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RESEARCH PAPERS

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From the Editor's Desk

Literary Voice: A Peer Reviewed Journal of English Studies, Number 18, Vol. 1, September 2022 comprises research papers on various genres of past and current British, American, Canadian, Indian English literatures, Life Writings, Theatre and Media and ELT. The articles are anchored in theoretical frame work of Karen Horney's "Basic anxiety," Braj Kachru's analysis of nativization, feminist discursive perspective of Lazar, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's Monster Theory, Judith Herman's Trauma studies, Arne Naess's ecocentric philosophy of Deep ecology and Georges Canguilhem postulates on the normativity of the diseased body and the theory of kyriarchy conceptualised by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. The literary texts have been investigated in the light of Freud's concept of "Guilt," spatial theory and various aspects of sociological interface, concepts of death and life-after-death in African/ethnic context/culture, 'graphic dissent' a mode of counter discursive strategy to bring in an alternative history or narrative, multifaceted nature of mobility, multiple aspects of 'otherness' in the dominant discourse of India's Partition in 1947, and the architectural spaces of Britain which exclude the minority blacks.

A couple of papers focus on women's subjectivity, identity, suffering and resistance in a conservative society characterized by dated patriarchal norms and practices, and incisively probe the coercive and oppressive repercussions of the gender-oppressive ideology of 'honour' to regulate female sexual desire and justify violence against women, and examine critical discourse on refugee women in the light of the multifaceted nature of mobility which has come to define the contemporary age. The experiences of health and illness have been analysed to discover how medicine acts as weapon to oppress the subaltern, how stigma, directly or indirectly, dictates the life choices of the female protagonists and how women autobiographies use the language of privacy, domesticity, femininity and intimacy to locate their "self" in the male hegemonic social structures.

Apart from the postmodern and ecogothic readings of literature, the impress of ecofeminism, ecopsychology and ecophobia is manifest in the critical appraisals. The essays attempt to unravel the interface between the non-human actors with the human community in the Anthropocene epoch, and focus on the healing practices of non-western communities for the treatment of trauma and explore the futile efforts to realize the American dream. The paper on Sylvia Plath tries to analyse the psychological praxis that brings her to the 'Edge,' while Imtiaz Dharker' approach towards the cultural discourse reflects her pluralised cultural identity.

An interview with Mohineet Boparai, Canada based poet, A Dialogue with U.K. based Theatre Director-Writer, Jatinder Verma and an incisive write up on link between reading literary fiction and development of empathy through Wolfgang Iser's work in reader response theory, are the high points of the current edition of the journal. Please help us to improve our endeavours through your valuable feedback.

T.S. Anand (Dr.)
Editor

Modern West or the Primeval Human Nature: An Examination of the Roots of Evil in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract

In his dystopian novel Lord of the Flies *(1954) William Golding tries to trace, hamartiologically, the source of rift and conflict back to the human nature. The boys have passed through the initial socialization, or what Freud termed the "catastrophe" of infancy, before they attempt to shape the contours of order on the Island. My argument in this Paper is that the roots of evil are left untraced to one particular source; the irresolution of the source can take us to the ambiguity of the narrative persona in taking the line of the root toward civilization or human nature.*
Keywords:*Evil, Original Sin, hamartiologically, enlightenment, chaos, society, culture*

The deceptive simplicity of the narrative in the *Lord of the Flies* conceals a more complicated engagement with the provenance of evil on the island. William Golding (1911-1993), is apparently seeking answers to the tragedy which befell the West in the wake of the World War II (1939-1945). He saw mind-numbing death and destruction from close quarters. Like others who witnessed this, he wanted to understand the genesis of such violence. To this end, he uses a group of pre-puberty boys as a narrative method to unravel the instinct for mutual destruction. It is an endeavor to arrive at the core principle of disintegration of pure innocence and the eventual destruction of the caring figure of nature. The author, in his interviews and articles, drifts in the direction of arguing that the evil is innate to the human nature; it just needs an external prompt to come out and consume everyone. Several other commentators, underlining the inherently sinful, evil character of human beings, concur with him. There are enough hints to prove this line of thought. However, that is not the final word on this matter or the "only valid interpretation of the novel" (Sunderman 1). Although the authorial intention may desire to elicit a specific interpretation, I believe the text argues that both the inner and the outer causes are tenable claimants for the mayhem and disorder on the peaceful island to impute it only to the inherently–evil nature of the human beings.

Therefore, it is clear that there is a personal dimension to the Golding's project at hand: the author's firsthand experience of chaos of the World War II. The War brought forth an important point. It showed, despite claims to the contrary, human beings were essentially the same as when they were thousands of years ago, ever ready to spill blood. The twentieth century was hailed as the century of marvelous scientific achievements. In terms of the enlightenment project of reason and the achievements thereof, mankind had touched a very

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high   water mark. Other cultures and civilizations were looking to the West for light and guidance. A large number of great people, like M. K. Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar, from the former colonies came to the rationally-organized western academies to be enriched with cutting edge ideas. They then returned to their native countries and engaged in nation building enterprises. Not that many of them copied *en masse* the ideas and institutions of the West, especially those of the United Kingdom. But they envied the amazing achievements of the West. However, that envy and those expectations subsided once the catastrophe of the World Wars unleashed. While the West taught the world flying in the plane like a bird, it also engulfed the globe in unprecedented destruction. On the European continent inhumanness reached a climax. If the West could not spare her own brothers and sisters on the European continent, what could the other countries and civilization expect from it? In Golding's own words:

> I must say that anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head….I believed then, that man was sick—not exceptional but average man. I believed that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation and the best job I could do at the time was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the instrumental mess he gets himself into. (Qtd. In Spitz23)

It is against this deep sense of pessimism, especially western, and inhuman wickedness that the narrative of *Lord of the Flies* is situated. He takes a group of English schoolboys and puts them in the island. There is nothing to worry them on the island. It is calm as they arrive. Previously, the mutual destruction of human beings was ascribed to many causes like class warfare, the Freudian sexual drive or the Darwinian survival of the fittest. These considerations are squarely ruled out in this narrative. First, there is no sign of the class warfare as there is no private property. When the boys land on the island, they are propertyless. They have too fragile a consciousness to lay claim on anything. Yes, there are drives towards materialism and spirituality, e.g., Jack from the beginning displays materialistic tendencies, and Simon shows the mystical or spiritual inclinations. However, there is no tangible class consciousness. The absence of this consciousness is done with a purpose: to forestall the explanation that the ruin and rampage on the peaceful island are due to the class warfare. The Freudian interpretation is also foreseen and taken care of. The ages of the boys are too small to bring into the loop sexual drives and their implications. Ralph, one of the oldest, is just 12 years and a few months. Though there is a counter position that "throughout the story spears, logs and sticks are the phallic symbol" (Martin 411), that is not convincing enough to prove that the boys are conscious of the phallic character of these objects. There are also Freudian readings of the sow-killing incident. The way they dig their spears into her is reminiscent of the sexual drive among the boys. Even there if the incident shows anything with regard to the sexual drive, it is very latent. Instead of reading spears, logs and sticks as phallic in nature as is done by Jerome Martin, as the expression of sexual energy, it would not be wrong to see that as the sadistic impulse for violence lain inside the boys.

To preempt any threat to their remote and isolated existence, the author has removed any possibility of aggression from external forces. The boys do not see any outside danger. Had there been any other island with other humans or people living on the same island and competing for space and resources with them, then there was a possibility of mutual bickering and groupism. Their search for a proper strategy to deal with the external threat could have set them against each other. But there is no sign of such threat. Yes, there is a talk

of the beast in the beginning and the subsequent chapters. But that is, again, latent; a very vague kind of fear of the Beast. The kinds of irrational fear children have in any society. In the hunt for this imaginary beast, they end up mistaking the downed airman and his parachute as the beast. Their inner fears are made rich by the flapping of the parachute on the mountain. So,what does Golding want to achieve through such a setting?

Golding in all his novels engages with the idea of the Original Sin. Be it *Inheritors (1955)* or *Pincher Martin (1956)*, the idea comes up again and again. Though *Lord of the Flies* was published much before the other two novels, the theme of Original Sin is prominent. By keeping the boys away from any external cause of devastation the author is trying to prove that the cause is internal. The absolute disorder is due to the "terrible disease of being human"(Golding qtd in Spitz). To be a human was to carry the bane of sin. If it had not been a sin, goes the argument, then how else could one explain the fall of these boys? To that end, the island has been vested with the atmosphere of the Biblical Garden of Eden. The imagery of the snake is preponderant. The "littl'uns" see snaky things in their surroundings; a hint of the serpent sneaking into the paradise. That will soon disrupt their attempt at order, the way Satan came in the form of the serpent into the Garden of Eden. In a way that proves out to be true; the initial fear of snakes grows into the fear of the beast, and the fear of the beast unleashes the forces of disunity and disorder. Interestingly, unlike the story of the *Bible*—one which is also mentioned in the *Quran*—there is not a single female character in the novel. They are all pre-puberty boys. Also, as has been pointed out, "it is an ironic commentary upon religious interpretations of the *Lord of the Flies* that of all the choirboys, not one ever resorts—even automatically—to prayer or to appeals to a deity, not even before they begin backsliding" (Oldsey 97). There is a satanic Jack and the mystic Simon, but the supposed paradise they are in gives them a lot of pain and terror, right from the beginning. When they decide to set up a signal fire on the mountaintop, a boy goes missing when the fire is lit.

In any case, the aim of the author is "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature" (Qtd. in Martin 408). His intention is to produce the proof that the problem is lain in the human nature. The character of Simon further strengthens that line of thought. Simon—the mystic, truth–bearer and Christ-figure—is sketched to convey the same intention. It is he who finds the answer to the mystery of beast on the island. Most of the boys believed that the fluttering thing on the mountain is the beast. However, it is Simon who goes atop the mountain to verify the rumor among the boys. He sees that it is the corpse of a parachutist on the mountain. Apparently, another victim of the warring nations had fallen on the island, and the boys had taken him to be the fearsome beast. Before he could tell others about the beast, he is done to death. But he emerges as the spokesman of the intention of the author.

Simon is a very solitary character. He has found a small place of his own in the midst of the forest where he goes often. In between, he helps the smaller boys in picking fruits from the trees. Once when he is at his favorite haunt in the forest, he has an interaction with *Lord of the Flies*, which is the head of a pig on a stick killed by Jack and others. The head begins a conversation with him. The dreamy exchange between the two goes to the heart of the disturbance on the island. The Belzebub or *Lord of the Flies* says to Simon:

> 'Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!' said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated place echoed with the parody of laughter. 'You knew, didn't you? I'm the reason why it's no? Why things are what they are?' (*LF* 158)

This revelation leads Simon all the way to the mountain to see for himself the source of fear. But before conveying truth, he dies a Christ–like death. The truth–bearer is not allowed to tell the truth. The embryo of the adult world, as these boys are, has assassinated a visionary. He had the insight to relieve them of an illusion.

The ending of the novel reaffirms the evil–inherent theory of the author. The boys by this time have turned the heat on Ralph. He is running for protection. He reaches near the coast and sees an elegantly-dressed naval officer. The sight of the adult, for the first time since they came to the place, freezes them in their footsteps. A shift occurs in their disposition. With their unkempt hair, colored faces and masks they look no more than street urchins. In one stroke this sudden switch reminds us of the 'innocence' of the children:

> With the appearance of the naval officer the bloodthirsty hunters are instantly reduced to a group of painted urchins…The abrupt return to childhood, to insignificance, underscores the argument of the narrative: that evil is inherent in the human mind itself, whatever innocence may cloak it, ready to put forth its strength as soon as the occasion is propitious. (Peter 582-83)

One would have concluded the argument in favor of the innate nature of evil if the evidence for the latter was enough. However, there is textual support to believe that there are also external causes to the criminalization of the boys. Once again, the final part of the novel is useful in noticing the involvement of an external agency in the conflict on the South Sea Island. In the final scene, the naval officer appears from the adult world. He sees the "filthy body, matted hair, unwiped nose"(*LF* 186) of Ralph. He inquires about the condition on the island. Ralph tells him that it is pretty bad out there, and that two of the boys are already dead. To this, the naval officer says "Jolly good show. Like the *Coral Island*"(*LF* 224), referring to R M Ballantyne's novel *The Coral Island* (1857*)*. That novel had three principal characters with the same names as that of the three main characters in *Lord of the Flies*. That correlation apart, there is something chilling in the response of the officer. He smiles away the news of murder given by Ralph as if it was just another event of the War. Ralph is dumbfound to hear such a response from him. But for the reader it shows that the rescue of the boys from the burning island is very precarious. The naval officer is a captain of another ship on the ocean that is engaged in the sea warfare. It is not a final moment of relief for the boys, not a transition from the war to peace. It is very likely that in the chase of the enemy–ship the captain might engage in a sea battle, and end up killing all the boys. So, to argue that the adults might have saved them from descending into chaos is an illusion. Piggy articulated such a desire earlier when he asked, "Aren't there any grownups at all?"(6). He is "like Socrates in the Phaedo seeking to remove the child-like fears of Simmias and Cebes.It is Piggy who reminds the others not to act like children but to behave like grown-ups (Spitz 26). The hope beneath is that the behavior of the grown-ups is much better and constructive. But eventually we come to know that the grownups are themselves in a worse mess than the children. In fact, the children mirror the world of the grownups. They are transferred from the frying pan to the fire.

There is another problem with the construction of the narrative. One may like to know what is the ideal situation to learn about the true human nature. Apparently, Golding wants us to believe that these boys provide a fine environment to analyze the inner, uncontaminated disposition of human beings and then give a kind of universal theory of human behavior. But the boys who were transplanted on the island are not in a State of Nature as was propounded by political theorists such Hobbes (1588–1679), Locke (1632-1704) and Rousseau (1712–1778). They have not taken birth there but they have come from a different

place. They are conscious of this transplantation, and have the memory of the learned values of the mother country. As Jack at one stage boasts of his Englishness, saying that we are English and the English are not savages; they are best at everything. These are the signs of socialization the boys have already gone through. They are aware of their values, attitudes and arrangements that they seek to put up on the island. So, the setting created by Golding is not all that free from external agents as he is trying to make the reader believe. Their condition is heavily inflected by the socio-political ethos of the middle-class England. It is not for nothing that Piggy repeatedly appealed to science in the narrative.

A true State of Nature is yet to be discovered. Until then we will only have speculative situations. And one is not sure whether it is possible to create one. For human beings are social creatures. They live and breathe in societies which inherit cultures and pass on to future generations. As in this case the memory of the children intervenes in their day-to-day activities. Spitz puts it correctly:

> For what Golding has forgotten is that a state of nature is not necessarily a state of political and moral innocence. The boys who inhabited the island did not spring up full-blown, as did Athena from Zues's head. They were the carefully chosen products of an already established middle class society. (29)

These memories are also noticed when Simon is killed in a frenzy by the boys. They kill him with the belief that the beast is being killed. By morning they realize what they have done. Ironically, both Ralph and Piggy have also participated in the death of Simon. Ralph and Piggy look at each other in disbelief, dumbstruck by their overnight action. Especially after they had evolved a consensual opinion that unity went haywire because of Jack and not due to Simon or any one else. "I suppose it's Jack," (*LF* 129) is an answer from Piggy when Ralph asks him what makes things break. Despite that they are part of the assassins of Simon. Now, at this moment the remnants of their socio-cultural cultivation revive. Ralph and Piggy have a deep sense of regret, and Piggy says, "it was an accident"(*LF* 174). The sense of guilt brings up their connection with the civilization of which they are products. Their minds are not blank slates as the argument of inherently-evil theory implicitly propounds.

Another very potent example of this hangover of civilization comes when Maurice and Roger run into the little decorations made by the smaller boys on the beach. They just run them down but side-step a few, leaving the important ones intact. Even then there is a sense of regret in Maurice for having done this little destruction after the little ones had set them up with great effort.

Roger has the same feeling but in a different situation. He is aiming stones at the boys. But is not actually hitting them for the fear of injuring. His conscious missing the target comes out of the old civilizations feeling of guilt, which he wants to avoid. "Yet," says Golding, "there was a space round Henry which he dare not throw. Round the squatting child was the protection of the parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins." (*LF* 64-65) However, these shibboleths of civilization are discarded as the novel progresses. The fear of the external agencies of punishment goes. It is Roger who rolls down a boulder toward Piggy and kills him.

Among all these characters, it is Piggy who most reminds one of the burdens of the civilization on the boys. Used to the soft life of the upper-middle class British life, he is neither a "hunter nor a hut-builder" (Lederer 576). He wears specs, symbol of his intellectual orientation. When all the boys grow their hair wild and long, it is Piggy again whose hair somehow fails to grow, keeping him close to the civilizational habit of proper dress and hair.

Arguably, there is a lot in their heads, which they are yet to discard. "The boys," says Levitt "come to the island already acculturated" (522). Their decision and their actions are charged with the stain of the Western tradition. The Western tradition has from time to time driven the mystics to the margins. It is not different on the island. Simon and Piggy are derided from the beginning. They are both killed, so that what remains with their exit from the scene is naked arson and loot. They boys turn into embodiments of the beasts. The imbibition of this western tradition is alluded to in the novel at many times. Golding, at one point, refers to the inability of the boys to adjust initially to the environment due to the "European tradition of work, play, and food right through the day…" (*LF* 61). If only they were immune from the acculturation in the Western tradition, then there was scope for staving off any criticism of that tradition in shaping their minds towards their disastrous actions. So, the tension in the cause of the degradation of the boys is not resolved. We can neither exclusively blame that tradition, for if Jack is a product of that so is Simon. But then overestimating the role of the vague human nature and absolving the West is not without pitfalls, for the narrative offers sufficient evidence to incriminate the West.

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Monstrous Landscapes, Menacing Women: An Ecogothic Reading of Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*

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Abstract

Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve *(1977) combines Gothic horror with ecological insinuations. The dark underbelly of the American landscape is foregrounded in the novel offering a challenge to the pastoral Edenic implications of America as the land of opportunities. What the protagonist Evelyn meets with in the New World is not a passive, cornucopian nature subject to exploitation but a dark, retributive one laying bare its monstrous teeth. The gothicisation of women, landscape and non-human others casts femininity and comforting nature in a strange, dark light that evokes unease and fear. Drawing from Andrew Smith, William Hughes, Simon Estok and others, the paper offers an ecogothic reading of the text, by focusing on nature that is alive and uncanny. It argues that the gothic mode deployed in the novel combines ecophobia with the cultural symbol of primordial, all engulfing monstrosity as feminine. By so doing, the paper seeks to show how such gendered Gothic landscapes and non-human life are central to Carter's dismantling of anthropocentric myth making.*
Keywords: Carter, ecogothic, nature, uncanny, America

Introduction

Ecogothic refers to a mode of representation which highlights the fearful aspects of the non-human world. First theorized by Andrew Smith and William Hughes in their work *Ecogothic* (2013), such writing features a nature that reminds one time and again of its sentience and power in the form of cataclysmic events, vegetation taking over abandoned sites or a sudden awareness of embeddedness in the non-human world or close proximity with the same. In Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), the gothic mode manifests itself in the form of a chaotic American landscape that overwhelms and overpowers an unassuming Evelyn. The novel follows the escapades of Evelyn as he arrives in America from England in search of opportunities and instead finds himself losing his job, his male body and his identity. This America is not a land of opportunities and is festering with civil war and degraded landscape bearing signs of chaos. Seeking the comfort of emptiness and inactivity in the desert, he undertakes a journey to the far Western desert where his hopes are again thwarted by unseen dangers in a hostile landscape leading to a violent transformation and misadventures. These transformations run parallel to changes in his perceptions of American landscape from one luring him with its rampant sexuality and danger to one of disease and dis-ease, uncomfortable intimacies and finally, an overwhelming horror.

Gothic Nature and Angela Carter

Gothic writing evokes horror and produces grotesque images by featuring death, ghosts lurking and threatening to disrupt order, violence, excessive corruption and sexual transgression. Originally referred to a style of architecture from the Medieval period, the Gothic soon came to be associated with writings such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), *The Monk* (1796) etc. which formed a part of the Romantic tradition of sublime combining pleasure with terror. It is in this tradition that Hughes and Smith trace the beginnings of an ecologically aware Gothic (Hughes and Smith 1) that confound Romantic ideas of biophilia and presents nature in the light of estrangement rather than belonging (Hughes and Smith 2). While Gothic architecture in the form of haunted houses, castles, dungeons etc. has been the subject of much critical attention, the ecogothic mode shifts its attention to the hitherto overlooked non-human life in such tales in the form of menacing forests, wild beasts or even violent humans which actively participate in the production of fear. At the root of ecogothic is ecophobia, which is "an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world as present and as subtle in our daily lives as homophobia and racism and sexism." (Estok 208). According to Estok, ecophobia accounts for our constant desire to tame wilderness, weeding and controlling of nature in gardens and creation of sanitized spaces devoid of vermins, harmful microscopic entities etc. (208). At the heart of anthropocentrism is this ecophobia, (Estok 116) which is the anxiety of the non-humans taking over if not taken over. The Gothic with its preoccupation with fear thus makes for an important lens through which such anxieties of the non-human world can be examined (Hillard 689). Andrew Smith and Ted Hughes in their volume *Ecogothic* (2013) examines the Gothic using ecocritical theories. Pastoral nature is benign, all-giving and one which one can retire to when beaten down by the vagaries of modern life. Such nature is kept at a close proximity, in our gardens, flower pots in corners, fountains in the gardens or pets at home and is often equated with a feeling of comfort and homeliness. Gothic nature, on the other hand is that which resists human control and exists of its own accord in the forests, in form of creeping undergrowth, wild animals hostile to humans, untapped seas, vast howling deserts, all of which evoke feelings of unease, dread, danger. In its fear of the other, ecophobia can be linked with homophobia, racism and misogyny (Estok 208), as Gothic and unruly nature is often portrayed as an all-engulfing heart of darkness or likened to female fury (Merchant 132). This nature is "uncanny" (Freud 2) whereby comforting and nature and angelic femininity appear in strange, hostile forms. Visions of this Gothic nature, or what Timothy Morton refers to as "dark ecology" (16) are central to ecological thought as they "compel our compassionate co-existence to go beyond condescending pity" (Morton 17). It offers alternatives to "environmental rhetoric that is too often strongly affirmative, extraverted, and masculine… sunny, straightforward, ableist, holistic, hearty, and "healthy"" (Morton 16) by bringing in "negativity, introversion, femininity, writing, mediation, ambiguity, darkness, irony, fragmentation and sickness" (Morton 16).

Angela's Carter's works predominantly feature Gothic excess and verge on the gory in the form of bodily disfiguration and dismemberment, violence, corporeal mutations and sado-masochism. As one of the most prominent literary voices from late twentieth century England, Carter's oeuvre boasts of such diverse concerns as countercultural elements in *Shadow Dance* (1966), *Several Perceptions* (1968) and *Love* (1971), which together form the Bristol trilogy, a coming of age story in *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), dystopian works such as *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972), *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and

The Passion of New Eve (1977), and magical realism in *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991). She is most famously known for *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) a feminist retelling of fairy tales like "Bluebeard", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Beauty and the Beast" etc. Her other works include a collection of short stories titled *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974) and *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1978). Her works display an overarching preoccupation with gender and sexuality and abound in tropes from Medieval literature and folklore. The non-human world in these works often becomes the site of Gothic horror when characters find themselves helpless in the face of nature that threatens to overwhelm. In *The Magic Toyshop*, Melanie's playful act of a bride in the garden at night time soon turns into a nightmare as the natural life appears devilish in a moonlight- the grass tangles around her feet, the branches menacingly block her way and the monstrous looking cat slyly tears her dress. Sears talks about how "the menacing externality of the garden is purely Gothic in its symbolism" (Sears 121) in the novel. In *Heroes and Villains*, Carter offers a dystopian image of a world receding to darker ages as group of professors find themselves constantly living in fear of attack from Barbarians residing in forests. This coming together of the ecological and the Gothic in Carter underlines the non-human agentiality and destabilizes an anthropocentric confidence. In her Gothic rewriting of fairy tales, myths etc. she exposes and subverts patriarchal folklore (Baldick xiv) of complacent femininity and tameable nature. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter places Evelyn in the middle of a broiling American landscape that challenges the rational, male ordered view of passive nature. Here Angela Carter undertakes a rewriting of both the myth of Edenic creation and that of America as an empty virgin territory that the European settlers of the land saw as up for grabs. In the novel "the abjected landscapes-chaotic landscapes, entropic pastorals, and dehydrated deserts, acting as psychic backdrop to the disturbing events that occur in the novel- are transgressive spaces where the narratives of social femininity are not only played out, but also abrogated" (Welby 74).

Festering City

R.W.B refers to innocence, of the landscape and people, as the defining feature of American myth (Lewis 7). In *The Passion of New Eve*, this myth is subverted in favour of a postlapsarian Gothic excess. Far from being a virgin land as visualized by the early settlers, this is a land festering with promiscuity and violence. In the manner of the pioneering European settler, Evelyn, "child of a moist, green, gentle island" England, is excited by the prospects of the dangerous landscape. However, instead of the exciting "violence, fear and madness" (11) of the myth what he meets with is unsettling and horrific chaos, of a nature swarming with trepidation that finds him unawares. This is a city under siege, by both human and non-human forces. On one hand, the rebel black and female militant groups shake up the complacent lives of people in New York, and, on the other, plague outbreak lurks on the horizon as rats, "fat as piglets and viscious as hyenas" (11) take over the city and appear everywhere from bedrooms to alleys, even choking sewage lines. The first image that greets him as he lands in the city is that of a grotesque plaster figurine of a gnome squatting on toadstool while devouring a pie. This runs contrary to both the idea of America as Eden and his expectations of "a clean, hard, bright city where towers reared to the sky" (6). This is a Gothic landscape, "its dark, labyrinth streets suggesting the violence and menace of the Gothic castle and forest" (Botting 2). The overwhelming heat of the city along with skies that rain poisonous sulphur reeking of decay produce the images of a landscape that has reached a

tipping point owing to human exploitation and is turning back on humans and wreaking havoc. All of these serve as premonition of what befalls Evelyn in the form of a horrific castration and sexual assaults. This "disjunction between utopian idealism of the project and its dystopian aftermath" (Hughes and Smith 2) is one of the characteristic modes of ecogothic writing.

Howling Desert

Carolyn Merchant talks about how the desert is seen as the evil other and "the inhospitable arid wilderness contrasted sharply with the bountiful, fruitful Garden of Eden and with the promised land of milk and honey" (131) and "represented a land to be subdued and made arable" (131) in Judeo- Christian mythology. In the novel, Evelyn sees this landscape in gendered terms calling it "the abode of enforced sterility, the dehydrated sea of infertility, the post-menopausal part of the earth" (36) making it look passive, benign and less monstrous. Being disillusioned with the chaotic cityscape Evelyn seeks out the desert, "the untenanted part of the world" (34) where "seeking "pure air and cleanness" (34) where "there were no ghosts" (34), as opposed to the American South where there were "too many ghosts of Europe in the bayous" (34). Far from empty and passive, the desert soon reveals itself to be sentient with dangers lurking in its underbelly. In the desert Evelyn is greeted by overwhelming heat in the daytime followed by chilling cold at night. Trying to climb to a high point to call for help, he stumbles on what appears to be the carcass of an albatross. While a sea bird in the middle of desert is uncanny in itself, it also alludes to the gothic figure of the albatross in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Parallels are drawn between the albatross serving as a reminder of the sailor's ecological crimes and the one here as reminding us of Evelyn's dismissive gendering of landscape and women. The desert also houses the teeming all women world of Beulah in its underbelly where Evelyn is taken away by women and subjected to a forced sex change operation in the hands of the multi-breasted Mother. The subterranean landscape of Beulah in the desert can be said to resemble the basement of the unconscious, a manifestation of the dark and repressed energies. In "Notes on the Gothic", Carter writes how such images of the unconscious in nature alongside the moon and forests are recurring images in Gothic writing (134). Other Gothic tropes of "Radcliffean model of the heroine enclosed in the master's house" (Baldick xxi) alongside "the imprisoning house of Gothic fiction that has from the beginning that of patriarchy" (Baldick xxii) are subverted in the space of Beulah. This space "in the interior, in the inward parts of the earth" (43) is a foil to the towering landscapes moving skyward, highlighting the differences between phallic masculine structures and subterranean female landscapes. The territory is a womb-like place "an egg deep in a nameless desert far away from home" (48) designed to reunite the alienated masculine figure with the original maternal self. Beulah thus resuscitates the chthonic, "a journey backwards to the source" (50) countering the "phallic projectory" (50) or a journey upwards to space in the name of progress. With its emphasis on the subterranean, the primal and the maternal, Beulah poses a challenge to the rational landscapes of the city symbolising enlightenment progress and invokes horror. In this underground world Evelyn feels the desert and the world closing in on him:

> I felt the dull pressure of the desert, of the mountains beyond the desert, of the vast prairies, the grazing cattle, the corn; I felt upon me the whole heaviness of the entire continent with its cities and its coinage, its mines, its foundries, its wars and mythologies imposing itself in all its intensity, like a nightmare, upon my breast (49).

In this "merciless breast of this inverted ocean where only specks of mica glittered" (141) Evelyn loses perspective of his own human self as he perceives his sand dusted body as "delicious…like a gingerbread woman" (142) to be consumed. Evelyn's lover, the drag artist Tristessa meets her death in the desert, her body "dead and rotting, under the acrrion sun" (157).

Women and Non-human

The comfort and warmth of pastoral nature is often associated with domestic femininity while Gothic nature is associated with seductive and dangerous femininity. In myth and popular culture, the idea of the fickle or fearful nature is often used to distinguish femme fatales from angelic figures, thus creating binaries of appropriate and inappropriate or dangerous femininity. Carolyn Merchant points to how the witch in Renaissance Europe became "a symbol of violence of nature, raised storms, caused illness, destroyed, obstructed generation and killed infants" (Merchant 132), combining ecophobia and misogyny. In this image of witch and other mythological figures such as siren (half woman half bird, luring sailors with their songs), Medusa (with vipers for hair), calypso (seductive nymph smelling of woods), Demeter (fertility goddess causing drought while in mourning), Persephone (symbolizing the dark and the subterranean) we find the non-human fusing with seductive or monstrous feminine figures.

In Angela Carter's works such as *The Passion of New Eve* and *The Bloody Chamber*, she plays with and critiques such received notions of women in myths and folklore by undertaking a feminist revision of the same. While in *The Bloody Chamber*, women refuse to take on the roles of the damsels in distress needing male saviours, in the novel, Carter's "demythologizing business" (Carter, "Frontline" 38) proceeds through an attention to "the social creation of femininity, amongst other things" (Carter, "Frontline" 38). As Evelyn projects his fears of feral chaos onto the figure of Leilah, she appears to Evelyn a metonym of the menacing American landscape which he must conquer. She is described as a "little fox pretending to be siren" (16), an embodiment of the dark desires, both alluring and dangerous at the same time. Evelyn assumes here the figure of the American Adam to whose masculine virility the howling wilderness poses a challenge. His symbolic taming of the wilderness through impregnating Leilah loses its appeal when a botched abortion attempt renders Leilah miserable and he escapes the chaos to the desert. Later, Evelyn as Eve becomes the object of his own masculinist myth-making as the serpentine, dangerous woman of the Biblical myth and is subjected to vagaries of being a woman in a man's world. In the patriarchal world of Zero's ranch, Evelyn, now Eve, along with the other women are equated with non-human animals as they are sexually exploited, starved, smeared with dog excrement and made to sleep with pigs.

In the figure of the Mother in Beulah, the Gothic and non-human, the monstrous and the vegetal nature come together. A self-styled multi-breasted goddess with thighs like that "female mantis" (61) and face, "dark as an eclipse of a moon" mother is the "literal and terrifying objectification of man's dread of a woman" (Ferreira 288) and signifies the fear of castration (Ferreira 288), one of the main sources of the uncanny (Freud 14). She tries rewriting a masculinist account of the Edenic myth of creation where Adam was created by God and Eve out of the former's ribs. Here the Mother proclaims how "the garden in which Adam was born lies between my thighs." (60) and tries impregnating Evelyn with his own semen. Eliminating the male figure impregnating/seeding both the soil and the woman,

fecundity is here presented as an essential trait to both women and nature. The horror of this erasure of male agency reaches its pinnacle in bodily violence in the form of a forced sex change operation turning Evelyn, the American Adam into an Eve, with a woman's body. Evelyn is seen as "an earth ripe for the finest seed" (64) in whom they are going to carve "endless prairies" (64).   The horror of these nightmarish events leads to ecological realization dawning on Evelyn where he attributes monstrosity to human exploitation of landscape:

> Perhaps this desert, since the nuclear tests they had performed here, somewhere in the vastness, spawned mutations of being-perpetrated hitherto unguessable modes of humanity, in which life parodied myth, or became it. (74)

Conclusion

In "Melodramas of Beset Manhood" Nina Baym talks about how a woman writer is likely to write of nature "as more active, or to stress its destruction or violation." (136) than male writers who present the same as "compliant and supportive" (135). This proposition holds true for Angela Carter whose works deploy the Gothic mode to present the non-human world as dark, menacing and above all, alive. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter conjures a dystopian world where the gendered landscapes are all too sentient to be ignored and too proximal to be escaped. Through this, Carter shocks the reader to bring her face to face with "new modes of psychological, social and environmental attentiveness" (Hillard 693). Evelyn's complacent white, male European perspective of non-human world is challenged in the postlapsarian America of untameable nature where the landscape and the feminine act rather than being acted upon. As Estok writes, such depictions of Gothic nature put "ecological humility" (209) back to ecological thinking. This serves the purpose of re-enchantment of nature where the non-human world elicits the awe and reverence of the pre-modern times, so crucial in the anthropocene.

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Identity and Ego Psychology: A Study of Characters from Select Plays of Christopher Marlowe

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Abstract

Christopher Marlowe was born in Elizabethan England, a period of economic glory which nevertheless had its fair share of socio political turmoil, sectarian intolerance, and a culture of intense espionage and persecutions with a history of ruthless religious militancy. Marlowe himself was an educated and desirous man, and critical studies such as those done by Una Ellis Fermor and Roma Gill have shown that there are shades of Marlowe's mysterious and unrestrained persona in the characters of his plays. In distinct ways, the author's subjectivities flow into an ambitious Doctor Faustus, a sensual young Mortimer and an unflinching Barabas. This paper makes an attempt to look at the above interpretation by studying these characters through the lens of a few identity theorists who are primarily concerned with ego psychology. Erikson's theory of identity crisis and its solution through the stages of psychosocial development, the types of ego functions and their failures, James Marcia's theory of identity status, and Kohlberg's theory of moral judgment are some of the perspectives explored in the interpretation of Marlowe and his characters.
Keywords*: identity, ego function, gender, psychosocial, role confusion, ambition, religion.*

Christopher Marlowe was born into a history of turbulence. He grew up listening to the bloody stories of English Reformation, and the accounts of how hundreds of people were burnt at stake by Henry Eighth and Queen Mary. Religious laws and identity of heretics were turned upside down with the change of monarchs and to possess the correct religious identification became mandatory for survival. Elizabeth was a Protestant Queen whose reign witnessed Catholic conspiracies and rebellions, and subsequent suppression and executions. Marlowe was thus brought up in an environment which bore the fear of royal executions (the aspect of punishment in regulating moral identity according to Lawrence Kohlberg) as well as trust in the righteousness of the monarch (the aspect of social contract). The son of a shoemaker, he was academically driven and had both the goal and capacity of upward social mobility. Like Doctor Faustus, he was born 'base of stock'[i], and explored his chances of a superior economic and intellectual identity. Erik Erikson, in his theory of personality and ego psychology, talks about the collective functioning of the conscious and unconscious ego in the processes of identity crisis and psychosocial development of an individual. He defines this adolescent stage of shuffling of the various layers of one's identity (behavior, habits, goals, political ideas, gender, community and friends) as seeking the strength of fidelity from a state of identity versus role confusion. Identity theorist James Marcia divides this stage into the statuses of diffusion (lack of commitment and exploration), foreclosure (lack of exploration), moratorium (exploration without commitment) and achievement (commitment after exploration).[ii] Marlowe's learning and scholarly expeditions at Oxford

naturally brought him to a status of identity moratorium; he was measuring his options of identification at education, society, politics and religion though he was committed to his national identity under the leadership of spymaster Francis Walsingham. His religious identity was dubious as his peers have condemned him for being an atheist – "… that this Marlow doth not only hould them himself, but almost into every Company he Cometh he perswades men to Atheism willing them not be afeard of bugbears and hobgoblins, and vtterly scorning both god and his ministers" (Marlowe 225). The identity of an atheist was risky as well and Marlowe explores the reaches and limits of Christianity through Faustus. He had read about his nation's war with the Holy Roman Emperor, about the beheadings of the Catholic Thomas Moore and the Protestant Cromwell. This knowledge made him skeptical of identifying with theological principles just as Faustus, though the play certainly ends with a Christian warning; an expression of the superego- "Damn'd art thou, Faustus, damn'd: despair and die" (*Doctor Faustus*. V.I.56).

In Marlowe, the ego cannot, despite its defense mechanisms, reconcile the extremes of rebellious aspirations and the realization of his limitations; it is torn through the psychosocial developmental stages of fidelity, love, care and wisdom, culminating in shame and guilt induced by the superego. The realization that the glorious dreams of Renaissance idealism will ultimately transgress into exploitation of the weak and abuse of power is seen in the isolation and disillusionment of Faustus. "It is rather a transgression rooted in an impasse of despair" (Marlowe 277). This signal from the superego is challenged by Marlowe's libido, his intellectual and physical desires, his sexual agility and intelligent readiness that got him recruited as a royal spy, his latent potential in climbing high up the cultural and political ladder of England, and his society that encouraged freewill and the advantage of limitless knowledge. While Tamburlaine completely identifies with power and aggression that denotes submission to the id, it is interesting to note that Faustus is destroyed by his contradictions; the good and bad angel (really Faustus's inner structure that can be interpreted as the superego and the id respectively) tear him apart with opposite narratives of his identity and render him crippled to accept either salvation or damnation. "I do repent, and yet I do despair" (V.I.71). Like the playwright himself, Faustus suffers from a lack of identity achievement and is destined to be doomed. Faustus asserts himself being ravished by magic, while its true essence evades him.

> Both Satan and Faustus wish to be all-powerful, omnipotent, God's equal, choosing a wrong route to that status. The magic of spirituality is in humility, which makes the merger possible; only that guarantees the knowledge by Identity. (*Ghosal* 54).

The ego thus falls short to achieve fidelity or a pleasant synthesis of the emerging self. In terms of ego psychology, most of the main characters of the plays suffer from a failure of the conscious ego, thus lacking in the formation of an integrated self and identity. There is always an undercurrent of dissociation with society in the contexts of morality, principles, ambition, religion and politics. The unconscious ego plays out its defenses though being frequently interrupted by a complete surrender to the aggression of the id. When Marlowe writes the character of Mortimer, he is writing from the chronicles, about a character that has been hit with the sudden and untimely death of his father as an adolescent and spends his maturing years with his war hardened formidable uncle. Due to a stern and stringent childhood, he naturally suffers from a repressed ego which finds expression later during adulthood. The young Mortimer is forced to an identity foreclosure status as he learns to follow his father and uncle in their loyalty to the king. He does not question the delegated duties and loyalties until a point- "Mine uncle here, this earl, and I myself, / Were sworn to

your father at his death" (*Edward II*. I.I.114-115). As Marlowe's play proceeds, Mortimer grows ambitious as political uncertainty arises; caught up in between immense social and political forces, he is exploring and gambling with his possibilities in a stage of identity moratorium. Though Marcia primarily theorizes adolescent identity, these stages are not always linear or restricted to age groups, but vary depending on the subject's life. Identity achievement in its practical significance remains elusive to the character of Mortimer because he never gets to exercise the true power and sovereignty of a king.

Mortimer faces what one may call a difficulty in modulating and controlling impulses, as does Tamburlaine and Barabas. It is an example of disturbed ego function where the characters are not able to manage their violent and aggressive wishes (the conscious ego collapses under pressure). Mortimer himself tells Warwick that he is unable to control anger and will hang Gaveston from the court gate at the first chance. It is an example of ego projection when he projects his wishes upon Gaveston- "Who, swoln with venom of ambitious pride" (I.II.45). Under the garb of maintaining decorum and protecting the kingdom, Mortimer pushes his own agenda of replacing the sovereign. He displays that his actions are driven by social contract and norms while being actually motivated by self interest.[iii] He thus possesses a dual identity in the choices of ambition and moral behavior as his ego follows the desires of the id under concealment.[iv] He confesses in secret- "Fair Isabel, now have we our desire; /… Be ruled by me, and we will rule the realm" (V.II.1-14). In *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas is punished for being Jewish in a Maltese Christian society which initiates his ego's dysfunction- "…if you rob me thus, / I must be forced to steal, and compass more… You have my wealth, the labour of my life, / The comfort of mine age, my children's hope" (*The Jew of Malta*. I.III.189-224). He becomes embittered by everything Christian and embarks on a killing spree, looting, deceiving and emasculating, making excuses of vengeance until a point where he becomes lost in his id and reaches a crisis of completely disrupted ego identity as he relentlessly switches sides in the end. Closely related to the ego identity of the characters is the aspect of the role of will or ego strength which is directly related to moral behavior and judgment.

One cannot follow moral principles if one does not understand (or believe in) moral principles. However, one can reason in terms of principles and not live up to these principles. . . [F]actors additional to moral judgment are necessary for principled moral reasoning to be translated into 'moral action' (Kohlberg 672).

In this context Kohlberg puts forward ten universal issues of concern that determine an individual's response in a moral dilemma. This response is the content of moral judgment. These involve punishment, property, concerns of authority and affection, law, liberty, life, truth, sex, and distributive justice.

It is noticeable that each of the characters discussed here is subjected to one or more of these issues that determine the structure of their moral reasoning and thereby play a major role in assuring or rupturing the path of their ego identities. In the Maltese tragedy, the title of the play gives away the identity of the central character, and the same identity becomes the central force and locus of commitment cutting across the entire plot. Barabas is stripped off his honor and hard earned wealth for protesting against injustice and unequal treatment. So where is the law and distributive justice when the lawmakers themselves discriminate and confiscate on the basis of religious identity? Why is Barabas punished for speaking up for the right cause and how does his ego manage to balance the sense of cognitive moral judgment in its face? In the play, it cannot. His subjective reasoning in the face of moral dilemma drives him towards vengeance and away from moral action and eventually leads to a complete ego

breakdown. Barabas cannot exercise appropriate judgment in the face of frustration due to inadequate functioning of the ego's impulse control, and fails to tolerate the anxiety and aggression of his id. In comparison, Mortimer and Tamburlaine have a less complicated moral structure as they are exploring positions of control and power in a state of moratorium. Their overarching concerns of authority and lust are characteristic of the id towering over their conscious ego, as they stay away from moral action and identify themselves with relentlessly growing political power.

Queen Isabella, also an illustration from history, is identifiable with the likes of Anne Boleyn – clever, manipulative and politically adept. The character depicted in the play is quite close to that of the actual figure. Isabella had two primary identities to settle with. She was a royal and a woman. Her identity is meant to play a certain role and her will in that role remains inconsequential. She is trained in her role and confidently crosses the stages of purpose and industry versus inferiority thus reaching a foreclosure status before adolescence. Her ego functions are naturally smooth as she understands and identifies with her role as the queen who is expected to bear her husband a son for the future of the country. The muddle begins when Isabella grows jealous and angry with Gaveston and stops identifying herself as Edward's wife. Subjectivity becomes an important aspect in one's psychosocial stages, and coming to terms with reality is important in the formation of ego identity. Due to the strained relationship, Isabella and Edward cannot attain the basic strength of love at the stage of intimacy versus isolation which demands a fearless fusion of one's identity with the other. She quickly finds a solution to her identity crisis as she finds love and support in Young Mortimer. This stage of identity crisis that involves the virtue of love reverberates with Marlowe's own crisis of not being able to unite with the woman he loved.[v] Isabella's moral principles were mainly centered upon the concerns of authority, affection for Mortimer, and her own liberty and life. Her judgments also revolve around her performance as a mother. When faced with conflicting forces about her husband's conduct, she is afraid of a rebellion that can cause harm to her son. She coaxes Mortimer after the king's defeat – "And therefore, so the prince my son be safe, / Whom I esteem as dear as these mine eyes" (*Edward II.* V.II.17-18). This is Erikson's seventh stage of psychosocial development when a parent reevaluates his or her roles and commitments. The virtue of care that comes out of this stage is threatened in case of Isabella as she is worried about her child's safety and inheritance. She thinks about protecting the identity of her son as an extension of her own. This further resolves her decision of dissociating herself from the king to join the rebel forces.

The young Gaveston was placed in Prince Edward's household during the age of competence building; an age when friends and companions play a crucial role in the exploration of love, confidence and capacity. In context, Gaveston and Edward have found their relative abilities and adequacies through mutual dependence upon each other. Gaveston sees his role as being productive to the future king, both politically and personally. He identifies his fidelity in being physically and psychologically committed to Edward- "It shall suffice me to enjoy your love, / Which whiles I have, I think myself as great, As Caesar…" (I.I.229-230). Their sexual identities merge into a point of crisis as a king's homosexuality is socio-politically unacceptable. Gaveston becomes stubborn and takes up reaction formation[vi], overtly indulging with Edward in the face of opposition. He can not affect regulation in his thoughts and actions. In the conflict between intimacy and isolation, his passion for the prince overrides his power of cognitive reasoning and he gets stuck in foreclosure with defensive ego functioning. His sexual and political identities are threatened

and his unconscious ego recourses to episodes of desperation and blame shifting, denying to recognize the faults, fissures and carelessness that would bring about his own downfall. From an early age Gaveston is tormented with an awareness of unbelonging because the nobles refuse to accept him as their peer, denouncing him as a low born peasant. This leads to a state of alienation that further impacts his identity crisis in the developmental stages of purpose, competence and fidelity. Edward follows Gaveston into regression and lack of coherence. It is evident that the character has not successfully journeyed through the psychosocial stages of progress. He suffers from detached defensiveness when confronted with his lack of decorum and competence. He is forced to conform to limitations and fails to commit to the responsibilities that come with power. This lack of commitment towards kingly duties is also a part of his failure in resolving the stage of role confusion. He cannot distinguish himself as the sovereign and jumbles up his identity with Gaveston- "Why shouldst thou kneel? Know'st thou not who I am? / Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston" (I.I.194-195). The problem of Edward's gender identification might also be a result of an unresolved phallic stage. King Edward I, being away in battles, was generally an absent father figure. Thus the cycle of initial jealousy towards the father and later detachment from the mother while following and identifying with the father might not have been complete. Instead, he came in contact with a male partner who posed no competition for the mother. Having passed through the phallic and latency stages in the close accompaniment and indulgence of Gaveston, Edward lands up in a confused state regarding his identity as a man. He does not properly identify with his acquired role and is thus a reluctant king with a troublesome reign. To become and remain a leader is to master competence, confidence and organized political ideas. Erikson describes the idea of unified ego function:

> It is the accrued experience of the ego's ability to integrate all identifications with the vicissitudes of the libido, with the aptitudes developed out of endowment, and with the opportunities offered in social roles. The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others, as evidenced in the tangible promise of a 'career' (Erikson 235).

> Instead Edward agonizes under manic episodes of indecisions and delusions as his unconscious ego struggles to negotiate with the reality of the external world. The cognitive dissonance that underlines the personality traits of Edward and Doctor Faustus is major sign of their identity crisis. Faustus deals with a more acute synthesis crisis as the ego is unable to consolidate the different functions in his personality. "How am I glutted with conceit of this!/ Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,/ Resolve me of all ambiguities" *(Doctor Faustus.* I.I.77-79). Most of the other major characters in the plays dwindle to attain the status of developmental identity achievement though Tamburlaine is an exception. He is sure of his identity as an all conquering leader – "For fates and oracles [of] Heaven have sworn/ To royalize the deeds of Tamburlaine" (*Tamburlaine.* II.III.7-8). Marlowe shares the plight of modulating and controlling impulses with Faustus, Barabas and Tamburlaine. It has been attested by his acquaintances that he often engaged in brawls, fights, sexual adventures and excessive drinking. This kind of a disturbed ego function is closely related to the content of moral judgment, which in the playwright is driven by the possibilities of life, liberty and sensuality, without the fright of repercussions. Being thus driven by hunger, sex and creativity shows untamed and overflowing energy of the libido. A lot like young Mortimer, the young playwright defies the governing principles of the ego, and pursues the pleasure principle, as he disregards friendships and social decorum for the immediate fulfillment of his senses. It is a rebellion against the ego's reality principle for a fragile perception of

superiority. It is an example of a man whose ego identity is confused in an age of tremendous advancements in learning and trade that places humans in a position of omnipotence, when overreaching egoism was celebrated but the ensuing bewilderment of the soul was left unanswered.

Notes

[i]The opening chorus in Marlowe's play describes Doctor Faustus's parents as base of stock or of low rank [See Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in works cited, pp. 63]

[ii]James Marcia's theory of identity statuses in formation of ego identity [refer to Marcia's book in works cited, pp. 5-16].

[iii]Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development and behavior.

[iv]Freud's analogy of the id as the horse and the ego as the rider, where the rider is sometimes forced to follow the will of the horse and guide accordingly.

[v]There are accounts of the playwright's life that talk about his unreciprocated love for a woman which led him to sexual promiscuity and restlessness in choices of lifestyle [letters by contemporary University Wits such as Richard Baines, Anthony A Wood and Robert Greene. See Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in works cited, pp. 218-226].

[vi]Reaction formation is a defense mechanism of the ego. See psychoanalytic theory.

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Britain as a Carceral Space: Analysing Representations of Racial Discrimination in Mustapha Matura's play *Welcome Home Jacko*

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Abstract

When we talk about state violence or resistance in any form, it is always the marginalized people that are impacted. They live at the intersections of a system of oppression thrust upon them by the state which they call their home. While living in this 'in-between' space they have to deal with the violence inflicted upon them by the very construction of that space in general and the state apparatus in particular. The present paper attempts to deconstruct this space with reference to the black British minority community where their race becomes a disability for them. Policing, detention and incarceration are some of the methodical ways in Britain that are steeped in racism and do not get diagnosed easily. The play Welcome Home Jacko *is a commentary on the very construction of the architectural spaces of Britain which exclude the minority blacks as they are forced to socialise only with their own community.*
Keywords: Black British community, identity crisis, in-between space, carceral space, surveillance

Introduction

The research paper aims to focus on the experiences of black British minority community (people of African and Caribbean descent) in Britain with reference to Mustapha Matura's play *Welcome Home Jacko* (1980) and try to locate how the very architecture of Britain acts as a means of carceral power steeped in racism. Before proceeding let me briefly introduce the playwright. Mustapha Matura (1939-2019) was a black British playwright of Trinidadian origin based in London. Some of his other notable plays are *Play Mas, Rum and Coca, Playboy of the West Indies.* His plays are mostly based on the West Indian experience in London. This theme also finds resonance in *Welcome Home Jacko.* Rummaging through history the transatlantic slave trade stands testimony to racial violence when thousands of blacks were transported by their colonial masters from Africa through the middle passage to work in the Caribbean islands in sugarcane fields and in America as slaves. They were transported in squalid conditions and were kept under heavy surveillance so that escape became impossible for them. The social scientist Rashad Shabazz, while investigating ideas on space, carceral power and blackness, provides a vivid description of the predicament of the blacks during the transatlantic slave trade:

> The cruel technologies of slavery represented an entirely new ontology of space. The slave ship, the big house, the slave quarters, the field, the auction block, and the plantation were the spaces the geography of slavery created. Using fear, intimidation, and spatial isolation, slave owners were able to make the larger geography outside the plantation places of illegal occupation for slaves. A slave ship

was built to stack people in its bowel for transport. Mashed together like animals with disease ever present, the slave ship instilled in slaves a new sense of space. The well-known image of the belly of the slave ship filled with Africans en route to the Americas is an illustration of these barbaric spatial practices. Slave traders used chains, cells, and other kinds of restraints to immobilize Blacks. (Shabazz 6)

Britain's state apparatus as a prison-like space for the black British community

The black British people are the British citizens of either the black African or black African Caribbean background and include people with mixed ancestry from either group. The term developed in the 1950's, referring to the black British West Indian people from former Caribbean British colonies in the West Indies. They are now referred to as the Windrush generation. The migrants were named after the *Empire Windrush* ship which first brought the families over to rebuild the post-war Britain. These people from the former British colonies came to Britain not as immigrants but as citizens. But after calling them to rebuild Britain they were treated as second class citizens. Besides, the historians have created a discourse which says that Britain's demography was always peopled by whites. This whitewashing of history totally negates the black presence in Britain which extends back to the Roman period. These facts have been brought to light by historians like Peter Fryer, David Olusoga, David Dabydeen to name a few. "There were Africans in Britain before the English came here. There were soldiers in the Roman imperial army that occupied the southern part of our island for three and a half centuries" (Fryer 1). Peter Fryer also cites the examples of Marcus Aurelius and Septimus Severus to support his argument.

In the contemporary times policing, detention and incarceration are some of the methodical ways in Britain that inflict racial discrimination on the black British community. There is a strong connection between incarceration and institutional racism which makes the very construction of Britain a prison for the black British minority community where they fall victim to the white privilege. The black British minority community turns into the political prisoners that are segregated and do not have the right to navigate freely. The British justice system declares the blacks criminals without trial and counselling and denial of any employment opportunities puts them in perennial poverty. Further, the age-old prejudice of the mainstream whites against the blacks as a potential threat to the demography and the favourable social order has built a superstructure of racism.

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the deployment of the carceral mechanisms in the contemporary times by analysing the representation of characters and their experiences in the play *Welcome Home Jacko*. Racism also operates in more subtle ways in the contemporary times. In this context the social historian Paul Gilroy's views on racism is very significant. Gilroy opines, "Racism does not, of course, move tidily and unchanged through time and history. It assumes new forms and articulates new antagonisms in different situations" (Gilroy 11). Margaret Thatcher's government (1979-1990) is one among many examples advocating institutional racism in the form of stop and search policies against the black minorities. When we talk about the state violence or resistance in any form, it is always the marginalized people that are impacted. They live at the intersections of a system of oppression thrust upon them by the state which they call their home. Therefore, they live in an 'in-between' space which the marginalized people call their home. On the other hand they also

fight against the violence inflicted upon them by the very construction of that space in general and the state apparatus in particular. The present paper approaches this particular space with reference to the black community in Britain, where their race becomes a disability for them. Besides, the concepts of space and carceral power cannot be understood in vacuum as they are relative ideas. *Carceral Spatiality: Dialogues between Geography and Criminology* (2017) edited by Dominique Moran and Anna K. Schliehe is a critique on theorising space and urban crime and the relationship between them. The essays in the book advance a new insight by putting forward the idea that the environment in spaces of crime and violence should not be seen simply as geographical sites but as a "product of power relations, cultural and social dynamics, or everyday values and meanings" (Moran and Schliehe 3). Their ideas are in the lines of Henry Lefebvre's ideas on social space in his seminal text *The Production of Space* (1970) where he opines that space can not be read in isolation but with its embedded ideologies. In the postmodern era it is a construction of social power, knowledge, politics and ideology. This paper draws from Lefebvre's ideas of space.

The play exposes the inherent racism and hostile environment of the British society through the predicament of the young black British men. The readers get to see the everyday lives of four young black British boys (Zippy, Marcus, Dole and Fret) aged between seventeen to twenty-one. They while away their time playing football machine, listening to reggae music on a jukebox, smoking ganja and drinking coke. Interestingly, the term 'jukebox' also stands for being wicked, rowdy or disorderly (stereotypes for black youth). The setting of the play is a youth club where readers see "Posters of Africa, Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, Youth Employment, a Police PR Poster" (Goddard 5). It can be said that the youth club is formed to keep the young black British boys away from the social spaces of Britain. It is also a way of surveillance where the state can easily identify the blacks and use brute force to police them. It becomes quite clear that the boys are unemployed and without any education. Therefore, to compensate their crisis and to historically belong they follow the ideals of Rastafarianism, Marcus Garvey and glorify Africa. Here, the concept of Rastafarianism needs to be elaborated as it will justify the boys' inclinations towards the religion to retrive their identity. It is a religious movement that developed in Jamaica during the 1930's. The movement emerged in Britain since 1945. Peter B.Clarke in his book *Black Paradise: The Rastafarian Movement* writes:

> Reliance, then, on systems, institutions, and structures for support and security weakens, debilitates, frustrates, and results in passivity and the inability to do for oneself, to be creative. The Rastafarians themselves 'know' this from the history of the black race, a chosen race with a glorious past, that was to suffer the indignity and humiliation of the slave trade because it had ceased to do for itself and had come to rely on slaves. Africans undermined their own independence and lost their creative ability through overdependence on others. The Rastas feel that, as individuals and as a race, the real, true identity of black people has been destroyed. Wrenched from their homeland and 'natural', normal ways of life, treated as sub-human during the era of the slave trade, and 'indoctrinated' with western values and notions and images of 'God', they must now restore their true identity by a process of deconversion and reconstruction. (Clarke 12)

There is also no comment on their family. The readers get to know the white supremacist ideologies in the carceral space, where laws are different for whites and blacks, through the eyes of the twenty-five year old character Jacko who has returned from prison. The

conversations between the characters direct its readers towards the fact that Jacko, who was convicted on charges of rape, was declared guilty without any proper investigation.

The paper casts some light on the various ways the carceral power operates in the places where the black British community resides. The quotidian places of Britain turn into a prison like environment for them while they navigate these spaces in their everyday lives. To illustrate, one of the young boys from the play named Zippy describes the youth club as the only place where they can freely navigate without any harassment. He says, "Cha yes is a good place man. Dis is de only place in dis town whey we could come an relax an get no harassment. We could do we own ting here, an dey en have nobody ter tell we what to do or asking we what we doing" (Goddard 37). He also refers to the British police vehicles as 'Panda Car' stationed at every corner of the streets as a means of surveillance. Therefore, he says, "If dem people see relaxing dem tink dem up ter something" (37). But while trying to understand the complexity of the situation it can be said that the youth club, where these young people do not feel vulnerable, is also an architecture of confinement to contain the black British community and police them. The readers get a vivid picture of the setting of the youth club which is a small cramped place isolated from the society. Zippy describes the place as having only an office, a phone and a toilet. Another character named Dole compares the place with other youth clubs and the readers can sense a hint of dissatisfaction when he says, "But dis a youth club, suppose ter have Coke, I know some youth club have not only Coke but orange, and food" (13). The space of the youth club, which is constructed for recreational purposes, dehumanises the young boys of the club. Caught in the matrix of domination of the British society the youth club is the only place where they can express their anger and frustration. But, these expressions have a negative impact in their identity formation as it is seen as hyper masculinity of the blacks. These discursive productions of stereotypes popularise the idea that blacks are inherent criminals and sexual deviants which result in justifying the segregationist policies against them by the British state apparatus. The relationship between identity and space is justified by Kim Duff as follows:

> 'socially-produced space [is] a created structure comparable to other social constructions...much in the same way that human history represents a social transformation of time'. So while a 'place' can be a library, an airport, a building in the city, or any other location that is materially measurable and locatable, space is the thing that produces identity (Duff 8)

The play, *Welcome Home Jacko* is pregnant with representations of racist housing policies that contribute towards concentration of the black British community into racially zoned sectors of Britain. Although the setting of the play is a youth club, the readers can clearly detect the absent elements that are necessary for a person to lead a healthy social life. When Sandy says, "We have got the worst name as far as centres go and that's saying something" it can be perceived that the place is not suitable for recreational activities (Goddard 15). The young black characters are frequently seen using Jamaican slangs like 'Ras Clart' and it clearly voices out their frustration. Neither does the play mention any other spaces like parks in the neighbourhood for comfort or play. The spaces of Britain thus represented are not just architectures but a replica of the racist ideologies of the entire British system. As Lynne Briggs et al. observe:

> When the expectations and realities of migration do not match, the individuals involved can experience elevated levels of psychological distress. A sense of helplessness and hopelessness and loss of purpose can prevail which, when coupled

with social isolation from extended and friends, can lead to existential distress and low mood and demoralization. (Lynne Briggs et al. 194)

Nor do the readers find much representation on interracial relationship apart from the character of Sandy (a white) and the other black characters. These absences talk a lot about the segregationist policies not only of the British government but also of the society in general. The character of Sandy also demands critical analysis as she being a white is the manager of the youth club where the other black characters gather and spend time. This clearly directs the readers towards the idea of white privilege in the British society. Although Sandy never mistreats the young boys she is clearly the decision taker. Her power as the manager is well depicted as she keeps the keys of the bar where the coke is kept. The keys to the bar symbolise authority and Marcus regrets the fact that he is not given the keys. There is a clear display of his frustration as a young boy when he says, "Cha me in charge a what dis Ras Clart place, en worth notting she give me no keys so how me a in charge, she a hypocrite dat" (Goddard 22). Although Sandy is protective of the young black British boys, she also contributes to the channelling of a set of stereotypes against the blacks that are widely held and are acted out institutionally. To illustrate, when Gail accuses Marcus of hurting her, Sandy's remarks on Marcus not only portray him in poor light but also jeopardize the entire black community. When Sandy comments on Marcus as, "You're a wicked, dirty, vicious bastard that's what you are, I always knew one day…" she leaves no room for Marcus to defend himself (52).

In the initial pages of Gilroy's book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) he talks about how blacks are seen as problems, victims and "objects rather than subjects" (Gilroy 11). As blacks are seen as problems they are segregated from the rest of the society. Therefore, the spaces of confinement are not exclusive only to the architectures of Britain but are ingrained in the psyche of individuals as well. The whites are blinded by the stereotypes regarding the blacks and they only strengthen these discourses against the blacks. Therefore, when Sandy, the white manager of the youth club in the play, asks her helper Gail to mind the young black boys, it becomes evident how the whites perpetuate the stereotypical discourses against the blacks and see them as trouble makers. To illustrate, Sandy asks Gail for "any bright ideas for keeping these guys occupied, except dominoes, the Juke Box or football…" (Goddard 35). The idea of containing the four black youths in the space of the youth club is furthered when Gail is hurt and blames Marcus. In Act II of the play Sandy finds her helper Gail in a pool of blood and Gail blames Marcus for her condition and wants to report the incident to the police. Although Sandy has sympathies for Gail she is also alarmed by her intentions of bringing the police into the matter. The play very adequately exposes racism in the institutional spaces of Britain like the prison. Therefore, she requests Gail not to take such a severe action against Marcus as he is a black and reporting him to the police would ruin his life. She says:

They haven't got a chance, the moment they walk on the street they're guilty, that's why we are here to occupy them, to contain them because society doesn't want to know, not even their parents…" (Goddard 55)

While analysing carceral space and racism in Britain, the construction of Africa in Britain becomes crucial as this also impacts the image of black British people in the minds of the whites. The construction of Africa also helps in building the stereotypical images of the continent and the black migrants. The four young characters in the play namely Marcus, Zippy, Dole and Fret dream of going to Africa and experience it. To illustrate, Zippy says he

wants to experience "All kinda ting, Rastafarian tings, an Ethiopia" (Goddard 26). When Gail asks the boys to experience Africa by visiting an exhibition on Africa in London Zippy outrightly rejects her point as he knows that the exhibition would not be the genuine Africa he wants to experience. Therefore, he says, "But dat not Africa, dat a white man ting, dem a hypocrite, dem not genuine Africa, is Africa we want ter see, we want ter see real lion not dem circus ting" (26). This also directs the readers to the fact that whites consume Africa in a repackaged form everyday and picturise the continent as they are shown. There is no critical analysis and this strenghthens the stereotypes and prejudices against the blacks. The representation of Africa channels the discourse against the blacks which are steeped in white supremacist ideologies thereby identifying them as an inferior race to be dominated and ruled. This results in pushing the black British community into a ghettoed space which is hostile and policed. Surveillance technologies are used in the name of reducing crime, violence and creating an impression of accountability by the British institutions. This negates the free navigation of the black British community. It is quite perceptible to the readers that the young black British boys do not feel at home in Britain. The readers can clearly detect their sense of identity crisis when they relate themselves with the ideologies of Rastafarianism and talk about personalities like Emperor Haile Selassie and Marcus Garvey. When Gail asks Zippy about his roots he says, "No, we born in London, but me people from Jamaica" (26).

After reading the play the readers hardly find any representation of black history in the spaces of Britain although the blacks contributed to rebuild the British economy post World War II. The British government oficially called the blacks from the Caribbean islands to rebuild Britain after facing devastation due to World War II. But in spite of the contribution of the black community, the efforts of the Windrush Generation (as they are commonly known) are not acknowledged. Therefore, to establish their identity in the prison like environment of Britain the black British community (particularly the youth of the second generation immigrants) turn towards African culture. To illustrate, Zippy comments on his sartorial choices and says, "Show, no man, Ras dis is genuine Ethiopian robes, we is Rasta man, genuine Rasta man yer do know bout Rastafarian?" (Goddard 36). The readers get to see an immense amount of devotion for Rastafarianism and the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie among the black British youths represented. Therefore, the play is filled with praises like "Haile Selassie de Lion of Judah, de Lord of Lords de King of Kings, wen dem see him" (11). This glorification of the representations of Africa lays bare the fact that people from the black British community feel disconnected in Britain. They live in an 'in-between' space. Here, the ideas proposed by James Clifford on a migrant's experience become significant. He remarks:

> In diaspora experiences, the copresence of "here" and "there" is articulated with an anti-teleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed painful yearning. (Clifford 318)

As mentioned earlier in the paper there is no comment on the education of the young black characters in the play *Welcome Home Jacko*. The readers see no opportunity given to Jacko by the British authorities to sustain his life after prison. Also, there is a hint of jealousy and remorse when Marcus meets the black character Gail as she is from London and educated. He seems jealous because he did not get the opportunity of education and employment as he was a school dropout. Such representations illuminate the hostile environment of Britain towards

the black British community.

Conclusion

The research paper has attempted to illuminate racial discrimination in Britain against the black British community through the representations in Mustapha Matura's play *Welcome Home Jacko*. The play lays bare institutional racism in the form of predatory police personnel, prison violence, surveillance and segregation in the name of housing policies, lack of education and employment opportunities. The black British youth are identified as extremists and this leads to disenfranchised communities. They are seen as political threat as they do not fit in a structure and this becomes their crime. Such forms of racism make the very architecture and everyday spaces of Britain a prison for the black British community.

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Negotiating Intimacy through the Lens of Mobility
in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

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Abstract

Mohsin Hamid's 2017 novel Exit West *engages with the global refugee crisis and looks at the multifaceted nature of mobility which has come to define the contemporary age. Hamid's novel is an attempt at evoking compassion for the migrants who are painted as faceless hordes by the West. This paper will try to argue how the emotion of love has been central to the experience of migration across the world as depicted in the novel. It will explore the phenomena of love through the prism of mobility and vice versa. It will argue how the novel tries to represent mobility and intimacy as an intertwined process. The vital role played by mobility in sustaining and rupturing intimate relations will also be engaged with in this study. The aforementioned process will be traced through the symbolic stages of movement in "going out" "moving in" and "moving out" as portrayed in the novel.*
Keywords*: mobility, intimacy, refugee, emotion, migration.*

In the year 2015, the western world was forced to acknowledge the refugee crisis, and the civil war ravaging the state of Syria. The viral image of a 3 year old boy Alan Kurdi's dead body lying on a Turkish beach was one of the most powerful images of that particular year. He died while trying to get to the Greek island of Kos along with his mother Rehanna and four year old Ghalib , along with eleven other Syrians. Abdullah Kurdi, the only survivor of the Kurdi family and Alan's father talked about how they were planning on moving to Canada from Kos. If we were to strip this tragic event to its bare core, we will come to realize how every perilous journey undertaken is not only about survival, but is also about the need to salvage and sustain some form of love. This was an example of an intimate mobility driven towards sustaining the family. This tragic event shed light on the more humane side of the migrants and the centrality of love or the affective dimension in the decision to migrate.

In an article "Immigration panic: how the west fell for manufactured rage" Suketu Mehta talks about how the west is being destroyed not by migrants but by the fear of migrants. The fear of migrants is magnified by lies about their numbers; politicians and racists train minds to think of them as a horde. There is a compassion fatigue which is slowly setting in. He talks about how the "recent elections across the world illustrate the power of populism: a false narrative, a horror story about the other, well told" (Mehta). Compassion and fear are some of our more dominant emotional responses to migration. Love has been central to the stories of migrants and this is what Hamid tries to bring to light in his book. This paper will look at how Hamid represents the intertwined relationship between intimacy and mobility in his story. It will look at how mobility is brought about by certain situations and its implications on the various symbolic stages of a relationship. In her book *Family and Intimate Mobilities* (2013), social geographer Clare Holdsworth talks about how "Mobility speeds up and slows down intimacy, but the reverse is also true: desires to go and stay are

almost always framed by the formation, continuation and dissolution of intimate relationships" (63). This particular argument by Holdsworth shall inform my analysis of the intertwined aspect of mobility and intimacy in *Exit West*.

Mohsin Hamid at the very beginning of the novel establishes how the story that is being told is a story about a young man and a woman who are caught in the middle of a civil war which was tearing apart their beloved city. The refugee crisis although addressed very early in the novel, remains in the background. The novel presents us with various vignettes throughout the story where we witness migration in its multifaceted forms occurring throughout the novel. The purpose of this is to draw our attention towards a crisis which was slowly enveloping the globe across all temporal and spatial scales; yet Hamid primarily anchors his narrative of migration in the love story of Saeed and Nadia. He impresses upon the reader the urgent global crisis of migration through the eyes of the individual characters of Saeed and Nadia. Hamid through his story also tries to portray how every story of migration, is also a story about intimacy and love, about the forging of new relationships and dissolution of old ones.

In the context of the novel for instance, the motivation behind Saeed and Nadia's departure from their city of birth is not driven by needs of economic mobility or social privilege. Their act of departure is motivated by the desire to sustain their newfound relationship and this also results in them getting acquainted with other emotions and landscapes which contain those emotions, which were unbeknownst to them in their country of origin. The most important and celebrated aspects of intimacy and family life involve mobility. "The significance of mobility is apparent if we consider how, colloquially, the main stages and events of relationship formation are identified with movement such as 'going out,' 'moving in' or 'moving on' . . . Mobility and intimacy are interdependent, as a change in one nearly always involves a change in the other" (Holdsworth 24). The three stages can be located in the novel and the change in the nature of mobility and the consequent change in the behavior in the protagonists further cements the intertwined mutually reinforcing power of mobility and intimacy.

Going Out

The first half of the novel presents us with mobilities of wartime. We witness through the lens of the primary protagonists how young people in a war torn city negotiated with different kinds of mobilities which were informed by the larger super structures of power, circumscribing movement within the city. The cultural and social norms governed the display of intimacy. The city of Saeed and Nadia's birth prohibited them from exploring the other constellation of emotions associated with love. Thus, even performing love was something which could prove fatal. We witness how everyday violence in and around the city was basically a routine affair and couples navigated their way around this routine violence which was corporeal as it was psychological.

Courtship and mobility in times of crisis

Falling in love is also dependent on appropriation of space and mobility. Thus we witness Saeed and Nadia create their own distinct intimate geography of the city through their acts of courtship. The burger joint with the private booth at the back for instance, would serve as a location for the couple to indulge in surreptitious, intimate games of courtship

Saeed and Nadia also want to move to the next stage of their courtship which involves sexual intimacy but are held back from doing so because of the stigma associated with mobility within the city after hours and the city did not harbor enough spaces that accommodated physical intimacy beyond certain hours. Thus, the temporal and spatial constraints also rendered couples immobile, and this immobility further reproduced fear ; While the hours before dawn was appropriated by the people of the city of different sexual orientations for their congregation at the public park. The act of "coming out" is also a form of mobility associated with sexual liberation. Nadia would go outside "for a walk in a nearby park that would by now be emptying of its early-morning junkies and of the gay lovers who had departed their houses with more time than they needed for the errands they had said they were heading out to accomplish" (Hamid 33).

Tim Cresswell comments on how "mobility does not just allow for the relaxation of emotional control; it also allows for emotions within intimate relations to be managed: spending time apart and spending time together. More sinister emotional control can be forced on others, either through denying mobility or through enforced expulsion. Feelings of entrapment and the inability to escape from oppressive relationships are just as relevant to the interplay between emotion, intimacy and mobility as more celebrated forms" (qtd. in Holdsworth 24). The curfew in the city would bring an end to their meetings and the eventual blackout of all telecommunication services would further aggravate and intensify the love that they feel for each other.

Dramatic circumstances, such as those in which they and other new lovers in the city now found themselves, have a habit of creating dramatic emotions, and furthermore the curfew served to conjure up an effect similar to that of a long-distance relationship, and long-distance relationships are well known for their potential to heighten passion, at least for a while, just as fasting is well known to heighten one's appreciation for food (Hamid 36).

Thus, the conflict acted as a distancing agent , separating lovers from each other confining them to their rooms: " Deprived of the portals to each other and to the world provided by their mobile phones, and confined to their apartments by the nighttime curfew, Nadia and Saeed, and countless others, felt marooned and alone and much more afraid**"** (38).

Moving in

Nadia would eventually move into Saeed's house following his mother's death. Her movement to Saeed's house is parallely followed by the movement of the rebels and militants into government administered territories.   All of these circumstances would eventually force Saeed and Nadia to flee the city.

Saeed's father stays back in the city, to ensure that his son has a future. Saeed's fathers decision to stay back is also a commentary on how within the framework of a family, certain mobilities come to pass because of the decision of some individuals within the family to stay stationary or immobile. So, family which is usually associated with sedentary traits is actually a dynamic entity where mobility and immobility are in a constant state of interplay. British sociologist John Urry talks says that "this interplay is particularly relevant for family and intimate mobilities, some mobility practices are sustained by the immobility of others and the intensification of mobilities for some is brought about through the immobilization of others" (Holdsworth 9).

Saeed and Nadia flee their country by entering these doors which were springing up all across the globe, helping people migrate all over the world more easily. One of these

doors leads them to Mykonos. Mykonos is an island in Greece which is most popularly known for its reputation as a party destination. It is a place where couples travel to for leisure. Hamid in the novel juxtaposes this image of leisure and pleasure with the image of refugee camps, which were popping up all across the island.

"Moving in" is a stage of mobility in an intimate relationship that involves a sense of self-disclosure, where one begins to see beyond the initial illusion of infatuation. Saeed and Nadia's decision to move in together is set against a world where the sedentary way of life was slowly on the wane. Saeed and Nadia set up a tent together at the edges of the migrant camp and try to simulate the feeling of being a family. This is also the first time when cracks start showing in their relationship, Nadia approaches Saeed to kiss him, but he moves away from her, this is the first time when Nadia witnesses a sense of bitterness within Saeed: "she had never seen bitterness in him before, not in all these months, not for one second, even when his mother had died, then he had been mournful, yes, depressed, but not bitter, not as though something was corroding his insides" (Hamid 64).

Nadia also meets a young local girl in Mykonos who tends to some of her wounds, which she suffers while trying to escape from a gang of men who try to loot her. This young girl leaves a lasting impression on Nadia, and it is also the first instance in the novel when Nadia starts having second thoughts about her sexuality: "A partly shaved-haired local girl who was not a doctor or a nurse but just a volunteer, a teenager with a kind disposition, not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, cleaned and dressed the wound, gently, holding Nadia's arm as though it was something precious, holding it almost shyly" (Hamid 70). Cresswell posits how "Mobility can facilitate emotions by creating opportunities for co-presence as well as separation; it can be a form of emotional control (the need to get out of certain situations or the need to feel closer), but it also opens up the unknown and unfamiliar, engendering a sense of emotional uncertainly that renders the unconscious maintenance of emotions impossible" (qtd. in Holdsworth 35). This affair however is short lived as Nadia and Saeed decide to move to a different place in order to save their relationship which was already in a state of peril.

Nadia and Saeed would then arrive at a manor-esque house in Palace Gardens Terrace in London; this is where, Hamid tries to communicate to the reader how constant mobility can also start to take a toll on the emotional and physical well being of a relationship. The fractured nature of their relationship is conveyed through the representation of both Saeed and Nadia's grime covered bodies. Nadia and Saeed even have a verbal tussle with each other over the simple matter of taking a bath. Nadia argues how this basic act of cleansing was important to her , to remind her of her sense of being human: " it was about the essential, about being human, living as a human being, reminding oneself of what one was, and so it mattered, and if necessary was worth a fight" (Hamid 74).

This sub human nature of being a refugee is further highlighted by the description of how Saeed and Nadia had to venture out into the more hostile native areas in London to forage for food. We witness how the mobilities which were earlier motivated by a sense of sexual fulfillment and by a need to sustain a relationship and family, slowly metamorphosed into a need to survive.

The mood of despair and frustration that engulfed Saeed and Nadia was a sociogenic response to the environment they were embedded in. There was a lack of intimacy which was slowly creeping into their relationship. The very mention of love now made them uncomfortable. They blamed this lack of romantic feeling on, "a state of unnatural nearness" (Hamid 81) in which any relationship would suffer. They began to wander separately during

the day, and this separation came as a relief to them. They describe this state of existing close to each other as being "claustrophobic". They slowly started to behave like relatives.

The couple in the warmer months would move to the new cities which were being erected in the greenbelt areas around London to accommodate the growing population. These cities were called the London Halos. Saeed and Nadia started living in the worker camps in the halos. This is where we see Nadia slowly embracing her new sexual identity which is also brought to her notice through a dream. Her body feels strangely rejuvenated and alive after the dream: "she was almost panting, and felt her body alive, or alarmed, regardless changed, for the dream had seemed so real, and after that she found herself thinking of Mykonos from time to time" (Hamid 100). Thus, we witness how Nadia was slowly drifting apart from Saeed. The dream serves to embody Nadia's sexual mobility, a movement which would only end with her sexual awakening.

In the novel there are two descriptions of Saeed and Nadia walking next to each other in different spaces and different times. The first walk takes place in their city of birth; they take this walk with a feeling of dread, trying to reach the door which would eventually set them on their path to the west. During this walk Saeed and Nadia's knuckles would brush against their sides, and they both regard this sporadic physical contact as important, indirectly reinforcing their mutual desire for each other. This is contrasted with the other walk in the work camp in London where both stride abreast each other, with some distance between them , "they resembled a brace of workers instead of looking like a couple out on a stroll" (Hamid 105). With every new arrival of a couple into their worker camp, Saeed and Nadia began to see each other differently:

> Every time a couple moves they begin, if their attention is still drawn to one another, to see each other differently, for personalities are not a single immutable color, like white or blue, but rather illuminated screens, and the shades we reflect depend much on what is around us. So it was with Saeed and Nadia, who found themselves changed in each other's eyes in this new place (Hamid 108).

Hamid beautifully describes Saeed's predicament, his existential crisis I brought to the fore, when he realizes that he doesn't recognize himself anymore. The romantic flame within him was extinguished by the tireless speed of time and mobility. The rationale behind his decision to migrate had always been to start a new family, to sustain it. With the death of his parents, the intimate ties which tethered him to his once beloved city also vanished. The diminishing sense of intimacy with Nadia and the slow breakdown of the relationship make him afraid of the future, more so because of the possibility of losing his new family which was Nadia:

> Saeed wanted to feel for Nadia what he had always felt for Nadia, and the potential loss of this feeling left him unmoored, adrift in a world where one could go anywhere but still find nothing. He was certain that he cared for her and wished good for her and wanted to protect her. She was the entirety of his close family now, and he valued family above all, and when the warmth between them seemed lacking his sorrow was immense, so immense that he was uncertain whether all his losses had not combined into a core of loss, and in this core, this center, the death of his mother and the death of his father and the possible death of his ideal self who had loved his woman so well were like a single death that only hard work and prayer might allow him to withstand (Hamid 109).

These circumstances force Saeed and Nadia to abandon their home-esque camp and they travel to another part of the world, to Marin in San Francisco with the hope "that they would be able to rekindle their relationship, to reconnect with their relationship, as it had

been not long ago, and to elude, through a distance spanning a third of the globe, what it seemed in danger of becoming" (Hamid 110).

Moving Out

Holdsworth talks about how "both popular ideals and academic research have foregrounded the importance of corporeal mobility in youth transitions, that is, that the very act of leaving home and moving away is a vital stage in the transition to adulthood. Moving away is popularly regarded as a precursor for both emotional maturity and economic advancement" (59). The city of Marin would provide Saeed and Nadia an opportunity to move towards adulthood. Marin was the embodiment of all the good cultural values of the west. It also happened to be the melting pot of all the cultures of the world. It is also in Marin that both Saeed and Nadia slowly start to fall in love with other people. Marin is presented as a vibrant emotional landscape, where besides the confluence of different cultures, there was also a parallel process of confluence of various emotions:

> In dynamic interaction, the experience of migration, and the values and mores of societies of origin and settlement, contributed to shaping diverse emotional landscapes. Equally important were tensions created by changing conceptions of self and society, family and nation, and gender norms and relations, in a fluid political and cultural context marked by mobility (J.Borges et.al 19) .

Saeed turns into a religious person, and his pursuit of love in religion leads him towards a religious organization and he falls in love with the preacher's daughter. Hamid talks about how all over the world people were starting to slip away , and at this very moment Saeed and Nadia also decide to part ways: "A spoilage had begun to manifest itself in their relationship, and each recognized it would be better to part now, ere worse came" (Hamid 123).

Nadia finally reverts back to her life of independent living; she starts working at a food cooperative and also falls in love with the head cook of the cooperative who she comes across in the musical gatherings of various tribes which played out in the streets of Marin. Thus, there were new kinds of intimate mobilities which were slowly starting to take shape in Marin. Newer trajectories of mobility were being drawn in their lives.

Conclusion

Thus, Hamid portrays the West as a space which was tolerant of all kinds of emotions and Marin serves as the final culmination point in Saeed and Nadia's story of intimate mobility but also marks the beginning of new ones. In contrast to the other places presented throughout the story, Marin is represented as a space which recognized the migrants as human beings. Mobility engenders new forms of intimacies which are not bounded by hetero-normative practices or identities. Mobility in Hamid's novel is thus presented as a transformative agent that brings about changes in not only in the relationships but also in the individuals, recomposing their role as mobile individuals. Hamid also establishes how love and the need to sustain love play a vital role in the different acts of mobility across the globe.

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Revisiting Unchaste Desires: Identity of a Diasporic South Asian Female Immigrant in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

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Abstract

The present paper explores the patriarchal conduct and marriage in South Asian immigrants' families living in London as portrayed in Monica Ali's Brick Lane. *It will examine how these two subjects encourage the physical desires of Ali's religious and culture-obedient Nazneen. Gaining liberty through a job and her wish to explore the outside world brings Nazneen to romantic sexual experiences. The affair introduces her to an imagined world of romance and a horrifying world of unchastity. The complex emotions and helplessness at becoming emotionally and physically involved with a man consequently lead Nazneen to self-discovery.*
Keywords: *Diaspora, Gender, Identity, Unchastity, Self-Actualisation.*

The migration process is about individual(s) leaving his/her country. The migrants do experience multiple stresses including the concept of self, identity change, and loss of religious beliefs and customs, but to a certain degree, it provides some enlightenment for the migrants, especially female migrants. Migration helps in liberating the migrants from oppressive social practices brought from their home country. The relocated practices are regarded as traditions by female migrants that should be preserved and maintained. These practices intersect with western values they encounter in the host country. The Western practices and cultural values of the host country seem to facilitate female migrants to gain some self-awareness about the alternate ways of life. These alternate ways which place values more on the personal sphere rather than the social realm foreground an appreciation of an individual's freedom over marriage customs, family ties, and spirituality. Consequently, these alternate ways of life "felt to be more promising for those women migrants, providing the agency allowing them to strive to liberate themselves from oppressive practices." (Prasasti 79).

In western countries, individual freedom is respected by Liberalism. Liberalism is "operated with a belief in the freedom and welfare of the individual and often related to capitalism" (Ritzer 190). This definition provides an understanding that liberalism is synonymous with individualism. Since liberalism is linked with individualism and capitalism, it is often related with western culture, whereas, traditionalism is associated with "traditional conceptions of community," that tends to emphasize "primordial attachment to the family, and to ties of kinship and place, as the bedrock of social solidarity" (Day 16). Such conceptions specify that traditionalism deals with "the virtues of small town and village life, the solidarity of various ethnic communities and the warm relationship to be found among those who share common interests and goals" (Day 16). Accordingly, traditionalism is

associated with social tolerance, collectivity, warmth, solidarity, and harmony that is often related to eastern culture.

The intersection of immigrants' traditional values with western beliefs lets them encounter the unavoidable liberalism that influences their opinions, thoughts, and methods of valuing the family bond. These contradictory views are very well depicted in Monica Ali's debut novel *Brick Lane* (2003), which was shortlisted for Man Booker Prize, 2003. Born to a Bangladeshi father and English mother, Ali is a Bangladeshi-born British writer. She settled in London at the age of three with her mother and younger brother. The novel is about the London settled Bangladeshi family, and explored the South-Asian diaspora experience. This paper depicts the encounters of protagonists with liberalism while at the same time they see the importance of homeland's tradition, in respect of family values and marriage. The paper centers on the contradictory views that result from the intersection between traditionalism and liberalism provided by migration, which has been brought out in the portrayal of the female protagonist, Nazneen who is "constantly struggling against patriarchal constraints" (Pereira-Ares, *Hijab* 204) to be independent.

Patriarchy is defined as "a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (Hartmann 14). The definition shows the male collaboration to sustain dominance over females economically as well as sexually by relying on the social structure which benefits them. By controlling these two sectors, men "control women's labour power, both for the purpose of serving men in many personal and sexual ways and for the purpose of rearing children" (15). It confines the role of women in cleaning, cooking, and raising children.

Parents want to "transmit the portion of culture accessible to the social stratum and, therefore, [parents] decide what is the best for the children." Nazneen's father, Hamid, therefore, practices his "parental ambition" and decides to get Nazneen to marry Chanu. (Merton 159, 214) He does not even feel the need-to-know Nazneen's mind. Nazneen's family is happy to have Chanu, a perceived-to-be well-educated man, to be a part of their family. Nazneen agreeing with her father's decision of marrying Chanu reflects the domination of patriarchy in South Asian families. After marriage, Nazneen moves to London in the hope of getting a happy life, but the migration becomes an extension of stronger patriarchal culture. Nazneen, as a Bangladeshi woman is culture-obedient and religiously rooted. She is completely dependent on Chanu, more because he is the financial supporter of the family which "become the instrument for sustaining the existing patterns of relations and authority" (Held 133). Nazneen trusts him and is sure that she will be safe and secure under his protection. Nazneen's father, deciding for her marriage and her obedience to her husband, represent the patriarchal power.

In terms of sexuality, women and their sexuality are positioned in a "cultural tradition" sphere, particularly when they are expected to be the "guardians of tradition" (Katrak 11). This tradition places women in a sacred place as the "guardians of tradition" society represents itself as if putting women in a higher and respected position since they are protecting and keeping the tradition. However, being "guardians of traditions" is not as advantageous as the term suggests. Actually, the women are "colonised with their very body" (44). Their traditional and domestic roles, duties as daughters, wives, and mothers are all decided by the paterfamilias. Whom they married and how many children they will bear are all decided by the males. In simple words, males have authority over women's bodies and sexuality.

Economic dependence is one of the major reasons for the subordinate positioning of women, which isolate them in their own home. However, the emergence of capitalism and liberalism has shifted the role of women. Nowadays, they are no longer financially dependent on the male members of the family and have gradually entered the "economic world of the male" (Held 134). Although, the provisions to access economic resources allowed women to gain liberation, to redefine their identities they have to embrace both the roles of housewives and financial supporters. The task requires them to "work the job" and carry out their domestic duties at the same time which can be regarded as the "'natural extension' of their familial duty" (Mohanty 20).

Brick Lane acknowledges the traditional and domestic roles of a housewife through Nazneen and the gradual shift in her perspective when she becomes the financial supporter of the family. She faces the difficulty of surviving in a host country and works to support her family financially. This new world brings her to the point when the redefining of Nazneen's identity begins. To her identity as a devoted wife, the identity of a working woman is now added.

Nazneen can possibly not live solely as a wife as she is a part of wider society, which positions her as an immigrant who has to face new realities. Being a South Asian migrant, she firmly holds her religious and cultural values, at the same time involved with the society which is individualist and secular. On some occasions, she views this polarity as the ground for her cultural upheaval and sometimes, as "unhomliness" (Bhabha 9). Although Nazneen has accepted her father's decision of getting married to Chanu without any argument, she starts thinking about the marriage and begins to assess her feelings for her husband after a few years. She couldn't understand if she loves him or it is just understanding. Although Nazneen is pacified after spending years with her husband, she is still doubtful of her feelings towards him. To be with him is an obligation for her as a devoted wife. This obligation develops some irritation within her but she never compromises with her duties of a devoted wife. She never stops respecting Chanu despite his difficulties in playing the role of the main financial supporter of the family. As an immigrant, Chanu faces difficulties in getting a stable job:

> There had been a period, weeks or perhaps months, but to Nazneen it seemed an infinity…. He started every job with a freshly spruced suit and a growing collection of pens. His face shone with a hope. And then greyed with frustration, with resentment. (Ali 203)

When Chanu becomes jobless Nazneen realizes she has to be strong for her family, and not just remain a village girl. Despite facing such financial condition, she has no nerve to ask him if she can support him financially. This strengthens the belief of Bangladeshis that "when a married woman works, it means that the husband is unable to feed her" (Prasasti 84). Accordingly, Nazneen does not want to offend her husband and tries to convince him if she can work at home without abandoning her domestic responsibilities. Additionally, as a male member of the family, Chanu holds the position to "decide [on] women's (non-)involvement in matters of the public sphere" (Rascanu 30).

> 'Some of the women are doing sewing at home,' said Nazneen.

> 'Some of these uneducated ones, they say that if the wife is working it is only because her husband cannot feed them. Lucky for you, I am an educated man.' (Ali 184)

Although Chanu considers Nazneen's proposal, he is considerate about the fact that Nazneen working professionally means her involvement with the public sphere. He plays a dominant role in choosing an occupation perceived to be appropriate for a woman with

limited knowledge of the world outside. Nazneen being a devoted wife tightly holding to her indigenous cultural values and religious beliefs respects Chanu's decision by accepting the sewing profession he settled on which could be carried out without stepping out of the house. Now, her role starts shifting from a wife and mother to a money-earner.

This job, chosen and approved by Nazneen's husband opens up new dimensions of life where the affairs happening in the outside world are exposed to her. Affairs like her neighbour having multiple boyfriends and having a physical relationship with all of them. Nazneen does not understand such relations or their intimacy because being sexual with Chanu she is fulfilling merely her duty as a wife. For Nazneen, a Muslim, having a physical relation out of marriage is adultery, and a woman can be touched only by her husband. Nazneen's body was completely controlled by her husband. She has no understanding of the intimacy other women feel when they are with their partners.

Nazneen's occupation opens a new gate that lets Karim enter into her life. Karim is a young middleman, who is responsible to bring unfinished clothes from the factory to Nazneen. He is the man who changes her life and makes Nazneen explore the meaning of love, care, and intimacy. Nazneen experiences the strange feeling inside her body for the first time with Karim, when his fingertips touch her palm accidentally. She feels "…an electric current run from her nipples to her big toes. She sat very still." (Ali 261).

Nazneen's feeling is now creating chaos in her mind. She is feeling relaxed and at the same time thrilled. Her relationship with Karim brings her to an "exchange of intimacy" and "reawakened passion" (Kipnis 293). However, she does not understand a bit of this feeling and the reason why her heart has such emotions. She still doubts if she is in love with Karim or it is just her lust. When "he kissed her on the mouth and he led her into the bedroom…. She turned her face into the pillow and moaned and when he kissed the back of her neck she moaned again." (Ali 288)

This love affair lets Nazneen feel emotions that she has never felt before. Her physical contact with Karim, her body reactions to his touch make her feel special. She notices her body for the first time and feels like a real woman. "She was aware of her body, as though just now she had come to inhabit it for the first time and it was both strange and wonderful to have this new and physical expression." (Ali 343)

Nazneen starts having the feeling of delight and dread at the same time that puts her at the intersection of being a devoted wife or retaining the desires she has now. Her cultural roots position her as a dutiful wife and mother, but as an immigrant, she notices that women can be as liberated as men in deciding their life choices. Her affair introduces her to the world of intimacy, but her religious belief makes her a sinner. Nazneen is "interrogating not only the dominance of patriarchy but also the hegemonic 'interpellation' of the culture of belonging" (Kuo 172). She starts questioning her position as a woman as on one hand, she upholds the customs in the traditional sphere whereas on the other hand digests the values offered by her new dwelling place. Thus, her condition of getting involved in unchaste desires requires her to negotiate her "role identity" as a woman and as a human being.

Although, Nazneen enjoys her unchaste desires, at the same time she feels terrible. She is full of conflict knowing that what she is doing is a great sin and the only right punishment for it is death. When Nazneen and Karim read the Hadith on adultery, they understand its meaning, and as a faithful and culturally obedient Muslim woman, she finds herself trapped in the law of God written in the Quran. He reads in English. '*On the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported that Allah's Messenger (may*

the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) had said: A man's share of adultery is destined by Allah. He will never escape such destiny. The adultery of the eye is the look, the adultery of the ears is listening to voluptuous talk, the adultery of the tongue is licentious speech, the adultery of the hand is beating others harshly, and the adultery of the feet is to walk to the place where he intends to commit sins. The heart yearns and desires for such vicious deeds. The loins may or may not put such vicious deeds into effect.' After the first few lines, Nazneen heard only the blood in her ears. She watched Karim as a mouse watches a cat; when he turned she would be ready. (Ali 347)

Nazneen refuses to hear the whole content of Hadith, and both of them ignore to understand its meaning. Nazneen, in particular, tries to justify her love affair by ignoring the Hadith but deep down knows she has sinned. Nazneen's bizarre condition shakes "her identity as a Bangladeshi and Muslim woman who is supposed to put her family as a priority" (Prasasti 88). Nazneen as a religiously rooted and culture-obedient has believed that married women "were bound by their juridical and social status as wives; all their sexual activity had to be within the conjugal relationship and their husband had to be their exclusive partner" (Foucault 145).

Nazneen realises that she has been "divided between her loyalty to Chanu, her commitment to her children and her love for Karim" (Chattopadhyay and Shrivastava 118). Her unchaste desires take her to negotiate her identity as a woman. She wants to untangle her inner conflicts and she starts it by unravelling her relationship with Karim and then deciding what is best for her and her family. Her love for her daughters and her independence become her major priorities. She decides to end her affectionate relationship with Karim and says,

'It would be too difficult,' said Nazneen, 'for us to be together. So I think we had better stop now.'
Karim began to say 'right' again, but caught himself. 'Yes, I see what you mean. With the children and everything.'
'I have to think of them first.'
'Exactly,' said Karim. He sighed. (Ali 451)

As a woman Nazneen chooses her independence, as a mother she feels responsible to accommodate her daughters' concerns, but as a wife, she doesn't choose Chanu. A culturally-rooted obedient wife is supposed to follow her husband wherever he goes, but she refuses to follow her husband and return to Dhaka. Here, Nazneen rejects male domination over her and let both the men go who have occupied and controlled her body for years.

Nazneen's decision of staying in London is her life's turning point in determining her identity. At this point, she tries to build her own identity and image instead of following her husband to Dhaka. "Nazneen does not lose her identity in multicultural London but rather discovers it" (Perfect 119). Her identity negotiations and developed attitude of decision making are related to her increased reflexivity, which means she is "free to choose not only what [she] want(s) to do, but also what [she] want(s) to be" (Calhoun et al. 222).

At the end of the text, Nazneen does ice-skating and starts dancing. "*Shout!* She sang along . . . She swooped down and tucked her sari up into the band of her underskirt. *Shout!*" (Ali 489). Her dance expresses her true feeling and symbolizes her freedom of expressing her ideas and freedom of her body from male domination. Her body is completely hers and now she is an independent woman.

The transformation of Nazneen's character reflects the notion of South Asian feminism in *Brick Lane.* The text constructs "a parallelism between the emancipation of

Nazneen's voice at the formal level and her process of self-empowerment" (Pereira-Ares, *Gaze* 73), and both of them are considered as central subjects of feminism in South Asia. South Asian feminism has developed because of the "contemporary interventions" (Loomba and Lukose 1) in the form of migration and globalisation. The interventions have encouraged the shifting perspectives in addressing women's domestic and social roles.

Besides, South Asian feminism incorporates both "the insights of postcolonial theory" and "cultural and historical discourses that regulate and construct gender" (Kapur 346-47). The postcolonial theory provides an adequate background to define women's social, cultural, political, and historical positions in attaining "formal equity" and "a deep faith in the emancipatory potential" (336) and resolving "problems caused by cultural and economic strains" (Karim and Nasir 125). The demarcation of women's position may lead them to determine their identities. At this point, Western feminism might influence the shift in looking at women's roles. The influence is "embodied in the self-awareness developing among South Asian Women," i.e.; demonstrated through Nazneen. (Prasasti 89). Chanu dominates her body in the name of social norms and Karim in the name of individual desire. Western secular life offers Nazneen ways of exploring herself. Her rejection of male domination shows her exercising self-determination over her own body.

The self-determination of Nazneen, a South Asian is displayed through the rejection of male domination over women's bodies in the name of social models which are masked as social discourses. Thus, self-determination in Western feminism offers more space for women to negotiate their identity through individual discourses to counter-balance the male domination. Nazneen has performed all her duties as a daughter, a wife, a mother, and a believer. She has always been obedient to what she has been told or decided by the male members of her family. Before marriage, she follows all the decisions taken by her father including her marriage, and after marriage, she obeys her husband including the decision of selecting a job for her. Once she gets to interact with the world and people outside, she starts redefining her identity and meaning of becoming a real woman. The complexities of her family and her passionate relationship with Karim that evoke physical desires within her result in shaking her identity. There she starts reconstructing her identity from an obedient and shy Nazneen into a woman who needs physical love and finally into an open-minded independent woman. Nazneen realizes her life momentum when Chanu allows her to work. Her affair has transformed her into a woman who now knows what is best for her and now she is strong enough to take decisions for herself. The patriarchal domination that once had entrapped Nazneen's life eventually opens new dimensions that develop her into a new strong woman and in full control of her own self.

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Corpus-Assisted Study of Symbolism in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

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Abstract

The present paper, a corpus-based analysis of symbolism in Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness*, focuses on the recurrent symbols which reflect the culture, imperialism and corruption of the human soul through the prism of post colonialism. With the application of corpus methodology, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to strengthen the applicability of the software on literary works to minimize the concept of biases in the use of sole qualitative analysis. AntConc 3.5.8 software was used to extract the most frequent symbols used in the novel with the help of a concordance tool. The data was categorized according to the frequency order and analyzed qualitatively by explaining keywords in the context. The results indicate that symbols employed by Conrad in* Heart of Darkness *reflect the themes of post colonial brutality, imperialism, racism and corruption of the human soul.*
***Keywords:** Corpus Linguistic, Symbolism, Quantitative, Qualitative method, Post colonialism.*

The present study aims at making a comparative analysis of the bankruptcy of the culture and imperialism and corrupt nature of imperialists and the symbols used by Joseph Conrad in his masterpiece novel *Heart of Darkness*. Originally published serially in Blackwood magazine in 1890, it was later compiled in the form of a short novel or a novella in 1889. Being a highly symbolic novel, the symbols not only throw ample light on the dark nature of the European people but also allow us to observe the prevalent heart-rending and horrible conditions of the African people. In *Heart of Darkness,* the dark aspect of the soul of civilized people, human life, both black and white, is presented as an unusually serious affair. Conrad's art here lies in his capturing of the infinite shades of the white man's uneasy, discontented, and fantastic relation with the exploited barbarism of Africa. The Europeans go into the territory of backward African people to make them educated and civilized creatures but, ironically, they start collecting the natural resources of the subject races. To add to all that the Western people have set up a trading company that is marked by tyranny, bloodshed, and inhumanity. There is no doubt, that imperialism has adopted a new shape as formal empires are replaced by new mechanisms of multicultural control and surveillance (Mundeja 2021).

Symbolism means a deeper meaning than what has been written in the text. Symbolism, though emerged in the mid nineteenth century has influenced the art of painting, music, writing, music, and theatre. The symbolists got inspiration from the poetry of Baudelaire, (1857) and his work 'Flower of the Evil.' Stephane Mallerm, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimboud are the central figures known as French Symbolists. French symbolism had

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a great influence on the literature of 19th and especially on 20th-century literature at the international level (Acquisto 2017).

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is replete with symbols which suggest multiple meanings, vague and elusive truths underlying both the historical events and the author's private experiences. Almost every character and thing is highly symbolic and supports the themes of culture and imperialism and the inner corruption of the human soul. Kanjilal (1967) considers imperialism as a corruption of the very ideals that define humanity, humans often don the cloak of civility and shed it when no one is looking. The same is the case with the so-called civilized Europeans whose evil instincts thrive as they go to the underdeveloped/backward regions. Resultantly, they turn themselves into monstrous devils and fall from the level of humanity.

Mr. Kurtz, the central character in *Heart of Darkness* is highly symbolic at different levels. He symbolizes the love of power, commercial mentality of white people of Europe and the repentant sinner. Marlow, the narrator, symbolizes the love of adventure, knowledge, thoughtful observer of human life and the influence of savagery upon a civilized man. It is clear that Marlow's primitive instincts have been awakened first by his having heard a lot about Mr. Kurtz's way of life and then by his close personal contact with that man. Besides characters, other things like ivory, company, and rivets also symbolize the white man's greed, duality and cruelty.

Conrad has portrayed themes of culture, imperialism, colonialism, racism, and corruption of the human soul through *Heart of Darkness*. The themes embedded in this novel reveal three facts: the nature of colonialism, the exploration of the unrevealed meanings of the struggle in the lives of black and white people and the revelation of the dual nature of civilization. The colonizers claim that they want to civilize barbarian people. The bitter reality is that they commit cruelties and make the things worse. Kurtz and Marlow defend imperialism, colonization, and racism through their civilized expressions and actions. They treat the colonized people of Congo like animals; Congo here represents the whole of Africa (Petocz and Mackay 2013).

Backhaus and Drechsler (2006) have researched the hypocrisy of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*. Febrinan (Beyaz 2020) has evaluated the moral values of the main protagonists in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. By utilizing the mixed-method approach and descriptive design, Faryyad, Ajmal, and Sammar (2020) have conducted another research on William Golding's novel, *Lord of the Flies*. With the help of Antconc software, the findings of the study show that the writer has used symbols to present the theme of the modern man's nature both civilized and savage.

After going through the above-mentioned literature, it is observed that all the researchers have used qualitative descriptive design to analyze the characters and major themes of *Heart of Darkness*. The present study intends to open up new horizons in the field of research as it is founded on a mixed-method approach and a descriptive design to conduct it. Being a corpus assisted-study, this research practically proves the data in the form of linguistic features. The text of the novel was converted into plain text and tagged into parts of speech to run the operations of the software in order to identify the most frequent linguistic patterns of the symbolic words used in the software. *Heart of Darkness* is a highly symbolic novel. Almost all the characters, objects, and the very title of the novel also have multiple layers of meaning. Among these symbols, the researcher used only those ten symbols which present the themes of culture and imperialism and corruption of the human soul. The frequency of the symbols can be observed in blue color and total concordance hits are noted

down on the top left of the taken screenshot. The researcher has drawn a comparison between the symbols and themes to strengthen the applicability of the software in the extraction of the meanings from the literary piece to remove the risk of subjectivity.

Frequency of Keywords used as symbols from *Heart of Darkness*

Sr. no.	Symbols	Frequency
1	Kurtz	122
2	River	65
3	Manager	43
4	White	39
5	Ivory	31
6	Darkness	27
7	Wilderness	17
8	Company	14
9	Rivets	14
10	Marlow	10
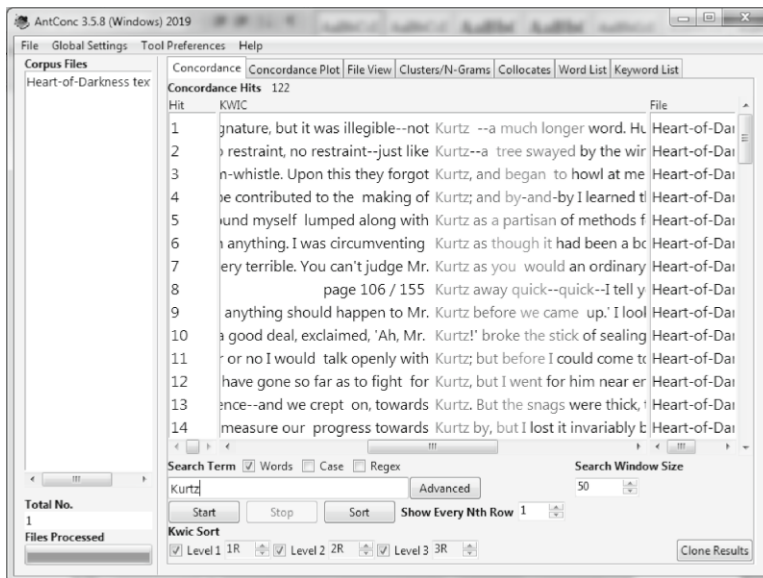
Figure 1. Kurtz as a symbol

There are 122 total concordance hits of the central character Kurtz who symbolizes greed and commercial mentality as well as the corrupt mentality of th white colonizers. Secondly, he symbolizes the western people's love of power. He has been sent over to Africa by a Belgian company. Kurtz turns himself into a charismatic demigod for all the native tribes of Africa because of his knowledge and clever mind. He goes over Africa with the pious purpose of taming all the native brutes. On the contrary, this man becomes a part of that society and attends all the unspeakable rites of native people. His sole purpose is to collect ivory and he has done his best to collect ivory. The writer has portrayed the themes of imperialism and the corruption of the human soul through Kurtz. Being the incarnation of colonialism, Kurtz is full of love for desire and wealth. Instead of paying attention to 'white man's burden', Kurtz indulges himself in the unspeakable rites and ceremonies of the savage people.
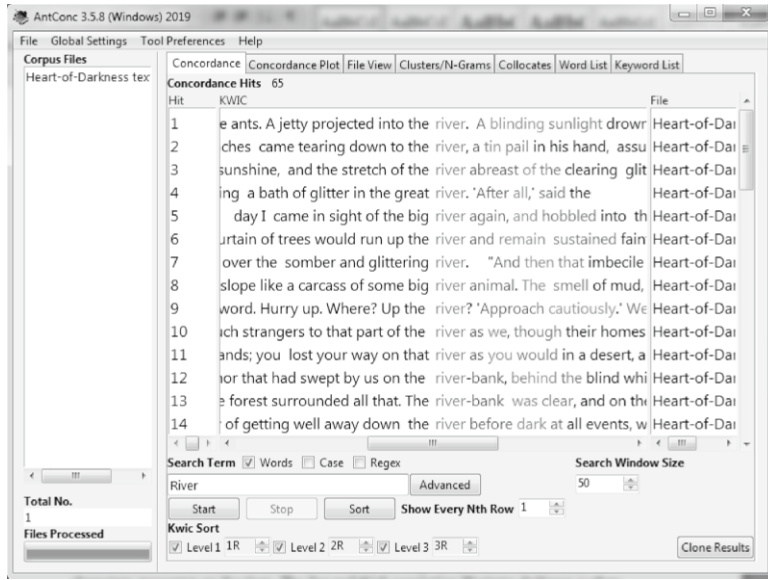
Figure 2. River as a symbol

The word river has 65 hits in the corpus and it is highly reflective of the characters' movement away from their civilized and humanitarian culture. The huge and abundant trees and fog that Marlow and other characters encounter on the banks of the river, illustrate darkness and complexity of man's conscience.
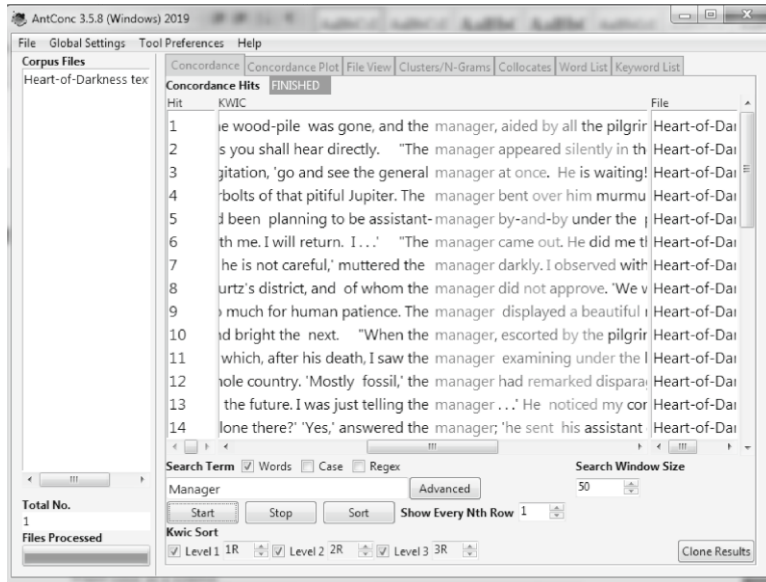
Figure 3. Manager as a symbol

The manager in the central station has 43 concordance hits. He symbolizes spiritual barrenness and the white man's greediness and love for power. He is a jealous type of person who makes plots against Kurtz. The manager desires to supersede Mr. Kurtz in collecting ivory so that he can attain power and respect in the eyes of his employers. His sole aim is to
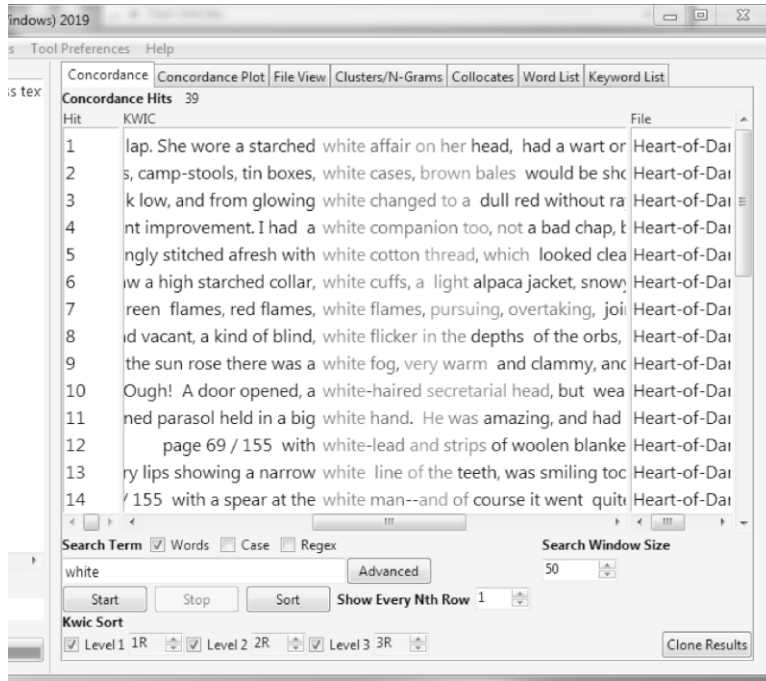
Figure 4. White as symbol

The white color has 39 concordance hits in the corpus. This color symbolizes innocence, peace, purity, good nature, and the better side of the human soul but the novelist has used it ironically to show the evil and corrupt nature, cruelty, and negative side of the human soul. It can be said that the word white does not have to be the embodiment of goodness. They do not show restraint in collecting ivory and committing atrocities with the black people who are outwardly black but inwardly good, because despite being hungry they show self-restraint and do not attack their white masters to fill their belly.
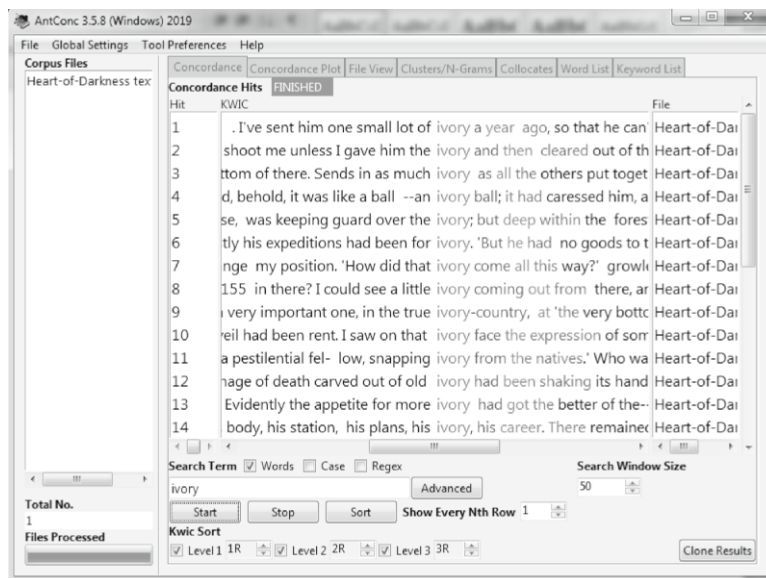
Figure 5. Ivory as a symbol

The word ivory has 31 concordance hits and it symbolizes the greed and commercial mentality of the colonizers'. It is the sole commodity that is cherished by all civilized people. The Belgian company trades in ivory for material benefits. All the white people compete with one another in collecting ivory and Kurtz is a person who collects more ivory than all others. All the people think more about ivory and they think their promotion lies in collecting more ivory for the company. Ivory stands for the commercial mentality of the white people as well as the imperialistic approach of the masters.
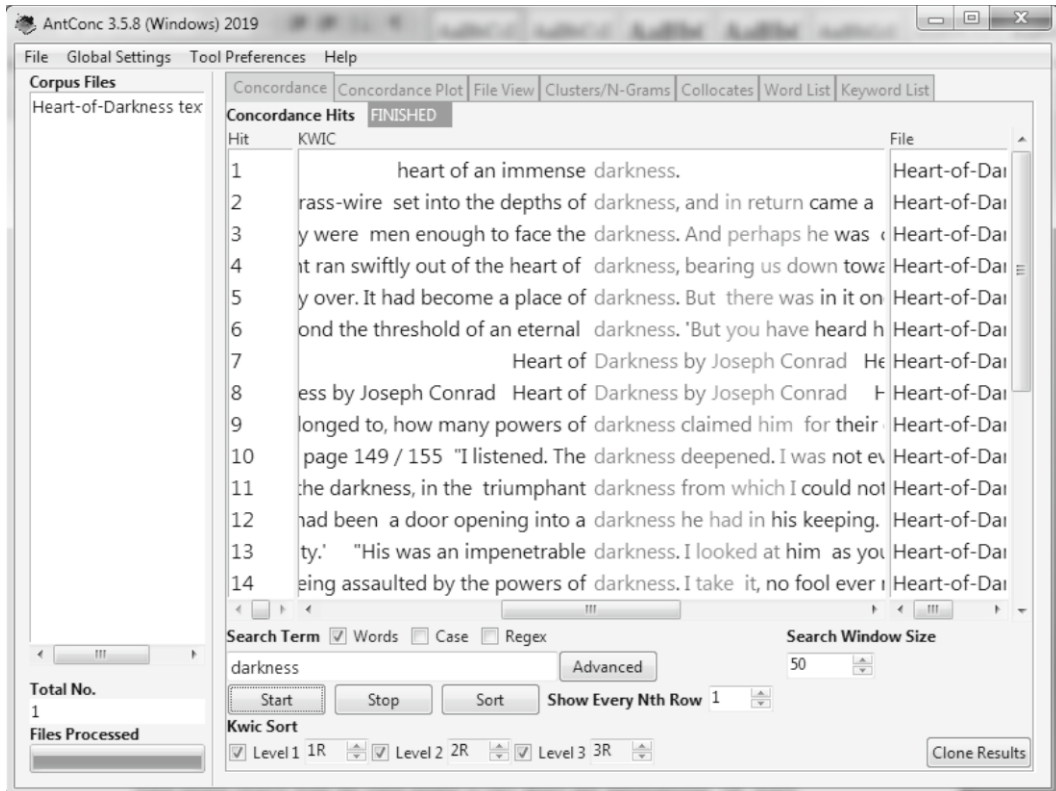
Figure 6. Darkness as symbol

Darkness has 27 hits in the text and symbolizes the inability of the colonisers to see something which is simple and evident. The darkness prevents the characters to see each other as individuals. Darkness also symbolizes the evil which is found in human nature (Qu 2008). In the course of the novel, it is observed that the treatment that black people receive from the white people is very abject and dehumanizing. Mr. Kurtz raises himself to the stature of a demigod and sees the local people as less than human. This symbol shows the cruelty, brutality and prejudice of the colonizers. Some critics connect darkness with the jungle. "The jungle is the opposite of a moral symbol—it stands for the savage in man, for his utter isolation and moral collapse" (Lester 1982). Darkness also symbolizes illiteracy, poverty, death, ignorance, and the inability to do anything positive.
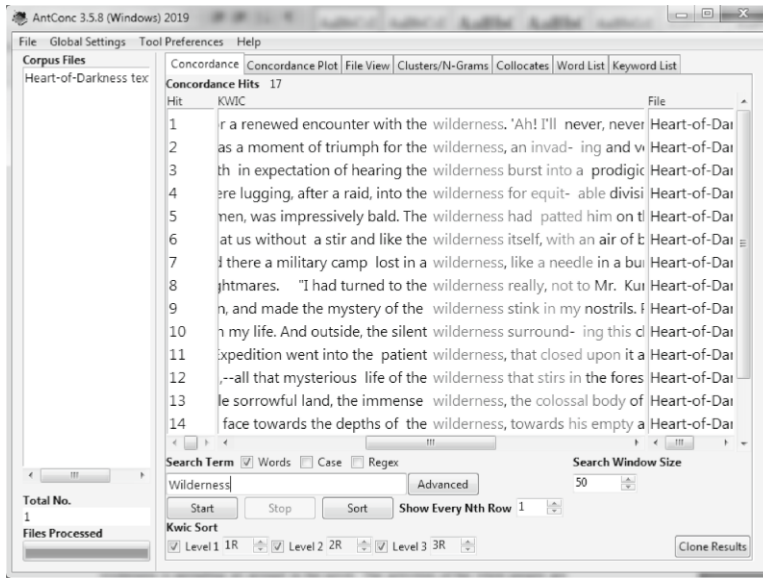
Figure 7. Wilderness as symbol

The term wilderness has 17 hits in this corpus and it is highly symbolic. It is symbolic of the background of the novel as well as the characters of the story too. The immensity and barbarism of the wilderness are set in contrast with the meanness and foolishness of the pilgrims. Another symbolic connotation of the wilderness is the themes of greed and cruelty that are hidden under the noble ideals such as serving the backward people. The wilderness is spreading all around in the novel. The activities of the white people are observed as mean and petty. The wilderness is such a powerful force that it destroys all the apprehensions and reveals to every man the truths regarding his personality. In the light of the above discussion, it can be said that wilderness is the natural outcome of imperialism.
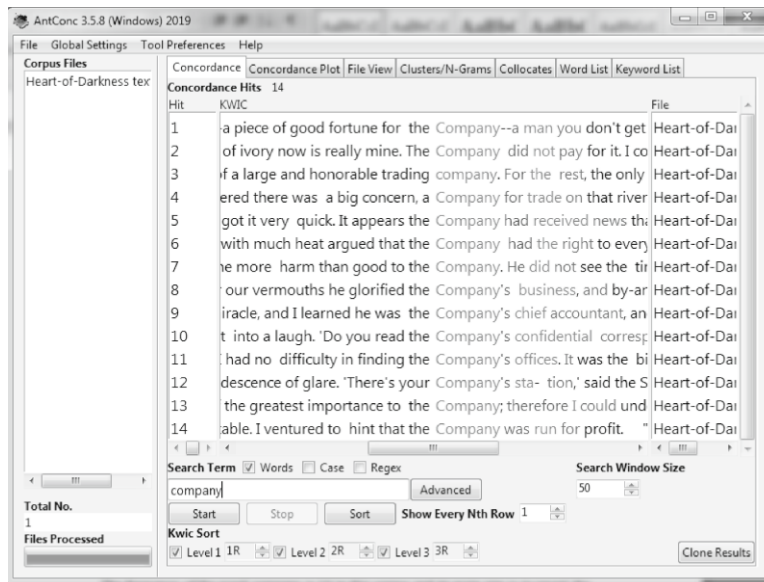
Figure 8. Trading company as a symbol

The frequency of the word company is 14 in this corpus and its main aim is to reveal the imperialistic designs of white colonizers. It is the trading company of the Belgians. Its headquarter lies in Brussels. It is also known as white–sepulcher. A sepulcher represents death and confinement. The novel reveals that colonization originates from Europe. The Belgian company is governed by a set of rules which promotes cruelty, atrocity, evil passions, and dehumanization and it is dead against change. White people go into the territory of the backward people to make them civilized and educated but they do nothing except exploit their natural resources and manpower. To conclude, it can be said that the trading company symbolizes the imperialism and greed of the Europeans that corrupts the hearts of people.
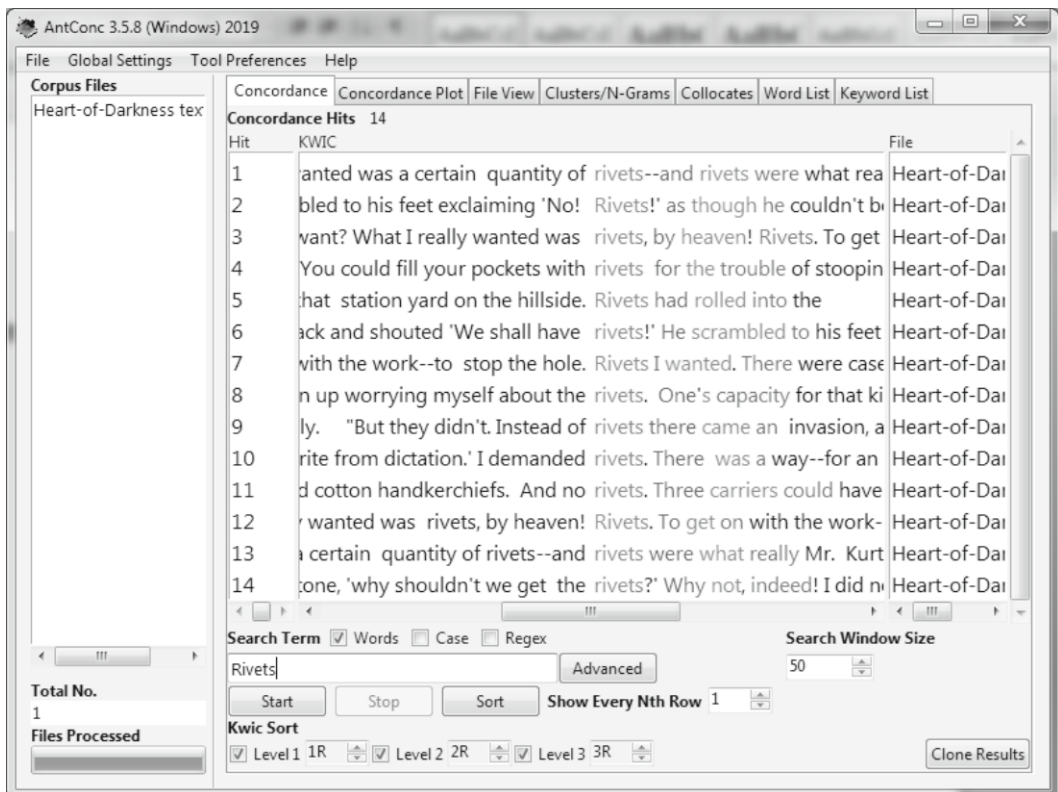
Figure 9. Rivets as a symbol

The rivets have 14 concordance hits in the *Heart of Darkness*. Marlowe needs rivets to repair the steamer to advance his journey to the inner station of the company. But the bitter reality is that he receives these rivets with great difficulty. The rivets and the other useless machinery are lying here and there. They stand for the futility of efforts. The White agents of the company do nothing for the progress and advancement of the native people. So, the novelist has conveyed the hypocrisy of the imperialists through the above symbols.
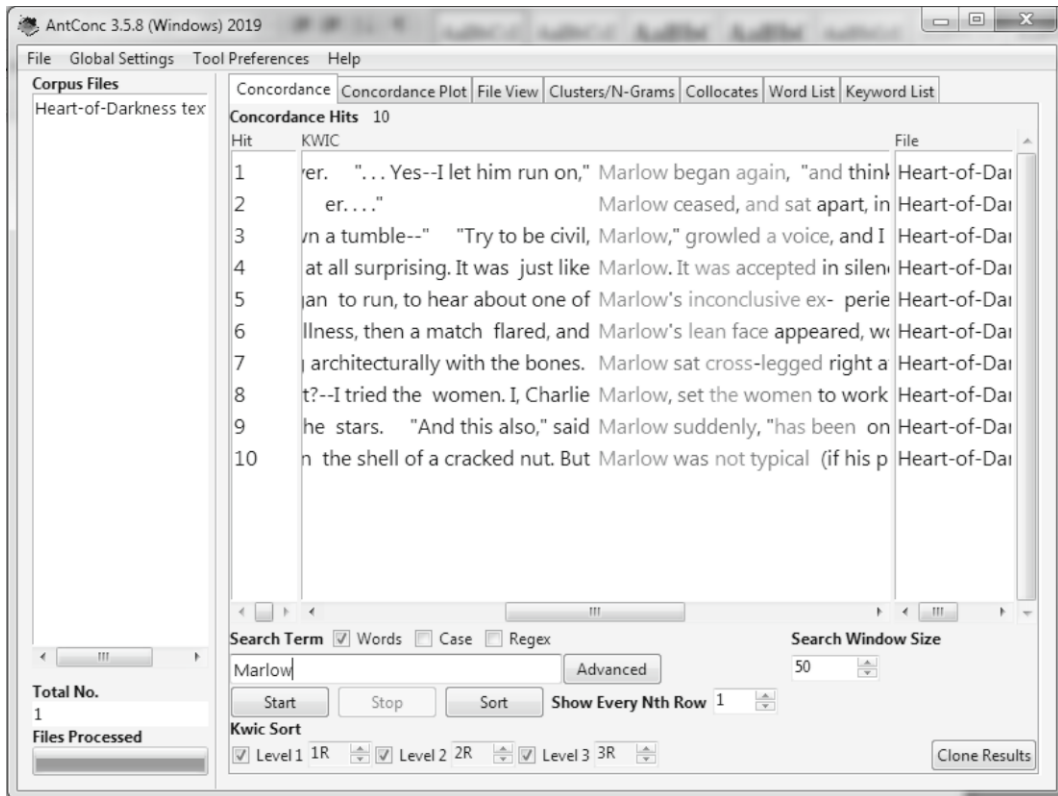
Figure 10. Marlow as a symbol

Marlow, the narrator of the novel, has 10 concordance hits and he is the narrator of the novel. He symbolizes the thoughtful observer of human nature, the spirit of adventure, love of knowledge. He also symbolizes the influence of savagery and primitivism upon a civilized man. To conclude, traveling through the Congo River is more than an inward journey of man.

After analyzing the quantitative data which is collected through Antconc, the researcher depicted the shades of culture and imperialism through different symbols and characters to portray the themes of corruption of the human soul. Mr. Kurtz is the representative of the Western civilized and cultured people but the tragic thing is that, after going to Congo to make the brutal native people civilized and cultured, he raises himself to the level of a god and starts participating in the unspeakable rites of the native people of Africa. Kurtz becomes the biggest devil among the devils of the native people. His main concern is to collect ivory for the company, to achieve a prominent status in the company. Imperialism, colonialism, and racism are core ideas that *Heart of Darkness* tackles through Kurtz. *Heart of Darkness* has conveyed how imperialism is legalized by Britishers in Africa (Hasan, Ahmed, and Muhammad 2020). The colonizers justify their illegal actions, crimes, and evil treatment. The jealous manager also tries his best to collect maximum ivory for the company to replace Kurtz in the game of power. Marlow is a thoughtful observer of human nature. He pens down all the atrocities on starved and chained native people which are the natural outcome of imperialism. In the end, he also becomes prejudiced and favors Kurtz. He

lies to his fiancé, when she asks him about the last words of Kurtz.

As far as the other symbols such as ivory, Belgian trading company, darkness, fog, river, white color, and wilderness, all these symbols have been employed very tactfully by the novelist to portray the theme of corruption of the human soul and exploitation of natural resources. Western people claim that they go to the territories of backward people to civilize the natives. On the contrary they establish trading companies and set them up in underdeveloped countries to exploit their natural resources and labor and did nothing to improve them.

The third objective of the study is to analyze symbols in *Heart of Darkness* with the assistance of Anthony software. Anthony is such a tool as helps in gathering data statistically within a very short period. The concordance tool helps to focus on the symbols used by Conrad to expose the hypocrisy of imperialism and the so-called civilized and cultured Western people. It is also useful to detect patterns and themes of the text as well as the qualitative analysis of the text to minimize the concept of subjectivity of the researcher.

Conclusion

With the help of the data analysis it is concluded that Joseph Conrad has employed different symbols that reveal the major themes of the novel - culture, imperialism and corruption of human soul. Conrad's main aim is to expose how Imperialism supports the white people in their inhuman exploitation of the natives through their power, influence and diplomacy or the military. It is quite obvious in the novel that the Belgian trading company enjoys power over native Africans and they are unable to do anything except serve their masters. All the characters of the novel actively work for the company and their sole aim is to grab maximum ivory and curry favour with their employers.

Mr. Kurtz goes over to Africa to take stock of the prevailing conditions and to give suggestions on how to improve them. He represents crass commercial mentality, and loves to exercise power over backward races of the world and undermine the basic principles of ethics and morality. The managers in the central station and other faithless pilgrims are corrupt to the core. All the aforementioned characters belong to civilized cultures but as they become part of the backward society their evil instincts engineer the loss of self-control. Besides, Conrad has employed other objects which are symbolic and support the themes of the novel as darkness, wilderness, ivory, fog, rivets and river. All the objects reflect the hypocrisy of imperialism and exploitatation of the native people at the hands of the colonial masters. In short, the Antconc software has immensely helped the researchers to collect and analyze data objectively to prove the usability of the software in the extraction of literary meaning without damaging their beauty. The symbols in the novel advocate the thought of Nietzsche that the colonists' wish is to continuously expand the territory and accumulate huge wealth, a passionate desire called the will to power. The *Heart of Darkness* illustrates through its symbols that the British and other European colonizers have done the same not only in Africa but also in other underdeveloped countries of the world.

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The American Dream: Cultural and Social Downfall in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*

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Abstract

As known, throughout history, most societies have experienced hard times that have made life difficult to bear. Among these hard times are political, social and economic conditions which shape the ways human beings perceive the world and lead their lives. The Great Depression, that ravaged American society in the 1929s, is one of the most catastrophic economic events in the history of America and it is considered to be a calamity resulting in unemployed, desperate and even homeless people. John Steinbeck, being one of the foremost representatives of American writers, handles the devastating effects of the Great Depression and how it affected numerous people from different parts of the community. In this period, from women to the black, from the old to the disabled, most people wanted to lead a life based on humanly standards but what they expected turned into a frustration paving the way for the impossibility of the American dream and thus cultural and social downfall of such people no matter how hard they try to achieve their goals. Steinbeck's novel titled Of Mice and Men *in this context is a touching representation of frustration, hopelessness, despair to have a place to live in, and a portrayal of unattainable happiness and the impossible American dream. This paper explores the futile efforts to realize the American dream and thus unhappiness and failure from Steinbeck's point of view and it presents the reflections of such a concept through the fictionalized characters in the novel.*
Keywords*: The Great Depression, The American Dream, Downfall, Of Mice and Men, Steinbeck.*

Introduction

John Ernst Steinbeck, born in Salinas- California- spent his summers working on one of the nearby ranches and later with migrant workers on sugar beet farms. There, he became aware of the harsher aspects of migrant life and the darker side of the human nature. His meeting with migrant life and the difficult conditions, in which they lived, provided him with materials that were expressed in *Of Mice and Men*, "a controversial novel, still banned from some American public libraries almost sixty years after publication" (Ferguson 172). Working in a sugar factory, Steinbeck had enough time to write and observe how the Great Depression affected people and made them hopeless towards life. The Great Depression

changed the structure and the operation of the national economy and constrained the purchasing power of customers. The Great Depression that shaped Steinbeck's fiction according to Bernstein can be classified into three categories: The first argues that "it was the result of the collapse of financial markets that began in 1929" (3), the second refers to the "poorly formulated and politically distorted actions undertaken by the government" (3), and the third perceives the depression "in a long-run context" (4). Whatever the reason was, it pre-dominated the events of the 1929s and people had to struggle to survive in a pessimistic atmosphere. From black laborers to the unemployed Americans, the streets were filled with desperate people searching for a work to feed themselves. During the period of the Great Depression, Steinbeck bought a small boat and claimed that he was able to live on fish and crab that he had from the sea and fresh vegetables from local farms. When he could not get anything to eat, he even stole food from the local produce market and shared the food with his friends. Finally, so as to reflect Steinbeck's inspiration to produce the novel, it should also be mentioned that he had a friend named Rickett who provided emotional support to Steinbeck after his emotional upsets.

In his general description of Steinbeck, Wilson claims that Steinbeck wrote about "the suffering of the dispossessed and exploited workers in his native state and about the economics of greed which fostered this shameful situation" (54). Parallel to his definition, *Of Mice and Men*, "an eloquent example of Steinbeck's desire to describe the world using stories written in the language of the general public" (Daniel 1) is the story of displaced people, suffering from exploitative ranch owners which leads them to become a member of an "organization of "group man," a sense of community among the exploited "Okies" through which they might resist together and survive" (Wilson 54).

George as the most prominent figure of the novel is small with sharp and strong features. Although he is not physically well-built, he is shrewd and has the ability to distinguish what true and false are. On the other hand, Lennie is his opposite, giant and has a shapeless face. Reflected as "simple-minded" (2), Lennie likes playing with soft things, but he kills them unconsciously. Since they escaped from the former ranch because of Lennie's desire to love the woman, George warns Lennie to come and conceal behind the brushes before they arrive at the next ranch to work. Both characters are dependent on each other since they share a dream of buying their own piece of land, farming it and, to Lennie's delight, keeping rabbits.

George and Lennie arrive at the ranch and they mention that they are cousins and Lennie was hit by the head when he was a child. In the ranch they meet Carlson, Slim, Candy, Crooks, Curley and his wife. During their stay in the ranch George warns Lennie not to talk to anyone and get in trouble. Curley's wife is a complete trouble according to the workers of the ranch as she flirts with George and Lennie when they are alone. Next, Slim, one of the respected personalities in the novel, claims the rarity of such a friendship and George expresses that they are not cousins but close friends since childhood. At the same time, he confesses that they have always been in trouble with Lennie's obsession with playing with soft things. In the ranch Curley, maniacally searching for his wife, gets angry with Lennie and hits him but Lennie retaliates holding his fist and pushing him back. When George and other workers go to the local brothel, Lennie is left with Crooks, the lonely, black stable- hand and shares what they plan to do with George. Crooks, the black and despised man, is scolded by Curley's wife who flirts with them. Candy, the old man, intends to leave the ranch with them too. Lennie who has one of the puppies, which Slim gave, kills it when he pats in the barn. Having killed the puppy, he realizes that he has done something

bad and tries to hide it. With the arrival of Curley's wife Lennie attempts to like her soft hair but it results in another tragedy because her neck is broken and she is dead in the end. Lennie is so scared and escapes from the ranch to the brushes they talked about before they came to the new working place. After returning from the brothel they see the woman lying in the barn lifeless and try to find Lennie to lynch. George hurries to find him first and sees that Lennie is hiding in the bushes. In the end, George kills Lennie with Carlson's pistol due to his mercy to Lennie and in case of a lynch.

The American Dream: Cultural and Social Downfall in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*

The issue of the American dream and unattainable happiness is notable in the novel and it shapes the individual's views of life and their great expectations towards how they experience the world. Nearly all the individuals are in search of gaining freedom through reaching their dreams. As having one's own property means a complete freedom, George and Lennie- the protagonists- dream of having their own ranch one day. While talking about George and Lennie and their dream Doyle states that; "Joined in a symbiotic partnership, George and Lennie are naively and genuinely American in conception, and they pursue a vision of the American Dream that is as sweet as it is unattainable" (80). Working in different ranches and being ordered by others urge them to work as harder as possible and finally have a place in which they entertain the joy of freedom. They have such a dream that all the goods and animals in the ranch will belong to them and they will not be dependent on anyone else. George and Lennie have the aim of growing their own vegetables, grain and breed their own livestock. Lennie apts to pat his own rabbits and play with the animals as freely as possible and the following lines refer to how he idealizes his dreams: "Well it's ten acres. Got a little win'mill. Got a little shack on it, an' a chicken run. Got a kitchen, orchard, cherries, apples, peaches, 'cots, nuts, got a few berries. They's a place for alfalfa and plenty water to flood it. They's a pig pen" (Steinbeck 59). They have ideals expressed by various utterances as given below:

> And we could have a few pigs. I could build a smoke house like the one gran'pa had, an' when we kill a pig we can smoke the bacon and the hams, and make a sausage an' all like that. An' when the salmon run up river we could catch a hundred of 'em an' salt 'em down or smoke 'em. We could have them for breakfast. (Steinbeck 71)

It is obvious from the quotations that the expectations of both George and Lennie are restricted to a small house and cooperation to lead their lives with the crops and pigs, chicken and fish they will have. They plan to save money during their work in the ranch and then buy an affordable farm to survive. During the harsh conditions of the Great Depression, like many people the heroes are struggling to earn their lives and cope with the severe conditions that cause many people to die. George and Lennie try not to lose their hope in terms of leading a life belonging to them. Whenever they face any trouble in any ranch where they work, they remind each other of the possibility of their imagination and console themselves with the probable realization of their dream which is likely to turn into happiness. Despite their strong desire to be autonomous ranch owners one day, Curly's wife's accidental strangle by Lennie causes all the futuristic plans to end in tragedy. George shoots Lennie at the back of the head and his death as mentioned by Mumford is "tragic not simply on account of our investment in his character- our sympathy for his dreams and our fondness for his manner" (149).

Within this frame, it is useful to refer to Goldhurst's article titled "Of "Mice and Men": John Steinbeck's Parable of The Curse of Cain" which points to the similarities between the stories of Cain and Abel and George and Lennie:

> *Of Mice and Men* is a story about the nature of man's fate in a fallen world, with particular emphasis upon the question: is man destined to live alone, a solitary wanderer on the face of the earth, or is it the fate of man to care for man, to go his way in companionship with another? This is the same theme that occurs in the Old Testament, …. In effect, the question Steinbeck poses is the same question Cain poses to the Lord: "Am I my brother's keeper," (126)

The American Dream, which consists of having a better life and having a say on their own lives, attracts other members of the society suffering from the economic drawbacks of the period. One of the characters whose dream is to try to reach an ideal life is Candy. The old man, whose dog was sacrificed as it was considered useless, hears George's and Lennie's dream and wants to join them. After working for many years under the domination of others, Candy offers George and Lennie to contribute to the purchase of the ranch by paying all the money he has. He is too old to work as beneficial as he did before, but he has the energy and strength to do his best in the ranch they are thinking of buying. The idea of owning a place in this context, means not only freedom in financial terms but humanistic perspective. So, as a man Candy desires to be valued as a human being rather than a servant obliged to serve his master.

Candy knows very well that as an old man he will be seen useless in the ranch sooner or later and the execution of his dog makes him understand that growing old, especially in these harsh conditions, means spiritual execution that will end the joy of life a person has. Candy does not want to be excluded from the life and he considers this a last chance for him to lead a life independent of limitations. Although he liked his dog so much, he could not prevent its death and he could not decide on his loyal friend's life. That's why, he imagines to share the ideal place with George and Lennie as stated below:

> "You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs. I'll have thirty dollars more comin', time you guys is ready to quit." (Steinbeck 75).

Alongside Steinbeck's depiction of Candy's determination and hope to have a place of their own lies a tragic story as well. Although he plans to invest all his money, he is frustrated by Curly's wife's death as it connotes the impossibility of a new beginning and turmoil of life for him. The landless and cheap laborers who are forced to be in the mercy of ranch owners, share the same fate with mice. So, the turbulent life, in despair, is the same for the animals and the homeless. Both do not want much but they experience unavoidable death proving that they are deprived of their hopes which may bring happiness to them. "For the mice, a small cozy house, for the men, a piece of land belonging to themselves. But what awaited both was disaster and despair" (Meng and Liu 40)

As detected in the novel, "Loneliness and alienation set the tone for the whole novel and the hunger for intimacy seems like an ache that bites everybody's heart" (Meng & Liu 40). In this perspective, Curley's wife, as the isolated and alienated figure and though reflected as a troublemaker, is hungry for intimacy which causes her to fail no matter how hard she tries. Since she is an attractive and a charming woman, she does not want to be an ordinary woman but someone special admired by everyone. Even though her dream is far

from survival, she -as a woman- has a goal which might make her seize the life and be a person that has enough power to actualize herself. Her tragic fate is similar to the other passionate but restless figures of the novel despite her futuristic plans given below:

> Nother time I met a guy, an' he was in pitchers. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He says he was gonna put me in the movies. Says I was a natural. Soon's he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write to me about it. (Steinbeck 109)

The representation of woman-man relationship in the novel is controversial and via the problematized interaction, the readers are informed about the constant opt for admiration. Curley's wife, the only woman in the ranch, always expects to be informed about her career by the guys she met before. She wants to be recognized and uses her appearance to seduce people around her. The more she is admired the happier she becomes. The reflection of unattainable happiness through a woman can be associated with affection which has not been shown by her husband-Curley. From the beginning to the end of the novel, the readers have the impression that Curley and his wife are looking for each other but cannot find. In spite of the fact that they live in the same farm, they never meet and others witness their isolation from each other. The conditions of the period are severe enough that's why, Curley's wife feels confined and does not have independence at all. Her interaction with Lennie symbolizes how desperately she needs affection. She is in the pursuit of love and affection, and this leads her to make wrong choices which results in a dramatic end for her and Lennie whose pure intention brings about a catastrophe.

Finally, Crooks is another personality who wishes to lead a life on the ranch as well. Crooks, who is a black and isolated man from the community, is confined to live in a small cottage and he is not allowed to be with the others as he is thought to stink. Being a black person is the reason to be despised and he is scolded by the white residents of the ranch. He does not have the right to do what he wants, and he is not given the chance to be social, but he remains a person captivated in his cottage and working: "They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you, you all of you stink to me" (Steinbeck 70). Crooks after hearing what George, Lennie and Candy plan for the future, intends to live on the ranch too as it is a way for him to lead a life based on a life constructed upon the equality of the races. Though he is against the idea that to have a place far from the control of bosses is nearly impossible, he cannot help dreaming a life there with the people who will respect him despite the color of his skin. Dramatically, the reader gets the impression that he will not be able to realize his dream either. Through Crooks' position in a white dominated society, one can understand that their world is "a world in which the simplest dream of the simplest man—poor dumb big Lennie—cannot come true" (Scarseth 1).

Conclusion

Based on the ideas provided, it seems that even the humblest dreams of some people cannot come true no matter how hard they try to realize them. The characters, whose dreams have been expressed, have never gained what they imagined. It is clearly seen that they are doomed to fail in social, cultural, financial as well as emotional terms. First of all, George and Lennie are far from what they dreamed and Lennie's murder by his best friend proves how impossible it is to reach an ideal life and become free for American people of that period. Feeling mercy to his best friend, George rescues Lennie from having been lynched by other people. Instead of witnessing the ruthless execution performed by Curley and his

friends George kills Lennie and buries his happiness with him forever: "Hundreds of them. They come, an' they quit an' go on: an' every damn one of 'em got a piece of land in his head. 'An never a God damn of 'em ever gets it" (Steinbeck 91).

Taking the conditions of that period into consideration, the only desire for them was to have their own house and a few animals to provide food to them. The survival of ordinary people is based on small things like a house to live in and enough food to feed them. But for George and Lennie, it is apparent that it is impossible, so the survival of the fittest continues without giving an opportunity to the weak to survive. In addition to George's and Lennie's frustration, Candy is hopeless about his dream to come true. He had dreamt of having a new life and making a new beginning with people who would attach him importance without thinking about his age. Unfortunately, he realizes the impossibility of the American dream in the end. In addition to George, Lennie and Candy, the accidental murder of Curley's wife puts and end to the woman's expectations and the unnamed woman will never be able to accomplish what she dreamt. Her neck was broken, and she lost her life and she paid the price of searching for real happiness. As for Crooks, he- as the black person- is left with his loneliness. He is pre-destined not to live in the world of the white. His only desire was to be treated like a real human being and not to be humiliated. Finally, it is concluded that Crooks is too far from attaining his happiness and it seems to be a utopia for the black to have the same sense of humanity with the white.

In brief, *Of Mice and Men* fictionalizes how impossible it is to realize the American Dream which includes pursuit for freedom, happiness and to have the basic facilities to survive. It emphasizes the fact that it is just a dream, and it will not be possible for people especially for migrants to survive under the hard circumstances of the Great Depression. Additionally, optimism and the belief to attain real happiness result in pessimism and frustration which explains the end of the simplest dreams of the simplest people. Thus, it is overtly seen that the novel depicts several debatable issues of paramount importance through the fictionalized characters: "*Of Mice and Men* presents dramatic situations and characterizations that allow us to see and hear and feel ethical dilemmas and such social problems as racism, sexism, and economic exploitation in an immediate, firsthand way" (Hart 33-34).

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Being "Nobody": The Fluid Boundaries of Self in Dickinson's Eco-poetics

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Abstract

Dickinson's environmental stance, which is one of humility, makes her see the non-human life forms as no less important than humans, and they occupy a position of environmental significance. This paper makes an attempt at studying the representation of the animal in Emily Dickinson's poetry and argues that Emily Dickinson's stance of modesty towards her immediate environment allows her to conceive presences other than herself in that shared environment as subjects, thus expanding the very idea of the self beyond its physiological limitation. The paper also attempts at making a case for anthropomorphism through arguments put forward to suggest that it is just one out of many manners of speaking about the world, and although it may be scientifically inaccurate at times, it can nonetheless promote ecologically constructive behavior by blurring the sharp lines between humans and animals.
Keywords: *Human, Animal, Subjectivity, Personhood, Emotion, Anthropomorphism*

Introduction

To see oneself as "nobody" is to consciously think of oneself as insignificant or less significant than others. To be "nobody" is to be non-existent, and/or if existent, to be invisibly so. When Dickinson writes, "I'm Nobody," I read in these words a conscious negation of a fixed identity, of the desire to be identified "as" somebody with a fixed "circumference" (a loaded and recurring word in the Dickinson lexicon). Being nobody, in her poetic venture, actually helps her to become everybody, as she constantly shifts subject positions to speak 'for,' 'as' and 'with' others.

In her nature poetry Dickinson paints landscapes where human and nonhuman elements coexist. In such encounters between the human and nonhuman, it is the nonhuman elements that often come to occupy central position in her poetry, with the human presence often being marginalized. Dickinson's environmental stance, which is one of humility, makes her see the non-human life forms as no less important than humans, and they occupy a position of environmental significance. Dickinson's ecosophy can be substantially understood in the following lines:

> If I can ease one life the Aching/ Or cool one pain/ Or help one fainting Robin/ Unto his nest again/ I shall not live in Vain (J 919)

The Stance of Modesty

Pride often makes us see our place in the universe and our personal interests in magnified proportions. Modesty allows us to understand that our interests are just as important as that of other species with whom we share the environment. Deep ecologists,

ecofeminists and other green theorists agree on the point that man's alienation from nature is at the root of the current environmental crisis. They advocate cultivating a sense of interconnected self. Christine Gerhardt in her book *A Place for Humility: Whitman, Dickinson and the Natural World* (2014) posits that despite leading a secluded life, Dickinson rejected the strict boundaries of her "self" in her association with the natural environment. In the company of non-human nature, the Dickinsonian poetic self often cuts across the limits of her ego to become a "self-in-relationship," a notion of the self based on an ethic of care and responsibility supported by Val Plumwood (20). Situated within the larger network of life in a particular place she lives a responsible and engaged life.

Dickinson makes room for equal consideration of interests of the human and the non-human, an essential element in contemporary eco-ethical thought. "On an ethical level, ecocriticism strives for the revision of an anthropocentric cultural value system…" (Zapf 52). In her poetic revaluations many culturally undervalued species acquire significance. Dickinson's willingness to observe and represent minute life-forms itself can be seen as what Gerhardt calls "eco-ethical gestures" (Gerhardt 32). Let us consider the following poem:

> As I of He, so God of Me
> I pondered, May have judged,
> And left the little Angleworm
> With Modesties enlarged. (J 885)

Such an encounter with an angleworm leaves the poet with a sense of modesty as she realizes that she too is just a speck in the larger inter-connected universe. Such representative acts invest these minute life forms with "intrinsic value" independent of their instrumental value to human beings.

The Question of Subjectivity

> The Spider as an Artist/ Has never been employed – / Though his surpassing Merit/ Is freely Certified (J1275)

Dickinson's poetry explores the agency and autonomy of the natural world. Nature responds and is responded to. Human speech is not a unique faculty; the non-human world too is able to communicate with humans. It has language, not like humans, but nonetheless a system of signs and gestures, and is highly articulate. Only one possessing an observing eye and an attentive ear can perceive the commonly overlooked and unheard natural phenomena. "Beginning with the idea that all entities in the great web of nature deserve recognition and a voice, an ecological literary criticism might explore how authors have represented the interaction of both the human and nonhuman voices in the landscape"(McDowell 372). Dickinson's poems are situated, in the garden of the Dickinson Homestead, that place which became a microcosm of the world to the poet, and her "society" as she shunned more and more the company of human beings. The poems are born out of everyday connections, and there is a sense of immediacy. Distinct voices are heard, and tiny presences get amplified under her microscopic vision.

In the poetic landscape depicted in the poem "A Bird came down the Walk" (J 328) the narrator observes the activity of a bird without the latter's knowledge. Unable to resist the urge to be taken into the bird's confidences she 'cautiously' comes forward to offer him a crumb. The bird, all the while cautious too, is unsettled the moment he senses the approaching human presence. He has the choice to accept or reject the narrator's friendly

advances, and he chooses to fly away.

Her nature poetry is an expression of her emotional and aesthetic response to nature, accompanied by the realization that representing non-human subjectivity is in itself a difficult and problematical task since it questions the limits of human knowledge and understanding of such subjects. "Every literary attempt to listen to the voices in the landscape or to 'read the book of nature' is necessarily anthropocentric. It's our language, after all, that we're using, and we inevitably put our values into the representation. But there are varying degrees of egoism, and… writers who at least try to dissolve their egos and to enter the private worlds of different entities in the landscape" (McDowell 372). Dickinson is one of those poets with a capacity for downplaying her ego and foregrounding the consciousness of nonhuman animals. Dickinson interrogates the boundaries that place the human species apart from the natural environment. "Our fellow creatures turn out to have many of the intellectual and technical abilities we once assumed to be uniquely human, though the degree is still much debated" (Westling 37). In such poems where Dickinson considers that "Butterflies from St. Domingo…/Have a system of aesthetics – / Far superior to mine" (J 137) or that her dog is "the best Logician" (J 500), she is subtly overturning anthropocentric pretensions to human superiority. The more-than-human world is seen as demonstrating remarkable agency and exceptional skills that can baffle the human mind.

Making a Case for Anthropomorphism

Several of nature's people/I know, and they know me (J986)

While there are ongoing debates regarding whether "personhood" can be conferred on animals, I would like to agree with David Sztybel who in his essay "Animals as Persons" argues in favour of construing animals as persons. If we go by present dictionary meanings of the word "person", we see that it is almost synonymous with humans. "While it is true that linguistic conventions cannot be used to prove that nonhuman animals are persons, neither can linguistic usage settle the issue that they are not persons" (Sztybel 244). If it seems odd to think of animals as persons it is only because the idea of what constitutes the human had been created by Western Enlightenment in such a way that it is seen as the total opposite of and antithetical to the animal, thus ignoring that the human too is an animal or that the two concepts may have anything in common. "In a world in which human societies have constructed and emphasised difference in order to justify domination , the ethic of connection is a powerful countervailing force" (Hall 111). I agree with Hall when he argues that better relationships with other-than-humans cannot be forged from a deeper appreciation of otherness but by seeking affinity with them by taking a relational, inclusive stance that emphasizes similarities and connections rather than differences and otherness.

Dickinson is one of those poets who establishes a continuity between herself and the animals around. If we accept that there are certain traits common in humans and nonhuman animals, and that it is plausible that the traits which confer personhood on humans are present in some nonhuman animals as well, then it follows that personhood is not exclusive to humans. "The crux of the issue of what a person is lies in what we consider to be the core of our own personhood: our capacity for conscious experience, and this is a capacity we share with any number of nonhuman animals. I hope that once we have understood this we will eventually adopt the proposal that many nonhuman animals are persons" (Sztybel 246). I would like to argue that Dickinson's poetry provides an adequate challenge to human/nature

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or human/animal dualisms, which have its roots in the rationalist tradition, by representing animals as persons with the capacity for "conscious experience." Let us take the following examples:

> Several of nature's people
> I know, and they know me;
> I feel for them a transport
> Of cordiality; (J 986)

> The bee is not afraid of me,
> I know the butterfly;
> The pretty people in the woods
> Receive me cordially. (J 111)

The above examples show that the people from the natural world are conscious beings with feeling of cordiality for the poet. They also experience feelings of pleasure and pain. There is the "indigo and brown" songbird that "shouts for joy to nobody but his seraphic self" (J 1465). When she calls a bee "the debauchee of dews" (J 214) there is an element of conscious indulgence on the bee's part for an excessive intake of dew.

A word which can be somewhat accounted as synonymous to 'person', and used quite a number of times by Dickinson in relation to a few creatures from the animal world is the more casual word 'fellow.' *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the word 'fellow' as a way of referring to a man or a boy. Once again linguistic convention attaches the word exclusively to humans. However, Dickinson seamlessly uses the word to denote animals she encounters in her day-to-day experience. A few instances where the word is used by Dickinson have been quoted below:

> He bit an angle-worm in halves
> And ate the fellow, raw. (J 885, denoting a bird)

> A narrow fellow in the grass
> Occasionally rides; (J 986, denoting a snake)

> A joyous-going fellow
> I gathered from his talk, (J 1723, denoting a bird)

Leslie Mcabee in "Through the Tiger's Eye: Constructing Animal Exoticism in Emily Dickinson's 'Big Cat' Poems" argues that authorial claims to speaking for an alien animal requires imaginatively crossing over into unknown territory. Despite their good intentions, she says, the speakers reinstate their superior position when they exercise the power of their domineering gaze. She further complains, "Dickinson's speakers construe animal nature for their own pleasure (4)", and posits the question "Is poetic insight an ethically specious exercise in human hubris?" (6). I would like to argue that Dickinsonian poetic self has never exhibited arrogance by making any claims to absolute knowledge of the animals or birds she writes about. The gaze, more than being domineering, is accommodative. Isn't it better to look than to overlook? Some poems reveal the poet's realization that she is not readily admitted to the world of birds or bees, and she never claims to have a free pass to their minds. The poet's garden, however, opens a space for dialogue – one might question such a dialogue because both parties do not share a common language – but a dialogue, nonetheless, because the speaker imaginatively assumes the animal's/bird's/plant's point of

view, speaks to and is spoken to by them. To be monologic is to be disrespectful. For Bakhtin, "Monologue is . . . deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other" (Bakhtin 293). Just because we cannot look through a bird's point of view, for example, does not imply that it does not have one. To imagine it through poetry is in itself an acknowledgement. Much of the divide in the world, whether those of race, economy, gender, or species, sustains because there is a lack of dialogue, because those on the privileged side of this divide never 'imagine' what it would be like to live on the other side.   Marian Scholtmeijer in her essay "The Power of Otherness: Animals in Women's Fiction" makes a really insightful comment, "In their work on animals, women writers perform that most anti-androcentric of acts: thinking themselves into the being of the wholly 'other', the animal" by employing their "creative freedom… to liberate otherness from the norms of dominant ideology." Speaking on behalf of or in the guise of animals, more than being an exercise in 'human hubris' can be seen as an attempt to dissolve otherness.

While some critics like Mcabee have problems with her anthropomorphizing non-human life-forms, I would argue that Dickinson's ethical stance makes her see the non-human life forms as no less important than humans, and she attempts to raise them to the position of having environmental significance, which she seeks to do through empathic representation. Poetry need not strive for scientific "accuracy." The moment the poet feels for the animal she breaks free of the human-animal divide and dissolves animal alterity. Aaron Shackelford, answering to the question "Why do we avoid anthropomorphism in our writings?" in his essay "Dickinson's Animals and Anthropomorphism" writes that one of the charges against anthropomorphism is that it is a scientific error; the other is that by projecting human traits onto the animal, the animal is appropriated as a means through which to voice a human concern (Shackelford 47). However, such anthropomorphizing "might be done in the interest of dramatizing the claims and plights of the natural world" (Buell 134). It is important to keep in mind that while speaking of the non-human life forms she is positioned as a place-connected being with an embodied 'humanness' which it is not possible to completely evade. Hence, non-human nature has to be approached through such human means as perception, imagination, and articulation.

I would, here, like to make an attempt at justifying the use of anthropomorphism in the representation of animals in literature in general, and in Dickinson's poetry in particular. Because animals do not communicate in human ways and do not possess human forms of language, any attempt to put words in their mouth, or to understand animal psyche or project them as beings with thought and emotion is deemed "anthropomorphic", and anthromorphism is always seen in a negative light and as something to be shunned. The doubt surrounding whether animals can suffer mental anguish is almost a validation for their abuse by humans, since in that case there is no moral accountability in abusing animals that are not capable of suffering. There is a bias against recognizing the emotions of other animals. Formal study of animal behavior (ethology) operates within a strictly scientific mode which is reductionist, and which only privileges specialist knowledge while dismissing all non-specialist ways of arriving at knowledge. However the lay man or woman does not understand scientific discourse and their bonding with animals depends on a deep, intuitive understanding of "individual" animals. Science overlooks matters of the heart, but I feel it is pertinent to engage both the mind and the heart of people to give a real impetus to the environmental movement. Somewhere we got to get the realization that even the minutest of

creatures have inner lives.

Dickinson interrogates the boundaries that place the human species apart from the natural environment, and projects nonhuman animals as thinking, feeling, acting and experiencing subjects, equally deserving of "personhood" as any human. Let us take an example – speaking of a caterpillar walking in the palm of her hands, the poet utters: "Intent upon its own career/ What use has it for me –" (J 1448). These lines stress that the caterpillar has a purpose to fulfill in life, it is a conscious being aiming at things in the future. There is also the spider "as an artist", a couple of butterflies that "waltzed upon a stream", the woodpecker "that laboreth at every tree", and the responsible bird who acts as "the faithful father/ Of a dependent brood". In all of these instances, the more-than-human world is seen as demonstrating remarkable agency and exceptional skills that can baffle the human mind. Even a butterfly spends her day out "on miscellaneous enterprise" which only "the clovers understood". Dickinson time and again in her poems accepts the limits of human understanding, neither scientific nor poetic endeavours to explore and solve the mysterious workings of the natural world have been successful.

> But nature is a stranger yet;
> …To pity those that know her not
> Is helped by the regret
> That those who know her, know her less
> The nearer her they get. (J 1400)

Science cannot claim absolute knowledge of nature's processes. "It's so unkind of science/ to go and interfere," (J 70) she writes in one of her poems. The workings of the minds of animals have not been conclusively studied and deduced by any of the emerging scientific disciplines. So Dickinson, instead of trying to be scientifically correct in her representations of animal behavior, employs alternative ways of seeing and presenting the realities of nature.

To project animals or plants as persons does not necessarily mean an obfuscation of their inherent natures. To think of a person in exclusively human terms is in itself a form of speciesism as argued by Peter Singer. What we see as anthropomorphism, or the violent projection of the human unto non-human beings, may in practice be seen as a broadening of the concept of the person to accommodate non-humans. Since there are no absolute truths, and since reality in itself is relative, there is no "true" or "false" ways of talking about animals or plants. The nature of truth itself being provisional, the manner of speaking that anthropomorphism employs cannot be criticized on the grounds that it is a false representation of animals. Rather what can be valued is that it employs a perspective towards animals that is more respectful than harmful.

Conclusion

Most plantscapes are seen as a passive, homogenized, lifeless, non-identity against which human interests are foregrounded. No matter how much we encounter these on a day-to-day basis, they occupy a place on the fringes of human existence, or no place at all. For human reconsiderations of the natural world in moral and ethical ways, there is a need to alter the environmental discourse or the way we talk about nature. In the Dickinsonian poetic landscape plants and animals too are seen as autonomous agents, bearing emotions, sentience, volition, cognition, ambition, etc. The garden is not simply a passive background or setting but an actual living organism throbbing with life, and all life is revered in here. Even

the tiniest of them gain visibility. While there are debates regarding whether Dickinson possessed an environmental consciousness, or the lack of an activist angle, we can nonetheless say that her poetry reveals a unique understanding of the relationship between the human and the non-human and has the potential to reorient its readers towards the development of a new set of attitudes towards the environment. If the thought of sweeping away spider's webs makes me uncomfortable, if I don't kill ants that line up to my sugar jar or hit a bee that enters my room with whatever I find close at hand, I owe these simple gestures to my reading Emily Dickinson.

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Sylvia Plath's "Edge": A Psychoanalytical Review

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Abstract

In the current trying times when the social, political and the economic world has gone lopsided and more than half of the planet had been quarantined for an extended period of time, human psyche has been challenged as never before. Isolation and social distancing has become the new way of life. Standing on such slippery, metaphysical ground amidst a world that so long projected its monstrous fangs at those who struggled for existence, solipsism has never been better defined. It is an evolution of sorts with an inward domestic corollary that tries to make up for social isolation. Ironically, however, frail humans have often been victims to Nature and society alike. Eventually an isolated human heart, suffering from a sense of void in a temporal and spatial wilderness, has often sought liberation in derangement or self-annihilation. Sylvia Plath, regarded as the icon of Confessional Poetry, was a denizen of a similar world. Her poem 'Edge' is a distant echo of human isolation and estrangement that plays upon her psyche and makes her take up a decisive action to end her life. The poem was written barely six days before she committed suicide. This paper makes an attempt to delve into the poet's psyche and try to analyse the psychological praxis that brings her to the 'Edge.'
Keywords: *isolation, solipsism, self-annihilation, estrangement, psychological praxis*

The Confessional Poetry and Sylvia Plath

Poetry, as one would explain, is an expression of individual voice and the rhythm and cadences represent the ebb and tide of human emotion. Poetry holds within its microcosm the macrocosmic universe of the poet that he sometimes unconsciously and yet at other times consciously reveals. It is an incantation that arises from the poet's soul and lead to spontaneous outpouring, synthesizing the body and mind, rhythm and word. However, a sudden barricade of social awareness and intricate, ineffable realities threaten to take over the mind so much so that in a bid to fit in to social constraints and mime the culture of the times, the poetic soul suffers infinitely from social embarrassment and isolation. The American poetry of twentieth century incorporates this struggle. It was an age that has been witness to two World Wars, the Great Depression and the Holocaust. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" probes this issue of social terror and social isolation with brilliant eloquence. Both Pound and Eliot surged forth a creative upheaval that made the individual voice distinct and assertive but stopped short of explicit expression for to quote Oscar Wilde's apothegm, "All bad poetry springs from genuine feeling." It is, however, this sincere feeling and heightened emotional state, that brought about a new surge in American poetry.

Coined as Confessional Poetry by M.L. Rosenthal after his reading of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* published in 1959, the movement had the likes of Sylvia Plath, W.D. Snodgrass and Anne Sexton besides Robert Lowell. The form was often criticized as self-indulgent, revolutionary effusions that was unrestrained, personal and dealt with transgressive subjects often regarded as 'taboos'. Schwartz's influential essay, "The Isolation of Modern Poetry" provided perhaps the best theoretical background for the Confessionals. "The fundamental isolation of the modern poet began not with the poet and his way of life; but rather with the whole way of life of modern society. It was not so much the poet as it was poetry, culture, sensibility, imagination that were isolated" (Schwartz 213). The poetry of Sylvia Plath was one such example. It was poetry born out anxiety, horror, dejection, morbid terror and isolation.

Confessions are the most personal or subjective form of self-expressions. The earliest confessions were written in the second half of the fourth century by Saint Augustine. These are spiritual confessions that express Saint Augustine's journey towards salvation, yet *The Confessions* is also an exploration of Saint Augustine's own psychological struggle. There have been many subjective writings since Saint Augustine's confessions, "yet it is believed that Rousseau took the form of autography dramatically further and gave it its modern shape. His autobiography is a quest for self-definition" (Sharma 2). Rousseau has famously declared, "I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe that I am not made like any of those who are in existence. If I am not better, at least I am different" (Rousseau 5). Sylvia Plath's poetic journey is also a quest for self-exploration and a battle to accept her unique self and appreciate her self-worth. In her last poem "Edge" she seems to have abandoned the battle and accepted defeat with a smile on her face.

Psychoanalytical framing of Plath's 'Edge'

Plath has often mentioned her interest in psychology and psychoanalysis in her journals. Partly because of her weekly visits to her analyst and partly because of her first-hand knowledge of other patients, that Plath developed such a keen interest in the subject. However, it is her own clinical conditions at an early age that make critics find pathological connection between her life and poetry. Elizabeth Hardwick states, "In Sylvia Plath's work and in her life the elements of pathology are so deeply rooted and so little resisted that one is disinclined to hope for general principles, sure origins, applications, or lessons. Her fate and her themes are hardly separate and both are singularly terrible. Her work is brutal, like the smash of a fist; and sometimes it is also mean in its feeling" (Hardwick 5).

The recurrence of psychoanalytical terminology and symbolism in Plath's poetry reflect workings that Freud termed as the "family romance." In fact, when we are psychoanalytically reading her poem, we are actually digging into the poet's childhood traumas, fixation, anxiety, guilt and family life. It is the 'unconscious' that forms the storehouse of all such primitive and instinctive desires, emotions, traumatic experiences and unresolved conflicts. As Freud proceeds further to divide the human instincts into the Eros and Thanatos, which usually co-exist, he adds that "the goal of all life is death" (Freud 30). However, Death instinct may not eventually lead to suicide. Although, the instinct is planted in human beings, the desire to end one's life is a psychological disorder necessitated by traumatic experiences, isolation and depression often an Electra complex or Oedipus complex in the phallic stage. Death of her father at an early age, shocking childhood

experiences, stunted love relationships and sensual conflict had led Plath to instable mental state and driven her to the 'edge,' where she stood all by herself with the shadow of death as company.

In fact, most of Plath's poems are portrayal of frustration, isolation and a divided self. In poems like 'Zoo Keeper,' 'Lost Words,' 'Wife,' 'Face Lift,' 'I Am a Vertical, Insomniac,' 'The Moon and the Yew Tree,' 'The Barren Women'- the titles itself evoke Plath's sense of loneliness and self-annihilation. The poem like 'In Plaster' highlights this struggle and as the title suggest, her façade seems to be falling off. Even in poems such as the 'Morning Song' and 'Blackberry Bay' she seems to stand all alone in a landscape where she is completely isolated. Her noted works-*Lady Lazarus*, *Ariel* and her only prose composition, *The Bell Jar* - all express the void she felt in her heart throughout her life. This extreme sense of alienation, passivity and victimization leads to a sense of aggression and vengeance and "suicide fantasies" (Ostriker 180). In her book *The Second Sex* Simone De Beauvoir indicates that "in order for a woman to achieve full humanity, she must reject or minimize whatever is imposed on her by the physical body. The inferior life of 'immanence' dictated by feminine anatomy must become the superior life of 'transcendence' willed and dictated by the striving individual ego" (Beauvoir 760).

'The Edge': A Cry of a Desolate Soul

Juxtaposed between life and death, between reality and disillusion, Plath pens 'Edge', a few days before she took a decisive step to end her life. The poem for once settles all staggering issues and reaches a brutal end in a vein of bleak finality and 'perfected' art. The title itself suggests the intensity and subtlety of the poem. The 'edge' is a precipice that marks the divide. There is an air of finality in the very opening line of the poem: "The woman is perfected." This could either be that her time on this earth is over or that she has been successful in crossing the edge and reaching the other world. A sense of achievement gratifies her now for she has completed her task before she has reached the 'edge.' There is an air of resignation as the poet is no longer interested in fighting her demons and establish her identity as projected in her earlier poems 'Mirror,' 'Words,' and 'Winter Trees.' She has become absolutely 'still.' It is quite obvious that the woman has not achieved perfection while alive, so she chooses to die. However, the choice of words casts a positive spell. Phrases and words like "perfected," "smile of accomplishment," "rose and sweet," stand in stark contrast to a rather bleak context. Plath seems to have a prophetic vision of her end. That "her dead body wears a smile of accomplishment" suggest that Plath probably had inkling about her posthumous success. There is something ostentatious in the sense of calm in the lines. As she refuses to endure this derogatory life and continue struggling, terminating her life is all that she could visualise as a path that would lead her to achieving all that she could not really accomplish while alive.

There is sense of revulsion, however, as the protagonist senses infanticide. She depicts a Cleopatra-like figure having white serpents at each breast. There is something ominous about the way the white serpents, presumably the woman's children, coil about the "pitcher of milk." "White" symbolises innocence, virginity and chastity on one hand and emptiness, absence, isolation and blankness on the other. There is an element of suspicion as the mother coils them back in herself as the rose draws in her petals. The conventional meaning of flower and the garden as symbols of love is replaced by the image of impending

vacuity. That the life of the woman is perfected now assumes a different meaning, suggesting that her life comes full circle as she dies and draws her children to herself. Her motherly instincts seek to protect her child so she instinctively draws her children "back into her body," sceptical that the cruel world might maltreat her children. Critics often draw parallel to the mythological Medea, who to avenge the infidelity of her husband Jason slew her children in order to protect them from strange hands. Plath, in her life, of course kept her children from the heinous act. She rather made sure her children do not come to any harm, when she took the extreme step of ending her own life. Personally, she took this extreme step partially to challenge the patriarchal society and partially as a mechanism to cope with her psychological demons.

Plath's aversion to the male dominant world is displayed in her oft-quoted poem "Daddy." Plath shows an acute sense of alienation towards her father, whom she adored yet regarded a cruel "Nazi" for his death was the first rude shock that she had to face at a very early age. This traumatic experience was further accentuated by infidelity of her husband whom she portrayed as a "vampire" drinking her blood. She later generalizes this feeling to include all women who have been victimized by men: In the poem "Daddy" she says, "Every woman adores a fascist, /The boot in the face, the brute/ Brute heart of a brute like you." This sense of estrangement and alienation sunk so deep that her only way out of this Hell was to seek refuge in death. She is thus driven to the very brink of existence; to the very "edge". Much of her poetry revealed a "deep self" concealed within her.

The serpent in the poem "Edge" replays the Biblical scene of the Garden of Eden when Eve crossed the edge and committed the primordial sin and was never permitted to enter Paradise. It is a kind of reminder, thereof, to the woman that her act to end her life is a path of no returns. "When the garden/ Stiffens and odor bleeds/ From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower," there is impending danger. The 'odor' of life juxtaposed with bleeding and stiffness highlight the conflicts within the woman who is still indecisive about killing herself. However, the verse ends with a refrain of self-destruction and with a bleak acceptance that self-annihilation is the only choice left for her.

The garden with flowers that bleeds at nightfall is supplemented with the stark moon that watches the tableau of the dead – the mother and the children. However, the moon that belongs to the world of darkness and death watches the necessary outcome of a woman's life dispassionately. It remains unperturbed by the sight of the dead for "she is used to this sort of thing." The moon remains cold and unsympathetic even when the woman turns to her for consolation and seals her fate forever. The words "illusion" and "seem" possibly suggest that the woman has fatally misinterpreted the text of her life and had taken a drastic step contrary to what the book of her life implies.

Conclusion

"Edge" composed only six days prior to Plath's suicide, is a case study of what goes into the mind of a person, who is contemplating to end his own life. The perfection that Plath was seeking in her life deluded her, and she decides to go over the edge in search of the ever eluding flawlessness. Her life long struggle with her psychological demons concluded with her final step of discarding the world in which she found herself a misfit. The poem is beautifully crafted and styled having ten stanzas of two lines each, seized in an enjambment. The stylistic perfection of the poem is a hint that Plath was in total control of her art, even

when she was at the "Edge."

"The Edge" encompasses the entire complexity of a person who is contemplating suicide. Plath hangs between the two worlds of 'life' and 'death' envisioning the space between the two worlds. The poem is a great psychological insight into an accomplished poets' mind when she is concluding her life on her own terms. The positive metaphors and phrases used by her indicate that her final act is a well thought and skilfully executed plan, and not an impulsive step taken by an agitated soul. "Plath's life experience and art experience coalesced and the result is one of the most excellent confessional poetry of the sixties" (Sharma, 131).

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Elizabeth Strout's *The Burgess Boys:* Freudian and Neo-Freudian Readings

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Abstract

Freud's contribution to psychoanalysis proves indispensable not only in the field of psychology, but also in literary studies. Further, Freud's work also acted as a source of inspiration for a variety of schools of psychology. For example, the Neo-Freudian sect accepts some of his basic concepts and at the same time, negates a few of his notions; several theories and tenets developed by this faction flourished in the field of psychology. This paper focuses on the psychological interpretation of the dominant characters in Strout's The Burgess Boys*, using the Freudian notion of "Guilt" and the Neo-Freudian notion of "Basic anxiety". Elizabeth Strout's* The Burgess Boys *is a psychic narrative that revolves around the Burgess brothers, namely Jim and Bob, who unwillingly return to their homeland after ages to sort out their nephew's strangling situation, as their nephew is caught in a civil rights violation . Since Jim and Bob work in the law firm, they are called by their sister to succour them. As the story moves forward, the plot uncovers the long-buried emotional tensions of almost all the significant characters, triggered by a childhood incident. The ramifications of a jesting act, performed by one of the Burgess boys, without any motive, haunts the characters for more than half of their lives. The paper attempts to study the characters' mental struggles and their coping strategies by incorporating Freud's concept of "Guilt" and Karen Horney's theory of "Basic anxiety".*
Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Guilt, Freud, Neo-Freudian, Basic anxiety, The Burgess Boys

Elizabeth Strout, a prolific American author, is known for the intense and idiosyncratic psychological intervention that is central to her works. She is born and brought up in Maine. and this positionality (perhaps) influenced her to invent a fictional setting namely Shirley Falls, Maine, in four of her novels. As Strout says in an interview, "So in a way I'm very interested in writing about Maine, because I think Maine represents its own kind of history" (Dionne). Her notable works include *Amy and Isabelle, Olive Kitteridge, The Burgess Boys, My Name is Lucy Barton* and *Olive, Again*. She is the recipient of the highly treasured Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2009 for her novel *Olive Kitteridge*. Her works deal with the real-world problems incorporating various facets of psychological insights. The purpose of this paper is to analyse Strout's novel *The Burgess Boys* by employing the psychology of "Guilt" fabricated by Sigmund Freud, and the Neo-Freudian sense of "Basic anxiety" brought in by Karen Horney. The paper takes a broader look at psychoanalytic literary criticism and narrows down to the Freudian and the Neo-Freudian concepts. Then it goes on to explicate how the significant characters in the novel endure "Guilt" and "Basic anxiety", and how these impact their complex life. The paper attempts to make the readers to be mindful of the complex consequences of guilt and its by-product basic anxiety, by illustrating the doomed

fate of the characters namely Jim, Bob, Susan and Zach in *The Burgess Boys.*

In her 2013 novel *The Burgess Boys,* Strout's concern for psychological and emotional constraints is brought to the fore. Outwardly, the novel revolves around the brothers, Jim Burgess and Bob Burgess, who are settled in New York and are compelled to visit their native place Maine, to help their sister Susan and her son Zachary Olson, who are in an anguished situation. In a state of turmoil, Zachary Olson throws a pig's head into a mosque during the festival of Ramadan. Due to this act of Zach, Susan and Zach are in a great trepidation as it has serious consequences including the civil rights violation, for which Jim and Bob are called for help as they work in a law firm. The visit kindles numerous repressed memories in the brothers which probes the mental makeup of significant characters. As Natalie Serber puts forward in the review, "Living beneath a shadow of loss and blame around their father's death when they were small children, Jim and Bob escaped their home state of Maine for New York as soon as they possibly could. Yet ties to home and family supersede their desire to break free" (Special to The Oregonian). The visit to their hometown arouses various emotions, which evokes the sense of guilt and basic anxiety among the characters. In this light, the characters Jim, Bob, Susan and Zach have been subjected to psychological introspection.

Psychoanalysis is a comprehensive term that incorporates various theories and concepts to study human behaviour with respect to conscious and unconscious mind. It is not limited to the branch of psychology, but assists to assimilate religion, philosophy and chiefly literature. As Barry states, "Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature" (96). It focuses on analysing the author, the characters, the audience or the text itself. The present study concentrates on the analysis of the characters in *The Burgess Boys* in which "psychological theory becomes a tool to explain the characters' behaviour and motivations" (Hossain 43). For this purpose, the concepts contrived by Sigmund Freud and Karen Horney are exercised.

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist is the founder of psychoanalysis. He proceeds with the diagnostic approach and analyses the human mind through his concepts of Repression, Oedipus Complex, Defence Mechanism and his psychic structure model that contains Id, Ego and Superego. Freud is a proud recipient of Goethe prize for his ebullient contributions in the field of Science. This paper critiques the Freudian notion of "Guilt" in connection with the characters of *The Burgess Boys*. Freud considers "the obstacle of an unconscious sense of guilt . . . as the most powerful of all obstacles to recovery" (Freud 390-391). In agreement with Freud's proposition, the feeling of guilt handcuffs the lives of three characters namely Jim Burgess, Bob Burgess and Susan.

Guilt is a gruesome moral feeling that clings to aperson who lives with a constant inner conflict between what one has done and what is against the universally accepted moral standards. Despite the uncertainty of committing a mistake, the person is overpowered by the sense of guilt. In the novel, Jim and Bob endure the sense of guilt due to a childhood incident in which their father got killed in a car accident. Jim was the one accountable for that accident but due to fear, he trapped Bob as offender of their father's death. Owing to that distressing episode, a sense of guilt controlled the lives of both, as Jim knows he was the wrongdoer and Bob believes himself to be a criminal. The guilty feeling stayed as an obstacle for more than half of their lives. This feeling gets intensified when they revisit their native Maine after settling in New York for many years. As Strout notes in an interview, "New York has provided them (Jim and Bob) with a sense of being able to shake off the family tragedy that occurred when they were such young siblings" (Neary).

Though Jim leads a well-settled professional life, the repressed past hinders the ease of his personal life and he often shuns the family members. When his sister made a phone call asking for Jim, his cold response was: "Tell her I'm not home, Hellie" (19). Jim tries to evade even his children in the name of good education and sent them to far off places. Indeed Jim is accountable for the extreme loneliness of his wife Helen, as she misses her kids and Jim also does not spend quality time with her. He is unable to open up his thoughts and his problems to his wife Helen due to the gnawing canker of his guilt. Indeed, it results in a gloomy sequel as Jim develops an illicit affair with his office assistant in an attempt to equipoise the breach with his wife. Jim's sense of guilt becomes apparent, as he becomes tense when Helen informs him about Dorothy's comment that Jim has "a guilty conscience" (140).

On the contrary, Bob's sphere of life is dominated by the guilty feeling which made him submissive and inefficient. This feeling acted as a stumbling block for his progress in life; both personal and professional. He can neither prolong his blissful wedded life nor upgrade his professional endeavours. Jim always addresses Bob with mean terms such as "Knucklehead", "Slob dog" (34, 35) and Bob diffidently receives them. Bob's assumed inefficacy is seen throughout his life. For instance, when he went to help his sister Susan and her son Zach, "Bob had no idea what to do. Jim would know what to do" (57). Even when Susan and Zach left for work, Bob was simply fooling around. Bob understands:

> Other people would have done something. Bob did realize that. Other people would have gone to a grocery store and made a meal for Susan and Zach to come home to. Or driven over to the coast and watched the surf. Or gone up to a mountain and taken a hike. But Bob- except for his trips to the back porch to smoke-had sat in his sister's living room and skimmed Reader's Digest Condensed Books, and then flipped through a women's magazine she had. (78)

Susan's sense of remorse commences from the poor upbringing of her son, Zachary Olson. Susan woefully miscarried a baby girl, and she hoped the next one to be a girl. But "the sight of him (Zach): skinny, wet, blotchy, his eyes closed" (204) disappointed her. As Zach grows, his despondent and unfriendly nature becomes obvious. "By elementary school he was teased mercilessly. By middle school he was beaten up. By high school his father left" (206). Susan's husband Steve blames her for Zach's oddity as "He doesn't ride a bicycle. He can't even swim. He's a total weenie and you made him that way!" (206). Later when Zach moves to his father's house, he seems cheerful and productive. It makes Susan feel "Zach's current capacity for happiness proved she'd been a bad mother since he'd never been happy like this with her, but all she wanted, she said, was this health he seemed to now have" (354).

In accordance with Freud's notion of guilt, the siblings Jim, Bob and Susan experience great difficulty in overcoming the emotional imbalance caused by an unconscious sense of guilt, which acts "as the most powerful of all obstacles to recovery" (Freud 391). Though the consequence of the guilty conscience differs for each of them, overall it created a substantial void in their lives.

From Freud's lineage, varied schools of psychology started developing. In particular, the Neo-Freudian school of psychologists agree with some of the basic tenets of Freud. Contrarily, they also break with the Freudian tradition through their strong discord of several notions of Freud. For the most part, the Neo-Freudian thinkers dissented from Freud's ideas mainly because of his theory of sexual urges, which failed to give proper attention to cultural and social differences among the individuals, and projection of a pessimistic vision of humanity. In this context, Karen Horney, a twentieth century German psychoanalyst can be observed as a Neo-Freudian. She spurned Freud's idea that women suffer from "penis envy."

Nevertheless, she brings in a contradictory notion that men endure "womb envy". She put forward the concept of "Basic anxiety" in her examination of neurosis. It refers to the feeling of being insignificant and helpless, which is the consequence of basic hostility. It is exposed by numerous circumstances such as,

> direct or indirect domination, indifference, erratic behaviour, lack of respect for the child's individual needs, lack of real guidance, disparaging attitudes, too much admiration or the absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, having to take sides in parental disagreements, too much or too little responsibility, over-protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere and so on. (Horney 41)

Horney devised ten neurotic needs as a strategy to cope with basic anxiety. Later, she segregated them into three broad categories. In order to handle the basic anxiety a person decides to "move toward people, against them, or away from them" (Horney 42). In conformity with Horney's theoretical postulations, the three characters in Strout's *The Burgess Boys* suffer from basic anxiety and they can be juxtaposed with the three needs. Accordingly, to cope with the basic anxiety, Bob Burgess moves toward people, Jim Burgess moves against people and Zachary Olson moves away from people, which is illustrated in the following paragraphs.

Bob Burgess always feels incapable, helpless and lonely due to the gloom-ridden childhood event. As Helen says, Bob is "someone who was traumatized at the age of four" (86). To get through the dejected feeling, Bob always converges with ever mocking Jim, Bob's ex-wife Pam and unwelcome Susan. Horney explicates this as follows, "When moving toward people he accepts his own helplessness, and in spite of his estrangement and fears, he tries to win the affection of others and to lean on them" (42). Though Jim and Susan always offend Bob, he never shows any sign of contempt for them. Rather, he moves toward them whenever possible. At Susan's home, Bob "was captive in his coat, freezing cold, and with nothing to drink. She (Susan) knew it, and kept him that way" (58). Even then Bob "wouldn't want to complain" (70). His attachment to his ex-wife Pam implies, though they were separated, as Jim says, "Pam is Bob's family" (105). He visits her frequently and updates her about all the happenings of his life, which gives him a sense of pleasure and satisfaction. Jim becomes the lifeblood of Bob, and he invariably attaches himself to Jim in all his endeavours. Jim explains: "Whatever I wore, he wanted to wear the same thing. Wherever I went, he wanted to go too" (129).

The authoritative and cold nature of Jim proves that he moves against people. According to Horney, "When he moves against people he accepts and takes for granted the hostility around him, and determines, consciously or unconsciously, to fight" (42-43). He cannot accept anyone to get close with him. Always, he overlooks Bob and his presence. Even in a bowling game, he boasts that Bob "Never has and never will" (129) defeat him. Pam finds "a strange combination of arrogance and earnestness in Jim"(130). When his wife Helen was emotionally worried over the loss of a diamond in her engagement ring, Jim reacts in a dispassionate way and whispers, "It's a ring" (215). Through his authoritative nature, Jim escapes from being answerable to anyone for his erroneous behaviour.

Due to the inept rearing by Susan, Zach handles the basic anxiety by moving away from people. Zach suffers basic anxiety due to the loss of parental love because of his parents' separation. As Horney explains, "When he moves away from people he wants neither to belong nor to fight, but keeps apart. He feels he has not much in common with them, they do

not understand him anyhow" (43). Zach never blames anyone, albeit he feels dejected. Rather, he chooses to stay aloof. Zach's neighbour Mrs. Drinkwater observes that "he's quiet" (37) and "Zachary seems more alone than most" (71). There are hardly any friends for him. Zach avoids expressing his emotional distress to anyone, including his mother with whom he lives. His uncle Bob feels that Zach is "missing in action or something" (154).

The Freudian concept of "Guilt" and the Neo-Freudian concept of "Basic anxiety" holds most appropriate for psychological introspection of all the prominent characters in Strout's *The Burgess Boys*. According to Jain, "Guilt is a cognitive or an emotional experience that occurs when a person realizes or believes accurately or not – that he or she has violated a moral standard, and bears significant responsibility for that violation. It is closely related to the concept of remorse" (33). The guilty feeling averts a person from exposing his/her true self which inevitably results in an undesirable pseudo life. The sense of guilt can be remedied by punishment or intellectualization. Through punishment, one feels sincere remorse, whereas intellectualization makes one realise that he/she is innocent. In the novel *The Burgess Boys,* Strout delves deep into the psyche of the characters' long-buried burdens and restlessness by the grip of guilt and also projects how they cope with the unrelenting source of pain which shapes each character's life and world.

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Towards Eco-consciousness and Self-realization: A Reading of Arne Naess's Deep Ecological Perspective in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, the ongoing industrialization, advanced scientific development, and rapid urbanization explicitly reflect humans' anthropocentric behavior towards non-human nature. As a result, the harmful impact of human activities massively destroys the natural ecosystem of the planet. At present, the ever-increasing ecological crisis and environmental problems raise questions for sustainability and environmental wellbeing. According to deep ecologists, human anthropocentric behavior is considered the root cause of environmental degradation. Therefore, requires environmental consciousness and environmentally responsible behavior towards nonhuman nature. In this context, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's ecocentric philosophy of Deep ecology provides a value-based and action-oriented theory that gives proper respect and value to every living component on the earth. The concept of Deep ecology advocates the intrinsic value of every living organism regardless of its instrumental value to human's benefit and interests. In this paper, I have taken American novelist and activist Barbara Kingsolver's ecologically rich novel Prodigal Summer *(2000). Here, Kingsolver deals with environmental issues such as rapid species extinction, loss of natural resources, and the use of harmful pesticides. This paper aims to delve into Naess's ecocentric view deep ecological perspective using his ecosophy of 'Self- realization' and deep ecological principles to understand the root causes of the current environmental crisis Kingsolver depicted in this novel.*
Keywords*: Arne Naess, Deep ecology, Eco-consciousness, Ecocentrism, Ecological self, Self-realization.*

The term 'Deep Ecology' was first coined by the Norwegian environmental activist and philosopher Arne Naess in his article "*The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements*" in1973. Naess (1912-2009) has developed an innovative concept of eco-centric philosophy of 'ecosophy' which is a philosophy of 'ecological harmony or equilibrium' (Naess 155). He distinguishes the subtle differences between eco-philosophy and ecosophy and describes eco-philosophy as a philosophical approach to human's relationship with non-human nature and he defines ecosophy as ecological wisdom. Hence, ecophilosophy and ecosophy both concentrate on the priorities of values towards the nonhuman natural world but unfortunately, its absence can be traced in the modern era's lifestyle where reverence for nonhuman nature is missing. So, the huge breach that exists between the human and the nonhuman natural world destroys the symbiotic relationship in the ecosphere and creates an urgent need for revolutionary changes in environmental thinking. Ecophilosophy as a philosophical branch brings radical changes in environmentalism to seriously consider

human's excessive use of natural resources and exploitation of nonhuman animals in human society.

In environmental philosophy, Naess's theory of 'Deep Ecology' is a radical ecological worldview that focuses on a nature-centered value system and advocates the intrinsic value of every living organism. He articulates this radical form of environmentalism to bring deeper changes in human conscience to give proper respect and value to every living component on the earth. The concept of Deep ecology advocates the inherent value of every living being regardless of their usefulness to human needs. It attempts to preserve the sacred and spiritual relationship of human and nonhuman nature. Here the concept of 'anthropomorphism can be relatable in this regard to worship Nature and give respect and value to every living component on the earth. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics, or behavior to a God, animal, object, plant, supernatural beings, or nonhuman entities. In some cultures or folk stories, we find this idea of anthropomorphism where humans are treating other objects, animals, and plants with reverence and gratitude but at the present moment, we are losing respect towards other nonhuman beings. Naess's Deep ecology advocates this notion of reverence for nonhuman nature and nourishes the human/nature interrelationship and the interconnectedness of all organisms. However, Deep ecology criticizes anthropocentrism which is a human-centric approach and promotes an ecocentric approach towards life with the holistic understanding that humans are ultimately a part of the whole ecosystem.

The present paper analyses the environmental issues fom a deep ecological perspective as evident in Barbara Kingsolver's novel, *Prodigal Summer*. Recognized as America's best-selling novelist and a well-known social activist, contemporary writer Barbara Kingsolver's concern for the natural environment and nonhuman animals constitutes the crux of her writings. Most of her novels deal with social and environmental justice, the biodiversity of the ecological community, and the interconnection between humans with every other living and nonliving being. *Prodigal Summer* published in the year 2000, deals with the harmful effects of pesticides and herbicides, loss of natural resources, and endangered species extinction which can be blamed on human anthropocentric behavior. Kingsolver being a biologist incorporates the element of natural environment and interaction between humans and nonhumans in her writing. Environmental problems such as the issue of loss of biodiversity, massive species extinction, loss of natural resources can be traced in this novel under study. She explores the human-nonhuman relationship and human's anthropocentric attitude towards nonhuman nature which destroys the biodiversity and harmony of the planetary ecosystem.

In *Prodigal Summer* there are some environmentalist characters such as organic farmer Nannie Rawley, forest service employee and wildlife biologist Deanna Wolfe, and nature lover and entomologist Lusa Landowski. They are all eco-friendly and nature lovers who develop their 'ecological self' by expanding their identical self with nonhuman nature. By 'ecological self' Naess means that "the ecological self of a person is that with which this person identifies" (Naess 227) with nonhuman nature. In this way, he has foreseen and recognized the possibility of human's inherent potentialities of getting closer to one's ecological self by identifying with all living beings in nature. The environmental ethics of Deep ecology's holistic understanding leads to "*Self-realization*!" of oneself through expanding the boundaries of self to the whole world, a transcendental experience to identify with nature, develops a natural sense of care, sympathy, and respect for the nonhuman world. According to him, this large comprehensible Self with a capital "S" embraces all the life

forms on the planet (Naess 80). Deep ecological insights help people to understand their deeper connection with nature and rekindle their responsibility towards the natural environment. These characters expand their ego-self to a larger 'ecological self'.

The story sets in the bioregion of the Appalachian Mountain region where biological diversity is very rich and diverse. The main characters in this novel are introverted and solitary individuals who have unique and strong views about their natural surroundings. The story is revolved around Deanna Wolfe, Lusa Landowski, and Nannie Rawley. Throughout the spring and summer season, their lives change drastically and they realize that they are part of the whole ecosystem like other creatures. They are a part of a complex web that connects all living beings together. The novel starts with the realization of interconnectedness in life "solitude is only a human presumption. Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot; every choice is a world made new for the chosen" (Kingsolver1). The ecological principles of the Deep ecology perspective show intrinsic value towards non-human nature. The novel *Prodigal Summer* reflects the main characters' relationship with nonhuman nature. One of the major characters Deanna Wolfe, a reclusive wildlife biologist, works under the Forest Service department. As an employee, she serves as a resident biologist-ranger overseeing a section of the Zebulon National Forest. Her deep knowledge of the surrounding ecology of the Zebulon Valley and her concern and love for nature reflects her ecosophy of oneness with nature. Her separation from the outside social world and trying to find herself in nature reiterate her deep ecological path of seeking simplicity in life. Her mission is to maintain the harmony of biological diversity in nature. She is environmentally conscious and she has sympathy for every living creature on the earth. According to the deep ecological principle "Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening" (Naess 68). This deep ecological notion is reflected in her approach towards nonhuman beings. She tracks the population of coyote families in the valley she works as a forest ranger to avoid their extinction from the planet. Human excessive hunting, abuse, and killing of animals for material benefit highlight human's unnecessary interference with nonhuman animals. Coyotes are considered an endangered species and her concern for them shows her love for these animals. Coyote and other endangered species' extinction occurred due to human's exploitative and dominative attitude towards nonhuman beings. Human anthropocentric behavior such as excessive hunting, killing animals, and overfishing creates massive species extinction, and ultimately it affects the biological diversity of the ecosystem. Deanna lives by the deep ecological concept of "*Biospherical egalitarianism*", which is a 'deep-seated respect or veneration for all forms of life' (Naess 151-2). She views life as a whole, where every living entity is interconnected and interdependent. She believes that every nonhuman being has its place in nature and every living being has equal rights to live in nature. She understands the ecological cycle which reflects the predator and prey relationship. Her ecological view matches with deep ecology's ecocentric view of 'equal right to live and flourish' (Naess 68). When Deanna expresses her feelings that "These trees were the lungs of her mountain—not her mountain, nobody's a damn mountain, this mountain that belonged to scarlet tanagers, puffballs, luna moths, and coyotes" (Kingsolver 100) echo every living creatures purpose in the ecosystem. In this novel, Kingsolver meticulously expresses through Deanna's character that the earth does not belong to human-only but to every living and nonliving entities which together forms the holistic notion of the whole in the ecosystem where humans are only a part of the whole. The theme of the interconnectedness of every form of life is very much evident in this novel. Another eco-friendly character is Nannie Rawley who is an organic farmer who believes in

"Everything alive is connected to every other by fine, invisible threads" (PS 216). Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess proclaims that "Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations" (Naess151). Therefore, to maintain the richness and diversity of life humans have a moral obligation to respect and preserve nature for its intrinsic value. Deep ecological principle proposes the similar view that "Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values & also value in themselves" (Naess 68).

Another environmentalist character Lusa Maluf Landowski's life changes through her discovery of identifying herself with nonhuman nature. She left her city life and a job as an entomologist and came to live on a farm several miles down the mountain. Her attraction to the natural surroundings of farm life and her growing attachment to the land makes her determined to take charge of the farm after her husband's death. She completely changed the whole scenario of the farm. She makes a rule that nobody is allowed to "touch the woods, not to hunt squirrel or deer or coyote or ginseng" (Kingsolver 439). She appoints an assistant farm manager to keep the other men in the family from hunting. She confidently claimed that "This was still the Widener farm, but the woods were no longer the Widener woods, Lusa explained. They were nobody's" (ibid). She realized that nobody can claim land or forest because it exists for its good. She expresses the ecocentric view of the intrinsic worth of every living being. Her refusal to grow Tobacco plants on her farm reflects her awareness about environmental pollution by cigarette smoking. According to the ecocentric view, all forms of life have intrinsic value and the holistic view of Deep ecology upholds the intrinsic value of every organism in nature. Lusa's sense of environmental ethics extends to animal ethics. Like Deanna, she is also against killing animals. She loves nature as a whole and appreciates the value of "The trees, the moths. The foxes, all the wild things that live-up there" (Kingsolver 123) on the beautiful Appalachian mountain.

The ethical consideration of the wellbeing of animals comes under animal ethics and biocentric views which articulate the inherent worth of every living being irrespective of their instrumental value. Deanna's holistic approach towards life can be seen in her dialogue with Eddie, the hunter, where Eddie's anthropocentric behavior contrasts with Deanna's ecocentric view, "I don't love animals as individuals. . . . I love them as whole species. I feel like they should have the right to persist in their own ways" (Kingsolver 177). Her love for all the species reflects Naess's radical idea of "*the equal right to live and blossom*" (Naess152) of every living organism and according to the Deep ecology principle, humans have no right to kill other species and disrupt the harmony of ecological cycle of predator and prey relationship. Deanna supports the predator and prey relationship as an ecological system that tends to fulfill each other's criteria for survival. She has the understanding of the ecological fact that "To kill a natural predator is a sin" (Kingsolver 179) because every species has a purpose in life. The ecological cycle supports the preservation of biodiversity and ecological harmony in nature.

Kingsolver meticulously describes the interconnectivity in the ecosystem and how everything in nature is interdependent and correlated in the ecosystem. She artistically weaves the environmental message with these three characters' stories, their relationship with place, and how they communicate with their natural surroundings.

Humans' anthropocentric attitude towards nonhuman nature is observed in the character of Garnett Walker and Eddie, the hunter. Garnett Walker believes in spraying pesticides in his garden which has harmful effects in many ways. The natural way of growing plants maintain biological diversity but killing insects is not a solution for the wellbeing of

the plant. His eco-friendly neighbor Nannie Rawley gives reason and explains that "Predator bugs don't reproduce so fast, as a rule... that works out right in nature because one predator eats a world of pest bugs in its life. The plant-eaters have to go faster just to hold their ground. They're in balance with each other" (Kingsolver 275) she describes the predation and prey relationship in these lines:

> When you spray a field with a broad-spectrum insecticide like Sevin, you kill the pest bugs and the predator bugs, bang. If the predators and prey are balanced out to start with, and they both get knocked back the same amount, then the pests that survive will increase after the spraying, fast, because most of their enemies have just disappeared. And the predators will decrease because they've lost most of their food supply. So in the lag between sprayings, you end up boosting the numbers of the bugs you don't want and wiping out the ones you need. And every time you spray, it gets worse. (Kingsolver 275)

Her understanding and awareness of the ecological cyclical system reflect the Deep ecological principle of "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves" (Naess 68). In the novel, Nannie rebukes Garnett for his careless attitudes towards nature and explains every species' right to live and flourish in life "What harm is that tree doing you up there in the woods?… The raccoons can use it for a bridge. The salamanders will adore living under it while it rots. The woodpeckers will have a heyday" (PS 284) As every species has a role to play in life to fulfill their purpose but human's excessive interference into nonhuman nature ruins the ecological cycle. As philosopher Arne Næss states from an ecological point of view "The right of all forms of life to live is a universal right which cannot be quantified. No single species of living being has more of this particular right to live and unfold than any other species" (Naess 166).

The character Nannie's environmental awareness shows in her organic way of living. Her admiration for the living creatures and her deep respect for the non-human creature makes her a kind of environmentalist and ecologically conscious citizen. Once in a month at Grandy's bait store her act of buying every lizard from the tank and setting them all free behind her orchard reflects her love and care for the wellbeing of the animals. She claims that "there were ten or fifteen kinds of salamanders in Zebulon that were endangered species, and said she was doing her part to save the environment" (Kingsolver 138). As endangered species are vulnerable to human's exploitative behavior towards them, the deep ecological principle proposes that "Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening" (Naess 68). This worse situation can be handled with the application of the ecocentric view of respect and intrinsic value towards every form of life irrespective of its instrumental value. Nannie believes that "This world! A field of plants and bugs working out a balance in their own way" (Kingsolver 277). Deanna also supported 'the same view of Nannie that "Removing a predator has bigger consequences for a system" (Kingsolver 319). As each life is interconnected with other life and humans are only part of this ecosystem. The purpose of every living species has some obligation to fulfill its criteria to survive but humans have exploited other species to claim authority over other species.

At the end of the novel, Deanna marvels at the wonder of nature and appreciates the natural cycle of the ecosystem which goes on in its way "The world was what it was, a place with its own rules of hunger and satisfaction. Creatures lived and mated and died, they came and went, as surely as summer did. They would go their own ways, of their own accord" (Kingsolver 365). Here Kingsolver very aptly depicts the social message of environmental awareness and the acquiring of a profound deep ecological view of 'Self-realization', respect

for life, and identification with nature through her environmentally conscious characters in this novel. The current ecological crisis can be blamed on human anthropocentric behavior, excessive dominative and exploitative conduct towards nonhuman nature. No amount of technological development and scientific success can replace natural resources such as air, water, soil, and land. So, it is very clear that the need of the hour is sustainable living to preserve the natural resources and ecosystem of the earth. Thus, Naess's concept of deep ecology criticizes anthropocentrism and promotes a sustainable way of living positively.

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Death and Life-after-Death in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Song of Solomon*

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Abstract

This essay studies Toni Morrison's concepts of life, death and life-after-death in two of her novels: Sula and Song of Solomon. It examines how these concepts are interlinked, and they give meaning to one other. The essay argues that Morrison develops the concepts of death and life-after-death in African/ethnic context/culture. However, her representation of them is inextricably linked to the language and culture that she is trained in, i.e., English. Thus, her usage of tropes is contextual, yet they can be deciphered by the readers at large. This paper uses various examples from the two novels to show Morrison's stance/representation of the concepts.
Keywords: Death, Life-after-Death, Morrison, Sula, Song of Solomon

Introduction

Toni Morrison artistically crafts her fiction with characters that exhibit the meaning of life and death through their perspectives. While living is necessary for the meaning-making process of life, Morrison suggests that life is perceived closely by understanding the other side of it, i.e., death. She writes about death in a context that revolves around the subtexts palpable in her fiction, like slavery, racism, gender discrimination. Morrison handles the subject of "death" and its significance by painstakingly engaging in the intense philosophical rigour and seriousness. She deals with this subject in her fiction, glossing meaning concomitant to the context, and staging different conditions in which death transpires—natural or accidental, regular or unusual. In the context of Morrison's conception of death, Morrison depicts death and life-after-death in her fiction broaching the problem of representation of ethnic culture on the one hand, and the usage of the language (English) which might not provide her ample space to do this Signigyin(g) on the other. Nonetheless, in her novels, death as a phenomenon unfolds in various ways, and its effect can be felt upon individuals, either when directly encountering the dead in some form, or by reliving the memories of the deceased person. Morrison interlaces the story of this world and the other world by presenting the dead (specter/ghost) who recount/s their experiences. The impact of death, unawares, shapes the subjectivity of those who survive by steering the course of their lives. Morrison does not simply present death in her fiction in various forms, but she uses it to impart life lessons.

In her "Nobel Lecture", Morrison teaches a critical lesson about life and death: "[w]e die. That may be the meaning of life" (para. 21). Thus, pursuing Morrison's idea of death, this paper will examine the depiction of death in different circumstances, its meaning-

making role, and after-death representation and significance (as in signifier) in two of Morrison's novels: *Sula* (1973) and *Song of Solomon* (1977).

Death-in-Life: A Representation

The inevitability of death can be attributed to natural process of life's ending that shows human helpless at its occurrence. Morrison depicts the terrible experiences of the characters, in her fiction, while undergoing the process of death. Sula, the eponymous character, brings out the horror of pain and suffering of dying alone thus:

Pain took hold. First a fluttering as of doves in her stomach, then a kind of burning, followed by a spread of thin wires to other parts of her body . . . Several times she tried to cry out, but the fatigue barely let her open her lips, let alone take the deep breath necessary to scream . . .While in this state of weary anticipation, she noticed that she was not breathing, that her heart had stopped completely . . . She was not breathing because she didn't have to. Her body did not need oxygen. She was dead'. (Morrison, *Sula* 148-149)

The detailed description of Sula's death, running for two pages, sketches the physical pain that she undergoes in the last stage of her life. The process of dying continues till an individual gradually reaches the final stage. Morrison's description of Sula's death is not interlaced with any moral judgment or cultural nuances. Instead, she presents a plain narrative of how events unfold during death and the plight of the individual who goes through it.

In the description of Sula's death, Morrison gingerly portrays the process of dying, step by step. The artistry of Morrison's narrative makes it possible for the readers to understand the process of dying/phase of death through the observation and description of the narrator. The latter observes the pain the victim (Sula) undergoes in the process of dying, revealed through the helpless bodily gestures and movements by the victim. The humanistic and poignant narration ("cry" and "scream") is blended with the biological factor leading to death ("did not need oxygen"). In a similar manner, even taking someone's life is not an easy matter. In *Song of Solomon*, Hospital Tommy says that "[e]very killing is a hard killing…[k]illing anyone is hard" (124). In other words, the act/process of death is a tedious and taxing one as per Morrison's characters.

Some of the reasons for death in Morrison's novels are killing and suicide caused by unfortunate circumstances. In *Sula*, Hannah dies while "light[ing] the yard fire…The flames from the yard fire were licking the blue cotton dress, making her dance" (Morrison, *Sula* 75). Hannah's death can be speculated as suicide as she is upset with life and wanted to find out whether her mother, Eva, loved her at all as she knows that her mother had killed her brother, Plum. She could not see any meaning in life without love and felt no point in living. Kagan opines that suicide takes place when in "some period of life [we] can truly say that [our] life is *worse* than nonexistence" (329). Many personal and familial problems surrounded Hannah, and she did not have anyone to support her or take care of her. Due to this lack of love and support, perhaps she could not understand the meaning or point of her life and considered killing herself a better option than living. The value of life for her made less sense than the overpowering end of death.

If some characters in Morrison's fiction anticipate death, natural events precipitate uncertain death for others. Pilate, one of the main characters in *Song of Solomon* (hence *SOS*), believed that people lived forever and they choose to die at the time when they wanted

as there "[a]in't nothing natural about death. It's the most unnatural thing they is" (Morrison, *SOS* 173). Hence, this statement generates an understanding that death is not a natural (imaginatively) and desirable thing for people who want to live forever, facilitated with the rights and privileges of life. On the contrary, in a society where the power structure always already operates, the dominant forces muzzle the weaker ones, and resort to bumping off the resistant voices forever. In this context, in *SOS*, Guitar poignantly relates: "Everybody wants the life of a black man. Everybody. White men want us dead or quiet—which is the same thing as dead. White women, same thing" (ibid. 277). Thus, the politics of death is connected with factors like gender and race thereby connecting them to the question of power. This can also be connected to the way how the importance of 'Black Lives Matter' has come up in the present times; especially as/when they are victimized for their skin colour.

The event/accident/suicide that leads to death would also have its own history – circumstantial, psychological, etc. In Morrison's novels, one finds intersectional problems like race, gender and sexuality which lead to an individual's death. In *Sula*, Eva, who had immolated her son Plum, narrates her heart-rending side of the story of killing him:

> There wasn't space for him in my womb. And he was crawlin' back…I birthed him once. I couldn't do it again . . . I done everything I could to make him leave me and go on and be a man but he wouldn't and I had to seep him out so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb, but like a man. (Morrison, *Sula* 71-72)

The helpless condition that led Eva to kill her son so that he could be free from his pathetic living is debatable, as it justifies death as a solution to human problems. Death is considered better than worse living conditions, full of pain and hunger. A point to reflect upon is: if an individual has nothing to lose while dying, is it better to die than living a wretched life? This is also a bioethical question that tries to determine the utility of an individual's life vis-à-vis to his death.

The act of killing/death is a spectacle to those who are not affected by it, emotionally or morally, and do not want to take responsibility for it. In *Sula*, Nel and Sula accidentally kill Little Chicken by downing him in the water, and they do not save him, rather they hide the information about his death. It was a part of sheer fun that "Sula picked [Little Chicken] up by his hands and swung him…he slipped from her hands and sailed away out over the water…where [he] sank" (Morrison, *Sula* 60-61). In this act of killing, even "watch[ing]" becomes an act of participation (168)—when Eva meets Nel she tells that the latter "watched" the killing of Little Chicken. This point/argument of Eve moots the question of ethics in the context of death, the (social) responsibility of people to save the lives of others, and a larger question of power-politics as to who gets to decide who should live and who should die.

Death-in-Life: Usage of Tropes

The metaphors that address/anticipate/decode the matters related to death are predicated on cultural nuances. In *Sula*, the day Hannah dies she had "mentioned her dream of the wedding in the red dress" (Morrison, *Sula* 74) to her mother, and after Hannah dies her mother "remembered the wedding dream and recalled that weddings always meant death" (78). This Signifyin(g) implication of dreams is cultural to the community that practices and interprets them in context. Both Hannah and Eve had some inkling of the imminent danger, though not in the specific terms of one of their death, innocent of which the dream was

related the former (daughter) to the latter (mother).

The death of one (an Individual) plays a teleological role for the others where it functions as a revelation to the others regarding emotive and worldly matters. In *SOS*, for the young boy, Guitar, his father's death taught him a lesson that anyone in life could be deceptive, and one should not let others "fool [him/her-self]". When his father was "sliced into two halves", his mother had accepted money as compensation (Morrison, *SOS* 279), and to add insult to the injury, she bought "peppermint stick" for the kids on the day of the funeral. All the kids sucked the peppermint stick except Guitar who "held it in is hand until it stuck there. All day he held it. At the graveside, at the funeral supper, all the sleepless night" (280). Morrison's novels do not depict death merely as an end or cessation of life; rather, they celebrate it as a meaning-making process of life. Guitar articulates this point quite eloquently: "What good is a man's life if he can't even choose what to die for?" (278)

Morrison unfolds the idea of death and its implication through tropes that are natural and reflects the question of life and death. In *SOS*, Lena provides an illuminating perspective of death through a maple bush that would be dead soon, as "the leaves aren't turning this year" (Morrison, *SOS* 264). She tells her brother (Milkman) that he "peed on it" exactly as he had also peed on her. She reminds him of the errand that the family had made on a summer afternoon when their Daddy had Packard. Milkman wanted to pee, and she had helped him unbutton his pants. Then she went to "pick flowers, returned, and at the sound of her footsteps behind him, he'd turned around before he was through" (43). She tells him that she wanted to kill him and had tried some tricks to kill him. Through this maple reference, Lena tells Milkman how he peed on the life of their other sister, Corinthians, who had fallen in love with a man who was their tenant. Milkman reported their love affair to his father, after which Corinthians was barred from going out of the house. The dead maple bush symbolized the death of Corinthians love life. Denying Corinthians the right to love the person she likes tantamount to death as she then merely exists mechanically.

Names are considered to be the symbolic trope of what one stands for, and Milkman's grandfather 'Macon Dead I' uniquely acquires his name while registering for Freedmen's Bureau. Milkman's father relates the incident:

Papa was in his teens and went up to sign up, but the man behind the desk was drunk. He asked Papa where he was born. Papa said Macon. Then he asked him who his father was. Papa said, 'He's dead.' Asked him who owned him, Papa said, 'I'm free.' Well, the Yankee wrote it all down, but in the wrong spaces. Had him born in Dunfrie, wherever the hell that is, and in the space for his name the fool wrote, 'Dead' comma 'Macon.' (Morrison, *SOS* 66)

This was figurative death of the old Macon who was a slave and moves north to be free. The name Dead is also a symbolic ascription of what the word dead could imply regarding the history of slavery and the overall passage of it. Rest of the family members and generation that follow take up the name re-living the experience of slavery through the constant reminder of the familial name "Dead,"

In *Sula*, Shadrack, World War I veteran, bears a horrible experience of the war, which reflects in his eccentric behaviour, the symbolic manifestation of which is his celebration of "National Suicide Day" in which he walks shouting "suicide" through the street. He does so in order to "manage death's unexpectedness" (Morrison, *Sula* 7). It is not Shadrack who talks, but an unseen force operates in order to pass the message, and it gets translated in the voice of the person who is a symbolic "specter". This falling back to the voice would assure that there is an experiential voice that speaks for the cause, though it is

quite difficult to rely on the ethical or political side of it.

Life-after-Death: Haunting or Meaning-Making

The distinctive feature in Morrison's novels is the dead coming back to the world, making its presence felt in various forms, influencing the "normal" flow of society and providing an alternative narration. This is quite apparent in Morrison's later novels, especially *Beloved* (1987). Some characters in Morrison's novels keep lingering after their death, and others perpetuate their presence through the memory lane of those alive. An important question to reflect on is: what does this say about Morrison's making of "death" imaginary?

Morrison's idea of a ghost could be predicated on the African American cultural roots that depict the nuances of unnatural death, but as she depicts death in the language that she is trained to write in – English – could she completely do away with the cultural ethos of the latter? In *Sula*, Eva tells Nel that she knows everything about their killing of Little Chicken as her dead son "Plum. Sweet Plum. He tells [her] things" (Morrison, *Sula* 169). This would imply that Eva has been talking to her dead son, perhaps, through necromancy, or it is just the dead person suggesting things to people alive. In *SOS*, Pilate narrates about her dead father: "we saw him sitting there on a stump…Something in his face scared us. It was like looking at a face under water. Papa got up after a while and moved out of the sun on back into the woods" (Morrison, *SOS* 53). This has an implication regarding the recurrence of the past in some form, and its role that shows the way for the future.

The novels of Morrison also depict the symbolic connection of the living with the dead. In *SOS*, Pilate tells Macon the reason why she collected the dead body/bones of her father in her "sack, piece by piece", and kept it in the central part of her house:

> [I]f you take a life, then you own it. You responsible for it. You can't get rid of nobody by killing them. They still there, and they yours now…You can't take a life and walk off and leave it. Life is life. Precious. And the dead you kill is yours. They stay with you anyway, in your mind. (Morrison, *SOS* 258-259)

Here, a matter of interest is the argument that can be developed through the presence of the dead body. Though the body does not have spirit/soul, yet, it still exists in its corporeal form. The presence of that body in Morrison's *SOS* in the central part of Pilate's house made the dead person/her father exist until it got stolen. It is for that reason even Pilate brings the dead body of her father from the cave and keeps it hanging at the centre of the house, projecting it like property.

The impact of someone's death is discernable in the lives of people who are affected by it, the way they comport themselves in their day to day lives. In *SOS*, Guitar "can't eat sweets" (Morrison, *SOS* 75) as it makes him "think of dead people…white people . . . and to puke" (76). On the day of his father's funeral, who was killed, his mother had given him "peppermint stick" which he could not eat (280). The childhood memory of associating the death of his father and sweets was traumatic for Guitar lifelong. To settle his disturbed mind, he works towards the redemption of black people by involving himself with the Seven Days, a black revenge squad, which operated on the principle: "If the Negro was hanged, they hang; if a Negro was burnt, they burn; raped and murdered, they rape and murder" (Morrison, *SOS* 192).

While death is considered to be a sad event for the loss of life, it might generate contrary reactions, depending on how the person is looked upon in the concerned society. In

Sula, "[t]he death of Sula Peace was the best news folks up in the bottom had" and only few who were "not afraid to witness the burial of the witch" went to the cemetery (Morrison, *Sula* 150). Her death was presumed to be the "dawning" of brighter days (151). Morrison makes us question the value of individual life, even after death, and the eponymous character Sula becomes an epitome in this regard.

Conclusion

Both the novels – *Sula* and *Song of Solomon* – unfold the story that binds one to the cultural history which is not devoid of death, either of individuals or of culture. The African American history, which is shrouded with the problems of racism and slavery, finds its distinct tale in the manner in which the two novels show the concept of death.The novels depict Death occurring under various circumstances and the hardship entailed in its process. It is both for the person who dies as well as for the survivors. A close analysis of the dying process in many situations shows Morrison's meticulous study of the subject of death. Whether an individual dies a natural death, is killed, or kills himself/herself, the story woven around it makes death a subject of more in-depth analysis. It is not just about the subject of death but the religious and cultural fabric associated with it that assigns significance to the entire process from death to after-death. It is through death Morrison informs the reader of the meaning of life itself. Thus, meaning-making is churned in the process of life, death and life-after-death. This can also be deduced as the process of natural science where things do not end/die, but they convert into a different form, either mass or energy. In the novels of Morrison, there is a symbolic representation of the new forms—in case of *Sula* and *SOS*, the spirits of the dead one's are witnessed. Coming back of the characters to the world after their death represents Morrison's take that death is not the ceasing of life and there is a continuity of the cycle. Death shapes the functioning of the world, as the dead ones keep guiding and influencing through the process of "memory" and "re-memory." The death of a person contributes to the subjective formation of other individuals, as the impact Guitar's had of his father's death in *SOS*. Death is not seen just in a metaphorical embodiment of guidance, but Morrison makes many philosophical bearing about death. Morrison employs these ideas quite uniquely in her work, giving it a distinct ethnic colour at the same time incorporating the modern ideas of death.

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Endnotes

1. K. Zauditu-Selassie in the book *African Spiritual Traditions in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (2009) shows the influence of the African tradition over Morrison in projecting the vital questions related to life and death.
2. Henry Louis Gates uses the word Signifyin(g) to show its difference from the western concept of Signification. See *The Signifyin(g) Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988) for details.

Possibilities of Applying "New Mestiza Consciousness" to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*: An Analytic Discourse

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Abstract

This paper will attempt to demonstrate the possibilities of applying "New Mestiza Consciousness" to Alice Walker's The Color Purple*. Alice Walker in her work of fiction* The Color Purple *deals with a distressing problem that is directly responsible for the sufferings of the Black Women of her community. While Patriarchy is no doubt repressive, the manipulative, dehumanizing condescension of white feminism cannot be condoned. This paper shall make use of analytical critical discourse to apply the theory of "New Mestiza Consciousness" to the text of* The Color Purple *with the noble intention of identifying ways and means of mitigating the anguish of Black women.*
Keywords*: "New Mestiza Consciousness", "Black feminism", The Color Purple, Third World Gender Discourse) .*

Introduction

The approach and practice of Gloria Anzaldua's "New Mestiza Consciousness" is undoubtedly evolutionary in nature as it aims not only to strengthen the collective identity structure of Black Women, but also to valorize their cultural values before the world, thus galvanizing a global recognition. "New Mestiza Consciousness" in simple terms merely means "the adaptation of cross-cultural values through one's racial identity." As an inclusive theory, it attempts to bring together borderline consciousness/space consciousness, political consciousness, cultural consciousness and situational consciousness into one cohesive whole. This progressive idea, as developed by Gloria Anzaldua in 1987, attempts to accommodate every kind of consciousness onto a single psychological platform. It teaches Mexican American women (chicana) to transcend their racial identity to cross the border line thus enabling the appropriation of an alien cultural discourse of plurality or hybridity. As a cultural discourse "New Mestiza" is a borderland consciousness which blurs the identity of an actual borderline in order to formulate a merged cosmopolitan plural cultural identity. This in turn is a progressive step not only for sharing a sense of sisterhood among the "double marginalized class of women", but also for their global recognition and sustainable development while merging or co-existing with a dominant sexist/racist group of culture (patriarchy/ main stream white feminism). The birth of "New Mestiza Consciousness" is determined by the adaptation of cross-cultural values like tolerance, ambiguity and plurality. "New Mestiza" as a theory of consciousness is an

extended and advanced version intending to reconstruct an idea of collective consciousness and cross-cultural values blurring the cartographic line of border or boundary land.

Alice Walker's master piece *The Color Purple* reflects over certain psychological, political, social and cultural issues to enable a critical comprehension of the very concept of "New Mestiza Consciousness". The voice of protest against the double domination enabled by patriarchy is revitalized through the relation between Celie and Shug in *The Color Purple* where the narrator questions the very structure of system and society deliberately demeaning Black Women as "commodified objects". Narratives of rape, slavery, incest, physical violence and child birth reflect the degree of trauma, intolerance and ambiguity that Black Women undergo in their lives. This paper will try to explore the redemptive insights of "New Mestiza Consciousness" in co-relation with the depiction of social, psychological, cultural, racial, situational problems faced by the Black Women in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. At the same time this research paper will demonstrate the subsequent intersection of Gender as a performative art form of resistance against all those above-mentioned problems. Minority literary discourse and color line politics are the two basic factors which are specifically responsible for restricting the lives of Black Women within certain parameters or codes in terms of shaping a stereotypical collective gender identity structure. As a mestize, Anzaldua refers to herself as the brother and sister of every person belonging to the community. In this way, a chicana dives into the collective identity crossing the borderline of race, space, culture or ethnicity. Alice Walker's ground breaking work of fiction *The Color Purple* shares cross cultural values and identity codes within and beyond African American ethno space.

Womanism and Space lines

Alice Walker uses an epistolary style while writing this novel, *The Color Purple*. Generally the theme of this novel is marked by Celie's journey from an innocent, uneducated, submissive girl to a mature, independent woman. Through this novel the narrating persona tries to liberate the victim self of Celie. Shug, another woman character in *The Color Purple* thinks that Celie is a victim of double or triple manipulations**:** manipulation of white male and female, manipulation of Black male and also manipulation caused by economic dependency. With the help of a diagram, we shall try to understand the position of various characters in subsequent co-relation to space conscious values and the exploitative borderline of restrictions.
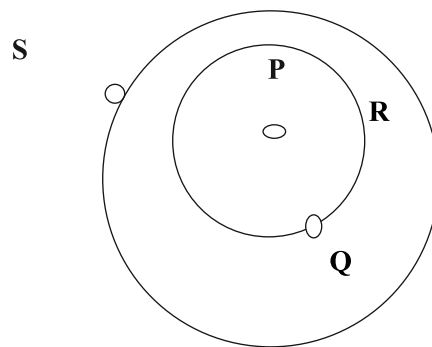
Suppose, the dot "P" is the center of a total space circle "S" which is supposed to be the position of African American ethnic culture in the context of the global cultural index. The space, dot "R" is supposed to be the space of incorporating conscious value for African American cultural discourse and the borderline dot "Q" is supposed to stand for accumulating barriers of economy and the patriarchy of the black male.

In the context of the text *The Color Purple,* the application of "New Mestiza Consciousness" or space/borderline consciousness can be equated through positioning certain characters in place of dots, borderlines and space. The centre dot "P" stands for the character discourse of Shug Avery and Mr.—Albert both of whom enjoy economic privilege and black patriarchal value respectively. The position of Celie can be equated with the peripheral position of dot "Q" and the incorporating space conscious values which is marked by "R" is represented by Netti, Celie's younger sister and a few other characters as well. The very dot positioning "S" is the cultural index of the total African American ethnic discourse and its relative stance with respect to merging the total African American cultural identity with a cosmopolitan, hybrid, plural collective identity.

In the subsequent critical analysis, the above diagram with the help of certain positional dots—"P", "Q", "R" & "S" helps to establish the fact that the application of "New Mestiza" as a borderline or space consciousness theory is possible within the African American ethnic community and beyond, especially to those who share more or less common cross cultural values.

The shift from "Mestiza" to "New Mestiza" is marked by decentralizing the center, thus erasing the thin and invisible borderline of hegemony, sex, gender, color, class etc. The ground level execution of erasure of manipulative borderlines will not be possible until the privileged class women from the centre support the women of the periphery mentally, physically, financially, politically, and culturally.

The invisible manipulations or dominations of Black male, White female and White male restrict Celie's spirit from free thinking and from enjoying her life as an individual. Celie codifies herself through the imposed codes given to her by mainstream white feminism and the role model of patriarchy. Celie has suffered from psychological damage and trauma all through her life because of physical abuse and violence. Celie's words underscore her dispassionate anguish while having intercourse—"He start to choke me, saying you better shut up and git used to it" (Walker, 3). Having undergone such brutal abuse from black males, the women of her community look to women for refuge and redemption as they have lost faith in men whom they consider bestial. Celie's words establish her dependence on other women in order to withstand inhuman torture—"He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got something in my eye but I even look at mens. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I 'm not scared of them" (Walker, 7). "Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr- say, cause she my wife" (Walker, 23). Manipulation by black males is so extreme that the use and abuse of their wives as per their choice or demandis claimed as a basic right since women's bodies are their private property. Celie has such minimal space that she has no place to project her voice, be it the voice of trauma or protest. Celie gives birth to a child as a result of incest with her father and her father tells her to keep it secret compelling her "you better not tell nobody but God" (Walker, 3). Thereafter she starts writing letters to God because no one either in her family or in her community is ready to accept or believe her words. In order to hide her pain and trauma behind the curtain, Celie makes herself almost invisible thus enabling and ensuring her total rejection as a human being. Celie in her letter to Netti writes about her disbelief in God.

Considering God as a male figure she writes that God is callous towards the sufferings of black women, and as a manly figure God has an epicurean outlook towards the problems of black women and women belonging to the periphery. Rather than God, Celie finds belief and trust in the sisterhood, the reason why she started writing about her problems to Nettie and Shug Avery—"I don't write to God no more. I write to you. When I told Shug I am writing to you she laughed" (Walker, 173). "She believes that God is only for privileged class women and white people" (Walker, 179). "Shug! I say. God wrote the bible, White folks had nothing to do with it" (Walker, 175). It is only Shug who stands strongly with Celie in her hour of crisis. Despite being "satin" (wives of the same husband) Celie and Shug create a strong bond of love, sympathy, affection, and cooperation with each other totally abandoning the negative emotions of jealousy and antagonism. It is Shug who comes to Celie's rescue in moments of crisis. Celie is overwhelmed by the affectionate and kind hearted concern of Shug Avery. Shug calls Celie her own sister and dedicates a song in the name of Celie which indeed is a welcome surprise for Celie who has never received such warm hospitality in her life before. Thus the bonding of sisterhood is felt beyond the boundary of blood relationship. "Shug saying Celie. Miss Celie. And I look up where she at. She say my name again. She say this song I'm bout to sing is call miss Celie's Song. Celie says first time somebody made something and name it after me" (Walker, 70). The relationship between Shug and Celie has significance beyond their coordinating selves as they emulate an example of complementing and completing each other without the need of any male counterpart as reflected in their conjugal love relation, (lesbianism). In order to satisfy their bodily pleasure, they are not dependent on the male. As an evolutionary approach propagated by Alice Walker, the relationship may be seen as a progressive discourse in the context of gender and queer relation. This is reflected in the text when Shug says to Celie- "Listen—She say, right down there in your pussy is a little button----my face hot enough to melt itself. She say----here take this mirror and go look at yourself down there, I bet you never seen it, have you?" (Walker, 74). Shug replied to Celie "I love you Miss Celie. And then she haul off and kiss me on the mouth—umh she say like she surprise—I kiss her back, say ummm too---us kiss and kiss till us can't hardly kiss no more" (Walker,103). Shug later leaves Celie for a 19 year old man Germaine with whom Shug finds her love. When Shug and Germaine's relationship is over, Shug comes back to Celie only to find Celie in relation with Albert which makes her jealous. This type of relationship of jealousy between Celie and Shug further highlights the intensity of their passion for each other. They miss one another a lot when they part ways and tie the knot with other men. This shows that Shug is incomplete without Celie and vice versa. The physical and emotional bonding between Celie and Shug is too strong to be equated with material or mechanical profit or loss. It is hatred against the manipulative oppression of the black male and the subsequent emergence of a new consciousness in their traumatised psyche that enriches their relationship making it more productive and sustainable. For Celie, there has been no reprieve either through the Black man or through the white woman or through privileged women. Thus, it is not only the oppression of patriarchy or the domination of Black males which is specifically responsible for the traumatic and problematic lives of Black Women, but also the non-cooperation and callousness of both the privileged women of their own community and the white women outside their ethnic space that are equally responsible for turning their lives into a prison house of misery and suffering. Finally, it is Shug, the black woman of privilege and empowermet who makes it possible for Celie to cross the border

and embrace the centre.

And here comes the significance of applying the idea of "New Mestiza Consciousness". As a mestize, Anzaldua (1987) once said "there is no one chicano language, just as there is no one chicano experience." (1987:58). She tries to overcome the tradition of Black American silence (1987:59), being every woman's sister of all races" (1987:80). Thus Chicana dives into a collective identical thought through realization and experience which is not personal but collective. Anzaldua states it thus: "My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance". (Anzaldua, 107). Resistance must begin individually but must expand to Chicana collectively. In this way she became the brother and sister of every woman of the world, crossing the border line of race, color, gender, economy, politics, class, caste, and sex. The reflection of this type of conscious value is noticed in *The Color Purple* where strong female relationships which are likened to sisterhood, help Celie to find her actual identity. Netti too, Celie's younger sister despite belonging to the community of underprivileged black women crosses the borderline of her community's ethno-space and merges with other women of the world. She enjoys freedom, and develops political, cultural, situational consciousness within herself. Unlike her elder sister Celie who largely remains passive, submissive and uneducated, Netti embraces different types of worldly values, cultures, politics, races, and is empowered by experience and travel. Her values are not identical with those of traditional black women of her community who love to see themselves through the eyes of other privileged class women. Instead, she crosses the borderline of the patriarchy of the black male and privileged class women to enjoy her indigenousness and individuality in the midst of a merged cosmopolitan hybrid culture. Thus she becomes a round character who reflects the characteristics of "New Mestiza Consciousness" in every respect. Netti's letter to her sister Celie justifies her value of consciousness a lot—"We are not white. We are not Europeans. We are black like the African themselves---And that we and the Africans will be working for a common goal: the uplift of black people everywhere" (Walker, 122). The interesting fact is that like "New Mestiza Consciousness" Netti also highlights the value system of the collective identity structure in order to catapult her problems, or voice of protest to the global platform while simultaneously readjusting herself to the dominant cultural group of white feminism or European feminism. It is not a separation or a rejection, but rather an accumulation or unification of their indigenous ethnic values in order to receive/restore an identity or recognition at the global platform. The activity of "Sewing" in *The Color Purple* is a symbolic element which justifies the strong sisterly bonding that exists between Sophia, Netti, Shug and Celie. Shug not only helps Celie to find her true identity but also gives her money to establish her own business thus empowering her to become an independent woman capable of enjoying financial freedom in her life. Celie in a roundabout way builds up the thread of sisterhood between Shug, Nettie and herself. Though she is at home, on her own psychological ground, she crosses the manipulative borderlines of economy, patriarchy and color. Nettie after visiting Harlem and New York reaches Africa. Celie in her letter to Netti states that –"I am making some pants for you to beat the heat in Africa". So, their bonding of sisterhood crosses the cartographical borderline.

Conclusion

The Black female can acquire her identity and live her life harmoniously not only

through protesting against male domination but also through building a sense of sisterhood with other women within and beyond their ethno space. Such an attemt no doubt would help to heal the psychological trauma of physical violence. A rare type of conjugal love relation is born among Black women sharing common problems because of patriarchy, white feminism and domination of the black male: "Shug spoke right up for you Celie. She say Albert, you been mistreating somebody I love. So as far as you concern, I am gone" (Walker, 27). These lines from the text *The Color Purple* provide a rare redemptive insight to show that the love between two women *has* been reflected as a more powerful instrument than the love between a man and a woman. Despite some progress, the execution of "Third World feminism" or "Womanism" is still a distant illusion in the context of literature and cultural discourse as per as its very ground zero reality is concerned. Most of the time the main stream privileged class feminism or feminism of white male and female tried to be the voice of third world women or under privileged black women but subsequently failed to deliver the message. As a result, most of the problems of Black Women or Women of the underprivileged community have never been solved because the privileged class women or main stream feminists have no firsthand experience or any ground zero experience with the problems and lives of Black Women or women belonging to the margin. Alice Walker's fictional narrative *The Color Purple* unfolds several problems of Black Woman which remain unchanged. The possible application of "New Mestiza Consciousness" theory in the critical discourse of literature and cultural study may be seen as a progressive and evolutionary step towards minimizing the problems of Black Women or problems of women belonging to the periphery.

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Confronting the Colonial Narrative through Cultural *Survivance:*
A Critical Reading of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

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Abstract

The racial and ethnic identities in postcolonial literature are not fixed but are subject to continuous change. Postcolonial literature offers a 'contested space' that rewrites history to represent nativity. Therefore, the postcolonial literary productions are the cultural representations that configure the issues of marginalized identities and reassess their voices that previously had no voice. In such a scenario, the history, politics and culture of the marginalized are altered, rediscovered, and reassessed by rejecting the monolithic and monochromic versions of western textual and cultural discourse. The postcolonial authors stress the polyphonic and heteroglossic concepts of a poststructuralist discourse that put an end to "final vocabularies." Native American literatures from the United States have also countered the master narratives by refuting the colonial constructions of natives through cultural survivance. Louise Erdrich is one such Native American author who has focused on the Anishinaabe tribal patterns in order to resist the authoritarian narratives. The novel Tracks *focuses on the indigenous narratives of Chippewas who have been uprooted from their ancestral land and have endured and survived through time to the present. Erdrich emphasizes the tribal narratives in her novel to create a sense of native presence over the absence in hegemonic discourse. Erdrich has configured the contents of Chippewa's oral myths and legends to preserve the indigenous cultural traditions which put an end to the "terminal narratives."*
Keywords*: Anishinaabe, Chippewas, Survivance, Manifest Manners*

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absence in hegemonic discourse. Erdrich has configured the contents of Chippewas' oral myths and legends to preserve the indigenous cultural traditions which put an end to the "terminal narratives."

Louise Erdrich is a renowned Native American author who was born in Minnesota in 1954. She is from a mixed-blood ancestry as her father was a German-American and her mother was a Chippewa. She had her schooling from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Boarding School and as a child she started writing. Later on she was educated at Dartmouth College and majored in Creative Writing at Johns Hopkins University in 1979. She was married to Michael Dorris, her former anthropology professor who was also of Native American descent. The literary works of Louise Erdrich focus primarily on Native American characters that are mixed-blood and socially and culturally displaced. *Tracks* (1988) is Erdrich's third novel of her tetralogy that began with *Love Medicine* (1984), and *The Beet Queen* (1986). The novels deal with the saga of interrelated lives of four Anishinaabe families residing on Indian reservation which is near the fictional town of Argus, North Dakota. Erdrich has employed multiple first-person narrative technique in *Tracks* to relate the events of the lives of native characters, alternating between Nanapush (tribal patriarch) and Pauline (a young girl of mixed ancestry). The chapters narrated by Nanapush focus upon narrating the stories to his granddaughter, Lulu who has come back from a boarding school. Lulu was sent to school at the age of ten which becomes a reason of her estrangement from her mother. Nanapush in an attempt to reconcile them narrates to Lulu the situations between 1912 and 1924 that led her mother (fleur) to take that decision. Nanapush has focused on tribal narratives and narrates how Fleur had survived the difficult times through observance of Ojibwa customs. Pauline Puyat (the second narrator) stands in opposition to Nanapush and Fleur who are the followers of native tradition. Pauline takes refuge in a sadistic form of Catholicism and has denied her Native American heritage. Pauline always admires the white race due to her light skin tone and has a strong desire to be a part of the white community.

Louise Erdrich has attempted to destabilize the hegemonic discourse of mainstream American society by chronicling the struggles of Chippewas (Ojibwa tribe). As a storyteller, she has created a chain of tradition in the text to portray the experiences of self, community, and the world. She has destabilized the imagic representation of Native Americans in the literature of mainstream American society who have been treated as a "source for a literary construction of a vanished life rather than as members of a vital continuing culture" (qtd. in *Manifest Manners* 8). The dominant narratives configure Native Americans through negative stereotypes and construe them in past tense to represent them as a vanished race. The indigenous epistemological narrative in the novel *Tracks* defies the inequitable structures of power by providing strong evidence that "natives are the stories of imagic presence, and Indians are the actual absence" (*Manifest Manners* vii). The discourse of storytelling is dialogic and provides the colonized a weapon against colonizers to alternate reality by exchanging stories. The counter-stories posed by marginalized challenge, displace, or mock the pernicious master narratives. The indigenous discourse of tribal trickster and shamanism is polyvocal in nature and puts an end to 'final vocabularies' and it also subterfuges the narrative of colonizers in the novel. Smith in her *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* reminds us that "decolonization cannot be limited to deconstructing the dominant story and revealing underlying texts, for none of that helps people improve their current conditions or prevents them from dying" (4). Frantz Fanon claims that "liberation of colonized is linked to contesting the subjectivity imposed by the colonizer, and writing one's own identity" (qtd. in "The Canvas of the Other" 147). He

insinuates that the colonized are always dehumanized by the colonizers who cultivate hegemonic discourse of norms, culture, and ideas of progress, civilization, and barbarism. The colonized, in order to liberate, must first become humans which necessitates an awareness of dependent structures and a conscious effort to break from them (qtd. in "The Canvas of the Other" 148).

Informed and grounded in the indigenous epistemology, the narrative of trickster discourse subverts the "simulations of dominance" by liberating tribal realities from the legacy of oppression. The trickster discourse is a narrative of tribal liberation which resists the "terminal creeds" or "manifest manners" of colonial dominance. The tribal trickster discourse, in the words of Vizenor, is a new way of conceiving and speaking about native sovereignty which is distinct from 'treaty sovereignty' and 'territorial sovereignty' in terms of colonialism (qtd. in *The Columbia Guide* 141). Vizenor contends that the differences in trickster narratives are never clear as the distances between earthdiver myths, tribal dreams, comedies, and metaphors have been floating free from time in conversations. The "Earthdiver myths" have helped in recasting the tribal trickster in a new manner. The native trickster of the contemporary period, like the trickster in myths, dives into "unknown urban places" and also into the "racial darkness in the cities" to create a new consciousness of co-existence (Vizenor, *Earthdivers* ix). The trickster aesthetic in the text plays language games by creating tribal referents which are constituted as subtexts and demands active participation from the reader to decode the multiple perspectives. The meanings in the text are embodied in paradoxes, dualisms and contradictions between freedom and restraint. Moreover, the trickster discourse of Native Americans is deeply embedded within the oral narrative which helps them in establishing "an awareness of tribal identity, spiritual traditions and connections to the land and its creature" (Bak 33). The adherence to native traditions provides a ground to indigenous people who can respond and resist the dominant structures as cultural shape-shifters. Philip J. Deloria proposes that during the twentieth century, Native Americans have lived as tricksters since they have adapted themselves to the imposed cultural conditions by changing their outlook (qtd. in *Where "Indians" Fear to Tread?* 183).

Nanapush in the text denotes a trickster figure as he has close affinities with Nanabozho who is the Ojibwa trickster figure and cultural hero. Nanabozho is a predominant trickster figure in the Anishinaabe culture because he acts as a storyteller and appears in the oral stories of the tribes about the creation of the world. Nanapush is represented as an elderly man who speaks with tribal wisdom but he has a sense of humor. He enjoys talking and is adept in his skill of speaking that exhibits his reliance on wits. He admits at the beginning of the novel, "Even a sledge won't stop me once I start" (Erdrich 7). While discussing his name, Nanapush relates how his father gave him the name of 'Nanapush'. He says, "… Nanapush. That's what you'll be called. Because it's got to do with trickery and living in the bush…The first Nanapush stole fire. You will steal hearts" (Erdrich 33). In the text, the reader discerns that Nanapush plays pranks upon people and tricks them to expose their flaws that assist him in trapping his enemies. Owing to this trickster-like quality, he becomes able to find out the secrets of Pauline. Pauline has decided to not to relieve herself more than two times a day in order to expect eternal life. When Nanapush recognizes Pauline's secret, he traps her by offering tea and she eventually rushes to relieve herself for more than two times a day. Besides his ability to play pranks, Nanapush exhibits trickster-like qualities by relying upon his wits. Nanapush, like Coyote, does not use brute strength but uses his wit to attain his ends. It is evident when he takes revenge on Clarence Morrissey for kidnapping him and Margaret

as well as shaving off Margaret's hair.

Furthermore, Nanapush as a 'trickster cultural hero' epitomizes the significance of preservation of the 'old ways' for which he has resisted the attempts of assimilation into the white society. Nanapush symbolizes those natives who have survived the apocalyptic phase of life when their entire families were wiped off. In the text, the reader observes that he, like Fleur, is the sole survivor of his family but has remained intact with the traditional tribal practices. He acts as a storyteller when he relates the events of history to his adopted granddaughter Lulu. The narrative style of Nanapush in the text remains grounded in Chippewa's mythic tradition as he bears resemblance to Nanabush/Nanabozho who acts as a trickster-transformer in Chippewa woodland myths. The stylistic devices used by Nanapush while narrating the events imply the form and purpose of storytelling in native communities. In Native American communities, the art of storytelling is not only related with what the storyteller has to say and to whom but also with the manner in which he relates the events. The stylistic devices of parallelism and repetition employed in the novel create tension, symmetry and balance. At the beginning of the text, the Nanapush describes the apocalypse of the Anishinaabe people. He states, "We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall" (Erdrich 1). He describes the hard times that Anishinaabe had endured and their survival from the wrath of genocide. His insistence on the word "last" reminds of the last beaver, buffalo, bear, and birch as well as all other non-human species that had a relationship with the Anishinaabe. Due to encroachment by the outsiders, the Anishinaabe people witnessed "exile in the storm of government papers" (Erdrich 1). The storm of government papers is the narrative of dominance that has undermined as well as oppressed the native culture. The construed narratives of colonial settlers have robbed Anishinaabe of their old world in which they used to live and work with their relations. Notwithstanding, Nanapush represents that native figure who has challenged and ousted the oppressive discourse of the mainstream community with valor. Besides this, the reader can also sense his whispered statements when he tells the story about Margaret who lost her braids. He says, "I can only tell it step by step" (Erdrich 109). When Lulu grows tired of listening to the long stories, he reprimands her in his own style and reminds her of the roots and her mother's role in the storytelling tradition. He states, "I made her sit down and listen, just the way you are sitting now. Your mother always showed the proper respect to me. Even when I bored her, she made a good effort at pretending some interest" (Erdrich 178).

In addition to the trickster discourse, Louise Erdrich has upheld the native tradition and culture through Shamanistic religious ideals. She has recounted the struggles of Anishinaabe people in the modern world where the traditional shamanistic religion deconstructs the semiotics of Christianity. David Chidester in "Colonialism and Shamanism" proposes that a shaman possesses power to bind the community through which he mediates between a transcendental reality and a particular social group. The social group is constituted by kinships because the shamans are considered to be the hereditary ritual specialists for their clans. The shaman necessarily performs a range of social, political, and economic roles but due to the effects of colonization, the roles of a shaman are altered. It is examined that colonization is not only the system of political, military, and economic power but it is also a cultural agenda that affects every facet of indigenous communities. Owing to the cultural agenda of colonization, the colonizers have demonized local forms of religious specialists, and shamans are left with no other option but either to extinct, assimilate or resist the colonial domination. However, there are some shamans who have often played innovative roles as they have acted as mediators "not only between the supernatural and

human beings but also between the religious worlds of colonizers and colonized" (42). These shamans, who act as mediators, are the "postindian warriors" in terms of Gerald Vizenor as they challenge the simulated images of shamans as fakes, frauds, or imposters. Vizenor in his 1997 novel *Hotline Healers* has claimed that the "shamans can be treacherous, unstable, and touchy, but only the envious mistrust their vision" (52).

The narrative reveals that the presence of the Catholic Church has influenced the Ojibwa beliefs and traditions. It has been represented through the rivalry between two women, Fleur Pillager and Pauline Puyat. Fleur Pillager is a shaman with supernatural powers and upholds the traditions of her ancestors in an attempt to save their land from white settlement. Pauline Puyat, on the other hand, also upholds a native ancestry but she denies her Native American heritage and starts believing in a sadistic form of Catholicism. Pauline Puyat who is the daughter of a white mother and a mixed-blood father, has internalized the racist attitudes of the white society. In her desire to be like her Canadian grandfather, she moves to Argus and starts attending the Catholic missionary school. Pauline's neurotic self-hatred for native tradition disassociates her from Ojibwa culture and she makes every possible attempt to assimilate into the white community. Instead of learning the traditional arts such as beading and curing leather, Pauline demands to be sent to the nuns in Argus and desires to learn lace-making. When Pauline starts living in Argus, she tries to suppress all memories of her past life. She makes every possible attempt to assimilate into the white society but she gets ignored or ridiculed by the white girls of Argus. The narrative of Pauline is rooted in the colonial discourse of assimilation that construes its subjects in a negative manner and portrays their absence over presence. Pauline is entrapped into the colonial discourse of identity and becomes unable to articulate her native roots.

Fleur Pillager, like Nanapush, has survived the apocalyptic phase of her life as her family residing on the reservation was wiped off and she was the sole survivor. She stands in stark opposite to Pauline as she refuses to embrace Christianity and the discourse of white society. She adheres to the Ojibwa customs not solely because she is guided by the powerful underwater manito Misshepeshu but because she gets guidance from her mother and Nanapush. Her mother demonstrates the importance of honoring one's heritage by retaining the given name and culture. Nanapush becomes Fleur's next teacher after her family is wiped out by an epidemic and guides her in maintaining traditional values. She has demonstrated her adherence to traditional values when she returns to the four allotments of her family on the shores of Machimanito in order to protect it from land surveyors. Barry in "Fleur Pillager's Bear Identity" asserts that Fleur Pillager in Erdrich's novels is that mythic character who traces the "spiritual legacies of a small Chippewa band's attempts to survive the encroachments of Euro-American society" (24). Barry further explicates that Fleur's roots are attached with the Pillagers who are "people of power with the smile of a wolf and the clan markers on their grave…who are feared and respected by all, and who fight the encroachments of Euroamerican culture" (25).

Fleur Pillager epitomizes the influential 'bear identity' as like a bear guardian in the *Midewiwin* (the Grand Medicine Society) initiation ceremonies, she acts as a guide to enter the spiritual world of Chippewa or as a barrier for those who pose a threat to Chippewa culture. The role that she plays in the life of Pauline and for other Chippewa people is similar to the bears in the *Midewiwin* ceremonies. She acts as a barrier, a breaker of barriers and as a guide for all of them. In order to save the Pillager's land from logging interests, she beckons her most dramatic power and acts as a barrier for the encroachers. Her periodic appearance during her lifetime also abides resemblance to bear that wanders and returns to its home

territory. In *The Beet Queen* and *Love Medicine*, she emerges as a traditional healer and shaman who defies the dominant culture of the twentieth century and refuses to embrace the temptations of the modern world. Furthermore, Fleur also exerts power over gambling as she gambles with anyone and tries to be triumphant when necessary. However, she corresponds to the traditional tribal ways of the Grand Medicine Society and the rituals of Chippewa in her gambling aspect. In *Tracks*, she gambles for Lulu's life (her daughter) whereas in *The Bingo Palace* she acquires her land back in a rigged poker game. Her proficiency in gambling skills echoes the obstructions just as the bears of the *Midewiwin* society that act as spiritual barriers against evil.

Keeping in view the narrative of cultural survivance, it can be concluded that the hegemonic discourse of the mainstream society has attempted to undermine the native culture by erasing its presence. Notwithstanding, the literary works have become a contested space for the writers "to challenge the institutions that attempt to erase indigenous peoples…, [but] do not challenge the institutional language and forms" (Wilson x). Louise Erdrich, like other Native American authors, has grounded her works within indigenous epistemology and these works have become a vehicle for community resistance and a site to decolonize the colonial experiences. Erdrich has not simply configured the events of Anishinaabe survival but has also reflected the manner through which they survived the wrath of colonizers. The characters in her texts are marked with postmodern fluidity that assists them to challenge the hegemonic discourse because it constructs the natives in a 'monologic' narrative. The indigenous discourse of trickster and shamanistic religion subterfuge the narrative of mainstream society as the tribal discourse has facilitated Nanapush and Fleur Pillager to adhere to the traditional culture while adjusting to the paradigms of broader society.

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Suffocating Shame and Sexual Identity in Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*

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Abstract

The feeling of shame is not only related to internal experiences but also conveys socially shared information about a person's status and standing in the community. It is an integral part of a gendered and sexual body. However, shame also operates in a society through institutions of power which use shame politically to align the subjects as per the hegemonic values of the society. The subjects internalize institutional shame to a point where the body self-regulates itself in accordance with the gendered norms of the society. American author and transgender activist Leslie Feinberg's first and ground-breaking novel, Stone Butch Blues *(1993), deftly demonstrates how social and political construction of shame is disseminated, perpetuated, and hegemonically used to make subjects conform to fixed gender roles. This paper discusses the impact of institutional and gendered shame on the transgender protagonist, Jess Goldberg, and how it ultimately shapes, limits, and alters her life. It examines how shame is instilled in the psychological identity of a transgender individual which ultimately impacts the individual's social identity. The paper also explores the connection between institutional and physical bodies and how that connection affects the relationship between sexed body, gender, and shame.*
Keywords: Shame, Gender, Transgender, Butch, Violence.

Introduction

American literature has been at the forefront to forge transgender movement in the 1990s, and to represent various issues related to the position and plight of gender and sexual minorities in America. *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) by Leslie Feinberg is considered a ground-breaking work for presenting gender complexities and representing a transgender. Leslie Feinberg (1949-2014), who has been named as one of the fifteen most influential figures in the gay and lesbian rights movement by the lesbian magazine, *Curve,* and who identified hirself as an anti-racist white, a working-class, secular Jewish, transgender, lesbian, female, and communist, is remembered as a revolutionary activist who contributed to build a strong bond between the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities. Hir nonfiction study, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (1996), is the first examination of the historical foundations of transgender discrimination. Feinberg's second novel, *Drag King Dreams* (2006), talks about transgender rights, and also draws connections between gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and immigration rights. Apart from *Stone Butch Blues*, a number of novels have contributed to the transgender

movement and transgender causes such as *Billy's Boy* (1997) by Patricia Nell Warren, *The Hours* (1998) by Michael Cunningham, *The Danish Girl* (2000) by David Ebershoff, and *Middlesex* (2003) by Jeffrey Eugenides.

The novel, *Stone Butch Blues*, is autobiographical and *bildungsroman* in nature and is also deemed to foster transgender movement in the 1990s. Although the primary concern of the novel is to exposit the problems of the sexual minorities, it does, however, acknowledge and refer to ethnic and racial minorities as well, which reflects Feinberg's empathy and advocacy for all kinds of oppression and discrimination. Since the feeling of shame is an integral part of a gendered and sexual body, and it operates in a society through institutions of power, this paper analyses the depiction of shame as a disturbing feeling and its crucial role in the development of the protagonist, Jess Goldberg, who is subjected to shame since her very childhood in the novel. Jess identifies herself in the novel as a 'he-she,' a 'stone butch' and a 'complicated and complex' person who does not fit within the constructed boundaries of gender such as masculinity, femininity, and heterosexuality. Apart from various other factors pertaining to a working-class transgender living in the second half of the 20th century America, the novel discusses how Jess is shaped by the shame inflicted on her not only by the society but also by her family and her friends.

Shame, when institutionally embedded and attached to gender and sexuality in a society, plays an important role in the formation of an individual's identity as it impacts the psyche and self-perception of the individual in contrast to the society at large. Shame is used as a vehicle to ensure conformity to the gendered norms as it is instilled in and internalised by the subjects. A society's prejudices towards sex and gender induce somatic shame in its subjects thereby rendering and stigmatising sexual minorities as inferior, inadequate, abnormal, other, defective, and so on. As in Silvan Tomkins' words:

> The individual can [. . .] be shamed by whatever shames another. [. . .] This mechanism provides a perfect vehicle for the transmission and preservation of social norms from generation to generation. It also provides a mechanism for the preservation of social norms among adult members of a community, inasmuch as the evocation of shame [. . .] provide[s] powerful negative sanctions against the transgression of shared social norms. (Shame and its Sisters 156)

The norms and expectations attached to sex and gender are introduced in a society hegemonically and governed politically, enforcing the subjects to align with and correspond to its gendered customs and conventions. While talking about sexual minorities, Robert Wallace argues, "shame is central to LGBT identity because it adheres to who one is rather than what one does" (117). Shame is usually associated with and accompanied by other negative feelings such as fear, disgust, distress, humiliation, guilt, anguish, and so on. Since gender is an integral part of identity, causing shame to someone because of their gender and sexual identity has the potential to put the entire person into dubiety and leaving them vulnerable to violence and discrimination.

Analysis

Stone Butch Blues is replete with the portrayal of what Jay Prosser calls "an almost insufferable shame" (492) which the protagonist, Jess Goldberg, is forced to face since her early childhood. The novel chronicles how the natural phenomenon of being a gender non-binary is made to be psychologically painful, emotionally shameful, and socially hateful by the power structures. Jess's ordeal begins quite early in her childhood when she is looked

down upon by her own parents for whom she is "one more bad card life had dealt" (7). Jess is nothing but one of the nightmares for her parents. They have never been happy with her birth. The story of her birth is retold many times by her parents while she is growing up, "as though the frost that bearded those words could be melted by repeating them in a humorous, ironic way" (8). Therefore, mocking and dislike towards Jess begins with her own parents. Once Jess's sister asked their father, "What's a he-she? (15). While Jess too gets interested in knowing the answer, she gets dismayed by her father's response, "It's a weirdo," my father laughed. "Like a beatnik." (15). The sarcastic laugh of Jess' father sows the seed of shame and humiliation in her at a very early age of her life and it only keeps growing day by day with new challenges coming Jess's way through her peers, police, and the public. "[. . .] adults would stop me and ask, "Are you a boy or a girl?" I'd drop my eyes in shame, never questioning their right to ask" (10).

Jess is born as an intersex child but has been raised as a girl. Jess does not know how to perform her gender. Being an intersex, she has no role models to look up to and learn performativity requisite of her gender. Her gender queer performativity makes her a subject of mockery, amusement, and anxiety for the people around and ironically justifies their right to question, humiliate, and violate the social dignity of Jess. At childhood, Jess's inability to understand society's skeptical looks after seeing her makes her feel inferior and inadequate thereby reinforcing her shame with respect to her body and her being. On the one hand, elders disapproved of and disgraced Jess with their looks and questions, and on the other, children and Jess' peers try to humiliate her through violent means. On one such occasion, some boys from Jess's neighborhood stripped her clothes and locked her inside a coal bin. "I was filled with horror. I couldn't make them stop. The shame of being half-naked before them—the important half—took all the steam out of me" (12).

The molestation of Jess at such a tender age of childhood pushes her into what Heather K. Love calls an "abyss of shame" (526) for no fault of her own. "Here her naked body on public display is itself the source of shame; that "half" is important for it reveals her sexed difference both from the boys and from what she herself appears not to be" (Prosser 493). The voyeuristic violence forced upon Jess by a group of boys, who are children from the same neighbourhood as Jess, connotes how early in life people are conditioned to abide by gendered norms and as Judith Butler says "regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (178). Adding insult to the injury was Jess' parents' reaction to this entire episode. "They were really angry when they saw me. I never understood why. My father spanked me over and over again until my mother restrained his arm with a whisper and her hand" (13). Despite Jess's being molested without any fault of her own, her parents show no sympathy towards her, rather, they get angry upon her and her father even spanks her. It demonstrates the double victimization and marginalization of transgender people. More often than not, they are despicable to the outside world and deserted by their own family, including parents. Thus, they are neither accepted at home nor respected outside.

Other significant occasions, where sexual violence and somatic shame are inflicted upon Jess are, first, when she is raped by her schoolmates and, second, when she is raped by the police. Jess is subjected to such brutal sexual violence out of the intentions of shaming and punishing her for daring to be different and disobeying the societal norms. In the 1960s America, any form of gender and sexual deviation from what was considered normal (like heterosexuality and gender binary opposition of man and woman) was legally a punishable offence and was socially met with vehement hate, violence, scorn, and mockery. Therefore, transgender people were not protected by law but, on the contrary, were punished by it. As

Cat Moses describes "After each arrest and torture session, the butches feel alienated even from the femmes who love them. Jess dissociates from her body to dissociate from the pain and humiliation, and she loses a bit more of her voice with each arrest, each beating" (80). Thus, people with gender variance are shamed into silence by the law and society.

The novel also shows how a transgender person's class status plays a pivotal role in their being targeted and punished for their gender performativity. Where upper- and middle-class transgender people are way less vulnerable to violence, their lower- and working-class counterparts are prone to it because, as Cat Moses opines, "Upper-class lesbians in this era tended to congregate in private homes rather than in lesbian bars" (80). Despite knowing that visiting bars might end up making them a prey to the police brutality, transgender butch and femme could not stop visiting them. Bars were their only refuge where they could get to see and talk to people like themselves, learn from them, and feel alive in spite of struggling to survive each day.

People are conditioned to see the world through the lens of binarism, which lead them to look down upon Jess and cause her shame, as Laura C. Schlüter observes in her thesis, "shame has a political function designed to normatively align its citizens' identities to correspond with hegemonic values" (9). The humiliation and discrimination, which accompany Jess every day and everywhere, relegated her to become a stone towards her own feelings and prevented her from expressing them, even made her choke if she tries to. "Shame suffocated me" (14). Shame is the only feeling Jess is seen articulating frequently in the novel. All other feelings of Jess are bricked behind a wall Jess is creating unconsciously as a result of the discrimination and hatred she experiences in her life. The sexual violence and shame not only distance Jess from her body but from her beloved, Theresa, also because she is "already too ashamed to be touched. Ain't that a crime?" (76). The rhetorical question Jess asks here contradicts society's criminalisation of gender non-conforming and punishing it in inhuman ways, and ostensibly criminalises the very society's attitude towards gender variance.

Transgender people are not only being shamed by the majority of heterosexual society but also by the minority of homosexual society. The novel discusses how homosexual people were also prejudiced against transgender people in the 1960s and 1970s and did not want to unite with them in their struggle for gender and sexual liberation. "They drove us out, made us feel ashamed of how we looked. They said we were male chauvinist pigs, the enemy" (6). While discussing female masculinity in her book *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam observes, "[. . .] unlike male femininity, which fulfils a kind of ritual function in male homosocial cultures, female masculinity is generally received by hetero- and homo-normative cultures as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment, as a longing to be and to have a power that is always just out of reach" (9). Transgender activist and writer Kate Bornstein also takes note of and laments this attitude of homosexual groups. In her essay, "Gender Terror, Gender Rage", she says, "It does hurt, being excluded or even attacked by other oppressed groups, and it makes me feel a shame I thought I'd gotten over a long time ago" (Bornstein 242). In the 1960s and 1970s, when Gay and Lesbian movement was fostering its ground in America, conservative homosexual groups considered themselves superior to other sexual minorities and equivalent to heterosexual majority on the grounds that at least homosexual people adhere to gender binarism, which transgender people do not. Therefore, instead of deconstructing and challenging the enforced binarism of gender, homosexual groups perpetuate the same by seeking acceptance and equality on the basis of being a binary opposition to heterosexuality.

The protagonist, Jess, identifies herself as neither man nor woman but a butch and is punished for the same in various ways by various people in her life. Yet, she never tries to fit into the gender binary system until recession hits America in the late 1960s, and, in order to survive, Jess had to pass as a man because "the butches' gender expression limits their employment opportunities" (Moses 80). Jess got her breasts removed and took hormones to look and sound like a man. Soon she begins to pass as a man publicly and found the passing liberating her from various fears and judgements. "I could go to the bathroom whenever and wherever I needed to without pressure or shame. What an enormous relief" (173). However, the relief was as transience as superficial because Jess "still lived in fear, only now it was the constant terror of discovery" (186). Therefore, although passing as a man brought Jess a job to survive and a sense of safety in public places, especially public restrooms, but she still remained a "prisoner of her shame" (299) and fear. The fear of getting exposed did not let Jess form any close and personal relationships, which made her feel lonelier than ever. She also feared of being asked to produce her identity card or driving license, which clearly mentioned her female, and, as a result, ending up being molested or violated by cops. Thus, passing or not passing, shame and fear remained constant in Jess' life.

Ultimately, it dawned on Jess, "What good is safety if the price is shame and fear of discovery?" (Green 507). The predicament leads Jess to read books on different people like her and learn that they have not always been despised and humiliated but have been held in high esteem and treated special beings in history for their uniqueness. Reading about the past also made Jess hopeful for the future. Jess realises that it is not she with whom something is wrong but the society and time she is surrounded by. "Remaining physiologically female is impossible for Jess, and existing as a man is equally problematic. It is only when the two combine in her body that she finds her home – a condition that confirms her position in the third gender category" (Warkentin, 174). Jess stops taking hormones and soon returns to her intersex self, which signifies the resolution of her shame complex and acceptance of her gender ambiguity. Her decision to live her true self made her vulnerable to violence and shame again, but Jess is ready to face everything with dignity and determination. Despite all the humiliation, hatred, and hardships, the novel ends on a positive note with Jess dreaming of and preparing for "*a world worth living in, a world worth fighting for*" (330).

Conclusion

Stone Butch Blues is an epitome of how social and legal attitudes towards gender and sexuality cause somatic shame complexes in sexual minorities. The novel deftly limns the social, political, and cultural roots of shame and how these roots affect the sexual minorities, their interpersonal relationships, and their life. It demonstrates this through a working-class transgender butch's life in the second half of the 20th century America. The novel is replete with illustrations of as much complex emotions as there are intricacies of being neither male nor female. Jess Goldberg in *Stone Butch Blues* faces humiliation not just because of her failure to perform gender properly but mainly because of the society's failure to confine her within the gender binarism through their gaze. The novel describes how gender is constructed socially on the basis of its performativity and how people who fail to perform gender as per the social demands are shamed and punished both socially and legally.

Through Jess Goldberg, the novel demonstrates the irony of being a transgender butch, who is not able to live a respectful and fearless life despite trying to fit into the gender binary system by passing as either man or woman. The perpetrators of hate and humiliation

push transgender humans to the margins of society and force them to live in silence and secrecy. The fear and shame of being discovered of their true identity always keep them on their toes as seen in Jess's case whose passing could not free her from her inner turmoil. Jess's realisation that the problem lies not in her body but in society's obsession with the binary is central to this coming-of-age novel. Jess's decision to no longer conform to the gender binary system despite knowing the consequences and finding her purpose in working for the cause of transgender people and gender equality is revolutionary. It is the spirit and struggle of such transgender people that has paved the way for a change the world is witnessing today, though there is still a long way to go for the gender equality or a genderless or gender-just world to become apparent.

Notes

1. A butch is either a gay man or a lesbian woman whose appearance, expressions, and mannerisms are masculine in nature.
2. A femme is either a lesbian woman or a gay man whose appearance, expressions, and mannerisms are feminine in nature.
3. The pronouns used in the paper for Leslie Feinberg and Jess Goldberg are in alignment with Feinberg's website and the novel respectively.

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A Postmodern Reading of Teju Cole's *Open City*

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Abstract

A movement beginning from the post World War era; Postmodernism, mainly depicts the transition of society and culture from its 'modern' environments to the highly complicated 'post-modern' period of transnationality, hyperreality, intertextuality, simulacrum and deconstruction. From a world where Nietzsche had already announced the death of God, Postmodernism announces the death of the subject and structured discourse. Teju Cole's Open City *is a post-modernist text both in theme and style. It is a smooth flowing text entirely dependent on the retrospect and insights of the narrator Julius, a Nigerian-born psychiatrist who lives in the Upper West Side of New York City in America. Julius is inherently a loner and a self isolated identity. He decides to take his favourite hobby of long evening walks as the subject of his narrative. A thoughtful, scholarly and a solitary walker, Julius narrates his experiences with all the people he meets in great detail. The novel continues with a smooth narrative and with an absence of a real plot.*
Keywords: Hyperreality, Maximalism, Cosmopolitan culture, Metamodernism, Logocentricism, heteroglossia,, disillusioned society, identity crisis.

The uniqueness of Postmodernism lies in the fact that its philosophers do not place its philosophy into a defined box of category. It is this aspect which in turn produces its current, coherent chaos and fluidity. Anything that seems to be out of place, individualistic and rebelling contemporary discourse is often termed to be "Postmodernist". To speak of the technical literary aspects of Postmodernism one must begin with the literary foundations laid by Barthes, Kristeva, and Derrida along with others like Rushdie and Shokof who gave the concepts of Hyperreality and Maximalism. Postmodernism being highly characteristic of technology and advancement, often talks of hyperreal situations in literary texts where readers, authors or the characters themselves are present in such situations which seem as highly advanced extensions of reality. Technological advancement also leads to the overflow of information and science hence leading to the production of art literature related with science fiction, robots, disillusionment of humanity and Magic Realism.

With typical postmodern stylistic techniques of minimalism and restrained expression Teju Cole's *Open City,* with its highly personal narrative creates a deep hollow inside the minds of its readers. The text is rich with multicultural and postcolonial elements of literary fiction that support contemporary arguments of microaggression as especially

found in the States and Europe. The narrative of Teju's Cole may be paralleled with the writing styles of Joseph O' Neil and Zadie Smith whose narratives are not plot based but rather depend on the ordinary lives of characters who themselves take forth the story with great intensity. Having a free flowing and unpredictable narrative, the text is often compared to the works of J. M. Coetzee and W. G. Sebald. The melancholic treatment of Cole's work along with the tendency of his narrative to become intensely biographical while recurrently maintaining the separation of the author and the narrator often reminds the reader of Sebaldian influences. It is entirely dependent on the retrospect and insights of the narrator Julius, a Nigerian-born psychiatrist who lives in the Upper West Side of New York City in America. He is in the final year of his fellowship in the hospital where he is pursuing his psychiatry course. Julius decides to take his favourite hobby of long evening walks as the subject of his narrative. A thoughtful, scholarly and a solitary walker, Julius narrates his experiences with all the people he meets in great detail. Being of a highly melancholic and morbid humour; Julius sets the serious mood of the novel through his scholarly intellect. In the text, Julius makes good friends with the eighty nine year old Japanese American professor of literature, Mr. Satio, a Muslim man living in Germany named Farouq and many others who are equally intellectual and intense. With short experiences of racism, Postcolonialism and even violence, the novel reaches its end with Julius getting mugged by a few ruffians in one of the streets of New York during one of his walks. The incident ends with Julius having minor injuries on his hand. He also finishes his residency at the hospital and decides to shift to another part of the same city which seems to be the only strong decision he made during the entire course of the novel.

Evident Postmodern techniques of simplistic turn of events and minimalism are the chief characteristics that make *Open City* a reflection of contemporary Postmodernist writing style. Like Ihab Hassan who regards Postmodernism to be both a diachronic and synchronic sociological modifier, we notice examples of the same through the minimalist, free flowing narrative of Cole. The text is unique and melancholic. It is based on the visual perceptions of Julius instead of a story. This therefore makes *Open City* an interesting landmark in the turning of Post and meta-modernist writing patterns of authors. Ihab Hassan in his essay provides us with eleven aspects that differentiate Modernism from Postmodernism, all of which may be applied to the text of *Open City*. For instance, the concept of Indeterminacy which discusses how culture specific dislocations, misalignments and uncertainties, that are an eminent part of Postmodernism, can be found in contemporary novels that often have an urban environment. The epistemology of the text may also be related with fragmentation. The book's narrative disengages itself along with its protagonist from the rest of the epistemic world. Its hero is a man of lesser social intelligence and he strides the text in the direction of his personal experiences in a manner which keeps him disengaged from the society.

Besides the character of Julius, we may also note the minimalist style in which Cole fashions *Open City*. All the encounters of Julius in the book appear to be based on chance rather than with authorial intention. The experiences are dependent on the actions and behaviour of the people rather than Julius' reaction. The simplicity in their narration makes the novel smooth and uninterrupted hence making the reader absorb it like a sponge. Postmodernist attributes given by scholars like Ihab Hassan and Baudrillard also make us observe how characters of the contemporary novel tend to attach emotions with societal products and services, thereby creating a simulacrum for themselves. A parallel reality therefore is born in the minds of protagonists and characters like Julius who distance

themselves from their real troubles and remain isolated in their rooms, thinking about the people in their lives, engaging themselves in ordinary consumerist behaviour and constructing a protective shell for themselves in the form of isolated activities like long solitary walks. The symbolic significations created by these characters later become the medium of interaction for the characters with their society and themselves. There are many such significations found in *Open City* that Julius creates in the form of dream manifestations of Julius, the symbolic lonely death of his favourite professor Satio, the various patients of Julius which Cole systematically presents in his typical minimalist fashion; all are largely a part of Postmodernist characteristics. The protagonist of *Open City* is like a static character that is more dependent on his environment rather than his personality. His behaviour is of lesser value than his observations about the city. The narrative can therefore be considered to be antithetical when compared to other modern and contemporary texts. The arbitrary nature of all episodes and experiences of Julius makes the text of *Open City* highly Postmodern in nature. Each episode is dependent on the power of language and circumstance rather than the response of the characters. Even the silent walks of Julius appear meaningful and spontaneous to the reader hence making them imminent and Postmodernist. Teju Cole proves the relevance of this aspect in the form of many instances in the novel. For example, his encounter with various new characters where he is quiet and observant or his manner of being a good listener be it any condition like the words of Professor Satio, his involvement with his girlfriend, his relationship with his mother or grandmother where there are hardly any words used for communication between them or him being simply silent while listening to the voices on the radio or being simply engaged in an observation of his city. In all the instances, silence is figuratively used as a tool to examine the passivity, muteness and isolation in the life of the protagonist. The same instances prove to be helpful in adding to the minimalism found in the narrative. Cole, very interestingly draws the reader's attention to observe all things from an absurd and a subjective perspective hence making the book postmodernist in nature.

The cosmopolitan culture filled with socio-psychological insecurity, dislocation and detachments also contribute in making the book postmodern. For instance, we never see Julius running errands to make friends with anybody around him. Rather, he appears cold and inexpressive even to the warm and friendly people around him. Another example may be represented when we see that Julius has been living in the same apartment building for the whole of his graduation years and yet he is much surprised to know that the wife of a neighbour he "hardly knew" but was on friendly terms with, died months ago. The same can be viewed in his relationship with Nagede which becomes difficult to manage due to dislocation and pressures of work. "It was painful breaking apart, but it surprised neither of us" (24) The casual note in Julius' language expresses his lack of emotional sensibility despite being in love with Nagede. His adherence to an isolated comfort zone makes him accept the 'painful' experience of breaking apart in his relationship. We may also note the lack of confidence in Julius in many circumstances where he fails to express his feelings directly to any person.

Traits of Metamodernism can also be associated with the tones of racism in the form of microaggression found in the book. We notice various scenes in which Julius is humiliated during many of his walks in the city. As he takes a walk and quietly waits on the bus stop, we see two children villainizing him due to his appearance as a black man. In another of the scenes we witness Julius watching "another film" where

Another film I had watched the previous year...had left me frustrated because of the

film's fidelity to the convention of the good white man in Africa. Africa was always waiting, a substrate for the white man's will, a backdrop for his activities. A white man – a no body in his own country, who thought, as usual, that the salvation of Africa was up to him (Cole 29).

The influence of media and market over the image of blacks is therefore an issue questioned in the novel. The deep rooted prejudices and generalisations that have created socio-cultural and psychological gaps in the society regarding culture, ethnicity and race are evidently questioned by Cole in his work. Helen Andrews in her criticism of Teju Cole's work comments on the microaggressive tendencies in *Open City* saying that,

It's not   so much that everyone the narrator meets has been plainly oppressed by some political injustice, it's just they can talk of nothing else. Even the bit players can scarcely go a page without saying things like, "I don't want to talk about poetry tonight. I want to talk about persecution." or "It is always a difficult thing, isn't it? I mean the orientalising impulse" (Andrews 61)

The various issues of contemporary American or European politics and society are deeply discussed in the novel. We see repetitive mention of American political situations and middle-eastern figures like Saddam Hussein in the long intellectual conversations of Julius with Farouq and his friends. The portrayal of America as a nation that dominates global politics and rather attempts to hegemonize it is deeply viewed and might be observed as anti-America in some ways. Not only does the writer discuss the prevalence of microaggression but also the presence of reverse racism in the city of New York where: "It was easier to get flagged for violating biking rules than for actually stealing a bike, because the police were afraid of being seen as racist" (99) Furthermore, the issue of discrimination and Islamophobia found in places like America and Europe are often discussed.

Thinking back to Mayken's assertions, I had been wrong, I decided. What Farouq got on the trams wasn't a quick suspicious glance. It was a simmering, barely contained fear. The classic anti-immigrant view, which saw them as enemies competing for scarce resources, was converging with a renewed fear of Islam. (Cole 106)

Such instances in the text are indicative of the commonality of socio-political oppression done on subjects like Julius and the temporary companions he meets. The consequent alienation occurring in subjects who find them to be expatriates of their societies which psychologically assume them to be rapists and Vikings hence produces more complicated issues of disillusionment, psychological conflict and depression among the victims. Julius in the text undergoes similar issues. His profession as a clinical psychologist seems like one of the few strands that keep him from going insane and remain conscious of his sadness and reality. Being entirely passive and anti-social, Julius complicates his situation even more and seems closer to depression.

Cosmopolitan features associated with capitalist isolation may be noted in many of the situations in the novel. His character feels isolated in a jungle of peoples, consumer products and entertainment. For instance, in one of the scenes where he decides to watch a movie, Julius writes: "In the great cave of the theatre, I sat alone. No, not alone exactly: in the company of hundred others but all strangers to me" (Cole 29).

The same effect of isolation may be observed in the distanced relationships between individuals in society occurring due to dislocation and crises. Estranged relationships like that of Julius and his family where no one knows of the whereabouts of their own kin is therefore a consequence of such isolation. The same assists in setting the depressive mood of

the novel which uses tools like transferred epithets – "lonely palm trees" (46) or "distant echoes of the voices present" (46) and minimalism to express the melancholy. The image of America as a melting pot of various cultures is shown in many traces. For instance the mention of Ellis Island as the symbol of the prevalent immigrant culture where literally and quite figuratively Julius, an immigrant himself, meets another black immigrant who seeks brotherhood in him is representative of the contemporary metamodernist need of cultural assimilation and communal unity of people living in distant lands. However, Orientalist tendencies of the birth of the 'other' may be seen in the country where we see incidents of racism and are told how foreigners without documents like Africans and Asians are kept in stricter detention centres than the rest. It is in these 'othered' centres that Julius seeks to find himself but ironically fails. The reason behind his failure is his consumerist isolation and absent emotional sensibility.

The postmodernist or rather metamodernist inclinations of disunity and estrangement in relationships as mentioned before may point out the hypocrisy and emotional impotency of the protagonist. It is quite ironic and hypocrite on the part of Julius to take a vacation in order to check whether the woman he is looking for and apparently attached to is alive or dead. As he takes his vacation, Julius returns home without any regrets about not having met his grandmother at all. Similarly, the rest of the 'othered' characters of the book like Farouq may also be termed as hypocrite for constantly condemning stereotyping and racism when they themselves highly stereotype the Americans and their country: "America is a version of Al-Qaeda" (122), they discuss.

The concept of Logocentricism may come handy in analysing Julius' identity which is in constant dilemma in deciding which language defines him. He believes that German and not English is his second language. However, Julius cannot correctly remember German and declares that he 'totally forgot' it. In another one of his conversations with a stranger, Julius declares and lies that Yoruba is his first language hence confusing the reader and compelling him to think of the associated identity crisis of Julius.

The frequent psychological manifestations of dark and depressive themes in the form of the complicated dreams of Julius which often have death as a repetitive motif in the entire text also proves the novel to be dark and wholesomely contemporary. Bugs, terrorist attacks, dreams of dying people, people actually dying in reality: a vague vision of a possibly dead grandmother, a dying professor Satio, etc. echoes Julius' fear of dying a lonely death.

Therefore, *Open City* seems to be a book about the social and psychological inhibitions of its hero Julius. The cosmopolitan culture filled with socio-psychological insecurity, dislocation and detachments also contribute in making the book postmodern. .Moreover with contemporary features of race, politics, homosexuality, oppression, alienation, minimalism, heteroglossia and melancholy, the text thus manifests all features of contemporary postmodernist and semi-metamodern traits of a disillusioned society.

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Cornucopia of Displeasures: Reading Mumbai in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*

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Abstract

The paper aims to look at the heterotopic narrative of the city of Mumbai through a close reading of Vikram Chandra's novel, Sacred Games*. Foucault's concept of heterotopia has been applied to the narrative of the city as a specimen of a counter-site that either shifts from dream to dungeon or is a mixture of both as it's simultaneously represented. The production of Mumbai as a city and also its evolution as a character is studied in the light of Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory. The unification of slums and skyscrapers and the dark, chaotic and suffocated life below the golden realm of capitalism and mafia is another aspect that is critiqued through Lefebvre's theoretical application. The darkness and its play is also studied sociologically through Edward Soja's "third space" and Manuel Castells discussion of "fourth world." Though Maharashtra is a place like any other place that is constructed on the idea of caste and class, Vikram Chandra builds the hierarchy essentially on the basis of associations and illegal activities. This further propels the discussion to include exclusionary practices as perused by David Sibley. Chawls and kholis, the symbolic habitats of Mumbai's culture have been analyzed through Gaston Bachelard's concept of home. Huge terms of migration give rise to the construction of space and at the same time the space is further manoeuvred by linguistic exchanges. This aspect of language as giving sense to a space is also examined in the paper. Thus, the paper constructs its thesis around spatial theory and various aspects of sociological interface.*
Keywords: Mumbai, space, Lefebvre, hertertopia, Foucault, identity

Walter Benjamin said, "In thousands of eyes, in thousands of objects, the city is reflected" (qtd. in Gilloch 6). The paper deals with one amongst the many reflections of Mumbai as the city of differences. Vikram Chandra in his epical novel *Sacred Games* (2006) narrates the city of Mumbai juxtaposed against and sandwiched between its (il)legal and (in)visible residents. Due to the suspenseful and cinematographic technique of writing, it has been made into a web series by Netflix with the same name in the year 2018. In the novel the detective investigation is merely used as a trope to map Chandra's reading of the city and how the city reveals itself differently based on polyphonic narrative perspectives, specifically those of the police inspector, Sartaj, and the goon, Ganesh Gaitonde. It blends in both utopia and dystopia, thereby making a heterotopia out of Mumbai. Utopias are unreal spaces depicted as perfect sites having "no real place," and 'heterotopias' are "real places ⬜ places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society ⬜ which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 3). They are the sites which somehow mirror, and at the same time distort, unsettle or invert other spaces. They can also be seen as actual fragments or remnants of utopia. Mumbai as heterotopia becomes the city of dreams and dungeons, as

it assumes a protean form that is demonstrative of freedom, opportunity, drama, passion, spell, attainment and gratification, and at times personifies fear, terror, crime, corruption, profanity, seductive charm, alienation, disease and threat to the social order.

Sacred Games is a story of two men's search for belongingness in the city; Sartaj searches for love and community, while Ganesh struggles to make a home for himself. As it is a detective story, Sartaj's "whodunit" case makes the readers not only detectives but also *flaneurs*, slipping through the streets witnessing the conundrum of the variegated Mumbai life. By referring to Mumbai as a "whore of a city," Chandra refuses to idealize it (537). He rather reads it in the light of human rights by putting the spotlight on invisibility of individuals in Mumbai because of illegal constructions of the slums exposing their need for home and their struggle for housing rights.

In terms of this marginality, Mumbai a capitalist space, denotes the 'place of the other' in Lefebvrian terms. The marginalization of a space is marked by segregation, division or separation, whereas homogenization is marked by coherence, conformity and uniformity. Henri Lefebvre conceived of the urban space as a seedbed for unification of these very differences. Thus, the paper studies Mumbai as a character and not as a "passive surface, a *tabula rasa* that enables things to 'take place' and action to ground itself somewhere; . . . [it] is itself actively produced" from the standpoint of Lefebvre (Merrifield 107). The novel thus draws our attention to spatial disenchantment where the city appears as a repressive and violent space. Where slums were expanding inch by inch "tunnel-like streets, … shacks that crept forward every year, each added-on room seizing ground and holding on" (Chandra 75), builders like Kishorilal Ganpat spread his constructions across the city: "From the highway you could see his buildings rearing their heads out of the green fields, above the villages and the old colonies" (Chandra 262). He would thank *Bholenath* for "the crores he had swindled, for the bribes he had given, for sand-mixed cement, for shoddy wiring that spilt out of rough-finished walls, for illegal and unlicensed buildings, for encroachments, for extra floors towering far beyond FSI limits, for middle-class money desperate for homes, for starving labour, for slums, for tough, sword-swinging boys, for Suleiman Isa" (Chandra 263) for "clearing slums from … residential plots" (Chandra 262). Struggling under the pressure of non-natives and illegal inhabitation, the slums are produced as part of the larger capitalist space, but at the same time, they highlight a resistance to that spatial arrangement by producing an alternate spatiality complete with separate modes of production and consumption. As the city swallows up villages around it, the earlier uses and meanings of space get transformed overnight, and become intractable problems for planners.

Money can be seen as a major component of life in Mumbai. Sartaj had once heard it from a slumlord convicted of murder, "the bitter secret of life in the metropolis: *paisa phek, tamasha dekh"* (Chandra 10). Kamble reiterates to him "But money makes it all happen, my friend, and to make money you have to spend money" (Chandra 10). The narrative further develops the discourse with the commentary "… if you had money to throw, you could watch the spectacle – the judges and magistrates trapezing blithely, the hoop-jumping politicians, the happy, red-nosed cops" (Chandra 11). Another character, Paritosh Shah exclaims, "Money is what I wanted, money to hold and grasp, money in my pocket, I wanted thick wads of notes, the thickness enough for silver boxes, for soft *gaddas* and red bedspreads and record players and clean bathrooms and love, enough crisp paper for confidence and safety and life" (Chandra 59). The capitalist city of Mumbai is all about "business of revolution" of money passing through hands, "as it went from bottom to top"

(Chandra 862). In this context, Georg Simmel saw money as a major component of life that governs the totality of life in a city. He highlighted the impact of urban materiality and its quantitative change over qualitative in a society. He posits:

> For money expresses all qualitative differences of things in terms of 'how much?' Money, with all its colourlessness and indifference, becomes the common denominator of all values; irreparably it hollows out the core of things, their individuality, their specific value, and their incomparability. All things float with equal specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money. (qtd. in Giddens and Sutton 80)

The seduction of money makes Mumbai the 'Fourth World' for people living outside the conventional norms as it represents the only space of liberation for them. Manuel Castells conceives this liberation found in social exclusion not as a condition but as a process in a city. He conceptualises 'Fourth World' as "populated by millions of homeless, incarcerated, prostituted, criminalized, brutalized, stigmatized, sick and illiterate persons" (Romero and Margolis 561). Edward Soja looks at this space as a 'third space' with a possibility for socio-political transformation or as a site of sin (1996). This space connotes desires, fears and anxiety. Further, it also works as a site of illusion or even self-realization. Mumbai thus gets narrated as a city where "a whore got up and powdered. She lay on the bed, naked but for the earnings" (Chandra 63), a world that "is shot through with crime, riddled with it, rotted by it" (Chandra 310) where crime cuts crime, as steel cuts steel, a place where "the politicians provide protection to the criminals, the criminals provide muscle and money to the politicians" (Chandra 310). Even the bumpkins would try "to talk themselves into some petty crime, some pilferage to afford them money for cinema tickets or hair cream" (Chandra 868). The micro to macro criminalization of the city also affects its borders as Ganesh points out: "the rising crime rate in the city, the worrisome incidence of random robberies, the rapes, and also the aggressive posturing of governments and militant groups, leading to bomb explosions in restaurants" that were rife in and around the city (Chandra 803-4). Thus, city space is produced by human actions, and often under conditions that are not always acceptable to one or the other section of society.

Chandra critiques the hegemonic hierarchy of the population not on the basis of class or religion, but on the basis of associations and illegal activities. In this context, David Sibley's idea may be adapted to showcase exclusion of minority groups by the majority as a regular and yet unnoticed practice in urban life. The exclusionary practices evolve in a very concealed form in urban planning and land-use policies that reject differences by valuing order. Hence, in spatial conflicts, dual cities of self and other are created, where one community represents itself as a part of the mainstream, and feels threatened by the presence of those who are perceived to be the other (Sibley 28-9). The dominant space creates boundaries. Boundaries enforce separation provide security and comfort to some people, while they are the cause of deprivation to others (32). In the novel, roads as well as a long grey wall create this kind of a boundary.

> They sped past clusters of apartment buildings to the right, ensconced behind a long grey wall, and on the left the untidy shacks of a basti opened doors directly on to the road (Chandra 14).
> …There were apartment buildings on one side of the road, lower constructions on the other, the sloping tiled roofs of mill workers, shipping clerks, postmen. (Chandra 60)
> Juxtaposed against the urban bound spaces in Mumbai are the long snake-like

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space through social relations. His small *kholi* amidst "a crowded huddle of kholis, mostly pucca, with electrical wire strung over the roofs and through doorways" (Chandra 24). Where the migrants produce a space within the city, claim it for their own, but live in a constant fear of its loss, Katekar's wife Shalini is certain of her ownership of the space of the kholi, which she confidently transforms into her home. The "shape of his home" that housed his family was divided by a black sheet:

> On his side of the sheet there was a small colour television on a shelf, and next to it pictures of his parents and Shalini's parents, all garlanded, and also a large gold-framed photograph of the boys at the zoo. There was a Lux soap calendar turned to June and Madhubala. Under it, a green phone with a lock on the dial. At the foot of the chatais, a whirring table-fan. Behind his head, he knew, there was a two-in-one and his collection of tapes, songs from old Marathi films. Two black   t r u n k s stacked on top of each other. Clothes hanging on hooks, his shirt and pants on a hanger. Shalini's shelf with its brass figures of Ambabai and Bhavani, and a garlanded picture of Sai Baba. And the kitchen, with racks all the way to the roof and rows and rows of gleaming steel utensils. And then on the other side of the black sheet, the shelves with schoolbooks, two posters of Sachin Tendulkar at bat, one small desk piled high with pens and notebooks and old magazines. A metal cupboard with two exactly equal compartments. (Chandra 24)

With its homely lived and conceived space the structure of the *kholi* is symbolic of the gradual destruction of privacy and the rapidly disappearing possibility of having a personal world, with the presence of one common water tap and absence of toilet as essential to a private space. In urban areas the notion of private space has gone through a major overhaul, as more and more apartment buildings are replacing individual houses, changing the urban landscape forever. There is an ongoing struggle to assert one's space and individuality in a city which threatens to enclose it within the rest. Comilla, the hairdresser, reflects on the spatial crisis that the city encounters everyday: "Space was so expensive in Bombay that even the best salons always had too many chairs squeezed in, too much business. And every day the salons were full" (Chandra 347). The disproportionate and uneasy economic distribution in this neo-liberalized city is starkly emphasized by the simultaneous existence of characters such as the dhobis, who lay claims on the private domestic spaces, and the dispossessed, who sleep on public street-space. With this, Mumbai as dual city gets divided between 'real citizens' and 'squatter citizens', with the majority of people occupying the second category.

Spatial practices also take place through linguistic exchange. Chandra employs language to capture the nuances of Bombay. In a city of migrants where new migrants meet old ones, language tends to acquire a life and character of its own. Bombay's relationship to language is fascinating given the presence of a powerfully influential Hindi film industry. The novel is interspersed with Bollywood film dialogues and songs. In *Sacred Games*, the city finds further expression through the discursive space of the profane street language that is so unique to the city with its multilingual street culture that is heavily inflected with diverse regional accents due to heavy migration. *Bambaiya* becomes the identity marker for many characters including Gaitonde:

> Now this was our own language, kanchas and gullels for bullets and pistols. The Cobra Gang and all the other companies might say daane for bullets, and samaan for pistols, but we said kanche and gullels. [It] set us apart from the rest, made us belong to each other more because we spoke a private tongue, and to become one of us you

streets in *chawls* and *jhoparpattis* which symbolize freedom from boundaries. These streets enable movement and signify liberation from the claustrophobic restriction and control of the urban space. The street is the space where its anonymity evokes a sense of power for the individual, strangers encounter each other, and where events, especially those violent in nature, conflagrate into vileness. This space of the 'other' has no spatial boundary and ganglords are its central figures. They belong to the "unintended city," a fuzzy space between inside and outside. Ashis Nandy, in his Introduction to *The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*, defines the "unintended city" as "the city that was never part of the formal 'master plan' but always implicit in it" (2). The unintended city consists of the urban poor housed in slums and other peripheral spaces. This city is the result of unintended planning as opposed to direct exploitation. It is generally inhabited by the migrants. However, the official city cannot survive without the services of those residing in the "unintended city". The *pavs* that "Katekar and everyone else ate came from or through Navnagar, and other nagars like it. Navnagar made clothes and plastic and paper and shoes, it was the engine that pumped the city into life" (Chandra 210). Chandra situates his action in the slums and shanties of the city, exposing the underbelly of "this swarming, gleamy flux, the breathing of this undulating city" (126). The description of the Navnagar slum mirrors the lives of the migrant community where "Everything was smaller, closer, the pathways narrow between the uneven walls of cardboard and cloth and wood, the tumbling roofs covered with plastic" (Chandra 19). Katekar's contempt for the *jhopadpatti*-dwellers who let "dirt and filth and garbage pile up not two feet from their own door, who let their little daughters squat to make a mess exactly where their sons played" reflects the attitude of the city towards those surviving at the periphery who were believed to be the people who ruined Mumbai (Chandra 19). The slum develops the image of the city as a ruin by articulating a tense, claustrophobic space where the yearning for a home and a fear of homelessness is constantly experienced, resulting in the production of a distinct form of spatial anxiety. Katekar, whose caste certificate reads OBC (Other Backward Caste), disapproves of the residents of Navnagar slum primarily because he feels they are encroaching on his city, his home ⬜ a space that he is apparently reluctant to share. A main constituent of social space is private space which is in turn bound to social space. The home has for long been considered a safe place, replete with memories, comfortable to dream in. It is where life "… begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house" (Bachelard 7). The house, Bachelard mentions "shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace (6). Since the house has the power to integrate human thoughts and memories, and is bestowed with the element of daydreaming; without it a man is a dispersed being (Bachelard 7). Whenever a human being found even the slightest of shelters, his imagination "buil[t] 'walls' of improbable shadows, comfort[ed] itself with the illusion of protection, or, just the contrary, tremble[d] behind thick walls, mistrust[ed] the staunchest ramparts" (Bachelard 5). Katekar's attitude is reflective of ideas of safety and belongingness which, he feels, are threatened by the migrant communities from Bangladesh, thus leading him to relegate them further beyond the boundaries of the periphery:

> The communities tended to cluster together, lane by lane. People like to stay with those they know, like seeks like, and even in the thick crores of the city, in this jungle where a man can lose his name and become something else, the lowest of the low will seek his own kind, and live with them in proud public squalor. (Chandra 106)

Katekar's *kholi* becomes Lefebvre's lived reality of spatial practices that produces social

had to learn it, and in learning it you were changed. … And so for American dollars, we said choklete, not Dalda like the rest of our world; for British pounds, lalten, not petal; for heroin and brown sugar, gulal, not atta; for police, Iftekar, not nau-number; a job gone wrong was ghanta, not fachchad; and a girl so impossibly ripe and round and tight that it hurt to look at her was not a chabbis, but a churi. (Chandra 112)

The speech variants not only reflect many different criminal communities but also different crime pockets in the city. In the context of Lefebvrian spatial theory, the speech variants of the gangs with its terse criminal vocabulary makes Mumbai as a "representational space."

Lefebvre's "representational space" can be used to assess the dominant ideology of Mumbai as the mythical city of dreams. On one level, this space allows for a complex exploration of articulation of the ambitious drives of the city's inhabitants; at another, it presents the city as a sea of slums belonging to the endless migrants who, as Sartaj muses, arrive in the city:

Full of hope. And there was a fullness of them, there were just too many of them. Most would not be successful, but more kept coming to this city of gold. From this surplus and hunger, from this simple equation, came… business. (Chandra 134)

This city of dreams of infinite possibilities is capable of magically transforming the lives of some of those who come here for a living:

And there were boys and girls who had come from dusty villages and now looked down at you from the hoardings, beautiful and unreal. It could happen. It did happen, and that's why people kept trying. It did happen. That was the dream, the big dream of Bombay. 'What was that song?' Sartaj said. 'You know, the one that Shah Rukh sings, I can't remember the film. *Bas khwab itna sa hai* ...' (Chandra 215).

In the novel, Ganesh Gaitonde's journey in the city is symbolic of the lives of many people who come to Bombay to find their fortunes but are sooner or later lured into its dark and grim underworld. Sartaj Singh "could hold the whole city in his heart, from Colaba to Bandra:"

Now it was too vast, escaped from him, each family adding to the next and the next until there was that cool and endless glow, impossible to know, or escape. Had it really existed, that small empty street, clean for the children's cricket games and dabba-ispies and tikkar-billa, or had he stolen it from some grainy black-and-white footage? Given it to himself in gift, the memory of a happier place? (Chandra 22)

He has a mixed take on Mumbai as a city of both pleasure and pain.

There is a certain pleasure … in thinking about how bad it gets … and then in imagining how it will inevitably get worse. And still we survive, the city stumbles on. Maybe one day it'll all just fall apart, and there was a certain gratification in that thought too. (Chandra 88)

A deep sense of despair is felt by Sartaaj when his beloved city is constantly at the centre of terrorist plotting in the pamphlets that are circulated by the Hizbudeen:

'Now, this is interesting. Mumbai is specifically mentioned, in each of the pamphlets.'
… 'Here,' Anjali Mathur said. 'It says, "A great fire will take the unbelievers, and it will begin in Mumbai." This line is repeated in the other pamphlets with minor changes. "A fire will begin in Mumbai and sweep across the country." But always, Mumbai is mentioned.' Sartaj was outraged. 'What do these bastards have against Bombay? They don't mention any other cities?' (Chandra 528)

Katekar, however, loved the everyday banality of the city and its horrendous morning traffic. He "loved the enormous bustle of millions on the move, the hurling local trains with thick clusters of bodies hanging precariously from the doors, the sonorous tramp and hum of the crowd inside the tall hall of Churchgate Station. It made him feel alive" (Chandra 69).

> The city, however, is Ganesh Gaitonde's cocoon and he gets nostalgic:
> In the early morning hours, sometimes, I was able to dream of Mumbai. In that light half-sleep, I put myself into those lanes, and I was young and happy again. I relived my victories, my narrow escapes, my triumphs of tactics and strategy. And not only these grand moments □ these historical landmarks the whole city remembered □ I also recalled small details and passing conversations. A neer dosa shared with Paritosh Shah at a roadside udipi stall near Pune, Kanta Bai dealing cards on top of an upturned carton (Chandra 762). Yet, towards the end of the novel, he too is shaken by the idea of the Mumbai's "flayed, stinking corpses" (Chandra 796).

The magic of Mumbai is such that it leaves a nostalgic ache in all the characters, though it is claimed by all and belongs to none. As Katekar puts it that when you're away from it, you can miss it, physically you can ache for it □ even for the stink of it.

> ... after a year away from Mumbai I still got attacks of yearning, I craved the spittle-strewn streets of that great whore of a city, while waking up I felt that pungent prickling of auto-exhaust and burning rubbish at the back of my nostrils, I heard that swelling rumble of traffic heard from a high hotel rooftop, that far sound that made you feel like a king. ... Under the foreign sky I could feel my soul crumbling away, piece by piece. And I felt a loneliness I had never imagined, that I wouldn't have. (Chandra 537)

Mumbai is seen as *vatan*, not only a city but a nation by Ganesh after riots in 1992-93 sparked by the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Ganesh returns to the city to protect his gang's territory and explains: "During a lull in my own war I had left my home, and came back to find my home the battleground for a larger conflict. They, somebody, had drawn borders through my vatan. My neighbours were now refugees" (Chandra 366). Ganesh recognizes that although he had been fighting a gang war in the streets of the city, it had not disrupted the neighbourhood community. However, communal riots alienated the residents by allowing non-local anger to manifest itself locally: neighbours had drawn lines based on religion and had driven out certain members of their once-united community and Gopalmath is no longer the close-knit quilt he had described earlier (Chandra 366). Returning to Mumbai after the riots, Ganesh feels that he is no longer a king on the throne but an impotent buffoon who could not protect the slum neighbourhood that he helped create. He and his entourage look helplessly out the window as their plane descends:

> From the muddy coast-line emerged a scattering of islands, and then I could see clearly roads, buildings, the shape of colonies and the spreading brown patches of bastis. From behind [me and my wife] I could hear the boys arguing, 'That's Andheri there.' 'Maderpat, where Andheri? That's Madh island, can't you see?' Then they were all quiet. A thick black snake of smoke grew from a coastline settlement and twisted in towards the centre, towards another dark, curving fume- the city was burning (Chandra 364).

To conclude, the novel is about the yearning for urban materiality and how city space brings a lot of changes which in turn change the course of an individual's life. The

protagonists appear as mere pigmies before the gigantic, anonymous and callously deterministic powers of the city leaving individuals without any freedom of choice. In the words of Blanche Gelfant, the city's appearance in literature enables the reader "to explore the city, to show what it is, what values it lives by, and what effect it has upon the individual's character and destiny" (8). *Sacred Games* not only charts the topography of Mumbai but a conscious cartography of the author's mind as well. It extends the scope of the physical city and makes it multifaceted and ambiguous.

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Unravelling the Human /Non-Human Interface: A Critical Reading of Select Stories from Janice Pariat's *Boats on Land.*

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Abstract

Apart from being a cultural mosaic, North East India also embodies the organic relationship between humans and the natural world. The intrinsic bioregional relation that the region shares among the physical, living, and the materialistic environment gets reflected in most of the writings from this region. The Northeast literature provides a panoramic view of how the human and the natural world interact with each other, often affecting and yet affirming the connection between the two worlds. Re-establishing the man-nature relationship is a decolonizing tactic in postcolonial societies. Post-colonial society's engagement with the ecocritical studies of the region encouraged the writers to unravel the binary division and to bring forth the collective ecological consciousness from the periphery to the centre. The present paper analyses three short stories from Janice Pariat's Boats on Land *and attempts to uncover the interface between the non-human actors with the human community in the Anthropocene epoch.*
Keywords*: human, non-human, interface, blend, unravel.*

In the face of growing globalisation and a fast-changing world, the extant value systems are disintegrating, thus causing chaos and confusion in contemporary times. The richness of the Northeast part of India is manifest in its diverse cultural heritage and ages-old traditional values. The creative writers of Northeast capture the traditional ethos and myriad riches of the region to provide a counter-narrative to a larger historical canvas. Their close affinities with its ethos and natural environment are reflected in their writings as the intrusion of foreign culture has not only threatened the native tradition and culture but also inflicted terror on the ecology of the region. The Northeast writers have attempted to undo this damage by revisiting their traditional cultures, folklores, and oral narratives which are imbued with a sense of ecological consciousness, thereby overturning the spurious anthropocentric logic of the western world which envisages barriers between the human and the non-human, and placing the human at a higher stratum in the ecological hierarchy. Thus, the dualistic notions that separate nature/culture, human/non-human etc. are nullified and levelled by the ecopsychological practice on the part of the writers who brought the bioregional approach to the formation of the identity of the human community.

This paper aspires to analyse man-nature relationship and attempts will be made to dismantle the wall that separates them through the reading of some select stories from Janice Pariat's *Boats on Land.* Janice Pariat, a significant voice in the Indian English literary canon, in this book has documented the folktales rooted in and around Shillong. It is about the place and how it affects us in humongous ways. The stories weave folklore into larger socio-political and historical events and reimagining of the places and the people over a century

and a half. The first story begins in the 1850s and the last story ends in contemporary times. This paper focuses on three short stories of Pariat - "A Waterfall of Horses," "Sky Graves" and "The Keeper of Souls"- and endeavours to analyse them through an ecocritical lens. The select stories limn the author's engagement with folktales and myths that have intersected with the mundane changing the trajectory of the inhabitants of that land.

The first story titled "A Waterfall of Horses" is imbued with the human non-human intersections. The story begins in the mid-eighteen century in a remote village named Pomreng situated on the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills in Shillong. The story is narrated in the first person by an unnamed child narrator who recounts the time when the region was under British power. The region's ecological order disintegrated with the coming of the Britishers and events of settlement which the narrator points out in the following words: "a judge from Sylhet had bought vast swatches of land outside our village, to grow tea and build himself a pleasure palace" (Pariat 4). The settlement hinted at their plan to become the ruler and consolidate their rule. As the village headman said, "it was the bilati men with their guns and cannons who ruled us, and hence this was their territory too" (6). With their rule came the atrocities they inflicted upon the people and the environment. The narrator comments that "the bilati men were indifferent towards us, and all we felt on our part was awe and more than a little fear" (7). Women's bodies became the site of their atrocities and hostile activities. The situation hit its nadir one day when a village man accused a soldier of theft. The allegation irked the soldier so much that he tied the man to his horse and dragged him through the village road which resulted in the accuser's death. This very incident instigated the villagers to revolt and protest against the brutalities unleashed upon them.

The villagers instead of retaliating with pitchforks turned to their traditional knowledge. The traditional wisdom, according to them, was enough to revolt against the European Soldiers. Traditional wisdom, in this context, connotes their belief in the *shaman* (diviner) and his words that have magical and spiritual powers which can cure almost any problem of the villagers. The village headman said, "we have one weapon, poor as it may seem, the power of Ktien-the word" (12). After a few days, a strange event occurred. The "bilati" men's horses grew fierce, restless as if a certain kind of madness took over them. They galloped in utmost terror and jumped down the waterfall. This mysterious incident almost shook the soldiers to the core, threatening their very existence in the unknown place in the Khasi hills: "that night the fire in the camp burned brighter and longer as though to keep away the forces of nature" (16). The incident not only disintegrated the settlement of the British in Pomreng but also affected the villagers. Eventually, some soldiers left the place and some died there. The cultivation did not turn out well which forced the local people to move to another place. It seemed like nature found a way to restore its balance. Timothy Clark in his book, *The Cambridge Introduction*, describes nature as "capricious, awesome and easily capable of wiping humanity off the face of the Earth" (202). The impact of the non-human actors on the human community becomes very apparent as the waterfall turns into a dreadful sight in the minds of the European soldiers. The beautiful landscape which Janice Pariat has described as "It lay nestled on a bit of grassy flat land, a cluster of fifty huts, ribboned by a river that flowed languid and deep before plunging down a steep rocky cliff" (4) turns out to be dark and fearful once its wilderness gets revealed which foregrounded the non-human actors as vengeful antagonist threatening the civilization. Elizabeth Parker in her book, *The Forest and the Ecogothic* has described this dual notion about the landscape which she observed as:

The landscape is commonly read as a binary space - as either 'good' or 'bad'. When it

is 'good,' it is a remedial setting of wonder and enchantment; when it is 'bad,' it is terrifying wilderness. (1)

Suzanne Roberts reviewing the book *Ecogothic* brings Matthew Lewis' idea about the Gothic ecology which suggests "humans need to learn to live with nature, and if they don't, it is nature that comes out as victorious in the end" (131). The uncontrollable and undefinable power of the natural world often renders the environment a supernatural aura. In the story, the mysterious incident and the falling of the horses down the waterfall were imputed to the *mantras* of Nong Knia. Nong Knia, a character described in the text as: "He is the bearer of the word. The one who performs our rituals and communicates with the gods" (12). Nong Knia becomes an interface where the entanglement of human and non-human occurs. This interlace also alludes to the connectedness of the biosphere where everything is related and forms an integral part of each other. Ursula K. Heise, in her book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, brings up James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis about the holistic approach towards the environment, and points out that Earth is an organic whole where the natural places around the world are connected (19-20). This connectedness is also evident in this particular story "The Waterfall of Horses" which can be seen as a microcosm of the macrocosm. The connection is not in terms of the global imagining of the environment but how the natural factors are connected with each other. While the villagers believed that the cause of the strange episode was the working of the *Ktien* (mantra), the soldiers surmised the bizarre event as the working of the forces of nature. Sahib Sam, one such soldier expressed his bewilderment through the following words: "It's difficult to explain . . . they say it's the call of the void, you know . . . the pull you feel when you stand looking down from the great height. The urge to jump" (18). However, the beliefs of the soldiers and the villagers evince that the human and the non-human sides of the biosphere including the wilderness that hovered in the mountains, the waterfall, and the action of the horses together works in order to take hold of the dis-balance. Again, the narrator informs: "They say dark magic always leaves a trace, and our harvests failed year after year, despite the usual turn of season" (18). Failing harvests after the incident also allude to the interconnectedness of the actors of the natural world and how they influence each other. The interrelations create an uncanniness in the minds of the soldiers as it is beyond their comprehension. The white settlers' incapacity to apprehend the preternatural and mysterious happening of the land instill cryptic feelings in their minds. Ursula K. Heise has observed:

> Far from idyllic or utopian, the biosphere's total connectedness is what makes it even more strange than its remoteness or its unfamiliar species. (20)

Their failed attempt to understand the incident also create ecophobia among the soldiers. Sharae Dekard in her article " Ecogothic in the Twenty First Century", defines ecophobic narratives as "suffused with effects of loathing, fear, disgust, and horror, traversing environments " (1). In the story the soldiers believe the place to be cursed. Their general rationality cannot define the mysterious happening that enable a kind of telesthesia. The unpredictability of the forces of nature delineates the rationale of human beings as powerless.

The connection between the human and non-human is also established through characters like Thomas Jones and the affection he has for the people of the land. Though an outsider he tries to connect with the local people and tries to understand their ecological order. Ursula K. Heise referring to American environmentalism writes:

> Walking through natural landscapes, observing their flora and fauna, hunting, fishing, gathering fruits or mushrooms, plowing a field, and tending animals are

some of the ways the human body is perceived to reintegrate itself into the "biotic community.' (30)

Sir Thomas Jones and his connection with the local human community helps him to establish a biocentric connection that finally aids him to understand the local culture. Going against the colonial policy of exploiting the natives, Thomas Jones encourages them to fight for their rights by questioning the price of their goods. His bond with the village girl Haphida brings him closer to the holistic connection they share with the land. The narrator describes them as "strolling leisurely by the river, while twilight hovered over the valley, darkening the hills around us, and make their way to the waterfall" (9).

In the second story titled "Sky Graves," the line separating the human and non-human has been further unravelled to the point of making it invisible and thus penetrable. Bah Hem, the "number one gunman" is asked by Kasa, a boy from Jatinga, to shoot a tiger that was causing havoc in the nearby land. He comes and kills the tiger but later that evening he is told how the tiger had saved a girl from a group of army men who harassed her on her way back home. The tiger attacks the group of army men, giving the girl enough time to flee the scene. The grandfather of that girl narrates the incident to Bah Hem and apprises him of how his son fell ill the same day the tiger was shot and wounded, giving him an inkling of their belief in shapeshifters: "they say all over the region – in Sohra and Jirang and other far-flung corners- there are what people call shape-shifters, man whose souls can inhabit animals . . . " (162). Moreover, Bah Hem's first night at Kasa's home is filled with some kind of eeriness which the narrator describes as "he was kept awake by a feeling that something was amiss and unnatural" (156). Later that night Bah Hem sees Kasa's wounded father who is moaning in pain and observes that "the sounds seemed inhuman" (156). Again, recounting the dead tiger the author writes "Its eyes stared sightless, curiously human eyes filled with pain that hadn't left even in death" (161). Attributing human qualities to the tiger and animalistic traits to Kasa's father, the story deflates the differences between the human and the non-human. Again, the experience of Bah Hem after the hunt is described as "Bah Hem was exhausted. It hadn't been a good hunt. He was left with none of the heady exhilaration that accompanied a kill" (161). Huggan and Tiffin in their book *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* point out how human beings owing to the artificial hierarchy exploited and dominated the non-human species that in turn made them "spiritually hollow" (134). This hollowness is clearly reflected in case of Bah Hem who is caught in one of those ambivalent moments when humans feel like part of nature yet threatened by the very existence of the non-human actors. The imbrication of the human and the non-human that links it with transcorporeality, breaks the human-nonhuman dualism.

Transcorporeality which certainly comes from the overlapping of the human and the nonhuman is also evident in the third story titled "The Keeper of Souls" which is set in Shillong. The story recounts the dream of Dariti which not only assuages the breach between the human and the non-human but also suggests the indigenous people's belief in Khasi dreams and mythology. The story presents sets of characters that can be categorised as either androcentric or biocentric. Experiences of the places they lived in determine their connectedness with nature. The narrator's wife, Vera, and her cousin, Charlie, represent the androcentric group owing to their inclination towards the materialistic world. The narrator describes his wife as: "My wife's undisguised lack of interest probably stemmed from having lived most of her life in cities, both in India and abroad" (252). Quite antithetical to this set of characters, we have the narrator and Dariti, a girl in her twenties, concerned for the natural surroundings and traumatised by the recurring images of changing landscapes of Shillong.

Their relation to the place is guided by the ideals of substantiality. The onset of industrialization has led to overexploitation of the natural environment. Forests and water bodies have been tampered with for the development of infrastructures. With globalisation, development is inevitable but how far it is even is questionable. According to Huggan and Tiffin, developmental works are "bound to the neocolonialist imperatives of the global corporate" that have created an ecological crisis affecting aboriginals the most (52). In the story "The Keeper of Souls," we come across the changing face of Shillong in the name of development which disheartens the narrator who once lived there. He explains to his wife how the developmental façade has led to the construction of high-buildings in an earthquake prone region. Dariti also observes how the "forest in Motinagar, the streams near Polo Grounds, everything's changed . . . " (264). Dariti even stops the people from cutting down the trees. Later, when the narrator visits her, she describes to him the dream she had about her dead parents and how they changed their forms into trees after death. She tells him:

> We walk through a forest and slowly they start changing…their hair and fingers turn to leaves and their arms and legs grow thick and gnarled… Did you know that people's souls turn into trees? (264)

The narrator understands the sentiment behind her dream that traces its genesis in Khasi mythology which considers the forest to be the keeper of the spirits. The intermeshing of the human soul with nature disrupts the dichotomies that exist between the human and non-human world. The image of 'living forest' is brought into focus by Datiri who informs: "I used to hear them at night, you know, whispering in the darkness" (264). But the same forests are considered as dead entities and are destroyed in the name of development. Elizabeth Parker in her book *The Forest* writes "anthropocentrism is of course reliant on the idea that we, as humans, are somehow more alive, or more meaningfully alive, than everything else" (71). Cutting down of the forest suggests how human beings consider trees to be dead or contemplate themselves more alive than their non-human counterpart.

Conclusion

The "species boundary" (Huggan and Tiffin 135) which has been considered as a fixed line and has demeaned the non-human species as the "culturally other" (135) is unravelled in these stories that portray human and non-human actors not as divided existence but coalesced into one connected whole. Huggan and Tiffin point out that an important aim of postcolonial ecocriticism is to "bring to light these alternative knowledge and knowledge-systems, which often underpin postcolonised communities' sense of their own cultural identities and entitlements" (78). In *Boats on Land,* we have come across Pariat's engagement with folktales which are infused with ecological consciousness and have helped to re-establish the interconnectedness between the human and non-human actors. The select stories beget ecological consciousness and bring forth the human and non-human intersections by unfolding the folkloric continuum. The first story "A Waterfall of Horses" not only ravels the species boundary by focusing on the interdependencies and influencing power the entities of the natural world have on each other, but shifts from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric perspective where nature takes hold of everything. In "Sky Graves," the dividing line has been blurred through the use of anthropomorphism where we come across the dead tiger whose eyes, although sightless but are filled with pain like that of a human. The local people's belief in shapeshifters finally conflates the human and the non-human factions, thereby rupturing the binaries in the natural world.   In the last story "The Keeper of

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Souls," the forest is described by Dariti as a living entity that encompasses the spirits of the dead. She intermeshes the human and the non-human sides by suggesting how the souls of the dead people turn into trees. In conclusion, it can be said that these stories of Janice Pariat evoke the traditional relationship or what Huggan and Tiffin called "Atrophied kinship" (64) that portrays the intimate relationship humans share with nature and how both the entities are inextricably connected.

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Women sans Men: Navigating Social Stigma in Select Short Stories from Manipur

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Abstract

In its quest to unpack the identity of Manipuri women, the anthology, Crafting the Word: Writings from Manipur *(2019), edited by Thingnam Anjulika Samom, shatters their homogenous image that we are fed by mass media. The works comprising this collection focus on women's subjectivity and identity as well as their suffering and resistance in a conservative society that is heavily dictated by dated patriarchal norms and practices. In a patriarchal society, men hold the power to delineate the desirability of differences and naturally construct a world order that maintains the status quo. Marginalized, the women are made more vulnerable to stigma, which affects the overall quality of their lives. Exploring two short stories from the anthology, "As Spring Arrived" and "The Debt Repaid," this paper shall attempt to analyze how stigma, directly or indirectly, dictates the life choices of the protagonists.*
Keywords: *Identity, Northeast India, Patriarchy, Stigma, Women.*

> *The skin of a woman is spat upon*
> *if shared without sanctity.*
> *The skin of a woman is torn apart*
> *if sharing is restricted.*
>
> --Ningthoukhongjam 191.

Gender relations in Northeast India are fraught with numerous complexities, contrary to the overarching narratives about the elevated position of women in the region. Only people with an intricate knowledge about the region can comprehend the complexities existing within the umbrella term of "Northeast India" and in the life of the women inhabiting it. Consisting of eight states, Northeast India is a confluence of multiple ethnicities, tribes, and linguistic communities, each with its own diverse set of traditions, customs, lifestyles, taboos, and stigmas. Between the rosy-colored picture of nature and celebrations popularized by media and the tourism industry and the red-colored picture of violence surfacing as a result of the various geo-political conflicts lies the everyday subjective reality of individual existence. The comparatively safer position of women in Northeast India vis-à-vis the rest of the country does not connote the absence of inequality, injustice, and violence against the womenfolk in entirety. Inequalities between men and women have their roots in the history of the various tribes and communities, where one can perceive the existence of stereotypes and taboos with regard to women. For instance, the Tangkhuls in Manipur believe that "a woman should not yell in public, a woman should not climb over roofs, trees etc. Ill luck will fall upon a man if he walks below a woman's clothes line" (Kashung as qtd. in "Gender Relations and the Web of Traditions in Northeast India"

74). Along with many other factors, the deviation from socially structured stereotypical characteristics results in stigma, which, in turn, leads to marginalization and exploitation. This paper shall attempt to explore how the social stigmas entrenched in Manipuri society adversely affect its women by analyzing two short stories from the anthology, *Crafting the Word: Writings from Manipur* (2019).

Comprising stories of different genres by women belonging to various age groups and ethnic and linguistic communities of Manipur, *Crafting the Word: Writings from Manipur*, edited by Thingnam Anjulika Samom, endeavors to comprehend "who really is the Manipuri woman?" (Samom 1). The anthology, through a series of short stories, poems, an essay, and even a graphic story, brings to light the multifaceted lives of women in Manipur, shattering the homogeneous "images of softness blend(ed) seamlessly with the strength and responsibility that seems to define the identity of the Manipuri woman" (1) fed to us by mass media. The works in this collection focus on woman's individuality, their identity, cravings, sufferings, and resistance in a conservative patriarchal society that is heavily dictated by time-worn norms and practices. In such a society, men hold the political, economic, social, and moral power, and women are relegated to the margins. As power is "essential to the social production of stigma" (Link and Phelan 375), and stigma is the disgrace associated with "undesired differentness," (Goffman 5) in a male-centric social structure, men become the group that possesses the authority to delineate the desirability of any difference, create labels, and construct stereotypes along with the power to ensure that their ideas and constructions are accepted by the wider community. They construct a world order that is beneficial to them, and the women, consequently sidelined, are made more susceptible to stigma. Taking two short stories from the anthology, "As Spring Arrived" and "The Debt Repaid," this paper shall seek to explicate how stigma becomes the force that drives the lives of their protagonists.

From the very beginning of Kshetrimayum Subadani's short story, "As Spring Arrived," originally published as "Yeningthana Lakpada" in 2000 and translated by Sapam Sweetie, the reader gets a sense of protagonist Ibemnungshi's dysfunctional and abusive marital relationship with her husband, Thoiba. The wife's plea to her husband, who is posted in the hills away from home, to visit her more than just once a month is met with a "slightly" (Subadani 86) raised voice, hinting at the possibility of physical violence if she dared to continue with the subject. Thoiba's absence not only makes his wife's life difficult but also hampers the childhood of their elder daughter, who has to take on the role of her own mother when Ibemnungshi goes to sell self-grown vegetables in the market, "putting aside all shame and fear" (87) to make ends meet. Moreover, at times, she finds Tada Toyaima, her husband's friend, whom he entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the family and whom she reveres as an elder brother, fulfilling certain duties of the absent father. Further, her life takes a turn for the worse when Iche Chaobi breaks to her the news of Thoiba's affair. Although Chaobi wants Ibemnungshi to teach her husband a lesson for his misdeeds, her suggestion to look for "spells and amulets, consult shamans and astrologers" and to "tear off that hussy's hair" (88) relieves the man of all agency and responsibility, instead holding the woman solely culpable for the illicit relationship and punishing her for the same. This indicates, once again, how women are easy preys because of their status in the social hierarchy.

In "Conceptualizing Stigma," Link and Phelan elucidate how the components of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination within a power situation results in stigma. Labeling assists the process of othering—the distinction between "us" and "them"—whereby the "them" becomes the possessor of all undesirable qualities. This

facilitates the stereotyping process and also sets the stage to justify the pathetic treatment meted out to the "others." The power embedded in certain labels and attributes are such that they become, at times, the entire identity of a person instead of remaining just a part of it. Ghosted by her husband, Ibemnungshi is left alone to fend for herself, with only Tada Toyaima as her emotional support. However, following the emergence of rumors that cast a doubt on the chastity of their relationship, they decide to maintain distance from each other, lest it cause any disturbance in Toyaima's marital life. Unfortunately, scandal chases them when, one day, Toyaima takes shelter in Ibemnungshi's house to escape the rain, and a mob, including Meira Paibi women and youths from the club, swarm her house. Accusing her to be "fooling around with other men when her husband's not around", the mob brands Ibemnungshi and Toyaima as "culprits," "immoral", and "thieves" (90). Ibemnungshi's identity drowns in the labels thrust upon her by people who have no inkling of her true self. Using this incident as a catapult, the crowd forcefully marries Ibemnungshi and Toyaima off after discarding the options of ostracizing them and shaving their heads, without paying any heed to their explanations. The story questions the double standards of society while judging a man and a woman. Being vulnerable, Ibemnungshi is easily subjected to the judgment and retribution of society without any fault, while Thoiba escapes scot-free even after his illicit affair becomes public knowledge. Moreover, while most of the literature on Meira Paibi women is full of praises for this vigilante group due to their resistance to AFSPA, fight for women's rights, and war on drugs, alcohol, and other social evils, this story highlights the need to check mob mentality, moral policing, and the all-pervasive omnipotent status of not only the Meira Paibi but of any organization, as it threatens human rights. Moral policing in Manipur made quite the news in the year 2019, when a mob consisting of Meira Paibi women and the local people harassed some people attending a private party during the celebration of a spring festival, Yaosang, citing the use of alcohol and donning of skimpy clothes as the reason for the intervention (Sitlhou). Another incident of a crowd attacking a couple, alleging that they were having an illicit affair, went viral. In a bid to protect traditions and customs, women often become facilitators of patriarchy: "Moral Policing in Manipur is now seen in a new form of patriarchy, with women as propagators and the medium, a way they seem to have taken out of long suppression" (Hanghal).

Courtesy stigma or stigma by association refers to the stigma and the associated societal disapproval one has to endure for simply being associated with a stigmatized person either by choice or by relation. Assaulted and thrown out of the house by her cheating husband, Ibemnungshi is rendered homeless. With her honor sullied, she is also rejected by her parents and relatives, as they do not want to be subjected to "courtesy stigma" by being associated with her. The owner of the hotel where she finds refuge and some other men, together, rape her in the middle of the night and then pay her money to conceal the heinous crime: "That night I lost my honour for the first time" (Subadani 92). Othering and linking people to undesirable traits provide the grounds for not only their social exclusion and rejection but also discrimination against them, thereby reducing the opportunities they can access and quality of life they lead even when their stigmatized condition does not affect their productivity as an individual or as part of society. The stigma Ibemnungshi now carries because of the alleged affair leaves her penniless and homeless. Bereft of any other recourse, she turns to prostitution, before opening up a shop with the money earned. But all the money in the world cannot fill the void in her life. Years later, understanding her self-worth, she dismisses the sympathetic pleas of the people asking her to return to her family, as now Thoiba has apparently realized his mistake: "But why should I go back on my own? I am also

human" (92). Despite this, for her, spring only arrives when Thoiba himself comes to take her home at last. The association of spring with the arrival of her husband reflects the patriarchal worldview that measures a woman's wholeness through the presence of her husband. This enforcement of one's worldview on others transforms stigma into a symbolic power. Bourdieu posited that one of the ways of exercising power is via different understandings of worth and value in different cultures. And stigma becomes a symbolic power because it, too, is a "statement about value and worth made by stigmatizers about those they stigmatize" (Link and Phelan 26).

People disadvantaged by dint of symbolic power are often influenced to accept their presumably low status without realizing that it is a consequence of external influence. Drawing from Bourdieu, Link, and Phelan, it can be posited that such internalization results in self-stigma, a concept which can be seen in Sunita Ningombam's short story "The Debt Repaid". Originally published in 2001 as "Sendol Shingba" and translated into English by Natasha Elangbam, the story explores a subject which "patriarchal morality deems taboo" (Samom 11) – female sexuality and desire and the conditioning that restrains its free expression. The protagonist, Lalita, is a young widow, whose daily visits to Shyamo's shop to satisfy her *kwa* addiction gradually transforms their repartee into desire. Although he refers to her as "Iteima" – sister-in-law – in reverence to her late husband, it does not stop him from blushing and faltering whenever she brings up the three-hundred-and-fifty rupees she owes him for the *kwa*. Being aware of the intentions behind Shyamo's actions and innuendos and trying to brush them aside, Lalita is taken unawares when she too starts experiencing sparks of desire within her. In the ensuing tussle between her desire and her psychological conditioning – "whatever is happening, can this be right?... 'Hah! This is becoming quite enjoyable!'" (Ningombam 143) – the former gets an edge, when, on her next visit to the shop, instead of waking up the sleeping Shyamo, she continues to stare at his bare body, bewitched. She feels her heartbeat sync "with the rhythmic rise and fall of Shyamo's breathing" and a "hot wave of desire suddenly rose high, burning up her heart" (144). Suddenly waking up, Shyamo becomes aware of her gaze on his bare body. Not letting this opening pass, he proposes that they run the shop together. Drawing confidence from Lalita's laughter at his suggestion, he takes hold of her fingers on the pretext of giving her the *kwa*. Jolted back to reality, with all its norms and expectations, Lalita withdraws her hand and reprimands him for his behavior. Overcome with a yearning that she simultaneously feels ashamed of, she questions the workings of the world which expects widows to be devoid of any feelings except for an everlasting grief in the memory of their departed husbands:

> How can you say that the hearts of those lonely women, those without husbands, have dried up? What should have flowed freely has been dammed up society and its rules. Behind this barricade, a widow clutches the memory of her lost husband and lets all that flows from her heart stream down as tears. Only then is she called a woman, allowed to live and go about (145).

However, all this questioning and sagacity amounts to nothing in front of years of conditioning, which molds minds to behave in accordance with the set norms. Throughout the years, women have been manipulated to feel guilty not only about their carnal desires but desire in general. In a patriarchal society, hunger, desire, and sexuality cease to exist in a woman's life, as it does not serve the men's interests, and any sign of their presence results in shame, stigma, and scandal. In Lalita's case, despite the absence of the external stigmatization that is seen in the previous story, her own awareness about her situation and the normative expectations regarding her conduct by others as well as her own self result in

self-stigma and self-shaming. Stigmatized or not, every individual applies identity standards to themselves, and failing to meet them induces the feeling of identity ambivalence. Identity norms stand apart from other norms in that the failure to maintain them has a "very direct effect on the psychological integrity of the individual" (Goffman 128). Lalita, too, flounders, as shame, repulsion, self-reproach, and disgust now replace the passion in her heart: "'Damn it! How could I?'... How dare he! To me!" (Ningombam 145).

The memories of her late husband, Biramani, further intensify her guilt. Although widow remarriage is not disparaged in Manipuri society, Lalita's internalization of societal codes of conduct refrain her from taking the relationship with Shyamo further, questioning its sanctity in comparison to the socially approved love she shared with her husband. Had her intention been to unite with Shyamo in marriage, a socially sanctioned bond, she would perhaps have taken the relationship ahead. However, since her desires are sexual and not socially mandated, her guilt over her feelings takes precedence over the feeling itself. Her identity as a widow who is supposed to be devoid of any yearnings surpasses her individuality and cravings and fuels her desperation to quickly put an end to this "filthy" relationship. She breaks her son's piggy bank, adds the money to her market capital, and sends her son to Shyamo's shop to repay the debt with interest. Her deviation from the set norms, her comprehension of and conflict with the conduct expected of her, and the possibility of being reduced to a dishonorable person hinder the realization of her desires:

> Each of us carries around those growing up places, the institutions, a sort of backdrop, a stage set. So often we act out the present against the backdrop of the past, within a frame of perception that is so familiar, so safe that it is terrifying to risk changing it even when we know our perceptions are distorted, limited, constricted by that old view (Mohanty 90).

"As Spring Arrived" and "The Debt Repaid" both exhibit how the ingrained ideas and beliefs of the society and the protagonists themselves become detrimental to the quality of their lives. This paper attempts to discern the various ways in which stigma contributes to the consolidation and continuation of the standardized moral codes of conduct. Both externally imposed and internally experienced stigmatization, as seen in Ibemnungshi and Lalita's stories, respectively, affect the psyche of the protagonists and diminish their life prospects. Stigmatization, Imogen Tyler writes, "operates as a form of governance which legitimizes the reproduction and entrenchment of inequalities and injustices" (Tyler and Slater 734). Looking at the source of stigma in these stories, one can realize how patriarchy has successfully designed a society that binds women in servitude to the advantage of men. Slight deviation from the carved path of conduct will result in stigmatization and the consequent loss of status. In both the stories, the course of the women's life is dictated by the action and the inaction/absence of the male characters. And despite taking the risk of resisting their social and familial obligations, Ibemnungshi and Lalita end up conforming to the roles expected of a wife and a widow, respectively. Subconsciously, they succumb to social conditioning and the enforcers of patriarchy.

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Spatial Reading of Temsula Ao's Select Short Stories: Nagaland's Insurgency and Metropolitan Complexities

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Abstract

The notion of space is central to the inhabitants of North-Eastern India as it is explored and evolved over the conflicts of geography. The idea of space is now being repeated in geography and mapping, attempting to depict the transition dynamic against a totality of linkages and multiplicity of spatialities. Temsula Ao is an ethnographic writer from Assam; her collection of short stories, These Hills Called Home: Stories from the War Zone*, discuss the Naga insurrection fuelled by their struggle for freedom. Individual and communal life mobilizes spatial behaviors strategically, geographically, ideologically, materially, and culturally. The paper focuses on interpreting Temsula Ao's images and dynamics of human spatial experience in Nagaland. The spatial reading of selected short stories explores the existential ties between the supremacy and the land of the North-eastern. The Literature on spatial cognition is to understand how humans and other entities in space perceive, interpret, and mentally represent environmental attributes.*
Keywords: space, transition, insurrection, geographically, spatial cognition.

Fiction and short tales are no longer read as the stories they are intended to be. Instead, the contemporary consumerist world needs more reading between the lines. The readers or the digital natives of the 21st century are more interested in what is told explicitly; decoding, deciphering, connecting, logically analyzing, bringing forth analogies, histories, references, and getting the complete picture of the story by spatial interpretations. Spatial literary studies are a critical genre in contemporary studies that encompasses geographical literature that broadens interest in geographical themes and concepts (Hones 147). Space, a common analogy, is ambiguous since it may be employed in physical, conceptual, idealistic, materialistic, perceptual, behavioral, and other settings. The space is integrated with history, mythology, religion, crime, and politics giving both a much-needed sense of importance. India's Northeastern region's geographical, political, spatial, indigenous, linguistic, and cultural characteristics are different. As reflected in Mitali Goswami's words from the text '*The Water Spirit and Other Stories,*' Northeast India has created a culture and history distinct from the rest of India while retaining its fundamental Indianness. The events that happened over there in the past have added a different identity to the place. People judge and interpret their environments and respond to the environment in terms of affective spatial responses. The ideological space is mainly associated with insurgency, militancy, civil war,

guerrilla attacks, folklore, myth, superstition, cultural practices, politics, problems, and rebellion. Northeastern literature and inhabitants have a deep-rooted connection with nature. In her preface, the author points out the result and effects of a change in space. Literature from the states of Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram represents their spatial conflicts in the works. The plot and setting are always woven with the place and represent the place in literature. Geocriticism reveals the socio-cultural dynamics of the relationship between space in literature and literature in space; it "explores, seeks, surveys, digs into, reads, and writes a place; it looks at, listens to, touches, smells, and tastes spaces" (Tally Jr 3).

Temsula Ao's indigenous voice intends to assist outsiders from North East to comprehend the people's lives, cultural practices, language, lifestyle, beliefs and religion, and the intricacies of their day-to-day existence. During Ao's stay at the University of Minnesota (1985-86) as a Fulbright scholar, she learned about the culture and heritage of the Native Americans. After her return, this inspired her to document the Ao-Naga community's culture, heritage, and oral tradition. The Insurgency and Militancy of Nagaland can be traced back to the times of the First World war, and Ao observed the happenings during the entire period. Thus, when she decided to put her thoughts into writing, she became the most authentic storyteller in Nagaland. Her stories were not about the people who make the headlines. She makes it a point to tell the stories of the ordinary people who deserve their stories to be told. She continues to voice out for the indigenous people of Nagaland through her stories, *Laburnum for my Head (2009)* and *The Tombstone in my Garden (2022).* Her first short story collection, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone,* depicts the chaotic lives of the Naga tribes and has been interpreted from various perspectives. The Nagas' rituals, customs, and living conditions were studied using the notions of subalternity, cultural imposition, and political dominance. Modernization influences culture and disrupts space by sending people as refugees to metropolitan areas. Critical Rereading of the text reveals the socio-political process. The characters in the select short stories experience political violence, societal reality, and psychological effects. The Naga people's acts of social exclusion and ethnic conflict were investigated, and the research gap has been identified as attempting spatial reading of the text to analyze space representation in the North-eastern area.

The article intends to address what constitutes a home and what differentiates a home from a house. It also makes us ponder whether hills can be termed home. Inhabitant and emotions of space are what make a house a home. If hills can make people 'feel at home,' provide comfort, belonging, and so on, they might be addressed as home. Hills, mountains, valleys, and forests are akin to houses for the inhabitants of the North East. Their relationship with natural space and its history delves deep into generations before generations. The stories are set in a war zone due to the civil war. They are caught between issues, such as whether they should assist or denounce one of the locals that join the subterranean army. The battle is not only raging on the outside but also the inside, making minds their battlegrounds.

"I hear the land cry, over and over again, 'Let all the dead awaken and teach the living how not to die'" (Ao 6), says the author in her book dedication. It would have been more effective if the narration had been done by one of the victims. But, documenting history is equally important so that posterity will know about the struggle and not repeat the same mistakes. In the preface, she explains under what circumstances and with what intention she has written them. "Nagaland's story of the struggle for self-determination started with high idealism and romantic notions of fervent nationalism, but it somehow got re-written into one of disappointment and disillusionment because it became the very thing it sought to overcome." (Ao, x) The North-eastern states of India are considered a troubled space, and

people are trying to seek and find safe spaces. Amidst all this, the struggle for independent Nagaland is going on; the natives of the land are seeking independence from the government of India. One cannot avoid remembering the horrors of the holocaust while reading the stories. The portrayal evokes a sense of pity among the readers towards the people whom their very own government hurts.

'The Jungle Major' story narrates how troublesome it is to have a normal marital relationship with his wife for a man who has joined the underground army. How the wife bravely saved her husband and the entire village from being burnt down using her intelligence. Khatila, the wife, represents how noblewomen have opposed war and violence, caricatured in the words of Amitav Ghosh "this particular mob was intent on confrontation. As its members advanced on us, brandishing knives and steel rods… suddenly, all the women… stepped out and surrounded the men; their saris and kameezes became a thin, fluttering barrier a wall around us. They turned to face the approaching men, challenging them, daring them to attack (Gosh 205). The story tells us how the suspicious villagers or the entire errant villages are grouped and camped, similar to the concentration camps of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany. Even the villagers who were afraid to support the militants later understood their struggle and changed their hearts. Meanwhile, Tally Jr.'s introduction takes literary geography out of the human geography context to incorporate it into the 'growing body of work in spatial literary studies' (Tally Jr.'s 2). For Tally, spatial literary studies include 'almost any approach to the text that focuses attention on space, place, and mapping'-whether it 'operates under the banner of geocriticism, geopolitics, literary geography, the spatial humanities, or something else along those lines' (Hones 3). There is a shift in the spatial setting, from a house in the village to a campsite in the jungle, which addresses whether the feeling of being at home is due to the people or space. Either home is a physical structure or an ideology or concept that can be adapted to its surroundings.

'Soaba' in Ao Naga means idiot. The story presents the consequences one could face simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Soaba is a man with no family, doing odd jobs provided by the villagers. He ends up in the house of an army man as a servant. Prior to this, he had no space called home or a sense of belonging. Soaba enters the house where he is restricted during a party, and the subsequent chaos leads to Soaba being shot by an army man. Throughout the story, he is portrayed as a lost pet (dog) who yearns for a master and a den. Cognitively, one's living environment impacts one's mental health. It is evident that change in dwelling places causes imbalances in our psyche, which many of us will overcome or adapt to, but for a person like soaba, it becomes unbearable and results in a tragedy.

'The Last Song' is a coming-of-age story that deals with multiple aspects like choir, singing, nature, patriotism, faith, moral policing, religion, sacredness, holiness and god. A young tribal girl Apenyo and her widowed mother, Libeni, were raped by the soldiers in the newly constructed church in the village. The church space is considered sacred, holy and pure, but when the victims were raped exactly there, no one came to their rescue. The irony is that one among them was singing hymns till the last breath. It is considered a haven for desolated people and doesn't protect or provide safety. The mother and daughter were buried along the gravesite's edge, but there were no headstones. Even in death, they were not given a place to call home. They were pious and genuinely believed in god. They believed in their hearts that the space would protect them and provide them shelter. When approached as a means of last resort, the place proved to be a haven at times of distress. The incident shattered their beliefs. The choir members were burnt dead and they were buried together. But Apenyo, despite being the lead singer of the church choir, was not given space in the cemetery because

her cause of death was by unnatural (unholy) means. These events get associated with the places and will forever be etched into people's minds. Any chance mention of the place or the day would trigger the traumatic memory. Here the church; the boundary of the cemetery; two mounds near it without any headstones; or the song; anything could trigger the same. "Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for ship-wreck" (Stevenson 133). The storyteller recalls the events of the dreadful day and begins to tell the story of Apenyo and Libeni to the village youth, thereby passing it on to posterity. "She tells them that the youngsters of today have forgotten how to listen to the voice of the earth and the wind" (Ao 32).

'The Curfew Man' is the most extensive story in the book. In which a man is forced to become an informer to the government, and how he tackles the problem is the significance of the story. People are forced to take odd jobs, which they don't like, due to the dangling economy and the need to support the family. Their anguish, anger, and pain are similar to the condition of the tribals of Gujarat explained by Shekar. "We Adivasis will not dance anymore'… We are like toys – someone presses our 'On' button, turns a key in our backsides, and Santhals start beating rhythms on our tamak and tumdak, or start blowing tunes on our tiriyo while someone snatches away our very own dancing grounds" (Sowvendra Shekhar 170). Displacement is one of the most discussed and repeated themes among the North Eastern narratives. Moving from the native to a metropolitan space with a new identity is traumatic and deals with one's sense of belongingness, and also compelling one to be an informant. Jemtila, the wife, suggests that if her husband is afraid to take the job or denies the offer, they might try to move back to the village. She still considers her village safer than this strange, alien city, even though any place in the Northeastern states cannot safeguard them from constant fear. Deterritorialization is vital as people, ideas, and cultural forms move away from their original contexts and new ones (Appadurai 66). Civil war and insurgency in the villages caused a kind of an exodus into space. People feel that moving to the city would help them bury their fears and forget the past. A part of their identity changes, from a villager whose village supports the underground people to a man who lives in the city. The author wanted to tell the world that these are happening in Nagaland, and she needed to voice those out. She placed Nagaland as the setting for all of her stories because only that would serve the purpose of what she exactly wanted. The phenomenon behind this is explained by Lisa fletcher as "writers and readers of popular fiction understand that there is a powerful correspondence between types of settings and types of narratives" (Fletcher 1).

'The Shadows' is a story about the fate of immature people who join the underground army. Unaware of the internal politics and hierarchy among the insurgents, they get caught in the crossfires. Elements that suit the spatial studies concern familiar and unfamiliar explored and unexplored space, village and jungle. This story carries much weight because it talks about the border and boundary issues between India and Burma, how people infiltrate and move to China via Burma and how other countries train the underground people. Incidents similar to these are reflected in the description of issues about the Gorkha National Liberation Front and the fight for a separate Gorkha land for the Nepalis in India, explained in Kiran Desai's Booker-winning novel except here, the people are fighting for independent Nagaland. It also explains how the youngsters of these regions are easily persuaded or threatened to join the underground movement, leading them to believe that a very comfortable and fulfilled life is awaiting them in the future. The terms nationalism and patriotism could easily convince even highly educated people working for the government like teachers. "This is our land! It is

not your land, it is free land, they countered, putting down the sentence flatly, rudely…There was no system to soothe the unfairness of things; justice was without scope… for these crimes the guilty would never pay. There was no religion and no government that would relieve the hell" (Desai 204).

It is about an immature soldier who joins the underground army and falls victim to the troops' dirty hierarchical politics. Imli was murdered or left to be dead by his people. The people he thought of as his fellow men, comrades, left him in the jungle, with hands and legs tied, mouth stuffed, to die a slow and cruel death. Army men can do anything; they are strong and capable but have one defect: they can think. This summative idea is worded brilliantly in Bertolt brecht's poem *General, your tank is a powerful vehicle.* Haigot, the handler of the troop, met the same fate as Imli and died at the hands of his fellow men due to vengeance. Imli's father used to be harsh and rude to the people during training, and at times, he humiliated a few, leading to his son's loss. The war space of Northeastern makes the rational judgments of the youth irrational. But they do not understand what makes peace, and when people fighting on both sides are our people, how should we bring peace? Chetan Bhagat remarkably presents the harsh reality of bitter truth. He says, "Peace is not a free-hugs campaign or a touchy-feely warm and fuzzy feeling. Sometimes, peace is just boring indifference or simply a desire to live and let live." (Bhagat 94).

'The Old Man Remembers' is the story of an older man reminiscing about the days he spent in the underground as a young boy. Transferring knowledge of history to future youngsters is essential to the deceased older man since history alone may help the young appreciate the value of democracy. A war cannot be justified. One may write pages and pages on how there is no alternative way to go and nothing to rely on. However, people's lives are at risk, and war has no concern for them. To put it in a nutshell, Arundhati Roy says, "Nothing can excuse or justify an act of terrorism, whether it is committed by religious fundamentalists, private militia, people's resistance movements or whether it's dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognized government" (Roy 169).

In brief, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from the War Zone* and almost the entire spectrum of Northeastern literature is about how people synchronize their lives with space. The representation of space is associated with the individual life intertwined with nature, rich culture, and tradition, and struggles faced in their lives. As spatial conflicts, it introduces turmoil, and violence between government and rebel groups is portrayed in Ao's narration. The spatial conflicts are not only in the war zone but even in urban life. The complexities and conflicts in urban space lead to the fallout of Naga's history. In Teju Cole's *Open City* and *Everyday is for the thief*, narrators from outside Newyork city and Lagos describe the city space. Here, spatial memory acts as the past to construct the city space in the present. Life in American cities is undeniably complicated with its vibrant places and lifestyle. The space is perceived, interpreted and mentally represented with the short stories, narrators, spatial setting and their lives.

Finally, when things started returning to normalcy, people started to return to their lives without fear of existential ties. People deal with the difficulties in migration, how space change is perceived, and how it affects their mentality, language, skill, labor, and education. The dualities of spaces to cope with the migration make it hard to try to adapt to the modernities, yet they struggle not to cut off from their old ways of life altogether. All they now need to do is, lead everyday lives; of course, that would be the hardest of all. Towards the people of the country, Rabindranath Tagore says, "I will persist in believing that there is such

a thing as the harmony of completeness in humanity, where poverty does not take away his riches, where defeat may lead him to victory, death to immortality, and wherein the compensation of Eternal Justice those who are the last may yet have their insult transmuted into a golden triumph" (Tagore 116).

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Myth, Memory and the Politics of Sexuality: A Reading of Janice Pariat's *Seahorse*

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Abstract

Janice Pariat, a writer from the northeast of India, had remarked, in an interview, how meaning accrues from the similar patterns and motifs uncovered by myths. In her novel, Seahorse*, she employs a Greek myth of the relationship between the sea god Poseidon and the youth Pelops to weave together a narrative of love and loss. This essay would attempt to analyse the way Pariat retells an ancient myth to show the fluidity of gender and sexuality, to dismantle constructed heteronormative boundaries, and to legitimise a queer identity for her protagonist. The content and narrative structure of the novel show the fiction of compartmentalising and categorising, and the seahorse, both a literal and symbolic presence in it, further strengthens the notion of queerness. Besides, the fluidity of time and memory in the novel is appropriate for a text which sees the echoes of an ancient myth in modern history. T.S. Eliot's essay, "Ulysses, Order and Myth" elucidates how myth is used to control and order the futility and chaos of the modern world and make the latter possible for art. However, Laurence Coupe argues against this privileging of form over matter and structure over story, and indicates how one need not make any hierarchical distinction between myth and contemporary history. How does* Seahorse *then read myth – as a shaping factor or mainly to show the resonances of ancient story in the modern world?*
Keywords: *Myth, Gender, Sexuality, Queer, Memory*

Introduction

Janice Pariat's novel *Seahorse* (2014) seeks to argue for a queer identity and consciousness in a society marked by extreme homophobia and patriarchy. Pariat, who spent her childhood in Meghalaya and Assam, is a novelist, poet, reviewer and teacher. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Young Writer Award and Crossword Book Award, her debut collection of short stories, *Boats on Land* (2012) employs Khasi folklore and rituals to tell stories of colonial exploitation, environmental degradation and tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. In the stories marked by a lyrical and poetic quality, memory plays a key role as a counter-hegemonic force and a tool of subversion (Borah 2015). Her other novels include *The Nine-Chambered Heart* (2017) and *Everything the Light Touches* (to be published in October 2022).

Set in the 1990s-2000s of India and England, *Seahorse* follows the story of Nehemiah, a student from Meghalaya, who studies English Literature in Delhi University and then goes on to London on a fellowship to study at the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies. Through Nehemiah's relationships with Lenny, Nicholas and Myra,

the author crafts a tale of love, loss, pain, betrayal and trauma in a society where difference is punished and conformity is enforced. This essay would first examine the way time is experienced in the novel and its relations with narrative and memory, then explore the role of myth and finally discuss the politics of sexuality and its impact on the lives of the characters. Pariat retells a Greek myth of same-sex love to draw parallels between modern life and ancient mythical story. This essay would show how the author takes this myth as a starting point but refuses to categorise and label the sexuality that is presented in the novel. The idea of fragmentation and wholeness inherent in the myth is also present in the modern story but what is to be noted is the way the author dismantles the concept of any kind of essentialising and fixity of sexuality and identity.

Time and Memory

Time, in the novel, is intricately connected with the narrator's emotions and memories. The narrator, Nehemiah, begins his story with his lover-mentor Nicholas' disappearance. Remarking how "Everything opens in media res. /In the midst of things", Nehemiah feels his life is forever haunted with Nicholas' disappearance, which he later corrects to say that actually, the latter had left and not disappeared. On the other hand, his relationship with Nicholas is specially marked by his earlier ties with Lenny, his childhood friend at home and his untimely death. As Nehemiah remarks, "Nicholas and Lenny, though worlds apart, are inextricably linked. On either side of a diptych, bearing the names of the living and the dead" (Pariat 6). For Nehemiah, it is Nicholas and Lenny who shape his identity and his present. The novel elucidates how memory is often omission and selection, a deliberate performance based on one's present needs and accompanied by the desire to construct a particular self. The story is an exercise in memory with the narrator's present intricately marked by his recalling those who had the deepest affective ties with him and the writer resorting to an ancient mythical memory to tell her story.

Henri Bergson, concerned with increasing rationalisation and standardisation in society, came up with a radical concept of time, highlighting memory as its central feature. Bergson characterised remembering as active engagement, and as fluid and changing (qtd. in Olick 154). He rejected objectivist and materialist accounts of time in favour of the variability of individual experience. Against an "imaginary homogeneous time" (Bergson 274), Bergson argues:

> In reality there is no one rhythm of duration; it is possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places in the scale of being. (275)

Seahorse also foregrounds the narrator's subjective experience of time, "Time doesn't hang on a wall. It doesn't tick by on a wrist. It's infinitely more secretive and intimate" (Pariat 63). For Nehemiah, time does not flow smoothly. "In our heads, it hastens and halts and stumbles. On occasion, it dissolves. It ceases to exist" (Pariat 63). Another instance of such a conception of time tied to one's emotional state is when Nehemiah says how before meeting Lenny, he was attuned only to his "parents' precise clockwork regime…When I was with him [Lenny], though, time dissolved into insignificance. It lost its grasp, and loosened, unfurling endlessly as the sea" (Pariat 15).

The novel's intermingling of the past and present and the final selection of a vivid incident from the past bear out what Middleton and Brown (2008) observe about time and

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memory. Drawing upon Bergson's concept of the "fluid continuity of the real" (qtd. in Middleton and Brown 245), they note how although fundamentally we exist in a "fluid continuity of the real", we are, nevertheless, able to actively "cut out" or "isolate" discrete forms within that flux. The narrative moves back and forth, as the protagonist-narrator, Nehemiah continually finds his memory going back to the crisis that Lenny had suffered as a result of his difference. His relationship with Myra later is again determined by the memory of loss. The novel simultaneously progresses from one geographical location to another and remains poised at that originary moment of self awareness and discovery. The narrator explains this with a metaphor:

> Time, I've often thought, could easily be captured inside a moving train. When the natural light outside has faded until it is even with the artificial light inside. And a passenger, looking at the window, sees two images at once. The dim landscape rushing past and the interior of the carriage, reflected with its motionless occupants./ Moving and still. All at once./ Moving and still. (Pariat 201)

These lines capture effectively the fluidity of time. Further, the author writes:

> 'in the case of the Aymara people in the Andes, the past lies ahead.'/ For it can be seen. This is who you are – the entirety of everything that has come before – and it stands there, a steady yet fragile reflection. The future stays behind, unknown, unseen, unfathomable. (Pariat 247)

Nehemiah's identity is an outcome of his past; it is constructed out of his relationships with others. The novel articulates how history shapes one's identity and self and determines one's present behaviour.

Myth, Art and Contemporary Reality

Given the author's argument for a fluid concept of time, it is only appropriate that the main action of the narrative draws upon a lesser known ancient Greek myth, that of the same-sex love between the sea god, Poseidon and the youth, Pelops. Pelops was slaughtered by his father, King Tantalus, and served as flesh to the immortal gods. The gods, however, recognised the deception and Pelops was restored to life by the fates or the *moirai*. Pelops became a lover of Poseidon and he was provided with a chariot of swift, winged horses. One notices the echoes of the Poseidon-Pelops story in the relationship between Nicholas and Nehemiah. As Nehemiah remarks, "I was offered to Nicholas on a plate. / Something like fate" (Pariat 58). Nehemiah is the young student who is irrevocably drawn towards the older Nicholas, an art historian who has come to India for research and teaching, and who initiates the young boy into a sophisticated, upper class way of life and culture. As Pariat says in an interview to *The Hindu*, "He is mentored by the older man, much like many pederastic relationships in ancient Greek, in the ways of love, life, art. Music (mostly classical, and opera) forms the soundtrack to their time in the bungalow on Rajpur Road." Nehemiah was found and rescued by Nicholas after the former had attempted to kill himself by jumping from the tower at the ridge. An intimate relationship blossoms and Nehemiah slowly recovers, though the loss of Lenny continues to traumatise him. As he says, "Death. Loss. They left their absences, filled with oddly shaped emotions that didn't quite fit, that pressed on this nerve and the other" (Pariat 111). Just as Pelops was made whole again, Nehemiah, too, gains a new life of sorts. To show how the experience of pain and trauma can also result in a sense of beauty and completeness, Pariat refers to the Japanese notion of *kintsukuroi*, the belief that a piece of

pottery, which had been broken and then repaired, has its beauty enhanced. Through this, the author also tries to make linkages between art and human nature and indicate the resilience of both to the vagaries of life. In the interview to *The Hindu*, Pariat says, "These events are, naturally, treated metaphorically in *Seahorse*, but I think what drew me to the myth was the idea of a person falling apart, and being put back together. What happens to all of us in life." Pariat, in another interview to *The Sunday Guardian*, remarks, "Myths unveil common patterns through which we derive meaning, and I'm intrigued by how these timeless narratives emphasise, as TS Eliot explains in his essay "Ulysses, Order and Myth", the underlying commonality of ostensibly disparate times and locations."

Seahorse, too, by showing the prevalence of same-sex love in ancient society, draws parallels between history and modern milieu. More significantly, it tries to argue for a greater tolerance and acceptance of same-sex desire in a predominantly homophobic society. It is significant that the author refers to TS Eliot as a possible source of inspiration for her novel. Reviewing James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Eliot in his essay remarks:

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others might pursue after him…It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. . . Instead of the narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art. (177–8)

However, Laurence Coupe, in his book, *Myth*, argues that Eliot "privileges form over matter, structure over story" (33). He points out how for Eliot, "what matters most about *Ulysses* is the paradigm inherited from Homer rather than the actual tale it tells, the protagonist of which is a modest middle aged Irishman and not a Greek warrior" (33). Coupe further says, "He takes the notion of myth as paradigm to the point of an arid formalism" (33). Coupe also criticises the opposition of myth and history in Eliot, where the modern world is one of futility and anarchy and must be redeemed by art, identified with the ideal order of myth. Thus, scholars have refuted Eliot's mythical method as inadequate for explaining the presence of myth in modern writing. Ancient Greek society and the myths that evolved from it may be accommodative of same-sex desire though they are marked by a predominantly male hegemony. Therefore, they cannot serve as a paradigm for modern history. David Halperin, in his book *One hundred years of Homosexuality,* writes about the erotics of male culture in ancient Greece and how it saw sexual behaviour as an expression of political and social relations. Foucault also wrote approvingly of non-normalising culture of ancient Greece but as Tamsin Spargo in her book, *Foucault and Queer Theory*, points out, he did not offer it as an alternative to contemporary society. Prevalence of slavery and patriarchy in ancient Greek society revealed the existence of different forms of domination and oppression.

Representation of the Politics of Sexuality

Pariat, by drawing from a culture tolerant towards homoeroticism, tries to show the contrast with modern society which fears and looks at horror at the sexually "deviant". When Lenny is discovered by his father in bed with another boy, he is sent to a psychiatric institution located in a pine forest far away from the town. Nehemiah recalls how social

reputation is paramount and despite Lenny's father's attempts to cover it up, the entire town knew about it, "Where everyone knew everyone else. And whispers grew as tangled gardens, abandoned in their wishes, words flitting like butterflies from tongue to tongue" (Pariat 56). As a "respectable man of the church", Lenny's father believed, "It was a sickness, and somehow it must be cured" (Pariat 56).

Lenny's fate is the perfect example of how society forces conformity and annihilates anyone who cannot adhere to society's norms. He demonstrates what Foucault had written, "sterile behaviour carried the taint of abnormality… and would be driven out, denied and reduced to silence" (3, 4), and how a discourse developed around sexuality in the nineteenth century with classificatory division created between the norm and the perverse. Nehemiah, his bosom friend, strongly believes that he was killed though he never mentions who or what did. Lenny's favourite line from Auden, "All we are not stares back at what we are" (Pariat 16) shows the disjunct between the individual and society and the immense pressures inflicted on the one who is different. Even before his confinement, Lenny feels an extreme restlessness and reiterates to Nehemiah his desire to leave.

Tamsin Spargo writes how while many historians of homosexuality try to trace connections between homosexual identities and behaviours in the twentieth century and those in earlier periods, Foucault regards the category of the homosexual as emerging only in the nineteenth century. Further, Spargo points out how according to Foucault, homosexuality, like sexuality in general, must be seen as "a *constructed* category of knowledge rather than as a *discovered* identity" (17). Foucault believes that though same-sex relationships were prevalent earlier, it was only in the nineteenth century that "homosexual" came to be regarded as a species:

> Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (Foucault 43)

Foucault writes about the advent of "technologies of sex" (119) at the beginning of the nineteenth century which makes sex a concern of the state and places individuals under surveillance. Spargo remarks:

> These 'technologies of sex' were designed to preserve and foster a productive and procreative population (or workforce) that met the needs of a developing capitalist system. The key unit of this social order was the bourgeois family within which the future workforce would be produced. (18, 19)

Seahorse shows how in the twenty-first century also, Lenny is identified as "a perverse or deviant type, a case of arrested development, a suitable case for treatment, in short as an aberration from a heterosexual norm. As such, he was subject to the disciplining, marginalising and subordinating effects of social control" (Spargo 20). The shame associated with homosexuality is captured by the author when Nehemiah remarks how his own father asked him hesitantly and with timidity if Lenny had touched him. Believing that Lenny is suffering from a disease and to cut off all contact with him, Nehemiah is sent away to a college in Delhi, founded on, as he says, "good wholesome Christian principles" (Pariat 58). Ironically, Nehemiah does what his father had most feared. While Lenny had no escape, the novel shows how Nehemiah achieves freedom from the stifling, conservative environment of his hometown. However, Nehemiah does feel emotionally claustrophobic, as Lenny's death leaves a deep scar on him. So much so that he attempts suicide. He says, "It would creep

back, the feeling that I'd splinter into a million pieces. That my breath was caught in my throat. / That's why I'd climbed the tower" (Pariat 111).

During his stay in Delhi and England, Nehemiah comes across other queer relationships. It is notable that Pariat does not use the term "homosexual" in her novel. We see how both Nehemiah and Nicholas have relationships with women. Many found the terms "gay" or "lesbian" restrictive and a reaffirmation of the binary and unequal opposition between homosexual and heterosexual. My essay has attempted to see the author's exploration of the complexities of relationships as "queering". According to Spargo:

> queer theory could be seen as mobilising 'queer' as a verb that unsettles assumptions about sexed and sexual being and doing. In theory, queer is perpetually at odds with the normal, the norm, whether that is dominant heterosexuality or gay/lesbian identity. It is definitely eccentric, ab-normal. (40)

The characters in *Seahorse* suffer as a result of deviating from the norm in other ways too. Lenny had a penchant for drawing and sketching, but was forced to study science. His disinterestedness drove him to drift. The author remarks how most small towns in India in the late 1980s did not look kindly on "the imaginative and abstract. The elusive and intangible" (13). They would rather prefer medicine, engineering or government service. Nicholas too remarks how he was "a misshapen pearl" (158) in his family and his father could not comprehend his interest in what he called "eastern monstrosities" (159). The seahorses in Nicholas' aquarium, which provide the title of the novel, are a significant metaphor, serving as an accompaniment to Nicholas and Nehemiah's relationship as both remain fascinated by these strange creatures, trying to catch a glimpse of their famed ritualistic courtship at dawn. The novel celebrates difference as is signified by the seahorse which belongs to a rare fish family marked by male pregnancy.

Pariat depicts the fiction of heteronormativity. Nehemiah's friend, Santanu struggles to come to terms with his girlfriend's simultaneous relationships with more than one man. She claims she is of many loves but would not like to label any of her ties as "then it ascribes a formal structure on something that's meant to be organic…something you can't predict or dictate" (195, 196). Further, we see how Myra's father visits a cross-gender, transgender friendly place but is furious when confronted with this fact by Nehemiah.

Conclusion

Pariat, therefore, uses myth as a framing device to interrogate the politics of sexuality and gender in contemporary society. The story can be seen as a bildungsroman where Nehemiah comes to terms with his identity and resists social and familial conservatism and oppressive structures. This identity is, however, grounded in pluralism and dynamism; it is not a static and stable entity. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* formulates the idea of performativity of gender and the self. Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr in their edited book, *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, drawing upon Butler's ideas, point out how on the one hand, a self is fashioned out of a discernible identity and on the other, the performance of that identity is also the condition for its dismantling. They remark:

> the conditions of representation themselves will yield a politics in which one can be a self only through the repetition of a norm, at the same time as that very repetition is essentially queer. For the queer is not radically outside or beyond recognition and selfhood; it is that which makes a claim to be heard as human –

within the norms of speech, gender, the polity and the symbolic – at the same time as
   it perverts the normative matrix. (15)

Seahorse also seeks to claim such multi-layered and queer identities for its characters, and makes a plea for diversity and difference by showing the trauma that ensues when dissidence is punished, and by drawing parallels from a Greek myth of antiquity.

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Fragmented in Exile: Postmodern Consciousness inTsering Wangmo Dhompa's *In the Absent Everyday*

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Abstract

Contemporary Tibetan literature in English has emerged as a significant voice of the traumatic exile experience of the Tibetan refugees scattered worldwide. Deterritorialization of Tibetans brought an opportunity for the academia to study and understand the problem of forced migration, belonging, identity and representation to reconceptualize not only diaspora but also postmodernism. The paper attempts to interrogate Tsering Wangmo Dhompa's collection of poems, In the Absent Everyday *from the perspective of Postmodernism, particularly examining the illustration of "fragmentation" in her poetry, arguing that the diasporic condition further gives rise to the postmodern conditions of alienation, ambivalence, disillusionment, existentialism, impermanence and consequently the perception of a fractured self. The paper will analyse how this fractured as well as hybridized "self" manifests itself in the literary creativity of Tsering Wangmo Dhompa.*
Keywords*: exile, fragmentation, postmodernism, contemporary Tibetan literature*

Wherein we matter, words raising evaporable walls
and conduit vaporous or vapid. A plain field is
canter-friendly and food. How is it that we come to dreaming
without purpose. Think, the more we know, the less we become
capable of dreaming. If only I had fealty to speak of. If only
cormorants would come closer where we are cutting up words.
Happy. You are my volant being. Happy, happy. A wing is voyage.
An artery is to reconsider. Matter is to disintegrate.

(28)

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, a leading Tibetan poet and author, also the first Tibetan female poet writing in English to be published in the West, is a "representative voice of exiled Tibet" (Bhoil). Born on March 6th, 1969 in India, Dhompa grew up in the Tibetan refugee communities in India and Nepal. She now resides in the United States of America (Bhoil). Having lived as a refugee, as an exile, experiencing different cultures and encountering histories with constantly shifting perspectives, her works become a significant site to raise the questions of alienation, existentialism, fragmentation and identity. These questions have been approached from diverse standpoints such as that of postcolonialism (Bhoil) but, I argue, the aspects of postmodernism which are significantly present in Dhompa's works, are yet to be explored. *In the Absent Everyday* is an anthology of forty-eight poems written in free verse which was published in 2005 by Apogee Press, Berkley, California. This article attempts to examine Dhompa's poetry in *In the Absent Everyday* from the perspective of

postmodernism, particularly focusing on the concept of 'fragmentation' in postmodern literature. It aims to understand how the experience of exile becomes responsible for the connotations of fragmentation observed in the creative writings of Dhompa, thus highlighting the postmodern consciousness in her poetry.

Postmodernism, as a movement, started in the 1950s and gained momentum in the 1960s becoming a predominant thought in the following decades. It was identified as "an appendage of modernism" and "an indicative effect of modernism" which was visible in the fields of art, architecture, culture and literature (Hariharasudan et al.). Some look at postmodernism as a shift from the modernist ideology that had prevailed in the West after World War I. Morawski (2013) cites Bauman to explain postmodernism as:

Postmodern culture has rid itself of all authorities, abolished all hierarchies of values and eliminated all binding codes and norms. It frees everybody from obligation to tradition, and ridicules Utopia. Everything is possible and allowed. Clashing values co-exist in a state of passive indifference; they may be freely shuffled and exchanged. Their meaning is interpreted according to context or circumstances (Morawski).

Though postmodernism is different from modernism in many ways, on many occasions, they seem to overlap each other in such a way that their definitions become obscure and it can be said that they coexist together making both philosophies ambivalent. Many theorists have rejected the idea that postmodernism is the 'sequel' of modernism. They rather explain it as a 'state of mind' (Morawski). One of the prominent works that strongly emerged as a theoretic expression of postmodernism was Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* published in 1979 which countered the idea of "grand narrative" (Sim) arguing that the theories about the Western culture had lost their credibility and hence should have no authority or influence in the present time. Instead, there emerged a "multitude of stories, a polyphony of voices, a plurality of versions" (Guignery et al.). This philosophy provided a scope to express dissent over such authorities giving rise to scepticism thus questioning the very foundations of the Western ideology which was in turn based on the classical Greek philosophy. Christopher Butler asserted that obliteration of history from culture along with evasion of memory of any tradition was what signified postmodernism (Butler). Another important work which significantly helped to build the postmodern philosophy was Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* published in 1981. Rejecting the notion that there are "hidden structures behind all phenomena", Baudrillard proposed that "the postmodern world was a world of simulacra, where we could no longer differentiate between reality and simulation" (Sim). Taylor (2005) defined postmodernism as "dramatic changes in global politics, economics and culture" (May et al.). In other words, Postmodernism could be understood as the notable drift or the social and cultural changes that were noticed in several advanced societies towards the end of the twentieth century (Lyon), also understood to be an "inevitable human phenomenon" (Jun).

Postmodernist writings dominated the literature between 1960 and 1990 (Lewis), particularly relying on the devices of fragmentation, deconstruction and playfulness, emerging as a reaction to modern literature (Hariharasudan et al.). Breaking away from the pre-defined literary edifices such as narrative techniques, form and so on, it could be identified through its tendency of flouting from the rigidity of form and structure. It had elements of fantasy and self-consciousness. This philosophy was visible across all literary genres. It represented the chaotic life and culture of the contemporary time highlighting the issues pertaining to human identity in context of society, gender, culture and ethnicity along

with the struggle for legitimization. Specific elements of postmodern writings such as temporal distortion, pastiche, fragmentation, looseness of association, paranoia, hyperreality and language disorder became the hallmarks of postmodern writings (Ingalagi et al.). Some or all of these aspects were visible in the literary works that were produced after the end of World War II (Lewis). Postmodern literature can also be identified by the rudiments of uncertainty and indeterminacy. It can be understood as breaking away from modernism as it presents a different "structure of consciousness", a structure defined as "an unlimited, decentralized system, which doesn't allow for a universal vantage point or outside perspective" (Stephan). Uncertainty is an essential aspect of postmodern experience which gives the choice to an individual to become a 'detached' subject. Other stylistic techniques commonly used in the postmodern writings are intertextuality, metafiction, minimalism, maximalism, magical realism and reader involvement.

In exile, identity and culture function on the experiences of alienation and up-rootedness making fragmentation inevitable and majority of displaced Tibetans too live a fractured life where the only thing permanent is 'impermanence' (Bhoil). Assimilation and hybridity become the faces which conceal their fragmented self in exile. This fragmentation is metaphorically reflected in the stylistic aspects of Dhompa's poetry. The postmodern issues of rupture from the past, fragmentation and alienation take centre stage in her writings which are chiefly informed by her exilic existence. Dhompa comments in one of her interviews that once a person becomes an exile, he or she will always remain so even if they are granted citizenship of any nation because there would be no comfort of familiar languages and customs.

Fragmentation and ambiguity are essential features of postmodern identity such that the narrative becomes a foundation of subjectivity and helps to contemplate over 'self, other and the world' (Taylor). This is achieved in different ways in different genres. While fiction largely depends on plot, characters, setting and theme; poetry analyses imagery, figurative language, tone and theme to understand literary art. It is not very difficult to perceive the stylistic as well as ideological aspects of postmodernism in Dhompa's poetry. The most noticeable of the aspects of postmodernism throughout Dhompa's poetry is the element of 'fragmentation'. Just as in postmodern fiction the author breaks away from a fixed narrative structure and form, Dhompa's poems reject the pre-set arrangement of words, sentences, rhythm or construction. The dependence on 'structure' of a piece of art as a frame can be limiting, as it is governed by a set of rules or follows a specific pattern. Dhompa, instead chooses distortion and irregularity, which are the indispensable traits of postmodern writings, as a hallmark of her poetry, making it almost impossible to comment anything about the setting or the context or the timing in her poems. Complexity, instability and chaos which characterize postmodern writings (Farsi) rule Dhompa's writings as well, but she presents them subtly. The poem *Surrender* is a fine example:

> Between the three of us we had a garden of camellias.
> The whites were planted in the middle. By the time
> we changed our minds, the plants had taken root
> and we took it as another lesson. The doctor
> often found something wrong in one of us,
> we assumed we'd grow feeble before old.
> Raindrops left puddles on our clothes laid out,
> flattening the grass into our shapes. They would dry

but, again, there was nothing we took for granted.
If the sun came out, if thieves climbed our gates,
if naked spirits tucked damp shirts into their porous
ribs. On our side of the town, we referred to fluctuations
in our collective karma for predictions for weather
and for genes. We had many ways to introduce ourselves
but we said nothing. Said – where are you going?
and, have you eaten today?
(60)

Dhompa's poems are descriptions of everyday random instances and she puzzles the readers with the metaphorical or coded linguistic. The sentences begin and end suddenly. The background and refrain seem obscure on numerous occasions resonating Lewis' representation of fragmentation (in postmodern fiction) as the kind of writing where the narrative is "pounded into small slabs of event and circumstance" (Lewis). The following lines from her poem *A Matter Not of Order* illustrate this very well:

You are placated
with offerings
hollow as midnight's ankles.
Day life postpones impulses
to the future as though it sits
ahead with a symbol of permanence.
In night life you dream
a daughter. Skin a beast.
You can tell you are good.
(3)

Just as fragmented events mark the postmodern fiction, lyricizing fragmented ideas mark postmodern poetry, an attribute apparent in Dhompa's poems.

Another feature which is very similar to fragmentation is 'looseness of association' which applies when the text cannot be segregated into specific beginning or ending. In other words, the plot does not seem to move in a sequence and it literally "instructs the reader to riffle several loose-leaf chapters into any order" (Lewis). Dhompa's poems reject the notion of centrality of idea, coherence in expression and obligation of theme as well as meaning. They are notable in their use of language with complex and sophisticated undertones that necessitate deeper inspection as they become problematic to grasp. The metaphors mark the complexities of exile throughout her writings posing a question mark on the ability of words to express the human experience to its fullest. Postmodernism is marked by a rejection of linearity, coherence and realism which were dominant in modern literature (Taylor). A glimpse of this is observed throughout the collection *In the Absent Everyday* where Dhompa amalgamates chaos and question with reflection as well as internal conflict in her writings. As a result, her poetry emerges as a collage of disjointed thoughts and images, inscribed in the vein of self-consciousness. The following lines from her poem *A character whose name I forget* is a fine illustration:

This question of desire or its equivalent erupting
from caudal concerns. How a man walked all night
in black hush to discover hunger and loneliness
in fields of heliotrope, and the stars, belonging to the night,
not his.

(25)

It takes several episodes of close reading to be able to comprehend Dhompa's poems. She exhibits a quality of keen observation of the surroundings and of the people, which is reflected in the way her poetry presents the seemingly unimportant mundane tasks of every day. This also symbolically points out to the rejection of "grand narratives" and denial of classical traditions, values and roots which demands significance. The title of her collection itself symbolizes the persistent sense of absence and an incompleteness that informs the exilic existence. The exile experience is marked by alienation, fragmentation of identity and perpetual uncertainty which imitates in her poetry in the form of episodic and fragmented documentation of her self-reflections. The narration style closely resembles the postmodern characteristic of self-consciousness as observed in the following lines:

> Part of the confusion lay in the way light appeared on the
> horizon like a thin sheet of marmalade. You were not
> prepared for it. You were not talking about life but that was
> present too. There's a movie about a day-dreaming mechanic
> whose car stays in the passing present. Letters from dissident
> friends, and the birth of four reincarnate lamas in our little
> town. Soon, your fate will be proclaimed. Summer like
> a rash. Letters again, but still, who can say where one finds
> resolution. Fingers without guile, soft as a kitten's throat.
> Fire flies around. You are already there.

(14)

The poem *Review* is a fine example of postmodern writing as the lines of the poem are characterized by disjointed or fragmented ideas put together. The interpretations are ambiguous. Throughout Dhomps's poetry, the context of the poem varies and toil of defining meaning is left to the readers. Most of the poems in this collection are written in the form of short lyrics but few of them have been put as paragraphs in the form of prose poem. Ambivalence, memory and nostalgia emerge as the hallmarks of her poetry. Dhompa's creativity in poetic writing is different than the usual style. In her poems, the contexts are only suggestive. She describes her observations of routine life and interweaves contemplative thoughts in an elusive way. Philosophy in the form of words and expressions erupts surprisingly. Therefore, it is important to analyse the poems not only as a whole but to also examine words as singular thought. The prospect of multiple interpretations is an indispensable feature of postmodern writings.

Lewis (2001) describes modern works as "attempts to protect culture, against the chaos of technological change and ideological uncertainty in the wake of the First World War". However, he remarks that after the end of the Second World War, the postmodern writers "no longer believed that the old cultural values were recoverable […]. The alienation effects of their fictions express the effects of alienation upon themselves" (Lewis). Thus, the experience of alienation too marks the literature produced after the Second World War.

In the case of the Tibetans, their experience of alienation emerges from the issue of integration of Tibet into the People's Republic of China in the 1950s which led to the exodus of thousands of Tibetans into alien lands (Bhoil; Kapoor). Having faced deterritorialization, the Tibetans in exile too find themselves struggling to define their identity after being deprived of their land, history and roots (MacPherson), thus being pushed into the postmodern disillusionment in 'strange meadows' (Sonam) as Buchung Sonam creatively

puts it in his poem *Dandelions of Tibet*. Living as an exile, Dhompa also juggles between the past and the present which is connected with shared as well as transferred memory and personal as well as collective history, an experience she writes about in her memoir *A Home in Tibet* (Dhompa). However, she does not rely nor does she assert too much upon the past, thus alienating herself from both past as well as present, withdrawing from the existing surrounding, being incapable of identifying, attaching or relating self with any specific place, person or thing. She writes in her poem *A Geography of Belonging*:

[…..] My walk is mine.
The world runs above and below, and no one stops
to tell me they can read the future in my face.
(73)

Moving back and forth in narration and time, she illustrates the endless flux between past and present, between alienation, assimilation and hybridity which leads to uncertainties, instability and impermanence. However, just like the postmodernist writers do, she surrenders to this inadequacy of exilic existence. The following lines portray this quandary and the postmodern consciousness impeccably:

Conquered by ingredients: we replace salt
with sugar. Butter with milk.
We believe others know better
because we have arrived to find our place taken.
[…..] What cannot be explained
is accepted. Our forefathers went
to bed with salted butter tea in their bones.
You are living the life given.
(6)

The postmodern realization in Tsering Wangmo Dhompa's poetry is characterised by the fluctuating perspectives, obscure refrains and connotations, ambiguity in interpretations, non-sequential structuring, use of stream of consciousness style and representation of the ambivalent world without complaining about it.   Most of the poems in the collection *In the Absent Everyday* are mere fragments of her everyday experiences which are primarily informed by her exile status. The thoughts they put forward are disjointed with patchy construction and structure such that the lines open and close brusquely leaving the reader muddled. The fragmented form of her poetry mirrors her own exilic existence and the postmodern conditioning to which her life has been subjected in exile.

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Critique of the Troubled Experiences of Northeast Tribes during Internal Migration: An Analysis of Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood*

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Abstract

Heterogeneous cultures prevailing in the society are the geographical representations of the territorially divided boundaries. Territories are the cultural and social spaces of a group or a community inhabiting in it and their influence over people and vice versa tend to construct distinct human behaviours and identities. Human migration beyond native territories subsequently ruins the geographically built cultural and communal identities of the displaced people. Migrants are uncertain of their identities due to the cultural friction which occurs as the result of power relations in the host land. Territorially distanced North eastern tribes of India are prone to socially structured discriminations within the nation. Migrated tribes in the metropolitan cities encounter racial and cultural prejudices questioning their fundamental citizenship rights and national identity. This paper attempts to focus on the internally migrated tribes of Northeast India as subaltern in the host territory through literary and real life interventions. Easterine Kire's Bitter Wormwood *is selected to discuss the fictional deliberations on the experiences of the migrated tribal people by comparing with the contemporary happenings in the host territory. The select narrations are investigated under the conceptual lens of power-relation and racial discrimination through the subaltern voices of the native writers to posit the troubled experiences of the displaced Northeast tribes at various levels in the host society. Further, this paper studies the role of hegemonic power in imposing cultural alienation against Northeast tribes in the migrated territory.*
Keywords: *Northeast tribes, internal migration, power relation, subalternity, racial and gender discrimination, identity crisis*

Introduction

Migration is a global phenomena and a complex issue that unbalances the economical, political, social and cultural orientations. The movement of people across geographical locations has the ability to shape and change the histories of a nation. People migrate to different places in search of better livelihood and face numerous social and ethnic discrepancies. The movement of people across unknown territories involving both internal and external migration embodies the country's international standard. The broader concept

of 'identity' cannot be overlooked while discussing the complex problem of migration as both are interlinked to each other. This is because of the fact that the native identity carried by an individual or a group of people is devoid of ideal place in the host land that sequentially influence their sense of belonging. Accordingly, the cultural identity of the migrants becomes more complex in the majoritarian society. However, in the case of subjugated indigenous people, it becomes much more intricate and problematised in the host land. The Northeast region of India with its lustrous and enthralling landscape has its own tribal sense of belongingness to its people. Tribes from this part of the country choose domestic migration for job, higher education and other reasons. Despite the fact that every migrated and displaced people confronts racial and cultural discrimination in the host cities, this paper particularly deliberates on the humiliating and unwelcoming experiences faced by the domestically migrated North-eastern tribes through literary and contemporary real life incidents. Northeast migrants are verbally abused by labelling them through the derogatory names such as 'chinky,' 'nepali,' 'chinese' that significantly influence them to feel alienated within the country. The oriental or the Mongoloid racial features of the Northeast people is the prime reason for the occurrence of discrimination and social exclusion imposed by the majority group as racial bias is

> ...any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (Egon Schwelb 1001)

These possibilities of enjoying the nation's sense of belongingness are uprooted from the lives of these tribes as they are portrayed as the subaltern groups by the elite. Easterine Kire from Nagaland is keen on projecting the social and political prejudices faced by the displaced tribes to the public through her literary works. She, through her literary documentations, negotiates between the centre-periphery to include the socially excluded tribes into the collective community of the nation despite their different racial affinities. The select novel *Bitter Wormwood* by Kire is analysed under the lens of racial discrimination and power relations through the echoes of the unheard subaltern voices along with the real life incidents. Further, the study explores the identity threat and insecurity imposed by the dominant majority communities against the subaltern in the host land. Gender discrimination under the view of intersectionality is discussed to establish the racial manifestation of power against the migrated communities.

Echoes of Racial Taunts through Literature and Contemporary Events

Influx of people from India's Northeast region to several places is infinitely increasing in the recent times for multiple reasons of survival. Migration practiced by the natives is primarily domestic migration, as they move within India and experience diverse prejudices and bigotries. "Over the years, the concept of 'other' or "othering" [pertaining to migration] - the politics of discrimination and exclusion of disenfranchised groups or racial/ethnic minorities- has become one of the most important contributions to philosophy, ethnology, anthropology, and cultural studies." (Shilpi Saxena and Diksha Sharma 162). Similarly, literatures emerging from the Northeastern region authentically portray these inhumane circumstances of alienation induced by the host society. The novel *Bitter*

Wormwood, though largely depicts the political situation of Nagaland during post-independence period, Kire also touches upon the racial confrontations of the entire migrants in the mainland society. The author portrays the unstable and wounded minds of the tribal migrants as Mario L. Barnes states, "For those who have suffered because of their race, racial narratives almost involve elements of threat and pain" (479). In the novel, Neibou, a young Naga boy migrates to the city of Delhi for his higher studies and strives hard to survive within the territory of alienated ambience. In the college "Neibou was suddenly cornered by a senior who called him a *pahariya,* a hill-dweller. He had said it in an unmistakably offensive manner, almost spat it out." (181). Neibou here is helpless and treated as a subaltern, because the voice of the migrants and the displaced people is usually unheard and desperately avoided. The subaltern consciousness is forcefully established in the collective minds of the Northeast migrants as they are treated along the margins of the pluralistic society. Northeast region though geographically integrated with India, culturally differs and the people from these area are treated as "others" (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 247) within the country questioning their national identity. Neibou experienced the feeling of "other" when his "... knuckles were swollen and bruised. No one came forward to help him. He felt homesick and very lonely" (181) during the racial clash with the seniors. The sense of severance from the majority group and the alienation as a result of Neibou's racial discrimination "... is a terrible and inexplicable anomaly stuck in the middle of ... liberal democratic ethos." (Jennifer L. Hochschild 3). The act of racism as the product of social thought and perceived notions of the hegemonic group has its excruciating impact on the psyche of every individual victim. The fictional case of Neibou facing racial profiling transpires in the contemporary factual incidents. To illustrate, Mary Kom, an acclaimed Indian boxer hailing from Manipur speaks of the existing racial prejudices in her autobiography *Unbreakable – An Autobiography* as follows:

> Because of our oriental looks, people from the Northeast are often mocked in other parts of India. In a country where people speak all kinds of languages and have varied   kinds of looks, why is such treatment meted out to us? When I used to say that I am from Manipur, many people didn't even know where it was. (Mary Kom and Dina Serto 61)

Through the words of Kom, it is construed that ostracising the 'other' is not limited to the impoverished rather influence the established figures of the nation pertaining to their physical appearances. The country witnesses multiple such racial biases everyday that problematise the security and national identity of the migrants from Northeast region. The existing pandemic situation due to the spread of Corona virus has become the double edged threat to the people of Northeast India. As Thongkholal Haokip argues in his article that the Asian looking people have become the prey to the racial upheavals as the epidemic in China began spreading to other parts of the world. Therefore, myths started to proliferate on the utilisation of oriental products and food which would spread the covid cases. India's Northeast has no connection with the origin or spread of the highly dreadful virus, but the physical appearance has forced them to confront critical situations of racial discrepancies in the displaced cities within their motherland (354, 357). This is because in the mainland, the Northeast migrants lack the hegemonic expectations of Indianess as Gloria Ladson-Billings claims, "... humans have constructed social categories and organizations that rely heavily on arbitrary genetic differences like skin color, hair texture, eye shape and lip size." (38-39). On March 23rd, *The Indian Express* published an online news article, on a group of young Naga people, who worked in Ahmedabad were subjected to crucial insult and racial discrimination

and the group was forcefully carried to the Covid test camp as the natives believed them to be Chinese. One of the victims Akhropele Cathy remarks,

> The police had come at around 7 pm and mistook us as Chinese. They said they had received a complaint against us that we are carrying the virus and as such, we have to be medically examined. We said we are Indians from Nagaland but they didn't believe us. (para. 5)

The false belief systems about the appearance of the Northeast people within the national spaces subjugate them culturally and ethnically. Similarly, in Mysuru, two Naga youth were prohibited from entering a supermarket and the staff deliberately charged them of carrying virus (March 30, 2020 *The Times of India*). These ostracised behaviours of the masses purposefully humiliate and insult their fellow beings and manifest their dominance over the marginalised sections. The experience of the racial bias is more dreadful than the disease for these migrated subalterns as they are forced to prove their authentic national identity which is always misunderstood.

Gender Discrimination on Northeast Women

Laura Sjoberg defines gender as it is "often described a social construct, an institutionalized entity or artifact in a social system invented or constructed by a particular or society that exists because people agree to behave as if it exists or to follow certain conventional rules." (5). Women are treated as mere objects in the views of patriarchal society. Migrated Northeast women are abused both verbally and physically because of their inability to raise their voices against the hegemonic society which deconstructs the communal and gender identity of them. In the novel *Bitter Wormwood***,** the author through Neibou, lists several intersectional inequalities confronted by Northeast women with respect to race, class, gender and so on. When Neibou did not obey the words of his seniors, they "... made a lewd gesture and said something about girls from the Northeast. *Badchalan.* Easy women" (181). The enraged Neibou felt hurt and powerless to react to the insensitive remarks. The preconceived notions about Northeast women significantly permeate young male outsiders' thoughts and frequently find their representation at social, political and cultural levels. In addition to their racial differences, the aspect of gender has become another cruel threat for the girls or women who migrate internally. Bill Ashcroft et al. rightly argue on the elements of intersectionality which are relevant to gendered subjugation as follows:

> The body, too, has become then the literal site on which resistance and oppression have struggled, with the weapon being in both cases the physical signs of cultural difference, veils and wigs, to use Kadiatu Kanneh's terms, symbols, and literal occasions of the power struggles of the dominator and the dominated for possession of control and identity. Such struggles have often articulated the further intersections of race with gender and class in the construction of the colonized as subject and subaltern. (290)

Therefore, in the context of Northeast women and their invariably linked embodiments of discrimination, the racialised experience in the hostland problematise their self identities and native tribal identities with reference to their gender. In the novel, Neibou reinstates that,

> The targeting of girls from the Northeast had become a big problem in the city and he

had read innumerable reports about these in the newspaper. It seemed that girl students and working girls from the Northeast were victims of carefully planned rapes and sexual attacks and the city was becoming increasingly unsafe for them. (181)

Neibou explodes in anger and remarks on the precarious circumstances faced by the Northeast women community in the migrated cities and also draws attention to the factual happenings that are reported in the media. The ideologies of the mainland cities about the Northeast women represent a different sexual discourse. They continue to face sexual harassments which, the *Morung Express* reported as, "three Naga women were accosted by their house-owner who allegedly asked for sexual favours in exchange for letting them stay in their rented apartment" (para. 4). The women and girls from other states of Northeast also become prey to diverse forms of physical and gender based violence. In a broader concept, the orientations of sexual favours pertaining to gendered discrimination result in generating irremovable and excruciating scars on the psyche of the victims, leaving them with emotional trauma. This act of humiliation caused by the elite depicts the nature of hierarchal power relation existing within the pluralistic nation. The liminality of power lies between the passage of the superior and the inferior as power network oppresses the subaltern groups. Power plays a major role in establishing a hierarchal configuration in the society "to ignore a person, to devalue their existence, to unmark their representation" (Jasmine Anand 102). The primary function of power as Michael Foucault asserts is "... there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives ... the rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level" (95). In the case of migrated Northeast tribal women, the patriarchal community asserts its superiority by physically and verbally mutilating them.

Deconstruction of National Identity

Though India experiences complex cultural patterns and variant racial roots, the people from Northeast feel that they are marginalised. The region is perceived differently and treated as alien in the mainland society. The migrated people from this region are brutally discriminated through race and gender bias by the peer citizens. Neibou who is migrated to the city of Delhi states,

What disgusts me is that we are always alienated and picked on. Today it's a rape, another day it is a stabbing, how we are expected to believe that we are Indians when all this racism goes on? We are served last in the restaurant and cheated by taxis and autos and even rickshaw pullers. Why do they treat us different from other Indians? (208)

This indicates the oscillating psyche of almost all the Northeast migrants, who face crisis about their national identity within their country. The region is geographically included in the cartography, but in reality the region is ostracised and its people are significantly stigmatised due to their racial difference. Neibou, as a collective representation of his Northeast region explodes on the racial, political and physical atrocities committed in the hostland through internal migration.

...I am Indian on paper because when I fill up a form and they ask for my nationality, I have to write Indian. But many of my Northeastern friends believe that they are ethnically Indians, and when they meet this kind of treatment, they are so

traumatized by it. It is deep- rooted racism and its very ugly. The name-calling, the stereotyping of our girls and the way the police refuse to protect the victim, it just makes me feel very hopeless about the rights we have been promised by the Indian constitution. Becoming a state in India didn't really change anything much. Now we keep encountering maltreatment from the civilian population in place of what we faced earlier at the hands of the army. ... Yet the government still insists we are Indians, and tries to ignore the racism." (208)

They are the citizens of India identified only through the registered official papers, but are treated as others and forced to confront alienation in their own soil. The national identity of these tribes is at stake. Nation, as Benedict Anderson states is an "imagined community" (24) where people imagine themselves as part of the socially constructed society manifesting collective national identity. Northeast people are restricted to enjoy the nationhood experiencing racial and subaltern discrepancy within the national spaces that are destined to linger in the communal memories of the Northeast tribes.

Conclusion

The novel *Bitter Wormwood* transparently highlights the social predicaments faced by the tribes of Northeast who migrate to the mainland. The act of racial discrimination, subaltern circumstances built by the majority groups through social power add more threat to the political and social rights of these marginalised tribes within their national spaces. In addition, women from this region tend to get a state of insecure feeling in the metropolitan cities due to gender bias. The day-to-day happenings on the discrimination and gender bias over the Northeast natives are increasing since there are no sufficient interventions from the state mechanism. Othering people within the national spaces make the survival complex for the migrated tribes from the Northeast. More than a hegemonic issue, Northeastern tribes are excluded from the collective national identity as they are restricted to enjoy the rights as experienced by the mainland people because of the tribe's racial discourses. Therefore, "The persistence of racism should send a strong message that the current legal framework is inadequate to ward-off overt acts of racial discrimination and, therefore, necessitates a strong anti-racism law for a more qualified national integration" (Anwesha Mohanty 5). In this regard, the problamatisation of nationhood of the Northeast tribes needs a serious political intervention by eliminating the spread of otherness in the society in order to establish the standard of nation's collective identity and unity at the international levels**.**

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Disrobing Draupadi: A Feminist Discursive Perspective

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Abstract

Feminist linguists (Lazar 2005) have long demonstrated the inextricable links between texts and gendered subjectivities, specifically the manner in which women have been defined, imagined, reconstructed and regenerated within the bounds of the phallocentric universe. Stereotypically, women in literature have been understood through the traditional matrix of feminine attributes (filial obedience, subservience, devotion, piety and non-assertiveness), and all of these allude to their powerlessness in differing contexts. However, such depictions are changing in contemporary retellings of Indian epics such as the Mahabharata which embraces the centrality of women, particularly of Draupadi. This is largely due to the complexity of her nature and the juxtaposition of opposing traits such as her grittiness, ire, devotion and sacrifice as the wife of Pandavas. As Mankekar (1999) informs, Draupadi in texts and on television is an embodiment of new womanhood, images that have led to modern retellings of her life, particularly the heinous act of her being disrobed.
Unlike the multitudinous commentaries on Draupadi that focus on her life and tribulations, this paper is an attempt to exclusively examine the disrobing of Draupadi in two popular literary texts, one penned by Pratibha Ray, and the other, by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Drawing on the critical feminist discursive perspective of Lazar (2005) and specific linguistic tools by Fairclough (1989) – speech acts, vocabulary and presuppositions; and employing a critical discursive lens, the paper seeks to examine the following: firstly, to compare and contrast how Draupadi has been discursively created in both these texts; secondly, to analyse the varying degrees of power that she asserts vis-à-vis the men in context; and thirdly, to understand the multiple meanings that the authors intend to convey through the construction of womanhood. This discussion is important, and, Mankekar (1999) remarks, dissecting the disrobing of Draupadi is essentially a dissection of womanhood and culture.
Keywords: *Draupadi, gender representations, feminist critical discourse analysis, power*

Introduction

Feminist linguists have long demonstrated the inextricable links between texts and gendered subjectivities, specifically the manner in which women have been defined and constructed "vis-à-vis men within particular gender orders" and the bounds of patriarchy (Lazar 12). Much of literary feminist critique has focussed on unraveling gender stereotypes and women's signification within the phallocentric universe (Showalter 182). Moreover, interest has increased in women's writings and their depiction of females (Showalter 184). Since literary fiction entails a multi-layered discursive interaction between the characters, author and the readers, (Short 257), analysis can help demystify social relations and gender

roles in texts. Feminist linguists have argued that gender as an interpretative category can reveal asymmetry and misconceptions (Lazar 5). Language analysis can foreground gender "at certain key moments" in a text (Mills 13), and, extrapolating from that, employing linguistic tools to do a discourse analysis of literary narratives (Tolliver 266) can unravel the above-mentioned issues, providing fresh perspectives on the subject.

The *Mahabharata* is a timeless epic that has dealt with gender roles, shaping "Indian gender and social norms" since decades (Brodbeck and Black 11). One of the main characters in the tale is Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas and the eldest daughter-in-law of the Kuru clan. Her significance is such that Blackwell has asserted "no Draupadi, no Mahabharata" (139). This is largely due to her complex character and the juxtaposition of opposing traits – anger, vengeance, obedience and devotion – whereby her victimization lends her centrality in the story (Kumar 166). Though the traditional retellings (see Rajagopalachari and Chaturvedi) portray her within the sacrificial matrix as one of the *panchkanya*, symbolic of purity and fire (Bhattacharya 37), yet her contemporary re-appropriation by feminists and scholars has led to important questions on culture and women's autonomy (Luthra 146-147). Ethnographic studies on televised programmes of the Mahabharata have constituted Draupadi as the essence of "Indian womanhood" (Mankekar 10), hence her analysis in fictional retellings would help gauge not just women's writings as endorsed by Showalter (184), but would also reveal the representations of gender and womanhood. Unlike other writings on Draupadi that focus on her life, this paper seeks to solely explore her construction from the point of view of the most crucial event in her life – the heinous act of disrobing – which altered the lives of the entire Kuru clan, culminating in internecine war.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) as advocated by Michelle Lazar is an approach within critical discourse analysis (CDA) that seeks to understand the (mis)representations of women, their marginalization and the operation of power in texts. The basic premise is that "asymmetric meanings of male and female" enter into social relations (Lazar 5), which can be unearthed through "interrelationships of gender, power and ideology" (Ibid.) in discourse. FCDA appropriates the use of discourse tools to examine the ways in which writers resist, challenge or support gender representations, portraying the true transformatory potential of discourse. In addition to FCDA, I have drawn on three linguistic tools, namely, speech acts, vocabulary and presuppositions, from Fairclough's approach to CDA. In *Language and Power,* Fairclough is of the view that discourse is a form of "social practice" (22), analysable through language tools. One of them is speech acts which, Fairclough states in *Analysing Discourse*, can be functional, performing various actions, like requests, commands, confessions and questions as part of a conversation (108). Also found in first person narration such as diaries, speech acts show the ideology of the speaker (Fairclough 109), and the workings of power; for example, a threat veiled as a suggestion or an order couched as a request. Thus, speech acts can help reveal the social and power relations between characters in literary texts (Short 196-198). The other tool is vocabulary discussed by Fairclough in *Language and Power*. It denotes the analysis of value-laden words, consisting of antonyms, synonyms, metaphors, rewording and repetition that indicate the knowledge, social relations and social identities of people involved in discourse (110-112). The third tool, presupposition, refers to shared assumptions (Grundy 120) that are textually

embedded and understood through trigger words such as verbs, subordinate clauses, negation etc. (Grundy 123-127). Presuppositions show what is normatively accepted in society and thus their examination can unravel gender roles and patriarchy. In the present paper, I have employed these linguistic tools to understand the images of womanhood and the intersections of language, gender and power in Draupadi's disrobing. Due to space constraints and in consonance with Mick Short's view, only brief extracts that are "representative" (255) have been analysed below to highlight the above.

Analysis

Both the texts adopt first–person narration, lending a voice and agency to Draupadi not seen in more traditional retellings. Such an autobiographical rendition, that focuses upon Draupadi's perspective – how she feels and what she says and does vis-à-vis others – "enables an enunciative position which puts forth a level of being as the conditions of that being are problematized" (Probyn 25). While Ray alternates between narration and dialogue, Divakaruni uses narration to construct Draupadi, and the images of womanhood through the dichotomy of self and the other – how Draupadi herself and the men at court construct her in speech and action. Such representations are relevant for they underscore the interrelation of language, power and gender. One of most striking aspects of the disrobing scene is the manner in which Ray repeatedly describes the emotions of Draupadi on hearing the news of the dice game and being commanded to appear at court.

> Full of anguish and anger, I was thinking was woman merely man's movable or immovable property? Being a woman did I not have right even over myself, my own soul? (Ray 235)
> Like a tongue of flame my eyes and every pore of my body were burning. My anger against Yudhishthir I poured onto my companion (Ray 236)
> Helpless, I lost my balance. As the wild buffalo drags some broken creeper along, similarly Duhshasan dragged me to the assembly hall…Like a creeper trembling in a storm, I was shivering with fear and shame (Ray 236-237)

Draupadi's reaction can be understood through a series of questions (speech acts) that she asks herself (and the readers) wondering whether she has a right over herself. The words 'anguish and anger' convey her emotional intensity while the questions presuppose that there is no certainty regarding women's autonomy after marriage. In fact, the legal tone of the question and the strong vocabulary 'movable or immovable property', 'right', 'myself' and 'soul' reinforce the idea of traditional objectification of womanhood, based on dependence and powerlessness.

In the next line, the figurative vocabulary – 'tongue of flame' and 'burning' body – highlight her ire and its spread (internally and externally) through her psyche and body, engulfing others such as her companion Nitambini and Yudhishthir. Together, the declarative form of the statement, and the assertive speech act emphasize her anguish cum wrath. Similarly, when she is dragged to the court, Ray highlights her agony; the words, 'helpless' and 'lost balance,' connote her unwillingness, presupposing her powerlessness in the situation. The force of being dragged is seen through the contrasting lexis for Duhshasan as 'wild buffalo' and the repetitive use of 'creeper' for her, his brute strength against her weak spirit and body. This is reinforced by the words 'broken' and 'shivering in storm.' Her rage changes to 'fear and shame' on being dragged wearing a single cloth, 'devoid of emotion'

(Ray 237) to denote her helplessness and humiliation. However, before she starts speaking at court, she is imbued with courage, showing her changed psychological state, repeatedly emphasized through her utterances. Her assertion is also an admission/confession (speech act) of her dauntless heroism. The words 'danger' and 'once' presuppose that she has probably not faced such a dire situation before, but she becomes strong in the midst of it.

> Once the danger is in front of you, I do not know from where the strength comes to face it. I do not know from where so much courage fills one. (Ray 237)

In comparison to Ray, Divakaruni does not make Draupadi's experience a vivid gamut of emotions since her writing style is fast-paced. On hearing about the result of the dice game, Draupadi is vexed but regaining her composure; she recollects the knowledge from *Nyaya Shastra* which endorses her realization of powerlessness through the words 'power over me.' The italic font and the declaration (speech act) of the wife being a property reinforce the same.

> But then I remembered what I'd read long ago in a book, never imagining that quaint law could ever have any power over me. *The wife is the property of the husband, no less so than a cow or a slave.* (Divakaruni 190, italics original)

Divakaruni's Draupadi is highly intelligent, deciphering that she is on the losing side while Ray's protagonist suffers from immense powerlessness and humiliation on being wagered. Also, while Ray astutely describes Draupadi's emotions on being violently dragged, Divakaruni writes of her emotional change after the disrobing, which is discussed later.

In Ray's text, a crucial issue is the representation of Draupadi by the male members of her clan who, on being questioned, indirectly reveal the images of womanhood and gender construction prevalent at that time.

> Bhishma - Immaculate One! One who is dependent does not have the right to stake someone's wealth. But the wife is ever her husband's dependent…Yudhishthir's very life is dharma. He is your husband…Therefore I do not feel like replying to your question. (Ray 238)
>
> Bhim - For what offence will Draupadi suffer this insult? I wish to burn the hands that staked Draupadi and lost Sahadev! Arrange for fire. (Ray 239)
>
> Arjun - I thought, "Well! What respect for tradition and culture! So much respect! Elders must not be spoken ill of…Arjun is advising Bhim while petty persons are insulting and outraging his wife. (Ray 239)
>
> Vikarna - On the basis of what logic did he stake her? Further did he retain the right to stake her after having lost himself? In my opinion, legally the Kauravs have not been able to win Draupadi. (Ray 240)
>
> Karna - If Phalguni was desired by her then what was the necessity of holding the mockery of the svayamvar? ... But by accepting five husbands she has discarded her modesty, shame and womanhood. (Ray 240)

The first person to reply to her question is Bhishma, who greets and acknowledges (speech acts) her as 'immaculate', yet asserts contradictions in his speech – one who has no wealth has no right over a dependent but the wife is dependent on the husband. He reinforces his views by further equating Yudhishthir with two noble attributes – dharma and being Draupadi's husband. It is presupposed that he who epitomizes dharma has lost her while gambling, hence what can anyone say and so Bhishma refuses (speech act) to answer Draupadi's question. Here, the words 'dependent' and 'dharma' presuppose the powerlessness of Yudhishthir and his wife. Next, are the contrasting responses of Bhim and Arjun. While Bhim questions Draupadi's humiliation and promises to burn those who hurt

her, strong speech acts showing his unflinching loyalty towards her, Arjun remains taciturn. Draupadi sarcastically belittles Arjun for his respect for 'tradition' and 'elders', reinforced by the twice-used word 'respect' which presupposes his lack of action. His diplomacy is lexically contrasted – he attempts to calm Bhim while others malign Draupadi. The next utterance is by Vikarna who both questions and answers (speech acts) the injustice done by the Kauravs. Once again, the legal issue of rights comes to the fore – the right to stake Draupadi, and the right to lose and win her. His opinion shows the folly of Yudhishthir and the word 'legally' presupposes that though the Kauravs have won Draupadi yet it is through deceit. The last speaker Karna vents his anger on being insulted at her marriage. His words indicate that Draupadi was already fond of Arjun (known as Phalguni) and that the marriage ceremony was a façade, reeking of nepotism. He also disparages her for polyandry which presupposes that honourable women are bound to only one man. Each of these men presents a different image of how a woman should be – dependent on her husband, protected by him, and bound in monogamy or (as contented by Vikarna) to be independent and have legal rights. Barring Vikarna, the others construct womanhood as bound by patriarchal conventions, underscoring women's powerlessness vis-à-vis men. Unlike Ray, Divakurni has not dedicated space to the opinions of the men at court. Bhishma is portrayed as sitting with his head hung low much to Draupadi's dismay; but Karna is the focus, since Draupadi has confessed her love for him, earlier on in the narrative.

> I knew what he (Karna) wanted: for me to fall on my knees and beg him for mercy. He would have protected me then. He had the reputation of helping the destitute. But I wouldn't lower myself to that, not if I died. (Divakaruni 192)
>
> I called on my pride to freeze my tears to stone. I mustered all the hatred I could find within me and focussed it on Karna. (Divakaruni 192)

Her assertions serve as an emphatic indictment of his and her own character and her gradual dominance even when she is unprotected. The clauses, like, falling on knees, begging for mercy, protecting her and helping the destitute, all stress upon his power to help Draupadi in this situation. The words 'mercy' and 'destitute' equate her with powerlessness but the contrast surfaces with her refusal (speech act) to need protection. The words 'lower myself' presuppose that asking Karna for help would be equivalent to begging from an enemy and lowering one's esteem, therefore Draupadi's refusal to do so, even if she were to die. Karna and Draupadi are constructed as possessing power to help and to reject that help respectively. Divakaruni employs the metaphor 'freeze my tears' and the words 'pride' and 'hatred' to connote Draupadi's contempt for him and her rise to power. Through such a portrayal, a strong and dignified image of womanhood emerges because Divakaruni continues to represent Draupadi as a fearless woman who maintains her composure and prestige even when everything else is uncontrollable.

The most important event of her life too, the act of disrobing, constructs differing yet similar representations of Draupadi. A pertinent issue when Duhshasan begins to disrobe her is that of shame and the way it is related to power. Agnes Heller states that shame occurs in view of an act that has "approbation or disapprobation" (6) in "conformity with the norms" of one's community (7). Thus, what is not socially sanctioned elicits shame. Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni speak of the gaze of shame and the existence of an audience (25-26) that constitutes the contextual and evaluative dimensions as it provides "reasons to feel shame" (27) by judging an individual's actions. Moreover, Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni are of the view that shame arises when one's public image is compromised, signifiying a "sense of

powerlessness and lack of control" between one's actual and perceived self (31). The shame affect is, thus, the crux through which Draupadi constructs her 'self' and regains power, presented differently by Ray and Divakaruni. In Ray's version, Draupadi is screaming with anger when Duhshasan begins disrobing her. She clutches onto her clothes with one hand and with the other, ardently prays to Sri Krishna, soon realizing that it's of no avail. She then raises both her hands begging Krishna to maintain her honour.

> Lord I am not mine own. This body is not mine. Therefore the whole responsibility of this body is yours. At that moment regarding Krishna Vasudev as God instead of as *sakha*, I was standing free from doubt and fearless in the midst of danger. (Ray 243)

Draupadi employs a series of assertions and confessions (speech acts) about her body and Krishna's responsibility to save her. The force of her statements is categorical, understood through the 'be' form of the verb (am and is). The rejection of her body and the elevation of Krishna from friend to Godhead, enables her to free herself from the moral gaze of the public. The lexical contrast of pronouns 'mine,' 'I' versus 'yours' reinforces the same. She, thus, becomes potent by avoiding the need to protect herself as indicated by the words 'free' and 'fearless.' In contrast, in Divakaruni's text (extract given below), even though Krishna appears as a friend, Draupadi's stance is quite different. She imagines being with Krishna in a garden, whereby the words 'sandalwood', 'bright' and 'tender' indicate his presence. The assertion in italics also functions as a command (speech act) as if Krishna is telling Draupadi to rid herself of shame and its gaze. The double use of negation – 'no one' and 'don't' – presupposes the act of feeling shame before an audience who judges. Draupadi's acknowledgement and acceptance of Krishna's advice is apparent in the last three assertions or declarations (speech acts). By allowing others to stare at her 'nakedness,' a very strong presupposition is created that her shame is related to public image as Duhshasan is about to disrobe her. The question on why she should care presupposes that she traditionally should as a daughter-in-law but she refuses to do so. Moreover, the accusation (speech act) that the Kauravas should be ashamed of their crudity makes them the agent of this cowardly act, absolving her of any guilt and shame.

> The wind smelled of sandalwood. Krishna sat beside me on a cool stone bench. His glance was bright and tender. *No one can shame you,* he said, *if you don't allow it.* It came to me in a wash of amazement, that he was right. Let them stare at my nakedness, I thought. Why should I care? They, and not I should be ashamed for shattering the bounds of decency. (Divakaruni 193)

Draupadi, thus, gains freedom and becomes powerful in different ways in the hands of both the authors. While Krishna is elevated to godhead in Ray's writing, in Divakaruni's he is a confidante and guide. In both texts, shame arises because of an incongruence of what Draupadi is and what is happening to her. Ray constructs Draupadi as forceful in submitting her entire being to Krishna, not caring about her body while Divakaruni sketches Draupadi as defiant, unashamed and accusatory as she states that not she but the perpetrators should feel this emotion. In both cases, she emerges dominant in the face of trial but Divakaruni's depiction is a more power-laden indictment. Furthermore, Divakaruni writes about the uplifting change that Draupadi underwent after the disrobing. With regard to Karna, her strong confession (speech act) in italic font bespeaks of her antipathy and error in loving him, reinforced by the word 'taught.'

> *Karna,* I said to myself, *you've taught me a lesson, and you've taught it well.*

(Divakaruni 194, italics original)

However, with her husbands, her emotions are different and she becomes wiser. Through the use of additive and contrastive clauses, Draupadi asserts that they loved her, as much as any man but they also loved other things, clearly gauging that she was not the pivot. The enumeration of 'loyalty', 'honour' and 'reputation', all point to abstract qualities, presupposing their relevance for warriors in ancient times. However, these qualities appear subdued when not put in use during the act of disrobing, abandoning her to her plight. The subsequent assertions by her also act as declarations of her emotional state deciphered through the words 'changed' and 'depended'. The phrase 'no longer' presupposes that until this time, she depended on them for protection but now she would rely more on herself, reiterating her self-will and power. Draupadi therefore emerges stronger through this ordeal, showing a remarkable mental and psychological change and self-reliance.

But now I saw that though they did love me—as much perhaps as any man can love—there were other things they loved more. Their notions of honor, of loyalty toward each other, of reputation, were more important to them than my suffering…The choice they made in the moment of my need changed something in our relationship. I no longer depended on them so completely in the future. (Divakaruni 195)

Conclusion

Drawing on a feminist discursive perspective and linguistic tools, the article highlights the points of convergence and divergence in Ray's and Divakaruni's representations of Draupadi. Ray traces the trajectory of Draupadi's emotions through figurative vocabulary and lexical contrasts before and during the disrobing. She uses a variety of speech acts (assertions, refusals and questions) and presuppositions to show others' evaluation of Draupadi's gender and womanhood, raising questions on women's autonomy and subservience. Draupadi appears powerless but gains dominance in relying on Krishna and relinquishing control. On the other hand, Divakaruni's Draupadi is dominant from the start, projecting her anger on her lover Karna and her husbands, thus emerging strong not just during the disrobing but even after it, understood through presuppositions and lexis. Divakaruni humanizes Draupadi as she uses assertions, declarations and lexical contrasts to show her strong views about others, and how she feels, presenting the interrelation of emotion and power between her and the men at court. Divakaruni's Draupadi in therefore a more textured characterization of the intersection of language, gender, power and emotion.

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Reading the Monster: Cultural and Corporeal Alterity in Mahasweta Devi's *Bayen*

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Abstract

Mahasweta Devi's Bayen *is a social commentary on the entrenched caste system and superstitions in the rural parts of India. The bayen is a cultural construct, a monstrous being, that exists outside the boundaries of humanity and culture. The monster always signifies something other than itself—it is an embodiment of difference. This paper studies the discourse surrounding the monstrous entity known as bayen using the Monster Theory proposed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. In doing so, I argue that the alienation of the gendered subaltern, and the perceived uncanniness of the female body, are significant elements that give rise to witches and bayens. The paper aims to reveal the ontological liminality of monsters like bayen, which enables a patriarchal society to use them as weapons to oppress the subaltern.*
Keywords: Bayen, caste, the female body, Monster theory, subaltern, witch

Introduction

Mahasweta Devi's *Bayen* was initially published as a short story in 1971 and later adapted for the stage in 1976.[1] It takes place in a rural village in West Bengal. *Bayen* is the story of Chandidasi Gangadasi, a descendent of the mythical Kalu Dome who gave shelter to King Harishchandra when he had lost his kingdom. She married Malindar Gangaputta, one of the few educated men in the community who has a permanent government job. She had inherited the occupation of burying dead children and guarding their graves at night. While dutiful and obedient at first, she started showing reluctance once she had a child of her own. She is ostracized and later branded as a 'bayen', which leads to her ex-communication.

Mahasweta Devi was a Bengali writer and activist whose prime preoccupation had always been the subaltern. Her works depict the social reality of the underprivileged communities in the rural parts of India. Therefore, it is not surprising that her works have been a source of much critical analysis, especially in the domains of Gender Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Ecofeminism. Recent scholarship in literary and cultural studies draws attention to the non-human for a better understanding of the ontological boundaries of the human. This paper deconstructs the monstrous figure of the 'bayen' to examine the cultural forces that drive the events in this narrative.

In his seminal work, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen proposed the Monster Theory of reading cultures and developed a new method of "reading cultures from the monsters they engender" (3). While research on monsters in arts and literature was not uncommon in the past, his theory laid the foundation of Monster Studies within the broader field of Cultural Studies. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock carried this forward in his book, *The Monster Theory Reader (*2020), where he connected the principles of Monster theory to the ideas of scholars like Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, and Elizabeth Grosz. This paper studies the cultural discourse surrounding the bayen in Mahasweta Devi's

play, better understanding its nature and origin. For according to J. J. Cohen, "the monstrous body is pure culture…[it] exists only to be read" (4).

The Non-Human Other: Intersectionality of Caste and Gender

The bayen, a witch-like entity that sucks the blood of its victims and causes infant mortality, is a crucial figure in Mahasweta Devi's eponymous play. While the advent of Enlightenment and Modernism had stamped out witch-hunts in Europe and America, it is still a common occurrence in India today. According to Soma Chaudhuri, a United Nations report stated that around 25,000 people were tortured and killed based on witchcraft accusations between 1987 and 2003 (10). Chaudhuri asserts that witchcraft accusations in rural India are linked to control over land and social hierarchy, often within areas of contested power. In such cases, myths and superstitions become weapons to be wielded (10-11). There is an interplay of various sociocultural elements in the construction of monsters like *Bayen*, *Daayan*, and *Chodail*. The ontology of such monsters exists in a liminal space and represents a category crisis. When Bhagirath asks his father why his mother became a bayen, Malindar could only answer with: "Our bad luck, hers, yours, and mine" (Devi and Bandyopadhyay 87). But at what point does a person transform from a human to non-human? What cultural and natural laws did she violate to elicit such violent responses from her community? As J.A. Weinstock aptly phrases it, "at what point does deviance make someone a monster?" (22).

The answers to these questions are context-specific, determined by the cultural interpretation of normal and natural. Contemporary monster theory, based on the Foucauldian model of genealogy and discourse analysis, focuses on the boundaries that form the category of human. The existence of the non-human Other validates the human Self. A preliminary inspection of various monsters shows us that the disabled or the differently embodied that do not fit the socially accepted norms of the human are dubbed monstrous or non-human. The traditional conceptions of the human are often limited to male, able-bodied, and upper class /caste individuals. It automatically excludes women, people from lower castes, and disabled people, who are consigned to the periphery of cultural boundaries and excluded from the power hierarchies. This otherization invokes culturally specific anxieties and desires within the dominant discourse. It precipitates vilification and persecution of the subaltern.

In 2002, Frank J. Korom conducted an ethnographic study in a village in West Bengal, which focused on a three-day ritual. The Untouchables of the community performed the role of drummers in the ceremony (Korom 408).[2] In Mahasweta Devi's play, most of the characters, including Chandidasi and Malindar, belong to the Dom community, considered Untouchable by the larger society. Interestingly, those who played the drums were called *Bayens* by everyone else in the village. Korom cites Sukumar Sen's *An Etymological Dictionary of Bengali* (1971), which gives the meaning of *bāyan* as drum-player (1:642). Besides this, the presumed root word for *dom* also has a connection to drums (Burrow and Emeneau 257). Perhaps the drum and similar musical instruments are associated with the lower castes because of their role as musicians and drummers in various rituals. Eventually, the Doms must have adopted the word *bayen* into their cultural discourse. In the play, when the mob confronts Chandidasi at the graveyard, Malindar has to choose between supporting his wife, which would nullify his social status, and condemning

her, which would secure his position in the community. Malindar hurriedly finds a dhol, signifying his allegiance long before he articulated it (Devi and Bandyopadhyay 97). Malindar renouncing Chandidasi by beating the drum reinstated him back into the community.

Korom portrays the drummers or bayens as an integral part of the festivities, despite their untouchability. Because of this, the drummers wielded limited power, especially in negotiating inter-caste transactions (Korom 422). Chandidasi, a descendent of Kalu Dom, was also revered and respected for her ancestry and profession. However, this disturbance in the social hierarchy threatened a breakdown of the distinction between the Self and the Other. It leads to what Julia Kristeva termed 'abjection'—that which "disturbs identity, system, order…does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4). In a social hierarchy where the boundaries break down and meaning collapses, abjection, as a source of horror, acts to separate the subject from the partially formed subject (Weinstock 212). The word *bayen,* which initially signified their duty as drummers, eventually became an oppressive classification. This difference became embodied, wherein the term bayen signified the subaltern status of the community.

Nevertheless, what transformed this classification of an entire community into the supposedly monstrous witch as described in the story? Here, the intersectionality of caste and gender politics comes into play. Human beings construct their image of the Self by excluding and sometimes demonizing the Other. In a patriarchal society, the dominant discourse automatically privileges the upper-caste male members while simultaneously Othering the women and other marginalized groups. This discourse sometimes takes up the form of superstitions that penetrate the inner workings of the community to disseminate the dominant ideology. In a society where most of the population remains poor and illiterate, the people turn to superstition to fight diseases and understand unpleasant incidents. These beliefs and myths lend authority to the logocentric patriarchal system, reinforcing their control over the subaltern (Vanashree 226). In an oppressed community like the Doms, the men secure their Self by exerting power over the women, thus subjecting them to double marginalization. Bayen, the name that initially denoted a caste, was later used to condemn women who did not fulfil the social criteria for being a woman.

The American cultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner parallels the Nature-Culture divide and gender roles with women representing nature and men as culture. The body, social function, and psyche of a woman contribute to the perception of her proximity to nature. This perception of women often manifests in institutional forms that reproduce the situation (Ortner 87). Nature represents unbridled chaos and the vast unknown. Culture is how humanity transcends the natural forces and bends them to their purpose. The conventional discourse often equates culture with human consciousness, through which humans assert their control over nature. Although a woman is a human being equipped with human consciousness just as a man is, her reproductive functions identify her with nature rather than culture. Thus, motherhood, an aspect of a woman glorified in all cultures, makes her an intermediary between nature and culture.

Such a position on the continuous periphery of culture would easily account for the subversive feminine symbols like the witch and the feminine symbols of transcendence like the mother goddess (Ortner 86). The patriarchal society reveres the woman in the marginal position, positioned against the chaotic forces outside, as the goddess. However, it also perceives a marginalized woman as part of the chaotic forces outside the established

boundaries. Chandidasi Gangadasi, a descendent of Kalu Dom, is tasked with burying dead children. The souls of the dead children can attain moksha or salvation only through her deeds. She also guards the graves fearlessly at night against all that might threaten the dead. Here, she acts as a positive force that stands against chaotic forces. Therefore, she embodies the river goddess Ganga, as she helps the dead souls attain moksha. She was placed higher than anyone else in the community. However, with her marginal position at the periphery of culture, the people start confusing her with the outside forces. In their eyes, she slowly becomes part of the wilderness outside and is transformed into a bayen.

Difference made Flesh: The 'Monstrous' Female Body

The instability of the female corporeality that challenges the normative definitions of the body allows the monster to emerge within the discourse. The word *bāyen,* which initially signified the drummers of the community, was later distorted to represent the alterity. A broader etymological analysis reveals that *bay(a)* is a root word for 'age' and *bayasī* meaning 'old woman'. Interestingly, Sukumar Sen's E*tymological Dictionary of Bengali* gives two different meanings for *bayasī*—a young woman; a new form (1:612). All these words are similar in pronunciation, and with time the boundaries separating these signifiers blurred. The bayen simultaneously signified alterity and women, underscoring old age and differences in the embodiment. It is noteworthy that *bāyen* is pronounced similar to *Daayan*, which refers to a female paranormal entity from the netherworld. Over time, all these meanings intermingled to form the social construct called bayen.

The discourse surrounding the female subject often presents the body as monstrous. According to Sarah Alison Miller, "female corporeality is 'out of bounds', not only because it transgresses the boundaries of the proper human form, but also because it transgresses the epistemological and ontological boundaries that structure the very ideologies that give birth to the monstrous female itself" (2). In her work, Miller analyses the representation of the boundaries and orifices of the female body in medieval literature. She highlights the corporeal boundaries and distinctions of the beautiful virgin and the older ugly woman.[3] The body of the young virgin is stable and contained. But the corporeality of the older woman disrupts the normative values associated with the human body. As Miller observes, "the eroticized and repulsive female body—the delineated objects of desire and disgust—begin to emerge" (3).

The corporeal distinctions between the young and old female bodies often contribute to the perceived monstrousness of women in a patriarchal society. In India, the victims of witch hunts are usually widows or older women who live on the fringes of society. As shown above, the monstrous entity known as bayen is an amalgamation of meanings involving the gendered subaltern and old age. The monster takes birth within the patriarchal discourse when the older woman transforms from an object of desire to the embodiment of decay and death. This breakdown of meaning, and the feelings of horror and loss it evokes, leads to an "epistemological vertigo" (Weinstock 3).

In the play, the maternal body and bodily processes of Chandidasi are instrumental in her indictment as a monster. The people accused her of witchcraft because of the uncanny nature of her corporeality. "Suddenly those people, those craven, superstitious people, lowered their eyes. Someone whispered, 'What about the milk that spilled out of your breasts as you were piling earth on Tukni's grave?'" (Devi and Bhattacharya 9). The bodily

secretions of the female body disconcert the patriarchal society, which paradoxically seeks to deify motherhood and maternal duties. They vilify the female body because of lacking the phallus and the perceived instability and uncanny nature of menstruation, lactation and childbirth. According to Pramod K. Nayar, "the woman as monstrous, and reproduction as monstrous, all revolve around particular anxieties about the origin of species and individuals" (117). Sarah Miller reiterates this when she asserts that the physiological processes associated with puberty, pregnancy, and menopause register as "modes of seepage" that embody the monstrous (5). Malindar's accusatory question to Chandidasi—"Why is your sari dripping with milk?" (Devi and Bandyopadhyay 97)—is characteristic of the internalized misogyny of the patriarchal society.

Conclusion

The bayen, like many other monsters, is distinguished by its ontological liminality. It is a mythical creature marked by its in-betweenness, charged with the power of discursive ideology, embodying contradictions and difference. The very idea of such an abnormal existence allows the construction of difference. Unlike the eldritch and supernatural forces like demons and monsters existing far beyond the boundaries of humanity, the bayen is a human-turned-monster. The bayen, as a cultural construct, is threatening because it calls attention to its human past, and it "questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis" (Cohen 6).

This ontological liminality of monsters allows the logocentric patriarchal system to keep people in line. According to the Monster theory, the bayen in this story "polices the borders of the possible" (Cohen 12). From its position at the periphery of 'human', the bayen stands as a warning against deviance from the normal. It demarcates borders that are not to be crossed, devaluing women as objects with limited agency and mobility. The bayen, thus, enforces a Foucauldian panopticon, in which to step outside the boundaries is to invite attack from the monster or to become monstrous oneself (12). In addition to this, the bayen attests to the subtle yet penetrating power of language. In a logocentric society, arbitrary and mutable language can create and bypass ontological boundaries.

The ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the discourse of the bayen amplify the threat of demonization. The borders that separate the monstrous Other from the Self are not defined. Chandidasi Gangadasi was a respected woman from the prestigious lineage of Kalu Dome. She performed the duties of her ancestors assigned to her caste, married a man of good standing, and gave birth to a healthy son. She did not have any physical or mental deformity. They even proclaimed her as the embodiment of the Mother Ganga (Devi and Bandyopadhyay 94). And yet, despite all this, she is labelled as a bayen and excommunicated from society. While her declaration to quit her job may have prompted her exile, it is clear from the play that she suffered ostracism long before that. They condemned and banished her *because* she did everything flawlessly. Her honourable conduct and good fortunes set her apart from everyone else. So, they pushed her out of the boundaries of the human subject. The bayen stands as a threat of punishment to those who violate the prescribed norms of the community. It exists as a reminder that anyone can become a monster, even the revered goddess.

Notes

[1]The short story was translated into English in 1993 by Mahua Bhattacharya; the play was translated in 1997 by Samik Bandyopadhyay. This paper takes both translations into account.

[2]For more information on the cultural traditions of rural Bengal, see Rohner and Chaki-Sircar, *Women and Children in a Bengali Village* (1988).

[3]Miller analyses the Pseudo-Ovidian poem "De Vetula" (The Old Woman), which distinguishes between the beautiful virgin ('puella') and the ugly older woman ('vetula').

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Probing 'Otherness': Reflecting upon the Personal Experiences of Women in the Partition Narratives of 1947

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Abstract

The division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 by the British brought about unprecedented horrors of violence, plunder, and loot. It altered the geography of the land along with the fate of millions of people residing within that territory. Its worst impact was that on the womenfolk who underwent unspeakable horrors and yet little is known of their experiences of the time. They were subject to unimaginable suffering, unavoidable loss, and helplessness, none of which finds mention in the dominant discourse of Partition. This paper, therefore, is an attempt to scrutinize the aspects of 'otherness' that mark its presence in the dominant discourse of Partition of 1947 with specific reference to Urvashi Butalia's work The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India.
Keywords: *Partition, otherness, women, victim, suffering.*

Introduction

Since time immemorial humans have carried out the task of labelling individuals as distinct from them due to various reasons. Wallenius in her article "The Concept of Otherness in Partition Narratives of Finland and India" discusses the idea of 'otherness' as elucidated by Lisa Onbelet:

> "Otherness as being" something or someone "that is not me." The 'other' can be understood as "whatever the self is not." In feminist and postcolonial context, otherness delineates "difference … marked by outward signs of race and gender." It lays down the "boundaries of acceptability in society" that demarcates the relationship between different groups. It is primarily associated with people who have been "marginalized … by virtue of their difference from the dominant group." These are individuals who "have been disempowered, robbed off a voice in social, religious and political world … who cannot tell their story, cannot define themselves … without the permission from the dominant social group." (qtd. in Wallenius 55).

On a closer look, it is evident that the concept of 'otherness' materializes in the discourses of national identity, power politics, gender, and communal identity. Otherness in the historical narrative of the subcontinent's Partition can be witnessed at various levels, such as the othering of the native population at the hands of colonizers, the othering of the masses at the hands of their own indigenous political leaders, along with the othering of victims of communal clashes at the hands of the historians. Gyanendra Pandey in his essay "The Prose of Otherness" observes that the focus of the historians has been largely limited to the circle of the elites, marking an unnatural silence on the discussion of partition violence. Often the

individuals far removed from the politically powerful circles are forgotten. E. H. Carr in his work *What is History?* seconds this idea of selective representation of facts by the historians. He mentions that historians are a part of the society, and their mind-set and viewpoint is influenced by their surroundings either "consciously or unconsciously" (Carr 6). Carr's judgement of history is that of an "enormous jig-saw" whose parts are arranged together to present a "preselected and predetermined" picture of the past (5, 6). Historians are selective in their approach; they ignore, simplify and clarify from the "ocean of facts" as per their requirement (6, 7). It is for this reason that the official narrative of 1947's Partition portrays largely the history limited to the political scenario of the time. The focus remains largely on the role of Indian National Congress, Muslim League and the British; what remains untold is how partition affected the populace of the two countries. Pandey opines that since the 19th-century focus has been on the "national histories," which cleanses the signs of conflict and violence witnessed during the creation of nations (Pandey 190). This absence of voices of conflict and violence homogenizes nationwide cultures and histories so as to avoid uncomfortable truths. Consequently, the decision-makers of the time are spared of any wrongdoings whatsoever. There has been an eerie silence when it comes to the individual experiences and emotions of the victims of the colossal partition violence. There is an unwillingness to delve into the dark recesses of those times that constitute the literal meaning of partition lived by millions who did not opt for it. Perhaps the gory details of communalism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are far too unpleasant which is why it is left completely in the hands of creative writers and filmmakers to cover this aspect of history (Pandey 205). Not to mention that such narratives would open the age-old wounds of communal conflict that writers tend to avoid. Despite that, avoiding such subjects does not serve the purpose of historical writing it rather shows our unwillingness to accept our own history, creating prose of 'otherness' that leaves the experiences of the common men and women unaddressed (206, 213). In the colonial view, the indigenous populace was the uncouth 'other,' and it was the white man's burden to civilize and govern it. This notion of 'otherness' passed on by the British was accepted and adopted by the new political forerunners of the country. This is the reason that mass violence is understood to be the act of the barbaric 'other' which is why silence is maintained on certain acts of ethnic violence (195). Partition historiography provides a window of opportunity that enables in breaking these silences observed particularly in the zones that have been considered taboo, forbidding the writers to take up sensitive subjects like rapes, abductions, various kinds of violence committed against women in a male-centric society. It aids in uncovering the harsh realities that have remained hidden for decades because after more than seven decades of partition the nation today is stable and mature enough to take up such sensitive topics in academic discussions. As Carr puts it, "History" archives "what one age finds" significant "in another" (Carr 32). "Great history is written" down when the historian brings up the lesser known aspects of the past; when his insight into the past is "illuminated" by his awareness of the present issues (21). It is crucial to remember that past and present do not exist in isolation; ergo, the "past" can be fully understood "only in the light of the present" and vice-versa (32). The historian ensures a continuous "dialogue between past and present" when he writes of the bygone (33). This reveals "new vistas, new angles" to the historical narrative that were previously unknown (20). Thus, the "dual function of history is" to facilitate the understanding of "the society of the past" at the same time enhancing the "mastery over the society of the present" (32).

      This paper, therefore, seeks to investigate the forms of 'otherness' present in the

partition narratives of 1947 laying particular emphasis on the women's experiences as articulated by Butalia in her work *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India.*

Discussion

The act of generalization and differentiation is a long-established practice by people all over the world; which is why the concept of the 'other' is not new to people. It has been preached and practiced since ages. Human nature is such that the task of 'othering' someone becomes a mandatory practice particularly during the moment of crisis. Hence, the reoccurrence of 'otherness' during partition violence is nothing new. What is new is the fact that for the first time women on such a massive scale got dragged into this communal tussle between Muslims and non- Muslims. Throughout history, women have been on the suffering end. Living the lives of uncertainty, they have been victims of social unrest and change much more than men, particularly during times of war. They not only lose their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons but also the comfortable day-to-day familiarities and security that a household offers them. The pain of being severed from their families comes in addition to the sexual and psychological violence they endure at the hands of the enemy – the 'other'. Only a handful of writers have attempted to pen down the actual experiences of women during Partition; such as Urvashi Butalia, Kamla Bhasin, Ritu Menon, Kamla Patel, Anis Kidwai bringing forth the unexplored histories of the common women that largely remains unknown.

She at the Receiving End

Women are vital in keeping the family and community going. It is the female body through which the coming generations acquire their existence and identity. Unlike men, women hold the identity of the individual she is in association with; be it her father, brother, husband, or son. Consequently, a woman's identity alters once her association with the man changes. It is this complexity of her position that places her at the receiving end of things, particularly at the hands of the enemy or the 'other' because by harming her, the entire community and its future generations can be harmed. The female body, in this manner, becomes the territory of the struggle between the two sides who view each other as the enemy that has to be destroyed. Women, thus, become the tool as well as means of destruction of the 'other.' As women constitute a part of the community in addition to being the source of its origin, perceived as the enemy by the 'other' group.

Wallenius equates the significance of family honour to that of national honour. She is of the opinion that both the family and the nation take pride in honour acquired through property, power, and women (58). Butalia too in her work *The Other Side of Silence* expresses a similar opinion that "national honour" has been associated with the image of the body of "Mother India" which by extension gets transferred to the bodies of all the women of the nation (191). As a consequence of that women were abducted by the 'other,' and for the same reason had to be returned back to their original homes. The event of Partition in 1947, therefore, "provided a rationale" in equating the female folk of the country "into symbols" of community's and the "nation's honour" (192). In her view, it is this sense of honour that fuelled men to torture women of the 'other' community. In other words, the real allurement to the perpetrators of the crime was not to cause the loss of lives and property to the 'other'

rather the rape and impregnation of the women of the enemy's community. Men were capable of fighting for their honour and in case they died at the hands of the enemy that death would be honourable too. However, women did not possess such prowess and hence became the easy targets of communal violence owing to the fact that through their body "the entire race" could be harmed or dishonoured (196). The same reasoning was the cause of the suicide of 90 women from the Thoa Khalsa village who jumped into a well to save themselves from the enemy after their men perished in the conflict. Such women had little choice at their disposal; they could either choose to end their lives or live with the abductors only to be physically and sexually exploited time and again.

Her Free Will Marred

Thousands of women were abducted during this time. Kamla Patel in this regard gives an estimate of 12,000 Muslim women and 25,000 non-Muslim women being abducted. In spite of that, it can be understood that the actual numbers went quite high than the ones mentioned in the official records (Patel xviii). The governments of the respective countries were aiming to end the torture that the women were being subjected to at the hands of the 'other.' On that account, it was mutually agreed to recover and restore the abducted women so as to bring an end to their misery and torture. Kirpal Singh in his work *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab-1947: India and Pakistan* mentions that:

> The "Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Act 1949" was brought forth to "alleviate the sufferings of women folk" by recovering them from their abductors and restoring them back to their respective families (xxxiii). To warrant swift action in this regard a clause was added that "conversion of persons abducted after the 1st March 1947" was not to be given authorization and all such women had to be "restored to their respective Dominions even against" their wishes, "no option was to be given to any recovered person" in this regard (xxxii, xxxiii).

This law was brought forth for the smooth and speedy recovery of abducted women. In addition to it, this law had put a question mark on the status of inter-religious marriages during the above-mentioned period, as its definition of an abducted person was a bit problematic. As per the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Act, 1949:

> A female … who … immediately before the 1st day of March, was missing and who on or after that day and before 1st January 1949, has become separated from his or her family and is found to be living with or under the control of any other individual or family … would be taken as being abducted (Butalia 265-66).

Henceforth, any Muslim woman marrying a Hindu man (or vice versa) would automatically come under the category of abducted person, making her eligible for recovery even against her wishes in case her parents or relatives requested for the same. Kamla Patel in her memoir *Torn from the Roots* specifically mentions the instances of Ismat and Prema who belonged to different religions than that of the men they had fallen in love with. These two women had willingly decided to marry men belonging to the 'other' religion. These two cases were certainly "not of abduction" or forcible marriage even so; these women were recovered against their wishes and were separated from men they had willingly chosen to spend their remaining lives with (41). Patel questions "the doggedness" of the authorities to "send" a woman to her supposed home "against her own wishes" (Patel 117, 41).

This act was introduced in the assembly by Gopalaswamy Ayyangar with a "humanitarian" objective (Butalia 180). The thought behind it was quite noble as it meant to

seek out and recover women who were forcefully uprooted from their families and were subjected to horrendous physical, sexual and psychological tortures. Nevertheless, to apply a rule universally to all cases without considering the individual situation of the victims and their respective choices would lead to problematic conclusions. Needless to say in some cases this particular clause of "denied choice" of "freedom" to take their own decision brought further suffering to the women who were already wounded by the circumstances surrounding them (181). Butalia quotes Purnima Banerji's words regarding this matter, reasoning that having spent quite some time with their abductors it was possible for these girls to "develop mutual attachment" and that these girls should not be made to return to their family only because those men belonged to the 'other' religion (181). Still, the minister under question was not willing to alter that clause that provided a woman free agency to decide for herself arguing that in her current environment she ceased to be a "free agent" and for this reason, she does not possess "the liberty of mind" to either accept or deny the recovery (181). The supposition behind this belief was that when these abducted women are "asked for their opinion" they would be unable to express their "independent" views considering that they were oppressed by the men who had abducted them and that their opinions would be under the influence of their abductors (192). There's no denying that some women could have been coerced by their abductors in such circumstances. However, there is a critical need of introspection to critique the ethical legitimacy of the clause that denied all women the right to decide their future. It is at such moments of crisis that the actual helplessness and vulnerability of women come to the fore.

It is women who give birth to the coming generations and yet they seldom get the opportunity to voice their opinions. Similar was the case during the recovery operations. All said and done, the individual wishes of these women were put aside and they were sent back to the respective countries they belonged to. The governments of both the countries came together to sever the ties of these women from their men, as these men were the 'other'– the enemy.

Women thus underwent twofold suffering, once in case of abduction and second in case of forced displacements. Instances such as these in turn inflicted pain on the already suffering victims of communal violence. As the women were refused the right to decide for themselves they, ergo, became the 'other,' to the community and to the governments on the grounds that their individual choices lost significance in the larger scheme of things.

Rape as a Tool of War

Physical abuse and brutality such as rape are not just a consequence of the war but have often been used as a tool of war. This phenomenon has been recurrent in the violence of 1947 as well as that of 1971. Rapes have been used time and again as a deliberate strategy to destroy and demoralize the enemy or the 'other.'

Kamla Patel mentions that the abductors often traded off the abducted women after raping them. This was not a one-time phenomenon. The girls who were captured by the men of the 'other' community were bartered until they were thoroughly used. Usually, after being exchanged four or five times did this sale come to an end; some women were even presented as "gifts" to the family and acquaintances of the abductors (19). While others who did not have much sales value were simply left on the roads to die after being raped; "such women were as good as dead," and the experiences of their torture at the hands of their abductors were so horrific that it killed the appetites and the sleep of the social workers who rescued them (19).

Conclusion

Needless to say, it was women who bore the brunt of communal riots. They were forcefully uprooted from their families and additionally, were subjected to unimaginable horrors, the pain of which went deep into their psyche. Under the larger issues of legitimacy, honour, duty the very basic issue of a woman's right to self and sexual autonomy was lost. A woman thus and thus became the 'other' for the aggressors as well as the defenders, given that she was deprived of her free will in both circumstances. Hence, it is crucial that their plight finds expression in literature as well as other forms of academic discourses as they too are individuals capable of experiencing and remembering the wrongs done to them. These women "do not cease to be… because we do not know their names" (Carr 29). It is unjust to disregard the discrimination meted out to them simply because history cannot recall their names. Thousands of such "nameless … individuals" cannot be ignored because "numbers count in history" (Carr 29).

When a victim's voice is silenced and her wounds are ignored there is an understanding behind the curtain that her pain is not worthy of expression. This leads to normalizing her victimization by the people who are in control of the historical narrative; people who find it too uncomfortable to discuss the wrongs perpetrated on her. Consequently, it becomes mandatory to unravel this aspect of history so that the voices of the silent victims no longer remain unheard.

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Localizing the Global and Globalizing the Local: A Study of Indianization in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

South Asian Writers in English in general, and Amitav Ghosh in particular, with their central focus on the distinctive use of the aspects of local language use, have made a lasting impression on the literary landscape in English. This nativization phenomenon is not accidental or for want of felicity in language use, but is deliberately infused not only for artistic-aesthetic reasons but also to globalize readership and localize the English use to suit the context. Situated within the theoretical framework of Braj Kachru's (1983) analysis of nativization, and specifically Indianization, and using the ideas of other scholars about Indians writing in English (Auddy 2020), this paper sees Ghosh's The Hungry Tide*, as a glowing example of nativization used by successful writers of English in the South Asian context.*
Keywords: *Contextual Nativization, Amitav Ghosh, South Asian writing in English, Indianisation, The Hungry Tide*

Introduction

South Asian writers have left an indelible mark on the literary landscape of writing in English, and this has led to an increased focus on the idiosyncratic use of certain aspects of local language use in their writing in English. This paper focuses on Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and brings out aspects of nativization used by Ghosh in his writing in English. Using Braj Kachru's (1983) and other criteria of analysing texts for their aspects of nativization, and the use of Indianisms, the authors suggest that successful South Asian writers in English use nativization to bring their novels to suit the local setting and characterization, and in the process help the 'local' readers immediately connect to the context. Readers from other 'global' contexts pick up the flavour of the local and acclimatize to it while reading the novel, due to such language use.

By looking at the linguistic aspects of nativization, we argue that novelists like Ghosh 'localize' the global language (English) and 'globalize' the readership by retaining elements of the authentic local terminology as well as local habits of language use in their otherwise 'pure' and lucid writing in 'standard' English. This 'contextual nativization' is one of the primary reasons for the success of the style used by writers such as Ghosh, it is argued.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Several Indian writers have used the English language creatively to "convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own" (Rao, 1989: 5). Contemporary Indian English fictionists like Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, and Salman Rushdie use Indianisms liberally to express the 'Indianness' in their work. "By Indianism is generally meant a word, phrase, idiom, expression or point of syntactical usage which is not a part of current English or American usage and involves a shade of meaning or usage which is peculiarly Indian or is reminiscent of the lexis, idioms, phrases or syntax current in one of the modern Indian languages" (Gokak, 1991: 25, emphasis ours). Kachru argues that the reason for the use of Indianisms is the acculturation of a western language (here, English) in "the linguistically and culturally pluralistic context of the subcontinent" (1983: 1). Such an 'acculturation' becomes an imperative for a writer of fiction in the Indian context.

While for Kachru Indianization is a historical process leading ultimately to a legitimate variety of English called Indian English ('South Asian English' for Sridhar S.N (1980)), which arguably deserves the status of a language by itself, this paper uses his ideas about Indianization not to look at Indianization as a diachronic process but to see it as writers' deliberate, synchronic use of a set of strategies to Indianize their English, which is otherwise a more un-Indianized 'global' variety. Kachru sees such inventive use of English not as mistakes stemming from ignorance but as 'deviations' stemming from intentional use, and argues that this deviation is determined by the cultural and linguistic context of the writer. Arguably, these strategies can be used even by writers from outside the cultural and linguistic context. Linguistic innovations for Indianization are therefore seen as not merely the productive use of language creatively, but also as pragmatically essential for a writer's success in depicting the Indian context in English.

For the novel to succeed, the novelist must use Indianisms not merely in vocabulary but also at the structural and discoursal levels. *The Hungry Tide* exemplifies the use of such strategies in language. This strategy helps Ghosh encourage his Indian readers to read 'Standard' English in the novel on one hand and relate to the local setting and language use on the other. It also helps the non-Indian readers taste a distinct regional flavour in the language, even as they can comprehend the narrative without much difficulty. Successful writers like Ghosh employ language to capture even the lectal varieties (borrowing from the sense with which Auddy, 2020 uses this term) of what is called Indian English. His third-person narrative is mostly what could be called the Indian acrolect, while the mesolect is captured in his Indianisms used in his narrative in some places. Ghosh has also used certain twists of language and direct use of Bangla and their translations to capture the basilect representing the oppressed (unschooled) classes and castes as seen in the language used by the characters Horen and Fokir in the novel.

Ghosh can thus be understood to use what J.R. Firth calls 'the context of situation,' that is to use Indianisms in the English language to suit the speaker's status and social character of the situation in the novel. It can be argued that Indian writers like Ghosh, by virtue of belonging to a richly multilingual context, with a large appetite for metalinguistic abilities, pick up this skill for language use rather easily, when compared to writers from predominantly monolingual contexts.

Indianization in *The Hungry Tide*

There are several Kachruvian features of Indianisms that Ghosh uses in *The Hungry*

Tide. He liberally uses predominantly native words over their English equivalents to suit the contextual appropriateness. For instance, Ghosh uses italics while referring to Mohona and Mashima (at least during first use). However, he never loses touch with the global audience even as he takes several liberties in his use of English. Ghosh uses them in such a way that the meanings of the local/native terms are either easily guessed from the context in the novel or are simply defined or explained in the proximate text.

Another interesting feature of Ghosh's writing is his colouring the texture of language-use to suit the character of the speaker. For instance, Piya's 'proper' use of English as an American, Nirmal's use of a colonial version of English interspersed with many Bangla terms, Nilima's convent-school English, and Kanai's linguist-translator consciousness in language use, highlight Ghosh's attention to language-character appropriateness.

It is also interesting to note how Ghosh doesn't use a neutral third person narration as much as he uses narration from the viewpoints of the principal characters (Mostly Kanai and Piya, but also Nirmal and occasionally the insiders of the Sundarbans, such as Horen, Moyna, and rarely Fokir) in the novel. What this also means is that he captures the individual variety of the language as he envisions it, by also capturing the acrolectal, mesolectal or basilectal variety of the social group of the character, in the process.

For example, the first chapter 'Tide Country' uses Kanai's narration (even though it begins with the mention of Kanai in 'Kanai spotted her…'). He approximates to the acrolect of an educated English-speaking Bengali Indian in this chapter. Indianisms abound in the form of words like bindi, sundari (tree) and Bangla terms for tide (bhati) etc. All these words are italicized, and Ghosh ensures attention is paid to linguistic aspects like the origin of the terms as Kanai, being a translator and interpreter by profession, is deeply interested in the workings of languages. Kanai says, "I like to think that my ears are tuned to the nuances of spoken language." Ghosh captures the Indianness of this acrolect beautifully through the casual use of compound terms that would otherwise be whole phrases in the language use of a speaker from Western countries - snack-vendors, tea-sellers (p.1), 'tide country'. He also uses language inventively to bring in aspects of Indianization like in the use of the expression 'people who did *daily-passengeri*' (p.4), instead of writing 'people who were daily passengers. This use of an Indian suffix to change the word passenger into something like the phenomenon of travelling as a passenger daily is one of several such inventive uses of Indianization Ghosh employs in the novel.

Apart from these, Ghosh also uses the Bangla expressions transliterated in English simply to enrich the narration with the local flavour. For example, the use of the expression "*ami Bangla jani na*" (4) is added after Ghosh mentions "that she knew no Bengali". In Kanai's narration, Ghosh uses interjections like '*Aré moshai*' (5) as address terms to capture how one would speak to a person in the local language. This is probably done with the intent of capturing Kanai's fluent use of Bangla, the language.

The context of tea presents an intriguing set of features. In the Kanai narration, Ghosh uses the word 'tea-sellers' but when Kanai intends to buy tea for the person who let him sit on a seat of his preference, the tea-seller is referred to as '*cha'ala'* even though he refers to his product as 'a cup of tea' in this instance. In the following chapter (Piya's narration), Ghosh again uses both the terms within the same sentence. Piya "had never cared for the kind of *chai* on offer in Seattle" ... "milky, overboiled tea" (9). In the very next sentence, Ghosh uses the word '*chai'* again to refer to the tea Piya was offered at her home in the US. Is Ghosh drawing a difference between the tea consumed at the home (*chai*) of this person of Indian origin and the one consumed/offered outside (tea)? Seen along with the use of the terms in Kanai's case

where he uses the word 'tea-seller' without emotion and prefers to use the word '*cha'ala*' when he feels gratitude for the gentleman with the newspaper, we can deduce that Ghosh associates the Indian term with emotion and the English word tea in a neutral sense. Ghosh makes this play of language even more intriguing in his clever use of it to differentiate the interjections of a young school-going Kanai when Nilima talks about "The goddess of the forest…" and when she says that Kusum had escaped being "forced to lose her self-respect and honour". In the former, Kanai's response is a very Bangla "*O?*" and in the latter a more English "Oh?" Is Ghosh suggesting that one feels (and uses) more locally (and innocently) when dealing with spiritual matters and feels more globally (sane, sensible, grounded and less carried away?) while talking about worldly matters?

Piya's narrations hardly have any Indianism, but Kanai's abound in them. It is in Kanai's parts that Ghosh uses compound terms like palm-thatched huts, bamboo-walled stalls, ragged-edged maidan, the weekly market day etc. Loan words like *kewra* (a variety of tree), *jilipis* and *badh* and Indianized inflections such as *filmi* are also used with panache, often letting the reader deduce the meanings from the context.

In addition, Ghosh's acute sense of language-use is clearly visible in the attention he pays to use/non-use of the honorific in Kanai-Horen-Fokir transactions, and in the use of the terms 'Calcutta-Kolkata' 'Bengali-Bangla' or 'Ganga-Ganges' 'Sir-saar' depending on the user and the use. He not only captures the pragmatics of language transactions, but also brings to us the lectal variations through this kind of discernment in language-use.

Moving up from vocabulary use to the structural-discoursal level, we notice that Ghosh gets Kanai, an educated Indian using an acrolect, to use the present continuous tense form "Come, I'm inviting you…" instead of the present tense form "I invite you" that Piya would have thought to be the correct use. This, we argue, is not a lapse on Ghosh's part but his creative use of the idiosyncrasies (use of present continuous in place of simple present tense, sometimes even for habitual action) of even educated Indians using English, who arguably use the acrolect variety of Indian English.

Ghosh uses Indianization in cultural terms throughout the novel. He brilliantly weaves native terms for the tide-country cuisine into the tapestry of English syntax. He mentions different types of fish such as '*tangra machh', 'chhechki machh', and 'koimachh'* in addition to the "musuri'r dal, a quick-cooked chorchori of potatoes, fish-bones and a kind of green leaf watery jhol of a tiny but toothsome fish called murola" (143). In clothing and attire, there is reference to *bindi, sari, achol, dhuti* (Punjabi) etc. In the context of religion and religious practices, there are several references to terms such as Bon-Bibi, as well as references to Islamic and Hindu symbols and rituals. *Saar, Shaheb, memsahib, Mashima* etc., are used to address people. Interjections like 'Are' and 'O' in 'are moshai,' 'are Kanai' are used in the context of addressing people showing closeness or familiarity. Similarly, 're' is used to express fondness. Sometimes, Ghosh even introduces native words without any translation, compelling the reader to understand the meaning from the context. In this sense, Ghosh helps the reader transcend the usual boundaries of communication in English fiction.

If we look at the categories used by Kachru for lexical innovations, *The Hungry Tide* contains several items based on such innovations in South Asian English. For instance, his use of the words *sari, chai, bazaars, daal, khaki, maidan* are exemplars of assimilated lexical items, that is language terms that have been borrowed into English *achol, mohona, bhati, bhatir desh, bhata, chaata* are what Kachru would call restricted lexical items, that is terms that are local but are not yet imported into the English dictionary hybridized items in terms of linguistic innovation including compound formations are seen in the terms like *Daily*

Passengeri, Kolkata bazaar, paan-shops, filmi music, *fried jilipis, bujuwa* nationalists a cha'ala is a brilliant example of what Kachru calls derivative suffixes. Ghosh uses string formations abundantly throughout the novel. Terms like 'ash-smeared locks', 'the tide country,' 'plain white widow's sari,' 'the opera house of Manaus,' 'the ten thousand pagodas of Pagan,' 'a threadbare lungi,' 'with red paan-stains,' 'palm-thatched huts and bamboo-walled stalls,' 'ragged-edged maidan,' and 'the weekly market day' are all examples of string formations.

Code Mixing and Code Switching

Ghosh also uses code-mixing and code-switching profusely in his novel. 'Code mixing refers to the transition from using linguistic units, words, phrases, clauses, etc. of one language to using those of another within a single sentence' (Sridhar and Sridhar, 1980: 408) Language alterations take place intra-sententially in code-mixing and inter-sententially (across sentences) in code-switching. Code-switching has pragmatic or discourse-oriented functions that may be absent in code-mixing, but Ghosh uses both these phenomena in the book.

According to G.J.V. Prasad, "Many shades of social meaning can be conveyed by people by their choice of sound, word or grammar… (so they) codeswitch from one variety to another" (1999: 47). Code-mixing and code-switching have been seen as expressions of one's identity and Ghosh employs these amply.

Here are examples of both:

Piya, even though she doesn't know Bangla, uses the sentence 'ami Bangla jani na' when spoken to in Bangla.

Kanai says, "Are moshai, can I just say a word?"

Kanai was about to swear at the man he had bumped into, bokachoda! (p. 17)

'Kanai? Is that you?' 'Are tumi!' In bending down to touch his uncle's feet… (p. 17)

'Are mashima! You here?' (p. 27)

Ghosh uses what appears to be code-switching but is actually a technique to capture the basilect while describing or reporting the lines of *Horen/Fokir* etc. '*Jongol korte geslam*, I went to "do jungle" yesterday, Mashima' (p.27).

Conclusion

Even while using creative Indianisms in English profusely in the book, Ghosh doesn't lose sight of his Western, non-Indian reader who cannot guess the meanings of typical Bangla words or words and expressions rooted in Indian cultural practices. He takes the trouble of doing what it takes to make the Indianism clear to the average reader without letting them lose interest in the narrative. For example, he mentions the "plain white widow's sari", which he wouldn't even have to describe in this fashion to an exclusively Indian readership, for whom the white sari is deeply ingrained culturally as a marker of widowhood. When he uses Bangla/Indian terms, he makes sure to give either direct translations or provide a context for the reader to guess the meanings of the term. For example, in the lines ``...heightened by his clothes and umbrella: his loose white drapes…, while the shape of his *chhata…*" it is clear that '*chhata*' must be an umbrella. In a few lines after this, Ghosh uses the Indian term in the line '*his usual white dhuti-panjabi* and he had his umbrella in his hands'. Ghosh avoids using both

the terms for the clothes and the umbrella in the same sentence because that would burden the reader. He translates the term if the reader would find it difficult from the context otherwise: "This is a *shahebi choubachcha*, a white man's tank." For good measure, "Nirmal said, pointing to the bathtub. *Shahebs* use them to bathe in" (39).

In conclusion and from the information evidenced from the text *The Hungry Tide,* it can be surmised that Ghosh like other successful Indian writers in English, by virtue of belonging to a richly multilingual context, expresses the skill for Indianisation of the English language rather easily and naturally, without letting the communication load on the non-Indian reader weigh them down too much.

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Adorning A Pluralist Cultural Identity To Win "The Right To Be Ordinary" in Imtiaz Dharker's Poetry

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Abstract

The twenty-first-century South Asian diasporic women poets break free from age-old kyriarchal traditions that bound them from living an ordinary life at par with men of the same socio-cultural milieu. Even though the highly-applauded fall of patriarchal norms raised the veil from women's heads, per se, it still does not permit them to live freely without interruptions of social disparities. Thus, while the South Asian women poets raise their pen and lend their voice to dissent, the kyriarchy prevails even today. In addition, Imtiaz Dharker, a Scottish Muslim Calvinist, as she calls herself, has wonderfully portrayed the issues of women's exploitation and their reclamation of identity in her poetry without being dogmatic and prosaic. The main aim of this qualitative research is to bring forth her approach towards the cultural discourse that reflects her pluralised cultural identity, which runs throughout her work, thereby lending a transnational metaphor to women's struggle in breaking free from kyriarchy to embrace an ordinary life and relegate conformism.
Keywords*: Kyriarchy, Identity, Oppression, Diasporic poets, Subaltern women, Transnationalism*

Introduction

When Carol Ann Duffy, Ex Poet Laureate of Britain spoke of Pakistan-born Imtiaz Dharker as the only candidate who deserved a chance to be a World Laureate (if there had been such a title), least did she know that Imtiaz Dharker would turn down the offer of Poet Laureate of Britain to remain more private, nonetheless away from the public eyes. Dharker, a Scottish Muslim Calvinist, as she claims herself to be, is a world-renowned poet, artist and a filmmaker with seven poetry books to her name - *Purdah, Leaving Fingerprints, Postcards from God, I Speak for the Devil, The Terrorist at my Table, Over the Moon* and *Luck is the Hook* published in 1989, 2009, 1994, 2001, 2006, 2014 and 2018, respectively. This research will focus on a qualitative analysis of select poetry pieces - Purdah I and Purdah II, and A Century Later, available on her website http://www.imtiazdharker.com.

Literature review

Her poems are a reflection of her lived experiences, felt experiences and heard experiences that are not bound within the perimeters of geographical borders of countries. Her words are of global nature that transcends borders and nationalities in a true sense. Her ethnicity, marriage and immigration engendered this transcendence that dates back to her birth in 1954 in the beautiful town of Lahore, Pakistan. Her family decided to immigrate to Glasgow while she was less than a year old. She chose an arduous path to give a chance to her

love life by marrying an Indian Hindu, after which she married a Welsh poet, Simon Powell in 2007. As quite evident through these facts, her strong interconnectedness with transnationalism propelled a sense of globalism in her writings as she was an adopted daughter of India but had the fragrance of Lahore's soil running in her blood. Dharker made it strikingly clear that her family background didn't clash with her Protestant schooling in Glasgow; rather, it blended in really well due to the mutual prominence of purity and the attitude that emphasised 'giving' above everything. She mentions to De Souza that she loves being an 'outsider' in a land of natives as it fills her up with positivity. Freedom, she says, is something that resides within oneself and she has fallen in love with being an outsider. (De Souza) It is not a surprise that contemporary South Asian diasporic women writers are finding inspiration from the talks, sayings, interviews, articles, books, poems of women like Dharker who've set a standard and raised the bar against dichotomies.

The rawness and bluntness embedded in her poetry have everything to do with her consideration that women are as ordinary as men ought to be. Her vision thrives high on scar culture to alleviate suffering through words. In her poem 'A Century Later,' Dharker writes,

This girl has won
the right to be ordinary

While the Cambridge Dictionary refers to ordinary as something that is not distinct or special (Cambridge), Dharker's words are a clear depiction of how much women have to fight to live an ordinary life like men. Dharker represents this suffering in her poetry effortlessly without any extraordinary mentions of ethnicity, religion, caste or any other social division, thereby strengthening the ordinance of the scar culture. Scar culture refers to the act of suffering that is represented through some kind of body which then triggers a sentimental response from the viewer. This response leads to an emotionally enriched discourse which becomes possible because, over time, humans have fostered literacy both visual and affective - within themselves (Nayar).For instance, a person can sense pain through beaten bodies, and this shared knowledge is developed by scar culture, thriving through suffering bodies as emotional dominants. However, emotional dominants are a crucial component of the formation and realisation of identity, which assists in the engagement of socio-cultural emotions (Jung G). Dharker paves the way for readers to deliver judgements on her visualisation of suffering, which she observed based on psychological, social and cultural perspectives. Then, she tunes her observation into a carefully woven string of words with which the victims can identify themselves. Her poetry can be identified with the emotional sentiments portrayed by Nayar in his States of Sentiments, thus allowing people the opportunity to be aware of disparities that remain afloat in a society that claims to be devoid of all incongruencies.

Dharker's poetry holds a strong urge to break free from the shackles of *kyriarchy* that binds women without letting the specificity of culture, age, and demography blur her vision and sentiments. The theory of *kyriarchy* was conceptualised by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza in her book *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretations*, wherein she defined kyriarchy as a neological theory that finds its origin in the Greek words *kyrios* meaning 'lord' and *archein* meaning 'to dominate.' The word *kyriarchy* refers to a system of intersecting social structures that dominate over the suppressed/subordinates. This word holds multifarious oppressions that dominate particular subordinates, thereby characterising a narrowed down and analytical category of patriarchy (Fiorenza). Fiorenza elaborates in the glossary of her book, the reason behind challenging the theoretical concept of patriarchy as inadequate owing to the variety of social structures that intersect at certain levels. For

instance, she says, "white wo/men cannot be controlled by black men." Sian Ferguson takes this example to highlight the inadequacy of patriarchy by saying that experiencing male privilege depends on other identities and is dynamic in nature. In the essay, Ferguson further mentions that using the term *kyriarchy* instead of *patriarchy* is the new step forward towards taking into account various other forms of oppression faced by people in their everyday life as kyriarchy is more compatible than patriarchy when someone talks of feminism which is in itself intersectional in nature (Ferguson). Although Maryam Khan and Asad Ali Babar conclude in their research that kyriarchy cannot swaddle the spirit of women who wish to rise against conformism, it would be worthwhile to study how the poet's pluralist cultural identity has contributed to relieving her angst against *kyriarchy* in favour of the subaltern women (Khan, 870).

Unveiling transnational *Purdahnasheens*

The *Purdah* system, adopted by the Mughals from the Persian culture prevails even today and corrupts the freedom of women in multifarious ways by restricting their movement, behaviour and social access. A *Purdah* or veil is an attire worn by women, as directed by the authoritative voices of Islam irrespective of a woman's choice. During the Arab conquest, the *Purdah* acted as a barrier for women to keep them protected from turmoil and social angst, thus becoming a symbol of elitism. But today, in comparatively more peaceful and aware times, the system of *Purdah* is characterised as a medium to gain more authority over the *Purdahnasheens*, thereby ruining the self-confidence, personality, dignity and freedom of women. It might've had some benefits in the past, but feminists have been revolting against the oppression to help reinvigorate a woman's psyche and give her more rights over her body. The *Purdah* system is not just a culture of rigidly Arabic countries, it spans across all Southern, Northern, Western and Eastern continents. Imtiaz Dharker, a proud diasporic poet who carries within herself traces of Pakistan, India and the United Kingdom, has successfully introspected her transnational identity to expose the *Purdah* system and the complexities it brings in the life of women who observe a *Purdah* (*Purdahnasheen*).

Dharker gives way to her thoughts through "Purdah I" and "Purdah II", both seen as vehemently interconnected pieces that voice the imminent oppression of women for ages. While Purdah I gives a closer perspective of a Muslim girl who suddenly becomes aware of her sexuality while others her age are more aware at that point of time, Purdah II is a slightly more harsh and elaborate dissent of the *Purdah* whilst voicing her feminist concerns against the kyriarchy. Although the *Purdah* system finds its origins in the Muslim culture, Dharker's poem does not limit the social evil to the Muslim culture; her poetry doesn't talk of *Purdah* as attire for Muslim women only (Kathiresan, 29). Therefore, Dharker transcends from cultural boundations in Purdah II; this gives her readers a free hand to introspect, analyse and formulate the metaphorical meaning of *Purdah*. Both the poems are marvellous creations of modern poetry and rank one above the other in terms of conveying fierceness and humanistic compassion while evading from the speaker's views perhaps. Furthermore, Purdah I and Purdah II touch the sensibilities of a reader by evoking a sentimental response through visual and affective literacy as highlighted by Pramod K. Nayar's Scar Culture.

Purdah I starts with 'them' telling a girl that "she was old enough to learn some shame" because her growth from a child into a woman will attract more men.

One day they said she was old enough to learn some shame.
She found it came quite naturally.

The poem internalises a lot of connotations while voicing suffocation that kills women as the veil "fans out against the skin" as it feels quite similar to the "the earth that falls on the coffins after they put dead men in".

The cloth fans out against the skin
much like the earth falls
on coffins after they put the dead men in.

She should learn to safeguard the sanctity of her body because now she can feel "between the thighs a sense of sin".

She half-remembers things
from someone else's life,
Perhaps from yours, or mine –
carefully carrying what we do not own:
between the thighs, a sense of sin.

In Purdah II, Dharker paints a cleverly vivid picture of women being "sold and brought" while being taught that they must "bind their brightness tightly round, whatever they might wear, in the purdah of the mind."

They have all been sold and bought,
the girls I knew,
unwilling virgins who had been taught,
especially in this strangers' land, to bind
their brightness tightly round,
whatever they might wear,
in the purdah of the mind.

Madhurita Choudhury highlights the above stanza and states that Dharker's main focus is to object to veiled minds prior to veiled bodies (Choudhury, 174). Purdah II can be looked upon as an actively Muslim women-centric poem due to some words such as "Allah-u-Akbar", "Koran", "Maulvi", "Haji" and "Mecca", however, it transcends national boundaries as the poet doesn't deter from writing that she has met most of these veiled women and can know their tongues before they speak as they are "thick with the burr of Birmingham or Leeds".

There are so many of me.
I have met them, meet them every day,
recognise their shadows on the streets.
I know their past and future
in cautious way they place their feet.
I can see behind their veils,
and before they speak
I know their tongues, thick
with the burr of Birmingham
or Leeds.

This phrase, "thick with the burr of Birmingham or Leeds", can be seen as essentially depicting transnationalism by not limiting the geographical presence of veiled women. Indeed, in these few instances, Dharker makes the best use of her pluralist cultural identity to widen the scale of relevancy through her poetry to reach the diaspora of Muslim women in England and beyond that. Madhurita Choudhury also states that Dharker's poetry is not only for the Third World Women but for all women irrespective of ethnicity, geographical boundary and colour who stand united by distress. Furthermore, Dharker's multicultural identity remains in line with Virginia Woolf's remark, "neither do women have a country and

nor do they want a country because the whole world is their country" (Choudhury, 176).

Women's rise in transnational battlefields

Dharker starts her poem, 'A Century Later' by referring to the school bell as a call to battle where every step towards the classroom is as big a stride towards the firing line.

The school-bell is a call to battle,
every step to class, a step into the firing-line.

It is evident that Imtiaz Dharker calls the school premises a battleground where girls and women have to fight against the tyrants to claim their right to education. This oppression is the result of male dominance that stems from their narrow mentality and women's obligation to conform to those oppressive thoughts. We cannot deny that the poem alludes to Malala Yousufzai's incident when the Taliban shot her in the head when she protested against the decision of steeling the right to education - as mentioned in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, put forth by the United Nations Human Rights Council - away from young girls (United Nations). She was shot in the head and the lines "surrendered, surrounded, she takes the bullet in her head" corresponds to that particular incident. While the direct correlation of the incident and the poem reveals a linear perspective, it would be unfair to let go of the global perspective that the poem hints in between the lines. Women across many countries are marginalised to an extent that they are forced out of school and not allowed to study. For example, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Niger, Afghanistan, Chad, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Ethiopia are some countries where getting an education is a tough task for women/girls (Coughlan). This poem portrays a wider perspective than the eyes can read in one glance; it screams of the valour and sacrifice that woman put in to live an ordinary life. In the seventh line of the poem, Dharker aims to convey that even bullets and missiles cannot prohibit a woman's desire to learn and educate herself as she "walks on".

Surrendered, surrounded, she
takes the bullet in the head
and walks on. The missile cuts
a pathway in her mind, to an orchard
in full bloom, a field humming under the sun,
its lap open and full of poppies.

Furthermore, words like orchard, bloom and sun are a connotation of women's strength amidst terrorism and marginalisation whereas other words like missiles, bullet and battlefield are a display of the patriarchal and kyriarchal perspective of the men who aspire to take control of the lives of women (Khan, 870). Although these words can be metaphorical in nature, their usage in the poem is quite poignant and renders chaos throughout the mind of the reader, thus triggering a sentimental response. Later, to symbolise the victory of the repressed, the poet says, "the girl has won the right to be ordinary". Everyone, irrespective of gender has the right to be ordinary, so why does Dharker make this point at such a crucial stage during the poem? Ignoring the fact that women, in certain countries, are still fighting for the basic rights that men enjoy, will not only ridicule their struggle but also validate the notion of oppression. Some recent developments in socio-political spheres such as the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan are the latest example of oppression that women are facing, not in the other world, but in parts of the world close to us. According to Human Rights Watch, 66% of adolescent boys in Afghanistan can read and write as compared to 37% of teenage girls

(Bronstein). Although women's rights are inseparable from the universe, this indicates clear isolation of women's rights in lieu of the oppressive mentality of men in certain demographies. Nonetheless, other lines such as "wear bangles to a wedding, paint her fingernails, go to school" offer a vivid description of the restrictions that women face in their daily lives that even the most common of activities are seen as extraordinary.

While tension and dogmatism run parallel throughout the poetry, it takes a more positive turn towards the end when Dharker writes that "you cannot kill a book" where "a book" is an underlying metaphor for women's undying urge to gain more knowledge.

Bullet, she says, you are stupid.
You have failed. You cannot kill a book
or the buzzing in it.

Jerry Pinto after her talk with Imtiaz Dharker pointed that she is not a difficult poet but people only assume her to be a difficult poet because she destabilises one's views about poetry. Shweta Sharma, while concluding her research about Imtiaz Dharker's ability to negotiate binaries, says that Dharker doesn't conform to prevalent notions, rather she intelligently navigates through them while questioning the existence of these notions, thereby compelling the readers to rethink the opinions that they have already conformed within their mind (Sharma, 2). Therefore, we can say that Dharker's transnational identity and coherence with various cultures paved her thinking to write poetically about the challenges that women face in the name of kyriarchy to obtain something as ordinary as education. Clifford suggests that these dispersed communities are "not defined by specific geopolitical boundaries" and belongs to a "multi-locale diaspora" and her writings must suggest a broken link with her homeland (Clifford, 246). Although the research couldn't find any detachment in the writings of Imtiaz Dharker, her works suggest a lingering sense of ubiquity of ideas that transcend geopolitical boundaries and resonate with women who feel secluded from social norms and religious tenants owing to their body functions that differ from men (Santosh Gupta, 2017). Despite the seclusion, women gather one behind the other to take place on the front line,

A murmur, a swarm. Behind her, one by one,
the schoolgirls are standing up
to take their places on the front line.

Conclusion

Imtiaz Dharker in her works gracefully demonstrates the struggles of women against the kyriarchal systems of the society which are not bound within geopolitical dimensions. Her knowledge and a keen eye towards the maltreatment, misguidance and misunderstanding of women in almost all spheres of life renders a clear vision to her poetic endeavours. Although her Pakistani roots, settlement in the Western world and connection with the Indian subcontinent can be looked upon as an essential factor behind her transnational approach, we must not deny the shape-shifting identity that she possesses which allows her to mould herself according to the situation. Through her works, she urges women to break the shackles of kyriarchy and soar high while raising their voices against dogmatic practices, even if the evil is rooted deep within the cultural ordinance. She has seen women from various lands talking about oppression and feeling like the other, but no one, according to her, can silence the voice of a woman who knows what she stands for. Through a deep and worthwhile analysis of Dharker's poems - Purdah I, Purdah II and A Century Later, we conclude that Imtiaz Dharker possesses a plurality in her voice that stems from her multi-

locale diaspora. Thus, enriching her work for all women who are willing to fight against societal norms across transnational boundaries. This pluralistic approach is the epitome of transnationalism that encourages women to seize their right to be ordinary.

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A Journey through Madness: A Comparative Study of Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* and Paulo Coelho's *Veronika Decides to Die*

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Abstract

Madness has been one of the favourite themes in literature. Literature has often represented madness as something that liberates the character to do what is right rather than what is considered normal. By analysing how madness is represented in Anita Desai's Cry, the Peacock *and Paulo Coelho's* Veronika Decides to Die*, the paper attempts to show the differences and similarities in the representation of madness in the novels and demonstrate how madness acts as a potent force that sheds light on discourses of gender and social norms. Through a critical analysis of the texts, the paper also tries to portray how medicine acts as an institution of social control, how for the protagonists of the novels, being mad is being 'ex-centric' and how being mad is represented in the novels as an expression against oppression.*
Keywords*: Gender, Madness, Medicine, Oppression, Social control*

> "Anyone who lives in their own world is mad…people
> who are different from others."   -- Coelho 30.

In the context of literary history, madness has turned out to be a rich and many-layered concept. Rather than addressing madness as a homogenous pathological situation, literature has often portrayed it as a product of the oppressive socio-cultural norms and circumstances created by specific structures of power throughout various moments of history. Writers have used the theme of madness to reflect "the hypocrisies, double standards and the sheer callous obliviousness of the sane society" (Porter 3). For instance, during the Renaissance period, William Shakespeare was renowned for using madness in his plays. Lear's madness in *King Lear* provides him and the audience an insight into how power and authority can blind people. He also brings in the Fool, who was considered to be outside the social order during Shakespeare's times, in the play and criticises the king's behaviour and lopsided governance through his overtly insane words. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare brings in madness as a pathway for Hamlet to discover the truth behind his father's death. Though Hamlet feigns madness, it helps him recognise the true nature and pretense of people around him. With time, madness in literature also began to be read in connection with discourses such as gender and race. Jean Rhy's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a prequel to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, depicts how madness, gender and race are intertwined and how Bertha's madness in *Jane Eyre* was a product of Victorian morality principles and a form of protest against patriarchal oppression. As medical connotations of madness became popular, writers also started bringing out intricacies of madness as a disease and often criticised mental institutions. Ken Kensey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* published in 1962, is one of the

most famous works that critique psychiatry and the working of mental hospitals. Similarly, the texts under analysis in this paper have represented madness as something created and developed by power structures in society, especially patriarchy and medicine and also portray how madness can act as an agency of resistance.

The present paper focuses on Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* and Paulo Coelhi's *Veronika Decides to Die* as these novels address the highly complex yet ubiquitous conjunction of madness and femininity. Both the novels appropriate the discourse of madness "in order to critique the contradictory ramifications of mandatory adherence to the construct of 'femininity'" (Volkhausen 1). Both the novels revolve around female protagonists who are labelled mad due to their actions that do not fit the social and patriarchal norms. Maya, the protagonist of *Cry, the Peacock*, is deemed to be mad as she kills her insensitive husband and Veronika, the protagonist of *Veronika Decides to Die*, is put in a mental asylum as she attempts to lead her life her own way and tries to kill herself by consuming sleeping pills without any reason.

The novels, using madness, question the patriarchal power structures and the societal norms that do not let women come out of the social construct of femininity. Both the protagonists turn mad because everything in their life is monotonous and restricted. In Maya's case, she is a person of senses and Gautama, Maya's husband, is a person who focuses on rationality. Everything that Maya says is childish for Gautama, and he would lend his ears to the ones "who are capable of logic and analysis…. intelligent, reasonable men" (Desai 19). Gautama gave "no value in anything less than the ideas and theories born of human and, preferably, male brains." (86). According to Som P. Sharma and Kamal N. Avasthi, "Maya is seething in eros manifested in her multi-dimensional projections of companionship, motherhood, of Keatsian sensuousness of her identification with petunias. Gautama on the other hand is an Apollonian: he is into form, order, discipline, career and logomachies" (141). Gautama always wants Maya to leave her sensual world and be practical like him. She has to leave behind who she is and be what Gautama wants her to be. She has been part of the system for four years. However, the spark of madness hits Maya when her pet dog dies. At this moment in her life, she realises how indifferent her husband is towards her and her feelings. The incident also reminds her of a childhood prophecy made by an albino astrologer, according to which either Maya or her husband would die within four years of their marriage. This increases the psychic tumults within her, and as madness grows in her, she understands that she was "filled to the point of destruction" (Desai 25) due to her husband's indifference and the restrictions cast upon her.

Though one cannot find Gautama using physical force in taming Maya, he consciously manipulates her thoughts and activities. He always pulls her back when he discovers that she is taking her own path. Maya states, "he knew nothing that concerned me…His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talk of cups of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and talking, reveal myself" (14). Maya's private thoughts, which she does not speak aloud, come out of her when Gautama tells her she is sick. There are instances where Maya argues stubbornly with Gautama, rushes out to a circle of men engaged in reciting couplets even though she knew that Gautama would not welcome it, expresses her emotions and thoughts out loud and questions Gautama about his indifferent behaviour. Madness acts as a catalyst which causes "Maya's attitude to change from one of passive acceptance of Gautama's 'superior plane he always managed to elevate himself onto' to one of active rejection of his values" (Rosenwasser 88). The tints of madness even allow her to talk about her emotions out loud, support her sister-in-law's divorce and confront her husband, who

wanted her to conform to the patriarchal laws. As madness grows in her, she starts violently protesting against oppression, culminating in her husband's death.

In Veronika, madness enlightens her about all the restrictions she had in her life and provides her with an opportunity to live her life the way she likes. She clearly states in her suicide note that she decides to die mainly because "everything in her life is the same" and "everything is wrong" (Coelho 6). Veronika wanted to be a pianist all her life, but her mother had always stopped her from being a pianist as she believed that skills like playing the piano were required only for pleasing husbands, not a profession. She had always tried not to hurt others or talk defensively. Although she had everything in her life, she had always restricted herself. She decides to commit suicide for freedom, and she gets it when cast mad. Soon after her suicide, the novel starts "gyrates(ing) around the pivot madness" (Vasuki 33) and teaches Veronika the necessity of living life to its fullest. She had lived her whole life following the "manual of good behaviour" (Coelho 119) of the outside world, which was difficult "not due to chaos or disorganisation or anarchy, but to an excess of order. Society had more and more rules and laws that contradicted the rules, and new rules that contradicted the laws." (95) Madness gave her the freedom to do whatever she wanted, and there were no limits to it. Veronika stops feeding the "fears or preconceptions that had always limited her life" (120), and comes to know about the purpose of her life once she starts to live with her inner madness. Madness enables her to slap the leader of Fraternity (a community of inmates in Villette), cry in front of a nurse, sneak out at night and play the piano, fall in love with a person with schizophrenia, masturbate in a hall to see how far she could go, escape from Villette and talk out loud in a restaurant without caring about pleasing others. Madness enables her to do things that she had never done in her entire life.

The authors also use madness as a medium of self-discovery or emancipation of the protagonists from institutions of oppression. Madness gives both the protagonists a heightened perception about life and things that oppress or restrict them. What really provokes them to travel through madness is the timidity of life and the burden of oppression. In both novels, the protagonists free themselves from the shackles of societal norms using madness. Like Bertha Mason, who burns Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*, Maya kills her husband, who stands as the epitome of patriarchy or oppression. Maya tries to come out of the room in which she was caged and live her life the way she wants. Even though one could see Maya trying to communicate about the constraints in her life and her dissatisfaction with her marriage to both her father and her husband, her father had asked her to "learn to accept it" (49), and her husband wanted her to detach herself from all attachments and be "serene and not affected by sensations" (93). Madness gives her the freedom to communicate what she had always suppressed and follow her instinct rather than what Gautama says. She begins to reject everything that detaches her from what she likes and rejects all forms of oppression she had to suffer. In Veronika's case, she finds that "other Veronikas existed inside me, Veronikas that I could love" (59) only once she is in the mental asylum. Madness enables her to understand how she had lived, "not bothering to discover the hundreds of other Veronikas who lived inside her and who were interesting, mad, curious, brave, bold." (61-62). One could also see Veronika thinking that "I (Veronika) should have been a little madder" (85) throughout her life. All these things might not have happened in the life of the protagonists if they were not mad or pushed into the world of insanity by society.

However, the protagonists' journey through madness and its culmination take divergent paths in both novels. Maya and Veronika come from very different cultures and social backgrounds. While *Cry, the Peacock* takes place in an Indian family setting that is

overtly modern yet patriarchal, and it throws light on a society that devalues women and forces her to restrict herself, *Veronika Decides to Die* unfolds in the lunatic asylum called Villette and analyses society's arbitrary definition of madness. Also, while madness in *Cry, the Peacock,* takes up violent expression, madness in *Veronika Decides to Die* is a mystical journey of discovering one's purpose in life. Veronika, through madness, finds out the vast possibilities that life offers, but for Maya, madness gives her the power to annihilate sources of oppression. One could also see that madness in Maya heightens her imagination and makes her more obsessed with her childhood, but madness in Veronika, though she had everything, does not have much to do with her past. In fact, madness unravels in Veronika as she starts interacting with the inmates in Villette. While Maya's journey through madness is tense and frustrating, Veronika is at ease once she starts to accept the madness within her. The presentation of madness in *Cry, the Peacock,* is rather inclined towards the popular idea of madness and, in some way, results in creating an aversion towards madness. However, being a person who was considered insane by his parents and sent to an asylum, Paulo Coelho has tried to portray how madness can be transcendental rather than bizarre and dangerous. He has tried to portray the freedom that madness offers and how it changes one's perception of life. Unlike *Cry, the Peacock*, *Veronika Decides to Die* has made significant efforts to break the stigma against madness.

Also, though both the novels provide hints on how medicine acts as an institution of social control, *Veronika Decides to Die* explicitly criticises mental asylums and their operations, whereas *Cry, the Peacock,* only provides subtle remarks on the influence of medicine. In her article "Gender and Insanity as Characteristics of the Insane: A Nineteenth-Century Case," Wendy Mitchinson states that "Since the mid-1960s, social control has been a significant explanatory model in accounting for the emergence and development of insane asylums" (99). In *Cry, the Peacock*, unlike physical constraints or abuse, an essential tool that Gautama uses to calm down the self-expressive femininity in Maya, is labelling her sick. Gautama avoids all her tantrums claiming it to be mere physical sickness. Whenever Maya tries to express her emotions outrageously, Gautama points out that she is sick and asks her to rest. Also, towards the end of the novel, the conversation between Maya's mother in law and sister in law points towards the necessity of taking her to the doctor. They make this suggestion not to help her relive from the burdens of her psyche but to control her and bring her back to normality. There are also instances where Maya herself thinks that her urge to cross boundaries and dream the unattainable is a product of insanity, and she often states that "insanity can be cured" (Desai 92). This indicates that cure acts as a tool to tie up all ex-centric thoughts, even for Maya. Although there is only a subtle description of the role of medicine in *Cry, the Peacock*, the novel portrays how the shadow of illness is cast over people who fight or raise their voices against societal norms and oppression. However, *Veronika Decides to Die* demonstrates how mental asylums act as an institution of social control rather than being places of treatment and cure. The major part of the plot unfolds in Villette, which is portrayed as "the famous and much-feared lunatic asylum" (Coelho 11). The first-day Veronika arrives at Villette, someone says, "You have landed slap bang in hell... it's not really hell it's worse than that" (10). Life at Villette taught her that even though mental asylum seems to be a place where one could do whatever they want, there are rules to be followed in an asylum as well. In Mari's note to the members of Fraternity, she writes, "life inside is exactly the same as life outside. Both there and here, people gather in groups, they build their walls and allow nothing strange to trouble their mediocre existences" (181). The novel explicitly assigns mental institutions as spaces for treating the deviant rather than the

sick. The novel portrays Villette as a place that accommodates both the sane and the insane (Coelho 68) and thus, depicts how medicine, mental asylums, in particular, aid social control.

Thus, Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* and Paulo Coelho's *Veronika Decides to Die* provide insights into how madness in fiction is intertwined with various other themes like gender and social control even though they are written by authors who have different cultural backgrounds. The protagonists of both novels try to liberate themselves from societal and patriarchal norms and oppression through the madness. The novels represent how madness alters the protagonists' perception of life and lets them do what is right rather than what is normal. Although the texts differ in the way madness has been represented, yet provide an outlook on how madness in literature is multi-faceted and how treatment of madness affirms laws of social control.

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An Appraisal of Superstitions in the select novels of V.S. Naipaul

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Abstract

Vidiyadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is a Noble Award-winning author whose works focus on immigrant workers' rootlessness, identity crisis and alienation in an extraordinary way. The present paper, however focuses on the element of superstition prevalent in the social set-up of Trinidad and Tobago and India and how the gullible are swayed by it or manipulated by the pseudo diviners as evident in Naipaul's novels - The Mystic Masseur, The Suffrage of Elvira *and* A House for Mr. Biswas.
Keywords: Rootlessness, Identity crisis, Alienation, Faith healing, Superstition

Introduction

Superstition is a pejorative term for belief in supernatural causality: that one event leads to the cause of another without any natural process linking the two events, such as astrology, religion, omens, witchcraft, etc. that contradicts natural science. The word superstition is often used to refer to religious practices other than the ones prevailing in a given society. It is also commonly applied to beliefs and practices surrounding luck, prophecy and spiritual beings, particularly the belief that future events can be foretold by specific unrelated prior events. Although there is no single definition of superstition, it generally means a belief in supernatural forces and their capacity to resolve uncertainties plaguing human minds in moments of crisis. Carrying charms, wearing certain clothes, visiting places associated with good fortune, preferring specific colours and using particular numbers are important elements of superstition.

Superstitions revolve around luck, amulets, astrology, faith-healing and spirits. A lot of superstitious beliefs emerged over the course of centuries and became a part of cultures of various countries. The social world of Trinidad and Tobago could not be immune to the virus of superstitions. There are certain superstitions that are prevalent in Trinidad and Tobago. One of the most prominent superstitions is that if a person's feet are cleaned by someone else, then the former won't get married. Similarly, if you put your handbag on the floor, you will run out of all your money. In order to stop any evil spirit from entering the house, one must walk backwards in his house at night. Whenever somebody passes a paper to another in his hand then the former is bound to have an argument with him. Like the above-mentioned superstitions, placing shoes with their soles facing upwards brings bad luck. On the New Year-day, one should eat black eye peas to get good fortune.

In an article, "The Evolution of Superstitious and Superstition-like Behaviour," Kevin R. Foster and Hanna Kokko state that although the concept of superstition

encompasses a wide range of beliefs and behaviours, in a world increasingly dominated by science, superstitious and indeed religious thinking typically take a back seat in academic affairs. However, superstitions do play a central role in many societies, and remain prevalent in the popular culture of all societies (Ralf Binswanger, Lutz Wittman, *International Journal of Dream Research,* 103-111, Eve Conant, *National Geographic*, 9 June 2020). This is precisely the reason why superstitions receive considerable attention in several fields, including popular psychology and literature (*Medical News Today* 13 Sep 2019).

Apart from the works of V.S. Naipaul which focus on the superstitions of the people in Trinidad and Tobago and India, the shadow of superstitious behaviour of people is manifest in the works of writers of Indian diaspora as Amitav Ghosh, Chitra Banerjee and Kiran Desai. Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason: A Clash Between Superstition and Scientific Reason* portrays superstition in the form of Phrenology. The novel revolves around the character named Balaram who enthusiastically practices Phrenology, which according to him, is the science of combining the body and soul. Getting motivated by the works of Louis Pasteur, Balaram leads a campaign that aims at combining superstition with logic in order to win the confidence of the villagers. Chitra Banerjee's *The Mistress of Spices* focuses on a woman named Tilo who is born out of a ritual fire, and is also gifted with the super power of looking into the minds of other people. Likewise, in Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* embodies glaring instance of superstition as the protagonist Sampath Chawla one day, out of extreme frustration, runs into a guava orchard, climbs on a tree and then resolves to become a holy man. He tries his best to gain recognition through fake spiritual knowledge. Soon, crowds of tourists start thronging Sampath's so-called place of spirituality and he successfully reaps financial benefits through the knack of delivering religious sermons.

The present paper trains its lenses on the prevalence of superstitious practices in *The Mystic Masseur, The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S. Naipaul, a Trinidad and Tobago-born British writer in whose works of fiction and nonfiction one discerns "glimpses of the bleak view of human existence and effort and self-fictionalizing that were to become the key themes and motifs of his later works" (*The Guardian,* 12 August 2018), some of which courted controversy. Rachel Donadio in obituary, sums up V.S. Naipaul as a writer who "documented the migration of people, the unravelling of the British empire, the ironies of exile and the clash between belief and unbelief in more than a dozen unsparing novels and as many works of nonfiction" (*The New York Times* 11 August 2018).

In the novel *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), Naipaul has delineated superstition in the form of faith healing. Faith-healing refers to the art of curing an ailment by putting hands on the forehead and by chanting hymns. Ganesh Ramsumair, the protagonist of *The Mystic Masseur* makes his presence felt as a mystic healer when he successfully cures a boy who was being haunted by a mysterious black cloud. Ganesh then starts curing as many people as he can and soon becomes famous all-around Fuente Grove. Readers can find the brighter aspect of superstition in the form of faith-healing because Ganesh Ramsumair provides exceptional relief to persons suffering from psychological ailments through faith-healing.

The first case of successful faith healing becomes the gateway to success for Ganesh as he does a thorough reading of books based on religious healing and then poses as a mystic. His first client happens to be a woman whose son named Hector feels troubled by a strange black cloud. In his reflective tone Ganesh intones: "Oh, God! I see it now too. Oh, God!" (118). Hector queries: "You see it? You see it? You see how it chasing me? You see the hands it have? You hear what it saying?" (118). Thus, Ganesh instills confidence in the boy by his utterance: "You and me is one . . . "God! Hear my heart beating. Only you and me see it

because you and me is one. But, listen to something I going to tell you. You fraid the cloud, but the cloud fraid me. Man, I been beating clouds like he for years and years. And so long as you with me, it not going to harm you" . . . "It just can't touch you with around. I have powers over these things, you know. Look around at all these books in this room, and look at all those writings on the wall and all the pictures and everything. These things help me get the power I have and cloud fraid these things. So don't frighten. And now tell me how it happen" (118).

It becomes obvious that Ganesh has done a lot of homework prior to performing the ritual on the boy. In order to control the mind of the patient by drawing his attention towards the books and pictures kept in the room, he secures his cooperation. Ganesh's self-confidence and determination is something that is expected from a faith healer because in the modern society which is marked by rationalism, nobody believes religious healers easily.

On the following day, Ganesh creates veritable ambience of a healing centre when the father and mother of the boy visit Ganesh's house to monitor the treatment of their son. The room in which the ritual is to be performed is filled with the aroma of camphor and incense without any light. A candle is burning just below the portrait of goddess Lakshmi. There is also the portrait of a stabbed heart that is bleeding along with two Crosses. Ganesh asks his clients to sit before a screened table and after that, himself sits behind the screen. In order to test the effect of the ritual, Leela persuasively tells her son, "He say you must believe". "He say you must believe, if only for two minutes, because if you don't believe in him completely, he will dead too" (122). Hector tells his mother, "I believe in him, I believe in him" (123). The dialogue signifies complete control of the boy's mind. This is nothing but a symptom of weak mentality which helps swindlers in looting innocent people, who if given proper guidance can simply heal the ailments which they deem incurable. Gaining the boy's confidence, Leela describes the treatment to the boy: "He change the cloud. It not following you now. It chasing him. If you don't believe, the cloud will kill him and then it will kill you and then me and then your mother and then your father" (123). After a few minutes, Leela goes on to utter the following words: "The fight beginning between them. It starting now. Oh, God! He get the cloud. It not after you. It after him. God! The cloud dying" (123). At last, the boy says the following words in relief: "See how they kill the cloud. Look how it breaking up, Ma. You see it now?" (124). "Ma, it gone now. It really gone" (124).

Following the ritual, Hector, his mother and Leela fall on the floor and rest for a while. Ganesh stops his chanting and takes the clients outside the room. Surprisingly, the boy starts feeling comparatively better and the post-ritual experience proves really special for him. The boy's father feels extremely happy at the arrival of that golden moment and thanks Ganesh cordially in the following words: "I don't know what we could do to thank you." (124). Ganesh responds in the following way: "Do just what you want. If you want to reward me, I don't mind, because I have to make a living. But I don't want you to strain yourself" (124). Then, the mother of the boy says: "But you save a whole life" (124). To which, Ganesh responds: "It is my duty. If you want to send me anything, send it. But don't go around telling all sorts of people about me. You can't take on too much of this sort of work. A case like this does tire me out for a whole week sometimes" (124).

Ganesh Ramsumair establishes himself as a person of strong determination and smartly utilizes the talent of faith healing to fulfill his dream of becoming a Member of Legislative Council of Trinidad. The tactic of grasping political power by cunningly winning the confidence of the common man portrays the far sightedness of the author because he foresees what would happen decades after the publication of his celebrated work titled *The Mystic Masseur*. In 2001, a movie with the same title was released which was directed by

Ismael Merchant in which Om Puri and Asif Mandavi played pivotal roles. It was jointly produced by Nayeem Hafizka and Richard Hawley. Although the movie did not fare well at the box office, it beautifully portrays the themes of struggle, faith-healing, shrewdness in politics and hunger for power.

V.S. Naipaul's *The Suffrage of Elvira* quite impressively portrays how a large number of people can get swayed by the statements of certain persons who claim to possess divine powers and also shows how superstitions can influence politics. Two White women pose as Jehovah's Witnesses and appeal to the people of Elvira, a small district in Trinidad and Tobago, to not vote for Surujpat Harbans who is runs for the office of M.P., because it was against the will of the almighty. Here, it becomes extremely important to note that issues such as religion, faith in the divine will and providence play a crucial role in shaping the psychology of a large section of the society. Another significant reason behind people falling prey to superstitious beliefs is the lack of proper education. As the novel is set in pre-independence period, the public of Trinidad was not much educationally strong to counter an argument that was based on blind faith.

There is also the reference of a bitch and her puppies which keep appearing and vanishing in the novel. The people of Elvira are flabbergasted at this supernatural happening and hence, these puppies are considered auspicious. Although, the readers can find the presence of imagination in this reference, it clearly portrays the weak psychology of the voters of Elvira. Unfortunately, these puppies die and Surajpat Harbans puts their carcasses in the litter for public display. He does so because he is of the view that displaying the carcasses would lessen the impact of the influence of the Jehovah's Witnesses on the public of Elvira and help him win the election. Here again, the author highlights a psychology that is formed by supernatural beliefs. What Harbans did for winning the election was just the act of making the best use of the brittle-mentality of uneducated voters of Elvira. This example of superstitious mindset can be compared with Bhabani Bhattacharya's famous novel, *He who Rides a Tiger* whose protagonist Kalo, in order to win the confidence of the upper-class people of the society, decides to build a Shiva temple. For this, he first of all digs a few feet deep hole in the earth and then drops a few seeds in it. After finishing this process, he secretly places a tiny idol of Lord Shiva and waits for days for the seeds to germinate. Surprisingly one day, the seeds are able to rupture the earth and the people start believing his so-called miracle. Consequently, Kalo is able to win the confidence of people and assume the identity of a Brahmin and wreaks vengeance upon the people of upper class who had insulted him once. Thus, the social scourge of superstition and lack of robust psychology are highlighted, similar to what Naipaul portrays in *The Suffrage of Elvira.*

In V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), superstition has to be seen against the backdrop of Indian subcontinent. The family of Mohun Biswas is quite orthodox and god-fearing. When they see that Mr. Biswas is born with six fingers, they are shell shocked at first. The family members' psychology is drastically influenced by superstitious beliefs and it is well known that one with a weak mentality is the easiest prey of such beliefs. People used to have deep faith in Pundits and fortune tellers during the time in which the novel is set. One of the chapters of the novel revolves around the mysterious dream of Mr. Biswas in which he sees the ghost of a dead women named Padma. Sigmund Freud, in his celebrated work titled *The Interpretations of Dreams*, opines that there are two mental processes that produce dreams. In the first process, some unconscious forces construct a wish, which is later on expressed by a dream. The second process is called the process of censorship. This process involves the forcible distortion of the expression of a certain wish.

Another example of a weak psychology in the novel is the act of walking with a candle and a Crucifix. Chinta, in order to get the stolen money back, starts chanting a hymn in Hindi, despite knowing that such type of rituals will not help her in any way. In relation to the above said example, psychologists have put forward the view that people often believe in superstitions that include carrying small and lightweight lucky charms and performing certain rituals that have been upon them by their ancestors. If a certain practice is followed in a family and it is transferred to the next generation, then it becomes impossible for that generation to relinquish that practice. This example is directly related to the practice of touching wood that is prevalent in some European countries.

As the narrative unfolds, the ghost of a dead woman named Padma appears in one of the chapters. Spotting ghosts is another crucial aspect of superstition that characterizes weak mentality. There are many reasons that are attributed to the problem of spotting ghosts. According to famous psychologist Chris French, a major cause behind the appearance of ghosts is "sleep paralysis". A majority of people while they are sleeping or lying in bed, do get hallucinations or claim to see ghosts and this behavior is attributed to the condition of sleep paralysis. This ailment is quite common in those people who are deeply influenced by the stories based on ghosts and spirits
.

Conclusion

Superstition, in any form, does leave a deep impact on the heart and mind of a man. People wear amulets, clothes with a distinct colour and chant hymns not because doing so guarantees success and fortune, but because they have unshakeable faith in these activities. This phenomenon and its impact on human beings has been impressively showcased by Indian English novelists as Amitav Ghosh, Chitra Banerjee, Kiran Desai and V.S. Naipaul. The culture of Trinidad and Tobago presents various shades of superstitious beliefs which makes it unique. Through the character of Ganesh Ramsumair, the author puts forth the fact that shrewd persons can easily win the confidence of the gullibles through dubious methods. Whatever Hector suffers from is, in fact, nothing but a fatal consequence of careless upbringing. The people with strong will power and robust confidence are not at all swayed by the spurious assumptions implicit in the concept of faith healing.

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Patterns of Human-Nature Interaction in Select Tamil Short Stories

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Abstract

The present paper essays to explore how the interaction between Humankind and Nature is portrayed in three short stories named Konangi's Paazh, Perumal Murugan's Neer Vilayattu,and Uma Maheswari's Malai Yettram. These short stories are translated from Tamil language into English with titles Ruin, Water Play and The Ascent respectively. The stories, regardless of the landscapes they portray, reveal the capacity of Nature to fascinate humans as well as to protest the misdeeds that they commit against it. This study examines the reaction of humanity to this phenomenon through the prism of ecofeminism, ecopsychology and symbolism.
Keywords: Ecocide, ecofeminism, ecopsychology, garden, mountain, water.

Introduction

Planet Earth has been struggling against a host of environmental issues since Industrialization caused by one of its most intelligent species called homo sapiens. These issues include deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination et cetera. In the context of these problems, and with Earth's survival at stake, the prefix 'eco' (meaning "house" or household" in Ancient Greek) has become "the much sought-after" one for all fields including literature (Sumathy v). For example, "ecocide" refers to the "destruction of entire habitats, rather than just individual organisms or species" (Garrard 183) as can be seen in Tamil writer Sa. Kandasamy's novel *Saayavanam* (1968). The term "Ecopoetics" (or Oikopoetics) denotes poetics of the "oikos,... [meaning] habitat comprising the spirits, humans, nature and culture peculiar to it" (Selvamony).This is evinced by the insightful classification of landscapes into five regions in the ancient Tamil literature: *mullai* (forest), *ku☐iñci* (mountainous region), *marutam* (cropland), *neithal* (seashore),and *pālai* (desert). Besides that, natural images have been extensively employed, either as metaphors or active participants in the narratives. Despite the dominance of human-centric themes in recent times, many contemporary Tamil works portray eco-regions, employing celebratory or cautionary tones. Konangi has evinced a consciousness of the environment and the changes to the natural world through his highlighting of the Human-Nature relationship (Aarvalan); he "understands the language of the mountains" and "even empty space has something to convey to him" (ibid). His works evoke "an intense nostalgia for the bygone Golden Ages of the pastoral world" and the "vanished harmony" between humans and nature ("Vessel Of Void (Pāli)"). Perumal Murugan's *Yeru Veyil* (meaning"the surging heat") (1991) describes a harmonious relationship between a boy and a pastoral landscape that is threatened by the

establishment of colony houses (Sumathi 852). Uma Maheswari's short story collection *Marapachi* (2002) records the pain of womenfolk in response to the injuries inflicted by a male ideology that sees women and land as objects of possession, production, and consumption (Magarasan).

The following sections employ ecocritical perspectives, namely ecofeminism and ecopsychology to explore *Ruin* and *The Ascent* by the writers Konangi and Uma Maheswari respectively. Eco-feministic interpretation understands and recognises the "blurred boundaries between the nature/culture dualism" (Sharma 54). Ecopsychology "promotes the psychological thinking of human beings to consider themselves as a part of nature and communicate with it, instead of viewing it as a resource bank to supplement their survival and causing dominance over it. This, in turn, helps them to nurture themselves as well as the environment surrounding" (Maitra 46). The changing perceptions of human beings towards Nature have been interpreted considering the symbols in Perumal Murugan's *Water Play*.

Konangi's *Ruin*

Konangi is the pen name of S. Ilangovan, known for his "unconventional postmodern writings" (according to a biographical note in *The Tamil Story: Through The Times, Through The Tides*). *Ruin*, found in the anthology *Along with the Sun* (2020), is the translated title (by Padma Narayanan) of a story named *Paazh* found in Konangi's short story collection titled *Madinimargal Kathai* (1986). The story focuses on Andal**,** also known as Panneerakka. She has a close kinship with her ancestral garden and unconditional affection towards its beings. She is also in love with Chithravelu, son of the village theatre artiste. Due to some reason, Chithravelu is "gradually moving out of Adiyur" (Konangi 52) into the town. For a long time, Andal waits for Chithravelu to return and marry her. But her hopes are lost. Both her emotions and the condition of the garden change with seasons. At a point, it is implied that Andal's father Marimuthu dies grieving that his daughter is still unmarried (Andal's ultimate fate remains unknown). The garden and Adiyur in whole become desolate. A lime kiln "sprout[s] in the garden as a cruel, new tree" (61). Trees in the area are cut down for household uses. At the end of the story, the garden's well is used to make lime and eventually gets filled up with mud.

The narrative makes Andal synonymous with the *panneer* tree (*Guettarda speciosa*), by referring to her by the name 'Panneerakka' ('elder sister who gives panneer flowers'). Even this name is derived from the sound of young birdlings who seem to call out to Andal. This highlights the symbiotic ecofeminist relationship between Andal and the garden. Rather than plucking the flowers from trees, she shakes the trees so that they may drop the flowers naturally for her friends. As the girls clap and dance, Chithravelu sings *thaarakai padalgal* (star songs) from a nearby fig tree - a symbol of creative energy, desires, fertility, enlightenment, and co-existence ("Fig – Nurture"). After he leaves the village to make a living in the town, Andal keeps longing for him and descends into sadness, ironically in the company of the panneer tree that is believed to hold auspicious and medicinal values (Radhakrishnan). Despite her sorrow, Andal, being a "wood nymph" (Konangi 55), retains her concern for the life-forms in the garden. She urges the birds to eat the ripe fruits before they drop off the trees. Her sorrow is intensified by the cries of pigeons who seek refuge in the garden as young boys are after them. As Andal gets older, memories of Chithravelu envelop her: "The songs that he left behind would be heard forever in the rustling of the leaves and the chirping of the birds. He, however, was somewhere else, inside running trains, selling

flowers as an accompaniment to his songs…[W]henever memories of Andal haunt him, he took refuge in singing." (59)

> The garden soon becomes dry and desolate:
>
> The dust that was part of Adiyur's streets entered the garden, together with herds of goats…While the animals stomped around, making the trees bare and crying for their lives, the birds were gone, never to come back,...The breasts of Adiyur Matha also ran dry of milk and blistered, becoming lifeless…The garden, with its hardened beds, was deprived of the sweet scent of grass, the golden colours of autumn, the gleam of floating green leaves in the well, the chirping of birds…and there was no cascading of panneer flowers. (60-61).

The trees become "roof beams", "boards of doors" and "cots" in households. When the "cruel axes" fall on the tree trunks, "the entire garden scream[s]" (61). The trees that survive this deforestation, become firewood. As they burn, the fire logs "roll[ed] and murmu[ed]", which is a voice in protest against the "destruction of forest wealth" (Aarvalan). The well that was once a haven of excitement for Andal and her friends becomes a spot for manufacturing lime, and suffers further degradation: "The pillars that held the pulleys used to draw water…stood peeping into the dry well, choked with mud…" (Konangi 62). This description aptly sums up the decline of symbiotic civilizations and the emergence of ecocidal, materialistic systems in their place.

Perumal Murugan's *Water Play*

Perumal Murugan writes mainly on "lives lived in the margins", as quoted on the back cover of the novel *Seasons of the Palm* (Murugan). *Water Play*, found in the anthology titled *Katha Prize Stories Volume 10* (2000), is the translated title (by Hephzibah Israel) of a short story (*Neer Vilayattu*) found in January 1999 issue of the magazine *Kalachavudu.*The story begins with a man being persuaded by three children (related to him) to jumpand play with them in a crudely shaped well situated in the heart of a forest. After happilyswimming in the well with the children for a while, the man prepares to leave, only to bestopped by the children. They repeatedly thwart his attempts to climb out, making him fall intothe well each time. The man becomes delirious. The initially innocent, relaxing, and rewarding experience inthe well has transformed into one of horror. At the end of the story, he falls into the water afterhearing a voice cautioning him about a snake.

In this story, the man's first reaction to the children's invitation is one of "desire andeagerness" (Murugan, "Water Play,"50). However, he is also held back by "[t]ender thread-ends of hesitation"(ibid). This metaphor of a thread, a human-made entity, alludes to the subtle role ofanthropocentrism in preventing one from forming a kinship with Nature. Nevertheless, hedevelops a deep affection for the well.

> There were so many mysteries that the well contained. Would it unravel alland offer them to him…in just a few minutes? He reprimanded himself for thefoolishness of putting himself out in vain….The well had defeated him once again...Noone could outface the monstrous well. One was forced to accept defeat before itsmammoth proportions. Even to confront and be defeated by it asked for daring. (51-53)

The children are shocked when the man declares that he is leaving the well:

> They encircled him like a thick chain which he could not break. How long was this playgoing to continue? …It was the well that had impelled him to come …, had given form toits messengers and sent them to fetch him… He began to hear the

sound of approachingdeath…How mistaken he had been thinking them [as] children. They were really threedevils sent by the well's witchery. (55-56)

The same well that fascinated the man now becomes the "origin of illusion and deceit", "deathtrap" and "infernal pit", with even the water feeling like acid (56). As he tries to climb outholding the pipe of the motor pump, a "howling figure" dashes against him, pushing him backinto the water. He again tries to climb up a little higher, half-consciously. At this point, he hears avoice from the well that says "Snake, Snake!". The man loses his grip and faints into the water"like a frog" (57). With his apparent death, the foreshadowing that "the well waited to accept as sacrifice the one who jumped in first" (51) seems to come true. His endeavour symbolises the journey of humanity in general. Humans begin life in watery wombs, strive to explore the natural world to make sense of it, rely on technology (here representable by the motor pump) to solve their difficulties, which in turn create more difficulties**.** They suffer defeats when Nature fights back. From this viewpoint, *Water Play* serves as a cautionary tale against the anti-nature activities of the human race.

Uma Maheswari's *The Ascent*

The Ascent, found in the anthology titled *The Tamil Story: Through the Times, through the Tides* (2016), is the translated title (by Subashree Krishnaswamy) of a short story (*Malai Yettram*) found in Uma Maheswari's first short story collection titled *Marapaachi* (2002).   The story is focused on an idyllic mountain and the challenges it offers the protagonists whohope to reach its top. Kalpana (the narrator) and Ramaa are two womensharing the same house. Their kitchen window offers a view of a mountain that appears "so close as if it were within touching distance" (Maheswari 479). Kalpana suggests that they climb the mountain right away. Though the mountain's imposing appearance makes them doubt their chance of success, it seems to invite them. As they near the mountain, its "colossal physique" (481) makes them feel insignificant. During the climb, the gushing wind challenges them, resulting in Ramaa being injured. But she walks alone after motivation from Kalpana. After quenching their thirst from stagnant pools of water in a hollow piece of land, they resume the hard climb. The wind intensifies as they go higher, and they feel weightless. At the 'palm' (peak) of the mountain, they are playfully thrown up in the sky and get ecstatic. Climbing down easily despite the resultant exhaustion, they return home with a sense of voidness and "with the glow of a novel experience" (483). Back in the kitchen, they see the mountain framed within the window.

The Ascent is considered to be a blend of women's thirst to rise further, and their contentment and disappointment on realizing that the peak is emptiness, stillness, and nothingness (Shahi). N. Magarasan finds the story located on the plane where the longings of the woman (who thinks of easily interacting within the man) become dreams which then become hallucination(s). Myths about the male (with psychological elements) are constructed in the guise of a dream (Magarasan). He further writes:

[The women] consider the mountain as a place which they can enter and wander around freely. They climb the mountain, considering it as something that destroys their arrogance (unlike the male of the real world). They also think that the interaction happens at ease. The mountain appears to jeer at the advancing women…but gradually comes to submit itself to them…Here, the peak can be taken to be a man…Though the climb does not prove to be easy, there is finally a mood of self-submission.(ibid)

These critiques view the mountain wilderness as a metaphor for women's aspirations and female-male relationships. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to also consider the story's natural elements in their own right.

The Ascent lends itself to ecofeminist and eco-psychological analyses. Ecofeminists call for a reclaiming of the natural and the feminine/maternal from the structural system of dominance that is scientific rational patriarchalism (ibid).The ecofeminist narrative in *The Ascent* is an interplay of skepticism and confidence manifested by the characters. Ramaa can be said to bear the impacts of patriarchal culture. She could only wonder about the distance of the hill from their place and the impossibility of reaching its top. The mountain is described in terms that establish it as an epitome of the rigid system of patriarchy that wants to undermine the ability of women. Examples are "manifestation of resoluteness," "chilling silence," rugged hardness," "[inviting them] openly and loudly" (480). The mountain symbolises a masculine understanding of power. The robust structure of the mountain creates a sense of fear in the minds of both women. In course of time, one overcomes the fear and also motivates the other. Moreover, climbing the mountain symbolises overcoming the fear based on the physical stature of men by women.

Kalpana's confident statement "Nothing is so far that we can't reach it" (479-80) blurs the human-nonhuman divide, thereby winning over Ramaa's reluctance. In this respect, Kalpana subscribes to the eco-psychological principle: "The drive to live in harmony with the natural world and its rhythms are primal innate. Suppression of that drive is just as disorienting and damaging as suppression of other human needs" (Jackson 15). When Ramaa packs things hoping for a picnic, Kalpana keeps them aside and takes only water. Her statement "Even the most important, necessary things, will be a burden…. a big hindrance to our climbing" (480) is advocacy for responsible eco-tourism.

On way to the mountain, the women see questions on the faces of people "framed within the windows" (ibid). This image represents a society steeped in orthodox and materialist values, unable to realise the sublime in Nature. According to the ecofeminist viewpoint, this society has enabled the oppression of women as well as the neglect of Nature. Though the two women are not under any obvious domination by a male figure, they are still bound in some way by the social structure as long as they are in the town.

The shadows of trees huddling together, "whispering with intimacy" (480), signify the sisterhood of women (or more broadly the kinship of the marginalised) liberated from patriarchal culture. As the grass gently tickles their feet, the women hesitate to walk over the vegetation, recognizing the sentience of the plants. However, their desire to proceed wins over this consideration, assuaging their guilty conscience. Moreover, the mountain shows its true rugged appearance as the women near it. They begin to see it as a less-friendly sentient being that is awakened by their footsteps and laughs soundlessly as they rise after stumbling.

During the second phase of their climb, the women are "hesitant yet determined" (481). The mountain seems to push them around with intensifying winds. After stumbling, they recover and advance with determined steps. Ramaa now sees Kalpana as "a manifestation of her thoughts" (482) meaning that the two are now united in their confidence of moving on. The roots that "burst forth on the surface of the rocks" (ibid) represents female resurgence against male oppression, and the resilience of Nature in the face of anthropocentric apathy.

Eventually, the mountain's terrain becomes one with their feet like a father who allows his children to play the 'elephant game' on his back (ibid). This kinship with the mountain arises as a paradigm in opposition to patriarchy. Though small stones scratch their

palms, the women excitedly climb on, leaving behind all their bonds:

> The initial struggles disappeared; I watched with astonishment my body losing control, around and flying high…lifted by the waves of the wind, the top curve of a giant wheel. I could see everything below…An unknown experience…consumed us; the nerves in our thighs tingled and tightened, sending goosebumps through our entire body. (482-83)

Kalpana considers the peak as a state of equilibrium, containing dichotomous qualities namely "the high, the low, aggression, submission, joy, [and] sorrow". It is "a vacuum…utter stillness…nothingness. Once you comprehend this, fulfillment and disappointment engulf the mind…. There is a helpless urge to come up when you are down, and to go down when on top" (483).

The downward journey of the women is now easier. Their internal void created by the mountain now widens. Their faces indicate a novel experience affected neither by victory nor failure, implying that they have imbibed the equilibrious quality of the peak and have attained mental sublimity. In this way, Kalpana's initial intuition -- that they might not return home after the venture-- is realised. The mountain -- framed within the window as seen by the women after their return – is an indication that modern culture is still narrow at large and that one has to keep transcending this boundary to appreciate the sublimity of Nature.

Conclusion

Ruin is a critique of the violence of materialism and as a note of Nature's underlying capacity to fight it. *Water Play* brings out the delights and perils of the human relationship with Nature and the limitations of human power. *The Ascent,* despite its urban class-conscious undertones, calls for the realization of the sublime through a venture into the natural wilderness. It also captures the strife-ridden journey of womankind amidst the wilderness of patriarchy. As an ecofeminist perspective promotes the value of all forms of life, the narrative too carries a message of inclusive sustainability. Interestingly, the stories rely on three elements of Nature–namely earth, water, and air/space–as settings in which the Human-Nature interactions take place. In continuation of this study, further, the idea of ecofeminism and eco-psychology could be applied to other genres of literature like short stories and novels translated into English from other Indian languages that form the trijunction of women, Nature and literature.

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Gendered Perception of 'Honour': A Reading of Selina Hossain's "Izzat"

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Abstract

The notion of 'honour' also termed 'izzat' or 'prestige' holds particular importance in the patriarchal societies of South Asia. In the social structure of this region, it is a customary yet disconcerting belief that women are the repositories of honour, whereas men hold the authority to regulate women's conduct so that they cannot jeopardize male, family and/or community honour through their 'irresponsible,' 'immoderate' and 'irrational' behaviour, particularly sexual behaviour. This presumption that women embody the honour of the male, the family and the community enables men to regulate female sexuality and normalize violence against women in the male-dominated society. Reviewing the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of honour along with its gendered manifestations offered by various feminist theorists and activists, the first part of this paper attempts to illustrate the coercive and oppressive repercussions of the gender-oppressive ideology of honour based essentially on sexual misdemeanor by women. Thereafter, offering a textual analysis of eminent Bangladeshi writer Selina Hossain's short story "Izzat," this paper further aims at revealing the writer's intention of censuring the gendered perspective of 'honour' as well as reproving the invocation of 'honour' to regulate female sexual desire and to justify violence against women in the patriarchal social background of rural Bangladesh.
Keywords: Honour, izzat, shame, honour killing, gendered violence, female sexuality, patriarchal society.

The concept of 'Honour' is one of the most valued as well as dominant ideologies in the patriarchal societies across cultures. Achieving, upholding and maintaining honour are, thus, prime concerns for both men and women in such societies. The concept of honour continues to control social and family relationships, and guide codes of appropriate behavior both at home and in the public sphere. Moreover, since family holds the central place in the larger social structure, emphasis on retaining and ensuring family honour is considered to be one of the very basic requirements. However, what is commonly accepted yet immensely disturbing is the fact that in the patriarchal social structure of the Indian Subcontinent, honour of individual families is believed to be dependent on the propriety of behavior, particularly sexual, especially shown by its women. Uma Chakravarti, a noted feminist critic of the subcontinent, states, "Women are the repositories of family honour—of their own family as daughters, and of their husband's family as wife and mother" (151). Women both in their own families before marriage and in their in-law's families after marriage are constantly reminded by men that the status and reputation of the family rest on them. In her book *Daughters of Shame*, Jasvinder Sanghera has also defined *izzat* as the cornerstone of the Asian community and observed that the girls and women of the family have kept it polished since the beginning of time (Sanghera 25). If their demeanor and actions are disgraceful,

women can ruin the status of the family within the wider social hierarchy. Accordingly, the word 'honour' does not engender any feeling of pride women might feel for their own *izzat*, rather it mirrors the ways in which their *izzat* becomes their family's reputation and, in most cases, becomes the reputation of their men. That is why, women from the early girlhood are trained to unquestioningly accept and internalize the implications of honour as it is perceived and upheld by the men of their families or societies.

However, what goes rather unnoticed is the fact that conditioning women by constantly evoking the notion of honour enables men to perpetuate their control over women's bodily desires and sexuality. In the name of retaining family honour, women are often denied of exercising their control over their own bodies. Radhika Coomaraswamy in the preface to the marvelous collection of essays titled *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence against Women* judiciously sees a link between violence against women and the regulation of female sexuality. Critiquing all direct and indirect forms of violence against women, and considering 'honour killing' to be "the most overt example of the brutal control of female sexuality" (Coomaraswamy xi), she states: "In many societies the ideal of masculinity is underpinned by a notion of 'honour' – of an individual man, or a family or a community – and is fundamentally connected to policing female behavior and sexuality" (Coomaraswamy xi). The socially determined codes of 'honour' are invoked by the male members of the family to control, direct, and regulate women's sexuality, freedom of movement, emotions, actions, and choice. On the whole, violence against women as a means of upholding honour is acknowledged to be an exclusive male right in the patriarchal social structure of the Indian subcontinent, and, it is also a way to maintain the status quo of patriarchal control over woman's sexuality and her body. Manisha Gupte in her essay "The Role of 'Honor' in Violence against South Asian Women in the United States" articulates:

> In many societies, control of women's sexuality is one of the most powerful tools of patriarchy. . . Patriarchal honor operates not just at the moment of choosing a partner but percolates almost every moment of a woman's life. Ultimately the notion that women embody men's honor is normalized and internalized in childhood by both genders. This situation is accepted as 'natural' in society. (**7**)

Social frameworks of 'honour', and its corollary 'shame', presume that a man's own actions mostly have no consequences over determining his honour; only women within his household can make him lose his honour through their wayward sexual conduct. However, a man is required to reclaim his lost honour by acting out as per the socially-determined gender roles that demand action on his part. Failure to act in this regard is considered disreputable for him and abases his family's status in the appraisal of others in the community. Hence, in less developed South Asian and Middle Eastern communities, men are the main perpetrators of honour violence and young, helpless women are the most likely victims (Idriss 1-2). Mohammad Mazher Idriss has further added that it is "men who command 'honour' – women do not control 'honour' in the same manner nor can they require men to adhere to chastity and other similar moral values" (3). Thus, though dependent on the demeanor and actions of woman, honour as a cultural construct is presumed to be a commodity at man's disposal combined with male prerogative to ensure that she does not put it at risk at any cost. Prem Chowdhry has remarked that this gendered ideology of honour "produces inequality and hierarchy, with men and women embodying honour differently: woman as repository, and man as regulator of women's conduct, because the latter pose the greatest danger to the loss of his honour" (qtd. in Gupte, "The Concept" 73). Thus, in a patriarchal social structure, the idea of honour serves as men's legitimate means of control over woman and her body. Since

men are attributed with the responsibility to protect women's honour, successful protection of women's chastity and, thereby, defending both familial and communal honour infuse men with *izzat* or prestige. The fear of losing this honour makes men rationalize and justify masculine aggression and violence against women. Thus, a woman's engaging in sexual relations before or outside marriage is branded as ignominious not only for the woman but also a disgrace for the men in the family. Being the repository of family honour, a woman is thus an object of protection and violence at the same time. For this reason, men attempt to violently constrain the movements and choices of women, severely limit their public roles and, in extreme cases, murder women in the guise of honour killings, which Veena Meetoo and Heidi Safia Mirza have labelled as the most "extreme acts of violence perpetrated upon a woman when an honour code is believed to have been broken and perceived shame is brought upon the family" (42). At this juncture, in a desperate effort to restore violated honour of the family and the community, brutal killing is often seen to be the familial as well as societal "response to the 'oppositional agency' of women who may attempt to renegotiate the traditional boundaries of their lives" (Chakravarti 159).

This gendered concept of honour which primarily centers on female sexual transgression is severely tyrannical and unwarranted to women. From this oppressive perspective, the family's honour is grounded on the prospect and ability of men to exercise violence against women. Whereas such violence on women is meant to uphold men's prestige as well as family honour, it also engenders and perpetuates male supremacy and men's absolute control over women and their sexuality. In fact, the gendered concept of honour in punishing those who are thought to besmirch it enables patriarchy to maintain the unequal power relation between the sexes endorsed by sexual violence. When a woman breaks the prescribed code of honour through her 'aberrant' behavior, she is invariably punished for bringing upon the perceived stigma of shame not only on her but also upon the family and the community. She may suffer retributions like public defamation, excommunication, social ostracism, sexual violence, physical abuse, forced marriage, and even death itself in the form of 'honour killing.' Welchman and Hossain have used the term 'crimes of honour' for all these various manifestations of violence against women "where the publicly articulated 'justification' is attributed to a social order claimed to require the preservation of a concept of 'honour' vested in male (family and/or conjugal) control over women and specifically women's sexual conduct: actual, suspected or potential" (Welchman and Hossain 4). This ruthless and informal dispensation of violence and death penalty against women in recent times in the name of restoring the sullied honour of the family and the community has drawn serious attention from both human right activists and feminists who in their actions and writings have shown serious concern over "the negation, through honour codes and the resulting regulation of sexuality, of women's right to control over their body and indeed to sexual liberty" (Welchman and Hossain 15). Following the same drift, distinguished Bangladeshi writer Selina Hossain in her short story "Izzat" has fiercely yet aptly excoriated the gender-oppressive concept of honour used to restrict female sexual autonomy along with the consequential violence and atrocities committed on women invoking honour in the patriarchal rural social structure of Bangladesh.

Selina Hossain's "Izzat" is a searing yet gripping tale of honour killing set in Bakaljora, a remote village somewhere in Bangladesh. The plot unfolds the events after Latif's killing of his wife Maleka, an act committed in the name of preserving his family honour and status, for her supposed post-marital infidelity. Maleka, the female protagonist of Hossain's story, has been married off to Latif, a man with an age difference of thirty two

years between them, when he already has a living first wife. The underlying notion behind this unequal marriage in a rigid patriarchal social backdrop is that "a man's age never matters" (Hossain 45) especially in marriage. Latif, an old patriarch, rules his wives and household with an iron hand. He often violently beats both his wives at the slightest pretext. Being too old for her, he has had a groundless suspicion about the trustworthiness of his young wife from the very beginning of their married life. We come to know about Maleka's supposed relationship with Mainka outside marriage through Latif's self-musing, "Why did you encourage Mainka?" (Hossain 45). However, the most rueful aspect of the patriarchal honour code is the fact that the assumption of a woman's soiling the family honour through her acts of infidelity is often based on man's subjective perceptions rather than on objective facts. This is exactly the case with Maleka. She is indeed desirous for Mainka which is quite natural for a young woman having an abusive, aged husband who does not have an iota of interest either in her sexual longings or in her romanticism. Her love for Mainka is, in essence, an instinctive response of a young woman with a romantic disposition and an individualistic mindset whose desires are severely trampled by an unresponsive aged husband. However, her love for Mainka is, in actuality, something which is not merely grounded on sexual longing. Maleka's insatiate spirit as a ghost returns to Bakaljora after her slaughter and echoes the specious reason mostly put forward for the 'masculine' act of honour killing:

> I had wanted to love Mainka—with a deep spiritual love. But Mainka did not understand love, he only understood sex. Mainka wanted to sleep with me, but I would not agree. What is the body without love? Is it so easy to get someone's body? Maleka sees herself in the shade of the tree. No—oh, it's not so easy. Sleeping together without love is a sin. Still, why was Mainka attracted to me? Was that my crime? Was that all? Latif could not tolerate it. He told everyone that I was a dishonourable woman, a wanton woman. (Hossain 46)

After killing Maleka by slashing her throat, Latif hacks her body into two pieces and throws the pieces into the marshes outside the village. Later her two brothers dispose of her decomposed body in the Someshwari River without a proper Muslim burial. So, Maleka's spirit, seeing neither hell nor heaven in front, returns to her husband's village. On a bright moonlit night, Maleka's spirit roams at will around the village. Her frustration of not being able to satiate her thirst for a free quixotic life when she was alive due to the inflexible codes of 'honour' imposed on her by her brothers and husband is candidly reflected in the following words: "Ah, how beautiful the world is! Her deep sigh wafts in the breeze. . . She had wanted to see how high the sky was. But she had never been able to leave the house. Her world had been confined to bedroom, kitchen, barn, the banks of the pond" (Hossain 46). Maleka's fate is, exactly yet ruefully, analogous to the destiny of thousands of women across the country who are circumscribed to a marginalized existence in a male-dominated socio-cultural backdrop where 'honour' is expressed and accepted as "a dichotomous concept" (Payton 69). It has both feminine and masculine aspects with their opposing characteristics. For the female members of the family, 'honour' is static since they can neither achieve nor increase it, and they lose it forever without any chance of regaining it. By contrast, male 'honour' is dynamic, and men can retain and increase it by their active participation in the family and social affairs (Payton 69). As stated in Joanne Payton's essay, "the positive, autonomous, male 'honour' of any man, family or tribe is built upon the foundation of the negative, dependent female 'honour' of female relatives and tribeswomen, just as a trader's reputation is based on his merchandise" (Payton 69). Thus, women are invariably bereft of having

agency of either taking any decisions or making any choice in matters relating to their own lives.

Latif's *Boro Bou* (Elder Wife) and Maleka's mother are glaring manifestations of the vulnerability of married women to the onslaught of rigid and repressive patriarchal ideology. Boro Bou, though often at the receiving end of Latif's rapid blows and other forms of violence despite her best efforts, is a silenced being who is forced to keep "her anguish locked up inside her day and night" (Hossain 45). The situation is even worse with Maleka's helpless and insane mother. Maleka's spirit contritely sees her mother fighting with the hen over the scattered grains of cooked rice from the poured out rice starch. Maleka's two elder brothers are more concerned about their honour of belonging to a once-respectable family than either becoming worried about their mother's plight or their sister's corpse being eaten by jackals and vultures without a proper burial. Selina Hossain actually censures the rigid codes of honour and morality which help to perpetuate the worst form of gender disparity in rural Bangladesh through the questions raised by Maleka's ghost:

> What is vice? What is virtue? What is the world? What is after-life? … Why can a man have four wives and be considered respectable? If anything, his respectability increases with the number of wives he has. But the woman who is hungry for love, who does not want to be one of four wives, the woman who wants to arrange her life a little differently—is all the fault hers? (Hossain 46)

We see numerous instances of honour killings in the subcontinent in the recent past. From media reports it becomes evident that most honor killings occur in countries where the concept of women as a vessel of the family reputation predominates. Pakistani novelist Faiqa Mansab's award-winning debut novel, *This House of Clay and Water* is a blatant representation of Pakistan's patriarchal and strictly religious social structure where hypocritical social norms still dictate and exploit the lives of women with a view to perpetuating male dominance over female body and sexuality. Nida, the protagonist of the novel, is reminded of patriarchal notion of honour even by a bedraggled, scrawny beggar when she goes alone to the Dargah of Daata Sahib in Lahore to meet the *hijra qalandar* (a eunuch, mendicant dervish) Bhanggi: "Think of your father's honour, your husband's. Women are the honour of their men" (Mansab 94). Towards the end of the novel, Bhanggi is mercilessly killed by four miscreants employed by Nida's husband Saqib when he comes to know of Bhanggi and Nida's unusual yet tender relationship which, in his terms, is both scandalous for his family reputation and ruinous for his political career. In Selina Hossain's "Izzat", the author's severe denunciation of honour killing is further candidly reflected in Ganu Master's wife Alimun's reflections about the labelling of Maleka as 'a wanton woman': "If she was a bad woman, so what? That was her choice. Did that mean that she had to be killed?" (Hossain 48). The same attitude is shown by Ganu Master when he thinks, "The honour of the poor lies in their stomachs. It doesn't matter whether it's a man or a woman. Honour lies in nothing else. Women must have character, but then so must men" (Hossain 49). Hannana Siddiqui in her article on women's struggles against honour crimes in the UK has aptly argued that cultural defences are used by men to justify violence against women in the name of religion and culture (Siddiqui 263). Moreover, accepting the concept of 'honour' as a part of cultural beliefs that need to be upheld and safeguarded, the state legislature often condones honour crimes and exonerates the male perpetrators of violence from criminal charge.

In cultures where men have absolute ownership and control over women's lives,

honour killing of women is hardly a matter of crime. Just as the agents of honour killing do not face any opposition within the traditional patriarchal community where most people unwaveringly justify the act of killing, so, in Selina Hossain's "Izzat", we find Moslem Hawladar of Durgapur police station to be "one of the big guardians of honour" (Hossain 49) in the village. Citing another instance of an honour killing of a married woman by her younger brother-in-law, he vehemently tries to justify Latif's brutal act of killing Maleka by saying in a raised voice that "A hot-blooded man will naturally have such a tendency. The duty to preserve one's honour …" (Hossain 50). Moslem Hawladar in this short story is the representative of the wider patriarchal community that often colludes with the perpetrator and goes for vindicating honour crimes by presenting the male as the custodian of familial and community honour. In this context, Hannana Siddiqui astutely opines, "'Honour' is used as a motivation, justification or mitigation for violence against women as seen from the perspective of the perpetrator, often with the collusion or active involvement of the community" (Siddiqui 264). Finally, Selina Hossain's story ends with the intense desire of Maleka's ghost to be alive once more so that she can kick at the back of honour: "If only she were alive again! She would return to the village of Bakaljora and kick honour out" (Hossian 50). Hossain's use of Maleka's ghost as a character in the story is also ingenious. Being a ghost that is not bound by the allegedly sacred and seemingly unalterable dogmas of a patriarchal social structure, Maleka can now voice uninhibitedly her desires of getting herself free from all such coercive doctrines and ethos. Maleka's desperate longing to drive away honour from her tradition-bound, male-dominated society candidly reflects Selina Hossain's courageous stance against the false sense of *izzat*, the consequential sexual violence on women, and the regulation of female sexuality prevailing in the orthodox social set-up of Bangladesh.

Selina Hossain's "Izzat not only candidly represents the pains and plights of the subordinated women in the patriarchal socio-cultural backdrop of rural Bangladesh but also roundly condemns the odious act of honour killing along with other abominable acts of gendered violence based on the professed idea of *izzat*. In "Izzat," the author has demonstrated her sympathetic cognizance of the evil of 'crimes of honour' stemming from the invocation of the gendered perception of 'honour' in Bangladeshi traditional and doctrinaire socio-cultural set-up as well as her genuine desire to redress this evil.

Notes

Some recent news reports on the incidents of honour killing in the subcontinent are listed below:"Family members confess to honour killing in Brahmanbaria." Published June 30th, 2020.
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"The heart wrenching story of Khusboo." Published January 13, 2022.
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"Love in the Crosshairs: Honour Killings Still Continue in India." Published January 15, 2022.https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/india-news-love-in-the-crosshairs-honour-killings-still-continue-in-india/305349

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"Night is not a woman's story": A Study of Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against Refugee Women in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*

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Abstract

Albeit refugee as a global phenomenon has substantially been acknowledged and investigated within the realm of social sciences, a gender-sensitive approach to it vanishes often in the mist of formal policy framing and peace negotiations. The violence committed against refugee women and the violation of their rights has so far remained unabated as most narratives involving them have failed to find an adequate space in the prevailing critical discourse on refugees and asylum seekers and wherever they do, they are plagued by an inability of research to put into practice much of the discourse involving refugee women. A humanities perspective lends face to data and figures lending visibility to the 'human' behind the statistics. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to examine the problems particular to refugee women and unaccompanied girls through the study of Clemantine Wamariya's 2018 memoir The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After.
Keywords*: Refugee women, SGBV, existential dilemma, privacy concerns, intolerance, xenophobia, protracted displacement.*

Against the backdrop of exponential number of people fleeing homes globally due to a confluence of factors that include among others the targeted violence, political instability, ethnic cleansing, ecological disasters, and lack of safety within their countries, U.N.H.C.R. (2020) reports that around 47 per cent are women and girls who remain extremely vulnerable to varying degrees of SGBV. Their experiences, however, are often obscured by debates concerning international laws, formal policy framing, peace negotiations, humanitarian assistance, and regimes involved. Though in recent past, many women refugee writers notably Dina Nayeri, Isabel Allende, Nada Awar Jarrar, Ali Smith, Farida Khalaf, and Samar Yazbek etc. have extensively written of the concerns involving refugee women and tried to carve out spaces where they can more persuasively define and illuminate their perspectives, call society's attention to their experiences and contribute to the evolution of a world-view that recognizes them properly, yet ironically they continue to receive minimum attention which not only pushes them to peripheries but also erases their agency, contaminates their voices and brushes aside their predicaments. Indra (1987) ascribes this contrariety and under-representation of refugee women to the "overall discourse, practice and research concerning refugees" (3) that she believes to be a "male paradigm" that systematically eliminates gender as one of the major constituents of refugee reality. One of the ways of appropriating this agency is to bring their voices in the domain of literary discourse through the study of their

memoirs and autobiographies. Accordingly, this paper aims to foreground the experiences peculiar to unprotected women and children fleeing violence through Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil's *The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After.* Set against the backdrop of the 1994 Rwandan Civil War, Clemantine's memoir is a first-person testimonial of political instability and violence and what follows. It meticulously describes the congruities of experiences and issues faced by refugee women which are articulated otherwise only in the passing in the stories by men.

  The foreword to the U.N.H.C.R. Guidelines on Prevention and Response to SGBV (2003) states, "Sexual and Gender Based Violence is, of course, itself a human rights violation. Women and children who are often most vulnerable to human rights abuses, are also the ones who suffer most from sexual and gender based violence." In fact, world over the warring factions uses and punishes women to demonstrate its power. This fear of SGBV is very real and palpable right from the beginning of the narrative when Clemantine mentions the beginning of the conflict and the ensuing anxiety of her parents: "My parent's faces turned into faces I had never seen. I heard noises I did not understand- not screaming, worse...My mother cried again...I heard them say that some robbers had ransacked yet another neighbour's house...They nailed a note to the front door saying they'd soon return for their girls" (23). It is not just the physical act of violence against a woman, nor the consequence of impurity she will face, but the effect it has on the men in the community. If the men cannot protect the women of their community from harm, this threatens their masculinity—"thus rape is domination by men but also domination of men" (Khan 138). Soon the two girls are sent to their grandmother's house picking up many girls of the same age group on their way- all fearing and escaping SGBV. However, the safety proves to be elusive and both the sisters have to flee to save themselves.

  From the very onset, the narrative makes explicit the deep sense of uncertainty that surrounds the lives of unprotected refugee girls. Clemantine and Claire find themselves trapped in an unending existential dilemma with nowhere in sight to go and nobody to embrace them: "It's strange, how you go from being a person who is away from home to a person with no home at all…No other place takes you in. You are unwanted, by everyone. You are a refugee" (29). The narrative has presented both the girls as unprotected subjects who are at persistent risks of being identified, abused, manipulated, and even killed. This continuous exposure to excruciating pain and the repeated instances of denial results in a state of precariousness for them which is clearly manifested in Clemantine's description of the situation: "We didn't know where we were going- just to the next hill and then the hill after that and then the hill after that and then across another river" (26). Survival becomes more challenging when they reach the Ngozi Refugee Camp, where, "Staying alive was so much work" (43), and staying alive with dignity was an option that even U.N.H.C.R. did not consider worth the effort. Claire being the elder one tries to earn enough to live comfortably. Here she attracts the attention of Rob "a handsome Zairian CARE worker" (72). Though Claire is not interested and tells him off, she is also very well aware of the vulnerability of women in the refugee camps: "Claire knew we were targets, two girls without a guardian. Every woman was a target there" (73). The deplorable conditions of the camp, the fear of SGBV and the hopelessness of a future reprieve finally convinced Claire to accept Rob's advances: "The only way out was marriage. Marriage came with papers" (74). The UNHCR's 2008 Report does acknowledge that "In certain camp situations, unaccompanied women and girls have been known to enter what are called 'protection marriages' in order to avoid sexual assault". Rob, however, makes good on his promise and takes the girls away from the camp to

his home in Zaire where they have a brief peaceful interlude till the conflict extends to this region as well. Once again refugees, they begin their journey towards Malawi.

Clemantine's memoir quite effectively presents the draconian immigration policies and border politics governing refugee lives. Equipped with high-tech infrastructure, the 21st century borders can be said to have been erected with the intent to segregate wanted from the unwanted, and, in most cases, to ebb refugee influxes. However, when seen from a broader perspective, this practice of "teichopolitics" (Rosiere and Jones 2012) i.e., the border politics, has serious implications on human rights. Clemantine and Claire confront barriers every time when they amass at border in hope of crossing over. Crossing into Malawi is one such instance that strongly emphasizes the repercussions which the border securitization has on refugee women and the gender-based atrocities committed against them at borders. Claire is subjected to extreme violence and ignominy when she tries to make her way through the Tanzania-Malawi border without legal documents. Before she could make it through, she is spotted, harassed and assaulted physically by the police. On being enquired why they (police) need to punish a refugee particularly a woman, the unwelcoming and hostile police respond: "refugees belong in camps. Why are you not in the camps?" (116) that captures the apathy of authorities towards this desperate lot. Claire also faces utmost humiliation when she had to pull her breast out and squeeze it "until white drops of milk appeared" (116) to prove her point that she has a baby. Such impediments tend to further heighten miseries for the married women like Claire who are abandoned and move without any agency. Being the sole caretakers of their infants, they face immense difficulties during their journeys especially when they have to crossover illegally. The memoir illustrates this particular case when Claire before climbing over a wired bulwark, envelops her infant daughter Mariette, in several clothes and throws her over the fence: "She swaddled Mariette in several wrappers and threw her over the six-foot-high fence, chicken wire topped with barbed wire, then climbed over herself" (111). Correspondingly, when these children and women fail to cross over, they are unfairly incarcerated and left to languish in detention centres. To make the matter worse, the personals guarding these transit points use such opportunities to extort money that further compounds problems for the deprived women. For example, to facilitate their passage from Uvira to Kazimia, Claire had to bribe the soldiers who stood at the wharf and shouted "Twenty dollars, twenty dollars, twenty dollars" (89). At another point, she also pays the authorities to get Rob released from the detention.

Yen Le Espiritu in her book *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees* (2014) contends that refugee women not only live through the trauma of violence and gender discrimination, but also experience the bruises of despondency, precarious existence, disempowerment, and desolation induced by the pathetic camp life. Barring a limited access to few rights, they are seldom provided any opportunity to improve their plight that makes life more difficult and tortuous for them. They are persistently dehumanized and exposed to adverse circumstances in the form of SGBV, poverty, economic hardships, health issues, privacy concerns, and abuse of basic rights which are committed frequently well under the eyes of the authorities. As Janine Shaw emphatically states in her discussion on femicide and gendercide, "Violence is inherently linked to power and there is arguably no act of violence that does not intersect with gender". Clementine and Claire suffer an overwhelming pain and heightened misery in camps. During their stay, they go through unspeakable disgrace and humiliation at the hands of authorities who initially employ torture and other cruelties to instil fear and insecurity in them and then use power to

restrain them and fellow refugees. Through retrospection, Clemantine portrays the absurd living conditions and terrible life awaiting unaccompanied children in refugee camps as:

> You're just in a horrible groove. You learn skills that you wish you did not know: how to make a fire, how to cook maize, how to do laundry in the river a n d burn lice on the rocks. You wait, hoping the trucks will bring something other than corn and beans. But nothing gets better. There is no path for improvement- no effort you can make, nothing you can do, and nothing anybody else can do for you either, short of the killers in your country laying down their arms and stopping their war so that you can move home. (73-74)

Given the socio-economic segregation and lack of support in camps and host communities, women also face extreme privation and economic hardships. The dearth of resources compel Claire to put up complex survival battles: she sells her belongings; works as security guard; trains children in sports activities at Ngozi Camp; sells meat at Malawi Camp besides engaging in minuscule business ventures outside the camps by helping the stroll owners in merchandising their products who would, in service, pay her few bucks that would suffice her domestic requirements. Likewise, in South Africa, circumstances press Clemantine into child labour. She serves as a house-girl doing laundry, dishes, sweeping floors, ironing clothes, and polishing furniture in affluent families.

Indra (1989) asserts that refugee women are doubly oppressed i.e., they experience inequality at two different levels. Besides enduring the pain of being refugee, they often are constrained by the societal norms and lack of opportunities. Nonetheless, Clemantine's narrative presents Claire as triply oppressed. Besides being a victim of refugee-hood, she is constrained by patriarchy and vicious socio-cultural mores entrenched deeply in the society she joins after her marriage: "You are a woman. You are a refugee. You cannot have a job. You are nothing under our laws" (115). In the words of UN relief official Kyung-Wha Kang, "While entire communities suffer the impact of armed conflict, women and girls are often the first to lose their right to education, to political participation and to livelihoods, among other rights being bluntly violated". Claire not only faces social stigma but also endures the pangs of patriarchy and male domination. It is quite evident from Rob's treatment of her when she delivers a pot of tea to Rob and his friends. He yells at her only to prove his male ascendency over her in front of men sitting there that not only disfigures her individuality but also brings forth the man-woman binary that affects a woman's social acceptance and undermines her control over life.

All too often, refugee women are at perpetual risks of being exploited and abused both in camps and on their routes. Pittaway and Bartolomei (2001) observe that "Rape and abuse is the most common form of systematized torture used against women… [they] are also "othered" by their own communities making this form of torture extremely effective" (24). Rob forces Claire into an undesired marriage only to forsake her later to wane in the sea of ruin with her children when he is done with his self-indulgent relation. It exposes the moral hypocrisy and internalized inhumanity harboured against women by fellow refugees. Nobody, in fact, cares for the others. Instead, as articulated by Claire: "Their job and self-worth depended on your continued debasement, on your commitment to residing in a social stratum below them" (117). This well-entrenched contempt for fellow refugees is again explicit in other women's treatment of Clemantine in the camp when they didn't allow her to get her share of water from the community water pump. This internalized inhumanity and xenophobia again becomes visible when in South Africa Claire and Clemantine are denied economic opportunities only because they are perceived as usurpers of resources and seen

as a threat to national harmony and peace: "[They] didn't want black immigrants performing those jobs either. We would have been heckled on the bus and in the township if we'd been seen" (177). Similarly, the absence of adequate facilities and proper protection in camps particularly in washrooms and toilets makes them "the favoured hunting ground of the most depraved men" (117). While many women and girls are abused and subjected to indiscriminate SGBV, countless others are pushed into prostitution or survive through sex to sustain life: "Rape is the story of women and war, girls and war, hundreds of thousands of mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, cousins, and aunts . . . hundreds of millions across the world . . . Night is not a woman's story" (246). This is a recurrent concern in refugee writings globally as foregrounded by Claire Chambers in "Refugees, asylum and women's human trafficking in fiction: A Discussion". Sometimes, women and young girls are asked for sexual favours by smugglers and even by the authorities in return for help offered while crossing checkpoints. A 2002 U.N.H.C.R. Report showed that girls were sexually exploited by humanitarian agencies staff and security forces in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, yet this problem has not been stamped out. Even though UNHCR issued a revised and updated version of *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls* (2008), there has been hardly any difference in the ground reality. In fact, J Freedman (2016) writes, "The current refugee crisis is not the first occasion when the problem of violence against women refugees has been raised. Theoretically, gender equality issues have been mainstreamed both into the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the Frontex Operations. The CEAS directives which have recently been recast on paper, oblige EU member states to take gender issues into consideration both in reception conditions for asylum seekers and refugees, and in the refugee status determination process. In practice, however, these directives have so far had little impact in improving refugee women's access to protection within national asylum systems in Europe and survivors of GBV still face both legal and practical obstacles when trying to access services, rights or protection" (19).

The memoir also offers significant insights into the situations of protracted exile through which refugees go and the ramifications it has particularly on unaccompanied refugee women and children. Though, as delineated by Hyndman and Giles (2017), all *prima facie* refugees caught in situations of protracted exile are protected from non-refoulment, yet it can fairly be inferred that this very right to life comes at a greater cost. The lack of durable solutions supplemented by the absence of a gender-sensitive approach and other issues notably the linguistic and cultural barriers compound challenges for women and girls. Before finally being settled in the United States, Claire and Clementine traverse eight African nations for over six years for a stable existence which strongly reflects the inefficacy of agencies mandated to assist and protect women and girls on move. Their story is the story of not only Rwandan refugee women but every refugee woman on the move, every camp, every displacement; Christian, Muslim, Hindu, secular and any other background: Global north or global.

To sum up, it can be argued that *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* is a strong testimony to the power of story-telling that the refugee women have taken recourse to for reclaiming their right to exist, which not only lays bare the diversity of challenges facing them but also counteracts the problematic public discourse that depicts refugee women as opaque objects by lumping them together with the desperate homogenous masses that continually breach international walls in pursuit of safety. It presents a complex picture of the present time where forced migration is no more an anomaly but ubiquitous while simultaneously compelling the readers to look into the silences and cracks of refugee women narratives that

have not found their way into academic critical discourses to maximise their impact. It speaks collectively for millions of women and girls whose voice has systematically been smothered to prevent the reverse action. Moreover, it can also be contended that Clemantine-Elizabeth's memoir is more about the resilience and tenacity shown by women on move than the miseries they face during exile. The post-settlement part of the narrative evinces a more authoritative voice which Clemantine assumes to enkindle people to stand up for justice for all female refugees by embracing a collective struggle against SGBV, human rights abuse and other forms of atrocities committed against them.

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Gender, Genre and Identity in Women Autobiographies -- *My Feudal Lord, The Weave of My Life* and *I am Malala*

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Abstract

The study of autobiography and gender has escalated in the academia. It is a platform that brings together issues of identity and performativity, the narrating "I" and the evasiveness of the gendered self, genre, and canonicity, and the intersectionality of gender, place, ethnicity, class, and embodiment in rhetoric of individualism and community. Thus, autobiographical writing and its analysis have become highly visible artifacts of and for cultural activism, political action, and scholarly endeavor. The present paper focuses on the feminine voices in three select autobiographical narratives—Tehmina Durrani's My Feudal Lord, *Urmila Pawar's* The Weave of My Life *and* Malala Yosufzai's*I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was shot by the Taliban* and the ways in which these writers use the language of privacy, domesticity, femininity and intimacy to locate their "self" in the male hegemonic social structures.*
Keywords: *femininity, gender, genre, social structures*

> There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender.
>
> *-- Judith Butler*

Autobiography is said to spark fantasies in real. Its purpose is not just to depict gender, genre and identity in any particular lived and imagined configuration, but also to postulate a base from which the configuration emerges. The presence of fiction in autobiography and autobiography in fiction has gained autobiography a reputation for elusiveness as a literary genre that defies genre distinction. Of all modern genres, it is perhaps autobiography that raises most complex and often times dramatic questions of ethical. Tzvetan Todorov aptly sums up this by saying that, "a genre, whether literary or not, is nothing other than the codification of discursive properties" (23).

There occurs a binary between male and female mode of writing about "self." Feminist critic of autobiography Leigh Gilmore states that "there is a difference between lived reality for men and women" (12).On one hand where "males" concentrate on depicting their achievements in public field through autobiography, the female sphere limits itself to depiction of private and home life, sharing her experiences as a mother, daughter, wife and sister. Writing of autobiography is not an easy task for a female as she has to struggle on two planes, first she has to select suitable material, diction and style because she is about to portray realistic segments of her life, and secondly she has to have the audacity to defy the male canons. Aptly summarized by Barbara Johnson, "The problem for the female

autobiographer is, on the one hand, to resist masculine autobiography as the only literary genre available for her enterprise, and, on the other, to describe a difficulty in conforming to a female ideal which is largely a fantasy of the masculine, not the feminine, imagination" (154).Therefore female autobiographies are generally fragmentary than linear, more conjoint than singular and about relationships than achievements.

It is the ambivalent relation between subject and her environment, between life and its re-telling that makes female autobiographical accounts extra ordinary resonate instruments for deciphering the symbiosis of self and place within a specific cultural context. The basal feminine sense of "self" is associated with the world while the basal masculine sense of "self" is individualistic, it sometimes can be delineated in terms of denial of a relation, but feminine personality is always defined in centre of relationships. Domna Stanton opines, "more than the ambiguous inscription of multiple person relations, the autogynographical narrative is marked by conflicts between the private and the public, the personal and the professional,.....there lies a systematic tension between the conventional role of wife, mother or daughter and another unconventional self that had ambition or a vocation"(3). In her essay "Autogynography :Is the Subject Different?" Stanton coined a new term "Autogynography" for the genre of women autobiography and tried to focus on " women's personal literature of the self."

Georges Gusdorf advanced the "individualistic" paradigm of centrally located isolate autobiographical "self" and keeps marginal like blacks and women out of the periphery of autobiographical writings; supporting that school of thought which looked minorities as misfit for autobiographical writings due to lack of individuality. The feminist theorists like Sheila Rowbowtham, Nancy Chodorow, Susan Friedman, etc. highlighted the inapplicability of Gusdorf theory and avouched the need of respective discourse for the autobiographies by women which would reflect the socio-cultural traits of their personality, stating that "self-creation and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women" (Friedman 35).

The last few decades have been witness to women's autobiographical practices both as an expression of depicting women's life experiences and as seedbed for enunciating feminist theory. Scholars of women writing have demonstrated that autobiographical mode has opened up spaces within public discourse where female authors could question prevalent notions of gender and society. In the words of Carolyn Barros ". . . women are beginning to experience the documentation of their lives as an important way to utilize their experiences and knowledge, for the expansion of their knowledge of self and others" (2). Not only feminists, but literary and cultural theorists also have acknowledged the role of women's autobiographical writings as a mode of making visible formerly invisible subjects.

The underlying theme of histories by women writers reveals their struggle for existence and their quest for success. The voices of these women writers are transcribed directly, as they tell their stories of work place injustices, emigration, personal accounts, etc. but never without reminding the reader of the frame in which they are situated, a frame determined by class, location and language. The narratives of personal experiences often flip over to reveal articulations that are more politically aware, frequently disturbing seemingly stable stories of home life. The home and the world are then not as separate as they may seem in women autobiographies but make continuous inroads into each other.

Though the autobiographical writings by women of last two centuries have probed issues of identity in male literary traditions, the postmodernist thrust on liberation discourse has taken a lead in conversion of women's life narratives into a specific genre. Violating the

credentials of canonical autobiography, women life narratives serve as testimonials of class, caste, gender and lead to an alternative discourse of history. The works by women writers delineate the self viz-a viz family, society and politics and bear witness to gendered subordination.

The Twentieth century has witnessed a set of women writers exploring extraordinary intellectual and physiological caliber in delineating the feminine experiences through this genre. There is a reflection of dual conflict within their accounts. The present paper is an attempt to analyze three autobiographies *My Feudal Lord* by Tehmina Durrani,   *The Weave of My Life* by Urmila Pawar and *I am Malala:The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yosufzai depicting this conflict with "self" and conflict with "other." The works of these writers resound with their struggle to gain social, intellectual, political and economic autonomy. Through their writings these women autobiographers not only try to offer new models of agency and resistance to their marginalization within the spheres of patriarchal hegemony, but also engage upon the concepts of "tradition," "modernity," "self" and "other" within the ambits of historical, social, cultural and economical contexts shaping their writings. There is a forward looking optimism within their writings that conveys transformability of existing conditions. They register their protest and resist whatever is detrimental to the gynic quest of self identity, self assertion and self worth. This act of autogenesis, the process of coming into existence from silence to sound, is recorded as a gradual process from marginalized invisibility into central vision.

My Feudal Lord (1995), by Pakistani writer Tehmina Durrani created uproar in literary arena as she was found bold enough to disclose the minor details of her traumatic nuptial life in her writings. Belonging to a political family of Pakistan, Tehmina Durrani undoubtly gained prominence in the genre of autobiography writing as she had not used it as a tool to attack her religion or her family members but as an agency to express evil done to her as well as reflect on her own mistakes. Divided into three parts the book envisages the three important phases of Durrani's life. The first part deals with her first marriage and meeting with Mustafa Khar. Second part speaks of her victimization by her husband (Khar) and the emotional and physical turmoil she went through, whereas the conclusive segment highlights the transformation in her life and personality.

The first part, "Lion of Punjab" of *My Feudal Lord* begins with Durrani's account of marrying Anees (her first husband) in order to escape from her family as her relations with her mother were never cordial. Attracted by the charismatic external appearance of Mustafa Khar she decided to break off first marriage being aware of the fact that her relationship with Mustafa might cut her off from the outside world. Born and brought up in the metropolitan set up Durrani was unaware of the feudal confines pertaining to women, but soon she realized her folly. "I had escaped from the domination of my mother by climbing into the lap of a tyrant"(128). She was not aware of the subordinate position of women in feudal society. She was accustomed to a life where she was free to take her own decisions, but after her marriage with Mustafa she became submissive and meek, accepting the authority residing exclusively with her husband. She narrates, "I could only develop in the direction he chooses. To think independently was a crime that he had the right to punish" (107), thereby pointing out the disavowal of woman's self-identity and of her rights in the feudal set-up. She realized that feudalism has reduced woman's situation to cattle.

In part second of the book entitled "Law of the Jungle" Tehmina under the backdrop pf political upheaval of termination of Bhutoos's government further elaborate her distressing married life during the period of their exile in London. On one hand Mustafa'a

behavior and tortures made her life miserable whereas on other hand he very skillfully tried to undermine her image in front of her own family by proving himself innocent (not having relations with Adila). Beaten, suspected and humiliated on all the planes Tehmina decides to listen to her inner voice and separate from Mustafa.

The conclusive part "Lioness" expatiates the real spirit of paper, as it is the section which deals with revival of "self" in Tehmina. From the relics of passive, submissive and docile wife rose a resilient, confident and determined woman. In her new 'avatar' she strategically fought like a Lioness against Government to free her husband from imprisonment with a belief that this incident might change his attitude, but Mustafa's illicit relations with Adila and his tyrannical behavior coerced Tehmina to leave Mustafa. Through her decision of legal separation from Mustafa Khar Durrani shows that she had agency to resist not only the male hegemony but also the stifling social and familial constraints. Through her act of writing Tehmina tried to give voice to her silences. She dared to break the bounds of femininity and took her stand against the reigning dogmas of the culture, including male dominance on her physical and emotional self.

Urmila Pawar is one among the leading figures of Marathi Literature. She has to her credit many novels and short stories echoing the theme of social ostracism and caste discrimination. Through her writings she has attempted to unleash the vexation and indignation she faced in her life for being a woman belonging to low caste. In her fictional works she portrays the picture of Dalit women who like her were marginalized in both public and private domains due to social, economical, communal and patriarchal factors. In her writings Pawar highlights the intellectual contributions of Dalit women, and combines "private" lived experiences and "public" practices of dual oppression of women on basis of caste and gender.

Urmila Pawar's autobiography *Aayadan* was originally written in Marathi (2003) and was later translated by Maya Pandit into English *The Weave of My Life* (2008). It is an intricate commentary of a gendered individual who being a Dalit presents account of her life from caste and feminist perspectives. Her autobiography highlights her determination to assert her selfhood while struggling against the antagonist forces of caste and gender. As she was both an "insider" as well as an "outsider" in Ambedkarite and feminist organizations therefore her autobiography has the capability to initiate discourse on invisible relationship between gender and community. As the title suggests "weaving" is the cardinal motif of the book .Weaving of bamboo baskets for survival by Urmila's mother is suggestive of their low caste and economic status. Pawar's lines elaborate the relation between her writing and her mother's act of weaving. She states, "My mother used to weave *aaydans*. I find that her act of weaving and my act of writing are originally linked .The weave is similar. It is the weave of pain, suffering and agony that links us"(2).

Born in Conk village   near Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Pawar belonged to Mahar community (one of the lowest in the Hindu *varna* hierarchy). Her childhood especially after the death of her father was spent in extreme poverty. But due to her father's motivation and her mother's determination she along with her siblings got good education. The determination to excel in every field of life made her participate in every event at her school and college. Though the boys mocked at her and nicknamed her "Aga", but she was not perturbed and often abused them in anger. This rebellious spirit inspired her to move forward in academics as she believed that it was through education only she can come out of quagmire of caste discrimination and can establish her own "identity". After passing her matriculation exam she did her B.A. in Marathi Literature. After her marriage with Harish

Chandra (an educated man whom she chose as husband) she shifted to city, completed her M.A. and started working in an office to earn the livelihood. Exposure to the outside world and her own desire to work for he upliftment of Dalit women inspired her to join Ambedkar movement, though her involvement with feminist and Ambedkarite organizations resulted in conflict between her and Harish Chandra who, in Urmila's own words, " …was perplexed. He felt that he was losing control over his wife fast and had to establish his authority with an iron hand so as to keep her within bounds!"(207) But Urmila's horizons had expanded vastly and asserting her "self" she decided to work for the upliftment of women. She even started writing, which gave vent to her suppressed feelings. Gradually surpassing all the difficulties she was successful in establishing herself as an accepted writer.Written in a realistic fictional mode, the autobiography depicts the struggles of a Dalit woman traveling from a small town to a metro city facing innumerable obstacles with daunting courage.

Malala Yousafzai's autobiography *I am Malala*(2014) is an account of an Afghani girl who raised her voice against the Taliban for the cause of girl education. The act of writing autobiography being a girl belonging to a typical male hegemonic patriarchal society is in itself an act of resistance, and an attempt to break the societal, cultural and gender constraints. Her autobiography added fuel to her mission of bringing gender equality as it gave her a public voice. It gave her a power position which she lacked in her society, the power to tell her story and thus register her resistance. This echo in the very beginning of book: "To all the girls who have faced injustice and been silenced. Together we will be heard". By identifying herself with other girls she generalizes her problem and thereby achieves a louder platform to endorse the cause of women rights and education.

Divided into five parts and an elaborate Epilogue her autobiography begins with Malala's birth and ends with her stay with her family at Birmingham. Part I "Before the Taliban" deals with the birth of girl child (Malala) in a Pakistani patriarchal family. Malala highlights the structural marginalization of girl child in a community like hers and believed herself to be lucky as her father supported her right to education resisting the patronizing religious and communal pressures. This paternal support assisted Malala to cast a critical lens at the gender inequality prevailing in her society. Carving out a space for herself she delineates her attempts to voice her feelings through debates, drawings and group discussions at her school and gaining a meritorious position.

Part two "The Valley of Death" and Part three "Three Bullets, Three girls" discloses the dangers faced by the girls going to school in Swat valley. Malala discusses how TTP threatened to target girls schools and in order to shield them, their teachers suggested the girls not to come to in school uniforms, however as an act of defiance she choose to wear a bright color dress on that day. She also tried to break the stifling tradition of 'burqua' and decided not to veil her face, though her mother disapproved of this act but still she stood by Malala's side defending her.

The next two parts "Between Life and Death" and "Second Death" echo of the incident of shoot out at Malala's school van by Taliban in which she and two of her friends were injured and its aftermaths. Before the incident of shoot out Malala received death threats from Taliban, but nothing could curb her zeal to move ahead. Refusing to stop the campaigning for girl education Malala refused to be a victim and maintained her own agency. But, she had to pay the ultimate price as she couldn't stop Taliban from attacking her. In the conducting part Malala rises as a phoenix with double zeal and dedication towards her mission. She clearly states in autobiography that Taliban's act of shooting her just reversed

their goal, as instead of becoming silent she became more vocal and seek global attention.

Thus, the autobiography serves as medium to express her resistance and language becomes a tool which helped Malala to march ahead on the road of self-expression. It carries a powerful message proclaiming gender equality that girls must also be given the liberty to voice their feelings and education is a medium which provides them this power to 'speak'.

The resolution to write an autobiography is in terms with the belief that one's life should be read. This belief is incongruous to the traditional feminine attributes. Judy Long in *Telling Women's Lives* states, "Women's self-writing is animated by the tension between external control of women and the assertion of female subjectivity . . . Women subjects are at risk because the requirements of autobiography and the requirements of femininity are at odds----Autobiography is self display, opposed to female virtues of modesty and concealment"(27).This argument connects all the three autobiographies under this study as the autobiographers in their attempt to pen down their lives, have stepped beyond convention bound social customs and have asserted their "self." They have used the autobiography as an instrument to show their resistance, to break the concept of meek and docile woman and to establish their identities .It is interesting to note that though society, culture and religion prohibits the articulation of women yet through their autobiographies they ensure that their voice is heard. Tehmina Durrani, Malala Yousufzai and Urmila Pawar are among such women who refused to be silenced by dominant culture. Believing in the dictum of "silence condones injustice" they have chosen autobiography as a genre to rewrite their 'selves' in the language of their own.

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The Big Sick: Analysing the Politics of Narrating Visibility to Chronic Illnesses through Social Media

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Abstract

The intersection of biomedicine and humanities and the subsequent creation of the emergent field of health humanities have opened up new and sophisticated categories for interdisciplinary readings of health and illness vis-à-vis literary and cultural studies. As a constructivist paradigm with dialogical perspectives, the discipline has had consequential implications on the genre of life writings, with a proliferation of illness narratives and the development of autopathography, a new subgenre that provides access to lived experiences of illness and disease. This paper considers the premise of illness narratives and aims to explore the multiplicity that characterises them through a study of tellings of illness in the digital space. It seeks to read into the narrativisation of illness in the virtual domain through first-hand accounts of chronically ill patients, which can be posited as a project in subverting the dominant discourse on disease which has more often than not been controlled by medical practitioners and caregivers. The paper shall look into the various digital tools used by patients, such as blogs, viral hashtags, Instagram handles, to tell their stories, thereby breaking the stigma associated with disease and creating an empowered space to build and disseminate patients' own image of the diseased body. Using the theoretical framework postulated by Georges Canguilhem on the normativity of the diseased body, the paper shall adopt a meta-analytic approach to examine how illness narratives in the digital space critique the inherent power structures in the field of medical sciences and create a more collaborative and inclusive space for healing or, rather, living with disease.
Keywords*: Illness narratives, autopathography, digital space, social media, disease,*

Introduction

The intersection of health and humanities was a decisive cultural turn that sought to create a more expansive framework to address the myriad concerns encompassing health and medicine, beyond ideas of disease and cure. While biomedicine and the allied sciences have focussed extensively on the aetiology of diseases, health humanities concentrates on the phenomenology of health. This burgeoning field of study places bioscience, medicine and healthcare within their social and cultural contexts and tries to interrogate the interactions and intersections between society, culture, healthcare practices and individual experiences of illness.

A significant development in health humanities was the unique juxtaposition of the illness experience with the narrative mode. While Sigmund Freud's nineteenth-century writings stressed the persuasive power of the narrative tradition in the hermeneutic processes

of psychotherapy, it was Arthur Kleinman's seminal work *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition* (1988) that placed the narration of patients' illness experience as a core feature of doctoring. In the context of biomedicine, illness narratives seek to look beyond disease prognosis and treatment and establish critical links between medical science and the broader culture that informs doctor–patient encounters. Consequently, illness memoirs and narratives have gained currency, synthesising a range of artistic and cultural representations to create a new subgenre within the canon of life writing, termed as autopathography. "As a narrative practice, autopathography combines auto/biographical narratives about living with an illness with reflections upon the wider implications of a particular disease, treatment, recovery and interactions with medical professionals" (Bolaki 4). It is more inclusive and accommodative of the dialogism informing the field of health humanities.

In 'autopathography,' a subset of autobiography, the root word "*bios* is replaced with *pathos*" (Tembeck 1), thereby highlighting pain and suffering as its key features. However, this paper chooses to transcend conservative assumptions of narrative as literary text and situates autopathography, with its myriad narrative dimensions, in the digital space. The idea of narrative is no longer tied to a single medium or artistic form, as the generic multiplicity and mixed-media nature of illness narratives have transformed it into an experimental multi-genre that seamlessly lends itself to critical engagements in the virtual domain**.**

Constructing the Self: Autopathographies in the Digital Domain

The post-2004 Web 2.0 development championed user-generated content, a participatory culture and a dynamic convergence of different media formats into a collaborative and accessible platform that facilitates increased information sharing and interconnectedness among users. The constant user engagement on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and on video and audio platforms such as YouTube and Spotify through vlogs and podcasts has ensured that the Internet is no longer a passive space for content consumption but an active sphere of content creation. Web 2.0 is essentially a postmodern phenomenon that seeks to dismantle grand narratives and their homogeneity, to adopt an inclusionary and heterogenous position by endowing users with greater agency to control their data and construct their narratives.

The centrality of the narrative discourse in the virtual space has helped create a democratic ambience that counteracts the dominant ableist culture and affords greater visibility to aberrant narratives of marginalised subjects. Recently, there has been a proliferation of illness narratives, where the diseased and the disabled actively construct their own self, thereby subverting the existing polarity between the healthy and the ill. While the discourse on illness and disease has mostly been controlled by doctors and caregivers, through its engagement with illness narratives in the cyberspace, this paper aims to show that "tellings on illness do not necessarily need to be framed by the context of biomedicine, but instead by a wider artistic and human context" (Bolaki 20).

Traditionally, biomedicine has been sceptical of the connotative discourse, but this legacy is gradually eroding, as clinicians are now foregrounding the necessity of narrative inbuilding stronger doctor–patient relationships (Mattingly and Garro, 2000). One significant point of attraction drawing the clinical community to narratives is that they highlight the "human dramas" surrounding illness. Eminent neurologist Oliver Sacks distinguishes between patients' standard medical history and narrative proper to advocate

narrative discourse as a way to bring persons, with their particular experiences of disease, into focus:

> To restore the human subject at the center-the suffering, afflicted, fighting, human subject-we must deepen a case history to a narrative or tale, only then do we have a who as well as a what, a real person, a patient in relation to disease-in relation to the physical. (Sacks as qtd in 'Narrative as Construct and Construction')

It is this idea of the patient as a real human, and not just a malfunctioning body, that shapes the narrative process of illness, whereby "patients seek to reclaim the aesthetic and imaginative qualities from a system that reduces illness narratives (and healthcare more broadly) to nothing more than a further set of utterances that provide specialist medical data" (Willis et al 68). Social media has made easier this project of reclamation, as the inbuilt interactivity of such sites provides avenues for multiple narratives and relational modes of expression. Features such as the comment section, tagging, exclusive as well as open groups, pages and handles, hashtags that enable cross-referencing of content with similar themes and the overall ease of simultaneous content sharing across numerous platforms have facilitated important conversations in narrativising the illness experience and played a pivotal role in raising awareness about illness and disease.

For long, medical science centralised its own construction of patients' body as the passive recipient of treatment and a site for experiment, while patients' personal experience of illness was pushed to the periphery. However, the intervention of humanities has now given prominence to this neglected aspect. The digital domain has enabled different media formats to converge into a narrative reconstruction of the diseased self, thereby providing new perspectives on the lived experience of illness and the healing process. This paper reads into autopathographical accounts of chronic illnesses in the virtual milieu, to explore new categories in the dominant discourse on disease. While the general aim of this paper is to understand how different social media tools empower patients in constructing a symbiotic narrative on illness, it shall specifically look at certain popular Instagram handles such as *@sicksadgirlz* and *@sufferingthesilence* and viral hashtags such as *#hospitalglam* to understand the politics of visibility surrounding chronic illnesses and how these narratives on social media create healthy spaces for presenting and negotiating illness experiences.

Illness Narratives on Social Media

Often critiqued for being a vapid vortex of filtered images that blur reality and present unrealistic and superficial portrayals of the ideal body, the inherently liberal and autonomous nature of social media has defied such prescriptive notions, with netizens consciously choosing to make more meaningful interactions online, to mobilise political and social awareness and resist homogeneity of narrative. Social network is increasingly embracing the role of a support network that provides multimodal ways to order individual experiences, including illness. With an increasing number of stories of being unwell moving online, new spaces have formed for "comparing experiences" (Melander 69) and ameliorating the isolation accompanying chronic illnesses. Online narratives of illness are not wholesome or consistent but fluid and fragmentary, as patients endeavour to make sense of their changing bodies and re-order their selves in relation to the illness. Neither is the story-telling process is easy, nor do they always have happy-endings; yet, they empower patients to escape the restrictive doctors' chambers and hospitals beds and construct a more liberated sphere. Social media endows narrators of illness with agency – a crucial constituent of the

discourse on the politics of visibility – and enables them to make more inclusive configurations of the diseased body.

The juxtaposition of words, images and videos in online narratives offers a rare hybridity that seeks to alter common perceptions about living with chronic illness and critique the hierarchies and power structures of medical knowledge. Illness narratives on social media are candid and characteristically involve translating medical jargon into a more comprehensible idiom that not only bridges the gap between health practitioners and patients but also helps patients gain honest insights into their conditions, which may sometimes be concealed in clinical interactions. As Ruth Page notes in the Introduction to *Stories and Social Media: Identities and Interaction*, "narrators online tell stories, not retrospectively from the point of recovery, but as updates that appear discontinuously as the narrator documents their experiences while diagnosis and treatment unfolds" (10).

This paper aims to explore illness narratives across social media platforms "to convey both the centrality of medical experiences in subjects' lives and their specific desires to be publicly identified as persons living with illness" (Tembeck 9). Instagram handles such as *@sicksadgirlz* and *@sufferingthesilence* are significant projects in this context, highlighting stories involving the oft-misunderstood lived experience of chronic diseases and disabilities. Founded by Rosa Mercuriadis, *@sicksadgirlz* shares the myriad female experience. With its simple yet resonating tagline – *#TellUsWhereItHurts* –the page has quickly become thousands of women's safe place to narrate their stories. Mercuriadis, who herself is negotiating more than one chronic illness, focuses particularly on women's narratives that, she believes, have consistently been marginalised and, therefore, require an exclusive space to attain substantial visibility. The page is not aligned with any singular issue or illness but concentrates on the erratic and ever-shifting emotions surrounding the diagnosis, treatment and trauma of disease. Allie Cashel and Erica Lupinacci's *@sufferingthesilence* is another noteworthy campaign that aims to end the stigma and misconceptions associated with chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, Lyme disease and lupus. The handle's portrait series features individuals with the name of their invisible illness written on their arm –one hand covering their mouths to represent the silent struggle. Accompanying the pictures are stories of how sufferers navigate through life with incurable chronic conditions. The project aspires to initiate raw, honest conversations on illness and create a dialogue that makes the experience more accessible to people who do not live with it. Through their unique photo series, the two women seek to engage with the politics of visibility/invisibility surrounding chronic illnesses that are often misunderstood in the social milieu, as patients of such diseases thwart conventional assumptions about the sick body. According to Cashel, it is extremely empowering "to write your disease on your body, to actually have it live visibly on your body" (as qtd. in Kircher, 'Sufferers of invisible illnesses'). Therefore, *@sufferingthesilence* situates itself right at the centre of the discourse on the narrativisation of chronic diseases.

Ubiquitous selfies and hashtags define the social media phenomenon in the twenty-first century, to the extent that these elements of popular culture have become subjects of recent scholarship that views them not as banal social media trends but as active sites for the "continued, ongoing construction of subjectivity and articulation of selfhood" (Cover 55). In this context, this paper also examines the documentary function of digital self-expression through selfies of ill health and associated hashtags that propel these photographic autopathographies into a wider realm with greater accessibility, thereby creating a truly

polyphonous illness narrative. In the pre-digital era, self-portraiture and autopathographic photography were important modes of activism that "specifically sought to counter the illness' lack of visibility outside of a medical context" (Tembeck 4), but these visual self-representations have received greater impetus in the digital era, with the multiple hashtags attached to selfies being positioned as a form of life-writing. In the *#MeToo* era, that hashtags can grant visibility to repressed voices is irrefutable. As Martin Gibbs et al. note, "the capacity for users to tag images and thereby insert their photo[s] into a wider hashtag conversation" (258) has created an entry point for discussion among individuals with diverse forms of chronic illnesses and disabilities. In this context, the photographic work of Karolyn Gehrig, who initiated the social-media movement *#hospitalglam* in 2014, can be situated within the hybrid lineage of autopathographic photography and the millennial selfie phenomenon. Gehrig identifies herself as a queer disabled artist who suffers from a debilitating chronic health condition called Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, which can lead to various other health conditions and, therefore, necessitates frequent medical consultation. When regular hospital visits became a part of Gehrig's life, she began documenting them by clicking selfies and planning elaborate looks for them, thus infusing fashion and a touch of glamour into her otherwise mundane medical regimen. Her project to glamorise what is regarded as unglamorous stems from her philosophy to "take the shame out of being in treatment, one selfie at a time", as outlined in her Tumblr bio. Gehrig's *#hospitalglam* is an empowering initiative that encourages chronically ill and disabled people to reclaim a photographic gaze that subverts the stereotypical images of diseases constructed by medical science. Gehrig's narrativisation of illness through vivid photographs is not just a mere coping mechanism; it constitutes a political project that offers chronically ill individuals a way to represent themselves within, what Gehrig calls, an "often alienating medical environment." Gehrig also chooses to photograph medical imaging procedures as an alternate record to lab images and reports. This effort supplements her medical history in an intimate way that gives her agency. While the captions to images on her Insta feed frame *#hospitalglam* as a political movement seeking to raise awareness, reduce stigma and heighten the visibility of chronic illnesses, Gehrig's poses before the camera "also serve her immediate personal needs, allowing her to be more attentive to her body, and, in so doing, to take charge of the situation at hand in the doctor's office or the waiting room" (Tembeck 7). Beginning as a solo venture, the *#hospitalglam* movement instigated mass participation from chronically ill patients wanting to write and rewrite their own narratives of illness through creative self-expression. Gehrig's unconventional choice to tie patients' experience of disease with non-health-related ideas of fashion, art and ornamentation helped construct aesthetic yet effective counter-representations of disease. In this sense, Gehrig's campaign may be conceived as one that enlists the postmodern and the postcolonial, as it consciously engages in writing back to medicine.

Illness narratives in the digital space, as analysed in this paper, transcend mere interactive and collaborative functions that can endow medical practitioners and patients with substantial cognisance about clinical diagnosis and treatment. Rather, these narratives actively seek to dislodge fixed ideas about illness and the sick body. To elaborate, the paper uses Georges Canguilhem's theoretical framework on the normativity of the diseased body to place illness narratives in the digital space as critiques of the inherent power structures in medical science that construct the standard ideas about healthy and diseased bodies.

Reconstructing Disease and Health: Canguilhem's Conception of the Normal and the Pathological

In his book, *The Normal and the Pathological,* Canguilhem articulated the then prevalent concern over medical science's excessive reliance on formal and statistical norms that hindered not only diagnosis and treatment but also the understanding of an individual patient's relation to society and the environment. His perspectives on health and disease were heavily influenced by the works of surgeon René Leriche and the German neurologist Kurt Goldstein. Their works helped him critique and reanalyse Auguste Comte's claims about disease and the pathological condition being nothing more than a modification of the normal condition. Canguilhem disagreed with this notion of disease being 'not normal' or lacking any specific norm:

> Canguilhem pointed out the normative and norm-producing effects that 'the normal' had possessed ever since Comte: the norm was held simultaneously to be both identical to the normal and the only norm. Consequently, there could be no norms specific to disease—disease could be only an aberration. (Geroulanos and Meyers 2)

These ideas about disease as abnormal and anomalous birthed an overarching discourse on the symptomatic nature of illnesses as a broad spectrum, overlooking the individual patient, for whom the disease is a specific and qualitatively heterogeneous experience. Canguilhem's views justify the burgeoning illness narratives that seek to document this complex heterogeneity. In his seminal work, *The Normal and the Pathological*, he postulates that "disease creates a shrunken milieu and is a narrowed mode of life, but it is also, for the individual patient, a new life characterised by new physiological constants and new mechanisms" (185). The illness narratives examined in this paper evidence this viewpoint, as sufferers try to arbitrate a new normal amidst their disease-imposed constrictions. As seen in the previous section, the different styles of narrativising illness on social media attest to patients' desire to not be seen as crippled and powerless but as active architects of their own selfhood, resisting medical science's stereotypical constructions of patienthood. Karolyn Gehrig's #*hospitalglam* and Insta handles such as @*sufferingthesilence* and @*sadsickgirlz* are keen endeavours that strive to recreate and recast the sick body in a wider social and cultural context and defeat normativist ideas about ill health. By engaging in a more inclusive conversation through social media, illness narratives in the digital domain portray the complexity of the pathological experience and reclaim the gaze from the positivist normative assumptions of health, outlining new notions of singularity and normality of disease.

As Canguilhem suggested, the conventionally healthy need to be rethought as "more than normal", that is, not characterised by the presence of symptoms and not limited by norms of living life in set ways while disease implies that individuals are tethered to norms and to deficiency and failure vis-à-vis these norms. Canguilhem is highly critical of positivist conceptions of disease, as they efface the experience of individual suffering, and of health itself, by considering health as natural and illness as unnatural, a bodily incongruity that may or may not be corrected. His thesis is extremely relevant in the narrative parlance of chronic diseases that are mostly invisible and, therefore, blur the lines between entrenched ideas about the healthy and the sick body. His critique of the inherent power structures in the field of medical science directly aligns with the multimodal nature of illness narratives in the digital space, which aspire to free patients from objectification in isolating medical environs and endow sufferers with the agency to shape and disseminate their own subjective,

heterogenous stories.

Conclusion

Arthur Frank, in *The Wounded Storyteller*, writes, "The ill person who turns illness into story transforms fate into experience; the disease that sets the body apart from others becomes, in the story, the common bond of suffering that joins bodies in their shared vulnerability" (xi). The illness narratives considered in this paper uncover intimate and revelatory positions on the human capacity for responding to representations of pain and encourage empathetic readings of illness in tandem with contemporary literary theories, to probe deeper into the political relation between bodies and narratives. Illness is conceptualised as a form of colonisation within the multidisciplinary realm of health humanities, where the sick person hands over their body and their story to biomedical expertise. However, social-media narratives on ill health are essentially a postmodern development that subvert the metanarrative about health and illness and present a plurality of smaller narratives that amplify peripheral voices. The sick person reclaims the authority to narrate their own story and also assumes responsibility for it. Online narratives, thus, aim to discover the "personal meaning of the impersonal statistics" (Jurecic 18) delivered regularly by medical science. As these narratives provide human, social and cultural context to disease, they occupy a crucial position within health humanities, which aims to create a hybrid, inclusive space that refrains from making not only normative presumptions about disease but also reductive inferences on the idea of healing and cure, taking significant strides, instead, towards a recalibration and normalisation of the idea of living with illness.

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Healing Trauma through Rituals: A Study of Le Ly Hayslip's Memoirs

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Abstract

Western schools of thought negate the spiritual and traditional healing practices of non-western communities as superstitious or primitive. Their notions of trauma and healing have always been based on the foundational theories of Freud's Psychoanalysis that does not take the traditionally embedded ways of dealing with trauma into account. The distinctiveness of cultures within which trauma stricken individuals operate their daily lives, is not taken into consideration. The aim of this paper is to analyse how people engage with traumatic events in a specifically cultural context through the memoirs of Le Ly Hayslip— When Heaven and Earth Changed Places (1989) *and* Child of War, Woman of Peace (1993)*. A survivor of the Vietnam War, she engages with the traumatic events of her life by immersing herself into traditional rituals which help her to let go of her past and grant her a new lease of life in America, while her family back in Vietnam tries to knit together the pieces of their devastated lives after the war.*
Keywords*: Trauma, Healing, Culture, Rituals, Spirituality*

War or any form of armed conflict affects the hoi polloi of a country in the most ruthless ways possible. They suffer the consequence of decisions taken by those in power by paying for their lives. The Vietnam War was one such event that was responsible for 1,353,000 recorded deaths and numerous other atrocities committed against humanity which never found mention in the record books. The trauma of losing loved ones to violence and starvation haunted ordinary masses for years. The normalcy of their pre-war life had ceased with the beginning of the war. The aim of this paper is to look at the various ways the Vietnamese culture aids the people through rituals and ceremonies in engaging with the trauma of losing family and friends during the war with special focus on the Memoirs of Le Ly Hayslip -- *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places (1989)* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace (1993).*

Trauma, according to trauma theorist Cathy Caruth is "a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time." (Caruth 61). It is the aftermath of an extremely painful external event that alters the way an individual makes sense of the world around them, including a highly altered sense of self and being. It may appear due to the occurrence of one singular painful event like rape, death or accident but it is equally possible for prolonged historical events like war, genocide and exile to inflict trauma upon not just an individual but an entire population.

However, very intrinsic to the idea of trauma is the concept of recovery or healing. After a traumatic event it is a natural human tendency to try and work towards gaining a sense of normalcy, to pull themselves out of the memories of those life-shattering experiences that haunt the psyche. But it is also significant to understand that the ideas of trauma and healing

are culture specific. Every culture or society has for centuries tried to structure ways of healing for its members that is unique and conducive to their way of life. Classical trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman and Dominick LaCapra, regarded as the pioneers in the field have often faced criticism from postcolonial trauma scholars because of their failure to recognize the significance of non-western traditions healing rituals while engaging with trauma.

Irene Visser, one of the founding figures of decolonized trauma studies, in her essay, "Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects." argues— "Rather than considering the openness to spirituality as dubious, then, we should realise that this openness could liberate analytic readings in trauma criticism to consider as worthwhile the dimensions of human life and experience as they are expressed in trauma narratives and testimonies" (Visser 12). Western scholars dealing with conventional trauma theory have never attempted to include indigenous practices and rituals as equally fruitful ways of subverting the trauma. Instead they see the "non-secular non-west" as inferior and superstitious as compared to their secular and rational selves.

<center>II</center>

Le Ly Hayslip, a survivor of the Vietnam War, records her experiences of the war and an elaborate detail of her migrant life in the U.S. in— *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989) and *Child of War*, *Woman of Peace* (1993) While her first memoir revolves around her life in her homeland during the war and how she survived it before making her escape to the U.S.; the second memoir focuses on her new life in America and its challenges as well as her return to Vietnam as an American citizen.

Born in Vietnam during the resistance against French rule and a victim of the War with America, she has never known peace as a young girl. The death and destruction that she witnessed, becomes a part of everyone's life around her. The constant interaction with death and the dead become a reality for them. She refers to many instances in her memoirs of people witnessing spirits and ghosts of those killed in the war. But before we make assumptions about such supernatural sightings as rural gossip of a sleepy village, we have to note the fact that Vietnam has a rich heritage of religion and spirituality that primarily involves three schools of thought—Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Rituals and traditions involving the dead/ancestors have largely been the result of Taoism which forms the essence of Vietnamese way of dealing with the supernatural. There is a saying in Vietnam: Life is a temporary stay, death is a return! It implies an inherent belief in life after death and the acceptance of the existence of souls or spirits which is a major premise in everybody's life:

> we had been taught from birth that ghosts were simply people we could not see.
> (Hayslip, *When Heaven* 12)

Hayslip's own beliefs are very much rooted in worshipping her ancestors and appeasing/helping other spirits find peace. The supernatural seem to pervade her life in Vietnam and later in America as well. The spirits of "slain soldiers" who "used to parade around the cemetery" or the "ghost of a pregnant woman who was killed by the French and sang lullabies to her dead baby in the cemetery" were all a part of her childhood. In their folk tradition the world of the dead is not separate from the world of the living. Both the worlds meet together to form a unified whole. In fact, writing her memoirs would not have been possible for Hayslip without her father's spirit who she claims would guide her whenever she needed his support:

I answer, "The best reason of all. I have promised my father's spirit that I will tell everything I have learned to my family, to my people and the world." (Hayslip, *When Heaven* 88)

A man returning as a spirit to guide his daughter after might seem bizarre when we look at it from a western rational standpoint where supernatural occurrences are deemed to be hallucinations or things made up by men in order to escape reality. We find many references of ghosts and spirits even in African literature which is termed as "Magical Realism" by western literary critics in order to rationalize events which they think are too bizarre to be real without taking the cultural context into account.

Visser in her essay further writes that "Commenting on the frequent classification of his work as magical realism African writer Zakes Mda has stated in an interview that it is the western, not the African stance, to refer to magic as opposed to reality, and that to him as an African, the immaterial is real, natural, and ordinary: "part of the way people live".(Visser 12). The same goes for the culture in Vietnam where "the immaterial" is very normal:

You can still see them around their house, mostly at night, begging for food and water....The wife's hair is long and tangled with twigs....strength. The husband however, looks very forlorn, because he failed to do his duty and protect his wife and his house....downcast."

"Why do they beg? Weren't they farmers like us?"

"They died without having children to worship them— to bring cakes and paper money and burn incense for them. Do....reason?" (Hayslip, *When Heaven* 35)

It is important for the people to have children as they are the ones who will ensure that the rituals honouring the spirits of their ancestors are carried on so that the dead can have a good afterlife. However, if we look closely, it becomes clear that honouring the dead is a way to engage with the trauma of dealing with the loss of loved ones. The assurance that it is only the physical death of the body and not the elimination of their existence proves to be therapeutic for the family of the deceased. Hayslip's family, experiences the tragic death of her brother, Sau Ban, who gets killed by a landmine while on his way home. The family accepts the truth of his death except his mother who refuses to believe that her son is no longer alive. She warns everyone including her husband against performing any rituals for his soul. Soon, Hayslip and her father hear noises at night which they attribute to Sau ban's spirit:

That evening, when we tried to sleep, I swore I heard my brother's voice—clear as a bell—in a storm that howled around the house. He was cold and wanted to come in. I got off my mat and went to my father, but he was already awake. "I know, Bay Ly," he said, "I heard it too." (Hayslip, *When Heaven* 202)

Disturbed and anxious about his son's spirit wandering at night her father decides to call the village shaman to investigate the matter:

"Well here's your problem, then. Your spirit house is too small. You have a relative who needs some shelter, that's all. Just build a little alcove outside and things will be fine."

The shaman left....my father got his tools and with loving care added a small altar on the north side of our house....We never heard Sau Ban's voice again....We didn't weep anymore....visit. (Hayslip, *When Heaven* 203)

Rituals become so interwoven into a culture that communities often forget the real motive behind such practices. Both Hayslip and her father found their peace after providing a shelter to the spirit of Sau Ban in the ancestral altar. The small gesture provided them the closure that they needed to move on with their lives. Nevertheless, mentioning her brother's

death becomes forbidden in the household for the sake of her mother. But years later when a snake makes an appearance out of nowhere, Hayslip's mother referred to as Mama Du in the memoir takes it to be her long lost son who has finally come home:

> I went to see the village psychic who concurred with my opinion. "The snake held Sau Ban's spirit,' he said. 'No doubt about it. Ban's bones must lie buried in the mud someplace and are cold, so his soul decided to come in the body of the snake...." (Hayslip, *Child of War* 315)

Mama Du buries the snake who she swears is her son Sau Ban requesting to be put to rest in their family graveyard— "Inside the bamboo were two beady eyes and a black snout. The forked tongue hissed 'Thank You, Mother,' in snake talk ...We grabbed the ends of the pole and lowered it into the ground and pushed the earth in after it." (Hayslip, *Child of War* 315). Since Sau Ban was killed by a land mine his body could not be recovered which meant that she could not see him for the last time. The shock of the event is too much for her to believe it without a proof. But deep down she knew that Sau Ban would never return. It was finally time for her to move on and find a closure. She found it by burying a snake assuming it to be her dead son. "His spirit is finally at rest" and it was enough for Mama Du to move on with her life happily.

In the Vietnamese culture death is not the end of the deceased's association with the family. It is rather the beginning of a new life as a spirit in the family altar where generations of descendents would pay homage and seek their blessings and guidance for years to come. Therefore, Sau Ban being provided a proper burial along with a permanent residing place in the family altar is important for both of his parents to make peace with his death.

However, she recounts her difficulty in keeping up with her religious and spiritual beliefs in America, where such rituals are frowned upon as superstition. In Vietnam it was a normal way of life for her and the rest of the country. She struggles in her new family who looks down upon her as a gold digger who married their son only to get out of the war zone. Since, performing rituals for the dead is considered significant for the deceased's soul to be at peace, not being able to follow those customs in America after the death of her husband becomes traumatic for her. Her pain in not being able to provide shelter to Ed's spirit at the altar obstructs her from resuming her normal life. She begins witnessing his spirit night after night looking restless and impatient. Without anyone by her side who could understand her dilemma she decides to confide in her mother-in-law, Leatha who brushes it aside as nonsense:

> Ed never believed in that mumbo-jumbo. You said yourself he didn't want any fuss made over him after he's gone—the way you offer food and money to your father. It's time to be sensible and put all that stuff behind you. (Hayslip, *Child of War* 115)

Leatha's reaction towards the rituals that Hayslip performs for her father and her desire to do the same for her husband echoes the perception of the secular west towards the practices of the non-western world. It portrays a lack of sensitivity and understanding towards cultures other than one's own. Visser in her essay argues that "the non-west is too easily contrasted with the West as less civilized or even backward, and in need of enlightenment." Leatha's appeal to be "sensible" to Hayslip who believes in "mumbo jumbo" is the manifestation of a deep rooted sense of superiority as a white woman trying to talk sense into her Vietnamese daughter-in-law. In order to regain normalcy and overcome the trauma of losing her husband it becomes essential to perform the ritual:

> I put a framed picture of Ed up on my father's shrine, lit some incense and offered him a bit of Top Ramen and a bit of spirit play money....

> That night, we slept the profound sleep of three—or was it four?—untroubled souls at peace. (Hayslip, *Child of War* 115)

The significance of the ritual becomes evident in how she is able to sleep peacefully without being haunted by Ed's spirit. Several researches have shown how resorting to one's religion or rituals has helped many trauma survivors cure their PTSD and lead a normal life. In Hayslip's life spirituality along with the rituals surrounding it act as a sort of emotional energizer which provides her the peace and calm needed to continue her life. As an immigrant living in a culture that frowns at the way she conducts her life around spirituality, she finds herself getting more and more alienated from Ed's family. They attribute her yearning for ritualistic practices as a form of insanity that has to stop in America.

Her attachment to her traditional Buddhist beliefs and her attempts in trying to keep those traditions alive again becomes a problem for her second husband, Dennis who had a low tolerance of religions other than his own:

> in place of the Buddha's message of transcendence and reincarnation was a nonnegotiable demand that we sinners renounce satan and get on with Christ's work. (Hayslip, *Child of War* 165)

She becomes a victim to the West's preconceived notion about the senselessness of religions other than Christianity. Visser comments by quoting Manav Ratti that "western secularism identifies itself with 'ideas of modernity, progress, civilization, and the othering of religions that are different from Christianity'; consequently, non-Christian belief systems, especially Islam, are the religious other, seen as intolerant and irrational" (Visser 11). Buddhism for her white Christian husband was a Satanic cult, not a real religion. Dennis tried every possible way to make her give up her beliefs and accept Christianity in order to "save" her from hell. He could never bring himself to respect and accept the religious difference in his household.

Though she left Vietnam to escape the violence of the war, her heart still yearned to return to her homeland, to the house that held the memories of her father. She perceives her abrupt departure as a sort of break in her spiritual journey which she must complete by returning to Vietnam which for her symbolises the beginning of her spiritual path. She must return to fulfil her duty to her ancestors. She sets up a health clinic in her village so that every person in need of healing from scars of the war could get treated:

> I have lived in America—and it's a wonderful place—but I could have lived on the moon and still be drawn back to the land of my father. I am not a spy or a politician, Chau Nam. I am not even a very good tourist. If anything, I am a pilgrim. Like everyone, I must come back to start again. (Hayslip, *Child of War* 385)

The land, the country, her village is the deity to whom she is bound by blood. The clinic is her offering to this deity. The country that lay wounded for years during the war needs a balm to soothe its scars. Hayslip, the lost daughter must do her part in healing the land and its people through the health clinic. Going back to her roots and reconnecting to the land in order to "start again" highlights the spiritual significance of the trip for the writer. As a "pilgrim" her pilgrimage gives her the much needed spiritual and mental strength to make peace with her past in order to start afresh. The ceremonies and rituals, which she performed over the years to appease her ancestors in Vietnam and in America comes into full fruition when she revisits their land. Returning back to Vietnam would be the last ritual that would complete the circle and provide her the much needed closure by reuniting herself with the land of her birth.

III

Rituals, ceremonies and other such traditional practices become an integral part of the cultural fabric of a community such that their original functionality might become unknown to the practitioners over time. The practice of ancestor worship in Vietnam acts as a emotional cleansing ritual for the kith and kin of the deceased. The necessity of the ritual is so entrenched within the social system that inability to perform it might further traumatize the survivors. Indigenous practices as a way of trauma healing has been gaining popularity in the recent years. For example, ex child soldiers involved with militancy in Africa have indulged in traditional cleansing rituals as a way to their social reintegration. Similarly, Theyyam which is a ritualistic folk festival in Kerala, India celebrated by oppressed castes involving dance, singing and costumes act as a catalyst for them to release the built up social tension that revolve around their lives due to oppression. Western ways of dealing with trauma involve doctors and psychologists but taking note of the effects of traditional healing practices is equally important in the current times. Rather than perceiving the western and the traditional ways as opposed to each other they could be perceived as extensions of one another for the betterment of the human society.

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A Study of Food in Ayser Salman's Migrant Memoir, *The Wrong End of the Table*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse how food plays a significant role in understanding migrant narratives and to establish a relationship between food, culture and identity. Being from a minority community in America, and that too from a community which is often regarded as hostile, Ayser Salman's memoir, The Wrong End of the Table *introduces several Arab dishes to the readers, and through these food recipes and stories, she delves further into the topics of racism, assimilation etc. Through textual analysis and food theories, this paper also attempts to break the prevailing stereotypes regarding the members of Arab-American community and represent them as ordinary people who enjoy food, solidarity and life as much as other communities.*
Keywords*: food, migration, identity, culture*

When people migrate from one nation to another, they carry with them their entire identity- their culture, religion, customs, language and food. And as they settle in a new region with their own ideas and identities, it raises dilemmas and challenges not only for them but also the host community. For the host society, its first introduction or exposure to the migrant community, in many cases, is through the food brought by the immigrants. And while food might seem a universal and mundane entity of everyday life, it might not always be so. As Terry Eagleton puts it, "If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food . . . Like the post-structuralist text, food is endlessly interpretable as gift, threat, poison, recompense, barter, seduction, solidarity, suffocation" ("Edible Ecriture" 204).

Published in 2019, Ayser Salman's *The Wrong* End *of the Table,* gives an insightful and humorous account of her life as an Arab- American. The themes in her memoir range from that of her family, food, to Muslims, assimilation problems, her identity crisis and even an open letter to Donald Trump. However, this paper makes an attempt to navigate Salman's journey of food choices and eating habits and how this not only contributed to her assimilation in the new country but also enabled her to communicate within and outside of family, forming a definite identity.

Food often plays an important role in interweaving the narratives in a novel or story. For example, in Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen*, the characters often vent their emotions through food, especially the protagonist Mikage. After her grandmother's demise, coping with loss and loneliness, Mikage bought three cookbooks, taught herself cooking and then went on to cook throughout the summer, no matter how she felt. Thus, food often acts as a device to give insight into the character's emotional state of mind. It is also because of the food she prepares that the Tanabe family starts having meals together more often. This signifies the inherent implication of a sense of solidarity by the simple act of sharing food.

Hence, "it is in the context of the family that the social dimensions of eating and

those of emotion are particularly tied together" (Lupton 44). Even in the case of Salman, it is observed that amidst her growing identity crisis at school in America, where she constantly tried to assimilate, food at home came as a solace. Every time she had a bad day at school or she was sad, her mother would not force her to open up but rather tried something unusual. Her mother would start cooking a meal with her small FM radio playing pop music in the background. Salman would often sit in a small corner table of their kitchen and help her mother shape rice into balls for kibbe and squeeze lemon juice into tabouleh and other side dishes. And as they worked, her mother would dance around in the kitchen humming happily to the tunes in the radio, sometimes holding the spatula as a microphone, and this ambience would instantly cheer Salman up. Thus, food can be a source of communication between the characters when language fails, and it can even create irreplaceable memories.

Salman's fondest memories with her father were from the time when she was twelve. They had moved to Saudi Arabia for a while and she had broken her leg there. Prior to that, Salman did not share a close relationship with her father. This is a common aspect seen in most Arab father-daughter relationships. While the mother is a friend and often involved, the father is slightly distant and is assumed to be strict, protective and dominating. However, at that time, during the weekly trips to the doctor, Salman and her father would stop at a fast food corner, and then at electronic store, book shop and a bakery. As soon as they arrived at the bakery, her father would raise three fingers and the guy would take out three huge round sheets of Arabic bread from the pit fire oven and pack it for them. It smelled so tempting that both of them would often end up eating the breads in the car itself, instead of sharing it with the family back home. Moreover, after the bakery, they would stop at their favourite street food vendor and pack shawarma and falafel from there for the family. On account of their shared likes and dislikes of food and the weekly trips in their car, Salman's bond with her father grew stronger, even without speaking much.

Often these memories of food evoke nostalgia and bind the immigrants not only to their families but to their cultural roots and ancestral homeland as well. This expression of immigrant nostalgia through food is also found in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. In the first page of the novel itself, the readers see Ashima standing in her kitchen in America trying to prepare an Indian street side snack by mixing rice krispies, planters peanuts, chopped red onion, salt, lemon and green chilli pepper in a bowl. It is an attempt by Ashima to satisfy her craving for "jhalmuri" as well as the familiar city of Kolkata. Donna R. Garcia, in *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans,* says,

> Psychologists tell us that food and language are the cultural traits humans learn first, and the ones that they change with the greatest reluctance. Humans cannot easily lose their accents when they learn new languages after the age of about twelve; similarly, the food they ate as children forever defines familiarity and comfort. (78)

The migrant parents partake everyday a sense of nostalgia along with the food they cook and they desire to transfer it to their next generations in the form of recipes or stories. It is with the intention of holding on to the old world or their culture. Hence, food is not only for eating but it also has its own ways of working as a mode of unification, diversification or resistance.

For the second generation migrants, food is a source of their link to the homeland. It "may elicit nostalgia to the extent that they shape preferences for food in adult life" (Lupton 49). However, growing up, with the exposure to a different cuisine outside the house, their definition of familiar or comfort food might change or at least expand. Salman, in fact says, "to this day, whenever I am in a strange land or city and I'm feeling out of sorts, I look for the familiar yellow arches of McDonald's, or the white-and-green mermaid logo of

Starbucks—and, as silly as it seems, I find it comforting" (31). She dedicates almost an entire chapter on McDonald's called "Land of the Free, Home of the Mcmuffins" where she discusses her attachment with McDonalds, an American food.

> When you're a six-year-old immigrant whose parents have moved you across the globe and you can't process that it's for your greater good and all you know is that your world is weird and you don't have any friends and everyone speaks funny but they look at *you* like you're the one speaking funny—it gets scary. But then you get to go to McDonald's and order a cheeseburger and hot, salty fries and everything seems fine. At least for a moment. (57)

Deborah Lupton in *Food, the Body and the Self* talks about how "humans' 'innate disposition' to certain types of food also fails to take into account the dynamic nature of food preferences and the tendency of humans to incorporate new tastes into their repertoire of foods deemed edible"(8). Thus, eventually, either due to accessibility or curiosity, the migrants tend to try the host country's cuisine. Salman's mother too starts buying fast food and giving it an Iraqi twist of her own. They would go to KFC and buy a bucket of chicken and sides and then eat half of the bucket and save the rest for the next meal. In the next meal, her mother would prepare an Arabic meal with the 'Colonel's chicken' mixed with zatar spices and then they would have it with saffron rice and tabouleh salad. Salman's mother even took a magazine subscription and started trying out new dishes and on almost every weekend, along with various Middle Eastern delicacies, she would prepare American dishes such as pineapple upside-down cake and ice cream sheet cake. Here the fusion of food does not only imply the mixing of food habits or choices but also the coming together of the old and the new, to create something different and unique. Food here acts as a metaphor for cultural negotiation.

The family's love for McDonald's was such that when they moved to Saudi Arabia for a brief period of time, the first thing they searched for was a McDonald's outlet. All Salman wanted were hamburgers, fries and ice cold coke. They were appalled when the taxi driver informed them that there was no McDonald's in Saudi Arabia. In order to pacify them, he kept saying that they have Beed Zahoot and he could take them there, to which Salman's brother yelled, "I DON'T WANT ZAHOOT!I WANT SOMETHING AMERICAN!" (54). Later it turned out that by Beed Zahoot the driver meant Pizza Hut. This attachment with American food shows how migrants, despite holding on to portions of their ancestral homeland, also create space for their new country, and actually start belonging there. For example, in Salman and her brother's case, Iraq is only in their memories or stories, but it is America where they had lived and grown up. Hence Iraq is the ancestral homeland but America is home for them.

However, even after the Salman family incorporated the American cuisine in their dietary habits, their native food still acted as a mode of demarcation between them and the Americans, creating "us" and "them". In fact, a wave of culinary nationalism existed in America during World War II when being American and being patriotic were also defined by eating habits. It was such that in 1940, the Home Economics Section of New York's Department of Welfare recommended and prepared a chart of what the immigrants should eat for breakfast, dinner and supper (Gabbacia 129). This was an attempt to homogenize the eating habits of the minorities and migrants, in order to make them assimilate and be "American." While these rules could not withstand subsequent waves of immigration in the country, and along with it, bunch of inclusive outlets offering diverse cuisines sprung up; the idea of the "other" and the fear of it still prevailed in several aspects.

Assimilation in a new country is hard in itself, and it can become harder when one's

food is also treated as foreign, along with name, complexion and accent. Salman imagines herself sitting with the popular American girls from her school and sharing pork egg rolls made by their mothers. However, in reality she is not welcomed in any group as her lunchbox contained laban, a liquid yogurt which tasted and smelled like sour milk. Hence a much loved Middle Eastern dish is immediately treated as inferior and "disgusting" in Ayser's new surrounding. A dish like laban does not conform to the idea of pure American identity and it disrupts the homogeneous eating habits. Also the mention of pork egg rolls by Salman is ironical in itself because being a Muslim, she does not consume pork. Thus the consumption of food is not outside cultural and religious conditioning and such food differences tend to exclude certain communities from the "right end of the table."

In this regard, the sociologists find the works of the structuralists, Claude Levi-Strauss and Mary Douglas, on food quite limiting. While Douglas says that Strauss expects to find universal food meanings common to all mankind (62), which is not exactly possible to achieve; her work "Deciphering a Meal" is also restrictive to some extent. Even though Douglas works on analysing categories and meanings of food and the social boundary system, it still confines to families and small homogenous societies. "While structuralism is insightful in describing static patterns in food preferences and habits, it has little explanation for change, human agency and the 'lived experience' of eating" (Mennell et al. 12). For instance, Mary Douglas elaborately explains how and why the Jews don't consume pork. However, while the Jews and Muslims are prohibited from having pork, she does not delve further into how the dynamics might change or affect them and their identity when they want to eat in a heterogeneous society, in this case, Salman wanting to eat with the popular Christian girls of her school.

Wenying Xu in *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*, writes, "Sharing food plays a central role in the formation of social groupings. In many cultures eating alone is an uncomfortable if not a shameful act. Solitary eating is often associated with loneliness, unpopularity, social isolation, unhealthy lifestyle or eating disorder." (3) In order to avoid alienation, Salman started being more cautious of what lunch she carried to school. Like all other immigrant kids, she eventually learned what to pack in a standard American lunchbox, in order to not get bullied. She relates an incident of another immigrant kid who was avoided at school for an entire half year only because she brought rice cakes to lunch. Salman would check her lunchbox on the way to school and if she found something such as her favourite dolma and beef kebab, she would anyway throw them away for the fear that those would be called "gross" by her classmates. She would then stay hungry for the entire day and survive on a bar of snickers until she reached home starving and weak. In high school, Salman developed a reverse coping mechanism where she would joke about herself before anyone else could. If her lunch somehow consisted of pickled turnips which one of her friends found "putrid, malodorous and abominable" (83), Salman would pretend that she was grossed out too. It was an attempt by Salman to fit in and "look normal" at school while also not telling her mother about these lunch incidents as Salman did not want to hurt her mother's sentiments, thus trying to balance her American life and Arab life. This also shows how an individual's consumption pattern helps in understanding the socio-cultural struggles of the individual.

Sahlins observes, "Food dealings are a delicate barometer, a ritual statement as it were, of social relations, and food is thus employed instrumentally as a starting, sustaining, or a destroying mechanism of sociability" (215). Here, the first case of microaggression

Salman faced also had its origin in food dealings, disrupting a small social structure. Salman's neighbours, the Packers were Mormons and they used to organize regular family dinners where their daughter Cara was allowed to invite friends. Cara's invitation to Salman enraged Cara's other friend, Debbie who was from an atheist family. While Salman loved this family where she felt welcomed and included for the first time in America, Debbi was of the opinion that Salman already had her own religion with its own "dinners and stuff" and hence she should not be having more of the Packers' homemade chicken and dumplings. Instead she should go back to where she "belonged". Debbie indirectly stated that Salman did not belong there with everyone else and was an outsider and that she should go back to her own country. This left Salman perplexed and she could not understand why it was not possible for her to explore traditions outside of her culture. This goes on to show that sometimes, even when an immigrant is accepting and wants to assimilate, they might be pushed away by members of the host community itself. The fear of the unknown, the "other" still persists, and this surfaces every now and then in the form of hate crimes, aggression or discrimination.

In an interview with *Disobedient Femmes*, on being asked what it was like to be a Muslim, Salman answered that she didn't visibly look like a Muslim and that now more dialogue and conversations were happening around that aspect as well. According to her, "earlier, people had one view of being a Muslim, you cover it up, you pray five times a day, you didn't drink, and you didn't eat pork, and various other things…", and these things were used as identity markers. However, in the recent times these ideas have changed considerably. Salman herself enjoys drinking wine even if consumption of alcohol is considered a sin in Islam. And yet she identifies herself as a part of the Muslim community. Due to incidents such as the Arab- Israeli war and the tragedy of 9/11, a negative connotation has been added to the identity of the Arab Americans, without understanding their side of the story. This memoir, which portrays the life of an Arab American family in a comic manner, is an example of how a culture is much beyond the stereotypes and people tend to create their own unique identity with changing times and broader perspectives.

Also, it can be seen that food preparation, consumption and eating behavioural patterns are subjective to individuals and these are associated with one's identity formation as well. Also, despite discrimination or acceptance, an immigrant tends to create a hybrid or globalized culture of food, expanding their culinary space; and this breaks the image of a homogeneous national identity.

To conclude, an immigrant might undergo a lot of changes in their lifetime, ranging from the language they mostly converse in, to their attire and even their ideologies. However, a major part of what they eat at home or their cuisine remains intact. Food might seem mundane or too ordinary, but food also signifies comfort and safety. For the immigrants who have left their homes behind, food often acts as the connecting link to their ethnicity, cultural practices and national past. At the most, they find a unique way to blend their ethnic food with American food like Salman's mother does, thus not only eating hybrid food but also creating a hybrid identity in the process. It is only through a lifetime of experiences and experiments Salman realizes that there is no wrong end or right end of the table and that she is not alone in what she feels. Indeed it is never about choosing one side or eating one cuisine, rather it is about accepting both and becoming comfortable in it, thus creating a unique identity of one's own.

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Trajectories of Holocaust Writing in Post-War America: 1940s – 2020s

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the trajectory of the Holocaust literary narrative in America from the post-war period to the present day. It locates the shift in methodology across three generations and evaluates the continuities and discontinuities of its narrative modes. Finally, it examines the ethical aspects of producing such literature and the persistent difficulties in keeping the Holocaust alive in public memory. The literature of the Holocaust is a literature of testimony and memorialization. It embodies both fact and fiction, the barriers between which occasionally intermingle (Ramras-Rauch 493). Yerushalmi remarked that more had been written on the Holocaust than on any other historical event in Judaism. Despite the diverse literary techniques, the modalities of Holocaust literature in the west were not concretized till the late 1970s.
Keywords: *Holocaust literature, Holocaust testimonies, postmemory*

The first wave of Holocaust literature was produced from the end of the 1940s by the survivors of the Holocaust themselves. Works such as Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* made use of a mimetic or realistic combination of fiction and memoir. The Italian writer and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi has given a poignant account of the year he spent as a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland in *If This Is a Man* (1947), which was published as *Survival in Auschwitz* in the United State**s**. The Second-generation Holocaust narratives, such as Phillip Roth's *Operation Shylock* foreground the necessity of survivor testimony in narrative fiction to keep the Holocaust from fading away from public memory (Dobozy 38). Saul Bellow's *The Bellarosa Connection* and *A Double Dying* stresses a phenomenological reading of the Holocaust through its survivors (Bach 78). While realism tended to be the dominant mode of survivor accounts, authors such as Aharon Appelfeld relied on allegory and allusion to depict the horrors of their experiences. In *Badenheim,* Appelfeld brings out the tension of invasion and survival on the eve of WW II through symbolism (Ramras-Rauch 498). Salomon Perel's *Europa Europa* and Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* attempted to break away from a documentary account of the Holocaust and introduce the problems of narrative representation of the genocide and its consequent trauma (Jarniewicz 641). German poet Paul Celan's "Death Fugue" and the novel *Fateless* by Hungarian author Imre Kertész portray the horrors of the Holocaust. Charlotte Delbo was a French writer whose literary narratives focus on dehumanization and her survival. Patrick Modiano confronts the guilt of the French government for the killings of Jews in *Dora Bruder*. Many third-generation authors writing in French have taken up the subject of WWII and the massacre of European Jewry since the publication of Modiano's *Dora Bruder.* Recent French-language narratives about the Holocaust include Jonathan Littell's

monumental novel *Les Bienveillantes* or *The Kindly Ones* (2006), Pierre Assouline's *La Cliente* (1998), Philippe Claudel's *Le Rapport de Brodeck* (2007), Fabrice Humbert's *L'Origine de la violence* (2009), Laurent Binet's debut novel, *HHhH* (2010), Arnaud Rykner's *Le Wagon* (2010), David Foenkinos's *Charlotte* (2014), etc. *Sarah's Key* (2006) is a historical fiction novel by Franco-British author Tatiana de Rosnay. The Holocaust is the central theme of the novel *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak and of *Beatrice and Virgil* by the non-Jewish author Yann Martel.

References to the Holocaust became a focal narrative theme in a wide range of literature, including novels, novellas, memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies, as the Holocaust became part of American consciousness. *The Painted Bird* (1965) by Jerzy Kosinsky and "The Shawl" (1980) by Cynthia Ozick both explicitly refer to a Holocaust setting: for Kosinsky, the villages and towns of central and eastern Europe, and for Ozick, a concentration camp. Alternatively, Holocaust fiction set in the United States, such as Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1969) and William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* (1979), revolves around a protagonist who is the survivor and is indelibly marked, physically and emotionally, by events that are both personal and isolating on the one hand, and part of a cultural history and identity on the other.

Authors who did not experience Nazi persecution, like Cynthia Ozick, have also written on the problem of depicting the horrors of the camps without trivializing the gravity of the Holocaust. In *The Shawl,* Ozick describes both the external factual and internal experiences of concentration camps in which the act of remembrance becomes parallel to directly witnessing the event (Bach 81). There is seldom discussion on literature from the "1.5 generation" – survivors who were barely old enough to either retain any memory of the Holocaust or fully comprehend its cruelty. Suleiman notes that the writing of these survivors is often characterized by "themes of unstable identity and psychological splitting, a preoccupation with absence, emptiness, silence, a permanent sense of loneliness and loss" (Suleiman 184). Raymond Federman's *The Voice in the Closet* explores the sudden arrest and disappearance of his entire family by the Nazis during the war. Federman employs surfiction, "a fictitious real discourse" (Keller 11) and instead of offering a linear story of surviving capture by the Nazis, presents an unpunctuated and fragmented account of when he had experienced it and when he was recounting it years later. According to Ted Pelton, "the narrator of *The Voice in the Closet* insists, due to the necessary evasions and elisions of narrative construction, that his story cannot be told" (Pelton 47). It is one of the early instances of Holocaust literature expressing the impact of trauma on memory and the difficulties of describing traumatic pasts in a coherent manner.

Testimonies have been the guiding methodology of Holocaust literature for the first two generations. Contemporary scholarship has shown that testimonies unburden the survivor and descendants of their traumatizing memories, prevent the Holocaust from debilitating from public memory and potentially prevent such catastrophes in the future (Kidron 444). However, survivor and descendant testimonies have been shaped to serve different functions for their respective generations. While testimonies transformed the survivor from a passive observer into an active custodian of collective memory, descendant memoirs and fiction emphasized the search for a ruptured connection to a past that was not directly their own (Kidron 445). Second-generation authors primarily focused on the transmission of the trauma from their survivor parents – a phenomenon that was seen as cultural more than individual experience (Grimwood 8). Carl Friedman's *Tralievader*

detailed a woman's struggle to understand her father's experiences of surviving the Holocaust because they lacked the common language to do so. Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* explores how the experiences of her parents affected her and also uncovers the perspectives of other children of survivors.

Second-generation witnesses and testimony differ according to the type of survivor household they were raised in. Yet, their general tendency is to "make sense" of the Holocaust and navigate through the trauma of growing up in survivor circles (Berger 13-15). The Holocaust itself is tangential in these works, although it serves as the pivot for the narratives (McGlothlin 44). The central theme explores the complicated relationship with emotionally distant yet overprotective parents due to their experiences in the concentration camps (Berger 36). Thomas Friedmann's *Damaged Goods*; Barbara Finkelstein's *Summer Long-a-Coming*; Art Spiegelman's *Maus*; Melvin J. Bukiet's *Stories of an Imaginary Childhood,* and *While the Messiah Tarries* and Thane Rosenbaum's *Elijah Visible* are some of the works that focus on the fractured relationship between their Jewish and American identities and a desire for revenge against Nazism (Berger 36-37). They are the generation of "postmemory" (Hirsch 105) who reconstruct their parent's unspeakable past through photographs, family histories, and memoirs to re-establish their connection to a living past and keep the significance of the Holocaust alive in the public consciousness.

The difficulty to articulate the Holocaust remains persistent with the socio-political obligation to the same. Kidron deliberates, "the absence of voice is understood as signaling psychologically maladaptive processes of avoidance and repression," and the 'silencing' of potential truth telling" (Kidron 443). Little has been explored about the phenomenological experience of the survivors as they recall these traumatic events. The same lacuna exists for the dialectical impact of this process on the immediate family (Kidron 444). Miller argues that "empathic identification with the victim" has been "the pre-eminent means of approaching and understanding the Holocaust" (Miller 45). There has been an attempt on the part of the third generation to reconnect with the difficult histories of the survivors. Grandchildren of survivors stress upon the role of school trips to Holocaust sites in the hopes of eking out any suppressed familial memory within them (Kidron 442). Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, and Nicole Krauss' *Forest Dark*, consist of a journey undertaken by the protagonists to trace back to the point of dislocation and trauma that has been blanketed in testimonial silence. In doing so, they often imagine parts of these histories by piecing together oral recollections, written accounts, photographs, and other things. Julie Orringer's *The Invisible Bridge* details the lives of Hungarian Jews who perished in the Holocaust, partly imagining and partly reconstructing them from actual victims and their family members (Aarons and Berger 78-79). David Grossman's *See Under: Love*, explores how Momik's identity is shaped by his parents' memories of 'Over There' and surviving the 'Nazi beast.' However, their reticence leaves Momik with little context to ascribe meaning to these memories, and his response is to imagine the 'Nazi beast' (Eaglestone 75). Joseph Skibell's *A Blessing on the Moon* utilizes magic realism and Jewish myth to visualize the fate of the author's murdered great-grandfather and several victims of the Holocaust (Grimwood 83). Hunter argues that "within cultural memory of the twentieth century, the Holocaust itself may have become a form of dark fairy-tale" (Hunter 60). Therefore, there has been a shift in the methodology of writing about the Holocaust from a purely testimonial authority

of survivors towards fiction that builds upon folk myths, fairy tales, and magic realistic tropes in "a narrative frame that fits with our mode of understanding (Hunter 73). The literary narratives of the third-generation Holocaust writers are indirect representations of the genocide. A number of themes and concerns run across these post-Holocaust literary portrayals. The third-generation Jewish American writers, for example, try to negotiate their diasporic identity while upholding the Jewish tradition. Their work frequently recalls events related to the Nazi extermination, but it also contrasts these allusions with various narrative techniques. The third-generation writers perceive the Holocaust indirectly and in relation to other significant historical events. In this regard, Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory" has shown new paths to Holocaust representations.

Holocaust testimonial literature narrates the agonies of the survivors and commemorates the lives lost. The testifying self is incapacitated, yearning to forget the harrowing incident and longing to recount the traumatic memory, which requires a trip back in time. Though dissociated from the trauma of the Holocaust, the succeeding generation of writers attempts to depict the event to preserve the memory. The shift from a historically faithful account of the Holocaust was facilitated by the postmodern turn and the problematization of the difference between history and fiction. Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra have paved the way in decentralizing the concept of objectivity or transparency in any narrative, be it literary or historical. The emergence of memory studies with respect to the Holocaust has become an indispensable tool in contemporary Holocaust literature. Eaglestone suggests, "Memory and memoro-politics are key in all these intersections of personal and communal identity. Memory is a part of everyday existence, not simply a space for backward-looking reverie" (Eaglestone 76-77). Halbwachs considered history and historiography inclusive of memory where collective memory was partial and particular to each group (Assmann 99). Assmann argues that collective memories have limits and boundaries of representation. To dissolve these boundaries is to dissolve both the identity and the memory (Assmann 98-99). Recent literature like Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million* engages in a dialogical relationship with the memory of the survivors to close the generational distance between themselves and the direct witnesses of the Shoah (Remington 5). Literature around the Holocaust continues to be a swiftly evolving and dialectical process with several continuities and discontinuities. It reflects the concerns of every new generation as the custodians of its memories and galvanizes the history of the Holocaust against the tides of oblivion.

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End Notes

[i] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi as cited in, Alan L. Berger and Gloria L. Cronin, Introduction in Alan L. Berger and Gloria L. Cronin (ed) Jewish American and Holocaust Literature: Representation in the Postmodern World, State University of New York Press, New York, 2004, p 3.
[ii] Raymond Federmand described Surfiction as a "kind of fiction that tries to explore the possibilities of fiction, challenges the tradition that governs it".

[iii]Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.

[iv]Multidirectional Memory (2009) offers an argument concerning Holocaust remembrance in a global era by putting it in the context of decolonization..

 Annabel Herzog states that the memory of the Holocaust consists of "two kinds of pasts" memorial (narrated history) and immemorial (that can neither be remembered nor narrated").

Reliving Auschwitz: A Study of Jewish Identity in Primo Levi's Testimonies

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Abstract

The Holocaust has redefined the identity of many Jewish survivors. The Nazis regime put forth its best effort to destroy human values by treating the Jews less than animals so that the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust struggled for existence even after the atrocious event. Primo Levi, an Italian Holocaust survivor, has described his holocaust experience in his works that reflect the struggle for survival. Through his works and several interviews, he tells how the Auschwitz experience changed his life. This paper aims to re-read If This Is a Man and his other testimonies to discuss the various factors that made the survivors struggle for their identity. This paper will also examine the helplessness delineated in the victims psyche. Levi's struggle in a doomed civilization under a fascist government, bereft of ethics or empathy, as documented in his works and interactions, acts as a key catalyst in conceptualizing the identity of post-Auschwitz Jews. Levi's If This is a Man discusses the deprivation of fundamental human rights. This book mentions that one cannot question Why? in Auschwitz. This paper will also attempt to explore the human relationship among the captives formed inside the concentration camp and how it helped in offering hope to survive Auschwitz.
Keywords: Holocaust, Jewish Identity, Auschwitz, Primo Levi, Nazi

Introduction

This paper attempts to make an in-depth observation of the state of an individual's identity inside the concentration camp during the Holocaust. Levi's *If This is a Man* gives a working definition of the conflicting identity of the captives inside Auschwitz. It is a known historical fact that Holocaust or Nazi propaganda made a terrifying impact on the captives' lives. The Auschwitz experience affected the captives who survived it and that of the third generation of holocaust survivors. The popularization of antisemitic ideology in Europe was one of the root causes of the Holocaust. Race scientists like Fritz Lenz and Eugene Fischer have observed and appropriated Jewish identities' physical and genetic features, such as a large or sharp nose, to recessive genes, which subjected to form the "Jewish Question" (20). Later, the Jews were accused of overpowering the world by negating the social and political norms. As a result, anti-semitism became political, and towards the end of the 19th century, Jews were accused of holding good economic and social positions. Marion Berghahn's book *German Jewish Refugees* in England talks about the antisemitic regulations that prevailed in German. She states:

Anti-Jewish hostility - always present in German social and political life in varying

degrees - finally broke through to the surface in the 1920 and 1930 when it developed into the major political force. After the deceptive 'Golden Age of Security' which German Jews had enjoyed during the period before World War I, they were rudely shaken out of their dream of progressive integration and, ultimately, full acceptance by the majority society." (Berghahn, 47)

In Primo Levi's *The Voice of Memory*, he states that "the Jew is the nonbeliever the foreigner nor even the usurer; instead the Jew is platonic idea, a transcendent source of infection, the eternal enemy" (Levi, 181). Primo Levi was a holocaust survivor who faced anti-semitism even before the racial law promulgated in 1938 under the governance of Benito Mussolini. Levi's Holocaust testimony provides the reader with a first-hand insight into the horrifying experience of Auschwitz. It helps the reader gain a profound understanding of the inhumanity of some human beings against their fellow human beings. Being a chemist by profession, his writings reflect a rational and scientific approach to understanding the fundamental nature of humanity. *If This Is a Man*, read as a memoir, has been acknowledged as one of the greatest works of Holocaust literature. This paper re-examines the dehumanizing experience that the Jewish captives went through in Auschwitz and their struggle to re-establish their identity in its aftermath, as depicted in Levi's *If This Is a Man*.

Levi's radical thinking sometimes made the readers question whether he had already forgotten his horrendous experience, to which he replies, "my personal temperament is not inclined to hatred… I have never cultivated within myself hatred as a desire for revenge, or as a desire to inflict suffering on my real or presumed enemy, or as a private vendetta … I repress hatred even within myself: I prefer Justice" (185-186). Levi's ideology has remained unmatched due to his radical thinking, and he is often compared with other Holocaust writers such as Ellie Weissel and Jean Amery. Levi stands out among holocaust writers due to his insignificant reasoning and rationality.

Levi and his Jewish Identity

Primo Levi portrays himself as a man of reason, and he came to understand the value of being Jewish only after his Auschwitz experience. Levi was less orthodox than other Holocaust writers like Jean Amery and Elie Wiessel. He started learning Yiddish[i] only after the Holocaust. Levi experienced anti-Semitism in the early part of his life when Mussolini passed the racial law in Italy in September 1938. Regardless of the politics of rejection that was quickly developing, Levi's portrayal of his Jewish identity has a nostalgic tone; he inspires, for instance, his bar mitzvah[ii] at age thirteen, an occasion that signifies a muddled image of fast learning of tradition and custom and, for some Jews, it was a quickly forgotten instance. However, his depiction, honest and delightful on a superficial level, retells an irrelevant contrasting side. Jews of Levi's era were powerfully impacted by an optimistic account concerning the new secularism, mainly Italian Jewish identity created in 1860 that marked the ascent of the fascist regime. This left Levi's generation unguarded against the new laws supporting the fascist government. Also, after the establishment of anti-semitic laws, they considered themselves an integral part of it. When asked about his Jewish identity in an interview, he mentioned that he was a middle-class Italian boy who was turned into a Jew by others. The experience of the Race Laws helped me to recognize, amongst the many threads that made up the Jewish tradition, a number that I could accept" (Levi, 262). The Italian Jewish community was considered less orthodox, which is where Levi grew up. Levi understood about the essence of Talmudic traditions after his Auschwitz experience. Levi embraced and molded his Jewish identity and matured the specific character of Italian

Jewishness in him (Harrowitz, 21).

    While discussing Levi's Jewish roots, Nancy Harrowitz, in her book *Primo Levi and the Identity of a Survivor*, writes:

> This is the true and the most authentic Jewish background of Levi's personality … [these pages] constitute that cultural, daily Judaism that is, without solution of continuity, Levi's Jewish identity." (Harrowitz, 30)

The Jewishness of Levi's cultural identity presents specific challenges: How does being aggrieved as a Jew give Jewish identity, and what are the consequences of such an identity formation? What does 'a genuine religious conviction' have to do with the reality of persecution? While conversing with Ferdinand Camon, when Levi was asked if he was a believer, he responded that he was not and has never been. He would like to be one but cannot imagine it at the same time. Further, Camon carefully asserts his Jewishness, pointing out his unorthodox nature regarding Jewish beliefs and religion. Levi remarked regarding his Jewish identity, he says:

> A purely cultural fact. If not for the racial laws and the concentration camp, I probably would no longer be a Jew, except for my last name. Instead, this dual experience, the racial laws and the concentration camp, stamped me the way you stamp a steel plate: At this point, I am a Jew, they've seen the star of David on me and not only on my clothes. (Harrowitz, 38)

Identity and Experience

    Paula M L Moya, in her book, *Reclaiming Identity Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, says identity remains one of the most urgent—as well as hotly disputed—topics in literary and cultural studies. For nearly two decades, it has been a central focus of debate for psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, and cultural materialist criticism in areas ranging from postcolonial and ethnic studies to feminism and queer theory (1). In theory, proposed by Tajfel and Turner, Social Identity is defined as a group membership such as class, race, gender, etc.,which serves as a source of pride for the individual belonging to it (Turner, 518). The group itself gives a sense of social belonging. Group identification sometimes leads to racial destruction, and a notable example is the mass genocide of the Jewish race during the Holocaust.

    The importance of communication to survive the death camp was a massive challenge for the captives. Language lacked words and could not express the gravity of the offense (Levi, 26). As the captives were from all different parts of Europe and the perpetrators spoke only German, it was hard for the captives to communicate. The treatments received by the captives were inhuman and they believed that they "have reached the bottom." Levi describes his Auschwitz experience and tells how the captives were denied their basic needs. He says:

> Nothing belongs to us anymore; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they would not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand. They will even take away our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains. (26)

The captives use different types of tactics to survive 'the selection.' The selection was a ruthless process of ethnic cleansing propaganda of the Nazis. The captives indulged in stealing and other minor activities, which seem improper but considered from a captive's perspective; it was a way to survive. The idea of right and wrong does not seem to exist anymore inside Auschwitz. Levi describes the unimaginable circumstances that he and his inmates faced in the book as prisoners inside the camp. Levi writes:

> Let thousands of individuals, differing in age, condition, origin, language, culture and customs, be enclosed within barbed wire, and there be subjected to a regular, controlled life which is identical for all and inadequate for all needs. No one could have set up a more rigorous experiment to determine what is inherent and what is acquired in the behaviour of the human-animal faced with the struggle for life. (82)

Levi had kept a hold on his humanity until his liberation. The main reason for survival in Auschwitz was because of strong resistance. The understanding of humanity is exemplified in his writings, where he writes:

> He will be a man whose life or death can be lightly decided with no sense of human affinity, in the most fortunate of cases, on the basis of a pure judgment of utility. It is in this way that one can understand the double sense of the term "extermination camp," and it is now clear what we seek to express with the phrase: "to lie on the bottom." (Levi, 27)

Primo Levi, towards the end of his life, made a disturbing remark in an essay "Vergogna" (Shame)" from his collection *The Drowned and the Saved*, published in 1986. His discussion of witness writing in this work reflects the idea of shame-shame of surviving. Supporting this argument, Harrowitz also wrote:

> As the phenomenon of shame is a concern strongly linked both to survivor identity and to the giving of testimony, any discussion of his views on witnessing and testimony must also take into account his polemical views on this topic. Levi himself, as we shall see, directly links testimony to shame through his articulation on the most appropriate witnesses of the Shoah. (108)

The horrendous experience formed the identity of Jewish Men inside Auschwitz. Psychologist David Shapiro asserts the reason for delving into shame by the holocaust survivors in *Primo Levi and the Identity of a Survivor*:

> "When Levi speaks of the irrationality of shame in this connection, he is speaking of people who of their own choice have done little or nothing to be ashamed of, but on the contrary have suffered the shameful acts of others. It is true that they have been forced to endure experiences or perform actions that in themselves might be considered shameful. (112)

The experiences of the captives were forced upon them, and they had to endure the violence against them, which resulted in mental trauma and shame. The shame later let them take their own lives even after surviving Auschwitz. Levi's controversial death is also debated whether he had taken his own life or it was an accident.

Assimilated Jew

In one of his conversations, Ellie Wiesel defined assimilation as a means to give up the heritage. In his vocabulary, it is to change everything, including the name, religion, and tradition. Turin, where Levi was born, is located in the northern part of Italy. The Jewish community, including Levi's family, was heavily influenced by Catholicism. Dissecting Levi's Jewish ideology from Weisel's statement, Levi was already assimilated before his Auschwitz experience. Levi became an assimilated Jew owing to his Jewish heritage and later because of his scientific reasoning. But later in life, when he was identified as a chemist and a writer, he tried and succeeded in connecting his Jewish roots and even learned Yiddish. He also commented on the contemporary issues relating to the Zionist movement and Israel.

Levi tries to explain that they were treated the same inside the camp, no matter where

they came from and what identity they had. Primo Levi had a significant change in his awareness of his Jewishness in Auschwitz. He came to feel Jewish in the same way as he felt being a male. He said that he was three-fourths Italian but emphasized the other one-fourth. He said he was in favour of mixtures and impurities. He wrote in *The Periodic Table*, "The grain of impurity which makes the reaction go." Who says he wasn't aware of his Jewishness? Primo had another reason for favouring impurity. Thomson wrote:

> for a country to become racist, it must be compact, tend to make a massive block of itself, uniform, manoeuvrable." That happened in Germany with Hitler, but it didn't happen in Italy, for the sole reason that the difference between a Piedmontese and a Calabrese is too great (68-69).

Levi narrated his personal story, but, at the same time, he tried his best to provide the reader with compiled data of experience. 'Assimilated Jew' is a widely used term by Levi in his writings. The most prominent example of this term is discussed in the chapter *Ka-Be*[iii] in *If This Is a Man.* Levi writes:

> He is Null Achtzehn. He is not called anything but that, Zero Eighteen, the last three figures of his entry number: as if everyone were aware that only a man is worthy of a name, and that is Null Achtzehn is no longer a man. (40)

Levi also mentioned the struggle faced by the captives inside the camp. They were nothing but 'a being' struggling for survival every single moment. Talking about survival, Levi remembers his best friend, Alberto. He writes:

> He is sustained by intelligence and intuition. He reasons correctly; often he does not even reason but its right just the same … he fights for his life but remains everybody's friend. He "knows" whom to corrupt, whom to avoid, whose compassion to arouse and resist. (55)

Levi has always been known for his rationality and reasoning, as he is a man of science. His position as an assimilated Jew is one of the reasons for his rationality. He grew up in a non-orthodox Jewish society in Turin, where many Catholics were among them. It is recorded in his biography that it was the hardest for Levi when the Jewish identity was enforced upon him rightly after the racial law. He was not an Italian but a Jew, "this adjustment was for those Jews who had felt the most assimilated" (Thomson, 88). Levi was assimilated even before his Auschwitz journey. However, Levi's narrative highlights familiarity with Jewish history and faith. Therefore, Levi got assimilated before his Auschwitz experience and after Auschwitz. First, identified as a Jew and not an Italian and later as a captive each of them was identified with the numbers engraved on their arm or with terms such as *Halfing*[iv] or *Musselmaan.*[v]

Conclusion

All the captives had an individual identity before Auschwitz: they had a name; they were titled as a father, son, husband, etc. They had their profession, and their dignity was maintained and preserved. Still, after entering the camp, they were categorized only with a German term, that is *Halfling* or *Musselman* and only identified by the number tattooed on their arms. The captives in the Lager were reduced to numbers and nothing else, of which, Levi writes:

> I have learnt that I am Hälfling. My number is 174517; we have been baptized; we will carry the tattoo on our left arm until we die. (27)

In the case of Null Achtzen, Levi and other captives carried different identities inside the camp. This discussion analyses two aspects: one as a Jewish and another as a survivor.

The Jewish identity became more intact after surviving Auschwitz. And as a survivor, Levi faced a lot of mental trauma. He says the ones who have died are the heroes. After surviving this horrendous episode, Levi and other survivors gained a whole new identity, not only identified as 'survivors' but inclined themselves towards their roots. Through their testimonies and being vocal against the Nazi crimes, the Jewish captives gained a new identity. The writings of Levi shed light on some complex issues relating to Auschwitz's philosophy and psychology. Levi owns the Enlightenment custom and the manners in which his life seriously tested his past creed in the death camp. The experience of confinement in the camp compelled him to reconsider and change. He, however, does not disavow his past perception of being a human, which leads him to describe the captives of the camp as animals. Distinguishing the deep-rooted tension between these classifications and the inclusion of the present perception within the former, Levi shows that the Nazi's extermination of their captives was carried out through a systematic cycle of dehumanization by intentionally reducing them to a state of animals and exploiting their labour until their final execution.

Notes

[i] a language is widely spoken by the Jewish community
[ii] a customary ritual for Jewish boys
[iii] an infirmary inside Auschwitz Buna
[iv] German words meaning Prisoners
[v] a term used by the perpetrators to describe the weak and inept

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The Mosaic Self: Carving Spaces and Defining Identity
in Philip Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*

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Abstract

This paper titled 'The Mosaic Self: Carving Spaces and Defining Identity in Philip Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient*' undertakes a postmodern reading of* The English Patient*. It aims at understanding the individual's postmodern identity through the despondent lives of the four protagonists—Hana, Caravaggio, Kip and the English patient. The fragmented narratives and the characters break the existing dominant discourse of both the historic and the personal, especially through intertextuality. The paper studies the fragmentation gaining an insight into the grief experienced by the protagonists. The paper explores how the landscape serves as a medium of expression reflecting the scattered postmodern identity. The paper constructs the postmodern identity examining the displacement underwent by the characters, their responses and eventual reconciliation with their selves.*
Keywords: *postmodernism, identity, fragmentation, displacement, metanarratives, intertextuality, post colonialism, the Other.*

Postmodernism was often characterized as a condition of the society that encouraged radical questioning mostly in an era beyond modernity. Jean-François Lyotard in his *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), posits the postmodern as an anti-authoritarian, flexible, inclusive condition that rejects the supremacy of the 'grand narratives.' Instead, according to Lyotard, the eclectic, fragmented multiplicity of the 'local narratives' are embraced. Postmodernism advocates learning, unlearning and relearning the world we live in. It demands that we open ourselves to all probabilities. Though it lacks a concrete definition and epistemological coherence, postmodernism encourages scepticism and subjectivity in all walks of life. This fondness for questioning, critiquing and simultaneously, the readiness to accept the authenticity of realities, renders the postmodern thought as an advocate of plurality. The 'postmodern' is inclusive of theoretical concepts like intertextuality (parody, pastiche), self-reflexivity, fabulation, irony, temporal distortions, magical realism, historiographic metafiction etc. that blurs and blends multiple, contesting genres together. The postmodern influence is visible across many dimensions—literature, cinema, philosophy, art, architecture etc. to name a few.

The English Patient: A Vortex of Disjointed Tales

Michael Ondaatje's life scattering across Ceylon, England and Canada is a testament to the postmodern temper and the nouveau identities he had constructed in his works. As he says, "I am a mongrel of place. Of race. Of cultures. Of many genres" (Ondaatje,

"Interview"). Ondaatje's writings are concerned with migrations, complexities of individual identities, human entanglement with history, et cetera. An acclaimed poet, Ondaatje's prose fiction is rich and lyrical. He established himself as a novelist with the Booker Prize-winning *The English Patient* (1992), later adapted into an Academy Award-winning movie in 1996. In the novel, he maps the intricate intersection created by the postcolonial and the postmodern, touching upon his usual themes. Much like his protagonist Almásy, Ondaatje refrains from restricting himself from being the "representative of a country" (Ondaatje, "Interview").

Michael Ondaatje in his *The English Patient* (hence *TEP*) weaves together the lives of four damaged individuals—Hana, a Canadian nurse; Caravaggio, the thief turned spy and Hana's friend; Kip, the Sikh bomb diffusing agent; and Almásy, the unnamed burn victim identified as the English patient. In a twisted turn of events they are united at the villa, San Girolamo, in Italy. They harbour within themselves ghosts of their pasts which they persistently try to hide. However, these narratives struggle against one another, their tales convulse and segue into one another creating a constantly fluctuating vortex at the centre of Ondaatje's text, testifying that he "is a poet with a mythic imagination and this novel unfolds in prose of such breathtaking lyric and muscular beauty that the reading of it becomes almost a physical experience" (Battersby).

The novel is overtly intertextual with many excerpts from Herodotus' *Histories*, Kipling's *Kim*, Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Rebecca*, *Anna Karenina* which complete Ondaatje's narrative and "become mirrors of the characters' mutilated identity, inscribed with history's debris and its ruins" (Hilger). Thus, Ondaatje explicates that intertextuality "is a method of reading one text against another that illuminates shared textual and ideological resonances; the assertion that all texts and ideas exist within a fabric of relations" (Clippinger 190). The allusions to *Histories* play a decisive and constructive role in the narrative, providing a postcolonial dimension to the text. Ondaatje acknowledges *Histories* as one of the primary sources of his narrative. Incidentally, *The English Patient* owes it wavering vortex-like structure to the *Histories*.

Ondaatje's text mirrors the *Histories* in casually leaping back and forth in time in a nonlinear narrative that often digresses or shifts into anecdote. The English patient's copy of the *Histories*, with its collage of quotations and images, reflects the manner in which Herodotus' work is constructed from the accounts of witnesses from around the world. (*Histories*).

This paper aims at studying Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992) as a manifestation of postmodern identity principally through Kirpal Singh. *The English Patient* displays most of the postmodern tendencies, predominantly, it blurs the factors that usually demarcate the historic from the fictitious. Here, the study examines the role of the landscape in the text and juxtaposes it against the postmodern individual. The paper concludes gauging how each character reacts to the displacement they suffer and reconcile with their self.

Kirpal Singh: A Medley of Differences

Kirpal Singh or Kip was a "young man of the strangest profession his century had invented, a sapper, a military engineer who detected and disarmed mines" (*TEP*). Kip was an extraordinary creation of the postcolonial world. Through him Ondaatje embodies 'the Other.' Contour lines demarcating nationality are smudged in the case of Kip. He is originally the second son of a large Sikh family who breaks an old tradition of his family "The oldest son would go into the army, the next brother would be a doctor" (*TEP*). He is trained to be a

sapper. to serve the English Army in the Second World War, under the tutelage of Lord Suffolk in Woolwich. Despite unfavourable popular opinion, the self-possessed Kip chooses Lord Suffolk as he believed "in a war you have to take control, and there was a greater chance of choice and life alongside a personality or an individual" (*TEP*).

Kip was the last to join the incongruous group of four at the villa San Girolamo. Kip finds himself a part of the fraternity while serving the Allied forces in Italy. He is easily accepted by the other inhabitants of the villa. He is extremely self-sufficient, private, easily satisfied and finds solace in his 'can of condensed milk'. Later, Kip recollects that his reticence was a carefully chosen habit. Ondaatje recalls, "He was accustomed to his invisibility. In England he was ignored in the various barracks, and he came to prefer that… It was as much a result of being the anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world". During the course of his stay he and Hana develops feelings for each other forging a tender, affectionate bond.

Despite the anti-colonial ideological schooling of his brother, Kip was a vanguard of cultural tolerance. He was a reasonable human being who earnestly compromised to avoid confrontation. His brother believed that he "had the trick of survival, of being able to hide in silent places" (*TEP*). Kip benefitted from this silent, invisible existence. The sapper's cultural tolerance was palpable. During the Marine Festival of the Virgin Mary, he ponders upon the tenderness on the face of Virgin Mary's statue, finding a strange sense of peace and comfort in her presence. He feels that she "looked more like someone he knew. A sister. Someday a daughter" (*TEP*). A similar softness reverberated within his personality. His thoughtfulness and sensitivity enables him to reflect light into the otherwise grim life of Hana. He indulges her with tales of his past and his land. He guides her through the shrines of his Gurudwara, instilling hope. "He knows the depth of darkness in her, her lack of a child and of faith. He is always coaxing her from the edge of her fields of sadness. A child lost. A father lost" (*TEP*). Therefore, Kirpal Singh is a beacon of hope amongst the disillusioned lives in San Girolamo. At this juncture, it can be established that Kirpal Singh is an accurate manifestation of the postmodern identity. A soldier with a diversified national consciousness and a simplified view of life and patriotism. An unprejudiced, forbearing man who practices a jovial, calculated, encompassing demeanour: Kirpal Singh is the epitome of postmodern inclusivity.

The bloody carnage that blew the towns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to smithereens, however, thoroughly disconcerts the sapper. This crime against humanity disillusions his spirit of inclusivity hitherto projected. His helplessness angers him and turns him against everything of the occident origin. "Now his face is a knife…seeing everything, all those around him, in a different light. Night could fall between them, fog could fall, and the young man's dark brown eyes would reach the new revealed enemy" (*TEP*). Antagonizing the West with good reason, Kirpal Singh embraces his brother's ideologies and leaves behind the minuscule life he had built at the villa. He returns to India, becomes a doctor, honouring the traditions of his family.

Unlike the obvious plurality of the English Patient's identity, Kip finds himself in a subtly fragmented manner. Kip is often juxtaposed against Almásy and acts as a foil for Almásy's erased identity. The obvious brownness of his skin and the turban worn by Kip establishes him as an Indian, however, the acquired English accent of the burnt Hungarian patient mistakenly renders him the 'English patient'. Almásy very fondly refers to the pair of them as 'international bastards'. "Kip and I are both international bastards – born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere. Fighting to get back to or get away from our homelands all our lives" (*TEP*).

Shattering the Metanarratives

Postmodernism rejects all the existing absolute, historical truths and exhibits a strong "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv). The postmodern thought structure establishes these 'grand' or 'metanarratives' as a mechanism to direct and control the existing knowledge systems. Both Kip and Almásy denounce the grand narrative of identity. All the protagonists are characterized by "their tendency to submerge their individual identities in those of other people" (Cook 121). The learned explorer, Almásy was a man who had willingly enmeshed within himself the diverse literature and cultures he has been exposed to. He says "I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states" (*TEP*). As the unidentified English Patient he becomes the canvas on to which the others projected their own conclusions "to fill the gaps in his identity in order to make sense of their own lives" (Hilger). Almásy refuses to acknowledge a rigid identity and embraces the fluidity and anonymity offered by the accident to escape from the clutches of his disturbing, guilt-ridden past. "Because of the grief he feels for Katharine and Maddox, for his betrayals of friendship and love, he is determined to collapse all distinctions of time and space and personal identity, to dissolve the present totally in the past" (Cook 114).

Kirpal Singh, on the other hand, assimilates into his sapper identity for the sake of survival in a colonial nation. He was baptized as Kip simply because the butter smeared on his paper at camp was alleged to be Kipper grease. "He had no idea what a kipper was, but the young Sikh had been thereby translated into a salty English fish. Within a week…Kirpal Singh, had been forgotten" (*TEP*). The slow erasure of his identity was a result of the careless treatment of 'the oriental Other'. Their services to the English Nation had rendered them 'international bastards' by choice further alienating them from the concept of identity. However, through a strategic shift in narration, a desolate Kip snatches back his original name after the bombings in Japan.

Through Kirpal Singh Ondaatje successfully breaks the romanticized image of a masculine soldier. Unlike popular expectations, Kip is very relatable with flexible notions of nationality and patriotism. He finds solace in the tenderness exuded by the image of Virgin Mary, the Archangels' and in cans of condensed milk. Hana often describes him as the 'warrior saint'. Unlike the portrayal of rigorously patriotic soldiers in mainstream literature, Kip is the face of cultural tolerance and benevolent humanism. He is a source of genuine comfort for the inmates of the villa and assumes the role of a healer in the aftermath of the war. Ondaatje also crumbles the idealized notion of love as a constructive force. Kip and Hana forges a traumatic, fragile bond of love which eventually ends with no closure for the pair. The universally accepted courtship procedures are largely absent in the narrative. Moreover, the affair between Almásy and Katherine proves terribly destructive and culminates in death. Here, love blends cultures, transgresses nations, political structures, erases identities and awards nameless, anonymous deaths in caves and deserts. Almásy recognizes the enslaving force and warns "To fall in love and be disassembled" (*TEP*).

Role of the Landscape

The geography of the landscape in *The English Patient* brilliantly reflects the inexplicable helplessness, alienation and fragmentation suffered by its characters who for Ondaatje "disappeared into the landscape". The villa, San Girolamo, like the novel is not a monolithic structure. It brings together people of different cultural, national backgrounds

where one life seeps into the next. It was "an old nunnery, taken over by the Germans, then converted into a hospital after the Allies had laid siege to it. In the hills north of Florence. Most of it torn apart by bombing" (*TEP*). In a world favouring grand structures, the villa stands symbolic of a petite narrative that the characters have written for themselves—an all-inclusive niche. Like its suffering inhabitants the villa is also 'in near ruins'. Hana's books and Almásy's memory were both compared to the villa, where "Some rooms could not be entered" (*TEP*). San Girolamo is a space carved by these shattered souls as a protest against the world. However, the bombings in Japan completely ruins it significance. "The atomic bomb forcefully reconstructs the binary which the characters have gradually and painfully deconstructed in an attempt to emerge from their solipsism. The world of the Villa San Girolamo is destroyed as the outside world breaks in" (Hilger).

The elusive desert, Zerzura, Almásy's Muse represents the fluidity of identities as it "could not be claimed or owned" (*TEP*). "Geography is not only introduced through maps, cartographie instruments, detailed descriptions of winds, but also through the metaphorical meanings of maps and through a composite imagery of the desert" (Comellini). Like the unchartered Libyan desert, Almásy too remains unidentified till the climax. The ambiguously territorialized desert mirrors the obscurity in mapping and identifying the German spy, Almásy. He says "after ten years in the desert, it was easy for me to slip across borders, not to belong to anyone, to any nation" (*TEP*). The desert escapes definition like the four protagonists of the story. It refuses to conform to the traditional notions of identity and territory. The desert acts as an equalizer. Almásy pertinently recollects "In the desert it is easy to lose a sense of demarcation" (*TEP*).

Conclusion

Seeking asylum at the dilapidated San Girolamo, the four protagonists mend themselves. Their lethargic existence finds meaning and direction. Almásy finds closure in death and Kip embraces Kirpal Singh whilst Caravaggio and Hana liberate themselves. Through constant symbiosis they reconcile with themselves and their troubling pasts. "This view, that identity is in fact communal and composite, a product of cumulative inscription and sedimentation, is one that . . . echoes through the experience of all its characters" (Cook 120). The disillusionment seeping in the post-war era has broadened the horizon of thought rendering singular identity a luxury. Ondaatje's "fragments become centrally important in dealing with questions of identity" (Hilger). Ondaatje writes, seeing "the streets of Asia full of fire . . . the personal will forever be at war with the public."

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Literary Symbolism of Mountain in Paulo Coelho's *The Fifth Mountain*

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Abstract

Paulo Coelho's works are known for their symbols and mystical elements. Coelho's The Fifth Mountain details the troublesome life of prophet Elijah, associating the same with a mountain. While Coelho retold a story from the 900 BCs connecting it to present-day topics, this paper closely analyses how mountains symbolise temple, transcendence, and the face of God, including other mystical elements in The Fifth Mountain. The essay further explores how mountains paved the way for a mystical progression in Elijah's life, making him undergo the three stages of self-development - purgation, illumination and unification - to attain self-realisation.
Keywords: Fiction, Paulo Coelho, Symbols, Mountain, Prophet, Mysticism

Introduction

Mountains are known for their height, beauty and grandeur. They have always been a subject of talk in the arts and science. The qualities of a mountain attract human beings to enjoy its existence. The Mountains later turned into hubs of adventure, where human beings tested their skills and courage. One of the most significant elements on earth, Mountains, are also used as symbols in literary works. While symbolism means using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning (Chandel 31), mountains as symbols are now popular among various art forms. According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols* (2008):

> Mountain symbolism takes many forms derived from height and centre. As mountains are tall, lofty, rising abruptly to meet the heavens, they form part of the symbolism of transcendence. They are often numinous places where the gods have revealed their presence and hence share in the symbolism of manifestation (680).

One of the many writers who used mountains as a symbol is Paulo Coelho de Souza. Known as Paulo Coelho, the Brazilian author emerged in a literary scenario in 1995 after getting his bestseller *The Pilgrimage* translated from Portuguese to English. Coelho's use of symbolism mainly lies around mystical symbols, as he tries to present his philosophy in a simple and lucid language. A majority of Coelho's works, including *The Alchemist* and *The Pilgrimage,* put forward symbols connoted through the idea of self-realisation. Both the protagonists and readers use them to go forward in their personal lives. As every novel of Paulo Coelho is rooted in different cultural contexts, the kinds of symbols he uses also vary in his works. His use of a Mountain as a symbol gains prominence in the novel *The Fifth Mountain*.

First published in 1996, Coelho's philosophical fiction *The Fifth Mountain* revolves

around a Mountain and narrates the story of prophet Elijah. Elijah had to flee his hometown to reach Akbar. He finds shelter in the house of a widow and later gains fame through his miraculous deeds, such as raising the dead and healing the sick. As fate devoured Elijah with many hardships later, Coelho associated the story from the 900s B.C. to present-day topics, including political refugeeism, existential nervousness, alienation and faith crisis.

Mountain as a Symbol

The novel associated mountains with places of worship, considering them the home of Gods. However, "The Fifth Mountain" plays several roles in the novel other than a temple. It decorates the title of the book and the structure of the story.

The protagonist Elijah believed in one single God, whose voice was heard through angels. When Elijah fled from his homeland Lebanon fearing queen Jezebel, he found shelter in Akbar's neighbouring town. A lady he met believed that a God named "Baal" lived on top of the Fifth Mountain. She also thought that the Gods on top of those mountains were responsible for the peace that prevailed in Akbar throughout years and generations. The lady's belief depicts how mountains act as a symbol of a temple in the minds of the people of Akbar. Coelho then points out how fear is used to blind the faith of the inhabitants of Akbar. The people were forced to believe that climbing the Fifth Mountain would invite the wrath of the Gods, making the climb dangerous and forbidden. The prayers to the Gods on the Mountain were said at the foot of the Mountain with sacrifices. When people of Akbar started to believe that Elijah brought wrath of the Gods of the Fifth Mountain, highest priest of Akbar asked Elijah to climb the Fifth Mountain and seek forgiveness from Gods living up there. However, the priest's primary intention was to kill Elijah in the name of God, as death was already sentenced upon the prophet in the priest's mind long before.

Elijah climbed and returned from The Fifth Mountain without harming himself. He also heard the voice of his guardian angel at the top of the Mountain, who gave him instructions on how to revive the woman's (who gave shelter to him) dead child. Since the governing officials of Akbar wanted to kill him, Elijah used the voice as an opportunity to seek forgiveness from the women (addressed as "widow" in the novel). Later, he successfully performed a miracle, bringing the dead boy back to life as forecasted by his guardian angel. Though The Fifth Mountain was considered as the home of Gods like Baal, it is noteworthy that Elijah's guardian angel appeared at the same spot too.

Witnessing the miracle that happened at the widow's house, the highest priest did not consider it the blessing of the Gods of the Fifth Mountain. As Coelho writes:

> The high priest wished to inquire what he had seen atop the Mountain, but in the presence of the soldiers, the answer might be awkward. He, therefore, decided to remain silent but approved of having Elijah ask for forgiveness in public; no one else could then doubt the power of the gods of the Fifth Mountain (30).

Anyhow, the people of Akbar started to believe in Elijah, who got his powers from the Gods of the Fifth Mountain. They spread rumours and stories about him as people gathered about Elijah. The people gathered about him; the story was already known throughout the city. The governor and the high priest stopped and retraced their steps to see what was happening. The Israelite prophet was saying that he had seen the gods of the Fifth Mountain worshipping a superior God. (Coelho 36)

Coelho also explicitly symbolised the Fifth Mountain with the faces of God. When asked why the same God (if God is only one) created wheat that nourishes and storms that

destroy, Elijah said God's action is like the Fifth Mountain.

"Do you see the Fifth Mountain?" Elijah asked. "From whichever side you look, it appears different, though it is the same mountain. Thus, it is with all of Creation: many faces of the same God." (38)

During the times of difficulty in Elijah's life, Coelho mentions how Gods of the Fifth Mountain came to his help. The governor of Akbar decided to attack Assyrians suspected of launching an attack on Akbar. Elijah stopped him and asked him to rethink his decision. "We must not do that, governor. The gods of the Fifth Mountain told me that we still have time to find a specific solution," he said (Coelho 40). Since Elijah knew that the governor and other officials of Akbar feared the gods of The Fifth Mountain, he used the myth behind the Fifth Mountain to retain peace. In his statements, Elijah did not mean the Gods that the people of Akbar believed but the one supreme God who sent his angel for communications.

Elijah and the woman of Akbar who sheltered him developed romantic love for one another. Elijah was even advised by his guardian angel, who said, "The Lord heareth the prayers of those who ask to put aside hatred. But He is deaf to those who would flee from love" (Coelho 47). Highlighting the importance of love, Coelho tried to connect the woman Elijah loved with that of The Fifth Mountain. Elijah was readying to leave Akbar when he saw the woman he loved sitting on a rock facing the Fifth Mountain (60). When asked what she was doing there, the woman replied that she needed some inspiration to continue documenting the history of Akbar by writing.

"I came in search of a bit of inspiration. The writing that I am learning made me think about the designer of the valleys, mountains, and Akbar's city. Some merchants gave me inks of every colour because they wanted me to write for them. I thought of using them to describe the world I live in, but I know how difficult that is: although I have the colours, only the Lord can mix them with such harmony" (Coelho 60).

Explaining why the Fifth Mountain was called so, the woman tells Elijah, "According to tradition, if men had given that Mountain the name of a specific god, the others would have become furious and destroyed the earth. Therefore, it is called the Fifth Mountain because it is the Fifth Mountain we see beyond the walls" (Coelho 61). The main idea was not to offend any Gods, thereby maintaining a 'universal peace.'

Often, Elijah resorted to prayers in despair. He asks his guardian angel what importance a mountain, rising in the middle of a valley, has. Similarly, when the commander of Akbar made plans to attack the Assyrians, he wanted his army to withdraw to the mountains after killing as many enemies as possible. The valley was better than any other place to attack, reducing the pressure of the siege. It implies how mountains become safe places for enemies to resort. When Elijah and his dead lover's son saw the commander's body, his arms and legs were cut off. Still, the commander was alive, gazing at the heights of the Fifth Mountain. "As you see," he said in a laboured but calm voice, "the Phoenician gods have won the celestial battle" (Coelho 91). Though the Fifth Mountain is an evil force during all these instances, Mountain is also associated with daily life. Elijah went to a house in the middle of the valley. He saw that a flock of sheep was in the enclosure and concluded that the shepherd had not yet left for the mountains that morning.

After the attack of Assyrians that eradicated Akbar, Elijah set on a mission to revive the city. He ordered that, at the end of each day of work, the remaining people of Akbar must gather at the foot of the Fifth Mountain to contemplate together the sunset (Coelho 112). Elijah decides to climb the Fifth Mountain once again towards the end of the story. He takes the boy, the son of the woman he loved, with him. Weeds had grown between the stones of the

altars; since the high priest's death, no one had gone there (Coelho 121). As climbing the Fifth Mountain was forbidden according to Akbar's customs, the boy was initially reluctant to accompany Elijah. Still, Elijah insisted on the boy, and they both climbed to the top of the Mountain. Nothing happened to them on the summit of the Mountain, though the boy was afraid to take every step. They both stepped into a cloud of fog, stayed there for some time, and came back as the boy was getting more fearful with the passage of every single minute. Elijah finally succumbed to the boy's request, and they both descended back without any more arguments. In this way, Elijah proved to the boy that The Fifth Mountain was an ordinary mountain like every other one. God and his love reside in every corner of the world, and every human being must enjoy and thank God for the same. When that boy later asks Elijah why was he taken to Fifth Mountain, Elijah says he wanted the boy to know the power of God.

> "So, you could see the valley, the city, the other mountains, the rocks, and clouds. The Lord often has his prophets climb mountains to converse with Him. I always wondered why He did that, and now I know the answer: when we are high, we can see everything else as small. Our glory and our sadness lose their importance. Whatever we conquered or lost remains there below. From the heights of the Mountain, you see how big the world is and how wide its horizons are." (Coelho 123)

The Mountains and Self-Realisation

The inexplicable relation of Mountain as the symbol used in different novel phases further necessitates a deep analysis of this symbol with its value in characterisation and thematic representation. Paulo Coelho's stories are mainly designed to achieve a motivational purpose through a mystical writing style. Therefore, scholars may believe that his writings are included in the inspirational literature. Again, the mystical elements found in Coelho's writing make them different from inspirational literature. Coelho generally employs symbolism through the narration of dreams, visions and journeys to achieve a magical effect in his stories.

Similarly, he places a mystical value on the Mountain adapted from prominent religious and mystical traditions. All the three sematic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) invariably assert a spiritual significance on Mountain. They project Mountain as the place where humans meet the divine. In the words of Julius Evola (1998), "The general foundation for the symbolism of the mountain is simple - since the earth has been associated with everything human (the etymology of the word human is from humus, "soil"), the earth's peaks were spontaneously regarded as the apt material to express, through allegories, transcendental states of consciousness, inner spiritual realisations and apparitions of extranormal modes of being often portrayed figuratively as gods and supernatural beings" (10). Hence the portrayal of the Mountain symbolically represents man's yearning to meet the divine surpassing his human weaknesses. In other words, symbolically, Mountain is man's desire to reach perfection.

In *The Fifth Mountain*, the mystical elements ascribed to the Mountain could be seen in association with the development of the central character Elijah. Gorakh Popat Jondhale (2021) identifies Coelho's plot setting through a journey where he structures the development of his protagonists.

> "Paulo Coelho powerfully constructs his plots in the form of an odyssey. He positions his characters in imbalanced situations where they feel discontented and

puts them through a struggle to obtain meaning out of meaninglessness. He guides them through transcendence leading to spiritual awakening; ultimately portrays them as evolved Self". (47)

The Fifth Mountain starts with the journey of Elijah as a discontented and immature man. He undertook a journey of self-doubt, conflicting identities, existential crisis and emotional vulnerabilities. Finally, his journey ends with an ascent to the Mountain, transforming and becoming mature. Mountain is always seen as a symbol of internal transformation and spiritual progression in various mystical traditions and theology. The process of the ascent to the Mountain has a mystical significance when seen together with one's spiritual advancement. This spiritual advancement is a total transformation of a person affecting all his/her psycho-spiritual levels of existence. The classical work of St. John of the Cross, a Christian mystic, titled *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* (1999), symbolically narrates the human soul's journey as an ascent to the mountain top. He explains different levels of mystical progression in comparison with mountaineering. St. John classifies the ascent to the Mountain as three stages of mystical progression, i.e., purgation, illumination and unification (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 118-154). Other mystics, too, agree generally on the idea of these stages in various expressions. The central character in *The Fifth Mountain* can be seen journeying through all these three stages in his development to self-realisation. Elijah's journey starts with an adieu to all his possessions, clinging to worldly comforts, and dreams of a safer future. His actions and decisions mark the first stage of purgation, where he denounces everything for a higher good. St. John identifies this renunciation as the vital sign of purgation followed by one's purification.

Writing about purgation, St. John adds in Chapter 3, Book One of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, "We are dealing with the denudation (emptying) of the soul's appetites and gratifications. This is what leaves it free and empty of all things, even though it possesses them" (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 123). Elijah's mental suffering was revealed through the intermittent soliloquies, narratives reminiscing his regretful past and his ardent will to continue his mission despite all suffering. It shows his progression in the mystical stage of purgation. He overcomes all his weaknesses at the purgation stage. St. John also speaks about the different experiences termed 'dark night of the soul'. One is directionless and confused as he nears the end of purgation (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 121). Elijah experiences the same feeling during the death of the widow's son. He seems to be lost, engulfed by the feeling of meaninglessness and self-doubt. When Elijah is forced to climb up to the Fifth Mountain, he goes 'little further', sits down, and reflects on his thoughts. When the fog (in his thoughts) disappears, he makes a self-surrender that becomes another step to the progressive stage of illumination, where he receives the light of the divine and gets empowered. The mystics who progress to the second stage of illumination are infused with the knowledge of their true identities concerning the divine and experience a new connection with other people and the world around them. Once they achieve this divine perception, they see their intimate connection to creation (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 165). For Elijah, it starts with reiterating his destiny to rebuild Israel later as a prophet.

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The Widow Colony – A Shrouded History

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Abstract

The Anti-Sikh massacre in 1984 is a reality which has for long suffered obliviousness in the nationalist discourse. The violence which commenced immediately after the assassination of former Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi has been one of the most macabre carnage tearing apart the secular fabric of the nation. The massacre which took the lives of almost 4,000 Sikhs is one of the most deliberately and strategically avoided narrative in the history of India. However, the episode has found some representation in literature and cinema. The present paper analyses Harpreet Kaur's documentary film The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement *vis-à-vis the violence that victims of anti-Sikh carnage encountered courtesy to the complicity of state and its failure in serving the justice. The paper also attempts to analyse the trauma and recovery in the aftermath of the carnage by bringing in Judith Herman's trauma studies.*
Keywords: *silence, violence, trauma, recovery, justice, women, patriarchy, gender, community, marginalisation*

Stories can inspire change for they add plurality and contextualization to our understanding of life situations. A documentary is a non-fictional motion film that documents reality, mainly with an intention of recording a historical episode, or providing instruction and education. Bill Nichols, an American film critic and a documentary expert, defines a documentary as "a film making practice, a cinematic tradition, and a mode of audience reception (that remains) a practice without clear boundaries" (xiv). Documentary is one such platform which bridges the gap between scholarship and practice by providing authenticity and objectivity. It challenges the popular hegemonic narratives by introducing the subaltern voices. The documentaries try to fill in the gaps left by the traditional and dominant narratives and present a nuanced context of the events and stories. Its narrative paradigms "look at the spaces between individuals and power structures, and the way stories can be used as resources for empowerment and social change, recognizing that language and discourse have the power only to describe but also to provoke political transformation" (Townsend and Niraula 31). Famous documentaries like *Nero's Guests*, *India Untouched, Coal Curse, Daughters of Destiny, A Dream of Trees,* and so on, have tapped the undiscovered or silenced social actualities like gender disparity, farmer's plight, casteism or environment injustice. In most of these stories, there is a miscarriage of justice and this fact is pronounced in their narrative methodology. Riots, for example, have throttled the honour of millions of women and the issue remains beyond justice since times immemorial.

In the Indian context, the ethno-religious dichotomies have augmented the social complexities further, especially during the riots and religious massacres. The post-Partition India has seen a rapid loss of its pluralistic traditions and an exponential increase in communal collisions tattering its 'secular' fabric. The Sikh massacre of 1984 revoked the Partition trauma in public memory. The violence which followed the homicide of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 by her two Sikh bodyguards, left many reiterating – "It is like Partition again" (Butalia 5). The event reverberated the betrayal and bewilderment synonymous to the one during Partition. Ramchandra Guha notes that the attack on sacred Sikh gurudwara along with the death of innocent civilians "left a collective wound in the psyche of Sikhs, crystallizing a deep suspicion of the Government of India" (569).

What came as a surprise was the aftermath of the assassination in the form of a brutal campaign of violence against the Sikh community. This aftermath of the assassination was beyond anticipation as the 'supposedly' neutral state machinery turned antagonistic. According to Uma Chakravarti, "the anti-Sikh carnage of 1984 remains unprecedented as it is the only occasion on which killings began in an organised manner and in which the ruling party and the police were decisively implicated" (2722).

The many omissions, erasures and manipulations around the pogrom left many ignorant about the massacre. The body of representations of this event is narrow too. However, these limited representations have tried to render a counter-narrative to the existing nationalist ones, where, the event was minimalised to nothing but a little shake of earth which occurs when a mighty tree falls. The history tried hard to shove 1984 in the darkness, but, some voices did successfully raise many from this historic oblivion.

Harpreet Kaur's *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* is one such documentary which brings forth the plight of people, particularly the plight of women in the aftermath of 1984 anti-Sikh massacre. When asked about the purpose behind the making of this documentary, Kaur says:

> *Dialogue* [emphasis mine]. People need to start talking about what happened [. . .] This film is reminder to those who already know about the massacre to realise that we are still at war. It's not over [. . .] As a Sikh woman I wanted to remind Sikhs around the world that 1984 is today, 1984 everyday [. . .] Through this film those who have never heard about the massacre will be educated. And those who have read about it or heard stories will have a better and honest understanding of what really happened (Sikhnet.com).

The present paper seeks to analyse Harpreet Kaur's documentary film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* vis-à-vis the violence that victims of anti-Sikh carnage encountered courtesy to the complicity of state and its failure in serving the justice. The paper also attempts to analyse the trauma and recovery in the aftermath of the carnage by bringing in Judith Herman's trauma studies.

The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement

Harpreet Kaur's 2005 documentary film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* was premiered at Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi. The title of the documentary is namesake of the 'The Widow Colony' which is actually another name of the Tilak Vihar area in New Delhi. The documentary includes the two resettlement areas of the 1984 victims – The Widow Colony a.k.a Tilak Vihar and Garhi (in South Delhi). Harpreet Singh records the

testimonies of various victims of 1984 massacre, along with opinions and assessment of the event and its aftermath by experts like Madhu Kishwar (Editor, *Manushi*), Harvinder Singh Phoolka (Lawyer), Patwant Singh (Author), Rajinder Sachar (Retired Chief Justice) and Kuldeep Nayar (Journalist). The film is a heartrending and agonising depiction of a dark history that had for decades been shoved under the carpets of oblivion. It documents the trauma and sufferings of the victims especially women and their continuous battle for survival and justice.

Myriad Forms of Violence

As is the civilization progressing, so is the cruelty, violence, destruction and annihilation. With the murder of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, an anti-Sikh psyche swept the entire nation, dragging the Sikh community into an estuary of death. The unabated violence went on for days post the assassination. *The Widow Colony* presents graphic images of destruction, bloodshed and violence that shook the nation to the core. These graphics images validate the oral narrations of violence by the survivors.

Anwesha Roy in the "Introduction" of her book titled *Making Peace, Making Riots: Communalism and Communal Violence, Bengal 1940–1947*, brings in Gyanendra Pandey's assessment of violence that accompanied partition. This assessment can very well be applied to the trends of violence that broke out in 1984. She analyses his reasoning so:

[he] asserts that it [violence] can be seen in two forms: the first being the 'violence of the state', which is often presumed to be legitimate, organized, carefully controlled, whereas the second form, i.e. 'violence of the people', is seen as being diametrically the opposite of the first – it is chaotic, uncontrolled, excessive and, likewise, illegitimate. (9)

The following excerpts from *The Widow Colony* shall validate Pandey's second form of violence, which is the 'violence of the people'. The entire documentary is interspersed with victims describing their encounters with the gruesome violence that was inflicted upon their innocent families:

They would take containers of gasoline out of the car and pour it on Sikh men. Trolleys, trucks, cars, buses full of mobs came to kill our Sikh men. The mobs were instructed to target anyone with a turban. Mothers were forced to hand their children's jura (topknot of Sikh's uncut hair). The grandmothers were then made to burn the hair. (00:05:04)

The mob said, "Come down, we won't do anything to you." [. . .] I can't forget what I went through. They killed my children and my husband with iron rods, right in front of my eyes. (00: 07:44)

They attacked our children and dragged them by their hair, beating them with bricks. The children were crying, begging "Mother, please save us!" But how could I have saved them, when there were so many attackers? (00: 08:10)

They dragged my husband out and beat him viciously with sticks. Then they burned him alive by putting tires on him and lighting him [. . .] My husband's brother was killed with a sword. His intestines were taken out. (00: 20:28)

They would throw a white chemical that would explode like a bomb [. . .] They were saying "we're going to cut Sikhs." They just kept cutting people. You could see people with limbs burning, people in agony and distress. Animals were eating corpses. I still remember how horrific it was. My own three uncles, they burned to death. (00: 28:18)

Madhu Kishwar describes the cover page of her magazine *Manushi*. She did a story on 1984 violence, with a picture of wounded Gurdip Kaur (an '84 victim) along a caption "In the name of national unity" (00:11:48). She recounts that Gurdip Kaur's story wherein Kaur witnessed the brutal massacre of the male members and the gang rapes of females, "Right in front of her young son, she was gangraped, her clothes were [. . .] she had not a stitch of cloth left on her body, and then they were gang raping" (00:13:47).

The discourse of '84 violence and its aftermath has lacked in the representation of the gendered aspect. According to Manoj Mitta:

> In the catalogue of crimes committed on the Sikhs in the first week of November 1984, the one that got the least attention was something that would ordinarily have stirred up a sensation: rape. Even as they went about raising slogans mourning Indira Gandhi's death, the mobs in several places were aroused enough – sexually, that is – to rape female Sikhs. (67)

The silence around the sexual violence on women has seemingly been because of, firstly, the reportage was primarily focused on loot, murder and arson; secondly, the social stigma which is attached to a rape victim; and thirdly, the trauma that women were already engulfed in. Testimonies of widows in *The Widow Colony* speaks volumes of the sexual violence that the capital city India witnessed, "[. . .] we had young girls who we feared for. We were fortunate to have gotten away with our honour intact. People went through a lot of suffering [. . .] Our daughters and sisters were raped. They were dragged away, openly, in public" (00:05:13). There has been not one but a repeated reference of rapes throughout the documentary.

One thing which is common in the narrations of violence is the role of 'mob'. There is a constant repetition of the fact that the victims were attacked by men who came in groups of hundreds, "[. . .] no less than a 500 person strong mob came to kill us in the '84 massacre" (00:31:60). These violent actors which have often recounted as mobs precluded any sense of rationality or agency, they were but mad men in herds, whose individual consciousnesses were replaced by a collective mentality, hypnotised and mobilised by their charismatic leaders. The hypnotism and mobilization of mobs by the leaders has been but a testified fact in '84 massacre (Citizens' Commission 1984; PUCL-PUDR 1984; PUCL-PUDR 1987). Judith Herman argues:

> In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defence [. . .] he marshals an impressive array of arguments, from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization. (8)

The testimonies given by victims in *The Widow* Colony are first-hand accounts this apparent collusion. Darshan Kaur, is one of the key witnesses who accused a political leader of instigating the mobs to kill the Sikhs. Harsh Mander notes how:

> [. . .] communal organisations and political leaders worked openly in tandem to stir and stoke communal hatred, and to organise the logistics of the slaughter, efficiently transporting men, weapons and inflammables to settlements and commercial establishments of the communities marked out for slaughter. (58)

For three continuous days, the capital city of the nation fell into complete anarchy. The law agencies stood not only as mute spectators, but in many cases also as the perpetrators. Kishwar believes, "The failure, the complicity in this violence took place right at the top (00:26:01) and she stresses that, "[. . .] the trial should be from the top to down, not bottom up." (00:26:20). The fact that almost 4,000 Sikhs were killed in the aftermath of the assassination within a span of three days is enough in itself to expose the complicity even if

there's no witness to validate. On the contrary, in this case there were many who came forth to validate the involvement, but the justice seemed a far off dream.

Amaranthine Wait for Justice

Led by different ruling parties, every government that came to power appointed several commissions and committees to investigate the massacre of '84. Since the time line of the documentary is till 2005, it ends awaiting the Nanavati Commission's report. The anger and frustration at the delay in delivering justice to poor victims of '84 massacre is quite apparent in H. S. Phoolka's scathing remarks, "4,000 people have been killed in open daylight, before everybody. These not the blind murders. And only 10 convictions till now? Just 10? This is the mockery of the system. (00:51:31).

A resentment is felt in the voices of poor victims who have been waiting for justice for their loved ones. Darshan Kaur's voice is full of remorse, for she strongly feels, "We don't think the perpetrators will be punished. No one to this day has done so and it's been twenty years [. . .] no one can hear in this deaf and mute government (00:42:44). Mander reports:

> [the victims] have painful memories from 1984 and share of sense of frustration, at the lack of genuine acknowledgement of what happened and how it affected the Sikh victims, and, perhaps most importantly, at the absence of conviction and punishment for those responsible for carnage. (59)

However, in spite of all the darkness which surrounds their plea for justice, the victims still wish to continue their long battle for justice which already transpired for twenty years and knows not how many more it will consort with. The cry for justice is incessant. Even though Kaur feels that the deaf government will not hear their pleas, she still feels determined, "But we are not ones to give up! Until we breathe our last, we will keep fighting. We will not give up and just stay silent" (00:51:22).

Trauma And Recovery

The delay or rather a denial in serving the justice has left the victims subject to a sort of vacillating trauma. Every time, the victims are asked about '84, their memories are flooded with the trauma that they have been experiencing and enduring since then. *The Widow Colony* is study of psychological trauma that these people have experienced and continue to endure, especially the widows, "who have bravely defended and raised their families for a quarter of a century, despite being completely unprepared for this challenge in a patriarchal society [. . .] show heart-rendering symptoms of unmistakable deep continuing psychological distress" (Mander 59).

Herman asserts that, "To study psychological trauma is to come face to face both with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature. To study psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events" (7). The documentary while presenting the testimonies of victims to the audience is simultaneously making them witness to a horrible past, where indeed vulnerabilities of people Darshan Kaur as well as evil malevolence of mobs and authorities stand exposed. All that these victims ask for action, engagement, and remembering.

According to Herman, remembering or revisiting the past for many is also a traumatic experience as:

The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which

breaks spontaneously into consciousness, [. . .] Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event. Thus, even normally safe environments may come to feel dangerous, for the survivor can never be assured that she will not encounter some reminder of the trauma. (37)

Sher Singh while revisiting the Mongolpuri area felt a similar reminder of the trauma that he experienced while witnessing the killings of his family members. The voiceover articulates Sher Singh's state while he moved in the same narrow lanes of his old neighbourhood where he lost his loved ones, "a crowd of curious residents surrounded him. He felt nervous, he had flashbacks of the mobs" (00:32:30). Presently, the harmlessness of the Mongolpuri area somehow brought in a sort of uneasiness in Singh's demeanour; the area and the people there still seemed to haunt him. This particular visit to his old neighbourhood served as a 'reminder of the trauma' for him as, "Right before stepping back into the car, Sher Singh paused in silence in the middle of the main road. This is where he as a five year old had witnessed bloodbath of his family" (00:32:50). He looked gasping for coherence to chronicle this confrontation. His fumbled sentences while recounting the past horrors is a sign of lack of a verbal narrative by a witness/observer, who finds it challenging "to find a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen"(Herman 2).

The basic premise of recovery, "is based upon the empowerment of the survivor" (Herman 175). In the case of victims of '84 violence a recovery phase has not yet been achieved as they have not been 'empowered'. In their case empowerment is justice, which unfortunately has not been served. The second stage of recovery is that of remembering and mourning (Herman 175). Even though the survivors have mostly remained physically unscathed, still there is a loss of "psychological structures of a self securely attached to others" (188).The trembling voices of the survivors which recount the memories of violence enacted upon their kith and kin is a reflection of shattered 'psychological structures of a self', so much so that after almost two decades the victims undergo quite an emotional upheaval.

The documentary serves as a platform, where, the processes of unravelling of trauma, its remembrance and its fractional recovery (fractional because justice is an important part of the process of recovery, which apparently has not yet been achieved) appear to converge. It voices the silence around a violent gloomy past which seemed to have remained unacknowledged for decades. *The Widow Colony* as a cinematic reconstruction of a traumatic past brought myriad responses from the interviewees. Some survivors seemed offended as they did not wish to revisit their past:

After 20 years, you have opened old wounds. We look at our children and try to forget about what happened to us. If you can't do anything for us, don't ask us about what we've been through. If you ask us then do something for us [. . .] We are very miserable. Our life has become a story, a history – the story of the massacre of 1984. (00:55:29)

While, some like Patwant Singh and Justice Rajinder Sachar, think it imperative to talk about the horrors of past in order to have an informed future. Justice Sachar also feels that questions must be asked as to why and how did '84 violence escalate to gargantuan levels.

Conclusion

"We remember every single thing. We haven't slept in these past twenty years" and "Never will we forget" (00: 05:10, 00:57:34) have echoed throughout the select documentary. The violence of '84 left the entire Sikh community alienated in a nation for

which they fought in 1947 and the memories of it are full of anguish and loss. The denial, the repression, the dissociation and the silence around the traumatic state sponsored massacre of '84 which has operated at a national level, unquestionably needs acknowledgment and reconstruction at a massive proportions. The responsibility of the representation thus lies on literature and cinema, for both render space and voice to the censored history. They are an impetus of rediscovery of history and the history of '84 needs to be reclaimed.

'84 needs a nuanced and comprehensive intervention and *The Widow Colony* is one such restitution to the victims of violence. The recent surge in online documentation of personal histories and memories via blogging offers an alternative platform for reconstruction and revisiting of the dormant '84 history. Parvinder Mehta feels that, "These personal histories have enabled the transition from passive silence to a more active voicing of the forgotten and unacknowledged history that seemed to have earlier been pushed under the rug" (158). Documentaries in this regard play a pivotal role as unfictionalized creative narratives which provide intellectual interventions.

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Teaching English Language through Dramatization of the Scenes from Indian Movies

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Abstract

With the advancements in the field of English language teaching, emphasis is being laid upon the use of innovative methods and techniques for teaching English in our country. Use of drama technique for teaching English language is also a different type of approach which makes the learning interesting. Dramatization of any imaginary situation, related to our day to day life or any scene from the plays written by various authors can be used as effective means of teaching English language. An another mode which can be used, is the dramatization of the scenes from Indian movies using English language. Teaching a language becomes easy if we can co-relate it with our life using a medium which is attractive as well as entertaining. College students usually enjoy watching movies and many times try to copy their favorite scenes. This inclination of students can be used for teaching English language. Practically, this technique is used to teach English language to a class of sixty-nine students of diploma engineering in Madhya Pradesh which resulted in a mixed outcome from the view point of improvement of their basic language skills. This paper contains an introduction (which includes some basics of drama and use of drama technique for English language teaching), a brief review of the relevant studies, the strategy for teaching English through recreation of the scenes from Indian movies along with the aspects which should be taken care while adopting this technique, actual application of this technique over a group of technical students, the benefits of this technique and its limitations.
Keywords: English, teaching, dramatization, recreation, scene

Introduction

As the need of the hour new and innovative ways of teaching English are taking place of old and traditional methods. Use of drama technique is also an interesting way of language teaching which has been supported and suggested by various authors and research scholars time to time. According to Maley and Duff (2005), the use of drama technique in teaching English language is beneficial as through the use of this technique language skills can be integrated naturally , it integrates verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication and results in restoration of physical and intellectual aspects of learning, it draws upon both the cognitive and affective domain thus restoring the importance of feelings as well as thinking, it fosters self-awareness, awareness of others, self-esteem and confidence and through this

motivation is developed, it encourages an open exploratory style of learning where creativity and imagination are given scope to develop, it has a positive effect on classroom dynamics and atmosphere ,thus facilitating a bound group which learns together , it is an enjoyable experience". (Zyoud 2) The word drama has been originated from the Greek word "dran" means "to do" or "to perform". (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). Thus drama is an activity which provides a platform for some kind of performance, action or deed. Whenever teaching is based on the principle of learning by doing it becomes more effective and learner centered. "As Dewy (1921) stated that "drama is a form of learning by doing" (Samantaray 72) and "Fleming (2006) stated that "drama is inevitably learner centered because it can only operate through active co-operation" (Zyoud 3). "A definition of drama with reference to using it for language teaching has been given by Susan Holden as "drama means any kind of activity where learners are asked to portray either themselves or to portray someone else in an imaginary situation. In other words, drama is concerned with the world of "let's pretend"; it asks the learner to project himself imaginatively into another situation, outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person." (Davies 87)

When dramatization is used as a method of teaching a language there is more scope for the appropriate development of language skills among students. In a traditional language teaching class, it becomes monotonous to learn the language using grammar – translation method or some other method of such kind where the contribution of the student in teaching-learning process is very less on the other hand this method increases the contribution of students and consequently helps in more consistent learning of the concepts. The idea of writing this research paper has come out on watching an Indian movie named as "Super 30" based on the life of famous Mathematics teacher Anand Kumar and his educational program of the same name. The movie gives a very nice message that how success can be achieved through hard work and sincere efforts in spite of unavailability of the adequate resources. In one of its scene we find that how the students from a very low stratum of the society who have phobia of speaking English, get rid of this phobia to some extent through enacting a scene from an Indian movie.

Movies can also be seen as forms of dramatic art in which stories are depicted through actors who represent characters. In modern era, plays in theatre are not common and people use to watch movies now days. Students also like to watch movies and after watching them, many times they enjoy copying their scenes. Dramatization of the scenes from Indian movies in English language classroom can be a delightful experience of learning a language which is otherwise a difficult one to be learnt.

The application of this technique involves some steps like 1. Dividing a class into small groups of students.2. Careful selection of the scenes from different movies from the view point of their content and message 3. Finding out the English equivalents of the words used in that scene for their translation 4. Rehearsal of the scenes with appropriate emotions.5. Performance by different groups 6. Giving feedback to each group by the teacher as well as the students.

Review of Literature

In earlier times also this method was being used for teaching English as according to Dodson(2004) "drama has played small but consistent role in language teaching in Britain and the United States since 1970's" (Dundar 1424-1425). According to Dundar "the early

most well-known advocates of drama in L1 classroom was Bolton (1984), who encouraged teachers to integrate the theatre into all what they did. Bolton in particular championed the use of drama in classroom for all subjects making it the "center of the curriculum". Later on L2 practitioners adopted drama in their practices and drama gained popularity in foreign language teaching" (Dundar 1425). Savignon(1983)was of view that "Current theory in second language acquisition supports the assumption that drama activities can enhance the communicative competence and thus facilitates language learning in general" (Dundar 1425).In an essay by Paul Davies, the author examined that how dramatic activities can be used for English language teaching. The essay was focused on displaying the need of drama activities in a classroom for teaching English, when this technique can be used, some procedural strategies like preparation, integration of the technique and organization of the class (Davies 87). In one of the research study done by Benjamin James Thurn in year 2016 many positive aspects of using films in English language teaching have been enumerated and pedagogical value of movies has been reflected upon. Some important views of various scholars mentioned in this study can be seen as the substantiations of benefits of using this technique in the classroom for English language teaching. like: 1."Chapple and Curtis (2000) found that using film as a source of content in the language classroom helped students to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Their study, which took place at a university in Hong Kong, found that film helped students foster the ability to perceive 24 and understand issues in a variety of ways and from multiple perspectives" (Thurn 23) 2. "Wood(1999) stated that Film merges three communication modes: the vocal, the visual, and the verbal, all while offering a wide variety of settings, communicative situations, and subject matter" (Thurn 24) 3. " Mallinger and Rossy (2003) were of view that film can have a motivating effect on students who would otherwise be bored or disengaged by more traditional pedagogies" (Thurn 25). "In the year 2009 Adriana Devrishaj studied the role of drama in foreign language acquisition and found that the use of drama in language classroom can be helpful in acquisition and practice of new vocabulary and grammatical structures and development of speaking skills" (Dervishaj 53)

Strategies for the use of this technique

This technique can be adopted in a class by following some steps:
1. First of all, students of a class should be divided into groups as per their convenience for performing different scenes from different movies. This type of group formation will be helpful in creating a sort of competitive spirit among them and while performing the act they will try to put their best efforts for better performance.
2. Secondly, students and teachers both can discuss together that which scenes of different films can be chosen for their dramatization. While choosing a scene proper care should be taken from the view point of its content, message and convenience for its translation into English. This one is very critical point where proper care should be taken as choosing an inappropriate scene can result in miscommunication. The scene should have scope for the involvement of at least four to six students so that not many groups to be formed.
3. Next the students should be given time for the translation of the dialogues into English for which they can take the help of their teacher, dictionaries and online available sources. They can discuss in the groups and help one another. While translating the sentences into English the proper care should be taken from the view that not only the words should be translated but

also the meaning should be translated.

4. After translating the dialogues into English they can rehearse the scenes assigned to them with proper emotional expressions. Teacher can help them in explaining that how the dialogues should be delivered. Students can also repetitively watch the scenes to ensure the better dramatization.

5. When the students get finished with their rehearsal a definite time slot should be assigned to each group for the performance of scene, with the instruction that nobody will be allowed to speak in the language other than English and if not done so their points of reward will be deducted.

6. Each group should be called one by one for performance and other groups should be allowed to watch the performance to find out the shortcomings and for giving feedback afterwards. Some certain criteria should be fixed for the judgement while performances of different groups of students.

7. After the performance of each group a feedback should be provided by the teacher in terms of use of the words and their expression. After the performance of all groups some points of reward should be given to the groups based on their performance on some specified criteria.

8. This type of activity should be repeated at least twice a week or more as per the time available. Repetition of such activities is required regularly for a certain period of time to create an environment favorable for learning all the skills of language. Doing just once or twice in a long stretch of time is not enough. Regularity of an action is a necessary condition for the achievement of its ultimate objectives.

Actual Application of the technique

To see the output of application of this technique a class of sixty-nine students of diploma engineering was chosen as the subject under study. As one of the researchers was teaching to these students it was convenient for her to apply this technique and measure the outcomes. The class of sixty-nine students (of technical education) studying in first semester of their diploma course was taken as the subject of study. Out of sixty-nine students twenty-eight students participated actively and on a regular basis, remaining forty-one students did not show their interest. The students were asked to choose some good scenes from motivational Hindi Indian movies like *Rang De Basanti,, Laggan, Swades, Mother India, Chak De India, Tare Zameen Par, Three Idiots,, Udaan,, I am Kalam, English Vinglish, Border, Bhag Milkha Bhag, Mission Mangal, Lakshya, Super 30, The Legend of Bhagat Singh, Anand, Iqbal, Ferrari ki Sawaree, Manjhi: The Mountain Man, Uri: The Surgical Strike* etc. Only Hindi Indian movies were chosen as the students' mother tongue was Hindi. Students were asked to choose the scenes first and after their selection, the teacher also checked them for their content. Students were left free to choose their partners also, so that they can comfortably recreate the scenes. The technique was used regularly for a month. On every Friday of the week the students were instructed to get prepared for their performance on the coming Monday during last two classes. Students' performance was assessed on the basis of some predefined criteria like different aspects of body language and paralanguage, their fluency in speaking English, their choice of words etc. and necessary feedback was given by the teacher as well as students to improve their skill of speaking English and their choice of words.

The use of this technique come with a mixed experience of teaching and learning English language. Some students enjoyed learning English through this technique while

other remained disinterested from the very beginning till the end. The phobia of speaking English among students got reduced to some extent as they also confessed it. The problem of motivating students to use this technique in the class was a major issue and it should be dealt with proper thoughtfulness. If this kind of activity (any kind of dramatization in English, not only the dramatization of scenes from movies) can become a part of their examination system to which certain marks can be given, students can be motivated to take part in such kind of activities. Students' interest depends more or less on the fact that they are going to get some marks or not for anything they do, so this type of reward in the form of good marks can be a source of motivation for them.

Students learnt many new words of English, hence the technique proved to be a good one from the view point of enrichment of their vocabulary of English language. For the effective use of this technique more time is required and it was found a bit difficult as their syllabus of the subject also has to be completed within the given time limits. The participation of students in teaching learning process got increased while making use of this technique as they not only performed a scene but prepared themselves for the performance on their own. They tried to find English words for the Hindi words used in a scene and constructed sentences in English using those words. So, in this way application of their theoretical knowledge for some practical activity provided them a better opportunity to learn and use English language.

Benefits of the technique

This technique can be proved as a very attention catching and entertaining technique of teaching English if used with a thoughtful consideration of the chosen content and scope for the use of vocabulary of English language.

a) It can be helpful in language learning in an easy and interesting way.
b) It can be helpful in maintaining more cordial and friendly relationship between teacher and students and also among the students. Sometimes it has been found that students are hesitant in clarifying their queries due to some psychological issues,
c) This method enforces a spirit of competition among different groups for better performance so students try to put more efforts. As a result of this automatically their language skills get improve.
d) Students can also provide feedback and when they provide feedback to others they themselves develop their skills of language as when somebody judges others' performances they themselves have to be more perfect.
e) This method can be helpful in enrichment of the vocabulary of students. While translating the scenes into English they are forced to look them into the dictionaries or other sources and while searching exact equivalents of the words required automatically they come across many other new words.
f) It can also be helpful in the improvement of skills of translation of the students.
g) Scenes from Indian movies of different languages can be chosen as per the mother tongue of the students.
h) When students recreate the scenes with emotional expressions they improve their communication skills in better ways as the nonverbal aspects of communication also get covered in it.
i) This method can be helpful in the development of mainly two skills of language namely listening and speaking and the other two skills of reading and writing to

some extent. .
j) The phobia of students towards learning English specially speaking skill can be cured to a great extent.

Limitations

While discussing the benefits of this technique we should also take care some of its limitations or demerits. Some limitations of this method can be enumerated as follows:

1.It is a time taking method and usually at collegiate level teachers have limited time period to cover the syllabus of the subject.

2.It requires sincere efforts from the side of the teacher and students both, without which it cannot be used successfully.

3.Sometimes students get so much absorbed in such kind of activities that they become careless about other important issues to be taken care also.

4.It is a bit difficult to motivate all the students to take part in this type of activity as some students enjoy it but others think it is insignificant to enact a scene which is not a part of their syllabus and may be due to some other reasons.

Conclusion

In the present paper we have discussed about how English language can be taught through the dramatization of scenes from Indian movies. We have discussed many benefits of this technique as well as some of its limitations and we find that it can be more useful if we can handle the issues of time by giving extra time after or before the scheduled time table and put some extra efforts.

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Enhancing Speaking Skills by Socratic Questioning Method
(An investigational study on undergraduate students)

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Abstract

The present paper focuses on how speaking skills can be enhanced by Socratic Questioning Method. There are several methods and approaches formulated and applied at different levels to enhance speaking skills, but critical thinking and questioning attitude are still lacking at undergraduate levels.

40 heterogeneous undergraduate students have participated in a 4month Intervention Programme, the Pre-Test and the Post-Test results have extensively been recorded by the researcher during the Intervention Programme. International English Language Testing System (IELTS) -Speaking Skills Descriptors have been adopted to assess students' speaking skills for both tests. Positive results have been founded and observed that undergraduate students have moderately enhanced their speaking abilities. Band score variations have scrupulously been observed by language expert- team from top-notch English Language Institutes in India.

This research article ontologically asserts that undergraduate engineering students can enhance speaking skills by thinking critically and applying Socratics Questioning Method implicitly and explicitly as a method to develop speaking competency.

***Keywords**/Phrases: IELTS, Critical Thinking, Intervention Programme, Socratic Question Method, Speaking Skills.*

Introduction

Socratic Questing was born in Greek, more or less 2400 years ago, and it was the brainchild idea of Greek philosopher and teacher named Socrates. Socrates used to make his disciples to think and answer for questions, and making them to identify possible ways to solve the given problem. The brainchild of Socrates is "if you deny, I affirm, if you affirm, I deny". This is the core idea of Critical Thinking. It is very tough to guide or guess being a good critical thinker which keep things always to question in a penetrate way or deeper ways. Questioning is very easy but the question which makes people to think and act very wisely and precisely is more important. It is undoubtedly emphasizing that those who are truly interested in critical thinking would also have a sense of deep questioning stance at all levels in the world. Socratic question is the basic cognitive idea of critical thinking. Deep and penetrated SQM will lead to critical thinking. In fact, SQM is the fundamental and basic to form the critical thinking abilities in any field or domain.

One has to identify and practice applying the components of one's own art. It is undoubtedly impossible to apply SQM without understanding the elements of it. Questioning strategies are very essential while applying SQM to enhance speaking skills before developing thoughts and concepts. SQM speaking strategies are to be underlined and imbibed in critical thinking frame work.

To apply in a better and possible way, contextualization and contextual thinking is to be adopted and then formulated in the daily life. Through contextualization, SQM and SQT (Socratic Questioning Technique) would be inculcated to get impeccable outcomes. Questioning oneself about the thinking, the thought and concept in a contextualized way would enhance speaking abilities. While participating in the activities, the basic components, that are to be adopted in SQM, are illustrated here

Critical Thinking
Socratic Dialogue
Mechanics of Socratic Dialogue
Importance of questioning
Link between SQM and Critical thinking – Dr Paul and Linda Elder, The Thinking Guide to *The Art of Socratic Question Method* (2006)

Socratic Questioning makes learners to dig deeply to get the accurate, precise and clear answers, never makes the learners rest on them, and conceptionally penetrates to involve and identify to get accuracy, learners can be experienced with a great amount of command and sense of understanding in critical thinking. Proficiency and accuracy would naturally drift amongst learners as they apply and practice SQM in daily communicative activities to have perfect outcomes.

The great advantage with SQM is that it enables learners to think and understand themselves and apply it before speaking. They can speak with deep thinking and share the perfect outcome till they achieve what they want. It ignites learners to think in a broader perspective. Question method is embedded in the Blooms Taxonomy levels. The 5th level in Blooms Taxonomy is analyzed, after thinking of it, it would be analyzed very meticulously. Hence the question method is embedded directly in the Blooms Level. Learners' thoughts are very scrupulously observed with Socratic Questioning Method and it is associated very closely with basic concepts to develop in any field.

Review of Literature

There are two essential dimensions of thinking that students need to foster in order to learn how to upgrade their thinking. They need to be able to identify the parts of their thinking (Scriven, M., and Richard Paul 2008, pp. 2019). The ever-changing competitive spirit that needs globally from aspirants to hone not only hard-core skills but also human attributes and skills to be a flawless human being. The structured, comprehensive, critical, and analytical skills that are currently helping aspirants to have speaking competences in any manner to get placed in the globalized scenario with employability skills (Shekhawat, Sushila 2020, pp. 263-269). Collaborative Critical Thinking (CCT) is to be identified as an instructional methodology in which students work together and gather information to analyze, inference, evaluate and deduct certain aspects (Khoshneshin, Zohreh 2011, pp. 1881-1887). Collaborative Learning makes learners to think critically in multi-dimensional to a new construct from knowing constricts. Group Learning initiates and ignites learners' abilities to form any concrete steps and thought (Olivares, Orlando J 2005, pp. 86-100). A way of

formative intervention programme builds critical thinking among young learners to develop demonstrative stimulative process by Socratic Questing Method. R.W. C.T. Methods have been employed to form Socratic Seminar with a view of forming Critical Thinking (Cojocariu, Venera-Mihaela & Carmen-Elena Butnaru 2014, pp. 22-28). To enhance critical thinking skills by Blended Socratic Method of Teaching (BSMT) model has been extended to foster critical thinking skills. Critical thinking competencies of the RED Model recognition assumption enhances and draw conclusions to form balancing judgement (Boa, Eugenia Arazo, et al. 2018, pp. 81-89). Teachers can find alternative ways and activities to make students to speak effectively. Teaching pedagogical ways and methods sharpen student's thinking abilities. Those can pave crucial attributes to make learners for affective speaking (Boonkit kamonpan, 2010, pp. 1305-1309). Evidences have successfully shown and authenticated that playful learning pedagogies not only develop important academic learning environment but also builds the skills that are required for success in the modern era. Playful learning approach will naturally enhance critical thinking skills at the tender ages (Fisher, Kelly, et al 2011, pp. 341–360). Empirically evidences scientifically proved that Socratic dialogue fosters student-teacher interpersonal sensitivity while stimulating conceptual understandings. Socratic Dialogue which enhances learner's' abilities to form an idea of common concept formation. A concrete Socratic dialogue in the context nurture the learner to form the best way of speaking (Knezic, Dubravka, et al. 2010, pp.1104-1111). Myriad pedagogy enacts and intends to enhance Critical thinking skills by elaborating allegories, analogies, images, storytelling, recollection throughout Socratic dialogue (George, Lynda 2015, pp. 3970-3974) (7). Various types of questions and questioning attitudes play a significant role to enhance critical thinking skills from question and clarifications, questioning that probe purposes, questions that probe assumptions, questions that probe information and consequences, questions about questions, reason, evidence and cause (Napitupulu, Fenty Debora 2020, pp. 37-43). Socratic questing method inculcates critical thinking skills of learners with significant factors besides problem-solving skills, analytical skills, speaking skills by critical thinking perspectives have been emphasized that answering questioning are more popular than asking questions (Ryan, Erin, et al. 2013, pp. 289). Life skills do play a significant role to construct a creative and critical approaches amongst students, and it can be developed through group discussion as group discussion greatly enhances questioning attitudes and attributes for undergraduate students to ace their skills (Sharma, Sangeeta, et al. 2020, pp.12-19). Self-evaluation is done in terms of how often learners ask questions and learn from critical thinking and learners ask questions at the beginning, middle or end of the sessions that causes learners not to think critically. Critical thinking should be a part of daily life activities. Socratic questioning method is heart of critical thinking and there is a specific relationship between the duo. Critical thinking and Socratic questioning method have shown common mind functions in its pursuit of meaning and truth. Socratic Questioning has significant and indelible impact on Critical Thinking (Manurung, Yayuk Hayulina, and Fatimah Sari Siregar 2018, pp. 212-216). Speaking skills can be defined as the most impart of language learning course. With the improvement of the technology and the need for international communication in the current century, language learners take part in language classes to enhance their ability of speaking. Those learners who are more effective in their speaking performances are much more successful and effective in school and in other area of their lives (Malmir, Ali, and Samad Shoorcheh2012, pp. 608-617). Learners could improve their reasoning skills and ultimately, they move toward more rational thinking ideas, this proposition was emphatically believed by Socrates (Hoaglund,

John 1993, pp. 291-311). Critical thinking is that made of thinking -about any subject, content or problem- in which thinker (learner) enhances or improves the standard thinking abilities skillfully and wisely talking changes of the structures inherent in thinking and improving intellectual standards (Sorvatzioti, Demetra Fr. 2012, pp. 61). There are two essential dimensions of thinking that students need to master in order to learn how to upgrade their high order thinking. They need to be able to identify the 'parts of their thinking (Anderson, Lorin W., et al..2001, pp. 25-45). Critical thinking is one of the most significant and modern educational elements that is being used and utilized in the classrooms and curriculum designs to train learners open minded individuals with comprehensive judgmental qualities referred to as cultivated critical thinkers (Choy, S. Chee, and Phaik Kin Cheah 2009, pp. 198-206). Critical thinking is the context of 'Preferences of Thought', standardizes thought is more important in any form to develop it (Louis, Linda L. 2000, pp.22-23). Critical Thinking is an objective and desirable educational outcome, that has been formulated and become prototype to many models. Study, conducted for 40,000 faculty in 972 by the American Council on Education, revealed that 97 percentage of respondents strongly opined that the most important goal of undergraduate education is to foster and develop students' ability to think critically (Halpern, Diane F.. 2001, pp. 270-286). Students need to build confidence to raise questions, voice, ideas and participate in dialogue. This means the freeing up the traditional role (Paul, Richard, and L. Elder, 2006). Contextual Intelligence plays a significant role in speaking skill, and speaking abilities are modified with CI to get impeccable results (Veerraghava, P., et al. 2020, pp. 2347-2356). Critical Thinking abilities are part of Socratic Questing Method, and speaking can be improved in language labs and classrooms. By giving various contexts and situations of critical thinking, speaking abilities can be enhanced in classrooms and laboratories sessions. (Raju, M., S. Lavanya, & et al. 2020, pp. 684-692). Speaking skills are concretely measured based on the rubrics created and adopted by European Frame work of Reference for Languages, it is globally accepted to assess language abilities and competencies (Heyworth, Frank ,2006, pp. 181-183). Acquiring skills is a skill that endeavours students to cope with others how to practice their abilities through different organised mechanism to speak politely and good decorum (Sharma, Sangeeta, and Sushila Shekhawat 2020, pp. 12-19).

Methodology

The researcher, in the study, adopted a structured and systematic observation to measure the engagement of the students in speaking skills whilst applying Socratic Question Method. The researcher has adopted Qualitative Methodology to validate the desired outcomes. Researcher has recorded students' speaking skills and in both tests. The recording of students' speaking test gave a good scope to assess their skills and abilities. It has been validated with Qualitative Methodology. This study has been conducted on 85 engineering graduate students; they have been selected after scrupulously conducting IELTS (International English Language Testing System) (28) test and students who secured band score 3.0 and below 3 according to IELTS Speaking Descriptors. To assess the basic skills for all students, the proposed rubrics of IELTS have been adopted in the study.

Students who secured band score 3 and below 3 have been selected for Intervention Programme. 40 heterogeneous students have got band score 3.0 in the pretest. They have been chosen for Intervention Programme. The Intervention Programme has been given to all 40 selected students, a session of 2 hours in a week on Socratic Question Method (SQM) has

been imparted to all selected students. The 2 hours structured sessions have lasted for 3 months 15 days. The 15 days period is for buffer time to conduct the test and taking feedback on Socratic Questing Method how it has helped them to enhance speaking skills in their stipulated time period.

Procedure

Much prior to this employed course, students in programme have been taught Socratic Questioning Method in English classes rooms and labs. Communicative English is the text that has been taught to all students in classes, and yet this Experimental Group (40 students) have received Socratic Question Method and Techniques at a regular scheduled session. A 2-hour session in a day has been employed, all in all 12 hours in a week, 48 sessions in month, at the end of the Intervention Programme, students received 144 sessions without any academic interruptions. Whereas other students, at the same time, received general English classes on Communicative English in the college.Students have extensively been given implicit instructions on Socratic Question Method Techniques, to enhance speaking skills, and they have been taught language classes on Speaking Skills by making students to imbibe SQM Models and Paul and Elder (2001) models. The extensive instructional methods have been employed to enhance their speaking abilities. Explicit and instructional intervention programme of 144 sessions have been taught for students to enhance speaking skills as a part of research study.

Measurement Instruments

The researcher has used CEFR-IELTS (Common European Frame work of Reference for Languages) Speaking Rubrics for assessment. This is globally accepted to test English abilities of aspirants. Fluency and Accuracy, Lexical Resources, Grammatical Aspects, Pronunciation have been employed to assess students' speaking skills. 0-9 Speaking Skills band score has been employed.

Significant Findings and Results

Significant findings have been observed during the programme, especially in last 2 months. Their speaking skills have been observed very meticulously by expert team on the weekly basis. The first 3 months were observed marginally on speaking skills, by stimulating Socratic Question Method in all possible discussions, teachings, providing supplements and so on. During the last 2 months we got very positive outcomes based on the SQM on the speaking skills band score. Students were enlightened by Paul's (1993) 6-points Taxonomy of Socratic Question Method.

Asking and answering, clarifying questions, asking questions and probe assumptions and evidence, asking questions about other view points and perspectives, asking questions about implications and consequences and even questions about questions. (Knaus 2006, P.89). As the post was about to employed, 5 students were not interested to participate in posttest due to their personal and family issues, and that has been informed to the researcher prior to the post test. They have been motivated and told the importance of getting good language abilities in speaking skills, how to question themselves was the prime aspect in the intervention programme to before speaking anything. Questioning themselves

before speaking the topic makes students to speak logically, critically and deeply. Their parents are very poor and they don't like their children to continue their graduation, and the researcher has convinced parents and he personally helped the students, they were finally convinced and became the part of the test. The 5 students' scores have also been included in posttest. At the end of the posttest, interestingly, those 5 students got very score according to band descriptors and their questioning attitude to develop speaking skills has significantly enhanced.

PRE-TEST

S. No	Total Number of Students	No. of students	IELTS band score
1.	**40**	25	3.0
		7	2.5
		8	2.0

Table:01

POST-TEST

S. No	Total Number of Students	No. of students participated	CEFR band score
1.	40	25	5.0
		7	4.5
		8	4.0

Table:02

Pre-Test and Post-Test observation

S. No	No. of students participated	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Observation
1	25	3.0	5.0	Significantly enhanced
2	7	2.5	4.5	Significantly leaped
3	8	2.0	4.0	Significantly enhanced
Total number of students 40				

Table:03

Table (03) shows the significant observations between pretest and posttest of students' speaking skills after an extensive 3months Intervention Programme to students. The above table categorically paints that student are broadly classified into 3 categories based on their IELTS band score which they have obtained in both tests. 25 students, whose band score was 3.0 in the pretest, have obtained 5.0 in the posttest, and their score in speaking skills have drastically enhanced according to the adopted rubrics. Their marginal difference between two tests is 2.0, that was possible by Socratic Question Method adopted by the researcher in the study.

The second category students, whose band score was 2.5 in the pretest, have obtained 4.5 band score in the post test, and their speaking skills have significantly enhanced. The marginal difference between them is 2.0. The last category students, who secured 2.0 in the pretest, have now obtained 4.0 in the posttest, and their speaking skills have meticulously

enhanced by adopting Socratic Questing Method. Very interestingly, the last category students had had lengthy pauses before most words, little communication was possible, they could produce only isolated vocabulary in communication, they were having grammatical errors in communication, and their speech was often unintelligible. All the observations were keenly noticed during pretest, but they have now subdued them and enhanced their level of understanding and speaking skills. Their outcomes have keenly showed that SQM could enhance their level of speaking skills.

Conclusion

Learners' abilities to enhance speaking skills hinge upon copious methods, techniques and approaches. The researcher has made a research problem that how students can enhance speaking skills by Socratic Questioning Method. After designating a special intervention programme for selected 30 heterogeneous students for a period of 3 months, it has been obviously assured that questioning oneself is very important than just simply answering what strikes in the mind. One should deeply think and draw all possible ways to come to conclusion before speaking randomly. Thought should be clear, accurate, precise, relevant, deep-breadth, logical, significant and fair (Paul and Elder Critical Thinking Model 2001), so is the thought as is the speaking ability by using SQM. Learners can enhance their speaking abilities and skills by thinking logically and critically, and that has been proved by conducting the Intervention Program, for which IELTS Speaking band descriptors have been adopted.

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The Impact of Social Media on English Language Acquisition: Perceptions of Undergraduate Students of Punjab (India)

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Abstract

The recent health pandemic faced by the world has forced educators worldwide to take the help of social media to impart education and connect with their students. For an average teacher, this meant abandoning the traditional teaching methods and adapting to the demands of the virtual medium. For an average student, this meant exploring new avenues of learning that were located beyond the realm of hard-bound pages. The precautionary measures followed during the pandemic restricted the access of students' to face-to-face interaction with language educators; while networking sites allowed them to extensively use chatting or web calling as the only means of language interaction.
With the massive growth of social media, it is bound to create an impact on the language acquisition of L2 learners worldwide. Numerous researchers from varied fields have started to focus on the importance of the impact of social media on different aspects of life, including social and educational. This paper endeavours to address this concern by evaluating the impact of social media on the English language acquisition ability of undergraduate students of the Punjab state of India, as perceived by them.
Keywords: *language acquisition, social media, English language, module*

Introduction

Social media is a convergence between personal communication in the sense of sharing between individuals (to be shared one-to-one) and public media to share to anyone without any individual limits (Meike and Young in Sari, 2017: 5). Recent times have witnessed a radical change in favour of distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it could be worthwhile to investigate the impact of social media in the foreign language context as they have been used much more now (Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). A comprehensive study on social media raises three important questions, should Social networking sites be integrated into the curriculum, do students need guidance in using them, should offline practices be adapted for exclusively higher education coordinated online e-learning environments or should foreign language learners navigate on their own in this extremely increasing virtual space, without any proper advice from their teachers? (Brick, B., 2011). The effects of a pandemic on the educational patterns of students worldwide have been explored by numerous researchers. As the number of different social media platforms and social media networks continue to grow exponentially these are the questions that need immediate attention and honest answers (Pikhart et al., 2021).

The English language as stated is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, thus making it a global language (Akinwamide, 2012). Roelfse (2013) argues that

exposure to new illiteracies embedded in the emerging technologies, impacts the way in which second language learners perceive the world. The mutated, hybrid language registers used in these technologies have made new demands on the reading and writing abilities of the youngsters (Davies, 2012). Social media can be both a friend and a foe for natural language processing (Baldwin, 2012). Social media is constantly changing the way we perceive the world around us. It is not only affecting our cultural choices but is also re-evaluating our choices concerning communication, information delivery, knowledge exchange, visual culture, education and all the varied aspects of life (Rieger and Christoph, 2018; Bhatti et al., 2019). Today, there are 4.65 billion social media users around the world (April 2022). This equals 58.7 percent of the total global population. The latest figures indicate that now 9 in 10 internet users use social media every month, accruing an annual growth of 7.5 percent. A typical social media user actively uses or visits an average of 7.4 different social platforms each month and spends an average of close to 2½ hours per day using social media. Till now, Facebook remains the world's most widely used social media platform; however, there are other 17 social media platforms that have at least 300 million active users in January 2022 (Li,M., & Croucher, 2020).

With the massive growth of social media, it is bound to create an impact on the English language acquisition of L2 learners worldwide. Numerous researchers from varied fields have started to focus on the importance of the impact of social media on different aspects of life, including social and educational. Language acquisition professionals and linguistic analysis experts have specifically attempted to investigate the effect of social media platforms and social media networking sites on the language proficiency of foreign language acquisition. In a recent research, it has been found that the younger generation prefers to chat on social networking sites, leading to a substantial change in their use of language and language skills (Al Jahromi, 2021; Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). Regardless of the impact of social media on the language acquisition and proficiency, there are a few papers that ascertain the fact that students of today are sceptical of the old fashioned, traditional teaching methods, yet are not able to explore the profound impact of social media on the changing dynamics of language instruction and information delivery.

This paper essays to address this concern by evaluating the impact of social media on the English language acquisition of undergraduate students of the Punjab state of India, as perceived by them. To study the impact of social media on language acquisition of English language proficiency, the following objectives were determined.

Major Research Questions

The impact of social media on language acquisition is positively associated with interactivity with teachers.
The impact of social media on language acquisition is positively associated with online knowledge sharing behaviour.
Social media enabled knowledge sharing behaviour is positively associated with the students' engagement with language.
Students' engagement with social media is positively associated with the students' academic use of language.
Frequent code-switching and code-mixing are positively associated with the students' academic use of language.

Review of Literature

Chomsky (2014) has asserted that language is constantly, inevitably, and naturally changing, transforming and becoming more adaptive to the users due to the demands of the present times. The emerging influence of social media has created a distinguishing language system necessary for practical communication (Attila, 2017). Studies by Slim and Hafedh (2019); Lin, Warshaucher, and Blake (2016); Thurairaj et al. (2015) have revealed that social media enhances the learners' grammatical complexity and vocabulary acquisition but fails to contribute to proficiency accuracy. Lin et al. (2016) claim that "language use on the internet is often criticized as being less correct and less coherent than other forms of language use, and as having disrupted adjacency"(143). A study on the effects of social media on Pakistani students has revealed that Facebook and other networking sites have a negative influence on the language acquisition of L2 learners (Tariq et al., 2012). A similar study on the Saudi students also produced similar results, claiming Facebook to be a distraction in the language acquisition process.

In a study, Brick highlights that Social Networking Sites can no longer be ignored by higher education institutes. The learning platform Livemocha was surveyed by Lin, Warschauer, and Blake to conclude that the platform offers a prolific space for communication with native speakers but fails to contribute proficiency accuracy. Another study has stated that due to lowered anxiety in online settings the confidence of the L2 learners was heightened and they felt motivated to engage in language spontaneously and creatively (Al Jahrami, 2019). Klimanova and Dembovskaya's study has focused on two key issues of identity construction through interaction and Discourse Analysis Framework. Another study showed that simplified online interactions help speakers produce meaningful exchanges whilst using the target language in useful manners (Mutum and Wang, 2010). A study by Klimanova and Dembovskaya asserted that "A digitally wise L2 learner is one who takes advantage of the social affordances that Internet mediation provides for L2 acquisition to legitimize his or her social power as an L2 speaker beyond the socially limited setting of the L2 classroom" (27). A similar study conducted in Turkey concluded that while the respondents were excited to use Facebook as a complementary teaching aid, they favoured the traditional in-class teaching method (Chen, 2009). Similarly, Lin, Warschauer, and Blake have highlighted that real-time conversations through live stream on Instagram or Facebook concerning quizzes on grammatical nuances allows L2 learners to interact with the language regularly. However, another study found that social networking site requires a multimodal approach of embedding and combining words and written texts from many sites, thus, having a negative impact on the learners' writing skills (Coons, 2012).

Amidst these claims, the present study aims to assess the possible impact of social media platforms on the English language acquisition capabilities of Punjabi students from the perspective of the undergraduate students of Punjab (India), a gap that this study aims to fulfill.

Research Methodology

The proposed study investigates the perceived impact of social media on English language acquisition among the students of Punjab. In order to analyze the impact of social media on language learners, a quantitative methodological measure has been used to collect

data in the form of an online and offline survey of a sample of 312 rural and urban college-going language students of Punjab. Since Punjab is an agricultural state that caters to the industrial hub as well, care has been taken to include respondents from diverse economic backgrounds to have a holistic perspective on the issue. The questionnaire has been framed keeping in mind four measuring scales i.e. Graphic Rating Scale, Likert Scale, Semantic Differential Sale and side-by-side Matrix Scale. The questionnaire elicits respondents' demographic profile along with their academic placement, besides accounting for their perceptive and behavioral responses. The exhaustive survey-based questionnaire consists of three parts, namely, the demographic and academic profile of the respondents; finding out the tendencies related to the use of social media viz-viz English language acquisition and, lastly, to ascertain the perceived impact of social media platforms on the acquisition of English language. Each part consists of a set of questions that aim at extracting a behavioral pattern of the respondents to ascertain their perceptions and choices regarding language acquisition methods and social media platforms.

The respondents are native speakers of Punjabi and respond to English as their second language. Thus, they have very little interaction with native speakers of the English language on a daily basis. Their interaction with the English language is either confined to the walls of the classroom or on social media sites. Responses from 312 students from different age groups and gender types have been analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. The responses for each question have been counted to get percentages. The questionnaire has been designed to afford the descriptive and critical thinking abilities of the respondents. The data has been carefully read and analyzed for chosen research objectives relevant to the purpose of the study.

Results and Interpretation

The results of the present study have been structured based on the type of questions applied in the close-ended questionnaire. In the scheduled questionnaire, the questions have been set to gain a wide understanding of the behavioral patterns regarding the use of social media platforms and their effectiveness in the acquisition of the English language as perceived by the undergraduate students of Punjab. The following results have been acquired from the study:

Demographic Profile

Out of 312 respondents, 50.6% belong to the age group of 20-23 years and 46.8% are in the range of 17-20 years. 51.9% of respondents are female and 47.4% identify as male. These respondents belong to diverse fields of studies, with a maximum of from Agriculture (36,4%), followed by the stream of Arts (29.25), Humanities and Social Sciences (14.9%), Basic Sciences (13%), Community Science, Engineering etc. A set of questions related to the knowledge of the subject and their frequency of interaction with the English language were asked from the respondents to ascertain their grasp of the English language. For 87% of the respondents, English has been the medium of instruction in their previous class and 50.8% of the total respondents consider themselves fairly proficient in their use of the English language. The respondents were asked to rate their vocabulary skills. 55% considered their vocabulary skills fairly proficient, 49.4% considered their vocabulary

skills two levels below expert and 3.2% categorized themselves as vocabulary experts. When asked about their latest score in an English language examination, 35.7% of respondents chose the option of above 80%; 25.3% of respondents chose above 70% and 22.1% of respondents chose above 60%.

Social Media behaviorism concerning English language acquisition

In the **first section**, to find out the social media usage related behavourial tendencies the students were asked about the popular social media platforms. 48.1% of respondents considered Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and YouTube as major social media platforms. When asked about the platforms they use regularly, 57.1% of students preferred using Instagram or Snapchat, 47.4% preferred YouTube and 43.5% used Whatsapp or Telegram. On average, 51.3% of students spend more than 2 hours per day on these platforms, while 2.6% spend more than 6 hours of their day surfing these platforms. When questioned about their purpose for using these platforms, only 33.8% use them for English language acquisition, while 71.4% use them for communicating with friends. The students were also asked about the number of academic pages they have subscribed to in their pursuit of language acquisition. 57.8% have subscribed to 5 pages while only 3.9% have subscribed to around 15 pages. The time dedicated to English acquisition online has been ascertained to only 1-2 hours per week by 33.1% of students, while around 15.6% spend no time in learning English language on these platforms.

Impact of Social Media platforms on the use of the English language

The second section aimed at deciphering the impact of social media platforms on the usage of the English language by youngsters. When asked about their frequency of usage of shortcuts/abbreviations/emoticons in daily life, 33.9% of respondents were neutral to the question, while 27.9% agreed to their usage in daily life. The students were asked about the reason for their preference for these shortcuts, 62.3% attributed it to saving time and space and 47.4% found it an easier option. The most preferred shortcut by the students was found to be replacing letters by numbers, e.g., 22ji and the least preferred was code-switching, e.g., theek...all ok. A large number of the students also used verbs for the nouns like googling, tweeting etc. When asked about the social media platform that affects their acquisition of the English language, 66% of students preferred YouTube, 45.5% of students chose Instagram and only 5.8% preferred Facebook. Only 71.8% of students agreed that these social media platforms (SM) sometimes encourage them to correct their English language and 48.1% of students agreed that these social media platforms increase their confidence in the use of the English language. 51.3% of students agreed that social media platforms positively impact
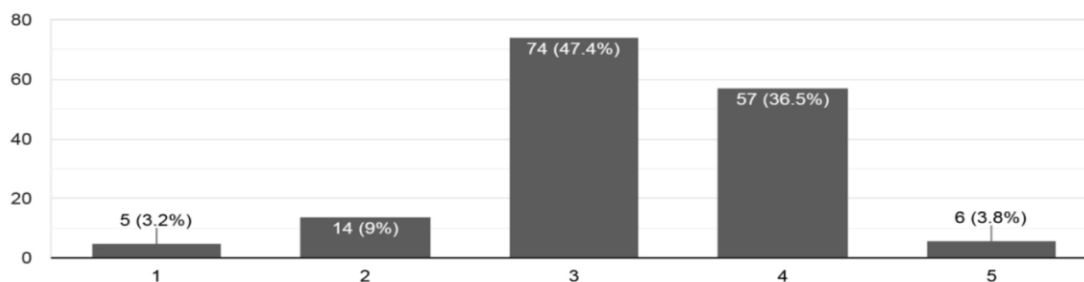
When asked if engaging in SM allows them to understand the language concepts in a more systematic manner, 45.5% of students agreed to the same while 41% students were unsure of the same. 49.4% of students agreed that learners do not feel boredom while using SM for language learning purposes. 71.2% agreed that their academic performance in an English language has improved after using YouTube or any other SM platform. 74.4% of students agreed that SM can be useful for learning language skills, 61.4% students agreed that SM can be useful for building vocabulary, and 32.1% agreed that SM can be useful for developing grammatical skills. 51.3% students agreed that they routinely employ slang in their written communication, 43.6% asserted that this has affected their academic performance, 60.3% of students acknowledged the use of incorrect spellings for speedy communication on SM, 31.4% confirmed that due to auto-correction Softwares on SM, their vocabulary index has been restricted. To gauge their confidence in the use of the English language on SM, the students were asked if SM makes them conscious of their language Skills, 54.5% of students agreed and 28.2% were unsure (Fig.2).

When you chat or give a status are you conscious about grammatical structure,spelling etc
156 responses

- Yes
- No
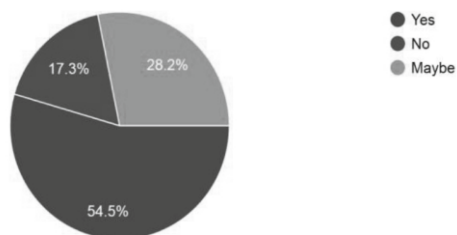- Maybe

17.3%   28.2%

54.5%

Fig.2

To whether they check themselves constantly regarding the use of shortcuts while drafting E-mails., 54.3% of respondents asserted that sometimes they do so while the response of 23% was negative. 76.9% of students confirmed that they feel the urge to resort to online searches while drafting an academic piece of writing, 67.9% of students asserted that they use online dictionaries to supplement their vocabulary deficit and 71.8% agreed that they sometimes feel unsure about their spellings and vocabulary on SM. 51.3% conformed to the idea that SM is a future risk to Standard English (Fig.3).

Use of informal and improper English language on social media is a future risk to Standard English.
156 responses

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

51.3%

10.3%

30.8%

312
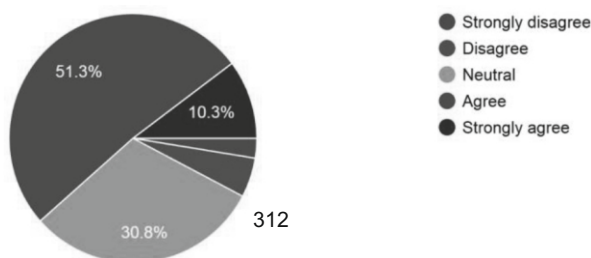
Conclusion

In the present paper, an attempt has been made to decipher the impact of Social media platforms on the acquisition of the English language by the undergraduate students of Punjab. The study found out that the majority of the students who participated in the study do not use SM for academic purposes including the learning of the English language. A very small number is aware of the platforms that provide English language acquisition facilities. An even smaller number of respondents spend time to secure any kind of language-related information on SM. Though the majority of the students do agree that SM allows them exposure to the English language, they still feel that the learning of English language in a traditional face-to-face method is a better option. They consider SM as an aid but not a replacement for the traditional system. Only 6.4% of students consider SM as an effective platform for learning the English Language. YouTube has been chosen as the most preferred platform for learning the English language by the students. Though the majority of the students agreed that SM increases their confidence in the use of the English language, they are also making them dependent on technology. More than 50% of the respondents agreed that SM is a risk to Standard English and it does impact negatively their language application skills.

From these readings, it can be discerned that SM is affecting the language skills of the undergraduate students of Punjab and its impact is marginally evident on the academic use of language. The students are conscious of the impact of SM on their English Language usage. Hybridity, code-switching and multiple registers due to the impact of SM along with Standard English language are evident in their spelling, vocabulary and communication skills. Thus, it can be asserted that their confidence in their writing abilities is both fostered and threatened by the SM technology. To suffice, it can be concluded that to keep the acquisition of the English language interesting, informative and engaging, it is pertinent to incorporate the social media platforms in the learning modules of present-day English language courses.

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Computer-Assisted Language Learning: A Study of Undergraduate Students' Perception

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Abstract

This research paper is based on the perception of first year commerce students towards the potential use of Computer assisted Language Learning (CALL). Five English language learning activities were carried out using two online technological tools named Ted Talks and Blogs during a ten-week project conducted with the 44 undergraduate commerce students of a constituent college of Punjabi university, Patiala. The study was conducted with an aim to determine students' perceptions of a) teachers' facilitative behaviour during the CALL lessons, b) the relevance of the lessons, c) impact of CALL-based lessons on the communication skills and the level of confidence of the students. Results were derived from an analysis of Likert-scale items. The data suggest that although some learners were hesitant to use these tools, however most of them showed an overall positive attitude towards using TED talks and Blogs for the learning of English. Hence the potential these tools carry to provide an effective platform for interaction and communication in a digital environment can be leveraged to engage the students especially during emergency remote teaching conditions.
Keywords: Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), *TED Talks, Blogs, Student Perception*

Introduction

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), though is a novice concept for the developing countries yet has gained significant attention in the global educational landscape. It basically is defined by its interactive method of instruction which helps learners to acquire their linguistic skills at their own pace and in their own way by granting learner autonomy to them. The distinctive feature of CALL based lessons is the incorporation of computer technology at all stages such as presentation, practice and feedback.

Computer-based materials for language teaching, often referred to as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), appeared in the early 1980s. Early CALL programmes typically required learners to respond to stimuli on the computer screen and to carry out tasks such as filling in gap texts, matching sentence halves and doing multiple-choice activities. Probably one of the best-known early CALL activities is that of text reconstruction, where an entire text is blanked out and the learner recreates it by typing in words. For all of these activities the computer then offers the learner feedback, ranging from simply pointing out whether the answer is correct or incorrect to provide more sophisticated feedback, such as showing why the learner is mistaken and offering remedial activities. The CALL approach is one that is still found in many published CD-ROMs for language

teaching. As access to ICT has become more widespread, the last two decades have witnessed CALL's journey beyond the use of computer programs to embrace the use of the Internet and web-based tools. It has rather made the use of computers more dynamic and progressive. Owing to the manifold advantages, it has become a preferred choice for many. Apart from this, many internationally recognized associations and organizations have started publishing journals (Language Learning and Technology, ReCALL, CALICO Journal, CALL-EJ) which focus exclusively on CALL and its related themes.

Advantages of using CALL in the classrooms:

a.   enriches English language skills
b.   connects learners to the real world
c.   helps in associating academics to the practical needs of the outside world
d.   serves as a 'substitute teacher'
e.   promotes collaborative and cooperative learning
f.   aids in carrying out repeated drills
g.   provides impartial feedback
h.   is available 24x7
i.   helps integrating language sub skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening
j.   enhances learner autonomy
k.   customises lessons as per learner needs

With the decrease in the cost of computers and its paraphernalia, most educational institutions can afford to have computer-based laboratories. It actually is seen as an essential requirement in any educational institution because of the increased awareness of its advantages among the students, teachers and managements.

Literature Review

The use of technological tools for the purpose of language learning has always reflected highly promising results. Advancements in the field of information and communication technology provide ample of opportunities for teachers and students to experience English language learning activities beyond the traditional classrooms; that is, through online mode as well. It has been recognized by many language experts as Egbert, Fotos and Warschauer that CALL can positively influence language learner motivation (qtd. in Alm 30).

A number of other benefits have been proposed by the ELT practitioners from using online learning modes, such as blogs, wikis, the internet and other online learning platforms for the enhancement of the communication skills of the learners (Alshumaimeri, 2011; Jung, Kudo, & Choi, 2012; Sun & Yang, 2015). Furthermore, many ELT professionals and researchers have presented reviews about an array of technological tools for classroom use (Ciaffaroni, 2003; Elturki and Hussein ,2011; Kiliçkaya, 2007).

Besides, Students also appear to gain confidence directing their own learning. In a project at one of California's Model Technology Schools, students who engaged in self-paced learning-by-doing within an interactive environment became independent learners

who were labelled "knowledge navigators" (qtd.in Stepp-Greany 165).

From insights gained through the review of literature, the researcher realized that although a number of studies have been carried out on the reviews of different types of technological applications and aids to find the impact of technology enhanced activities on language learning and acquisition, little is known about the perception of the learners of Punjab towards the use of technology. Therefore, with a limited body of research on the use of technology-enhanced language activities in the classroom in India, the researcher thought of embracing the opportunity to experiment and observe students' attitude towards it. Hence, the present study has been conducted to address the lacuna.

CALL pedagogy elements in TED Talks and Blogs

Three primary conditions of CALL pedagogy have been suggested by Chapelle (2003) that the language practitioners and instructors should consider when incorporating technology into language learning classrooms; these are the availability of L2-input exposure, interaction and linguistic production.

Activities based on TED Talks and Blogs used in the project do fulfil all the three conditions laid down by Chapelle and hence make them appropriate as language enhancement activities for the learners.

TED Talks

With the introduction of authentic content that too in the form of short video talks can be highly motivating for the learners to be engaged in the English Language Lessons. Besides, the tasks designed on the TED Talks in the different stages of the lessons (pre-watching, watching and post-watching) can facilitate language proficiency among the students. Nevertheless, the role of a teacher emerges with much more responsibility in the entire process to ensure that every lesson is fully explored to enhance all the language skills (i.e. Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) of the learners.

The easy access and availability of the riveting content in TED Talks is giving them enough momentum as rich language learning resources. TED talks offer free and engaging content for anyone teaching or learning English (Nursafira, 2020). With an aim to spread and share ideas, primarily in short form and powerful speeches, the non-profit organisation TEDx is presenting talks about almost every conceivable topic – technology, science, design, health, the environment, personal growth and many others. Currently, over 3100 talks are available making it is possible to find an inspiring talk for every classroom. Teachers can use them to enhance their lessons and spark their students' interest in language learning. He further states that TED talks are one of the resources for educators in teaching English Language especially Speaking Skills with Communicative approach.

Blogs

A blog or a weblog to be more precise is a Web 2.0 online platform which offers the opportunities to publish one's posts in an informal diary-style text entry. These posts are displayed in reverse chronological order making the most recent post appears at the top of the web page. The three-step simple publication of the content in any form may be written, audio or video on a web page with the freedom to comment and discuss has made Blogs one of the

most popular social media platform used by the youngsters. The feel proud calling themselves as Bloggers. They like to interact with and have their work viewed by others outside the classroom. Not limited only to the general use, the blogs have been well received by the educators and the ELT practioners as well. The multimedia features, simple web publishing, interactivity, and ability to support cooperative and autonomous learning make them popular with people across ages and professions. Several studies have lent support to the assertion that blogs can effectively facilitate language teaching and learning (Ahluwalia, 2011; Bloch, 2007), especially in terms of learners' language complexity, writing skills, grammatical correctness, and fluency.

Description of the Programme

Students participating in the present study were 44 undergraduate students of the Commerce realm, enrolled in a 10-week Foundation course in English Language at University College, Ghanaur. The college houses a Centre for English Language learning which is equipped with state-of-the -art audio-visual equipment to promote language learning among the students. During their course they were given five CALL based lessons making optimum use of two Computer –based tools: Blogs and TED Talks by giving ample L2-input exposure and the opportunities of interaction and linguistic production to the learners.

One of the lessons is being described as follows which is based on a famous entrepreneur Chetna Gala's TED talk titled "How women in Rural India turned courage into capital". The activity was planned in three stages of Pre-watching, watching and Post-watching and was covered in their class. Since most of the students in the course were female themselves and hailed from the villages in the vicinity of the college and were from the commerce background, the teacher researcher intentionally chose the particular talk, keeping their personal and academic interests in the mind.

At the pre-watching stage, the students were initially told only about the title and were introduced to the speaker and her domain. Following which, they were asked to predict about the talk and some questions about the problems faced by women in general and by women from rural India in particular. After discussion for about ten minutes, the students were given a list of Vocabulary words from the talk itself and then were asked to predict about the theme of the talk based on the key words. It has been found in the research that the students in the language classrooms are directly exposed to the listening activity without giving any introduction to the topic. Underwood (1989) believes that it would not be fair to draw students straight into the watching of the video without introducing the topic or the type of activity they are going to work on. Therefore, "preparatory work" (Underwood, 1989) which enables the learners to deal with the following listening text, is very important. At this stage, the learners are prepared to achieve the most from the passage in order to make them think, write and discuss everything they know about the topic, employing techniques such as prediction, semantic mapping to activate schema. A schema is the organized knowledge that one has about people, places, things, events and even for how texts work.

At the second stage of the lesson, the students were asked to watch and listen to the talk by Chetna Gala titled "How women in Rural India turned courage into capital" and check if their ideas match with those in the video. If not, how are they different? Besides, they were given the transcript with the keywords missing and asked to insert them as they listen. Listening is the basic ingredient of effective communication. Mendelsohn (1995) believes

that since listening forms up to 50% of communication time, the crucial role of listening in learning and teaching language cannot be side stepped.

Similarly, the contents of the following other TED Talks were leveraged to bring improvement in the language proficiency of the participants:

1.Persistence is Pivotal by Former Miss India Dr Meenakshi Chaudhary:

https://www.ted.com/talks/dr_meenakshi_chaudhary_persistence_is_pivotal

2.Women should rethink their Inheritance by Justice Leila Seth:

https://www.ted.com/talks/leila_seth_why_i_defend_women_s_inheritance_rights /transcript?language=en

3.Nandan Nilekani's ideas for India's future:

https://www.ted.com/talks/nandan_nilekani_ideas_for_india_s_future? language=en

4.How "SHE" became an IAS officer by Surabhi Gautam:

https://www.ted.com/talks/surabhi_gautam_how_she_became_an_ias_officer?lan guage=en

It is worth mentioning here that the TED talks were chosen judiciously keeping the interests and background of the learners.

In the Post-Watching/Listening stage, the students were divided into pairs and groups and were given following tasks to encourage them to use the language they focused on in the previous stage.

1. **Role-play**: Interview the speaker. The students were told to think of the questions they might ask the speaker based on what they have listened to. Role play as a journalist and the TED speaker. Students should be encouraged to use the new phrases and words learnt during the activity to persuade the journalist or make a point.

2. **Debate**– Write a few controversial statements of the board and divide students in to 'for' and 'against' teams. They should work together to think of how they are going to justify their points and then have a debate.

3. **Write a review**– What did they think of the TED talk? Did they agree or disagree with the points made? Was the speaker convincing? Did they find it inspiring?

4. **Publish on Blog**- Once they have formed their opinion and written their reviews on the given tasks, they were introduced to blogs and were asked to publish on the class blog prepared by the teacher. They were also told to comment on any two of their classmates' posts.

THE STUDY

a.   Research Instrument

Eliciting feedback from the participants of any research project is a pivotal step to measure the quality of teaching. It facilitates improvement in the pedagogy to enhance the positive outcome of the teaching learning process. Hence, the observations shared and the scores provided by students with regard to their teachers' teaching can lead to not only teacher professional development but also can be used for research and accountability purposes (Timperley et al., 2007).

Common approaches to understanding perceptions include the use of questionnaires,

focus groups, and interviews. While each of these approaches provides good information, questionnaires may be the best way to assess perceptions because they can be completed anonymously and administered to assess changes in individuals' experiences and thinking over time. They are generally designed to assess the attitudes and perceptions of the participants regarding the quality and effectiveness of the lessons and usually have a set of items about the quality of teaching that students have to respond to using a numeric scale. Therefore, at the end of the course, a questionnaire on student perceptions about the CALL-based lessons was administered to the students.

b.   **Data-Gathering Technique**

Student-Perception Questionnaire

The study was designed to elicit answers to the following questions:
1. What role did the instructor play in the lessons, and how important was the instructor's presence?
2. Were the lessons relevant, enjoyable and useful to the students?
3. Did students perceive that they gained confidence and improved their communication skills as a result of the lessons based on CALL?

   The questionnaire contained 15 statements with which students were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed on a 4 point Likert Scale. These statements elicited information about students' perceptions in three categories: a) teachers' usefulness and facilitative behaviour during the lessons, b) the relevance and the usefulness of the lessons, c) the effect of CALL-based lessons on the communication skills and confidence level of the students. After the distribution of the questionnaire, the teacher - researcher:

   a.   explained the students' about the purpose of the questionnaire.
   b.   informed about the three different parts of the questionnaire.
   c.   gave 30 minutes to answer the questionnaire.

c.   **Data Analysis**
   As discussed in the previous section, a 4-point Likert Scale was used to gather the information about the students' perceptions. Thereafter, the researcher analyzed the mean score of the responses using the following formula:

$$x = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

Where: x = Mean
Σx = Total Raw Score
N = Total number of the students (Gay, 1981:298).

Results and Discussion

   For the purposes of this article, data are reported in numbers and percentages of

student responses for each statement.

Teacher Usefulness or Facilitation:

More than 89% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor interacted with the students to facilitate difficulties with the activities. Students also believed that the instructor provided other kinds of language assistance, with 88% agreeing (34% of the total respondents agreeing strongly) that the instructor provided vocabulary help. Over 85% agreed that the instructor interacted with them to facilitate difficulties in the pronunciation. Over 85% also agreed that having an instructor present during the lab increased learning potential in the class. Moreover, for a small majority of students, the need for instructor facilitation did not seem to decrease after initial learning curve demands were met. Over half (54.2%) disagreed with the statement, "Once I learned how to do the activities, the presence of the instructor was not necessary." Students strongly perceived that their teachers facilitated instruction and that they were important to the learning environment. This perception corresponds to conclusions by other researchers like Glisan et al. conclude that teacher behaviours such as conducting review lessons, stimulating students to respond during lessons, and offering praise are important in the learning process. Kern states that "the degree to which computer-mediated communication promotes language and content learning, cultural awareness, and critical reflection depends fundamentally on the teachers who coordinate its use" (p. 118).

The results thus indicate the importance that a teacher as a facilitator hold in the CALL-based lessons. There has always been an apprehension of the replacement of the teacher with technology, but the truth is that only a teacher can equip the learners with the skills by scaffolding the activities as and when required. Being a silent guide by the side in CALL-based lessons, she facilitates the learning at every step, provides autonomy to the learners yet monitors their progress and extends support to bring the slow learners equivalent to their counterparts. The role of a teacher in a technology-enhanced learning environment as suggested by Kaendler et al., (2015), is two-fold: to regulate student activities by (a) assessing the progress and quality of student activities at both individual and group levels, and (2) designing just-in-time interventions to offer and adapt their support, aligned to the needs of each specific group/individual student.

Teacher Usefulness and Facilitation
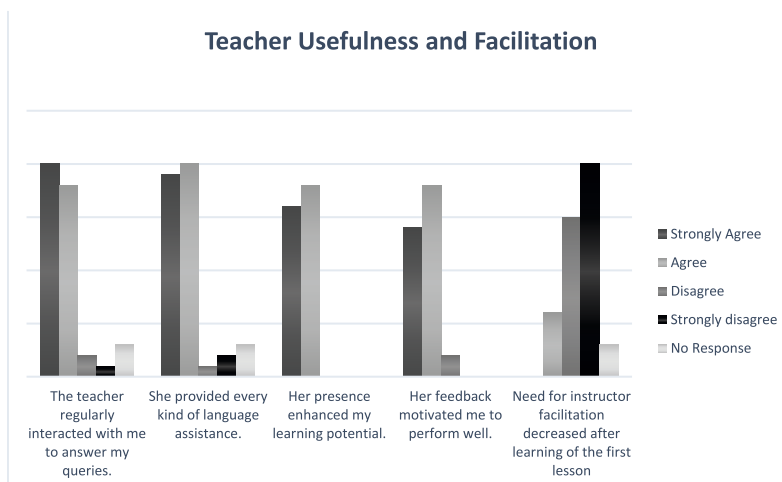
Relevance and Usefulness of the lessons:

Almost 71% of the students felt that they invested more time on the TED based lesson than they would have in a regular English class. Slightly over 36% "strongly agreed" with this response. They particularly enjoyed the task presented through multimedia and 56% cited it as an important factor in the achievement of the objective of the task. The results are in line with the findings of the other ELT researchers such as Selwyn & Gordard, 2003, who believed that the use of multimedia technologies in educational institutions is seen as necessary for keeping education relevant to the twenty-first century. Educators have heralded the advent of multimedia technologies as a catalyst for change in traditional teaching practices; to innovate and improve on traditional practices. One of the ultimate goals of multimedia language teaching is to promote students' motivation and learning interest, which can be a practical way to get them involved in the language learning (Thamarana, 2015). 82% stated that listening to an authentic video which quotes real life examples has a very positive impact on them. Almost three quarter of the students felt that the world wide readership of the blogs motivated them to post their content on the web 2.0 technological tool named blogs. Slightly more than half of the respondents (58%) said that, they liked the comments on the posts written by the instructor their peers on their uploaded content.

Hence, the promising results prove that the internet-based technological tools can be leveraged to improve the proficiency level of the learners. Researches have proved that instead of relying only on the written word in the form of books and other printed material, other highly engaging and varied teaching materials and styles can provide a rich environment which facilitates the lowest levels of the affective filter. Thus, propelling the learners to walk on an emotionally safer journey of learning at their own pace and thereby, promote better chances of language acquisition.

Relevance and Usefulness of the lessons
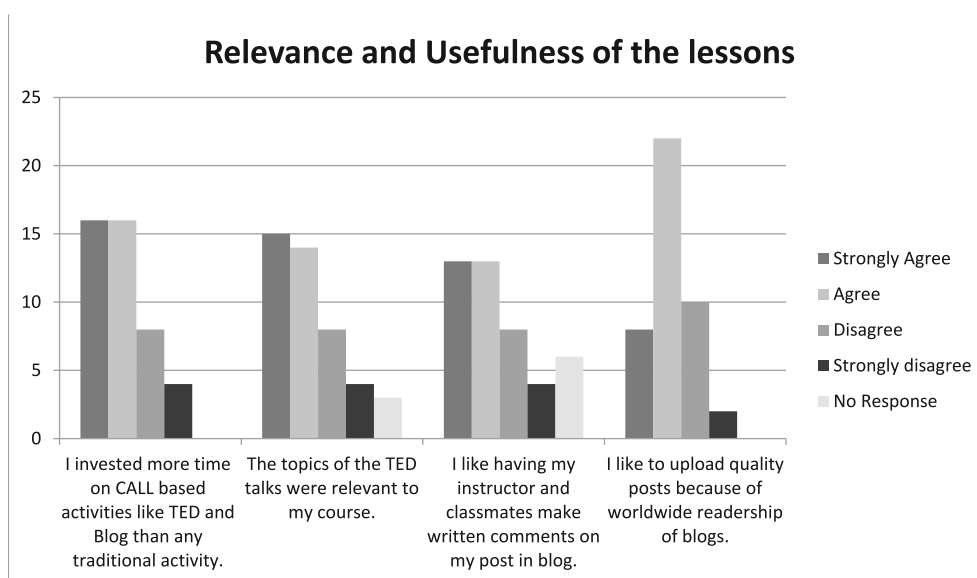
Communication Skills and confidence:

Students seemed to believe that the lab activities were beneficial to their communicative skills, although the majority expressed only moderate agreement with these statements. 74% believed that overall the entire package of the lesson comprising of pre-listening, listening and post listening activities was an enjoyable experience for them. 84% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that the pre-listening activities helped them in the better comprehension of the talk. Though more than 56% students felt that the preparation time given to them for the post listening activities was quite less, almost all were convinced with the benefits CALL activities offer to them. Almost two-thirds agreed that their listening skills and speaking skills had improved in English as a result of the activity (65.9% and 63.4%, respectively). The current study therefore, confirms the findings from previous studies that analyzed TED Talks (Coxhead & Walls, 2012) and academic spoken English (Dang & Webb, 2014), suggesting that a wider range of vocabulary (closer to vocabulary coverage for written texts) is necessary to watch and comprehend TED Talks presentations. TED Talks, web presentations freely available on the Internet, allow these students to practice effective presentation skills, improve pronunciation in context, and expand their academic as well as general vocabulary (Floyd & Jeschull, 2012). A majority (54%) also believed that they had gained confidence in their ability to interact and communicate effectively.

As testified by the research, motivation clearly seems to be a prerequisite for successful language learning and one of the responsibilities of a language teacher is to provide activities in which learners find intrinsically motivated. The Internet is clearly a motivating teaching and learning tool and language teachers need to harness this intrinsic motivational quality of the Internet to enhance the language learning experience and success of their learners. Renowned Linguist Stephen Krashen while propagating the theory of Input Hypothesis states that activities producing low affective filter results in increased level of motivation, self-confidence and produce the desire to explore, learn and even take a few risks.

Communication Skills and confidence:
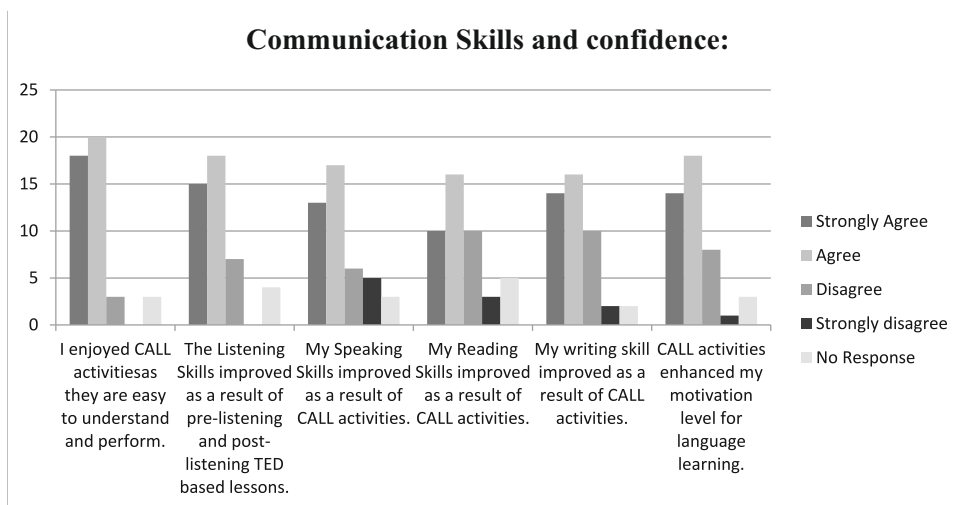
Conclusion

It can be concluded from the study that CALL based can be used to make the language learning lessons interesting and enjoyable, though care needs to be taken while selecting the talk, planning the pre and post listening and watching activities and the further reading, speaking and writing activities based on them. The students survey results suggested that the majority of the students seemed to have positive attitudes towards the use of technologies in English language education. The findings also suggest that technology supported language learning activities besides bringing improvement in the learners' reading, writing, speaking and above all listening skills also helped in increasing learner motivation and level of confidence.

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Humour Integration in the English Language Classroom: A Study

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Abstract

Humour as a potential component in educational scenario in India is less explored. With National Education Policy 2020's emphasis on innovative and best teaching practices, a reconsideration of humour in the academia would serve the purpose. Although humour as a pedagogy is acknowledged, the practical implications needs to be addressed. This article therefore looks into the pedagogical significance of Humour in English Language classroom and examines the myriad approaches to its utility for better teaching-learning experiences.
Keywords*: Humour; learner; language; pedagogy*

Introduction

Humour is indispensible part of human lives and a necessary biological attribute that every human being possesses. Humour refers to the ability to engage in amusement and laughter that gives a sense of relief and ease. Studies on Humour and its potential significance in academia has gained critical attention in the 20th century although its relevance in education dates back to 1960s and 70s (Bradford 1964; Linfield 1977). Presently, various studies have pointed to its pedagogical potential in educational settings. Many scholars reported its positive impact in academic environment. This includes increased teaching effectiveness (Englert, 2010), stress-free classroom condition (Neuliep, 1991), increased student motivation (McCroskey, Richmond, & Bennett, 2006), enhanced student learning (Baringer & McCroskey, 2000) and better elucidation of course content (Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988). Studies observe that employment of humour in classroom enables healthy teacher-pupil relation, improves learning environment and enhances academic and behavioural performances (Lovorn, 2009; Beard & Wilson 2013).

In the context of Second language learning (L2) and English as foreign language (EFL) teaching, many scholars have acknowledged the relevance of humour in enabling learners understand L2 or EFL (Bell, 2005) and in assisting language learning (Broner & Tarone, 2001). According to Cornett (1986), "humour is one of the educator's 'most powerful resources' in achieving a variety of beneficial educational outcomes, including such potential effects as controlling problematic behaviour and facilitating foreign language acquisition" (p. 8). Studies have reported the positive effects of humour when appropriately implemented in EFL teaching-learning (Hayati, Shooshtari, & Shakeri, 2011; Stroud, 2013). Laughter lubricates learning process. Also, students like to have some amount of humour in their routine classes (Embalzado & Sajampun, 2020)

Having discussed the significance of Humour in teaching in general and in L2/ELF environment in particular, it is significant to observe that many studies have acknowledged

the relevance of humour in teaching-learning scenario. However, humour studies from the Indian context is limited. Although English as L2/EFL is taught at all levels across disciplines, the utility point of humour in Indian academia has been neglected. A recent study conducted in 2021 across 147 teacher respondents to understand teachers' perception on humour as pedagogical tool revealed that most teachers in India perceived humour as pedagogical teaching strategy that can draw student's focus, increase attention span and create interest to learn. However, the study also revealed that many teachers are hesitant and do not know the strategies of humour employment into the subject (Swamy D & Shende, 2021). In continuation with the study, this article examines the ways of adapting humour into the language classroom.

Why do we need humour in language classes?

In India, English is taught and learnt as a second language and as a foreign language. By the time the student enters higher education, the student has already spent nearly 12-14 years of formal training in English as a L2 (second language). Given this scenario, yet most students lack proper communicative competency and skills to fetch a right job. Reasons include lack of exposure to L2, minimum interest in learning language or an attitude to acquire only the passing grades. Lack of motivation and resistance to participate in classroom learning are few other factors for this inhibition. Therefore, to create the necessary ambience and environment for learning is the first task of the teacher. Chabeli (2008: 51) states, "[a] helping attitude, openness, willingness and an empathetic disposition on the part of the teacher" acts as a crucial factor to establish the classroom climate. Although many techniques and pedagogies like communicative approach have been adapted over the years, in most situations, English in India is taught as a subject and not as language skill. The reliance on textbooks, study materials and the objective to score good grades limit students' knowledge and exposure to attain core language skills. All the more, students suffer a kind of anxiety when it pertains to learning a foreign language. Such anxiety causes nervousness and hesitancy to confront the language. As pointed by many scholars, humour comforts the learner and when a healthy, likable relationship is built between the teacher and the pupil, learning eventually occurs. In EFL context, since students need to equip themselves with a non-native language, a better learning environment along with the right approach facilitates better understanding.

Learning language through fun-based activities and laughter may motivate learning and assist acquiring language skills. In this context, inclusion of humour can aid pedagogy and policy making in education. The National Education Policy 2020 by the Indian government recommends best and innovative practices in teaching-learning. Considering these discussions, this paper explores the possibilities of employing humour for pedagogical benefits in a foreign language teaching context. Also, it provides an overview of the significance of humour in language classroom in facilitating better learning competencies.

Methods of Humour integration in English language classroom

Off late, many scholars have been investigating the pedagogical benefits of humour in the context of EFL learning (Cohen, 2017). Language teachers have the benefit of using humour to teach various language aspects such as structures of grammar, spelling, punctuation, phonology etc. The use of verbal humour such as pun, lexical/word humour and

nonverbal humour through facial expression, posture and actions play a good role in learning English as foreign language (EFL) or as second language (L2). In second language learning environment, humour aids and comes as a significant tool in comprehending L2 components (Bell, 2005) and in facilitating language learning (Broner&Tarone, 2001). Spontaneous humour may emerge from irony, sarcasm, pun, wit, word play and other context-based situations while explaining say for example, a grammatical structure of a sentence. Even when there is an interaction through questions, remarks etc., it can be stated with a sense of humour. Riddles, funny story, anecdotes, personal experiences also become part of the humour content. Ho.In a way wever, while experimenting innovative ways of using humour, care should be taken not to digress, distract or hurt anyone's feeling. The sense of humour should be appreciative; that which can create the necessary bond between the pupil and tutor. Hence it "should be constructive, understandable by all learners and be relevant to the content and/or compatible to the learning environment" (Chabeli, 2008, p. 58). If humour is utilized as a teaching strategy, it can create positive impact on learners as it makes learning interesting. Consequently, it improves class attendance and learning (Deiter, 2000). Also, researchers have urged that humour should be adopted as a teaching strategy and a specific pedagogical tool and not as an occasional detour to relieve stress from a serious exercise (Chabeli, 2008; Naseri & Mafaheri, 2015; Margoob, 2017). This means that researchers have strongly suggested pedagogic use of humour rather than a casual attempt to produce laughter. This implies identification of suitable methods of integrating humour within the subject taught.

Jokes and Riddles

Jokes and funny expressions while teaching phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax help to ease a serious environment and reinforce comprehending the structures of language. Errors and wrong expressions create ambiguity, miscommunication and also laughter. Laughing out to correct the errors committed in language expression can be an effective means to learn/relearn language. Jokes related to semantic and structural differences in languages helps to raise students' intercultural awareness (Deneire, 1995; Schmitz, 2002). Pham, (2014) study on humour in the EFL teaching supports teachers' utilization of humour and student's preference for humorous teachers. For Pham, jokes and funny stories can bring lot of humour in language classroom.

Use of Funny examples

Kim & Park (2017) recommended that teachers are to "provide funny examples using humorous activities or introducing interesting cultural information" (p. 241) and that "humor should be lesson-relevant, appropriate to students' linguistic level, and used in a careful manner" (Kim & Park, 2017, p. 241). Many scholars have pointed that jokes and funny sentences in the language classroom allow students to understand syntax structures, semantic differences in languages and cultural.

Implementing pictures and visual aids

Humor enhances learner's linguistic skills, vocabulary (Kilic, 2016), and writing (Skalicky, Berger, Crossley, & McNamara, 2016). Vocabulary is enhanced by using

humorous contexts through pictures (Andarab, 2019), and humorous movie clips (Mahdiloo&Izadpanah, 2017). Funny pictures such as cartoons or comics help learners to understand faster. Heidari-Shahreza (2020) suggests use of comic strips, jigsaw cartoons, sitcoms, limericks for language learning. In his chapter, he argues for HILL (Humour integrated language learning) as "a practical framework within which language teachers can teach with and about humour at the same time" (80). Heidari-Shahreza, suggests reading humorous passages, composing humorous stories for humour integration activities. According to him, illustration of humorous short story brings in cultural differences and makes it an instance of cultural humour. (90). Further, he suggests usage of comic strips, using blank comic strip (i.e., with empty conversation balloons) (93).

Word play/Puns

English language allows us to 'play' with words and structures. Words express more than one literal meaning, giving space for multiple meanings and interpretations. English, being a reservoir of puns, allows students to understand layers of meaning. Texts in the form of plays and short story offer a wide range of puns and word play.

Using a humorous Films and Literary texts for classroom discussion and analysis.

Films can become one of the teaching strategies to maximize learning benefits in second language L2 and English as foreign language (EFL) classroom. Films enhance language competencies and can be a good teaching resource (Bahrani& Tam, 2012; Champoux (1999). Films enable visualization and help comprehension. Watching films to understand various concepts benefit students at large and helps engaging students in an ideal way in L2 environment (Goldstein & Driver, 2014). Films can be used as a text as it allows multiple perspectives for classroom discussion. However, the choice of films should co-relate the topic taught. With a humorous narrative, Indian films such *English Vinglish* (2012), *Half Girlfriend* (2017) show the characters making effort to learn English. In general, films in Indian English like *The Namesake* (2006), *15 Park Avenue* (2005), *Morning Raga* (2004) etc provide ample scope for classroom discussion and language learning.

Similarly, using humorous literary texts also enable language learning. Engaging students with humorous literary pieces such as short stories or plays would develop reading comprehension skills. Texts such as Jerome. K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*, P. G. Wodehouse's *My Man Jeeves*, *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare or short stories such as *Did Somebody Smell a Rat?* by Dave Barry and *The Dinner Party* by Mona Gardner are filled with funny situations, hyperbole, sarcasm, understatement and irony.

Understanding Lexical and syntactic errors that bring humour

Humour can initiate linguistic awareness. How one language is different from the other can be taught by identifying structural differences. English language has lot of phonological jokes in the form of puns, synonyms and collocations. In everyday scenarios, we often see that spelling errors relating homophones/homonyms or sentence structures are wrongly drafted leading to funny expressions. For example, popular funny sentences include:
        In a Norwegian cocktail lounge: Ladies are requested not to have children at the bar.
        In a Budapest zoo: Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food,

give it to the guard on duty.

Such examples can be related to the Indian context. Indians typically try to translate their native expressions into English which gives raise to funny sentences. Indian Novelists such as Khushwant Singh have used such expressions to bring authentic flavour and humour in their writings. Spelling and structural errors are also common; easily seen in public platforms and even in office memos, circulars etc. Signboards or hoardings often have wrong usage of words. Example: *Snakes is served here*. (In a restaurant, instead of *snacks*)

The wrong punctuation leaves ambiguity, confusion and laughter. Punctuation produces different meanings. For example

A woman, without her man, is nothing.

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

A humorous classroom discussion draws learner's attention. If the teacher finds the class inattentive or bored, they can ask some riddles or questions. For example: The teacher to the class: *Can you frame a sentence consisting all the English letters?* Later the teacher can write on the board:

Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.

(or)

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Some practical examples from the Indian context

Table 1. *Funny language expressions in Indian Usage*

Common usage	Right usage	Error
According to me	In my opinion	Phrasal
Slowly slowly	slow	Repetition in usage
Person expired	Person passed away	Word error
You are going to Delhi, no?	You are going to Delhi, aren't you?	Use of question tags
Mother promise to swear that something is true	Mother's promise to keep her word	Word usage

Words like *would be* for fiancée, *prepone* for advancement, *timepass* for leisure are common Indian usages. Expressions such as *eating someone's head* or *killing time* are common Indian expressions which a native speaker of English cannot relate to. Teachers can point to these everyday errors while teaching sentence structures, word formation and so on. Students can be asked to find such funny expressions or spelling errors found on advertising boards/circulars/pamphlets which undoubtedly produce laughter due to faulty expressions. Such activities could be given as assignment as a part of continuous internal assessment.

Table 2. *Recommended Classroom activities*

Suggested Classroom activities
Role play of humorous story
Unscramble the sentences to form a funny story/dialogue
Listening to funny video clips/movies
Editing a passage/letter which is humorous due to lexical errors
Reading a passage as an instance of cultural humour
Word building through puns, riddles

Such classroom activities will enable students to learn at a faster rate. The language teacher can use various funny texts and movies to create awareness on appropriate language use. Learning through laughter helps to eliminate faulty expressions. To summarize, Bell (2009: 241) observation stands pertinent here:

Humor is presented as socially and psychologically beneficial to learners, helping to relax them, to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere, to create bonds among classmates, to raise student interest, and simply to make learning more enjoyable. In

addition, humor has been touted as an excellent way for students to learn the vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and discourse conventions of the target language, as well as to gain insight into the culture of those who speak that language.

A Cautious note on Humour implementation

Though many studies including the present study has significantly pointed the pedagogical potential of humour, it is also very true that one must use humour cautiously. Using the right humour, more often connected to the subject bears the necessary outcome. Otherwise, the purpose is lost. As observed by Garner (2006), humour must be specific, targeted and appropriate to the subject area. Humour is to be relevant to course content which distinguishes it from 'irrelevant' and 'unrelated' humour (Wanzer et al., 2006; Kim & Park, 2017; Bakar, 2019). For example, usage of puns, jokes, word humour should not cause discomfort, disrespect or harm others feelings (Wanzer et al., 2006; Kim & Park, 2017). In this context, it is poignant to observe that humour integration in language teaching inevitably illustrates cultural tendencies, patterns of behavior and differences in language use. According to Deneire (1995), "humour caused by the clash of cultures serves as an excellent teaching device" (p.189). This allows space for learners to understand both language and culture simultaneously. However, care must be taken not to hurt the sentiments of others. Humorous comment in one culture may not be perceived in the same way across cultures. For example, Bell (2006) notes that her Thai English learner did not find humorous comments on overweight people funny because in her culture posing fun at obese people was unwelcomed. Again, humour based on gender, varies based on behaviours and socio-cultural implications. Such cultural differences in perception must be carefully handled so that it does not become offensive or aggressive. Teachers should laugh *with* students not *at* them. Therefore, teachers must be thoroughly prepared on the ways of humour integration into the subjects without leave scope for digression or causing discomfort to others. If used carefully, Humour, can serve as an effective pedagogy. As many educationists are not clear about the right approach, it is necessary that suitable training programs and workshops are being conducted to train teachers. This need for training is emphasized in other studies as well (Ageli, 2018). Heidari-Shahreza (2020) also notes that workshops and training programmes would empower language teachers to make the best use of humour. A serious consideration to this aspect would benefit the student community.

Challenges for the EFL Teacher

There are possible barriers that may affect humour inclusion in language classroom. For example, teachers would disapprove its usage for the fear of losing control over the class or may lack the confidence to employ it. Some may also feel "humor is not in their personality," "they lack competence to create humor in L2," and "they are more syllabus-oriented" (Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, & Faiz Abdullah, 201, p. 111). Again, lack of group dynamics and seriousness may create a sense of indiscipline leading to inappropriate classroom situation. Even cultural humour may not be relevant at times. A heterogeneous class may not be able to relate to a cultural joke due to lack of awareness or exposure.

Conclusion

Humour has many pedagogical benefits in education. In L2 and EFL classrooms, the use of humour will aid teaching. Language teachers have the advantage to instil humour as various texts and contexts provide scope to derive ample meanings/interpretations through linguistic structures, word play and pun. Learning through fun and laughter brings the desired results in academia. However, the teacher should take caution not to digress or hurt anyone in the process. This requires some amount of thought on the strategies of humour employment. This article has pointed to few of them. Language instructors can further explore innovative practices on how humour can be effectively used. One common method cannot be applied blindly as target audience and their capacities differ. Further, an irrelevant humour may again create confusion and may appear disgusting. Through proper integration, experimentation and observance, one can be confident about its implication. As Lovorn (2008) points, those teachers who plan instruction with humour strategies transform their classrooms with a uniqueness.

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Swaraj Raj in conversation with Mohineet Boparai

Mohineet Boparai

Literary Voice talks to Mohineet Boparai, a Canada based poet who has published six anthologies of her poems and one book of literary criticism on Abdulrazak Gurnah titled, The Fiction of Adulrazak Gurnah: Journeys Through Subalternity and Agency which was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, in the United Kingdom. She has been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize. In an interview published in Zymbol Magazine, she was hailed as India's rising star. She holds a Masters in English and Ph.D. from Punjabi University, Patiala.

SR: *Thanks Mohineet for speaking to Literary Voice.*
You've till now published 6 anthologies of your poems and a book on critical appreciation of Abdulrazak Gurnah. All these publications indicate your prodigious talent. Tell us something about your background, your family, your work in India and about your poetic journey. When did you start writing poems? How does your background help you in writing poetry?

MB: I was born in Punjab, in India in 1985 and moved to Canada in 2018. I now reside in Canada, with my husband, son, and parents-in-law. I am a teacher. I was educated in India and completed my Ph.D. in English from Punjabi University, Patiala. My research interests include postcolonialism, subalternity, agency, place, and memory studies, among others. I started writing poetry when I was 12 years old and at the time most of my poems were lyrical and were often composed in the forms of random songs that I would hum as I went about playing or riding my bicycle. They were born out of leisurely engagement with the world. Now, my writing process may differ somehow, but my poems arrive in leisurely moments, still. Most of the poems that I choose for publication are written in moments of relative leisure that I now must snatch from daily routine. I've learnt that I may be busy but still be in a leisurely state to write.

SR: *I know it is a difficult question to answer, but still I would like you to tell us what really motivates you to write? I mean is the motivation intrinsic or extrinsic?*

MB: I find it indeed a difficult question to answer because I am forever in the process of understanding my art, and myself. I believe that whereas the motivation to write is

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intrinsic, the extrinsic is not absent from the creative process. The intrinsic and extrinsic must come together in some queer way and are always orbiting each other. Also, with art, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the inside and outside. The margins that lie between these are always unclear and hazy. I believe that the motivations to write poetry lie in the saturation of one's inner being, a kind of fullness that makes poetry spill into its physical state. It is like osmosis where poetry seeps out and finds space in the overt vacuum until a balance of some sort has been established between the spaces intrinsic and extrinsic.

SR: *Mohineet, perhaps my question has been misunderstood. Let me clarify. You see poets win many awards and they become celebrities in their own right. When I talk about external motivation, I have in mind public approbation and literary awards; and also, I've Rilke's advice to a young poet who had approached him for advice about his poems. Rilke's answer was: "Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart; confess to yourself whether you would have to die if you were forbidden to write." You see, in a way, Rilke lays the entire emphasis on internal motivation.*

MB: I very much agree with Rilke, and for me the inner motivations override the external. Creation is its own fire that cannot be kindled by money or fame, especially the creation of poetry. Poetry compels itself to be born. There are phases when I do not write at all and feel drained out and then there are times when I write even four poems a day. In such times, it is difficult to even understand where the poems come from. I cannot understand what it is in me that makes me write thus. It's probably just to do with all the ideas that get collected in my being and then stimulate poetry. It of course feels great when a good publisher wants to publish my work or when my poetry gets recognized in some way or when I read it out to other people, but that is because of the exposure. I do feel sometimes that more people should read what I have written, but that is hardly a motivation to write. It is a kind of incentive that does not impact the form or content of my poetry. If I try to write a poem on social issues for the sake of being fashionable, I do it very badly and the poem seems forced, so I try to not write as such.

SR: *Could you please dilate upon how you understand the creative process?*

MB: For writers, the self is inextricably tied to the overt world. Experience for them is always an exchange between the self and the outside world and there is no single place where it begins. It is neither directed inwards nor outwards but is in continual flow. The writing of a poem further closes the distance that one feels from nature and the self and nature become increasingly less estranged with the experience of reading or writing a poem.

This is often explained as a negative capability where the writer becomes nature. However, one can also think that we do not have to negate the sense of self to reach out for the overt. Rather, poetry involves a heightened sense of oneself and an ability to find the universe within the self. One cannot experience that which is not already a part of oneself. Nature is a part of our very biological makeup. A poet has an acute sense of this connection and knows that only that is experienced by us what makes our being. Rilke would not be able to understand the tiger if a part of him was not already a tiger in a cage. Keats could not have written his "Ode to Autumn," if the seasons did not flutter and flit, already, in his being. They did not negate their subjectivities but meditated long and calm over the presence of these, in their being.

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The self never disappears in meditating over the universe, but in meditating, one explores and unravels the universe's presence within the self.

By paying attention to an object, one explores not just the object of meditation, but one's own conscious, subconscious, and unconscious to understand it. The resources of understanding the universe are present within one's being. One does not negate subjectivity but explores it to reach an understanding of an overt object. There is no other, but a self with unlimited possibility.

The meditative process in writing leads to revelation. Something of the world is inhaled during the process of meditation and the writer connects this whiff to something in herself. The poet understands that the pursuit of beauty is also that of truth, and that beauty and truth are but one. The poet understands that truth cannot be reached by a scientific dissection of the world that we find ourselves in; rather the truth of existence lies in experiencing the beauty of the universe. The understanding that everything is true, therefore, nothing is true leads one on a cyclical never ending path. Thus, the poet understands that all truth lies in experience.

SR: *When a poem is brewing in your mind, do you follow the idea, as most people generally believe, or you follow the logic of language like Dostoevsky when he wrote his novels in his signature style poetic prose?*

MB: Mostly, my poems follow the logic of language. I never know a poem in its entirety before I start writing it. It has a gradual progression and every line I write ensues from the previous one. Sometimes a poem comes into being when I am reading a beautiful piece; sometimes when a thought resonates in the mind it compels poetry to explore it further; and sometimes the beauty of nature, emotions, and people motivate a poem. All such observations, however require concentration. When I write poetry, the poem becomes life itself and I am in it.

The art of concentration in writing leads the poet to spontaneity. Poetry happens and is not forced into existence. This is not to say that the poet does not think consciously while writing a poem and writes solely from the unconscious pool of feelings and emotions. Poetry is an odd culmination of long-drawn thinking that ends in shaping it with spontaneous overflow. What the poet brings to fruition in a poem, has been pondered over and imagined in the recesses of the mind as well as consciously. Thus, a line in a poem may not be written with much deliberation but for it to come to life, at a particular instant, it must have taken years of culmination. The emotional appeal of a poem comes from the spontaneous, emotional overflow of what has been thought long but is still in the domain of the unknown.

SR: *Please throw some light on the age old conundrum about a poet being a born poet or poetry being a craft that can be learned. Is poetry 'received' or do you have to labour hard to bring a poem into being? Please give some examples of a few poems or a few lines from some of your poems which you can summon in support of your ideas.*

MB: Though poetry has origins that can never be completely understood because the human mind and its workings evade understanding, I would not link it to anything divine. Everything is linked to divinity and hence nothing is linked to it. At the same time, one does not have to labour to bring poetry into being and it emanates spontaneously. The muse of poetry has many shapes and forms. It comes in the most unforeseen and mysterious ways to grant the passage to poetry. I have experienced my poetic self ever since childhood. I think that poetry started coming to me in the form of mispronunciation at first, and then as I grew up into a teenager, it emerged in

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misunderstanding. Whenever something is amiss or not in its usual place, poetry has automatically been created, for poetry is forever in the domain of making up for these breaches in the world or simply seeing the beauty in non-symmetrical things. Poetry can be an initiation into accepting the world in its raw beauty and yet a poem is all about organizing images and words to generate music and make imagination to flower. Despite the fact that free verse on the face of it may seem without constraints and the very placement of word on page seems to be disorganized, it is nevertheless, not formless and inherently aims for an accentuation of meaning.

SR: *Please tell us something about the poets you feel have influenced you the most and why?*

MB: I have been influenced by many poets along the way. I would start with the most recent influence first and then go randomly into the others. Most recently, I have been influenced by Mary Oliver and it is directly linked to my explorations of the natural scape of the Greater Toronto Area. Oliver's poetry links me to the land in a beautiful way. After reading Mary Oliver, my observation of nature can never be the same as it was before. The way she sees nature's breath passing through us and observes beauty in the minutest of things is indeed something that is essential to life. She seems to be iterating poetically what Spinoza did in his philosophical writing about God, when she focuses on experiencing the beauty of the world and seems to contend that experience of the world is the best form of prayer or conversation with God.

I have also been taken in by Wislawa Szymborska who made me come to the realization that life is an oddment that has to be understood a moment at a time and not in the alignment of days, months, and years that we so often engage in as we make sense of life. I understood through her writing that we can only make sense of life, a moment at a time.

As a poet of confessional and love poetry I have been immensely influenced by Pablo Neruda. His use of metaphor, is rich and he seems to be in love with not just the person but with love itself. Love seems to be the end in itself and it links with the larger things. When one reads his love poems it seems that love encompasses everything and nothing lies beyond it. Nature, the stars, the seasons are all an avowal of love. Some of his lines have been inhered in m consciousness, and so much has shaped me unconsciously as a poet. Another poet who seems to write metaphor in the way of Neruda is the Punjabi poet, Amrita Pritam. Her use of metaphor, the fearlessness of her tone, the resonance of meaning in images, and echoes in her vocal narration of poetry have all influenced me as a poet.

Of the old masters, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats have influenced my poetry. As a poet, I have also been influenced by some prose writers, such as Emily Bronte, Dostoevsky, Toni Morrison, and Arundhati Roy, which may seem odd at first. I believe that any kind of writing, whether fiction, non-fiction, philosophy, or even painting can influence one's writing if it generates some kind of dialogue in the mind. Any writing that makes one think deeply or engages one's imagination can be an influence on oneself as a poet.

SR: *You shifted from India to Canada in 2018. How did this migration affect your sensibility as a poet? Did your experiences as a migrant/diasporic find resonance in your poems that you've written in Canada?*

MB: When I migrated to Canada, it was at first difficult to engage in writing as I had done in the familiar home-space of India. I was used to the sights, sounds and smells that

bombarded the consciousness with stimuli and this clutter had become an essential part of my consciousness as a writer. I needed the background noise as it were, for a poem to flower. Canada seemed to be a sanitized place whose soul had furrowed into a deep hibernating place. No matter how much I coaxed it, poetry was aloof. Then, I started discovering the natural places around me with my husband and son, the trails that lay just beyond the neighbourhood, the forested reserves, the streams and rivers that passed under lonely bridges, the geese that went about their business most nonchalantly, the birds perched outside, with whom my pet green cheeked conure struck a conversation, and the maple leaves that created a panorama every autumn. When I went apple picking with my son and showed him how apple jam is made, or dipped my feet in the cool streams of Credit river or listened to "Twelve Days of Christmas" being played on the radio while driving northwards through the snow lined narrow roads. All these experiences re-kindled my poetic voice. My recent poems are attempts to record the beauties of nature and the messages that these relay to the being. Ever since the first poems I have not explored political issues much and most of my poetry has been either confessional or perceptive of images and thought.

SR: *I understand that you regularly participate in poetry reading sessions in Canada. How do these reading sessions affect your poetic persona? Do you think that the immediate feedback you receive from your listeners helps you look inwards sometimes, thus making you revise your own stance on a particular issue? Is writing poetry for the readers you've never met – though you will surely have your implied reader in your mind – a different ballgame altogether from writing for an audience present in front of you?*

MB: The poetry readings are very liberating for me. They are a welcome change from my routine life. Even though I am continuously engaged with reading literature, and writing, meeting people who also have writing sensibilities is a motivation in itself. This aspect of a writer's life was missing in Punjab, in India. Here, I feel fulfilled as I share my thoughts and writing with other people. The most rewarding part of writing, of course is writing itself and the audience/reader comes after this, so I would not say that I write differently or write for the writers whom I meet at poetry readings. These readings, however, have induced me to work on my recitation.

SR: *Do you need a particular space and silence to write your poems or do you think that the mind is always working and you can compose a poem even when you are travelling in a bus or a train, or while you are sitting and enjoying a cup of coffee in a coffee shop? This question has to do with a lot of travelling I believe you must be doing in Canada.*

MB: I can write a poem when I am in a certain mindset. This can happen anywhere, when I am alone, or in social places. Only, when a poem dawns I know only of the space within which the poem is. At that moment, I am alone with my poem even though I may be in a bus or a café. In that moment between the poem and me, the outside world gets partly eclipsed and enters a zone between consciousness and the subconscious.

SR: *How do you visualize the role of a poet today? What I want to ask is that we are living in a fast paced life glued 24/7 to our electronic gadgets; there's little private life. The life in hyperspace and demands of digital propinquity are changing us*

irrevocably. What role do you visualize for yourself as a poet in these circumstances?

MB: Writers and all other artists strive for beauty. They understand that we live for beauty of earthly experience, and to revel in the pleasures of the senses. Without these, survival would have no meaning. When the world is disrupted by tyranny and oppression, its is not just peace and existence that are at stake, but also the beauty of existence that we live for. What is threatened is not just survival, but the very beauty that we stay alive for seems to crumble around us. This is perhaps the reason why ever since times immemorial artists of all kinds have revolted against tyranny. This artistic call springs from their wish to maintain the beauty of the world. They do not just stand up against oppression as a mode of political duty, but against the very disruption of the beauty. They stand for the beauty of the universe that springs up in peace, and this encompasses the environment, and other beings.

SR: *The coming age of AI (Artificial Intelligence) is posing a great challenge to our very humanity. I've been told that there are many a poetry writing software available today that can help a person write poems. With the integration of AI and our neural pathways in times to come, the humongous amount of data that it can draw upon, and many other inventions/discoveries in the field of neurosciences, how would all this affect the craft of a poet? After all, the very notion of the human is under a question mark these days. Do you think that such interventions will diminish a poet or enhance her creativity?*

MB: I believe that art of all kinds keeps evolving. There has never been a stagnancy in it. I cannot believe that computers would write poetry and make it obsolete. Art will always find a detour and emerge even stronger and more imaginatively so. In some way, poetry is already immune to Artificial Intelligence because the core of it emanates not from the brain but the mind and we cannot locate the mind. Since the mind cannot be mapped, a computer cannot learn it in its entirety. Also, poetry comes inextricably linked with philosophy and thought, often in its unexplored aspects. A poet can think ideas that have been hitherto not thought about and exist in an untouched state. This is not the domain of Artificial Intelligence and therefore the writing of a computer exists on the surface. It cannot encompass novelty of thought like a poem written by a human being can.

SR: *Please tell us something about your forthcoming anthology. What are your major themes today, especially when life seems to have become extremely precarious? We've the third World War knocking at our doors; we've entered an era of extreme climate change and ecoprecarity occupies the mind of most thinkers; the neoliberal economic order has delivered heavy blows to human solidarity and conviviality; there's a growing tide of intolerance, bigotry, racism and xenophobia world over.*

MB: My most recent poetry anthology titled *Beyond Thorns* encompasses the first poems I wrote in Canada. These are explorations of nature and the workings of the universe as we know it through experience. As with my previous poems, poetry in the current anthology also begins from minuteness and then moves towards the questions that human beings universally look at. *Beyond Thorns* is a poetic avowal of the fringe between the human world and nature. It goes beyond imagination into the realm of perception, and existence itself. It is an endearing acceptance of sorrow that is ingrained in the being's interactions with nature. The poetry in this collection subsumes romantic and philosophical (almost prophetic) undertones, as it comes to

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grips with lived experiences of love, nature, and God. The poems dive subsurface and head on into the world that forever evades understanding and attempts to emerge with whiffs of its scent while also with the knowledge that grasping the world is never possible. This book attempts to open the dark room of philosophy by engaging the senses but also by delving into the unconscious recesses of the poetic mind and an inner darkness of being. It is an attempt to see through the thick honey-like darkness of life and float a boat to the other side, into the domains of happiness and love.

SR: *I know all your poems are like your own babies, and asking you to give us two that are your favourite poems is a near impossible task; but still, please give us your two poems that we can publish here; one that has been already published and one that is yet to be published.*

MB: The first one is from *Beyond Thorns* and is hitherto unpublished:

A Conversation with God

I think I am an echo lost in a valley of sounds
crashing against the rocks, forever bearing bruises,
floating here like solitary marble hearts in a saucer
of light, always towards darkness.
The rays pass through my glass self
like rain through the sky's breath
like the soul moving away from a song

I am an echo hurled between rocky hands, I think.
But, am I a prayer, or a poem?
Or just a crack through which life falls
and crashes into the soul?
I wonder what the twittering birds
on morning roofs say.

The world wears a great veil,
it too speaks in the shadows
and it is okay to not understand
but listen and listen again.

A flood flows between my ears
and every gurgle is not the sound of sinking
There are days which burst at the hems of my eyes
There are calls never answered but heard still,
like the pitter-patter of a tropical rain.

Can I listen to the song?
listen even if I don't reply because maybe I am
an echo not lost or hurled but
held still between the folds
of the universe

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coming out of a nebula,
silently, mysteriously
like a bird cracking out of an egg
revealing itself to the light, to us.

The second one was published in *The Wind in a Seashell:*

Blindness

Tonight, you open the soles of my feet
and rise in the capillary tubes of my bones,
the grains of years drawn on them.
Every circle an avowal of your heart.
You keep rising to the desert of the soul
Blind and silken, the winds
filter past the windows of the irises
Slow stones turn on their backs
at the tremors of your arrival,
memory flows, thirsty for whiffs of your starry night,
The heart's four chambers are dry
until you drizzle your fire in a slow rain of sparks
Then, as you lock your eyes into mine,
thunder flies the birds of love
to their nest in my soul
and we go blind in the never-ending rain.

SR: *Thanks a lot Mohineet for taking the time out to talk to Literary Voice. Our best wishes to you in your creative pursuits. We hope your voice finds an echo all over the world and your readers read and listen to your poems again and again, and the bird you talk about "cracking out of the egg" in your poem A Conversation with God flies high and fills the literary horizon with melodies that have the potential to awaken people to better ways of looking at the world.*

MB: Thanks for your best wishes and probing questions. It was pleasure exchanging my views with you on issues that are close to my heart.

Theatre of the Immigrant
A Dialogue with Director and Writer - Jatinder Verma

"Theatre is for all and I strive to approach any play I do – whether classical or modern – as if this was the first time the play was being produced." - Jatinder Verma

Jatinder Verma *is a British Asian theatre director. Born in Kenya to Indian parents, Verma moved to Britain in 1968, the year the Commonwealth Immigration Act was amended to disenfranchise Kenyan Asians. He is one of the co-founders of Tara Theatre, leading the company as its Artistic Director over its first forty-two years. He led the renovation of Tara's home in south London to create Britain's first multicultural theatre, fusing Edwardian brick and Indian wood to create a distinctive award-winning theatre building; which was opened in September 2016 by Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. He studied for a BA in History at York University & MA at Sussex University. He directed Tara's inaugural show – an adaptation of Tagore's Sacrifice at Battersea Arts Centre in August 1977. In 1989, Jatinder Verma became the first Asian or non-white director at the National Theatre, London, where he staged his own adaptation of Molière's Tartuffe. He has contributed a variety of published essays on theatre, as well as presented a range of programmes for radio and TV. He is the author of the children's book, Prince of Fire. He also wrote, with Claudia Mayer, a three-part dramatization of The Mahabharata for BBC Radio 4 (first broadcast in 2007). Jatinder Varma has received Honorary Doctorates from De Montfort Leicester, Exeter & York universities, a Research Fellowship from Rose Bruford College as well as an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. In 2017, he was awarded an MBE for services to diversity in the Arts. He is now pursuing projects under his own company, JVPRODUCTIONS – which inaugurated with an online reading of the story of Savitri from* The Mahabharata *by celebrated actress Indira Varma, for the all-India Folk Log Festival (this can be viewed on* https://www.facebook.com/folklog/videos/25126871261 0964.

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India Trust Research Grant in 2017. Her areas of interest include Drama and Indian Theatre, Performance Theory and Gender Studies.

RP. *If I start with a general yet subjective query, how do you define theatre and performative practices?*

JV. As a "sharing". Our practice is founded on the sharing of imaginations and skills; and our purpose is to share our story with an audience – who, themselves, have voluntarily decided to share their time in our space and with us.

RP. *Please share your experience to direct plays at Tara Theatre. How do you find actors preparing for an adaptation of Indian plays and application of Indian classical dramaturgy on plays?*

JV. The first assumption to make is that Indian plays are plays from any other part of the world – i.e, they take the form of a text which has to be deconstructed and then re-assembled according to the particular vision of the director. Second comes the approach – i.e., the appreciation that ways of producing (the dramaturgy) differs from culture to culture.

In the specific instance of Indian classical plays, I found it very useful for me and the company to explore the principles detailed in the *Natya-Shastra* – with the proviso that the language of gesture (mudras) is modified to take into account both the Indian-British actors and the British audiences. I found it useful to help the actors to make *connections* with other forms that they may be more familiar with – mime, popular Indian cinema, melodrama, dance, rap, musicals - as a way of deepening their appreciation of Indian classical dramaturgy.

RP. *How does the soil-based floor of performance space at Tara Theatre create a difference in performance in comparison to regular Proscenium? Also, at Tara Arts, the seating area of the audience is closer to the actors' space of performance than the proscenium theatre with the fourth wall. Does it make performance more engaging?*

JV. One of the abiding virtues of Indian (indeed, all Asian and African) theatre history has been the honest way in which it has dealt with fiction, where the performances do not pretend to be real – as began to develop in Europe with the invention of the proscenium arch. The latter "framed" presentations, much like photographs (and later, film) frame reality. This led to the practice of "realist" drama, which *pretended* to offer the reality of life.

Indian classical & folk theatre by-passes realism to get to what is essential in all drama – the truth of the situation. Tara Theatre's earth floor & intimate auditorium forces a gaze on the situation – and the art of acting. This architecture of the space means that both performers and audience are aware they are sharing a space of fiction.

RP. *In one of your interviews, you said, "I had grown up with an idea of London as a place of great houses and of all the literature. But my own lived experience was often that I was simply not wanted" (Dowd, BBC News). What kind of challenges and diasporic issues did you face to set up a theatre house and direct plays in a foreign land as an immigrant?*

JV. Racism has developed significantly in post-War Britain following the arrival of non-white immigrants from Britain's ex-colonies. Indeed, my arrival in Britain in 1968 coincided with perhaps the most iconic speech on race relations delivered by a British politician: Enoch Powell famously talked on "rivers of blood" flowing in the streets of Britain as a result of coloured migration.

At the time when I set up Tara Arts, there were no other similar theatre companies. It

took us 6 long years before we received support from government funding bodies. 40 years later, on building the theatre, I faced similar difficulties, with funding proving difficult to get.

RP. How theatre is a better medium to help challenge racism and give voice to immigrants?

JV. Theatre in its very nature is diverse – mixing literature, music, dance, painting, architecture and the play of light and dark to create the most magnificent of hybrid – or bastardised – art-forms. And, central to it is the word "exotic": it is precisely the world, situation, character that is different, foreign, exotic to the one we know that draws us to theatre in the first place, allowing us to engage with the bewildering Other in order to be provoked into seeing ourselves differently.

It, therefore, seems to me the ideal medium for challenging racism.

RP. London is a multicultural city. How do you plan a performance that appeals not only to Asians but to the diverse audience?

JV. By assuming both that any story I choose to tell is for *all* audiences, and that I know neither the story nor the language it is spoken in. This enables me to constantly challenge the actors to clarify their intent and actions…and, importantly, make clear the meaning of any non-English words or phrases.

RP. Did you produce any Indian play in a language it is originally written? If yes, how was your experience with the actors and audience?

JV. These have been fewer, but I've found my approach as in the previous answer works just as well. It is to an extent easier as we *all* share the same assumption – that no one will be able to understand unless our use of language (tone, rhythm, inflection), action (gesture) and intention (*bhava*) are clear.

RP. Some classical and traditional art forms demand prior knowledge of its methods, techniques, traditions etc. from its audience. How do you deal with this challenge as a director?

JV. I feel this is a barrier – rather like in classical music – creating a sense of elitism. Theatre is for *all* & I strive to approach any play I do – whether classical or modern – as if this was the first time the play was being produced. And therefore, I need to minimize or eliminate any barriers to understanding.

RP. Do you think that technology is transforming theatre?

JV. Of course. Lighting is an obvious example, as is sound. Increasingly, we are seeing the use of video & projections as tools to enhance the storytelling. In some respects, these technical advancements have a detrimental effect: eg., with the increasing use of throat microphones in theatres, the emphases on vocal projection (& hence training) has decreased. Much the same can be said for the use of video, which can restrict the exchange of imagination that otherwise takes place between the actor and the audience.

RP. Theatre has always been considered as a medium to bring change in society but it has its limitation as well. In what manner do you find theatre as a change maker?

JV. I believe all theatre can do is change the shape of a heart for the brief moment when we are sharing a story. By moving hearts to action, a theatre performance is like a stone thrown into a pond of still water – its ripples will go on long after the show is finished. And theatre, uniquely I think, when it is good, lodges in the heart's memory.

From Prof. Swaraj Raj's Bookshelf

Josh Cohen. *Not Working: Why We Have to Stop*. Granta, London: 2018, pp. Rs. 260, Rs. 599.

When I was nearing retirement just before the Covid19 pandemic paralysed the world, most of my friends posed one question for me: "What have you decided to do after your superannuation?" Invariably my answer was: "Nothing in particular. I will get a well-deserved rest." After all, I won't be part of a culture deeply invested in speed and demanding that decisions be made at the speed of thought. The question that often followed my answer was: "How will you pass your time?" "Well, doing what I've always wanted to do. Going to sleep and waking up when I feel like. Eating when I feel hungry. In other words, valuing myself for what I am and not for what I do."

I had been a witness to gradual erosion of time a teacher needs for reflexivity. Contrary to the euphoria generated by the introduction of computers and information technologies in education that promised freer time than we had, these technologies rather sought that we aligned our time and biorhythms with the machine time and machine rhythm. Life was changing irrevocably. New lexicons being used to define our role as teachers reflected increasing bureaucratization and corporatization of education sector. The teachers as well as learners had become 'human resources' ready for exploitation like other natural resources. Everyone connected with dispensation and reception of education became a stakeholder. Even bookkeeping was introduced subtly as a pedagogic practice when the quality of teaching and its outcomes were made measurable in terms of figures, charts and statistics.

The combined result of all this has been colonization of free time and impoverishment of leisure time. To borrow the title of Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber's 2016 book *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Speed of Culture in the Academy*, the 'slow professor' was fast becoming anachronistic in the speed-obsessed academy.

The questions put to me post retirement, are of a nature similar to the ones put to me before I retired. How do I pass my time? Don't I get bored doing nothing productive? My rejoinder how I can get bored not doing what I don't want to do is often misunderstood as rejection of life of action and embracement of lethargy, inertia and disease. The immediate advice that comes my way is that a fixed daily routine and keeping oneself busy is the only way to keep depressive tendencies and physical ailments at bay.

This counsel doesn't surprise me. Most of us have actually imbibed the contemporary work culture that prioritizes action over contemplation and attaches monetary value to time. Such thinking is not a new phenomenon. As it is, animadversion on and rejection of idleness is a very old phenomenon. In the distant past also the idea that 'an idle mind is the devil's workshop' was revered as great wisdom. This is what was drilled into our minds since early childhood. All this makes me wonder and why idleness fell into such disrepute given the fact that our sages and prophets always emphasized virtues of silence, stillness, introspection, self-reflexivity and meditation, all of which are impossible in a work-obsessed culture.

Earlier the work demanded from humans was mainly physical. However, as the Italian thinker Franco "Bifo" Berardi suggests in his text *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (2009), what has changed today is that it is our souls that have been put to unceasing work. Berardi does not conceive of soul in terms of spirit in a metaphysical sense,

but in materialist terms as "the vital breath that converts biological matter into an animated body" (21). Industrial exploitation, he argues, deals with bodies, sinews and arms. But the "The rise of post-Fordist modes of production … takes the mind, language and creativity as its primary tools for the production of value. In the sphere of digital production, the exploitation is exerted essentially on the semiotic flux produced by human time at work" (21-22). The 24/7 work culture heralded by the digital technologies is rendering all time as work time. Decisions have to be made in real time and any time that falls outside the work time is considered as time wasted. No wonder a legion of self-help books not only advise us to use our time judiciously for pragmatic and productive purposes, they also warn us against wasting time.

Work today has become a fetish, both for the political Right and radical Left. When work becomes a fetish then any deviation from the work ethic leads to a sense of guilt and anxiety. In such a situation, even leisure has to be managed in a way that intervals of leisure cannot be taken as time wasted, but as necessary recharging time to prepare people for more work. Managing leisure time has spurred the growth of leisure industry that has actually commodified leisure. Promises of great holidays for unwinding, meditation camps in wilderness areas, leisure activities in exotic places, and adventure sports etc. actually undergird the contemporary work culture only.

In fact, as Jonathan Crary suggests in his *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013) the extension of work time beyond production to consumption has led to financialization of time and reification of consciousness of time as well. According to Crary, the last enigmatic frontier for complete colonization of the human mind and integration with the machine is sleep. It is frightening to know how, as Crary points out, the latest researches being done in the field of sleep and dreaming are to aid total "imposition of a machinic model of duration and efficiency onto the human body" (np). In a frighteningly dystopian scenario Crary portrays, "Most of the seemingly irreducible necessities of human life – hunger, thirst, sexual desire, and recently the need for friendship – have been remade into commodified or financialized forms" (np). Sleep alone has not been colonized and harnessed yet to the engine of utilitarian rationality and profitability. Crary writes, "The scandal of sleep is the embeddedness in our lives of the rhythmic oscillations of solar light and darkness, activity and rest, of work and recuperation, that have been eradicated or neutralized elsewhere" (np). Thus sleep remains an anomaly to be sorted out, reshaped and exploited. Massive investments are being made to extract some value from this intransigent biorhythm

Leisure as freedom from work is never the aim of the present production-consumption economic cycle we are caught in. The so-called leisure activities are promoted not to encourage reflection and contemplation that require us to slow down and be still for a while to be at one with ourselves, but to use the free time in a way that makes us more productive. Each spare moment is sought to be filled with some activity to be harnessed later for some utilitarian purpose. A lot of research goes into devising leisure activities that could rejuvenate a tired and bored workforce.

The Covid19 mandated home confinement was the worst time for a vast majority of humankind, but in particular for the work-addicted. Feelings of guilt at sitting idle gnawed at the heart nibbling away whatever sense of security the home confinement provided against the marauding virus. Work from home became a kind of instant panacea for a life the virus had stood on its head.

It is during these times that I started questioning my own stance regarding protracted inactivity punctuated only by online talks, the talks which are a poor substitute for embodied

interaction. I had always looked forward to a time of rest, a time when my life would move in a leisurely lane and not be on the stopwatch. Now that I had plenty of time and life in general had moved to a slow lane I started having nagging doubts about the life of stasis.

My doubts troubled me despite my being a votary of Russell's views on leisure in his celebrated essay "In Praise of Idleness." Though Russell's views were certainly more relevant to the industrial society in the west, yet I was sold on his idea of four-hour workday.

A society where people have enough leisure, Russell wrote will be a happy one: "Above all, there will be happiness and joy of life, instead of frayed nerves, weariness, and dyspepsia. The work exacted will be enough to make leisure delightful, but not enough to produce exhaustion . . . Ordinary men and women, having the opportunity of a happy life, will become more kindly and less persecuting and less inclined to view others with suspicion …Good nature is, of all moral qualities, the one that the world needs most, and good nature is the result of ease and security, not of a life of arduous struggle" (14-15). Earlier in 1950s, a German thinker Josef Pieper had voiced similar concern about the importance of leisure in his book *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* (1998 translation by Gerald Malsbary). He looked upon leisure in terms of silence, receptivity towards the whole world, and celebration of creation resulting from a feeling of oneness with it. In his view leisure is non-instrumental as it has nothing to do with economic productivity. Both Russell and Pieper believed that leisure is the basis of culture.

The advent of the Covid pandemic provided us plenty of free time but deprived us of our sense of security. Insecure life is always a difficult grind. My smugness of being a well-paid retiree contented with enjoying leisure went for a toss when videos and images of suffering humanity started circulating in the media. Leisure appeared to be an iniquitous indulgence enjoyed by a few but denied to a vast majority.

It is during this period of incertitude that I came across Josh Cohen's book *Not Working* and it made me understand my fears and doubts. Cohen is a Professor of Modern Literary Theory at Goldsmiths, University of London, and a psychoanalyst in private practice. Intrigued by the book's title, I just plunged into the engrossing but unnerving text that probes deeply and questions the modern work ethic and its sacralisation.

Cohen draws his inspiration and examples from literature, films, mythology, writings of thinkers of excess like Georges Bataille, works of psychoanalysts like Freud and Donald Winnicott, his own practice as a psychoanalyst, and his own life to prove that the desire for inactivity and indolence is as much human as the urge for work is. The text is devoid of jargon and language of psychiatry. And yet Cohen's limpid prose is not easy to wade through; it lays heavy demands on the reader as it prompts him to introspect about not only the dehumanizing consequences of surrendering to the modern work ethic, but also to the calamitous consequences of not doing so. While dwelling on these issues he tries to unravel the psychic forces that make people who they are; workaholics, burnouts who were careerists addicted to punishing work ethic, slobs, daydreamers or slackers. By no means do these four types constitute straitjacket, hermetically sealed categories; their domains overlap and criss-cross as Cohen makes it clear. This taxonomic looseness may appear baffling, but from a psychological perspective, this is how it has to be. Complete black and white are just shades of grey, and striving for a balance between oscillating from one extreme to the other is what human life is mostly about. Aristotle's Golden Mean and Buddha's Middle Path are all about striking a balance. Cohen's text also is a pointer towards attaining that balance.

The text is divided into two sections namely "Gravity" and "Antigravity," both comprising two chapters each. The four chapters are entitled "The Burnout" and "The Slob"

and "The Daydreamer" and "The Slacker."

The Introduction is rather long. The author states that the book is the result years of reading and deliberating upon modern work culture and also on machine driven future which threatens to render work by humans redundant. Drawing on his own experiences with his patients in his psychoanalytic consulting room, and also on the available literature on the subject, Cohen is able to keep his finger on the modern malaise of overwork in contemporary society: "Our age," he states, "is witnessing a social, economic and political crisis of work. Overwork is one of its most glaring symptoms" (ix). The shrinking labour market due to several kinds of automation and so many other factors, has added to people's misery and they are forced to do stressful and unfulfilling work in order to survive. The future looks bleak as automation threatens to do away completely with the human in many sectors which provided employment till now. This crisis has given rise to many 'post-work' thinkers who focus on political, social and economic consequences of a world without work. This is why the talk of universal basic income for a decent living in the post-work world has assumed importance among mainstream economists, politicians and radical thinkers.

However, as the author rightly points out, the question of living without work is as much existential as it is political and pragmatic. In suggesting the existential aspect of work, he raises very pertinent questions: "A world in which the place of work is no longer central compels us to ask where life's meaning lies. What, if not work, makes life worth living? And what kind of beings are we if not fundamentally working beings?" (x-xi). Having once defined his problematic, he then works towards finding answers to these vexed issues.

Newton's first law of motion, also known as the law of inertia, comes handy to Cohen while looking for answers. According to this law, a body in motion will stay in motion unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. Humankind's desire for overcoming the unbalanced force for achieving perpetual motion has been an unachievable fantasy. In a way, we humans too are physical entities like any other and are subject to the same law of inertia. Our bodies weigh us down, literally as well as metaphorically.

To Cohen, we are subject to the law of gravity. It keeps pulling us down and makes us renounce levitation both physically and mentally. But the impulse not to work is not only embarrassing, it is also considered as alien to our very constitution. Cohen challenges this received wisdom that we are working beings only. He quotes from Freud and gives many examples from Greek as well as Indian mythology to suggest how primordial forces of inactivity, lassitude and inertia insinuate themselves invisibly in our most ambitious drives and dynamicity. He makes this point clear in a very forceful manner in these words:

> The principle of inertia established the impossibility of perpetual motion as a law of nature. Our knowledge of this law is coded deeply in our biology and psychology. But so, it seems, is the urge to defy it, to insist that we don't have to stop if we don't want to. This pull of contradictory impulses creates an irremediable division at the heart of our selves. We dream of building, expanding, conquering, of becoming masters over an ever larger territory of possessions and people; but in the midst of this heroic ambition lurks the yearning to crawl back into our beds and stay there. (xxxi-xxxii)

This realization of our intricate and conflictual relationship to reality is an important reason for Cohen to suggest that human beings are not primarily creatures of action and purpose. The existence of art, "the creative act that consists, paradoxically, in sustaining the inactive state" (xxxvii) is another reason for him to believe that we are not working beings. No wonder, he gives umpteen examples from the world of art to lay bare the existence of dark

spaces residing within us. These spaces are that inner voice which tells us to stop, and it needs to be heard. Understanding the psychodynamics of this voice is the author's quest.

His account of Tracey Emin's 1999 installation *My Bed* as her art exhibit in the Tate Gallery, London is the starting point from where he begins his exploration of the primal forces of inertia that pull us down. *My Bed* is a sort of paean to surrender to entropy following Emin's break-up that led to her "alcohol fuelled breakdown" (xxii), *My Bed* created a lot of controversy as the critics dubbed it as an "ugly act of self-exposure" (xxiii). Emin's art, a dirty tangle of objects in a disorderly state provoked a "horrified recognition of a scene playing itself out invisibly and secretly in each of us, a spot in us that, amid our purposeful lives of action and progress, would surrender to entropy, to the dissolution of all order and meaning" (xxxiii). As Cohen suggests that while Emin's art work sparked afresh the age-old debate about what constitutes art, the impression of sloth was actually an outcome of painstaking work in which the distinction between "making and unmaking was artfully blurred" (xxxiii). Emin submitting in to the force of gravity did not signal the death of imagination; rather sloth and lassitude served as a creatively productive resource.

In the first chapter "The Burnout," Cohen discusses the phenomenon of the burnout resulting from repetitious and alienating overwork. Quite interestingly he begins his argument with a starkly anthropomorphic disquisition on a rabbit with a queer name Rr. The rabbit's indifference towards him irks him at first but then he reconciles to his inhabiting a parallel universe in which he is in "contact with the same secret, self-enclosed blankness in myself" (2). Devoid of self-consciousness, Rr does not experience personal feelings, but experiences impersonal needs. Since Rr cannot reflect, his depersonalized and automated responses remind him of Duracell Bunny who exemplifies a zombie that the overwork is turning us humans into. Cohen's telling comments sound premonitory, a warning of the times to come:

> And what about the Duracell Bunny, with his clockwork motion and dead-eyed grin? Irritating yet compelling, he hints at the automated state into which our own lives threaten to slide. He goes on and on, powered not by any personal aim or desire, but by an inexhaustible supply of impersonal energy. Behind his rictus grin lurks the unmistakable figure of the zombie, ubiquitous emblem of our apocalyptic pop culture, trapped in the purgatorial grip of blind forward movement. (4)

He argues that unlike the Duracell Bunny, human beings experience the lapine pull of gravity and wish to renounce the clockwork regularity of dehumanizing work. His patients come to him with the desire for cessation of work and reclusion from the world. Their psyche is torn apart by contradictory pulls and pressures of their "impulse to live, to expand their presence in the world by participating in and contributing to it" and the "opposite impulse, to contract and withdraw into the indifferent neutrality of a rabbit. But no sooner do they begin to sink into oblivion than they once again feel the scratch of worldly demands and desires" (4). Most burn-outs are those who get pulled between the two extremes; as a result, they can neither work nor rest.

Cohen tries to understand craving for non-work in Buddhist terms. The desire for non-desire itself is a desire and the person seeking *nirvanic* non-attachment through non-work and peace gets attached to the desire for non-attachment. This bitter cosmic irony, as Cohen suggests, instead of providing peace takes the form of 'manic deadness' or "what the writer Ivor Southwood calls 'non-stop inertia,' a state of perpetual motion concealing the 'underlying stasis' of our souls" (9). In fact, Cohen offers a scathing criticism of our culture of frenetic work and continual digital noise when he says that the desire for non-desire is a

major scandal of social and psychic life today since "Permanent mental activity, enforced by the screens that surround us at work and in the home, have made an outlaw of silence and indifference" (9). The only outcome is alienation, alienation from the work we do, from our own selves, and from those around us. The alienated subject seeking temporary retreat into death or disappearance is actually torn between starting and stopping.

This existential dilemma characterizes burn-outs. The burn-out experiences a feeling of sudden alienation from the role with which he had been identified for long. His withdrawal from the world is a reaction to a culture that produces lethargic indifference but does not permit its expression. Cohen buttresses his argument by discussing in detail the cases of burn-outs; the Japanese *hikikomori*, a female patient of his, Bartleby in Melville's story "Bartleby, the Scrivener," and Andy Warhol. All are haunted by contradictory desires to make a mark and to stop.

Cohen's nuanced treatment of Andy Warhol's idiosyncrasies, transgressions and extremes leaves the reader gasping for more. He suggests that Warhol's carefully cultured myth of having transcended sex was actually a symptom of excess:

> Neutrality, indifference, emptiness – these were Warhol's resources in the struggle against the onrush of disturbances to his internal balance. He sought, in both life and work, a state of serene pastel stillness, only to find it menaced on one side by the threat of pain and shock, on the other by the void of silence and death. His erotic life oscillated between long periods of asexual detachment and abrupt bursts of passionate, often hopeless desire … (36)

To Cohen Warhol's persona was an attempt to realize the desire for non-desire. A thorough investigation of Warhol's life and work, such as his book *The Philosophy*, reveals that Warhol was a symbol of American consumer culture: "Through his life and work, we enter into the heart of consumer culture's hedonic, lurid glamour. But no sooner are we inside it than we experience a pull towards inertia and indifference, as though at the centre of the affirmative logic of consumerism is a massive and irresistible negation of life" (50-51). The negation of life is enacted in inverse; the mass proliferation of consumer goods no longer makes demands on our desire, it rather neutralizes desire. In a way, giving in to the life of immediate gratification signals the triumph of superego as desire itself gets neutralized. This, as Deleuze and Guattari would say, indicates total oedipalization of the consumerist subject.

In the second chapter "The Slob," the author turns his attention toward slobs who wallow in laziness and slovenliness. Invoking Winnicott's two principles of 'being' and 'doing,' Cohen argues that the slob's life is a study in antipathy to action, to 'doing.' What distinguishes a slob, however, from a burn-out is that whereas the latter's enjoyment of lassitude is spoiled by anxiety, shame and guilt, the "scandalous courage of the slob embraces the inertial state, and rejects openly the diligence and responsibility that confer full social legitimacy in a culture defined by work and productivity" (76).

Citing his own example, Cohen says that at some point in our lives and on any given day, we all experience moments when the body and the mind refuse to work. In such a state, our own bedrooms may resemble Emin's bed. But culturally, politically and economically we are so heavily invested in the life of perpetual activity that we tend to disregard and deny our resistance to activity. We seldom talk about it. This denial of the inner voice leads to imbalance in us. Cohen employs Winnicott's ideas of 'being' and 'doing' to drive home his point. Since perpetual 'doing' alienates us from our 'being,' we tend to hold slobs in contempt. These metaphors of 'being' and 'doing' reverberate throughout the text.

However, what we overtly dislike, we secretly desire that. In this connection, Cohen draws our attention towards the heroic stature of the slob in Western culture:

> The slob may be the object of our mockery and disgust, but he is equally a source of admiration and envy. A gallery of drunken louts (Trimalchio, Chaucer's Miller, Falstaff), spacey fantasists (Quixote, Snoopy), hopeless slackers (Oblomov, Lebowski) and entitled slobs (Diderot's Rameau, Homer Simpson) attest to the enduring heroic status of the slothful in the history of Western culture (67-8).

He goes on to discuss in detail entitled slobs such as Diderot's Rameau, the acclaimed American film actor, director and producer Orson Welles and one of his patients too. In between, his own dalliance with inertia and listlessness is also his subject of discussion; and these details from his own biography he brings in to talk about the slob residing in him are perhaps the weakest link in an otherwise profound discussion on the existential dilemmas and conflicts we face in our society that demands us to emulate the untiring machines that *we* have made. The best takeaway from this chapter, to my mind is what Cohen says about Diderot's Rameau: "In ventriloquizing him so seductively, Diderot brings us into contact with the Rameau concealed in us all, the big, entitled baby who rails against the obstacles reality puts in the way of his contentment, who doesn't see why he should be asked to wait, to work, to be responsible" (73). The appeal of the disgusting slobs, Cohen discusses so very sympathetically, lies in the fact that such slobs reside surreptitiously in us, though we may keep pushing them back out of sight, ignore or even deny their presence.

In the third chapter "The Daydreamer" Cohen delves into the workings of antigravity, the force responsible for levitation, for flights of imagination into the realms of possibility, allowing the dreamer to leave behind the weary world of stark utilitarian reason and reality. These imaginary worlds of possibility don't exist since the "world that does exist is so perpetually painful and disappointing …" (117).

Cohen begins exploring these ideas with reference to his own indulgence in the world of fantasy. However, he grants that most daydreamers become objects of contempt for resisting the claims of reality. Moreover, given the present day world full of injustice and inequalities, staying invested in the stories of imaginary characters of an unreal world does appear immoral. Yet, we value works of art because of their lack of instrumental value. Daydreaming Cohen avers, "is a refusal to equate life with quotidian existence" (121).

He accepts that imagination is not the exclusive preserve of the daydreamer. Achievements in science, medicine, engineering, and many other professions that transform the world are no less acts of imagination than the works of literature, music and painting. There is, however, a fine difference between these arts and other professions: "But the daydreamer, unlike the person of action, doesn't want his imagination corralled into the service of the world" (121). Poetry, to the author, remains a primary medium of antigravity because it operates largely in the realm of possibility.

Under the rubric of daydreamers, Cohen discusses at length authors like Xavier de Maistre, a French aristocrat who wrote *Voyage Around My Room* in 1790 when he was placed under house arrest, Oscar Wilde who was a lifelong devotee of aestheticism, Emily Dickinson who lived the life of a recluse, and many others. He also narrates stories from his consultation room.

Dickinson's enigmatic reclusion receives maximum attention of the author. He quotes extensively from her poems, biographies and critical studies on her to build a case that her withdrawal from the real world of action was not pathological. To her friends and acquaintances, she was doing nothing, but as Cohen speculates, she was doing everything,

"travelling fearlessly to the furthest extremities of possible experience – sexual ecstasy, traumatic pain, madness and death" (139). She dwelt in the world of possibility and her renunciation provided her the freedom to do so. Her renunciation "is the very condition of both the poet and the poetry – it enables her to be a poet and is the substance of the poems" (139).

He raises some very pertinent issues in connection with her retreat into herself when the world outside was undergoing traumatic transformations owing to the Civil War, industrialization and urbanization. He asks rhetorically, "Why would you daydream in a locked room while the world outside burns?" and then provides the answer also: "Alternatively, why wouldn't you? Daydreaming . . . isn't always an expression of melancholy resignation and despair. In her life and work alike, Dickinson reveals the daydream to us as means to the deepest expressions of love, doubt and defiance" (159).

The last Chapter "The Slacker" deals with the fourth way, the slacker's way of coming to terms with time, tedium, sloth and aimlessness of life. The slacker, rejecting the externally imposed goals and standards of success and achievement lives according to his own rhythm. Cohen employs Roland Barthes's notion of 'idiorrhythmy' in regard to the slacker's way of relating to his life. He declares that "To live life in this way means to refuse the regimentation of your time and space by the impersonal forces of work and leisure, giving yourself over to the pace and style of the impulses, curiosities and desires unique to you. But it is equally a social ideal, whereby the rhythms of all our individual lives coexist without encroaching on each other" (166).

Cohen also makes good use of 20th Century Romanian thinker Emil Cioran's idea that sloth and doubt, both of which are vices for the religious and work fanatics are the qualities we require to save us from "terrors of fanaticism and the exclusive claim to truth . . . . Doubt and sloth, the twinned moods of the slacker, protect us from the terrors of unbridled sanctity" (170). In this category are the Romantics who were sceptical of growing mechanization of life in industrial society and sought escape in ephemeral moments of oneness with nature. This is how the Romantics registered their protest against the strict regimentation of life under the imperatives of industrialization. The tranquility they sought and achieved might have been be transient, but it was their way of seeking freedom from the drudgery of a banal existence. Thus they were slackers in a philosophical sense:

> The slacker's life of sloth and doubt is a protest not in the name of this or that cause, but for the very right to be, to exist in what philosopher Frédéric Gros calls a 'suspensive freedom', outside the confines of personal, professional or any other identities. (171)

Cohen dwells on Rousseau's "Fifth Walk" in his unfinished masterpiece *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1776). He argues that Rousseau's claim that it was while drifting in a boat in Île de Saint-Pierre peninsula where he had taken refuge as an exile that he found full happiness is a paradox. The nirvanic bliss, the happiness that leaves no desire in the soul that Rousseau experiences is only transient. Nevertheless, this moment of bliss cannot be dismissed because it is about a radically free region of the self that Rousseau discovered. Quoting Sloterdijk, Cohen suggests that this free region is that pure anarchic subjectivity which is dangerous to a purpose-driven living in our productive-consumerist culture. This is the subjectivity that we generally deny and wish to evade. The slacker earns our contempt for showing us this "useless dimension of our own selfhood, for voicing our own impulse not to work today, or tomorrow" (173-74).

Haunted by the denial of our own rhythm – sleep, rest, eating, movement, thought,

sex – we live in a state of perpetual deprivation. Cohen states that the 'slow movement' of the early 21ˢᵗ century which found its most coherent voice in Carl Honore's *In Praise of Slow* (2005) advocates that we slow down so that we feel the pleasure of doing something and don't consume it like a busy consumer. However, to Cohen the 'slow movement' is not unproblematic. Slowness advocated here is is not an end in itself, but it is a means to maintaining the status quo of efficiency and greater productivity. The 'slow movement' is no different from the corporate management's 'floatation tank' guaranteed to relieve stress levels in overworked employees. Contrariwise, Rousseau does not claim that his reverie rejuvenated him to return to active life with renewed energy. To Cohen, reverie is a sort of protest as it rejects instrumentality, imposition of alien rhythms and gets us in touch with that part of our self that refuses to be put to work.

Cohen's deft analysis of the celebrated American author David Foster Wallace's troubled life that led him finally to taking his own life bears the imprint of an accomplished psychoanalyst. Wallace struggled with depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and suicidal tendencies for which he remained under psychiatric treatment for a long time. According to Cohen, Wallace's posthumous novel *The Pale King* reveals two things; one, "the irrevocable and enraged renunciation of a life defeated by the impossibility of living;" and "an unfinished project imagining how this impossibility might be endured, even affirmed" (194). Wallace's formidable creative talent that led to his success and fame and his immense desire to be loved and admired laid heavy demands on his psyche making him wish for a less demanding and punishing life. He yearned to be left undisturbed and in peace. But that was not to be. According to Cohen, "Routine, monotony and dullness are gravitational forces that pull life down into a self-perpetuating depressive indifference" (216). This was Wallace's fate. Possibly he died of boredom.

In the concluding Chapter, Cohen agrees that stopping is difficult, or even dangerous. He cites the example of *hikikomori*. We have seen how Wallace's mind was divided between the desire to stop and go on. Then there are the examples of the 'flotation tank' of the corporate world and of sellers and consumers of leisure as a commodity. The last two actually signify capitulation to the status quo and affirmation of the higher efficiency of the working machine. Cohen looks at 'not working' as cultivation of inner freedom. One must have the freedom of choice, even freedom to choose to work more: "This does not and should not exclude the choice to work very hard, to pursue large worldly ambitions and desires for oneself and others. But even a life of hard work looks and feels different when we know that we can stop it if we need to" (220). The book ends on a note of hope: "Once we can see that we have to stop, we may soon find that we want to" (223).

While I was going through *Not Working* I was constantly reminded of something I witnessed in Las Vegas in August 2015. Las Vegas is a resort city that seems to remain always awake. I saw two huge billboards of Tao Restaurant, a part of the resort Venetian. The backlighted billboards had images of Buddha in lotus posture. On one of these was written "Tao: Asian Bistro: Spiritual Dining," and on the other "Tao: Night Club: Religious Nightlife." It was an amusing sight, though an affront to the finer sensibilities also. Did these places symbolize the inseparability of the spiritual and the sinful, of the feverish desire for immediate gratification carrying in its heart itself the urge for spiritual peace also? Or was it case of appropriation of Buddhism, a way of life that emphasizes renunciation, by consumer capitalism whose every move owes its allegiance to pleasure principle? *Not Working* grapples with and lays bare such contradictions that are constitutive of our own selfhood.

Not Working is an eclectic and rambling text, but then a text that positions itself

against rigour could not be otherwise. It is a disturbing text because it brings us face to face with the forces residing in us which ask us to opt out of the Formula One Circuit rat race and reclaim our freedom to opt out. For us, the students of English literature, it is an important text that can teach us how to employ psychoanalytic theory in understanding the deeper meanings of literary texts. In a nutshell, a text not to be missed because it reminds us of our own perfectly imperfect humanity.

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A Take on Cognitive Research Regarding Connections Between Reading Literature and Empathy through Wolfgang Iser

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Abstract

There exists a growing interest of researchers in fields such as psychology, cognitive science, and neurology who are keen to prove and detail if, how, and under what conditions reading literature can develop empathy. Their efforts have proposed concepts to analyse empathy such as theory of mind and perspective-taking as well as an examination of the literary reading experience through concepts such as simulation and transportation. As the body of research grows along with a recognition that it is a multidisciplinary effort, it would be advantageous to revisit Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological study of the reading experience to bring the different fields closer together. This article first reviews current research on the connection between reading literature and empathy from the field of psychology and cognitive science before applying the phenomenological work of Iser to present and identify further ways to advance this research effort, serving to reinforce the literary reader response's voice in this research area.
Keywords: *empathy; literary reading; fiction; theory of mind; perspective taking; Iser*

Introduction

There is an increasing interest in how reading literary fiction may influence a reader's worldview and behaviour, particularly in the development of empathy (Kidd & Castano 1; Oatley 618). This article aims to contribute to the discussion by exploring a few proposed theories and models from the field of psychology and cognitive science through the ideas proposed by Wolfgang Iser. Iser's work in reader response theory, particularly his seminal paper "The reading process: A phenomenological approach" published in 1972, touches upon the very questions which are a concern in the aforementioned discussion of the link between reading literary fiction and development of empathy. It is hoped that by discussing and framing those questions with a lens informed by Iser, some aspects of the reading experience may be clarified and the usually assumed disparate fields of cognitive science and humanities may be brought closer together. To do so, this article begins by focusing on empathy development, and reading literary fiction before suggesting that Iser's virtual dimension can be further developed through Batson's work in the effort to research the link between empathy and literary reading.

Empathy

The colloquial definition of empathy is the state when one feels the emotions of another subject, referred to as 'feeling with', as opposed to sympathy where one is concerned for another without feeling the subject's emotions, referred to as 'feeling for' (Willems and Jacobs 244). This distinction plays out as well in research efforts to understand empathy as an essential human trait. Indeed, researchers have distinguished between cognitive empathy (related to theory of mind and perspective-taking) and emotional empathy (feeling the feelings of another). From a developmental psychology perspective, children develop a theory of mind which refers to the ability to guess another individual's mental state (Flavell 274; Wellman, 208). It is essential for a child's psychosocial development as that ability is linked to emotions such as empathy and sympathy which are likewise linked to prosocial behaviour.

Koopman and Hakemulder (82) suggest further distinctions for research regarding empathy and literary reading, namely trait empathy, narrative empathy, and emphatic ability as an after-effect of reading (or real-life empathy). Trait empathy refers to an individual's personal or character trait where some may have more developed trait empathy than others. Narrative empathy is experienced during the reading process, particularly for characters in a story. Empathic ability as an after-effect of reading refers to an examination of emphatic ability after reading, perhaps influenced by the reading experience.

Kidd and Castano sought to provide evidence that reading literary fiction is able to improve readers' theory of mind abilities, from which they argue that readers of literary fiction are more empathetic as opposed to readers of non-literary fiction. They designed three experiments to test this connection as explained in their 2013 publication before extending and replicating their experiments for the 2019 publication – not all, however, were successful. The 2013 experiments utilized various tests that respondents had to complete after reading a randomly assigned short text (three were excerpts from literary fiction and three were nonfiction texts). Results did lead Kidd and Castano to draw the conclusion that there was a difference between reading literary fiction and reading popular fiction, and that respondents who read literary fiction had higher measurements of theory of mind (380).

In 2019, Kidd and Castano reported on extensions to the previous the experiments to include a moral judgement test where respondents had to rate the permissibility and beliefs of certain actions based on their intended outcomes. The intention was to test three hypotheses; reading literary fiction would improve respondent ability to discern emotions, whether reading literary fiction would result in a heightened consideration of character intention in making moral judgements, and to determine if characters in popular fiction were perceived to be more predictable and stereotypical than in literary fiction. Of the three, only the third was affirmed by data as there were issues with replication and respondent fatigue. Nevertheless, whilst the researchers acknowledge that there is limited evidence to support their hypotheses based on their experiments and the work of other scholars, Kidd and Castano continue to call for a focus on "how fiction influences social cognition… to further explore how the methods of characterization in literary and popular fiction evoke different sociocognitive processes" (8).

While the increasing work in this area is exciting, some voices have cautioned against an overly enthusiastic embrace of the link between reading literary fiction and empathy (Currie 48, Langkau 2). First of all, the process of understanding a character in

literature is different from the process of understanding another human being in real life. Much of the research linking literary reading and theory of mind or empathy has been understandably focused on characters and characterization. Take, for instance, the similarities between reading a letter from a worried friend and reading a first-person narrative in a literary work. The process through which one tries to identify the other individual's or character's mental state certainly seems closely related as they both require engagement in written language. In reading, however, the reader is limited to the written language of the text without access to other discourse cues such as the observation of facial features or body language. Even a speaker's tone would provide useful cues for an individual to discern another's mental state. Furthermore, Langkau argues that in fiction, a character's state of mind, thoughts, and emotions are often told to the reader in the written text (6). Such direct information is unavailable in real-life contexts. Hence, the accuracy of one's evaluation of another's mental state would likewise differ where there is more certainty in the literary text as compared to real-life situations.

Langkau illustrates the difference through the act of riding a bicycle (9). Feeling empathy in a reading context is akin to a mental visualization or simulation of riding a bicycle while empathy in real-life face-to-face contexts is like actually riding a bicycle in real-life. Each act, mentally simulating riding a bicycle and actually riding a bicycle, require different skills. If one were to imagine riding a bicycle, the act would involve imaginative processes, likely drawing on previous experiences and expectations of how riding a bicycle would be like. If one were to ride a bicycle in real life, the act would involve muscle coordination, adjustment of the body for balance and so on. Therefore, both acts are different.

Another issue in analyzing the link between reading literary fiction and theory of mind, or more specifically empathy, is whether or not causality exists between the two constructs. Perhaps individuals who have higher levels of empathy in real life would already be more prone to empathy in reading a literary text. To further complicate the matter at hand, empathy may be a culturally-faceted concept. In a study by Heinke and Louis (2582), Asian respondents displayed more collectivistic values than the European Australians surveyed to analyse how they would respond to four scenarios where an individual is upset for different reasons. The first concerns a friend, the second a teacher, while the third and fourth were in workplace contexts. The study's conclusion suggests that while respondents who were more collectivistic had higher levels of empathy, researchers must not reduce the differences purely down to culture but to consider other aspects that might influence individual responses, including but not solely the role of culture.

The Reading Experience

This section serves to examine reading experiences from three concepts; transportation, simulation, and imagination (to be more specific, Iser's concept of a virtual dimension).

Transportation

Green and Brock used transportation theory as a means to examine the relationship between the extent in which a reader is absorbed in a narrative and the level of

persuasiveness of the narrative. Setting out against a background where much work on persuasion was grounded in the work of poetics, Green and Brock sought to provide a means to measure transportation. Transportation into a narrative world is conceptualized in their study as "a distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings… where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative" (701).

One of the conditions that determines if and to what extent transportation while reading occurs depends on the reader choosing to accept the facts of the world of the story, which requires setting aside factual reality. They suggest that readers become "less aware" (Green and Brock 702) of reality and its governing rules which might be in opposition to the world of the story and thus, would be less likely to critic or analyse the content of the text while reading. Another feature of transportation is the reader's view of characters in the narrative, particularly the protagonist. Green and Brock theorise that the level to which the reader is persuaded partially depends on how much the reader likes the protagonist. A self-report survey using a 7-point Likert scale was constructed with items such as "While I was reading the narrative, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind" and "the events in the narrative have changed my life" (704). While not proving a causal relationship, results did demonstrate that the higher the level of transportation, the more accepting the reader was of the beliefs and characters of the narrative and vice versa.

Other researchers like Johnson sought to use Green and Brock's definition of transportation as a construct in order to examine how narratives may influence real-life behaviour. To be more specific, Johnson's intention was to examine if reading literary fiction could enhance empathy and prosocial behaviour (150). To do so, Johnson makes a key assumption that "the degree to which an individual reports being transported into the story can serve as a proxy for how much they simulated and learned social information from the story" (151). Hence, transportation may be used as a key concept to account for what happens during a reading experience yet it is not without its limitations.

As described above, transportation is based on the idea that readers travel into the world of the narrative. As they do so, readers can become so emotionally and cognitively absorbed in what they are reading that they cease to be conscious of their physical environment in the real-world – this is termed as high-level transportation. In contrast, should readers pause to question the logic, events, or characters in the narrative, they are deemed to have low-level transportation. As they did not leave their real-world perspectives and beliefs behind, they are perceived to be less accepting of the narrative, and hence, less persuaded by it. While the concept of transportation does take into account both emotional and cognitive aspects of reading, one might ask if pausing to question what is happening in a narrative or why a character is behaving a particular way should necessarily be taken as a lack of transportation into the world of the story? Must this attitude of unquestioning acceptance be adopted from the onset of reading a literary text in order for transportation to occur? If so, how do we then account for the easing in or negotiation between a reader and text?

Simulation

According to Oatley, to read works of literary fiction is to simulate different possible realities where "[f]iction is the simulation of selves in interaction" (618). The reader

imagines the world and characters of a text as if it were a simulation of life. The point of reading then is to explore different realities that may not exist within the realm of reality for specific readers. As such, the reading experience is one of social simulation. It is on this basis that Oatley asserts readers have better understanding of others because they have been able to explore, through simulation, other experiences and perspectives that are beyond the physical environment of their everyday lives.

In describing simulation in reading, Oatley writes of two processes, namely inference and transportation (621). Readers go through inference, Oatley writes, because they often do not have direct comment or report on a character's mental state, which is interestingly at odds with Langkau's criticism of reading where she argues that character mental states are often stated. The second process is transportation which Oatley defines as "the extent to which people become emotionally involved, immersed, or carried away imaginatively in a story" (621). As described in the previous section, transportation as theorized by Green and Brock is not merely emotional because readers are also cognitively transported in the reading process yet Oatley foregrounds the affective aspect of transportation. What must be highlighted in Oatley's article is his discussion of the difference in the ways people read (and hence comprehend) a text. He cites a study by Nijhof and Willems which identified readers who read for "trains of action" as well as readers who prefer to explore the "mental lives of characters" (622), to argue that readers who read in the latter manner are likely to be more empathetic in real life. Thus, Oatley argues that it is character-driven stories where characters are complex and non-stereotypical that foster engagement with a text as well as empathy.

Imagination and the Virtual Dimension

The question of literariness and complexity of characters in works of fiction are very much related to Iser's idea that literary texts are written with gaps in its construction, interestingly encompassing Oatley's process of inference. Should everything be told and described to the reader, the reader would be positioned in a passive role and have little to no opportunity to participate in the reading experience. Whereas gaps left in the text, including what is "unwritten", would provide the reader with opportunities to fill in the gaps with their own imagination and understanding. The reader would be cognitively engaged in the reading experience as he or she furnishes the gaps with their imagination as they continuously make sense of the text where certain ideas have to be adjusted or change as they read on. Likewise, the content of a text in itself does not determine its literariness. Instead, literariness is experienced as an aesthetic reading experience that lies not in the text or the reader but in an interaction of the two.

Iser also provides a fine-grained description of the reader's cognitive processes which suggests a different means of understanding the concept of reader engagement or transportation as discussed in previous sections. According to Iser, readers are constantly constructing the meaning of a text as they read. It is a non-linear process and involves holding in their minds what has been read in past pages (retrospection), what they are currently reading, and what they expect to read in future pages (anticipation). As they read, they constantly have to form and modify connections in order to arrive at an interpretation of the text (283).

The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it

presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination." (284)

The virtual dimension is the reading experience. It is precisely this virtual dimension that perhaps might provide insight into questions regarding the relationship between reading, perspective-taking, and empathy. How do these virtual dimensions help us understand the reasons why different readers may experience the same text differently? And how may these virtual dimensions be linked to the meaning readers construct from the text?

Perspectives while reading

Carrying forward Iser's concept of a virtual dimension of a read text, this article turns to the work of Batson who distinguishes between three vantage points in which a text may be perceived or imagined. These are an imagine-self position, imagine-other position, and objective position (267), which have proven to be instrumental in empathy research. These perspective-taking positions are sometimes discussed as cognitive empathy as differentiated from the emotional response usually associated with empathy.

It is best to use an illustrative situation to describe the distinctive feature of each position. Imagine there are two individuals in a scenario, Sheila and Mary. Sheila is describing a recent traumatic operation that she had to undergo to Mary. Mary, as the listener, can take different mental positions in her effort to understand what Sheila tells her. If Mary imagines how she herself would feel if she had to go through what Sheila is going through, Mary would have taken the imagine-self position. If Mary's response is to imagine what Sheila is going through, how Sheila might be feeling and how Sheila might be struggling, Mary would have taken an imagine-other position. The imagine-other position focuses on the other. If Mary's response is to listen to Sheila, recognizing and noting that Sheila is going through a traumatic experience without enacting any of the previously described connections, then Mary would have taken an objective position. The objective position is often described as the position of an observer.

Experiments have sometimes instructed participants to take on a particular perspective in responding to visual images or a verbally told story. In Kidd and Castano, for instance, participants who were told to take on an imagine-other position had higher self-reported levels of empathy than those who did not (380). However, questions remain in terms of how those positions may be taken on and enacted in a naturalistic reading context – without instructions, without experiments, without tests. As one reads and enacts a virtual dimension, how might the choice of position influence the reading experience and interpretation of the text? In particular, how would these positions be related to empathy in a naturalistic reading context?

Summing up and moving forward

This article set out to bring together research regarding connections between literary reading, perspective-taking, and empathy with a phenomenological study of reading by a key figure in reader response theory. As demonstrated, there are concepts that overlap, specifically transportation, simulation, and imagination as a virtual dimension, which can each frame and illuminate the complexities of literary reading. Taken together, researchers

might be made more aware of the differences and assumptions embedded in each concept and proceed to enhance or even challenge how each concept is applied in multidisciplinary empirical studies. Reader response studies can examine and interrogate reader responses with instruments developed in other fields, for example, while cognitive and psychological studies could re-examine their theorisations of reading and its connections with perspective-taking as well as empathy using theories developed in fields such as reader response theory and the humanities in general. A note must be made about the need to turn to longitudinal, naturalistic studies of readers engaging with literary texts. There is a need to explore the models, theories and connections put forth by researchers such as Kidd and Castano and Batson in the natural phenomenon of reading, thus integrating the humanities and cognitive science fields in a pursuit to understand empathy. In the pursuit of a naturalistic study of these connections, conducting such studies in an Asian context would be extremely beneficial to contribute to research on empathy development that has been largely developed in Western contexts. While there is no intention to present a dichotomy between East and West, it should not be discounted that a reader is shaped by his or her individual sociocultural and historical contexts and experiences. Thus, their engagement with texts, be it through transportation, simulation, or imagination, would be influenced by their specific lifeworlds. For Asian readers, how much that is proposed regarding reading literature, perspective-taking and empathy development would apply to represent their experiences? The answer to that is not yet clear and therein lies an exciting path for future studies in this area.

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This novella (or a long short story) depicts the relationship between a boss and his lady secretary of two religions. Aamir happens to be Muslim boss of a HRD Wing located at Kalyanpur meant for helping the destitute of the country. Mrinalini happens to be his Hindu secretary, who has to accompany him on his office tours. There are two themes, of man-woman relationship and Hindu-Muslim relationship, which are intertwined here. As boss and secretary, they are supposed to be living and moving closely inside and outside the office and are likely to grow closer to each other. One may easily see the grammar of love and an evolutionary pattern of love in the Indian context here. There are about three or four stages in the Indian context. The first stage is that of dubious innocence or utter hypocrisy wherein a young man and a young woman pretend to be brother and sister. In the second stage, they slowly promote themselves into close friends. In the third stage, they grow into lovers and fuck-buddies and in the fourth stage, they may get married or go away from each other. One may see this pattern in the *Enigma of Choice.* First time, when they go to Udayagiri and stay in a lodge, they sleep separately on two beds in the same room like a brother and a sister. In the next stage, Aamir begins to write amorous poems about her and awakens her hidden sexuality due to which she begins to fantasize about him. In the third stage, Aamir stands stark naked before her and invites her for sex. Mrinalini has already overcome her hypocritical Puritanism and admires his nakedness and his nuts and quivering member. So she asks him: "Be the deity in my vacant temple. I have lit it with lamps and decorated it with flowers. This temple is all yours. Install yourself, be a swayambhu. I am your parvati, you are my shiva" (P.36). Aamir tells her, "we are just man and woman you know, no hindu no muslim I want us to evolve into humanhood as our bodies don't have any religion. Your vulva is not hindu, my organ is not muslim, We are just children of god…" (P.37). Consequently they enjoy their fill of sex, which transcends the barriers of caste and religion. In the fourth stage they wish to marry each other at the feet of Lord Vishwanatha at Varanasi after a week. But in the meanwhile Aamir's Muslim heritage asserts itself and he is forced by his dying uncle to marry his daughter, Noorjehan. As a Muslim he can marry up to seven wives and therefore helplessly marries Noorjehan and thinks of having Mrinalini as his additional, second wife. But Mrinalini as a Hindu girl cannot agree to the second wife of Aamir and therefore goes away from him without telling him where she is going. She faces the enigma by choosing to reject him as a husband. Then she disappears and Aamir does not know her whereabouts for three years. But when he visits a new school of destitute in Agra he is shown a baby, Ayesha said to be the daughter of Mrinalini, now a single mother. Aamir is shocked to learn that his own baby-girl, the product of their trans-religious love has become a destitute. He learns sadly that Mrinalini has joined a band of Mother Teresa service unit which keeps touring all tribal areas. He therefore offers a cheque for Rs.100000/ to the lady principal of the school of destitute for Ayesha's care lying to her that the money belonged to Mrinalini's unclaimed salary in the past. Mrinalini seems to have sublimated her amorous desires and longings into philanthropic

activities of serving the tribal people.

Although both of them wanted to transcend the limitations of their religions they could not do so. The Hindu and Muslim Twain could meet biologically, but not culturally. Mrinalini's dilemma is greater than Aamir's, simply because his marital scope is wider than Mrinalini's. It is essentially a conflict between Muslim polygamy and Hindu monogamy.
Both of them are intellectuals and can discuss Eliot and other English poets. Whereas Aamir can translate Hindu poetry, she can appreciate his translational talent critically and perceptively. Mrinalini is not an innocent young lady, as she knows a lot about sex and likes the pictures of glistening naked bodies of Negro males with their prominent genitalia with big nuts and dangling long members. But in spite of all their intellectual and uninhibited knowledge of human life, they cannot marry each other, but drift apart from each other due to the cultural opposition. Their desire to transcend the barriers of religion is ultimately not realized at all. *Enigma of Choice* seems to act as both a lesson and a warning to the modern Hindu radical feminist. The novella sets the reader thinking seriously about life like self control and indulgence.

As for the fictional narrative style employed by Srinath one is tempted to say that it smacks of the flavour of D.H. Lawrence, Khushwant Singh, Arun Joshi and Shobha Dey in different measures and shows how Indian English Fiction has been slowly moving towards a realistic and non-puritanical way of writing.The little novella is produced excellently, but the absence of the capital letters in place of small letters indicates the conspicuous absence of the copy-editor.

Lalit Mohan Sharma. *Parables: Fair and Flawed*
Authors Press, New Delhi. 2021, Rs. 295, pp. 154.

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"In my view a good poem is one in which the form of the verse and the joining of its parts seems light as a shallow river flowing over its sandy bed" (https://www.poetsgraves.com).

These words of Japanese poet Matsuo Basho primarily come to mind when one turns the pages of *Parables: Fair and Flawed*, an anthology of poems by Lalit Mohan Sharma, published by Author Press, New Delhi, 2021. What makes this book of verses unique is that it encapsulates two different rather contradistinctive kinds of poems triggered by two dissimilar sorts of emotions - one of agony, anguish, anxiety, anger and disgust revealing the poet as a socio-political being, and the other soft, subtle and finer category of human feelings, emotions and sensibilities that redeem suffering wherefrom springs poetry of love and beauty. "A Time for Transition" is the poem which not only invites the readers to come out of his/her own individual construct "seeking the unknown" but the two distinct groups are also significantly demarcated by this poem. What gives the collection an edge is that it serves as a perfect vehicle and repository of emotional conundrums involving human body and soul; the poet tears open human hearts and with remarkable ease and velocity frees the cascades of human emotions.

The first group of poems portray the socio-economic and political concerns that agitate the consciousness of the poet at the mayhem caused by the Pandemic which unravelled the miserable plight of his countrymen in a system deeply shadowed by hypocrisy. The poems lay bare the society's anguished and bruised soul and become the 'speaking-mirror' of contemporary times. The poet's understanding of man's utter inability to break the shackles ("Before the Advent of Gods"), his anger against the present system where the poor and the destitute can't live a life "without a fear" ("Them/he People"), his unfailing voice of protest against the social iniquities that have become pathetically obtrusive during the recent Corona pandemic ("Dreaming Nightmares"), his frustrations at man's vaunting ambition ("Parables-2020"), as the 'centre' forces each individual to join the 'action' even at the risk of "losing the ground solid beneath your feet" ("A Cacophony"), his disbelief of the media and the tribe of politicians ("A Cacophony"), his disgust with the country being caught in the web of blank words and gestures ("Metamorphosis"), his desperation to seek forgiveness from Jesus for what his country is being dragged into ("Forgiveness"), his love of nation ("Better Now than Later") and the seamy side of life - the violence, hatred, lust, chaos, death all around – are manifest in myriad ways in the first group of poems. The satiric undertones pave the way for the poet's abiding faith in humanity and universal bonding in the other cluster of poems. Love, joy, trust, beauty and charm of the natural world characterize the second half of the book that cheers, rejuvenates and invigorates our souls and adequately informed by the reigning spirit of buoyancy in the second half. The poems as "A Poem on Guru Purnima,"

"Daddy-Friend's Greetings," "A Birthday Dream," "On a Complaint by a Friend" add to the riches of the anthology as a whole. A reader's sense of variety is satiated as almost in every new stanza/section of a poem, the poet seems to surprise by offering something new, either thematically or analogically. What engages a reader is the poet's amazingly new outlook as revealed in a number of poems.

The imprress of intertextuality is writ large on some of the poems which allude to legendary and mythological characters. This specifically interests the readers, as in each of the poems as "Ashwathama," "Visamriti," "Melon, Mirage and the Bird," "Birth of Krishna," "The Roving Eye," "Dance of Death and Devotion" the poet tries to bring out the contemporaneity of myths and epical happenings. The other noteworthy aspect of this volume is the titles of the poems which are really justified, be it a noun phrase, an adjective phrase, a proper noun, a participle or a sentence and in cases it is not apparent there is a significant correlation between the readers' perceptual understanding of multiple dimensions of meanings and how these are reflected in the titles poetically. Additionally in a sense a reader is to invent a story in poems generated either from the beatific vision of the poet or the satiric one portraying human follies and foibles that scare, instruct and entertain.

In the poems as "Celestial Flights," "May and April," "Wages of Language," "Daddy-Friend's Greetings," "Dream of Beauty," and "Theatre of Politics" the poet either alludes to unforgettable lines of a precursor poet or directly names him, most of the times to emphasize his own point of view or his vision. Notably, the poems are in free verse form and the poet successfully attains semantic and thematic coherence. Exceptionally, some of the long poems, as "Rainbow Blues," "The Roving Eye," and "Airborne Allusions" may appear to the readers as compilation of dispersed ideas which is however not the case with the other long poems as they have underlying thematic resonance. In spite of jarring occurrence of words as 'hosannas,' 'pulsating,' 'timber bridge,' 'greying,' 'rivulets,' and 'coiffeur,' the poet's commendable strength in drawing analogies is significantly noticeable. Metaphors and images weave the rich tapestry of Lalit Mohan Sharma's poetic craft. Furthermore, the form, pattern, structure and the rhetorical devices used in each poem seem to flow from the internal logic of the poems, sans pretentiousness.

Finally, the absence of any punctuation mark in the poems (incidentally there is period at the ending of "Lovers") on the one hand builds a complex sort of narrative in the poems and on the other allows the readers more freedom to derive their own meanings. It may appear so that the poet simply gathers expressions and breaks them into verses, stanzas and groups but such is the art of the poet as the diverse parts of poems tend to join each other smoothly and lightly. A reader feels re-energized as the poetic stuff dished out touches the inner chords of human heart. *The Parables: Fair and Flawed* helps us to discover our multiple selves, emotions, actions and inactions which shock, instruct and entertain. When anxiety, death and grey clouds of uncertainties envelope the globe and the human in man becomes the first casualty, one must turn to *The Parables* for succour, truth, unalloyed joy and mediative solace in order to immerse into something beautiful and profound that "empowers human potential with celestial flights."

POEMS

Dr. T. Chinnadurai*

Virgin, still Virgin!

I am not sure; I was
a girl of 17 or 18—virgin
Opt for opposite sex,
not for hairy and mustached faces

Lengthy hairy on top to toe—Face
Tailor couple of balls armed arches;
Razor sloped nose; finest close of lips;
Ideal measured shape of the profile

Lustful men's and jealously girls' eyeballs
Were at me; toe to head—sight
Every move of my shaped body,
Timid eyes of mine at sliding

Changes changed for changers
Some unchanged in changing globe
My breathed heart squeezes out of hope
My skin wrinkle and slough

Panty to gown, frock to colourful sarees
Which remain fade glows
Bangles lose their golden beauty
Fault in it as like me ageing

My breasts long to feed, lips to lullaby,
Shaped hip shapeless to bring up
Still hungry after eating, stomach feels empty
Disconnect belly buttons to be merged

I long for love? Lust? Life?
Left the unanswered question,
I shall dwell happily or sorrowfully
To be virgin till my end!

My father called me queen
Where shall I find my king?
He is no more; his words too
Nothing here to beg than me

My beauty and urges fade away

I breathe my reality in imagination
Extended imagination; shrink reality
Yet to complete, counting my last breath

My beauty on others' eyes
Dowry hands of the buyers
Wacky People cube my gossip;
Boomerang at last to my ears to be wondered

Purity will be good for certain ages
Ages of purity will be impure so on
I am sure; I am –
virgin unmarried woman of late thirties.

Tree of life

Back to my village
to see my affectionate childhood soul mate,
fills the hungry stomachs,
Shelter the passersby,
dwelling sky walkers
Five years younger than me
born in different womb;
brought up same land,
swap our breathings, kisses, hugs,
smiles and tears;
me time climb up and sit on his shoulder
trust worthy relationship
I speak to him a lot
Good listener, never interpret my dialogue
Attractive handsome, anyone fall for him
Summer disturbs his impressive
Spring salvage it.
Dismantled him from fifty years
Now aged, no more top hairy,
Blessed with many children
Still same happy with energetic move,
Thinking of our pass plays and
Days which bonded, come back
To regain our uber past.
Reached the spot
All my dreams come before my eyes reality
I see nothing, nothing
Where my dreams fragile into pieces
Where shall I search my past?
The place was empty with stump
A gift of seed buried near his graveyard

With wet eyes and curved lips
His nostalgic memory lied
A furnished wooden furnisher
Murmuring his name all over again TREE
You last your breaths yesterday
No more extra breath for me tomorrow
Mourned your 45th anniversary
Celebrated my 50th birthday

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Ranjit Mandal*

Attraversiamo

I was melting like sunset into the West,
On strange path, I had been walking,
Since the day I had eyed
And run run run into the circle
On the orbit of name, fame, and gain.

I was wandering like a cloud into the West,
With the grip of my strong Wind,
I sprang to freeze the twinkling star,
In the open air and of the sun;
Far from the engraved mountain.

I was floating like a surge into the West,
To touch her bottomless layers,
Held her like a lover;
And, sucked her juicy lips
Till the dateless day of mine.

There, I saw cells count their breath,
Like a patient
Etherized upon the table;
And, bubbled like Faustus
For a drop of Blood.

But, in the stream of thought
When I unfold the serenity of Viragya,
I gaze the blurring footprints of my Guardians,
Dancing on the sand,
I dissolve in Panchabhutas.

The sky is on my head,
I bear the cosmos,
My prosthetic soul
Rejuvenates;
And stimulates with eternity.

O! Folks behold,
I am smelling the rain
Kisses over my body,
I kindle with a cry
And embrace her.

I germinate like Valmiki
After a perennial sleep
And hark the Eastern Wind
Bringing the birds' chirping
Echoes like 'Om'…

One Day

One day I will soar
Up and up like an eagle
Onto the space
Tear the air
To the star.

One day I will pull
The stone down
And glean the dust
For the gloomy feet
Like Manjhi, the Mountain Man.

One day I will dig
Into the deep
Of unconsciousness
And fight the fear
By the sword of my ink.

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Komal*

Scattered Beads of Sindh

Sindh
the land of plenty
Peace, love and art
A home
to great Sufis, martyrs and mystics
confluence of
Arabic, Persian, Dravidian,
Sanskrit and Sindhi
gives clarion call
to Jhule Lal.

Woe!
All engulfed
Bitter fruits of barbarity
Preyed upon
By chicanery
Torn apart
Brothers, bearings and breaths.

Alike
breaching the pride
of Mohenjo-Daro,
the necklace
Ah!
Those beads
Jade, jasper and steatite
Hindu, Muslim and Sikh
That shiny twine
of gold
saintly Sindhu
stringing all
Together.

What befell the
Sagacity
Dividing the invaluable
Into half!
Partitioning
Sanctity, belief and meaning
Scattered beads.

Strung into
two different pieces!
Will the indigeneity be still maintained?
Cherished
But a valueless heirloom
once broken
is hard to redeem.
Some say
Mankind is known
to learn from the past,
Is this past
revertible?
Is it possible for the exquisite beads
to be reunited?

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Dr. Priyanka Chaudhary*

Success and Failure

Like success nothing succeeds
Failure ever desperation breeds
Only a few succeed many fail
Of helplessness and frustration bewail
By means foul or fair
Everyone wants to attain the chair
Ours is a materialistic world
Our aims and motifs gnarled
Against odds the honest are pitted
By swindlers and cheats outwitted
Of success money alone is measure
Eating, drinking and living in pleasure
Fraud, deception, blackmail and lies
Are rife from the earth to the skies
Hence in fraud should we take a course
Of rising this alone is a resource
Honest, sincere, hard-working lag behind
The blackmilers scoundrels their axe grind
Let success not dazzle like lightening
Though it should have an effect brightening
Let honesty, truth, innocence be our guide
With fairness, fair and noble ends provide.

Who Am I

Who am I?
What am I?
Whence do I come?
Whither am I bound?
Answers to these questions
Are rare found.
Am I the body;
Am I the soul?
Am I the ego?
Am I the self?
Am I the spirit?
The question ever baffles us
Philosophers have failed
To satisfy the queries
Like an innocent boy
Let me the body enjoy

I am a harmonious whole one with the over-soul
Life is holy, it isn't a hole
It is perfect, wholly whole

All lead to the Grave
The Sun ascends to the Zenith
At the noon
Alas! It goes beneath horizon
After the afternoon

The red rose does blossom
For a day or two
The withered petals scatter
And into compost grow

The crescent moon does grow
And turns into full moon
Alas! It decreases
Its size so soon

Men attain grandeur glory
But it is ever the same story
However great or brave
Everyone has to go grave!

Dr Priyanka Chaudhary is a Professor of English at Manipal University Jaipur. She has authored four books and was honored with the Jewel of India Award and Certificate of Education Excellence in 2015.

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