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Editorial

The maiden issue of *International Journal on Multicultural Literature* (IJML) in July 2011 had such a very hearty welcome from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder for this issue even before the deadline of 30 October 2011. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted.

Unity in diversity is the essence of the universe and its chief beauty. The beauty of that symphony is visible in the animal and plant kingdom. Man, the rational being, who ought to play his major part in the great concert of the universe, is playing a discordant note and tries to disrupt the mellifluous flow of the system. Massacres and genocides have become no news at all. Newspapers and TV channels are competing to give maximum coverage to unnatural deaths of men from suicides to patricides, matricides, fratricides, infanticides etc. Communal and religious feelings have conquered the rationale of the people, particularly in the East. Scientific and secular thoughts have given way to superstitious and blind religious faith. Science and religion are twin sides of a coin and they should go hand in hand in the progressive, harmonious march of the universe.

We, human beings should use our reasoning power to learn our position in the universe. As the last evolutionary being we should be humble enough to understand that other creations—animals, plants and inanimate objects—also have an equal right to exist on the planet. We should conserve this Nature rather than annihilating it, as we are doing now. When we learn our position on the globe, how transient our lives are when compared to the immortal universe, we will be forced to throw away the petty differences among us—colour, size, nationality, religion, language, caste etc.

It's very tragic and alarming that the world is now ruled, crushed and exploited by three mafias—political, religious and intellectual mafias. It's they who make disharmony and disintegration among the

multicultural communities who lead peaceful, happy lives of fraternal relations. Instead of serving the masses in their physical needs of food, shelter etc. the political and religious mafia brainwash them with hollow promises and illusions. Not only do they loot the masses but make them fanatics. Thus the people are made ready to die for their parties and religions.

The political mafias all over the world come to power taking advantage of the weaknesses of the masses. The gullible people are befooled by their sky high promises of a welfare nation. Thus coming into power they start selling the nation to multinational corporates and earn billions by corruptive measurers of import and export. The people are strangled by heavy taxes and inflation. The political mafia boasts of rocketing growth of economy in the country. In fact the growth is limited to the rich who are below ten percent. The intellectual mafia, getting illegal favour from the political mafia, beguiles the masses through media reporting that the fake growth is true.

As teachers and scholars—the most literate and intellectual layer of the society—we are entrusted with the duty to guide the masses. If not we, who else will remove the darkness and ignorance from the minds of the community? The society and the nation expect this moulding role from us. As teachers and scholars, let's vow to serve the society we live in in their physical and mental needs, promote multiculturalism and mend the broken strings that played discordant notes, and thus mould a society which dances to the eternal symphony of happiness.

Keeping in mind the nature of this journal, the current issue, with its variety in terms of the creative output, does its best to strengthen the role of intellectuals in society. The sad truth remains that the term 'intellectual' has come to have negative connotations in society currently, especially as those who lay claim to that term serve mainly nothing, except the interests of the political and religious mafias, and of course, their own. The time is ripe to reclaim the true nature of an intellectual's job—to understand and dissect society's laws, portray them truthfully, and serve practical answers to the burning questions of our times. As writers, the onus is greater, because the nature of our medium permits us to examine in depth the issues we need to address in society. This is the philosophy which drives the journal, and is at the core of this issue too.

There are sixteen research articles, eleven poems of seven poets, three short stories and two reviews in this issue. Before winding up my preface I express my deep gratitude to the contributors who made this issue a reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast and a very happy new year,

Thodupuzha
1 January 2012

Dr. K. V. Dominic
Editor, IJML

CRITICAL ARTICLES

“Apparently Unbridgeable Gaps of Language”: Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke* and an Emerging Global English?

- Christopher Rollason

River of Smoke, Amitav Ghosh’s seventh novel and the second part of his ongoing “Ibis Trilogy” following *Sea of Poppies* (2008), was published in 2011. As a novel, it may be considered a highly engaging read: an extremely fine piece of writing and a piercing analysis of its chosen theme, namely the interaction between Indian and Chinese communities in an early-nineteenth-century context of waxing British imperialism in Asia, embodied in the lead-up to the “Opium Wars” that broke out in 1839. It is no doubt not by chance that one of the most distinguished active practitioners of Indian Writing in English (IWE) should have chosen past Sino-Indian relations as the focal point of a major work, at a time when the economic and political rise of the India-China dyad is constantly evoked in the media of a faltering West. However, precisely *because* Ghosh’s book is the second part of a trilogy, I do not wish to venture at this moment as a literary critic on a detailed analysis of its subject-matter. Part two of any trilogy, as the inside wing of the triptych, has a particularly delicate status, since it points in two directions, back to a first part which already exists and forward to a third and crowning part which as yet lives only in the author’s mind. The critic may thus be particularly liable to wrong guesses and missed connections. My own sensation on the evidence of *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* is that the finished trilogy will be strong and solid enough to warrant Amitav Ghosh a Nobel nomination, but on quality issues too, one is best advised not to stick one’s neck out over a work that is only two-thirds complete. Indeed, the recent interviews collected on Ghosh’s official website - www.amitavghosh.com – have him suggesting he may even end up writing sequels to the trilogy, extending his characters’ life-stories to the length of a Harry Potter-like saga. Thus,

admirable though one may find Ghosh's writing, characterisation and historical range and sweep in this his latest novel, I shall, rather than offering a review or critical essay, target the brief comments that follow on a specific (and isolable) aspect of the book, namely its—in many ways daring and even groundbreaking - *use of language*.

Sea of Poppies already ventured into linguistic experimentation, with its English peppered with Indian terms from Bengali or Bhojपुरi. *River of Smoke* now takes language complexity further, reflecting the kaleidoscopic multiplicity of its characters' mutable identities. Indeed, on a personal level, Ghosh has told an interviewer that his research for the novel included learning Cantonese. The narrative opens in Mauritius and shifts to a China where a key object of focus is an Indian community that clustered around the "Achha Hong" mercantile complex in Canton. The name is itself a significant hybrid coinage, "achha", the Hindusthani/Hindi term meaning "all right", being also a general Chinese designation for an Indian, and "hong" a Chinese word for trading house. On the way, the text's matricial English emerges as profoundly affected by interaction with Mauritian creole, Cantonese and pidgin, and a variety of Indian languages. Multilingualism rules: the Indians of the Hong (to their Chinese hosts, apparently all the same) "spoke between them more than a dozen different languages", exhibiting a linguistic diversity running counter to the "commonalities" forced on them by all being subcontinentals in China (Ghosh 2011, 181). In such a context, where European, Indian and East Asian languages are in both conflict and symbiosis, the most adaptable characters prove to be those most linguistically versatile: notably Bahram, the Gujarati Parsi trader, and Neel, the Bengali ex-maharajah-turned-convict from *Sea of Poppies* who ends up working for him. Both can function in non-Indian languages, Bahram in fluent pidgin and approximate English, Neel in the Queen's English and, as his time in Canton advances, increasingly in pidgin too.

I use the word « matricial » deliberately to describe the book's English, for the matrix of this novel is provided by a third-person, extradiegetic narratorial voice that speaks the International Standard English of our day. At the same time, that matricial English is frequently, though not invariably, sprinkled with words and phrases from Asian languages. Meanwhile, where dialogue occurs between the characters, and where those characters are Indian or Chinese, it is often in either a visibly Indianised English or in a tongue that strictly speaking is not English at all, namely the totally transformed "English" – lexically

simplified and hybridated, syntactically manhandled and adapted to a Chinese context—that is called pidgin and which served as a lingua franca, for commercial and practical purposes, between Chinese and non-Chinese, whether or not the latter were native speakers of English. The grammar, we are told, is Cantonese, the vocabulary a mixture of English, Portuguese and Hindusthani.

Ghosh's text is marked by a general and pervasive awareness of language issues and by a sense of the complexities of multilingualism and the interaction of languages: Indian tongues—Neel's Bengali, Bahram's Gujarati, and the then Indian lingua franca Hindusthani, but also "Tamil, Telugu and Oriya" (60) and "Marathi, Kachhi and Konkani" (292); Cantonese Chinese; Portuguese, French, English; Mauritian creole; and the hybrid that is pidgin. The Portuguese presence runs strong in Canton, thanks to the proximity of Macao and the presence of Goan émigrés, and terms from that European language seep into the day-to-day lexicon of Indians, Chinese and English ("'falto', for example, meaning fraudulent or false, . . . became *phaltu* on Achha tongues" - 180).

Translation and interpretation—already present as a theme in Ghosh's earlier novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004), where the protagonist Kanai ran a translation/interpretation agency—loom large, and, to his credit, in the new novel Ghosh manages something which not all novelists do, i.e., in his narratorial voice, not to mix up the two processes of translation (written) and interpretation (oral): or, where "translator" appears it may, according to context, mean either translator proper or translator/interpreter, but certainly Ghosh does not in this book lapse into the crude, oral-oriented solecism of using "translator" naively to signify interpreter and nothing else. Indeed, "linkister", meaning a three-way interpreter between Chinese, pidgin and English (163), appears in Ghosh's pages as a specialist term. His English-speaking trader community in Canton is reliant on its translators/interpreters for all rigorous communication with its Chinese hosts, the halfway house of pidgin not always being enough, and certainly not with the imperial authorities ("In the no-man's land between the two groups stood the translators . . . this being a matter of life and death they had decided to use translators instead of speaking pidgin" - 448).

Neel takes his linguistic curiosity far enough to become the imputed compiler of the *Chrestomathy*, a lexicon of English, Cantonese and pidgin, inspired in this by the printer and translator Liang Kuei-Ch'uan

(alias Compton), a Cantonese who has himself produced a “glossary of the Canton jargon” whose Chinese title translates as “The-Red-Haired-People’s-Buying-and-Selling-Common-Ghost-Language” (252). Neel’s own compilation is a fictional double of the multilingual glossary (between English and a variety of Asian tongues) for *Sea of Poppies* which has been on Ghosh’s website since 2008 (though not in the book) – and whose updating to include *River of Smoke* readers may perhaps hope for in the near future (Ghosh calls it the *Ibis Chrestomathy*, thus implicating the whole trilogy). Ghosh’s interest in lexicography is also evident from his very favourable mention, in a note to the website glossary, of *Hobson-Jobson*, otherwise known as *The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, the encyclopaedic dictionary from 1886 compiled by Henry Yule and A. C. Burrell which Ghosh, like Salman Rushdie before him, sees not as a suspect colonial relic but as a treasure-trove of still-valid lexical lore.

The weaving of Indian terms into an English syntactic matrix is particularly notable in the novel in certain especially culture-specific registers, of which we may cite, firstly, the culinary. At a Canton kitchen-boat eatery offering Indian fare:

Everything was cooked in reassuringly familiar ways, with real masalas and recognizable oils, and the rice was never outlandishly soft or sticky: there was usually a biryani or a fish pulao, some daals, some green bhaajis, and a chicken curry and tawa-fried fish. Occasionally – and these were considered blessed days – there would be pakoras and puris. (303)

Here, a British or other non-Indian reader used to eating in Indian restaurants will recognise certain terms—“masalas”, “biryani”, “daals”, “pulao”, “bhaajis”, “pakoras” (all standard menu items today), but “puris” are less likely to be encountered outside India, and “tawa” (a type of frying-pan) may raise eyebrows.

A second significantly recurring register is the sartorial. Dressing for a business dinner,

Bahram . . . chose a knee-length white jama of Dacca cotton; it was discreetly ornamented with white jamdani brocade, and the neck and cuffs were lined with bands of green silk. Instead of pairing this with the usual salwar or pajamas, Bahram settled on a pair of black Acehnese leggings, shot through with silver thread. The weather being still quite warm he picked, as an outer garment, a cream-coloured cotton choga embroidered with silver-gilt

karchobi work. The ensemble was completed by a turban of pure malmal muslin. (216)

This register, less immediately transferable than the culinary, is more likely to baffle the non-Indian reader, but remains reasonably accessible. The reader from outside may not recognise “jama”, “jamdani”, “choga” or “malmal”, but “turban” and “pajamas” are universally known lexical borrowings in European languages in general, and those with some knowledge of India may recognise “salwar” (loose-fitting trousers). “Acehnese”, meanwhile, referring not to anywhere in India but to Aceh, in what is now Indonesia, points up the hybridated dimension of Asian culture, its ultimate irreducibility to watertight notions of origin. Those terms not directly understood by the non-Indian reader may be assimilated on a level less of denotation than of connotation, signifying a general “Indianness”. This strategy of connoting that-which-is-Indian through lexical items is, in fact, recurrently used in the novel: thus, Bahram’s working space in the Achha Hong is always his “daftar”, not his office, and Neel not his secretary but his “munshi” (or in the vocative, “munshiji”).

On a rather different tack, the dialogue passages in pidgin stretch the reader with an alien syntax all but unrecognisable to native English sensibilities, as in a long conversation in that idiom between Bahram and his Chinese acquaintance Ah-Lau or Allow. Thus, Bahram addresses his visitor: “So talkee me ... Sittee, sittee here. Allow, what thing wanchi? Tell maski, chop-chop. No time have got”, and the latter replies: “Allow have ear-hear Mister Barry have come China-side with plenty, plenty big cargo. Is, is not true? Mister Barry have, no have plenty cargo, ah?”, and continues: “Galaw, Mister Barry talkee allo is inside his heart: what-thing he thinki do with cargo? This-time cannot do-pidgin in Canton. Cannot sell. Mister Barry savvy, no-savvy ah?” (244). Here, “pidgin” means “business” (not the language), and “savvy”, from the Portuguese verb “saber”, means “know”. In the long conversation of which this interchange is part, most readers, be they native speakers of English or indeed not, will not understand everything and will have to deduce part of the sense from context.

If *River of Smoke* represents Amitav Ghosh’s newest contribution to IWE’s expanding shelf, it may nonetheless be predicted that some critics will ask, polemically, whether this novel is finally in English at all—and even deny that it is. Some will no doubt praise the book as marking a transition from hegemonic English to a more equitable, hybrid

“Globish”. If such claims are made, though, there will be some exaggeration in play, and legitimate comment will require a degree of nuance respecting the text as a whole. The fact is that, despite the diverse acts of making-strange directed by Ghosh on English, there are also sequences in the novel, some of them long, where, the dialogue being exclusively between members of Canton’s English community and the subject-matter reflecting their concerns, both narrator and characters practise an unmodified, if at times nineteenth-century, International Standard English.

A parallel may be suggested here with another epic novel by an IWE maestro, Vikram Chandra’s *Sacred Games* (2006) - which comparably sprinkles a matricial English with words and expressions from a variety of Indian languages, and for which, too, the author has placed a glossary on his website (www.vikramchandra.com) while refraining from including that aid in the book proper. Ghosh and Chandra, conscious wordsmiths the two of them, may both be seen as working towards, not a replacement but certainly a redefinition of the English language in the emerging Asian context.

One further linguistic aspect of *River of Smoke* deserves mention, and that is its future translation into other languages, European or Asian (the Italian version was already scheduled for autumn 2011). The translator into whatever tongue will obviously start out from the presumption of the book being in English (a pragmatic point surely in favour of that position), but will be confronted with evident difficulties in the face of its linguistic hybridations. The Indian lexical items can no doubt simply be retained, possibly italicised and/or glossed, but how in French or Spanish to convey the strangeness and non-Englishness of the dialogues in pidgin? Nonetheless, the task, though difficult, will surely not be insurmountable, and the future existence of successful translations may, indeed, help shed light on the precise nature of this novel’s experiments with language.

Meanwhile, Ghosh’s novel is not IWE’s first encounter with Chinese culture. The young Vikram Seth studied Chinese in Nanjing, translated a triad of Chinese poets into English, and wrote *From Heaven Lake* (1983), a travel book about China and Tibet; Aravind Adiga’s Booker-winning *The White Tiger* (2008) is structured as a series of letters to the Chinese Prime Minister. It will not be surprising if in the near future Indian writers turn their attention more frequently towards their neighbour and fellow rising power. *River of Smoke* may be seen as a

particularly significant instance of the IWE novel mutating from the postcolonial into the global. In the present geopolitical context, it is especially worthy of note that Ghosh in his new novel employs an English modified under Chinese as well as Indian influence, its historical setting in no way obviating the significance of this aspect for our times. The author has done remarkable work in his research for this novel, even considering the language dimension alone: indeed, it is the result of more work than one person could do, and in his closing acknowledgments to those who have helped him with “details of fact and language” (511), Ghosh recognises that a book like this is also the outcome of a collective endeavour.

River of Smoke, while it neither supersedes nor abolishes International Standard English (with Ghosh as with Chandra, to redefine is not to abandon), certainly goes at least part of the way towards substantially *modifying* it. The second part of Ghosh’s trilogy is not only an absorbing and rewarding work of fiction: it is also an exploration of communication across linguistic and cultural barriers, across what the text itself calls “apparently unbridgeable gaps of language” (323). At the same time, it sends out a challenge to complacently Anglocentric notions of English as a global language, and offers a foretaste of possible mutations to linguistic power-structures, with the resurgence of India and China in a newly multipolar world.

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From Ignorance to Knowledge: A Study of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

- Mahboobeh Khaleghi

Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* presents a family's history, which invariably reflects the collective history of the Afro-Americans. This sequential story revolves around Milkman Dead and his unwitting spiritual and physical journey to his ancestral home. Marc C. Conner points out that finding home is not, as Milkman believes, "a simple matter of geography" but that "his communal identity must be *earned*; that is, Milkman must undergo his own harrowing—in the older sense of being torn, lacerated, cut through—in order to find who he is and where he has come from" (60). This novel, as Marilyn Sander Mobley states, is "essentially the story of Milkman Dead's search of discovery of meaning in his life" ("Myth as Usable Past" 97). It is the story of Milkman search for his roots. He initiates a journey to the "mythic past" (Spallino 511).

Milkman's search for identity does involve racial conflict, social transition and communal values. Philip M. Royster notes that the development of Milkman's identity "is depicted by a series of episodes during which he discovers his relationship to his family" (419). He begins his journey toward a self-knowledge that will be earned through an understanding of family relationships and his heritage. As Mobley argues, "*Song of Solomon* invites us to remember the expensive price of freedom and the struggle the descendents of enslaved Africans had to wage to obtain what racial identity once denied" ("Politics of Representation" 212).

Milkman's father, Macon Dead, believes that acquisition of wealth will put him on par with the white race. This can be seen in the way "he behaves like a white man, thinks like a white man" (*Song of Solomon* 223). According to Susan Willis, Macon Dead's attitudes toward rent and property make him more white than black (34). His desire for wealth

is his vision of a freedom quest. He chooses to believe what he shares with his son, Milkman, “Money is freedom, Macon. The only real freedom there is” (*Song of Solomon* 163). His inordinate craze for possession pervades Milkman’s mind but at the end he realizes that materialism is a hindrance that prevents him from constructing his identity.

Milkman considers his name a source of shame. J. Brooks Bouson connects Milkman’s rejection of his name to a broader rejection of his race, gender and heritage, describing him as “a shame-ridden individual who carries with him the ‘shit’ not only of his family’s false class pride but also of inherited familial and racial shame” (75). But his contact with Pilate totally changes him: “Now he was behaving with this strange woman as though having the name was a matter of deep personal pride, as though she has tried to expel him from a very special group, in which he not only belonged, but had exclusive rights” (*Song of Solomon* 39). It is Pilate who nourishes his mind with some stories of her childhood, of his father, of his grandmother and of his grandfather who has been murdered; such stories awake his consciousness about his family’s past. Wallowing in it, he tells for the “first time in his life that he remembered being completely happy” (Plakkootom 85).

When Macon convinces Milkman that Pilate’s green tarpaulin bag contains gold apparently stolen fifty years earlier, he and Guitar stealthily enter her home to steal it. Although Pilate would have been justified in her anger towards Milkman, whom she had loved and cherished, she instead extends merciful love when Milkman is arrested for the theft. Instead of filing charges against him, she changes her form in order to garner the police officers’ pity. “Pilate had been shorter . . . she didn’t even come up to the sergeant’s shoulder . . . and her hands were shaking as she described how she didn’t know the sack was gone until the officer woke her up” (*Song of Solomon* 206).

Milkman does not love other people. He loves himself and the pursuit of sensual pleasures. Self-centered and uncommitted, he feels no responsibility to home or family. He sees his mother as “insubstantial, too shadowy for love” (*Song of Solomon* 75); he assumes and expects Pilate, Reba and Hagar’s love for him, he overlooks the sacrifice of his sisters, who gave up their childhood to cater to him; and his father, the one person he claims to love, he does not give to or to share himself with. Indeed, he is insensitive to the needs of his mother and sisters,

careless and cruel in his affair with Hagar and unknowing about the effects of his actions.

Milkman's attitude to his mother and sister is mercenary. Vernersa C. White contends that Milkman is—"a true product of his environment in so far as his relationships with women are concerned" (73). Milkman extends his crippled vision to include his mother. "Never had he thought of his mother as a person, a separate individual, with a life apart from allowing or interfering with his own" (*Song of Solomon* 75).

Milkman's initial disregard of persons other than himself extended even to those women with whom he was sexually intimate. Although five years his senior, Hagar's and Milkman's sexual play continued to excite and entertain Milkman well into his twenties. However, after their relationship had stretched out for more than a decade and she finally asked something of him, *commitment*, he discarded her like detritus. After all, she had become "the third beer. Not the first one, which the throat receives with almost tearful gratitude; nor the second, that confirms and extends the pleasure of the first. But the third, the one you drink because it's there, it can't hurt, and because what difference does it make?" (*Song of Solomon* 91). While Milkman was experiencing his spiritual epiphany in Shalimar, Hagar was dying in Michigan, of a broken heart.

Still attuned to the lessons he has learned from his father, Milkman offers to help Circe with money. She refuses it, telling him that he has helped her by listening to her story and sharing his own knowledge of Macon and Pilate. When Milkman hitches a ride to town, he shows that he has not yet understood Circe's veiled warning to not devalue the lives of others. He never asks the name of the man who gives him a ride, then further insults him by offering to pay him. This same attitude buys him a fight at the general store in Shalimar. Milkman, who is assaulted when he speculates that he might buy a new car, believes that his attackers are jealous of his wealth, but Morrison lets readers know that his impersonal attitude prompts their aggression:

He hadn't found them fit enough or good enough to want to know their names, and believed himself too good to tell them his. They looked at his skin and saw it was as black as theirs, but they knew he had the heart of the white men who came to pick them up in the trucks when they needed anonymous, faceless laborers. (*Song of Solomon* 266)

The men take their anger out on Milkman; they see him as a villain, not because of his money, but because he treats them as though they are invisible.

Milkman's increasing awareness regarding race oppression, class exploitation and gender subjugation steadily emerges. His awareness regarding race, class and gender facilitate his journey towards the quest for self. He questions the people and events around him. Through this inquiry, he is able to arouse his consciousness and discover the variegated and crucial questions of identity in a composite American culture. It is Pilate who is responsible for Milkman's journey towards constructing his self and establishing his identity. Dorothy H. Lee makes a perceptive observation about Milkman's journey. She states that Milkman ". . . travels from innocence to awareness i.e., from ignorance of origins, heritage, identity and communal responsibility to knowledge and acceptance" (353).

K. Sumana pithily expounds the development in his class consciousness when he opines that Milkman "commits class suicide" (91). His awakened consciousness regarding race oppression and class exploitation paves the way for the sprouting of his consciousness regarding gender. During the early stages of his life women receive variegated forms of ill treatment from him. This vicious treatment, which he has meted out to women who had served his welfare, signifies his lack of gender consciousness. But when he reaches a high level of consciousness, his crippled view of women is totally changed. He realizes that all his life he had thought "he deserved to be loved," even while he refused any responsibility for the pain or problems of those who loved him. Morrison clearly lets readers know that this is Milkman's defining moment. She tells us that the "cocoon" that had defined Milkman's "personality" gave way (*Song of Solomon* 277).

During his journey Milkman realizes that, "[w]ith two exceptions, everybody he was close to seemed to prefer him out of this life. And the two exceptions were both women, both black, both old. From the beginning, his mother and Pilate had fought for his life, and he had never so much as made either of them a cup of tea" (*Song of Solomon* 331). With self-awakening he comes to value the great assistance he had received from women like Pilate and Hagar. He begins to respect women and the poor blacks. His new attitude entails his renunciation of the commoditized way of life. He begins to embrace the feminist trend that called for equal rights for men and women. His former biased view of women is buried forever. He develops reciprocal relationships with women. This reciprocity is manifested through Pilate's guidance to bury the "dead in him" (Sumana 91) and Milkman's direction of Pilate to bury

her father's carcass. He becomes a source of life and acts as a catalyst for women.

Participation in the "Seven Days" serves to feed Guitar's repressed anger, fans the flames of his hunting prowess, and free him to hunt whomever he chooses. Guitar becomes a killer. When Milkman leaves in search of the gold, alone without Guitar, Guitar's resentment at Macon for being just like a white man, anger at Pilate for her "aunt Jemima act" before the police and suspicions of Milkman's treachery in seeking to take the gold for himself coalesce (*Song of Solomon* 209). He heads to Pennsylvania and then Virginia to kill Milkman; "he had snatched the first straw, limp and wet as it was, to prove to himself the need to kill Milkman" (331).

Just as Pilate places the earring that contains her name into the grave, she is shot by Guitar who mistakes her for Milkman. Cradling the head of his dying mentor, Milkman is overcome by love for the first time in his life. Pilate's dying words underscore the focus of her life and her place in Morrison's texts, "I wish I'd a knowed more people. I would [have] loved 'em all. If I'd a knowed more, I would a loved more" (*Song of Solomon* 336). Milkman whispers a wish of his own: "Now he knew why he loved her so. Without ever leaving the ground, she could fly. 'There must be another one just like you,' he whispered to her" (336).

Wilfred D Samuels asserts that Milkman has become ". . . one, who has been shaped not only solely by his environment, but his distinct choices and actions" (67). He experiences strange loneliness which cannot be assuaged by the quirks he boasts of. "There was nothing here to help him—not his money, his car, his father's reputation, his suit or his shoes. In fact, they hampered him" (*Song of Solomon* 277). This loss of his clothes symbolizes the loss of "the white cultural values he has absorbed and assimilated at the expense of his black values" (Peach 60-61).

When Milkman is leaving Susan Byrd, he asks about the watch he had left with Grace. Susan tells him he will probably not get it back because Grace will have a great time talking about the watch the northern man gave her. It is significant that Milkman decide to accept the loss of his watch, which indicates that Milkman loses western concept of time that is linear. It insinuates that he espouses the African concept of time, which is cyclical. The son of the man whose only advice was that "time is money" relinquishes what was perhaps the most significant symbol of his "modern" identity.

Milkman realizes his previous relationship with others was based on the attitude that “I am not responsible for your pain; share your happiness with me but not your unhappiness” (*Song of Solomon* 277). He belatedly realizes that he is to blame for Hagar’s tragic death. It was Hagar who suffered and died in his absence: “Just as the consequences of Milkman’s own stupidity would remain and regret would always outweigh the things he was proud of having done. Hagar was dead and he had not loved her one bit” (335). For Milkman, this realization that he can never escape the consequences of his actions is the most difficult and painful of all. Accepting his responsibility for Hagar’s death, he decides to carry with him Hagar’s box of hair, which symbolizes his new awareness of the past. His act can be constructed as expiation for his inhuman treatment and exploitation of Hagar. The recognition of his mistakes can be construed as an act of expiation and repentance for his past.

The realization of Milkman’s spiritual death and renewal is further illustrated in his abandonment of the quest for the gold. No longer focused on securing freedom through money or running away from his familial responsibilities Milkman becomes excited about the discovery of the facts of his ancestry. His brief relationship with Sweet provides him to learn and express reciprocal love. As Milkman begins to love, he also confronts his family’s living heart, beating in love and sadness. For the first time, he feels homesick and misses the family he had been so determined to leave. With his heart, he sees his parents in a new light. He looks at his mother and sees how sexual deprivation “would affect her, hurt her in precisely the same way it would affect and hurt him” (*Song of Solomon* 300). There is a clear shift in Milkman’s values. While he had once valued his own freedom and power, he now sees the value of family ties. He shows a real transformation in his personality when he “accepts the responsibility of adulthood and Africanhood” (Sumana 90). This can be elicited from the statement: “he had stopped evading things, sliding through, over and around difficulties” (*Song of Solomon* 271).

If Milkman Dead begins his journey in conflict and ignorance, he ends it in complete awareness. Barbara E. Cooper observes:

On Solomon’s Leap, he understands how little value there is in property and how priceless are family relationships and connections. By losing everything in search of gold, Milkman is released from the burden of his self-indulgence. Like the peacock,

he was weighed down by his vanity and greed. However, when he sets aside this deadening weight, he finds a life-giving treasure in family history and remembrance . . . (156)

Milkman breaks free from the avid materialism that seduced and enslaved him. He is thus able to return to Michigan as a new man. Armed with a new sense of self, a heart of mercy, an understanding of love and a willingness to confront the consequences of his former actions, he finally flies, "without ever leaving the ground" (*Song of Solomon* 336). Ultimately, he emerges as a triumphant hero who traces the genesis of his rich history and culture and succeeds in identifying with the community, spirituality and physically. He establishes his identity and finds meaning in life. He emerges as a totally changed man, a new Milkman.

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Representing Pre and Post colonial African Reality in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*

- Kiran Thakur

Contemporary African writing constitutes a very significant part of post colonial literary discourse. Many African writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong' O, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwi Armah, Cyprian Ekwensi and many others have come to identify themselves with the socio-political movements as well as with the aspirations of their people and subsequently presented the different facets of African heritage in their writings.

The spread of imperialism in Africa had far-reaching consequences not only on the political life of the nation but on the literature as well. Nigeria, the most vital representative of West Africa comes to represent the whole process of colonization which disrupted the socio-cultural fabric of the whole nation. The Nigerian novel remarkably portrays the tragic predicament of the Nigerians torn by a conflict between the loss of their cultural heritage and identity under the colonial regime and later the post independent disillusionment.

A soaring figure in the African literature, Chinua Achebe has painted with remarkable insight the multifaceted picture of Nigeria which becomes a microcosm of the whole of Africa. He has successfully been able to perceive the African reality in the pre and post colonial context. Using the western genre of fiction he has brought into it the fine shades of African sensibility and culture. Though spatially the novels are set in traditional Igbo society of east Nigeria, the depiction is so close to the truth that it moves from the particular to embrace the general and the local scene can be extended to the ex-colonial world.

Achebe, in his novels repeatedly turns back to throw light on the impact of colonialism and to focus crucial problems as a result of this collision. In his fictional world, Achebe goes on to highlight the traumatic impacts of colonialism and the great damage caused to the rich African cultural heritage and tradition. The infiltration of imperialistic forces into the African society gave birth to cultural hybridity and living on the margins of both, the natives have experienced the cultural dichotomy which finds a fine expression in Achebe's novels. Achebe exquisitely problematizes such dichotomy through the character of Odili Samalu, the narrator of *A Man of the People*.

A comparative study of Achebe's two pre and post colonial novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People* respectively brings to the fore not only the predicament of the individual in revolt against the society but also reveals how with the passage of time, the erstwhile compatible units of the individual and society cease to exist in harmony. In these two novels Achebe is as much concerned with cultural revival or cultural re-organization of the nation. He has successfully perceived the pre and post colonial African reality in these novels by portraying the highly revered African values of the past against the perspective of fast declining values in the post independence period.

Things Fall Apart depicts the first stage of cultural confrontation while the disillusionment with the post independent Nigeria forms the subject matter of *A Man of the People*. The kinds of societies handled in both the novels have great discrepancy in their locale. The first novel presents a faithful social document of the colonial times and provides an insight into the process of colonization and in the latter one, Achebe has handled a society, the values of which were fast eroding under the impact of the British rule and which, though less at the mercy of white men, yet retaining the legacy of colonialism. *Things Fall Apart* is a sensitive reconstruction of the traditional Igbo Nigerian society and relates to the period when traditional power in the hands of Umuofians is on the verge of being snatched away from them. But the restoration of power in the hands of natives does not lead to a satisfactory end as is evident in *A Man of the People*. The black people in the array of whites appeared as perpetual agents of exploitation.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe presents a traditional Igbo society and exhibits the essential qualities of a primitive society wherein nature, gods, people, ancestors, the past and present are all mystically linked. It reflects a society that upholds the traditional values and concurrently

the cultural conflict it experiences with the advent of imperialistic forces resulting in the fragmentation of the organic pre colonial society. In fact, the very title of the novel is suggestive of the process of disintegration. Umuofia, a well knit small unit experiencing the tensions of colonial intrusion puts on record the whole history of colonialism in Africa. The transformation that takes place in the Igbo society does not occur due to a gradual process but rather an almost abrupt intrusion that results in the shattering of the prevalent social order. Therefore, instead of things getting transformed the novel chalks out how things fall apart. It is a simple but penetrating account of the way in which the colonial powers from the west came to Africa and systematically they took control of the political situation at first and then gradually spread their own Christian religion by converting the natives like Okonkwo's son Nwoye and enthusing the civilized and modern values in the so called uncivilized natives.

Okonkwo epitomizes a firm traditional society of pre-colonial Africa in *Things Fall Apart*. This Igbo character that Achebe captures in this novel celebrates the rhythms of a well knit tribal culture. Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel comes to represent the whole of traditional society. Though Achebe focuses on the frustration experienced by Okonkwo towards the end of the novel, yet "it is the entire community that has experienced the debasement rather than one separate individual" (Larson 116). So the fate of the community is depicted in the tragic fall of protagonist, Okonkwo. Therefore, *Things Fall Apart*, is an exquisite exploration of the forcible transition of Umuofia, standing metonymically for all of precolonial Africa. In other words, "beside the collapse of ordered practices and values of kinship, identity and community, it is the terror of losing one's cognitive moorings and having little to shape the fashioning of new and viable markers or paradigms to make experience meaningful that leads to the deep historical melancholia at the end of the novel" (Jeyifo).

The novel has an immense sociological and historical importance for it explores the basic cultural patterns and social past of Nigeria. The novel with its "Arcadian atmosphere exhibits the essential qualities of a primordial image of a primitive society which is bound by laws of nature, good and evil, totems and taboos, beliefs and superstitions, myths and legends, rites and religion, customs and observances punctuated by folk speech, proverbs, songs etc" (Dhawan 43). These aspects of primitive society come to represent the true picture of African

pre-colonial reality. And Umuofia can be taken as an example of any African village in pre-colonial times. By evoking the occult rituals be it 'egwugwu' or 'Chielo', Ani's priestess and the traditional customs, Achebe has endeavored to recreate a sense of African past. The social harmony of the village is evoked vividly through various customs and traditions as Umuofians were of the belief that "We shall all live, we pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. . . . Let the kite perch and the egret perch too" (*Things Fall Apart* 17). Deeply rooted in such traditional values, Okonkwo incarnates them and becomes an archetypal picture of pre colonial society. But the proverb that "wherever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then you know something is after its life" (Achebe 178) is worth quoting here which refers to the fall of the traditional culture of Umuofia in the face of the advent of alien religion and laws. And the sense of uncertainty that Umuofians experienced after the infiltration of unwanted stuff is well expressed by Okonkwo with the help of animal imagery that "Umuofia was like a startled animal with its ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run" (*Things Fall Apart* 193). The animal here is symbolic of the terror stricken natives of Nigeria and that something after it is the white colonial aggressor which had far reaching ramifications and finds an exquisite expression in the second novel selected for study.

A Man of the People, accounts for post independence era when the imperialistic authorities were replaced by the bourgeoisies like Nanga and his allies who ignored the needs of their people and continued to exploit them in the similar fashion. The novel is a political satire that presents an archetypal picture of political opportunism and prevalent corruption in the socio-political sphere of the country . The text and subtext of the novel critique the post colonial situation by depicting a society facing utter disillusionment and chaos and the novel can very well be referred to as post colonial disenchantment novel. The moral debasement in terms of political and personal affairs is evident in the type of relationship that exists between Odili and Nanga. Nanga's philosophy is one of survival, whereas Odili to some extent embodies the Nigerian spirit and looked for a better future based upon the wisdom of the past as well as of the present.

Colonialism implanted a hybrid culture wherein the people were caught in a dichotomy. Odili Samalu, the antagonist in *A Man of the People* entails this dichotomy in his thoughts, actions and behavior.

The new generation as represented by Odili fails because it has deviated from its traditional roots and has not been able to internalize the western culture and values. He makes for a fragmented personality whose crusade against the prevalent system ends in failure. Whereas Okonkwo represents the traditional Achebian hero imbued with the essential virtues of manliness and masculinity. But he is a tragic hero who is ultimately alienated from his society. Nanga, on the contrary, is the archetypal imperialistic politician thriving on political opportunism.

Both the novels tend to trace the history of the life of a nation since the coming of white men. The simple agrarian society of *Things Fall Apart* has undergone a sea change in *A Man of the People* only to degenerate as more self-centered individuals. The two novels tend to represent the African past in the present context. Pre-colonial situation is dealt in the first one which in fact is an anthropological portrait of a society in transition whereas the latter one is dedicated to presenting the critique of post independence scenario in Nigeria and could be read as a discourse on decolonization. Both the novels are embedded in politics of culture. *Things Fall Apart* exhibits the pitfalls of colonial politics which carries with it the promise of a bright future. Umuofian society breaks due to the pressure exerted by colonialism and Okonkwo commits suicide. The death of Okonkwo ends an important chapter in the life of Umuofian or Igbo society. *A Man of the People* mirrors the post independence period when the imperialistic authorities were replaced by the bourgeoisie leaders like Nanga and his allies who ignored the needs of their people and continued to exploit them. The violent history of colonialism continues in post independent Nigeria as the conclusion of *A Man of the People* reveals. Thus the fragmentation of the hitherto self-contained Igbo society finds reflection in the first novel under study whereas the second novel depicts the serious ill consequences of the African exposure to the west thus creating a society unrestrained by the forces of religion and tribal laws as in pre colonial era where respect for tribal laws and culture is held in high esteem.

Achebe depicts the weaknesses, pitfalls, follies and foibles of the natives as well in both the novels. He holds the Igbo society equally responsible for its disintegration. *Things Fall Apart* is not only the evocation of the past but also explores the need of decolonization. *A Man of the People* reiterates the fact that political malaise and social bankruptcy are not only the evil effects of colonialism but also the

natives are equally responsible for manipulation of their traditional values. Though the unscrupulous political opportunism is manifest in the novel, the cynicism and public apathy also find expression in the novel.

The pre and post colonial African reality in relation to language is also juxtaposed in these two novels. The Igbo society is illiterate. Their conversation is marked by proverbs and maxims, entailing the wisdom of their ancestors. The western mode of thought and speech has infiltrated into the African way of thinking and speech as is clear from *A Man of the People*. Pidgin has become a necessity for the mixed, semi-literate urban population. Odili represents the neo-literate urbanite standing at the juncture of traditional Igbo culture and westernization. Pidgin is used in public discourse not on private discourse. Achebe traces the stages of colonization from native to the European mode of perception and communication from *Things Fall Apart* to *A Man of the People*.

Things Fall Apart is a male dominated text which hardly offers any space to women. Though polygamy is practiced in post independent Nigeria, women are coming out of shadows of men. In *A Man of the People* women have significantly been given ample space and assigned active roles. In post colonial urban Nigerian set up women have access to education and quite a few of them have a position for themselves equal to men. Chief Koko's wife is the leader of women's wing of P.O.P. and was nominated by the prime minister to the senate and later was made a minister of Women's affairs. When Max was attacked by Chief Koko, his wife Eunice "stood like a stone figure...she took out a pistol and fired two bullets into Chief Koko's chest. Only then she fell down on Max's body and began to weep like a woman" (*A Man of The People* 144). Thus, Eunice emerges as a strong feminist.

Achebe in these two novels has not only documented the calamitous changes in the history of a nation but even offered solutions in an objective manner. These two novels reveal that how a writer can motivate and guide people in order to make their political freedom more meaningful, functional and relevant. These novels are a sincere endeavor in this direction and can be understood at least in parts as analyses and products of the historical problems created by colonization.

The transformation that takes place in the Igbo society does not occur due to gradual process but rather an almost abrupt intrusion that results in the shattering of the prevalent social order. The beauty of the

life of primitive, tribal African society is manifold. It is culturally rich and mature which is evident in their linguistic nuances through which the whole cultural dream is expressed. By the collective feasting and festivity, kinship and unity is maintained in the clan. But the society is unable to adapt to the encroachment of the western culture. And this lack of adaptability, flexibility and assimilation is what Achebe implies led to the collapse of traditional Igbo society. Hence the subtext of the first novel presents a critique of imperialism at its earliest stage in Africa. The white man's government at Umuaro was but the tip of an iceberg. There was a whole colonial design behind all this that the things had to fall apart sooner or later. What made it simpler was the absence of any resistance on the part of the natives. Therefore, thematically Achebe's *A Man of the People* completes the project Achebe had begun in his *Things Fall Apart* i.e. tracing the far-reaching impact of colonialism on African society. And in the second novel, the linguistic, intellectual and mental colonization of the natives is complete. It focuses on the crisis of culture with which the African society was confounded. The problems portrayed in the book, such as bribery, incompetence and governmental apathy, were experienced by many West African nations in the neocolonial era. The political turmoil and moral decadence in the postcolonial Nigeria is delineated exquisitely and the novelist posits the need for the demolition of the leftover of colonial administration as a pre requisite for building a healthy nation.

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INTERVIEW

Bridging Gaps: An Interview with Sanchita Islam

- Elisabetta Marino

Born in Manchester in 1973 of Bangladeshi parents, **Sanchita Islam** is an artist, writer and filmmaker. Her work deals with a variety of themes and she works across media. She has been running the organization *Pigment Explosion* for over ten years now, focusing on international art projects that stem from a distinctive work ethic supported by a well-articulated educational plan: by engaging in workshops that impart valuable training with people living in the countries where a film (for example) is being shot, marginalized groups and individuals who otherwise would never have the chance to work in the creative industries are given the possibility to acquire skills and expertise. Islam has so far written fifteen books, two plays, shot seventeen films, and exhibited her pictures and drawings in capital cities such as London, Paris and New York, just to mention a few. Currently, she is creating new work for a forthcoming exhibition in London, completing commissioned based paintings and writing new poems and books with varied thematic content. She lives in Brussels with her husband and young baby son, but she works mainly in London.

Elisabetta Marino: *How did you begin your career? What models did you have?*

Sanchita Islam: Although I have cultivated artistic aspirations since the age of five, because of my Asian heritage becoming an artist was not going to be easy. My parents were ambivalent about my 'precocious' talent and preferred that I pursue a more academic path. Hence I applied to Oxford and the London School of Economics (LSE) instead, I was accepted at both Universities and ended up embarking on an academic course of study, while trying to maintain my art during any spare moment. It was a difficult time for me. By the time I left university, I was twenty-three, with a BSc (econ) and MSc (econ) and I still desperately wanted to be an artist. Luckily, I had spent one year doing an art

foundation course before I went to the LSE, which kept the spark alive. I was actually considering doing a PhD at the LSE under the tutelage of Dr Chun Lin (whom I am still in touch with). During a tutorial I showed her some paintings I had done inspired by the Bosnian War and she urged me not to pursue academia and to follow a creative path. However, I lacked confidence and with no meaningful role models or idea how to be an artist I completed a second MA in Directing and Screenwriting with the aid of a Channel 4 bursary and embarked on a shortlived career working as researcher in TV. In 1998 I enrolled at Chelsea school of Art and Design to study a BA in Fine Art. I dropped out of Chelsea in my second year, because I felt alienated from my peers and my tutor, especially, in fact attending art school paradoxically stunted my creativity. The following year I set up my own organization, *Pigment Explosion*, and very quickly after leaving art school, (which apart from having access to the great library, didn't teach me much) I had a solo show off Brick Lane, which came about by pure chance and I began to apply for grants and worked on commissions. Despite my unconventional background and fundamental lack of art school education, (I would say I am principally self taught) by the age of twenty-six my artistic career had officially begun. I didn't have any models to emulate, I had to create my own from scratch, I saw the art world as endemically elitist and decided to establish a parallel model, which would give me creative autonomy and allow me to do projects in developing countries, this is where my LSE background and inherent interest in socio-economics held me in good stead.

Elisabetta Marino: *In your production, you often delve into the lives of immigrants, children, elderly people, or those affected by mental diseases. Could you expand on the reasons and intentions that have prompted you to devote so much attention to them? Could you give us some examples from your works?*

Sanchita Islam: As I briefly mentioned, studying at the LSE gave me a socio-economic and political framework. I didn't want to make art exclusively for the affluent. My parents are from Bangladesh and from a young age I had witnessed poverty during my trips there, I also felt quite marginalised at times and it was this feeling of being on the periphery and on the outside looking in that made me empathise with other excluded groups. I was genuinely interested in their stories and what they had been through. In retrospect, I could have gone into even more depth. I am still fascinated by the inner workings of the mind and

thoughts of the elderly, children and the mentally ill. Only yesterday I paused to talk to a ninety-five-year old German woman, to me her face was beautiful and if she had let me I would have been more than happy to sit and listen to her life story, she is alone in the world now, all her friends are dead, she has no family, and her history will die with her. This is how I felt about the Bangladeshi elders that I worked with, I wanted to document their stories and understand why they came to Britain. When I worked with battered women, perhaps my mother influenced me; she worked as a social worker in Manchester and Oldham. The women opened up after I spent many hours establishing a relationship with them. It was through spending time and building up a level of trust that let me film them in their small rooms at the refuges; it was a privilege to simply be with them and I was moved by their stories, many of which were harrowing. When I embarked on my project with poor kids in various developing countries, again they poured out their stories, their dreams, their suffering. I discovered that most of the time these people simply wanted to be listened to and to count in the world. I thought that creating a book exclusively of their stories, taking their photos and drawing their portraits would make them feel more valued and less invisible. I remember when I presented the photos and books to them, they were very moved, thrilled and happy that someone had bothered. But I always felt I could do more. It was never enough and these projects were complex and time consuming and I was literally doing everything on my own, which included filming, sound recording, editing, taking the photos, doing the artwork, interviewing, running the workshops, writing up the stories, designing the books and arranging the distribution. They tested my mental and physical endurance and made me question what it was to be an artist. (Many artists these days are consummate business men).

Elisabetta Marino: *Is there any connection between the idea of multiculturalism and your choice of using different means of expression?*

Sanchita Islam: I am not sure what multiculturalism means anymore. Rather, I respond to things that move me. Often I am compelled to write about something I have experienced, seen or heard about. It really is a compulsion and often it is random. It is only afterwards that themes and strands reveal themselves almost surreptitiously. Now that I am a mother I have to find new methodologies, I draw everyday, I try to write everyday too, I keep oil paintings on the go and I have a thirty foot

scroll to work on, once that is complete I will start another. To date I have completed four scrolls. I revel in the cheeky concept of creating something monumental, intricate and precious that is emphatically not for sale and can be stored in a shoe box. It is a protest to the 'ego maniac big money, massive' type art projects that are often favoured and revered. I think this is misguided and the best art, the art that is a reflection of different cultures is the art that is made by hand. Old fashioned, but something I wholeheartedly believe in. Keeping different pockets of expression available to me at all times allows me to dip in and out and keep my creativity flowing. I don't just create or write things about my ethnic background, I write and create work about human beings and the issues that afflict them.

Elisabetta Marino: *In your opinion, what is the future of multicultural literature and what valuable contribution can it effectively give to our society? Can we still perceive a clash between East and West in a globalized world?*

Sanchita Islam: Because of the speed of cross global communication, people are bombarded with opinions and blogs and twitter feeds, literature has to respond to these changes and will naturally mutate into different forms. The publishing world is in a panic, anyone will be able to self publish via Amazon, whether their work has merit or not, which suggests we will have more choice, but it doesn't necessarily mean that people will read more or be exposed to work of superlative quality. Writers from different ethnic backgrounds will be able to self publish relatively easily and we will have access to a greater variety of voices. This is why, although I have been writing many new books and poems, I have not submitted them to my publisher for publication, because I don't believe in my publisher anymore. I am saving my work, keeping it safe, trying to make it better and then when I am ready I will release the material in a dynamic and innovative way, juxtaposing images with the written word to consolidate the work at a literary and visual level. Firstly, though I am waiting to see how self-publishing takes off. Being exposed to a plethora of voices, views and life experiences will always be more enriching than being targeted with a revered few, selected by a biased group of critics. There is a shift in global hegemony, China, India and Brazil are reigning supreme now and that will probably reflect in the types of literature we are exposed to. I think this can only be a good thing for culture and society, which is becoming more and more heterogeneous.

Elisabetta Marino: *Any plans for the future?*

Sanchita Islam: I am working on new books, poems, paintings, drawings, scrolls, I have a showing of my scroll in January in London at Shoreditch House (I was artist in residence there from 2007 until 2009) and I just completed a series of commissions. I was also awarded a development grant last year by the Arts Council to create new work. There are new themes developing in my work, principally mother and child themes and also the subject of postnatal psychosis. Barbara Hepworth, the late great sculptor, and mother of four (including triplets), said it was important to keep on working, even if it is only for half an hour each day. This is my mantra, to keep on working, no matter, whatever, but to keep on and what will come, will come.

Can a mouse fall in love with an elephant ?

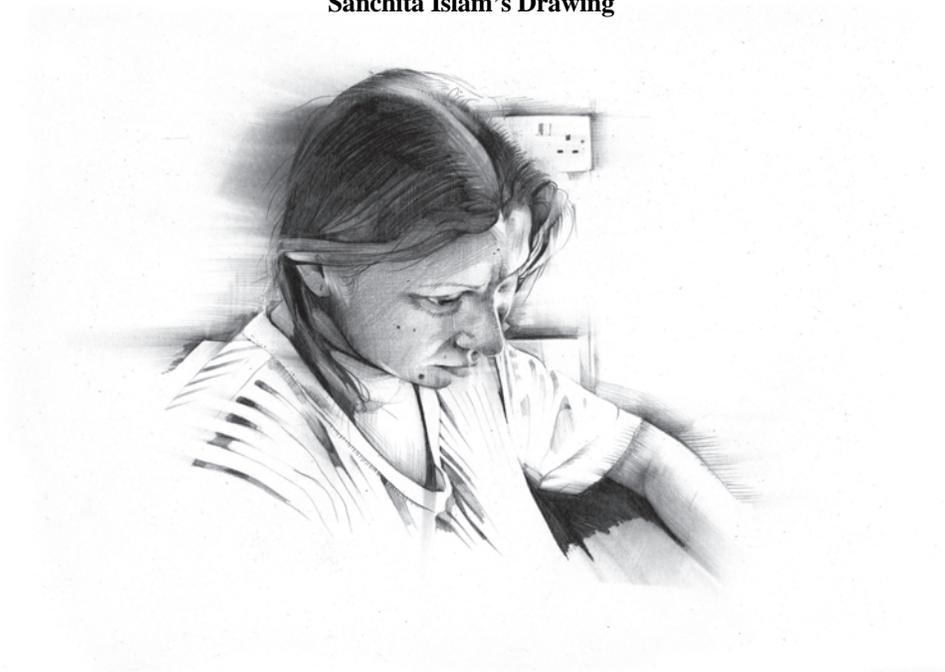
Sanchita Islam

The mouse was sniffing and foraging for food,
There was an aching hunger in her belly
And her body had shrunk so much her ears stuck out like two balloons
That almost made her float on a windy day
Then one afternoon as she nibbled on a grain of wheat she saw him
A giant, mighty elephant with an elegant trunk
He was staring right at her
Even slightly nervous in fact
The tiny mouse looked this way and that
Slightly incredulous that such a mighty beast would notice her and
tremble as he watched her twitch
Their eyes locked, she was about to run, but she stayed out
Tentatively he gathered her up with his trunk and placed her right on
the tip of his forehead
'Did you know that I have always dreamt of meeting a mouse like you,
Tiny and delicate with large furry ears'
'Why, you are an elephant and it is absurd that you should desire
Someone as small and sensitive as I' she squeaked
'It is of no matter, you are what I have dreamt of all my life' he cooed

They would stay up on balmy nights and watch the stars
And he would tell her stories about mighty conquests
Battles with lions
His adoring mother, the grand matriarch of a distinguished line of
Elephants, and his plans to be the mightiest elephant of all
'And what of your family?' he asked
The tiny mouse grew quiet, recounting how her father was eaten by a
Black, scruffy cat and her mother had long since gone mad, hiding
Behind ears so large
She'd now forgotten what her mother looked like
As for her siblings they were scattered like pollen in the wind
Too hard to find
Where were they now?
The elephant laid the mouse down and stroked her with the tip of his
trunk
He was gentle and tender and she grew scared of the feelings
That began to stir
In the mornings he would leave her, walk for miles in search of food,
In search of water
In search of knowledge that he sniffed and digested through that all
Mighty wielding trunk
And each day they grew closer, each day she grew more fearful
Knowing that people stared at the mouse and the elephant
Female elephants came prowling, tried to seduce him with their sultry
ways and he was tempted
He did caress a few and the mouse tried to play with other mice,
But somehow they always returned to one another
He had a vicious temper, became impatient at the slightest hiccup
He would trumpet and stamp his feet for any small reason
And she would cower under his shadow
Wishing she could break his almighty spell
'Can a mouse fall in love with an elephant?'
For a time perhaps,
But then the constant struggle to bridge gaps that are
Unbridgeable leaves you sapped and weak
One night she crept from under his ear and ran far, far away
When day broke she heard his cry
And she trembled, knowing that she could never return
She ended up with a humble and diligent mouse

He was a nice golden mouse with blue eyes and a silky tail
She felt safe with the mouse,
They looked like the perfect mouse couple
Some days she would long for the elephant,
Miss the fear that he would instill in her, the sway of his trunk
The sharp jab of his temper and the lick of his tongue
'Can a mouse fall in love with an elephant?'' she asked again
'Yes, but it is a doomed love, a tricky love, an exhausting love that
will break in the end and leave an imprint in your heart as deep as
the footprint of an elephant in the dirt.'

Sanchita Islam's Drawing



Dualism of Canadian Existence in Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*

- K. Mangayarkarasi

The study of Canadian literature is a gradually emerging phenomenon. The readers and researchers interest in Canadian literature may be owing to many factors of which a few are obvious. One is the newness of Canadian literature and the charm that exercises on the readers and researchers and the other is Canada's contiguity to America and the readers' response could be that of comparing two literatures of the contiguous and multicultural societies.

The readers' and researchers' interest in Canadian poetry may be accounted for by the conviction that poetry came out first in Canada which is more a hypothetical belief than certainty. But a more valid reason for the interest in Canadian English poetry would be that this poetry insistently brought to focus certain basic conditions of human existence in Canada. Canadians, primarily as settlers from Europe, experienced a sense of strong affiliation to their place of origin and an equally strong sense of dutiful affinity to the land of their settlement. A sense of right and frustration at the wilderness and an equally strong desire to clear the wilderness into civilized habitat resided together in early white Canadians. The need to appropriate what was already there in effort to survive and the impulse to resist such appropriation operate equally in the minds of the early Canadians. Thus Canadian English poetry could be seen as communicating and tackling such contradictions of human existence in Canada.

This article examines the 'Dualism of Canadian Existence' in Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. It is of course the most memorable evocation in modern Canadian literature of the myth of the wilderness, the immigrants experience and the alienating schizophrenic effects of the colonial mentality. The dualistic nature of

Susanna Moodie's Canadian experience can be viewed as representative of most Canadian settlers. In *Journals*, Atwood presents Canada as wilderness and existence in Canada as journeying through that wilderness. This wilderness presents the inescapable double nature of Susanna Moodie's vision of Canada as wilderness and as land subjected to order; as landscape and as mindscape; as nature and culture; and Canada as native land and as an alien land. Atwood makes Susanna Moodie embody this dualistic nature of Canadian experience. That kind of experience is linked with Moodie as essentially an emigrant and her experience as a conflict between polar opposites of existence.

The motives for emigration could be many. The hope of bettering one's condition and of securing a sufficient competence to support one's family may be a prime cause. Love of the new and of an independent existence may also be the impulse that propels to migrate to new lands that promise fulfillment of their heart's desire. Dream of acquiring social status through possession of property at the least material cost and the consequent hold on power could also be the motivation behind emigration to the new land. The need to create a better future and to relinquish memories of none-too-happy past might also be reasons for emigration, or the sheer spirit of adventure might be the ruling passion that sets one a voyage towards a new land. Whatever the motivation, the fact remains that emigration is not so much a matter of choice as of necessity:

Emigration is a matter of necessity
Specially true of the emigration
Or the persons of respectable
Connections or of any station
Or position in the world (qtd. in Atwood 3)

In 1830, the tide of emigration flowed westward and Canada became the great land mark of the rich in hope and poor in purse. Public newspapers and private letters teemed with the almost fabulous advantages to be received from a settlement in this highly favoured region. A large majority of these emigrants, who were officers of the navy and Army and their families, formed by themselves a class unfit for contending with the stern realities of emigrants' life in the back woods at Canada. The emigrants of Canada looked upon their grants of wild land in remote localities as the ground for a glorious future though the lands were far from the churches, schools and markets that is, far from the precincts of civilization:

Canada, the blest-the free!
With prophetic glance, I see
Visions of the future glory
Giving the world's greatest story. (qtd. in Atwood 8)

Following their marriage, the Moodies were compelled to decide how and where they wanted to live. Dunbar, who had served in the Napoleonic wars as a subaltern officer, had only the income of a half pay officer which was too small to supply the wants of a family and to maintain his original standing in the society. Their only prospects were literary and the financial return from such endeavors was too meager and unpredictable to sustain their social status. These factors and Susanna Moodie's brother's presence in Canada made the Moodies to think of immigrating to Canada in search of better prospects.

As an emigrant, Moodie was unfamiliar with North American social customs and language. Difference in tastes and personal habits led to an uncongenial and hostile relationship with the neighbours. The harsh conditions of the proximity of the wilderness and the wild animals, the unpredictability of the elements and the physically exhausting process of clearing the land for settlement and productivity were some of the major problems, she faced in Canada. The harsh and isolated condition of existence made, Susanna Moodie feel alone in the midst of wilderness.

Susanna Moodie praises the Canadian landscape and also accuses it of destroying her. She dislikes the people already in Canada but finds that these people were her only refuge from the land itself. She preaches progress and the march of civilization while at the same time she elegiacally laments upon the destruction of the wilderness. She claims to be an ardent Canadian patriot while all the time she stands back from the country and criticizes it as though she were a detached observer:

We are all immigrants to this place
Even if were born here, the
Country is too big for anyone to

Inhabit completely and in the parts unknown to us. We move in
Fear, exiles and invaders. (qtd. in Atwood 62)

The country is something that must be chosen and it is not easy to leave it. When one chooses to be in Canada, one does so with a violent duality of mind. There is ambivalence in this attitude to Canada—Canada as an alien land and as one's own; as the voice of skepticism and as the force of authority and also of divisions. Margaret Atwood and Susanna Moodie focus on the presence of this double

voice in their Canadian experience. Both Moodie and Atwood accept the reality of the country they are in and they accept the inescapable doubleness of their own vision and existence.

Canada as a land defying human supremacy and as a land gradually subjected to human settlement is well presented in “The Two Fires” the summer fire that rages causing destruction and fright and the winter fire in settlement houses that protects are the two fires. The settlers’ experience of two perspectives of a single vision in which neither perspective is free of the other:

One, the summer fire
Outside; the trees melting returning
To their first red elements
On all sides, cutting me off
From escape or the saving lake
The other, the winter
First inside, the protective roof
Shriveling over head the rafters
Incandescent all those corners
And straight lines flaming the carefully

Made structures imprisoning us in a cage of blazing bars (qtd. in Atwood 22)

In the poem, “Double Voice” the two voices can be elaborated in terms of mind and Land:

One saw through my
Bleared and gradually
Bleaching eyes, red leaves
The other found a dead dog
Jubilant with maggots

Half buried among the sweet peat. (qtd. in Atwood 42)

The paradox that life is seen through bleached eyes does not suggest a hopeful and energetic outlook. Death that is jubilant implies the desire of the heart to be relieved of the bleary prospect of continuing life. Hence, the symbols can be viewed as suggesting the double vision on the land.

The duality of existential vision gets a more direct expression in “Thoughts from Underground.” Atwood presents Moodie as a person apparently in two opposed relationships with Canada. When she entered Canada she hated the country. As time passed and as a successful settlement was achieved, hatred was felt to be out of place and love for the country was felt:

When I first reached this country
I hated it
And I hated it more each year;
Then we were made successful
And I felt I ought to love
This country
I said I loved it
And my mind saw double. (qtd. in Atwood 54)

Moodie's statement of the moral obligation to love Canada is constantly countered by:

Do you like the country?
No, and I fear I never shall (qtd. in Atwood 154)

This problem of 'hatred' and 'love' for Canada and the simultaneous experience of the sense of alienation from and the need for integration with the society is so pervasive that the split becomes as integral part of Canadian existence. By presenting Moodie as caught in this flux, Atwood makes Susanna Moodie a Canadian archetype for this kind of dualistic experience.

It is from this immersion in primitive nature that Moodie the Canadian prototype surfaces as a complete recognized person. This complete unification with nature signals the awareness that the confrontation between man and nature is a characteristic of the Canadian doubleness of existence for which Susanna Moodie becomes the archetypal figures.

Thus, Margaret Atwood creates Susanna Moodie as a central figure in Canadian life. She becomes the representative of the dualities of Canadian existence like landscape and mindscape, wilderness and order, alienation and identification and nature and culture who co-exist without either in the diad routing out the other. The result of this unmerging co-existence is the schizophrenic experience of life. This cycle of poems of Margaret Atwood on Susanna Moodie is perhaps the memorable evocation of dualism of Canadian existence in Modern Canadian literature.

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The Multicultural Matrix in Chinua Achebe's Novels

- Shamsoddin Royanian & Zeinab Yazdani

African oral and written literatures are but two sides of the same coin with ordinary fundamental values. Both are for education, for aesthetic satisfaction, for culture protection and for self recognition. Both are, therefore, complementary except perhaps that oral literature is the springboard of written literature. African oral literature helps in the reaffirmation of African cultures. It is the rich storeroom of myths, the foundation of tribes, the holiness of religions and traditional beliefs. It helps the African writer to weave artistically into his written literature the efficacy of their healing ways, the logic of their legal systems and the meaning of their rituals. Oral literature has unquestionably enriched the African written literature and thus has resulted in cultural nationalism in written African literature.

Igbo written literature emanates from Igbo life and language. It embraces the social, political, economic and emotional factors through which Igbo life is revealed. Its shape and color in any particular work depends upon the temperament, vision, talent, conditions and circumstances of the individual artist. Igbo life may be approached from a variety of angles and with unlimited technical and stylistic freedom. Depending on time and place, Igbo social attitudes could be characterized as subservient, non conformist and ambivalent. It can be said that a society in which the white man is dominant, in which the Pax Britannica is an unquestionable reality; and yet where colonial values leave the individual lives of the Igbo untouched. It can also be added an eccentric society, fast in its pace, reckless in its demands and desires, alive and forlorn in its sensibilities. Chinua Achebe reveals a society dignified in its pace, individualistic, communal, aggressive and accommodating. Achebe's fiction is full of re-discovery and declaration.

He delves into Igbo culture and customs, explores Igbo history, and creates a new picture for the Igbo, an image that recognizes the follies of the past, but discards unqualified denunciation of that past, as the future with all its realities and illusions, is confronted.

Achebe renders authentic portrayal of Igbo life and social behaviour in his novels. The diversity of his works reminds us that Africa as a whole is a land of contrasts. What is most essential in the Igbo novel is its texture, and the critic or reader who concedes this must be willing to allow the novel, for the rest, to establish its own forms and terms. What the writer says about the Igbo is as crucial and important as how he says it.

It has been demonstrated how Achebe successfully amalgamates European and Igbo cultural influences in his fiction. It is, moreover, his sensitive use of language, as much as his historical perspective and memorable characterization, that makes Chinua Achebe the most prominent Igbo writer today and one of the leading novelists in Africa as a whole. Achebe's preoccupation is with a human society whose way of life is only superficially different from that of other cultures. Though not explicitly, Achebe may be reacting to racial prejudice. He is a modern African who knows what criticisms of African society circulate and he seems to be meeting these criticisms. The contention implicit in his novels, especially those set in the past, is that the people of his novels had their shortcomings but they were essentially human beings. He knows that the people themselves had doubts about some of their ways and itched for change. On the other hand, there is Okonkwo, the inflexible defender of the old ways. But Achebe shows his universal qualities too. He has feelings despite all his practical bluntness of attitude. Achebe shows by Okonkwo's death, that for him, there is no alternative to suicide. What Achebe has done in this situation seems to analyze a man's personality—what formed it, what he did about it, and what defeated him in the end.

Achebe in his novels shows a complete society worth living in, in spite of the weaknesses within it which make it vulnerable. His fiction in general has covered the themes of friendship, bravery, success through struggle, failure through self defeat. He sees himself as a teacher with messages of importance to convey, especially to his African audience so that they can begin to take an interest in themselves and their past. Yet, Achebe is not a sentimentalist romantically looking backward to an era of order and content. Deeply critical of the blunders

of colonial days, he still seems a man committed to the complex promises of a world of technology and cosmopolitanism, a world of the troubled but compelling future. Despite the claim of a critic that Achebe makes a vainglorious attempt to ascribe all the evils which occurred in Igbo society to the coming of the white man's, it is evident from his novels that Achebe's attitude toward his ancestral past is sharply critical. Twin murders, Ostracism, human sacrifice are unflinchingly portrayed in all their cruelty. The murder of Ikemefuna in *Things Fall Apart* becomes the key episode of Part One of the book. It reverberates down the years, and Achebe does not evade its implications. Why the appreciative account of Nwoye's friendship with Ikemefuna, if not to cast doubt upon the god that decrees the boy's death?

Achebe's earlier novels deal with the history of Igbo land. The novels achieve epic effect, if read as the novelist's impression of life from the time of European conquest to the contemporary period. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe achieves the literary progression from birth to death, from planting to harvest, through a sparkling narrative technique borrowed from the native literary traditions. The reader is introduced, from the beginning, to a mythic narrative voice – telling him the legend of the founding of the town and the tribe. The present is strongly tied up to the past through heroes like Okonkwo, who is already a legend in his lifetime. And the episodic nature of the narrative, which has led some critics to criticize that *Things Fall Apart* is nothing but episodes not clearly interwoven, is typical of the original epic custom. The expositional style which helps the story to develop through explanation of anthropological materials, digressions, proverbs and idioms is also part of the indigenous literary tradition. The mythic narrator chronicles, sings the history and culture of Umuofia, its customs and belief systems and leaves the writer to record them for posterity.

In *Arrow of God*, “The author attempts the more difficult task of creating in detail the values, the attitudes and the atmosphere of this colonial society exercised by the problems of the Dual Mandate and Indirect Rule” (Carroll 94). And in the novels that Achebe sets in contemporary Nigeria, he is neither self-conscious nor apologetic in his portrayal of his society. The society of *No Longer at Ease* is full of social blunders – bribery, corruption, and hypocrisy. Obi's life consists of a series of trials such as a contemporary African experiences. He returns from England very unrealistic and keen to alter the ways of his society but at the same time he does not desire to be cast off by his

society. He is in love, grown-up and skilled, but still cannot decide for himself the personal affairs of his life such as whom to marry. He becomes intertwined in bribery because he can't play the game. Similarly, *A Man of the People* portrays a society that is corrupt and confused in its social and economic values. It is the first novel by a Nigerian in which the disillusionment of young Africans is shown vis-à-vis their political independence. The attraction of money and beautiful things had destroyed the sense of values of the traditional society. The novel is a vivid political satire, exuberant in tone but scathing in intent. The most frightening thing about the genial, corrupt Chief Nanga, who lends the book its sardonic title, is that he is truly a man of the people, the flamboyant avatar of the failings and ambitions. Therefore, it is felt that there are many real Chief Nangas in contemporary African politics. Equally, the society in the novel reflects the attitudes of today's masses in Africa. Achebe in the novel permits Odili Samalu, his intermittently outraged narrator, to hurl unqualified abuse at "the vast contemptible crowd" as he calls them at a moment of particular bitterness.

Thus, Achebe affords the reader reach for the study of a society in the course of socio-economic, political and cultural transformation. He reflects in the characters of his novels, attitudes which, in the main, are the attitudes of their societies and generations. Achebe's approach is that of a detached and analytical writer.

Simon Gikandi says of the novel that "it is a representation of the 'political and cultural crisis that marks the transition from the colonial system to a post-colonial situation' (18). In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe observes that one can reform society only on the basis of what it is, its core of reality, not on the basis of an intellectual abstraction. To annotate Achebe, man's potential for good or evil is tasted on the touchstone of temptation or/and power. *Anthills of the Savannah* is a scathing indictment of military dictatorship seizing power through violent coup which is worse than civilian misrule. We have also seen in the novel that the continual pursuit of power without scruples spells disaster to the people who become its worst victims. Achebe does not subscribe to grandiose ideologies either of the left or the right. He denounces regimented policies pursued by the ruling coteries of either party which inevitably degenerates into intrigues and maneuvering of power politics.

Achebe stands a good distance away from the world he creates and the people he puts into it. He places his major characters in clearly described and coherent worlds in which all their actions are natural. His

relationship to his protagonists can best be seen as that of an observer, not entirely a neutral but certainly not a self – advertising critic or an informer. The reader is not imposed upon; rather he is left to make his own judgment of the characters and the world in which they live. Achebe’s distinction as an author is that he presents the here-and-now in such a way that one wants to read what he has to say, and in the process one becomes involved and concerned about the people of whom he writes. Achebe obviously demonstrates his ability to change the English language to go with his Igbo surrounding without interfering with the capacity of English to be an international organ of communication. He depicts mastery in the use of English and at the same time has all the efficiency of an Igbo orator or narrator in the way he incorporates Igbo proverbs, witticisms and aphorisms in the dialogues in his novels. He is, no doubt, a giant in the Igbo contemporary literary scene and his fiction has signaled the maturity of the Igbo novel. His special distinction in the African literary scene is that he makes African literature a potent social force. But in particular, his Igbo novels in English are important studies of the Igbo from the linguistic, sociological and literary points of view. Achebe Believes that “The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost” (*Transition* 31).

To sum up, one can remark Achebe’s novels are a study in the psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and policies of power and how it manifests itself in several ways stampeding and bulldozing human dignity and equality. Achebe’s fictions are bold and brilliant attempt at Africanizing the alien English Language and the very genre of fiction which the Eurocentric writers claim to be their monopoly. He has been able to indigenize the alien language showing the way to the younger generation of writers as to how it could be handled to convert the African experience with an unmistakable flavor about it. And that is why he can be called as the chronicler of Africa, for he has portrayed Nigerian life and history through traditional and cultural life of Africans which can be generalized to the whole African continent. We can, therefore, finish off that Achebe, in his novels, relies significantly on African aboriginal literary traditions. This graft of folk traditions is not inadvertent; rather, it is informed by Achebe’s artistic credo that is, teaching the readers the cultural legacies of the African continent.

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The Strange Walls

- Sunil Sharma

And,
They
Go on
Erecting unseen
Walls
Between
You
And
Me.
Everywhere
I go,
They
Follow
These
Walls
That do not permit
Each other
To see
A common humanity,
During this war.

Multicultural Conflicts and Negotiations in Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction: A Re-defining of Cultural Identity

- S. Sujatha

At a time when multiculturalism was believed to be on its way out, novelists in Canada and other places attempted to illustrate the historical context of different postcolonial immigrant population. In the continual re-definition of Canadian identity, the serious disputes about possibilities and limits of cultural diversities and tolerance are a painful but necessary form of negotiations. Canadian Literature has always portrayed the cultural conflict in the Canadian society and critically commented on them. Bharati Mukherjee's fiction revolves around the cultural clash experienced by Indians who emigrated to Canada but still have difficulties in acculturating. Her ironic and penetrating literary style mirrors her own life as an immigrant to Canada. Her characters are often Indian women who are victims of racism and sexism driven to desperate acts of violence when they realize that they can fit into neither the culture of the West nor Indian society which they have left behind. Mukherjee has also fashioned narratives of refugees and immigrants from Asian countries.

Mukherjee's foremost concern, as a postmodern writer, has been the life of South-Asian. In an interview with Bill Moyers she states: "Multiculturalism, in a sense, is well intentioned, but it ends up marginalizing the person." Mukherjee seems to be defining "multiculturalism" from the non-multicultural person's point of view of the person who is multicultural by choice or more often because of colonialism in one form or another. She does not discuss the power multiculturalism can demonstrate once it refuses to be marginalized. Transnationalism in Bharati Mukherjee is a broader expression. While

it is difficult for an Asian person to assimilate into American culture, it is similarly difficult for an Asian- American to assimilate back to their native country. In a paradoxical situation, Tara Banerjee in *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) is alienated in her American set of connections and then 'alienated from her roots of pedigree.' Her pain of alienation is evident not only in Canada and America but even in her indigenous terrain of Bengal and wonders "how does the foreignness of spirit begin?" when she returns to India after seven years. It is at that moment she excruciatingly realises that she is neither an Indian nor an American.

Raymond Williams imparts an anthropological sense to the term, when he observes that "Culture was made into an entity, a positive body of achievements and habits, precisely to express a mode of living superior to that being brought about by the 'progress of civilization.'" But, as Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins observe, the "conflict between culture in the anthropological sense and culture in the normative sense leads to a third way of using the term, one that refers neither to a people's organic way of life nor to the normative values preached by leading intellectuals but to a battleground of social conflicts and contradictions." However, if one were to view "cultures" as, in Graff's words, "textual sites and processes, constitutively open to conflicting cultural currents and interpretations, and as themselves including travel both 'ethnographic' and other," it is possible to develop "respect for the lived experience of cultures in the plural, particular sense." It is this "lived experience of cultures" that forms the "textual sites" of Bharati Mukherjee's explorations in her novels

The women portraits of her fiction are the spokesperson of her own experiences; through them she reveals their sufferings. Instead of limiting to the constricted paradigm of deliberation, alienation also refers to the concept of transnationalism, multiculturalism and the theory of Diaspora. With the advent of globalisation, Diaspora, in particular, has attained new connotations, significance associated with design such as global de-territorialisation, transnational migration and cultural hybridity. Bharati Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* is a materialization of the diasporic community and hence alienated. Tara Banerjee, the main protagonist, is the 'other,' disjointed community who struggles to hook-on to the nationalised community by entering into the wedlock with an American, David Cartwright.

In "Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies," Blunt and Rose state that, for a woman, locating "an author(ity) in terms

of her position in a complex and shifting matrix of power relations involves a fluid and fragmented sense of both identity and space” (14). The inter-weaving of feminist and geographical theories about the production of space and subjectivity opens new understandings of identity politics and the way “gendered space” is constructed and deconstructed in literary texts. Identity politics permeates Mukherjee’s texts. Her novels, which include *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), and *The Holder of the World* (1993), explore the shifting identities of diasporic women, both in the present-day United States, Canada, and India, and in the past. *Jasmine* builds up the proposal of the ‘amalgamation, combination and absorption of the East in the West’ through a young Hindu woman who leaves India for the U.S. following her husband’s assassination. She leaves for US just to be raped and ‘return to the understanding of a caregiver through a succession of jobs.’ Samir Dayal describes the title character of *Jasmine* as “a perpetual nomad” who “shuttles between differing identities,” seeing America as a place where nothing is rooted anymore. Everything was in motion’ (152).

Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters* (2002), opens with the story of Tara Lata, the Tree Wife. When her teenage fiancé is killed by a snake on her wedding night, five-year-old Tara Lata is spared the disgrace of life as “not quite a widow . . . [but] a woman who brings her family misfortune and death” (*Desirable Daughters* 12) by her father’s quick actions. As married to a tree, Tara Lata lives the rest of her life in the house of her father, ‘emerging only when she is dragged off by the colonial police for her support of India’s freedom fighters.’ The life of Tara Lata becomes a benchmark for the narrator, also called Tara. She has removed herself from the “spatial patterns” (McDowell 29) that seemingly determine her identity. In the novel Mukherjee explores a “complicated working out of the relationship between home, identity, and community that calls into question the notion of a coherent, historically continuous stable identity and exposes the political stakes conceded in such equations” Using the metaphor of the family tree, Tara seems to imply that ‘identity is essential, defined by one’s home, community, and culture.’ She the influence of Bengali culture thus: “. . . When I speak of this to my American friends — the ironclad identifiers of region, language, caste, and sub- caste — they call me ‘over determined’ and of course they are right. When I tell them they should be thankful for their identity crises and feelings of alienation, I of course am right” (*Desirable Daughters* 33).

Tara also ferries between identities. During her visit to New York she straight away falls into the role of “choto bon” (*Desirable Daughters* 186), the youngest sister, a role facilitated by the familiar clothing, language, and food of her past. Speaking Bengali with her sister, Tara thinks, “It was wonderful returning to my native language, rediscovering that mocking tone just shy of aggression. I liked the person I became when I spoke it” (*Desirable Daughters* 176). Later, at a jewelry party, she resolves to be “the good little sister, the pliable Loreto House girl” (*Desirable Daughters* 239) as she models her sister’s sari designs with “an icy, walking-mannequin determination” (*Desirable Daughters* 250).

Mukherjee explores the lives of women marginalized by caste, class, and socio-economic position. Tara says that in Calcutta, she and her sisters were part of “a blessed, elite minority” (*Desirable Daughters* 29). Yet she also lusters over certain discrepancies. Her neighbourhood in San Francisco depends on the services of Palestinians, whose families are, as she says, “uniformly gifted in providing our needs and anticipating our desires” (*Desirable Daughters* 25). Her community identity remains structured by the social networks of her childhood.

Home and community are ideological determinants of identity; however, individuals respond to these determinants in different ways. Although Tara and Padma remain defined within the social networks of community, Padma attempts to recreate an authentic Bengali life in New York while Tara refuses to live as “a perfectly preserved bug trapped in amber” (*Desirable Daughters* 184). Instead, Tara moves from home to home, constantly attempting to redefine the boundaries of home, identity, and community. At the end of the novel, returning to the story of Tara Lata, she calls the Tree-Bride “the quiet center of every story” (*Desirable Daughters* 289).

Her construction of her ancestor’s life apparently authenticates Tara’s own ‘quest to reconstruct’ her own identity. The story suggests that one’s birthplace does form one’s identity, that identity performance can only be enacted within the limitations of an assigned space. In the final paragraph of the novel, Tara walks the same road traversed by the Tree-Bride in 1879. The surroundings dissolve into the same scene pictured in the opening paragraphs: “the trail ahead, as far as [she] can see, is lighted by kerosene and naphtha lamps held by the children of fruit and vegetable vendors sitting on the carts” (*Desirable Daughters* 310).

Mukherjee seems to assert that she belongs to ‘the Euro-American traditions of American literature and she is able to fit’ into that tradition. There are aspects of her work that are derived mainly from her cultural roots in India. Her technique of twisting stories and entrenching stories within stories, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and much of Indian Literature deeply reflect her awareness of Indian mythology and Literature. Her ability to make her characters speak to us about themselves or as narrators of others’ experiences is a reflection of the oral traditions of Indian literature.

Bharati Mukherjee’s fiction is a vivid and a realistic portrayal of Indian immigrant life experience of racial hatred and the violence in Canada is often considered a regular feature of her fiction. She has also charged Canadian society with xenophobia. Her later fiction shows an increasing optimism at the possibility of successful integration as her characters learn that rehabilitating themselves and their identities allow them greater personal opportunities and a chance to participate in fostering a more inclusive society and culture.

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Short Story

Spectrum of Life

- Hazara Singh

It is said that if a person records candidly his life history from childhood to his last active years, that text turns out to be an interesting novel. Likewise, if one ponders over one's daily happenings, it reflects the changing attitudes of society towards contemporary life. It is how I experienced one day.

Ugly Ancestors

The wife of a bigwig at our university campus called at us during her pre-lunch sauntering. She kept looking superciliously at various pictures in our drawing room. At last not able to contain herself any longer she said to my wife pointing towards the picture of Socrates with his flowing beard and half-naked body wrapped loosely in a shawl: "Is that old man your father-in-law"?

Before the latter could reply, as if to hit the nail again on its head, the former with her eyes falling on the portrait of Abraham Lincoln, remarked disapprovingly:

"How ugly the ancestors of your husband are!" Instead of feeling exasperated or belittled, my wife felt amused at her swagging rooted in ignorance.

The Gems

The same evening I and my maternal grandson, a smart well-bred child of about 10, were to catch train for Amritsar. Our single piece luggage did not necessitate looking for a coolie. In spite of my being in the sixties, I was sure that I could carry it upstairs conveniently. Impelled by affection, my grandson insisted that the suitcase be given to him. I fondly said,

"Dear child, I am not yet so old that I would not be able to carry this much luggage even."

Prompt came his reply,

"Nor I am so tender now that I should not share any burden with my grandpa."

A railway worker, passing by overheard us, beamed with smile, patted the child and notwithstanding my entreating ‘Oh! No thanks,’ took the suitcase from me. When we reached the platform, without giving us even a moment to thank him, he clasped the child affectionately, bowed to me respectfully and hurried his way.

As I pondered over both these happenings, I felt that while the evolving material-based outlook was rendering our middle class as vain and shallow, the common people still believed that lending a helping hand to an elder was a social obligation. They sparkle as gems in our murky developing society.



A Sad Basho in Post-modern World

- Sunil Sharma

(Basho revisited in these turbulent times)

Then: Along this road
Goes no one;
This autumn evening.

Now: Once there was a road
In the forest,
Now there is none
The forest or the road.

Then: The old pond
A frog jumps in
The sound of water.

Now: The frog no longer leaps,
As the choked pond is dying

The water is toxic.

Then: It is deep autumn
My neighbor

How does he live, I wonder.

Now: The autumn is a mere memory,
The neighbours hate each other.

Then: Yes, spring has come
This morning a nameless hill
Is shrouded in mist.

Now: The spring comes late
and is brief,

The only tall hill remaining
Has been demolished

By the sand mafia greedy.

Stage as Cage: Incarceration in Modern Drama

- Eugene Ngezem

With degradation, degeneration, and decadence at its backdrop, the stage in modern literature is often the hub for encaged characters. Although there may be no signposts that tag modern characters prisoners, there are few, if any, truly free characters or people. The presence of menacing sternness around modern characters puts them in captivity given that those who are not physically incarcerated still have limitations on what they can and cannot do. These limitations may emanate from various sources, including gender roles, social mores, or race relations. Limitations are prisons when personal freedom becomes insurmountable, thus erasing the possibility for individuality, and adhering to Monika Fludernik's argument that "literary texts abound with prison settings, and prison metaphors everywhere proliferate" (43). Modern drama touches on many plays with prison settings and metaphors that explore both the causes and consequences of domestic, social and physical imprisonment as viewed in modern American, English and African drama. Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* wrestles with domestic prison, Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* grapples with social jail, and Athol Fugard's *The Island* hinges on a literal dungeon.

Domestic prisons typically confine women within their own homes because of the prevailing notion that the home is woman's proper place. However, in the modern era, more and more women were becoming dissatisfied with their limited space in Western society. Historical events attest to this shift in women's homebound role: early in the modern period, many Western nations began extending the vote to women in the culmination of a long battle, hard-fought by its proponents, and still offensive to the sensibilities of its opponents even after the establishment of woman suffrage. Those who disapproved of women leaving the domestic sphere then had further reason more effectively to

cage the women whose burgeoning sense of independence from the confines of the home were so unsettling.

In American drama before the national woman suffrage ruling in 1920, we see an example of a domestically imprisoned woman in Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* from 1917. Mrs. Minnie Foster Wright murders her husband in a violent reaction against his oppressive actions and attitudes toward her. Though there is little evidence that John Wright's restrictive and abusive behavior toward his wife is politically motivated, his actions are no doubt brought on by the attitude that accompanied the woman-in-the-house political stance of the time: women's purpose, ultimately, is to care for husband and children, and they can best perform this responsibility when their interactions with the world are limited to the domestic sphere. Since the Wrights have no children, Mrs. Wright's primary duties are to her husband, and her duties to John Wright take precedence over her duties to herself.

Mrs. Wright is a prisoner in her own home, having no interaction with neighbors and only strained interaction with her husband. Her isolation from the community is evident from the comments Mrs. Hale, her nearest neighbor, makes to Mrs. Peters: "I've not been here for so long.... I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and that's why I ought to have come" (Glaspell 1167). Mrs. Wright's isolation within the house is clear, as well: "Not having children makes a quiet house, and Wright out to work all day, and no company when he did come in" (Glaspell 1167). Mrs. Wright's lack of human interaction is reminiscent of the solitary confinement used in actual prisons, and John Wright acts as a cruel warden. He forces her to conform to his expectations and his wishes, preventing her from the singing that she loved as a young woman, and further enforcing his oppressive will by killing her caged songbird, which is a metaphor for the children, the husband, the glorious past Mrs. Wright yearns for. In deed the image of the bird and its cage are also significant in interpreting Mrs. Wright's home as a prison setting. The singing bird represents Mrs. Wright herself before her husband's enforcement of his will changed her: "She was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kinda timid and—fluttery. How—she—did—change" (Glaspell 1167). The cage itself is symbolic. The cage held the bird in much the same way as Mrs. Wright's domestic position held her. As woman and wife, she is captive to the will of her husband and the space of her home. The cage door is broken as well, with "one hinge...pulled apart," indicating both the violence with which

Mr. Wright removed the bird, and the dysfunctional door out of Mrs. Wright's own cage: her only way out is murder.

In "'A Different Kind of the Same Thing': Marie de France's *LAÛSTIC* and Glaspell's *Trifles*," Brian Sutton, while discussing killing songbirds in the two works, notes that "While the husbands' actions are ghastly enough on the literal level, in both works the deeds are even more horrifying because symbolically the husbands are attacking their wives" (172). For Mrs. Wright, the bird's death marks a turning point for her status as prisoner: though she submitted to her husband's oppressive, warden-like behavior before, the loss of the bird that symbolized her lost youthful liveliness motivates her to strike out against her captor.

Mrs. Wright's actions are, of course, criminal. That she murders her husband using a method analogous to his killing of her bird leads many contemporary viewers and readers of the play, as well as Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, to sympathize with her notwithstanding the brutality of her action. However, that she is a female murderer strikes a nerve with many, including the men of the play, because her behavior "challenge[s] societal constructs of femininity—passivity, restraint, and nurture" (Ben-Zvi 141). She attempts to break free from her domestic cage with

a "behavior [that] must be aberrant, or crazed, if it is to be explicable. And explicable it must be; her crime cannot be seen as societally-driven if the cultural stereotypes are to remain unchallenged" (Ben-Zvi 141). Her actions free her, to an extent, from the prison that traps her, but even after her husband is dead, the attitudes that first brought on her situation remain.

A type of prison found in modern drama similar to the domestic prison is the social one. Social prisons keep their prisoners bound by their relationships and obligations to other people. They differ from domestic prisons in that their ways of keeping individuals confined are not specifically based on the notions accompanying gender roles, though gender may play a part; Tom Wingfield's man-of-the-house trap in *The Glass Menagerie* might, for example, be seen as a type of social prison where gender matters. However, rather than confining individuals in order to maintain gender roles specifically, social prisons' purpose is to maintain a status quo among members of a group, usually seeking collective gain at the expense of individual agency or will. The confined person is trapped because he/she is part of the group and perceives

his/her own responsibility toward the group. Options for escaping social prisons may be present, but in some cases they may be very limited by the mutual needs that keep the social group together—namely, the needs that the imprisoned person has that only the group can fulfill.

Clov from Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* is a prime example of a person confined within a social prison. Clov, of course, is not the only character subject to imprisonment in the play—all the characters are quite literally confined to the space they inhabit. Clov, though, is the only character for whom escape from the prison is a real possibility. He is the most able-bodied person in the play, and the only one who can walk, and he “circulates in place like a beast in a cage. Sometimes he leaves the common room and goes to the kitchen, which is yet another hermetical and stifling box” (Tworek 249). He also indicates the desire, however weak, to leave the prison of their shelter, repeating the words “I’ll leave you” in various contexts, making plans to set the alarm if he decides to go, and in his final entrance at the end of the play, is “dressed for the road” (Beckett 940).

The social nature of Clov's imprisonment is evident from his interactions with Hamm, who appears to be his most tangible reason to stay. Clov's life, it seems, essentially revolves around Hamm. At the beginning of the play, he describes his plan for the day: “I’ll go to my kitchen now, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me” (Beckett 921). The size and shape of Clov's kitchen are not incommensurate with the size of a prison cell, and while the kitchen is where Clov goes to seek further isolation, his time in the kitchen is not his own. He waits for Hamm's whistle that will signal his need for Clov. Agnieszka Tworek notes that

In the opening soliloquy of *Endgame*, Clov identifies himself as a hostage and a victim when he says, “I can't be punished any more.” Yet immediately after that he contradicts himself; rather than rebelling, he adds that he will “wait for Hamm] to whistle me . . . and wait for him to whistle me”...Aware of the blind man's power, Clov complies with Hamm's orders. (253)

Hamm's authority over Clov and Clov's choice to obey Hamm indicate a set of social obligations with which each character complies. At the end of the play, as Clov plans to leave, they acknowledge their participation in a social contract: Hamm half-heartedly thanks Clov for his services, Clov returns the gratitude, and Hamm replies, “It's we are obliged to each other” (Beckett 940).

Clov's role within the group is not only the able-bodied servant and ward, but also the means to continued survival. Because of the vast difference in functionality among the Clov and the other characters, if he leaves, they are sure to die. Neither Nagg nor Nell can leave their ashbins, and Hamm is both blind and unable to walk. Clov's escape would remove him from the responsibility toward the other characters that keeps him there, but without him, the other characters would starve because they would not be able to get to food. Hamm tries to move his wheelchair with the gaff, but he is unable to, and since his health is declining rather than improving, it is unlikely that he could ever manage to learn (Beckett 940). Though Hamm certainly does not seem to prioritize his survival, he "hesitate[s] to end," suggesting at least a modicum of will to live, or at least to maintain the status quo (Beckett 921).

Clov can make a clean break from his prison by breaking from the social pressures that keep him there, but his options once he leaves are uncertain and nearly as limited as those on the inside. The world outside is bleak and gray, which we know from his repetitive looks through the window. But life other than the four main characters exists—Clov finds a rat in the kitchen, and a flea on himself. At one point, while looking out the window, he sees a small boy (Beckett 939). As dismal as the world beyond the shelter appears, there is the possibility that there can be life there, though as Tworek puts it, "hope that the outside is better or that it exists is minimal" (256).

The ending to the play is inconclusive, in keeping with the beginning and middle. Though Clov is dressed to leave by the end of the play, and even Hamm suggests that he could leave, we never know whether Clov escapes his prison, or even if the world he sees out his window is real or conducive to continued life. In "*Endgame: Beginning to End*," Evan Horowitz points out that "The flea lays eggs and lies down, the rat is half extinguished and half living, the boy is alive and fictive, and Clov both leaves and does not leave," which emphasizes the ambiguity of the world within the play (127). He further notes that as viewers or readers of *Endgame*, "we fear two things: that Clov will never leave and that Clov will leave (and find nothing)" (Horowitz 127). Both are possibilities for Clov. His social prison keeps him in the shelter with the others, but the possibility that nothingness awaits him outside prevents him from choosing to leave. His preparation to leave shows,

however, that he must act out against his prison, even if in the end, he chooses to stay.

Literal prison also abounds in modern drama. In plays where the prisons are literal, as in *The Island* by Athol Fugard, the theme of confinement is obvious. The stage is set specifically to reflect the inside of a cell, and the characters are overtly named as prisoners. These literal prisons reflect more than just captivity for criminals; they question and subvert the laws and corresponding attitudes that put the prisoners in them. They foreground not only the reality of prison life, but also the symbolism that captivity holds for those in its grasp.

In *The Island*, the only characters seen on stage are John and Winston, both prisoners. While the two men are very different from one another, they came to the prison island for similar reasons: they each violated South African apartheid laws. Winston “marched with those men and burned [his] passbook in a direct protest against apartheid, and for his troubles he received a life sentence (Fugard, 1580). John’s violation earned him ten years imprisonment on the island, which was later reduced to three (Fugard, 1581). Their imprisonment represents to them the false justice of the law—as Winston puts it in the final scene, “I go now to my living death, because I honoured those things to which honour belongs” (Fugard, 1585).

The play that the two men choose to enact for the prison concert, *Antigone*, reveals further the significance of unjust law in confining people, as Sophocles’ *Antigone* is punished for burying her brother, whose corpse was supposed to rot for his treason. John and Winston’s transgressions led them onto the island prison in the first place and are tantamount to treason: they sought to destroy, or at least subvert, the workings of the government that oppressed them. Harry Garuba notes the significance of the choice of play: “the prisoners, John and Winston, take a classical European text, *Antigone*, and rewrite and perform it in a manner that inscribes their own meanings within the text” (71). Winston, who received a life sentence for subverting European rule, plays the part of *Antigone* and thereby turns a European text against its makers.

The literal prison in which John and Winston reside are not the only prison they must endure, either. Before they entered the prison, they were constrained by the rules of apartheid law, so they were not able to come and go as they pleased. Their freedom was not complete before they entered the prison, and it will not be complete when they

leave it. In discussing the inescapable reality of the system Andre Brinks says, “in *The Island* it is encapsulated in the image of the island itself, from which none can escape. Even if John, whose sentence has been remitted, is to return to the outside world in three months’ time, the society he returns to embodies the deadly system that has created the island as prison” (447).

For Winston and John in their literal prison, the type that might seem to have the greatest chance for escape once the sentence is completed, freedom in the end becomes impossible because their confinement is not only within their cell: it is also within their apartheid-redden society.

As modern characters, who, by extension, are metaphors for the modern world everyman trudge the stage, strong barriers of visible and invisible jail cells encage them. Prisons are everywhere evident and are not limited to buildings with concrete walls, heavy metal bars, and a warden at every entrance. Homes, shelters, and minds can serve as prisons. Modern American, English and African drama presents diverse types of prisons, with their different walls, different bars, and different wardens. Common to different types of prisons is that all “modes of confinement are experienced as physically and mentally unendurable” (Fludernik 45). As Glaspell, Beckett and Fugard demonstrate, with telling finality in their plays, prisoners, or say characters may never successfully leave their cages, and even if they leave, they may find bigger ones awaiting them outside or in an insidious world prone to collapse.

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Clap, Clap

O. P. Arora

Clap, clap...	neither dead nor living...
What is this clapping going on?	There are, lots of them,
His dry, withered face	he asserted , his eyes protesting
turned to me apace	they bite, keep me awake all night
my God! Glowing with excitement.	now that I have killed them
Ecstatically he said:	I shall sleep, sound and light...
I am killing mosquitoes	I wanted to tell him
I have already killed ten	Insomnia , not mosquitoes
only one more ...	but I didn't—
Mosquitoes!	you live by certain illusions
Where are mosquitoes?	or delusions
I don't find them	everyone.

Baraka's Vision of America in "The Toilet"

- K. Rajaraman

"The Toilet," a one act play, is set during the last period of a school day in the dirty and foul-smelling latrine of a boy's school; the urinals and the commodes are used throughout the drama, and the language of the play matches the setting. As the play opens, the Black students slowly congregate in the toilet; while they wait, they engage in idle chatter, profanity for profanity's sake, boasting and horse-play, some leading to brief bit of action. Their language is punctured with insults and bragging as they box, play basketball, play the "dozens," and joke about their colour—all in the men's toilet. They constantly insult each other and each other's mothers in the style of dozens. Ora, the antagonist in the play, is motherless. Therefore, he is less vulnerable and emerges as the meanest of the kids.

From the boys' violent interchange, the information emerges that they are cutting Miss. Powell's class in order to watch a fight in the bathroom. They are waiting for their comrades to round up and bring to the toilet Karolis who has insulted their gang leader, Foots (Ray) by sending Foots a love note saying that he was beautiful. They are planning to force Karolis into a showdown fight with Foots, for Foots must maintain his tough-guy image and his leadership. Some members of the gang are away capturing Karolis; others loiter in the washroom, playing the "dozens" and waging mock and real battle among themselves.

One of the black gang members, George Davis brings a white companion, Donald Farrell to the washroom for the confrontation. Farrell doubts the validity of the cause of the fight and indicates that Karolis's love letter may have been a response to a first move by Ray. When Farrell protests the plan, Ora, the most violent of the gang, punches him in the stomach and knocks him to the floor. Once all are assembled, Farrell is forced to leave. Karolis has arrived badly beaten. Ora is the

main one to bully him. Foots who has been talking with the Principal, Van Ness, after class, finally shows up. Foots is the physically weakest and smallest of the bunch, but he is undoubtedly their leader. Ora and one or two others had a short time before already roughed up Karolis when they caught him in the hall and tried to get him down to the toilet. Foots refuses to fight Karolis in that condition. It becomes apparent that even though he has veneer of toughness and bravado, he would just as well let Karolis go. But Karolis, unashamed, acknowledges the letter and insists that he wants to fight Foots. Foots feels pity and a kind of returned love for Karolis, but because of social pressure from the gang and because of Karolis' own insistence, he does fight.

Karolis gets a grip on Foots' throat and begins choking him. Ora, Knowles, and the whole crowd come to the aid of Foots, and punch the fallen Karolis in the face until he stops moving. The boys revive Foots and take him with them, leaving Karolis badly hurt, possibly dead. A moment later, Karolis manages to recover, struggles to one of the toilets as he tries to stand up, collapses again, unconscious. As the play ends, Foots, now Ray as Karolis preferred to call him, "stares at Karolis' body for a second, looks quickly over his shoulder, then runs and kneels before the body, weeping and cradling the head in his arms" (62).

For all its ugliness, "The Toilet" is a play about love between a white boy and a black boy, a love which, because of the social order in which the black people live, cannot be expressed on any level. The play's theme is love's inability to survive in a callous, dehumanizing society (symbolized by the toilet). The society is so inhuman that one cannot openly express love. Externally, the play concerns a gang of Black boys intent on beating up a lonely white boy who has made homosexual overtures to one of the group. Internally, the play abounds with a need for love and understanding. The two youths who beat each other nearly to death are secretly and shame-facedly in love with each other. Unable to break free of his macho facade, Foots cannot openly express his true feelings to anyone—his gang, Karolis, or even himself. He must hide his emotions about Karolis or risk losing his position of leadership within his group.

Although Foots has allowed Karolis to be sacrificed, he is caught up by human sympathy, daring to express his emotions only when he is alone. The fact that, love in this play is homosexual and biracial is to an extent irrelevant except for the dramatic staging. One need only

imagine the racial identities reversed with Karolis, a black, and the others, Caucasians, to understand that race does not control the narrative line and the play's inherent drama. In this play, Baraka the chronicler, talks—for the last time—about love. The play hints at the possibility of black and white coming together at some future time after the black man has earned his manhood and self-respect by defeating the white.

The problem of homosexuality is a dominant motif in Afro-American literature. "The Toilet" deals with self-expression in terms of homosexuality and reveals that Ray Foots' homosexuality is a concrete image of a natural desire undermined and destroyed by a world that condemns such desire. It also contrasts the homosexual relationship of two protagonists with the hostile and threatening all-male outside world. The homosexual attraction between Ray and Karolis appears as an aesthetic challenge of the social order. It is disavowed by the gang in the name of a code of ethics that sees it as a betrayal.

Homosexuality is viewed positively by Baraka as a possibility for the realization of "love" and "beauty" against the racial gang code of a hostile society. Gerald Weales believes that "Jones is obviously using homosexuality to represent something else on this play. Acceptance in the white world perhaps" (141). Ray's friends think his love for Karolis is a way of being accepted into the white world. Karolis is identified with white power that threatens black virility. But the black man does not want acceptance into the white world, as much as he wishes to escape the traditional patriarchy of the black community.

If Ray's homosexuality comes to mean "sell-out integrationism" in a racial reading of the play, then Ora, "Big Shot"'s violent repression of homosexuality, is a positive almost heroic step toward affirming Black manhood. Ora's brutality is a perverted outlet for repressed sexuality, when Foots tries to get out of the fight. There is an important interrelationship between Ora's repressed homosexuality and his sadistic urges. Metaphorically, homosexuality appears as suicidal, homosexuality as a sign of degeneration, and misused creative energy is an escape from reality. Whether or not Foots and Karolis have actually experienced a homosexual relationship is less important than the fact that homosexuality is unprotective.

The violence depicted in the play, unlike that of "Dutchman" and *The Slave*, is entirely specific in context. As pointed out by Paul Witherington, the boys wish to show their masculinity by discarding

all maternal or “soft” values. Their thwarted libidinal urge is expressed in the form of violence (159-161). Driven to deny impulses which they consider “unmanly,” the boys exhibit hostility in varying forms throughout the play. These actions culminate in the disparate actuality of physical violence against Karolis. In beating him, the boys are engaged in a struggle to free themselves from the pre-adolescent maternal community and assert their membership in a masculine community.

However, the violence takes a more subtle appearance in the early stages of the drama. The boys engage in name-calling and the well-known ghetto game, “the dozens,” at the start of the action. By playing the dozens, the youths prepare themselves for the hyper-masculine world of the gang. But the game is carefully controlled and rarely erupts into a fight. But soon after Foots enters, violence does erupt eventually, not from the dozens itself but from the general atmosphere of physical and verbal sparring that goes on within any adolescent groups. The whole tone of the play is consistently violent.

This blunt and brutal tale is one of Baraka’s most chilling examinations of victimization, split identity, and crushed sensitivity. Both Foots and Karolis are victims in this play. Foots is a victim no matter what he does; for if he refuses to fight Karolis, his disloyalty to his gang will be disastrous. Karolis is also clearly a victim. Ray’s betrayal brings into swift and cruel contact with enveloping violence of his environment. Both are beaten and alone near the conclusion of the play. As Ray holds Karolis in his arms at the very end, we are shown a painful image of fragility and hopeless compassion in an inescapably hostile, cold, and brutal world. Karolis is more obviously, but to Baraka less profoundly, a victim than is Foots, the black boy. It is the white boy who is beaten. But the meaning of the play comes from Karolis’s revelation that the black boy he really loves is a hidden beautiful boy named Ray, not Foots. Both the black and the white are therefore victims.

Ray Foots is the embodiment of the tensions between black and white cultures in the United States. He is the middle-class black boy who is torn between two cultures. Karolis sees Foots as two different persons; Ray, a human being, beautiful, whom he wishes to be involved with; and Foots, a stereotyped leader of a gang of corrupt heroes. Foots, the name by which his young peers call him, belongs to the leader, the tough and clever exterior, the mask. “Ray,” the name the white boys use for him, is related to the troubled, sensitive, and lonely adolescent

searching for sexual identity and meaningful personal relationship. As Karolis bears down on his opponent, he makes this division clear: "Did I call you Ray in that letter . . . or Foots? (Trying to laugh.) Foots! (Shouts.) I'm going to break your fucking neck. That's right. That's who I want to kill. Foots!" (59). The ending of "The Toilet" affirms the triumph of "Ray" over "Foots." The play describes the limbo of marginality of a black character who functions in both the white and black worlds but can express himself totally in neither. This problem will be articulated later by Clay in "Dutchman."

More than any other of Baraka's stage creations, Ray Foots is reminiscent of a kind of tormented and tender being. Underneath his exterior of coolness and practical intelligence is a highly sensitive consciousness, a tender and desiring sensibility that must be smothered as the prince for survival. Ray is unable to explain that he is something stranger than the rest of the gang even though the blood and soul of him is as theirs. His sensibility in a world that demands toughness and strict social allegiances becomes a hated thing.

The characterization of the male Black youngsters and their playful, tough interaction was an innovation on the American stage. The gang members are a complete cross-section of the intelligent, stupid but trustworthy, likable, judicious, loud, and ugly individuals whom the difficulties and rhythms of ghetto life can blend into one tough conglomerate. They are full of the spark of machismo antagonism. Baraka's psychological and sociological view of growing up male in the ghetto makes the Black gang in the play more important and interesting than the sentimental love story that Baraka may have intended to write. The majority of the dialogue is given to the Black gang. Karolis and Foots are present on stage for less than half the play. The black gang is ambiguously idealized and is depicted as destructive of love and beauty. But their very presence onstage is a theatrical event comparable in effect to the impact of gangster movies.

Baraka intends to show how the black youths, except for Foots, act according to their inner vision of what is a man, an image affected by the white mythic heroes, and have, consequently, lost some of their dignity and worth as black boys. They have been corrupted by the white society. In addition, it also seems possible that Baraka intends to reflect the black experience under the eroding influence of the white middle-class society which not only debases the black identity but also destroys the vitality of the white groups. The two positive characters

in the play are Ray and Karolis. Both have some dignity as human beings and are involved emotionally with each other. Karolis, the only white character in the play, is a homosexual and his characterization suggests perhaps the demoralization and confusion of standards of behavior within the white system.

For the first time, Baraka plunges to the core of black life to find dramatic structures in “The Toilet.” He studies the world of ghetto youth, a world governed by a highly theatricalized code that expresses anguish, hate, and frustration. A toilet is symbolic of the world that Baraka is trying to describe through drama. This setting is much more naturalistic than those of “Dutchman” and *The Slave* and remains throughout the play as its dominant symbol. Its appearance and smells suggest the ugliness and filth that Baraka attributes to his character’s social and moral milieu. In turn, this vision of America as toilet defines the personalities of the characters themselves.

The choice of the toilets as the setting shrewdly duplicates the usual adolescent preference for the toilet as the stage for a certain kind of brutish bravado or for covert rebelliousness. A dirty toilet is most compatible to their purposes, and they are so intent on their evil purposes that they are oblivious to the room’s filth and stench. The individual terms the filth and stench represent the unsavoury personalities of Fouts and his gang. It defines the filthiness that results from the denial of feeling in Fouts and his kind. The privacy the toilet lends itself to the theme of repression—the repression of love—which runs throughout the play. The moral corruption that is suggested by the toilet setting is associated with a kind of perverted masculinity. The setting is an appropriate metaphor for the kind of life that cripples, smothers, and permanently maims so many of the adolescent youth who live in urban poverty. Therefore, the setting is a dynamic force in the action of the play and with experience of the characters.

The language of “The Toilet” is entirely naturalistic and appropriate not only for its setting and characters but for its subject. The earthy language, rivalling even that heard in “The Baptism,” is a real and necessary part of this world of young, primarily black urban school boys. Adolescents in the big city ghetto speak exactly as do the characters in “The Toilet.” The dialogue often fully and firmly rooted in the black idiom not only focuses on universally identifiable character types (the bully, the coward); it simultaneously probes the various ways by which the boys enforce the taboo against tendencies. Their languages about

sex and their sexual terms most readily reveal their participation in a male world. It is flavoured by curses, dozens, ritual insults, and braggadocio challenges:

LOVE. (swinging around as if to shoot again he suddenly punches HOLMES on the shoulder. HOLMES lets out a yelp of pain): Uhhuh . . . I told you about messin' with me.

HOLMES. (holding his shoulder): Shit. Why didn't you hit Big Shot, you bastard? He brought the shit up.

ORA. (has the door propped open again). Shit. That narrow head bastid know better than to fuck with me. (43)

Their language about sex and their sexual terms most readily reveal their participation in a male world. It emphasizes the intense but misguided efforts of these adolescents to assert their manhood.

Controversial or objectionable language also abounds in "The Toilet." Measured in terms of intensity and frequency of controversial idioms, "The Toilet" is Baraka's most obscene play. Perhaps, the most abusive words in the play are variations of "muthafucka" (45) which have been used to draw the line between the gang's ideal of sex without involvement and the "momma's" (51) boys who are accused of wanting to return, figuratively, to the womb. Variation of "muthafucka" is used nine times in "The Toilet." The obscene language defies the taboos and puritan norms of American culture.

"The Toilet" is a drama of extreme realism or naturalism. Everything about the play is intended to enhance the viewer's belief in the actuality of the situation. The setting is of extreme importance in that it grounds the viewers in the tactile. Like the setting, the other aspects of the drama, characterization, diction, and action, express the same concreteness. Baraka displays brilliant facility with the language and rhythm implicit in the life-style he explores. No one, with the possible exception of Ed Bullins, deals with the sound of black life with more formidable powers of persuasion. Even as Baraka's design and purpose regarding his work have changed or been redirected by him—the weight of his words and the soundness of his dramatic structure have travelled well with him to new stations.

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The Sea-Waves

O. P. Arora

The sea-waves, rising and howling, at the sunset
fascinated by the moon, tides towering the skies
rocking ferociously as if they would swallow the rocks
like the violent mobs storming the citadels of power
dreaming and hoping to destroy the despotic tower.
The sea- waves, subdued and retreating, with the dawn
tides ebbing, giving in to the fun and frolic on the beach
roar turning into soft, rhythmic music, within easy reach
like the mobs, defeated and desperate, finding excuses
failed mutineers, retreating, sad and saline, blaming others.
The sea-waves, still struggling and asserting, in the morning
ruffled only on the surface, placid down below
giving way, gradually, reluctantly, accepting, turning low
like Indian masses, opiated, slumbering, following the tow
poverty, misery, their lot, fated to be slaves, they bow.
The sea- waves, quiet, at ease, only quivering, at noon
children making castles, picking up shells
learners surfing the sea, bathers slicing through the wells
like the Indian sages, resigned, deep insight
gazing at the furious goings-on, compassion at man's plight.

Postmemory, Identity and Narrative: Reema Moudgil's *Perfect Eight*

- K. Yeshoda Nanjappa

The Partition of India in 1947 was marked by unparalleled genocidal violence. What makes the event one of singularly violent character is that several hundred thousands were killed and thousands subjected to rape and arson and many millions uprooted. Millions were left, in the words of Amitav Ghosh, with “no home but in memory.” The repercussions of partition, unprecedented human suffering, the epic scale of dispossession and the enormity of the event have been put forward from different perspectives by writers over the years. A nation born out of a violent partition inherited a violent legacy. Echoes of the extreme violence triggered off during partition continue to unsettle India.

These issues are dealt with subtlety and sensitivity in Reema Moudgil's literary debut, *Perfect Eight*. *Perfect Eight*, published in 2010, traces the story of a young girl, Ira and her mother, a partition survivor. Intricately interwoven with their personal story is the turbulent history of modern India and the complex ramifications of communal violence. The novel traverses beyond partition through the decades after independence punctuated by events like the Emergency, 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, the Hindu-Muslim riots, the Rathyatra of the Hindus, the demolition of Babri Masjid and the innumerable communal riots that time and again shook India to the core. The novel subtly reiterates that the unrelenting chain of communal violence which erupt in India have their roots embedded in the events which ensued during Partition. Such events make us conscious of the relevance and immediacy of Partition in the present. As Jasodhara Bagchi puts it, partition is “very much part of our present condition burdened as it is by the partition of our minds.”

In the years that followed Partition, the memory of the violence became a traumatic part of the identity of the survivors and the trauma created self-images of vulnerability, defenselessness and weakness. To

quote Vamik Volkan, such victims of violence “draw the mental representation of a traumatic event into (their) very identity” (xxv). Their world is violated by a dark subtext of haunting memories which stalks them relentlessly. Patrick Devine Wright argues how memory in an individual is socially constructed and reconstructed over a period of time and how it is intimately related to a person’s sense of identity. (11) P. F. Strawson observes that memory is essentially, profoundly and inextricably involved in “experience, recognition, consciousness of identity of self through diversity of experience” (qtd. in Eaglestone 74). Robert Eaglestone discusses memory at length—memory as both private and public, inextricably linked to identification, and how memory takes in all modes of cultural production, thus playing a vital role in narrative, cultural, social and psychological processes (79). Eaglestone quotes the Canadian writer Anne Michaels for whom, “memory is skin: defining who we are, where the inside meets the outside” (qtd. in Eaglestone 79). Brandon Hamber and Wilson Richard foreground how the memory of pain and loss trail the survivor consciously and unconsciously and the individual lives in a perpetual state of denial and obsession. Survivors of genocidal violence across the world exist in a “liminal space” and they are both part of and removed from the society and their lives are characterized by uncertainty and doubt (151).

The Partition of India which traumatized millions of individuals is also an event which engendered a collective historical trauma. The ramifications of the pain and torment in the people who lived through the events that followed Partition are many. The post-partition generation too suffered trauma, loss of identity and pain though they never experienced Partition first hand. Children of the Holocaust survivors too wrote about their lives overshadowed by the memory of the agony and sufferings of their parents. Similarly, post-partition generations “remember” events not really experienced. The burden of memory then becomes a painful legacy inherited psychologically. In Reema Moudgil’s *Perfect Eight*, her mother’s traumatic memory of Partition endures in Ira and she suffers an acute sense of loss and estrangement from identity. Though for Ira the experience of Partition is not a lived one, yet she is left with an intense consciousness of lack, emptiness, and exile and a fear of the unknown that haunts her every moment of her life. The question here is how one “remembers” an experience one has not lived through. Referring to such a memory among the children of the Holocaust survivors, Marianne Hirsch coins the term “Postmemory.”

According to her postmemory explicates the experiences of the people with a profound relationship to the painful memory of the past. She writes,

Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. (Hirsch 106-107)

Hirsch further clarifies that Postmemory is not the same as memory, but that it is “post” for it simultaneously “ approximates memory in its affective force” (109). Ellen Fine writing about the Post-Holocaust generation believes that the children of survivors “continue to ‘remember’ an event not lived through. Haunted by history, they feel obliged to accept the burden of collective memory that has been passed on to them and to assume the task of sustaining it” (qtd. in Eaglestone 80). *Perfect Eight* illustrates the psychological effects of what is often called the “second generation syndrome” and the traumatic consequences of the Partition and the phenomenon of postmemory. The novel describes Ira’s childhood, girlhood and adult life in relation to the psychological crisis brought about by the fact that she is the child of a partition survivor who has no home in the real sense.

Ira, the daughter of a woman who witnessed (the aftermath) and survived Partition as a child of five, suffers an acute sense of loss and pain and estrangement from identity even as a child. Living close to her mother, a witness and survivor of the massive historical trauma, she harbours in herself a traumatic postmemory and lives in perpetual exile from her own self. Constantly searching for an identity, she strives to relocate herself in the present. Ira’s identity is shaped by her mother’s memories of how she survived the turbulent days after the Partition. In Helen Epstein’s words, Ira is “possessed by a history (she) had never lived” (qtd. in Hirsch 109). The narrative of *Perfect Eight* is Ira’s recounting of her mother’s pain and suffering as a five year old in the days immediately after the Partition and her own struggle with memory. By way of remembering the trauma of her mother, Ira remembers the trauma of a whole generation. Though the text is written in the third

person, the narrative is from the point of view of Ira. The people, the events and the world are presented as Ira sees and comprehends them. Narrating is perhaps the best way of remembering. As Ian Hacking points out, “The metaphor for memory is narrative” (250). The entire text thus is an act of remembering. This act of remembering every detail of her mother’s experience strongly suggests, to use Hirsch’s words, a powerful longing in Ira “to remember, to rebuild, to reincarnate, to replace and repair” (*Family Frames* 243).

Ira’s mother’s history of pain had started in Lahore, a part of undivided India, when she was just five. The only child of an affluent father who got his fur-collared overcoats tailored in London and a mother who was one of the most beautiful women in Lahore, she herself had a rich inheritance. Precisely then was Pakistan “hewn” out of India and Lahore went up in the flames of communal violence. One day while playing in the backyard, she saw her house being torn apart and burnt and experienced the terrifying smell of burnt skin and cold blood that lingered in the air. As she stumbled into a neighbouring Muslim house, she was bundled in a quilt and hidden in a dark room from the hate-filled eyes of the Muslims and from there packed off to Kanpur to her father’s childhood friend. Thus Ira’s mother, as a five year old, along with Tai, a Hindu cleaning woman “walked out of a history that was no longer theirs” (16). The long journey for the five year old was a traumatizing one filled with pain and suffering. Memories of it would haunt her a lifetime. Later in life she would transmit these harrowing memories to her daughter who would carry the painful burden of the unseen pain and suffering of her mother through her life. The memories of her journey towards an uncertain future taught her that human beings even with “beribboned inheritances” could be annihilated overnight. She learnt that if not anything else memories could be carried “with their bleeding roots to unfamiliar soils” (17). As she walked for weeks, she could see “death burning quietly” (17), fear in its inexorable flight over the refugees as they edged their way towards an unknown land, men and women shivering “outside the broken shells of their lives” (17). The smell of cold burning flesh became an inseparable part of the long journey and her life.

The little girl’s journey ended only in a traumatic life in Kanpur. Her new home turned a cold shoulder, an impersonal indifference to her pain and grief. Yet she struck a warm relationship with Anna, one of the daughters of the family—a relationship which would turn out to be

one of the few blessings of her life. She who was forced across the border when she was barely five became the focus of hatred when Gandhiji was assassinated—a hate filled voice could be heard: “Throw that refugee bitch outside. One of her kind must have shed Bapu’s blood” (20). Years later, her mother-in-law would ruthlessly echo these words referring to her: “I don’t like *refooji*. They spread misfortune wherever they go” (26).

As years rolled by when her friend Anna married a rich aristocratic tea-planter from the lush Ambrosa valley in Kangra, Ira’s mother married a Punjabi, a “dream-smith” (26) from Patiala who never had a steady livelihood. Yet, he was a man whose faith in life was immeasurable—he remembered no pain of the past, had no respect for tears and celebrated all days alike. When Ira was born, she imbibed her mother’s fear of happiness and carried the burden of her mother’s trauma and feeling of insecurity. Ira learnt from her that “[h]appiness was something we would always leave behind and go somewhere else” (5). She learnt from her “to smell grief before it struck. To turn foreboding into a fine-tuned instrument” and that it “was risky to love anything too much” (3). She felt she was not normal like the other children; that she was dysfunctional and her dysfunction was gene-deep (9-10). The only promise in her life seemed to be the presence of Samir, Aunt Anna’s son. As she grew up she nurtured her love for him in spite of the fact that she had learnt from her mother never to trust joy and hold on to life’s promises.

As Ira grew up to be a teenager, terrorist attacks in Punjab and other parts of India grew bloodier by the day. In Patiala, as in other parts of Punjab, Hindus and Sikhs who knew no differences suddenly armed against each other with hatred. There was Bhinderwale who tried to convince the Hindus and Sikhs that they did not belong together. Then there was the “madness” of the storming of the Golden Temple to flush out terrorists. And subsequently the mass killings of the Sikhs in Delhi when India’s prime minister was shot dead. Innocent Hindus and Sikhs were killed indiscriminately. Hate-filled voices filled the air rupturing the peace and tranquility of the streets of Punjab and Delhi where people of all religions had always walked hand in hand. The profound question here is as to what initiates normal people to harbor feelings of extreme hatred and a desire to exterminate innocent people. Peter Uvin, interrogating ethnic violence in Rwanda, discusses how the moral restraints in ordinary people that would under normal

circumstances restrain them from perpetrating unjustifiable violence against fellow human beings, break down. The mass participation in violence is the fall out of social processes triggered off at some point in the history of a nation and these social processes lead societies to lose human values and ethics and commit deeds which under normal circumstances appear repugnant even to contemplate (208-210). And as Maurice Halbwachs argues, it is in society that people normally acquire their memories and what enabled individual memories to operate is the collective social frameworks through which memory exists (qtd. in Eaglestone 77). Ed Cairns and Mícheál D. Roe foreground how “memory plays an important role in creating or recreating conflict, in reactivating it from the form in which it may have lain dormant, perhaps for several generations” (4). Daniel Bar-Tal maintains how any violence when it persists for many years “has a crucial effect on the society as the accumulation and sedimentation of such experiences in collective memory penetrates every thread of the societal fabric. The collective memory of physical violence serves as a foundation for the development of a culture of violence” (84). The culture of violence thus engendered in turn becomes “investments in the continuation of the conflict” and sets off vicious cycles of violence at the slightest provocation (Bar-Tal 91-92).

Ayodhya’s turbulence and angst, though thousands of miles away, spreads to Bangalore where Ira settles down after her marriage. The assault on Ira by the conductor of a bus she is travelling in, in the presence of cold and indifferent fellow-passengers brings to her mind her mother’s journey from Lahore towards the Indian border. The mindless attack on a movie theatre, rekindles her postmemory of the age old violence. When her marriage to Gautam turns out to be a failure, she attempts suicide. Gautam who always believed that he did the right thing never hurt her but took away her “sense of living” (210). She on the other hand wanted the best out of life, to enjoy the simple pleasures: “To look at the sunset and smile. Watch the moon when it sheds its silver shadows on the road without feeling sad” (210). Lying in a trance from an overdose of sleeping pills, Ira imagines herself to be the little girl her mother was once, who walked long ago into a future with no one waiting for her, the little girl who “walked with ghosts in a caravan of shadows” (206). The thought fills her with a strong desire to live, if not for anyone else, for her mother’s sake, “for the little girl who had walked endless miles” to grow up and bring another life into the world

(206). As Ian Hacking contends, it is the way in which one remembers the past that plays a crucial role in constructing one's identity—personal, social, communal—and in turn “our identity shapes in no small way how we remember the past, cope in the present, and hope or expect the future (74).

Though her love for Samir was the guiding force of her life, the main stay of her existence, the awareness of the fragility of her own identity haunts her, especially when she is in his presence. The absence, lack and loss she feels and the feeling of exile that burdens her memory hinders her from having a strong relationship with Samir based on mutual respect. She soon realizes that Samir like Gautam can never love anyone. Samir did not have roots anywhere and felt unsettled where ever he went though he carried no burdens like she did. Finally, it is the memory of her dead father that helps her come to terms with life. As the narration draws to close, at the background is Ayodhya – the demolition of the mosque and the simmering hatred and mistrust brewing anew between the Hindus and the Muslims. When the elderly guest at Samir's resort talks proudly and arrogantly of being a Hindu and asserts that the land belongs to the Hindus and that the Mosque has to go and a temple has to be built, his words echo the deep-seated hatred that had triggered off the violence at the time of Partition and was relentlessly nurtured through the years after independence. Amartya Sen foregrounds how “the illusion of a unique and choiseless identity” and a “fostered sense of identity with one group of people” has been wielded by sectarians and communitarians as a powerful weapon to promote sectarian hatred and consequently conflicts and barbarities, violence and terrorism” (xvi). Ira wondered where she belonged in a land of unending conflict between the so called majority and minority. Born as a woman and to a mother whose “soul was cleft into two” when the country was divided and strangers ripped apart her life in Lahore, she had along with her mother carried “bundles of pain and fear” on her back through life. The memories of the trauma were passed on unwittingly to her daughter who suffered the postmemory of her mother's losses and pain all her life.

Perfect Eight thus articulates the complex and ineluctable connection between memory, postmemory, culture and identity. For Ira the experience of partition is not lived, and yet she is left with an acute consciousness of lack, emptiness and exile. Postmemory is active in her in spite of a lack of a specifically partition memory.

Thus, the trauma of partition violence did not end with the outward normalcy in India, but continued to colour what happened later. Partition and its aftermath have become an unavoidable part of India's present and future. Even the happiest moments in the lives of the survivors are coloured by memories of their families and the other members who could not live to share the joys of life. Novels like *Perfect Eight* reflect the difficulties of coming to terms with the aftermath of political trauma for the individual and how many areas of contemporary life in India are shaped by the Partition. As Ira's mother always has the feeling that "something had followed her across the border, to stalk, hunt and kill all over again", the ghost of Partition continues to haunt this country and its people. Thus Partition is of critical importance in India's history—the impact of partition proved to be more complex and far greater than politicians and scholars have hitherto recognized with its devastating fall-outs and deeply destabilizing consequences which are still little understood. Understanding memory and postmemory of Partition as experienced in this narrative helps us comprehend its everyday role in lives and how it is vital in coming to terms with the past. It leads us to a new understanding of the lesser known consequences of Partition. Further, in the words of Eaglestone, it is "memory and the process of memorialization that are not only an ethical commitment to the past, but a commitment to the future as well" (100).

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Short Story

For an Address

- Pronab Kumar Majumder

Mandira Nayar was a wellcut, wellshaped figure indeed that was appropriate to be a receptionist in a star hotel frequented by foreign and domestic guests of highest level of society. At her 32 she was in best of charms and attractions to visitors. Hotel reception job is pressing and challenging one from nine in the morning till eight in the evening. Hardly could she remember her five year daughter Tikli in the meanwhile. At home were available her husband, a journalist, her mother-in-law and father-in-law who would take care of Tikli outside her stint in a Kindergarten school. Mandira was a Bengali girl. Sudhir Nayar was her classmate in an English medium school of repute and also a close neighbour in a posh area of the metro city. Working hours of the couple did not match. She would leave home at eight in the morning and return at about nine in the evening. Her husband would leave for office around four in the afternoon and return at about midnight. Thus very thin was the scope of creating a relationship for them. Mandira had a really low-key communication with her in-laws, difference of mindset and cultural background being large impediments. Sudhir Nayar was an effortless prey to glamorous beauty of Mandira since school days. In course of time she, however, realised Sudhir was frittering man of inconsequential mind that did not match what she needed. Hence Tikli was her only concern in this world and Sudhir in her life turned redundant one. It must be admitted for Mandira choice was something not to last long. She was not interested in a permanent address. That was her obsession, to say in lighter vein, her hobby also. At this cross-road of her mind, Somesh Basu, a frequent visitor of the hotel caught her attention. Somesh understood it and often indulged in brief useless talk with her while reporting to and leaving the hotel. They felt drawn to each other eventually.

Sudhir felt comfortable in company with one woman of his community working as a journalist for the same English daily Sudhir was working for. Indeed he was infatuated and fascinated by the beauty of Mandira since school days. But when they were married couple, Sudhir failed to bridge the gap two different communities generally generate. How much one is compatible with another can be realised only when the two spend times in togetherness, everydayness. Mandira noticed indifference of Sudhir towards her which she was not prepared to accept. Information of his association with his colleague reached her ears. Her ego was hurt. She felt insulted. But she was not in a hurry to pre-empt any action. For, her daughter occupied whole of her heart. Under no circumstances she would agree to part with her daughter. Sudhir also kept Mandira under scrutiny. He could understand a tempest was raised in her mind. Deliberately Sudhir started picking up point of discord with her. His intention was to provoke her to create an irretrievable situation. Mandira did not agree to offer him such an opportunity. Her stance was to let something if any, come from him. A long period of time of non-communication between them had flown in silence. It was a holiday for both of them when they were closeted by arrangement. Parents of Sudhir went to attend a social invitation. Tikli was engaged in computer game in another room. They initiated deliberation in low pitch. Sudhir opened to say, "Listen Mandira, perhaps at the moment we are of no consequence to each other. It seems like staying together under compulsion. We are like unusable commodities for each other. Do you agree? Mandira chose to put off words, but stipulating. "Speak up Mandira, speak up," Sudhir insisted. "What do you want me to do? To part, to separate? If that satisfies you, I won't block your way. But I must have my daughter with me in any case," she stopped for a response. "Be it so, it is of no use making fuss over it. We may part as friends. We were perhaps better friends in school days," Sudhir remarked. "Yes, we may perhaps do the formalities by mutual consent. It is no use dragging the matter to the public," Mandira closed.

An intercom call came for Mandira from a guest in the hotel. She received the call to hear "I am Somesh Basu on the line. Good morning madam. How are you placed tomorrow, it is your offday." "Good morning Sir, but what makes you ask for my offday engagement anyway?" Mandira waited for the response. "I shall be in the town for a couple of days. May we have lunch together in Calcutta Club tomorrow?" "But is

it really necessary?" Mandira put back. "I would have liked it." "So much is power of your words," Mandira laughed audibly. "Be it so, I shall be over there," she added. "Thank you madam. In what part of the metro you stay and if I am permitted to ask who are in your family?" Mandira smiled to say "I stay in Salt Lake city, the extended metro, with my parents and my daughter." "And, and what about....". "And I am a divorcee," Mandira added. "I am the vice-president of a multinational company located at Mumbai. I am to frequent our Kolkata Regional Office. I have a son studying in Doon School and my wife left me a few years ago as she started nurturing other choice of life." Somesh smiled broadly to speak about himself. "So your present address is that of your father," Somesh joked. Mandira was sad to remark "I am always in quest of an address. I don't have one really." "May I provide you with a permanent address?" Somesh braved to put before. Mandira was wordless for moments and then joked "everything can not be sorted out over a lunch." "O sure, I fully agree, I am prepared to wait for," Somesh hastened to respond.

In the evening cell phone of Somesh sang. Somesh Basu is speaking was the response. "I am Mandira here." "Good evening Mandira, I think you are fine," Somesh wished. "You see, I think you have put an expectation. It cannot happen. I cannot leave my job anyway and my daughter is my heart," Mandira elaborated. "O, that is no problem, I have some people in authority in the counterpart of your hotel in Mumbai. You may be located there almost overnight. Your daughter will be essential part of our family. Mumbai provides good schooling facilities as you know," Somesh stopped for reactions. "Thank you for your thinking so much about us. I shall get back to you soon," Mandira closed for the evening.

Days passed in tandem. In the meanwhile Mandira put on some age and weight. She realised her glamour of beauty was dwindling. She was more eager than ever for a permanent address. Tikli was located in a reputed boarding school. With aged parents together her aloneness could not be removed. In the meanwhile Somesh called her few times. Actually her mind never supported her to leap into an unknown and uncertain world with no possibility of an uplift in life. An address itself cannot obliterate anonymity. Once she made it clear to Somesh that her preference was to stay as very good friends. Somesh, however, never called her again.

Sudhir stayed very close to the residence of parents of Mandira. He was keeping Mandira under scrutiny through his intelligence apparatus. One Sunday he made appearance behaving as a close neighbour does. Mandira welcomed him indifferently. Her parents treated him as one does for an old neighbour. Sudhir sought details of information about Tikli. Her parents made space for Mandira to hold conversations with Sudhir who reported his mother died sometime ago of cardiac arrest and his father was a lone soul in the family. “What about your journalist friend? Are you upto her yet?” Mandira joked, “It is a matter of past. I realised later I am more compatible with Bengali culture than that of my own community because of my being in Kolkata since birth. I don’t understand my community people much now. I made a mistake,” Sudhir observed. “Really, really you mean it?” Mandira was sarcastic. “You have every right to disbelieve me, disbelieve what I say. But I am credible one if I say I love my daughter, long her to be with me,” Sudhir bared himself only to add “have we done something irreversible?” Mandira raised her brows to observe, “there are things which are reversible but one should ponder enough before doing a reverse.” “I am prepared to ponder over, are you really?” Sudhir sought to know. “You want to give back my old address, do you?” “Yes, I do. But you shall have it in your own right. There is none giver, none receiver,” Sudhir was honest in his declaration. “I want your comeback, I long for your homecoming and for that I must have undone what wrongs I had done as far as possible. I did not do that much for my daughter as I ought to have done. I must try to atone myself. Is comeback a possibility in that case,” Sudhir entreated for her affirmation. Mandira smiled clearly to say, “It is a possibility,” then embraced him.



The Portrayal of Sexism in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

- Zeinab Yazdani & Shamsoddin Royanian

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, published in 1985, is highly praised as a major work which shows the world of feminist protest. Critics always talked about the complexity of this novel which shows the dangerous presence of sexism and anti-feminism in contemporary society. In all the novels, Margaret Atwood's protagonists are both helpless and dominant. They are strong enough to tolerate and retain a sense of self. This paper explores *The Handmaid's Tale* to identify how Atwood explains the physical and psychological suppression of women in the patriarchal society that treats women as objects.

Offred, the protagonist of *The Handmaid's Tale* reveals the cruelty and violence that Gilead society used towards women and the denial of human rights for women. In fact, Atwood in this novel deals with the problems of discrimination and the subjugation and suppression of women in modern society. Despite the fact that women in this society are valued for their ability to reproduce, they are not allowed to work, own properties, or read. Therefore, the Gilead society stands for the dangerous religious society, in which they use Bible as a means of suppression and in which women are reduced to a "two-legged wombs." As Offred explains: "We are for breeding purposes. There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us, no room is to be permitted for the flowering of secret lusts. We are two-legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices" (*The Handmaid's Tale* 176). In fact, the oppressive regime forces women to submit to their authority and Offred, as a handmaid, observes her own victimization in such a society.

In all her novel, Margaret Atwood, represents women and studies their position and relationships in society. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, she talks about the situation of women. She Pictures a society in which the

women are treated as property instead of human beings. The only motive in their lives is to be pregnant and have children. In the eyes of the patriarchal society of Gilead, women are considered inferior to men. They are not allowed to read and girls are not educated. They have been exploited through their inferior position in a patriarchal society as Simone de Beauvoir claims in the *Second Sex*: “For him she is sex-absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is incidental. As opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute-she is the other” (16).

The story of *The Handmaid's Tale* is narrated from the point of view of a woman called Offred. She explains that what has happened to her after revolution when she discovers she has lost all independence and power to her husband. Therefore, Offred and Luke along with their five years old daughter try to escape across the border into Canada, but they are caught. Because of Luke's last marriage and divorce, their marriage is not legal. They are separated from one another, and Offred has seen neither her husband nor her daughter since. In the new society of Gilead, Offred is considered an important commodity because she is fertile and she is able to bear children for infertile couples. She has been placed as a [handmaid](#) in the home of the Commander Fred and his wife Serena Joy to bear a child for them and during this time she has suffered many inequality and subjugation in the hands of patriarchal society.

The republic of Gilead is governed by a fundamentalist Christian theocracy. The new society of Gilead which is according to a patriarchal law uses Bible as an authority for their law. The Republic Of Gilead can be considered as a male-dominant and misogynist society in which women are suppressed. In this society, women must obey men in any situation and must be dependent to them to be protected. It's a male dominated society which disgraces and suppresses women. In fact, women are slaves and sexual objects to males. Women are not allowed to speak and if a man asks them any question, they are allowed to give short positive responses. The only reason that women are kept is for producing children.

According to their law, a handmaid who is proven to be fertile comes to a Commander's house whose wife cannot have children, and has regular ceremonial sex with her commander in front of his wife. The authority of Gilead society has ultimate power on people of their society especially on women. They control every part of the handmaid's life and they have no self-control. In this way, the oppressive society of

Gilead negates the self-respect and autonomy of women and tries to put them into the traditional roles of reproduction and motherhood. The society wants women to be dependent to their husbands. When at the beginning of the revolution, Offred loses her job and her right to own her property and money and everything is transferred to her husband Luke, she tells Luke: “You don’t know what it’s like, I said. I feel as if somebody cut off my feet. I couldn’t put my arms around him. I guess out get all my money, I said. I thought already he’s starting to patronize me. Then I thought, already you are starting to get paranoid . . . we are not each others, any more. Instead, I am his. Unworthy, unjust, untrue. But that is what happened” (*The Handmaid’s Tale* 188).

Women are valued only for reproducing ability and nothing more. According to Bible, women are disgraced and they are unclean if they serve no purpose. By silencing women and taking all sorts of power from women, Gilead society remains in control. Women are like birds that are kept in cages to stop them from flying. And the authorities make women believe that this society is very secure for them and they are protected in this way of living. They also make women believe that the new way is a better freedom and God will save them if they follow. As the Authorities talk to each other:

We’ve given them more than we’ve taken away, said the Commander. Think of the trouble they had before. Don’t you remember the singles’ bars, the indignity of the high school blind dates? The meat market. Don’t you remember the terrible gap between the ones who could get a man easily and the ones who couldn’t? Some of them were desperate; they starved themselves thin or pumped their breasts full of silicone, had their noses cut off. Think of the human misery. He waved a hand at his stacks of old magazines. They were always complaining. Problems this, problems that. Remember the ads in the Personal columns, Bright attractive women, thirty-five. This way they all get a man, nobody’s left out. And then if they did marry, they could be left with a kid, two kids, the husband might just get fed up and take off, disappear, they’d have to go on welfare. Or else he’d stay around and beat them up. Or if they had a job, the children in daycare or left with some brutal ignorant woman, and they’d have to pay for that themselves, out of wretched little paychecks. Money was the only measure of worth, for everyone, they got no respect as mothers. No wonder they were giving up on the whole business.

This way they're protected, they can fulfill their biological destinies in peace with full support and encouragement. (*The Handmaid's Tale* 220)

The authorities believe that the decreasing birth rate is all because of women's fault and consequently they used to arrest fertile women to become handmaids and bear children for other families who can't have children. And if they fail to bear a baby after three attempts, they are sent to colonies to work hard and ultimately die. And if a handmaid becomes pregnant, her child will be given to the Commander and his wife. Like the other protagonists in Atwood's novel, Offred is a victim at the beginning of the novel but throughout the novel she learns how to protest and how to survive.

One of the incidents which shows the existence of sexism in society and the victimization of Offred as a handmaid and most importantly as a woman is the fact that she is raped every month by the commander but an official and legal one. Actually she is victimized in the hands of her commander as a sex object. Her monthly sexual meeting with her commander is just a job and there is no pleasure or love in their relationship. Her sexual relationship and all the humiliations that she endures during this relation show that women in Gilead society have lost their authority all in all. For this reason Offred is very much afraid of being infertile. In this regard, Roberta Rubenstein points out that "procreation and maternity are simultaneously idealized and dehumanized in Gilead" (102).

In fact, Offred tolerates the performance of sex during the ritual in order to stay alive, but this act of forced sex provokes a deep sense of self alienation. As a woman and a victim, Offred tolerate all the suffering in her life with a blind hope that everything will change and she will survive. Offred is always hopeful that she will find her daughter, who was taken from her to be raised by an unknown Commander and Wife. The chance of surviving is so little for Offred and the other women that many lose hope. Actually she is horrified to speak to other handmaids, and thus is not able to connect to fight the system.

Another way that Offred was victimized under the Gilead Regime was that she was deprived of her identity. Indeed she has lost her identity without any name and any control of herself. The society took their belongings, families, clothing, and most significantly, their names. She is not permitted to decide and make choice. There is no self-respect, honor and dignity left for women in Gilead. They are cut off from their

families and are suffering by the memories of them. The authorities changed her name in order to remove their previous identity and call them according to the names of their commanders. In fact, by giving them new names, the state wants to destroy the handmaid's past and force her to live in the present moment alone each handmaid is called by the name of the Commander who possessed her. She is "Of Fred", it means that she is like a property, belonging and a slave of her Commander, Fred. Throughout the story we never know Offred's real name. Because that name has a connection to her past, and shows her individual self, but her society tries to destroy that past in order to suppress women's identities and to demolish all senses of individuality in women. As Offred says: "My name isn't Offred, I have another name, which nobody uses because its forbidden.name is like your telephone number, useful only to others" (*The Handmaid's Tale* 79).

In this misogynist society, Offred is treated as an animal. All the handmaids should be tattooed like cattle. And because of this tattoo, she is always in control. So she has to be careful to do everything they expect her to do as a handmaid. Offred expresses her feeling about her tattoo, "I can't avoid seeing now, the small tattoo on my ankle. Four digits and an eye, a passport in reverse. It's supposed to guarantee that I will never be able to face, finally into another landscape. I am too important, too scarce for that. I am a national resource" (*The Handmaid's Tale* 85). She is a possession of the society and is owned by it. In this way society is erasing women's identity so without an identity they can go anywhere and they have to live there as slaves. In an interview Atwood explains Offred's situation as: "You're dealing with a character whose ability to move in the society was limited. By the nature of her situation, she was very circumscribed. She couldn't communicate with people. It was too dangerous. She was boxed in" (Hancock 216).

During her life in Gilead, Offred is victimized through unthinkable subjugation and her life is controlled and watch in any aspect. She has no personal life. She is not allowed to read, write or speak. Because any type of communication is forbidden in the Gilead society and will be punished strictly by society. In the beginning of Offred's arrest she is taken to the Rachel and Leah Re-education Center. In that center the Aunts made the handmaids understand that living in Gilead society is much better for them and they are safe because nobody can rape them or misuse them as women. As a handmaid, she is not allowed to have any relation with people around her because her job in the society is

giving birth to babies and having any relationship will stop them from their job. The handmaids live in loneliness and isolation.

Because of these harsh situations Offred suffers a lot. She feels alienated. Most of the time, she has to be alone by herself, there is nobody to talk and nobody to pass time with her. She lives in isolation and she yearns for the company of other women to share her pain with them. This is one of the harsh tortures for her. At first she tries to communicate with anyone else - the "Marthas," the Commander, even Serena Joy, the Commander's wife. But nobody is willing because they are afraid of being punished. This situation is very awful for her because she can't express herself and say what is on her mind. Offred knows completely that every human being needs communication and without it she will not likely survive. So she tries to make some relationship in secret. As she was not allowed to talk openly to other handmaid, they whisper to each other to exchange information. She keeps communicating with the other handmaids and other people around her to keep herself alive.

The way that handmaids get dressed is another reason for their victimization. The government forced the handmaids to wear a special dress which signify them as handmaids. Offred describes her dress as: "Everything except the wings around my face is red: the color of my blood, which defines us. The skirt is ankle length, full gathered to a flat yoke that extends over the breasts, the sleeve are full. The white wings too are prescribed issue; they are to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen" (*The Handmaid's Tale* 11). The government ask them to wear this long cloth because they want to hide the shape of their body, in this way nobody will pay attention to them and watch them. By this way of dressing they are marginalized in the society and nobody could recognize them from one another. They treat her and her body as an object, because her only purpose in Gilead is to bear children. As she says:

I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will. I could use it to run, push buttons ~ make things happen. There were limits but my body was nevertheless lithe, single, solid, one with me. Now the flesh arranges itself differently. I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am. (*The Handmaid's Tale* 95)

At the end of the story, she escapes with the help of Nick and along with the underground May Day group and tells the story of her life and all the misery that she had suffered in Gilead society. She recorded her tale on cassette. Her storytelling helps her to emerge from being silence. Through her storytelling she defines herself and struggles for equality, self-realization and most importantly she struggles for her survival. In fact her story telling is a powerful weapon in the hand of Offred. So when she achieves her ability to speak she tries to fight the sexual oppression and marginalization of women in patriarchal society of Gilead. Indeed, these small acts of rebellions are very important in her way to survival. By being courageous she has achieved some power over the powerful Authorities of the Gileadean society. And this power leads her through her path of survival.

Although at the beginning of her life in Gilead she is suppressed and silenced, she finally fights for freedom through language. In this way, she uses Helen Cixous's thought that women should write and express themselves. She comes to know of the importance of language for self-realization and eventually survival. Language makes her strong enough to survive in Gilead and to raise her voice against the subjugation of women in the patriarchal society. Hogsette says: "women can use language to create their own subjective meaning and challenge certain socially and politically oppressive institutional meaning" (263).

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women are supposed to be more protected and safe than they have ever been in their life. The society worships and admires women's body and their ability to reproduce. It poses that there is no rape or any physical and mental violence against women. Further, it makes women believe that men are needed to protect them. Also, there is no abortion. So the reader thinks that women are free, powerful and strong in this situation, but the women in the novel reveal the other side of the patriarchal society.

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On Conservation

K. V. Dominic

Hey poet, kindly heed to my plea
before you thrust your pen
into my bleeding heart.
Though I am a passive sheet of paper
I have a soul as vibrant as yours.
Please don't vomit your trash
through your volcanic missile.
The less you write the more we live;
the more our plant family lives.
Kindly write on the need of the day;
the necessity of conservation
of plants and animals on earth.

Laxmi Vs Daisy: Portrayal of Cultural Clash in R. K. Narayan's *The Painter of Signs*

- J. Jaya Parveen

R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao are the three significant writers of early Indian literature in English. R.K.Narayan is a prominent Indian English novelist of the 20th century. He is influenced by the writings of Dickens, Wodehouse, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Thomas Hardy. English author and critic Graham Greene is his mentor. He is compared to Guy de Maupassant in short story writing. Similar to William Faulkner, his writing revolves around a fictional town Malgudi. His novels are very simple in narration and diction. He has won Sahitya Academy Award, Padma Bushan, and Padma Vibhushan awards for his incomparable contribution to Indian English writing.

The Painter of Signs is written by R. K. Narayan. It is slim and packed. It is not much longer than a novelette. Yet by the end of it, a character has been evolved, a predicament analysed, a world constructed, and a point of view defined (William 153). R. K. Narayan is a profound lover of humanity. He portrays 'life in Malgudi' with all its flaws and frivolities from a comic point of view. He treats human sentimentalism, selfishness, manners, and meanness with sympathy and compassion. The novel evokes the atmosphere of orthodox middle-class life and society. It also shows an incursion of the modern on the traditional Indian culture.

R. K. Narayan's *The Painter of Signs* revolves around three characters: Raman, his aunt Laxmi, and Daisy. Raman is a young painter. He designs signboards for businessmen and traders in the town. He is polite and businesslike. He is a rationalist and tries to find reason for everything in life. He lives with his aunt who is an orthodox woman. He comes across a lot of gossips and silly talks on the streets. However,

he remains unique by his talent and sincerity in job, rational thinking, and sense of independence.

Raman is well-versed in calligraphy. He writes and paints signboards in Malgudi. He is determined to demonstrate the Age of Reason in the world. He wants a rational explanation for everything. He does not accept any irrational concept, even if it is religious. He bursts with self-declarations. He does not do anything unless he sees some logic in it. He often argues with his aunt over her conventional thoughts and behavior. He starts brawls with customers who speak illogically.

Laxmi, Raman's aunt, is an old-fashioned lady. She is born and brought up in a Hindu Brahmin family. She brings up Raman from his young age as his parents are dead. Her main job is to take care of home and Raman. She is very careful about kitchen work. She narrates old stories and autobiographical events to Raman. She goes to the temple every day. She hears bhajans and tries to enlighten Raman with religious thoughts. Her efforts go in vain when Raman starts questioning her conventions and religious beliefs.

Daisy is a modern lady who escapes her family to live an independent, ambitious life. She works in a population clinic. She seeks the help of Raman to design signboards for creating awareness about birth control among the local people. Raman admires her beauty and independence of spirit. He is attracted by her rational thinking and passion for work. He falls head over heels in love, and gets ready to do anything for her. She agrees to involve in Gandharva marriage, but soon frees herself from familial thoughts and deserts Raman to continue her social work.

Daisy seems to be a protagonist and an antagonist. She detaches herself from everything in life for the sake of her work: population control. She represents ideals very different from conventional Indian female characters. The only crowning achievement of her life is the begetting of sons. She is considered to be a dangerous, disruptive, and fanatical nun wedded to her goal, out to destroy the Malgudian order of things (Krishnaswamy 115). She also seems to be a normal, healthy, and highly intelligent girl who wants her share of happiness on earth (Krishnaswamy 122).

Daisy is a modern and sophisticated woman. Her past is a mystery even to Raman. The concept of utilitarianism has influenced every walk of modern life. Daisy, like other modern girls of Indian society, does not believe in love or marriage. For her, they are fantasies created by

men. Love, the union of two souls, has lost its true meaning and is evaluated in the sense of utility.

Raman's aunt Laxmi is an epitome for traditional Indian culture while Daisy is a paradigm of modern Indian culture. They both play significant roles in Raman's life. R. K. Narayan narrates his story with Laxmi and Daisy on parallel sides. He brings about a clear contrast between Laxmi and Daisy in various occasions. Their perceptions on name, God, housekeeping, goals, etc. vary to a greater extent, portraying cultural clash in the novel.

Names play important roles in man's life. They are accidental, incidental, or coincident. They represent the country, culture, religion, or heritage. Some names are unique and express identity. Laxmi and Daisy exhibit cultural clash even in their adoption of names. The name of Raman's aunt is Laxmi. While referring to her name, she exclaims: "I was especially fortunate as I had the name of the goddess of Wealth, Laxmi, and no one dared say, 'Go away, Laxmi,' as it might be inauspicious. It was always good to say, 'Oh, Laxmi, welcome to our house,' and I was invited ungrudgingly into any of the hundred houses in our village. I was pampered wherever I went, and grew fat." (*The Painter of Signs* 20) She identifies her name Laxmi with the Goddess of money. She establishes no separate identity for her. The novelist implies it by hardly using her name in the narration. She is often referred by the phrase 'Raman's aunt'.

Daisy has a different story. She runs away from an orthodox home with no money on hand. She travels in the train without tickets. She reaches Madras with her personal safety and womanhood jeopardized. She studies with the help of a Christian organization. She refuses baptism and changes her name to 'Daisy.' She wants just a name for establishing herself in social service. The name should be a non-denominational label. The name 'Daisy' remains neutral, revealing her identity. In Indian mythology, Ganga's real identity is not revealed to Santhanu until the end. Similarly Raman does not know Daisy's real name at all. He knows only the name assumed by her.

Raman's aunt is from a Hindu Brahmin family. Her father is a priest. She is very religious. She believes God without questioning. Whenever Raman asks doubts, she says: "Don't ask me all that. That's what our shastras say, and we don't have to question it" (*The Painter of Signs* 19). She has the habit of going to temple every evening. She listens to the spiritual discourse very eagerly. She does not want to miss any

episode from Krishna's life. When Raman returns from work, she narrates Krishna's story to him. "Do you know when Krishna revealed himself to the maidens, every one of them, thousands of them, felt convinced that Krishna was there dancing with them..." (*The Painter of Signs* 163).

Laxmi participates in almost all the rites and rituals. She wants Raman to continue the spiritual tasks rendered by her. She says, "You see, on Fridays, I usually drop a ten paisa coin into the money chest kept at the temple. Never failed even once these thirty years since I came to this house to look after you. That god protects us, remember" (*The Painter of Signs* 166). Raman does not believe in aunt's words. As a rationalist, he doesn't want to follow the religious practices. Even then, she insists him to perform the religious activities.

Contradictorily, Daisy does not believe in religion. She escapes from an orthodox Hindu family. She grows in a Christian organization, but refuses baptism. She does not go to a temple or church. After the departure of his aunt, Raman calls Daisy to settle in his house. He locks up his aunt's deities in a cupboard and empties the room for Daisy. When Daisy asks whether gods can be locked, he exclaims: "Why not?" When Raman and Daisy involve in theological jocularities, Daisy says: "What locksmith can produce a lock strong enough? While human safe-breakers work their way through the strongest lock, can't a god do as much?" (*The Painter of Signs* 170) Daisy is not interested in idol worship, rites, and rituals, but she has faith in the superpower.

Daisy has no superstitious beliefs or religious habits, but she has fear for God. When she decides to leave Raman, he complains that he has locked up gods for her sake. She asks him to bring them back to their pedestal before they punish him. She is in deep distress and says, "The gods, if they are there, will look into my mind and judge whether I am choosing the right path or not; if I am wrong let them strike me dead" (*The Painter of Signs* 179). This is considered to be her first serious reference to God.

Raman's aunt does not like the idea of Raman getting married to Daisy. When she prepares to visit Benares, she explains a lot of things to Raman. When talking about kitchen and cooking, she says: "Remember the rice in the bag is cleaned, and all the pebbles and unwanted things have been picked out... You won't have to buy gingelly oil for at least six months. The Chettiar just got freshly harvested sesames crushed at the oil mill and gave me the best stock, but you must see that the lid of the jar is taken off for a few minutes at least

once a week, and then it won't become rancid" (*The Painter of Signs* 164). She explains about pickles, dried vegetables, fodder, milkman, cows, etc. in detail. She expects Daisy to take care of Raman's food habits after she leaves to Benares.

Raman wants to call Daisy home as soon as his aunt leaves to Benares. He plans alterations for her settlement in the house. He knows that Daisy hates the word 'housekeeping.' Work is primary, and home is secondary to her. When Daisy comes to visit Raman's home, he enthusiastically describes how he is going to colour the walls of the hall. He tries to explain the scheme of the new kitchen. Daisy feels disinterested. Making food and eating seem to be worthless jobs to her. She tells Raman, "I can pick up anything, anywhere, to eat. I am not particular about eating, cooking, or storing things. Millions of our people have nothing to eat all day. Anyway, any sort of food from a restaurant will be adequate for me" (*The Painter of Signs* 172). According to her, kitchen work is a waste of energy.

Raman's aunt Laxmi wants to visit Benaras and get spiritual enlightenment. She thinks that visiting the holy place and taking bath in the holy river will take her to heaven. "A dharshanam of the God in Badrinath, and if possible to Amarnath, where the lingam is shaped in ice. I wouldn't care what happened to me or to the world after I have seen the holy places and dipped into the Ganges from its birthplace all along its course, until I end my pilgrimage in Benares. After this I shall want nothing more in life" (*The Painter of Signs* 151). The pilgrimage is her life's ultimate aim.

On the contrary, Daisy thinks population control is her life's goal. She is ready to take any risk to achieve this goal. She can travel anywhere, speak with anybody, and do anything for the sake of her goal. When she explains Raman about her mission, she resembles a general who plans a campaign. She says, "An average of – mind you it is only an average – four hundred adults in each village may have to be sterilized or fitted with contraceptives, and at least twelve villages in this lot. That is attending to about five thousand in all in this sector. And then I shall move further into the interior, perhaps on foot, as no roads are likely to pass through those forest villages" (*The Painter of Signs* 176).

Raman gets upset as Daisy spoils the plan of moving to his home. When he asks Daisy whether she sees an end to her mission, she says: "No. How can there be an end to it? There are a million villages in our

country and even if I devote myself to this task every day of my life...” (*The Painter of Signs* 177). For Daisy, work is love, family, god, etc.

For Raman’s aunt Laxmi, family is everything. She devotes her whole life to bring up Raman (even though he is not her own child). She cherishes her family memories. She involves herself in religious discourses, rites, and rituals. She narrates autobiographical events and religious stories to Raman. She does all the household activities with utmost care. She relates her name to Goddess Laxmi. She has no separate identity.

On the contrary, Daisy runs away from an orthodox family. She devotes her life for the social cause: population control. She is rigid and reserved. She has no place for personal feelings or emotions. She hates the idea of housekeeping. She does not go to temple or church. But she has fear for God. She wants her name to be a non-denominational label. She establishes her identity by isolating herself from worldly affairs. In each and every aspect, Laxmi and Daisy bring out the clash between the traditional and modern Indian cultures in an impressive way.

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Anglicized Indian Culture: An Analysis Based on Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*

- V. Rajesh

Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* explores contemporary international issues such as globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence (Mishra). Like Naipaul, Desai bears witness to the sufferings of the poor and the powerless by holding up an unflinching mirror to their lives (Bilwakesh). Described as post-colonial diaspora literature, Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* portrays the Anglicized Indian culture by depicting the lives of a few Indians with fractured Indian identities.

Justice Jemubhai Patel is from a small village Piphit. He is educated in the Bishop Cotton School. He admires the portrait of Queen Victoria at the entrance of the school building. She looks so plain but is powerful. From that time, his respect for her and the English grows in leaps and bounds. He gets first mark in all the tests. His principal Mr. McCooe wants him to write the local pleader's exam. But his father insists him to become the chief justice.

After graduating from the Bishop's college, Jemubhai goes to Cambridge for higher studies. He always carries an Oxford English Dictionary. He has a cabin mate from Calcutta. He often composes Latin sonnets in Catullan hendecasyllables. Bose, his friend, shows him what records to buy for his new gramophone. He always recommends Caruso and Gigli. He corrects Jemubhai's mistakes in English pronunciation: *Jheele*, not *Giggly*, *Yorksher*, *Edinburrah*, *Jane Aae*, *Jane Aiyer*, etc. They both read a lot of textbooks like *A Brief History of Western Art*, *A Brief History of Philosophy*, *A Brief History of France*, etc.

While studying, he grows strange to others and himself. He finds his skin tanned and his accent very awkward. He forgets how to laugh

or smile. Even if he smiles, he holds his hand over his mouth; he does not want anybody to look at his gums and teeth. Jemubhai takes revenge on his early confusions and embarrassments in the name of 'keeping up standards.' He wants to keep his accent behind the mask of silence. He works at 'being English' with fear and hatred, but he wants to maintain the false pride throughout his life by ignoring his real identity at all.

After retirement, Jemubhai leads a lonely life in a hill station called Kalimpong. When Sai's parents are dead, the convent sends her to Jemubhai, her maternal grandfather. When Sai arrives at Kalimpong, he begins to confront his own sufferings as a victim of racism and colonialism as well as the violence he perpetrated against his wife (Egelman). Jemubhai does not have affection for Sai. But he finds something familiar about her. She has the English accent and manners. She is a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns. He relates himself with her as an alienated Indian living in India.

Sai grows in a Christian convent in Dehradun with a lot of contradictions. She experiences hybridity by reading Lochinvar and Tagore along with economics and moral science. She practises Highland fling in tartan and Punjabi harvest dance in dhotis. She sings national anthem in Bengali and recites a motto in Latin. She learns Indian and English at the same time, inheriting the latter for her way of life. According to Sai, the convent system is fully obsessed with the notions of purity and morality. She thinks that those people are very much talented in defining the flavor of sin. For them "cake was better than laddoos; fork, spoon, and knife better than hands; sipping the blood of Christ and consuming wafer of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than Hindi" (*Inheritance of Loss* 30).

In her grandfather's house, Sai lives like an outsider. Jemubhai has no affection for her. She is accompanied by the cook at home. Though Sai and Jemubhai live as strangers under the same roof, he insists her to follow the English manners at home. She visits the Gymkhana club library and reads *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Cider with Rosie*, and *Life with Father*. She admires the pictures of chocolaty Amazon and stark Patagonia in the National Geographics, ignoring the naïve beauty of Kalimpong. Lepchas, Rong pa, Fodongthing, and Nuzongnyue who are created from the sacred Kanchenjunga snow are fast disappearing. When Sai reads the book "Vanishing Tribes," she finds that she does

not know anything about the original inhabitants of Kalimpong. But she is least bothered about it.

In H. Hardless' *The Indian Gentleman's Guide to Etiquette*, the author says: "Although you may have acquired the habits and manners of the European, have the courage to show that you are not ashamed of being an Indian, and in all such cases, identify yourself with the race to which you belong" (*Inheritance of Loss* 199). Instead of reacting fiercely to it, she wants to search the descendants of H. Hardless to stab the life out of them.

The cook works for the judge for many years. His son Biju is an illegal immigrant in the US, struggling for food and lodging. But the cook boasts to everyone that his son is working in New York. He claims that his son is the manager of a restaurant business. He exclaims that America is the best country in the world, and the people who have gone to England feel sorry.

Afghan princesses are given refuge by Nehru as their father on a holiday to Brighton is replaced by the British army. Mrs. Sen is their neighbor. Her daughter Mun Mun has gone to America. She is to be hired by CNN. Noni and Lola live in a rose-covered cottage called Mon Ami, which is a French name. Pixie, Lola's daughter, is a BBC reporter. While reading the news, she announces her name Piyali Bannerji in pucca British accent. Lola warns her that India is a sinking ship and compels her to leave India as soon as possible. Mrs. Thondup is from an aristocratic Tibetan family. She has two daughters—Pem Pem and Doma. They attend the Loreto convent.

Uncle Potty is from a well-known Lucknow family. He has learned languages in the Oxford, but reads only the comics like *Asterix*, *Tin Tin*, and *Believe It or Not*. Father Booty is from Switzerland. He maintains dairies and produces cheese at home. He has no papers; he has almost forgotten that he is a foreigner. He has become, indeed, an Indian foreigner. These people eat English foods, hear English songs, read English authors, grow English plants, celebrate English festivals, and lead English lives in India, feeling very proud about it.

All of them visit the Gymkhana library to borrow books. They don't like English writers writing about India, talking vividly on delirium, snakes, perverse romance, spilled blood, miscarriage, etc. They think that they don't correspond to the truth. But it is obvious that they don't want to know about the darker side of India. According to them, English writers writing of England are gracious. They admire P. G. Wodehouse

and Agatha Christie, describing the countryside England with crocuses blooming early. They also prefer the manor house novels. Reading their works, these people feel like watching movies in the air-conditioned British Council in Calcutta.

These people have no respect for Indian leaders. When Gandhiji marches from Sabarmati ashram to Dandi, Jemubhai's father says, "Where will that get him? Phtoo! His heart may be in the right place, but his brain has fallen out of his head" (*Inheritance of Loss* 112). Noni and Lola are talking about the riots, Gorkhas, and the GNLF. "This statemaking," Lola comments, "biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rule, any group of idiots can stand up demanding a new state and get it, too. How many new ones keep appearing? From fifteen we went to sixteen, sixteen to seventeen, seventeen to twenty two..." (*Inheritance of Loss* 128)

Lola and Noni talk about the letter sent to the queen of England during the partition of India. For the first and last time, they call the British 'bloody Brits' for the colonial subjugation. Mrs. Sen refers to Pakistan and says, "First heart attack to our country, no, that has never been healed..." "You know, that Jinnah, he ate bacon and eggs for breakfast every morning and drank whiskey every evening. What sort of Muslim nation they have?" (*Inheritance of Loss* 130) These ladies appreciate the English and humiliate Indian leaders.

They admire the English people and try to follow their lifestyles. Hearing Kiri te Kanawa on the cassette player, Lola says that the Buddhist monks live by Hollywood money. Noni wants to hear Maria Callas. She adds: "These monks are not vegetarians. What fresh vegetables grown in Tibet? And in fact, Buddha died of greed for pork" (*Inheritance of Loss* 196). The ladies also criticize Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism for they believe that no religion and no government could stop the crimes happening in India.

Indians don't buy Indian products. Father Booty supplies home-made cheese to the local restaurant. He persuades the manager of Glenary's Restaurant to switch from Amul. Products which come in factory tins with names stamped on them (with lots of advertisements) are considered better than anything made by local farmers. When Father Booty asks whether the manager doesn't want to support the local farmers, he says: "Quality control, Father! All-India reputation, name brand, customer respect, international standards of hygiene..." (*Inheritance of Loss* 193).

Sai's lover Gyan is a well-educated, sensible, young man. He belongs to the Gorkha community. His great grandfather is sent to Mesopotamia where the Turks kill him. Many of his family members fight and die in Burma, Gibraltar, Egypt, and Italy for the British army. He leads the poor life of native Indians. He is an active member of GNLF (Gorkha National Liberation Front) which fights for a separate Gorkhaland.

Gyan is the tuition teacher of Sai. They fall in love with each other. They roam around Kalimpong. When they visit a museum and views the exhibits of Tenzing and Hilary, Gyan claims that Tenzing is the real hero. He is a Sherpa, and without him Hilary couldn't have carried the bags. Tenzing may be the first. But Hilary has taken "the first step on behalf of the colonial enterprise of sticking the flag on what is not theirs" (*Inheritance of Loss* 155). Gyan asks Sai why she wants to celebrate Christmas. She has no answer for the question. Gyan complains that they are Hindus and don't celebrate Id, Guru Nanak's birthday, Durga Puja or Dussehra, or Tibetan New Year. He calls them 'slaves'. He rages that they are running after the West, getting nowhere else. They appear fools to the whole world. They are copy cats, imitating the English people. But the English don't want them. Gyan feels anti-secular and anti-Gandhian while shouting at Sai.

Gyan asks whether Sai and others try to be so westernized. He says that the Indians are ready to clean the toilets of English people even if they don't want them. He hates the company of Sai and her grandfather with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over the dark brown. He considers even the certificate from the Cambridge as an object to be ashamed of.

The GNLF starts the protests and announces strikes in Kalimpong. Gyan participates in the rally. When Sai questions about it, he speaks angrily with her. He tries to avoid seeing her. He thinks why he hates her recently. After a while, he could come out with a few issues about her:

She who could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she who could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum She who could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus; who had never been to a temple but for architectural interest; never chewed a *paan* and had not tried most sweets in the *mithaishop*, for they made her retch; she who left a Bollywood film so exhausted

from emotional wear and tear that she walked home like a sick person and lay in pieces on the sofa; she who thought it vulgar to put oil in your hair and used paper to clean her bottom; felt happier with so-called English vegetables, snap peas, French beans, spring onions, and feared – *loki, tinda, kathal, kaddu, patrel*, and the local *saag* in the market. (*Inheritance of Loss* 176)

Gyan has felt embarrassed while eating with Sai. He is puzzled about her finickiness and curtailed enjoyment. She doesn't like his slurps and smacks. With fake Englishness, Jemubhai eats even chapatis, puris, and parathas with knife and fork. He insists Sai also to do the same in his presence. Sai feels proud for her behavior. She considers it as a status symbol. Gyan thinks that she may be masking it as a shame for the lack of Indianness.

People like Bose, Jemubhai's old friend, speak against the English people. "What bastards they were! Goras – get away with everything, don't they? Bloody white people! They are responsible for all the crimes of the century" (*Inheritance of Loss* 206). He is happy that the English has left India at least in 1947. He says that they stay in Africa, still making trouble over there. According to him, the justice is always against the native as the world is still colonial. He speaks angrily only because he failed in a case to win a pension equal to that of a white ICS man. He bids even the farewell using English sentences (not Indian) like "Good night. Good-bye. So long."

The English have influenced the Indians in various ways. Being English in dress, food, hobby, habits, and manners is considered 'standard' in India. People like Jemubhai Patel, Sai, Noni, Lola, Mrs. Thondup, and Uncle Potty live English lives in India. They think the Indian culture is mundane or barbarian. They want to maintain their status by being English. Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* talks about the serious consequences of colonialism and depicts the Anglicized Indian culture in a splendid way.

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Remembering the Workers

Fathema Begum

One slipped
and fractured his foot,
one fell down
and broke his neck,
while climbing the
rickety scaffold,
stained the mother earth
with patches of scarlet blood.

Their dark bodies
glistened with sweat,
under the ripe sun of June.
They toiled with the body's
every tool:
the hand, the foot,
the neck, the shoulder
to raise that mammoth
house.

The house is raised
with sturdy pillars
to confront the earthquake,
measuring ten points,
on the Richter scale.
The walls painted

in lovely pink and blue,
balconies safe
with silvery grills,
the seven feet black gate,
high enough to foil
every pedestrian's temptation
to peer in.

The house felt proud
with gaudy lights,
teak wood furniture,
and modern amenities
singing lullaby
to the wax doll wife
and
pink cheeked cherubs.
Only the smell of
the workers' sweat and blood,
occasionally disturbed
the house's
immaculate dwellers.
That the rich landlord dispelled,
spraying the exotic
air freshener.

Short Story

Ways of Living

- Aju Mukhopadhyay

Since my childhood I learnt that my brother-in-law was a forest ranger, a member of the Indian Forest Service. I felt interested about it. More I heard agape the stories of the jungle from my sister and brother-in-law who at least once in a year visited us, more I envied his luck, while many of our relatives turned up their nose at the fate of my elder sister who moved with her husband in the vicinity of forests at distant places.

Nevertheless, the jungle stories have become a part of our family story. It seemed that my brother-in-law derived pleasure out of his service. Though liked I could not think of that life as my father expected me to be an entirely professional man like him. By the time I passed M.Sc my brother-in-law had become the Chief Conservator of Forests of Gujarat living in a sprawling bungalow in Ahmedabad. I wished to visit them before considering the next turn in my career. As expected, my childless sister welcomed me.

The Chief Conservator's job is mainly administrative and executive. He remained mainly in the Head Quarter of his office, rarely visiting jungles but I lulled my desire of going into one. A chance occurred when it was known that the Chief Minister of Gujarat, among many of his deeds and prides suddenly developed the pride for lions of his State. While tigers suffered loss and were going towards extinction everywhere, it was found that the Asian lion population was on the increase in the Sasan Gir forest Sanctuary in the Junagadh district of Gujarat. It is the only Asian Lion Sanctuary in India. Some conservators proposed that some of the lions be transferred to the other forest areas so lions may grow further in diversified habitats. Here came the point of pride and the tenacity to maintain it.

The Chief Minister declared that no lion would be given either as loan or as gift to any other forest for experiment and that it was Sasan

Gir which suited the lions most as the state maintained the forest and its inhabitants best in the country unlike other forests where endangered species of animals are on the decline. The talks and proposals ended there as none challenged him in such insignificant matter. It is at that point that the Chief Minister called the Chief Conservator of Forests to visit Gir and assess the situation to suggest methods and ways so that the sanctuary remains an example in the world where lions thrive best to grow in large numbers, even surpassing some of their African habitats.

The State's Chief Forest man knew of my interest. It is needless to add that he took me as his intimate companion as I reached them. The first two days were spent in meetings with all the forest officers of the Junagadh district. Many officers with their staff were sent before hand to the Sasan Gir to prepare the ground for our visit. And on a fine spring morning we left by car for the forest. The sanctuary lies in the Gujarat peninsula in South West India which is gifted with a terrain that is rugged with low hills and the vegetation is full of mixed deciduous. The beauty of this place is enhanced by the high-rise Jamun, Teak, Tendu and Dhak trees. These are mostly evergreen trees with broad leaves that provide the area a cool shade with moisture content. There are some rugged and deep ravines, steep rocky hills and plenty of rivers which intersperse with large patches of grasslands. This geographic composition heightens the charm of this place which accepts large number of tourists from several parts of the globe. The spring climate this time was tolerable and mild. Because of the special job assigned to the Forest Department no tourist was to be found during our visit.

At the gate of the forest we boarded a new jeep and the four of us including the driver moved with ease and comfort. After a 10 kilometre drive I found a strange animal to our right, coming out of the bushy area. Its whole body was, as if decorated with silver scales, very big and sparkling in the sun, moving swiftly in the open as if for fear of being caught by someone or for the shyness of being exposed to public view. Its tail was about three feet and the whole body of the animal might be some five feet or bit more. Its face was half hidden as down and it moved like a crocodile or mouse with a tangling effect; elusive and difficult to detect. We stopped quite at a distance and lo! There came a lion from another side followed by another three, all young and hungry it seemed. They immediately formed a group and conferred among them. Our guide suggested that we go back to the thick forested

area to see them from a cover. Accordingly the driver turned the jeep suitably.

One of the lions ran after the strange animal. Bewildered, it ran awkwardly wobbling for some time but when the lion with a roar charged it, the whole body of the prey rolled into a big iron ball instantly. The lion pounced on it with all force. By the force of the attack the ball rolled down the slope and the lion followed it followed by the other three; four kings of the animals. As it stopped in a muddy place, the lion with two big paws tried to tear it off. But the ball held its ground. Then came the other lions and tried one after the other, then two at a time, to hold it and to unroll it so they could tear off its soft flesh hidden inside the rolled body. It was a big skirmish, the prey hissing desperately with its tail binding its body, its groan reverberating in the valley with the outrageous roars of the lions. We remained like statues inside the jeep, deeply absorbed at this awful, eerie sight where such a small and insignificant animal was withstanding the ferocious attack from the body of giant animals. It became a challenge to the big cats which were young and hungry and there was no sign of a buffalo or antelope nearby. But in my heart I was surely favoring the strange animal to be saved from the killer savages.

For some half an hour that desperate hissing cry and the lions' suppressed roar and gnashing of the teeth continued. They pushed it from one side to the other as if to be kicked by another. After all efforts when the ball remained without relenting to any force, the lions decided to abandon it. One after the other they dispersed inside the jungle but two of them remained. They looked at each other and as if to make their last effort one of them pushed the prey with all force that seemed like a giant's kick. The iron ball of the strange animal rolled again between the rocks down to the unknown location. Neither we nor the lions could see it. All vanished before our eyes as if to a fairy land after enactment of the most tantalizing tale, an abject failure to a heroic predatory effort.

Quite for some time we neither spoke nor moved. The jeep was standing still. We were witnesses to the beautiful foliage and mild spring air in a vast forest land with the lions and other animals, with the tribal people. We were witness to a rare encounter between asymmetric animals.

It dawned on my mind that the lions were perhaps bored preying on big and known herbivores so they attempted to taste the oddly sweet unknown flesh which was perhaps one of their romantic adventures.

But this was unlike my earlier thought that there were no other animals nearby and that the lions were hungry. Perhaps taking the cue from my thought my brother-in-law spoke first, “It was a pangolin, a rare tubulidentate, neither edentate nor predentate mammal, which means they have neither front teeth nor exactly row of lower teeth but traversed teeth on the lower side, living shyly among well known beasts, feeding on termites only.” I was wondering how on termites only they live and how do they get so huge quantity of termites which we did not come across anywhere in the jungle. “But I have never heard of such innocent animals being attacked by lions. This is surely rare”, said my brother-in-law again. Our guide said that he too never heard of such a scene where lions in group attacked a small animal of such rare body. But he expressed his idea that this showed a rare mental frame of the predators, that they not only kill for food but for fun also sometimes and that they too are sometimes obstinate like the humans. He added that there was no dearth of herbivores in the area and that the lions usually have sufficient prey to depend on.

During our day long visit that day we saw more animals; lions, antelopes, wild boars, monkeys, birds and more of them but the first experience of the day engaged me in learning more about the wild life there, particularly about the pangolins. While my brother-in-law became my best teacher then and there, his other companions too helped me to know. While on the move I learnt from them that Manis or pangolins have the upper surface of the body covered with pine cone like large overlapping scales which seemed to be made of silver in the sun. The under surface of their body is soft and sparsely covered with hair. The animal’s natural defense is to roll itself up into a ball with the long tail wrapped round the body. With a length of three to five feet some are terrestrial some are arboreal. All feed on termites. They have some long tapering muzzles, long extensile tongue and other characteristics associated with animals living on a diet of termites. Their site and hearing are not acute but have sensitive taste and smell. The third toes of its front feet have enormously developed claws for digging out the termite’s nests. With one extended claw it is forced to walk like ant-eaters, pressing on the sides of its feet. They live on termites entirely, as if made to live like that with fitting body parts for the purpose. They rest at an angle on the tree trunk. In the tree dwelling species the tail is prehensile but it can also be pressed against the trunk so that the pointed scales dig into the bark. Using the tail in this way a pangolin

often clasps the trunk with the hind feet, throwing the weight of the body on to the tail, leaning backwards rigidly. “Do they do it instinctively to resemble a tree stump? But this hardly seems comfortable for them,” I opined.

To this my teacher replied in a very interesting way, based on his long experience about the wild animals, that peculiar are the ways of living things on earth, “otherwise who would approve of bat’s hanging throughout the night head down from the branches of a tree? Or a snake swallowing a snake of its size slowly, absorbing it into it?”- He asked.

My thirst was actually quenched to a great extent when I visited more wildlife areas later. But pangolins are really rare things to be seen. Frankly speaking, I did not see many. While their arboreal varieties can be spotted with trained eyes only, the land dwellers are rarely seen. My further study about pangolin has given me some rare insight about the animal which I wish to share with readers here.

Resembling a beast of medieval legend with its fantastic armament of overlapping scales like an antique coat of mail, the pangolin presents a strangely unreal appearance. It brings to mind the giant crocs or dinosaurs or such things in the animal kingdom which we never knew ourselves nor shall ever know really. Pangolin resembles a scaly ant-eater, an old world edentate mammal of Asia and Africa. It is usually grouped with sloth, armadillo and ant-eaters but really pangolin fits in a separate order of tubulidentate with pholidota and aardvark as it is not entirely toothless; only their front row is toothless.

More we see nature more we are amazed wondering about the varieties of living and life style which are so genuine that man’s imitative life styles in many cases seem artificial and bizarre. But that is what happens in the civilized societies as we see around us. If we think of man in different societies in times past we may easily find such varieties of life styles and ways of living as are beyond our comprehension. Why go to the remote past, just look at stories by Jack London like “One Thousand Dozen” or “The Law of Life”, look at life in Mumbai slums as seen by V.S. Naipaul in his “India a Million Mutinies Now” or life in his “Beyond Belief”; look at life as it was and as engineered by Stalin and Mao Ze-Dong around them, look at life in Tagore’s family and Mahasweta Devi’s “Mother of 1084”; the usual ways of living and life of a terrorist. Either by circumstances or by choice man leads different ways of living so different in types and nature that they are unthinkable by one who lives in another pole.

The ways of living of man is unthinkable even in dreams by those who have no idea of them, have not seen, experienced or read about them. Usually in dreams only one can see such animals as armadillo or pangolin if he ever day-dreamed them or such men he ever gave space in his heart for any reason, out of love or fear. There is no end to ways of life.

In spite of everything believable or unbelievable, the existence of Pangolin even now is truth.



Anna's Dream

- N. P. Singh

Anna is a visionary
a dreamer incorrigible
who thinks that
if the Parliament passed
the Jana Lokpal Bill
corruption—the monster
would simply vanish
from our hallowed land.

There would be
so much fear both
among bribe-givers
and bribe-takers
that the hydra-headed monster
would just run away.
Anna has a child's perception
of the way of the world
that sanctifies corruption.

If cast domination
and untouchability have flourished
in spite of Baba Saheb's agenda
the monster of corruption
would also survive
in spite of Anna's magnificent dream.

*A monster in Greek mythology whose many heads reappear after they are cut.

I would be, however, most happy
If I am proved wrong.
I may be right, who knows?

Whatever be the odds
the youth of our land
have reacted firmly
to Anna's call for a
corruption-free India
the Parliament has endorsed
the Jana Lokpal Bill
the media has supported it
the momentum generated
must not fizzle out at any cost.

It's our duty to see
that the battle against
the hydra-headed monster*
is carried out to its
ultimate logical conclusion.
No room for cynicism
and dark apprehensions!
It is a question
of now – or never.

Cultural Conflict in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

- Nirmal Sharma

Webster's *New World Encyclopedia* defines culture as "the way of life of a particular society or group of people, including patterns of thought, beliefs, behavior, customs, traditions, rituals, dress, and language, as well as art, music and literature." The problem arises in an individual's life when he/she gets inexorably mixed-up and messed-up with those of others in different spaces. They face cultural dilemma when their cultural practices are mocked at and when there is a threat to their ethnic and cultural identity. They stand befuddled and confused, nostalgic and homesick and also struggle to the discourse of power in various forms. The identities of these individuals and communities can neither be placed only in relation to some homeland to which they all long to return nor to that country where they settle down in. They, by all means, face the crisis of fusion or dual identities, which makes their existence all the more difficult.

Jhumpa Lahiri, the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *The Namesake*, is undeniably commendable for her magnificent discovery. In the book, the author portrays several themes through her writing including family relationship, identity loss, cultural conflicts and generation gap. Of them, the clash of cultures spreads throughout the whole book and so, appeals to the reader most considerably. The gorgeousness of the book lies in the skill with which the author juxtaposes images and memories from life in Calcutta with life in Boston. *The Namesake* is one of the most fascinating accounts of the immigrant experience. Moving between events in Calcutta, Boston, and New York City, the novel examines the nuances involved with being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social, and ideological differences. In an interview released by Houghton Mifflin Company, Lahiri remarks

that the novel is definitely about those “who are culturally displaced or those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously.” Addressing the themes of immigration and clash of cultures in *The Namesake*, Lahiri demonstrates how much of a struggle immigration can be. According to Dubey, “The immigrant experience is complicated as a sensitive immigrant finds himself or herself perpetually at a transit station fraught with memories of the original home which are struggling with the realities of the new world” (Dubey 22). This steady resistance is depicted in this novel, as original-generation-immigrants and their children struggle to find their places in society. As the Ganguli parents, particularly Ashima, resist with adapting to a different culture than they are used to, their children (Sonia and Gogol) struggle with trying to respect their roots while adapting to American society. The Ganguli’s desire is to raise Gogol and his sister with Bengali culture and values but, Gogol and Sonia grow up connecting mostly to their peers and surrounding culture in the United States.

Ashima, who comes to Boston after an approved marriage in Calcutta and clings to the letters from her family, reading and rereading her five Bengali novels and craving and missing her family and friends. She is continuously reminded of all that she has left behind and is aware of the altering set-up around her-in the environment, the people, the cookery, the values and the way of life. She dreads the panorama of bringing up her child here by herself. As she says: “I’m saying I do not want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It’s not right. I want to go back”(Lahiri 33). Once the baby is born however, she immerses herself in the task of bringing up the infant with Indian values and now finds a focus in her life that was missing before. Ashoke and Ashima are rooted in Bengali culture. Ashima is a distinctive Bengali woman who never addresses her husband by his name, prepares mixture of rice krispies, planter peanuts, and onions in a foreign land. She tries to follow all Bengali ceremonies for her children so that she can inculcate Indian values in them. For example the traditional naming process in their families: that is an elder gives the new baby a name. As-”This tradition does not exist for Bengalis, naming a son after father or Grandfather, a daughter after mother or grandmother. This sign of respect in America and Europe, this symbol of heritage and lineage, would be ridiculed in India. Within Bengali families, individual names are sacred, inviolable. They are not meant to be inherited or shared”(Lahiri 28). When they are not able to get the name from Ashima’s grandmother, Ashoke named

him Gogol due to the circumstances of his survival of a train wreck during which he was reading the work of the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. To learn their children Bengali culture, they most often attend Bengali social gatherings along them. The author shows how Ashima upholds her Indian culture living in modernized American society.

In the book cultural conflict arises because the parents of Gogol intend to grow their children in Indian culture, their children prefer to follow American culture. Going to Calcutta is a joy for them but the two children have no attachment to either India or their relatives. Gogol and his sister love Christmas more than Durga Puja and find Bengali cultural lessons boring. For their parents India is their desh (country) but “Gogol never thinks of India as desh (country). He thinks of it as Americans do, as India” (Lahiri 118).

Jhumpa Lahiri did a stupendous job by emerging cross-cultural issues in her book through the protagonist, Gogol. Throughout the book, he undergoes mixed cultural issues. His parents insist on following Bengali Culture while he wishes to practice American culture and life style which drives his mind to be “Americanized.” Like every American kid, Gogol ultimately moves away from home. He does not hate his parents. Far from it, he is very devoted to them. But the things they say do not interest him and their Indian way of life means nothing to him. He detests the way they hold on to Indian traditions and functions that are of no importance to his American mind. He hates it when his parents whisk them off to Calcutta, a place the couple still considers home, for months together, disturbing his entire schedule. In spite of his yearly sojourns to Calcutta, he does not feel bound to India as they are. Not only is this, throughout he pained by his name, Gogol. He feels uncomfortable with his identity. When he renames himself Nikhil, he assumes the existence he admires, and moves away from his Bengali heritage. He hardly ever calls his family and tries to gain acceptance by becoming a part of his American girlfriend’s life and reality. Like his American friends, Gogol drinks, smokes pot and has more than one romantic relationship and is able to disconnect himself from the memories of his girlfriends, notwithstanding with great difficulty. But this proves only the temporary escape. There, he constantly compares his own parents with hers and is far more comfortable with them. Gogol confesses: “Yet he cannot picture his family occupying a house like this, playing board games on rainy afternoons, watching shooting stars at night, all their relatives gathered neatly on a small strip of sand. It is

an impulse his parents have never felt, this need to be so far from things” (Lahiri 155).

Gogol keeps on running away from his culture. He falls in love with a white girl named Maxine and enjoys the company of her parents but feels ashamed of his own parents because they do not fit into American culture. Right from his early days, he has been rebellious. He changes his name from Gogol to Nikhil which is in fact a Manifestation of his protest. In acts of disobedience, he loses his virginity at a party. He has a short affair with a white girl called Ruth. Later he has a more durable affair with Maxine, another well to do white girl, but somehow he has been drawn towards his origin, somehow “he is conscious of the fact that his engagement in Maxine’s family is betrayal of his own”(Lahiri 141). The drastic change comes in his life when he gets the news of his father’s death. His father’s death is a shock to him and he wants to remember his father in hours of privacy, in the sanctity of his memory. Gogol, thus, begins to understand his father better. His father’s sudden death affects him profoundly as he learns to connect with him and his past. Monika Sharma rightly points out:

In the death of his father, he finds a beginning, and awareness and understanding of community and of the place of the individual within family in society. The hour of personal grief unites him of his family and makes him accept their ways. The ambivalence of his in-between states ceases to vex him any more. Responding to the binary oppositional, he eventually discovers and resuscitates his Indian roots and familial ties (Sharma 56).

Something inside of Gogol changes. He slowly withdraws from Maxine as he tries to sort out his emotion. Maxine tries to pressure him to open up to her. Gogol breaks off the relationship and begins to spend more time with his mother and sister, Sonia.

Later, when Gogol’s mother suggests that Gogol call the Bengalese daughter of her friend, Gogol resists, for a little while. Then he gives in, somewhat curious about dating Moushumi. As Gogol slowly realized the importance of his family and his culture, he marries Moushumi, the Bengalese woman in Indian Tradition. All the rituals make no sense to him as a child but he dutifully performs all of them after his father, Ashoke passes away. The story appears to have finally come to a happy conclusion. Gogol and Moushumi are married. But this is not a romantic happily- ever- after tale. Moushumi, who was a quiet and shy young teen, has tasted freedom in her twenties, a freedom from her parents

and their strict Bengali ways. It was as if she was taking revenge upon herself:

With no hesitation, she had allowed men to seduce her in cafes, in parks, while she gazed at paintings in museums. She gave herself openly, completely, not caring about the consequence. . . . She allowed the men to buy her drinks, dinners, later to take her in taxis to their apartments, in neighborhoods she had not yet discovered on her own. . . . There were days she slept with one man after lunch, another after dinner (Lahiri 215).

Now Moushumi feels restricted in her marriage, no matter how well Gogol treats her. She turns away from him. Moushumi and Gogol divorce because- “They have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima’s generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, and to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness. That pressure has given way, in the case of the subsequent generation, to American common sense” (Lahiri 276).

The story ends with Ashima selling the family home so she can live in India with her siblings for half of the year. Now she has learned to do things on her own, and though “She still wear saris, still puts her long hair in a bun, she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta. She will return to India with an American passport. In her wallet will remain her Massachusetts driver’s license, her social security card” (Lahiri 276). Sonia is preparing to marry an American man named Ben. Gogol is once again alone. But he feels comforted by one thing: before his father died, he finally told his son why he had chosen that name for him. By the end of the novel, Gogol has come to accept his name and picks up a collection of the Russian author’s stories that his father had given him as a birthday present many years ago. He begins to assume his family’s history as a series of accidents-from his father’s train crash to his doomed marriage. The book ends with him thinking that he is now free to do what pleases him without the expectations of either his family or the demands of American society. Finally, Gogol is able to come to terms with his name and his roots.

Thus, in the novel, the cultural conflict is shown in a sophisticated manner. One can feel the pain of the parents who make every effort to keep children intact with their Indian roots. However, one can also understand the misery of children who have to deal with two different worlds. What is right in one culture is unacceptable in another. *The Namesake* is about this everlasting dilemma faced by immigrants as they

struggle to maintain their identities while trying to shake them off at the same time. It is about the series of distressing choices they are forced to make every day as they try hard to avoid being misfits in a foreign land. *The Namesake* might not be the most genuine depiction of the Indian- American experience, but even with its one dimensional approach, it images to make a profound impact.

Jhumpa Lahiri herself is a victim of mixed culture. Though she was born in London, she was grown up in US. She dealt with the same problem like Gogol. *The Namesake* perhaps is a complete representation of her own life and experience. In this regard, the author deserves triumph as she has been able to represent the cultural issues through Gogol and Ashima. The author has shaped the characters in a way that it attracts the reader mostly. By the book, the author conveys a message that one can change her lifestyle or culture, but one can not forget her culture forever. Besides, the book reminds the reader that no matter where one stays but one cannot ignore one's culture.

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Magical Realism in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

- Shima Sadat Mirmousa

One of the most celebrated classics among Carter's fictional works which has received considerable critical acclaim is *The Bloody Chamber*. Although the story has been widely acclaimed by critics particularly due to its concern with the aspects of feminism, fairy tale and mythology, it would be difficult to imagine discussing the work of Angela Carter without obvious references to magical realism. This can be partially proved through *The Bloody Chamber*, written in a very important decade in Carter's writing career in terms of her deployment of magical realism in her literary discourse. Therefore, this critical discussion of the story aims to extract the elements of magical realism incorporated within the text and reveal Carter's vision of a slice of life.

The story deftly delineates the teenage life of a poor anonymous heroine who is attracted to an old wealthy Marquis. Even after realizing that he has been married a number of times, she weds him and leaves her girlhood behind. Having conducted the wedding ceremony and performed particular formalities, the newly-married couple goes away to live in a magnificent ancestral castle where the heroine is totally astonished by its opulence and wealth. Soon after, the Marquis is called for a business trip and leaves the woman with keys to every room and permits her to enter any room she wishes except for one particular room. Entering the forbidden chamber out of curiosity and encountering the mutilated bodies of Marquis's previous wives, she realizes the sadistic and perverse nature of his husband and the fact that she herself will be soon murdered as well. She tries in vain to remove the blood stain which is conspicuously sticking to the key, since it was dropped on the bloody floor until Marquis, who is back from the trip, notices the bloody mark and learns that she has violated his commands and has stepped into

the bloody chamber. He presses the key forcefully on her forehead and lets the blood stain remain there forever and asks her to get rightly prepared for decapitation. After a while, the heroine's mother arrives, shoots Marquis dead and destroys his evil design. The heroine survives and lives happily ever after with the red heart-shaped bloody mark on her forehead.

Carter adopts Seymour Menton's view and "emphasizes the improbable, unexpected, and surprising BUT real elements of the real world" (qtd. in Faris 223). She opens her story into the real world of Paris and depicts realistic events and characters that one can find in the extra textual world as well. Getting married and going away from the family, being taken care of by a nurse, going to the opera and watching the performance, and traveling by train as well as the mother's concern for her daughter suffice to prove the point. Then, towards the middle of the story, she very subtly inserts the supernatural and improbable while artistically maintaining the realistic narrative space she had opened the story with. This subtle juxtaposition of the real and the element of fantasy is the main characteristic of magical realism neatly employed throughout the story. The supernatural included is the marvelous castle, the bloody chamber, bleeding dead body, transferring the blood stain from the key into the young bride's forehead and leaving a bloody mark forever, and so on.

According to the views of a number of major critics, matter-of-fact narration of the supernatural and improbable is one of the most distinguishing features of magical realism employed time and again by magical realist writers like Hegerfeldt, Bowers, Amaryll Chanady, Faris, Patricia Hart etc. The narrators of the magical realist texts give a baffling realistic, precise and elaborate description of the events that actually transport the reader with them to the heart of the events. This causes the reader to believe in the supernatural casting no doubts on the occurrences of the unlikely happenings even in reality. This can be seen in the weird and magical space of the bloody chamber in which the narrator finds the dead bodies along with instruments of mutilation. The events in this monstrous chamber are depicted in detail and in a matter-of-fact style that leaves no hesitation for the reader and makes him/her believe in the improbable. The young widow, for instance, finds a naked body in a coffin and imagines she is "trying to clamber out":

The opera singer lay, quite naked, under a thin sheet of very rare and precious linen...I touched her, very gently, on the white

breast; she was cool, he had embalmed her. On her throat I could see the blue imprint of his strangler's fingers. The cool, sad flame of the candles flickered on her white, closed eyelids. The worst thing was, the dead lips smiled. (Carter 36)

Further, in the middle of the shadows, she witnesses a skull hanged from the ceiling "And this skull was strung up by a system of unseen chords, so that it appeared to hang, disembodied, in the still, heavy air, and it had been crowned with a wreath of white roses, and a veil of lace..." (Carter 36).

These as well as other mind-boggling items all are the details of improbabilities which are narrated matter-of-factly in a realistic setting and are proved probable not only at the textual level but at the extra textual level as well. Later in the story, we notice two salient supernatural events made natural through the matter-of-fact narration. One is the heroine's failure to remove the stubborn blood stain out of the key despite all her efforts: "Crimson water swirled down the basin but, as if the key itself were hurt, the bloody token stuck" (Carter 42). Washing it under the hot water or scrubbing with her nail brush was of no use: "...the more [she] scrubbed the key, the more vivid grew the stain" (Carter 42). And the other magical occasion is when Marquis, the antagonist, presses the bloody key into the heroine's forehead "to the space between the eyebrows" (Carter 46) and leaves a heart-shaped bloody stain forever on her forehead: "No paint nor powder, no matter how thick or white, can mask that red mark on my forehead" (Carter 52). The reader initially might ask himself/herself whether it is possible that the blood stain remains permanently on her forehead and cannot be erased however hard she tries. However, Carter sets these unreal phenomena in an astonishingly realistic and familiar setting throughout the whole story that leave almost no skeptical space for the reader to question the validity of the claims and to pose such questions. There is no other way for the reader but to surrender him/herself to the supernatural. None the less, depending on the readers' beliefs and cultural systems, they might either hesitate over the authenticity and reality of the text in general and this fantastic event in particular, or accept the supernatural. The latter occurs only due to the technique of the matter-of-fact narration the text suggests here.

Correspondingly, in her secondary list of specification of the magical realism which she believes serves less to distinguish magical realism from the rest of contemporary literature than to situate it within

postmodernism, Faris introduces us with a narrative naïveté “addressed as fresh, childlike, [and] even primitive” (177). She asserts that “wonders are recounted largely without comment, in a matter-of-fact way, accepted—presumably—as a child would accept them, without undue questioning or reflection” (Faris 177). Carter not only goes about the business of matter-of-fact narration so that the readers accept the occult in a fresh and childlike manner but also presents a different kind of freshness and deals with the freshness of patriarchal terror. This is when the new bride feels a dreadful anguish and terror to undergo a similar impending calamity suggested by those mutilated bodies of earlier wives lined up by the Marquis.

Repetition as a narrative principle plays another significant role within magical realist writing. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a distinguished and of course an influential paradigm of magical realism, Gabriel Garcia Marquez uses the repetition through circulation of magic among the whole lineage. One illustrative example of such repetition is the births of children with pig’s tail as an inherited deformity in the entire genealogy. In the same fashion, Carter employs explicit repetitions in *The Bloody Chamber* which have been tied to the ancestral line of magic and improbability. At the very beginning, for instance, the protagonist is gifted an ancestral opal ring which is Marquis’s “own mother’s ring, and his grandmother’s, and her mother’s before that, given to an ancestor by Catherine de Medici...every bride that came to this castle wore it...” (Carter 10). The narrative principle of mirroring is also indicated through the depiction of martyrdom of different brides, albeit in various forms by the Marquis who makes a monstrous “museum of his perversity” out of the mutilated bodies (Carter 35). The repeating act of mutilation occurs not only by Marquis himself, but it has been performed by his ancestors as well. The piano tuner, the narrator’s friend claims that “there was a Marquis, once, who used to hunt young girls on the mainland...” and his grandfather had heard from his grandfather “how the Marquis pulled a head out of his saddle bag and showed it to the blacksmith And it was the head of the blacksmith’s wife” (Carter 41). Therefore, towards the end of the text, it is clear that the young widow has stepped into the territory where the Marquises wallow in mutilation of brides, the Castle of Murder. But eventually, this ghastly ancestral chain is ruptured through the assassination of Marquis himself. Such repetitions play between history and present, between making us wonder whether we control history or it controls us.

Unintentionally and helplessly, just as this young bride, we sometimes surrender to the events and have no control over them. Dozen mirrors surrounding the bedroom through which the young bride can watch “more white lilies”, “a dozen husbands approach [her]” (Carter 17) as well as the white lilies she sees again and again in different rooms of the castle are other illustrations for the repetition and mirroring pattern in *The Bloody Chamber* bordering on surrealism.

In the very first chapter of the *Ordinary Enchantments*, Faris suggests five primary characteristics of magical realism all of which are well- incorporated into the story: the presence of “irreducible element” of magic, phenomenal world, unsettling doubts, different realms as well as temporal/ spatial uncertainty (7). She states that “magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity” (Faris 7). Not only Faris but Patricia Hart and other literary critics are on the view of the disorientation bordering on distortion of the notions of time and space in the magical realist writing (223). In *the Bloody Chamber*, our usual sense of time is shaken from the time the protagonist first goes to that “private slaughterhouse” and encounters unusual phenomena there; time had passed vary slowly and the hands of “the precious little clock... had scarcely moved one single hour forward” as if the cruel and grotesque Marquis takes control of that: “Time was his servant, too; it would trap me...” (Carter 38). Apart from the temporal aspect, one encounters the spatial indeterminacy as well, that is, the suspension of the castle in between. As the name suggests, the oxymoronic genre of magical realism neither lies on the realm of magic nor real but a space in which do the realistic and the magical coexist. That is why Faris believes that the magical realist narratives do create the space of the “ineffable in-between” which makes not only the characters but the reader at the state of being suspended (45). This in-betweenness, the suspension feature of magical realism, is explicitly referred to in *The Bloody Chamber*. The “legendary habitation” wherein the heroine settles, a “fairy castle whose walls were made of foam” (Carter 8), is told to be “neither on the land nor on the water, a mysterious, amphibious place, contravening the materiality of both earth and the waves” (Carter 15). This existing on the threshold between two places or states of being, accords with the liminal quality of magical realism, a particular narrative space called the space of the “ineffable in-between” by Faris and indicates the spatial uncertainty.

Still another textual feature causes the story to fall under magical realist rubric is the enjoyment of the elements of grotesque. Andrew Hock-soon Ng explains about the grotesque and argues that it is “ambiguous, suggesting at once physical distortion and interior corruption” (166). And since the story makes reference at some stage to both bodily and mental distortion of Marquis, he can be identified as a grotesque figure. Carter introduces Marquis as a “huge man, an enormous man” whose “eyes [are] dark and motionless as those eyes the ancient Egyptians painted upon their sarcophagi” (Carter 14). He is represented as a “grave satyr” (Carter 23) with a leonine and “grotesque carnival head” (Carter 14) whom the young bride is afraid “not so much of him [but] of his monstrous presence” (Carter 24). He is “heavy as if he had been gifted at birth with more specific gravity than the rest of us” (Carter 24). The unnamed heroin “seemed reborn in his unreflective eyes, reborn in unfamiliar shapes” (Carter 25). Thus, to look into the view of the grotesque’s most meticulous critic, Mikhail Bakhtin who argues that the grotesque body ‘becomes grandiose, exaggerated and immeasurable’, Marquis’s body has certainly grotesque aspect to it (qtd. in Stoddart 29). Not only the Marquis but also his “grand, hereditary matrimonial bed” with huge size of “her little room at home” and the “gargoyles carved on its surface of ebony” (Carter 17) is also presented as grotesque.

And finally, Carter’s excessive use of various gestures to other literary works can be another factor, though a minor one, to treat the story as a work of magical realism. Mary Kaiser differentiates between intertextuality and allusion and states that the latter “gestures toward another text without taking on its entire context” (30). It is noteworthy that every work of magical realism does not necessarily contain allusion, though in most of the cases we do witness. Mythical allusions to the *Pandora’s box* and *satyr*, biblical allusions to the Eve and Cain, intertextual allusions to Romeo and Juliet are some illustrative examples of allusion in the story that suffice to be mentioned here. The result is a challenging dystopian magic realist text that by terms is mocking, shocking, frightening and laced with estranged sympathy which always pushes the boundaries.

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Faith

Fathema Begum

My mother plump with swelling feet.
Pain lodged in body's every joint.
Eyes blinded by age and cataract,
But holds in hand
Faith's big blazing candle.
Plants it in the house's centre
To drive away the skepticism,
Spreading its pitchy black wings
To darken her children's
Lustrous souls.

Second Creator

G. Manjulatha Devi

Nature bows feminine power
A Second Creator, as she be
Of a Being born to tower
Vice or virtue; wait and see

Grief endured; brow unrisen
She shapes New Life in her womb
Task onerous but hopes risen
She makes this endeavor with
aplomb

God obscure to human eye
She is His visible power
Battle searing; Death so nigh
Protects Life but wear no armor

Women, Nature and Native: An Ecofeminist Reading of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*

- Jubimol K. G.

Women and nature are closely associated in many, if not all cultures. We associate women with nature because of their natural function of reproduction and nurturing. 'Mother Earth,' 'Mother Nature,' 'Virgin Land,' 'Barren River,' 'Flowery Women,' describing women as 'chicks,' 'cow,' 'bitch' etc are some usages that linguistically and symbolically connect earth to female and female to earthly or animal like. All these commonly used metaphors show not only earth as our mother but also show the land as passive and suitable for exploitation. These metaphors of domination and subjugation once again tie women and nature into a new relationship—dominated, exploited and objectified by patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society.

Increasing awareness of this direct connection between the domination of women and oppression of nature gave rise to Ecofeminism, a combination of feminism and ecological movements of the early 1970's. Ecofeminism arises out of the struggles of women to sustain themselves, their families and communities. Ecofeminists insist that the domination of women and the oppression of nature in patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society have gone hand in hand. It is not only women who are portrayed as being closer to nature but the oppressed races and social classes have also been closely associated with nature and falls into the category of 'the Other' with women and nature. Karen J. Warren, a prominent ecofeminist philosopher, argues that women's oppression is interwoven with class, race, species and environmental oppression, as all forms of oppression are based on 'value-hierarchical thinking,' 'value-dualism,' and 'the logic of domination.' This very idea is clearly captured in Warren's ecofeminist phrase, 'It's all connected.'

Greta Gaard in her essay “Living interconnections with Animals and Nature” writes: “Ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature” (1).

Ecofeminist literature highlights the patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society’s exploitation of women, nature and the minorities represented in different literary works. It exposes the power structure by rejecting the notion of absolute difference and the entire binary constructs and makes us more aware of the interconnectedness of all life. Native American women’s writing is a rich area for ecofeminist study as these writings include the voices from the margins. In these writings, women, nature and the natives are shown as sharing the same history of domination and exploitation in the western patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society. The Native American women writers like Leslie Marmon Silko blends the western literary forms with the oral traditions of her Laguna Pueblo heritage to communicate her Native American concepts concerning nature, femininity, tribal traditions and their relevance in the present situation. Silko’s novel *Ceremony* is a fine example for this. *Ceremony* tells the story of Tayo, a World War II veteran of mixed Laguna Pueblo and White heritage haunted by his war experiences. The novel is all about how Tayo understands the destructive nature of the western patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society and how his struggles to find his true self, revives the ethos of his tribe and his tie with Mother Earth. Throughout the novel Silko criticizes the western patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society for its unfair treatment of women, animals, nature, natives and the indigenous culture.

This paper incorporates Silko’s feminist and ecological concerning in her novel *Ceremony*. This reading will reveal the following ecofeminist ideas. The western patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist society’s attempts to dehumanize women, natives, animals and the environment, the correlation between different levels of domination (racism, sexism, speciesism) and environmental degradation, commercializing women, nature and the natives, the conflict between men and women, human and nature, and culture and nature presented through the conflict between the Anglo and Native cultures, the interface between self, identity and landscaping, women and nature portrayed as healers and sustainers of all life and lastly Silko’s assert for the need to establish a reciprocal community that intertwines men, women and nature equally and naturally.

Returning to his home, the reservation at Laguna, after a period at the Los Angeles Veteran's Hospital, Tayo struggles to recover from the mental trauma of fighting in World War II as well as from an ever-present feeling of being an outsider in his family and in his community as a half breed. He is driven insane by thinking that he saw his uncle Josiah's face among a crowd of Japanese soldiers he was ordered to shoot and then of watching his cousin Rocky killed by the Japanese. As a result his day and night are haunted by the war memories. He also finds himself responsible for the drought which is ruining the Laguna people. Tayo feels himself as dead and everything as dying. His white doctor drugs him into senselessness as he is unable to understand and cure his inner turmoil and simply terms it as "battle fatigue" (31).

Tayo's mental struggle is the result of his alienation from his Laguna Pablo ancestry. So his cure rests on a journey back to his maternal past which would unit him back to their ancient stories and rituals. The Anglo culture had destroyed the Native Americans, their land, animals, their tie with nature and left them in an in-between, self-doubting state. Silko presents the cultural dilemma of her people through Tayo's individual struggle for his identity. Native American land was beautiful and untouched like a virgin before the white people came. Their years long farming and hunting never endangered the land and its animals as they were able to live on natural goods without harming nature. But when the white men came they stole their land, destroyed it and substituted it with their culture of "dead objects: the plastic and neon, the concrete and steel" (204). They separated the natives from their land and forced them to live in Laguna reservations in poverty and crisis. More over the racial discrimination and devaluation forced them to be ashamed of their native ancestry. The young generations of Laguna reservation were even ready to die for the country that seized their land because in army uniforms they "didn't look different no more. They got respect"(42). Unfortunately, as the war ended the discrimination returned. The post-traumatic stress disorder and their inferior status forced all of Tayo's childhood friends Harley, Leroy, Emo and Pinkie, who fought in war, to find relief in alcohol. Thus the Anglo culture and their war created an atmosphere of violence and drunkenness in Laguna.

Ceremony presents the completely opposing attitudes of white men and the natives toward the land. White people see the land and animals as an object for exploitation and a ladder for making progress. But the natives worshipped it as their creator and sustainer. They even respected

the animal spirit and performed the tradition of sprinkling a killed deer with cornmeal in order to free its spirit and appreciate the deer for giving up its life for the people. The novel shows how white teachers in reservation school taught the natives a completely different view of nature and animals. They taught them to kill the frogs for dissection and flies as “they are bad and carry sickness” (101). They laughed at the native beliefs that killing frogs bring terrible flood. The people like Rocky, who refuses to perform the ritual for the spirit of a deer they hunted and calls it a superstition, an old Mexican man, who use sticky flypaper and a “red rubber fly swatter” (101) to kill the flies, Harley, who proclaims that animals are not “worth anything anyway” (23) and Emo who tramples ants with his boots, squashes and kicks around melons just for fun and tries to trap Tayo because of internalized racism, are perfect examples for the changed natives who lost their tie with their land, animals and people by adopting the white ways. Even Tayo, when Rocky was killed, takes his grief and frustration out on the flies and curses the heavy rain in the forest of Philippines. He slapped the flies and smashed them between his hands. This action proves how Tayo, as a soldier in the white army, has “grow away from the plants and animals” (135) and forgot Josiah’s ethics that flies are sacred for they asked forgiveness for the people and save them from death.

The White loggers robbed the trees, stripped the canyons, cleared the plateau slopes, killed “ten or fifteen deer each week and fifty wild turkeys in one month” for feeding the entire logging camp and “shot the bears and mountain lions for sport” (186). They also hunted the more adaptable Mexican cattle for fun: “They rode massive powerful roping horses that were capable of jerking down a steer running full speed, knocking the animal unconscious and frequently injuring or killing it” (212). In another instance, the petrol men, who capture Tayo for trespassing, leave him in order to hunt the Mountain lion, a rare species than a native to make their white boss happy. Its rarity never stops them to exploit it but increases their inner quest to hunt it. The Mountain Lion and Tayo here stands in the same status- ‘the Other’. Here we can trace a connection between racism, sexism and speciesism as women are also considered as “the Other”, dominated and exploited like the natives and animals to satisfy men’s desires. This novel here proves how the anthropocentric ideologies of these men, that is; the earth exist for humans, result in environmental degradation and the mass extinction of innocent animals. The Tayo’s memories of the past prove

how the white man's culture, their wars and the constant drought left him with few animals and no family.

The Laguna land and its people have been also damaged by the Uranium mine. It intensified the agricultural crisis, polluted the reservation lands and caused severe health problems. Silko through her novel here throws light on the painful realities in the late 1970s like the severe lung diseases among Navajo uranium miners caused by the underground uranium mines during the 1940s-1960s.

The white culture not only exploited the Laguna land, animals and men but also oppressed its women and destroyed its goddess worshipping culture. The situation of a mother and son in Gallup, and that of Helen Jean proves the worst treatment of women by White men. The white culture promoted alcoholism and prostitution which result in the abandonment of half-breed, fatherless children like Tayo. Not only the Whites but also the Natives, who followed the white society, contributed to devalue and dehumanize women and nature. As Emo says, "They took our land, they took everything! So let's get our hands on white women!" (55). Here the exploitation of the land by white men resulted in the exploitation of white women by the natives which proves the ecofeminist argument of parallel domination of women and nature. Emo also associates white women to "white pussy" (59) and the arid mother earth to an old barren woman. This is again a perfect example for the use of sexist language which devaluates women and nature. Emo's comment also devaluates his Laguna ancestral beliefs which connect women and nature in a positive way. In Laguna culture the universe and all life were made by a female Creator, Thought Woman. They believed in the equality and interdependency of Thought Women, Corn Women and the Sun Father. But the white man's culture and their religion replaced the goddess worshipping culture with its male God, who created the man first and then a woman, which gave a chance for men to categorize women as a second sex. Here colonialism like patriarchy developed silencing the goddess worshipping cultures and created their racist and sexist culture in which women and nature seem to exist only to serve a hierarchical, male-oriented system. This again shows a connection between racism and sexism.

In *Ceremony*, Silko tries to bring back the traditional equality of men and women which permits them to do whatever they like. Ceremony presents two strong female characters who represent the creative power and the feminine aspect of Mother Earth by which they are able to heal

and teach the importance of harmony among the earth, the animals, the plants and the people. They are Night Swan and Ts'eh who helps Tayo to find his true self. Night Swan is Josiah's girl friend, a Mexican woman and a dancer who seduces Tayo in order to teach him about mixed heritage and change. Like the thirsty earth has needed the rain to revive, Tayo has needed Night Swan to start a new course of his life. It is she who gives advice to Josiah to buy some Mexican cattle that helps Tayo in his recovery process.

Ts'eh, a sacred figure in Laguna cosmology, and her love help Tayo to get out of his post-traumatic stress disorder and begin his final stage of ceremony. She made Tayo to feel alive. Silko writes: "being alive was all right then: he had not breathed like that for a long time" (181). She also teaches him the importance of wild herbs, plants, animals, insects and love. Then he begins to absorb the natural feeling again. He started seeing animals around him, heard their sound and above all started respecting their life. It is she who corrects Tayo, who hated the insects which circled on Rocky's dead body, by telling him that they are not evil but necessary for our survival. Thus Ts'eh represents the ecofeminist ethics by believing in the democracy of all life. These women characters like 'the Spring', which continues to produce water even in severe droughts and 'the Mountain lion' which helps Tayo, help and heal him.

The white men, introduced capitalism in Laguna. The Gallup Ceremonial in which the traditional dances lost their ceremonial value and are performed only to entertain the tourists and the Santa Fe Calendars which Josiah used to bring home every year are some examples which prove how the Native Americans and their culture are exploited for their commercial value. They also commercialize women by forcing them to live by selling their body. Here *Ceremony* presents the oppressive nature of capitalism which only promotes the destruction of women, nature, natives and the indigenous cultures like patriarchal/colonialist society.

Silko weaves animal stories and Laguna myths with its extremely powerful characters like Thought Woman, Corn Mother, and Sun Father in *Ceremony* to give a fabulous dimension to her novel. In *Ceremony* Silko tells the story of how Corn Mother became very angry with people and took away the plants and rain clouds, and didn't allow any baby animals to be born only because people abandoned her and believed in an evil Ck' o' yo magician. This makes us remember Josiah's teaching

to Tayo that drought happens when people forget nature. In another myth Silko tells the story of Sun God in which The Spider Women helps him to free the imprisoned clouds as Night Swan and Te-sh who embodies the Spider women helped Tayo to find his imprisoned identity. Silko in her animal stories tells the story of a fly, humming bird and buzzard who serve as messengers for people and ask forgiveness for people's mistakes. Again in a story told by the witch who had predicted the arrival of "*white skin people*" on Indian land summarizes the destructive nature of the white culture:

Then they grow away from the earth
then they grow away from the sun
then they grow away from the plants and animals.
They see no life.
When they look
they see only objects.
The world is a dead thing for them
the trees and rivers are not alive.
The deer and bear are objects
They see no life. (135)

The natives who assimilate to this white culture starts growing away from their traditional values which stands for living in harmony with all life.

Silko insists that the white men have destroyed their tradition so they need to revive it in order to survive. Where the traditional medicine man, Ku'oosh and the White doctor failed, Betonie, a half-Mexican, who integrates the white's culture into traditional rituals, is able to help Tayo to find his identity and a new ceremony. Betonie tells Tayo that the whites only think they own the land, but in fact no one can own the land. Here Betonies comment shatters all the systems- patriarchy/ capitalism/and colonialism, which promotes the male ownership of land that results in the exploitation of land and women. Like Betonie, Josiah's Mexican cattle, another symbol of mixed ancestry, help Tayo to survive while others perish. These cattle that are close to nature do not stand stupidly around artificial water tanks like the Herefords but find their own food and water in desert lands and taught Tayo to survive by his own native ability. Tayo takes the uranium mine in the hills to complete his ceremony as this is most deeply and visibly wounded part of Laguna and a strong symbol of cultural mixing.

In *Ceremony* we can trace an inextricable linkage among the self, identity and landscaping as it draws from Silko's own identity struggle as mixed Laguna Pablo, White and Mexican ancestry and the land where she grew up. Through *Ceremony* Silko tries to preserve the Native American culture, its traditions, its tie with nature, animals and women in combination with the changing reality of cultural mixing.

Though Silko had to choose a male protagonist for her novel, as no Native American women served in World War II, actually gave her a chance to show that men can also contribute to create an ecofeminist future like Tayo by rejecting the patriarchal/capitalist/colonialist ideologies and creating a society where difference never breeds domination. Thus, *Ceremony* is a novel written to enlighten and change us with a message of healing and reconciliation between sexes, races and the environment.

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Interventionist/Constitutive Potentials in Sarojini Sahoo's *Waiting for Manna*

- Sangeeta Singh

“It is easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, and it costs no effort... But who fight the current and struggle it, know what the demands are and what it costs to meet them” (Dalmia 13).

Sarojini Sahoo is a distinguished bilingual South Asian feminist writer, well known for her frankness. She is a prime figure and trendsetter of feminism in contemporary Indian literature who has emerged as a writer crusading for the cause of feminism through various experimentations in fiction. Her stories and novels have become ‘no-holds-barred’ exploration into the ‘feminist self’ of a ‘female soul.’ This paper attempts to explore the interventionist potentials in the four short stories from the anthology *Waiting for Manna* by Sarojini Sahoo. The focus of this paper is to discuss how far Sarojini Sahoo has been successful in creating an alternative construct of woman’s identity in terms of her sexuality. This paper addresses to foreground conscious subversion of traditional notions of womanhood, in particular her sexuality. Further, this paper explores the narratives as a means to articulate counter cultural spaces for women.

Sarojini Sahoo’s writing is marked with a female consciousness, body and experience as a woman. Her stories and novels depict a feminine sensibility. She argues that women cannot deny their body, their sexual differentiation but consider it a source rather than a limitation and a disadvantaged destiny. In her blog ‘Sense & Sensuality,’ she writes “Let us emphasize our femininity rather than impose the so-called stereotyped feministic attitude of the second wave.” As an Indian feminist, many of Sarojini Sahoo’s writings deal candidly with female

sexuality, the emotional lives of women, and the intricate fabric of human relationships. She delineates explicitly about the interior experiences of women and points out how their 'burgeoning sexuality' is seen as a threat to traditional patriarchal societies. This anthology is *avant garde* fiction in the Indian context as it raises questions about issues that have never been discussed so far in any Indian discourse. Sahoo accepts feminism as an integral part of femaleness separate from the masculine world. Writing with a heightened awareness of women's bodies, she has developed an appropriate style that exploits openness, fragmentation, and nonlinearity. Sahoo, however contents that while the woman's identity is certainly constitutionally different from that of man; men and women still share a basic human equality. Thus, the harmful asymmetric sex /gender "Othering" arises accidentally and 'passively' from natural, unavoidable intersubjectivity. Hence, it is quite evident that at ontological level there is differentiation of gender but it does not imply gender discrimination.

Sahoo's feminism prioritizes the sexual politics of a woman over other issues. She identifies women's [sexual liberation](#) as the real motive behind women's movement. In South Asian Outlook, an e-magazine published from Canada, Menka Walia writes: "Sahoo typically evolves her stories around Indian women and sexuality, which is something not commonly written about, but is rather discouraged in a traditionalist society." Sarojini's novels and short stories treat women as sexual beings and probe culturally sensitive topics such as rape, motherhood and marriage from a female perspective. *Waiting for Manna* consists of ten short stories out of which six stories are related to female world. The protagonist's refusal to be completely absorbed into the cultural system within which she finds herself placed is the cut off point in all the stories. For this paper, I have chosen four of her stories which include 'Waiting for Manna,' 'Threshold,' 'Few Pages from Vacant lots,' and 'Rape.'

The first story 'Waiting for Manna' is about a childless woman Paramita who is obsessed about having a baby and is under a constant fear and a sense of insecurity. And when she has a baby she questions the futility of becoming a mother at the cost of woman's identity. Since she is admitted to a hospital for few days before delivery, she gets a chance to interact and observe people from close quarters.

"I don't need any thing, neither children, nor family. Jayanti began to sob as she rose to speak. I am so far without a child, what if I don't

have one now? How long shall I live? Because of lack of this, I will have to tolerate so much. Mama lashes with her words at whomever she wants my husband rages whenever he feels. And simply because I am one's daughter, and other's wife." These lines are an emotional outburst of Jayanti who like Paramita is in the same nursing home. She has been unable to conceive even after twelve years of her marriage. Her identity crisis is juxtaposed with another woman who is now old and has a grown up son. The irony in the life of this woman is that both her son and her husband; for whom she must have undergone the similar waiting and pain as Paramita is going through now; are totally indifferent towards her and treat her as a liability that they have to toe. And yet, she is self effacing. Children who were once central to parent's existence get engrossed in their own life and forget about their parents; who brought them up so lovingly. "This valorization of motherhood has its own built in paradoxes; the mother's quasi divine status is associated with her capacity for voluntary self sacrifice" (Chakaravarty 34). Once Paramita gets her baby, she wonders about motherhood, its rewards and finally confronts her disenchantment with motherhood.

Hema, who is waiting for "manna," (the pleasure of motherhood) has chosen an exile of insecurity and suspicion for herself. Paramita is able to see through Hema's veneer of 'incessant chatter.' She knows that Hema too has lost herself in the quest of having a child. Waiting for Manna is a story which provokes the reader to question whether motherhood is the only criteria for happiness in a woman's life? A woman's identity is tethered to a pre condition of her ability to bear children, particularly a male child (in India). "In India, women's self-worth and value is usually dependent on their reproductive functions" (Gandhi 138). The society puts a lot of pressure on woman to bear a male child and in the process, she forgets her identity and is constantly plagued by all. It is engrained into her mind that her happiness is incomplete without a child. A woman is made to forget that she had lived a complete life even when she was not a mother:

You have forgotten that life of some previous birth.
 Now you are a prisoner among moments
 And yet timeless.
 Before your eyes only your shadow.
 No world is before you.
 Yet sweat drips from the body in the sweltering heat
 And in the bosom –a devastating thirst.

You have torn all pages from the calendar,

Like falling flowers, in the sun of timelessness. (WFM 16)

Paramita goes through the transition of a woman to a mother and she realizes that how the society has different set of moral laws and customs, values and validities for a mother. “She had so far been hiding her breast thinking them as the most secret part of her body. Who took away all her shyness? Strange were the feelings and experiences in the world, where all obscenities were decent” (WFM p. 26). While it seems perfectly sane to discuss “breast cancer” or “breastfeeding” without rousing a controversy, a woman is not allowed to talk about her breasts in other contexts. For a writer, it is completely natural to want to express every experience and how is one supposed to categorize these needs and inhibit oneself? Sarojini Sahoo is very candid about describing the natural process of womanhood which is generally not talked about. She questions the futility of becoming a mother at the cost of woman’s happiness and identity. The attainment of motherhood is termed futile by Paramita if it amounts to a non identity. The desperation of Jayanti to become a mother is obvious. Paramita desires to bless Jayanti with motherhood so that Jayanti herself realizes her lost self in a quest to have a baby.

A woman can think of herself as an individual only when she has either attained some level of security, be it emotional or economic, or when she has no strings attached; which means when she has nothing to lose. And at this juncture, Jayanti belongs to neither of the two categories. ‘Waiting for Manna’ depicts a link between a private sorrows and a collective social trauma that women bereft of motherhood undergo. The metaphor of woman as idealized traditionally passive is evoked deliberately in the stories, to be dismantled by deconstructing the patriarchal metanarrative. In her blog *Sense & Sensuality*, Sarojini Sahoo writes about *Waiting for Manna* as a story which discusses ‘the queries after a lifetime of wondering, whether to have children, wondering if the sacrifices are worth it, wondering if life is full to bursting enough already — how does our generation of women decide to have children?’

“Threshold” is the story of Ipsita, a girl who runs away from her home to elope with her boyfriend and her anxiety and desperation to forget her parents. Even though she consciously violates the intellectual paradigms of the patriarchal world, her perspective is shadowed by her ambivalent relationship. Privileging of stability has led women to spend their lives in obedient compliance with the traditional patriarchal set up.

A woman survives with humiliation and forbearance as her constant companions in order to nurture and sustain the patriarchal construct of womanhood. It is considered sinful for a woman to desire anything for herself. And Ipsita has crossed that 'threshold' not with a sense of freedom but with a predominant sense of guilt. Sahoo has tried to recover and to explore the aspects of social relations that have been suppressed, unarticulated, or denied within male dominant view points. Her narratives simultaneously lament the patriarchal framework of 'womanhood' and at the same time attempt to celebrate feminine selfhood and freedom. Her narratives are partially constituted by their location within the web of social relations that make up any society. Sarojini is a progressive writer who doesn't sever her ties from the society. For Sarojini, the idea of freedom is thus paradoxically combined with a strong emphasis on responsibility towards oneself and others. She thus suggests alternative forms of liberty, beyond current notions of individualism. One feature that predominates all stories is that all protagonists feel that autonomy of freedom at an individual level has dangerous overtures for the society. And a sense of social and ethical responsibility is a must to evoke the maximum potential of freedom on a more pervasive scale. They all feel a need for connectedness. But stories also highlight the fact that all forms of connectedness are not the same while some bonds are constricting and need to be challenged or discarded, others especially those forged through choice and commitment are represented as transforming and empowering. As in the story "Few Pages from Vacant Lots," Deepa chooses to establish a new relation breaking away from her family.

In "Rape," Sahoo tells the story of a female fantasy. A naïve woman dreams about being sexually crossed by the doctor and confesses it to her husband. And he is quick to retort back, while being wide awake, in his full senses that he too would like to make love to somebody other than his wife. From then on an innocent relationship between husband and wife changes; the change actually is subtle but a simple dream affects their marital status. The story dwells on consequences of being truthful to her husband. The husband goes on nagging his wife and cannot accept the sexuality of his wife. Women have no independent identities as human beings. And they are not given the liberty to express talk or even think about their sexuality. Men also like to think of women as an extension of themselves. When women violate these standards this is a direct blow to the man's sense of identity. The writer asks a

question whether a woman has no right to her sexual desires even in her dream. She denies patriarchal limits of sexual expression for a woman through her narrative and interrogates previous constructs of 'womanhood' and her focus is on an emergence of self. Rape is a conscious subversive narrative. It is subversive in terms of a woman being vocal about her sexuality.

Through her use of narrative, Sarojini Sahoo tries to create an identity. She constructs a collective history and effectuates a cultural critique and offers an alternative epistemology. However, the writer herself seems to be implicated in the system which she sets to critique. She has used her narrative as a means of re imagining woman's own process of identification through revising and subverting the givens of the society. Making a dent in the so called Indian code of righteousness; Sarojini Sahoo's writings are trying to validate their counter desertion of the patriarchal code of *dharma* in an attempt to assert the selfhood of women. Sarojini Sahoo has tried to re construct a woman's sexuality in her stories where she gives a free expression to what a woman as an individual wants. In the narratives of Sarojini Sahoo, there is a telescoping of the inner crisis of the protagonist in response to the realities outside: an effective dynamics through which the inner layers of the protagonist are laid bare. Through the double frame of reference, one alluding to a public world in a state of suspicion and conflict, and the other to private agony of a woman's struggle with her own split subjectivity, Sarojini questions the hierarchical model of patriarchal discourse which privileges public history over personal story. Sahoo seeks to expose the hypocrisy latent in the dominant discourses of maternity and marriage. The target of transformation is the reader, rather than any fictional character. These stories seek to unsettle perceived hierarchies and force a rethinking of accepted social frameworks. Sarojini deals with the social issues but she is basically a writer of individual values. A reader can see there is always a conflict between social values and individual values in her stories. In the expression of self there is a tension between individualistic urges and societal expectations. And her protagonists live in a nebulous borderland in search of coherence.

'Self hood is about freedom, choice, rights, equality, rationality and control of one's self.' These stories articulate counter cultural spaces for women. In other words, they do invert traditional notions of womanhood. Her protagonists are poised between submission and

resistance, passivity and action. The very instability of this subject contains within it the possibility of initiating a change. These narratives do have an interventionist potential. However, total revolutionary and constitutive transformation is a distant dream, only piecemeal changes in the society can be co-opted in the society and that too very gradually. I think *Waiting for Manna* is a step further in this direction.

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Reviews

**K. V. Dominic's *Write Son, Write*.
New Delhi: GNOSIS, 2011.
99 pp. Paperback. Rs. 125. ISBN:
978-81030-25-7**

- Patricia Prime

Write Son, Write is K. V. Dominic's second volume of poetry, although his writing and criticism have been widely published. The collection not only includes a Preface by the author, a Foreword by P. C. K. Prem, but also delightful little pen drawings throughout its pages. The book is dedicated to the poet's mother and includes the fine poem "An Elegy on My Ma." Here is the concluding passage:

What would be our fate, Ma,
when we become old as you?
Who will care for us
as we cared for you
one after other?
"It's better not to
fret on morrow;
Surrender unto Him
who created you."
Ma, we will go ahead
boosted by your divine words.

This selection contains all the wryness, humour and adept observation of Dominic's first collection *Winged Reason*. The themes of family, love and loss are other constants. This latest release builds upon a territory its author has already charted strongly, and in that makes for a book which is a perfect "companion read" to its predecessor and a commendable offering in its own right.

My son,
I have a mission
in your creation,
God spoke
to my ears.
Why do you
look up?
Look at the tip
of your pen.
I am the ball
of your pen;
I am the ink
that flows
on the paper.
Write, my son, write.
Write till
I say stop.

begins the titular and the collection's longest poem. Here one heeds the message, important and skillfully-put as it is.

Amazement is a good watchword for this collection. Sometimes, the amazement is the author's particularly through poems about his country, animals and the poem "Aung San Suu Kyi—Asia's Lady Mandela." Often though, the amazement is the reader's—the kind of gentle amazement unearthed when we alight upon a startling, but resonant image Dominic offers us. The poem, "Coconut Palm," for instance, offers us an unexpected view of a palm tree:

Standing erect on lean tall foot
and growing up to hundred feet
bearing tons of leaves and fruits.
A marvel to all architects.
No human hand can build
such a parallel pillar
Kudos to the Architect of architects!

Animals are perfect magnifiers of human behaviour, its successes and failings. Dominic offers several poems which prove the veracity of this rationale. Cats, cows and crows are just a few of the animalia Dominic's verse embraces. With something of a "tongue-in-cheek" humour, the poem "Crow, the Black Beauty" gently leads us into the world of the crow:

Crow, the commonest bird in the world;
cleaner of kitchen garbage;
has seldom been sung
in praise by the poets.

This solidity of meaning in these poems and their simple poetic style (short lines, imagery and atmosphere) continually underpins the poems, but is especially apparent in “Flowers’ Greetings,” “Hungers’ Call” and “Nature Weeps.” Here and elsewhere are poems which, like the land and society in which the author lives, strive to embrace and confirm his personal beliefs and his ideological commitment. Take a poem like “For the Glory of God,” for instance, which begins:

Chellamma Antharjanan, aged seventy-five;
widow, childless, weak and homeless.
Rejected by relatives, neighbours and society,
decides to end her life on a railway track.
Counting down minutes, she timorously waits;
the alien Death will arrive in train
and take her to a happy abode.

This juxtaposition is typical of the way contradiction is used by Dominic throughout the collection to evoke the pains and pleasures of life along with the epic and everyday. As an example, we may look at the poem “Rocketing Growth of India!” which keeps the reader suspended between the plight of the poor and the growth of the rich:

Rocketing growth of India!
Overtaking America,
surpassing Europe,
competing with China.
The tornado of recession,
evolved in America
swept over Europe,
dashed towards Indian continent,
but drowned in the Indian Ocean.

The collection ends with a homage to a Wordsworth poem: “Lines Composed from Thodupuzha River’s Bridge”:

Looking down from you girdle bridge
my eyes and mind bathe in they morning beauty.
Invigorating cool water gushing through your vein
overflows my mind with eternal realities.
Every second passed in our lives

is irredeemably lost forever.

This poem, for me, sums up Dominic's belief in the harmony and beauty of life. The seconds passing by add up to a lifetime, which we must use for the good, not only of our friends and families, but for mankind and for ourselves. The poet's faith in God and belief in the afterlife, allows him to observe creation, with all its foibles and beauty. He finds God in everything that surrounds him: the poor, the suffering, the rich, the hungry, and the good. This enables him to write his poems to bring harmony to our spiritual and physical selves. These poems, which are both inspired and well-written, work at several levels, one of which is biographical to the poet, another that encompasses the wider world. That said there is plenty of space for the reader not only to delight in the language, tensions, and the rhythms, but also to make their own, quite different readings.



Moving Alone

- Pronab Kumar Majumder

If it is so I shall go
All alone on my own
If none agrees
I wont cease but move alone
If none be my part but go apart
Leaving me in the lurch shall I march
For polestar though afar
Life is terse not farce
Great men every now and then
Gave birth on this earth
Something unique but little they speak
They shake and make life full of mirth
None is foe if I can show
How to fight for things right
How to think how to link
Pieces of peace for divine light
Life has shown none is alone
There are many to lend company
Seek and pick people you like
Know, as you go options not too many

**Valsa George, *Drop of a feather*,
Ernakulam: NARP, 2010, pp 91,
Paperback, Price Rs. 150/-**

- Kavitha Gopalakrishnan

Reciting the saga of pain
that never dies
the sea of life
flows
on and on.... (84)

Subtle, alluring, mellifluous and philosophical—that is how we can describe Valsa George’s poetry in her latest collection *Drop of a Feather*. Valsa George presents the sea of life in its variegated hues and shades through alluring imageries. The poet’s sensitivity and imagination is highlighted through beautiful, subtle imagery that is imbued with deep-felt thoughts. The images used in the collection also reveal the grotesque aspects of reality. Many a time the poet lends a philosophical, subliminal and metaphysical colour to the commonplace:

I have squeezed a space
To be a face
In a faceless multitude.
But in this eddying flux of life
What am I...?
Just one of a milling crowd...
A mote in this cosmos grandiose! (“In the Eddying Current”
20)

In her poems, the metaphors and images showcase the poet’s brilliant observation. Due to such meticulous observation and her ability to translate it into words, her poems are very visual and picturesque. Her description of a dementia patient highlights this:

Like a kite afloat in the boundless sky
Moving nowhere, but as the wind directs,
Cut out from the past, turned from the present
With the future yet to surge from the abyss.... (Dementia 40)

The predominant strain of thought that recurs in most of her poems is the passage of time. We see this in “Nostalgia”:

Time elapses, wrought with change
Change! Nature’s irreversible law!
The joy that we had in times of yore
Far surpasses the sheen of new opulence and pomp (12)

We see this repeated in “In the Eddying Current,” “A Lament” and others. However she comes to terms with it and in the poem “Today is the Only Day” we get to see the optimistic note:

Drool not, hence, over yester years
Rant not on the chances missed.
Greet Today, right in front!
Render it your respiration and perspiration,
Turning yesterday—a commemoration,
Tomorrow— stimulation,
And life—a celebration! (81)

The collection covers a wide assortment of topics –nostalgia, tributes, laments, supplication, nature, death, time, modern values and more. The poet’s unbound sensitiveness, fathomless compassion and dexterous imagination are abundantly manifested in the 52 poems of *Drop of a Feather*. One can sum up the collection thus:

As soft as the drop of a feather,
Flow the lines without any tether,
Suited all clime and weather
Our latent thoughts it does gather.



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The Legend of Imphal

N. P. Singh

A pale frail young woman
from Imphal
fasting unto death
time and again
(from the year 2000 AD onwards)
against AFSPA
that gives the Armed forces
the extraordinary power
to enter any house
interrogate men and women
and shoot anyone
on mere suspicion—
the suspicion of being
a terrorist waging
war against the state.

She has fasted many times
but forced nasal feeding
has kept her alive
in hospitals in Gauhati
and Imphal. She has become
pale frail but her defiance
has been unending and blunt.
Her mom has been pleading
with her. Her brother has been
urging her to give up

her seemingly futile struggle
but she refuses to do so.
She has a hope
that her satyagraha
would make the people
in and around Imphal
free and happy
free from hunger
free from fear
free from deprivation.

Her poem *Rebirth*
has made her a legend
in and around Imphal.
Her fasting alternates
with forced feeding
by the authorities
and her struggle
continues against
the might of the
great Indian Republic.

How long would her
dream remain a dream
I do not really know.
Perhaps, you can guess.

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