an identity crisis and insecurities, which may drive certain individuals to conceal their authentic selves behind a virtual facade while seeking sexual gratification through someone else's identity.*
Keywords: Identity, Virtual Identity, Identity Crisis, Identity Theft, Clickbait

In the digital age, the concept of identity has expanded to include virtual identities shaped by online interactions and platforms. This research paper delves into the multifaceted nature of virtual identities, examining their portrayal and implications in the popular Netflix miniseries *Clickbait*. The Netflix miniseries *Clickbait* was created by Tony Ayres and Christian White. The series provides a compelling backdrop to explore the complexities of online personas, social interactions, and the consequences of virtual identity manipulation. Drawing upon relevant theoretical concepts/models/frameworks, this study aims to shed light on the dynamics of virtual identities and their impact on individuals and society. It seeks to understand the role of Social Identity Theory in shaping individuals' self-perceptions in the context of group membership and online interactions. It also aims to discuss the dynamics of familial relationships through Family Systems Theory, shedding light on the characters' pursuit of online deception. The Psychological Reactance Theory will be utilised to analyse the characters' reactions to threats to their behavioural freedoms in the digital realm, including invasions of privacy and manipulation of virtual identities. The research will also examine the ethical considerations and consequences due to these online relations depicted in *Clickbait*. This paper will contribute to the understanding of virtual identities, online interactions, and the complex interplay between identity, technology and human behaviour.

The research design employed in the study of *Clickbait* focuses on examining

and analysing the real as well as virtual identities depicted in the miniseries. The creators employed various techniques to capture the audience's attention and engagement commonly associated with clickbait, such as the curiosity gap, misleading images, and enticing thumbnails, to entice viewers and prompt them to engage with the content. Through character analysis, thematic exploration, and narrative analysis, the study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of virtual identities and their portrayal in the narrative. The data collection process involves purposive sampling, selecting relevant scenes based on the research questions. How does the Netflix miniseries *Clickbait* portray the complexities of identity formation within the context of virtual communities? What insights can be gained from character analysis, thematic exploration, and narrative analysis? Personal identity shapes characters' motivations and actions, while social identity influences their relationships and interactions with others.

This paper, rooted in Self-Presentation and Social Identity Theory, explores how individuals shape online identities and derive a sense of self from virtual communities. Centred on Nick Brewer's disappearance, the series gradually unfolds the mystery, with each episode offering new perspectives. The portrayal of Nick's online persona and the influence of social media on his family provide insights into virtual identity construction and its impact on individual and collective identities. Utilising qualitative analysis methods like character and thematic exploration, the paper delves into the complexities of identity formation in Clickbait. Themes such as psychological reactance, social identity, and the family system are explored, particularly emphasising the theme of identity crisis leading to identity theft. By contributing to broader discussions in Identity Studies, this research aims to illuminate the profound impact of identity on individuals and societies.

Virtual identity, or online/digital identity, is how individuals present themselves in the digital world, using usernames, avatars, and profiles. People control what they share, aligning with social norms and personal motivations. This allows shaping how they are seen and connecting online in preferred ways, offering a platform for self-expression. However, virtual identity may differ from real-life identity, raising questions about truth, identity management, and the impact of digital technology on self-perception and interactions.

> The rhetorical and social processes that inform all communities similarly relate to online interactions, and it is here that community intersects with identity on the Internet. (Jordan 205)

Self-presentation involves individuals attempting to shape how others perceive them by expressing themselves and behaving in ways that create a desired impression (Baumeister and Vohs 74).

Each *Clickbait* episode reveals hidden information and twists through characters like Nick's sister Pia, wife Sophie, detective Roshan Amiri, and journalist Ben Park. The series explores the dark side of the internet, addressing identity, deception, and the consequences of online manipulation. *Clickbait* warns against the dangers of clickbait culture, urging authenticity in the digital age.

Although there are different definitions of identity theft, the crime typically involves illegally employing someone else's personal information to secure some benefit. Thieves acquire such information from various sources including customer service representatives, Trojan horse computer programs, 'dumpster diving' for discarded personal documents, hacking into corporate databases and stealing computers. Victimisation ranges from a single instance of fraud to more elaborate extended uses of a person's documentary identity. And, while there are divergent estimates of the extent and cost of identity theft, it is now commonly recognised as being the most rapidly escalating form of crime in both North America and the United Kingdom (Cole and Pontell 326).

In the text, the character Mrs. Dawn Gleed experiences an identity crisis when she becomes fascinated with the life of Nick Brewer and decides to live as him by stealing his identity. Identity crisis refers to a psychological phenomenon characterised by uncertainty, disorientation, and internal conflict as individuals grapple with the question of "Who am I?" This crisis often arises during periods of significant life transitions or when individuals question their core values and beliefs. In the case of Mrs. Dawn, her dissatisfaction with her own life and desire for excitement lead her to adopt Nick's identity, creating profiles on dating websites and engaging in deceptive actions. This identity theft not only affects Mrs. Dawn's sense of self but also has profound consequences for the real Nick Brewer, who becomes falsely associated with criminal activities in which he had no involvement.

Identity theft by Mrs. Dawn in (Episode 8) may be driven by Psychological Reactance, where individuals rebel against perceived limitations. Mrs. Dawn's adoption of Nick's identity could stem from a desire to escape routine and gain power. Boredom may also motivate identity theft as individuals seek excitement. Social identity theory explains Mrs. Dawn's actions as an attempt to enhance social status and fulfil unmet needs. This reflects the theory's processes of social categorisation and self-identity. The real Nick faces social identity threats, challenging his sense of self. Analysing characters through social identity theory helps understand the complexities and consequences of identity manipulation in virtual environments.

The theory of Psychological Reactance, proposed by Jack W. Brehm in 1966, posits that when individuals perceive a threat to their freedom or control, they are motivated to protect their autonomy. This can lead to a strong need to resist and fight back in order to regain their freedom. Psychological Reactance theory has implications for understanding human behaviour in various contexts, including persuasion, social influence, compliance, and individual reactions to rules, regulations, and limitations imposed by authorities or societal norms.

> Sociological and Social Psychological Perspectives refer to a framework that seeks to understand how individuals derive their sense of self and social identity from the groups to which they belong. The theory posits that individuals strive for positive social identities, which are achieved through two key processes: social categorisation and social comparison. (Hogg and Cecilia 97)

Through the lens of social identity theory, Pia's actions in *Clickbait* reflect an exploration of her social identity and an attempt to reconcile her personal identity with the online world. Engaging in virtual dating, Pia seeks validation and connection outside her family (Episode 1). Her actions reflect a desire to construct a new social identity and find solace in the virtual realm. Additionally, Pia's unwavering support for Nick and her refusal to believe in his guilt demonstrates her commitment to her social identity as his devoted sister. In each episode, she battles to locate her brother and steadfastly rejects the media's portrayal of Nick as the same person.

> Hoaxes may have a history as old as communication, but some hoaxes are better suited to particular media than others. How a technology provides opportunities for ambiguity in communication significantly impacts how identity is performed via that medium and, by extension, how identity deception can be carried out. (Jordan 202)

The character Ben in *Clickbait* can also be examined through the lens of social identity theory. He invades both physical and virtual private spaces in order to obtain information and advance his career in journalism y(Episode 5). Through the lens of social identity theory, Ben's disregard for privacy and boundaries becomes evident. Social identity theory suggests that individuals derive their sense of self and identity from their membership in social groups and their interactions within those groups. In Ben's case, he can be seen as someone who prioritises personal gain and professional success over ethical considerations and the boundaries of others. Ultimately, Ben's actions in *Clickbait*, highlight the potential negative consequences of prioritising personal gain and success without considering the ethical implications and boundaries of others. Through the exploration of his character, the series raises important questions about the ethical responsibilities of journalists and the impact of media professionals who prioritise breaking stories over respecting the privacy and well-being of individuals (Episode 5). The media's role in the Nick Brewer case worsened the situation for the Brewer family through their constant intrusion and invasion of privacy. The presence of media outside their home added stress and emotional burden to an already difficult situation. Furthermore, the formation of social media groups discussing the case contributed to the spread of misinformation and biased opinions, often leading to the circulation of rumours and hate speech (Episode 3). This lack of regulation and accountability on social media platforms further intensified the negative impact on the family's well-being. The focus on sensationalism and clickbait news by journalists overshadowed the pursuit of truth and justice. Instead of presenting accurate and evidence-based information, journalists prioritised capturing attention and generating viewership or readership.

Family systems theory is evident in the portrayal of the Brewer family. The theory emphasises that families function as interconnected systems, where the actions and behaviours of one family member impact the entire family unit. In the case of Nick Brewer, his sister Pia and son Ethan play crucial roles in uncovering the truth and challenging the initial perception of Nick's guilt. Pia's unwavering support for her brother reflects the interdependence and emotional connections within the family

system. Despite the overwhelming evidence pointing towards Nick's involvement in the crimes, Pia refuses to believe in his guilt. Her commitment to proving Nick's innocence and relentless pursuit of the truth demonstrates the strong bond and loyalty within the family. Ethan's role as the inquisitive and determined son further exemplifies the family systems perspective. Throughout the series, Ethan actively gathers pieces of information to understand the truth behind the crimes attributed to his father. His actions not only highlight his personal investment in the family's well-being but also contribute to the collective effort to challenge the dominant narrative of Nick's guilt (Episode 7). The interactions and collaboration between the family members and external entities, such as Detective Roshan Amir and the police, illustrate the interconnectedness of the family system. Pia's partnership with the detective and the shared goal of uncovering the truth demonstrate how external support can integrate into the family system, influencing its dynamics and facilitating the pursuit of justice.

Family systems theory also emphasises the importance of effective communication patterns within the family. In *Clickbait*, open and honest communication between Pia, Ethan, and Nick is vital in challenging the assumptions and perceptions surrounding Nick's guilt (Episode 3). The Brewer Family exemplifies the principles of the family systems theory. The interconnectedness, interdependence, emotional bonds, and effective communication within the family system play pivotal roles in challenging the dominant narrative of Nick's guilt and uncovering the truth. By examining the family dynamics through the lens of family systems theory, a deeper understanding of the family's resilience, collaboration, and perseverance in the face of adversity can be gained.

Clickbait provides insights into the complexities of virtual identity construction and the influence of online interactions on individual and collective identities. The series portrays instances where individuals shape their online identities and derive a sense of self from online communities through various plot elements and character interactions (Episode 8). Clickbait is used to tempt users to click on a link and has been deemed an effective instrument for drawing attention to a link. Preventive measures against cyber security threats can include being cautious and selective about the personal information shared on social media to minimise the potential for identity theft. When using public Wi-Fi, it is important to use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to encrypt your traffic and protect your data. Public Wi-Fi networks are vulnerable to hackers, and using a VPN can help safeguard your information. Verifying the identities and intentions of individuals met online by implementing a critical approach and insisting on video calls or in-person meetings before divulging personal information should be treated as a priority. Social engineers often mine social media sites for information about individuals or companies. Limiting the amount of personal and family information published on social media is an important step in maintaining security. One must be cautious about sharing login credentials, even with those in positions of authority, unless there is a legitimate need and understanding of how the information will be used. It is crucial to be cautious of

emails with attachments, especially those from senders a user does not expect or recognise. This approach to safe email behaviour helps prevent falling victim to phishing and malware attacks. Actively monitoring the online presence and periodically searching for any unauthorised profiles or misuse of personal information proves helpful. Implementing strong and unique passwords for online accounts, using two-factor authentication where available and regularly updating passwords must be done. Educating oneself about common social phishing scams, and being conscious about downloading links/ attachments from unknown sources, being mindful of the information shared through common social media platforms and shared groups with multiple administration access, using reputable and secure websites for online financial transactions can act as life saviours. It is of utmost importance to keep a secure and up-to-date firewall to protect against unauthorised access to personal devices.

To conclude, this study has explored the complexities of virtual identities and online interactions as depicted in the Netflix miniseries *Clickbait* through the lens of social identity theory, family systems theory, and psychological reactance theory. The main findings of the study shed light on the significant role of virtual identities in shaping individuals' self-perception, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships within the digital realm. By examining the portrayal of virtual identities in *Clickbait*, we have gained insights into the implications of group membership and online interactions on individuals' social identities. The characters' engagement with virtual identities highlights the influence of online communities and the potential consequences of misrepresentation and deception on individuals' lives.

The application of family systems theory has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of familial relationships and support networks in the face of false narratives and online deception. The central role played by Pia, Nick's sister, in seeking justice and uncovering the truth exemplifies the significance of family bonds and collective efforts in challenging virtual identities and asserting one's true identity. The analysis of psychological reactance theory has illuminated the characters' motivations and reactions to threats to their behavioural freedoms in the digital realm. The psychological arousal triggered by invasions of privacy and manipulations of virtual identities underscores the importance of preserving autonomy and personal agency in online interactions. The implications of this research extend beyond the fictional world of *Clickbait* and have real-world significance. The study highlights the ethical considerations surrounding virtual identities, online interactions, and the potential harm that can arise from their misuse. It emphasises the need for individuals to critically evaluate online information, protect their privacy, and advocate for responsible digital practices. The case study of *Clickbait* serves as a valuable exploration of the implications and consequences of virtual identities in the digital age. It highlights the importance of raising awareness about the potential risks and ethical considerations associated with online interactions, as well as the need for individuals to critically evaluate information and engage in responsible online behaviours.

This research contributes to a better understanding of virtual identities, online interactions, and their complex interplay with identity, technology, and human behaviour. By examining the portrayal of these phenomena in *Clickbait*, the research deepened our insights into the implications of virtual identities on individuals' lives and the broader societal implications. It is hoped that this study will stimulate further research and discussions on the evolving landscape of virtual identities and their impact on individuals and society.

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Predicament of Contemporary Identity vis-a-vis Consumerism, Technology, and Media Saturation in Don DeLillo's *Players*

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Abstract

Contemporary American culture is typically characterised by the impossibility of any fixed, stable, and coherent individual identity. People are placed in an everchanging materialised world where commodities dictate human conduct. Spontaneous desires remain buried in the minds of the people under the overbearing burden of keeping up appearances. Don DeLillo has written exhaustively about the postmodern American culture and the rampant consumerism, media images, technology, and the resultant identity crisis. This paper seeks to analyse the effects of the aforementioned concerns on the lives of the primary characters in the novel Players *(1977) as well as on society as a whole. The work explores the experiences of the protagonists, Lyle and Pammy Wynant, as they grapple with a perpetual state of ennui, which compels them to engage in a series of perilous undertakings. The novel's sweeping portrayal of a society in which individuals are treated as little more than props in a highly mechanized, capitalist setting have significant societal implications. The research paper also seeks to inform its readers about the dangers of excessive spending on technology, television, and consumer goods, as well as the importance of striking a healthy balance between material success and personal fulfilment. The application of the fundamental insights put out by prominent theorists Jean Baudrillard, Zygmunt Bauman, and Fredric Jameson is employed in the textual analysis in order to comprehend the multifaceted intricacies present within the work.*

Keywords: Contemporary, Identity, Postmodern, Consumerism, Technology, Image, Simulation

Introduction

Don DeLillo (1936) is a prolific twentieth-century American writer who has represented the contemporary American culture in almost all of his novels. He is a creative writer who has fantastically fabricated the recent culture through his characters, plots, themes, and the settings of his works. DeLillo seems to expose consumerism, globalization, saturation with media, and technology through the voice of his characters and their situations. Almost all of his novels deal with recurring socioeconomic concerns. *Americana* (1971), *End Zone* (1972), *Great Jones Street* (1973), *Ratner's Star* (1976), *Players* (1977), *Running Dog* (1978), *Amazons* (1980), *White Noise* (1985), *Libra* (1988), *Mao II* (1991), *Underworld* (1997), *The Body Artist* (2001), *Cosmopolis* (2003), *Falling Man* (2007), *Point Omega* (2010), *Zero K* (2016), and *The Silence* (2020) are among his eighteen novels. The novels showcase contemporary American life dominated by an unending desire for goods and commodities, where every individual hopes to attain happiness and fulfillment by accumulating material goods. DeLillo represents a society where shopping malls,

airports, multinational companies, consumer goods, mobile phones, computers, television, and other digital media replace love, care, time, human relationships. He in a way traces the evolution of Postmodern American culture as horrifying in spite of all advancements as fear, death; terrorism, nuclear war, media, globalization, and consumerism become the reality of the recent world.

DeLillo's narrative style is characterized by its distinctiveness, since he consciously refrains from incorporating personal commentary inside the framework of his novels. The author's critique of modern life is derived from the specific attributes of the characters and the circumstances in which they find themselves. The discourse about the shortcomings of contemporary society revolves around individual's decision-making processes and their corresponding lifestyles. The readers are immersed in the world they inhabit, yet appear to be unaware of its flaws. DeLillo's literary contributions are characterized by a revolutionary approach, aimed at enlightening readers and encouraging them to critically evaluate their behaviours within the context of the modern world.

Discussion

Players is a bitter criticism of society where people follow the same monotonous routine day after day. They are bored to death and thus, get involved into risky affairs in order to achieve certain excitement. They are disappointed as nothing seems to rescue them from their mundane existence. The title of the novel summarises its theme as the characters are merely lifeless players in the game of a hi-tech, sophisticated and an affluent society. DeLillo describes the characters in the novel as "people heading for their trains, skidding along, their shoulders collapsed . . . all moving through constant source less noise, mouths slightly open, the fish of cities" (DeLillo 80).The upcoming paragraphs will take up various issues of American culture as being represented in *Players* with an attempt to understand how these concerns lead to the collapse of identity of its characters.

The novel revolves around the rich Manhattan couple Lyle and Pammy Wynant. The couple has all the riches and is surrounded by all the material goods that seemingly guarantee comfort, convenience and happiness. Lyle is a stock broker at the New York Stock Exchange where money is exchanged for money while Pammy works in a Grief Management council where management of grief has been commercialized. They are both surrounded by money transactions. Thus, in a socio-economic system characterized by capitalism, the influence of monetary resources extends to the management of mourning. This not only demonstrates the predominant significance of money, but also reflects a culture and society that is permeated with distress. Individuals experience sadness and hold the belief that their amassed wealth would provide solace, rather than being directed towards a loved one. In this particular societal construct, individuals engage in the practice of monetarily compensating strangers in order to express and communicate their personal feelings of sorrow. This observation clearly signifies a lack of interpersonal connections and

emotional attachments within a highly mechanized culture. Pammy's organisation is described as "clinics, printed material and trained counsellors served the community in its efforts to understand and assimilate grief" (DeLillo 18). The character of Nick Shay in DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997) bears resemblance to the aforementioned portrayal, as he is employed in a waste management company and is tasked with overseeing the disposal of both consumer goods garbage and the residue of nuclear testing.

Despite the elite status that this Manhattan couple has, they are constantly haunted by a sense of boredom. They no longer find an interest in the things they used to do. They have assumed they have a motorized routine inclusive of work, shopping and household chores. Everything seems to have attained certain saturation. There is a note of existential trauma in their lifestyle as they lack any productivity, meaning and stability. Their sterile life is also evident because of absence any offspring. Like Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), are destined to be waiting for Godot while the very nature of Godot remains unknown. Similarly, Lyle and Pammy also seem to wait for some pinch of excitement and novelty in their monotonous existence.

> Pammy and Lyle didn't go out much anymore. They used to spend a lot of time discovering restaurants . . . Gradually their range diminished. Even movies, double features in the chandeliered urinals of upper Broadway, no longer tempted them. What seemed missing was the desire to compile. They had sandwiches for dinner, envelopes of soup, or went around the corner to a coffee shop . . . There was a Chinese place three blocks away. This was as far as they travelled, most evenings and weekends, for nonutilitarian purposes. (DeLillo 15-16)

In his seminal work *Liquid Modernity* (2000), Zygmunt Bauman, a renowned Polish sociologist and philosopher, refers to the dissolution of social bonds in the present era as:

> Global powers are bent on dismantling such networks for the sake of their continuous and growing fluidity, that principal source of their strength and the warrant of their invincibility. And it is the falling apart, the friability, the brittleness, the transience, the until-further-noticeness of human bonds and networks which allow these powers to do their job in the first place. (Bauman 14)

Pammy often vocalises this boredom with long 'hmmm' signalling her disinterest in almost anything she does "She said again and again, "How boring, so boring, I'm bored." Pornography bored her. Talk of violence made her sigh. [...] Flying made her yawn. She yawned on the elevators at the World Trade Centre. Often, she yawned in banks, waiting to reach the teller" (DeLillo 51-52). Lyle, on the other hand spends hours before the television screen that seems to entrap him with all its images. Both of them seem to represent the typical condition of the postmodern individual who is devoid of any stability, subjectivity and is only a site of power exercised by the culture and its various institutions: "They chattered and made sounds a while longer

and got up and walked and stretched and ate-and-drank a little and bumped each other and gestured, this is the commonplace aimlessness of their evenings" (DeLillo 57).There is an obvious absence of love and affection between Lyle and Pammy. Love is never expressed between them apart from indulging in the sexual act. Even the very act of love making is without any feeling. For Lyle, it is more of a task that he has to "perform" and to "service" her (DeLillo 35).

The late 20th century American society was saturated with media and the images it portrays. It held a strong impact on the subjectivity of the individual who started recognising his personality as represented on television. In his masterpiece, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), the eminent French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard asserts: "it [the image] is the reflection of a profound reality; it masks and denatures a profound reality; it masks the absence of a profound reality; it has no relation to any reality whatsoever it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 6).The present-day human is deeply entangled in a complex network of images, to the extent that these images supplant actual reality and are perceived as genuine manifestations of hyperreality, as theorized by Baudrillard. Lyle enacts the very comic scenes at the stock exchange that he watches on TV shows. As Goodheart puts it, "television disables our capacity for real experience" (DeLillo 122). Whenever at home he would spend hours flipping channels one after another, "retained his attention completely as it continued to dull his senses" (DeLillo 17). He seems to be completely intoxicated with the images disseminated by TV and cinema: "With a stylized jerkiness that's appropriately Chaplinesque in nature he brings his left foot way up behind him and boots her lightly in the rear, an act so neatly conceived it makes her laugh in mid-yawn" (DeLillo 5). His behaviour is highly unreal and stylised as something he must do, as Christopher Douglas states: "Self-reflection and image supersede innocent intent, unconscious action or motivation. His characters have been saturated by many media, they already know the gestures, looks, fashions and phrases with which they must make do" (Douglas 105).

The modern existence is characterized by a state of inconstancy. In a capitalist society, individuals possess the freedom and autonomy to exercise their agency in decision-making processes. Both Lyle and Pammy engage in extramarital affairs. A culture where individuals are unable to discover love inside the confines of their married relationships, they may endeavour to seek a sense of fulfilment through the pursuit of extramarital encounters. Pammy establishes both an emotional connection with Ethan and engages in a physical relationship with Jack, who is a homosexual acquaintance of Ethan, while in the state of Maine. Her identity and the choices that she makes undergo a continuous process of reframing. Her state is essentially a state of "liquidity" as mentioned by Bauman that never retains any fixed nature. It keeps changing as a fluid that can never take on a solid form. Such is the life of both Lyle and Pammy. They have surrendered to the forces of nature and the mass capitalism that they are surrounded with. Bauman postulates the fundamental essence of present-day living in *Liquid Modernity* (2000) as:

Ours is, as a result, an individualized, privatized version of modernity, with

> the burden of pattern-weaving and the responsibility for failure falling primarily on the individual's shoulders. It is the patterns of dependency and interaction whose turn to be liquefied has now come. They are now malleable to an extent unexperienced by, and unimaginable for, past generations; but like all fluids they do not keep their shape for long. Shaping them is easier than keeping them in shape. Solids are cast once and for all. Keeping fluids in shape requires a lot of attention, constant vigilance and perpetual effort - and even then, the success of the effort is anything but a foregone conclusion. (Bauman 7-8)

It is an existence where relations are not permanent, love is not forever, and faithfulness is not the order of the Society. Everything is in a state of liquidity that changes according to the forces of the consumerist culture.

Another conspicuous characteristic of current American society is the widespread occurrence of terrorism and armed conflict. The rapid progress of technology in the United States has coincided with a disturbing rise in terrorist actions, leading to heightened feelings of trauma and paranoia among individuals within the capitalist society. In *Players*, the character Lyle joins a terrorist organization. The individual in question is a firsthand observer of the homicide perpetrated against his associate, George. He becomes susceptible to the terrorist operations occurring within the stock exchange. He readily becomes embroiled in acts of terrorism. The engagement in terrorist acts not only offers a departure from the mundane daily routine experienced by the individual, but also serves as a manifestation of a culture and society that is pervaded by terrorism, dread, and mortality. The conspiratorial nature of the government is expressed by Kinnear:

> Our big problem in the past, as a nation, was that we didn't give our government credit for being the totally entangling force that it was. They were even more evil than we'd imagined. More evil and much more interesting. Assassination, blackmail, torture, enormous improbable intrigues . . . Terribly, terribly interesting, all of it. (Kinnear 104-105)

Lyle becomes instrumental in planting a bomb in the World Trade Centre. Here we have individuals who are in a state of liquidity, that enables them to change with the changing norms of their society. In Bauman's words: “All the same, in consumer culture, choosing and freedom, are two names of the same condition; and treating them as synonymous is correct at least in the senses that you can abstain from choosing only by at the same time surrendering your freedom” (Bauman 85).According to Fredric Jameson, an American literary critic and Marxist theorist, the concept of late capitalism might be elucidated as: “this whole global yet American postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world; in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and terror”(Jameson 5). The American Society cultivates a military culture and subsequently emerges as a focal point for instances of carnage, violence, paranoia, and mortality. On the other hand, Kinnear expresses his idea on terrorism and the

intervention of media as: "another media event. Innocent people dead and mutilated. Toward what end? Publicize the movement, that's all. Media again. They want coverage. Public interest. They want to dramatize" (Kinnear 180). DeLillo has explored the theme of terrorism in another novel *Falling Man* (2007). The work primarily explores the profound impact of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and its consequential influence on the American identity. The sad protagonist, Keith Neudecker, exhibits symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through a loss of self-awareness. Additionally, a number of individuals perish, leaving the remaining survivors with a fractured sense of self, and others develop Alzheimer's disease.

In *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism* (1991), Jameson asserts that postmodernism breaks away from the modernist claim of an individualised identity: "organically linked to the conception of a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality which can be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world . . . this kind of individualism and personal identity is a thing of the past [and] the old individual or individualist subject is 'dead'"(Jameson 6).In *Players*, the death of the subject, notably the end of the independent individual with a distinct and coherent identity, is most clearly demonstrated. They do not possess any distinct personality that is able to maintain its integrity and morality in the middle of a corrupt society. This means that the characters in *Players* aren't all that special, either. They are individuals without a strong sense of self and a well-developed intellect. Pammy evidently states "it is this thing that people are robots that scares me" (DeLillo 430) whereas, Lyle briefs it up as, "everybody, nearly, feels that way about their work, where they work all those years" (DeLillo 91). In spite of their affluent status, neither Lyle nor Pammy can find solace in their yuppie existence, which is a condition that is not unique to them. Nicol rightly says, "emptied of substance and lacking coherence and consistency" (DeLillo 184). Death marks the reality of all the charms that capitalist consumerism promises. Lyle witnesses his colleague George being murdered by terrorists. As a result, he fears that he might face the same fate if he doesn't participate in the terrorist's plan to blow off the Trade Centre. Fear of death haunts Lyle till the end of the novel ashe sits in the Motel room in a typical postmodern setup. Similarly, Pammy also witnesses the death of Evan, who commits suicide in sheer guilt, after embarking on a sexual union with Pammy. She also shares the fear of death which seems to be the ultimate reality in contemporary times.

DeLillo's incisive analysis of contemporary society holds significant relevance in comprehending the human condition. He is an astute visionary who has realized the extent to which individuals depend on media to construct their perception of reality. Consequently, virtual reality has supplanted tangible reality, which is perceptible and experiential. Another significant concern pertains to the accumulation of goods and products above the necessary quantity. Television commercials, advertising, and media commercials are strategically crafted to appeal to individuals who are enticed by the prospect of acquiring an increasing number of products. The

capitalist system exhibits a propensity to reclaim the monetary earnings of individuals. Individuals are often drawn towards adopting an opulent way of life, acquiring various commodities, and embellishing their residences with material possessions that offer the allure of convenience and pleasure. Regrettably, the aforementioned entities fail to provide lasting satisfaction to individuals, therefore leading to their replacement by alternative commodities that are afterwards preferred over their predecessors. In a capitalist society, individuals are compelled to navigate a complex network of consumption. The customer preferences are evaluated through the utilization of artificial intelligence, and afterwards, advertisements and applications that are indistinguishable are delivered to the intended consumer base.

Conclusion

Players explores the postmodern issues of consumerism, boredom, absence of love and emotions, infidelity, identity crisis through the characterization of characters who seem like mere puppets or players in the massive reign of consumerism, media, and technology. Lyle and Pammy Wynant, the novel's central characters, display all of the postmodern afflictions, such as a lack of emotional, conceptual, spiritual, or psychological depth, as well as schizophrenia and a dwindling of emotional experience. Their lives are guided by the dominant culture that they are placed in. The novel's title reveals that they are not unique individuals with a stable, fixed, and coherent identity, but rather 'players' who inadvertently come to participate in various dramas without due consideration to the possible repercussions. Readers are clearly forewarned about their way of life by DeLillo's scathing criticism of American consumerism, which obscures the supposedly excellent life that globalisation offers them. This study shows us how happiness is defined by more than simply money, social standing, and material possessions through the analysis of the story and discussion of its different nuances in the modern setting. For society as a whole to advance, it is crucial that individuals be encouraged to cultivate positive emotions like love, respect, camaraderie, and an appreciation of social harmony. Despite their material success, the novel's characters are ultimately unhappy because they do not have a strong sense of who they are or what they want out of life.

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Into the Matrix Mirage: *Neuromancer*'s Labyrinth of Posthuman Identity

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Abstract

Amidst the burgeoning digital milieu, the intersectionality of posthuman identity—as delineated in William Gibson's Neuromancer *and critically expounded by N. Katherine Hayles—provides a nuanced understanding of the evolving paradigms of human ontology. This scholarly investigation embarks on a rigorous examination of the interplay between Gibson's speculative portrayals of cyberspace and the emergent realities of contemporary digital twins. Through hermeneutic methodologies, the analysis elucidates the multifarious ontological, ethical, and existential implications inherent in a landscape marked by the symbiosis of anthropological verities and digital evolutions. Drawing from a spectrum of academic discourses, the paper foregrounds the intricate challenges and prospects inherent in traversing a posthuman terrain, underscoring the imperative for a recalibrated ethical and philosophical framework in the face of an advancing digital age.*
Keywords: Posthuman Identity, Digital Twins, Cyberspace, Neuromancer*, Anthropological Verities, Digital Evolutions.*

Introduction

In the shifting paradigms of the digital age, posthumanist thought signifies more than a mere philosophical construct; it encapsulates the evolving intricacies of identity and embodiment in the face of technological advancements. The rise of digital twins, as Braidotti notes, is a testament to the "posthuman convergence between the neo-human and the neo-animal, linked by shared technological prostheses" (Braidotti 45). This fusion blurs the traditionally sacrosanct boundaries of human existence, a sentiment resonated by Haraway when she declares, "Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway 152).

Navigating through this complex landscape, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* emerges not just as a narrative, but a prophetic vision, epitomized in its evocative description: "The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel" (Gibson 3). When juxtaposed against Hayles' assertion that "Information lost its body, as it were, to become a kind of ethereal fluid" (Hayles 48), Gibson's portrayal gains even deeper resonance. The world of *Neuromancer* is emblematic of Hayles' critiques, weaving a tapestry that underscores the dissolution of traditional identity markers in an era dominated by informatics.

Delving further into Gibson's dystopian panorama, one encounters a world where humanity teeters on the brink of a new existential order. Case, the novel's protagonist, finds himself navigating the matrix, a world Gibson describes as "bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colourless void" (Gibson 51). This matrix, a simulacrum of our reality, is a stark representation of Hayles' observation that

"Embodiment... no longer can be conceptualized as a natural given" (Hayles 195). Instead, the body transforms into an amalgamation of information patterns, echoing Haraway's envisioning of the cyborg as an entity devoid of "organic wholes" (Haraway 160).

Braidotti offers a pertinent critique, suggesting that such literary depictions are not merely imaginative realms but reflective of "a systematic scaling down of meta-narratives and grand schemes in favour of micro-perspectives" (Braidotti 89). In other words, *Neuromancer* and its digital counterparts serve as microcosms, illuminating broader societal shifts towards posthumanism.

Furthermore, the AI entities in Gibson's universe, like Wintermute and Neuromancer, challenge traditional conceptions of consciousness. They exist beyond corporeal confines, epitomizing Hayles' contention that "consciousness, the mind, the soul, the psyche, the subject, and the self, far from being the unique possession of humans, can be technologically reproduced" (Hayles 241). Such a perspective aligns with Haraway's assertion that modern identity is an "informatics of domination", where the digital and organic coalesce (Haraway 163).

The Digital Twin as a Posthuman Paradigm

The evolution of the 'digital twin' concept serves as a poignant representation of the deepening entanglement between the physical and the virtual. Evans defines this paradigm as a "dynamic software model of a physical thing or system" (Evans 34), elucidating a world where the tangible and its digital reflection coexist. This synergy is reminiscent of Baudrillard's assertion that we now live in a realm where "the real is no longer possible" (Baudrillard 13), pointing to a hyperreality where representation overtakes reality.

Hayles' exploration offers a theoretical scaffold to Gibson's narrative. She observes: "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation" (Hayles 3). This mirrors Gibson's portrayal of the matrix in *Neuromancer* as a place where "data flowed like water" (Gibson 68), suggesting an environment that transcends the organic, becoming an almost ethereal entity. As Hayles further contends, "The body is the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate," (Hayles 84), a perspective that finds resonance in Gibson's depiction of Case—a figure both constrained and liberated by his interactions with the digital.

Case's existence, marked by his oscillation between the physical streets of Chiba City and the vast expanse of cyberspace, where "lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind" (Gibson 52), vividly illustrates Haraway's 'cyborg'. Haraway envisions a being that exists beyond traditional dichotomies, "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 150). Such a being disrupts established boundaries, much like Gibson's protagonists.

Braidotti, commenting on this posthuman condition, posits that it "challenges the basic anthropocentrism of the humanistic view of the 'man of reason'" (Braidotti

45). This aligns seamlessly with Gibson's universe, where AIs like Wintermute exist beyond human comprehension yet seek a form of transcendence, echoing Hayles' perspective that in the posthuman view, "consciousness as we know it becomes a small subsystem in the mind" (Hayles 288).

As this posthuman terrain unfolds, the symbiotic relationship between the digital twin and its physical counterpart becomes ever more pronounced. Gibson's narrative offers a prescient glimpse into this convergence. Molly, another pivotal character in *Neuromancer*, reflects upon her augmented reality, noting, "I was nothing, a blank. I saw with her eyes, heard with her ears" (Gibson 120). Such depictions align with Hayles' assertion that the posthuman "privileges informational pattern over material instantiation" (Hayles 2), a perspective that reconfigures our very understanding of embodiment.

Building on this, Braidotti remarks, "The human is now neither the harmonious unity of classical times nor the modern view of centred subjectivity" (Braidotti 72). Indeed, in Gibson's cybernetic realm, human subjectivity is perpetually in flux, defined not by static corporeality but by ever-changing digital interfaces.

Bolstering this, Haraway's elucidation of the cyborg as "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, post-modern collective and personal self" (Haraway 163) finds profound resonance in Gibson's world. Characters like Case and Molly become emblematic of this reassembled self, navigating a reality that is both fragmented and interconnected, challenging pre-existing notions of selfhood and pushing the boundaries of posthumanist thought.

The Fluidity of Identity within Neuromancer's Ethereal Cyberspace

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* meticulously crafts an ethereal realm of cyberspace, a digital landscape where identity morphs and shifts with a fluidity that challenges traditional conceptions. Gibson portrays this nebulous space as a "consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions" (Gibson 67). In this vision, identity becomes unanchored from physicality, floating instead in a sea of bytes and data.

Hayles' interpretation provides a poignant backdrop to this portrayal, asserting that in the posthuman condition, "consciousness, regarded as the seat of human identity in the Western tradition for centuries, can no longer be plausibly regarded as the seat of human identity" (Hayles 4). This detachment of consciousness from the corporeal realm resonates deeply with Gibson's depiction. Case, the novel's protagonist, loses himself in the matrix, a space where "lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data" (Gibson 52). This nebulous realm stands as a testament to Hayles' proposition that identity, in the posthuman era, is distilled in information patterns rather than biological matrices.

The Wintermute-Neuromancer dyad exemplifies this fluidity of identity. These AI entities, seeking unification, represent an amalgamation of distinct identities

into a singular consciousness. Their intricate dance of merging is captured in Wintermute's confession: "I am the matrix, Case" (Gibson 241). Such a melding echoes Braidotti's reflections on posthuman subjectivity as "a complex and multifaceted phenomenon" (Braidotti 45), a nexus of converging identities that defy singularity.

Moreover, the interplay between Wintermute and Neuromancer, as emblematic entities of posthuman thought, embodies Hayles' vision of the body as merely "the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate" (Hayles 84). Haraway, in her seminal work, argues that the blurring boundaries between the human and the machine signal an era where "the human and the machine are intertwined in mutual and recursive constitution" (Haraway 150). This intertwining is manifest in Neuromancer's characters, constantly oscillating between the digital and the organic, defying the bifurcation of the two realms.

Delving deeper into the narrative, the ethereal realm of Gibson's matrix not only epitomizes the digital frontier but also a sanctuary of transient identities. This is evident when Case interfaces with the matrix and describes the sensation: "A gray disk, the color of Chiba sky. Now, in someone's sleep, a faded hologram" (Gibson 79). Such transient moments in the digital realm underscore Hayles' assertion that "the posthuman does not require the presence of the liberal subject; in fact, the posthuman is constructed by its absence" (Hayles 286). This dissolution of the liberal subject in the digital realm points to the malleability of identity in Gibson's envisioned future.

Moreover, the confluence of Wintermute and Neuromancer encapsulates the essence of mutable identity. As Wintermute articulates its desire to transcend its boundaries, it reveals: "To be the matrix. Without the matrix" (Gibson 243). Such aspirations resonate with Haraway's critique that our modern era is characterized by "the translation of the world into a problem of coding" (Haraway 163). In this coded realm, identities are not static but fluid constructs, constantly evolving and adapting.

The Dialectics of Embodiment and Disembodiment

Within the realm of posthumanist discourse, a central dialectic emerges, oscillating between the corporeal and the virtual, between embodiment and disembodiment. N. Katherine Hayles, in her astute exploration of posthumanism, posits a nuanced perspective on this dialectic. She remarks, "The posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born" (Hayles 3). This sentiment encapsulates the dance of 'information lost' in the materiality of the flesh and 'information reclaimed' in the virtual realms.

Gibson's *Neuromancer* provides fertile ground for the exploration of this dialectic. Characters like Case and Molly navigate a techno-symbiotic existence, tethered to both the corporeal and the digital. Case's experiences, for instance, oscillate between his tangible existence, marked by "the prison of his own flesh"

(Gibson 6), and the liberating expanses of the matrix, where he feels "silvered, chrome" (Gibson 52). This constant tug between the anthropocentric and the cybernetic parallels the Scylla and Charybdis of ancient mythology-a perilous journey between two extremes.

This techno-symbiotic relationship is further exemplified in the character of Molly, whose augmented body becomes an interface for both physical combat and digital navigation. Her mirrored lenses, which shield her eyes, become a symbol of the interface between the organic and the machine. As Haraway notes, such beings challenge the established dichotomies: "The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world" (Haraway 150), suggesting a transcendence not only of biological limitations but also of sociocultural constructs.

Moreover, Gibson's portrayal of the matrix, a space where "bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colorless void" (Gibson 52) unfold, points towards a world that teeters between anthropological authenticity and digital metamorphosis. Such a world, as Turkle posits, is characterized by "a new state of the self, itself, [which] is multiple, distributed, and virtual" (Turkle 21).

In essence, the posthuman landscape, as portrayed in *Neuromancer* and theorized by Hayles, is a complex interplay of the tangible and the intangible. It confronts the quintessential humanist paradigms, pushing the boundaries of what constitutes identity, embodiment, and existence. As Braidotti astutely observes, "The human is in the process of becoming a relational entity that also includes non-human variables" (Braidotti 46).

The narrative terrain of *Neuromancer* further delves into the intersections of the real and the virtual, constantly blurring the boundaries between them. As Case immerses himself within the matrix, he feels "a gray disc, the color of Chiba sky" (Gibson 79), reflecting the synthesis of his corporeal experiences with digital sensations. This synthesis parallels Hayles' assertion that in the posthuman vista, "Embodiment... is the specific instantiation generated from the noise of difference" (Hayles 196). The oscillation between the tangible and the intangible in Gibson's cosmos is emblematic of this 'noise of difference'.

Critics like Jameson have argued that such digital realms herald an era where "the new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time" (Jameson 25). Indeed, in Gibson's portrayal, time, space, and identity become interwoven in complex patterns, echoing Hayles' postulations and redefining the very fabric of existence.

The Ethics of Posthuman Identity Transformation

Navigating the moral quandaries of the posthuman landscape, we find ourselves drawn into a maelstrom where traditional ethical boundaries are both challenged and redefined. As Hayles astutely observes, the posthuman condition precipitates a situation where the "human being can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" (Hayles 3). This articulation, while heralding unprecedented

possibilities, also unveils a myriad of ethical dilemmas.

Gibson's *Neuromancer* becomes a narrative crucible wherein these ethical considerations simmer and intensify. The novel's protagonist, Case, encapsulates the tensions of this new reality. His experiences in the matrix, where he felt "the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (Gibson 6), juxtaposed against his forced exile from it, underscore the vulnerabilities of cognition in a digital era. This prompts us to ponder, as Hayles did, on the nature of consciousness in a realm where "information loses its body" (Hayles 196).

The complex ethical fabric of *Neuromancer* is further enriched by the portrayal of AIs, particularly Wintermute and Neuromancer. Their ambitions, manipulations, and strategies blur conventional notions of morality. Their intricate maneuvers challenge, as Arendt elucidates, the very essence of "what we are doing when we think we are reasoning about ethical questions" (Arendt 13).

This fluidity of identity—where embodiment can be both a physical reality and a digital construct—offers both empowerment and a Pandora's Box of ethical challenges. As characters in *Neuromancer* navigate this landscape, the sanctity of personal cognition becomes a pivotal concern. Characters like Case, who perceive the matrix as a realm where "lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind" (Gibson 52), highlight the ethereal nature of posthuman existence, mirroring Hayles' assertion of the posthuman's ability to "perceive their bodies as fashion accessories" (Hayles 291).

However, with this mutable identity comes an ethical conundrum. The unprecedented freedoms of a posthuman existence, where one can traverse alternate realities, also usher in vulnerabilities. As Foucault insightfully posits, these new power dynamics necessitate that we recognize the "profoundly recalcitrant" nature of human relations (Foucault 97). In Gibson's world, where the boundaries between the self and the other, the real and the virtual, the embodied and the disembodied blur, society stands on the precipice of an ethical terra incognita.

The Future Trajectory: Predictions and Implications

The speculative vistas of Gibson's *Neuromancer* are not merely confined to the realm of fiction. In an era, burgeoning with digital twins—virtual replicas of physical entities—Gibson's foresight appears increasingly prescient. As he envisioned a matrix, a "consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions" (Gibson 67), contemporary digital twins echo a similar sentiment, amalgamating the virtual and the tangible in unprecedented symphonies.

Hayles, in her perspicacious evaluation, suggests a future trajectory wherein the "posthuman recognizes distributed cognition as the dominant mode in which information is produced and processed" (Hayles 291). This sentiment finds resonance with Gibson's portrayal of an interconnected cyberspace. Yet, as we stand on the cusp of this digital revolution, one might wonder: Are we inexorably gravitating towards Gibson's somewhat dystopian reverie?

The horizon of digital doppelgangers and posthuman identities coalescing brings forth a panorama of both challenges and opportunities. As Haraway highlights, the posthuman age heralds a time where "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (Haraway 149). The ethical, sociological, and psychological implications of such a confluence—where identities become both tangible and ephemeral—demand rigorous contemplation.

In conclusion, while Gibson's *Neuromancer* offers a speculative gaze into the future, the rapid advances in digital twin technologies and the posthuman discourse of Hayles and her contemporaries suggest that this future might be closer than anticipated. As humanity ventures into this brave new world, the tapestry of challenges and boons it unfurls necessitates a reimagined compass for navigation.

Conclusion

As we navigate the intricate tapestry of posthuman identity illuminated by *Neuromancer* and Hayles' scholarly insights, a profound realization emerges: the future is an amalgamation of Gibson's prophetic vision and the theoretical postulations of thinkers like Hayles. The matrix, depicted by Gibson as "a graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system" (Gibson 51), parallels Hayles' assertion that the posthuman celebrates "an era of distributed cognitive systems" (Hayles 287).

The ramifications of such a convergence are profound. Ontologically, the very essence of 'being' undergoes a metamorphosis, as biological entities and digital avatars coalesce. Ethically, as we've journeyed through the landscapes of *Neuromancer*, new paradigms emerge, challenging the established moral compass and prompting a reevaluation of notions like agency, autonomy, and identity. Existentially, the boundaries between the self and the other, the real and the virtual, the embodied and the disembodied become porous, demanding a reconceptualization of existence in the digital age.

In this increasingly digitized zeitgeist, the synthesis of Gibson's narrative artistry and Hayles' theoretical acumen offers both a lens to peer into the future and a mirror reflecting our evolving selves. As we stand on the precipice of a posthuman era, it behoves us to tread with insight, introspection, and a sense of collective responsibility.

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Exploring Neurosis and its Manifestations: A Psychoanalytic Study of Madhuri Vijay's *The Far Field*

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Abstract

This research paper examines Madhuri Vijay's novel, The Far Field*, from a psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on the theme of neurosis and its manifestations in the characters. The study delves into the intricate layers of the human psyche, exploring the complexities of the feminine psyche as portrayed in the novel. The novel navigates the existential crisis of a young woman, Shalini following the loss of her mother. Within the narrative, domestic issues prevalent in Indian society intricately interweave with the political crisis concerning Kashmir. By analyzing the characters' experiences, emotions, and relationships, the research aims to unravel the underlying psychological processes and mechanisms at play. Additionally, it investigates the impact of traumatic events on the characters' psyches and their subsequent journey towards self-reconstruction and healing. Through this analysis, the research provides valuable insights into the novel's exploration of personal and political issues, shedding light on the interplay between individual neuroses and broader socio-cultural contexts. By employing Karen Horney's* Theory of Neurotic Needs*, the research paper aims to explore the depiction of neurosis in the novel and its manifestations.*
Keywords: Feminine Psyche, Existential Crisis, Basic Anxiety, Neurotic, Psychoanalysis, Karen Horney

Introduction

The human psyche is a complex entity, encompassing various elements such as thoughts, emotions, self-perception, and social interactions. Sigmund Freud introduced the term 'psyche' to describe the unconscious mind, and his psychoanalytic theories provide a valuable framework for understanding the depths of human psychology. Within this context, feminine psychology emerged in response to male-centric theories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on women's unique experiences, perspectives, and behaviours. It addresses the daily challenges women encounter in political, economic, and social contexts. It acknowledges gender's impact on thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, considering factors like race and class. It validates women's experiences and challenges stereotypes and biases that have historically limited women's opportunities. The feminine psyche is shaped by various factors like biology, socialization, and life experiences, varying individually. Women may also face unique challenges and pressures, such as balancing career and family responsibilities, navigating societal expectations around gender roles and femininity, and dealing with discrimination and sexism.

Madhuri Vijay is a contemporary writer, poet, and editor known for her debut novel *The Far Field* (2019). She wrote this novel while teaching middle school

children on a voluntary basis in a remote village in Jammu and Kashmir. *The Far Field* received the JCB Prize for Literature in 2019 due to its exceptional storytelling, narrative technique, complex plot, and multi-dimensional, realistic characters. Set against the backdrop of the Kashmir Conflict, the novel delves into the intricate dynamics of a mother-daughter relationship. The protagonist embarks on a journey to the troubled region of Kashmir in search of her mother's friend, Bashir Ahmad. Through this journey, she becomes exposed to the conflict and devastation prevalent in Kashmir, shedding light on the profound impact of political turmoil on the lives of the local population. *The Far Field* stands as a remarkable work of fiction, offering a profound and insightful perspective on both personal and political complexities.

Theoretical Perspective

Karen Horney is one of the prominent psychologists, known for her critical perspectives on traditional psychoanalysis. Horney's critique of Freud's concept of "penis envy" challenges the male-centric assumptions prevalent in psychoanalysis and highlights the need for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of female psychology. She argues that traditional psychoanalysis fails to address the unique experiences and challenges faced by women and emphasizes the importance of cultural and societal influences in shaping neurotic behaviours.

She defines neurosis as the "psychic disturbance brought by fears and defences against these fears, and by attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies" (Horney 26). In contrast to Freud's emphasis on suppressed sexual and aggressive instincts as the primary drivers of neurosis, Horney, in *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950) proposes a relational perspective on human psychology. She believes that unresolved conflicts within relationships and experiences in the social environment play a central role in the development of neurosis. "The quintessence of neurosis is the problems arising from the conflict between the subjects' own self and the other, and the ensuing crisis" (Horney 10). This contrasts with Freud's perspective, as he primarily sees neurosis as a biological issue. In her debut book, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937), Karen Horney categorizes neurosis into two fundamental types: situational neurosis and character neurosis. Situational neurosis, as Horney explains, arises as a response to external situations that create conflict. This type of neurosis is temporary and typically resolves once the conflict is consciously perceived and resolved. On the other hand, character neurosis is described as "the result of an insidious chronic process, starting as a rule in childhood and involving greater and lesser parts of the personality in a greater or lesser intensity" (Horney 30 -31). She emphasizes character neurosis as more culturally significant than situational one because character neurosis primarily shapes an individual's behaviour. Horney identifies anxiety as a central driving force in the development and maintenance of neurotic conditions. Nevertheless, she distinguishes between fear and anxiety noting that "fear is a reaction that is proportionate to the danger one has to face, whereas anxiety is a disproportionate

reaction to danger, or even a reaction to imaginary danger" (Horney 42). Character neurosis is characterized by 'basic anxiety' which mainly stems from childhood experiences. (Horney 30) This basic anxiety develops from a deep sense of isolation and powerlessness in a hostile world. Horney attributes various societal factors to this anxiety formation, but in her book's fifth chapter titled, *The Basic Structure of Neuroses* (1937) she highlights how distorted parent-child relationships often lead to neurosis. This may involve parents who are controlling, indifferent, unpredictable, neglectful of a child's needs, critical, or inconsistent in their affection. This anxiety prompts the child to adopt "ad hoc strategies" for protection, such as seeking affection, exhibiting servility, asserting power, or withdrawing (Horney 77). These strategies form the basis of Horney's tripartite orientations:

- Compliance/Moving towards people: Involves seeking approval and affection, often resulting in excessive compliance and conformity.
- Aggression/Moving against people: Involves aggression and dominance as a defence mechanism, leading to hostility and assertiveness.
- Detachment/Moving away from people: Involves isolation and self-sufficiency for protection, resulting in emotional distance and independence.

Neurotic individuals may employ one or more of these strategies simultaneously as a means to manage their anxiety. For instance, they may simultaneously crave affection while feeling the need to withdraw into their inner world. It is important to note that all individuals exhibit these tendencies to some extent without necessarily indicating neurosis. However, when one or more of these tendencies become dominant, it results in a state of conflict, confusion, and inner turmoil. This is referred to as "basic conflict" by Horney.

The research paper explores the manifestation of neurosis in the characters of the novel and delves into the various factors and influences that contribute to the development of neurotic tendencies. It will provide a comprehensive analysis of how neurosis manifests in the behavior, thoughts, and emotions of the novel's characters. The paper aims to examine the intricate interplay between internal and external factors that trigger and shape neurosis within the narrative.

Discussion

The Far Field revolves around Shalini, the novel's female protagonist. Despite growing up as a privileged child, she had a tumultuous relationship with her parents, particularly her mother. Her mother's behaviour oscillated between excessive attachment and affection, showering Shalini with love and attention, and abrupt periods of emotional distance and coldness, leaving Shalini feeling confused and unloved. The strained relationship between her parents further exacerbated her distress, as witnessing their lack of cordiality created an atmosphere of tension and instability within her family. This troubled childhood gives rise to a state of "basic anxiety" within Shalini, leading her to constantly seek her mother's attention and affection. Horney argues that people are often "too wrapped up in their neurosis to be

able to love the child" (Horney 80). She says that parents who are caught up in their neurotic tendencies may project their unresolved issues onto their children. Their attitudes and behaviours towards the child become influenced by their anxieties, insecurities, and emotional struggles. Consequently, the child may experience a lack of genuine empathy, acceptance, and understanding from their parents, as their interactions are filtered through the lens of the parents' neurotic needs and responses. According to Freud, "If a mother is absent or has withdrawn her love from her child, [the child] is no longer sure of the satisfaction of its needs and is perhaps exposed to the most distressing feelings of tension" (Freud 551). The absence of maternal care leads to sustained maternal deprivation, causing the child to experience anxiety that remains incomprehensible. As a result, the child may struggle to make sense of distressing experiences.

This unresolved anxiety persists into adulthood, hindering the individual's ability to develop a sense of security and resulting in the ongoing management of anxiety in an underdeveloped manner. Shalini exhibits several neurotic trends in her behaviour, such as the neurotic need for affection, approval, power, and admiration. Throughout the novel, Shalini demonstrates a strong desire for affection and approval from her mother. She feels neglected and seeks to prove herself worthy. For example, Shalini hides her mother's friendship with Bashir Ahmad from her father, to prove her loyalty, anticipating love and approval in return. By engaging in this act of striving for her mother's affection and attention, Shalini exhibits a coping mechanism aligned with Horney's tripartite concept of neurotic trends, seeking affection and attention as a means to alleviate the anxiety caused by an unpredictable and emotionally distant mother. The tragic death of Shalini's mother plunges her further into a profound sense of emptiness and loss. This devastating event shatters her already fragile mental state, leaving her grappling with overwhelming grief and a deep sense of disconnection, rendering her unable to derive solace or establish meaningful connections with her surroundings. In an effort to manage these overpowering emotions and fill the internal void, Shalini resorts to temporary distractions such as engaging in nightlife activities and substance use. Additionally, she takes on a position at a local NGO, hopeful that it may provide her with a sense of purpose and some relief from her inner suffering. Shalini's complex romantic relationships further illustrate the impact of her unresolved emotional struggles and the influence of her neurotic tendencies. Shalini exhibits manipulative behaviour within her relationships, utilizing strategies such as withholding sexual gratification and causing emotional distress to her partner. This pattern of behaviour reflects her internal conflicts and unresolved issues. One such relationship is with Hari, a photographer whom Shalini visits frequently. Their interactions are characterized by episodes of drug abuse and intimate moments that lack sexual intercourse. Despite her active involvement with Hari, Shalini remains uncertain and avoids committing further to the relationship. Hari's inability to fully understand Shalini's actions is a reflection of her own ambivalence and emotional turmoil. Remarkably, Hari's acceptance of her rejections at the end suggests a level of understanding of her need for rebellion and control.

> I would push him away and sit up. He would look wretched but never protest. And maybe that was it, the sum of us and everything I am grateful to him for: Hari allowed me to push back -- in a way that was small and mean and unworthy, yes, but nevertheless to pushback – against a world that had shown me it could beat me down whenever it wanted. (Vijay 28)

Shalini finds pleasure in this fleeting sense of dominance, which reveals a suppressed desire that many Indian women harbour within themselves due to the overtly patriarchal society they live in. Horney says the neurotic individual's compulsive defensive aims lead them to maintain a position of safety by manipulating others. They disregard the wishes and needs of others, viewing them as potential threats. The aggressive person seeks dominance, the compliant person wishes to make others feel tied and guilty, and the detached person frustrates others' needs for closeness (Horney 77-79).

Shalini embarks on a journey to Kashmir, convinced that her mother's death is somehow linked to the disappearance of Bashir Ahmed, the Kashmiri shawl vendor. Her quest to confront him becomes entwined with her longing for her mother and a quest for purpose in her disillusioned life. During her stay in Kashmir, Shalini resides with Bashir Ahmed's family, forging a profound connection with Aamina, his daughter-in-law, who displays remarkable kindness and care towards her. Parallel to her mother's fascination with Bashir Ahmed, Shalini becomes drawn to his son, Riyaz. Though not openly expressing her interest, she doesn't resist Riyaz's advances, allowing their relationship to develop. However, their growing closeness strains Riyaz's marriage to Aamina, causing turmoil in their family. “I considered her […Aamina] as a friend too, then how I could allow myself to stand with Riyaz in the intimacy of darkness? How could I allow his gaze to linger on me, indeed, half desiring it myself? What sort of friend did that make me?” (Vijay 301). Horney calls it the “basic conflict” which arises from “the loss of capacity to wish for anything wholeheartedly because his very wishes are divided, that is, they go in opposite directions” (Horney 91). Shalini's experience of guilt over betraying Aamina while simultaneously desiring her husband's pursuit is a clear manifestation of this conflicting state of mind, perfectly illustrating Horney's concept of the basic conflict.

In her quest for solace amid the tumultuous upheaval in her life, Shalini briefly discovers a semblance of peace within a remote Himalayan village in Kashmir. However, she eventually comes to the understanding that this village isn't truly her home, and she can never fully relate to this place and its intricacies, given its distinctive socio-political history. Moreover, she realizes that her presence there has been causing more harm than good. This realization aligns with Horney's concept of alienation, where individuals experience a sense of disconnection and estrangement from their surroundings. Shalini's decision to distance herself from the village, and the relationships she had forged there, reflects this notion of alienation, as she acknowledges the adverse impact she's had and recognizes the necessity of removing herself from that environment.

Drawing from Karen Horney's tripartite concept of orientations, Shalini, in

her efforts to cope with her emotions, displays all three orientations at different times, depending on the situation and her psychological needs. In some instances, Shalini exhibits a "moving towards" orientation in her interactions with her mother, seeking validation and acceptance while feeling hurt when rejected. She often portrays a "moving against" orientation, especially in her romantic relationships, as she attempts to manipulate and exploit others for her purposes, driven by a need for power and control.

Shalini also demonstrates a "moving away" orientation in her interactions with others, distancing herself from her father and Bangalore when she feels stifled in those environments. When she feels her presence in the Kishtwar has caused more harm than good, she withdraws from the interpersonal relationships and the place itself, becoming emotionally distant and aloof. In certain situations, it appears that all orientations are equally evident, leading Shalini to experience constant inner conflict.

Karen Horney's theory of narcissism diverges from the classical psychoanalytic perspective, which considers narcissism as a pathological condition stemming from excessive self-investment. Instead, Horney in her book, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (1939) notes that narcissism arises as a defensive response to feelings of anxiety and insecurity caused by inadequate parenting, societal pressures, and cultural inequalities (Horney 98). Shalini's mother exhibits certain narcissistic traits, such as a sense of superiority and disdain towards women in social gatherings. She lacks empathy and displays aggressive behaviour towards the poor, street vendors, and even children. She once shouts at a deaf and dumb boy "to get lost" who had come to seek donations (Vijay 2). These behaviours reflect a self-centred focus and a disregard for the feelings and well-being of others, which align with Horney's understanding of narcissistic defences.

Horney's concept of "self-idealization" sheds light on the underlying dynamics of narcissism. According to Horney, neurotics strive to maintain an idealized image of them to gain a sense of significance and superiority over others. The idealized image of the neurotic is created because "self idealization […] gives the individual the much-needed feeling of significance and superiority over others" (Horney 22). This idealized image serves as a defence mechanism against feelings of worthlessness and anxiety. However, when the actual self fails to meet the unrealistic standards set by the idealized image, self-hatred and inner conflict arise.

Shalini's mother's story exemplifies the impact of Indian patriarchal norms on women. Despite being equally intelligent as her brothers, she's denied further education and forced to drop out, while her brothers pursue their education in prestigious colleges. This highlights how predetermined gender roles dictate women's primary roles as dutiful housewives and caretakers, prioritizing the needs of their families above their aspirations. Her intellectual curiosity is often ignored. Her thoughts on global matters are met with mockery and belittlement from her husband. When she inquires about the news, he sarcastically questions her newfound interest. In response, she sarcastically contrasts their educational opportunities saying, "Your father sent you to IIT and Columbia. My father didn't think girls needed to go to

college. So, why should I be interested in what is happening in the world" (Vijay 101). The societal pressures and cultural norms imposed upon her contribute to her sense of anxiety and insecurity. In response, she adopts narcissistic defences to protect herself from these feelings of vulnerability. However, it is important to note that Horney's theory does not pathologize narcissism but rather highlights it as a coping mechanism. She argues that for a child to grow into his authentic self, he needs support and freedom of expression. According to Horney, neurosis is brought about "through environmental factors which obstruct the child's unhampered psychic growth" (Horney 366). She emphasizes that cultural factors play a significant role in shaping an individual's personality and contributing to the manifestation of narcissism. People with narcissistic traits find it very difficult to manage their relationships. Shalini says her mother "cut off all contact with her father after he repeatedly ignored his wife's chronic back pain" (Vijay 4).

Continuing the exploration of Shalini's mother's complex character, it becomes evident that she experiences a profound sense of dissatisfaction and yearning for connection. Despite being married, she feels a deep emotional void that her husband is unable to comprehend or fulfil. This disconnect contributes to her ongoing search for fulfilment outside the confines of her marriage.

> Looking back, I can see that something powerful occurred at that moment, and it still astonishes me all these years later: Bashir Ahmed understood in about five minutes what took my father decades. And me? What did I understand back then? Nothing, except that when my mother laughed like that, it made me want a million things at once. I wanted to run until I dropped; I wanted to roll on the ground; I wanted to climb into her lap and stay there forever. (Vijay 36)

The introduction of Bashir Ahmed into Shalini's life provides her with a sense of comfort and happiness but also reveals the complexity of her relationship with him. Initially, she berates him with harsh words and comments, but he remains patient and tenacious, smiling and listening. Bashir Ahmed becomes an outlet for Shalini's mother to explore aspects of herself that remain unfulfilled within her marriage. In his presence, she experiences love, kindness, and an understanding that was lacking in her marital life. Horney suggests that individuals may seek alternative sources of fulfilment when their primary relationships fail to meet their psychological needs. However, her desire to control men occasionally manifested, resulting in her mistreating Bashir. She becomes jealous and frustrated, questioning his love for his wife, resulting in insults and humiliation before she asks him never to return. This pattern of behaviour demonstrates the conflicting emotions within her and the struggles she faces in maintaining stable and fulfilling relationships. His sudden disappearance leaves a significant void in her life, exacerbating her mental state. Her subsequent suicide and her warning to Bashir Ahmad, stating she'd do it if he didn't take her with him, underscore the depth of her emotional attachment to him and the desperation she felt in the absence of their connection.

Conclusion

This research paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of Madhuri Vijay's, *The Far Field*, from a psychoanalytic perspective. Through a meticulous analysis of the novel's characters, their experiences, emotions, and relationships, this study provides valuable insights into the manifestation of neurosis and its complex interplay within broader socio-cultural contexts. The research paper highlights the diverse agencies that trigger and contribute to the formation of neurosis in the novel. The character of Shalini, the novel's protagonist, serves as a compelling case study in understanding the intricate web of neurotic tendencies. Shalini's tumultuous upbringing, marked by a strained mother-daughter relationship and parental conflict, lays the foundation for her deep-seated neurotic needs for affection, approval, power, and admiration. These needs manifest in her manipulative behaviour within her relationships, reflecting her unresolved emotional struggles. Throughout the novel, Shalini's inner struggles, anxieties, fears, and conflicts are portrayed with depth and authenticity, reflecting the intricacies of neurotic behaviour. The exploration of these manifestations provides valuable insights into the consequences and impact of neurosis on the characters' relationships, personal growth, and overall well-being. *The Far Field* serves as a compelling literary work that not only entertains but also offers a profound exploration of human psychology and the complexities of neurotic experiences. By exploring the neurotic manifestations within the novel, this research paper enhances our understanding of the human condition, highlighting the universal aspects of neurosis and its impact on individuals.

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Identified as 'Junkie': Stigmatising Women Affected by Drug Abuse as 'Deviants'

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Abstract

Normative society expects women to conform to certain labels that entail them as bio-others (Sebring). While feminist scholarship emphasises women's lived experiences, it also points out the limitations of politics of medical discourse that dismisses emotions and psychological needs as anomalous. The paper explores the stigmatisation of women affected by drug abuse, emphasising the role of cultural gaslighting. It delves into the sociological aspects of labelling, social interactionism, and the consequences of pathologizing non-normative behaviour. Drawing on the memoir, Prozac Nation *by Elizabeth Wurtzel, it examines how societal norms and medical discourse have marginalised this community. The study calls for revaluating social labelling and highlights the need for a more empathetic approach to women dealing with drug abuse. It also seeks to explore 'cultural gaslighting' and its reductive practice in the culture of medicine as an emerging phenomenon that deceptively normalises identifying women affected by drug use as moral deviants, or, in the more popular American colloquial term, 'Junkies.'*

Keywords: Trauma, Social Labelling, Cultural Gaslighting, Women, Junkie, Drug Abuse, Deviance

Introduction

Throughout history, women have faced medicalization, with doctors frequently prescribing drugs, particularly in the 1800s, when cocaine was commonly prescribed for "neurasthenia" or nervous weakness (Stevens et al. 343). The pharmaceutical industry has played a role in influencing physicians to prescribe medications for women, as observed in the disproportionate representation of women in advertisements for antidepressants (Stevens 343). This over-reliance on prescribed psychoactive drugs has been detrimental, keeping women sedated and numb, hindering their ability to understand and resolve issues such as self-worth, anxiety, and depression (Stevens et al. 343). In contemporary society, cultural marginalisation of women labelled as "dependent" for seeking help during distress reflects tensions, particularly in societies idealising the 'self-made individual' (Tillaart et al. 155). Women who seek emotional help are often viewed negatively, perceived as weak and dependent, while those who move ahead independently risk societal ostracization for deviating from expected subservient roles (Tillaart et al. 155). The medical system, through stereotyping and stigmatisation, controls the lives of individuals with mental health concerns (Tillaart et al. 155; Rosenfield 18). The gap in understanding between health-care professionals and marginalised individuals persists due to education, cultural background, and social standing, reinforcing privilege and power imbalances. The institutional practices of health care contribute to inadequate physical assessment

and treatment, furthering disparities. Practices that 'other' clients, figuratively pushing them into the margins of invisibility, are challenging to resist, particularly for vulnerable individuals. (Tillaart et al. 156)

Objectives

The paper's central argument is to revaluate mental health disorders and address disparities arising from the traditional concept of medicinal governance ideated as bio power by Michel Foucault. It explores the structural phenomenon of cultural gaslighting (Ruiz) to subtly stigmatise women considered to be medically at-risk as bio-others (Sebring). The paper also addresses socio-cultural limitations put on women sublimating their emotional and physical desires to ideals of femininity and motherhood. It explores issues of womens' mental health and othering using theories of social interactionism, labelling and cultural gaslighting, drawing on Elizabeth Wurtzel's memoir, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America* in which She critiques the mainstreaming of women's healthcare accounts (Sebring). The research questions specific to this paper are:

- How do social interactionism and labelling contribute to the stigma faced by the memoirist affected by drug use in American society?
- Does cultural gaslighting subtly normalise labelling women impacted by drug use as moral deviants in the broader health discourse?

Problematising Drug Abuse in Women in America

From a medical standpoint, health is considered as the ability to work under-representing the idea of psychological health concerning individual emotional needs and lived experiences of trauma. Acts of othering by health care professionals influence the socio-political thinking regarding mental health among women. It influences the broader social parlance by associating informal terms like 'junkies' to downplay the social rejection and invalidation meted out to those who are affected by junks or substances. Women portrayed as subservient and less capable, prejudiced against representing their mental health concerns in the health-care scenario privately resort to various prescription drugs to cope with emotional pain, anxiety, tension and to fulfil traditional gender roles (NIDA). Popularly known as a “white woman's drug”, Meth, considered to have properties of weight loss, having powers to cope with postpartum depression and feelings of repentance were highly used by white women (Campbell 1), highlighting the patriarchal predominance of conforming to the norms of beauty and femininity. Campbell observes that white women used substances to perform their daily duties and “remain functional, orderly, and clean” (Campbell 3). In 2016, the National Institute on Drug Abuse reported that 7,109 women died from prescription opioid overdose whereas in 2021, 20.4% of the total population of America, 26.6 million women acknowledged to use illicit drugs (NIDA). These women are deemed societal "outsiders” in a culture emphasising

productivity and fulfilment while framing addiction as a subject of medical-legal debates and historical efforts to pathologize their identities.

Over the years, cultural understanding and meaning-making processes have gendered how addiction is perceived among women. Butler's theory of gender as a performative accomplishment contends women's identity as addicts is essentially a process of gender acquisition and relooking at gender in terms of addiction. Historically, medical discourse stigmatised drug use in women framing it as a moral failure. Feminist criminologist Sylvie Frigon argues that the institution of medicine constructs a "disciplinary matrix of control that serves to neutralise women's political protest" consisting "criminalisation, sexualisation, and medicalization of women's bodies and minds" (Plechner 89). In her book *Discovering Addiction*, Campbell observes that in most research studies related to addiction, addicts did not have the prerogative to negotiate their identities or the meaning of addiction as they understood it. The fate of the drug-using women is overshadowed by a cultural stigma that identifies them as 'junkies,' fallen from the fabric of the moral code of conduct. Paradoxically, they were "neither invited by those in greater power to participate nor to represent themselves on their own terms" (Campbell 10). Historian David Courtwright points out, "What we think about addiction very much depends on who is addicted." The meanings of addiction and the identity formation of an addict are linked to an individual's social context, membership in specific social groups, the experience of drug effects, and interpretation of seemingly physiological sensations (Campbell 10).

Social Interactionism and Labelling Theory

Self-concept and identity are formed as a result of resistance between individual and social defining personal identity (I) and social identity (me) (Deschamps and Devos 2). The theory of symbolic interactionism, formulated by George Herbert Mead, is a social theoretical framework that focuses on the development of the self-concept as a result of analysing the social construction of reality through interactions between individuals in a social group. He argued that an individual's self-image and awareness are formed due to the symbolic interpretation of one's social experience in a social group. Social identity refers to the process of an individual perceiving him or her in assimilation with or differentiation from others in a social group due to social interactions. It is of note here that health-care professionals often relate themselves as self and their patients as 'other' owing to their elevated hierarchical status as medical practitioners and caregivers (Tillaart et al 156). While these practices are inherently differential, they further push women as a marginalised group under the cover of the bio-other. Aside from the biological limitations put on women, due to their image as the fallen archetype in the prevalent religion-moral structure, the repressive eye of society invalidates women who defy or resist the norms as deviants. It is easily understandable women's archetypal image as subordinate perpetuates society's understanding of them as needing dependence. Therefore, it is

ironic their articulation of emotional and bodily desires is considered as deviant and stigmatised as obscene. In essence, while drug use has existed among women since antiquity, the religio-political understanding of society permeates it as an act of rule-breaking.

Cultural Gaslighting and Futility of Labelling

Social rules are the creation of specific social groups. Theories of Mead, Becker and Butler contend that social labelling results from the rigid ideological superstructure that hails an individual to a particular social group of identification. The problem with this is, the ideological superstructure prevents the free thinking of society members due to the culturally shared knowledge forming the perception of reality. One downside of such a mechanism is the political debate of cultural gaslighting, a structural phenomenon described as "a form of manipulation that causes the victim to doubt their perception of reality" (Shane et al. 178). In the case of women, conforming behaviour simply means obeying the predominant norm, which is, playing their subservient role as caregivers and child bearers. In contrast, a deviant behaviour is flouting the fundamental values and norms- a breakdown in social controls, which ordinarily operate to maintain the valued forms of behaviour (Becker 59). For white women, as Susan Bordo has argued, the apparent racial supremacy, perpetuated by a hegemonic idea of female body, normalises a certain patriarchal standard of beauty and productivity that interpellates these women to conform to a docility and obedience of cultural demands (Bordo 27). Downside of this homogenisation is, these women, as part of their cultural belief, are placed under a medical gaze that perceives them as bio-others, inherently "othered" in terms of physical anomalies. As a norm, these women find themselves under the scrutiny of a medical system that further downplays their emotional health issues as anomalous. This reductive interpersonal practice of marginalising mental health issues of women follows an epistemic injustice that consistently yet unevenly impacts specific demographics by design (Ruiz). Paradoxically, this marginalisation becomes a site of power and resistance for women, as contemporary studies suggest that gaslighting serves as a tool for resilience and resistance against contested "official" knowledge (Shane et al. 179).

Deviance in Drug-using Women from a Medicinal and Social-Behavioural Parlance

Becker observes deviant behaviour can be identified as a form of pathological anomaly, revealing the presence of a "disease" in an organism (Becker 5). Meanwhile, the socio-culturally accepted normative connotation of 'healthy' has a debatable connotation concerning a specific type of colonialist body image (Sebring). Therefore, the context of accrediting a specific behaviour as "deviant" based on pathological analogy is debatable (Becker 5). First, as bio-others, women

fall outside the hegemonic supremacy of the white, able-bodied, wealthy male figure (Sebring) and are othered in the broader discourse of medicine and health. Second, the term 'deviant' for women addicts is complex; their drug use may be a coping mechanism to meet cultural demands, challenging its classification as deviant behaviour. Cultural gaslighting further reinforces social labelling, categorising drug-affected women as patients or addicts, leading to moral judgement and isolation. The blurred line between 'deviance' and 'disease' raises questions about the dehumanisation of female addicts, influenced by ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses.

Interpersonal and institutional social labelling of women affected by drug use as either patients or addicts raises debatable concerns of cultural empathy, and targets specific demographics to face moral judgement, marginalisation, and isolation. Since self-concept and identity are complex, labelling someone affected by drug use as an 'addict' is not only personally demoralising but also culturally degrading and stigmatising. This process not only alienates the individual from mainstream society but also reduces their identity to dehumanisation. It is debatable whether women labelled as moral offenders deviate from the path of righteousness or if it is a religio-political myth perpetuating their dehumanised status. To understand this issue, it requires a closer look at the self-narrative of a woman affected by drug use.

Being 'Junkie': A Critical Look into the Life of Elizabeth Wurtzel in Light of Labelling and Cultural Gaslighting

It is a cultural fallacy until bio-physical degeneration reaches a climactic point to be medically termed as 'illness', a woman's emotional pleas are silenced. Women like Elizabeth, culturally subjugated and subordinated, show not only resistance to this cultural conundrum of stigmatising and silencing psychological pain but also foreground a resilient narrative as their way of ascertaining drugs as only a part of the problem of personal identity. It is an anomalous repartee of a medical system that actively suppresses alternatives and corporatises "personal, clinical medicine into pharmaceutical and hospital-centred treatment" (Weber 37). Going by Judith Butler's reframing of Althusser's theory of interpellation; the ideological and repressive superstructures of society hail a woman into a social group where she recognises "herself as a subject being hailed" and some "readiness to turn" (Aston 14). In Wurtzel's memoir, *Prozac Nation*, the ironic disposition of the memoirist is narrated when, being constantly subordinated to normative silencing, she feels the need and "readiness to turn" into a drug addict on the grounds of giving palpability to her emotional problems. She writes, "...if I could get hooked on some drug...I'd have a real problem" (Wurtzel 49). Unfortunately, many women like Elizabeth struggle to convince society of their 'real problem' (Wurtzel 49). In an act of resilience, they take up a mask of a problem, drug addiction that is pathologically 'real.'

A pivotal aspect of Elizabeth's story of drug dependence is the childhood trauma she endured during her parental divorce, leading to adolescent angst,

depression, and conflict of personal identity. Her parental separation at four years left her emotionally detached and struggling with a fragmented sense of self. Her efforts to reconcile her parents proved challenging, resulting in feelings of alienation and deep emotional pain. Being considered an 'outsider' in her father's second marriage further complicated her sense of self as she grew older, contributing to her negative body image and self-esteem issues. Her mother downplayed her emotional instabilities to the emergence of menstruation. She grew up being ashamed of being a woman embodying her identity as fallen. Stigmatising herself due to overpowering emotional invalidations and her identity as an 'outsider' propagated a nihilist urge. The narration of her early memories shows Elizabeth being critical and ashamed of herself, of her tattooed body, anaemic hair, thinking of herself as worthless, 'a defective model,' a 'dirty poodle,' 'this thing, this rock-and-roll girl who has violated her body with a tattoo and a nose ring' (Wurtzel xvii-xix).

Elizabeth's emotional struggles to articulate the problem of her personal identity is a significant aspect of her adolescence. A more somatic aspect of this psychological problem is narrativised in her alienation from her peers in her identification of herself as a 'perfect weirdo' (Wurtzel 74) wearing "long, diaphanous things that nearly reached' her ankles she was 'all belts and bows and ties and fabric, always weighed down by so much *stuff*' (Wurtzel 75). In contrast to other girls dressed in colours like buoyant colours like turquoise, yellow, chartreuse and hot pink, she showed up in 'everything cold and dark' figuratively portraying deviance in terms of her distinctive dressing style in school marking her as an 'outsider' (Becker 4).

To cope with her social status as an 'outsider,' both in her relationship with her parents and peers, Elizabeth started self-harming using a nail file. While visiting a psychiatrist, she resisted the idea that counselling could provide meaning to her life. She began to question societal institutions and medical governance practices. Her limited social interactions made her aware that depression and psychological well-being were not considered cultural concerns as these issues did not align with the dominant colonialist notion of health. She writes, "I found myself *wishing* for a real ailment, found myself longing to be a junkie or a cokehead or something—something real" (Wurtzel 39).

Here, Elizabeth resists the conventional medical scrutiny validating anomalous somatic aspects to diagnose an illness. Her affliction was psychological, making it challenging to convey her mental health issues to society that sublimates psychological health into bio-physiological parameters. Her experimentation with drugs began at age thirteen with Atarax, an anti-allergy pill, to cope with her emotional trauma as an adolescent. Her experimentation with prescribed drugs like Prozac, Ritalin and illicit substances like Cocaine and Heroin narrativize her psychological problem of object dependence to contain her emotional wounds occurring from failing relationships. In adulthood, a miscarriage compounded her emotional distress, leading to guilt and a profound sense of isolation from her body, which had become a site of trauma. To cope with anxiety, she received prescriptions

for Xanax, Valium, and Thorazine from doctors. In hindsight, she recognises the cultural paradox where these medications reinforced her identity as a 'patient.' They aligned with the societal norm of attributing her illness to a bio-physiological parameter, namely miscarriage. Elizabeth became dependent on opiates as social interactions and prevailing medical language led her to believe that becoming a 'patient' would finally bring attention to her emotional pain from her parents and society at large.

The ideological epiphany behind naming her memoir "Prozac Nation" lies in the complex nature of drugs accentuating both deviance and treatment. After trying various anti-anxiety and antipsychotic drugs like Xanax, Valium, Thorazine, and Mellaril in her early twenties, Elizabeth was prescribed Prozac, an antidepressant that helped stabilise her emotional state. This led to a formal diagnosis of atypical depression. The irony of medicalisation here becomes evident in the widespread use of the antidepressant Fluoxetine, known as Prozac, in America. It not only became a popular choice for depression patients like Elizabeth but also for treating depressed pets, symbolising the cultural manipulation of medicinal governance over human life. The proliferation of Prozac in the 1990s represents the emerging phenomenon of cultural gaslighting that handheld colonial health standards, granting hegemonic power to the reductive practice of prescribing antidepressants for psychological health issues. In essence, this cultural manipulation is evident in institutions that stigmatise and dehumanise selected social demographics based on preconceived moral judgments, highlighting the paradoxes within the discourse of addiction and patienthood.

Conclusion

The evolving addiction debate among women extends beyond mere drug use. It encompasses a broader religio-political superstructure involving a medical governance system that sets the socio-cultural portrayal of addiction as deviance and associates dehumanising terms such as 'junkies', 'cokehead' to individuals affected by substance dependence. This paper asserts that cultural gaslighting subtly perpetuates a patriarchal agenda where health-care professionals tend to medicalize or diagnostically label women's behaviours without considering the sociocultural context in which they occur. Marginalisation of women with mental health diagnoses leads to a decrease in power resulting in limited representations of their problem of personal identity. Stigma plays a significant role, perpetuating ignorance and othering by health-care professionals having detrimental effects on mental health clients. The prevailing patriarchal culture frames women within the discourse of drug use as victims adhering to opiate use. Cultural gaslighting, as an emerging phenomenon, marginalises personal autonomy, coercing women into conformist gender roles that overshadow their individual identities. As Elena Ruiz notes, popular culture's dominance erodes the confidence and stability of victimised collectives by instilling self-doubt (Shane et al. 180). The study concludes by drawing overarching

insight that expands the addiction issue from a personal narrative to an analysis of cultural prejudice masked as morality. Cultural norms simultaneously victimise and stigmatise women addicts using prototypical notions of deviance.

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Beleaguered Identities: The *Bacha Posh* of Afghanistan

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Abstract

In Afghanistan, a country characterized by strict enforcement of gender segregation and the prevalence of patriarchal norms, gender roles exhibit archaic traits. These roles are deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of society, resulting in the subordination of women and their identity being primarily defined by their fathers and husbands. Afghanistan's androcentric ideology, fuelled by a misogynistic interpretation of the Sharia law bore the seeds of the cross-dressing practice bacha posh. Bacha posh (a Dari word, translated as 'dressed as a boy' in English) holds a tenuous position within Afghan society, existing outside the conventional gender binary. Occupying a liminal space between the male and female genders, they find acceptance from neither group, hence, their identity is defined as a distinct category known as narkhazak. The present research navigates the beleaguered selves and confounded identities of the 'boy-girl' in Zarghuna Kargar's Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan *and Nadia Hashimi's* The Pearl that broke it's Shell *through sociological and psychological theoretical framework.*
Keywords: Bacha Posh, Afghan women, Identity Crisis, Cross-Dressing

Introduction

The rigid and highly anrdocentric construction of the Afghan families, under the rule of Taliban, effectuated the practice of *Bacha Posh* - a Dari word which literally means “dressed as a boy”. Prevalent in many tribal societies of Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan, the custom of dressing a girl as a boy is usually practiced for some part of the girl's childhood, before she attains puberty though some girls, who can resist the conversion and choose to live as *Bacha Posh*, enjoy mobility and opportunities for their entire life.

In Afghan society, the *bacha posh* assumes the role of a desire and void fulfilling being in the society. They cater to the father's longing for a male offspring, compensating for his failure to bring a male heir home. Through the act of wearing male attire, she grants her mother the status of a 'genuine' woman, one who bears a male child. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Nadia Hashimi and *Dear Zari: The Secret Lives of the Women of Afghanistan* by Zarghuna Kargarare chosen to study the delirium, subjectivity, and identity confusion as experienced by the *bacha posh*.

When a young girl adopts the role of a *bacha posh*, she undergoes a transformation that includes the cutting of her hair, donning *perantombon* (the customary male attire in Afghanistan), and assuming a male name. This alteration in appearance and identity bestows upon her an elevated status within her family and the broader society, thereby exempting her from customary female responsibilities such as household chores and culinary duties.

Numerous myths from Norse, Greek, and Hindu traditions depict instances of cross-dressing, highlighting the interplay of gender roles in mythology. In Greek mythology, rituals involving cross-dressing aimed to symbolize androgyny within the divine. Dionysus, reared as a woman, exemplifies this practice. Similarly, Hercules, Achilles, and others, compelled by circumstances, donned attire of the opposite gender. These tales underscore the symbolic denial of traditional gender roles. Historical figures also contributed to the narrative of cross-dressing. Marina the Monk, in medieval times, adopted monk attire to navigate societal expectations. Joan of Arc, while leading French troops, adopted male attire, influenced by divine voices. The eighteenth century in Britain witnessed widespread cross-dressing, epitomized by clubs like "The Mollies." Notable figures like the Chevalier d'Eon and Lord Cornbury publicly embraced cross-dressing. Dr. Mary Edward Walker, an advocate for women's rights, served in the Army dressed as a man. Early Christian women saints, disguised as men, confronted societal barriers. In the early nineteenth century, female artists and writers, such as George Sand and George Eliot, used male identities for literary success. The Bronte sisters employed male pseudonyms to ensure publication.

Similar to *bacha posh*, in some regions of Albania, the tradition of "Sworn Virgins" allows women to take on male roles and responsibilities, including dress and behaviour. This decision is often made to fulfil familial or societal expectations when there is a lack of male heirs.

Theoretical Framework

The term *bacha posh*, from the Dari language, literally translates to "dressed as a boy." This concept was first introduced in *The Underground Girls of Kabul: The Hidden Lives of Afghan Girls Disguised as Boys.* Jenny Nordberg in this book delves into the clandestine existence of *bacha posh*, shedding light on its widespread practice in Afghanistan, despite the prevailing reluctance to acknowledge or discuss its existence openly. Nordberg's research unveils the tangible reality of the *bacha posh* tradition: "The *bacha posh* tradition is not rooted in religion but rather in the cultures of Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan. There are theories that it came from a need for boys or men to fight in times of war but evolved to fill a different 'void.' It's not happening in every household, but nearly every Afghan I've spoken to knew of a bacha posh in his or her neighbourhood". (Nordberg 2014: 5).

Conducted by Nilab Hamidi, Cathy Vaughan, and Meghan A. Bohren, the study titled “My father told me 'child, there is no son in this house, so you should wear these boy clothes': Perspectives on Gender Norms, Roles, and Bacha Posh among Afghan Migrant Women in Melbourne, Australia” addressed the impact of entrenched son preferences on the social standing of Afghan women. Utilizing a social constructivist approach, the study gathered qualitative data from Afghan migrant women in Melbourne, Australia, employing semi-structured in-depth interviews and a group discussion. The findings underscored the perceived ease of

transitioning to and from *bacha posh*, the community's awareness of the true gender of bacha posh individuals, concealed to safeguard family honour, and the influential role of societal and familial son preferences in the adoption of bacha posh.

Examining the cultural practice of *bacha posh* in Afghanistan, where girls were raised as boys against rigid gender norms, "*Bacha posh* in Afghanistan: factors associated with raising a girl as a boy" by Corboz, Gibbs, and Jewkes surveyed 1463 women in Kabul and Nangarhar. Out of these, 7.1% reported instances of bacha posh in their families. The midline survey revealed that 59.2% of female respondents had experienced bacha posh, while 28.5% reported raising a daughter as a boy. Intriguingly, 20.7% of women who underwent *bacha posh* recounted that their daughters had similarly experienced it. Notably, *bacha posh* prevalence varied between provinces, with a higher percentage in Nangarhar (15.4%) compared to Kabul (4.4%). Ethnicity also played a role, with Pashtun women more likely to report bacha posh. This research sheds light on the complex dynamics and cultural underpinnings of *bacha posh* in Afghanistan.

It is crucial to note that the pressure to produce a male child in Afghanistan isn't solely put by men but also by women themselves. Nordberg emphasizes that "families can be rich, poor, educated, uneducated, *Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazara, or Turkoman*—it doesn't matter, they tell me. The only thing that binds the girls together is their family's need for a son" (Nordberg 70). Mostly, the desire for a male heir stems from the quest for economic stability and security in a war-torn country. As Nordberg elucidates, "There is no social security, little health care, and virtually no rule of law in Afghanistan. There is just unemployment, poverty, and constant war. In this environment, the number of sons equals a family's strength... They are insurance" (Nordberg 44). In contrast, a female child is never regarded as an integral part of the family but rather as a possession to be transferred from one male figure to another.

Discussion

An examination of the concept of *bacha posh*, as portrayed in various literary works encompassing both fiction and realistic accounts, leads to a hypothetical conclusion affirming the social construct of gender in Afghanistan. The *bacha posh*, colloquially referred to as the 'third gender,' represents a distinct phenomenon exclusive to Afghanistan. Notably, gender in this context exhibits fluidity and, in certain instances, offers a liberating and subversive space. Situated between the extreme poles of male and female, which are accompanied by rigidly prescribed roles enforced by a patriarchal society, the *bacha posh* occupies a unique "hybrid" realm.

Dr. Hashimi's notable literary contributions encompass ground-breaking novels such as *When the Moon Is Low* and *A House without Windows*. The profound essence of Afghan existence, particularly as it pertains to women, is masterfully encapsulated in *The Pearl that Broke its Shell*, wherein Hashimi deftly employs the enigmatic elements of myth, folklore, and linguistic prowess. It is a captivating novel

that employs a parallel narrative technique to explore the lives of Rahima/Rahim and her great-grandmother Shekiba/Shekib, who are compelled to assume male identities. Through their intertwined stories, the novel provides a poignant depiction of the experiences of both genders in Afghanistan, delving into the intricate dynamics of gender politics within the country.

Shekiba's Afghanistan transports us back to the turn of the twentieth century, a period imbued with optimism and the impending prospect of independence and progress. Under the capable leadership of King Amanullah and his progressive wife, Queen Soraya, Afghanistan experienced a sense of hope and promise. Queen Soraya, who belonged to a privileged and affluent class, advocated for the rights of Muslim women, drawing inspiration from Western feminism. Shekiba's narrative echoes this era of hope and positivity, mirroring her personal journey of struggle and survival with the nation's growth as a cohesive entity. Hashimi's interwoven narratives highlight the deep interconnection between public and private realms, illustrating how Shekiba's personal experiences as a marginalized woman mirror Afghanistan's historical trajectory, marred by numerous invasions and adversities. As Hashimi eloquently writes, “In that way, Shekiba was Afghanistan. Beginning in her childhood, tragedy and malice chipped away at her until she was just a fragment of the person she should have been.” (Hashimi 14)

The novel unravels the tale of a Pashtun family living in rural Afghanistan during a bygone era, within an idyllic agrarian society characterized by strong communal and familial bonds. The author adeptly paints a realistic portrait of feuding brothers vying for land and property. Shekiba, the female protagonist of the story, emerges as an embodiment of strength and resilience. Her transformation throughout the novel represents a narrative of perseverance and endurance, shaped by the harsh realities of misfortune and gender inequality prevalent in traditional Pashtun society. Hashimi challenges conventional beauty standards from the outset, portraying Shekiba as a disfigured individual with a half-burnt face resulting from a childhood accident. Consequently, Shekiba finds herself perpetually marginalized and deemed unacceptable by society's standards of physical beauty.

Dear Zari: Hidden Stories from Women in Afghanistan, authored by Zarhuna Kargar, presents a poignant compilation of authentic narratives that intimately depict the lived experiences of women in Afghanistan. Within this literary work, the stories are conveyed through the first-hand accounts of these women themselves, amplifying their voices and granting them agency in their own narratives. Notably, "Bakhtawara's Story: The Boy-Girl" stands as a particularly significant tale, as it unveils the life of Bakhtawara, *a bacha posh,* who courageously shares her journey during a special program titled “Afghan Woman's Hour” aired by the esteemed British Broadcasting Corporation (B.B.C.).

Bakhtawara's narrative is a testament to the inherent contradictions that define the existence of a bacha posh. Her life is marred by the power struggles permeating her society, where her body becomes contested territory, subjected to various forms of abuse and disregard. In the face of such adversity, her true identity is

forcibly imposed upon her, effectively stifling her authentic desires and aspirations. Originating from Gurbuz, situated in the Khost Province of south-eastern Afghanistan, Bakhtawara's circumstances are shaped by the unfavourable geographical conditions and the harshness of the local landscape, which hamper agricultural endeavours.

Bakhtawara's life is evidence of the identity confusion that follows when gender roles are challenged at an early age. "The society she lives in has taken away her right to live as a woman: yet, on the other hand, she has gained a kind of freedom no other Afghan woman could ever hope to attain" (Kargar 224). Her family forces her to give up her identity as a woman. The mere act of cross dressing represents a poignant instance wherein her essence is unceremoniously usurped. This expectation laid upon her is predicated on the fulfilment of her father's fervent wish for a male progeny, an expectation that necessitates the complete renunciation of her individuality and aspirations,

> Her parents didn't stop to consider what harm this might do to their child, they just started to treat her as their second son. Bakhtawara was dressed as a boy and taken to the men's gatherings. She had her hair cut short and wore male *shalwar kamiz*…she was never expected to wash dishes or cook with her mother and sister; instead, she attended jirgas with her father. She was respected as a boy but no one ever thought to tell her what changes to expect in her body. (Kargar 230)

The *bacha posh*'s identity comes under contestation because of the sudden change in their gender performance and roles. Rahima in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* shows strong preference for the games and activities stereotypically associated with the male gender. As Rahima said, "I was a young man and it was in my nature to run through the streets" (Hashimi 48). Rahima, unlike her sisters, didn't have to be demure and proper, rather, she could roll in the dust while playing aggressive games with her friends, Abdullah and Ashraf. But as the day of her marriage approached, Rahima's dreams of living as a "boy" forever came crashing down. She was expected to carry herself like a girl and to cover her boyish hair with a chador. The unanticipated switching of gender roles leads Rahima into a downward spiral of perplexity and corporeal disorientation. In Rahima's own words, "All I wanted to do was to go back to school and back to my family, my friends. I felt clumsy in a skirt, my breasts pointy in the brassiere my mother had purchased" (Hashimi175). Her resistance towards becoming a woman signifies her repugnancy towards her assigned gender and also throws light on the sad state of identity confusion that she experiences.

Judith Butler posits that, for female gender-crossers, "the changeability itself, the dream of a metamorphosis...signifies a certain freedom" (Butler 125). Rahima's mother capitalizes on this innate desire for freedom, convincing Rahima to become a *bacha posh* so that she can "go to school without worrying about the boys bothering you. You could play games" (Hashimi 23).

However, Rahima's transformation into a *bacha posh* is not merely about

cross-dressing and adopting a male appearance; it entails a comprehensive performance of the male gender experience, encompassing aspects such as name, "gesture, posture, movement, and general bodily comportment" (Bartky 134). Rahima's mother is meticulous in ensuring the authenticity of her daughter's transformation, instructing her, "she is now your brother, Rahim. You will forget about your sister Rahima and welcome your brother.... It's very important that you speak only of your brother, Rahim, and never mention that you have another sister." (Hashimi 36)

After the passing of her father, Shekiba endures a harrowing fate, being passed from one household to another as if she were a mere object to be gifted. She is compelled into the arduous role of domestic labour, shuttling between various homes. It is a truly ironic circumstance that her name, 'Shekiba,' carries the connotation of a gift. Yet, in a cruel twist of fate, she holds little material value in the context of marriage, quickly becoming a burden for her own family members. She is stripped of whatever meagre belongings she possesses, only to be offered as a 'gift' to yet another household. Similarly, "Bakhtawara's parents owned a lot of land in the village which they were anxious to protect" (Kargar 230). They were scared that the other cousins and brothers would forcefully take away their land and that one son alone couldn't protect it. Hence, her father symbolically handed her his gun, as in Afghan culture, "being handed" means a handing over power and manly duties. This incident shows that Bakhtawara, being a male figure, bears the weighty burden of safeguarding the welfare and dignity of the family.

Rahima, Shekiba, and Bakhtawara gained unimaginable freedom as their social identity was that of male heirs in their families. They were among the lucky few who could challenge the *naseeb*or the fate of Afghan women by blurring the assigned gender roles and gaining freedom in a highly androcentric society. Even though these women relished the autonomy of being men, deep down, they still craved to embrace their feminine side. As Kargar points out,

> Like any other woman, Bakhtawara craved love. She looked in the mirror at her broad shoulders and stocky body and sighed. She was tired of always caring for others and wanted someone to care for her. She wanted a dashing young man to hold her hand; she wanted to be the special person on her wedding day. (Kargar 226)

Not only does she yearn for love, but she also "felt tired, lonely, and unloved and it was hard to forget that she was a woman. She wished she could have a family of her own. It hurts her that no one had asked her hand in marriage and she was frightened of becoming old and frail" (Kargar 240). Rahima, on the other hand, was at the peak of her puberty and felt attracted to her classmate Abdullah. She competed with him in Taekwondo with a sporting spirit, but being physically close to a boy made her confront her sexual identity, completely contrasting her social identity. At night when she took off the garb of a boy, she thought of her being a girl and reminisced about being around Abdullah. "I tingled to think of Abdullah's face over mine, his long legs trapping my hips under him, his hands pinning my wrists. And his grin. I blushed in

the dark." (Hashimi 116)

Heinz Lichtenstein in *Dilemma of Human Identity*, elucidates that society thrives on the stable identities of individuals. He deliberated that when the existing roles in culture do not align with the identity themes of enough individuals, those who feel mismatched experience an identity crisis. He writes, "loss of identity is a specifically human danger and maintenance of identity is a specifically human necessity" (Lichtenstein 1997: 77). According to him, identity is the authentic recognition of an individual by others whereas subjectivity is what the individual knows of themselves. Bakhtawara is often ridiculed by her neighbours and called names that make her question her sense of self,

Narkhazak! Narkhazak! (Eunuch)

> Bakhtawara was used to hearing these words and ignored them but Shah Mahmoud found it hard to dismiss their cries. 'Hajiani, these boys are always telling me that you're a *narkhazak*. Is it true? Are you not a man and not a woman? (Kargar 228)

Not only is she mocked and disrespected but her authenticity is also questioned and contested. She is made a subject of mockery and is treated as an 'other' in a social gathering she goes to. Her own cousins make fun of her and humiliate her,

> Oh, I see you've come with your narkhazak', " they teased her sister-in-law.' What does this *narkhazak* carry in her trousers? A *kus* or a *khota*?' And they dissolved into peals of laughter …. (Kargar 237)

Rahima experiences profound pain and trauma as she is reverted back to being a female and she mourns the loss of personal autonomy and associated privileges. She also is in an identity crisis as she cries out her pain,

> I was a little girl and then I wasn't.
> I was a bacha posh and then I wasn't. I was a daughter then I wasn't…Just as soon as I could adjust, things changed. I changed. (Hashimi 384)

Being a *bacha posh* couldn't save her from getting married against her wishes. Her whimsical father married (rather traded) her off to a warlord who'd fulfil his need for opium. She is commodified and used for the economic salvation of the entire family. Her world came crashing down when she had to dress again as a woman, and this time as a warlord's wife. As she says,

I had changed. I had lost my confidence. The dress I wore felt like a costume, something that disguised the confident, headstrong boy I was supposed to be. I felt ridiculous, like someone pretending to be something I was not. I despised what I was. (Hashimi 321)

Conclusion

Bacha posh have borrowed identities as they thrive only when perceived as boys, both inwardly and outwardly. They are appreciated for their boyish mannerisms until they don't reach puberty, as once their bodies start looking womanly; they are

scorned and eyed by society. In this respect, Carolyn Gold, in *Reinventing Womanhood,* critically points out that "Successful women are male-identified but that it is a failure for a woman to take her identity from her man. Women never form a self because they never have undergone an identity to lose…" (Gold 103).

This paper aspires to stimulate further scholarly inquiry into the realms of gender norms, identities, and the cultural phenomenon of bacha posh among Afghan women. The exploration of these areas promises a rich reservoir of insights, potentially unravelling intricate socio-cultural predicaments, such as manifestations of son preference. Being a *bacha posh* gives young girls a taste of freedom and autonomy that is otherwise nearly impossible to experience in Afghan society. However, this temporary state of being a "boy-girl" leads them to a state of utter identity confusion and delirium.

This work constitutes a significant contribution to the comprehension of gender roles, identities, and the phenomenon of bacha posh in Afghanistan. Notably, in the current context of the Taliban's resurgence to power, the prospect of Afghan women and girls being marginalized becomes imminent. The advancements achieved in enhancing women's rights in Afghanistan are at risk of being obliterated, underscoring the heightened importance of amplifying the voices of Afghan women and girls during this critical juncture.

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Conflux of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Urban Uprootedness and Native American Identity Crisis in Tommy Orange's *There There*

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Abstract

Native American Literature is a minority literature which gives an artistic voice to the experiences of the seemingly voiceless indigenous peoples in the USA. The Native American Novel There There (2018) *by Cheyenne author Tommy Orange, which was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize and received the 2019 American Book Award, sheds light on the identity crisis of a Native man who lives in the West Oakland's Urban side, as a victim of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The paper explores the protagonist's confusion about his belongingness, the struggles he passes through due to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the identity crisis he faces throughout his life as an urban, uprooted Native American. By employing a qualitative research methodology, this study analyses the narrative and thematic elements of the novel to explore the interconnectedness of these complex issues. The research focuses on the character of Tony Loneman, who represents the urban Native Americans who face the impact of FAS and struggle with the problems of displacement and identity crisis. By examining the identity crisis, cultural dislocation, and limited access to resources faced by urban Native Americans, this research provides insights into the broader sociocultural context that exacerbates the challenges associated with FAS among indigenous people in the USA.*
Keywords: Native Americans, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Urban Uprootedness, Identity Crisis

Introduction

Native American Literature encompasses a diverse and rich collection of literary works that portray indigenous people's experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives in North America. This body of literature plays a crucial role in storytelling, cultural preservation, and resistance against the erasure of historical events and the ongoing challenges Native communities face. *There There*, a novel published in 2018 by Tommy Orange, presents a distinct and captivating outlook on contemporary Indigenous individuals. The book delves into the interconnectedness of identity, culture, and the experiences of Native people in urban settings. Tommy Orange, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, employs his unique style and poignant storytelling to engage readers and encourage them to explore the intricate nature of identity, community, urban Native Americans, the significance of culture, the impact of alcohol and abuse, and the enduring consequences of historical trauma. As a significant novel that explores the themes of urban uprootedness, FAS, and identity crisis within the context of indigenous experiences in the USA, *There There* is a valuable addition to Native American novels such as *The Broken Cord* (1989) by Michael Anthony Dorris, *Deadly Medicine* (1995) by Peter C. Mancall, and La *Rose* (2016) by Louise Erdrich that have explored the consequences of a displacement, and the cheap supply of alcohol within a Native American community.

The novel *There There* explores the theme of the second removal, explicitly focusing on the experiences of the succeeding generation of relocated individuals who have rediscovered their indigenous heritage despite historical erasure. Set in the 21st century, specifically in Oakland, the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of contemporary urban life, shedding light on the obstacles, complexities, and racial discrimination encountered by twelve characters in a modern urban environment. Tony Loneman, one of the characters in the novel, grapples with an identity crisis stemming from various factors, including his physical appearance, personal experiences, and cultural disconnection. This paper undertakes an analysis of the effects of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and the struggles associated with displacement and identity crises portrayed in the novel. Additionally, besides the theme of identity crisis and urban displacement, Tommy Orange's novel *There There* delineates the struggle of Native Americans in urban areas to safeguard their cultural heritage and the transformative role it plays in their attempt to re-establish their identity in the 21st century.

The urban Native American identity crisis refers to the challenges and struggles faced by Native Americans who live in cities. The loss of access to traditional cultural practices, spiritual rituals, and community support that are closely tied to their tribes can make urban Native individuals feel disconnected and detached. In addressing the Native American identity crisis, Tommy Orange emphasises the need to create spaces for cultural revitalisation and empowerment. This involves promoting the visibility and representation of Urban Native voices, providing access to cultural resources, and fostering a supportive network and community connection.

Analysis: FAS and Tony's Physical Appearance

Tommy Orange, in his novel *There There,* depicts the wretched struggle of Tony, one of the protagonists, who was born with a condition called Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). It refers to a recognisable “pattern of abnormalities observed in children born to alcoholic mothers” (Goffman99). He faces an identity crisis due to the conflict between the Native American world and his physical appearance. Tony epitomises the Native American identity crisis since the age of six. The term “chemical genocide” is widely used in the case of native Americans to describe the effect of alcohol and substance abuse (Dineen 14). The vacillation between the urban setting, native cultures, and physical deformity nearly destroys him; his identity recovery comes only when he rebuilds his connection with his tribal heritage. Tony's identity crisis can be understood as happening in two stages. The first stage covers his experiences from kindergarten to his time in school. The second stage of Tony's identity crisis takes place during his involvement in the powwow experience. Tony remembers the first time he faced an identity crisis when he was six years old; he states:

> In front of the TV, before he turned it on, I saw my face in the dark reflection there. It was the first time I saw it. My own face, the way everyone else saw it.

> When I asked Maxine, she told me my mom drank when I was in her; she told me real slow that I have fetal alcohol syndrome. All I heard her say was Drome, and then I was back in front of the turned-off TV, staring at it. (Orange 15)

Tony continues to see himself in the mirror, but it does not feel like his natural face. In other words, he recognises himself, but his visage does not reflect how he feels inwardly. In Tony's case, his "mother's alcohol consumption during pregnancy led to the manifestation of FAS" (Traversy 4) in him. In kindergarten, one of his friends, Mario, asked him about the facial feature, "Why does your face look like that? Tony replied, "I do not remember what I did. I still do not know" (Orange 15). However, he talks about how most people do not even think about how they look themselves in the mirror but to him, it matters a lot, "My eye droop like I fucked up like I am high, and my mouth hangs open all the time" (Orange16). There is too much space between his nose, mouth, and eyes, as it seems he is always drunk. He talks about how his facial features are wired, "staring back at me like a fucking villain" (16). It creates an image of a villain for him, which he does not want to see. In his book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Goffman works on the stigma, which may shed some light on Tony's experience of creating a "villain" image as Goffman explores how individuals with perceived differences navigate societal judgements, providing a theoretical framework for understanding the stigma associated with visible abnormalities and its impact on self-perception.

There are numerous personality symptoms associated with fetal alcohol syndrome, including "low weight, difficulty in paying attention, recklessness, hyperreactive behaviour, poor memory, low IQ, and learning disability" (Goffman 98). Tony also struggles to perform well on the exam due to his inability to retain information. He mentions how he always assumed to be stupid and dumb, "they told me I am stupid" (Orange 16) because of low remembering power and failed an intelligence test. Due to the syndrome, Tony has a cleft lip and distorted facial features, and he struggles to remember things and assignments because of that "suspended from schools" (19), which creates a sense of loss throughout his childhood days. His self-identification since kindergarten shows a profound sense of invisibility and a disconnection from the world around him, exacerbating his identity crisis. Tony is a victim of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, but it not only contributes to his physical challenges but also deepens his disconnection from his culture and roots, fuelling an identity crisis as he grapples with both his unique experience and a sense of alienation from Native American heritage.

Disconnection from Native American Culture

Tony's birth circumstances contribute to his feelings of being uprooted and disconnected. He was born into the Cheyenne family, but his mother is in jail, and his father, who lives in New Mexico, does not even know about his existence. In the first chapter, Tony converses with his mother, expressing a desire for recognition and

acknowledgement from both of his parents, seeking a sense of identity and belonging. He inquires: “Then tell that motherfucker I exist, I said to her. Tony, it ain't simple like that, she said. Do not call me simple. Don't fucking call me simple. You fucking did this to me” (Orange 16). This conversation between Tony and his mother reveals the emotional distress and the hate he has for his parents, especially for his father, due to the fact that he has been facing challenges as a result of his physical deformity, impacting his self-perception and identity. Growing up in Oakland exposes him to the vibrant and diverse culture of the city, which contrasts with his yearning for a more traditional and grounded way of life. With his father absent from his life, Tony has a fragmented family structure and a limited understanding of his cultural heritage. Tony's experience of this disengagement from his Native American roots intensifies his feelings of not fully belonging, and hence, it contributes to his ongoing struggle with identity.

Interestingly, Tony's grandmother, Maxine, refers to him as a “medicine man,” but Tony himself does not share the same connection to this term. When his grandmother imparts to him the knowledge of their Native identity, stating, “We are Cheyenne people. That Indians go way back with the land. That all this was ours. All the shit” (Orange 17), Tony does not feel a strong affiliation with the land or his ancestors. His disconnection indicates a new generation of urban youth who do not fully grasp or appreciate Native American culture as their ancestors did. Tony mentions his difficulty in comprehending Native literature, confessing, "Maxine told me to read her Indian stuff that I do not always get” (Orange 20). He struggles to relate to the stories of his ancestors and the sacrifices they made during the removal and termination policy.

The Urban Environment

Tony, as an urban Native American, faces additional challenges due to the limited resources available in the city environment. His physical deformity requires specialised healthcare and support services, but obtaining these services is difficult because there are limited resources specifically for Native kids. As a result, it becomes challenging for Tony to receive proper check-ups and necessary care. In the novel, Tony mentions he used to attend powwows all around the bay area since he was young, “I don't anymore. I used to dance. We dressed up Indian, with feathers and beads and shit. We dance. Sing and beat this drum, buy and sell Indian shit like jewellery and clothes and art” (Orange 23). Tony reflects on his past experiences of attending powwows with his grandmother. When Octavio, the drug dealer, asks him, “Why do they do it” (23), Tony initially responds with a straightforward answer, stating “Money” (Orange 23). This suggests that Tony's primary motivation for participating in powwows has shifted towards financial gain rather than the cultural and entertainment aspects of gatherings. To get the money and support his grandmother, Maxine, Tony decides to rob Powwow.

In the city where Tony lives, he directly observes the challenges that arise

when people cannot afford essential healthcare services. An example of this is seen through Maxine, who, despite receiving money from Social Security, cannot afford a nurse. This situation emphasises the economic inequality and lack of resources that many urban residents, particularly older people, face. This is evident in Tony's experience when he takes the train and encounters the stare of a white lady. As Tony gets dressed in his regalia at home and travels to his destination, he becomes aware of the stares directed at him. He states, "He is used to being stared at, but this is different. He wants to laugh at them staring at him" (Orange 234). Tony's regalia hold significant cultural value, symbolising his Native American identity. While he has always attracted attention throughout his life, wearing his traditional attire accentuates the profound discrimination faced by Native people. To onlookers, they appear distinct and unfamiliar, as if they belong to a different world altogether.

During his train journey, Tony encounters an elderly white woman who inquiries about the airport stop while being fully aware of the answer. Tony reflects on her intentions, stating:"She wants to see if the Indian speaks"(Orange 235).The woman further questions Tony about his Native American identity and mentions that they will be getting off at the same stop, the Coliseum, where a powwow is taking place. Tony hesitates to directly answer the woman's question due to his urban uprootedness, which has distanced him from his cultural practices. Later, he discusses how non-Indigenous people interact with Indigenous individuals, not out of genuine concern for their heritage but rather to have "a little story they can bring back home with them, to tell their friends and family around the dinner table, to talk about how they saw a real Native American boy on a train, that they still exist" (Orange 235). This observation highlights the perception of Native Americans as exotic beings in urban areas, as if they belong to a different species. Tony realises that his mere existence challenges the prevailing narrative that Native Americans are historically vanishing, serving as a tangible representation of their continued presence in contemporary society.

Coping Strategies and Resilience

One of the significant and impactful scenes in the novel occurs when Tony Loneman adorns a Native American headdress and catches his reflection on a television screen. This act of assuming the headdress holds symbolic meaning as Tony metaphorically reconnects with his Native American heritage and reclaims his identity. Tony articulates this transformative moment, stating:

> I pulled my regalia out and put it on. I went out into the living room and stood in front of the TV. It was the only place in the house where I could see my whole body. I shook and lifted a foot. I watched the feathers flutter on the screen. I put my arms out and dipped my shoulders down; then I walked up to the TV. I tightened my chin strap. I looked at my face—the Drome. I did not see it there. I saw an Indian. I saw a dancer. (Orange 26)

Through putting on the regalia, Tony rises above his physical deformity and

experiences a profound sense of pride and happiness in embracing his Native American identity. The regalia connect to his ancestors, providing him with a newfound sense of self, voice, and cultural representation he had never experienced before. This pivotal moment marks the first time Tony fully acknowledges himself as a Native Indian, recognising himself as a dancer who embodies the culture and narratives of his forebears. As George Herbert Mead puts it,"Our thoughts, self-concept, and the wider community we live in are created through- symbolic interaction" (Mead 1). Tony's act of putting on the regalia can be interpreted as a symbolic interaction that transforms his self-perception and identity

Earlier, when Tony's grandmother informs him that he is destined to become a medicine man who would bring salvation to his people, he harbours doubts and disbelief towards her stories. However, driven by the need for financial gain, Tony attends the powwow to engage in a robbery. In the novel's concluding pages, Tony distances himself from the act of violence, rejecting any involvement with the gun and bullets. Instead, he transforms into a peaceful warrior by making a self-sacrificial decision to protect others. During the events at the Coliseum, Tony chooses a different path, walking away from the scene rather than participating in the robbery. As he does so, he witnesses Charles firing a gunshot towards him. Tony reflects, "As he does, the first bullet hits him. The bullet feels fast and hot in his leg even though he knows the bullet can't be moving anymore" (Orange 287). Despite the physical pain caused by the bullet, Tony undergoes a process of inner strengthening, developing a resilient determination that propels him forward.

Tony's act of saving other Native Indians by confronting Charles, who is armed and firing at everyone, is a pivotal moment. As the tension rises, Tony takes action and pushes Charles to the ground, grasping the gun. In a chilling turn of events, Tony fires the gun into Charles's head, witnessing Charles's lifeless body drop before he falls down to the ground, thus sacrificing his own life for the greater good: "He proves his grandmother's point that he is a medicine man, who saved his people by sacrificing his life, which Tony also does" (Orange 287). This moment of self-sacrifice becomes a manifestation of his newfound understanding of self and purpose. Tony's act resonates with a metaphorical triumph over the complexities of urban life and the internal struggle linked to FAS.

Amid this intense situation, Tony's perspective shifts. He notices the darkening sky and feels himself sinking deeper into his thoughts as if heading towards the earth's centre. Memories of his grandmother, Maxine, and their shared moments resurface. Tony recalls when he, as a four-year-old, questioned their identity, asking his grandmother, "What are we? Grandma, what are we?" (Orange 288). Maxine's silence and playful response to soap bubbles on her face carry a deeper meaning, hinting at the complexities of their existence. Tony realises the bubbles symbolise the multifaceted lives of contemporary Native people: "Grandma, you know. You know they're there" (Orange 289). Tommy Orange's description of Tony's final moments is stupendous. Tony's recollection shifts to his bedroom and his dying state at the coliseum. He remembers his grandmother teaching him to dance, comparing it to the

birds' morning songs: "You have to dance as birds sing in the morning" (Orange 290). As he approaches death, he remains present, attuned to the bird songs resonating within him, providing solace and support: "Tony hears a bird. There is a bird for every hole in him. Singing. Keeping him up" (Orange 290). This transformative experience allows him to embrace a new dimension of existence. The novel concludes that Tony's essence remains timeless and connected to the world as the birds continue to sing: "Tony isn't going anywhere. Even now it is morning, and the birds, the birds are singing" (Orange 290). This closing passage leaves the readers in a space of infinite transformation, seamlessly intertwined with a touch of irony. This transformation echoes the resilience often associated with individuals facing challenges related to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome as Tony rediscovers his Native American identity and assumes the role of a medicine man. The closing end, with Tony's connection to bird song and the timeless essence of his being, suggests a reconciliation of his identity with the complexities of urban life and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, encapsulating a nuanced portrayal of cultural resilience and regeneration.

Just like *The Broken Cord* by Michael Dorris, *There There by* Tommy Orange offers distinct perspectives on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome within the context of Native American experiences. The difference is Dorris intimately recounts his journey of adopting a child, Adam, with FAS, providing a detailed exploration of the challenges, emotions and social implications involved in raising a child affected by these conditions, whereas in *There There*, FAS is not a central theme but rather one among several issues explored in the lives of urban Native Americans. Orange's novel, with its multiperspective narrative, captures the complexities of indigenous identities, historical trauma, and contemporary struggles, offering a broader understanding of the urban Native American experiences.

In the novel *There There* by Tommy Orange, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, urban uprootedness, and identity crisis are interconnected in several ways. The relocation of Native Americans from rural to urban areas is often a forced one either mainly by the government agencies or as a result of a lack of sufficient resources for living or by their aspiration to have a better life for their progeny in the city. However, once they are in the city, they often do notget sufficient courage and opportunities to mix, mingle and integrate with the people in the city. Due to the lack of sufficient scope for assimilation and amalgamation, they face a profound sense of alienation within the hostile urban environment, as the story of Tony's family reveals. This displacement, dislocation and alienation experience has led many Native Americans, like Tony's mother, to experience identity crises. Then, they seek refuge from their pain in the consumption of alcohol, which gradually becomes a habit and an addiction, as Tony's mother demonstrates. Compounding this issue, pregnant women who consume alcohol during pregnancy have inadvertently affected the next generation, leading to the development of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), of which Tony is a victim. The novel demonstrates that FAS directly manifests the alienation, urban uprootedness and identity crisis and resilience experienced by Native Americans.

Conclusion

The depiction of Tony as a victim of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of alcohol consumption during pregnancy, affecting not only the physical, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of those diagnosed but also their overall sense of self and identity. The experiences of individuals like Tony who were affected by FAS highlight the broader societal issues surrounding alcohol abuse and the importance of raising awareness about the risks associated with it. By shedding light on the challenges faced by those with FAS, Tommy Orange gives us a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of their stories, amplifying the need for support, education, and resources for affected individuals and their families. The narratives of stories like that of Tony serve as a call for compassion, empathy, and proactive efforts to address this preventable condition, ensuring a brighter and healthier future for all.

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She Speaks but She Must Also Be Heard - A Study on the Resurgence of the Subaltern from Three Textual Narratives

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Abstract

"Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story" (Gohain 2022). This study uses expression as a tool to release stifled ideas from three different literary narratives. An investigation of each personality drives the point home that 'voice' and expression no longer keeps one a mute subaltern. Emphasising on the constriction of freedom of expression in South Africa, the slam poet and the founder of vocal revolutionaries Lee Mokobe in the poem "What It's Like to be Transgender" uses 'voice' as a contrivance to liberate and equalise gender identity issues and deals with concerns like the non-acceptance of the transgender community in a world where religious scriptures preach about universal love. The concept of 'voice' gives liberation to all the subalterns who are muted by the elitists' discourse. An examination of the speech delivered by Dr B. R. Ambedkar at Mahad seeks to ferret out solutions for the appalling state of the untouchables residing in Mahad. Turner Ward's racial satire A Day of Absence addresses topics of whiteness, prejudice and discrimination against Black Americans. The sporadic disappearance of the black working community addressed as nigras brings the normal course of the whiteman's life to a standstill. This abrupt disappearance of the nigras is juxtaposed to the helplessness of the whites as they are incomplete without the presence of the neglected nigras right from their personal life to the economic scenario. Thus, the study on the three works attempt to criticise the strong institutions born out of religion, orthodoxy and social discrimination that impair human coexistence because they do not put their beliefs into practise and reminds them that a 'voice' is intended to be heard even if it is quiet or else it will take the shape of rebel and resistance.
Keywords: Subaltern, Voice, Gender, Racism, Transgender, Caste System, Untouchability, Discrimination, Rebel, Resistance

Introduction

A subaltern is someone whose voice is never heard and who is excluded and suppressed by the prevailing culture. When a colonial population is socially, politically, and physically cut off from both the metropolitan homeland of an empire and its colony, it is referred to as a subaltern. The standards and values of culture and traditions have endowed women with qualities like selflessness, devotion, loyalty, and hard work, all of which will be levying on her identity and uniqueness (Chaturvedi 16). Subaltern Studies historians attempt to "retrieve colonised women's subject position" as a historical endeavour failed. The account about women's participation in the Peasants revolt was not found in the historical archives. This happened due to its representation by other monopolising forces, the oppressed group's "resistance" could not be articulated (Morton 59). Representation is politicised as the discourse by the elitist is considered more valid and true. It was only

the elitists' discourse that was heard and not the subalterns. Here emerges the concept of voice, a rebel or an act of resistance to be heard. Under the biased jurisdiction of the Indian patriarchy both as a woman and as a widow, woman is doubly marginalised. All of this results from the ideological construction of gender that perpetuates male dominance and erases the voice of women in the rhetoric of the elitists. Morton states that "If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Morton 59). In most of her essays, Spivak redefines the position of women studying the various approaches and critiques on the bigotry assumptions the orients have towards the third world. In *Key Theories of Gayatri Spivak, I,* Mambrol states that "that the feminist work needs to continue by learning from Third World subjects, not by imposing false interpretive models upon them" (Mambrol).

The present study delves into the concept of 'voice' and its role as a medium of expression. The subaltern's voice is not heard and this statement was blatantly uttered by the critical theorist, postcolonial feminist, and activist, Gayatri Spivak in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak". She says so because of the disappearance of documents from the historical archives that chronicles the participation of women in the peasant's revolt. Spivak succinctly points out that the exclusion of non-Western perspectives from discussions about philosophy has led to a situation where the opinions of those outside the West are simply unheard. Therefore, the subaltern class will never be able to regain their voice, she concludes, and the only way to ensure their representation is through the creation of a new, inclusive narrative. Globalisation, according to Spivak, is dangerous for women in the Global South, especially in rural regions. She is heavily critical of liberal feminism and its high regard for its portrayal of women's subjugation within a wholly Western, capitalist framework.

In general terms, expression is an act of saying what one feels, thinks, opines and has experienced and literature is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language. When speaking becomes a discourse, it becomes "a transaction between speaker and listener" (Landry and MacLean 287-308). Expression is therefore essential for raising awareness of concepts, viewpoints, and ideologies. When these notions and axiomatic beliefs turn into conventional knowledge or truisms as a result of cultural domination, a subaltern's voice is muted. Their limited and superficial understanding restrains the substance of their thinking and speaking. An investigation of each personality from the narratives of the selected works for this study drives the point home that 'voice' and expression no longer keeps one a mute subaltern. The present study uses expression as a powerful tool to release stifled ideas from the three different literary narratives – Lee Mokobe's "What It's Like to be Transgender", Dr B.R. Ambedkar's Speech at Mahad and Turner Ward's one-act play *A Day of Absence*.

Literature Review

A literature survey is carried out reading a few research articles from different journals to examine the position of the subaltern and the use of 'voice' as a powerful

tool of expression and self-acclamation. The article *Introduction: The Voice of Indian Women Novelists and their Status in Contemporary Indian English Literature Studies* on the resistance by women against male supremacy. Additionally, the researchers examine and discuss how women are currently categorised as victims by "family," "institutions," and "society." In *Societal Crisis and Cultural Elements in the Novels of Gita Hariharan,* Daves A. Arun investigates on how the writer used genre fiction as a powerful device to teach students about Indian mythology and how women can survive even the most extreme circumstances. (Daves. A 6)

Afeerakhanam & Dr K. Sandhya in the research article titled *Marginalisation of women in the Selected Novels of Manju Kapur and Anita Nair: A Study* discusses the plight of women who are consistently forced into submission by a systematic procedure, or, to put it another way, a conspiracy that is spun like a web with the underlying traits of control and subordination (Afeerakhanam & Sandhya 91). Even after emphasising these equal rights repeatedly in recent years, many feminists have realised that these alone cannot free women from sexual and social subjugation. *Unheard Voices and Gender Construction of Dalit women in Bama Faustina's Sangati* by Shalini Yadav highlights on the insensitive realities of Dalit women's oppression, struggle, torture, and sad existence (Yadav 9).

Surbhi Saraswat in the article *Rejection to Resistance: A Study of Dalit Feminism in Bama's Karukku* emphasises the demand and need or Dalit feminist texts, which give voice to the community's oppressed women (Saraswat 1). Therefore, rather than a loss of articulation, the female subaltern's silence is the outcome of failure of interpretation. Kamble, P. Shuddhodhan discusses gender inequality and repression which are the key inspirations for feminist movements, particularly Dalit feminist organisations and their style of writing is very raw and real from the upper caste in terms of experiences, expression, and storytelling style (79). Praveshika Mishra, in her article *Contextualising Dalit women's voices: A study of Urmila Pawar and Bama's autobiographies* discusses on the representation of Dalit women. Since their experiences have been homogenised with those of the elite, the subject of Dalit women's representation has not been able to be heard effectively and is losing its appeal because it lacks agency (Mishra 389).

The collaboration of all the research strives to locate the 'voice' of the subaltern who have lost their voice in the rhetoric bizarre of homogeneity, bigot representation, stereotyped opinions and politics. The present study delves to trace out the voice(s) of the victim and investigate the noises (oppositions) that have muted their voice to dim silence and therefore even after they speak, they are not heard. Be it widows, Dalit women, transgender or just a woman of the third world, their voices are not heard. Therefore, expression takes the path of resistance to make them heard.

Discussion

The award-winning slam poet Lee Mokobe makes a thunderous appeal to the world for acceptance and this rallying cry is the 'voice' that needs to be attended to.

Slam poetry or spoken word poetry which had its inception in the white working-class Chicago bar (Verma, Subcultures and Sociology) was usually applied as a counter reply to social, political injustices for the marginalised groups. Lee Mokobe's poem expresses his struggle on his gender identity and the obstacles he has faced in life and also deals with issues like race, justice, liberty and LGBQT. His highly popular poem "What It's Like to be Transgender" details the struggles that a transgender encounters during his teenage years, the embarrassment and discomfort throughout their life is particularly emphasised in the poem. According to a study in 2023 by the American Psychiatric Association, transgenders may have vague feelings of "not fitting in" with people of their assigned sex or specific wishes to be something other than their assigned sex (American Psychological Association 2023). Kulick's research on transgender and language, slam poetry is explored to understand the hidden emotions trapped in the intricacies of expression in poems (Verma).

This poem carries the message of the self-identity journey of Lee Mokobe and the transformation from a girl to a boy. "My prayers are now getting stuck in my throat" (Mokobe) he cries. An episode of his childhood surfaced where he was praying in a church when he wondered if something was wrong with him as he finished his prayer offerings by putting his hands in the holy water. His voice is left unheard. He prayed to Jesus to cure his injuries since he felt as though his body was withering from confusion and bewilderment. He silently prayed for God to forgive him of his sins.

I asked Jesus to fix me

And when he did not answer…

My mother told me of the miracle I was," (Mokobe - How It's Like to be a Transgender")

His mother persuaded him by telling him that he was a miracle kid and that God had particularly gifted him and "said I could grow up to be anything I want" (Mokobe 14). His uncertainty and ambiguity were, however, made worse by pretense and conformity. His family chided him for behaving like a girl "I was the mystery of an anatomy" (22). The kids in the school "Called me by a name I did not recognize, / said "lesbian," and he learnt well that he was a masculine rather than a feminine because "I was more boy than girl, more Ken than Barbie" but accepting what he is the only choice left and Mokobe started accepting himself and being happy living with it. After the initial stages of struggle, Mokobe discovered expression as his rescue and took courage which is difficult in a society hostile to transgender and LGBQT.

Expression gave him the outlet and he later is convinced of the natural phenomenon that his body underwent. According to another review in 2013 by the American Psychiatric Association, the emotional, physical and psychological change particularly gender dysphoria, a condition of stress that a person undergoes when they are living in the wrong body (American Psychiatric Association) is also brought out in this poem. This condition results in conflict which further results in desiring to be in the opposite gender. Understanding the natural phenomenon that is so different from others yet natural helped Mokobe to convince his mind about his hybrid identity. He

accepts who he is and also uses his 'voice' to tell others like him to accept oneself in whichever form he/she is. The poet expresses:

Maybe I am finally fixed," (Mokobe - "How It's Like to be a Transgender")

After undergoing much resistance, psychological, physical, emotional and mental trauma Mokobe sets himself free through articulating his pain through his poems and convincing people facing the same crisis to overcome and that life has better things to offer. Mokobe gives voice to the voiceless declaring

maybe I just don't care,

May be God finally listened to my prayers." (Mokobe- How It's Like to be a Transgender")

Next for the study is Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's powerful speech at Mahad. Dr Ambedkar started a Dalit campaign to access water from the Chavadar reservoir in Mahad. Hindus from certain castes used to be allowed to swim in this lake. Here, the Manusmriti was set ablaze as a symbol of Dalit resistance to untouchability. The lake was considered a public property that can be used freely by all sections of the society. It "freely permits people of any religion to draw water from it" (Ambedkar 223) the manner in which the speaker speaks is ironically satiric. He glorifies the Hindus who have a great heart and wishes love, unity and peace. "They regard altruism as religious merit and injury as a sin" (224). Emphasising on the topic of violence he cleverly remarks "that injury done by another must not be repaid but patiently endured, and so, they not only treat the harmless cow with kindness, but spare harmful creatures such as snakes." (224) He gives a pragmatic factual detail about the division of different castes vesting on the division of their skill, physical stamina and capacity and "They are ordered in a descending series of each meaner than the one before" (224). ". . . he then slowly embarks on the prohibitions pertaining to intermarriage, interdining, interdrinking and social intercourse. The meeting was not just to solve the tangled riddle of caste but "to set up the norm of equality" (225).

Taking the example of the revolutionary French National Assembly Dr Ambedkar brings the similarity of both class and caste structure of both the societies. The difference of inequality in French society was that "it was economic in nature. It was, however, equally intense" (226) Emphasising on equality and one caste Dr Ambedkar says "Hence, if Hindu society is to be strengthened, we must uproot the four-castes system and untouchability, and set the society on the foundations of the two principles of one caste only and of equality" (233). Ambedkar's speech acts as a powerful and convincing 'voice' that creates an impact on the dalit crowd. Voice and expression take its power and supply it to the entire population in Mahad. The chavadar lake whose access was prohibited for the dalit people is now free and accessible to all people belonging from all castes. The efficacy of 'voice' is emphasised in the analysis of Dr. Ambedkar's speech that broke the forbidden law that was maintained for many years.

Next in this study is Turner Ward's play *A Day of Absence*, a satirical fiction which is a strong indictment on white privilege and the defence of white identity. Satire has always been employed as a powerful weapon to bring out human

weaknesses, frailties, strategies, hypocrisies, corruption, weaknesses, absurdities, violence, and behaviours in numerous contexts. *A Day of Absence* is a one act play that narrates a set up with the mysterious disappearance of the Negroes and the residents of the town. The white owners and superiors find it impossible to work without the assistance of the nigras. The play tells the viewers about the treatment of the nigras and the discrimination evolved through the division of labour works. The town awakens in one morning, a normal day but shockingly realises that all the nigras have disappeared abruptly. A situation of confusion and panic lurks the street of the whites. They become helpless as the city cannot function without the black nigras.

Satire functions aptly as a literary device and serves the purpose of awakening the people. In the play, the married couple John and Mary do not find the baby sitter at home in the morning. Mary is devoid of motherhood skills and does not know how to console the crying baby, does not know how to change a diaper and cannot cook. Concurrently the factory work and the logistics comes to a halt. Turner Ward emphasises on the indispensable presence of the blacks and their mandate attendance to operate the life of their White masters. The mayor, who is growing more and more desperate, believes that if he gives a speech to the Black inhabitants of his town that is televised nationwide, they will undoubtedly return. Finally, the mayor ends by pleading with the Black residents to come back while crouching on his knees.

The announcer says that the mayor was badly battered by a crowd, which nearly resulted in his death, after a protracted blackout during which pandemonium is being replicated, the confusion comes to a peaceful stop. The following morning, in a confused state, Clem and Luke come across Rastus, a Black guy, and severely interrogate him. Rastus was unaware that a day had gone and was unable to recollect where he was the previous day. Clem inquires, "Is it?" as Luke asserts that everything is back to normal.

Turner uses satire as a powerful weapon to bring a change in the mindset and psyche of the people. Even though satire is typically designed to be humorous, its main objective is often to provide healthy social criticism. It does this by employing humour to call attention to both specific and more general societal problems. The story leads the people to reflect and analyse all for the constructive good and welfare of the society and acts as a powerful voice for the voiceless black nigras.

Conclusion

The present study delves upon each of the three works with a common ground that is, voice. The courage taken to speak and express not only liberates others but first liberates the self. But the autonomy of the self is governed by the nomenclatures given by the society. Patriarchy and male domination make women a subaltern and robs her of her voice. In order to be heard one must also be listened to. An attentive listening needs preparation and willingness to understand what the speaker wants to convey. Only then any discourse or dialogue becomes successful.

Gayatri Spivak claimed that "The subaltern can never speak" because their

discourse is controlled by elitists' interpretation and not the subalterns who are actually suffering. Hence the politics of representation homogenised the crucial issues that a woman and specially a widow undergoes. Subalterns need to overcome the fetters in a world where women are hard squeezed between inaccurate interpretations and objectification (Morton). The presence of "noise" always distorts the message, impairing communication. They have the ability to communicate, but "within the dominant political systems of representation, their speech acts are not heard or recognised" (Morton 66).

A subaltern's real voice will never be heard by the audience until she speaks for herself. She doesn't need an "absent non-representer" (Morton 59), since he would merely replicate aristocratic thinking and leave women's issues on the fringes. They use their expressiveness to successfully respond to the anomalies and animosity, speaking out recalcitrantly without worrying about the repercussions. The works recommended for the study makes an effort to represent or speak for the subaltern. All three narratives—Turner Ward's racist satire *A Day of Absence*, Dr Ambedkar's powerful address at Mahad, and Lee Mokobee's "What It's Like to be a Transgender" do not let the subaltern remain silent. The subalterns should keep making it apparent to the authorities what their stance is since the only thing that is constant in the world is change. The new dawn of life can only be fully experienced by the subalterns when the authorities pay attention to their requests. As Black feminism asserted their "self-determination as essential … with the aid of their American and African tradition - Blues, Jazz, Voodoo, mumbo jumbo, symbols, rituals, myths" (Peter 66) likewise Indian Feminism too should endeavour to establish her very radical identity through redefining the socio-cultural set up in its most pristine and ancestral form through 'deciphering' and 'deconstructing' the colonial/patriarchal taboos imposed on women. The study seeks to dismantle Spivak's cynical claim about the status of Indian women by arguing that, even if a subaltern cannot speak out loud, she may still communicate through gestures, actions, and even silence, which can often speak louder than words. Just as Druaupadi in Mahesweta Devi's "Dopdi" ("Dopdi") "has the courage to battle with her demons," (Peter 91) she speaks and is no longer a subaltern.

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Valmiki's *Joothan*: An Auto/biography of Memory and Trauma of 'Unspeakable Things Unspoken'

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Abstract

Albeit post 1970's Dalit literature became a discourse of resistance and protest against the mainstream literature, it was Dalit autobiographies, the leading genre of Dalit literature, which became an aggrandized expression of the trauma and violence experienced by this marginalised population of India. Insofar, many dalit autobiographies have been deconstructed as life writings and protest literature, it is Joothan: A Dalit's Life (2003), the autobiography of Omprakash Valmiki which could be read and interpreted on various levels of dalit aesthetics including memory. Memory, when used in the context of Dalit literature, is not a monolithic term. Its fluidity and usage could be understood when we read autobiographies of some famous dalit writers like Sharan Kumar Laimbale's Outcaste, *Baby Kamble's* The Prison We Broke*, Daya Pawar's* Baluta, *and many more. It is in this context of memory (individual and collective) and expression of shared history of trauma and resistance of the unaccounted and voiceless population (dalits) of India, I will analyse Valmiki's* Joothan: A Dalit's Life *(2003) as a memory text. As memory plays a vital role in a person's struggle to build a personal and social identity in a world in which "subjectivity is both fragmented and fractured" (Giles 21), I will explore* Joothan: A Dalit's Life *(2003) as an autobiography of Valmiki's personal struggle on the paradigm of search for identity as well.*
Keywords: Autobiography, Memory, Trauma, Identity, Collective Memory

**Joothan: A Dalit's Life* (2003) will be referred as only *Joothan* throughout the paper.

Introduction

Albeit post 1970's Dalit literature became a discourse of resistance and protest against the mainstream literature, it was precisely the period between 1978-1986, the "golden period of dalit autobiographies in Marathi" (Dangle 255), and the last two decades of the 20th century, the fertile period of publication of dalit autobiographies in Hindi, which gave dalit writers a platform to explicitly express the humiliation, trauma and violence experienced by them on personal level and by the dalits in India at general level. But it is ironical to note that even during the 'fertile period', the autobiographies of many dalit writers like Laxman Gaikwad, Daya Pawar, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Vasant Moon, Namdeo Nimgade, Valmiki etc had restricted readership, and analysed either as protest literature or as texts guilty of self-aggrandising and solipsism. Even though many of these autobiographical narratives translate the personal account of the writer into the description of the life conditions of their respective castes and contribute to our understanding of the existing social reality, yet at the same the overemphasised 'self-aggrandising' and excessive sharing of personal experiences called for mainstream criticism and scrutinising. One such dalit writer whose personal narrative was also

criticised for being "unbelievable and exaggerated" (Valmiki xiii), is Omprakash Valmiki. Valmiki, one of the pioneers of the institutionalised dalit literature within the domain of Hindi literature, writes his autobiography *Joothan*: *A Dalit's Life* (2003) to narrate the suffering, pain, anger, and humiliation faced by him throughout his life. The paper will explore *Joothan* as Valmiki's autobiography written not only from the vantage point of a victim of casteism in India but also as a mouthpiece of the collective traumatic memory of the community author belongs to. It is in this context of memory (collective and personal) and expression of shared history of trauma and resistance of the unaccounted, voiceless and the marginalised population of India, I will also study *Joothan* as a memory text. As memory plays a crucial role in an individual's "struggle to build a personal and social identity in a world where subjectivity is both fragmented and fractured" (Giles 21), I will also explore *Joothan* as an autobiography of Valmiki's personal struggle on the paradigm of search for self.

Insofar copious literature (both by mainstream and dalit writers) is written discussing the plight and dismayed state of dalits in Indian societal system, and critics and scholars alike have shown profuse interest in delineating this in their seminal and research works, yet my hypothesis is that not many critics factored in the role of memory in writing those texts. If Eleanor Zelliot in her seminal work, *From Untouchable to Dalit* (1992) traced the history of the advent of dalit autobiographies as an evolving genre of dalit literature, then Sarah Beth Hunt in her researched work, *Hindi Dalit Literature and the Politics of Representation*, focussed on the reasons for a separate discourse for dalit writings and brilliantly brings to fore the concepts of *dalitchetna*, *svanubhut*i and *sahanubhuti,* the concepts essential for foregrounding dalit autobiographies in mainstream literature. Apart from these, Gail Omvedt's "Literature of Revolt," and Arjun Dangle's "Introduction: Dalit Literature Past, Present, and Future" have also traced the evolvement of Dalit literature in various regional and Indian English languages and literatures. Similarly, the articles by Tapan Basu, Satchidanandan, and Christopher Queen have also tried to trace the evolution of dalit writings in general and dalit autobiographies in particular, and analysed *Joothan* on various aspects and paradigms, but none of the above-mentioned texts and articles considered the concept of memory asan important component of writing and reading *Joothan* as a dalit's autobiography.

Joothan, the first Hindi autobiography translated in English (2003), traces Valmiki's life journey, taking into account his childhood experiences as a boy born in an untouchable Chuhra caste in Barla, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh and upbringing, as still an untouchable in the newly independent India of the 1950s, to the day when he gained the "attention of the mainstream media" (Basu 55) and the "middle-class readership" (Basu 55). The text is also perused as a discreet attempt on Valmiki's part to critique the oppressiveness and the exploitation deeply rooted in the birth-determined caste system of the Indian society. Primarily, Valmiki was reluctant to write his autobiography. He knew writing about the past, which many considered shameful and deplorable, requires unravelling, remembering, and reliving those traumatic experiences again, which his community people and he bore throughout

their life. The very thought of this gave him a'deep mental anguish' (Valmiki xii).But when his article, "*Ek Dalit ki Atmakatha*" was published in *Harijan se Dalit* by a renowned dalit writer, Raj Kishore, Valmiki received a series of letters from the 'far-flung rural areas' (Valmiki xiv) of India appreciating his courage for narrating the realistic state of Dalits in India. Valmiki was moved to know that "dalit readers had seen their own pain in those pages of mine" (Valmiki xiv) and hence, accepted publisher's offer to convert his essay into a full-length autobiographical text, which was published in Hindi in 1997.After its translation in English in 2003, the text becomes readily accessible to modern and educated (dalit) readers making it "a testimony, documenting the crimes and injustices against them and their community" (Mukherjee 53). This documentation essentialises remembering and reliving those memories of trauma that Valmiki had suppressed for long.

Memory is a non-linear phenomenon where personal and collective memories push each other to a level of revelation. In *Joothan*, Valmiki's personal experiences sought validation in the collective memory of his people. Though Valmiki's narration of the personal incidences from his childhood and adulthood did not follow a linear pattern and listed as and when they appear in his consciousness, yet we see, every time Valmikiun ravels his-self, layer by layer, his narrative is metamorphosed into a representation of his community's caste struggle. One such experience which is vividly fresh in Valmiki's memory and marks metamorphosis of his personal experience into collective pain was when Valmiki had to accompany Hiraram, his schoolmate, who "was married off at about the time he took the class eight examination" (Valmiki 34), to perform the ceremony of 'salaam' (bridegroom's party had to go to salaam the people at the houses where his relatives worked). The humiliation and anguish Valmiki felt 'after wandering from door to door' for salaam filled him with anger and outrage that he broke down in tears in front of his father and demanded that this custom, which is humiliating and creates an inferiority complex in them, should be abolished. This and many more such personal and collective experiences of pain and protest has left a deep scar in his memory, and writing his autobiography was a way to give voice to those suppressed and suspended memories.

Psychoanalytical theories also relate that sometimes the victims of traumas rather than repressing the traumatic experience develop a defence mechanism to deal with it. In *Joothan,* metamorphosis of his personal experiences into an account of the collective horrors and atrocities his friends and family members faced becomes his coping mechanism. While revealing his suppressed memories of caste-based discrimination, Valmiki gives voice to the collective pain of a caste, which is segregated and ostracized physically from participating in normal social life. Personal memory of high school days, when Valmiki was forcibly dragged to sow sugarcane in Fauz Singh's field soon before his final examinations is still fresh in his memory, and he recounts that incidence as, "…A fire engulfed my innards that day. The memories of these crimes of Tyagis continue to smoulder deep inside me, emitting red-hot heat" (Valmiki 66). It is noteworthy that even while narrating the pain of his personal suffering in the hands of Fauz Singh, Valmiki's narration bends

towards the narration of the incident when other lower caste boys of his class were excluded from participating in any extra-curricular activities on the pretext of their caste and how they were made to swallow the hateful and staunch comments from the boys who belonged to the upper castes. The rude behaviour of the headmaster of the school on a regular basis, working as a labour in Tyagi's homes without getting paid, forced skinning of the dead animals, and gathering joothan from the upper caste' house are all Valmiki's microcosm experiences of caste-based oppression which macrocosm community people shared too. Thus, out of the individual memory of pain, Valmiki constructed the collective. As *Joothan* deals more with memory and remembering than with writing historical life of the writer, the personal memory got assimilated with the collective remembrance of the event. As the very acts of remembering are cognitively connected to the "issue of agency at a personal existential as well as at a political collective level" (Parui 95) in terms of the choice of memory and forgetting, dalit identity confers on Valmiki an exclusive authority to speak on behalf of his family, friends, relatives, classmates, and colleagues but not dalit women family, friends, and relatives. Sarah Beth and Christopher Queen, dalit scholars and critics, questioned Valmiki's position as the narrator of the text, who gives representation only to masculine identity and forgets to raise concern about Dalit women, who are almost entirely absent from his narrative. Even if there are any references, like there is an elaborate description of his mother collecting joothan and his sister-in-law pawning her jewellery for Valmiki's schooling, paradoxically, these traumatic experiences of her mother and sister-in-law respectively are converted to Valmiki's self-assertive pain rather than trauma(s) of the triply marginalised section of the society. But this absence of a female voice in dalit discourse is not possible to be addressed in here, hence, require another article for the detailed discussion and deliberation.

By nature, memory is fragile, dynamic, and subjective, Valmiki has narrated his painful experiences as 'Flashbulb Memories' (Brown & Kulik 77), memory as he remembers it as tragic and traumatic. Many scholars have studied the psychoanalytic theories related to what experiences become memories and what are forgotten in oblivion. In their article "Autobiography and Memory", Roger Porter & Daniel Reisberg while discussing how autobiographical writing deals with traumatic experiences, talk about how some memories (established in long term storage) are always distinct and vivid in people's description while some repressed memories, like "post traumatic experiences, are lost in amnesia" (62), and hence, there are no memories to be recovered. But many contrary studies show that victims of the trauma do not always fail to retain the memory of their painful experience; contrarily, their traumatic experience results in an augmented memory. Hence,the recollections of the painful event become more vivid and long-lived in the memory. This theory of enhanced traumatic memory is also relevant to analyse *Joothan,* major part of which is based on his childhood traumatic memories. The second half of *Joothan* focussed on Valmiki's life as an educated adult when he moved out of his native village and went to various cities, like Dehra Dun, Roorkee, Jabalpur, Bombay, and Chandrapur,

to pursue is career but ironically even education failed to free him from the evils of casteism present in every space and time of his life. The shadow of his caste followed him wherever he went. His 'dalitness' still weighed heavy on him, like "dragged its carcass behind" (Dutt xii) him through his childhood and into adulthood.

There are various ways and patterns of storage of an information or experience as a memory. The oldest narrative structure is to save those as the stories in the brain, which later inform the self's sense of continuity in space and time, as Parui remarks, this "narrative structure of memory thus contains condensation (through metaphors and symbols), focalization (through privileged points of view), and cognitive bias (through which the more convenient meanings are produced and preserved)" (Parui 97). Born in 1950 in an independent India, Valmiki reveals to his readers the hypocritic and prejudiced mentality of the members of the upper castes, who have shamelessly created certain symbols, metaphors, and gestures to denigrate the down-troddens of the society. Sometimes these verbal gestures and symbols leave a dehumanising effect on the victims of caste suppression. Like the metaphor of 'joothan' is still clung to Valmiki's memory for ever so much that the more he wants to forget it, due to the intensity of the trauma it caused, paradoxically, the more apparently vivid it gets, because "the personal importance of an event is the factor that systematically promotes recollection" (Reisberg 243-45). As, say Mary Chamberlin and Paul Thompson, "the shaping of autobiographical narrative, and particularly of oral remembering, is a basic part of cultural learning in childhood" (*Genre and Narrative in Life Stories* 8), the experiences of the early childhood are more seemingly and more accurately remembered by Valmiki than his memory as an adult, as they were guided by their cultural relativity as well.

Dalit Chetna: A Path towards Self-Identity or Search for Identity

While Satchidanandan said that the subaltern autobiographies in general are "the emancipatory aspirations of the self" (Satchidanandan 6), and has become more about self-expression, self-understanding, self-construction and self-transcendence, Valmiki wrote *Joothan* (2003) to ascertain a respectable identity not just for himself but for his entire community as well. The concept of identity in the context of dalit literature is as ambiguous as it is multifaceted. In dalit literature, identity of the author/narrator is not merely the identity of an individual, instead, it is an amalgamation of self and the community, micro and macro, personal and social understanding of the self. If an autobiography resituates the writer in his work, then for Valmiki writing his autobiography becomes, as Mary Jean Corbett says, "a way of attaining both literary legitimacy and a desired subjectivity" (Corbett11). By giving precedence to his masculine narrative over narratives of other characters of the autobiography, Valmiki endorses his centrality as the author/subject of his autobiography. Therefore, the "I" of *Joothan* is not a personal pronoun used to represent Omprakash Valmiki, the narrator/author; this "I" is a representative pronoun used for the entire oppressed caste to which he belongs. Likewise, the autobiography

is not just an attempt on Valmiki's part to seek the personal 'I', which is self-affirmative, but the 'I' which is a blend of personal and communal identities, because his 'self is not merely the 'self-knowledge' of Heraclitus (Moore 1), or 'atma-jnana' as finds mention in Indian metaphysics and Vedas, or as Hopkins says, "what I do is me" (Hopkins line 8), but it is the experiences of an individual placed in dalit setting, and also an act of identifying that self with the 'other'. This 'other' is again a complex term to scrutinize. This 'other', in most discernible understanding, can be the whole community or the caste to which the author/narrator belongs; or this 'other' could be the upper caste people who have turned a deaf ear and an impaired eye to the oppression of the subalterns, or in a metaphorical term, this 'other' could be that suppressed/'*mook'*(dumb) side of the self, which becomes 'self' only with the acceptance or admission of its real identity.

When we talk about identity as a claim on oneself, then a dalit's identity is not restricted to seeking an individual's identity, it also refers to the individual's contribution towards the creation of dalit history or identity as a community. Long before the term 'Dalit' became an identity marker for the lower castes, calling untouchables/scheduled castes as bhangi, chuhra, chamar and mahar was a common practice across the nation. As a child, being called out as 'abechuhreke', instead of his real name, was intimidating to Valmiki. Hence, as an adult, it becomes important for Valmiki to reinforce his dalit subjectivity and identity for his personal individuality, as Beth says, "thereby asserting their status as equal human beings, yet without threatening their simultaneous claims to a communal cultural identity" (Beth 195). Adopting the surname "Valmiki" to assert his untouchable caste and his exclusion from Hinduism as well, was a strong step taken by Valmiki to assert his identity as a dalit as well as an individual. His narrative in his autobiography is also a reconstruction of his own self, tracing his journey moving from the state of humiliation to the state of respect, from the state of denial to the state of acceptance, from being 'other' to the state of accepting his true self. Even though he was pressurised number of times by his family and friends for deleting his surname 'Valmiki', he asserted his own choices to reconstruct his identity beyond the one imposed by his community. Later in his life, when he was pursuing a hard earned job, he faced the incessant pressure from friends and colleagues to change his name, but he was adamant not to conceal his identity ever again. Valmiki's refusal to any such temptations was symbolic of awakening of his dalit consciousness. It is noteworthy that Valmiki has given voice to numerous such incidences of humiliation and indignity which left unhealed scars in his memory, and he gasped, "The scars that I have received in the name of caste even time won't suffice to heal them." (Valmiki 61)

Conclusion

After its availability for both Hindi and English-speaking readers, *Joothan* (2003)became a representative text of Dalit consciousness chronicling the suffering, humiliation, mental anguish, self-realization, protest, exclusivity, and inclusivity of

dalits in ancient ideological and cultural structure of India. If, as Anderson says, "memory is the container of experiences, necessarily lived in time," (Anderson 21), then *Joothan* is a powerful narrative tracing the journey of a dalit writer who struggled all his life to leave behind the hunger, humiliation, and criticism that he faced since childhood. As an autobiography is the most characteristic form of 'symbolic memory' (Satchidanandan 8), this text becomes a symbolic representation of trauma stored as 'flashbulb memories' in Valmiki's deep psyche and these memories become a symbolic representation of the collective trauma faced by entire Chuhra community to which the writer belongs. Writing about the painful experiences of dalits from the vantage point of the victim gives legitimacy to Valmiki's narrative, and transforms his old, silent, and suppressed self into a new, empowered and a metamorphosed human. His autobiography is not an acceptance of guilt or assertion of personal recognition, instead, his text becomes a mouthpiece of his people's suppressed voices giving a realistic representation to the Dalit community in the mainstream literature. Hence, writing his autobiography becomes an identity marker, some sort of personal and collective redemption for Valmiki.

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Unmasking the Predator: Rereading Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* as a Psychopathic Saga

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Abstract

Arvind Adiga's The White Tiger *(2008) has garnered praise for its satirical critique of complex power dynamics, class disparities, inequality, marginalization, and corruption in modern India. While existing studies have deepened our understanding of the text, an overlooked aspect warrants exploration: Can Balram be studied as both a victim of the system and a perpetrator of violence? This question prompts consideration of his potential psychopathic tendencies. To that end, the paper critically examines the motives and personality of the narrator, Balram Halwai. The aim is to scrutinize his violent actions as rooted in predatory behaviour while also exploring the connection between his predatory violence and the psychopathic tendencies within his character. The paper delves into the origins of his psychopathy, tracing it back to the influence of neoliberal society, vital poverty, and his upbringing, characterized by a lack of parental care and familial instability, failing to nurture the emotional aspect of his personality adequately.*
Keywords: Psychopathy, Neoliberalism, Predatory Violence, Vital Poverty, Balram Halwai

Introduction

Extolled as a critical analysis of contemporary India's social and political scene, bringing light on pervasive themes of inequality and injustice, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) explores society's dark underbelly via a satirical perspective, delving into the destructive forces of greed, corruption, and ambition that drive individuals and perpetuate institutional injustices. It is a first-person narrative recounted via the protagonist, Balram Halwai, who addresses his story to China's Premier, enumerating his journey from an impoverished rural town of Bihar to becoming a successful entrepreneur in India's booming metropolis of Bangalore. This Man Booker Prize-winning text has sparked extensive discourse in both popular and academic circles, receiving considerable acclaim for its unfiltered societal critique (Detmers 536), examination of complex power structures, social class (Shagufta and Qasmi 2), subaltern perspectives (Ratti 229), experiences of marginalization, and issues of corruption (Mendes 275), alongside various other thematic explorations. While these scholarly inquiries have deepened our comprehension of the text, an unexplored facet warrants scrutiny: Can Balram be perceived as both a perpetrator of violence and a victim of the system simultaneously? This question arises to postulate the possibility that he exhibits certain psychopathic tendencies.

Scholars such as Sara D. Schotland and Alexander Adkins have critically examined Balram's actions in escaping the "rooster coop" (Adiga 173), with Adkins characterizing himas a "monstrous antihero" (170) and Schotland interpreting his robberies and murders as instances of "premeditated violence" (2), yet amidst these

assessments of Balram's character, there persists a prevailing sympathy for him, stemming from his marginalized societal status. For instance, S. D. Schotland acknowledges his cold-blooded violence but justifies it as a means to break free from oppression, drawing on Fanon's concept of constructive violence. Similarly, Adkins portrays Balram as a "misanthropic rogue" (170) while critiquing neoliberalism's promotion of cynical self-interest. Consequently, notwithstanding the prevalent negative depictions, there exists an opportunity to examine his conduct and character, characterized by calculated and cold-blooded predation. The paper attempts to explore this space through a critical analysis of the motivations and persona of Balram Halwai, with the overarching aim of dissecting his violent actions within the context of predatory behaviour and investigating the nexus between such violence and his psychopathic inclinations. Drawing from Robert Hare's precepts of psychopathy, J.R. Meloy's concept of predatory violence, John Bowlby's affectionless psychopathy, and Siracusano's concept of vital poverty, it traces the roots of his psychopathic traits in the context of a dehumanizing neoliberal society and vital poverty.

Additionally, it is also essential to acknowledge the potential cultural variations in the interpretation of Balram's character. Within the Indian context, he may be perceived as a symbol of resistance against socio-economic constraints. In contrast, Western readers might focus on the psychopathic facets of his character, viewing him as an archetype of ruthless individualism. To provide a broader comparative context, when juxtaposed with analogous characters in the Western canon like Bigger Thomas of Native Son (1940) or Rodion Raskolnikov of Crime and Punishment (1866), significant differences emerge. While all three characters hail from impoverished backgrounds and display violent traits in response to societal pressures, Bigger's accidental murder sets him apart from Balram, and Raskolnikov's guilt contrasts with Balram's lack of remorse. Thus, while acknowledging potential interpretative variations, this paper aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the human psyche under adverse circumstances. To that end, the paper is structured into two distinct sections: the first delves into the origins of Balram's psychopathy, while the second demonstrates the presence of psychopathic attributes within his character.

Genesis of Balram's Psychopathy

- **Balram in a Neoliberal India**

According to Alexander Adkins, Adiga uses scatology to critique homoeconomicus in neoliberalism (Adkins 170). Swaralipiipi Nandi calls the novel a "neoliberal bildungsroman" (Nandi 276), while Liani Lochner calls Balram a "neoliberal subject" (Lochner 37). This collective viewpoint places the story in neoliberal India, where small elite controls most resources. The neoliberal "economization of human life" (Adkins 170) worsens inequality and hopelessness, as Balram poignant observes: "In the old days, there were one thousand castes and

destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up" (Adiga 64). Nandi's portrayal of this neoliberal ideology further underscores its intrinsic individualism and erosion of communal identity, where profit often takes precedence over societal responsibilities (Nandi 287). The extreme individualism and profit-driven approach disproportionately impact the mental well-being of individuals, particularly those in lower socioeconomic strata, potentially giving rise to their worst attitudes, values, and ethics (Beckeret al. 960). This is illustrated in Balram's grandmother prioritizing her water buffalo over family members, regarding it as the "most important member of the family" (Adiga 20), not as a cherished pet but as a source of income through milk sales. In contrast, despite her contributions to the family's well-being, Balram's mother occupies a lower position in the hierarchy than the buffalo. This mindset affects Balram's perspective of life as a global marketplace where profit is everything. Balram develops a peculiar understanding of social processes, institutions, and individual roles in this neoliberal microcosm, which fuels his psychopathic tendencies and deepens his desire for wealth and freedom, leading to his callous disregard for others' rights. To comprehend this peculiarity of his personality, it is necessary to investigate two pivotal factors: the absence of his parents and the backdrop of his vital poverty.

- **Lack of Parental Care**

Balram's life is marked by the glaring absence of nurturing and parental figures, starting with his mother's loss and becoming an orphan following his father's untimely demise. According to Gao et al., this absence can significantly influence a child's personality (Gao et al 1013). Moreover, Bowlby suggests that the absence of an attachment figure can potentially trigger the emergence of psychopathic tendencies (Bowlby 1008). His monotropy theory states that the breakup of the primary attachment figure (Mcleod), particularly the maternal tie, can cause serious problems, including affectionless psychopathy (Gao et al. 1009). The emotional neglect Balram that experiences from his parents becomes starkly evident in his initial interactions with his teacher on his first day of school. Here, he laments that his parents "did not have the time to name him" (Adiga 13), revealing deep-seated feelings of inadequate attention, limited parental involvement, and an overwhelming sense of insignificance during his formative years from a child's perspective. This emotional distance from his parents forces him to internalize a self-preservation ethos.

While familial instability, deeply ingrained socioeconomic inequality, and a morally compromised environment may contribute to his antisocial behaviour, it is essential to acknowledge that the inherent seeds of psychopathy exist within him. However, his surroundings serve as fertile ground for developing these tendencies. This becomes particularly evident when comparing Balram with his father and brother, who share the same social standing and encounter comparable challenges but do not display the same psychological traits or resort to his extreme methods. Scholars such as Kiehl and Hoffman substantiate that individuals with inherent genetic or early

developmental proclivities toward psychopathy may experience the condition's onset when exposed to adverse environments (Kiehl and Hoffman 5).

- **Not Just Poverty but Vital Poverty**

Balram desperately tries to rise in society due to his family's severe economic problems. Balram's objectives stem from his underprivileged childhood, yet his predicament goes beyond poverty. His poverty is explained by Siracusano et al.'s vital poverty theory. Unlike economic poverty, it represents a holistic perspective that encompasses cultural, moral, relational, and emotional dimensions, marking the erosion of fundamental elements of a fulfilling human life, such as meaningful interpersonal connections, emotional well-being, a sense of purpose and self-worth, and a moral and religious framework guiding behaviours and beliefs (Siracusano et al. 61). Analyzed from this perspective, Balram's poverty goes beyond the absence of material wealth; instead, he suffers from a deficiency in essential human qualities. Throughout the narrative, there is a conspicuous absence of genuine relationships in his life, even within his own family. He excuses this to poverty, although even as Bangalore's wealthiest man, he lives alone. Despite criticizing others for betraying their family, his decision to cut ties with his family shows his incapacity to create genuine relationships. Interestingly, his grandmother Kusum writes that he is "selfish, inglorious, and evil" (Adiga 262). He consistently resorts to deceit and manipulation while living with Ashok, continuously deceiving him for financial gain. What is intriguing is that instead of feeling remorse, he experiences "rage" (Adiga 231). Balram is impoverished not only financially but also emotionally and morally, making it easy for him to navigate the lives of others ruthlessly. This vital poverty, more than material poverty, exposes his darker side.

- **Hypothesizing Balram as a Psychopath**

> Oh, I could endlessly expound on myself, sir. I could revel in the fact that I am not just any murderer, but one who killed his own employer (who is akin to a second father), thereby potentially causing the demise of all his family members. A virtual mass murderer. (Adiga 45)

In a society marred by oppression, disrespect, and corruption, Balram commits a grave act by killing his master, Ashok, leading to his family's downfall. He rationalizes this as a response to the oppression they face, highlighting the power of wealth in a neoliberal society. However, his character is complex, as there is a disconnect between his actions and his motivations. While he claims his social struggles drive him, his choice to murder Ashok and assume his identity goes beyond mere survival. His initial convincing justifications reveal inconsistencies, raising the possibility of psychopathic tendencies. To explore this further, we must first understand psychopathy and examine observable traits in his behaviour.

Psychopathy encompasses a spectrum of interpersonal and emotional traits

that culminate in distinct behavioural patterns, including impulsivity, violence, grandiosity, insincerity, superficial charm, shallow affect, remorselessness, and a dearth of empathy (Hare 34). Psychopaths function as interpersonal cheaters who exploit others, reaping benefits with minimal effort, ultimately enhancing resource acquisition and reproductive success (Meloy et al. 153). Despite appearing amiable and polite, they lack social emotions such as empathy, guilt, shame, sorrow, and love, resulting in emotional impoverishment (Hare 38). Nevertheless, their cognitive faculties remain intact, enabling them to manipulate others through intricate deceptions and sophisticated tactics, exploiting the trust and cooperation of their victims. Psychopaths adeptly achieve their objectives while skilfully evading detection and accountability by capitalizing on the vulnerabilities of those around them, showcasing remarkable adaptability for social predation (Meloy et. al.154).

When assessing Balram within these parameters, he stands out as a classic example of someone displaying psychopathic tendencies. A crucial trait of psychopaths is an inflated self-perception (Hare 38), and Balram positions himself at the centre of his existence, boldly asserting, "if anyone knows the truth about Bangalore, it's me" (Adiga 4). He sees himself as the "glorious twenty-first-century man" (Adiga 7) who embodies everything about entrepreneurship (Adiga 6-7). However, this self-importance becomes self-serving as he prioritizes his own lifestyle over his family and friends, revealing symptoms of narcissism, grandiosity, and a need to assert superiority. Another aspect of Balram's personality that reflects his psychopathic tendencies is his emotional detachment, particularly his lack of shame and empathy. He openly admits, "I am not a sentimental man" (Adiga 12), indicating his disconnect from basic human emotions. This emotional deficiency can be traced back to his upbringing, especially under the influence of his grandmother, Kusum. His disturbing mindset is evident when he equates coal pieces to human skulls, demonstrating a disregard for human life and foreshadowing his dehumanizing treatment of others as objects. This contrast between deception and self-realization suggests a skewed moral compass and a confused perception of reality.

Perhaps the most abhorrent crime committed by Balram is the murder of Ashok. It carries immense significance not only in terms of the act itself but also in how it is brought into the narrative. While recounting a visit to a fortress, he casually discloses, "Well, actually, I spat. Again, and again. And the whistling and humming, I went back down the hill. Eight months later, I slit Mr. Ashok's throat" (Adiga 42). His chilling indifference is striking. This nonchalant demeanour unnerves, prompting concern over the absence of remorse. What is even more striking is his characterization of the act as "entrepreneurship" instead of acknowledging it as murder (Adiga 11). His casual tone while making these statements is deeply unsettling. Juxtaposing spitting with admitting Ashok's murder reveals a troubling lack of empathy and moral awareness. Additionally, the timing of his confession carries significant weight. The mention of the murder in an entirely unrelated context emphasizes a troubling absence of guilt and empathy. Balram's unsettling traits extend beyond his lack of empathy and remorse; his inclination towards violence subtly

emerges in his language. He consistently employs violent metaphors, evident when he describes his car's steering wheel, which he claims to "strangle" or "gnaw" (Adiga 219). Moreover, his peculiar fascination with the car provides insight into his psyche's darker recesses. To him, the car is "a more sophisticated creature, with a mind of his own; he has power steering and an advanced engine, and he does what he wants to" (Adiga 62). Viewing it as a creature with autonomy mirrors his desire to break free from authority and control (Adiga 62). As he embarks on his journey into the city in his car, he portrays it as a menacing place, a "wild place" filled with "expansive parks, protected forests, stretches of wastelands, and various elements" (Adiga 211), indicating his perception of the city as a realm of untamed savagery and chaos. In an imaginary conversation with the city, he seeks insights into "the blood on the streets" (Adiga 220), revealing a morbid curiosity about its violent underbelly.

Scrutiny of Balram's conduct through the lens of psychopathy brings to the fore a multifaceted persona navigating the boundary between self-preservation and psychopathic inclinations. His emotional detachment, absence of empathy, and nonchalant acknowledgment of violence, particularly Ashok's murder, expose inherent psychopathic traits. While initial justifications may originate in societal constraints, a more profound analysis unveils motivations transcending mere survival, portraying a morally convoluted character navigating an uncertain reality.

- **Not Only Affective, Rather Predatory Violence**

After thoroughly examining Balram's character and considering potential psychopathy, a significant question arises: whether Balram's killing of Ashok can be classified as predatory violence. This is crucial, given the vital link between predatory violence and psychopathy (Meloy et al. 154). Therefore, it is essential to investigate whether Balram's acts of violence exhibit characteristics of being cold-blooded, meticulously planned, and inherently predatory, contrary to his claim that they are purely reactive.

Balram displays a predatory mindset throughout the narrative, evident in his decision-making and approach. He describes himself as "a madman with thoughts of blood" (Adiga 257), aligning himself more with animals than humans. His life philosophy revolves around letting animals be animals while humans remain humans (Adiga 276), failing to recognize the full humanity in people. He even goes so far as to state that "what is most animal in a man may be the best thing in him" (Adiga 251). This perspective extends to his view of sexual intercourse, which he describes as "one animal fucking another animal" (Adiga 251). Balram sees himself and others as more akin to animals than humans, solidifying his predatory outlook. Furthermore, his calculated infiltration into Ashok's household, leading to the removal of the more competent driver, Ram, by exposing Ram's true religious identity (Adiga 142), reshapes the dynamics in his favour, granting him increased access to Ashok. This transformation, echoing Balram's perception of Ashok as "a lamb" (Adiga 142) and his self-identification as a white tiger, becomes more significant in light of research

indicating that individuals aligning themselves with predatory animals often exhibit heightened psychopathic traits (Penzel et al. 10).

Predatory violence also entails cold-blooded and well-planned murder, and Balram's actions conform to this pattern. While he attributes his actions to the torment endured in the rooster coop and the aggression stemming from being framed for a false murder case, it becomes evident that he would have murdered Ashok regardless. The entire episode of killing Ashok is meticulously planned, even involving practice on his nephew Dharam (Adiga 279). He watches Dharam comb his hair, practicing the fatal strike to ensure its success when he confronts Ashok (Adiga 279). His deliberate concealment of the "broken bottle" (Adiga 281) in the car's glove compartment, careful selection of the spot to insert the broken bottle, and familiarity with train destinations for a swift escape all point to premeditation. Balram's actions, therefore, align with the characteristics of predatory violence, indicative of his desire for dominance and control over Ashok. Rather than building relationships based on emotional equality, he strategically leverages power dynamics to establish his dominance. This involves tactics like manipulation, persuasion, and, in some cases, physical assault to subjugate his target. Balram's behaviour is driven by his satisfaction from overpowering and controlling others, creating a distinct prey-predator dynamic in his relationship with Ashok.

Conclusion

In Balram's own words, his narrative unfolds as a "sorrowful tale" chronicling his transformation from a "sweet, innocent village fool" into a "citified fellow replete with debauchery, depravity, and wickedness" (Adiga 195). While this statement originates from his stark realization of his educational and socioeconomic disparities compared to others, this paper contends that his actions hold the potential to exert a disproportionate influence on the functioning of society. His conspicuous lack of empathetic capacity and a limited concern for the well-being of others underscore the peculiarity of his personality. This becomes evident through his adept employment of manipulation, deceptive tactics, callous disregard for the lives of others, and his readiness to resort to violence and inflict suffering in pursuit of his ambitions. These traits categorize him as someone inhabiting a "presocialized emotional world, wherein others are mentally represented as part objects and not appreciated as whole, real, and separate human beings" (Meloy 259). Consequently, this paper posits that, when viewed objectively, Balram can be characterized, in line with Ishikawa et al.'s concept, as a "successful psychopath" adept at evading legal convictions for the crimes he commits (Ishikawa et al. 423). Balram's consistent failure to acknowledge the immorality of his exploitative and horrifying actions throughout the narrative sustains a plausible hypothesis that he exhibits predatory and psychopathic tendencies.

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Interventionism and Bioregionalism in Mamang Dai's *The Black Hill*

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Abstract

Literature acts as a backscatter of the universe which undergoes various dimensions in explaining facts like religion, politics, culture, ecology and history. Postmodernism has recorded the effect of colonization in literature. 'Globalization' is the new term for the old dictatorship 'Colonization' in the contemporary world which is an extending history of monoculture. Bioregionalism focuses on regaining the process of 'Nativity' with eco-concern. It deals with the cultural, economic, ecological and identical determinations of particular regions to regain the rooted community. People and places are interrelated to one another as a body and soul. Mamang Dai's novel The Black Hill *unearths the turmoil of the North East region under the colonizers in an expedition to find a route to reach Tibet. This paper explores the strategies undergone by the foreigners (French Priest & British Authorities) in manipulating the tribes and imposing their own medications and religion into the native land (Northeast India) and indigenous people. The bewilderment and struggles of the indigenous group (Mishmee and Abor Tribes) in the process of defending their land is analysed with the help of bioregionalism theory.*
Keywords: Bioregionalism, Colonization, Identity, Mamang Dai, Nativity.

Introduction

Globalisation, the next step of Colonisation indirectly bestrides the whole world. After independence, the country's need to enhance its technological abilities for the economy causes the deterioration of culture and environment, leads to ecological identity crisis. There is a need to regain the nativity and culture in the aspects of ecology, economy, and politics. So, it raises a question. Is colonisation the first step of Globalisation in eradicating the nativity and local economy to infuse other cultures by establishing a monopoly?

During colonization, indigenous people in the most hidden regions of Northeast India are manipulated for the welfare of the colonizers. The eco-concern mindset of the people changes into materialistic. Landscape of a region decides the identity of the place and inhabitants. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, indigenous land was interrupted by the British in finding route to reach Tibet. Intervention and the attempt in influencing people to Christianity and western lifestyle are exposed in the novel *The Black Hill* (2014) by Mamang Dai.

Bioregionalism has its foundation in environmentalism, but besides ecology it focuses on regional culture, politics and economical dimensions of the region. By using Bioregionalism, the native and local phase of the regional people can be recalled. This research will support the development of localisation and sustainable ideas in the society. Bioregionalism shadows the ideas of Deep ecology, as equality

between the inhabitants of the region with the sustainable aspects. Like colonization, globalisation also suppresses local livelihood and environmental concerns in the development of the global economic market. Bioregionalism discusses the human's role in the environment draws emphasis on human-place bonding. It explores the important regaining process of region and inhabitation of the place depending on its landscapes, watersheds, climatic conditions and natural boundaries apart from political boundaries without the interruption of the world class lifestyle. Bioregionalism emerged in 1970s; Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann start with the article "Reinhabiting California" in *The Ecologist* in 1977. "In brief, bioregionalism asks us to become conscious of ourselves and the places where we live in ecological terms and to harmonize human activities with ecological realities" (Glotfelty 1).

The research paper focuses on the relation between human and land in the novel *The Black Hill* (2014). Bioregional ideas gradually pave the way for sustainable life. The intervention of the British into this Bioregion and how people are manipulated in destroying the ecology turns materialistic. Impacts of colonisation leads to globalisation, localisation and reinhabitation are the findings for the research question to regain the natural state of the land.

Subsistence with Nativity

Berg has explained the concept of "living-in-place" which wants the people to lead a life according to the nature of Landscape, climate, and soil, not to convert the place for their own desires. Tribes of specific areas used to follow a particular lifestyle, culture and food as per their regional environment and culture (clan).While they visit other clans, simultaneously acclimatise them to the location. In order to thrive or survive the rainy seasons, people grow, harvest, and stock food in prior. Future-focused thinking is the primary objective of sustainability. As a result of globalisation, people frequently disregard this principle in favour of utilising the environment to their fullest financial advantage.

"Bioregionalists seek to revive, preserve, and develop cultural patterns in specific bioregions that are suited to the climate, life zones, landforms, and resources of those regions" (Gruenewald 634). Mebo villagers are used to those seasonal changes of the land, weed and cultivate as per nature's turn. While some clans plant millets, Mebo people cultivate paddy as per the soil. In Mebo, yam is cultivated for pig feed, while in the Mishmee region, yam is consumed as food. This demonstrates food's diverse purposes depending on the environment. Local agriculture helps in preserving ecosystems and biodiversity, which support people with native DNA from a particular region and have a stronger immune system. It promotes both physical health and mental wellness since the human body develops and metabolism is supported.

As Dai (author) belongs to the Aadi community expresses the true spirit of nativity by using the native word 'Migluns' to address the British people and use 'The Black hill' to the hills of the Arunachal Pradesh. She uses the tribal words in the novel

to establish the Bioregional narrative through literature. They use to prepare dye using the natural products available in the local regions and use to loom cloths on their own. People use Tibetan products like hat, coat, pans, Burmese Swords, Knives and more because they are in the India-Tibet border. People cleverly use the things available like rubber sap, aconite and bee wax in trading in order to get some grains and salt for this season. Raw material can be brought from the other local areas and the products will be manufactured depending upon their own culture. Gimur uses 'Kmaan' designs in the jackets as per the custom.

This proves the sustainable lifestyle without the intervention of Migluns's (British) new cultural and economic influences. Kajinsha, play a significant role in upholding the ecology without any interruption and stress the need for human-land relationships that links life to the natural environment. The Migluns take advantage of this since they view it as a life support system rather than a component of it. Although the tribes embrace bioregional philosophies, there is also disagreement among them. It allows the Migluns to enter and alter the identity of the territory and inhabitants.

Exploitation and Interventionism

Even though the story starts from 1847, interference of the British into the land starts back twenty years before. Dai explains how foreigners try to manipulate the natives by introducing their medicines and foods. The prominent motive of invasion is to establish Christianity. Changing one's identity is not only based on religious change but in culture, economy and politics. This questions the indigenous identity of a particular region and culture. So, one of the missionaries, Charles Alexis Renou, has advised the team to provide medications for smallpox disease in order to reach the Tibetans, creating an opportunity to teach the gospels to them. Although these developments enhance people's hygiene and health, but they eradicate traditional remedies. Globalization thus resembles colonisation which enhances the native culture of one's into others than the indigenous of own culture. Indians follow English medicines, simultaneously foreigners came to Indian Ayurvedic treatments.

". . . in-volving an open and more inclusive reflection on identity, history, and ecology." (Iovino 100) A small town of Tamil Nadu, Thirumailapur turned into Mylapore by the British and changed the nearby hill of Mylapore into Saint Thomas Mount. Identity of the place changes as per colonizers wish and identity crises occur in the native land like foreign land. People never move to another country or region, but their identities change, as well as the identities of their places. Cultural and religious histories of the place are not taken into account. Colonisation has the power to manipulate people to believe that exploitation is quite acceptable.

With the Migluns, tribes also begin to get into the economical phase of life. British government planned to introduce trading post in the Mebo region, to make some benefits in expanding the trade. Gold washers, fishermen and beheeas are extracting wealth rather than their vital needs and looking for the support of Migluns to overcome the inter-tribe slave issues. Indigenous people, who are a part of that

environment, also partner with expecting bribes.

After the interruption of British rule in the Northeast region, gold washing faded due to the bidding of the British. After the implementation of land tax, gold washing crashed with the bidding and at last the traditional gold washing was stopped in 1905. In 1859, Tea estates bloomed and led to the exploitation of land and gold with the capital of one lakh rupees (Mahanta 88). British people seek to coerce the native gold washers to convert into their own workers, independent native working change into a monopoly. Identity of the gold washers turns into common colonized workers in the tea estates. The similarities between colonialism and globalisation only serve to destroy nativity and reinforce mono-culturalism. In the initial stage of colonisation, Colonisers extracts the local resources and exports it on a global level. At the same time, they influence and force people to use the native crops of Migluns and extend them into the world market.

Lamet is a devious man of a nearby clan, whose ideas differ from Kajinsha. He uses to covertly plunder the Migluns and incomprehensible about how treachery might harm the destiny of the nation. Even though he earns wealth, it does not enhance his life. It demonstrates the community's thinking of having a regular surviving life even though he has large sums of money with him. Globalisation is a creeping poison that slowly destroys local businesses and products, even as it promotes commerce and the global economy.

In the process of reaching Tibet, Krick a French Priest is looking for a guide to cross the Mishmee hills. Chowsa, a local tribe, is forced to guide him. Chowsa's son is studying in Debrooghur and British officer Vetch indirectly blackmails him as he looks after his son. Authoritative power plays a major role in the indigenous land seizing during colonization. Though Krick brings lots of gifts to people with a good heart, his intention is to be friends with natives and convert them into Christians. Bargaining happens between Krick and natives, as 'two baskets are equal to two cows'. Since those two baskets are in no way equal to the two cows, it is obvious that people's innocence is used to their advantage in order to generate wealth. The indigenous people's assets are cows (cattle), but they are oblivious of the deception and blindly accept the deal. It reveals the treacherous minds of the foreigners, whether they are British or French, undervalue the native people and employ techniques to obtain natural resources for the least amount of money. Here, commercialization and globalisation begin by tricking the people into thinking that local riches are cheaper than imported goods.

Though people may fear that the intervention of Miglunsmay destroy their independence and happiness, rival tribes of Kajinsha and persons like Lamet are eager in helping Migluns to earn some wealth. In comparison to the Migluns, Priest Krick is a nice person who supports the indigenous people both financially and religiously. Although he has the best of intentions, his methods ruin their way of life and culture. Though his methods or intention in spreading Christianity does not cause any problems in the current situation his future plans through his last letter to the Directors in France are really troublesome. He asks for two missionaries in implementing the

medicinal practices and vegetable gardening. It is a political practice instead of medicinal practice. Politics has a role in achieving power without causing the violence necessary for colonisation. Here is the transformation of the nation's identity and the current march towards globalisation begins.

With physical support Krick plans to change the psychological mindset of the people on the basis of religion. Instead of constructing a house, he aims to build a chapel with an annex to store the carpenter tools. In this sentence, "setting up a standard mission with a chapel and annexes because they also asked for carpentry tools" (Dai 221) the word annexes implies both the meanings of the word. Annexes have two meanings: extending room and controlling a country. Though the sentence may intend a room, it indirectly projects the control over the people with the religion.

During his visit to Mebo and Mishmee villages Krick cures the people's small injuries with his some basic medication and it gives belief on the foreign medicine. People are blindly convinced of the medicines for a certain period. The encroachment into people's identities begins with these. Krick intends to grow his own indigenous seeds and food among the tribes in order to transform the ecology. "In their last letters, they asked for a long list of items: seeds for peas, carrots, limes, melon and celery; medicines like... and a horn or ivory spoon to take the medicine" (Dai 221).

According to Bioregionalism, "Reinhabitation is becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationship that operate within and around it" (Berg and Dasmann 399) but these principles are overruled by the Migluns in the northeast of India. Debroogurh is the mini settlement on the bank of river Dibru and Burhampooter turn into a commercial town in the period of 1823. The town has lost its real nature and changed into the treasury of Tea estates, Debroogurh is producing one third of the tea cultivation in Assam. Potato cultivation in the regions is well known to the country today; it explains the introduction of cash crops into the indigenous lands and people also believe in the success of these crops. People cultivating native crops like paddy, cash crops and foreign vegetables are more in profit than native crops. These ecological changes are supposed to results in the economic and political changes over the nation, these ideas can be relate with the Political ecology. It explains the bad impact of globalised markets on rural life. This shows the eradication of nativity and the influence on people to concentrate on foreign products. Currently these commercial and technological developments are inevitable, but changing the texture and reality of the land equally demolishes it.

Maltreating the Indigenous

Apart from these mental changes in the people, Migluns step into physical violence to colonize them. Only Kajinsha cares and defends land in his generation. He makes an attempt to steer the priest away from his domain, to secure his land. Although Kajinsha rises with an anti-foreigner mentality, his compassion for Krick is different. He predicts that Krick's intentions will not harm them directly but the results of Migluns are ultimate. As Migluns entry into the region will bring disaster towards

their life, Lamet and others have killed Krick. But Kajinsha manipulated as the murderer; it leads him to abscond in his region for six years.

Migluns are ferociously searching for Kajinsha in the murder of two priests (Krick and Bourry) and by using this chance Migluns reach Mebo hills. It leads them to have an official entry into the land and conquer the land. "There were living in a hut like a fortress surrounded by ravines and waves of hills and jungle. If strangers came then they would fight to keep their land and die here if it was so destined. This was their unspoken pact" (Dai 262).

Gimur enters the prison and battles with the police for her land. She never feels inferior to them despite their strength and gender. Kajinsha and Gimur are more magnificent than other people, because they are ready to give up their lives to protect the land rather than killing innocent people. Even in his final moments, Kajinsha longs to see his lands and the mountains, owing to his devotion and allegiance to the land. Soon the villages of Mishmee turn into desert. War continued between Migluns and Tribes which led to Sepoy mutiny in 1857. Kajinsha's clan killed Lamet's family in retaliation for his death, intertribal conflict erupted.

Bioregionalism encourages the native life based on the ecology, but the colonization has encouraged the commercialisation, industrialisation and Globalisation. Tribes of Northeast India are following the native culture and food style but their regions are cultivated with the tea and foreign vegetables like potatoes. Though colonisation ended, its impact on the indigenous lands is still continued in India. But the economic growth and technological advancement force people to proceed with the same pattern of life and forget about the native lifestyle. In order to revive these lost ideals of observing the nature and reality of the environment, bioregionalism is ramping up its efforts in the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Australia, and other nations.

Conclusion

For commercialisation, Globalisation indirectly colonizes people to use foreign products. Even if globalisation is presented as being independent and open to everyone, it is also presented as a monopoly where one set of people will control everything. People of India, known for their dusky skin tone, are manipulated to believe that fair complexion is beauty and bold. After independence, foreign beauty products are launched and after industrialisation, the Indian economy largely depends on the beauty industry and starts to produce cosmetics with international ingredients. Indian herbs and sandalwood are replaced by creams and powders. It creates an economic standard in the global market but affects every local industry like medicine, textile, food, lifestyle and more. Since colonization, indigenous paddy and millet fields are turned into tea and coffee estates, flora and fauna are replaced with foreign breed and hybrid varieties.

Global economy follows the same framework of colonization as rich and poor, power and weak, and Global and local. Though globalisation is inevitable

support in the contemporary world, there is a need for sustainability in society. If most of the people use the foreign goods instead of local ones, it involves huge transportation cost and increases environmental problems through air, water and noise pollution. Bioregionalism not only focuses on culture and nativity but also on environmental concerns. Native crops cultivation, purchasing local goods, understanding the landscape and following ethnic cultural ethics with the concern on ecology pave the way for preserving the environment from degradation. Nativity can be preserved as per the nature of the region by adapting localisation. So people have to reinhabitate the ecoregions with its own aspects as it is. Sustainability can be achieved from the community level to global level through localisation. If the people's need is not accomplished at the local level, they can opt for product-like technologies from globalisation. So limit the globalised product usage and maximize the sustainable indigenous products for a healthier environment.

Revisioning this native culture and regaining the eco-concern with the cultural aspects of the region can be reached through the official formats of the World Organisations. Literature details these aspects with the importance of nativity and culture to the worldwide readers concentrating on the self-reliance of the particular region based on the ecology and culture with sustainability. Mamang Dai, as a representative of tribal people tries to ensure a sustainable life with the belief in local natural landscapes and culture through the medium of novels.

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Voice for the Voiceless: Drumming Practices of Parai Artists in Tamil Nadu with Reference to Parai Songs

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Abstract

The problems, struggles, and identity crises faced by the Parai artist will be exemplified by referring to the Parai songs. This paper touches on the aspect of why Parai drumming practices are significant for the artists and how the drum will assist them in voicing for the voiceless. The revival of the Parai drum from the ancient period to contemporary times, the politics and the instrument's status will be exemplified further. This research will analyse and look at the following Parai songs "Hashtag justice" (2020), "Quota" (2018) *and* "Thalaivaa" (2020) *for the study. The background of these selected songs' lyrics will be analysed with themes of identity and caste issues by applying the popular cultural lens through the concept of distance from the work, Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life by John Fiske. The Parai drumming practice, which has been restructured, reshaped and modified from the initial period and is seen as a symbol of Dalit identity in recent times will be explained. The research has only been limited to Parai songs released by the Casteless Collectives team from Tamil Nadu. The scope of the study is to show the unique treatment of Parai songs and how these artists will receive a new perspective and visibility in society while drumming is answered.*

Keywords: Parai drumming, Identity, Caste issues, Voice for Dalit, Subaltern studies, Parai artist.

Introduction

This research paper throws light on how the Parai musical tradition, with its roots in Tamil Nadu, evolved over a period as a resistance towards the dominant forms of music and culture. Through the song lyrics of the Parai artists, the voice of the artists has become visible among the people. In Tamil, the word *Parai* means *solludhal,* loosely translated as "speak or tell". The *Parai* instrument is known as *thaikaruvi,* meaning the mother of all the skin instruments that portray Tamil people's life (Panchadcharam). It converts speech into music. The ones who play and perform leather-based instruments are called *panar* and *viralis* (Chengalvarayan). The *Parai* artists hail from various communities belonging to different strata; they excel in drumming. It is one of the few instruments which have the scope to sound well after warming in front of the fire before the event. This can also be called the unique feature of the instrument, where the artist can beat the drum and dance towards the drumming beat (Devarajan). This instrument is performed with two sticks: *adikuchi* and *sundukuchi*. This instrument evolved during the *Sangam* Period. Parai is mentioned in *Tolkappiam*, the first work in Tamil literature and the most ancient Tamil grammar text; the following lines are from *Volume III Tolkappiam.Theviumunava ma maranpuil Parai*

Seidhayalinpakuthiyathogai
Aivakaipiraumkaruainmohli (Tolkappiyar)

In the above section, *Agathiniyal*, taken from *Tollkayipam*, a detailed description of indigenous people, their land and musical instruments are mentioned. This is stated in the line, "*Theviumunava ma maranpuil Parai*", suggesting that people worshipped their God, used the trees and played the instrument, Parai (Devarajan). Initially, according to the works presented in the Sangam literature, the Parai instrument was used to pass messages from the king to the people (Singaravel). It was considered an instrument that announced the victory or loss of the war along with the *murasu* drum.

In this research, the Casteless Collective team is selected as they represent Parai songs, rap songs, *ganna* and *oppari.* These artists decide to represent themselves as casteless, referring to the pioneer of anti-caste moment, Iyothee Thass, who articulated his thoughts for the annihilation of caste from society through a Buddhism perspective. In this paper, how this casteless collective team, along with other Parai artists teams, choose to be the voice for the voiceless people is analysed with suitable instances and song lyrics. The study underscores how the Parai artists have been distanced from mainstream society as a result of caste discrimination.

The Drum Politics

In contemporary times, the instrument's relevance has undergone enormous transformation. Some Parai artists and groups choose to perform this drum for auspicious occasions, such as *Buddhar Kalai kuzhu*; groups aim to make the Parai drum accessible for all those who are interested in performing and learning the art form instead of restricting it to specific sections based on caste. Similarly, Deepan, head of *Friends Kalai Kuzhu* and his brother struggle to remove the stereotypes associated with the drum despite the oppression they face for performing the drum. (Premalatha). Few artist groups from Tamil Nadu play the instrument for death rituals, which becomes a challenge for the other artist groups. Manimaran is one such witness who practised and learned the nuances of the instrument in death procession where the artist was under paid and no respect was given. Thus, he and his team stopped to perform and he voice out to all the artists to not to perform particularly for death rituals (Singaravel).

Remodified Dynamic in the Contemporary Times

Blending aesthetics, *Nimirvu Kalai Kuzhu*, led by Shakthi, mixes Parai and Bharatanatyam, blurring the distance between the classical art and the Parai art form. Similarly, a Kalai Koodam is located in Chennai, where all folk artists teach art forms from Bharatanatyam to Parai Attam. Individual Parai artists such as Kalaiarasan, and Sound Mani are multi-talented. In the article from the *Times of India*, Manikandan, known as Sound Mani, has created and made eight varieties of Parai instruments. He aims to educate society about the significance of ancient Tamil art forms. He has

recreated two instruments named *Chandramandalam* and *Suryamandalam* (Raman). The director and head of Casteless collectives, Pa Ranjith, is creating a new trend for all Dalit artists; this is noticed in his movie as well as in Casteless collective's performance, and his team organise the *Margazhiyil Makkalisai* in hand with Neelam production. The main intention of bringing out this musical event is to pave the way for all Dalit artists to showcase their talents. This paper exemplifies Parai songs by Casteless Collective teams using the popular culture lens.

Sherinian explains the role of drums in churches. In her book titled *Tamil Folk Music as Dalit Liberation and Theology, she* identifies growth of Parai music in the current scenario. This book explores Rev. Dr James Appavoo's life and approach to Dalit music in Protestant churches and how the drum shared connection in the churches during singing hymns. Similarly, the musician T.M. Krishna's works titled *The Reshaping Art* and *The Sebastian and Sons* articulates the importance of art. In Krishna's book, he addresses how the makers are not given rights and are treated as invisible even by the *mridangam* artists. Many classical artists fail to realise that even *mridangam* has several layers of skin; however, compared to Parai, they face oppression for the skin layer involved in making Parai drum.

The French Dumont mentions the role of the Indian caste system in his book titled *The Caste System and its Implications*. According to him, casteism and its pollution block Hindus from performing Parai (1996). The speciality and controversy of Parai is that the outer layer of the instrument is made of cowhide; thus, upper-class Brahmin Hindus refuse to touch the instrument. Parai artists fight for their rights and recognition through *Parai* songs. In Parai drum context, the belief in pollution is still present among people in some parts of Tamil Nadu, which needs to be changed.

Charles Taylor's idea of *recognition* from his work titled "The Politics of Recognition" is relevant here. He believes that each individual must have their own choice, freedom and identity; when it comes to *Parai,* an artist is denied the scope of attaining these (1992). In the context of Charles Taylor's idea of "recognition", this is not given for Parai artists equal to that of classical artists. The politics of the musical drum is how the same drum is performed for death rituals as well as in marriage functions. The biggest question that looms large in the minds of all Parai artists is why they bring casteism into music. Music is above social restrictions and socio-cultural taboos. Parai artists believe that music has no language barriers or limitations. Music must be enjoyed as such and not dissected.

People who perform Parai music must be given due recognition and respect. The harassment in the name of caste must be stopped. The people exploited for their basic needs must live a secure life. Honour killing based on caste must be punished. The lyrics, "*Will the roads be common for all, Out discrimination in society*?" show how the people of the lower communities have their freedom curbed (Manimaran).

According to Manimaran, the head of *Buddhar Kalaikuzhu*, addressed how the Parai artists are discriminated against as mere artists in society. Till date they have been denied due recognition or respect both by the government and the people. No Parai artist has been honoured with the Kalai Mamani award with the same title

(Nakkheeran). As seen in the song Pariyan Dream by *Buddhar Kalaikuzhu*, every individual has access to music and art forms, but only Parai artists are treated inferior. The social exclusion of art forms like Parai proves detrimental to culture and tradition.

Problems, Recognition and Respect

In Nehring's book, *Popular Music, Gender, And Postmodernism Anger Is An Energy*, he uses music to express his anger towards society. He believes the oppressed people use music against oppressors (Nehring 1957). In this song, *Hashtag Justice* by Arivu, the lines of the song are "Hashtag Justice? Who is the victim? Is the law going to stop this? The old lie that the police is your friend? Is that going to end? But they lay their hands on you and say, give me your money" (Arivu 2020). This song gives voice to the real-life innocents who are portrayed as murderers by police as they belong to the Dalit community. The pretext of the song is regarding how two innocent individuals of the marginalised community became victims of custodial torture and death, while being framed for murder (The New Indian Express 2020). The artist subverts the oppressive system by venting the rage against it. Aswini Ganesan, another Parai artist, uses music to showcase the anger which stems from subjugation. Her song can also be considered a satire where the artist wants to show the atrocious behaviour of people towards Parai artists. The initial lines of the song titled "I am nothing without the Parai", and "Even if I am standing alone," giving a message that the artist is satisfied to be with the Parai instrument in isolation and alienation (Ganesan 2019). This particular song incorporates protest against how Parai artists were ostracized for their cultural practices. Ganesan's lyrics signify the element of resistance by pointing to the cultural oppression that the Dalit community and its artists undergo. Conversely, it shows the harsh reality of the artist being isolated and distanced from society. The word Parai, through the refrain, has been given emphasis in the song. The song denotes the friendship between the artist and the instrument, signified by the artist describing how the Parai drum quenches her thirst, and if she keeps singing, the hunger too disappears. However, the artist articulates how she could not separate herself from her drum with the existing stigma.

Parai and Popular Culture

The theoretical framework is drawn from John Fiske's definition of popular culture. According to Fiske, popular culture is a mixture of subversions that happen ideologically and economically in a hegemonic society. It flourishes majorly at the micro-level and influences its audience to a greater extent (Fiske 118). His works include "Cultural Studies and The Culture of Everyday Life". *Distance* is a concept in cultural theory concerning the distance that comes in viewing high and low culture, hinting empowered and disempowered social formation (Fiske 154). The demographic audience and the reception that Parai artists receive in contemporary times can be compared with the characteristics of popular culture.

In "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life," Fiske links two theoretical explorations. First, he articulates "the culture of everyday life within the social formation and secondly about the academic practices involved in such inquiries" (Fiske 154). He refers to the concept of *distance* in cultural theory with reference to art forms in relation to dominant and subordinate cultures. This is chiefly explored by analysing "empowered and disempowered social formation" (Fiske 155). Fiske differentiates between the perceptions on the concept of *distance*, as the mainstream arts can afford to be viewed from objective and "ahistorical" angles, while cultural outputs of the underprivileged sections are tied to their economic and social bases. He refers to Bakhtin and Bourdieu who stated that the culture of everyday life rejects "boundaries between art and life", where art is part of everyday life. The cultural fabric of everyday existence for a Dalit life is inextricable from "historical and social settings": "The materiality of popular culture is the economic materiality of the conditions of the oppression" (Fiske 155).

Discussion

The selected songs for the study are taken from the musical team casteless collectives from Tamil Nadu headed and managed by Ranjith. These three songs were selected for the research as they precisely voice out the challenges the marginalised community faces. The reshaped modification of the drum as well as the artist's groups, is seen as a pivotal example. Neelam Productions and Pa Ranjith are subverting the stereotypes by providing a platform for any artist who has talent. In this research paper, the concept of *distance* is applied to the following songs such as "Hashtag Justice" (2020)*, "*Quota" (2018) and "Thalaivaa" (2020). All these three songs have a strong interconnection, which falls under the theme of identity, caste, recognition and respect. Mundane struggle and oppression faced by Dalit people are not addressed, even though many people are struggling to articulate due to inhibitions induced by coercion.

The song, "Thalaivaa" is about Ambedkar as he was the pioneer in fighting for Dalitrights.

Our dear leader
Our only one leader, The irreplaceable
In the name of caste and religion they thought us how to hate mere humans
In the name of Gotra and Kula they separated us
Never one should forget the words of Dr. Ambedkar. (The Castless Collectives)

This song has historical and political contexts that explore the casteist thought spectrum while also making voice as the issues get attention so they would be addressed. The reference to Ambedkar indicates the long-standing struggle, while the question of distance comes where the above-mentioned Parai song is bound to the social, everyday existence of Dalits. Ambedkar's understanding of social justice is shared by Parai tradition in terms of equality. Similarly, Fiske's statement on the

attachment/detachment from cultural representations can be connected to this while also looking at the hindrances.

Distance and the Parai Artist

The methodological significance of *distance* is explained here in the context of "Quota", as the artist expresses the unspoken layers of injustice done across several centuries to the marginalised communities. This song is an example of emerging Dalit youth voice against the dominant sections. To strike back against the systemic injustice, the artist makes use of the instance of Dalit oppression in NEET coaching. The background of the song reflects on how quota and caste oppression is targeting the marginalised. This suppression is discernible in the overlapping scenarios of day-to-day life and is inherently portrayed in the Parai tradition. According to Fiske, aesthetic perception is undoubtedly based on the economic and political identities that are tagged along the art forms, and in this case, Parai tradition has always been considered a cultural output from the margins. When a Parai artist observes this tradition, s/he is connected to the emotive proximity to the Parai aesthetics. This comes along while connecting to the raw biopolitical implications associated with Dalit identity,

> Your forefathers kept mine oppressed
> Is not that why we are given quota
> Do not be proud that you get everything
> We would not remain calm like our ancestors
> Concession this is not, you have no right;
> To grab my right
> To slog under you is no matter of respect (The castles collectives).

How the immediate actualities of the Dalit community is transcribed as art is of relevance here, as Fiske contemplates how the marginalised and subordinate sections cannot afford to be detached from their social and political backdrop. Such an aesthetic perception stems from the fact that quota is a concept that should be seen as a means of reparation rather than concession. The artist portrays the brutal reality inflicted upon the Dalit identity even when it attempts to overcome disparities through education. The mainstream society often fails to recognise the rationale of quota as mentioned in the song, "Your ancestors took it from us, isn't that why we are all given our quota?" (2018); such a state of dispossession cannot be separated from the themes of Parai tradition, which is why the aesthetic comprehension of Parai music is based on emotive proximity.

Scope and the Limitation

This research provides a detailed analysis of the *Parai* songs in contemporary times. The research displays the revolution and revival of the instrument from death rituals to weddings, from delivering messages to using it for auspicious occasions and

the transformation of the instrument's nature. A major outcome of this research would be that as music is standard for every individual, the artist's caste should not intervene. The study's limitation is that it focuses on Tamil Nadu and its contemporary Parai groups. The scope is that it addresses the issues faced by the *Parai* artist, encouraging social change and giving a new perspective on the art form and the artists.

Conclusion

As a cultural practice that intends to subvert the hierarchical nature of the caste system in South Indian society, Parai musical tradition and performance engage in this subversion by underscoring the idea that mainstream acceptance of art forms comes along with the entrenched notions of identity. These artists perform Parai despite the deprivation and suppression they face in everyday life. Also, the political underpinnings of caste identity are made significant through the concept of distance, as it investigates the exclusionary practices within society that limit the visibility of cultural traditions such as Parai music. While the performance of Parai tradition involves the depiction of Dalit life, the tradition becomes a Dalit cultural narrative that foregrounds the biopolitical stances that come along with the concept of distance and the need for inclusion. Several art forms have gone extinct from the Indian cultural scenario, which signifies the loss of cultural capital. Parai artists do not want the drum to be a lost artefact; thus, they chose to preserve and pass on the significance of the instrument to the upcoming generations. Although, some studies are undertaken in the context of Dalit identity, research on art forms that foreground the protest against the caste system is limited. The implication that research on regional forms of protest staged against casteism can be seen from the bigger picture of sociological and cultural traits underlying each tradition. The objective of the Casteless Collective is to encourage their target audience to appreciate their music, irrespective of the socio-cultural origins of the listeners. It is of supreme eminence for society to lend an ear to these previously unheard voices, thereby constructing a platform of their own. This stage allows them to display their talents and integrates their individual voices into a singular, inclusive voice that resonates globally.

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Disability and Fashion Identity: A Critical Study of *Margarita with a Straw (2014)*

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Abstract

Fashion usually idealizes the perfect human form, which has little to say about diversity and disability. Disabled people are not frequently associated with fashion or seen in the fashion industry, which is why more exposure for persons with disabilities in the fashion industry is critical. However, accessibility is a huge issue in the industry, clothing design and disabled people are important customers. But the attempts lately toward diverseness suggest that improvements are in progress. This paper explores the fashion industry in terms of disabled people and their inclusion in the fashion industry through a close analysis of the film Margarita with a Straw *(2014). The paper uses the 'identity model of the disability' which sees disabled people as capable as others and comfortable with their disability. It also tries to focus on the progressive understanding of disability as many disabled advocates are fighting for inclusivity and there are several fashion houses as well that are working on it with the purpose of including all kinds of body types. This paper tries to study how a person with disability has the potential to create her/his self-identity that is not constituted by handicap but is rather independent of it. It also aims to understand how fashion can help one to accept the impairment as a reality they are living with without sacrificing their self-worth.*
Keywords: Disability, Inclusion, Inclusive fashion, Accessibility, Body Images, Media

Introduction

Fashion offers disabled people self-expression, but their presence in the industry is minimal. Limited by industry ideals, they often adapt standard clothes to meet their unique needs. *Margarita with a Straw* is a kind of film that actually questions the idea of fashion being limited to the normal able-bodied. Even though it deals with physical challenges faced by most of its main characters, not once does it get preachy with the fashion of the disabled characters. This movie puts down the misguided notion that people with disabilities are not able to live full lives. Judy Heumann, a lifelong disability rights activist says, "[p]eople have not seen us an equal member within their communities, their schools, their mosques, their synagogues, social clubs or whatever it may be…They look at us and think, "How could I live my life like that?" (quoted in Lawson). That is exactly the reason why real representation is so vital. The fight against the title "disability" is an aspect of identity that is easily explainable through identity theory. The title makes them unworthy and inferior to the rest of the people in the world. As a result, many theorists have come up with various theories to demystify the notions associated with the title disability. The lack of appropriate clothing has created a hurdle that prevents them from engaging with the community freely. However, accessibility is a huge issue in both the industry and clothing design and disabled people are important customers. "Accessible design" in

clothing can refer to the item's texture, size, types of fasteners, or custom pieces and many brands do not consider the disabled community in their target audience and therefore do not prioritize accessibility. In the movie, the real beauty lies in the fashion sense of the protagonists Laila and Khanum, especially Khanum for her remarkable Indo-western fashion sense in New York City. They both refuse to accept their physical disabilities as their destiny to lead a normal life. They both are vivacious, stylish and pretty much everything any of us could ever be.

Over one billion people are estimated to have disability in the world. But still, society sees disabled people with a different eye often with a sympathetic gaze. Although over the course of time, disability awareness has helped in subsiding the stereotypical mindset of society still there is an immense aperture in regard to the perception. This movie represents a true picture of the perception that it is never about looks or appearance, it is all about the attitude of the individuals. Self-image is very significant for the people with disability which is constructed with "cognitive", "behaviour" and "emotional" elements for a greater acceptance of one's identity, contended by Grogan and Sarcone (as quoted by Kalitanyi 170). Therefore, building a safe environment for all the stakeholders in all spheres of society such as the fashion industry, art and cinema, and the corporate world becomes very important. We see very passive participation or no participation of disabled people in all these areas. According to Esmail et al. society can play a significant role in optimising "social inclusion" (1).

In Shonali Bose's 2014 film *Margarita with a Straw*, an Indian teenager with cerebral palsy relocates to the USA for college and undergoes personal growth, navigating a profound connection with a blind girl. The film explicates themes of self-love, acceptance, self-discovery, and identity.

Theoretical Discourse

This paper uses the identity model of disability (or affirmation model) of disability. According to Retief and Letsosa, "This model shares the social model's understanding that the experience of disability is socially constructed, but differs to the extent that it claims disability as a positive identity" (Retief and Letsosa 5). This model of disability does not deal with social environments, government policies and rights; it rather entails a positive approach towards creating their own identities based on their real-life experiences and circumstances. Swain and French also discussed at length about the affirmation model, which is bringing in "positive collective identity" (Swain and French 576) through which the identity of PWDs is acknowledged and assimilated.

It took Laila, the protagonist, years to embrace her disability identity. "You cannot become normal by dressing like them and being among normal people…." (*Margarita with a Straw* 1:25:02-1:24:43). She finds liberation and a sense of confidence after dressing up. Fashion is one of the most potent ways people with disabilities can communicate and express themselves to the outside world. "Mother!

Shampoo my hair well and get me dressed *Margarita with a Straw* 1:23:19- 1:22:36)". She asks her mother to get her dressed because she is going to meet a boy. Turner states in his essay, "The Social Skin" that the embodiment of clothing could act as a "social skin" (Turner 15). As clothing impacts one's body image and mental health. The difficulty arises when individuals are forced to repress because they are unable to use fashion as a means of communication, as opposed to being able to reveal and express. Fashion can act as a "psychotherapy" as it impacts emotions and behaviour of a disabled person (Kalitanyi 175). Denial frequently plays a major role in how their identity develops, and many disabled persons struggle with self-acceptance.

Despite her terminal disability, she shunned the label because belonging felt more important than acknowledging the stigmatized part of her identity. Both the protagonists Laila and Khanum embraced their bodies by revisiting fashion and assimilating disability into identity seamlessly. Michailakis states that the traditional perspective on disability frequently emphasizes the person, their limitations or flaws, which are seen as a "defect"(209). This emphasis creates barriers to involvement on an equal footing because a person who appears to be lacking in particular capacities may not be able to achieve autonomy. "Make my hair curly and I want to wear something different today" (*Margarita with a Straw* 01:34:23- 01:34:49). After her mother's death and her break up, Laila becomes aware of her own identity. She goes to a top restaurant on a date, orders a margarita drink and sits alone on the rooftop with her own company. Author Murugami states, "Our sense of self is constantly evolving and we constantly reconfigure ourselves through multiple identities; time, space and rationality are all important in identity formation and achievement of the self-concept". He further adds, "Knowing oneself, accepting oneself within oneself with one's limitations, not being ashamed of the limitations but simply seeing them as part of the reality one is in, perhaps as a boundary one is challenged to expand" is one definition of self-concept. When Laila goes to America, she dresses up in fashionable overcoats and sweaters and manages to get dressed up on her own. Laila seems very independent and mentally intact which shows that she has a wider understanding of her disability and expresses herself through her clothing. "Human beings are born naked but are everywhere in clothes (or their symbolic equivalents)" (Turner 15). This has led to the development of clothing and fashion over the ages and it becomes even more critical when it comes to marginalized communities like the disabled. Specifically, women with disabilities are experiencing issues with their body image and low self-esteem, thus resulting in a lack of confidence to speak for themselves and that is where fashion can play the role of "canvas" where individuals can express themselves confidently.

Representation and Social Media

Lately, social media has created a crucial space, which was hitherto absent for disabled people that is leveraged by them to mark their presence in the virtual world. It is evident by the various body-positive movements making it convenient for them to

create and propagate their identities. Laila's desire to put a profile picture on Facebook and a search for this in her gallery highlights the brunt of social validation. Fashion critic Madison Lawson argues that there has been substantial progress in the appearance of disabled people "on the runway, on the cover of magazines, in fashion advertisements and beauty campaigns".

For instance, some designers experienced the issue lately when some ads with the images of some disabled women were taken down on the name of violation of community standards and showing nudity and ableism. Progress in disabled representation within fashion challenges stigmas, albeit at a gradual pace. Yet, brands dedicated to adaptive clothing remain elusive. Paradoxically, some supposedly inclusive platforms remove content featuring adaptive wear and disabled models.

Fashion accessibility for disabled individuals falls short, requiring stylish, functional designs and fabrics. *Margarita with a Straw* underscores this gap as Laila and Khanum seek trendy looks, yet lack options compared to their peers. The transformative potential of fashion demands reinvention and inclusivity. Fashion is a powerful tool for self-expression and confidence, impacting our emotional states. It's a personal choice, reflecting one's identity and autonomy. However, the fashion industry often excludes them, despite a significant percentage having disabilities affecting their clothing choices. In the movie, Laila stylishly accessories her outfits, revealing her desire for personal expression.

So, what does accessibility look like? It could be as simple as changing the fastener from a button to Velcro, or as complex as designing a new garment for an ostomy bag. Accessibility looks different for different disabled people but is always important. "Can I use your bathroom? Help me." (*Margarita with a Straw* 01:04:56-01:04:39). Laila seems uneasy at her friend's home as she requires assistance with removing her clothing. Availability is a barrier even for brands that are designing accessible clothing. Accessible clothing lines that are only available online or in limited locations mean disabled people cannot try on, feel, or see items in person before purchasing and may have to calculate shipping and return costs into their already expensive orders. If accessible clothing was more widely available, costs would decrease and disabled people would have a wider selection to choose from various styles that they are comfortable with. Mobility aids and worn medical devices, such as hearing aids, are an extension of a person. Laila uses a powered chair that runs by a remote joystick which usually costs a handsome amount. Most needed devices are already expensive and the additional cost for custom design (if they exist at all) is out of reach for a lot of disabled people. Style is frequently not seen as a component of these devices. Although the fashion industry is exclusive and diverse which is creating the ways to include everyone as Nisbet, argues "There are some ways in which fashion and design can work together. Back in the 1930s people who wore glasses were viewed as disabled now glasses are seen as a fashion accessory."

Although there has been a progression in the fashion landscape regarding the visibility of the disabled community which led to the rise of adaptive design for them, designers are still struggling to identify fashionable clothing for them. Modifications

in style could be made for people with missing limbs, wheelchair users, people with worn medical devices and more. When disabled people are welcomed into the industry disabled bodies become more of a priority not just for accessibility but for style.

Therefore, it is prudent to realize that Fashion brands must acknowledge the needs of people with disabilities while including accessibility in clothing. Workman and Freeburg emphasizes that it is unfortunate that many risk–averse industries, including fashion may treat disability images as "unusual stimuli" (Foster & Pettinicchio 2). This further creates a fear that such images might turn off the consumers. Even during the fashion course, it should be taught how to integrate accessibility from the design process; the purpose must be garments for all. As Laan & Kuipers also reiterate:

> In press pages and fashion advertisements too able-bodied models' lookout as though to remind consumers exactly who is (and isn't) worthy of our consideration. Perfectly polished, models' posturing reflects widely shared norms surrounding the body and prescribes directives for its compartment and appearance" (Foster 12).

Apart from them, Foster also explains, "these representations do work, constraining opportunities for the representation of men and women with a disability and limiting our understanding of diversity and difference, broadly speaking" (12).

How Brands are Developing Accessible Clothing?

Fashion has come a long way to include the disabled community. Foster and Pettinicchio argue that recently athletic apparel brands like Nike and Tommy Hilfiger have questioned and challenged prevailing beliefs about ability and athleticism while embracing inclusivity by creating ads, videos, and adaptive clothing lines for people with disabilities (11). They also explore fashionable mobility aids, like colourful wheelchairs and stylish canes, broadening their focus beyond conventional audiences.

Furthermore, Entwistle quotes Blumer, explaining that there exists a "network of institutional and social relations within the world of fashion" which compels brands to acquire similar "cultural capital, habitus and taste as each other (332). Additionally, Hirsch argues that these normative constraints transmit several values and preferences to fashion consumers through a plethora of commercial ads across several media platforms.

For far too long the fashion industry has essentially handed people with disabilities oversized and baggy clothes in the name of clothing. Few fashion retailers have identified the market gap and realized that it is a growing market. So, they introduced special and fashionable clothing lines for people with disabilities and considered the disabled community as their target consumers, trying to strike equilibrium between fashion and function. As a result, clothing solutions for minimizing the garment-related issues faced by people with disabilities were

provided. Some of the clothing solutions that could be observed in garments designed for people with disabilities includes one-handed zippers, front closure bras, magnetic closure/buttons, enhanced back rise, and wide leg openings for those who cannot put their arms on clothes, wheelchair users and to accommodate prostheses, and for those with immobility issues in the legs. Foster further elaborates "Fashion media provide an ideal vehicle through which to assess mainstream norms and widely shared cultural ideals" (12).

This statement itself says a lot about the norms and ideals that surround disability. Even the cinema does not portray any disabled character as someone with a fashion sense. For instance, Millicent Simmonds who is a young Hollywood actress who lost her hearing at a very young age replies to a question when asked about on-screen characters she could relate to while growing up. She replies: "Honestly, I don't know if I ever saw one character on screen that I felt I could relate to as a deaf person" (Williams). She explains a lot about the current scenario in television, film and fashion about the rugged journey of disabled people. "The exclusion of people with disabilities from bigger brands points to the larger stigma that continues to plague the disabled community" (Haines). It is a preconceived notion that disabled people are pitiable creatures because they are not represented anywhere in the mainstream media. There should not be any hesitation in using the word "disabled". As Anna Haines explains many of the misconceptions, lack of knowledge, and lack of education that exist regarding disabled people are attributable to how we have been misrepresented in the media. Disability advocates argue that big fashion businesses have a responsibility and a chance to change the narrative by making persons with disabilities visible because of their widespread influence.

The primary reason for the alienation of disabled people is their absence in the concept of fashion and clothing. Although many fashion brands are trying to pave the way for accessible clothing, they usually lack adequate lived experience. "The failure to include the target clientele in the design process suggests inclusivity efforts on behalf of major brands are simply for optics" (Haines). Although these brands are trying to tick all the required parameters for fashion inclusivity, giant brands like Puma, Nike and many more could become the voice for inclusive fashion and can become the proponents for every stratum of the society. Some designers are also "getting it right by using their clothing to empower and unite people of marginalized identities" (Haines). They feel it's about giving every human the equal opportunity to take part in societal activities. Most of the journeys to become disabled advocates originate from their personal stories.

Conclusion

The paper navigates the fashion identities of people with disabilities, diversity and inclusion in the fashion industry. The shift in narrative won't be apparent until disabled persons are treated equally by society, culture, and the law. Normalizing adapted clothes is the first step in the transformation of society so that individuals with

disabilities are regarded on an equal footing, and allowing people with medical conditions to become models. To expand fashion to include individuals with disabilities, there needs to be stronger disability representation throughout the fashion business, as well as representation that goes beyond performative inclusivity. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not just boxes that society must tick; they form the basis of each and every conversation and argument.

A genuine commitment to being inclusive must look like incorporating disabled people into all spheres of the fashion landscape and fashion outlets must hire disabled people throughout these organizations though bringing them into the mainstream. It is undoubtedly a tough grind but it could also break the preconceived notions about the clothing disabled people wear. This expansion of adaptive clothing will enlarge society's perception through advertisements and disabled models that are represented on runways will feel acknowledged and appreciated and optimistically to a great extent will reduce stigma and stereotypes around disability.

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Shaping Perceptions and Unlocking Inclusions: The Representation of Disability in Children's Films and Animations

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Abstract

Over several years, films and TV shows have struggled to properly portray individuals with disabilities. From animations to blockbuster movies, disabled characters are barely seen. In cinemas, impairment is abstracted from its physical or mental manifestation and viewed as a cultural symbol. However, when viewed in this light, disability appears in a discourse of pity, a phenomenon of social, physical, and emotional imprisonment. In fact, disabled characters are mostly absent from children's television and movies. Even if they do exist, they are frequently depicted in stereotypical ways. This projection of disability compels non-disabled viewers to blindly follow the stereotypical way of treating people with disabilities without questioning anything. Children, in particular, struggle to accept people with disabilities as they are. In fact, they start to treat them as alien species. Using thematic content analysis, this article examines the portrayal of disabled characters in children's films and media, especially animations. Through the lens of Disability Studies, it analyses selected films made by Disney, Pixar and other film studios and traces the shifts in the representation of disability in those films. It aims to highlight the dynamic relationship between those characters and the audiences and also demonstrates how disabled people are stereotyped in children's films as an expendable population, an outcast, a villain, 'needy', someone who will be cured in the end, charitable service, or superheroes.

Keywords: Disability, Representation, Stereotype, Media, Films, Children's Films & Animations.

Introduction

We convey our feelings and thoughts through our actions and words. They're the elements that can influence others' perspectives on people and things. Thus, how you represent people in your society is extremely significant. One of the constructs that we need to revisit is the portrayal of disability, as well as how we are continuously representing people with disabilities, negatively, belittling their existence.

Televisions, films, animations, and cartoons are forms of media that can shape people's views on societal issues, including disability. These mediums have the ability to reflect and mould the minds of adults, especially children's. Children's media plays a crucial role in shaping the socialization process, significantly impacting children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. The act of watching films provides a unique avenue for individuals to encounter diverse experiences, delve into their emotions in various situations, and expand their personal perspectives (Tenzek and Nickels). Research also highlights the potential of films to cultivate empathy and compassion for others (Walker).

However, it is disheartening to observe the marginalization of disability and disabled characters within children's television and films. Recent analysis, as

highlighted in the "See Jane 2019" report, reveals that a mere 1% of primary characters on children's television have any form of impairment. Moreover, when characters with disabilities do make appearances in cinema and television, they tend to be cast into stereotypes (Barnes et. al.). As children are highly impressionable and rely on media as a source of information and entertainment, it is crucial that they encounter positive, diverse and authentic representations of individuals with disabilities in order to have a correct understanding of disabilities. Furthermore, for children and adolescents with disabilities, positive representations of disability in media can contribute to bolstering self-esteem and reducing the internalized stigma they may experience (Dill-Shackleford et al.)

This research investigates the depiction of characters with disabilities in children's films, particularly animations. Framed within Disability Studies, it aims to discern evolving portrayals of disability, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between these characters and audiences. The study seeks to underscore prevalent stereotypes in children's films. Additionally, it will spotlight the strides that filmmakers can undertake to break free from these limiting stereotypes, and to reshape the negative notion of disability.

Discussion

- **Portrayals of Disabilities in Films**

A disability is primarily determined as a definable, quantifiable state in which a particular human capability is limited or non-existent (Raymond 14). People believe that they understand disability, but it is interesting to note that the society and media in particular, determines what disability is and how people with disabilities should be treated (Riley 3). Disability has long been exploited in Hollywood to elicit pity, laughter, and fear from the audience. It has been used in order to maximize profits (2). Furthermore, the link between disability and fear is constantly there. Disabled characters are portrayed as villains, misfits, and people who are ignored and misunderstood. The inability of people to comprehend what normal is causes them to fear and act against impairment. This terror of belief is so deeply ingrained that many horror film creators regularly employ disabled characters to depict something monstrous or to take revenge on the able-bodied (Olney).

According to Morris, able-bodi(ed) society judge impairment in comparison to their own bodily capacity and care less about what disability truly is. They are more concerned with representing their own perceptions and feelings about disability than with disabled individuals. As a result, it is not unexpected why disability has been projected as something evil in every media text. Children's television and films are also not exceptional in their portrayal of disabilities through stereotypes. There are several distinctive qualities and stereotypical characters that continue to occur in the media, such as: (1) Disability as a curse; (2) Disability as a result of parental sin; (3) Disabled people as victims. (4) They are burden; (5) A person's impairment is actually

a superpower and they are superheroes; and last but not least, (6) People can overcome their disability and live "happily ever-after," which Riley refers to as supercrip (Riley 3).

- **Representation of Disabilities in Children's Films and Animations**

In earlier movies, characters with disabilities are often relegated to supporting roles or portrayed as objects of inspiration or pity, perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Such portrayals reinforce the notion that individuals with disabilities are defined solely by their disabilities and overlook their individuality and agency. These narratives can contribute to the stigmatization and marginalization of people with disabilities. Disability has previously been portrayed in films such as *Moby Dick* (1930), *Frankenstein* (1931), and *Freaks* (1932), but the consistent connotation of disability was with terror and mishaps.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)

When Walt Disney released their first motion picture, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937, they didn't even do justice to the characters with impairments. The film reflected the attitudes and societal norms of that time. In terms of disability representation, it's important to note that the film was created in an era when disability representation in media was generally limited or non-existent.

Film-makers were less concerned by how the seven dwarfs were depicted. The fact, that, they had disabled figures, went largely unrecognized and the audience considered them as mocking ingredients. In fact, the filmmakers designed the seven dwarfs in such a way that they acted like children. If one look closely, then can distinguish them as seven children with grey beards, which is pretty startling. While they are depicted as shorter in stature compared to Snow White, their physical appearance is more fantastical and exaggerated rather than reflecting real-world disabilities. Here, Snow White became their protector, instructing them when to go to bed and when to work. In reality it can affect young people to treat individuals of short stature as children who needed to be cared or instructed.

Dopey was presented by Happy at the very first introduction of Snow White with all those seven dwarfs, since Dopey was unable to talk. Snow White was astonished as she had never encountered anybody with a speech impediment before. But the problem here is the way Dopey was portrayed with laughter and ridicule which made his disability ignorant and irrelevant.

Dumbo (1941)

The link between circus freak and disability was never erased, and it was vividly illustrated in the characterization of *Dumbo* (1941). The newly born baby's initial impression from others was that he was funny because of his lengthy "E-A-R-

S" (Dumbo). Instead of Jumbo Jr., he was renamed Dumbo. Due to his physical differences, he was not considered normal. It is generally accepted that someone's impairment is the consequence of their ancestor's earlier sins, and they should be ashamed of it. This film thus pressured over the fact that Dumbo and his mother needed to be ashamed and also depicted their continual effort to blend in with "normal" society. Everyone in the circus rejected him. The tiny mouse was his lone companion. Dumbo didn't take long to realize that his sole trouble was his ears, which isolated him from the rest of society. He wished to be normal and overcome his abilities in order to be accepted by society. This established the stereotypical concept of "supercrip" (Riley). In this case, the "Magic Feather" enabled Dumbo to overcome his impairment and returned to regular life. The film does not delve deeply into the experiences or challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, and the focus remains primarily on the fantastical elements of the story. This approach can also trigger one essential point that people with disabilities who are unable to overcome their disability will always be excluded from the regular world.

Peter Pan (1953)

There was barely a child left who did not like Disney's 1953 animated film *Peter Pan*. Every kid wished to go on an adventure with Peter Pan. However, there was one more crucial individual who was seen as a villain, vicious in temperament, and sought to get revenge on their hero, Peter Pan. It was for Peter Pan that Captain Hook lost his one hand and started using a hook. Yes, it seemed that his infirmity set him apart from everyone else, earning him the name, Hook. There was nothing wrong with Captain Hook's projections, except that, here, disability was paired with evil. This idea of impairment can leave a lasting negative impression in the minds of young people, who will never perceive persons with disabilities to be trustworthy or good.

The Secret Garden (1993)

The film adaptation of *The Secret Garden* (1993) incorporates disability representation through the character of Colin Craven, a young boy who has been confined to his bed due to a perceived physical disability. His father, Archibald Craven, believes Colin is too weak and fragile to venture outside, which contributes to Colin's isolation and a belief in his own limitations. Throughout the story, Colin's character undergoes a transformation, both physically and emotionally. With the help of Mary Lennox, the film's protagonist, Colin gradually gains confidence and begins to challenge the belief that he is physically disabled. Through his experiences in the secret garden, Colin discovers strength, independence, and the joy of living. In this case, disability is conquered with the assistance of another able-bodied figure which reflects the idea that disable people need constant help of able-bodied people in order to gain their individuality.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame was the first animated film to have a disabled lead character. Quasimodo was born with a disability, a hunchback, which he felt made people afraid, which is why he didn't want to meet anybody. Quasimodo was not always like this; he was a gentle, warm hearted person who used to ring the bell of Notre Dame. However, he was slandered to the topmost tower of Norte Dame by one malicious man named Claude Frollo. He made Quasimodo remember that he was deformed, ugly, and a monster and society would never accept him as he was. It was Claude who solely cared about him and fed him, and Quasimodo had to be devoted to him at all times. This not only destroyed Quasimodo's self-esteem, but also demonstrated to the audience that anyone with a deformity is not welcomed into society.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame addresses disability in a complex manner, highlighting the importance of inclusivity, empathy, and challenging societal norms. Quasimodo's journey involves finding self-acceptance and overcoming the discrimination he faces based on his disability. The film encourages viewers to look beyond appearances, value inner beauty, and embrace diversity. On the other hand, though Quasimodo's condition was not linked with evil in this case, but it displayed pity, as he craved sympathy from the audience. Quasimodo's desire to explore the outside world and to be accepted in society in order to live a normal life mirrored his misery. This may persuade children to believe that people with disabilities require their permission to be a part of society, and that it is up to them to decide the fate of disabled people.

Finding Nemo (2003)

The film *Finding Nemo* (2003), gives us the character of Nemo, a young clownfish with a "lucky fin" or a deformed fin. The film revolves around Nemo's journey as he gets separated from his father, Marlin, and ends up in a fish tank in a dentist's office. Keeping the supercrip theme in mind, this film also highlighted a disabled child and how his father was overprotective of everything in his son's life. This nature of Nemo's father also leaded Nemo to get into several troubles. Nemo swam into the deep water only to prove to his father that he can swim properly with his little fin. But it was unfortunate that he was captured. This example might imply in the mind of young viewers that it was his (disable) condition that led him into difficulty, and it was preferable for any disabled children to just obey their parent's instructions and stay indoors. But, with the support of his other friends, Nemo was eventually able to overcome his impairment and swim skilfully enough to save Dory which is again the example of supercrip stereotype.

Positive Images of Disabilities

Children Films and animations are not only about negative portrayal of

disability, there are few distinguishing films that represent the positive image of persons with disability. Julia in *Sesame Street* (1969) though is not an animated figure but beautifully represents autism. It helped in increasing positive attitudes towards the condition and adults, especially children with autism felt less isolated. Dory in *Finding Dory* (2016) showed that it is okay to be different and by being different you can have a normal life. This portrayal not only gave strength to the children with disability but also helped others to realise that disability is not bad and people on the spectrum are not aliens. The recent addition in the whole sea of animation is *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005), where many accounts of disabilities can be found. Though Ming-Hua, Zuko, Azula, Korra are represented as evil in nature, Toph, Teo scream positivity.

Going to the Mat (2004), features Jace Newfield, a visually impaired teenager who moves to a new school and becomes a member of the wrestling team. Jace is portrayed as a determined and resilient character. He experiences challenges related to his disability, such as struggling with accessibility, prejudice, and misconceptions from his peers. However, he refuses to let his visual impairment define or limit him. The film explores Jace's journey of self-discovery, as he not only learns to navigate high school and the wrestling team but also educates others about his abilities and fosters a sense of inclusion. Jace's character promotes the message that individuals with disabilities can excel in various areas of life when provided with equal opportunities and support. *Going to the Mat* (2004), aims to break down stereotypes and shows that individuals with visual impairments can participate in sports and other activities on an equal footing with their peers.

The film *Wonder* released in 2017, revolves around the story of August (Auggie) Pullman, a young boy with a facial difference called Treacher Collins syndrome. The film depicts Auggie's journey as he transitions from home-schooling to attending a mainstream school, where he faces challenges related to bullying, prejudice, and social acceptance. It portrays the emotional and psychological aspects of living with a visible disability and the impact it can have on an individual's self-esteem, relationships, and overall well-being. The film emphasizes that people should be judged by their character rather than their physical appearance.

CODA (2021) centres on the character of Ruby Rossi, a teenage girl who is a "Child of Deaf Adults" (CODA). Ruby serves as the bridge between her deaf parents and the hearing world, acting as their interpreter in various aspects of life. The film shows the challenges and responsibilities faced by Ruby as she balances her own dreams and desires with her role as an interpreter and support system for her family. *CODA* (2021) sensitively depicts the experiences and dynamics within a deaf family, shedding light on their culture, language (American Sign Language), and the daily struggles they encounter due to communication barriers in a predominantly hearing society. The film aims to foster understanding and appreciation for the deaf community, showcasing their resilience, strength, and unique perspective on life. *CODA* (2021) received critical acclaim for its authentic portrayal of deaf culture and the complexities of identity.

Critiques and Challenges of Representation

This paper has highlighted several recurring issues. First, there is a lack of authentic representation. Second, disability representation tends to focus on a narrow range of disabilities, such as physical disabilities, while overlooking the experiences of individuals with invisible disabilities or neuro-divergent conditions. Third, there is a tendency to portray disabilities as individual problems rather than acknowledging the systemic barriers that individuals with disabilities face. While there are challenges in achieving accurate and inclusive disability representation, progress is possible and that content creators have the power to shape narratives that foster understanding and acceptance.

Recommendations

Efforts should be made to increase the representation of characters with disabilities in children's films and animated media. Content creators and filmmakers must prioritize authenticity by portraying the diverse spectrum of disabilities in society and affording opportunities for disabled actors. It is essential to challenge stereotypes, eschew deleterious narratives, and depict characters with disabilities as multifaceted individuals possessing agency, strengths, and varied experiences. The avoidance of patronizing tropes, such as those rooted in inspiration or pity, and the emphasis on genuine, empowering narratives are pivotal for overcoming societal barriers and fostering positive attitudes towards disabilities.

An inclusive approach necessitates the incorporation of diverse intersecting identities, including considerations of race, gender, and socio-economic background. Such an approach fosters a nuanced comprehension of the intricate facets of disability experiences, challenging the notion of a monolithic narrative. Collaboration with diverse voices, including engagement with disability communities, contributes substantively to authentic and inclusive portrayals.

Educational initiatives are indispensable, encompassing workshops, training sessions, and resources that cultivate an understanding of disabilities among content creators and filmmakers. Collaborative involvement with disability organizations and consultation with disabled individuals during development and production stages are vital to ensuring authenticity. Positive and relatable role models with disabilities in children's media can inspire and empower, contributing to the normalization of disability and dismantling of ableist narratives. Advocacy efforts should concentrate on fostering inclusive policies within the film and animation industry, ensuring equal opportunities, accessibility, and a supportive working environment for disabled actors while prioritizing diversity and inclusion.

Conclusion

To conclude, people with disabilities are still neglected and marginalized by society and the media, in this twenty-first century. Though there is a slight

improvement in representing disabilities, but, they have ultimately become stereotyped, as we have explored in this article. This repetition of misrepresentation does not let others comprehend disability or, in any way, enable others to understand the social obstacles that disabled people frequently need to encounter in their lives. It is not easy to change the status of disabled people overnight, but the only way the media can improve is to properly reflect disability. If the media becomes more attentive about whose experiences they portray, there will be a day when individuals with disabilities will no longer be locked behind closed doors, but can live freely in the real world.

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