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Reimagining the Diasporic: Hybridity and Self in Shyamaprasad's *Ivide*

Amala S. Charulatha

For various reasons including globalization, increased mobility, and labour flow there has been an increasing number of people who choose to live outside their homeland. In films, this trend when explored gets manifested in the form of an actor or actress walking down crowded Manhattan or driving through the arid Arabian Peninsula. These are mere superficial depictions of that which is considered the glamorous and exotic. Films very often fail to represent the entirety of the diasporic condition with the representations usually being single faceted; where they are looked at either as the victims of marginalization and discrimination or they end up depicting the exorbitant lifestyles of the elite diaspora. As much as these issues form a part of the diasporic experience it would be highly reductive to confine the reading to one particular aspect. The film *Ivide* by Shyamaprasad is a departure from such monochromatic representations and this paper attempts to look at the manner in which the film portrays the nature of the diasporic experience. This includes the notion of identity as dual and unstable and the idea of home as something that is not merely a physical enclave. Through different characters, whose reasons for dispersion are different, the film also shows how the nature and intensity of the diasporic experience varies depending on the circumstance of “rupture” or dispersion. It also explores how the nature of the diasporic experience changes with each generation. Through the characters of Varun Blake, Roshini Mathews, Trisha and Krish Hebbar the film manages to depict both the old and the new diasporic sensibility and the difference in attitudes of the first and second generation of diaspora. There is also an attempt to look at concepts such as belonging, community and nationhood. Shyamaprasad has also managed to bring under the ambit of the film issues of economic integration (such as Indian firms doing outsourced work in the U.S.), xenophobia and racism and the impact that these have on the diasporic and native populations.

The film *Ivide* is set in the form of a crime thriller. It depicts Prithviraj as Varun Blake, an adopted Malayali boy raised by an American couple in Atlanta working as an officer with the Atlanta Police Department, who is investigating the murders of a series of people of Indian origin. Though everyone fails to see a connection between the crimes at first, the fact that all the victims have a common racial origin eventually garners the attention of the police and the national media. More than focusing on the thriller element of the plot, the film puts a lot of emphasis on probing deep into the psychological states of the lead characters, Varun, Roshini, Trisha and Krish. In talking of the film, the scriptwriter Ajayan Venugopal notes, "I want to show audiences the other side of life abroad, the one that's not always poetic, successful, colourful, or positive as portrayed in popular media. *Ivide* is a story along those lines, where life is mired in racial tension, isolation, suspicion, mistrust..." ("Right Here" *Hindu*). The film explores the development of diasporic consciousness which is constituted both negatively and positively. In terms of the development of a diasporic consciousness, it is constituted negatively for Varun through the processes of discrimination and exclusion where experiences of loss, marginality and exile are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement and for Krish (a half-Malayali who is the head of the IT firm Infotech) through virulent racism and endemic nativism. The case is different in the case of Trisha (Varun and Roshini's daughter) where it is positively constituted through identification with world-historical/political/cultural forces where the emphasis is on "feeling global" (Clifford 452).

The very title of the film, *Ivide* translated into English as "Here" is evocative of one of the central issues faced by any member of the diasporic community. The predicament of the protagonist Varun Blake who is trapped between vague memories of his homeland and the reality of the host country raises the question reminiscent of what writer and critic Northrop Frye once asked "Where is Here?" The film tries to tackle the intertwining concerns of dispersion and staying put; despite his physical rootedness in the host land for over thirty years Varun has not been able to shake loose of the influence that his homeland still exerts on him. The very notion of diaspora brings to the fore the issue of

being at two or more places at once – if not physically, certainly in the mind, that is psychologically and emotionally – where a person has more than one home, more than one country to claim as his home yet no home to call his own. This initial dilemma which lies at the core of diasporic existence hinders a person from even attaining a stable state of mind. At the most the diasporic subjects can aspire for a mean point where the attachment and detachment to both the countries are to a certain extent balanced and supplanted against each other. Diasporic discourse bends together both roots (fixed locations) and routes (pathways) to construct what Gilroy describes as alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/ space in order to live inside with a difference (Clifford 453). The degree of attachment and longing for the homeland varies considerably among the diaspora and is inversely proportional to the degree individuals and the communities are induced to or are willing to assimilate or integrate with their new environment, or remain wedded to ancestral customs, traditions, languages and religions. Beyond such issues there is also another aspect, that of generation, which can change the nature of the diasporic experience. In the film, this is explored through the characters of Varun, a first generation diaspora and Trisha, a second generation diaspora. The classification of diasporic people as first generation, second or third generation and the like is quintessential to understanding the differences in the nature of the diasporic experience. This classification is based on the period of shift, and the number of generations through which the subject had been a citizen of the host land or the present land of stay. The members of the second generation diaspora, who were born and brought up in the land that their parent/parents considered the host land, may never have travelled to a homeland and may not see themselves as immigrants of any generation, but it is highly likely that they may have some kind of understanding of what it means to inhabit the diasporic space but it is even more likely that the dislocation and homelessness turn out to be mere mythical or imaginary constructs. This is the case with Trisha who has no difficulty integrating possibly because her parents do not insist in an ethnic upbringing. She attends the same schools as the native-born children, picking up the same language, habits and beliefs, thereby giving her a greater sense of

belonging than her parents. This frees her from the traumatic aspects of diasporic consciousness that characterize first generation diaspora.

On the contrary, Varun who is a first generation diaspora has to battle many demons. Home or place is a fundamental aspect of identity and the main problem that Varun faces is that he has not one place but two places to call his home. Though he has managed to integrate himself into the societal framework of Atlanta, at the end of the film Varun adopts the assimilationist strategy where he is less concerned with sustaining ancestral ties than with coming to terms with his current environment and accepting his new identity. He comes to terms with the problems that have been haunting him and arrives at a different notion of home. Rather than a physical enclave or a domestic enclosure, home becomes an ever-changing concept that keeps evolving, in both personal and collective memory (Agnew 34). His stand challenges the age old notion of home as a fixed geographical location and espouses the stand that people like Gaspar de Alba takes: "And yet this particular space—one's home—is not merely a geographical location as much as a symbolical site working through memory and desire" (qtd in Brazier 119). As Salman Rushdie points out, the process of scattering or dispersion leads to a splitting in the sense of home where the diasporic subject looks in two directions - towards a historical cultural identity on the one hand and the society of relocation on the other (423); a point which is emphasized by Edward Said in the *Mind of the Writer* where he talks of the "unbearable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (467). The construction of identity in such a scenario becomes problematic. The identity of the imagined diasporic subject is far from fixed or predetermined.

The term identity has evolved so that it incorporates ideas such as individuality, community and cohesion and it also includes the interaction between one's experience of the world and the social, political, cultural and historical spheres in which those perceptions are formed. Diasporic identity demonstrates how identities must be constantly constructed and reconstructed by individuals. As Avtaha Brah would argue, diasporic identity is constituted within "the crucible of the

materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories that we tell ourselves individually and collectively” (68).

The diasporic condition then aids in uncovering the fluid and constructed nature of identity and the subjectivities involved in the process of creation. But as Shyam Selvadurai argues, more often than not, a dual identity is a burden forced on them by the fact that their bodies, or their skins to be precise, do not represent the nation-state they are in, thus compelling them to constantly wear their difference on their sleeve and carry it around on their back (qtd in Selvadurai 45). The racial discrimination that Varun has to face, be it from his schoolmates who discriminate on the basis of skin colour or from his stepfather who expects him to know and love all that is Indian (despite being brought up in an American family from a very young age), stands testimony to the kind of dual identities that are imposed on and expected of people like Varun. The development of diasporic communities as a result of patterns of population movement and settlement along with electronic communications which enable increased cultural juxtaposing, meeting and mixing question the idea of identity as stable and fixed. The diasporic condition of Varun as well as the problem of his identity is exacerbated by his orphanhood. In his homeland, he was forced to live out his days in an orphanage as his parents had abandoned him and there was no home that he could lay any claims on. His status as an orphan denies him of most of the traditional markers of identity like a name, place, religion and so on that he would have inherited had he been raised in a normal family. After his adoption by the American family, he is christened Varun Blake and given a new identity. Even then his situation does not get any better. His coloured appearance which is a stark contrast to that of his Caucasian parents reminds him as well as everyone around him of the fact that he does not completely belong in the new place. Varun's status as an orphan has an impact on the nature of his diasporic experience as it endows him with a sensibility which is partly that of a second generation diaspora. Though he is technically a first generation diaspora he has very little to tie him to his homeland. Though plagued at times by memories of his homeland (like most first generation diaspora), there is an attempt on his part to go beyond the trauma

and to make a new life in the host land. He develops a kind of open-mindedness and acceptance towards the host land and the willingness as well as interest to integrate into the economic and cultural life of the host land. Owing to the fact that he was an orphan and had no proper roots in his homeland he finds it easier to grow new roots and is more comfortable with navigating in the new cultural setting; acts which are rather uncommon in first generation diaspora but are characteristic of second generation diaspora. Though Varun has taken the assimilation route and managed to integrate himself into the system, he finds that at times the colour of his skin makes him the subject of certain prejudices at his work place. Despite the fact that his obsession with solving the serial murders is rooted in Varun's dedication to his job and his determination to bring the killer to justice, his actions are given a racial colouring by his superior when he observes, "It's this whole Indian thing. A few Indies get killed and you get all wired up." (*Ivide*) his statement shows the assumption that Varun's superior officer has, that Varun being a native of India has natural loyalty and affinity to his place of origin. Another example for an assumption of an innate 'Indianness' in Varun, is the dinner conversation that takes place between Varun and his step-father Paul. Despite the fact that Varun does not like spicy food or Indian cuisine, he is expected to know all about it because of the fact that he was born in India. The following conversation demonstrates it:

PAUL. It's the smell of my tandoori chicken. No Indian guy can resist that. . . .Who else other than an Indian guy can judge an Indian curry. VARUN. I like my steaks and hotdogs. Does that make me American enough for you? And if it's my brown skin that still makes me Indian, I can't help that can I? (*Ivide*)

According to Marie Gillespie the differences within the community prevents an easy identification of particular subjects with a given, fixed identity. This is what happens in the case of Roshini, Varun's ex-wife and an IT professional who works for the Indian firm Infotech. Roshini who was born in India, settles in the United States after her marriage to Varun. She faces the problem of dual identities/ sensibilities brought on by the influence of two cultures but this phenomenon is part of the

dual or paradoxical nature of the diasporic experience; one that is caught between here and there, one that is shaped by multilocality (Toloyan 34). The characters are involved not just in shifting identifications but also in enacting a hybrid identity that draws on global resources. In Clifford Geertz's words we now live in a globalized world in which there is "a gradual spectrum of mixed-up differences" (qtd in Mishra 421). This sort of a cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity is what Homi Bhabha describes using the term "hybridity" (Bhabha 27). Once the naturalness of the concept of stable identities dissolves, we begin to question these identities. Globalization provides the context for such a crisis since it has increased the range of sources and resources available for identity construction.

In films, people who are not white have often been represented as people with an inherent connection to their homeland, as people with problems, as objects, and as victims. As pertinent as these problems are, what is often missed out is the fact that for most diaspora, the culture of the host land too comes to have a significant bearing on their lives. Varun's response to his step-father during their dinner conversation is an acknowledgement of the deep-seated American influence in him and an argument against the aforementioned traditional notions. The stand that Varun takes is in tandem with the argument of critics like Robin Cohen. In his work *Global Diasporas*, Cohen points out that it is more important to look at diasporas as cultures that are formed as much by their contact with host countries as by their attachment to the homeland rather than looking at them as merely isolated victim groups (190).

In addition to the question of individual identity, the film also explores how diaspora problematizes the concept of national identity through the spreading out, the dispersion, the diffusion through geographical space, thereby cutting across national boundaries. The film depicts how diaspora disrupts the traditional notion of nationalism which was confined to the idea of a people living within the boundaries of a particular geographical area. Diasporic formations transgress the boundaries of the nation-state on the behalf of a globally dispersed people, becoming "the paradigmatic Others of the nation-state" (Toloyan 50).

There has been a tendency to celebrate diasporas as the exemplary condition of late modernity – as highly democratic communities for whom domination and territoriality are not the preconditions of nationhood (Mishra 13). In such circumstances, the diasporic identity is focused less on the equalizing force of common territory and more on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration defined by a strong sense of danger involved in forgetting the place of origin and the process of dispersal.

The trauma that the child/adult Varun encounters when he is unable to count in Malayalam is a result of this fear of losing touch with his roots. It depicts a desperate attempt on his part to hold on to that which he lost. The image of Varun going through the contents of the box which contains relics of his life in India is another instance of this fear, an action that Vijay Mishra identifies as symptomatic of the earlier diasporic experience “where imagination” and memory “was triggered by the contents in gunny sacks: a Ganesha icon, a dog-eared copy of the *Ramayana* or the *Qur’an*, an old sari or other *deshi* outfit, a photograph of a pilgrimage, and so on” (37).

The very nature of the diaspora as communities that exist beyond traditional boundaries of nation and territory permits its use as a tool to investigate the hybrid, transnational and global sites of identities and politics which challenge the national order of things, the naturalized and normalized understanding of the world of nations as a discrete partitioning of territory. Even when the film talks of diasporas cutting across national boundaries, through the characters of Varun and his daughter Trisha, it also questions the nationalistic claims of diasporic groups which are becoming increasingly anachronistic in a world where everybody is moving, where national boundaries are becoming less important than they once were. The relative insignificance of such nationalistic claims on the part of the diasporic population becomes apparent only when we take into consideration the role that social media and social networking tools plays in the lives of people around the globe. It was not so long back that media and media platforms were mostly specific to individual nations, and the interactivity and communicativeness of traditional media was very minimal. Unlike social media, people

from two ends of the world were unable to communicate directly and form communities using traditional media, such as radio or TV. The rise of social media has given rise to virtual spaces in which virtual communities can be formed and flourish; imagined communities that have the potential to cross national and geographic boundaries. The creation of new and the multiplication of existing social networks and activities increasingly overcome traditional political, economic, cultural and geographical boundaries leading to the expansion and stretching of social relations. Given such opportunities, it is no longer possible to see diaspora as the only people who get to experience the notions of community and belonging in a different way. Another aspect of the diasporic experience is depicted through the character of Krish, the de facto head of a highly successful IT firm called Infotech. He is a half Malayali who is convinced of the purity of his roots and is adamant in staying loyal to them. In every diaspora, culture in its broadest sense – cuisine, language, literature, cinema, music – plays a pivotal role. In the case of Krish, he goes the extra mile to display his devotion to his motherland. Despite leading a very busy life, with a company to run, he still manages to devote time for the religious practices necessitated by his religion. He insists on talking to his Kannadiga mother in Malayalam, listens to classical Carnatic music and insists on cooking at home, making dishes that are considered representative of Kerala cuisine. His actions are representative of the diasporic imaginary which is so crucially connected to the idea of a “homing desire” the idea that against one’s *desh* (“home country”) the present locality is *videsh* (“an other country”) (Brah 117). A manifestation of the tendency of “othering” the host land is exhibited in the formation of social cliques by the Indians members at the IT firm where they chose to hang out with people from their country; excluding the natives from such groups. Arjun Appadurai suggests that when in a foreign land, the diasporic people tend to develop broad nationalistic myths, what he names the “nationalistic genie...carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations...” (qtd in Braziel 93). Such narratives of the homeland are part of the dynamics of the diaspora which result from a need to address the trauma caused by the loss. These constructions or “imaginary homelands” (430) may or may not be in sync with the real

conditions in the homeland. Such imaginary homelands are constantly created and re-created in order to suit the needs of the diaspora for a utopian ideal of purity. For the diasporic population, the connection with the homeland is fettered to modern means of communication already fully-formed or in the making (airplanes, telephone, e-mail, the internet, videocassettes, DVD, video-link, webcam) (Mishra 276). The hypermobility of postmodern capital and ideas coupled with the collapse of distance on the information highway of cyberspace, and a collective sharing of knowledge about the homeland by diasporas have the effect of reinforcing this kind of an ethnic absolutism because diasporas can now connect with the politics of the homeland even as they live elsewhere (qtd in Mishra 478). Through the character of Krish Hebbar, the film also brings in the complicated relationship that exists between the individual and his home/hostland and the possible conquering diasporas whose communities have managed to acquire different kinds of status in the land that they inhabit; an event that can be seen as part of the ongoing process of globalization and the postmodern dispersal of new migrants of all classes to thriving metropolitan centers such as Australia, the United States, Canada and Britain. The lifestyle of Krish depicts how class plays a major role in altering the nature of experience. Because of his wealth and social standing, he is able to afford while the uneducated, illiterate downtrodden face the maximum crisis, the upper strata or the higher income groups are a success story for both the nations. He depicts a facet of the diasporic experience which has managed to invade and reclaim what had been lost by finding a way into the elite strata of the society.

When talking about the diasporic experience, the emphasis is placed solely on cultural aspects and issues but by bringing in the angle of Infotech (an Indian IT firm which handles outsourced work in the United States), Shyamaprasad has managed to incorporate the economic angle as well. The film explores the hitherto neglected economic dimension and its ties to cultural issues through an intricate portrayal of how an economic issue like outsourcing gets transmuted into a political one and finally acquires racial dimensions. Outsourcing is very common in capitalist economies like the US where companies outsource many production and service related activities to developing

economies in order to avail lower labour rates and more favourable employment legislation. The reason behind Cardgil's (one of Atlanta's top IT firms) decision to outsource their entire IT operations to Infotech was to obtain higher levels of performance at lower costs. Infotech takes up the outsourced work which resulted in organizational changes that involved a dismantling of the traditional structure of the organization and thereby eroding the conditions of the local employees. In a small town like Atlanta this has a significant impact on the life of the native community. Since the city is run on four major IT firms, one of which is Cardgil, the action of laying off the employees proves to be detrimental to the local economy. The process of outsourcing leads to an increase in local unemployment rates which in turn devastates local families and affects the entire community, depicting how the local issue of unemployment and the global issue of outsourcing have become intertwined in the processes of globalization, in the context of a global economy.

Under normal circumstances, outsourcing is seen as benefiting both the origin and destination country, providing jobs to the destination country and lower cost of goods and services to the origin country. But the high levels of unemployment in Western countries after the 2007-2008 financial crises have made the public in many countries hostile towards outsourcing. The Atlanta natives see the outsourcing of American jobs to cheap foreign labour markets as an assault on the men and women of the country; as an action whereby the work of the Americans is undermined, where the Indians steal what rightfully belongs to them, a sentiment echoed when the outsourced employees raise slogans like "americans deserve american jobs" and "return american jobs" (*Ivide*). It is the very same sentiment that is highlighted when Paul complains that, "the Indians are walking away with the goodies", ravaging their local community and reaping the benefits of the hard work that Americans had put in to build the company. It is this belief and the xenophobia that makes William Pierce, a native of Atlanta and a former employee of Cardgil, on a killing spree that ends in the death of numerous Malayalis who work in the IT sector. He harbours hatred against Krish for "stealing" his job and this hatred acquires racial dimensions when he directs it against all Indians who

work in the outsourcing sector because he feels they are all perpetrators of similar injustices. When all is said and done, the fact remains that outsourcing is an inevitable part of capitalism and as Roshini puts it, “outsourcing is here to stay” (*Ivide*). The unique feature of the diasporic communities which are the result of labour flow is that through the economic restructuring of the host land and the resultant socio-political impact that it has on the local communities, they have the potential to create new spheres of experience not just for the diaspora but also for the natives.

Through the fictional manifestations of the basic tenets of diaspora in *Ivide* we see how the concept of diaspora has changed over the years. The change is conspicuous from diverse points of view; instead of being seen as the victims of marginalization and discrimination, diaspora has now become the scope for the flow of economy to and fro from the nation, thereby leading to the flourishing of the individual and that of the homeland. They are reinvading the territory that had been denied them, and most importantly for them going back at times becomes more difficult than staying over. What had begun solely as a crisis or a matter of human and emotional concern has shifted this day to other aspects like economical and global flow of trade and commerce.

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Rooting for Selves: Belonging in William Faulkner's Fiction

Dr. P. K. Babu

There are many obstacles in the pursuit of a narrated personhood in American novelist William Faulkner's (1897-1962) fiction apart from those presented by the inexorable entity called language. The goal of the major characters of Faulkner is to decipher the past and to compose coherence by bridging it with the present. The roots of their troubled legacy lie buried in the past and often are of social origin. It is the clash between the individual ethos and the coercive machinery of the society/state which triggers the crisis. As Faulkner is given to iterate, there may be "no such thing as *was*" (Meriwether 255), but if it is embedded with the present, that presence itself thwarts the characters' desire to unentangle themselves. To further mystify the liberation struggle, they all have histories immersed in the racial conflicts of the past. The Southern cultural backdrop that defines Faulkner's oeuvre provides yet another crucial determinant/deterrent in the constitution of their personhoods.

Faulkner has dismissed blankly the idea of his fiction carrying any political affiliation or manifesto as such. Yet, an author who succeeds in problematising the Southern way of life in his novels could hardly keep off the signs of the times and he actually does not. At the very hub of Southern American culture and the fiction which feeds on it, is the racial question. Among other things, violence, incest and misogyny creep always into his world of fiction as offshoots of the feelings of race and place. In his *Faulkner's Apocrypha*, Joseph R. Urgo takes an insightful look at the apocalyptic vision of Faulkner and its ideological implications. Faulkner, for him, is a twentieth-century writer of apocrypha writing against place and time, denying the universal/perpetual authority of any single established truth or knowing (Urgo 48). Faulkner admittedly is interested in portraying the scenario of "man in conflict with himself, with his fellow man, and with his time

and place, his environment” (Gwynn 19). As Urgo modifies: “man is in conflict with himself, with the perceptions and values he has inherited and carries with him, preconceptions that can blind him to reality and prevent independent or genuine reaction” (59).

In every work of Faulkner—Joe in *Light in August*, Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury*— the major sufferers are recipients of a cultural scenario, a past they are compelled to accept, a history they are destined to live through. Their personal quandary is as much an outcome of the philosophic skepticism they possess as it is a derivative of being held captive by the deterministic cultural parameters of a shifting community. The role of community in the construction of a sense of identity is quite significant. There is a delicate dovetailing of give and take involved in it. In the way we feel our separateness and experience this knowledge subjectively, there are questions of our perceptions and expectations about the world involved. “[A]ll of the choices that we make about how to live our lives are based on perceptions of the world and our felt role in it; even the most diverse behaviours will be variations on a basic identity theme that may be seen as a sort of core metaphor for our existence” (Mortimer 4). In a revealing study, Mortimer highlights the connection:

The identity themes for Faulkner’s narrators and male characters, were we able to discover them entirely, would tend to be troubled ones, for the perceptions revealed in his descriptive passages show us that their world is experienced as unlikely to offer what they need. Instead, the central consciousness that guides us through Faulkner’s fictive world assures that precious things in the world will tend to leave it and that the only way to prevent loss is to hold on, to create containers and to emphasise boundaries, to see things in ways that control the dissolution that is the normal state of things (Mortimer 4).

Faulkner’s characters dwell in a very inimical environment, stumbling their way through, more often than not, with the implicit awareness of the cul-de-sac they stalk.

This is all the more relevant when it comes from a writer who has expressed serious reservations about the way the blacks were treated

in America. As Cleanth Brooks has stated, “withholding from the black people of their full civil rights and socially forcing them in to segregated schools, Faulkner saw a flagrant denial of the opening sentence of the declaration of independence” (139). Faulkner’s planned essays, titled “The American Dream; What Happened to it?” was meant to be a critique of the American way of life. “On Fear” and “On Privacy,” the only two to be really accomplished, are a scathing attack on the American cultural ethos of the period. The concept of the freedom of the individual is at the heart of both essays. “We seem to be losing all confidence not only in our national character but in man’s integrity too,” Faulkner states (qtd. in Brooks 141). The release from mere subject-hood, which the American Dream promised through opportunities to become persons in their entirety, has turned out to be a mirage in terms of reality. In “On Privacy,” Faulkner describes America as having promised “a sanctuary on earth for individual man,” one in which he would be safe from “the old, established, closed-corporation hierarchies of arbitrary power...of church and state” (qtd. in Brooks 144). The individualism that Faulkner advocates here is what E. L. Doctorow asserts in his writings, citing Plato’s view of Justice: “the liberty to realise ones full being” (Brooks 145), not the corrupted version permitted by American culture, where existence is transformed into a synonym for corporate lust and individual greed.

This anger and frustration of Faulkner against the American grain marks its appearance primarily in the form of the race-infested class divide in the South. In *Light in August*, Joe Christmas is ignorant of the manner and degree of recognition required for his acceptance in Jefferson’s racial society. The presumed black blood in Joe unsettles his life forever. It renders him an exile for life from life. It pushes him out of the confines of both the black and white communities alike. He remains a culturally undefined entity in a society in which the parameters of existence and acceptance are fixed only in terms of the racial scales. He doesn’t receive any models to follow or aspirations to realise. It is this secular void that coerces him to denounce the moral codes of both races. In the white-dominated Jefferson society of the time, a mulatto was considered more of an inferior black. The norms of colour-based identification and segregation had made the acceptance

of a racially ambiguous one impossible. This leads to the uncertainty regarding the reception of Joe in the society.

In every sense, at every crucial encounter in the life of Joe, the black/white query has haunted him: his childhood as a white boy in an orphanage, aborted sexual initiation by a black girl and so on. Ralph Watkins argues convincingly that the danger that Christmas represents to society in Jefferson exists because Joe has done two things: first, he has crossed the threshold between white and black and his existence brings together what should, in a racist society, be wholly separate (13). The Jefferson community's fear of Joe seems to stem from the ambiguous status he has in society because of his presumed mixed identity. They feel him capable of upsetting the rhythm of their lives as he can't be definitely labelled.

“Because society has treated him as a white man, although he is not part of it, he must conform to white society's morality codes. Joe's anger comes in part, not only from his uncertainty about his identity, but from society projecting on to him its anger at what it interprets as wilful deception” (Sugarmann 100). During the fifteen years period he is left away from Jefferson, Joe has wandered between his possible dual identities. “He had once tricked or teased white men into calling him a Negro in order to fight them or be beaten; now he fought the Negro who called him white...at night he would lie...with each suspiration trying to expel from himself the white blood and white thinking and being” (LIA 212). When he kills his white mistress, the white code catches up, asserting its whiteness and Joe's blackness, castrating and killing him. When Faulkner's depiction of the racist South and the blacks in his fiction are analysed—from Dilsey, through Joe to Lucas Beauchamp, the three landmark blacks in his fiction—the significance attached to the mulatto stands out. Being people of mixed blood, they are capable of manifesting the confusion and puzzlement, leading to ambiguities and ambivalences.

In the spectrum of varying contours of the self-society network, *The Sound and the Fury* claims a different kind of space. In it Faulkner explores the struggle of an individual, Quentin Compson, whose hypersensitiveness combined with cacophonous family relationships

render him extremely susceptible to the concerns of shrinking selfhood. If in Joe's case the external pressure far outweighs or at least equals the turbulence within, in the case of Quentin it is the inner hell that wrecks albeit it could be the consequences of his dealings with the immediate family surrounding and the cultural, sexual equations it embodies.

Instead of a single maternal figure guiding a child to a sense of separateness and identity, the Southern child was often raised alongside a Negro (and white) siblings by a black, as well as a white mother. In this context, the complicated sorting out of one's self as a being with a coherent and clear identity of one's own might well be made more difficult by the presence of two maternal figures and two races...in a meaningful state. If a white child is nursed and raised by a black woman, the white mother may be felt to be absent (Mortmer 13).

This greatly explains the feeling of a sense of inner vacuity in the central figures of *The Sound and the Fury* as well as *Light in August*. In the later stages of the Southern male child, this leads to fixing women as a polarity and to erection of boundaries. This feeling of Joe reappears in another guise in the identity crises of Quentin too:

Woman are like that they don't acquire knowledge of people we are for that they are just born with a practical fertility of suspicion that makes a crop every so often and usually right they have an affinity for evil for supplying whatever the evil lacks itself for drawing it about them instinctively as you do bed clothing in slumber fertilising the mind for it until the evil has served its purpose whether it ever exited or not (TSTF 119).

This stereotyped conception of the female which is a Southern cultural derivation has exerted its pressure in demolishing the bounds of entity for the emotionally unstable Quentin. If finally Quentin has failed in maintaining the requisite distance and is compelled to submerge in the "waters of Caddy", a union which implies destruction, a togetherness, a to-get-her-ness, which denies the bounds of self he has sought, it is to a great extent a result of the said fixation. Hence

the vacillation of Quentin regarding his attitude to women and Caddy in particular roughly parallels the same of Joe, the black-white duality, the involvement-detachment pattern. It is loss of love that has disestablished the moorings of Quentin's psyche and it is a direct consequence of the colour politics in which the South indulged. The story of Quentin is, therefore, as much about the loss of self through loss of love and the discomfort of Faulkner's heroes with women is closely related to the disease of a culture of the turn of the century South America.

It is the remix of the same Southern ingredients of race, family and cultural moves which wreak havoc with the lives of Rosa and Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* In any dispassionate analysis of the Sutpen design, the genesis is related to his boyish encounter with racist superiority and the concept of ownership of land. Till then, "he didn't even know that there was a country all divided and fixed and neat because of what colour their skins happened to be and what they happened to own" (AA 179). The initiation of Sutpen, born in the mountains of Virginia, into the colour-conscious rites of ownership cements his resolve to conceive a racially pure dynasty. Thomas Sutpen glues himself to the image which has rebuked his nascent psyche. The South and its racial politics are writ sharply into the backdrop of the character as well as of the novel. The saga of Sutpen is that of the race-ridden South. If Joe in *Light in August* undergoes the trauma of turbulent inner contradiction as to the colour of his self, in Sutpen it is the external, material trappings of the same prejudices that surface. His passion to fix his identity abidingly with the Southern symbols of land, mansion and male offspring is society induced. He deserts his first wife at Haiti, a rich planter's daughter, finding that she has Negro blood in her and she couldn't be adjunctive to the forwarding of the design. Rosa, too, is wrought by curious influences of the familial and personal nature, but of which, the least significant one is that of the Southern cultural mores. She is left to fend for herself, in her isolation, at Sutpen's hundred. Though at his mercy, she rejects his offer of a conditional marriage. Hence to a very good extent what turns Rosa into a psychic wreck is the existence of Sutpen and her father in a racial patriarchy.

Though the study restricts itself to selected works of William Faulkner, the aspects of his fiction subjected to analysis here runs through his whole oeuvre. Isaac McCaslin and Gavin Stevens exemplify the same in *Go Down, Moses* as they attempt self-recognition through articulation. Gavin is especially significant as his voice spreads through as many as five of his works. The capacity of language to reveal as well as conceal, to tell truth as well as falsehood, confuses him. *The Reivers*, a story of the growing up of Luscious Priest, too is involved with the question of self-discovery at the stage of initiation. Moreover, it too voices the feeling of being overwhelmed in a world of plenty, where choosing and bounding becomes impossible. Hence even works as different from the exterior as *Pylon* or *The Reivers* at the heart embody the same urge to ease selves into emotional consolidation through therapeutic narration.

In the matrix of interpenetrating layers that make up the consciousness of Faulkner's characters, a clear-cut delineation of the purely individual and social is always a futile venture. In someone like Thomas Sutpen the pursuance of a socially rooted design is made a religion of and he is on the trail of experiences which causes/coerce him to catalyse the inner compulsion. The same goes true in the case of many characters studied here. As the evils of the South stretch to accommodate the evils of the land, the evils of humanity, the cursed South becomes a microcosm of the doomed mankind. Faulkner lets the blur called consciousness with its shifty bounds of self and society record itself. When expression precedes and equals existence, and existence denies and defies essence, the cycle of ceaseless attempt at expression and thus existence persist. The narrative houses this play in the consciousness as the self is both the object and the source of the consciousness. The urge for self-definition and sense of belonging push for linguistic path and language attempts to gather the life around. As a socially determined culture and language exert the pressure back on the individual psyche, the turmoil is total. The catalytic activity of each is thus interrupted by the other component, leading to the ever evolving, ever emerging sense of self in the flux of consciousness—what Urgo calls, “the continuously created meaning” (24). Consequently, it drags along the material, spiritual and social irritants, repeatedly

confronting and doing away with the search for absolutes, the being and the knowing dissolve into each other.

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Dialogising Life and Death: The Messianic Impulse in Kazantzakis' *Christ Recrucified*

Alwin Alexander

“The Messiah will only come when he is no longer necessary; he will come only on the day after his arrival; he will come, not on the last day, but the very last” (“The Coming of the Messiah”: Franz Kafka 182).

Kafka's famous aphorism on the advent of the Messiah reflects on the exigence of non-closure rather than closure in expediting the messianic visitation. His arrival would be when everything is 'finalised' and nothing temporally necessitates the coming. The purported project of finalisation of temporality has to be exhausted for the 'unfinalisability' of real messianism to be revealed. Therefore the 'last day' is not the end but the beginning of the messianic realisation. The 'end' is not the end. The one is always in a dialogic relationship with the other. The Bakhtinian notion of dialogic openness could be safely read into and possibly transposed with this messianic paradigm. Bakhtin says, “nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future” (PDP 166). The inconclusiveness of events expostulated by Bakhtin keeps the world eternally open to a messianic future. Even the last word is merely the penultimate word which must ofcourse emerge in a dialogic interaction with other words, to inaugurate the expectancy for the ultimate which is still in the future - the messianic. Every word/utterance (from an addresser) presupposes other utterances and is therefore a response to them (addressee). Therefore the ultimate word of messianic future is a dialogic response to the words preceding them. Bakhtin observes, “Any utterance always has an addressee (of various sorts, with varying degrees of proximity, concreteness, awareness, and so forth). This is the second party (again not in an arithmetical sense). But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the

utterance, with greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher superaddressee (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee)" (Speech 126). The presumption of such a superaddressee in the future, responding to the utterance of the 'present' certainly warrants to be qualified as messianism - a dialogic messianism.

Messianism and Messianicity in a Dialogic Context

We have in Bakhtin a dialogic openness with a messianic propensity congruent with the messianic propositions of Agamben, Derrida and Walter Benjamin. In *Homo Sacer* Agamben notes: "...the Messiah will be able to enter only after the door is closed, which is to say, after the Law's being in force without significance is at an end" (37). The dimension of messianism is detained or unrealized until the door is shut on the temporal establishments. But this closure is not a finalization; rather an unfinalization, inaugurating a new realm. Here again the Messiah's arrival/non-closure is dependent on the 'closure', conforming with the dialogic enterprise. Derrida presents a messianism in *Spectres of Marx* that involves only the structure of the messianic thought and not the accompanying religious implications - "messianic without messianism" (74). He defines the messianic hope as an "eschatological relation to the to-come of an event and of a singularity, of an alterity that cannot be anticipated" (81). He adds: "The messianic, including its revolutionary forms (and the messianic is always revolutionary, it has to be), would be urgency, imminence but, irreducible paradox, a waiting without horizon of expectation" (211). The tenor of an openness resides within this idea of a possibility which could very well be impossible. Whatever is to be, may or may not be/happen. This is the ultimate experience of dialogic openness. Even in the face of a possible impossibility the waiting continues for whatever is to come - an event, singularity or an alterity/other, yet without anticipation. Benjamin celebrates this variability of (im)possibilities in his essay "The Theologico-Political Fragment": "Only the Messiah himself consummates all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, completes, creates its relation to the Messianic. For this reason nothing

historical can relate itself on its own account to anything Messianic” (156). The messianic is beyond the history comprehended as temporal progression. The messianic is in the ‘future’ that is beyond this progression; it could erupt at any moment; yet it is beyond the completion of history. Thus the messianic can never be envisaged as a ‘goal’ of history; it can only be at the ‘end’ of history. Therefore the end becomes a beginning in a dialogic openness. The messianic promise configured idealistically within the judicio-politico-historical-philosophical matrix (by these theorists) inhabits the narrative space of *Christ Recrucified*. This habitation is decoded in this study by employing the dialogic thought of Bakhtin.

Plotting the Messiah Dialogically

In *Christ Recrucified* Nikos Kazantzakis narrates the tale of a bunch of companions in the Greek village of Lycovrissi, chosen to enact the roles of Christ and a select group of his disciples in a passion play. Manolios, Michelis, Yannakos, Kostandis and Panayotaros are chosen by the Elders to incarnate Christ, John, Peter, James and Judas Iscariot respectively. Overwrought and excited simultaneously by their roles, they inevitably identify with the assigned characters and actualize their roles in real life. The Agha of Lycovrissi, the representative of the Turkish authority, detests the Christians, yet they grudgingly remain acquiescent and submissive to him. He is unsympathetic towards the daily life of the villagers and is concerned only about the administrative particulars. In such a scenario Pope Gregoris, the village parson and representative of the Greek Orthodox Church, heads a parallel power structure commanding absolute dominion over the villagers. The selfish and self-seeking disposition of this self-proclaimed official dispenser of God is revealed when a group of Christian refugees, tormented by the Turks, come to Lycovrissi under the leadership of pope Fotis and is denied sustenance by him. But, Manolios and his friends, against the will and pleasure of pope Gregoris and the village notables, help the refugees to settle on Mount Sarakina, near the village. Meanwhile Agha’s minion Yousuffaki is murdered and he imprisons the village notables, threatening to kill them by turns until the culprit is caught. The innocent Manolios impersonates Christ and owns up the crime to save

the village. The refugees on Mount Sarakina are impoverished and Manolios decides to lead them into the village to possess their inheritance willed by Michelis. Pope Gregoris conspires with Panayotaros, the Judas designate, and informs the Agha about Manolios' alleged Bolshevik affiliations posing threat to the Turks. Manolios succumbs to his inevitable fate at the hands of Panatotaros.

Inconclusiveness pervades Manolios' consciousness. His transformed identity which forms the kernel of the narrative is constituted by a dialogic interaction of the other consciousnesses in his world; Christ (Greek for Messiah) and the core group of apostle-designate friends are the foremost among them. Manolios's investiture as the Christ actor in the passion play does not circumscribe his persona, limiting it to the traditional ecclesiastical understanding and prescriptions of Christ, but it rather opens up and expands the its scope. What was expected of him was a mere ritualistic and religious adherence to the ascetic precepts of the institutionalised church sufficient to celebrate the passion as a melodramatic spectacle with religious fervour: "You are the one whom God has chosen to revive, by you gestures, your voice, your tears, the Holy Passion...It is you who will put on the crown of thorns, it is you who will be scourged, it is you who will carry the holy cross, you who will be crucified" (Kazantzakis 26). Manolios is required merely to contribute to the spectacularity of the event, rousing an emotional response and adulation within the onlookers. An invocation for a true realisation of the sacrifice envisioned by the cross is not intended by the elders. The passion is just a ceremonial observance with a peripheral impact sufficing to perpetuate religiosity. Manolios is supposed to enclose himself within this closure of religion. A radical and revisionist actualisation of the true Christ through application of the message of the cross beyond the spectacle in everyday life is precluded by religion. But Manolios transgresses into this dimension of the reality of the cross. He relives the passion through a messianic openness to the real message of Christ resurrected within him through a faithful adherence to the Gospel. There is no conclusive proscription or dogmatic limitation to the possibilities of messianic realisations or revelations in his life. The institutionalised church has no authority over him and therefore his excommunication is almost farcical, for he is in

the company of Christ himself: “He [pope Gregoris] dipped the sprinkler in the stoup , sprinkled the air, and pronounced in a thunderous voice: ‘Out from here, out from here, excommunicated!’.... It was as if Manolios were there, in the air, invisible, and the minister of God were advancing upon him to drive him away” (342). Mannolios’ apostle designate companions also join him, renouncing the institutionalised church. Michelis says: “Our Christ...looks at the bodies of the starving and the souls of those in fear and cries out: ‘This world is unjust, dishonest, without pity, let it perish’” (344). The seeming closure of excommuication is denied legitimacy due to the wider openness of communication/communion with Christ, his true disciples and the refugees whom Manolios and his frends help. It is in the context of the finalisation of ecclesiastical diktats and political laws that his unfinalised nature emerges. The theme of ‘disclosure’ is prevelant in the novel. Manolios, his close friends and pope Fotis (the leader of the refgees) confess their deep secrets and hidden transgressions before eachother and no one attempts to correct anyone. The consciousness of these companions polyphonically remain unmerged and open in their dialogic interaction. The whole effort to open up the village and its resources to the refugees and the enterprise to create equality (though both remain unsuccessful) through sharing (like the early christians) even amidst allegations of them being bolsheviks, are veritable instances of the constant striving for the ideal, which is almost an impossibility and thus a rupture in/of norms.

Conclusion

The messianism of the novel moves beyond the immediate compulsions of the plot to the discursive space of the narrative. Manolios’ identification with Christ/Messiah and the resultant activities are messianic in a profoundly spiritual sense. Messianism moves further into judicio-political dimensions and their extended possibilities in the future with the discourses of salvation and resurrection. Simultaneously inherent in these concepts are notions of presence, imminence and absence. Ideal conditions of salvation is always in the future and logically impossible. But the very effort for the same has inklings of salvation in it. This idea is dispersed throughout the novel. Similarly resurrection

is understood in the work as the advent of Christ into the heart. Yet the impossibility of surviving death is ruptured through the Messianic eruption of resurrection. The passion play ends with death (here with the death of Manolios) but messianic hope breaks into the end of life, after the end with a new opening. Manolios cannot be raised to life in the novel, but the refugees who were his 'life' move on with a renewed sense of purpose, proclaiming their immortality: "...our race cannot die.... we are immortal!" (468). They march to the east on the road that rises, to the sphere of rising. The 'last word' about them is not yet spoken and the ultimate awaits them in the future. Death dialogically opens to Life through the community. Manolios is 'resurrected' in every future hope and act of the community, thereby approximating the messianic. The refugees are to find their 'messiah' after the arrival of the 'messiah' (Manolios). Kazantzakis' narrative, apparently would find the 'superaddressee'/messiah in every moment of the future with every seeker/reader who finds himself/herself in the text.

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‘Kiss of Love’ and the Politics of the Multitude

Chinmay Murali

“O love is to battle, if two kiss
the world changes, desires takes flesh,
thoughts take flesh...
...the world changes
if two look at each other and see.”

- Octavio Paz. (‘Piedra del sol’ *Selected Poems* 48)

Globalisation has initiated irreversible changes to economic and cultural relations. A new global order has emerged encompassing a new form of power and sovereignty. In the year 2000, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri brought out their *Empire* which was hailed by Slavoj Zizek and others as a new communist manifesto for our age that decisively enriches critiques of capitalism (Zizek 38). Their argument in this book is that, following the collapse of various colonial regimes throughout the world, and then of communism with its barriers to the expansion of capitalism, a new global order – which they call the Empire – is materialising in our postmodern world. As a consequence of the globalisation of cultural markets and production, power has taken a new form, “composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule” (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 34).

The old divisions of the globe into the first world (the capitalist West), the second world (the communist Soviet), and third world have dissolved into a “smooth” world. The Empire, a “network power,” is now emerging and it includes as its primary elements, the dominant nation-states along with supranational institutions, major capitalist corporations, and other powers. In the era of globalisation, the Empire becomes the power that governs the world (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 12-20). The concept of the Empire designates a force which is at once

ideological, economic and political; simultaneously subjective and objective. Under the Empire, capitalism permeates every sphere of human life and existence. The power of the Empire operates on all levels of social order, regulating not only territory and population but also human interaction and even human nature itself. The Empire functions through the effective use of what Hardt and Negri call the biopower of the Empire (22). They observe:

Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it. Power can achieve an effective command over the entire life of the population only when it becomes an integral, vital function that every individual embraces and reactivates of his or her own accord... The highest function of this power is to invest life through and through, and its primary task is to administer life. Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself. (24)

The concept of power is incomplete without the concept of resistance. Power gives rise to resistance. Society becomes a site where forms of resistance challenge the dominant power structures and the forms of power dominate and suppress the possible forms of resistance to it. In the year 2004, Hardt and Negri published the sequel to *Empire*, titled *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. In *Multitude*, the authors argue that the Empire sees its strongest foe in the 'multitude'. If *Empire* was about power, *Multitude* is about resistance. The Empire is power and the multitude is the resistance to it. Democracy of the multitude is projected as the most effective alternative to the hegemony of the Empire. It is the living alternative that grows within the Empire. Hardt and Negri note, the "Empire creates a greater potential for revolution than did the modern regimes of power because it presents us, alongside the machine of command, with an alternative: the set of all the exploited and the subjugated, a multitude that is directly opposed to the Empire, with no mediation between them" (*Multitude* 393).

For Hardt and Negri, globalisation gives equal opportunities for both the Empire and the multitude to grow and expand. In fact there

are two faces to globalisation (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 12). On one face, the Empire spreads globally its network of hierarchies and divisions that maintain order through new mechanisms of control and constant conflict. Globalisation, however, is also the creation of new circuits of cooperation and collaboration that stretch across nations and continents and allow an unlimited number of encounters. This second face of globalisation provides the possibility that, while remaining different, we discover the commonality that enables us to communicate and act together. The multitude too might be conceived as a network: an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that also helps us to find common grounds (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 12).

Biopower of the Empire is challenged by the biopolitics of the multitude. This new form of struggle involves the use of life, body and the creative potential of the multitude against the Empire. Life and body become the sites of struggle. Biopower represents power over life, and it is precisely this life that constitutes the ground on which forms of resistance are situated. Negri observes, “[b]iopower is responsive to a lively and creative force that is exterior to it, which it seeks to regulate and shape, without being able to merge with it. Biopolitics refers here to the possibility of a new ontology that derives from the body and its forces” (97). Biopower is the power of the Empire whereas biopolitics is the power of the multitude. The project of the multitude sees life itself as a political activity.

Traces of the multitude can be found in various protest movements happening across the world. The last four decades have seen the emergence of new types of social movements- movements of women, tribal peoples, dalits, environmental movements, and many others. These movements are regarded by many social theorists as possible and relevant agents of social transformation, as authentic representatives of post-industrial social forces. The new social movements in the Third World bring forward new issues and carry ideologies that represent a theoretical and practical challenge to traditional theories of capitalism and exploitation. In those movements, people form assemblages or networks of resistance to challenge diverse forms of power in the age

of the Empire. The hope for a global democracy, equal rights and social justice is the driving force behind those movements.

Hardt and Negri trace the genealogy of such movements in the protests that happened across the world in 1968. The protests that raged throughout 1968 included a large number of workers, students, and the poor people facing increasingly violent state repression all around the world. The most spectacular manifestation of this was the May 1968 protests in France, in which students linked up with wildcat strikes of about ten million workers. For a few days the movement seemed capable of overthrowing the government. In capitalist countries, these protests marked a turning point for the civil rights movement, which produced revolutionary initiatives like the Black Panther Party (Katsiaficas 183). In the socialist countries there were also protests against the lack of freedom of speech and violation of other civil rights by the Communist bureaucratic and military elites. Movements of identity politics, which were born primarily of feminist struggles, gay and lesbian struggles, and race-based struggles also share some features of multitude movements. The most important organizational characteristic of these movements is their insistence on autonomy and refusal of any centralized hierarchy, leaders or spokespeople. Anti-globalisation movements that have extended from Seattle to Genoa are classic examples of distributed network organizations. These movements were characterised by the presence of groups that were previously assumed to have different and even contradictory interests. It included environmentalists, anarchists, gays, lesbians, workers and students as its members (Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 86-91). The kiss-ins conducted by Queer Nation, held at a Mormon convention in Utah, in which men would kiss men and women women in a public place also shows the various possibilities of the multitude movements. We find various forms of carnival and mimicry so common at anti-globalisation protests as well (99).

In the self-published pamphlet titled *Declaration* (2012), Hardt and Negri claim that the various occupy movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab spring are concrete manifestations of the multitude. These movements shared the internal organization as a multitude. They were leaderless movements which developed horizontal mechanisms of

organization. They didn't build headquarters or form central committees but spread out like swarms, and most important, they created democratic practices of decision making so that all participants could lead together. The multitudes were created through a network of bodies and ideas which were connected in the streets of protest as well as on other networks of communication including Facebook, Twitter and the Internet. These protests posed direct challenges to the rule of the Empire (Hardt and Negri, *Declaration* 11).

In the age of globalised culture and economy, power becomes "glocal". It operates through a network of power relations transcending borders. In its resistance to this network of power, the multitude works across continents, nations, cultures and regimes. When various social movements ranging from anti-globalisation protests to Arab spring take on the various regimes of power, a network of the multitude against the Empire emerges. Reverberations of these movements can be seen in local cultural contexts as well. The multitude movements which challenge the various forms of power in the age of globalisation begin to develop in various socio-political and cultural settings. These local struggles form part of the larger struggle of the multitude against the Empire.

Anti-corruption movements and the "Nirbhaya" episode in which the people entered into unique networks of resistance can be seen as the beginning of the politics of the multitude in India. The Kiss of Love (KOL) protest which happened in Kerala recently invites our attention in this regard. The protest was unique in many ways; it was the first of its kind in the history of Kerala. It marked a paradigm shift with regard to the notion of resistance in the contemporary political scenario of Kerala by heralding the coming of a new politics, hitherto unknown and unimagined.

KOL signalled the coming of a new politics in which people, transcending the boundaries of traditional political affiliations, age, gender, and class came together to claim their rights and to fight for justice (Rajeevan, "Chumbanam" 20). It forms part of a larger network of struggles happening in India ("Nirbhaya" episode and anti-corruption movements) and around the world (Arab spring, Occupy

Wall street, Anti-globalisation protests) in which people formed new alliances that went beyond the limits of class, caste, gender and other divisions in order to challenge the various forms of power and to fight for justice.

KOL protest redefined the notions of political organization and the methods of revolt prevailing in contemporary society. The origin of the idea of protest, how it gathered momentum through the mobilisation of supporters and participants from various walks of life through innovative methods and strategies, the ways in which it handled the threats and challenges from various quarters, and how it managed to reach its successful culmination were unique, without prior models to imitate. The protest could establish the possibility and feasibility of the politics of the multitude in Kerala.

KOL was the first movement in Kerala to use social networking sites as an effective tool for organizing and publicising social protests. It made use of the strategy which Hardt and Negri call “network struggle” of the multitude (*Multitude* 142). Like other multitude movements, including the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, the use of horizontal networks of communication such as the Internet as a vehicle for disseminating revolutionary ideas and mobilising collective action was a crucial factor that shaped the KOL protest. Given the dominant role of the new media, the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions have been called the Facebook or Twitter revolutions (Khondker 677). Along with these multitude movements, KOL becomes another Facebook revolution in the same way. During the Arab Spring uprisings, a revolutionary tweeted: “We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world” (qtd. in Khondker 677).

These multitude movements recognize the emancipatory potential of the Internet which allow them to form networks of ideas and bodies which later manifest into collective actions. Wael Ghonim, a major figure in cyber activism in Egypt, stated in an interview with CNN days before the ouster of Hosni Mubarak that, “[i]f you want to free a society just give them Internet access” (Khamis and Vaughn 326). No region, state, or form of government can remain immune to the impact of new

information and communication technologies on social and political movements.

Sociological discussion on the potential of the new media in shaping the society began earnestly with Manuel Castells's groundbreaking work, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996). In this work, Castells emphasises the interrelationship of social, economic and political features of the society, and argues that the "network" is the defining feature that marks our current epoch. He describes the shift from an industrial society to an information society, which started in the 1970s. This network society is structured around networks instead of individual actors, and works through a constant flow of information through technology. He also discusses new media and communication technologies based around networks, arguing that they are contributing to a fundamental change in culture. The new development is a "culture of real virtuality", which describes a culture that is organized around electronic media (Castell 148).

Castell's prophetic vision about the rise of network society which creates a "culture of real virtuality" becomes significant in the context of the ways in which the multitude movements like KOL make use of the Internet to create networks of bodies and ideas. When the Facebook page of the KOL gathered more than 50,000 "likes", a virtual multitude against moral policing was created in the cyber space. The KOL protests could create a multitude within the virtual space. This gave rise to an alternative public sphere in the cyber world where various sites and structures of power are openly challenged and contested by the multitude. It became a multitude movement in the virtual space, even days before its concrete manifestation in Kochi. In other words, multitude formed at the Marine Drive was the material manifestation of the multitude, which was already formed in the virtual world. The cyber space, thus also becomes a site of struggle, much like the streets occupied by protestors, where opposing and conflicting bodies and ideas challenge one another. It must also be noted that a Facebook page was created by the counter-protesters as well, and it managed to get around 3,000 "likes" ("Kiss Facebook" *Deccan Chronicle*). The fifty odd KOL protesters and those who supported them at Marine Drive was the

physical extension of the 50,000 likes on the Facebook page. In this sense, the protest could initiate both virtual and real revolutions which could simultaneously act in a “culture of real virtuality” (Castell 148).

The manner in which the KOL protest spread from one location to another also emphasizes its form as a distributed network. Its beginning in Kochi and the way it spread to other parts of Kerala and India, exhibit multitude movements’ characteristic feature of spreading from one local context to another like a contagion through the communication of common practices and desires. Each local KOL protest functioned as a node that communicated with other nodes without any hub or centre of intelligence, a method Hardt and Negri ascribe to multitude movements in general (*Multitude* 210). Each struggle remained singular and tied to its local conditions, but at the same time is immersed in the common web. While the protest in Kochi targeted moral policing in Kerala in general, the “Hug of Love” held at Maharaja’s college primarily aimed at the incidents of moral policing inside the college campus. Demonstrations held in Kolkata on the other hand, attempted to expose the hypocrisy of the people in that region with regard to the question of sexual morality.

The most striking aspect of KOL protest was that unlike the political movements of the past, this protest did not project anyone as its leader. In fact KOL was a leaderless movement. Decisions were taken and strategies were devised in collectivity, following the principle of the “swarm intelligence” of the multitude (*Multitude* 88). Borrowing Deleuze’s terminology, KOL protest was “a body without organs” (qtd. in Tampio 389). The movement was neither led nor backed by any political party in the so-called politically conscious society of Kerala. The supporters and participants of the movement did not merge into a single unit or identity which follows a central command or political ideology. It was a celebration of multiplicities and singularities. People from diverse economic and political backgrounds, different age groups, genders, sexual orientations, class and religious beliefs, formed what can be best described as an assemblage of multiple identities. The larger network of KOL protests across India also gave rise to a multitude of cultures, languages and ethnicities. Most of the protestors did not know,

meet, or speak to one another before the protest, but what linked them together was an identification of a common desire for change. Through the performative acts of hugging and kissing, they made the protest theatrical. It became a site where constant dialogues of multiple voices and identities produced an atmosphere of the carnival.

This protest cannot be located within the larger framework of the political landscape of Kerala, which has been confined within the mainstream Left and Right political parties. Resistance movements like KOL become a new political phenomenon, which cannot be explained using outdated political theories of the mainstream Left and Right (Rajeevan, “Chumbanam” 20). Thus, mainstream political parties in Kerala cannot even think about the possibility of kissing—an intimate, emotional and joyful act becoming political. While the Congress and the BJP, the two major right-wing political parties in Kerala, sided with the counter-protestors, the attitude of the CPI (M) which is the leading left party, was no different. Pinarayi Vijayan, the then secretary of the CPI (M) criticised the protest saying that: “[i]t is quite inappropriate to enact what a husband and wife do inside their bedroom in a public place” (qtd. in “Pinarayi Kiss” *Mathrubhumi*). It is no wonder that the CPI (M) along with its youth wing DYFI had donned the mantle of moral police several times in the state. Left parties in Kerala acted as another oppressive force which aimed to control lives and freedom of individuals in the society. This must be read in relation to the crisis faced by leftist intelligentsia in Kerala on the question of sexual morality. Leftist intellectuals like M.N Vijayan and K.E.N Kunjahammad disapproved of discussions and debates centred on the rights of sex workers, people belonging to alternative sexualities and the validity of sexual relationships outside family. They argued that those are “diversion techniques” employed by capitalism and a disintegration of nuclear family and the resultant sexual anarchy would serve market interests (Davood 21-22). This view of the classical Left was openly challenged by “revisionists” like M.P Parameswaran, who found no fault with women entering into sexual relationships outside family, since men already enjoy such privileges within the current social setup (Davood 21). These internal clashes clearly expose the party’s lack of a clear stand on this issue.

It was the failure of the mainstream Left that strengthened people's movements like the KOL. This shows a paradigm shift in Kerala's history of resistance movements, a shift from party politics to the politics of the multitude. The crisis within the Left in Kerala concerning sexual morality becomes more evident in the context of the KOL protest. It must be noted that the mainstream Left in Kerala follows the same attitude of the Right wing political parties and religious organisations, when it comes to man-woman relationships outside marriage. While the mainstream Left sides with the power structures (by becoming another power structure) and fails to address genuine concerns of the people, alternative political movements begin to occupy centre stage.

The KOL protest could initiate new discussions on the nature of the relationship between power, body and sexuality. In the context of the KOL protest, kissing has become an act of resistance, a symbol of a new political consciousness which allows people to think and operate in unique ways. Michael Foucault looks at body as the site on which discourses of power are enacted and contested. Body becomes a target of power (*The History of Sexuality* 187). According to Foucault, biopower operates through discursive practices which control the lives and bodies of the entire population (Deleuze, *Foucault* 79). Foucault's discussions about the ways in which power constructs normal and deviant sexual practices and behaviours become pertinent in the light of the shaping of sexual morality in Kerala society. Moral codes concerning sexuality become a site where biopower operates. In this sense, KOL's use of body as resistance becomes an expression of the multitude's biopolitics countering the biopower of the Empire. Various power structures including the state, mainstream political parties and religious organizations attempted to thwart this biopolitics of the KOL protest. But the very act of kissing became a revolutionary gesture which could pose challenges to various structures of power that control people's lives and bodies.

KOL's use of body as resistance has precedents in Kerala's history. The Channar revolt of Travancore, in which lower caste women asserted their right to wear an upper garment against the caste restrictions imposed by the Kingdom of Travancore, was one of the first instances

in this regard. Following the revolt, the then Travancore Maharaja Aayilyam Thirunal made an official declaration granting the lower caste Nadar/Channar women the right to cover their breasts (Devika, "The Aesthetics" 480). It is interesting to note that a "topless struggle" also happened in Kerala's history of the use of body as resistance. In the beginning of 1960's in a cashew nut factory in Kollam, the owner unilaterally withdrew all welfare and benefit measures for the workers. The enraged labourers blockaded the factory. When armed policemen came in and tried to disperse the crowd, a young woman labourer came to the front of the protestors, removed her blouse and told them to shoot her on her bare breast if they were brave enough to do so (482). What differentiates KOL's use of body as resistance from the above mentioned incidents is the fact that KOL was a movement of the multitude whereas the latter ones were operating within the domain of identity politics.

KOL protest will be remembered in history as the first multitude movement in Kerala to identify the political potential of love. KOL identified love as a political concept. When Hardt and Negri visualize the project of multitude as embedded within a new politics of love, KOL protest becomes an instance where the multitude achieved this goal. In this protest, love manifested its political potential at multiple levels. It was indeed a struggle against the limited conceptions of love. As its name suggests, the kiss became a gesture of love in its broader sense. What we saw in the protest was the unification of Eros and Agape, the personal and political manifestations of love. Love is used as a weapon which can effectively challenge power in different ways. It also became a moment of celebrating love in different forms. When the people, most of who did not know one another, formed a multitude as an assemblage of multiple identities based on common desires, it became a manifestation of their bond and mutual love (Agape). When the couples, including gays and lesbians, kissed one another, the hegemonic structures which control lives, bodies and sexualities were shaken. The KOL protest became a manifestation of the beginnings of the politics of multitude in Kerala, based on a new politics of love. The act of love is in itself a battle. When two kiss, indeed the world changes.

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The Black Dot

Memes in Cyber Protest as Performance

Preethu P.

Not long ago, the world was a big place with vast oceans separating land masses and cultures dividing people. Then came the Digital Revolution, one of the most important epochs in the history of humanity, and the internet, like Indra's net, hung over the globe, connecting every nook and corner. The world became a small illuminated screen where almost every action of daily life got a parallel. The concept of 'parallel universe' grew beyond the purview of science-fiction as social networking brought with it a kind of simulated reality which influences the concept of 'self' so much that the 'online persona' becomes almost as important as the real. The second decade of the millennia now witnesses a boom in the use of mobile internet which has doubled the number of people who uses social networking. The internet can, now, thus be considered to be a culture. The cyberspace has become the 'ideosphere' where ideas originate and spread. Though it began as a mode of communication, social media has become a medium of self-expression too. It has almost become an 'alter- collective conscious' or *egregore* in which an idea is shared by many. This paper focuses on this aspect of memes, that is, the scope of memes as performatives.

The word *meme* has its roots in the Greek word *mimeme* which means 'imitated thing'. Coined by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), it denotes cultural entities which can be considered as replicators. A meme is an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. Like the biological gene, it acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena. When it comes to the internet, a meme can be an image, hyperlink, video, picture, website, or hashtag, or even just a word or phrase, including an intentional misspelling. For

Susan Blackmore, best known for her book *The Meme Machine*, these memes which live in technological artifacts are 'temes'.

Just like genes, memes group themselves in so-called meme complexes or memeplexes and work together and influence each other. Religion is considered to be a memeplex, and so can the internet be. Such memeplexes do not only find shelter in the mind of a new host, but they will change the perceptions and life of their new host. Susan Blackmore considers the human consciousness to be an illusion constructed by memes and self to be a complex of memes.

Memetics is a field which is in its infancy. A lot of research takes place in it to find out its true potential. There was a split in the researchers and two groups- the internalists and externalists- emerged. The first group were those who wanted to stick to Dawkins' definition of a meme as "a unit of cultural transmission". The externalists, who wanted to redefine memes as observable cultural artifacts and behaviours, believed that memes would be impossible to be observed if they were internal. Newer concepts emerged in the field of Memetics and one of it is memetic engineering.

A term developed and coined by Leveious Rolando, John Sokol, and Gibran Burchett, memetic engineering studies the development of memes with the intent of altering the behaviour by modifying human beliefs, thought patterns, etc. In the 1998 'Symposium on Memetics', organised as part of the 15th International Conference on Cybernetics, a motion was passed calling for an end to definitional debates and in 2011, it was demonstrated that functional connectivity profiling using neuro-imaging tools enables the observation of the processing of internal memes (i-memes) in response to external e-memes. As memes themselves are neither good nor bad, it begin to take on their own process of evolution based on the person who adopts the ideology, internalizes it, and reintroduces it into society causing it to spread like a virus. The internet is an extremely powerful memeplex which, if engineered, can produce far reaching results.

'The Black Dot' was a meme that went viral online in the protests that followed the Delhi gang rape case. In 2012, the gang rape and

fatal assault of a student who later succumbed to injuries sparked an unprecedented uproar of protests and demonstrations against sexual violence in India. The incident acquired wide coverage in national, international and social media thereby increasing public discourse on crimes against women. It gained unprecedented coverage which was reflected in social networking too. The internet became the 'ideosphere' where the meme replicated and netizens across the nation tried to become a part of the protest by changing their Facebook profile pictures to a black dot. For some it was a way to express their sorrow, or the protest against the societal conditions that accounted for this episode, while others trivialized the meme as 'arm chair activism' resorted by people who didn't really care about actually doing something. Cyber protest is always looked down on as the way of the lazy man who thinks he can change the world with his fingertips. A memetic study of this instance of cyber protest enquires whether one can rip off the pejorative term 'slacktivism' associated with it and accommodate it to the wider area of performance studies.

What does the black dot signify? Conceived as a way of protest against the brutal gang rape, it can be analysed in many ways. As a dot, it symbolizes the end of something, like a full stop ending a sentence. The dot can be considered to be a protest against the violence rampant against women. It can be an appeal for stronger laws to put an end to it. If we go by colour symbolism, the dot can be analysed in multiple ways. Black has always been associated with mourning and bereavement. If read along these lines, the dot signifies the individuals shock and sorrow at the brutal murder of the victim. By the act of mourning, the individual tries to become close to the victim.

Black is the colour symbolising darkness. Here, darkness can be the societal conditions which permit such violence against women. The dot thus becomes a blot on the conscience of the nation. If we go by the definition of black as the epitome of evil, the dot can symbolize the ones behind the tragedy and thus can be read as a plea to put an end to it. The black dot can also be considered to be symbolic of shame where by the individual tries to accept responsibility of the event.

What makes cyber protest more appealing? First and foremost, the fact that information spreads easily, freely and quickly makes the cyberspace an apt vehicle for protests. It also creates an urgency that triggers immediate response. Finally, it is about the feeling of 'being there' that counts. There is no spatial restriction when it comes to the cyberspace. Thus, the potency of activism in the social media should be given attention that it is where the future is.

Performative turn, the postmodernist concept which assumes all human actions to be performance, explains how reality can be constructed through performance. J.L Austin, a linguistic philosopher, coined the term 'performative' in 1955. As Austin put it, 'to say something is to do something' (1). When a person changes his/her profile picture to the black dot, he transcends the stage of 'being' to 'doing' and thus the action becomes an instance of performance. Dubbed 'as-performance' by Richard Schechner, founder of the discipline of performance studies, it refers to the informal scenarios of daily life, suggesting that every day practices are 'performed'. According to him,

You need to understand the difference and relationship between "is" and "as" performance. Up till now, I have been talking about "is" performance, recognizably marked behaviors, no matter how varied and different genre to genre, culture to culture. This bundle of performance genres and instances is very different than "as" performance. "As" performance is a way of studying the world. (Schechner 33)

Thus, everything and anything can be studied "as" performance. What are the reasons for which individuals perform such an action?

According to the empathy-altruism hypothesis by American social psychologist C. Daniel Batson, if you feel empathy towards another person you will help them, regardless of what you can gain from it. It states that "feeling empathy for [a] person in need evokes motivation to help [that person] in which these benefits to self are not the ultimate goal of helping; they are unintended consequences"(87). Memes do not provide "help" in any way, but the intentions behind the individual who

resort to spreading it can be good. The urge to do something for the victim takes the form of protesting against the social system that let the tragedy happen. The internet, which has become the site for the alter-ego of many users, becomes a place where they can express their emotions which cannot be done in the real life. Thus a human mind is itself becomes “an artifact created when memes restructure a human brain in order to make it a better habitat for memes” (365). But the other side of the coin is that it creates arm chair activists who sit in the comfort of their homes and try to change the world with their fingertips.

Does participating in the propagation of the meme create any ripple of empathy in the minds of the individual? If so, it becomes the exact opposite of what is known as bystander apathy in social psychology. Bystander apathy is the phenomenon where individuals do not offer any means of help to a victim when other people are present. If the internet can boost the altruistic tendencies thus, it is not just ‘slacktivism’ anymore. Participating in performative memes makes the individual a part of the community and constitutes a social imaginary that gives meaning and context to the actions of subsequent and existing participants Richard Dawkins, in his book, writes:

“Let us try to teach generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish. Let us understand what our own selfish genes are up to, because we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs, something that no other species has ever aspired to do.” (4)

Ideasthesia, a concept introduced by neuroscientist Danko Nikoliæ, studies how activations of concepts (inducers) evoke perception-like experiences (concurrents). In Memetics, the meme becomes the inducer which produce a concurrent. In the case of the black dot, the meme can induce experiences of protest and the individual sharing it would perceive that he/she is a part of it and thus may experience a sense of content. Though the practicality of the results can be questioned on materialistic basis, it may promote a sense of well-being which may pave way for further similar actions in the future. Thus it is possible that the person who performs via the meme may feel better and his/her behaviour can be altered to be more altruistic. Dawkins writes:

We have the power to defy the selfish genes of our birth and, if necessary, the selfish memes of our indoctrination. We can even discuss ways of deliberately cultivating and nurturing pure, disinterested altruism - something that has no place in nature, something that has never existed before in the whole history of the world. We are built as gene machines and cultured as meme machines, but we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators. (201)

In part III of his 1995 book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, titled "Mind, Meaning, Mathematics and Morality", Daniel Dennett asserts that the meme has a role to play in our understanding of culture by helping us transcend the selfish gene. He is optimistic about the ability of human beings to design and redesign our approach to moral problems.

To conclude, memes on the internet can produce results which bring positive changes to the human life. Like genes are to biological evolution, memes are important in cultural evolution, and if judiciously employed, it can be put to good use. Memes are not just effluvia of human experience but it has control over the human culture. Memetic engineering, like genetic engineering, can alter meme types thereby altering the cultural phenotype. The emerging culture of the cyberspace calls for a control mechanism which can produce good results as it reaches more people.

When a person uses a meme, it transcends the stage of passive observation and he/ she feels a sense of 'action'. Though looked down on as 'arm chair activism', it may produce a sense of well-being in the individual which can in turn produce more altruistic actions. The question of psychological egoism may arise, that is individuals may be altruistic for selfish reasons, but it is better than inaction. Whether it is altruism triggered by selfish motives, or be it a "monkey see, monkey do" situation, what matters is that there has been an action which has the potential to bring about betterment.

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The Invisible Witch of Salem: Conjuring Tituba of *The Crucible*

Dr. Sruti Ramachandran

The Crucible (1953) based on the Salem-Witch Trials of 1692 is a comment on American life of Arthur Miller's own time reeling under McCarthyism and the activities of House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). In the Witch Trials, twenty people found guilty of witchcraft, mostly women, were hanged while other 'accused' saved themselves by confessing to witchcraft and in turn accusing others. The events which "began with experiments in the occult among a group of young girls curious about their romantic futures", culminated in threatening the foundational ideas of the Puritan New England community (McGill 259). In the public terror that ensued; puritanical elitism, distrust, old rivalries, land wars and paranoia coalesced to brew a mass hysteria.

This paper attempts at a recursive reading of Tituba, the black slave from Barbados in *The Crucible*. The 'invisibility' of Tituba flanks the rejection of the Blacks and other minorities by mainstream American society. The exclusionary attitude of the white Puritan New England community of the 1690's and its deep set racial prejudices come to fore in the play. Miller's treatment of Tituba has invited scathing criticism for its normative racial preconceptions and judgmental overtones. The objective of this paper is to illumine the glaring omissions and substitutions that galore in the (mis)representation of Tituba. The methodology adopted includes a selective enquiry into the historical records of the people and events during the Salem Witch-Trials so as to throw light on Tituba's representation in history. This is followed by a close reading of the text in order to detect the systematic sidelining of Tituba. The Tituba passages in the text are then critically analyzed to understand this omission *vis-à-vis* the socio-cultural patterns of perspective. There is also an attempt to evaluate Miller's own contribution to the effacement of Tituba.

The narrative of Tituba comes alive in the opening scene of *The Crucible*. She is the third character in order of appearance and the first one to speak and also the first one to confess. The only woman character to have a single name, Tituba is a Negro slave brought along from Barbados by Reverend Samuel Parris to Salem. She is an integral part of his household which includes his ten year old daughter Betty and seventeen year old orphaned niece Abigail Williams. However, there is a gradual disappearance of Tituba from the text as she is swiftly supplanted by powerful forces.

Betty Parris, at the opening of the play, is inert in bed with some unspecified illness which is strongly believed to have resulted from exposure to witch-craft. She, along with Abigail and a few other girls from the village, was “discovered dancing like heathen in the forest” by Parris (231). The conjuring in the woods is not dramatized on stage in the play, yet it is the direct and plausible action that initiates the drama. On relentless questioning by Parris, Abigail admits that they were indeed conjuring spirits when Parris discovered them, but blames it squarely on Tituba who “knows how to speak to the dead” (235). Parris questions Tituba in the presence of witchcraft-specialist Reverend John Hale of Beverly and other parishioners. She is frightened into admitting her liaison with the Devil and accusations of witchcraft fly thick and fast. Manipulated and cajoled into revealing names with a promise of hope and salvation, Tituba starts rattling out names of other ‘witches’. And that’s when Tituba does a vanishing act from the play and is not seen until the last act. Her final lines in the play “Take me home, Devil! Take me home!” echo not just in the corridors of the cell but also in the reader’s imagination (313).

Several American textbooks of history depict Tituba as performing magical rites, engaging in fortune-telling and even Caribbean *voodoo* rituals in the Parris household. Benjamin C. Ray, however, quotes Bernard Rosenthal’s *Salem Story* to disprove these accusations:

Bernard Rosenthal has shown that the stories about Tituba’s performing of magic rites and frightening the girls, making her the initial protagonist of the story, have no foundation in the primary sources. There is no basis in any of the court records or

in contemporary accounts for saying that Tituba “told fortunes and practiced magic on the side”.... (Ray 45)

The deliberate demonization of Tituba was a product of the deep sense of self-preservation in the Salem residents as “the edge of wilderness was close by” (227). Miller’s observations of the people “forced to fight the land like heroes” is ample proof for their predilection for preservation and proclivity for persecution:

The American continent stretched endlessly west, and it was full of mystery for them. It stood, dark and threatening, over their shoulders night and day...the Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil’s last preserve, his home base and the citadel of his final stand...They believed, in short, that they held in their steady hands the candle that would light the world...It helped them with the discipline it gave them. (227)

Tituba’s (a Barbadian outsider) foreign presence thus becomes indispensable as a catalyst for the painful American self-evaluations.

In Act I of *The Crucible*, Tituba is the third character in order of appearance after Reverend Parris and his daughter Betty. The entrance of Tituba sets the play in motion which otherwise opens with a kneeling Parris in prayer beside an inert Betty. Tituba’s deep love and concern for the child compel her to force a peek at the ‘sick’ child in spite of her “slave sense” warning her against it (229). By the time she utters her first sentence -“My Betty be hearty soon?”, also the first lines of the play, Tituba has already taken a step back; an instinctual act of regression (229). Her language, distinct from that of the Whites, is creolized and regarded as defiled and corrupt. Reverend Parris in a fit of anger and sorrow responds: “Out of here...Out of my sight” (230). This conversation between Tituba and Parris is prescient of the treatment of the black woman in the American cultural landscape. The Blacks have to remain ‘invisible’ in order to survive the land and be content with their marginal positions in society.

Tituba’s use of her native Barbados tongue is viewed with suspicion by the Salem residents while her ‘heathen’ songs are a source of

perennial discomfiture to the Puritan parishioners. Parris' declaration- "...I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She was swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!" (231)- refers to the articulate and musical Tituba as 'dumb', denying her the power of speech. In dismissing her language, the white parishioners disregard her culture and her identity.

The contrast between black and white, not merely as hues but as markers of race, can be seen throughout the play as evil is associated with blackness and good with whiteness. Parris is concerned whether Abigail's name in the town is "entirely white". Abigail's comment on why she does not find favour with any of the parishioners as domestic help, after her eviction from Elizabeth Proctor's household further illustrates the divide: "They want slaves, not such as I. Let them send to Barbados for that. I will not black my face for any of them!" (232). Even John Proctor's passionate cry following his confession and his refusal to make the proceedings public, "God knows how black my sins are! It is enough!...I blacken all of them when this is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence!" betrays a racial prejudice (327). His pronouncement to Judge Danforth, "You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me!" objectifies Tituba as a mere commodity that can be used and abused according to the whims and fancies of the White Puritan Salem community (327).

With her 'exotic' knowledge of conjuring, Tituba's interventions are sought by the young girls to know about their romantic futures. Mrs. Ann Putnam sends her daughter Ruth to seek Tituba's help in conjuring the spirits of her seven dead babies on the night of Parris' discovery. Yet, they are strangely absolved of their crimes as enticers of witch craft. Instead, Tituba who was forced to practice her customary rituals at their bidding is branded a witch with alacrity. Abigail and Ann Putnam, the powerful white co-opters of subaltern culture, are never punished. Tituba's pleas to Abigail during her examination, "You beg me to conjure! She beg me make charm-" fall on deaf ears (256).

Miller in his authorial comments within the text betrays a rather disquieting stance towards Tituba and endorses her association with

witchcraft. She is singled out as someone who is essentially guilty as charged of witchcraft:

I have no doubt that the people were communing with and even worshipping, the Devil in Salem, and if the whole truth could be known in this case, as it is in others, we should discover a regular and conventionalized propitiation of the dark spirit. One certain evidence of this is the confession of Tituba, the slave of Rev. Parris, and another is the behavior of the children who were known to have indulged in sorceries with her. (250)

Tituba is accused of 'regular and conventionalized sorceries' which echoes John Hale's famous statement - "We cannot look into superstition in this. The Devil is precise" (252). Witchcraft, sorcery and the Devil were lionized and their power questioned the very foundations of religion in the Puritan community. Therefore, an anti-system had to be first created, then interrogated and finally condemned to protect the interests and survival of the first- a classic case of creating 'The Other'.

Abigail Williams, the ring-leader of the girls in the play, wriggles out of a possible condemnation by accusing Tituba of 'sending her spirit on her'. When Reverend Hale questions her on how Tituba called the Devil, Abigail responds, "I know not - she spoke Barbados" (255). Tituba's language renders her unintelligible as well as invisible. Abigail's false and opportunist accusations against Tituba unconsciously reveal her own repressed emotions:

She sends her spirit on me in church; she makes me laugh at prayer!...She comes to me every night to go and drink blood!...She comes to me while I sleep; she's always making me dream corruptions!...Sometimes I wake and find myself standing in the open doorway and not a stitch on my body! I always hear her laughing in my sleep. I hear her singing her Barbados songs and tempting me with- (257)

Abigail's inability to complete the sentence suggests her grappling with the notions of sexuality and sin. In fact, it is her adulterous liaison

with John Proctor that is at the moral crux of the play. Abigail relegates Tituba's possession of her to her dream world, which is impossible to examine and penalize. She is pure evil, far more in control of the drama than anyone else, and yet she asserts her innocence and establishes her authority by relying on her whiteness, pointing her finger at the only black stranger amidst them.

Tituba confesses to witchcraft only to circumvent being hanged. It is her retracted confession not her relentless denial of witchcraft that ironically saves her. But a mere confession could not satiate the investigators entrusted to remove the scourge of witchcraft from Salem. Reverend Hale, with pure Christian intentions, is quick to forgive her 'sins' but is prodded by the villagers to elicit 'names' from Tituba:

You have confessed yourself to witchcraft, and that speaks a wish to come to Heaven's side. And we will bless you, Tituba...You are God's instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil's agents among us. You are selected, Tituba, you are chosen to help us cleanse our village. So speak utterly, Tituba, turn your back on him and face God- face God, Tituba, and God will protect you. (258)

Tituba's strong sense of self-preservation is quick to realize the import of the Reverend's words and she opens the floodgates of naming names, seamlessly slipping into her new role of a sellout. Her deep-seated resentment and anger against Parris is revealed in her open denunciation of her master "Oh, how many times he bid me kill you, Mr.Parris!...Mr.Parris no goodly man, Mr.Parris no gentle man, and he bid me rise out of my bed and cut your throat!" (259)

With Tituba's claim of 'seeing' four women with the Devil gaining acceptance among the villagers, Abigail backtracks on her stand and claims to be under the Devil's influence herself. Abigail's account of conjuring displaces Tituba's as her overpowering white voice snuffles out the black slave's. She even translates Tituba's culture, using it to her advantage, while keeping Tituba out of sight. It is with inspired vengeance that Abigail starts accusing other women in the village of witchcraft. The inert Betty springs up from her bed and rattles a few names too. Tituba is effectively silenced by the ecstatic cries of the little

white 'witches'. D.Quentin Miller in 'The Signifying Poppet: Unseen Voodoo and Arthur Miller's Tituba' has questioned Tituba's appropriation by Abigail and others in the play and her eventual scapegoating:

Tituba can be sacrificed for Abigail's survival, and the audience has never questioned this substitution, because of some chicken blood, a poppet, a needle and a Barbados language we do not speak. Miller has created a character whose power seems to derive from her sex appeal, but who is actually powerful because she is able to capitalize on her racial privilege. (451)

After Act I, there is a long absence of Tituba from the text and she only makes a brief reappearance at the beginning of Act IV. Miller describes the cell in Salem jail thus; "The place is in darkness but for the moonlight seeping through the bars. It appears empty" (312). In fact, it is the cell that houses Tituba and Sarah Good. Even Marshal Herrick who wants the cell vacated addresses only Sarah, ignoring Tituba. The two women seem to have accepted their plight and make grandiose plans to fly to Barbados with the aid of Devil himself- "We goin' to Barbados, soon the Devil gits here with the feathers and the wings" (312). The spiritual belief system that Tituba grew up with continues to sustain her and she reverts to it with quiet ease. Tituba explains her plans to Marshal Herrick:

Oh, it be no Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasure-man in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks - you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just sweet and - (313)

The very concept of Devil is turned on its head by Tituba. She even attributes a soul to him which she claims is frozen by the cold Salem villagers. Her reverberating cries through the jail corridors, "Take me home, Devil! Take me home!" are indicative of her yearning to get back to her native land, away from the moral fanatics around her (313).

Tituba has come to be regarded as an unconscious illustration of the invisibility of the African- American. Her life and especially her

conjuring remain out of the audience's sight throughout the play and yet she is made to carry the burden of the community's sin and loss. The play dramatizes a persistent problem of racial vision- the invisible status given to Blacks; the denial of their culture and way of life and even worse, an appropriation of their culture. Numerous studies about the Salem Witch Trials have contributed to a vast scholarship of the events. Some critics argue that Tituba was not a black slave; she was an Arawak Indian. Others suggest that she may have come from Barbados or be of Spanish Indian Heritage. However, after the American Civil War, when the institution of slavery and African American ethnicity were closely identified Tituba's racial identity changed. Sometime later in history she evolved into a fully African slave. Tituba's racial presence in the play is demonized, unseen and co-opted by the Whites even as two oppressed racial minorities of early American history are collapsed into one.

It is only through a close reading of characters and symbols that gaping gaps in texts can be problematised. By putting the spotlight on Tituba and her narrative, a different reading of the play can be conjured.

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Charged with the Grandeur of God: Poetry of Eco-spirituality

Dasappan V. Y.

In a moment of pure joy toward heavenly things in “the dearest freshness deep down things” in the world, G. M. Hopkins exclaimed, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God” (‘God’s Grandeur’). For Hopkins, Nature was the visible sign through which he encountered God, the Creator. He found Nature a means of sanctification and it enabled him to render worship to God.

The most remarkable of Hopkins’s School Poems, ‘A Vision of the Mermaids’ (1862), is the most characteristic of his early works. Rich in the sensuous beauty of Nature, the poem is headed by a Blake-like illustration. It is a string of beautiful images of Nature collected together and evidently suggests the influence of Keats as well as Spenser on young Hopkins. Every line is loaded with rich imagery and sharp sense-perception. In his appeal to the eye as in: “Plum-purple was the west; but spikes of light / Spear’d open lustrous gashes, crimson-white.” Or to the senses of taste, touch and smell as in: “Soon - as when Summer of his sister Spring / Crushes and tears the rare enjewelling.” (‘A Vision of the Mermaids’). The rose imagery of ‘A Vision of the Mermaids’ in which the sun is transformed into an orbed rose of ten thousand petals, culminates in the simile about how summer, that “glorious wanton” “plashes amidst the billowy apple-trees / His lusty hands” and “The dainty onyx-coronals deflowers”. Here the poet feels delight at being filled with wonder and enchantment.

Hopkins had profound love for Nature. He was a great walker too. His long walks are recorded in his journals as deep visual and spiritual experiences of Nature. His keen observation of Nature and his intuition into what he observed are well expressed in his journal. On 14 August 1867 he turned 23, just graduated from Oxford and was staying with a friend’s family in London. He noted that day in his journal: “Hot; fine, with haze; at six in the evening a wonderful rack of what I hear

they call 'flock-of-sheep' clouds, a dapple of plump rounds half parted, half branching from one another like madrepores" (House *Journals* 150). 'Dapple' is a favorite word for Hopkins and it appears in several of his poems and in each poem he has a different meaning for the word. One is reminded of "Glory be to God for dappled things" in 'Pied Beauty,' in which he glorifies God for the rich variety and diversity he finds in Nature. He gets an intuition into what he observes in Nature, and through his skilful use of language he communicates to his readers how apparent opposites exist in harmony to praise God. In 'The Windhover' he uses the expression, "dapple-dawn-drawn-Falcon," and in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' he says, "I kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west". The colour of the sky at dawn in the former poem and the colour of the western sky at sunset in the latter, as the poet sees them, are so variegated and beyond the expression in language that he coins compound epithets to describe them. Hopkins developed a large idiosyncratic vocabulary in the early journals—words that begin as aesthetic terms and then take on theological meanings for him during his Jesuit years.

Hopkins does not merely delight in the panoply of natural objects that catches his eye. He goes further into it, and through his imaginative language he translates his visual experience into linear prose which he himself calls a 'treasury of explored beauty' (Abbott *Further Letters* 202). He says:

But what most struck me was a pair of ashes in going up the lane again. The further one was the finer—a globeish just-sided head with one launching-out member on the right; the nearer one was more naked and horny. By taking a few steps one could pass the further behind the nearer or make the stems close, either coincidingly, so far as disagreeing outlines will coincide, or allowing a slit on either side, or again on either side making a broader stem than either would make alone. It was this which was so beautiful—making a noble shaft and base to the double tree, which was crested by the horns of the nearer ash and shaped on the right by the bosom of the hinder one with its springing bough. The outline of the double stem was beautiful to whichever of the two sides you

slid the hinder tree—in one (not, I think, in both) shaft-like and narrowing at the ground. Besides I saw how great the richness and subtlety is of the curves in the clusters, both in the forward bow mentioned before and in some most graceful hangers on the other side: it combines somewhat-slanted outward strokes with rounding (House *Journals* 152).

Here the description is very picturesque, like a painting, but one that is three-dimensional and one can walk through. At one point Hopkins has us moving our heads back and forth to examine the delicate changes in their perception of two trees. It is indeed lushly sensuous.

Hopkins's model and spiritual father, Ignatius of Loyola, had several mystical experiences which gave him great consolation in life. The most important of all such experiences was the one Ignatius had at the river Cardoner, which he failed to express in words. Hopkins had similar mystical experiences of Nature even before joining the Jesuit Order. While Ignatius attributes such experiences to direct divine intervention, Hopkins does not; instead he considers them as part of his love affair with Nature. Hopkins speaks of one such rare experience which he had on August 30, 1867:

Fair; in afternoon fine; the clouds had a good deal of crisping and mottling.—A round by Plumley.—Stands of ash in a copse: they consisted of two or three rods most gracefully leaved, for each wing or comb finally curled inwards, that is upwards.— Putting my hand up against the sky whilst we lay on the grass I saw more richness and beauty in the blue than I had known of before, not brilliance but glow and colour. It was not transparent and sapphire-like but turquoise-like, swarming and blushing around the edge of the hand and in the pieces clipped in by the fingers, the flesh being sometimes sunlit, sometimes glassy with reflected light, sometimes lightly shadowed in that violet one makes with cobalt and Indian red (House *Journals* 154).

This is a brilliant picturesque expression of a rare moment in the artist's life: an experiment with light and colour that one can actually

do oneself on any day, if it is bright and sunny, where one lives. Hopkins's portraying of the blue of the sky as "swarming and blushing" around his hand makes one think of Van Gogh.

However, after joining the Jesuit Order, particularly after his intense spiritual experience during the Long Retreat, Hopkins learned to understand his experiences of the world and Nature, directing them Godwards. 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' springs primarily and spontaneously from the intimate experience of the first week and the first half of the second week of the Ignatian Exercises, with special stress upon the twin mysteries of Creation and incarnation. In this great poem are contained the seeds of many of his poems to come. The Nature poems are in essence his cries in great spiritual consolation wrung from him of wonder and delight at how the sun flashes forth creation, as the incarnation flashes forth God - *lumen de lumine*.

As Hopkins grows in his spiritual life, he realizes more and more that everything is clothed with grace: "For grace is any action, activity. . . done through Christ, Christ's spirit . . . it is Christ in his member on the one side, his member in Christ on the other" (Devlin 154). For Hopkins everything in Nature is a sacred sign of God's active presence leading all humankind through Christ to his infinite love. His sonnet 'God's Grandeur' is the best illustration of this view. This sacramental view of the world as revealing God gives Hopkins' mature poems a combination of sensitiveness to created beauty, and in keeping with the spirit of Ignatian spirituality he uses beauty as a means, directing it Godwards. Hopkins seeks God through an integral act of his sense and intellect, which in turn help him to delight in the beauty of the world. Therefore in his *Further Notes* Hopkins comments: "This world then is word, expression, news of God" (Devlin 129). Hopkins's sacramental vision is the extension and continuation of Christ's Incarnation as reflected in humankind and Nature. The things of this world permeate his vision and determine, even sub-consciously, his approach to reality. In the ideal human nature of the incarnate Lord, all creatures receive their fulfillment and completion. Hopkins' reading of Nature as a series of ideas in the word of God was most practiced in Christian exemplarism, a Platonic tradition handed down from the Greek fathers

through St. Augustine to the Franciscans such as St. Bonaventure and Duns Scotus.

The beauty found in the variety of God's creation reminds Hopkins of its Maker. He was attuned to find God's presence in birds, trees, sunsets, stars, etc. He felt that God was enveloping the whole of creation. He found the myriad forms of God in the variety of his creation. "His whole *raison d'être* was to go through the world to Christ as Christ had come from the heavens to man" (Pick *Hopkins: Priest and Poet* 51). The mystery of Incarnation helps Hopkins to form a new vision of the world and of humans, in which the physical world becomes God's word, expression and news. Hopkins, to some extent, went beyond Ignatian spirituality and admired the Franciscan spirituality of love of the world, especially love of Nature. He knew well that his founder Ignatius himself was inspired by Francis of Assisi, whose spirituality had a more universal appeal than the limited Jesuit vision of the world. It is also from Francis of Assisi, the great Nature-saint, that Hopkins learnt to praise God through the creation. Thus, in Hopkins one finds the beautiful blend of the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Francis of Assisi. "The joy in the variegated and transient inscape of the world is Franciscan in its eagerness in "Pied Beauty" (Pick *Priest and Poet* 53). St. Francis invited the whole creation – animals, plants, Brother Sun and Sister Moon – to praise and honour God, their maker and master:

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who . . . bears a likeness of You, Most High One. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful. Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to your creatures (Francis 38).

St. Francis echoed the psalmist who invited the rest of creation to join the human race in singing the praises of God (Ps 148: 96). Ignatian spirituality helped Hopkins establish a similar sort of fraternity with all the good and beautiful things created by God. Among the many poems written by Hopkins under the inspiration of the Ignatian

Contemplatio ad Amorem, ‘God’s Grandeur’ perhaps best illustrates the ever vibrant presence of God in the world. The Jesuit poet found his consolation in life being imbued with the spirituality of *Contemplatio ad Amorem*, which helped him to see God in all things and all things in God.

‘God’s Grandeur’ opens with a very powerful metaphor expressing the electrifying presence of God in the world: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; / It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed”. While reading this poem, one can almost feel the explosion that is going to take place soon. This poem can be read along with another of Hopkins’s poems, namely, ‘The Starlight Night’ which expresses the poet’s ecstasy and wonder at the beauty of Nature: “Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies! / Look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!” Hopkins’s spiritual Father and the Founder of the Jesuit Order, Ignatius, was an avid star-gazer. Lying on his back in the open terrace of a building, Ignatius was fond of looking at the stars and praising the Maker of them all. Hopkins seems to have been following in the footsteps of his Founder in this respect too, giving himself over, for a while, to the sheer beauty and glory of the stars which appear to him as “the fire-folk sitting in the air!”

In ‘Pied Beauty’ the poet feels that all distinctions and varieties are singing God’s glory. God embodies the principle of similarity in dissimilarity, of identity in difference. In the opening lines Hopkins pays homage to God for having created multi-coloured and spotted things: “Glory be to God for dappled things- / For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow; / For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim; / Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings; / Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough”. The poet takes delight in the pied beauty of Nature – its dappled and varied appearance. He admires the skies, river, reddish brown chestnuts, birds in the branches and the works of human beings, and he praises God for all of them. In the poem, Hopkins admires the co-existence of contrary things; he admires their uniqueness and originality, their oddness, which differentiates each from the others. Then by asking the metaphysical question, “who knows

how?”, he means to say that nobody can explain why these things are ‘freckled’. All these things have their origin in God. All things issue forth from God. God’s beauty is not subject to change. God’s beauty is eternal when compared with the transient beauty of Nature. For Hopkins, God was not merely in heaven; He was very much here and now. Since God was enveloping the whole universe, Hopkins considered the world of Nature constantly and faithfully singing the praises of God.

Hopkins knew well the Biblical perspective that the earth with all that is in it belongs to God (Deut 10: 14; Ps 24: 1; Lev 25: 23). The first principles of the contemporary Christian eco-theology are drawn from the first pages of the Bible. The Book of Genesis opens with two stories about the creation of the cosmos. The creation comes out of God’s sovereign freedom and expresses the Creator’s love and goodness. Creation has beauty, goodness and value even prior to human arrival. In the end God creates humankind in God’s own image. “And God saw everything God had made, and behold it was very good” (Gen 1: 31). Created in God’s image, human beings occupy a pre-eminent place among creatures. “Then God said, Let us make human person in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen 1: 26). The past interpretations of the word “dominion” proved to have ecologically devastating consequences. But contemporary biblical hermeneutics denies to human beings any absolute mastery over the earth and its creatures. Pope John Paul II in his first encyclical *RedemptorHominis* says, “it was the Creator’s will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble master and guardian, and not as a heedless exploiter and destroyer” (15).

Firmly grounded on the Word of God, Hopkins believed that as responsible and compassionate stewards, human beings are accountable to the Creator for the world’s well-being and wholeness. The concern for the environment expressed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* was already reflected in Hopkins’s Nature poems. Pope Francis says, “together with our obligation to use the earth’s goods responsibly, we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God’s

eyes” (69). It is clear then that “the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures” (*Laudato Si* 68).

For Hopkins it is a sin to destroy the inscapes in Nature. Sorrow-stricken he wept when the aspens were felled: “My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled / . . . / All felled, felled, are all felled” (Binsey Poplars). The ecological imbalance the world experiences today was already a concern for the Jesuit poet and he expressed it most powerfully in his poetry. Today the emission of greenhouse gases mainly due to the burning of fossil fuels has reached alarming proportions resulting in global warming and climate change. Millions of people inhabiting low lying islands and coastal regions of many countries are living under the imminent threat of inundation of their land and possessions due to rising sea level. Reckless human activities have led to large-scale destruction of forests as well as pollution of land, air and water. This in its turn has impaired the balance of the ecosystem and led to loss of bio-diversity in many regions. Uncontrolled industrial activities have caused serious damage to the atmospheric and hydro-geological systems of the planet. One can almost feel the anger, anguish and disgust of Hopkins over man’s greed and wanton destruction and desecration of Nature in the following lines: “Generations have trod, have trod, have trod; / And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil; / And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil / Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod” (“God’s Grandeur”).

In the light of the present ecological crisis, study of Hopkins becomes more relevant and rewarding. Deforestation, environmental pollution and anti-environment developments in the modern world have resulted in environmental pollution, global warming, and a total ecological crisis. Therefore, more than any other time in history, today ecology has become a major concern all over the world. Rediscovery and reinterpretation of Hopkins’s Nature writings in the light of recent ecological concerns from an Indian religious and philosophical perspective will not only be enriching for Hopkins scholarship but will also be enlightening for the world at large.

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Race and Culture: Revisionary Frameworks of Reality

Maria Theresa Chakkunny

The term Race has recently been substituted by the nomenclature 'ethnic groups' courtesy of the social sciences, which cite an absence of cultural connotations in the original title. An ethnic group, accordingly, is defined as a category of people who identify with each other on the basis of common cultural, social, ancestral or national experience. The term Culture, however, represents an ongoing process, for its connotations are dynamic, and transform in response to various influences. When we draw upon current and former definitions, it becomes apparent that the parameters by which we judge a culture, transform considerably with temporal, spatial and social variables. The two terms, however, occur in tandem, for race engenders culture which in turn can reconfigure a race. We may observe this complex yet complementary relationship at work in the evolution of a race which is of great antiquity.

The Dravidian /Aryan debate has engendered a global enquiry into the status of the Dravidian race. Modern historians opine that the original inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent belonged to the Dravidian race. This argument rests upon the cultural expression of the various tribes inhabiting the land from the earliest recorded history. Disciplines in science such as Genetics and Anthropology provide rational and verifiable arguments, which indirectly argue for the existence of a Dravidian race. The diversity of treatises however prompts both scholar and common man alike, to question whether the Dravidian race is a legitimate designation. If so when and where did it originate? This question has not received a definite reply to date, for opinions have been divided over this hermeneutic puzzle of history.

Conventional historical texts state that the Dravidians were one of the earliest inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent but theories

regarding their origin are inconclusive. The two most commonly accepted theories pertain to their migration; one points to a north-west passage into the Himalayan mountains at a period far anterior to the so called 'Aryan' invasion and the other claims a southern origin. The second theory claims the hypothetical sunken continent in the Indian Ocean, termed variously, Lemuria, KumarikaGmam or Kumarinatu, as the originary homeland of this race.

T.R. Shesha Iyengar in his work *Dravidian India* mentions a number of theories which attempt to explain Dravidian origins and migrations. They are set down to give us an insight into the interpretations of history from a Eurocentric viewpoint. Professor Iyengar's work came out in 1925, three years after the excavation of the ruins of the Indus Valley Civilization. It presented theories put forth by western Indologists. According to H. Risley the Dravidians were distinguished by their "low stature, black skin, long heads, broad noses, and long fore-arm from the rest of the inhabitants of India. They form the original type of population of India, now modified to a varying extent by the admixture of Aryan, Scythian, and Mongoloid elements." (23-24) Augustus H. Keane (1833-1912), gentleman ethnologist and Professor of Hindustani at the University College, London, supported the Indo-African-Austral origin of the Dravidians. This theory which mentions the island of Madagascar united with South India, Sri Lanka, the Malayan Archipelago and Australia; gains support from ancient Tamil traditions which describe a large continent that once existed in the Indian Ocean, and was connected to South India. These traditions mention a deluge, or 'kadal kol', which submerged the large continent, in successive waves. According to Iyengar, "Geological research has shown that the Indian Ocean was once a continent, and ... this submerged continent, sometimes called Lemuria, originally extended from Madagascar to the Malay Archipelago, connecting South India with Africa and Australia." (24-25)

The contiguous nature of Africa and India has been traced to the close affinities between plants and animals found in these two regions at a remote period, pointing to a land bridge connecting these lands. This conclusion was arrived at by Dr. C.F. Oldham, Brigade Surgeon

of his Majesty's Indian Army. The idea of a submerged continent appears to gain credibility with further mention of migrations to the antediluvian land mass. The English zoologist, Philip Sclater, for example, posited the idea that the Dravidians entered India from the South long before the super continent submerged.

If we move forward in chronology to a more recent period we will notice subtle yet profound changes in the interpretation of the Dravidian hypothesis. The archaeologist B.B Lal contended in the sixties that the Dravidians probably came from Nubia or Upper Egypt. Excavations by his team at a place called Timos in Egypt revealed several megalithic sites of the ancient Nubians which bore an uncanny resemblance to the cemeteries of early Dravidians, found all over the west coast of India from Kathiawar to Kanyakumari. This discovery is of tremendous significance, for it brings to light the fact that the Dravidian race had a pan- Indian presence at a very early period in history.

Dr. Naval Viyogi, a research scholar in the ancient history of India, compiled his findings based on the Indus Valley Civilization in a work entitled *The Founders of Indus Valley Civilization and Their Later History* brought out in 1984. Dr. Viyogi contends that although, traditionally, historians consider the Mesopotamian civilization to possess the greatest antiquity among the three oldest civilizations in the world, the other two comprising the Egyptian and Indus Valley civilizations; they "... have done a great injustice to the great people of the Indus Valley by placing the greatness of the civilizations in the above mentioned order ..." (x) Dr. Viyogi's contention was based on the belief that such a claim should rest on the standard of living of the common man , "...the availability of facilities of life and the prosperity of the people, which were certainly available to the common folk of the Indus Valley." (x) Dr.Viyogi also discovered that the civilizations of Harappa and Mohenjodaro were identical and had a connection to Mesopotamia.

How did such a situation arise? Human migration is often the result of unfavorable environmental circumstances or natural calamities and ancient Tamil works collectively termed Sangam Literature, speak of

large scale natural calamities referred to as 'kadal kol' or reclamation of land by the sea, which appear to have flooded permanently, large tracts of land. This resulted in the shifting of the populace northward to safer elevations. In light of the various conjectures regarding the Dravidian debate we may surmise that if a study of the evolution of the Dravidian race must trace its origins to the submerged and mythic land of Lemuria/Kumarinatu, we need to make it a legitimate presence.

In her work *Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories: The Lost Land of Lemuria*, Sumathi Ramaswamy contemplates the concept of place-making. "What is a lost place? What symbolic capital does a lost place command that an available place does not, or cannot?" (3) She quotes Keith Basso a cultural and linguistic anthropologist who suggests that place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* human history. Basso stresses that place-making "... is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identity." (4) In a similar vein, Ramaswamy mentions Paul Carter who writes "It [is] through the act of naming that a space [is] delineated as having a character, as something that could be referred to." (23) The act of naming is significant to the spatial constitution of a land, for to name a space is to turn it into a space which is open to negotiation. In fact if the sunken continent of Kumarinad/ Lemuria had not received a name, it would have remained an obscure landmass lost in the mists of time, for naming is an act of authority where the namer has control over the named, an act which articulates a vision.

Place-making can occur in often unheralded but important moments which transform the social imaginary. In charting the discovery of Lemuria / Kumarinad, one of the most formative moments is probably the Theosophical moment of the 1880's, in which this place world was transformed from "...the paleographer's lost continent, uninhabited by humanity into the submerged home of the 'Third Root-Race,' progenitors to Man." (Ramaswamy 55) The second moment occurred in the 1920's when the fabled land was recast as a drowned Pacific Paradise and finally in the 1950's, the third moment reincarnated this world as a lost utopian world of wisdom and well-being. Theosophical place-making was important in that it resurrected mythic

lands and peopled them with humanity. More importantly Helena Blavatsky, leader of the theosophical movement, was able to incorporate these lost lands into a cyclical scheme of cultural evolution, which served as a critique of theories of linear progress, theories which placed modern civilization at the pinnacle of cultural development.

Ramaswamy writes that:

Blavatsky rehabilitated know ledges dismissed as archaic by the sciences but really more useful than anything scientific modernity had to offer. These knowledges had been produced in former place-worlds like Lemuria now lost to the ocean, but had left their mark in legends that circulate today in parts of the world that are outside the influence of the West and its materialist sciences ...The Theosophical moment has thus been critical to bringing Lemuria from nature to culture. (56)

Strangely it is when Lemuria became a crucible of scientific truths about the earth, promoted by prominent figures, albeit speculatively, that it was least subversive. Outside these intellectual circles its presence was contradictory, subaltern and scandalous.

Certain modalities are at work in the process of naming, both in the disciplines of science and the humanities. Place-making modalities at play include catastrophies, cartography and mythology. Modernity with its agenda of disenchantment, premised on the material sciences, is yet another modality which in a paradox of sorts, lead to the resurrection of a mythic world, through the neo sciences of paleogeography, paleontology, and paleobotany. For Ramaswamy modernity is a necessary adjunct to "... labors of loss (which) are those disciplinary practices, interpretive acts, and narrative moves which declare something as lost, only to "find" them through modernity's knowledge protocols..." (7) The resurrection of Lemuria/Kumarinatû, is a example of the successful application of modernity's knowledge protocols. The physical sciences of paleogeography and paleontology sanctioned the presence of a fabled landmass south of the modern Indian subcontinent, and in the process they lent credibility to Tamil literary traditions which laid claim to the antediluvian land, titled

Kumarikkantam or Kumarinatu, which existed in exactly the same location as the land mass validated by the metropolitan neo-sciences.

Naming as a tool of appropriation acquires significance when viewed from a historical perspective. Ramaswamy draws our attention to the evolution of terms used to designate a space when she writes that three terms referring to the mythic submerged landmass came to be used interchangeably since the 1930's – Lemuria, Kumarinatu and Kumarikkantam, of which the most popular and enduring was Kumarinatu. This was no accident for the term natû enabled the Tamil place makers to shift the meaning of Lemuria away from its dominant Euro-American scientific designation for a remote uninhabited paleo-continent to a familiar and real *Tamil* place, inhabited by Tamil speakers governed by Tamil kings and living in a Tamil state. By extension the suffix natû opened up the possibility of “designating this antediluvian land as Tamilnatû, “land/nation of Tamil,” from as early as 1903.” (107) A further act of nomination saw the transformation of Tamilnatû to Tamilakam or Tamil home-place. This latter day term acquired political overtones in the twentieth century for ‘Tamilakam’ had an antiquity which could be legitimately traced to the early years of the first millennium C.E. Tamilakam was traditionally regarded as the domain of the royal dynasties of the Chola, Chera and Pandya kingdoms, and their exploits were immortalized in verse, hence it continues to evoke historical and symbolic associations. We may infer then, that language is the essential medium through which nominal acts of appropriation, possession and occupation proceed. Tamil place-makers resort to an act of appropriation when they speak of Lemuria as their ancestral homeland or tàyakam, raising possibilities that they are the remnants of a pre-diluvian race which inhabited this mythic land.

Postcolonial critique, of global politics of disciplinary knowledge, the primacy of Reason, and the subordination of difference and singularity to Enlightenment universals, appear as necessary adjuncts to place-making. Such critique leads to the resurrection of subjugated knowledges, matters which have been marginalized in their own time and place, or have been deemed unworthy of the professional scholar's attention.

The loss of the mythical landmass Kumarikantam was due to a natural catastrophe termed 'kadal kol' in Sangam literature, which loosely translates as 'plunder by the sea' raising speculations of a major tsunami which triggered a deluge capable of sinking an entire continent. The meaning assigned by the Oxford English Dictionary to the word catastrophe is "an event producing a subversion of the order or system of things." It seems to echo the Foucaultian idea of history being the outcome of a series of radical discontinuities, ruptures and breaks, rather than a series of gradual changes. Such a history was validated by the neo earth sciences which, however, proclaimed a more gradual pace for radical changes happening to earth geography; but the catastrophic modes of thought which germinated in response to claims by the neo-sciences, persisted in the 'interstices' and margins, and following postcolonial and post modern claims, attempted to occupy centre stage.

The hegemony of the real and visible was observed in the empirical sciences but it is this very hegemony that intellectuals attempted to subvert, through postmodern and post-colonial critique. The potential of fabulous geographies to destabilize the knowledge empires of the metropolitan modern and reclaim knowledges which have been banished to the margins, has been comprehended, albeit, a little late in the day. Postcolonial critique is significant in that it undermines the modernist agenda of a politics of disciplinary knowledge. Homi Babha critiques the hierarchy of disciplinary knowledge which privileges western knowledge systems over all others, and offers the concept of narration as a means of conjuring up a national or communal identity. As Babha remarks "... the right to narrate ... serves as a "means to achieve our own national or communal identity." (*Location of Culture* xx) The nuances of a community, its traditions and culture, appear to find expression and are reinforced through mythic narration especially in its earlier oral expression. They may be regarded as the ever present yet hidden tools for the survival of a race. In the past century there has been an insidious plan at work, to replace the primacy of oral mythic narrative with that of the written. In the process vital knowledge has been erased from the memory of the various races accompanied by the attendant notion of the superiority of western scholarship.

Dick Teresi an acclaimed science writer and co-founder of the magazine *Omni*, in his seminal work *Lost Discoveries: The Ancient Roots of Modern Science – from the Babylonians to the Maya*, questions the hypothesis that science was born in ancient Greece around 600 B.C and evolved for a few hundred years till 146 B.C . From then on till around 1500 A.D it is supposed to have lain dormant arousing itself from intellectual slumber during the Renaissance. The hypothesis assumes that the people who occupied the greater part of the globe such as the Indians, Chinese, Egyptians, Mesopotamians or sub-Saharan Africans did not possess a scientific mind and hence conducted no science. He remarks that:

Twenty-four centuries before Isaac Newton, the Hindu Rig-Veda asserted that gravitation held the universe together.. The Sanskrit speaking Aryans subscribed to the idea of a spherical earth in an era when the Greeks believed in a flat one. The Indians of the fifth century A.D ... calculated the age of the earth as 4.3 billion years; scientists in nineteenth-century England were convinced it was 100 million years. (The modern estimate is 4.6 billion years.) (8)

This erasure and the attendant regression that occurred in the status of knowledge, has been noticed and commented upon by various intellectuals, significantly by writers in the area of science–fiction. As these writers bridge the gap between the humanities and sciences, the omissions and discontinuities in diverse disciplines become obvious absences. These inadequacies are highlighted in science fiction by positing a former golden age of knowledge and peace against the violence and uncertainty engendered by the present indiscriminate application of knowledge forms. A more dangerous situation arises due the discarding of foundational knowledge bases which are replaced by surface applications ensuring populations that become consumers, ignorant of the ways and means of knowledge production. These observations should serve as a wakeup call to a world that is rapidly meta-morphing into a global mass culture, losing its unique multicultural plurality with its attendant voices of critique or dissent.

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Sexuality, Social Norms and Gender Identity: Mahesh Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen and Seven Steps Around the Fire*

Gayathri P. J.

The prominent gender categorizations silence the other genders and sexualities that exist in the world such as homosexuals, the transgender, the bisexuals, the drag kings, the drag queens, the butch and the femme identities that problematise categories of gender and sexual identity. The poststructuralist notion of identity as provisional and contingent, combined with the limitations of identity in political representations, present a fertile ground for the queer to maintain a flux identity. The seemingly self-evident and logical claims of identity based on the Cartesian subject has been questioned by the works of Louis Althusser, Sigmund Freud, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault and many others. This de-centering of the Cartesian subject represents identity as a cultural fantasy or myth. The representation of identity as a coherent, unified and self-determining subject is the result of the representational codes through which identity is perceived. The context also makes relevant Karl Marx's emphasis on the constraints and historical conditions on which identity depends. Althusser elucidates on the concept of ideology that positions an individual in a society and confers on him his sense of identity. The psychoanalytical interpretation of identity problematizes identity as natural. The stable and coherent nature of subjectivity is also subjected to question by Freud's notion of the unconscious. Lacan's interpretation of Freud emphasizes that subjectivity is something that originates outside self and depends on identification with and against others for its existence. It is not a property, but a process. Saussure in his explanations of language argues that language is not simply that which expresses the authentic selves, the private thoughts and emotions of a person. Rather, for him, the personal, private and interior self is constituted by language. Theorists like Judith Butler and Foucault point out the relevance of social, cultural, discursive and political

conceptualizations of sex which explore it beyond its biological framework.

The acceptance of heterosexual identity as universal in society makes no space for the other sexualities and sexual orientations. Thus, the so called non-homosexuals get plunged into the closet created by the powerful in society. The secrecy thus formed, establishes the oppositions of private/public, inside/outside and subject/object. For Jacques Derrida, the poststructuralist theoretician, the structuralist project of the binary opposition seems to be lacking in logical validity. He argues that the notion of a fixed identity which depends on binary oppositions cannot be established logically and is purely the result of Western metaphysics. Thus from a post-structuralist perspective identity is fluid and volatile. When analyzed from this angle the traditionally organized hetero/homo binary is disturbed. For the survival of each an understanding of the very other is a necessity i.e., a better understanding of heteronormativity greatly depends on the understanding of the queer.

The events of June 1969 and the Stonewalls incidents were an open gay disclosure, but barely stirred a change in the existing social meaning. It was a self disclosure of gays but did not make the binaries collapse. The gay closet forms a feature not only of the gay life but also of society. Rarely do the gays emerge courageous enough to diminish the role of the closet in shaping their lives. The judicial formulations of homosexuality are based on the constraints imposed upon the life and identity of the gays by this 'closet' or 'secrecy'. Eve Sedgwick posits that closet is the defining structure of gay oppression. The attention and demarcation that homosexuality now experiences has been brought about by the secrecy and disclosure and the private and the public, which is also problematic to the gender, sexual and economic structures of the heterosexual order.

Queer is formed with the conception of an idea of a new (in contrast to the so called heteronormative) social, political and identitarian formations of sexuality, gender and desire. The queer politics and cultural organizations have now manifested female masculinity and masculinity without men, which indicates the desire for gender

transitivity. This desire has broadened the areas of transsexual politics and cultural practices and the proliferation of culture. Gender transitivity also encompasses the areas of cross-dressing, drag and butch and femme identities which indicate sexual inversions. Such sexual identities make evident the disorientation in the accepted sexual identities which happens to be a critique of heteronormativity.

Sexuality is a nomination of persons in their everyday life and is a reformulation of social processes of subjection. Sexuality is better understood in two ways - sexuality as irreducible to gender identifications and sexuality and eroticism adhered to gender identifications. The influence of gender and sexuality in the formulation of identity has always been a matter of debate and discussions. The conception of sexuality as an array of acts, desires and practices diminishes its role in shaping identity and personhood. The relationship between gender and sexuality is ever changing. The queer scholarship explores the impact of these transformations in moulding identifications, identity formations, sexual practices, public cultures and embodied life. Gender transitivity is located amidst social and psychic conflicts arising from its inability to form an identity, whether normative or not. Sexuality and gender thus operates in a variety of manners to form identities.

The progressive shift in the understanding of and the attitude towards sexuality in the later decades of the 20th century was initiated by Foucault's celebrated rejection of the notion of "repressive hypothesis." His work, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* articulates sexuality not as a natural instinct of human life but as constructed against historical, social and cultural backgrounds, despite its biological origins. The question how sexuality functions gains more importance than the question of what sexuality is. Along with the biological frame of sexuality the role of social institutions in shaping it also becomes crucial in this context. The discourse on sex intends to draw the truths about individuals, about groups and about communities which would reveal polyvalence of sex.

Despite these understandings on the discourse of sexuality the queer is still submerged in the social norms that keep heteronormativity

the social mode. This submerged status causes the social alienation of the queer which results in their mental agonies. The queer is forced to conceal their real self in conformity with the accepted standard of society by suppressing their desires. Hence, the queer self becomes a cauldron of unreleased desires and emotions that add to their turmoil. The distresses of the queer life in turn also affect the society. Forced marriage and the psychiatric treatments due to the family pressures to divert the so called divergent sexual orientations later create an adverse impact upon the straight. Hence these victims of gender subordination don the role of victimizers in such contexts.

Mahesh Dattani, one of the leading Indian English playwrights has carved a unique space in the domain of contemporary Indian theatre. His uniqueness stands in his selection of those offbeat issues from the myriad challenges that an individual faces today. Homosexuality, child sexual abuse, the AIDS crisis etc top the list of his favourite themes. Making the meanest his protagonists he becomes a true product of the post-structuralist span. His plays bring to light the lives dumped in darkness to open the eye of the society about the unseen burning issues. Winner of the Sahitya Academy Award, Dattani becomes the voice of the discarded, attempting to carve out a decent identity for them.

Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen* forms a platform where the issues of homosexuality and female subjugation conflict with the values of Indian joint family system. The play centers on the affluent Trivedi family which comprises of Baa and her sons Jiten and Nitin and their wives Dolly and Alka respectively, who are also sisters. Sridhar, an employee of the Trivedi brothers' business and his wife Lalitha is another pair of couples in the play. Though absent in the play Praful, Dolly's and Alka's brother plays a key role controlling the family.

As the play unfolds it reveals the pathetic plight of the female characters embedded within the patriarchal norms. All the female characters in the play are in one way or the other exploited by the men in their lives. This paper focuses on the couple Nitin and Alka who lead an unsuccessful married life because of Nitin's homosexuality. Alka was married to Nitin to further the selfish interest of Praful who is Nitin's gay partner. Though Nitin refused initially, Praful forced him

to marry the latter's sister telling him that she just wants the security of a marriage. Alka who was unaware of the game behind her marriage was left devoid of all her dreams about a happy married life. She is never informed about her husband's homosexuality throughout the play and never enjoys marital pleasures.

Nitin, the younger Trivedi brother despite his lavish wealth and swanky life, is indeed an oppressed character. He is a sexually marginalized figure who resorts to a life of hypocrisy and intrigue in a heteronormative set-up. At the end of the play he talks to his wife who is drunk and asleep about how she was tricked by her brother. He thanks God for his wife being a heavy sleeper, a situation which he exploited to satisfy his homoerotic desires with Praful. He also manages to enjoy the company of an auto-driver who is another source of satisfaction for his carnal desires. But within his married life he operates his patriarchal powers towards his wife under the banner of his masculinity.

Dattani paints both Nitin and Alka to be poignant figures who are victims of heterosexual and patriarchal discourses. While he acknowledges the sufferings of Nitin in a heteronormative society, he also meticulously explores how these victims of social norms turn out to be victimizers. Despite Nitin, Alka also becomes a victim of the sexual decorum of society when she misses out a married life because of a homosexual husband. Being gay never frees anyone from the clutches of patriarchy. When Praful and Nitin exercise their patriarchal power, Alka becomes a victim of it. She, in order to escape from her frustrations, resorts to alcoholism and creates an intoxicated parallel world of joy away from reality. Thus, the play becomes an exposition of queer life as a victim and victimizer in society.

Dattani in the play throws his spotlight on social norms which hinders proper development of individuals. The individuals often go against their natural tastes in order to be on track with the ways of the society which forces them to mask their real identity. Praful and Nitin being ashamed of their sexualities are forced to conceal their innate desires and lead a life of pretence. This brings more mental agonies to both of them to which Alka becomes a scapegoat. Praful

who is highly selfish and crooked seems to have a profound control on the Trivedi family. The brothers live under the heavy trauma of suppressing their aggressiveness against Praful. But this only plunge them deeper into an emotional as well as financial crisis. Praful's financial aid is an indispensable factor in the smooth running of their business. He also tricked his sister Alka by marrying her to his gay partner. Unlike Praful, Nitin is entangled within several kinds of oppressions. Being the youngest in the family right from his childhood he has been under the control his mother and elder brother and at later Praful. He is finally accused by his wife of abnormality. He is emotionally wrecked by his subjugation, and this is enhanced by his homosexuality.

Seven Steps Around the Fire is another play in which Dattani handles the queer by digging deeper into the psyche of the eunuchs. The non-conformity of hijras to the accepted gender binary in society forms the cause of their social alienation. Being politically, legally and socially marginalized they fail to carve out a decent identity. Any outlet of love and affection for hijras is never accepted and thus they are forced to lead a cursed life. The plot of the play revolves around the murder investigation of Kamla.

Kamla, a hijra who was in love with Subbu, a minister's son and who secretly married him was burnt to death by the minister. Her body was thrown into a pond and was found by a passer-by. The minister soon arranged a marriage for his son with an acceptable girl. Subbu who loved Kamla sincerely was not ready for the marriage arranged by his father. At the marriage he gets to know the entire truth behind the murder of Kamla and manages to get Suresh's gun and commits suicide by shooting himself. The murder of Kamla was easily hushed up by the political forces and there was no proper investigation. The death of Subbu was written off as an accident.

Uma Rao, a research scholar whose topic for research is class/gender based power implications becomes the protagonist of the play with her attempts to unveil the secrets behind the murder. Being the wife of the jail superintendent Suresh Rao she gets ample opportunities to meet the hijras associated with Kamla. She met Champa, the head

hijra and Anarkali, another hijra falsely arrested for the murder. Despite the warning from her husband not to cross the boundaries of research she interacts with hijras so keenly that she could sharply delve into the psyche of these ill-fated souls. Through their conversations Uma could clearly see a strong bond of sisterhood between the hijras and could surmise their innocence in the murder.

Uma's visit to the hijras' place surprises the hijras themselves. Uma amazes everyone with the usage of the pronoun 'she' for the hijras when the others prefer 'it' for this category of blurred sexual identity. Anarkali is kept in a male prison where she bears agonizing tortures from the policemen as well as the fellow prisoners. Uma tells Suresh about the plight of Anarkali in the prison. She also asks Suresh the reason why Anarkali is put in a male prison to which he replies, "They are all strong horses" (Dattani 237) and then easily changes the topic. He humiliates them as castrated, degenerate men, referring to them as creatures and laughs at the sisterhood of the hijras.

Eunuchs are coeval with the world. But their presence and status are marginalized by the accepted and the prominent two categories of gender, the male and the female. An attempt to destabilize the existing notions of gender is marked by internal ambiguity. Though the sexual difference is visibly marked by certain body parts the eunuchs present an incompleteness of this existing system of gender binary.

Venturing out into the lives of the eunuchs the playwright aims to explore the two ways in which they are forced to live a cursed life, their inability to fulfill the sex roles assigned to develop human bonds. Hijras' sexual identity marks an underlined deception. By lifting the curtain on the life of hijras, Dattani explores beyond the binary of male-female sexual divisions. This strange sexual identity which keeps the hijras away from the centre stage develops hatred and contempt towards this community. Society fails to understand the trauma in their isolated hijra life that denies them a normal human life. They are not regarded as a part of the society and any kind of relationship with hijras is never recognized. The play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* depicts the strong bond of relationship and love among hijras which sketches them as normal human-beings and their craving to lead a normal life in society. Anarkali

warns Kamla to withdraw from her relationship with Subbu because she knows very well that finally Kamla would face odious consequences. In order to save her sister from trouble Anarkali even wounds her face thinking that Subbu would leave Kamla because of her damaged face. Realizing Uma's concern for their community Anarkali is keen to welcome Uma as her sister.

This gender based social ostracization of the hijra community sometimes also becomes a misfortune for the so called accepted genders in society. *Seven Steps Around the Fire* testifies to the fact that if a hijra is loved, it amounts to his/her tragedy. Subbu loved the hijra Kamla which forms the root cause of his death. Hence, the play affirms queer as a victim on one side and a victimizer on the other.

The two plays gifted with Dattani's brilliant stagecraft lifts the curtain on individuals crunched between individual interests and social norms. In the beginning of *Bravely Fought the Queen* Dolly is seen with a mud-mask which is a key to the mood of the entire play. She fears if her mask would crack when she laughs. Her mask and the masked ball suggest the masked identity of the characters. The characters do not want to crack their masks in order to appease society. Lalitha's Bonsai in the play is of immense importance. When asked how it is made, she replies: "You stunt their growth. You keep trimming the roots and bind their branches with wire and... stunt them" (244). It suggests the innate tastes and desires of the humans being wired up resulting in their stunted growth like bonsai. The use of the large window overlooking the front of the house suggests an escape from the suffocated and truncated space which denies proper development of the characters. The wretched woman at the gate of the Trivedis symbolizes the distortion within the psychic space of each the individuals cramped within the social and cultural protocols.

In *Seven Steps Around the Fire* the social exclusion of hijras is vividly indicated by the location of the residence of Champa behind Russel Market in Shivajinagar which is far away from the main city. The poky quarters of the hijras and the rusty tin case symbolize their hopeless lives. Uma's contemplations on the plight of the hijras and the power implications in society help unravel the layers of power domination that

fold hijra lives in deep dissolution. The playwright with his brilliant use of the technique of voice-over draws out the inner thoughts of Uma which opens the eyes of the society to these damned lives.

The peculiarity of Dattani's work lies in his exploration of the queer life as victims and victimizers. While unraveling the layers of trauma and pathos surrounding this cursed community he simultaneously exposes the way in which queer becomes victimizers in society. In both the plays *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *Seven Steps Around the Fire* he makes a vivid picture of the straight lives ruined by the socially denounced alternative sexuality.

Dattani's brilliance in exploring the human psyche helps him to understand the agonies that gnaw an individual. While standing with the sexually marginalized communities, voicing their trauma to the world, he simultaneously sees the peripheral lives of the queer and the way in which they deconstruct the straight lives. He marvelously draws the gay couple Praful and Nitin in *Bravely Fought the Queen* to point out the pruned and wound lives of the homosexuals. In *Seven Steps Around the Fire* he makes the Hijra community speak their woes and expose the human relationships they cherish. Both the plays, through the characters Alka and Subbu vividly portray how the social exclusion of the sexual subaltern affects the smooth flow of the sex currents of the society. Despite being a topic that everyone normally avoids, Dattani daringly discusses it on the stage and makes it worth the concern of the society. His originality lies in his theoretical understanding of the question of the identity of the sexual marginal and the multi-dimensional perspective with which he treats the queer as both the victim and the victimizer.

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‘Listening to Estha’s Wounds’: Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* as a Trauma Narrative

And it is, indeed, at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet.

Cathy Caruth, *The Unclaimed Experience*

Dr. Kunhammad. K. K. & Jinan Ashraf*

Ever since Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* took the literary world by storm in 1997, the novel has been a fecund ground for the production of innumerable interpretations: political (Ahmed, 1997; Bose 1998), sociological (Airaudi 2007), narratological (Baneth-Nouailhetas 2002), Bakhtinian (Clarke 2007), Feminist (Bose 1998), spatial (Friedman 2005; Upstone 2007), ecofeminist (Comfort 2007), postcolonial (Froula 2007; Tickel 2007) and deconstructive/spectral (Cilano 2007; Punter 2007). While Elizabeth Outka (2011) has discussed the novel from the perspective of trauma theory, the focus of her analysis is on what she terms a “temporal hybridity,” a mixing of memory and desire, past and present through the hallucinations and flashbacks scattered throughout the novel. While we are in agreement with Outka’s view that “Roy’s novel should not be read simply as an objective study of trauma”, our paper can not merely be seen as an attempt to show how it is “a fictional and artistic expression of the after-effects of trauma” (6); on the contrary, we single out one of the central characters of the novel Estha and his traumatic experiences wreak havoc on his subjective identity. Sarah Young Longworth’s (2006) treatment of trauma and the ethical dilemma in *The God of Small Things* attempts to establish the presence of trauma in the narrative structure by invoking Judith Lewis Herman’s three categories of trauma with a primary focus on the medical notion of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although Ksenija Svarc’s essay (2013) analyses three types of trauma—cultural,

environmental and individual, the word ‘trauma’ is used in its general sense of a deeply disturbing experience. Our paper, which attempts a reading of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* in the light of trauma theory, with special focus on the transformation of Estha, is also intended as an accessible introduction to the emerging school of what Julian Wolfreys calls ‘testimonial criticism,’ or ‘trauma criticism.’

Though there may not be a new school of criticism called “trauma criticism” (Wolfreys), a wide range of works have already introduced the significance of trauma theory in interpreting literary works. These trauma readings are also referred to as instances of what Julian Wolfreys calls “testimonial criticism” because trauma is, fundamentally, always a certain mode of testifying to an experience. Shoshana Felman, arguably the most important theorist of trauma, has defined the twentieth century as the “age of trauma” and her works like *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (with Dori Laub) (1992), *The Juridical Unconscious* (2002), and *Writing and Madness* (2003) showcase some of the most remarkable attempts at charting out possible interfaces between literature and trauma. Cathy Caruth (1996) and Ulrich Baer (2000) have applied trauma theory in the reading of some of the masterpieces of world literature like Albert Camus’ *The Plague*. Most recently, Catherine Malabou has taken trauma theory to a different level (though not with an intent to apply it to literary works) in her new book *The New Wounded* (2012).

Perhaps one of the most powerful early readings of trauma comes from Jacques Derrida who has made a book-length interpretation of a story titled “The Instant of Death” by Maurice Blanchot. The story is hardly 4 pages while Derrida’s testimonial reading of it runs to more than 100 pages. The short story and its testimonial reading are published as a single book titled *The Instant of My Death* under the joint authorship of Derrida and Blanchot. *The Instant of My Death* is perhaps the first book-length example of a trauma reading of a literary work. The short story centres around a profoundly traumatic experience that Maurice Blanchot went through in his real life. Blanchot was a member of the French Resistance, and was caught by the Gestapo. Blanchot experiences the acute trauma of having to go through ‘the instant of

his death' as he stood facing the firing squad, waiting for the command by the Nazi captain who had decided to kill him along with a score of other young anti-Nazi activists. Standing in that line, with the command about to go off and convinced beyond doubt that once the command goes off, he will be dead, Blanchot is shocked to see that his entire family is watching the scene and requests the officers to take his family away. The officers agree. But in that last moment, in the instant of his death, some commotion breaks out and the shooting order is temporarily suspended. An officer comes to Blanchot and tells him to run away for dear life. Blanchot escapes. Now the first question that Derrida poses in his reading of the event is: *Has Blanchot died—or not?* Was the instant of his death an experience of death or life? The moment when Blanchot considered himself dead was soon followed by the inauguration of a new life beyond death and the experience was like witnessing one's own death. According to Derrida, nothing could be more traumatic than testifying to one's own death, to the fact of one's radical departure from the world, to the instance of death as "deferred imminence" (46), to "the imminence of an impossible dying" (47). In a sense, Blanchot has not experienced his death since a human experience of death is impossible (in the sense that we cannot know what happens when we die because we cannot communicate to the living the true state of being dead), while in a profoundly psychological sense, he has witnessed his own death—a conclusion that leads Derrida to not only define trauma as an "unexperienced experience" but also as an integral part of all literature:

Nothing seems more absurd to common sense, in effect, than an unexperienced experience. But whoever does try to think and read the part of fiction and thus of literature that is ushered in by such a phrase in even the most authentic testimony will not have begun to read or hear Blanchot (47).

Trauma, according to this Derridean reading, is not only the experiencing of death, but also experiencing its very survival. As Cathy Caruth puts it: "The crisis at the core of many traumatic narratives... often emerges, indeed, as an urgent question: Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived

it?” (*The Unclaimed Experience* 7). In the case of Blanchot, it is clearly ‘the ongoing experience of having survived’ the instant of his own death that remained as an “unsymbolizable wound.” As Žižek put it, “in order to cope with a trauma, we symbolize” (Qtd. in Wolfreys 126).

Psychic wounds caused by traumatic experiences have become integral to our life today. For instance, suppose we unfortunately witness a horrible accident on the highway, where, let’s say, a bike rider is crushed to death, a feature of life that has become a crucial everyday component in the fabric of our symbolic universe. As we watch the scene in horrified disbelief, we become a witness to a trauma and the physical trauma of another becomes our psychical wound. In that instant, we become speechless. As the symbolic fabric collapses under the pressure of an experience that is fundamentally not one’s own—an ‘unexperienced experience, trauma is experienced as an event of silence.’ Wolfreys substantiates this dimension of trauma in a memorable passage in *Occasional Deconstructions*:

Trauma, it might be said, is a ghost. Given that “the essential character of traumatism” is best described as a “nonsymbolizable wound,” to read trauma is to register the sign of a secondary experience and recognition of the return of something spectral in the form of a trace or sign signifying, but not representing directly, that something, having occurred, has left its mark, an inscription of sorts on the subject’s unconscious, and one that, moreover, can and does return repeatedly, though never as the experience as such. This is not to say that the traumatic event, that factual or historical event that one day took place, never happened or was not real. It is to register, however, that for trauma to be comprehended as trauma, as that which, in appearing, inflicts itself on the subject and thereby causes suffering, is never experienced for the first time as *trauma* (2004 170).

It is in this sense that Cathy Caruth defines trauma as “the unclaimed experience” in her book of the same title. It is this ‘spectral’ return of the traumatic experience that makes trauma narratives so heart-wrenching. The trace of this insufficiently internalized experience, the ghost of the wound or, what Caruth calls its repeated ‘voice’,

endlessly returns. The real trauma resides in having to live through the way in which one's trauma is tied up with the trauma of another. Trauma, in this sense, is, as Cathy Caruth explains in her chapter titled "The Wound and the Voice", "listening to another's wound" (*The Unclaimed Experience* 8). The psychical wound has a voice that haunts the trauma victims almost throughout their lives.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a brilliant example of a novel that is structured around a series of traumatic events in the lives of two kids, Rahel and Estha and the voice of their wounds reverberates throughout the text. While *The God of Small Things* is a work both of fiction as testimony and of testimony as fiction, the experience of reading it is like testifying to those experiences and listening to the wounds and the 'unexperienced experiences' of its characters. Traumas haunt the novel like ghosts and it is set against events of trauma at different locations: at Abhilash Talkies where Estha is molested by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, at the river where Chacko's daughter Sophie Mol dies by water, at the History House where 'a posse of policemen' unleash brutal violence on Velutha in front of the twins, at the Railway Station where Ammu bids a heart-rending farewell to Estha, at the Police Station where the twins are force-fed a tale of lies, and at the lock-up room where Estha produces a false testimony under duress. And the most excruciatingly horrifying trauma of all in the novel is this act of forced testimony, where a child testifies against a man he loves the most, a false testimony that costs Velutha his life and turns the child into a murderer of sorts. The trauma caused by this event of false testimony and the incredible pressures to which Baby Kochamma subjects the children leads Estha to lose speech for the rest of his life. Trauma descends on Estha like a ghost of silence. The "Yes" that Estha utters in response to the police officer's question erases from the innocent child's mind a brief lifetime of unbearably delicious memories with Velutha. And Arundhati Roy captures the intensity of the impact of that trauma on the child in an admirably poetic couplet:

"Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt" (145).

This is what happens in a traumatic experience. If an adult witnesses a traumatic event, s/he might feel a temporary shock and the

trauma may be awakened on several occasions later. But a six-year-old child might be disabled for life because, as in the case of Estha, trauma translates into a disability. Silence or speechlessness is our first response to any traumatic experience. When someone phones to inform that a significant other in our life has passed away or died in an accident, we become wordless, not as a matter of personal choice—it is just that in the face of trauma, words simply fail. In other words, in such moments, we are unable to experience the experience. Trauma suspends the actual experiencing of the traumatic experience and it may take days, or even months for the person to recover from the trauma. In the case of Estha, silence becomes a form of ‘estivation’ and a unique mode of being and Roy expresses this impact of trauma on Estha in a series of terrifyingly beautiful turns of phrase:

It had been a gradual winding down and closing shop. A barely noticeable quietening. As though he had simply run out of conversation and had nothing left to say. Yet Estha’s silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. It wasn’t an accusing, protesting silence as much as a sort of estivation, a dormancy, the psychological equivalent of what lungfish do to get themselves through the dry season, except that in Estha’s case the dry season looked as though it would last forever (6).

Recovery from trauma means recovering the ability to express the trauma in words and it is this ability to narrativize, to symbolize that Estha loses under the impact of trauma. Estha’s silence takes the shape of a beast and the way in which Estha begins to accept this octopus of silence inside makes him an incontestably tragic victim of trauma:

Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha. . . . It sent its stealthy, suckered tentacles inching along the insides of his skull, hovering the knolls and dells of his memory. . . . It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb. . . . [Estha] grew accustomed to the uneasy octopus that lived inside him and squirted its inky tranquilizer on his past. Gradually the reason for his silence was hidden away, entombed somewhere deep in the soothing folds of the fact of it. (13)

Estha's wounds are unspeakable, but as the victim of trauma, his life becomes a protracted process of listening to his own wounds. Elizabeth Outka's explanation of Estha's psychical wound in terms of "temporal hybridity" is worth quoting in its entirety:

Estha falls into a silent world where time does not quite stand still at one moment; it simply ceases to exist. What is "unspeakable" remains unspoken, and yet the unspeakable remains and gains agency, engaging in violent and even desperate attempts to Hoover or strip or pare or hide or numb or entomb or tranquilize the persistent memory. The sheer number of ways that the quietness works to silence the past suggests that even for Estha, the past returns at every moment, and the only way to escape this hybrid time is to shut out the present as well. Since the present can always trigger the past, just as the past can always infect the present, Estha can partly escape only by being taken over by a monstrous silence. Estha's experience appears to allow survival but little else (8).

Estha's wounds run really deep. If the false testimony under duress is the *coup de grace* that robbed him of words for ever, it is important to note that Estha had been dealt equally hard blows earlier in his life. His life has progressed by an accretion of traumatizing experiences. For example, the traumatic kernel of his horrifying experience of sexual abuse by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man had already begun to take its toll on his psyche. The memory of that event, made all the more intense by the ironic fact of his mother Ammu feeling a certain regard for the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, haunts Estha forever, like a voice of the wound:

"The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could walk in any minute. Catch a Cochin-Kottayam bus and be there. And Ammu would offer him a cup of tea. Or Pineapple Squash perhaps. With ice. Yellow in a glass." He is constantly haunted by the traumatic experience at Abhilash Talkies, which transforms Estha's relation to his external world.

He gets temporary reprieves, but he constantly lives in a state of shock at the possibility of the voice of the wound returning to haunt him:

Temporarily, for a few happy moments, the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man shut his yellow smile and went away. Fear sank and settled at the bottom of the deep water. Sleeping a dog's sleep. Ready to rise and murk things at a moment's notice.

Estha's fear drives him to think "Two Thoughts and the Two Thoughts he thought were these:

- (a) Anything can happen to Anyone, and
- (b) It's best to be prepared" (90).

Nothing is more harrowing for a child than having to resort to these traumatic thoughts as an anchor that would prevent him from drifting off. Estha's experiences in life have taught him that traumatic eruptions can destroy the inner and outer fabric of one's reality.

In one of his most recent books, Slavoj Zizek speaks about four different kinds of trauma: external, natural, internal and socio-symbolic. Traumas caused by terror attacks like 9/11, the U.S. 'shock and awe' bombing of Iraq, rapes, etc. belong to the external domain of human life, while natural catastrophes such as earthquakes and tsunamis constitute a different category of trauma. The third type of trauma is caused by terminal illnesses such as brain-tumours, Alzheimer's disease, etc. The fourth type of trauma, according to Zizek, is caused by the socio-symbolic violence of social exclusion. While all these traumas are "meaningless, brutal interruptions that destroy the symbolic texture of the subject's identity" (Zizek 141), in *The God of Small Things*, most characters including Estha suffer primarily from the traumas imposed on his life by socio-symbolic violence. Although *The God of Small Things* may be read as a fictional act of bearing witness to a series of traumatic events in the lives of several of its characters like Rahel, Ammu and Velutha, it is the voice of Estha's wounds that reverberates throughout the novel.

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Paradigms of Ecospirituality

Aswin Prasanth

The term ecofeminism was first coined by Francoise D'Eaubonne in her work *Feminism or Death* (1974). Ecofeminism is an activist oriented approach that seeks to unveil the dynamics of patriarchal oppression that women and nature have suffered. It has its roots in the anti nuclear movements that began in the West. It is an interdisciplinary discourse evolved from the intersection of ecology and feminism. In creative expressions like art and literature, nature or the external world is identified as the female, this is particularly emphasized in the 'Paternity Theory of Art' where art is regarded as the product of the interaction between the creative psyche (conventionally considered male) and the external world (traditionally treated as the female). Ecofeminism is based on the parallel predicament of women and nature. Both women and nature are colonized, exploited and degraded by men. Both women and nature have been the sites of male greed and cruelty. The dualism inherent in western metaphysics interprets difference as hierarchical and therefore privileges binary thinking that posits women and nature as inferior and subordinate to men and culture. Ecofeminism attempts to address the inherent inequalities in world structures which permit men to dominate women, and the plunder of resources that leads to unequal distribution of wealth.

Capitalism created the concept of private ownership which included land, women and domestic animals. Nature's closeness or resemblance to women has created the impression that nature also is to be possessed, consumed and degraded. Thus, both women and nature are oppressed and degraded by men. Ecofeminism is a woman identified movement encompassing a wide range of concerns resulting from various forms of oppression. Ecofeminists identify the various dominator systems that are inherent in most societies. The multiple forms of oppressions have been identified as patriarchy, capitalism, racism, colonialism and neocolonialism. In all these ideologies the victims are dominated by the hegemonic victimizers. Thus women, the working class, the coloured

communities, the colonized and the third world people are dominated by the oppressors in contemporary societies. Ecofeminism addresses the intricate and interlocking systems of multiple oppression and consequent degradation. In contemporary situation men, especially white men, colonize both land and nature. Men all over the world colonize women and female body. Ecofeminism is a sexual politics that decolonizes both land and the female body. In this regard, ecofeminism aims at a return to the times prior to primitive capitalism when there was a collective ownership of land and when women enjoyed a higher status in community life.

The political objective of ecofeminism is twofold: a resolve to face the challenge of a damaged planet and a conviction to resist the hegemony and oppression faced by women and other marginalized groups. The supremacist power structures constructed the mystique of superiority in matters of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and so on. During the period of colonialism the supremacist notions were extended to the domain of land and nature. Thus, the European colonizers dispossessed the natives, took away their lands and exploited nature and women everywhere on the globe. Ecofeminism deconstructs and subverts the supremacist power structures that indulge in unrestricted exploitation of nature and women.

During the colonial period the European colonizers Christianized the native communities as part of their civilizing mission. In the process of forced cultural assimilation, the indigenous communities all over the world had to face the erasure of cultural identity. The native communities were forcibly excluded from culture and history. The colonizers brought with them the patriarchal tradition which subverted the gender roles of women in indigenous communities. Patriarchy promoted the binary oppositions in which the second element is treated as the cultural Other. Ecofeminism deconstructs the binary oppositions and cultural Othering, which is the abuse of knowledge to construct a person or a group as the Other in order to keep them subordinated in power relations.

Patriarchy constructed and propagated the concept of dualism to reinforce binary opposites. According to Val Plumwood, dualism is “the

process by which contrasting concepts are formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive” (31). Patriarchy created dualist hierarchical paradigms like culture/nature, mind/body, subject/object, self/Other, male/female in which the first is preferred to the second. But the preference is not based on logic, but on conventions. So the male is preferred to the female by the conventions created by patriarchy and these conventions are legitimized through dualist thinking. Ecofeminism subverts the dualist paradigms and resists the Othering of the second element. Ecofeminism thus resists the cultural Othering promoted by patriarchy.

Ecofeminists are of the view that reductionism is a violence against natural order and therefore reductionism undermines the status of women and nature. Establishment of science and organized religions perpetuate domination and create hierarchy both in society and nature. In this context, Vandana Shiva argues in *Staying Alive*: “The basic ontological and epistemological assumptions of reductionism are based on homogeneity. . . .Reductionist science is the source of violence against nature and women because it subjugates and dispossesses them of their full productivity, power and potential” (29). Shiva means that the ontological and epistemological positioning of reductionist science is antagonistic to female identity. Caroline Merchant also states a similar view in *The Death of Nature*: the contemporary environmental dilemma can be traced to a world view of science that reconceptualizes “reality as a machine rather than a living organism” (xxi). She means that empirical science develops a mechanical view of reality. This world view creates the earth as a dead planet. She adds that empirical science’s image of the earth as “a living female at the centre gave way to a mechanistic world view in which nature was reconstructed dead and passive, to be dominated and controlled by humans” (xvi). This world view has led to exploitation and degradation. Moreover, the image of nature as a female enables man to control nature and legitimise exploitation of nature. Thus, earth/nature has come to be objectified, feminized and instrumentalized.

As already stated, ecofeminism is based on the parallel between women and nature. Historically women and nature/environment occupy

marginal positions. This is because women and nature are considered private possessions of man: women and nature are trophies to be displayed. In marginal positions women and nature are oppressed. So the kinship between women and nature is a sisterhood of the oppressed which, in feminist terms, creates a new sense of community among women. This makes women's writings and nature writings identical in certain respects. They are constructs of oppression loaded with ideological undertones. Ecofeminist writings are therefore polemic literature. They are counter discourses or counter narratives which subvert the hegemony of mainstream discourses and the exclusionary structure of institutionalized forms of dominant narratives.

Ecofeminism is an alternative politics that resists the colonization of land and women. Ecofeminists try to decolonize both land and female body. According to Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, ecofeminism is extended to all forms of oppression that make social life miserable. They argue in *Ecofeminism*: "Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. . . .We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns" (14). According to Mies and Shiva, ecofeminism resists both globalization and nuclear proliferation, in addition to other forms of resistance in everyday practice. Mies and Shiva also think that "a female principle inhabits and permeates all things in nature" (17). Women therefore locate a female identity in the existence and process of nature. This is the principle of goddess worship. In this context, Carol P Christ asserts that "the simplest and the most basic meaning of the symbol of the Goddess is the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the female power as a beneficent and independent power" (277). Goddess worship is amazing and empowering. It opens new possibilities. It makes female body, femaleness and femininity sacred. It makes the power of nature central to the world view and replaces man as the centre of all perspectives.

Some of the ecofeminists observe that environmentalism and racism have a common cause and a common platform for articulation of resistance. They point to the case of women of colour like the Blacks

and the Hispanics. Women of colour assert their rights as victims of racism. But ecofeminists like Miriam Starhawk argue that racism can be coupled with environmentalism. She observes in "Witchcraft and Women's Culture": "[Ecofeminism] is based on the recognition that these two forms of domination are bound up with class exploitation, racism, colonialism and neocolonialism" (quoted in Christ and Plaskow 263). Starhawk means that ecofeminism can be connected to dominator systems prevailing in society. Plumwood also expresses a similar view on the intersection of feminism with racism and classism. She remarks: "Feminism has undergone major conflict, transformation and enrichment as a result of its encounters with other forms of domination and theories, especially those of race and class" (1). She underlines that the objectives of feminism have been transformed consequent to its mingling with racism and classism.

Ecofeminism is a critique of organized religions with their androcentric world view. Patriarchal thinking is pervasive in society and Church. The collusion between patriarchy and religion ensures the subordinate position of women in society and Church. Ecofeminists think that the male oriented theology can be challenged in the space of ecofeminist theory. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether, the pioneer of feminist Christology, has reinterpreted Christian theology from the perspective of women. She argues that male theologians excluded women from the hierarchy of Church on the pretext of keeping the purity of the Church by demonizing women as impure, polluted and sinful. Ruether critiques devaluation of women and nature through her reinterpretation of Christology. She observes that western tradition has conceived nature as the subordinate Other like woman. Plumwood also endorses this view and observes that women's equation to nature is appropriated as a major tool in the oppression of both women and nature. Women's closeness to nature is no longer a compliment for women. It is a trap which leads to the devaluation of women and nature. Moreover, patriarchy colludes with the Church to create negative impressions like the one related to female body: women's body is a site of sin and decay. Misogynists like Milton endorsed this tradition in literature as evident in *Paradise Lost*.

Feminist theologians argue that the Biblical stories of Noah's Ark and Christ's Sermon on the Mount underline eco-spirituality and solidarity with the marginalized. In their view the flood is an eco-catastrophe and the ark is a paradigm of survival. They point out that Christ emphasized the economy of sharing in the sermon. Ruether makes the most radical statement about the personality of Christ. She disregards the maleness of Christ in "The Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy." Ruether observes: "Christianity has said that God was literally male, but has assumed that God represents pre-eminently the qualities of rationality and sovereign power. Since . . . men exercised public power, normally denied to women, the male metaphor was seen as appropriate for God. . . ." (Loades 138-39). Ruether explains that the qualities related to public sphere and masculinity were attributed to God.

Ecofeminists consider that politics and spirituality are not polar opposites. For example, Judith Plaskow argues: "Politics becomes an expression of spirituality in its intent to create more human institutions, and religion itself is transformed by politics" (Christ and Plaskow 71). She means that eco-spirituality is an alternative politics that transforms organized religions. Ecofeminist spirituality is rooted in contemporary reality. Plaskow adds that in feminist perspective spirituality is understood as "the fullness of our relationships to ourselves, others, the earth and God" (Christ and Plaskow 72). Thus, eco-spirituality is defined in terms of relationships and responsibilities. It is therefore the inevitable consequence of struggle. Ecofeminists think that struggle for equality and justice is an integral part of eco-spirituality.

bell hooks also underlines the argument of Plaskow. Eco-spirituality provides a space for everyone to question outdated systems of faith and conviction. She observes: "Feminist spirituality created a space for everyone to interrogate outmoded belief systems and created new paths. Representing God in diverse ways, restoring our respect for the sacred feminine, it has helped us find ways to affirm. . . the importance of spiritual life. Identifying liberation from any form of domination and oppression. . . [is] a spirituality which unites spiritual practice with our struggles for justice and liberation." (109). hooks emphasizes the point

that feminist spirituality cannot be separated from feminist politics. Spirituality is also an inevitable consequence of struggle, especially for justice and liberation. Therefore it is a form of resistance and a construct of cultural identity.

For many feminists spirituality defines import, immediacy and intensity of female experiences and understanding. It is an expression and celebration of distinct female experiences. Female spirituality is affirmative and stands for a vital, active, energizing perception. This is the importance of Goddess worship in ecofeminism. Goddess is a central signifier in ecofeminist spirituality. In this context, Carol P Christ observes: "The basic meaning of the symbol of the Goddess is the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the female power as a beneficent and independent power" (277). She means that the image of the Goddess legitimates the independence of female power. Starhawk also explains that in Goddess based spirituality there is an identification of sexuality and spirituality as parts of a whole. She remarks in *The Spiral Dance*: "Goddess religion identifies sexuality as the expression of the creative life force of the universe" (224). Starhawk underlines that female sexuality and the modes of its expression are inseparable from female spirituality. The female Bhakti literature in some regional literatures in India testifies to this fact.

Ecofeminist spirituality heals the split between spirit and matter, mind and body. It is a form of alternative reality that resists consumerist culture and protects collective identity. It also emphasizes the procreative and nurturing aspects of women by naturalizing their socially constructed roles and romanticizing the image of the divine as female. Ecofeminist perspective thus erases the distinctions between sexuality and spirituality. African American feminist writer Audre Lorde explains this fact: "When I speak of the erotic I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women" (55). She means that the erotic, the sexuality, is the creative or life force of women. In the poem "A Woman is not a Potted Plant," Alice Walker celebrates the unfettered spirit and unlimited energy of women: ". . . A woman/is wilderness/unbounded/ between each breath/only because/she is free/and not creeper vine/or tree/not even honey suckle/or bee" (105). Walker emphasizes the wild

nature and unrestricted freedom of women. The noted critic Ursula King also endorses the views of Lorde and Walker. She argues that female spirituality cannot be separated from female sexuality. She observes: "The discovery of women's self and women's spiritual quest is a process, a journey of exploration, discovery and adventure" (30). King emphasizes that female spiritual quest is not different from female quest for identity formations. It is a form of exploration, adventure and discovery.

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“O-Lan, you are the land...” - The Practice of Ecological Feminism in the Film *The Good Earth*

Mallika A. Nair

Ecofeminism describes movements and philosophies that link feminism with ecology. The term is believed to have been coined by the French writer Francoise d' Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974). From arguments that there are particular and significant connections between Women and Nature, Ecofeminism interprets their repression and exploitation in terms of the repression and exploitation of the environment. Ecofeminists believe that these connections are illustrated through traditionally “female” values such as reciprocity, nurturing and cooperation, which are present both among women and nature. These twin entities remain forever united in their tales of abuse and oppression by the patriarchal society.

In an essay by Karen J. Warren titled ‘Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology,’ the author argues that the goals of Feminism and Ecology are mutually reinforcing; ultimately they involve the development of ideologies and practices that are not based on male-biased models of domination. As Rosemary Ruether wrote in her 1975 book, *New Woman/ New Earth*:

“Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women’s movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic economic relations and the underlying values of the modern industrial society.” (204)

So the principal problem that emerges from this notion is that the Environment is in effect simultaneously a feminist issue. The present paper would deal with these “Women-Nature connections” that

ecofeminists claim link the twin dominations of women and nature. The film *The Good Earth* released in 1937 speaks about Chinese farmers who struggle to survive. It was adopted by Talbot Jennings, Tess Slesinger, and Claudine West from the play by Donald Davis and Owen Davis which is incidentally based on the 1931 novel of the same name by the Nobel Prize winning author Pearl S. Buck. The film was directed by Sidney Franklin, Victor Fleming and Gustav Machaty. The film stars Paul Muni as Wang Lung. For her role as his wife O-Lan, Luise Rainer won an academy Award for Best Actress. The film also won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography for Karl Freund. It was nominated for Best Director, Best Film Editing and Best Picture.

The Good Earth begins on the wedding day of Wang Lung (Paul Muni) as a young man who purchases a wife from a large house where she was a slave. The woman O-Lan (Luise Rainer) bears him two sons and quietly encourages him to pursue his dreams, no matter what sacrifices they entail from her and sees him through all the good times and bad, through drought, famine, revolution, and a climatic locust plague. O-Lan helps in the fields, bears and raises the kids, and does the housework. When Wang Lung becomes a man of property, he takes a Chinese second trophy wife who causes him a lot of grief. Still O-Lan stoically bears it all. She stands behind him, supporting every decision he makes in her own tranquil way. O-Lan is the glue that holds the story together. The family lives through a famine and a desperate Wang Lung considers the advice of his pessimistic, worthless uncle to sell his land for food, but O-Lan opposes it. Instead, they travel south to a city in search of work. The family survives by begging and stealing. When a revolutionary gives a speech to try and gather support for the army approaching despite rain in the north. Wang Lung and O-Lan realize that the drought is over. They long to return to their farm, but they have no money for an ox, seed and food. The city changes hands and O-Lan joins a mob looting a mansion. However, she is knocked down and trampled upon. When conscious again, she finds a bag of jewels overlooked in the confusion. The windfall allows the family to return home and finally achieve prosperity and success. O-Lan asks only to keep two pearls for herself. Years pass. Wang Lung's sons grow up into educated young men.

However, with success comes greed and corruption, and soon Wang is buying large plots of land and the Great Hall at which O-Lan was a servant. He severs ties with all who were close to him and finds faults with the worn-out O-Lan. Desperate to gain affection from Lotus, he gives O-Lan's pearls to Lotus.

Oppressive and patriarchal conceptual frameworks are characterized not only by value dualisms and hierarchies but also by "power-over" conceptions and relationships of domination (Warren 1991 1 b) Whether it be gendered or ecological concepts, the film explores the connections between Women and Nature. Both these entities are raped, mastered, conquered, controlled, and mined. Her "secrets" are "penetrated" and her "womb" is put into the services of the "man of science". "Virgin timber" is felled, cut down. "Fertile soil" is tilled and the land that lies "fallow" is "barren", useless. Even the nuance of language claims that nature is feminized and Woman stands Naturalized thus describing, reflecting and perpetuating the domination and inferiorization of these dominions of women and nature. The development of theory and praxis in feminism and environmental philosophy reinforce the goal of ecofeminism.

Pearl S. Buck's story of the ups and downs of this Chinese family is adapted for the screen in a stately and dignified manner. The characters are brought to life through ample screen time to mature and develop. It ultimately takes a tragedy for Wang Lung to see the error of his ways. When Wang Lung discovers that his second wife, Lotus has seduced the younger son, he orders his son to leave home. Then a swarm of locusts threatens the entire village. Using a strategy devised by the elder son, everyone unites to try and save the crops. Just when all seems lost, the wind shifts direction, taking the danger away. Wang Lung is shocked into awareness of his ways and is brought back to his senses. He reconciles with the younger son. On the latter's wedding day, Wang Lung returns the pearls to O-Lan before she dies, exhausted by a hard life.

Literary criticism of the sort offered by Patrick Murphy claims that patriarchal conceptions of nature and women have justified "a two-

pronged rape and domination of the earth and the women who live on it” (Murphy 87) The practice of experiential connections between women and nature are intended to reveal important cultural and spiritual ties in an attempt to bring about a praxis of an important system of symbols.

The film is a truly great epic story of love, individual rights, class strata, and gender issues. It portrays the life of pre-World War I northern China in perfect patterns. Ms. Buck was convinced that these good solid farmers formed the basic heart of China. The vividness of both character and scene distinguishes *The Good Earth*. Man is what his soil shapes him into. It may at times become not just the background in his life’s drama, but a leading character in it, exercising an active influence on the course of events, more often adorning the attire of a spiritual agent, coloring the mood and shaping the disposition of human beings.

According to Sally, the rationale of the exploitation of women and nature has been uncovered by the ecofeminist analysis of patriarchy. It is then inevitable that feminists, environmentalists and philosophers must see that struggles for equality of women and ecological sustainability are interlinked. Warren reminds us that any movement that fails to recognize this woman-nature connection is simply inadequate.

Ecofeminism raises significant issues about the philosophical conceptions of the self, knowledge and the knower, reason and rationality, objectivity and a host of favored dualisms that form the backbone of philosophical theorizing, even the concept of philosophy itself. The challenge is to replace conceptual schemes, theories and practices that subjugate the doctrines of ecology and feminism, paving way towards a new praxis of liberation. The film reiterates this through the character of O-Lan who becomes the Earth essence, patient and yielding, yet aware of the strength of persistence and perseverance that runs through her veins. Her roots run deep into the soil, nurturing life and dreams around her. O-Lan, you are the Land....

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Reconstruction of the feminine heroism: Multiple Dimensions of the Archetype of Journey in John Fowles *A Maggot*

Mary Limna Viswas

It is intriguing to find that there is no archetypal pattern which traces the activities of the heroine in literature. Mythographer Joseph Campbell in *Hero with a Thousand Faces* suggests that Daphne's transformation into a tree to escape rape from Apollo, is a refusal of the call to heroism. Who is the hero of this myth? Is it Apollo, who is bent on rape or Daphne who successfully escapes it? Campbell studies the concept of heroism and implicated that innate conception of heroism in human psyche is possible only for men.¹

Fowles in his novel *A Maggot* subverts this conception of heroism, through his character Rebecca, using the archetype of journey. He opens the novel by allowing the reader to explore the question 'who is the hero of this novel?' Is it Ayscough who is bent of resolving the case or Rebecca, the survivor of the adventure? To complicate the issue further Fowles structures the novel as a detective fiction and paints Rebecca with a morally questionable past. Looking closely into the different stages of Rebecca's journey, Fowles incorporates in her characterization a feminist stance. The plot can be delineated into various stages of archetype of journey. The novel opens with the Stage of Departure. Mr. Bartholomew is on an adventure; however the purpose of journey is not clear. Though his name is revealed to the reader as Mr. Bartholomew, later he is identified as the lordship's son. Similar to him, the other travelers also are in disguise; Rebecca is identified as Fanny, who is a prostitute in a London house owned by a Mrs. Claiborne. However at this stage the novel raises the question, who is the hero of the journey, is it Mr. Bartholomew, Ayscough or Rebecca? At this stage the novel resists a single hero's concept, challenging the conventions and disturbing the reader's expectation.

Each character undertakes a journey in the novel. Mr. Bartholomew is in his search of an unknown adventure. Ayscough is desperately searching to resolve the truth of Mr. Bartholomew's death and Rebecca is making her journey that is marked by redemption of her sins. This redemption is marked by her maternity to Anne Lee the founder of Shaker movement, as per the epilogue that concludes the novel. The relativity of the hero of the journey pertains to the reader's perspective.

The next stage of the journey is marked by the initiation into a rugged world. This stage plays a crucial role in the resolution as the characters are defined here. Fanny's identity as Rebecca surfaces at this stage, through the interrogation of the actor Francis Lacy, who pretends to be Mr. Bartholomew's uncle. Rebecca's past comes out as her initiation into the world. She presents herself as Louise. This change in the name points towards her vulnerability in the company. Moreover she is seen to be in a clandestine relationship with two men, Mr. Bartholomew and Dick. The objectification of her body is complimented by her identification with the Harlot archetype in this context. However later she redeems herself from this image, as she confesses to being a part of the journey due to her need to financially support herself. Rebecca becomes site of conflicting character archetypes that continuously mutate.

This section points towards the sexual encounters with Fanny and Dick, implying Mr. Bartholomew's impotency. The section is also marked by pornographic details that define Rebecca's status as a prostitute. This stage is crucial to the resolution of the novel as Ayscough accounts the reason for Mr. Bartholomew's death is due to his impotency in the resolution of the novel. This complicates the interpretation of the confession by Jones and Rebecca in the resolution and thereby resisting a monologic interpretation of the text. As both Jones and Rebecca attributes his death to mystic reasons. The objectification of her body points towards the trials in her journey. Her refined manners that intrigue the inn keeper also verify her noble essence.

The next stage that is evident is the Innermost Cave. The Innermost Cave can be an underworld or some other place of great trial and sometimes this place can be within the hero's own mind. It

also results in the hero's rebirth in some way, physical, emotional, or spiritual. Through this experience, the hero changes internally and as result returns to the society. Here Rebecca clearly emerges as the hero image in the novel, as she qualifies in all the stages of journey. Rebecca's accounts of Mr. Bartholomew's death as a mystic encounter with the feminine trinity, is verified by Ayscough from her personal understanding through his letter. Here Stonehenge becomes a projection her mind. The incident transforms her into a chaste woman. She later testifies to the same to Ayscough as the wife of a blacksmith named John Lee. She later begets Ann Lee the founder of the Shaker movement in England. Rebecca's transformation does not only qualify in the plot but also in the epilogue, whereby Fowles gives credibility to her story.

Rebecca's journey "Back the Road" is complete with her ability to escape Ashough's interrogation and accusation. She describes his inability to understand her situation due to the difference in their alphabets, in short pointing towards the difference in signification between genders. Her resurrection to a new life is further announced in the epilogue as the mother to a divine child. Thus the plot effectively incorporates several stages of the Archetype of Journey.

It is the resolution of the novel that plays an important part in projecting Rebecca as a hero. Here Fowles give Rebecca's narrative, foremost importance by complimenting it with an epilogue. An explication of the detective genre around which the novel is structured is important to justify her emergence as a hero.

The plot is structured in the form of a detective novel, with a typical Archetype of Journey in search of truth, to resolve the mystery of a missing man. However the novel resists a closure to the mystery, unlike the traditional detective novel. This lack of closure is mostly due to the contradictions of ideology that are replete in the novel. Ayscough the detective, investigates the case through interrogation however he is not able to resolve the death of the young noble man, who was pretending to be Mr. Bartholomew. Fowles' does not reveal the purpose of the journey that is undertaken thus denying Mr. Bartholomew the status of hero. Moreover his death is later observed as an escape from his impotency.

The plot is structured with a pastiche of documents from myriad sources, which contradicts each other. The documents include *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Western Gazette* and the letters Ayscough sends to the lordship interspersed with interrogative documents in the form of question and answers. This pastiche not only provides a novelty in approach but also brings in multiple perspectives to the problem, thus complicating the resolution of the plot. Ayscough's inability to resolve the case undermines his position as the hero.

The historical documents used to mould the form and meaning of the text, precede and follow every testimony in the text, bringing objectivity to the context. For instance at the beginning of the novel, Fanny is introduced with a bouquet of violets on her coat. This is brought to the reader's attention, while Mr. Bartholomew reprimands her for the same. Later *The Western Gazette* reports the discovery of a corpse in the woods near Exmoor, hanging from a tree, with a bouquet of violets growing from its mouth, thus connecting her to the crime scene and also pointing towards her involvement in the crime. Thus Fanny status as a hero is complicated right from the exposition of the novel. The climax is reiterated from different perspective at different stages of the novel, which further complicates Rebecca's status as a hero. Moreover the shifting narrative point of view allows Fowles to maintain this ambiguity.

In the interview Jones, reveals that this group of three, Rebecca, Mr. Bartholomew, Dick, entered the cave on the unfortunate day. Dick came running out looking terrified and disappeared into the woods. Rebecca later emerged, naked and his lordship never came out. Jones recounts Rebecca told him that she had seen witches inside the cave. She confesses that she had been raped by Satan and had witnessed a mock marriage between his lordship and the younger witch. This version of the story characterizes Rebecca as the victim and not as the hero. Her feminine sexuality is brought out as her vulnerability in the text. This version also objectifies her feminine body, thus denying her any elements of heroism.

However later Fanny also known as Rebecca, give a different interpretation of the story, which is religiously tinted. She tells Ayscough

that she lied to Jones about what happened in the cave, to keep him at a physical distance. It is mainly due to his inability to understand what has transpired in the cave. Her account of the event to Ayscough brings in an element of science fiction and mysticism. She claims that she has witnessed a bright, floating lantern and observed two men watching them. She then clarifies that she was told to engage in sexual intercourse with Dick while his lordship watched. Rebecca explains that she was taken inside the maggot-shaped machine floating in the air by a grey-haired woman, who had previously been three women of three ages who merged into one. The two men she saw at Stonehenge she recognizes were God the Father and God the Son, and the three women were a female trinity. It is intriguing to note that Rebecca's account not only challenges the catholic religious belief of the masculine trinity but also empowers her with feminine divinity. Thus Rebecca qualifies the hero image as Campbell states: "the hero and his ultimate god, the seeker and the found are thus understood as the outside and inside of a single, self-mirrored mystery." The feminine trinity mirrors Rebecca's challenged divinity. Rebecca's divinity is later qualified by her immaculate conception that may have led to Ann Lee's birth, which resulted in Shakers movement. This subversion effectively raises her to the status of hero in the novel.

Her account is later taken as the signification of a creative mind by Ayscough, thus verifying it scientifically. However the journey in search of truth ends with an exposition of the relativity of truth.

The significance of the Archetype of Journey is due to the fact that Fowles builds his story on familiar premises, however later challenging the rigidity of expectation by resisting a conventional expectation of an informed reader. Rebecca's character evolves from an archetype of harlot to a hero effectively in the novel. Fowles effectively paints her with divinity in the resolution to reinstate her heroic status. Rebecca's emerges as the true hero in the journey, the epilogues redeems her of her past and verifies her rebirth as a new individual. Fowles' text thus manipulates the Archetypes of Journey to suit the reconstruction of the feminine heroism.

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Home Coming

Niyati Pavithran

Was it your eyes, Sir, I fell in love with?
Caved in and dented deep but delightfully charming.
Pursing those lips in, what is that fear, Sir,
You fail to let go?
Those sprinting veins trace a story;
Untold but painfully evident.

At every station you tremble.
Those eyes perplexed, puzzled.
Dear Sir, were you lost in a world but so small?
When the decorous gentlemen cast contemptuous gazes,
Daunted, you quivered like a fawn.
But do you realise Sir, how big your sacrifices were?
I wish i could tell you and the world,
That you are no object of scorn.
I wish Sir, that you could go back safe
Into the warmth of those four walls.
I wish you would be served in the evenings,
A repast with Love.
I wish Sir, that the laughter of your grandchildren would heal you,
That the compassion of your son
Could wipe away your tears.

Why Sir, are those eyes still rambling,
Searching for those memories buried in time?
Dear Sir, would you please come with me,
Into my humble home?

I'd hold your hand Sir,
And with me, watch the mountains roar,
And hear the leaves rustle.
I'd serve you an auburn cup of coffee,
And read out to you at night,
Tales from lands beyond the sea.
Fall asleep Sir, and be the essence of my dream,
Where with me, my dear father,
Gently feel the Love of this Universe.

Book Review

The Narrow Road to the Deep North

Author : Richard Flanagan

Publisher : Knopf Australia

Year of publication : 2013

Genre : Historical fiction

Number of pages : 448

Anjana K.

The Narrow Road to the Deep North is a dance of contraries, woven into a moving, haunting story with underlying themes of love, loss, terror and shame. The central event of the story is the building of the Burma “Death” Railway by the prisoners in a Japanese Prisoner of War (PoW) camp during World War II. Dorrigo Evans, as a colonel and a surgeon, is the acknowledged leader of the Australian prisoners after the fall of Singapore. The pain and torture suffered by the prisoners in the camp and the appallingly graphic narration of one terrible day that leaves its ghastly mark on Dorrigo makes up much of the setting of the novel. The novel also narrates the illicit love between Dorrigo and Amy, which ends in inevitable heartbreak and a profound feeling of loss and incompleteness.

The novel shares its title with the 17th century classic *Oku no Hosomichi* (translated as *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*) by the famous Edo period Japanese haiku poet Basho. Flanagan dedicates *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* to his father, prisoner san byaku san ju go (335), the Japanese number given to him as a PoW, one of Weary Dunlop’s thousand on the death railway.

The myriad shades of human suffering that Flanagan brings out in his book is sickening, gut-wrenching and has been rendered in such

an utterly real fashion that the reader finds herself flinching page after page, enduring but unable to put the book down as if by some hypnotic suggestion. Flanagan vividly describes the disease and starvation that became fellow prisoners of war in the camp, visiting each and every other prisoner with unhesitating eagerness and Dorrigo's futile attempts to relieve the prisoners' suffering. The bloodcurdling descriptions of the violence dished out to the prisoners by the Japanese guards with surgical precision acts as some otherworldly peephole through which the reader is able to get an inkling about the pile of broken human bodies on which the Burma Railway was built.

Dorrigo finds himself at the other end of the emotional spectrum when he falls in love with Amy, his uncle's second wife. Flanagan's portrayal of their impossible love symbolises one of the saddest truths of human life, that we all have things we want, but cannot have. His juxtaposition of terror and love make up the unrelenting passages of this book very hard to read and leaves no doubt about Flanagan's unquestionable literary prowess.

The one aspect of Flanagan's book that the reader will be able to relate to the most is that his hero is beautifully, humanly flawed. Flanagan does not make Evans out to be a war hero who has gained victory over his enemies and who is the paradigm of familial perfection. Even though Dorrigo Evans spends his post-war life basking in the uncomfortable glow of attention, the ghosts of memories of one horrific day at the PoW camp that is the heart of this epic haunts him, and places him at odds with his own failings and guilt as he seeks comfort in the arms of countless women.

The style of storytelling by which Flanagan does a superb job of not pushing the link between the Australians and the Japanese into the realm of good and bad, of black and white deserves commendable attention. He lends the enemy an inner voice that defies simplistic moral evaluations from the part of the reader, such as in the case of the homicidal Colonel Kota.

The seamless fabric of prose skilfully woven by Flanagan plays out as smoothly as an unforgettable memory. The novel demonstrates the

capabilities of the human spirit : the creation of both exquisite beauty and the creation of exquisite terror all enveloped in a gripping story of love and suffering. This novel draws the reader into the shadow of contemplation. In my opinion *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan is a must-have for a unique taste of extraordinary storytelling.

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