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~Editor's Note~

Dear Readers & Contributors,

Welcome to the July 2024 issue of IJELLS.

A huge part of this issue has research papers from English Literature. All genres are covered with a little forward on the 'Drama'. The one important contribution in ELT section is an interesting read. The eclectic array each present a unique perspective enhancing our range of understanding.

If you have a suggestion for us, kindly mail it to dr.mrudulalakkaraju@gmail.com.

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Happy Reading and Happy Sharing!

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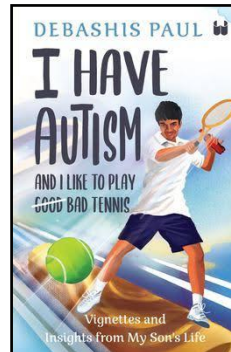
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~Creative Writing in English ~

Book Review of *I Have Autism and I like to Play Good Bad Tennis*

S Mohanraj



A sociologist once while talking about the relevance of marriage in human society said, ‘the main objective of marriage is procreation, in simple words to continue the progeny.’ This seems to be an obvious statement. However, what is unsaid is more important. You may desire an offspring, but what type of offspring is in store for you is not under your control. Further, having begotten a child, ‘how do you look after your child’; and ‘are all parents equally caring and sensitive to the needs of children’ are some of the questions that we find difficult to answer. This brings us to the question of ways of educating the children.

Among the different branches of education we have, special education is gaining ground today. This is an indication of the societal awareness and the need to provide a place for learners who need special attention. The beginning of special education was around mid-70s of the previous century. It was restricted to teaching the deaf-mute children and children who were visually challenged. These children were kept in isolated schools and were not allowed to enter the mainstream education. They were taught vocational skills like weaving baskets, mending wicker work furniture and other similar crafts without taking recourse to teaching literacy, numeracy and other academic subjects. Though Braille was available, it was not popular as yet, and facilities for its mass production did not exist. Today, special education embraces a larger spectrum of learning disabilities and the principal objective of special education is to help these children join the mainstream. This is a noble objective and demands the participation of teachers and parents as well as the society at large. The book under review is a case study of a child who is discovered autistic and the support the child receives from the parents is exemplary. The entire narration is in the form of a few vignettes and these are strung together in a seamless narrative. The book is educative, perhaps therapeutic if one reads it carefully.

I do not propose to summarize the book here, but highlight a few vignettes to bring forth the father’s understanding of the child, rationalizing the action and planning a strategy. Is it counselling that helps or the cooperation of the child is for you to infer. (To assess the parental care given, one should contrast this with *Dibs* by Virginia Axline)

The father is a senior executive in an advertising company that keeps him busy and requires him to travel often. The mother is a professor in a reputed national university busy with her research and publications. In between their schedule, this child is born and is naturally doted upon for more than one reason – the first child in the family and at that a nice

bumpy boy. As the child grows, the symptoms he shows reveal he is autistic. The parents are keen observers and help the child cope with the problem – they decide to move out of their home town and re-establish themselves in a new city, go to several places in search of a cure, (including specialized institutions in London and Tokyo) pour all their love on the child, and the result is the child is able to behave almost normal, and this is no mean achievement. We shall look at some instances of behavioural patterns rather than focus on the efforts put in by the parents. This is how the book opens:

Noel was our first child. He was born close to Christmas Day, on 15th December. In my dreams, I saw my son foremost as a spreader of joy; as one who would embody values of warm celebration, love, kindness, and togetherness. So, I named him Noel. (Page 1)

Do I need to say how happy the parents were to receive the child and the care they took to christen him? How and when did they discover the child was not normal? He is put in a school, and one day the father receives a call from the school. The teacher meets the father and: (*Noel was three and a half years then*)

She said that he was ‘aloof’ that there was something odd about him – that he was happy to be on his own. He showed no interest in kids around him. Noel stayed away from all the kids in class, even during group activities. During singing classes, he sat at a distance from the rest but smiled and clapped along with them. (Page 3)

This paragraph is very interesting. The teacher emphasizes his preference to be alone, but having some interest in music. This aspect is developed throughout the book. But we will not elaborate on this here, we will leave it for you to read the book and discover.

Alarmed by his odd behaviour, the parents go and meet a few specialists, a paediatric neuro-physician, a psychiatrist and others. The doctors give a thorough examination and break the news that Noel showed symptoms of classical autism as well as Asperger Syndrome. And the child was all of three and half years at that time. And what is autism as explained by experts:

Autism is ... the most complex area of impairment in most children on the spectrum. It interferes with their way of understanding the world, or interpreting its conventions and raises steep barriers in functional, academic, social and skill learning. (Page 49)

How did the parents take it? Though shattered initially, they took it bravely and hence the book.

Noel grows up under the parents care, and he is provided with all his requirements. The parents show exceptional patience in trying to understand him, make him understand what needs to be done and not done all through love and scientific strategies of DLT (Daily Living Therapy). The father goes far to obtain all literature available, read it and implement it in his attempt to make Noel normal. Noel is treated as a normal child and this is most important, he receives no abuse from the parents, and never ever a sign of fatigue is seen on them.

What are some of the DLT strategies – an attempt to make the child realize he is normal like all other children by involving him/her in all household chores, taking care of himself, etc. Noel is made to help his mother in the kitchen while she is cooking, he can set the dining table, he can organise his toys, use the toilet independently, tend the plants, learn to swim, ride a bicycle, play tennis and cope with many other chores. During all these experiments, there have been many failures. But these failures have been the proverbial stepping stones to success.

What were some of the problems that Noel had? He wanted everything to happen in a manner he was used to. If there was a change, that would upset or disturb him. There are several instances to illustrate this. There is an episode of how his teacher's instructions during the assembly distract him. At home, he has a set of tiny cars which are arranged in a sequence according to their colour. If this order was disturbed, he would be confused and become sad.

He had an encouraging trait which most children possess. He would assign names to his toys and animals as many children do. He also attributed to them some of the human characteristics. This is called 'anthropomorphism'. Noel's father had a car – a blue Corsa. His company gave him a new car, and he had to return the old car – the blue Corsa. Noel was greatly attached to this old car and he did not want to part with it. The lengths that his father went to convince him about loss of a thing as normal, is worth appreciating.

One of the vignettes I particularly liked was his learning to swim. Being an autistic child, he could not follow the instructions; his limb movements though supple were more involuntary. He has a special coach who helps him achieve a reasonably good competence to swim. Once, his father dares to make him participate in a competition (it is part of DLT). But Noel may not be able to cope with the stress nor follow the rules that need to be followed. His coach suggests that the organizers be requested to allow the coach to swim next to Noel so that he just imitates him. The organizers after a lot of persuasion agree to the suggestion and Noel wins a trophy. This is how the author describes the event.

The award ceremony took place by the poolside. There was an enormous crowd. Noel received applause as he went up to the victory stand two times. However, Noel himself showed no expression of jubilation. In minutes, the after effects of the swimming competition had evaporated from Noel's mind as we got into a cab. (Page 87)

I like to conclude with one touching incident. On a particular day the father comes back home tired from office. His wife and daughter are both away in England. Noel is alone at home. As the father enters the house and switches on the light, he finds the house full of glass pieces from broken crockery. Noel had pulled out all the plates, bowls, and saucers and dashed them on the floor and was lying on the bed. The father was obviously angry, but at the same time concerned whether his son had injured himself with broken glass shreds. He cajoles him, counsels him and tells him how sad he is. The son realizes his mistake, throws his arms round his father's neck and says "Baba, I will never make you sad". The father cannot help withholding some tears.

There are other episodes which are equally or more interesting, and it is not appropriate to recount all of them in a brief review. The last chapter of the book which talks of Noel's untimely passing away at a young age of 26 is very touching. I wonder how a father could bring himself to write about it in an objective and a detached manner. My

empathies are with him and his wife, not to forget the younger sister (Ahava) who was a solid support to Noel.

Finally, I would like to mention here that the book will remain a must read for teachers under training as well as teachers in service. It will help them gain a perspective on special education and more importantly the role a teacher has to assume as a mother (parent) while instructing the wards. This is a lesson not often taught on conventional teacher education programmes.

Paul, Debashish (2023). *I Have Autism and I like to Play ~~Good~~Bad Tennis*. New Delhi: Westland Non-fiction. (pp XXIV + 216) ISBN9789357762816, Price: not mentioned

The Last Teacher

G Venkata Ramana



I am a Teacher,
Shaping young minds,
Instilling values and knowledge,
Their dreams mirror our hopes,
I stand as time's witness, for future

The weight of parental expectations,
Scaffolding under towering hopes,
As a navigator, sometimes I falter,
Taking pride in their accomplishments,
My contributions often unnoticed, a mere speck

An idealist with lofty goals,
High expectations and little recognition,
Sometimes a laughing stock,
Yet, I carry the future of our world

Nurturing the children of others,
Also blamed for their neglect,
Living modestly, fostering big dreams,
Guiding visions, though mine unfulfilled

Passionately nurturing brightness,
Distracted by the allure of change,
My past, present, and future blend,
Few aspire to walk the path I tread,

Am I the last Teacher of my kind?

~English Literature~

The Black Women's Silence in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

G Chris Lenina Peters

Abstract

This article explores the silence of the Black women characters in Toni Morrison's novel *God Help the Child*. This novel depicts not only the silence of black women in the face of discrimination but also the silence of the society surrounding child abuse and relational conflicts. This work would help in a comprehensive outlook of the Black American woman. Toni Morrison is a Nobel Prize winner and is known for her deep insight into the lives of Black American women and their silences. It is an incisive study of the relational conflicts within a family and a stifled consciousness of all those who are involved. This paper will inform the peers of the peculiar situations in which Black American women are silenced and their way of dealing with their struggles.

Keywords: American, Black, women, child, conflicts, silence, struggles

Listen to silence. It has so much to say. - Rumi

Toni Morrison is a Nobel Prize winner and is known for her deep insight into the lives of Black American women and their silences. She is a prolific writer; *God Help the Child* is her eleventh novel. It is an incisive study of the relationship between a mother and child from different points of view. This paper will inform the peers of the peculiar situations in which Black women in America are placed and silently dealing with their struggles. A scholar feels that

...social dichotomous of white and African Americans within psychoanalysis became deeply rooted in the American collective consciousness. This lack of variety has pervaded many areas and fields, including literature. As a result, Black novels have predominantly been viewed as political or social documents. (27)

This novel is focused on the traumatic experiences of a child. It shows intersectionality, and how various factors impact the Black woman. The child usually does not have a voice. The novel *God Help the Child* opens with a Black mother giving birth to an unusually dark girl child. She immediately thinks of the far-reaching repercussions of her complexion in her life. The mother who is called Sweetness knows immediately that she would be under suspicion since she and her husband both are light-complexioned. The child is not responsible for her complexion and is a silent spectator in this situation.

She was so black she scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black. I'm light-skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father. Ain't nobody in my family anywhere near that colour. Tar is the closest I can think of yet her hair don't go with the skin. (3)

The mother's concerns are also silenced because she is not able to articulate her honesty or truthfulness knowing that she would not be heard. The husband, Louis, disowns Sweetness and their child and goes away. Later, he does send her money to bring up the child properly but does not come back to her. She is deprived of her father's presence because of her complexion.

Sweetness's marriage dissolves before her eyes once Lula Ann is born because Louis is in disbelief when he sees his baby's dark skin. His disgust is so intense that he refuses to believe she is his flesh and blood. Louis is the first person to reject Lula Ann. He walks out of her life, as well as Sweetness's, and does not look back as a result of what he believes to be evident infidelity. (31)

Lula Mae is deserted for giving birth to a black girl child by her husband. He goes to the extent of breaking his marriage with her, as he suspects her to be disloyal to him. A black child faces rejection even from her own family and this cycle of rejection continues for her entire life till she decides to turn it into a blessing rather than a curse.

My own mother, Lula Mae, could have passed easy, but she chose not to. She told me the price she paid for that decision. When she and my father went to the courthouse to get married there were two Bibles and they had to put their hands on the one reserved for Negroes. (3,4)

The racial conflict between the whites and the blacks even if they belong to the same religion and their segregation is vividly portrayed, as they do not want to touch anything that the Blacks would touch according to the above lines. It does not matter that the religion that the blacks follow preaches equality and kindness without any discrimination. The Blacks as a race are silenced and subjugated to the Whites. They cannot vocalize their sufferings and are silent because there is no way that they can change the colour of their skin.

The children who are victims of sexual abuse usually do not protest or are not heard because they are little and the adults do not acknowledge them as members of the society that they live in. Lula Ann witnesses Mr. Leigh, her white landlord who sexually assaults a young boy and is in a state of shock, but we know that sexual abuse of children is widespread in the US of A. There is another girl called Rain who also is a victim of child prostitution. This girl runs away from her so-called mother in protest since she does not find any other option to get out of this kind of abuse. Child abuse can be a characteristic of any society for that matter.

Toni Morrison, very tongue in cheek about the segregation of the blacks and whites, comments on the advantages of being divided from the whites. She also highlights the atrocities that are faced by the coloured people everywhere in the society.

Some of you probably think it's a bad thing to group ourselves according to skin color—the lighter, the better—in social clubs, neighborhoods, churches, sororities, even colored schools. But how else can we hold on to a little dignity? (4)

Thus Morrison subverts the segregation that blacks face into a positive viewpoint. She raises valid questions about the social mores that she experiences.

How else can you avoid being spit on in a drugstore, shoving elbows at the bus stop, walking in the gutter to let whites have the whole sidewalk, charged a nickel at the grocer's for a paper bag that's free to white shoppers? Let alone all the name-calling. (4)

By her writing Morrison is able to verbalize and give voice to the daily discrimination that blacks face but otherwise, they are silent while taking this kind of abuse day in and day out. She clearly points out that discrimination is only based on the complexion and nothing else. Even a child is observant and hears and feels the different ways in which her parents are treated.

But because of my mother's skin color, she wasn't stopped from trying on hats in the department stores or using their ladies' room. And my father could try on shoes in the front part of the shoestore, not in a back room. Neither one would let themselves drink from a "colored only" fountain even if they were dying of thirst. (4)

Sweetness even went to the extent of trying to kill her child. She felt that she wanted to give away her baby to someone or an orphanage. She did not want to be like one of those mothers who left their children on the Church steps. The father of the child seems to be partially educated and from an economically underprivileged background and that is another reason for the mother to silently bear the brunt of having a dark-complexioned child in a white world.

My husband, Louis, is a porter and when he got back off the rails he looked at me like I really was crazy and looked at her like she was from the planet Jupiter. He wasn't a cussing man so when he said, "Goddamn! What the hell is this?" I knew we were in trouble. (5)

Her husband Louis was in a state of shock when he saw Lula Ann for the first time as we see how he reacted when he saw her for the first time. He treated her as a stranger and an enemy too as her colour has played a prominent role in their lives as there were fights between

Sweetness and Louis which led to the end of their marriage after being happily married for three years.

Sweetness says “I could have been the babysitter if our skin colors were reversed.” (6) She being a black woman would have taken care of white children with ease, but her own child being dark makes people suspicious about her. She even advised her daughter to call her Sweetness rather than Mother or Mama.

The mother with all good intentions wanted her child to be accepted as a normal person in the society. She understands the nuances of being a child whose complexion makes her unfit for the employment that is reserved for the blacks, however mean it may be. Her frustration is evident as she feels,

Things got better but I still had to be careful. Very careful in how I raised her. I had to be strict, very strict. Lula Ann needed to learn how to behave, how to keep her head down and not to make trouble. I don't care how many times she changes her name. Her color is a cross she will always carry. But it's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not. (7)

The little child grows up to be Lula Ann and takes her name as Bride. She seems to be totally dependent on the emotional support of her boyfriend Booker. She was rejected by her boyfriend and finds herself scared and lost without him so much so that she feels that she is losing her femininity. Her boyfriend leaves her and goes away as she reveals the fact that she has witnessed falsely in her trial against Sophia Huxley who was accused of child abuse because she just wanted the affection of her mother. The silent rejection of the mother results in an insecure and emotionally dependent personality which breaks down as Booker leaves her for no apparent reason.

Booker is also unable to explain his behaviour resulting from childhood trauma and simply leaves her by saying, “You not the woman I want.” (8) Booker carries a cross because his brother Adam died of child abuse. So, without explaining anything to Bride he leaves.

Brooklyn, a friend of Lula Ann, is an unfaithful friend who uses Lula Ann for her benefit. She craves for the attention of Booker but is rejected. She takes away the position of Lula Ann when she is sick and is unable to go to work. Lula Ann thinks of Brooklyn as a true friend and is happy to leave herself in her hands not realising that she is only pretending to help her and in the process is usurping her position in the company and also has eyes for her boyfriend Booker.

I lie around all day with nothing urgent to do. Brooklyn has taken care of explanations to the office staff: attempted rape, foiled, blah, blah. She is a true friend and doesn't annoy me like those fake ones who come here just to gaze and pity me. (29)

This gullibility on the part of Lula Ann, points to a major flaw in her personality and may be the result of her extreme desire for acceptance and appreciation. The silent criticism of all those around her was always noticed by her.

Lula Ann recalls that at the age of eight, she had pointed fingers at Sophia Huxley who was accused of child abuse. She testified against her for the sake of pleasing her mother.

I glanced at Sweetness; she was smiling like I've never seen her smile before—with mouth and eyes. And that wasn't all. Outside the courtroom all the mothers smiled at me, and two actually touched and hugged me. Fathers gave me thumbs-up.

The above scene is in a courtroom where Lula Ann stands as a false witness.

Best of all was Sweetness. As we walked down the courthouse steps she held my hand, my hand. She never did that before and it surprised me as much as it pleased me because I always knew she didn't like touching me. I could tell. Distaste was all over her face when I was little and she had to bathe me.

A child can be silenced with words or by behaviour and Lula Ann as a child was silenced by the touch of her mother that was withheld from her, yet she understood the silent criticism of her complexion that was the cause for it.

Rinse me, actually, after a halfhearted rub with a soapy washcloth. I used to pray she would slap my face or spank me just to feel her touch. I made little mistakes deliberately, but she had ways to punish me without touching the skin she hated—bed without supper, lock me in my room—but her screaming at me was the worst. (31)

This passage is poignant with the pain of a little child when she is deprived of her mother's touch and is unable to understand why it is being withheld from her. Such a child can do anything to get the love of a mother, even stand as a false witness at the young age of eight. Even a slap or physical abuse by her mother was welcome to Lula Ann rather than the total rejection that she was experiencing. This is the kind of mental abuse that a young child can experience due to the inattention or rejection of the child for different reasons which we adults may possibly justify, but the child is unable to understand.

The name Bride that Lula Ann takes for herself is significant because it symbolises her way of dressing as she is mostly seen in white. Her way of dressing lets the complexion of her skin be highlighted. The name Bride emphasises the importance of a Black woman and her future.

Just you, girl. All sable and ice. A panther in snow. And with your body? And those wolverine eyes? Please!" I took his advice and it worked. Everywhere I went I got double takes but not like the faintly disgusted ones I used to get as a kid. These were adoring looks, stunned but hungry. (34)

In the persona of Bride, Morrison has subverted the Western standard of beauty and established another one silently. "I got to be a buyer only after rock-dumb white girls got

promotions or screwed up so bad they settled for somebody who actually knew about stock.” (36) She was forced to be silent even when she excelled in the job that she was doing when compared to others.

This is the condition of a middle-class black American woman in American society where she is treated as a second-class citizen in the country where she was born. When grown up Bride searches for a job and by sheer luck finds a friend in Jeri who is able to help her.

Even the interview at Sylvia, Inc., got off to a bad start. They questioned my style, my clothes and told me to come back later. That’s when I consulted Jeri. Then walking down the hall toward the interviewer’s office, I could see the effect I was having: wide admiring eyes, grins and whispers... True or not, it made me, remade me. (36)

Through the above lines, Toni Morrison tries to establish a set of new standards by making her characters and readers understand that Black is beautiful by portraying the transformation that she undergoes after taking a friend’s suggestion after facing rejection. Silence need not only be broken by words it can be used by the oppressed in a new way to show their calibre.

Thus, we see Toni Morrison exploring the life of the black woman and bringing out her struggles and traumatic experiences which she undergoes in silence in the so-called progressive country America. Child abuse has far-reaching repercussions on the psyche of the child as he or she grows up and should be taken note of by adults. Every individual in society is equally responsible for curbing this evil and verbalising their protest as Toni Morrison is doing in this novel of ours.

The central protagonist of this story, though a black woman, transforms herself into a confident and successful woman despite the abuse and the silence that she underwent as a child due to her dark complexion, ending on a hopeful note that so-called shortcomings can be overcome and can become a factor in one’s success. The silence of the oppressed can be expressed and given voice to, in different ways without even verbalising it.

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Women in the National Tradition from the Works of Eavan Boland

D M David Mathews

Abstract

Eavan Boland's work is deeply imbued with how the presence and representations of women are framed in Irish national discourse. She bemoans the lack of proper expression of women's desires, assailing male poetic and artistic traditions of silences, simplifications, and ornamentation. The paper first attempts to define the term nation with respect to its emergence in early modern England, as its denotations and connotations transformed from its application to religious personages and elites to the modern-day usage as masses and people. Thereafter, the paper lays down some notions of Julia Kristeva from her work *Nations Without Nationalism*, especially the notion of esprit general and private non-laws, as she challenges the conceptions that lay behind nationalism. The paper then moves on to an analysis of some poems and prose work of the Irish poet Eavan Boland as she works out her concerns that attempt to shift the discourse from a male-dominated to a women-centric model of nationalism.

Keywords: Eavan Boland, Women without Nation, Private Histories, Transcending National Identities, Irish Poetry, Esprit General, Volksgeist

Introduction

At the time when the notion of Englishness was being fashioned, one of the connotations of the term 'nation' was the relation it held with certain foreignness. At the centres of learning, especially of theology, students from neighbouring or farther territories were collectively termed as belonging to a nation. Curiously enough, students of both Germany and England were clubbed as Germans, and that they lost this 'status' once they went back home! Greenfeld writes:

A student in a medieval university, defined as a member of one or another nation, might derive there from an idea of the quarters he was supposed to be lodged in, people he was likely to associate with most closely, and some specific opinions he was expected to hold in the course of the few years his studies lasted. Otherwise his "national" identity, probably, did not have much impact on his self-image or his behaviour; outside the narrow sphere of the university, the concept had no applicability (Greenfeld 5).

Then again, she further argues these denoted social and religious elite, a connotation that changed drastically over the centuries. The present usage of the term is derived from Latin 'natio', cognate of 'nasci'. The understanding is that one belongs to a different nation, that is, he/ she is an outsider and so named accordingly. Greenfeld further argues that the earliest

connotations were “derogatory” (4) and were applied to foreigners or to people “below that of the Roman citizens” (4). The consolidation of the term to religion came much later during the middle ages—“starting at the Council of Lyon in 1274” (4)—when a transformation of the word took place whence it was referred to a “community of opinion” (4,) which acquired the connotation “that of representatives of cultural and political authority” (4-5), as these ecclesiastical representatives were thought to be spokespersons; the term later took on the meaning of “social *elite*” (5). The negative connotations were dropped much earlier than this when “an additional meaning” was acquired that of a religious scholars with “common opinions” (4). The association of the term with the elite which previously held “derogatory connotation” (5) was slowly becoming associated with the term people, which was specifically “applied to the lower classes” (4).

This re-naming and naming could have serious consequences even within a revolution that was predicated on egalitarian and revolutionary terms as it happened during the French revolution:

...revolutionary terror was first directed against foreigners—and that there were many republican decrees that promulgated a brutal persecution of foreigners in the name of nationalism; for first time in the history of humanity the latter was raised to the level of a politico-economic, restrictive, and potentially totalitarian concept and reality. (Kristeva 25-26)

Although sceptical of nationalism and the harking after roots, Bernard Yack in a review of her work argues that Kristeva challenges some of the notions of anti-racial organizations regarding racism and nationalism, where she “expresses reservations about the psychological and political viability of transcending national identities” (Yack 168). There occurs, as well, she argues a cleaving of identifying characters of people, that of free social beings and narrow kinship relations. As much as the individual attempts freeing themselves of kin relations, the ‘original cell’ in the form of territorial, kinship, and familial identities pulls or interpellates people back to itself. The yearning after some rootedness, contrasted with the anxiety of rootlessness of the individual, draws on aspects of human connection:

Nevertheless, today’s values crisis, beyond refinements in religious and ideological systems, affects the core of the speaking being; that latter is made up of a splitting, a clash between our symbolic identity having strong brotherly demands and our imaginary rooted in the original cell (family, race, biology). The problem that develops on account of national and religious conflicts, immigration and racism, henceforth touches upon the fragile boundary that defines civilization and mankind (Kristeva 4).

One of Kristeva’s claims is that the nation, although narrow and parochial, is here to stay and that people ought to make use of this framework until a time when a new ideology or notion emerges. Arguing against simplistic models that construe the form of the nation as racial and “to impose, indirectly, racial values” (49), she calls for a critique of the nation “in terms of new, flexible concepts” (50). Her most important question being if there are ways to think

about the national “that does not degenerate into an exclusory, murderous racism” (51). For this, she claims that there needs to be “an optimal definition of the “national” (52)...

...as guarantee for the identification pride of individuals and groups and as a historically indispensable transition for the insertion of national entities inherited from the past into higher political and economic wholes (Kristeva 52).

Contrasting the *Volksgeist* with Montesquieu’s *esprit general*, she claims that although the former was steeped in universalism, it later degenerated into an exclusionary and narrow politics, an illustration being the rise of the Nazis and the form it took in Eastern European nations, where it turned into a “repressive force aimed at *other* peoples and extolling *one’s own*” (54).

She makes two arguments on why the *esprit general* can better helm the vicissitudes of the next century by developing “a *historical identity* with relative steadiness (the tradition) and an always prevailing *instability* in a given topicality (subject to evolution)” (Kristeva 56). That is, this identity is rooted in the previously cultivated as well as developing sensibilities of the populace, or citizens, and these ought not to become ossified and entrenched, but always open to further manoeuvrings and expansions. Further arguing that “valorising this lay component” (58) is the need of the hour when one wishes to turn the nation from “regressive, exclusionary, integrative, or racial pitfalls” (59) to a heterogeneous confederacy that prizes not self-love but a transcending of the same, thereby approximating to an *esprit general*. Tasking “political parties and the media”(59) of broadcasting this tradition which can “give them back their own history” (59), so that France could lead the world in this “complex national affirmation” (59). She argues:

...the historical nature of French national identity demands a serious assessment of traditional national memory: the “customs of France” (Montesquieu), its entire religious history (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim) and transcending that history during the Enlightenment when, precisely, one could think of the “nation” as having an *esprit général* (58).

Second, she talks of layers and diversity of “social polylogics” (Kristeva 56) that do not dominate one other as well as attempt to level the other one. Now what does she mean by that? She claims that laws of the land determine “citizens’ actions” (56), but in actuality it is the “non-laws” (56) that define how humans act in social situations: “morals (inner behavior) and manner (outer behavior)” (56). These aspects she calls “private law” (56), laws that derive from practice of sociality and “the free exercise of morals and manners” (56); these laws of the private sphere then inform the particularities of the “general” (56), thereby constantly modifying and authenticating the national, or the “*esprit général*” (56). She clarifies...

...the vast domain of the *private*, the land of welcome of individual, concrete freedoms, is thus immediately included in the *esprit general* that must

guarantee through law and economy the private practice of religious, sexual, moral, and educational differences relating to the mindset and customs of the confederate citizens. Simultaneously, while the *private* is thus guaranteed, one is committed to respect the *esprit général* in the bosom of which there is a place for its own expansion (Kristeva 62).

Invoking Montesquieu, Kristeva claims that this shuffling and mediating role of private laws has the power, now, to transform the notion of the “*national* concept” (56), where “*citizenship* becomes relative” (56), binding people not to a sovereign nation but they themselves becoming free-wheeling confederates. There is also this aspect of “civil society” (61) which Kristeva claims prevents the *esprit general* “from freezing into an empty abstraction” (61), where everyone can observe their manners, customs, and manners. This ‘everyone’ might also involve “other communities” (62) which necessitates “respect for neutrality” (62) in all the public spheres that make civil society. Kristeva also calls for renegotiating and re-enacting the terms of “Enlightenment’s secularism” (62) which possesses the wherewithal to absorb both “barbarians and the *Volksggeist’s* appropriating and authoritarian calls” (62). Concluding her argument, she advances the notion that “private freedoms” (63) are the most essential measures that the nation can uphold and defend a “polyphonic community” (62); she also vouches that the private can provide the necessary “series of *counterforces*” (62) to the levelling or even erosion of nationalist spaces.

Women as Strangers to the Nation?

Boland illustrates her point in the essay “The Woman Poet in a National Tradition” (1987) that the old songs and the images before the twentieth century are “an archive of defeat” (149) and that her childhood in Britian was an “elusive part” (150) with most of her perceptions about Ireland were “conversations overheard, memories and visitors” (150). “Sea Change” questions the manner in which patriarchy leaves women with a sense of homelessness—“he built nothing that I could live in (Boland *A Woman without a Country* 25)” –although it is they who man the house. She also remembers her birth:

I was born in a place, or so it seemed,
Where every inch of ground
Was a new fever or a field soaked
To its grassy roots with remembered hatreds
(Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 25)

The poet seems to interrogate the nature of the discourse surrounding the nation. I, as a woman, has suffered and left to whims. This is not good remembering, rather it is the opposite, where the territory is known for “remembered hatreds” (25) suggesting that the people have not healed from their centuries of oppression and dispossession. Speaking of the private life of her grandmother, Boland states:

I have come to accept that the story of Irish history is not her story. The monster rallies, the oil-lit rooms, the flushed face of orators and the pale ones of assassins have no place in it. (Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 33)

The poet seems to reject the idea of a nationalism that leaves women out of discourse as well as the day-to-day struggles. If women are left out of crucial aspects of national self-determination, why would they consider its fight as theirs; as well as a history that has no space for them? Boland stresses the point that the representations of women were mostly “simplifications” (“The Woman Poet” 152), “one-dimensional” (153), and that she symbolizes a “passive cipher” (153). She further argues:

...the women in Irish male poems tended to be emblematic and passive, granted a purely ornamental status. Not in every case. There were exceptions, distinctions. When male poets wrote about women in a private dimension the images were often warm and convincing. Once the feminine image in their poems became fused with a national concept then both were simplified and reduced (Boland “The Woman Poet” 152).

While the poem “In Her Own Image” attempts to rewrite women’s stories as they are; “I will not disfigure/ her pretty face” (Boland *New Collected Poems* 77), the next one “In His Own Image” sounds like the woman herself urges her partner to bring violence upon her. The irony of the woman wishing to get beaten up because “his are a sculptor’s hands” (78), that the supposed transformation (the poet-persona insinuates that the women needed it!) is made when “he came home tight” (78). Representations and images of women are quite contrary to those of the male poets, it is also that women are not just reduced to a single image but Boland also writes of the violence that they undergo:

Now I see
that all I needed
was a hand
to mould my mouth
to scald my cheek (Boland *New Collected Poems* 78).

Of course, this is irony at its best; contrapuntal, even. The woman expecting to be beaten up and disfigured is something to be abhorred. Then again, the poem works on account of it being the daily routine of most women. These lines show a mirror to male domestic violence, its customary methods and the manner in which it frames the mind of the woman into accepting such behaviour as normal. If one were to juxtapose this poem with the one from *A Woman Without a Country*, then this ‘coming home tight’ can be understood as the man coming home drunk, but then it could also point to the dim-lit rooms where men discourse, fight amongst each other, go to war together... leaving women to themselves. However, once they come home these male aggressions assume violent actions on women. Is it not for this reason that Boland feels a certain animosity towards male aggrandizements?

Physical violence is one thing, artistic coercion is another thing, as Boland demystifies the manner in which the painter attempts to fix the woman in pastel. The poet-persona sees something else in the background: “Wait. There behind you. A man. There behind you/ Whatever you do don’t turn./ Why is he watching you? (Boland *New Collected Poems* 108). A danger in the form of men lurks behind, it could be the painter as well, as women go about in their daily routines. While the worker washes and folds the laundry of “leisured women” (108), in the end all that she is left with is her own “winding sheet” (109). Christy Burns comments:

This implied death through representation, or the process of being ossified by Degas’s gaze, necessitates the silent and complacent portrait we now have of these women. (Burns 219-220).

The next poem “Woman in Kitchen” tells a similar story, of a spectre that haunts the simple life of the woman as she goes about her life. The word ‘white’ occurs six times in a poem of four stanzas, giving a certain aura. But this aura is not a beneficial one; it is rather malignant and detrimental to the woman: “The silence is a death. It starts to bury/ the room in white spaces” (110). The whites are supplemented by “light of day” (110) but it bleaches rather than illuminates, the woman also might “lose her sight” (110), all this leading to the home “quiet as a mortuary” (110).

Women and their Private Lives and Laws

Not just silences and quietness, the poet draws readers to her impressions on her near kin relations as well. A private memory is recorded in Boland’s poem “Talking to my Daughter Late at Night” as they both converse of hard times as well as happier times. Specifically, they converse on the Irish penny, minted new when the Irish gained independence from Britain, but was later dropped as currency in the late 60s. Some people claim that this brought good luck and charm with it, and sometimes known as the ‘Lucky Irish Penny.’ The poet-persona and her daughter are conversing on things, “one thing pours itself into another” (10) but curiously sipping tea! Is the poet attempting to learn some English manners? It was mentioned that Boland grew up sometime in England as well. But it can also mean that one could learn other’s habits and traditions as well, which could modify both the cultures. Could it be argued that the acceptance amounts to a miniscule radical otherness? But, some would wish to have them separate! This could also mean that public life intrudes into the private lives of individuals. Boland writes:

If love is a civilization
As I once hoped it was,
And you and I are it living citizens
And if our words
Are less than rules and more than remedies (Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 10)

The poet makes a reference to the stories that she shared with her daughter but never really reveals the story itself. Would it have been better served if the poet-persona were to write about those circumstances and events that she was conversing with her daughter? She hopes that the entire world can learn to love one another, like herself and her daughter, and live together to be citizens, rather than be divided on the lines of religion and gender.

In “Lost Art of Letter Writing,” Boland hopes that private histories can become public as she compares handwriting to lace-making, as she reminisces of lost things. But then, the tone and the theme change from the seventh stanza as the poem and the persona traverse “on a road leading/ To another road, then another one” (Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 8). The poet-persona is distraught that the art of story-telling, of remembering things, of “stacking letters in the attic” (8) has attained an “unreachable distance” (8). Then again, these lines and the poem are unable to concretely talk about the very thing/s it wishes to speak of. One could question the abstractness of these lines.

Public lives intrude into the private as Boland resurrects the woman in the painting by Chardin to life, imagining the kind of life she would have lived:

This woman’s secret history and her loves –
And even the dawn market, from whose bargaining
She has just come back, where men and women
Congregate and go
Among the produce, learning to love from morning
To next day, linked
By a common impulse to survive (Boland *New Collected Poems* 27)

Then again, this painter and the painted are not from Ireland, but from France. Her mother, a painter herself “admired Chardin deeply” (Randolph 55) and had a copy of the painting in her home. If there is a connection between France and Ireland, the poet seems to be wishing for such kind of life to be possible in her country. In a nation where the constitution itself suggested a woman’s place is her home, these lines are radical. On top of all the private and domestic strictures, the Irish Constitution of 1937 itself constricted the role of women to “life within the home” (qtd. in McMullen 37).

Referencing Nuala O’Faolain, Anne Fogarty argues that there is a discrepancy in the representation of women and female figures in political and literary discourse respectively; where women are seen as “rural, innocent and loving servants of males” (94) and female figures as “urban, urbane and powerful” (94). One could argue that Boland in most her works speaks of a suburban woman, a personhood that takes in aspects of the urban and the rural. In the translator’s note to *After Every War: Translations of German Poets* (2004), Boland expresses anguish at the daily violence and deaths, more so of the manner in which the private domain was not spared...

...the private could no longer find shelter from the public. Everything was touched. Nothing was spared: a buckled shoe in the market street after a bombing, a woman looking out a window at an altered street—they were all

emblems, images, perhaps even a graffiti of the new reality (Boland “After Every War” 18).

Violence affects everyone and spares no one; each member of the community is touched by it. Since this is not war in the classical sense but communities fighting with each other with whatever implements that they can get their hands on, there are no rules to follow. Private lives get smeared as fighting goes on in the public sphere.

In the early 1990s a woman became the head of the Irish state signalling what appeared to be change in the fortunes of the island. “The Laws of Love,” a poem written in this celebration, congratulating her on breaking many barriers and the hope that this event has brought to Irish women. That women boldly partake in the nation’s citizenry; “the first of your daughters/ Become in your arms a citizen” (Boland *New Collected Poems* 56), distils the notion that this historic opportunity ought to be harnessed to expand the concept of citizen. She writes:

That sisters kill, that sisters die, must mock us
Now, unless, with separate speech we find
For them new blood, for them now plead

Another world for whose horizons,
For whose anguish no reprieve
Exists unless new citizens (Boland *New Collected Poems* 56)

The poet seems to claim that women have to be accepted for what they are and not conform to societal standards and strictures. This presidential chance ought to herald a new beginning that accepts women as who they are, in the positive and in the negative as well, upending centuries of oppression. For what purpose is this presidency if not to bring women to the public citizenry that they are entitled to. Christy Burns claims that Boland...

...when she attempts to imagine the lives of women who have lived in conditions different from her own, she balances between inquiring about the past and striking a tentative parallel to the daily domestic routine that she herself has experienced. (Burns 217).

In a series of poems titled ‘A Woman Without a Country’ which alternate with a lesson and a poem, the first “Lesson 1” questions the existence of women’s place in their nation’s history:

My grandmother lived outside history. And she died there. A thirty-one-year-old woman, with five daughters, facing death in a hospital far from home – I doubt that anything around her mattered then. Yet in her lifetime Ireland had gone from oppression to upheaval. And she had existed at the edge of it. Did she find her nation? And does it matter (Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 27)

The poet questions, with the grandmother as a universalized woman, if ever women become the purveyors of history, or someone by their actions become historical figures? That her grandmother had to die in a fever ward is a telling accusation; it also speaks of them becoming lesser beings as well as their worsening condition. Although the Irish nation was on the throes of a resurgent nationalism at that point of time, what would it matter to her when she has to take care of her children, and she is dying? Perhaps, the upheaval that the poet-persona talks of is referenced in Jody Allen Randolph's book:

James and Mary Anne Kelly were on the margins of the rural society that was seething through the Land Acts and the political unrest that in the year of her death, in 1909, had already taken a deep hold of the country. Owning no property, the Kelly's had no investment in the land or the future. They moved frequently between rented accommodations (Randolph 30).

Literally her grandmother could not come into the history of the nation as the next years of her death Ireland goes to war with the British and attains independence. But the poet doubts, that if that would have mattered if her grandmother were alive. The poet very well grasps that women have been elided from history from time immemorial, the modern nation too has not offered to them any substantial inscription back into history.

"Suburban Woman" from *War Horse* (1967) presents a "ghost-like figure" (Randolph 64) as fighting and violence reach "town and country" (Boland *New Collected Poems* 70). This figure seems to have survived the onslaught of war and its aftermath, then again, she chooses to "sever with a scar" (70). This survivor seems to have some lessons to heal, the again the poet-persona is unsure if the temporary truce survives longer. Silence and shutting down have become second nature to women that necessitated "neither a silversmith nor a glassblower" (28), and even if she tried to speak out, the "bird in her blackwork" (28) urges her to remain silent!

not a word not a word

not a word not a word (Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 28)

In the poem "Studio Portrait 1897", the poet-persona attempts to interrogate the nature of these silences, "Where is the source of her silence?" (30), as the poem suggests home as the source of dispossession. Its "not history" (30), that can be blamed, although it has not been favourable to women, "but a muttering under black cloth" (30) as she gets pushed into household chores, and as the central metaphor of the poem suggests, painted upon. Representation, yes, but one that becomes lifeless. Homesteads, of going out and of becoming a mere phrase in the nation's public discourse is the central motif of "Lesson 3", as Boland interposes:

I wonder whether she turned in some corridor, looked up from some moment of play and heard the whispers and gossip. Did she hear in some muttered conversation the future of an armed struggle, the music of anger, the willingness to die. (Boland *A Woman Without a Country* 31)?

The poet-persona interrogating the place of women in public discourse seems to be blaming patriarchy as armed struggles, the plotting, the rage, talk of sacrifices turn into hallmarks of male discourse and action. Women, it seems are excluded from the discourse of nationalism and of the nation. David Gervais writing of Boland's poetry argues that her work attempts to recover a "devalued subject-matter" (59) and that "she cannot take her Ireland on trust" (59) as the English poets, for whom that nation and its myths were readily available.

In "The War Horse" Boland writes of the way war and violence uprooted communities, using the metaphor of a runaway horse, but it is no ordinary equine. It is a male horse, "loosed from its daily tether" (Boland *New Collected Poems* 45), the only defense as it runs down "Enniskerry Road" (45) are the "laurel hedge" (45). There is as well "the stone of our house" (45), but it is no match to the force of the galloping violence...

...why should we care

If a rose, a hedge, a crocus are uprooted

Like corpses, remote, crushed, mutilated (Boland *New Collected Poems* 45)?

In making the war juggernaut as a personification of male figure, the poet-persona seems to be interrogating the nature of war and its association with patriarchal cultures. Christy Burns claims that although Boland would seem to be a less radical feminist, she was anxious of the actual implications of state control over women's place in the public and private spheres, and their bodies which "crystallized Irish cultural constructions" (222) of the familiar role of women and of "the fidelity of the women to the private" (222).

"Mise Eire" is Boland's attempt to register, that women have to move forward and not towards a "backward-looking essentializing national narrativization" (McMullen 502) however much male artistic and political representations would like to. Twice in the poem she forcefully declares: in the first line she says "I won't go back to it" (Boland *New Collected Poems* 126) and in the fourth stanza poet-persona repeats, "No. I won't go back./ My roots are brutal" (126). In asserting this emphatically, she questions the romanticization of women's experience in male Irish poetic tradition, of "oaths made/ by the animal tallows/ of the candle" (126) and those "songs/ that bandage up the history" (126). Rather she would identify herself with the woman of "sloven's mix/ of silk at the wrists" (126) and of the "gansy-coat/ on board the *Mary Belle*" (127). Then again, the woman who is stitching silks does not get to wear them but "gets cambric for it" (127), and the second woman although onboard the steamer is "holding her half-dead baby to her" (127).

In the poem "The Game" from *Outside History*, the poet as a child growing is acutely aware of her position as she writes: "I was a child in a north-facing bedroom in/ strange country" (Boland *New Collected Poems* 152), although it was a fine "English spring" (152). A splitting off can be seen in Boland's poetry as she grows from her childhood in London, "an important auditory shift" (Collins 37) occurs as Lucy Collins argues...

England becomes no more than a record of loss, in a poetic move that makes the 'freckled six-year-old' indicative of a culture that must see its neighbour as a corrective to its own limitations. This corrective is placed finally in the mouth of the teacher, rectifying the speaker's grammar, so a Hibernicism

becomes wrong, and the need to abandon the language of the Irish past is emphasized. (Collins 37).

Women have had to put up not only with the marginalization by Irish nationalism but also subordinated by British colonialism, merely serving as instruments for ideological persuasions. Moreover, women had to contend with their role as mothers in the domestic arena as an “outsider rather than a participant” (Chang 596). Appraising the role of women in her work *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (1995), she commented:

Once the idea of a nation influences the perception of a woman, then that woman is suddenly and inevitable simplified. She can no longer have complex feelings and aspirations. She becomes the passive projection of a national idea... I knew that the women of the Irish past were defeated. I knew it instinctively, long before the Achill woman pointed down the hill to the Keel shoreline. What I objected to was that Irish poetry should defeat them twice (Boland *Object Lessons* 113).

It was already observed that women have been silenced and that Boland, in an ironical twist, wishes them to be silent. Once women are drawn into the discourse of nationalism and the nation, they are made to lose their complexities and ironies. They become one-dimensional persons as soon as they enter male nationalist discourse as Hibernia, Cuchulain, or simply as Mothers. Alternatively, they become mighty goddesses from where nationalist discourse takes inspiration from.

Boland writes of the time when she was away from her country, could not take inspiration, and she could not learn anything about it first-hand: “what I had lost/ was not land/ but the habit of land” (Boland *New Collected Poems* 103). In another poem she talks of “airless, humid dark” (144) of the country, and interrogates if the choices made are ones own or are made by others: “we are what we have chosen. Did I choose to? –/ in a strange city, in another country”(144). As she travels around London, she becomes cognizant of the unfamiliarity around as well as her own strangeness. The other-worldliness is exacerbated when she attends school in a “London convent” (144) and speaks English as an Irish girl to which the teacher sternly announces: “you’re not in Ireland now” (144). Lucy Collins writes of her time spent in London; “her memories of London are shaped by the feeling of strangeness, of otherness, that permeated her childhood” (Collins 24).

Volksgeist is the Norm?

In the second poem of the sequence “Writing in a Time of Violence,” Boland questions the art of the neighbouring island and the burning and “darkening Ireland” (Boland *New Collected Poems* 174) as the warring groups identities deteriorate in to “flesh-smell of hatred”(174). The poem seems to suggest that at a time in history when Britain was consolidating itself as a nation, the Protestants in Ireland were attempting to fortify their upper-hand as the maiden in the painting “is burning down” (Boland *New Collected Poems*

174-175). Paul Keen critiquing Boland's work claims that she is "more critical about the organicist claims of national identity" (31-32).

"The Family Tree" sheds light on the animosity that became apparent after all the goodness is shed. In her early years she found her kinship relations, "growing as trees" (Boland *New Collected Poems* 57), but soon enough as spring arrives "they disintegrate" (57) and give over to violent confrontations that seem petty at first:

All empty beckoning, yellow malice –
Will wage their sterile fight, their arid battle
Pleasuring to poison enemy cattle,
Innocent children now (Boland *New Collected Poems* 57).

Not content with poisoning their minds, they poison neighbours and in turn the children too learn toxic behaviours. The poet is transfixed as peaceable and loving neighbours take to prejudices and discrimination.

Conclusion

This paper began with some arguments from Kristeva's work *Nations Without Nationalism*; of her claims of transcending national identities from the original cell that people seem to find so alluring. The modern-day values crises have led to the breakdown of civil and civic identities that resulted in repressive forms of social relations one of which is the turn to regressive nationalism. Kristeva argues that this can only be countered by valorising certain lay components among the citizens, adding diversity to the national identification. These could be private laws and customs, which do not possess a determinate aspect but which are dynamic because they are in tune with the private freedoms of individuals. These in turn make citizenship dependent not on the state, but becomes relative to different territorial communities as well as immigrants who enrich the private domain.

Eavan Boland, coming from a region of unrest and violence, attempts to find a fine line or even a 'dour line' as she calls in one of her poems, between claims of the nation and of womanhood. She argues that woman's aspirations about the nation have been silenced and historically their discourse has been defeated. A sense of homelessness pervades the claims of those women she represents in her poems; especially of her grandmother, mother, and daughter; who become representations of the universal women. Through her poems she also gives space to those women who are not usually represented in poetry; the laundress, the woman cobbler, the domestic woman, the seamstress and others. The private histories of these women could add layers to the nationalist myth making.

Then again, she also claims that the history of Ireland has no place for these women; if at all they are inscribed they become one-dimensional figures. She argues that women have had to bear the burden of simplifications and reduced to mere ornamental things in nationalist aspirations. In some of her poems, a sense could be found that the images of women become fixed, as in paintings, and not living. In some poems, she wishes for a non-interventional role of the state in the lives of women, arguing for a role that takes into cognizance women's freedoms. The poet wishes to have nationalism open to many discourses of various women,

so that it is expanded and enriched. Some of her poems take the bigotry and violence of the Troubles and pre-Troubles era as starting points urging for peace and tranquillity as well as the transitional nature of children as an illustration of the nation's emergence.

Despite her poems and essays attempting to herald a certain esprit general, the poet is apprehensive of such a layering of identities as she is alert to the deteriorating relationships between different communities into what she termed 'remembered hatreds.'

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Sita, the Quintessence of Strength and Purity in the Valmiki Ramayana

Dhananjaya Sodha

Abstract

This paper delves into the character of Sita in the Valmiki Ramayana, portraying her as the quintessence of strength and purity. Sita's character embodies a unique blend of virtue, resilience, and unwavering devotion, making her one of the most revered figures in Hindu mythology. By examining key episodes from the Valmiki Ramayana, this study highlights Sita's moral and ethical fortitude amidst the myriad challenges she faces. Her abduction by Ravana and subsequent trials in Lanka underscore her steadfastness and purity, which remain untainted despite the adversities. Sita's decision to undergo the Agni Pariksha is analyzed not only as a testament to her chastity but also as an act of profound courage and self-respect. Furthermore, the paper explores the implications of Sita's character, considering how she has been perceived and idealized over centuries. Sita's narrative is contextualized within the framework of dharma, examining how her actions and choices reflect and challenge the expectations of women in ancient and modern times. By exploring Sita's portrayal in the epic, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of her role and significance. Through an analysis of Valmiki Ramayana, this paper seeks to reaffirm Sita's status as an enduring symbol of strength and purity, whose legacy continues to inspire and resonate in contemporary discourse.

Keywords: Sita, Valmiki Ramayana, Virtue, Strength, Purity

Introduction

The Valmiki Ramayana stands as one of the seminal texts in Hindu literature, narrating the epic tale of Prince Rama, his devoted wife Sita, and their arduous journey marked by exile, abduction, and battles against formidable adversaries. Rama is believed to be the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu, one of the three supreme gods of Hinduism. There are various versions of Ramayana, written in different languages by different authors. "Although there are countless versions of the Ramayana, Valmiki's is considered to be the oldest, and therefore the most authoritative." (Richman 3) Ramayana has been passed down through the generations as a folk story.

Central to the narrative of Ramayana is the character of Sita, whose virtues and trials form a cornerstone of the epic's moral and ethical fabric. Sita is one of the most defining role models for womanhood in the Indian subcontinent. Her journey, marked by significant trials and tribulations, offers a profound commentary on the ideals of womanhood and the concept of dharma. "She is represented as the ideal of womanhood and motherhood with loving kindness, patience, total submissiveness and deep love for her husband, patience and purity of thought." (Lodhia 371)

Sita's Virtue and Resilience

Sita is presented in the Ramayana as the embodiment of moral excellence. She is the daughter of King Janaka and is renowned for her exceptional physical attractiveness, intelligence, and ethical principles. Not only is her marriage to Rama honoured as a union of two virtuous individuals, but it is also celebrated as a convergence of dharma, which is the notion of good behaviour. Even in the face of enormous personal pain, Sita's acts continuously illustrate her unflinching dedication to dharma throughout the entirety of the epic.

The abduction of Sita by Ravana is a crucial event in the Ramayana, signifying the commencement of her challenges. Ravana, enthralled by Sita's beauty, tricks her and forcefully takes her to Lanka. Notwithstanding the distressing circumstances, Sita's poise and resilience are evident. Throughout her interaction with Ravana, she displays a dignified attitude by consistently rejecting his overtures and preserving her chastity.

Although imprisoned in the castle of the demon king, she remains unwavering in her allegiance to Rama. She categorically tells Ravana, "I, the lawful wife, firm of vows, of him who is constantly devoted to virtue, cannot be laid hands upon by you, a sinner as you are..." (1: 870) Sita is born to stand for honour which cannot be tainted by anyone. She says about herself, "It is not possible for me to give a bad name for myself on earth." (1: 870) This period of being held captive, characterised by intense mental and emotional distress, highlights her ability to endure and her unwavering determination.

Upon Hanuman's arrival in Lanka, a pleasant event takes place when he notices Sita's presence in the grove. Hanuman immediately recognises her since she has a resemblance to Lakshmi. Based on her appearance, he is confident that she has been exclusively preoccupied with thoughts of Rama, just as he is aware that Rama's mind was consumed by thoughts of Sita. Hanuman exalts them as an exemplary couple, highlighting Sita's unparalleled purity. He says Sita has lived up to the expectation of the society that believes, "Indeed, the husband is the greatest adornment for a woman, greater than an ornament." (2: 103) Hanuman's admiration for Sita's morality demonstrates the elevated nature of her character.

The Fire Test

Rama is aware of the criticism that Sita will receive from the public, and he wants to prove her integrity before he hears any criticism directed at her. The real reason Rama fought Ravana was to restore his honour, not to protect Sita, as he openly admits. He had his family reputation in mind while waging a war.

He expresses, "Let it be known to you that this exertion in the shape of war...was not undertaken for your sake...This was, however, done by me in order to vindicate my good conduct and wipe off the obloquy coming to me from all sides as well as the stigma on my illustrious House". (2: 789) The harsh comments that Rama hurled at Sita were unexpected. He tells her that he cannot accept her anymore, "Standing before me, even though suspicion has arisen with regard to your character, you are extremely disagreeable to me even as a light to one who is suffering from sore eyes. Therefore, go wherever you like, O Janaka's daughter, I grant you leave to do so this day". (2: 789) He gives justifications for making

these remarks because it was not socially acceptable at that time to bring a woman back who lived in another man's abode.

He continues to say, “What man of spirit and born in a noble family for his part would take back with an eager mind a woman who has dwelt in another’s house, simply because she has been kindly disposed towards him in the past.” (2: 789) Rama adheres to the societal norms of his era while simultaneously endeavouring to safeguard Sita from any potential disgrace. Sita is deeply embarrassed by Rama's derogatory remarks and is weeping. After a short period of time, she regains her calm and responds to Rama in a condescending manner: “Why do you, like a common man, address to me, O hero, such unkind and unbecoming words, which are jarring to the ear, as a common man would do to an ordinary woman? I am not as you take me to be.... I swear to you by my own character. Judging by the conduct of vulgar women you distrust the womankind.” (2: 791)

Being a dedicated spouse, she expected her husband to have known her better. The most distressing aspect for her is Rama's failure to acknowledge her true character, “My exalted character was not prized by you either.... Nay, my devotion as well as my chastity have all been ignored by you.” (2: 792) She pleads with Lakshmana to raise a pyre, not desiring to live anymore: “I no longer desire to survive, smitten as I am with false reproaches. I will enter a fire, which is the course appropriate for me, renounced as I am in public gathering by my husband, who is no longer pleased with my virtues”. (2: 792) Sita chooses to go through this ordeal on her own to prove her chastity. She says, “As my heart never turns away from Sri Rama, so may the god of fire, the witness of the world, protect me on all sides.” (2: 792) She enters the flames with a fearless mind. The God of Fire testifies to her purity. This act is not only a testament to her chastity but also an assertion of her self-respect and courage. The end of the narrative shows that Sita is quite resolute since she rejects not only Rama but also the society that rejected her.

Sita in Contemporary Context

Sita's character has undergone re-evaluation and reinterpretation from different perspectives in contemporary times. Contemporary authors such as Devdutt Pattanaik, Namita Gokhale and Amish Tripathi are narrating her story from a feminist perspective. Some retellings of the epics are *Mandodari: Queen of Lanka* by Manini J. Anandani, *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil, *The Daughter from a Wishing Tree: Unusual Tales about Women in Mythology* by Sudha Murty, *Lanka's Princess* and *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* by Kavita Kane. The representation of women in Ramayana has been re-examined and reinterpreted in light of contemporary discourses on gender roles, leading to the emergence of fresh perspectives. While conventional interpretations commend her qualities, contemporary viewpoints generally emphasise the difficulties and injustices she encountered, raising doubts about the societal expectations that required such severe demonstrations of virtue and chastity. In the contemporary adaptations of narratives from Ramayana Sita is the protagonist - the main character. Namita Gokhale in her perceptive essay *Sita: A Personal Journey* writes “Sita has been there, in the mass consciousness of our subcontinent, for very long now. She has been there since the beginnings of our timeless

history, in the different versions and renditions of the *Ramayana*, written or recited and never forgotten. She lives on in ...celluloid, and on television ...She is there in song, in poetry, in the tears that Indian women have been shedding through generations as they tread *the lakshmanrekhas* that barricade their lives, as they are consumed by the flames of the penitential *agnipareeksha* that their families regularly subject them to.” (Lal xiv)

Contemporary authors have endeavoured to portray Sita in a manner that is not limited or determined by her husband's identity. Sita epitomises defiance and possesses a formidable sense of self. She displayed unwavering resentment towards Ravana, the one who had kidnapped her, and declined to pardon Rama for exiling her, ultimately deciding to part ways with him. Amish has characterised her as a fierce woman, stating, “She is the warrior we need. The Goddess we await. She will defend Dharma. She will protect us.”

Sita's significance persists in contemporary debates, serving as a focal point for concerns on gender, authority, and autonomy. Her narrative is often seen as a reflection of the difficulties women face when trying to balance societal expectations with personal autonomy.

Conclusion

A profound and everlasting reflection on the ideals of womanhood and the principles of dharma is provided by the portrayal of Sita in the Valmiki Ramayana. Sita is portrayed as the epitome of strength and purity. Her journey which was marked by considerable challenges and tribulations, exemplifies her unwavering devotion to virtue as well as her incredible tenacity in the face of adversity. It is because of her unflinching loyalty, moral fortitude, and unfathomable courage that she is considered to be one of the most beloved individuals in Hindu mythology.

Beyond the Ramayana, Sita's persona has had a significant impact on a variety of parts of Hindu tradition and literature, not to mention the cultural and societal connotations that accompany her. Her narrative continues to reverberate in contemporary debate, providing instructive lessons on the relationships between gender and virtue, as well as the quest for righteousness.

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Man-Woman Relationship Dynamics in Select English Plays by Indian Women Dramatists

Diksha Bharti

Abstract

This paper analyzes man-woman relationship portrayals in *Mangalam* by Poile Sengupta, *Free Outgoing* by Anupama Chandrasekhar and *Name, Place, Animal, Thing* by Annie Zaidi. The main argument of the paper is that contemporary English-language plays by Indian women dramatists focus on a nuanced portrayal of women-centered relations and their implications for power and agency in upper middle class and middle-class urban Indian families. Using the concept of intersectionality, the paper examines how multiple axes of oppression and identity interact and shape the relationships of the female characters to the male characters in the selected plays. The analysis reveals that these playwrights create authentic, socially relevant dramas that propose liberating alternatives to the oppressive realities, wherein women characters emerge as makers of meaning, albeit such moments are rare and fleeting.

Keywords: Indian drama in English, women dramatists, man-woman relationship, gender relation, urban Indian family, realism

Feminism in social theory studies gender as a macrostructure like race and class that defines our lived realities. Feminists regard gender as fundamental in structuring social organizations like, family, education, law, and religion, and in defining our relationships within these social organizations (Goffman, 1977; Kelly-Gadol, 1976; Rubin, 1975; Thorne, 1980). Moreover, for a long time amongst family theorists, the institution of family had been looked upon as a private sphere regulated by women, whereas, institutions like law, religion, medicine were considered male-dominated public spheres. Feminist scholarship over the years has however, revealed that it is a false notion. The one who holds power in the public domain like law, religion and medicine also holds power in the private domain of the family. That is, family is also a male-dominated institution (Osmond and Thorne 605-612). The literary feminist theorists extend this feminist understanding of the family theory to explore relationship equations in literature. These are the different ways in which characters in literature interact with each other based on their gender roles and expectations.

Urban Indian drama since its inception has been a fertile ground for such explorations of the domestic world. Dating back to the 1920s, it has largely remained interested in exploring lived realities within the institution of family. This was the period of translations of plays by John Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw and most importantly Henrik Ibsen. In non-commercial Hindi drama during this period, for instance, there emerged two dominant streams; the one stream dealt with historical themes yet raised contemporary concerns through its language and frame. The other stream dealt with “domestic interiors, presenting

psychological studies of man-woman relationships, often coupled with a desire for social reform” (Dalmia loc. 2396-2404). A similar trend is observed in the urban-realist mode of playwriting after independence. Defining the characteristics of Indian plays in the urban-realist mode during this period, Aparna Dharwadker writes:

The principal antithesis to the intertexture of myth and history in post independence Indian theatre...appears in several interlinked groups of plays that portray the historical present rather than a received or imagined past and that possess a range of common features without displaying the closer “family resemblances” that would characterize a distinct dramatic genre. Focusing on contemporary life, these plays are more or less realistic in presentational style; their action is invented, not derived from preexisting narratives; their settings are urban (often metropolitan) or semiurban; and their primary level of signification is literal rather than analogical or allegorical. To a remarkable extent, these works have also settled on the private space of home as the testing ground of not only familial but social and political relations, so that domestic settings, love, marriage, parent-child conflicts, generational shifts, and the quotidian pressures of urban life appear as the common fictional substrata of plays that are thematically disparate. (268)

Evidently, in Indian realist drama, it is the home or family that becomes the locus where genuine personal, social, and political issues are examined via relationships.

In this paper, I analyze such relationship portrayals in three English plays by contemporary Indian women playwrights. The plays analyzed include, *Mangalam* by Poile Sengupta, *Free Outgoing* by Anupama Chandrasekhar and *Name, Place, Animal, Thing* by Annie Zaidi. Among other kinds of relationships, these plays conscientiously highlight various shades of man-woman relationships. Through my analysis, I argue that contemporary English-language plays by Indian women dramatists focus on a nuanced portrayal of women-centered relations in upper middle class and middle-class Indian families, and that, by analyzing the interactional spaces within the family from various points of view these plays uphold the feminist understanding of family as a male-dominated institute. The research method used in this literary analysis is that of close reading of the texts. The theoretical framework will draw on the concepts of feminist studies, particularly the theory of intersectionality, to examine how multiple axes of oppression and identity interact and shape the relationships of the characters in the plays.

***Name Place Animal Thing* by Annie Zaidi**

This play primarily explores the complex and contradictory relationship between a domestic worker and her employers, in an upper-middle class family. The domestic help is a young girl of about 21, named Nancy, and her employers are Mr. and Mrs. Malik, an imposing man and his wife in their fifties. The play is largely about how a poor but resilient female house help refuses to be bowed down by her employers’ manipulative treatment and continues to dream

of a better life for her despite all odds. However, the play is also a commentary upon the stifling nature of relationships in apparently well-functioning upper middle-class families.

The play begins with a tense situation wherein Nancy reappears at the house of her employers after a mysterious absence of eighteen days. While Mrs. Malik is seen seething in anger, Mr. Malik avoids any verbal spat with the girl and a terrified Nancy silently resumes her domestic duties. Through their conversation, the reader gets to know that Nancy had earlier eloped and got married to her lover against the will of her employers. But after facing ill-treatment at the hands of her husband, Nancy returns. In the beginning of the play, Mrs. Malik comes across as an overbearing mistress who is annoyed by the fact that her house help is daring enough to take her life's decisions on her own. But like real life, the play's characters also fall in the grey zone. As the play moves forward, the reader gets to see a bond that exists between Mrs. Malik and Nancy, largely owing to the family's tragic past. It is revealed that Mr. and Mrs. Malik had a daughter named Monali who had run away with her lover just like Nancy does in the present. She had also later returned to her parents asking forgiveness. However, Mr. Malik refused to forgive and accept her back. Distraught with this treatment, Monali committed suicide. Ever after her death, Mr Malik forbade everyone in the family from talking about their daughter.

One night as Mrs. Malik and Nancy reminisce about the girls' childhood, Nancy shares her feelings about Mrs. Malik and Monali's relation with Mr. Malik. She reveals how she always thought that Monali and Mrs. Malik were afraid of Mr. Malik. When Shalu asks Nancy what makes her think so, Nancy replies:

I don't know. Maybe because you call him Mr Malik. In my village, no wife is so formal with her husband. Mona di was afraid of him too. We used to play a game. Describing people as names, places, animals, things. She used to say, if my father was an animal, he would be a very large snake...Like a python. He could swallow you if he wanted, slowly crushing the breath out of your body. He could also ignore you. But you can never relax with him. (Zaidi 118)

It's easy to gauge that for the character of Mrs. Malik, Nancy is an emotional anchor, and this is due to the fact that as a husband Mr. Malik doesn't communicate with his wife, who is emotionally scarred after the death of their daughter. Mrs. Malik is trapped in a patriarchal society that values honor and tradition over happiness and freedom. In front of her husband she hesitates from mentioning their deceased daughter even though a year has passed since the tragic incident. She is unable to confront her husband, who is responsible for Monali's death, and instead vents her anger and frustration on Nancy. Mrs. Malik's character shows the effects of oppression and internalized misogyny on women in a male-dominated culture.

The manner in which Mr. and Mrs. Malik interact in their daily lives also reveal how gender hierarchy is subtly reinforced through every day practices in a marital relationship. For instance, the play shows that the Maliks have stopped eating rice at night because Mr. Malik suddenly decided that it is unhealthy. Likewise, Mrs. Malik always ensures that her husband's clothes are tidy and ironed even when she is evidently under stress or is in the middle of a serious conversation that needs to be prioritized.

As the play moves towards culmination, Mrs. Malik, in her act of defiance, stops doing these things for her husband. But before that she confesses to being a coward who could not stand up for her daughter:

I did not know it mattered so much. . . Mona? I talked to you, only inside my head. I didn't dare to speak loudly. He is hard, Mona. Hard! You looked beaten down last time I saw you. Marriage was not the answer, was it?... I saw how you looked, right into the eyes. You never did that before. But that day, for the first and last time, you kept looking at his face, like you were a baby again. And he never really looked at you. He acted like you weren't there. And I couldn't do anything for my baby. (Zaidi 136)

The above monologue of Mrs. Malik depicts Mr. Malik as a rigid, conservative and patriarchal figure who imposes his authority and morality on others. He does not care about the feelings of his daughter or his wife, but only about his own reputation and values. He rejects his daughter when she returns to him and does not show any remorse or grief when she commits suicide. It reveals the complex interplay of class and gender at work in a father-daughter relationship where patriarchal norms dominate.

Kimberle Crenshaw, the leading scholar of critical race theory, in her 1989 paper 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics' defined intersectionality as a metaphor to denote interwoven systems of oppression. Crenshaw's argument was that discrimination based on categories like race, sex, and class are not mutually exclusive categories of discrimination. Instead, "[d]iscrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them" (149). By contrasting the similar yet divergent life trajectories of Monali and Nancy, the dramatist shows the unequal realities of women in India wherein their choices and outcomes could be shaped by differing social and economic contexts. Both women, Nancy and Monali defy the patriarchal norms of their society by eloping with their lovers, but they face different consequences. Monali is rejected by her father and driven to suicide, while Nancy is accepted by her employers on the pretext that she is not their daughter and hence, must learn about the atrocities of the outer world by experiencing it. This instance reveals how women's gender and class intersect to have very different impact upon their lives even within similar circumstances. They could be subjected to different forms of violence and discrimination. While Nancy is treated as an inferior being by Mr. and Mrs. Malik, who try to control her behavior like that of a pet, Monali is treated as a disgrace by her father, who values his honor more than his daughter's happiness. Both the characters, however, pay a price for their independent minds.

The persistent and crushing silence between Mr. and Mrs. Malik finally break off with a fierce confrontation that ensues between them towards the end of the play. In her act of defiance and exercising agency, Mrs. Malik indulges in a plate full of rice and dal at three in the morning as her husband stands over and stares. He tries to stop her from eating as she tells him that she cannot sleep properly without eating rice and continues to eat. Enraged Malik

steps forward and knocks the plate from her lap. Mrs. Malik continues to sit at her place (136). Scene 3 depicts a frustrated Mr. Malik, screaming off-stage, to the sound of cupboards being opened and slammed shut: “Where is my kurta-pajama? Mrs Malik, my kurta-pajama!” (139). Mrs. Malik doesn't respond. She eventually unleashes her pent-up anger and grief at her husband accusing him of being responsible for their daughter's death, and being selfish. Malik storms into the living room, grabbing a heavy metal object and threatens her. She dodges his attacks, frantically shrieking Mona and Nancy's names. Mr. Malik remains adamant and repeats that he acted according to his principles and family traditions. During the confrontation, Malik's foot gets caught in the clothes on the floor. He trips, falls, grows still. Mrs. Malik goes to sit on the sofa and stares at him. As Nancy returns, at the end of the play, Mrs. Malik instructs her to tidy up her bedroom and leaves for the hospital herself.(141-143) Via such nuanced interactions between Mr. Malik and Mrs. Malik, Zaidi's writing reveals the injustices of gender and class in society, while also showing how women resist their oppression in different ways. These actions may not be radical, but they are important steps to assert control over their lives in a male-dominated system.

***Mangalam* by Poile Sengupta**

Mangalam explores the entanglements of human relationships in two distinct acts. About the theme of the play Sengupta writes:

It is about family politics, seen through the perspective of women. The play deals with serrated relationships behind ostensibly normal households, whether in a small town in southern India of the 1960s, or in a modern cosmopolitan family, perhaps in Chennai. The first speaks in Tamil, the second uses English at home as many upper-class urban Indians do, but this play is not about language. It is about the vulnerability of women across all strata of society, and in varied households, and the tenderness and spirit that is so often brutally suppressed. (Sengupta 1)

In Act 1 as a dead woman Mangalam is remembered differently by her family members, the serrated relationships within the family are exposed. Central to all these relationships is Mangalam's relationship with her husband Dorai. The play opens with a bitter banter between Dorai and Mangalam's sister Thangam. As the in-laws confront each other, past incidents and resentments from Dorai and Mangalam's marriage unravel. For Dorai the dead woman brings up memories of deception that led him to marry a woman who was already with child at the time of marriage. Dorai was a poor priest's son when he was chosen by Mangalam to marry her. Thangam did not approve of this marriage because of Dorai's poor family background and reminds him in the present that it was their father who had helped Dorai in getting a job. She also accuses Dorai of not allowing Mangalam to pursue education after marriage. In retaliation, Dorai disdainfully reveals that he was chosen as Mangalam's husband despite his poor background to save Mangalam's honour, who was pregnant at that time. The reader learns that Dorai holds resentment and feelings of deception against Mangalam and her

family until present. Thangam accuses him of staying with her sister only for the money and physically abusing her, to which Dorai replies:

She would not tell me who the father was. First I used to ask her softly, sweetly. She would not tell me. Then I beat her. She stayed quiet. She would not even cry out in pain. She was so obstinate, that... that. ... Then it became a game to see how I could take it out of her.... (Pause) She never told me. (34)

In a heated confession, Dorai reveals that he wanted to end the life of her illegitimate child, to which Thangam counters by reminding him how proud Dorai felt when this child received accolades from others for his intellect. Thangam confronts Dorai about his infidelities during his marriage to Mangalam, to which he defensively responds, "It is different for a man" (34). She also brings up Dorai's perpetual mistrust of Mangalam, his doubt over the paternity of their other children, and his suspicion towards any man visiting their home. Dorai argues that such doubts would not exist if Mangalam had identified the father. Thangam challenges him to consider the possibility that Mangalam might have been sexually assaulted, suggesting the pregnancy could have been non-consensual. Dorai dismisses the idea as preposterous, insisting that a woman raised in such a sheltered environment like Mangalam's could not have been assaulted. He denigrates her, accusing her of willingly engaging in prostitution, and derogatorily calls her "a high-class prostitute" (33).

Evidently, the dynamics of the relationship depicted in this act are deeply influenced by the societal norms of patriarchy and oppression. Dorai comes across as a resentful individual, and abusive husband who treated his wife merely as an object of possession acquired from her father. His treatment of her lacks any recognition of her humanity. Dorai insists on uncovering the identity of the child's father, seeking to penalize Mangalam for what he sees as her infidelity. His own ethical shortcomings, however, such as his affairs with other women, are dismissed by him under the pretext that the standards for men are inherently different.

Dorai's mistrust in Mangalam's loyalty not only leads him to question the legitimacy of his other children, he also accuses them of ingratitude and betrayal. Throughout the first act, he is filled with bitterness towards his late wife, blaming her for the strained relation with his children. He believes his eldest daughter Usha and Mangalam kept secrets from him. When Thangam mentions Usha's servile treatment at her marital home, Dorai dismisses these as concocted tales by his wife and daughter seeking sympathy. In a dramatic turn of events at the scene's close, Chitra, Dorai's youngest daughter, flees with her lover. An enraged Dorai not only denounces her actions, but also calls her a prostitute who took after her mother. Although Revathy, rages against her dead mother-in-law for treating her unfairly, yet she voices out how Mangalam was never happy in her marriage with Dorai:

What do you think her life was? With a husband who hated her. I have seen her crying, every day she cried. She smiled only when he went out of the house. Once he was gone for three days, and she laughed like a young girl, she sang songs. But when he was here, he made her suffer. He gave her children

year after year so that he could see her suffer. Every night, he made her suffer. Even when the doctor said no. ... Do you know how she died? (31)

In a fit of rage, Revathy reveals that Mangalam killed herself by overdosing on sleeping pills. She chose death by her own hand because she wanted all those left behind to suffer her absence.

Dorai's relation with Mangalam highlights the persistent gender disparities embedded in the marital framework of India. It's deeply unsettling that Dorai's resentment and suspicion towards his wife led to her tragic suicide, reiterating the grim truth that a woman, regardless of her innocence, may find herself trapped in a spiral of allegations, and in dire situations like that of Mangalam, taking one's own life so that those who are left behind suffer her absence, could become an act of reclaiming agency. Furthermore, the play illustrates the way soured marital bonds can extend itself to impaired family dynamics characterized by feelings of animosity, acrimony, and distrust, among family members veiled under appearances of normalcy.

Act Two shifts the scene and recasts the actors from Act One in new roles. The actor who played Dorai now becomes Sreeni, and the actor who played Thangam, retains her name but plays the role of Sreeni's wife. The characters dress up in modern attire and converse in English. In the second scene of Act Two, Thangam stumbles upon a romantic letter in a book, initially mistaking it for her son Suresh's. On inquiring, it's revealed that it belongs to her husband Sreeni. Discovering Sreeni's infidelity leaves Thangam torn about leaving him. In a pivotal moment, symbolizing her revolt against patriarchal constraints, Thangam nearly shatters Sreeni's cherished vase. However, a timely doorbell halts her, and she reluctantly restores the vase to its place, heading to answer the door (67). This act mirrors Thangam's struggle with internalized oppression, as she grapples with confronting her husband or forsaking her societal standing and security. Her aborted attempt to destroy the vase represents her suppressed rage and the societal expectations that bind her, ultimately leading to her subdued acceptance of her circumstances.

The status quo within Indian marriages doesn't break, and women's oppression transgresses generations as is portrayed through the time lapse that happens from the first act to the second. The traditional gender expectations make Indian wives believe that they have the power, the hope, the faith, that only they can prevent the world from collapsing even if it requires staying in a repressive and unsatisfying marital life. In a patriarchal set-up, even within marriage, men are at liberty compared to women. It holds true in the case of the character of Dorai from the first act, and that of Sreeni from the second act. The man-woman relationship dynamics in both the acts are clearly based on inequality, exploitation and betrayal. The men are unfaithful and abusive, while the women are loyal, tolerant and sacrificial. The men take advantage of their social and economic privileges to pursue their desires and interests, without caring about the consequences for their wives. The women, on the other hand, are expected to conform to their traditional roles of being obedient, submissive and nurturing, even when they are hurt or humiliated by their husbands.

***Free Outgoing* by Anupama Chandrasekhar**

The play *Free Outgoing* by Anupama Chandrasekhar explores the consequences of a teenage girl's MMS scandal on her and her family. Deepa, a 15-year-old girl becomes a victim of cybercrime when her boyfriend Jeevan leaks their intimate video online. Echoing themes from *Mangalam* and *Name, Place, Animal, Thing*, *Free Outgoing* also depicts a woman's entrapment in a cycle of accusations even when she is innocent or has little responsibility. It also casts light on Indian society's patriarchal standards, which view the absence of a male figure in the family as weakness and dishonor. This section discusses those parts of the play that deals with man-woman relationship in the form of the relation dynamics shared between Deepa's single mother Malini, and Malini's male colleague, Ramesh. In the context of the Indian society that follows patriarchal norms, a woman's social class and the presence or absence of a male head in her family, significantly governs her interactions with other male members of the society. In this case, Malini's status of a single mother from a lower-middle class family plays a crucial role in her interaction with her colleague Ramesh. The gender-power dynamics under such circumstances differ greatly from the formerly discussed cases of husband-wife relationship dynamics.

In the play, 38-year-old Malini juggles her roles as an accountant and a part-time metal polish saleswoman. She is a mother to Sharan, 16, and Deepa, 15. Ramesh, 47, shares the accounting office with Malini and shows a romantic interest in her from the play's start. Despite Malini's disinterest, she remains courteous and hospitable to him. Ramesh often comes to their home unannounced, apologizing once he is there, with a remark like, "I came to see you, to help you—I wanted to because you are all alone" (Chandrasekhar Sc.03). He takes up a powerful position in Malini's home ever after Deepa's MMS goes viral and media frenzy ensues involving Malini and her children. When Malini, fearing public scrutiny and disgrace, seeks Ramesh's assistance to relocate temporarily, he bluntly remarks on the difficulty of finding accommodation due to her newfound "notorious figure" status (Sc. 06). Despite being just a colleague, Ramesh doesn't hesitate in making indecent remarks about Deepa's role in the MMS scandal. He claims that Deepa's behavior indicates a possible case of nymphomania, citing a psychologist's TV discussion that blames their diet for early sexual activity (Sc. 06). Their conversation clearly leaves Malini uncomfortable, but she doesn't confront him. In fact, she is extra careful and polite while talking with him.

The dialogue between Malini and Ramesh reflects the imbalanced and domineering dynamics of male-female relationships within the patriarchal framework of Indian society. Ramesh's behavior is exploitative as he seeks his own gratification and dominance rather than being respectful or supportive of Malini's circumstances. His actions render Malini feeling demeaned and powerless. The audacity, with which Ramesh interferes in family matters of Malini, showcases manifestations of patriarchy. Patriarchy as a system of social organization sets the norms and expectations of gender roles and gender relations often to the detriment of women's rights and dignity. In such a system women are compelled to negotiate their survival through oppressive patriarchal family structures and institutions.

Throughout the play, Malini can be seen making such strategic compromises for her family's well-being. Malini's polite demeanor towards Ramesh despite his scathing remarks on Deepa acts as a testimony to it. Likewise, when Malini's son Sharan finds Deepa's leaked

MMS on Ramesh's phone, instead of confronting Ramesh, Malini compels Sharan to apologize to Ramesh for the privacy breach (Sc. 06). She recognizes Ramesh as their sole support during their crisis. On the other hand, by having Deepa's MMS on his phone, Ramesh exhibits traits of scopophilia, objectifying Deepa without regard for her dignity. Even though aware of Ramesh's unreliability, Malini is left with no choice but to entrust Deepa to him to escape the media glare. When Sharan finds out that Malini is planning to send Deepa away with Ramesh, who holds her MMS, he angrily accuses his mother of "whoring" Deepa (Sc. 08). Yet, the scene poignantly displays a mother's dire need to protect her child and mitigate their plight. Malini refrains from challenging Ramesh's conduct or intentions, rather accepts them as natural and inevitable. She also silences Sharan's anger and resistance and makes him submit to Ramesh's authority. This shows how Malini internalizes the patriarchal ideals that relegate women beneath men, all to safeguard her family.

Malini and her family's situation can be analyzed through the lens of intersectionality. As already discussed, intersectionality is a perspective that investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations and individual experiences. Malini and Deepa are oppressed by Ramesh not only because they are single women in a male-dominated society but also because they are lower-middle class women in a male-dominated society. Their socioeconomic position exposes them to greater risks of abuse and bias from men like Ramesh and Jeevan. This same status also restricts their access to resources and chances for improving their circumstances, affecting their self-esteem and autonomy. Conversely, Ramesh benefits from his male privilege, despite his class. In a society that favors men, Ramesh believes that he has the right to evaluate and critique Malini and Deepa's choices. He presumes his insights on what is beneficial or detrimental for them are superior, to their own understanding of their situation. This sense of superiority enables him to view Malini and Deepa as lesser individuals in need of his direction or help. Even though he fails to recognize his faults or take responsibility, he nevertheless, blames Deepa and Malini for their predicament.

Conclusion

West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that "Doing gender" is an interactional process where the distinctions between men and women, girls and boys, are continuously created and utilized to reinforce a gender dichotomy that is detrimental to women. This paper posits that Indian women playwrights highlights this dynamic process of 'doing gender' within urban Indian families. They depict the various shades of man-woman relationships in such families. Indian women's playwriting highlights gender relations. The primary findings indicate that Indian women dramatists, composing in English, craft realistic and socially pertinent plays wherein they explore women-centered relations and their implications for power and agency. By this way the neglected experiences of women from the Indian households are brought to the fore. The settings of such plays are often the upper-middle class or middle-class urban families and a major relationship that these plays explore is the husband-wife relationship which in turn, serves as a lens for evaluating key feminist ideas like internalized misogyny, the perpetuation of gender hierarchies through daily interactions, and the gendered nature of transgressive behaviors. Nonetheless, these works also offer redemptive alternatives wherein

women characters are not always merely objects of domination. Indian English women dramatists recognize women as subjects and makers of meaning albeit such moments are rare or temporary.

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Matriarchy, Marginalization and Domestic Abuse in Rajam Krishnan's *Lamps in the Whirlpool*

Mohd Faiez

Abstract

The paper titled "Matriarchy, Marginalization and Domestic Abuse in Rajam Krishnan's *Lamps in the Whirlpool*" tries to study the novel *Lamps in the Whirlpool* from the perspective of feminism. The central character Girija is marginalized and treated badly by her husband as well as her mother-in-law. There is matriarchy and marginalization with domestic abuse. Girija is the victim of these issues because of her gender. She bears this just to maintain harmony in the family. As a woman, she understands everything but does not utter a single word. She is also marginalized in different matters of the family. She is considered as a slave who has to do all the works of the house. In all, this novel presents the condition of a woman who is dominated and marginalized by her mother-in-law.

Keywords: Dominate, Domestic Abuse, Gender, Matriarchy, Marginalization

Rajam Krishnan is a well-known feminist writer. Her novels raise the issues related to women. Her works have been translated from Tamil to English language because of contemporary issues. Krishnan's work *Lamps in the Whirlpool* is also the translated version of *Suzhalil Mithakkum Deepangal*. There is matriarchy in which a woman is the head of the family and she dominates over another woman. Besides this, there is domestic violence and the quest for identity.

Girija is the central character in this novel who is an educated woman. She is a homemaker and does all the daily chores without any complaint. She is controlled by her husband as well as by her mother-in-law who is a widow. From morning till late night, Girija does all the household duties without any complaint but gets no recognition.

Issue of domination is raised through Girija. She is dominated by her husband and her mother-in-law. The novel starts with the following:

Girija packed the filter with ground coffee and pot boiling water over it. She spread cheese and fills filling between two slices of buttered bread and slides the sandwich into a greased toaster. A tantalizing aroma filled the air as signaled it over the flame. (Krishnan 1)

This beginning of the novel says so much about the condition of Girija who starts her day with the making of coffee and the preparation of breakfast. In this way the day of a homemaker starts. She does all the work with responsibility. She has been married for seventeen years and doing all these chores continuously. She is the one by whom the air is filled with aroma. She not only serves her husband and children but her mother-in-law also.

Her mother-in-law controls the house and Girija too. She remains so much busy in the household duties that she doesn't get time to look herself in the mirror. It is expressed in the novel as, "It was not that great select the time to look at herself in a mirror she left the desire and enthusiasm to do so" (Krishnan 5). S. Jayanti argues in the following words:

Girija, the protagonist in the novel, is not one among the lower cadre who are usually uneducated and financially dependent. After her master's graduation she worked, for a period of eight years, as a school teacher. Yet neither education nor employment made her truly independent and free thinking. She accepted the transition from her family of birth to her family of progression naturally as any average Indian female. Included in this transition was her shrugging off her roles as a daughter and teacher and accepting those of a wife, mother, and a daughter-in-law. Such subconscious and culturally-implicit acceptance meant that she had to be an utterly unselfish mother, and a dutiful daughter-in-law. Whenever her husband visits her from his business trips abroad she has to be a subservient wife. Generally Indian women go through this "transition" unquestioningly and obligingly because of their social conditioning: thus losing their self-respect and ultimately themselves in the process. Being a descent of the Brahmin caste (the Hindu upper class) she was "destined" to follow the "madi" rules like any other orthodox family in the south Indian family system. (Jayanthi 428)

These views of Jayanthi throw light on the personality of Girija who does the entire household and performs different roles as a wife, a daughter-in-law and as a mother. She has accepted her role in the family to serve everybody. She can be considered as a full-time homemaker.

Regarding matriarchy, it is narrated that Girija's mother-in-law practice *Madi* ritual. This is an age-old tradition in which one has to be maintain the purity in everything like clothes, food and the place of worship. Mother-in-law is old and she is unable to do all these chores herself. Girija cooks madi food, wash madi clothes and clean the place of worship for her mother-in-law. Not only this, Girija has to take care that she should not come in contact with the one who is not clean or pure. She has to take care of the madi food that nobody should eat from it. Male is not allowed for madi ritual. These responsibilities of the house fall on Girija. It is expressed in the following words as:

A quick look around after the girls had left showed that Kavita had fallen her clothes all over Mamiyar's washroom. Probably the lazy girl had not bath at all. He would have a bath in the evening or at night fall. Students she at least has finished the toilet? With sheer distressed Girija clean the washroom. She switched on the geyser for Mamiyar and started to get Bharat ready for school. Girija went upstairs again. Her next job was to mop the floor in front of Mamiyaar's array of deities and decorate it with a kolam. (Krishnan 4)

These lines show the responsibilities of the house remain on Girija. She has to clean the washroom, mop the floor and get her ready for the school. Not only this, she has to clean the deities also. In spite of maid, Girija has to do the entire maid related works. Being educated woman, she has surrendered herself completely to the household duties. Here, it can be noticed that her mother-in-law dominates and she has to do accordingly.

Girija's marginalized position in the house can be understood by the incident when Ratna comes to her house and sees her having meal sitting on the floor. Ratna says the following words:

Why are you so stubborn? After serving everything to everybody why do you sit down on this dirty kitchen floor and eat the leftovers. Are you a four legged creature? Why did you do your M.A. B. Ed. and work for eight years? Where has that Girija gone with her tonsured head? Don't it you have a mind of your own? Oh come on Giri (Krishnan14)

After going through these lines of Ratna, it can be seen that Girija has surrendered completely for the sake of the family. This incidence brings to light the condition of a woman who serves as homemaker. To have food on the dirty floor in the kitchen and eat the leftover signifies the inferior position of any person. Girija is so much accustomed to sitting on the floor that she dares not sit on the chair even alone in the house. Ratna even asks about the importance of her education and work experience. She questions over her lost identity. It shows that Girija is no more the Girija of past. She has changed or the circumstances of the house have changed her into another person who has lost the power of reasoning and identity. This is what happens with homemakers who do not speak for themselves and accept everything.

When Ratna questions Girija about her life, Girija stops her and says that she is not going to take any action because domestic harmony is her priority. She says, "Ratna please don't say all kind of things and go off domestic harmony is my priority" (Krishnan18). This priority is only for a woman who sacrifices herself and not for man.

On the one hand Girija is there who does all the household chores responsibly and on the other hand there is her mother-in-law who does not credit Girija for any work. For her mother-in-law, it is the duty of Girija because she is a woman. Girija's mother-in-law replies to Ratna when she says to her that Girija is frightened of her:

Don't be silly she frightened? She is a clever one alright she acts docile in my presence. Take my son he never has a moment's rest. His job takes him all over and he eats and sleeps when and where he can. Besides, house work is no longer the drudgery it used to be. Everything at the click of a switch! Electricity, gas, pressure cookers which cook in seconds, heaters in winter, coolers in summer, what more can one ask for?(Krishnan 21)

In these lines, Girija's mother-in-law compares the work of her son and daughter-in-law. For her, everything is easy for a woman but for man there is struggle of travelling due to work. All these facilities are provided and nothing should be asked for more. Girija's work is not at all appreciated who works from morning till evening because she is a homemaker. But her

son's work is appreciated because he goes out and travels. Household work is not considered as hard work. This is patriarchal setup where women are supposed to accept everything without saying. If she is not appreciated, she should not raise her voice and accept that men's work is important. In this way, a woman is marginalized on the grounds that man runs the family and she is nowhere. Another aspect is that women are financially dependent on men and this dependence makes them feel inferior. In this matter S. Jayanthi argues:

The daughter-in-law's hardship is taken for granted; and if not appreciation they are certain to receive complaints. Thus Girija, who devoted her life to her husband, children and in fulfilling the "madi" rules and duties to her mother-in-law, was never recognized as an important member in the family. In contrast the bread-winning husband was always doted upon by the mother-in-law. (Jayanthi 430)

Another issue is also raised that women are not in the mainstream of the house as well as society. It is raised through the conversation between Abu and Girija when he asks her about the photograph in her house and she is unable to answer. Abu points out that when you not aware about the picture hanging in your house what about the social issues and he says the following words:

It's a great pity that people like you have become stranger to your own children. You know nothing about the picture hanging in your house. You don't know anything about social issues. You are removing yourself from the general flow of life and getting totally submerged under the daily rituals. Have you ever thought whether this is necessary? Think about this enormous women power confined to the house going to rot. Why have you never felt that we also have a part in the shortcomings and miseries of society? (Krishnan 37)

Abu says that Girija has kept herself away from the mainstream society in which she is not concerned about the social issues. It reflects the condition of women who are kept inside and are supposed not to think about the society. This is done to keep them under control. So much family responsibilities are there that they find no time for general awareness. These responsibilities are like the shackles in their feet which does not allow them to see and think about the world from their perspective. No doubt that children need mother but it is the patriarchy which has put the whole responsibility of looking after the family on the shoulders of women. Woman is made not born. The same happens in many houses where men are not supposed to the household chores. Women are not there to claim for their rights and they are not allowed to socialize with their community. When a woman is not concerned with the picture that has been hanging in her house, one can estimate the condition of the women in the outside world. It is not so that women are not interested in other things than family, but they are unable to get time from the family. The same can be assessed in terms of women where they are unable to do just because they are unable to get time for other activities. If they are able to get then they can achieve something in their lives.

Girija does all the works of the house like a maid. Her condition is worst in comparison to the maid, she is continuously kept under control and humiliated. Her husband treats her like a slave. After her husband's return from the trip, she washes the dirty laundry, irons it and put properly in the wardrobe. Girija is not only a wife and a mother, rather she is also considered by her husband as her mother's slave also. It is expressed in the following words:

Though Samu treated her as his mother's slave, he had no bad habits and no serious flaws in his character. There were no secrets between them, definitely not. She was the one to submit to his will. Even when she was ill, did he ever volunteer to lend a hand? No, he continued to boss over her. Did he care to ask if she had seen a doctor? No, she had to go to the doctor on her own, buy medicines and get back to the eternal grind when she recovered. As for him, a mere headache, and he brought the house. (Krishnan 40)

These lines indicate the condition of Girija who never gets the help of her husband, whenever she is ill, she goes to the doctor alone and does all the work of the house without taking any break, while her husband has no concern for her. If her husband has headache, he needs proper attention and care. In this way, Girija is treated in the house. She is there to fulfill the orders given by her husband. He orders her to arrange his bag for the tour and she gets it ready. Though Girija is the working force behind her husband and mother-in-law, it is not felt by them.

Girija's condition can also be understood by the instance when she asks about the box in her house which belongs to her neighbour, instead of proper reply her husband humiliates her and warns not to ask anything again. He at once becomes rage. He further humiliates her by flinging the plate and compares the house to a crematorium and blames that he is never welcomed warmly by her. He further complains that she remains busy in the kitchen and something or other is lacking in the food. When Girija questions, her husband asks to leave the house and he can manage without her. This domestic abuse is also considered by Marisa Silvestri and she argues about it in the following words:

It is through understanding the relationship between the abuser and the abused as one founded upon domination and coercion that we begin to make the connection between the more traditional victims of torture and the victimization that women experience in a domestic setting. (Silvestri and Crowther-Dowey 177)

To conclude, when women like Girija opens their mouths, nobody is there to accept the truth. They are required to keep their mouth shut. Regarding the condition of women in India, S. Jayanthi argues:

In India women are advised to keep mum about domestic abuse, be it physical or psychological, in order to safeguard the social standing of her family. Under the guise of saving the family name women, a large portion of who live with their in-laws, are treated as no more than maids. There are ways the Indian in-

laws have misused their “power” by pushing the daughter-in-law out of the family circle in all important matters. (Jayanthi 430)

In this way, a woman is humiliated and man is not there to listen what she says. Man wants the woman to keep her mouth shut and bear the humiliation and domestic abuse. Here, mental set up comes to light that this is male dominated society and woman is not supposed say a single in her defense. As she is a woman, how can she dare to question a man who is providing her the necessities of life. Somewhere, men’s financial support is the cause that men behave in this way.

Girija remains marginalized in her house when it comes to any matter. She is considered only as a woman who has to do all the household works on the basis of her gender. She is not only controlled by husband rather by her mother-in-law also. Girija is dominated in matriarchal setup in which a woman is controlling another woman. There is domestic abuse with Girija when she asks a simple question. It comes to light that woman is not supposed to open her mouth in any way. And if she does, she is prone to marginalization and domestic abuse.

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Myth as Mirror: Reflecting Contemporary Social Issues through Traditional Stories in Girish Karnad's Plays

Garima Jain

Abstract

This article tends to explore the nuanced way in which Girish Karnad, one of India's most illustrious playwrights, employs mythological motifs and narratives to critique and reflect upon contemporary social issues. Through a detailed analysis of three of his seminal works—*Nagamandala*, *Hayavadana*, and *Tughlaq*—this study seeks to read how Karnad reinterprets traditional Indian myths and folklore to address modern dilemmas concerning gender roles, identity, and political ambition. *Nagamandala* challenges the conventional perceptions of femininity and marital fidelity, using myth to question societal norms imposed on women. *Hayavadana*, through its narrative complexity, probes into the existential quests for identity and completeness, emphasizing the fractured nature of human desires and self-realization. Meanwhile, *Tughlaq* serves as a political allegory that critiques the idealism and tyranny in leadership, mirroring the disillusionment prevalent in contemporary politics. The plays of Karnad not only reveal his unique blend of myth and modernity but also demonstrate an enduring relevance in discussing the universal and timeless nature of human conflicts and societal issues. Also, Karnad's work offers profound insights into the cultural psyche and societal dynamics of India.

Keywords: Indian Mythology, Contemporary Social Issues, Gender Roles, Identity and Self, Political Commentary

I

Girish Karnad, a towering figure in Indian theatre, has left an indelible mark on the landscape of modern Indian drama. Born in 1938 in Matheran, India, Karnad's literary career spans several decades during which he has woven intricate tales that meld the rich tapestry of Indian mythology with pressing contemporary issues. A recipient of the prestigious Jnanpith Award, his work is characterized by its deep engagement with traditional Indian folklore, yet reinterpreted to reflect the complexities of modern existence. Karnad's plays often revolve around themes such as identity, power, and human relationships, underpinned by a strong mythological foundation. His facility with both Kannada and English has allowed his plays to resonate across diverse audiences, addressing universal themes that extend well beyond the confines of Indian society. Works like *Nagamandala*, *Hayavadana*, and *Tughlaq* not only entertain but provoke thought, offering layered narratives that invite analysis and discussion. These plays showcase Karnad's genius in using mythological and historical narratives to provide a critical commentary on the realities of contemporary life, from gender dynamics and societal expectations to political corruption and the search for personal identity.

Mythology holds a venerable place in the cultural and spiritual tapestry of India, serving as a reservoir of stories that have guided moral and social norms for centuries. In Indian theatre, mythology is not merely a relic of the past but a jubilant, living tradition that continues to influence contemporary theatrical expressions. Modern Indian playwrights, including Girish Karnad, have adeptly harnessed these ancient narratives to comment on present-day issues, blending timeless themes with urgent contemporary conflicts. This adaptation provides a familiar yet profound backdrop against which modern dilemmas are explored, making these age-old stories relevant to a new generation of viewers. Girish Karnad's oeuvre exemplifies this dynamic interaction between the old and the new. His plays, deeply rooted in Indian myths and folklore, do not merely retell these stories but reimagine them, addressing complex themes such as identity, power, and societal norms. Karnad has connected "the past and the present by exploiting the Grammar of literary archetypes" (Frye 135).

Nagamandala is based on a folk tale Karnad heard from his mentor, A.K. Ramanujan. This play explores themes of love, betrayal, and the societal roles enforced upon women. The story revolves around Rani, a neglected wife who concocts a story to win her husband's affection, only to have the story come alive in unexpected and troubling ways. The play uses the mythic to question the constraints of marriage and the realities of love and fidelity in the patriarchal Indian society.

Hayavadana, inspired by a theme drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text *Kathasaritsagara*, and influenced by Thomas Mann's reworking of the transposed heads theme in *The Transposed Heads*, explores the quest for completeness and identity. The narrative follows two friends, Devadatta and Kapila, whose heads are switched, leading to a complex interplay of body and mind, raising profound questions about the nature of identity and the completeness of the self in a divided world.

Tughlaq dramatizes the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq of the Delhi Sultanate. The play blends historical facts with legends, focusing on the Sultan's idealism and his tragic descent into despotic behaviour, reflecting the complexities of political power and the often-cruel machinations of statecraft. Tughlaq's story is a cautionary tale about the isolation and paranoia that can accompany unchecked political ambition, serving as a metaphor for the contemporary political climate in many respects.

Through these plays, Karnad not only preserves the narrative richness of Indian mythology but also transforms it into a medium for critiquing and reflecting upon the pressing social issues of his time, making a significant contribution to both Indian theatre and its broader socio-cultural dialogue.

II

In Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala*, mythological elements are intricately woven to critique and illuminate the rigid gender roles and marital dynamics prevalent in contemporary Indian society. The play utilizes the story of a serpent who falls in love with the protagonist, Rani, after consuming a love potion she had originally intended for her indifferent husband, Appanna. This narrative setup allows Karnad to explore the deeply entrenched expectations placed on women, both in mythic contexts and real life. The play explores gender disparities, illustrating how men are afforded greater freedoms and privileges, while women face

oppression and suppression. Karnad criticizes men who engage in severe wrongdoing yet seek to discipline their women. In this vein, it is appropriate to reference Simone de Beauvoir, the French philosopher, who noted that “man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being . . . she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute— she is the other” (16).

The character of Rani, confined within the boundaries of her home and subjected to the neglect of her husband, epitomizes the traditional roles ascribed to women—passivity, subservience, and domesticity. However, as the plot unfolds, Rani's interactions with the serpent, who assumes her husband's form at night, begin to challenge these roles. Unlike her real husband, the serpent listens to her and respects her thoughts and emotions, thus offering a stark contrast and critique of the real marital dynamics that often leave women feeling isolated and voiceless. Also, the dual life led by Rani, unknowingly with the serpent and knowingly with Appanna, symbolizes the split existence many women navigate—between their personal desires and societal expectations. This duality in Rani's life is not just a narrative device but also a critical reflection on the identity crises faced by women who are forced to mould themselves according to the conflicting roles society assigns to them. Jaganmohan Chari aptly comments that men are favoured because “the concept of ritualistic purity of the metaphysical tradition has structured the hierarchical vertical line-up of gods at the top, men below and women still underneath” (124).

The play addresses the theme of storytelling as a form of resistance. Rani's act of narrating stories to the serpent, who is disguised as her husband, becomes an act of self-expression and a subtle rebellion against the mute suffering expected of her. Rani says, “Do you know what my days were like? No, you don't. Because all you cared about was whether I had kept your house well. But at night, when you turned into a serpent and listened to my stories, it was different. My words seemed to come alive...” The stories, derived from traditional myths, are transformed in her telling, becoming tools of empowerment rather than mere entertainment. This not only elevates her status in the eyes of her nocturnal visitor but also serves as a metaphor for the reclamation of agency within oppressive structures.

The climactic revelation scene, where the village elders are called to judge Rani's supposed infidelity, further delves into societal hypocrisy and the moral dilemmas faced by women. The elders, embodying traditional societal authority, are eventually swayed by the supernatural elements of the story, choosing to interpret them in a way that maintains social order. This resolution criticizes the societal inclination to preserve the status quo, even in the face of profound injustice. Through *Nagamandala*, Karnad effectively uses mythological motifs to comment on and criticize the gendered dynamics of contemporary society, highlighting the transformative power of myths when reinterpreted through a modern lens. The play questions the fairness of these dynamics as well as raises the potential for personal and societal transformation through the subversion of traditional narratives.

III

Hayavadana employs traditional stories and characters to peep through into the intricate themes of identity and the quest for completeness, posing profound existential and

psychological questions. The play draws from the ancient Sanskrit text *Kathasaritsagara*, but Karnad's treatment of the narrative transforms it into a commentary on modern dilemmas of selfhood and fragmentation.

At the heart of *Hayavadana* is the story of two friends, Devadatta and Kapila, whose identities become irrevocably entangled when a goddess grants a wish that leads to their heads being swapped onto each other's bodies. This physical transposition becomes a metaphorical exploration of the conflict between the body and the mind, a central existential question about what truly constitutes one's identity. Is it the mind that harbors desires, emotions, and intelligence, or is it the body that executes and experiences the physical world? Karnad intensifies this query by contrasting the two friends' reactions to their new realities. Devadatta, the intellectual, initially seems to achieve a perfect union when his head is attached to Kapila's robust body. However, this amalgamation only surfaces more conflicts, as the bodily desires attributed to Kapila's physical form begin to dominate the composite being. Conversely, Kapila, now with Devadatta's body, finds himself in a crisis, unable to reconcile his physical identity with his mental self. This dissonance points to modern psychological concepts of cognitive dissonance and identity confusion, where the self is not a monolith but a construct influenced by both internal perceptions and external realities.

The character of Padmini, central to the love triangle, further complicates the narrative by embodying the societal and personal expectations of identity and desire. Padmini's attraction to the composite of Devadatta's head on Kapila's body challenges the conventional notions of love and attraction, questioning whether it is the intellectual or physical attributes that define her love. This scenario probes into the modern psychological issues of attraction and the nature of love, which often defy simplistic categorizations. According to K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Karnad is "modern and he deploys the conventions and motifs of folk art and curtains to project a world of intensities, uncertainties and unpredictable denouement" (736). Furthermore, the play incorporates the character of Hayavadana, a horse-headed man, who symbolically represents the theme of incompleteness and the human yearning for wholeness. His journey towards becoming complete—ironically ending with him achieving a voice but losing his human form—echoes the existential quest for a unified identity, highlighting the often-unattainable nature of perfect completeness.

Through these layered narratives, *Hayavadana* comments on the fragmentation of self in contemporary life, where individuals struggle to unify their internal desires with their external expressions. Commenting on Padmini's desire for Kapila, Satish Kumar writes, "Padmini lives for herself; for the satiation of her sensuality" (30). Her effort to find completeness in her lover has become a futile struggle. Karnad uses myth not only to reflect these struggles but also to suggest that perhaps true completeness is a myth itself, and the human condition is inherently fragmented and perpetually in search of unity. This exploration not only resonates with the existential dilemmas faced by individuals today but also offers a critical reflection on how traditional narratives can illuminate modern psychological complexities.

IV

In the play *Tughlaq*, historical and mythological narratives are adeptly used to critique the nature of political ambition and the resulting disillusionment that often follows. The play, set during the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq of the Delhi Sultanate, serves as both a historical recount and a mythological dramatization of a ruler whose idealistic visions end in tragic chaos. *Tughlaq* is structured around the Sultan's grandiose plans and subsequent failures, such as his decision to move the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad to foster unity and his attempts to introduce a new form of currency that ultimately led to economic collapse. These actions, while based on historical events, are imbued with a mythological grandeur that elevates Tughlaq's ambitions to epic proportions. His character is portrayed as one torn between lofty ideals and the harsh realities of ruling a diverse and dissenting populace, making him a tragic figure doomed by his own visions. This portrayal effectively critiques the perilous nature of unchecked political ambition, highlighting the fine line between visionary leadership and despotic hubris.

The disillusionment that follows Tughlaq's failed reforms reflects the profound existential crisis faced by leaders who are isolated by their own ideals. The narrative explores how such isolation can lead to a distorted sense of reality, where the leader becomes more and more detached from the people and conditions he governs. This theme is potent for analysing contemporary political scenarios in India, where political figures often rise to power on the promise of sweeping reforms and visionary projects, only to face the pragmatic challenges of governance and the discontent of those they lead. The relevance of these themes is seen in the cyclical nature of political promises and public disenchantment in modern democracies. The disillusionment that follows unrealized promises can lead to political instability and public cynicism, much like the chaos that ensued in Tughlaq's reign. Karnad's portrayal of Tughlaq's reign as a series of unfulfilled dreams and escalating crises serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of charismatic leadership that is disconnected from the practicalities and ethical considerations of governance.

The play's interplay of historical facts with mythical storytelling tells us that history often repeats itself, particularly in political contexts where power dynamics are involved. *Tughlaq* thus becomes a mirror reflecting the timeless challenges of leadership and governance, offering a critical lens through which to view contemporary political figures and their policies. In the context of modern India, where political rhetoric often overshadows pragmatic policy-making, this play serves as a pertinent reminder of the complexities and potential pitfalls of political life. The play not only critiques past leadership but also provokes reflection on current political ambitions and their implications for governance and public welfare. Rupalee Burke Comments: (Karnad's) his plays have always aimed at providing message in the contemporary context. In *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda*, Karnad employs history to comment on the pathetic and corroded state of Indian modern day politics, and through which he engages in an intellectual debate of our time (105-107).

V

The plays *Nagamandala*, *Hayavadana*, and *Tughlaq* by Girish Karnad are distinct in their narratives and settings yet share a profound thematic continuity in their exploration of myth and reality, tradition versus modernity, and the clash between individual desires and societal expectations. We see in them Karnad's versatile use of traditional forms to address contemporary concerns.

Firstly, the intersection of myth and reality is a foundational element across these plays. In *Nagamandala*, the line between myth and reality blurs as the story narrated by Rani comes to life, challenging the perceived truths of her existence and the confines of her reality. Similarly, *Hayavadana* utilizes a mythological framework to question the completeness of identity, illustrating how characters grapple with their fragmented realities—both physically and psychologically. In *Tughlaq*, the historical narrative, steeped in the mythic aura of Sultan Tughlaq's reign, dramatizes the harsh realities of political ideals versus their execution, manifesting a layered reality where historical events and mythological dimensions intersect. Regarding tradition versus modernity, each play navigates this dichotomy through its characters and their conflicts. *Nagamandala* confronts traditional marital roles and the modern quest for personal freedom and expression within the confines of those roles. *Hayavadana* addresses the traditional concepts of purity and completeness, contrasting them with modern existential questions about the self and the body. *Tughlaq* portrays the clash between ancient political wisdom and modernist ambitions, reflecting the turmoil that arises when traditional governance structures meet revolutionary ideas.

The theme of individual versus societal expectations is vividly explored across the plays. In *Nagamandala*, Rani's personal desires conflict with societal norms, culminating in a transformative rebellion against her prescribed role. *Hayavadana* explores personal identity through Devadatta and Kapila, whose individual desires and societal roles are complicated by their bizarre physical transformation, challenging the societal norms that dictate identity. In *Tughlaq*, the Sultan's individual vision of a unified and enlightened kingdom clashes dramatically with the societal and political realities of his time, highlighting the friction between personal ambition and the broader societal context.

These plays find echoes in real-life events and other cultural expressions within India. For instance, the themes of identity and societal expectations in *Hayavadana* find a parallel in the 21st-century discussions around gender fluidity and the societal pressures surrounding conventional gender roles. The public discourse increasingly challenges the traditional binary views of gender, much like the characters in *Hayavadana* grapple with complex identities that defy simple categorizations. Similarly, the political critique in *Tughlaq* mirrors the disillusionment seen in modern Indian politics where lofty electoral promises often lead to widespread public disenchantment, paralleling the historical narrative of Sultan Tughlaq's reign, whose initial idealism ends in tyranny and failure. This is evident in the critical reactions to policies that promise economic reform but lead to turmoil, such as the demonetization initiative in 2016, which, intended to curb corruption, resulted in economic slowdown and public hardship. Karnad himself has commented in *Enact*, June 1971 on this:

What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was temporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come on the throne of Delhi... and one of the greatest failures also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed to be both due to his idealism as well as the shortcomings within him, such as his impatience, his cruelty, his feeling that he has the only correct answer. And I felt in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction--- the twenty-year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel. (qtd. in Introduction to Tughlaq by U. R. Anantha Murthy from Girish Karnad Three Plays 143)

In other forms of media, these themes are also prevalent. Bollywood films like "Raajneeti" and "Satta" explore the murky dynamics of Indian politics, reflecting Tughlaq's manipulations and moral compromises. In literature, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) tackles issues of identity and societal norms, akin to the personal and existential quests in *Hayavadana*.

In Karnad's plays, religion often emerges as a destructive force that inflicts suffering on its adherents. They intricately portray religious conflicts and their ramifications. Tutun Mukherjee points out that Karnad's plays not only provoke a re-evaluation of history, myths, and folktales but also are set against a backdrop of increasing fundamentalism and communal unrest in the country, highlighting the individual's quest for communal harmony during times of conflict (20). Furthermore, Karnad addresses the modern society's growing disinterest in religious practices, the rapid erosion of cultural values and traditions, and the destruction of temples. These examples show how Karnad's thematic concerns in his plays are not isolated to the theatrical world but are part of a broader cultural and social dialogue, demonstrating the pervasive and enduring nature of the issues he dramatizes. His works encourage a reflection on personal identity and societal roles, providing a deeper understanding of the individual's place within the ever-evolving narrative of modern India.

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Migration, Alienation and Cultural Identity in the *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta

Jangaiah K

Abstract

Migration is an ongoing aspect that has been occurring since the beginning of human civilization. The primary reasons for migration include the search for food, water, and better weather conditions. As a result, migrants have encountered unique events from geographical, social, economic, cultural, traditional, religious, psychological, and linguistic perspectives. This has led to migration spreading throughout the world, becoming a continuous process in the cycle of human civilizations. In the novel *Second Class Citizen*, the protagonist Adah travels to the United Kingdom in search of a job. There, she faces numerous obstacles, including race, gender, and cultural oppressions. Additionally, she often feels alienated from her own country and fights for her own. Buchi Emecheta's works critically engage with the themes of Diaspora, particularly focusing on the complexities and struggles of African women in post-colonial contexts. In her novels, Emecheta deftly explores the multifaceted nature of identity, belonging, and displacement.

Key words: Migration, alienation, oppression, discrimination, identity.

Introduction

Migration has been a constant aspect of human civilization since its inception. The primary reasons for migration include the search for food, water, and better weather conditions. As a result, migrants have encountered various challenges related to geography, society, economics, culture, tradition, religion, psychology, and language. This has led to migration spreading throughout the world as a continuous process in the cycle of human civilizations. In the novel "*Second-Class Citizen*," the protagonist moves to the United Kingdom in search of a job. There, she faces numerous obstacles, particularly related to race, gender, and cultural oppression. At times, she feels alienated from her own country and fights for her own identity. *Second -Class Citizen* is an autobiography that chronicles Buchi Emecheta's life, from her childhood to her adult life as a mother of three children. Written in 1974, it is considered one of the finest autobiographies in African literature. The novel addresses themes of migration, alienation, and cultural oppression in the United Kingdom. Emecheta vividly portrays life in the UK, including its vibrancy and color, as well as the discrimination she faced. She never forgets the cultural oppressions she experienced, recalling the games she played with friends, the enjoyment of delicious food with her family, and the alienation and cultural oppression she faced from white people. Through her writing, she highlights the pervasiveness of cultural oppression, showing how it not only punctuates everyday life but is also an integral part of it.

Review of Literature

Abioseh Michael Porter of Drexel University discusses the novel *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta. The protagonist, Adah, is depicted as an intelligent and ambitious young girl who initially learns from a friendly neighbor before being enrolled in school. Her parents, particularly her mother, are hesitant about sending girls to school. Tragedy strikes when her liberal father dies shortly after she starts school, and she is then forced to live with a relative who treats her as a ward and slave. Despite facing considerable odds, Adah works hard and motivates herself to win a scholarship in the highly competitive Secondary School Entrance Examinations.

Migration is defined as the movement of large numbers of people, birds, or animals from one place to another. In modern usage, it refers to the displacement and movement made by individuals in search of personal convenience or better social and cultural conditions. Salman Rushdie believes that mass migration and displacement, as well as globalized finances and industries, are distinguishing features of our time. Emecheta addresses migration, alienation, and cultural oppression, fighting for "identity" in a foreign country. She experienced discrimination based on her color while working as a librarian, which made it difficult for her to pursue her identity in society. Despite the challenges, she fought hard for her own identity in society.

Alienation and Cultural Identity

In the novel *Second Class Citizen* (1974) the protagonist Adah is a Nigerian woman who was her father's favorite. Despite the cultural norms that discouraged girls from pursuing an education, her father defied tradition and sent her to school, becoming a role model for other girls. Tragically, her father passed away in the hospital from previous injuries after only three days. Adah was left alone with no one to care for her or her family. She moved to her uncle's house to work as a servant, where she was not encouraged to continue her education like her father had wanted. Despite feeling sad and disappointed, she did not lose her courage. With great difficulty and the help of her teacher, she completed her schooling and was even awarded a scholarship. She used the scholarship to pursue higher education in Lagos, where she faced further challenges as an unmarried woman. To overcome this, she decided to marry her classmate Francis, who was studying accounts. After their marriage, Adah began working at the American Consulate Library and started earning money.

However, it was actually her dream to go to the United Kingdom to continue her education. Despite her husband going to the UK to find a job and pursue higher education, Adah faced resistance from his parents when she wanted to join him with their children. After many struggles, she eventually managed to go to England to pursue her dreams. But finally, she went to the same country to pursue higher education. When Adah stepped on the land of England, she felt overwhelmed and excited because she had reached her life's impossible dream. However, England gave her a cold welcome. Francis came to meet them with great excitement. He kissed her publicly, but she felt ashamed because that was not their culture. She thought that he had adjusted to the new culture. Later, they went to their room, which was small and single. She couldn't adjust there, and Francis was not working. So,

Adah decided to find a job in England with her previous experience. She easily got a job as a librarian in the British library. There, she experienced a lot of discrimination from her colleagues because she came from Nigeria. Her skin color was black, and her language was also different from others. During lunch hours, she was insulted because of her eating manners, and she was alienated by her colleagues. She faced a lot of humiliation and suffering.

Emecheta explores cultural and racial discrimination through Adah's experiences in England. Their previous landlord asked them to vacate the room, giving them one month to do so. They began searching for a new room but couldn't find one in a day. They continued their search and eventually found a room. When they rang the bell, "an old-aged woman came slowly and clutched her throat with one hand, her little mouth opening and closing as if gasping for air and her bright kitten-like eyes dilated to the fullest extent. She made several attempts to talk, but no sound came her mouth had obviously gone dry. But she succeeded eventually. Oh! Yes, she found her voice, from wherever it had gone previously. The voice was telling them now that she was very sorry, the rooms had just gone. Yes both rooms". (77) And told them "No coloreds" were allowed. Adah and Francis were disappointed by her response, as they had not experienced this type of discrimination in Nigeria. They had believed that all people were equal in society, but it was different in England. They felt culturally alienated in England, as they were treated as "second-class citizens."

In the United Kingdom, Adah became pregnant once again. She was admitted to the hospital, where she was not treated well because she was a black woman and considered a "second-class citizen" in the country. All second-class citizens were treated in the same way. Adah gave birth to a baby boy, but she and her son were insulted by the other women in the hospital because of their color and weight. While the other women received many gifts and bouquets from their family members, friends, and well-wishers, Adah did not receive a single gift from anyone except her husband, who only visited her after three days without bringing anything. Feeling insulted, Adah decided not to give birth to another child in this country. She only had one nightdress, and the nurses looked at her with pity and sympathy as she wore the hospital dress every day. When her husband finally bought her a new nightdress, she felt very happy but also struggled with her own cultural identity.

During the Christmas festival, Adah was feeling very sad and disappointed because Francis was not working anywhere. He had failed in his examinations and interviews multiple times. Adah was the only one earning money, but it wasn't enough to meet their daily needs. As a result, she couldn't afford to buy dresses or delicious food for her children. She remembered how her father used to provide new dresses and good food for the entire family during the festival.

Francis was becoming increasingly irresponsible and was not taking any responsibility for the family. Adah was surprised by the way the festival was celebrated in England, as everyone seemed to be celebrating indoors. In Nigeria, people would come out into the streets to celebrate openly, with community elders drinking cola nuts and setting off firecrackers. They would wish everyone well. The cultural differences were confusing to Adah, and she couldn't understand why the festival was celebrated so differently in England. After this incident, Adah wanted to separate from Francis, but he could not understand this. Adah had not been talking to him for a few days. He pretended that he had changed in life,

but in reality, he had not changed at all. Adah shared her inner thoughts with him, expressing her desire to become a writer. She expected encouragement from him, but he disappointed her. She had written a novel called "The Bride Price" and showed it to Francis, who became jealous. One night, he quarreled with Adah and beat her severely. The next morning, she went to the office on an empty stomach, while Francis remained in bed. The children were crying, and she was running late. She left the room feeling disappointed and overwhelmed.

At the office, she did not receive the support and encouragement she had hoped for. When she returned home in the evening, she discovered that Francis had burned all the manuscripts of her novel. The papers were flying in the air like lifeless black birds. She considered her novel her "brainchild," and he had destroyed all her dreams. She decided to leave him and took all her belongings with her to a new, unfamiliar place, feeling alienated once again.

As a writer, she wanted to show the world how diasporic people are alienated and struggle for their cultural identity. In her depictions of migration, alienation, and cultural identity within the United Kingdom, she writes about the cultural oppression she faced in her daily life. She recalls being treated differently as a Nigerian Black woman and admonished harshly every time she tried to stand up for herself or speak on behalf of her cultural identity. She not only describes her experiences as a Nigerian woman but also the alienation and cultural oppressions she faced daily. The power of her narrative lies in the fact that she leaves the question of how Nigerian women will ever live in an easier world unanswered. Adah wants to become a role model to upcoming Nigerian woman writers and she wants to establish an organization to help the diasporic writers. After their separation she went to the place where other Nigerians are living and there she has taken a room for her children.

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Madness with a Method - Deconstructing Hamlet

Karunakar Shaji

Abstract

The intriguing nature of the Hamlet mystique has given rise to libraries of academic folklore over the ages, professing the character in the impenetrable halo of delusions, madness and essential Renaissance artifice. Hamlet has consistently eluded all attempts at demystifying him, as if part of a timeless conspiracy. It is no longer possible to approach Hamlet with a certain academic innocence, to strip of the cloud of scholastic verbiage. This essay seeks to explore the perspective of the Prince of Denmark, looking at him as a historical and theatrical necessity, which may correspondingly become unavailable to other ruminations.

Keywords: Quatro, Theatre production, Folio, Manuscript

There are many internal and external evidences to suggest that in Hamlet, Shakespeare working on a text that already existed. But it is a well-known fact that the same thing holds true of most of his plays. The Bard never really bothered to write stories on his own. Yet this fact never deprived his plays of their mark of originality and authenticity. Ultimately they all improved vastly upon the crude formats of the originals and carried the unmistakable seal and signature of the Master.

Hamlet is one his plays where the textual difficulties become most imponderable and almost indecipherable. With its bewildering depth and intensity, the play has few parallels in world theatre. It is the mercurial Prince himself who primarily contributes to the intriguing mystique of the text. A more rational and stable Prince might have made the play less difficult and obviously less charming. The multiple and irreconcilable variations of the play's language and structure needs an extensive reading and in-depth analysis.

These apparent textual problems are making a heavy demand on the actor, director and theatre-goer to develop his own understanding of the issues which paradoxically the eponymous character himself is unable to comprehend. Ultimately it must emerge that there are as many versions of Hamlet are available as there are actors, directors and least to say theatre-goers. The play keeps mutating with every different theatrical production.

The first known version of Hamlet dates back to 1603 titled, 'The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke, By William Shakespeare'. The version makes a definitive claim to authenticity with its unambiguous 'as it hath beene diuerse times acted by Shakespeare's company 'in the Cittie of London'. Further, the play has been performed 'in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where'. This version known as the first quarto has now been categorised as 'bad' which runs upto 2,154 lines.

The First Folio edition of 1623 titled *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies of Shakespeare* is having the play with 3,535 lines. The added lines generally point out to the fact that rather by being a very authentic version; the text bore the unmistakable marks of the

influence of theatre. The problem seems to be that the editors of this volume had to frequently refer to the bad quarto of 1603. As a result of this certain irresolvable issues with regard to the real Hamlet arise.

The second quarto had always been problematic as the dramatist himself never cared to correct the differences that existed between various manuscripts as he went on writing. The two illustrations cited below will evince this fact:

Q.2: Giues him threescore thousand crownes in anuall fee
 F : Giues him three thousand Crownes in Annuall Fee (2.2.73)

Q.2 : a speech of some dosen lines, or sixteen lines
 F : a speech of some dosen or sixteen lines (2.2.493)

In a similar way Hamlet's speech in the fuller quarto version is a problematic issue. In the conspiracy hatched by Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are to accompany Hamlet on his voyage to England, though the Prince himself remains unaware it, and the audience needs to be taken into confidence. The issue becomes all the more complex for the theatre as Hamlet has to be made aware of this shocking truth and he needs to evolve a strategy to counter it. Though the ghost had urged him to take revenge on Claudius without further delay, Hamlet chooses to relish the prospect of avenging on the opponent by eliminating Rosencrantz and Guildenstern this time, perhaps to derive a strange satisfaction of his ingenious ploy and frustrate the malicious villain. The relevant passage is cited here:

F. HAMLET: I must to England, you know that?
 GERTRUDE: Alack,
 I had forgot. 'Tis so concluded on.
 HAMLET: This man shall set me packing.

Q2: HAMLET: I must to England, you know that?
 GERTRUDE: Alack,
 I had forgot. 'Tis so concluded on.
 HAMLET: There's letter sealed, and my school fellows,
 I will trust as I will adders fanged,
 They bear the mandate. They must sweep my way
 And marshall me to knavery. Let it work,
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
 Hoist with his own petar, an't shall go hard
 But I will delve one yard below their mines
 And blow them at the moon. Oh 'tis most sweet
 When in one line two crafts directly meet.
 This man shall set me packing.

George MacDonald has noted that it might have part of Shakespeare's original scheme to frustrate the plans of his school mates on board the ship but later modified it by including the

part played by Providence. (Hamlet. Ed. George MacDonald. P.258). The first folio clearly shows a version revealing Hamlet's changed relationship with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern which sends them to their sudden deaths. In the second quarto an impatient Hamlet is found to be saying, 'They are not near my conscience'. (Warwick Shakespeare. P.256)

It is significant that the fourth soliloquy which is self-derogatory and reproaching does not figure in the Folio edition. Hamlet is realising the damning and self-destructive impact of his inertia:

Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'event-
A thought which quartered hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward – I do not know
Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do't.

(4.4.39-46)

Ernst Honigmann has made the observation that while writing a play, Shakespeare might not essentially have begun with Act I, but might have wrote speeches and scenes that eventually found their way into plays. (Ernst Honigmann. *The Stability of Shakespeare's Texts*. 1965. Ch 4 p-306). It is obvious that by the time, he has reached this act Hamlet had grown into an enormous enigma and the soliloquy was no longer sufficient to convey the unfathomable depths.

So the Folio has to be silent about Hamlet's voyage to England. The same silence has to add so much to the revealing dialogue with Horatio in a later scene, where he yields to the providential guidance. When Roberts went in all earnestness to edit Quarto Hamlet, he relied upon Shakespeare's 'foul-papers' and these papers carried many passages which the dramatist had intended to include in the theatrical version of the play. Consequently the second quarto brings to us some of those passages which had never been part of the play which the Elizabethan theatre-goers watched.

In his 1955 book *On Editing Shakespeare*, Fredson Bowers argue that Shakespeare himself might have been compelled to give a reading of the play to get its acceptability before the actual staging. In all probability, the play might have undergone some editing and revising. The part being ascribed to the scribes to write the speeches for actors and this possibility of these hands relying on the scrap books to complete the speeches cannot be ruled out.

To understand the textual problems of Hamlet better, Bower employs a meaningful phrase 'intermediate transcript' indicating the differences between second quarto and folio editions and refers to the special quality of the transcript that lies behind the Folio text, in that it is a more reliable synthesis of Shakespeare's manuscript as well as the production script. Now it seems that the last three acts have undergone extensive revisions.

It now becomes clear that scribe instead of basing the text entirely on the promptbook has begun to include the pragmatics of staging the play, which necessitated variations from that of the Folio. Scribe seems to assume the role of the director and production manager as he begins to incorporate elements that seems to contribute to the play evolving into a fully

developed structure. In his book *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, Bullough writes that ‘generations of actors played havoc with the original text and doubtless changed incidents as well discern that the original text, while not dependent on the first quarto of Hamlet, shared many of its features.’ (Bullough, VII, 128-58)

One of the greatest challenges theatre had always experienced has been the personality of Hamlet. The history of the development of the playing of the text becomes also a study in reducing the fathomless complexities of the character. The issues related to the placing of the ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy is one such instance. It is conjectured that playwright was tempted to place this at other junctures than where it is found today. A different positioning of this most crucial soliloquy might have altered the meaning and text of the play beyond recognition.

Rebecca West succinctly put the case about the soliloquy when she commented that critics often misinterpret Hamlet because they cannot face its bleakness. Critics from Dr Johnson onwards have tried to rescue Hamlet from the pervading air of gloom and despair. It is evident that earlier producers always tried to place the soliloquy much earlier in the play which might have drastically altered its very leitmotif.

It may be concluded that Hamlet as most mystifying and enigmatic of all plays of Shakespeare carries behind it a long history of editing and revising. Sometimes these were necessitated by the theatrical conventions and conveniences of the times of its presentation. So it turns out that only after the exhaustive analysis of the various factors that influenced and contributed to these textual changes that took place over the ages, we will be able to have a reliable account of the reality of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark.

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Complexities of Human Relationships and Portrayal of Women in Alice Munro's *Dear Life*

P Sri Madhavi

Abstract

Study of the short story collection, *Dear Life* gives insights on intricate human relationships and cultural aspects of the Canadian Society. Alice Munro is a renowned short story writer and a noble laureate. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for her outstanding contribution to the world of English Literature. Munro paints a bigger picture of life revealing the complexities of human life. Her collection of short stories depicts social and cultural dynamics in a realistic manner. Themes of the stories are simple, connected to normal events with characters which represent human feelings, aspirations and emotions. The imagery of rural and urban landscapes is depicted in her stories. Every story is a puzzle for the reader and mesmerizing, as every story reflects unusual turn of events and situations. They depict the harshness and pain present in the world. The turn of events in the stories reflect realities of death and loss. Her collection of short stories stands out as they cater to unusual events and relationships. She projects delicate human relationships, and multitude of struggles that exist within the cultural framework of the Canadian Society. Her works portray delicate aspects of love, relationships and marriage. The paper aims to perform in-depth study of characters and themes of *Dear Life* as Munro depicted experiences of people in a poignant and natural manner.

Keywords: Human Relationships, Socio-Cultural Dynamics, Gender Issues, Nature and Human Existence.

Introduction

Alice Munro's works present the characters that are bold and unconventional. They carve a niche for themselves, redefine themselves. Her short stories are unique and her characters are not within the confines of conventions and narrow walls of oppression and subjugation. Her works are autobiographical and the story, *Dear Life* in particular. The ending of every story has a unique element and lesson for life. She mesmerizes the readers and creates master pieces through the art of storytelling. *Dear Life* is a collection of short stories offers a rich tapestry of characters and themes. The characters are not confined but they are more liberated in their endeavors. There is a representation of Canadian culture in several contexts, situations within the stories. Munro projects profound psychological insights through the lens of stories which generates holistic view about humanity.

Literature Review

Close reading of the stories gives us insights into themes and aspects of life presented in the collection. The book *Common Wealth Essays and Studies* are the Essays on Alice Munro and they give an analysis on the autobiographical story in her work *Dear Life*. The motifs and experiences mentioned in the work are natural and near to real life and teach us the way to accept and get along with the realities of life. This essay focuses on loss and trauma as structuring motifs in several individual stories in *Dear Life*. They represent privileged moments of access to the Real that disturbs and pierces the smooth surface of ordinary life and reality. But read as a whole, the volume also offers a reflection on the process of healing at the heart of storytelling and on the reconstructive work of language that allows life to continue. The images created in the mind of the reader are natural yet intense and the story seems ordinary yet takes us through the journey of life where we meet people who make us what we are or what we aspire to be.

“To Reach Japan” is a story about the fragility of marriage, suppressed hopes and aspirations of Greta. She seems to be in a happy family, but all is not perfect. There is desire within her to do something on her own, rather than just being a doting wife and devout mother. She aspires to become a poet and in the course of time meets Harris Bennet who helps her reach home after a party. She gets attracted to him and starts thinking about him. She writes a letter to him alluding to the lines she used in her poem “Hoping to reach Japan”. Greta is a character who is entangled in a marriage without love and craves deeply to start a new life. Finally, she arrives at Toronto to make great beginnings in life, she aspired for. She discovered Harris eagerly ready to accept her and her child.

“Amundsen” is a story set during World War II. It reflects the uncertainty and temporariness of human relationships. It shows in matters of love and acceptance cupid can play otherwise with reason best known to him. In *Leaving Maverly* we can come across uncertainties and temporariness of life. Ray Elliot a war veteran meets a young girl Leah and escorts her from work as dutiful police officer. Leah goes missing and Ray gets to know she eloped and got married. In course of time she returns back to the town with two children. Ray's wife ridden with cancer is taken to another city for treatment. Ray makes the new city his home and leaves Maverly to be with her. His wife is in coma. He has none to share his life with. He is lonely and desolate. He gets to know that Leah lost the custody of her children and divorced. He has fond memories with Leah. He sees Leah who works in the hospital where his wife is admitted. She enquires about Isabella his wife and wishes to meet him at his apartment occasionally. After Isabella's death Ray is alone. He hopes to find respite and solace in each other and hope to make new beginnings in life. Time connects past experiences with the present and becomes instrumental in redefining the relationships in the future. The fluidity of time is represented in a beautiful manner. “Gravel” symbolizes mortality impermanence in life. The gravel pit symbolizes pitfalls and loopholes in life. The fragility of life and death, loss and pain are what make the story very engrossing and intense. The story “Haven” is about subtle rebellion of Aunt Dawn against her husband. The narrator of Haven observes transformation of Aunt Dawn from being a submissive wife to strong willed woman who rebels against her husband. Struggles of women, intricacies of human relationships and how the characters cope up in matters of love and marriage at the times of adversity are the

aspects presented up in Alice Munro's works. We can see how women liberate themselves in most difficult circumstances. This paper delves into and brings out the themes and key points of the stories in a lucid manner. Through close reading and textual analysis the mirror of realities that exist in the realm of life are presented in a natural manner. Alice Munro captures the images of characters on the huge canvass of life. Corrie is a young heiress who proceeds to have an affair with a married architect breaking the conventions of marriage and societal restrictions. Corrie shows love happens naturally and it is a chemistry none can refrain from as it is the sweetest potion of existence. Every soul is conjured by the sweetness of love. Corrie and Howard in the story do everything possible to sustain their relationship. They withstand the threats of making their affair public by their friend Sadie. The story "train" shows age and death can never intercept love and togetherness. Love has no sense of time, age and norms designed by life. Jackson and Belle share an ambiguous unusual bond of mutual understanding. They rely on each other for emotional support and existence. Alice Munro shows how time creates magic in people's lives. She juxtaposes past with the present as if time can oscillate back and forth to transform the minds of the characters. The uncertainty of time and fragility of age is presented in a natural and appealing manner in "In Sight of the Lake". Alice Munro shows empathy and sensitivity for Nancy. It shows the blurred lines between reality and imagination. The story captures Nancy's constant struggle with memory and her attempts to maintain a sense of normalcy and independence. Dolly, a young girl brings a ray of hope and the old couple begins to explore life again in the short story, "Dolly". The story reflects pain of age and deteriorating health. With revival of relationships, we can regain our composure and begin the life all over again. Every story has a message for the reader; they reflect the realities of the cycle of life. Every story has a new revelation. The writer applies stream of consciousness technique and uses first person narrative and the intricacies of the stories are revealed through the internal thoughts and observations of the narrator. Each story is carved with care to present the true faculties of life. Last set of stories are autobiographical in nature. The writer represents fond memories of her childhood as a school goer. She writes about her parents and her school life. In the story the writer uses first person narrative to describe how her life changes after her siblings are born and she discusses her association with Sadie who brings a new lease to her life. As an adult she transforms and understands the framework of life. Munro presented rural and urban Canadian Culture. She creates the characters that reflect typical Canadian lives. Every story is an artistic creation. In "Night" the narrator, Alice Munro writes about her association with her sister Catherine. Alice mentions some pleasures she had with Catherine, like storytelling or dressing up, but at the same time she asserts: "I don't mean to say that I was entirely in control of her, or even that our lives were constantly intertwined. She had her own friends, her own games" (DL 274). The writer is under a state of psychological stress. She grows restless due to unusual feelings of harming her beloved sister. She spends restless and sleepless nights. She finds solace and cures herself of the hallucinations with her father's support.

Conclusion

Alice Munro, she writes for women. It is as if she shows their position in the society, their family problems, educational social conjugal problems and impact of patriarchy over them. She produced a variety of characters; her characters are representations of suppressed male dominated women in the system. Her last set of stories have autobiographical tone. The incidents imply intense memories she has about her past which she cherishes in the present. The writer introspects on the experiences of her past. The writer's personal reflections are depicted and they offer an in-depth meaning for the readers to reflect upon. The stories are reflections of typical Canadian society. Her stories are the spectacular picture of womanhood depicting the perfect women's vigor. Through Alice Munro's Stories, we come to know the beautiful world of women and their height of ability. All the female characters of Munro's short stories show the extraordinary potency of women through their behavior, activities, and feelings and how they are influencing society. Reading Alice Munro's *Dear Life* is an everlasting experience where we create images of Canadian Culture. It is an exalting journey. The reader envisions the dynamics of society in a realistic manner. The harshness of human relationships, the subtleties of love, the pain of death and agony of disease, emancipation of women and mobility of time on life are the themes that create a visual scope for contemplation.

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Alienated Clara in Adrienne Kennedy's *The Owl Answers*

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Abstract

The Owl Answers (1965) is a one act play penned by the much acclaimed and prolific writer Adrienne Kennedy. She is notoriously known for her avant-garde and surreal works. *The Owl Answers* is one of her most favorite plays as she writes *The Owl Answers* is my best written play. It is indeed an enigmatic play that delves deeply into the intricacies of identity and racism through the lens of surrealism and symbolism. The play features Clara Passmore, an African-American girl who navigates a world filled with strange occurrences and fragmented realities. She is torn between conflicting desires for acceptance in the white world and her mixed racial heritage. Incorporating dreamlike sequences, fragmented storytelling and unconventional structures, Kennedy engages her audience with complex themes. The narrative centers on the life of a black woman's quest for her identity in an unjust world which demands only white skin to be a perfect fit. Clara Passmore travels to England to seek her father and is herself caught in the world of fixities. She is alienated because of her color, mixed race and heritage. This paper will make an attempt to analyze the character of Clara Passmore from a feminist perspective by unraveling the detrimental impacts of oppression and racism. Clara failed to embody either of the white superiority, or Black Nationalist pride, as she oscillates between two polarities. The confrontation of her dual identities compelled her to commit suicide and transformed herself as an Owl.

Keywords: Alienation, Fragmentation, Racial Hegemony, Identity, Heritage

Adrienne Kennedy is a celebrated figure in American theater known for her innovative, captivating, experimental and provocative works that explore themes of race, identity, and history. Adrienne Lita Hawkins was born on September 13, 1931, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Kennedy grew up in a family deeply committed to racial justice. Her parents, Cornell Wallace Hawkins and Etta Haugabook Hawkins, instilled in her a strong sense of social awareness and activism. Her father's involvement with the NAACP and his position as Assistant Head for Race Relations undoubtedly influenced Kennedy's perspective on social issues. She defiantly stands out both as a female writer and a woman of color "to break through barriers" (Kennedy & Lehman, 1977). Throughout her career, she has been a trailblazer, breaking through impediments and exacting societal norms with her unique voice and perspectives.

After her education, including earning a degree in elementary education from Ohio State University, Kennedy moved to New York City. There, she became involved in the vibrant artistic scene and honed her craft as a playwright. She joined the prestigious Edward Albee's playwright's workshop, where she likely had the opportunity to refine her skills and develop her unique voice. Additionally, Kennedy pursued further studies in creative writing

at institutions such as Columbia University, the American Theatre Wing, and Circle-in-the-Square school, demonstrating her dedication to her craft and her commitment to continuous learning and growth as an artist.

The contributions of Adrienne Kennedy attain popularity much through her one-act plays. Commencing her career in the 1960's, Kennedy has been considered as one of the most influential writers of that era. She has received an overwhelming response in Western as well as African American theatre. Unlike her contemporaries, Kennedy has presented the racial issues in a non-realist mode. Her plays contribute to the re-theatricality of the African Americans. Herbert Blau praises Kennedy by calling her "surely the most original black writer of her generation." (531)

Kennedy's plays often lack a traditional plot, opting instead for symbolism and a blend of historical, mythical and imaginary characters to portray and investigate the American experience. Kennedy's plays primarily deals with the racial, sexual, and religious themes, and are often delightfully autobiographical. She had said that the "characters are myself." (Brasmer 44) Kennedy calls her plays as 'States of mind' in which her characters live and emerge again from Kennedy's own experience; "I feel overwhelmed by family problems and family realities. I see my writing as an outlet for inner, psychological confusion and questions stemming from childhood" (44) claims Kennedy.

As an African American dramatist, Kennedy is known for experimenting in different genres. Often, the characters and imagery in her plays are sourced from mythology, history, or her personal memories and dreams. She has authored several plays in different genres such as one-act plays, musicals, radio plays, a monologue, a documentary drama, a memoir, a novella and a few essays. She has written thirteen published plays, five unpublished, several autobiographies, a novella and a short story. She also wrote under the pen name like Adrienne Cornell as well. Some of her works are *The Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1961), *The Owl Answers* (1963), *A Rat's Mass* (1966), *Lesson in a Dead Language* (1968), *A Beast's Story* (1969), and *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* (1976). Her later works include *She Talks to Beethoven* (1989) and *Ohio State Murders* (1990). She published an Autobiography titled *People Who Led to My Plays* (1987) which indeed became a celebrated work and served as key to many of her works.

Her works have earned her several accolades of national and international repute, solidifying her place as one of the most significant playwrights of her generation. She was awarded with the most prestigious awards such as Lila Wallace Readers Digest Award, Guggenheim award, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award for Literature. During the 20th century, Kennedy has become the most essential personality in African American Drama. Adrienne Kennedy is not only a black female and feminist writer. She is a great writer who has made the way for African American drama and continues to serve as a writer for the future generation too.

Adrienne Kennedy's groundbreaking play *The Owl Answers* centers on the protagonist of the play Clara Passmore, a character who is grappling with a fragmented and shifting sense of self. Throughout the play, Clara navigates through a series of encounters and memories that highlight her struggles with identity, memory and trauma. She is haunted by the ghost of her father, who represents her mixed-race heritage and the complexities of her identity. In the play, *The Owl Answers* Clara manifests her fragmented identities in different

ways. Multiple identities, reside in “She who is Clara Passmore, who is the Virgin Mary, who is the Bastard, who is the Owl” (OA 26). These various identities and roles are entangled in a group of relationships, too: “Clara, the Negro child of Rev. Passmore; Mary, the martyred Virgin; Bastard, the mulatto daughter of the Dead White Father ... and at last ... the mysterious Owl.” (28) Other characters blend into several selves, too, reflecting her different identities. “The Black Bastard Mother who is the Reverend’s Wife who is Anne Boleyn,” and the Father is “the Richest White Man in the Town who is the Dead White Father who is Reverend Passmore” (29).

The play opens in a New York subway, where Clara is seated in one seat and the Negro Man opposite to Clara. Clara, a Negro woman sits staring at an open space. She is Clara Passmore, who speaks in a tender voice as a Negro school teacher who always carries white handkerchiefs and notebooks. Throughout the play, she lets the notebooks fall on her handkerchiefs. This eccentric behavior proves Clara to be physically and mentally confused and abnormal. It is symbolic of her psychological turmoil and the deep-seated trauma she carries. The handkerchief represents a link to her father and her mixed-race heritage. The fall of handkerchief triggers a flood of memories and emotions for Clara, causing her to retreat into a state of confusion and distress. “SHE WHO IS carries white handkerchiefs; SHE WHO IS carries notebooks that throughout the play like the handkerchief fall” (26)

Kennedy crafted this work immediately following *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, premiering it at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre in January 1969. Critics often draw comparisons between the protagonist of *Funnyhouse...*, Negro-Sarah, and Clara Passmore in *The Owl Answers*, suggesting that Clara serves as an extension of Negro-Sarah on occasion. A notable distinction lies in the replacement of Negro-Sarah's haunting black father with a white father in *The Owl Answers*, a narrative choice aimed at subverting traditional dynamics in interracial relationships. Clara herself muses, "I am almost white, am I not? I am his daughter."

Philip C. Kolin writes that within the context of Kennedy's portrayal of black and mulatto characters, readers are invited into a world marked by civil rights struggles and legislative shortcomings. Clara Passmore, afflicted with multiple personality disorder, embarks on a quest for wholeness that remains elusive. Her admiration for English culture and yearning to assimilate into white society are acknowledged by Kennedy in her autobiography, *People Who Led to My Plays*, where she reflects on her family's mixed heritage and English connections.

Kennedy's diverse cultural experiences inform her creation of characters spanning different backgrounds and epochs. Improbable characters named after prominent English figures, including Shakespeare, Chaucer, William the Conqueror, and Ann Boleyn, populate the play, symbolizing Clara's distant desire to establish a connection with English heritage. However, Clara's aspirations are met with rejection by these esteemed English personalities, who collectively question her claims of whiteness and ridicule her continued Black identity despite her alleged descent from them. Clara's own father disavows her, denying her ancestry and branding her a bastard.

The central events of the play unfold within Clara Passmore's mind, where her memories, fantasies, and reality merge to create a surreal atmosphere. Clara's perception of truth is inherently paradoxical. Her memory, imagination and reality are inter-mingled to

provide a dream-like sequence. Clara Passmore's version of truth is self-contradictory. In the beginning, she recalls her visit to London with her white father, William Mattheson. After they have reached London, he dies of a heart attack and Clara Passmore wants to bury him in the Westminster Cathedral but is unable to do so as she realizes that she has been imprisoned and her imaginative guards are Chaucer and Shakespeare. The action then shifts to her childhood memory of living with her foster parents, Reverend Passmore and his wife. This happens after her biological father (a white man) refuses to acknowledge Clara Passmore as his daughter. Clara faintly remembers that her white father, William Mattheson, had relations with his black cook and the cook happened to be Clara Passmore's mother.

Kennedy portrays Clara Passmore as fragmented and disconnected who is unable to fully identify with either white supremacy or black pride. Consequently she feels alienated and marginalized from both the sides. Being the offspring of a wealthy white man and his black slave, Clara is confined in a setting that morphs between the subway, the Tower of London, a Harlem hotel, and St. Peter's Basilica. The characters in the play interchangeably dress and discard each other, mirroring the ever-changing scene. Prominent English figures such as William Shakespeare, Anne Boleyn, William the Conqueror, and Chaucer are captors of Clara who rejects her whiteness and bars her from attending her father's funeral. She is haunted by her father's body, British iconicity, biblical figures and her mixed-race origins. Initially, Clara wishes to die as a white woman, but ultimately transforms into an owl after her death. Brown (2001) states that Kennedy in her play offers "powerful metaphors for the social (de)construction of racial and ethnic identities." The complex emotion of alienation and psychic trauma caused by her mixed-race heritage intensify upon her arrival in England. Clara, who works as a teacher in Savannah finds herself completely alienated when she was not permitted entry into the church. As a mulatto woman, Clara is subjected to face double subordination by the ideology of patriarchy and white supremacy.

Towards the end of the play, we see Clara Passmore as a grown up lady in her thirties who is searching for a partner and lives in Harlem hotel rooms. She gets hold of a 'Negro Man' but does not succumb to the temptation of forming a relationship with him. In order to suppress her sexuality, she stabs the black man who tries to overpower her and in a climactic moment, she transforms into an owl symbolizing her liberation or transcendence. Clara becomes a powerful symbol of the psychological torments of the whole Black womanhood. The play moves between the realistic psychological mode and the symbolic track where Clara is in a loveless, soulless hallucinatory world. Her search for an authentic self hood and genuine love are answered not by God but by the owl as Clara herself quotes, "I call God and the Owl answers... I keep calling and the only answer is the Owl, God. I am only yearning for our kingdom, God" (Kennedy, 1988:43).

Born into a biracial family in a racially segregated society, Clara Passmore navigates the complexities of her identity with a keen awareness of societal expectations and prejudices. Struggling to find acceptance within both white and black communities, Clara experiences a sense of ostracization and isolation that permeates her existence. "I didn't feel like I belonged anywhere. I didn't feel like I belonged in this house, or in this neighbourhood, or in this city". The racial ambiguity of her appearance further complicates her social interactions, as she feels like an outsider in both worlds, unable to fully claim her identity as either black or white. Lawrence (1995) observes that individuals of pure Black descent are

confronted with the challenge of challenging racism and dispelling the notion that their ancestors were slaves. Conversely, mixed-race individuals must combat both racism and internal struggles of self-hatred and self-denigration.

This perpetual state of liminality leaves Clara feeling disconnected and estranged, yearning for a sense of belonging that always seems just out of reach. Through Clara's experiences, Kennedy poignantly explores the enduring impact of systematic racism and the pervasive nature of social alienation in the lives of marginalized individuals. Throughout the performance, the existential turmoil regarding her identity and her place in a predominantly white world is portrayed through various theatrical techniques and props. Characters in the play frequently change their identities and costumes, symbolizing the fluidity of identity. Kolin (2005) asserts, "Perhaps no other play better illustrates Kennedy's fascination with transformation of self than does *The Owl Answers*" (p. 51). The protagonist, identified as SHE, embodies multiple roles including Clara Passmore, the Virgin Mary, the Bastard, and the Owl. This fluidity highlights the protagonist's struggle with her sense of self and her place in society.

Clara Passmore experiences alienation in the family because of the profound sense of emotional estrangement and fractured familial relationships. Her relation with her mother is shadowy and often depicts a distant and is emotionally inaccessible. Clara says, "She's always closed the door. She doesn't let me in." She cannot share her feelings with her mother. She establishes some kind of barrier between them which is symbolized by the closed door that separates them physically and emotionally. She longs for her maternal love but she is out of reach. "She is my mother, but she's not really my mother. Not anymore." Clara finds herself on the outside looking in, unable to penetrate the walls of her mother's illness and emotional turmoil. Throughout the play, Clara is seen to be grappled with existential questions about her identity and existence, struggling to make sense of her place in the world. She often expresses feelings of detachment and dissociation, questioning the authenticity of her own experiences and perceptions. She is a doomed mixed-race character. She becomes a victim of racism and societal condemnation due to her multiracial heritage. She is essentially condemned from birth. Clara Passmore is kind of being trapped in the fixities of color- black or white. She constantly drifts from one pole to the other in identifying her root. She is baffled of her ancestry and cannot find her place to live in.

Clara's subjectivity keeps changing throughout the play and the final action shows Clara's metamorphosis into an owl. The metaphor of owl in *The Owl Answers*, has received a lot of critical attention. For instance, a very renowned critic Robert Tener, once commented that the owl is the controlling metaphor anchoring the heroine's problem of identity with the worlds of her white and black parents and her many self images. Clara's tragic plight in *The Owl Answers* is shown symbolically through the various personifications of her character. She stands for the whole Black womanhood. An anglophile mulatto girl like Sarah, Clara always associates herself with White ancestry, "I am almost white, am I not?" (Kennedy, 1988:29). Clara is terrified and again she cries at Anne Boleyn for help. Anne Boleyn is the second wife of Henry VIII, and his marriage to Anne has brought about the English Reformation. Anne's arrogant behavior soon makes her unpopular and she is charged with adultery. Henry sends her to the Tower of London on the charge of adultery and an incestuous relationship with her very own brother and consequently she is beheaded. Thus it

is highly symbolic that her notorious character is associated with Clara's immoral behavior with men in the subway.

Kennedy uses the technique of costume change for her characters to suggest fragmentation, multiple voices and the reality of ever changing subject in position. The characters of the play are multiple selves in one self. The protagonist is introduced as "She who is Clara Passmore who is the Virgin Mary who is the Bastard who is the Owl" and Clara's father as "Goddam Father who is the Richest White Man in the Town-who is the Dead White Father who is the Reverend Passmore" (31). The objects on the stage lend a sensory strangeness to the on-going spectacle. There are beards, wigs, faces and Kennedy directs that they "should be used in the manner that people use everyday objects such as spoons or newspapers". (26-27).

The owl is the dynamic and dominating symbol in *The Owl Answers* and it is associated with night, the emblem of bad omen. The owl, which is a solitary bird, a solo traveler, is a symbol that signifies the plight of Clara. The fig tree is another exceptional and profound symbol. It is associated with marriage and sexual relations, and is sometimes treated as a symbol of love and life and as the Tree of Knowledge. African tribes consider it a spiritual husband in a sacred marriage. Clara is locked up in the fig tree by the Reverend mother and it is emblematic of Clara' longing for a meaningful or fruitful life with someone in the world. The Tower of London which is painted black is another significant symbol in the play. Clara is imprisoned in the tower. Shakespeare, Chaucer and William, the Conqueror, lock her up in the Tower in order to keep her away from the funeral of her White father. They are aware of the fact that she is not the legal daughter of the dead White man, who symbolically represents her entrapment inside the very heritage that she desires but cannot attain in reality. Escaping through these "black" gates signifies transcending Blackness and passing as white. Despite challenging the essentialist nature of racial identity construction, Kennedy's female protagonist remains oppressed by a reality that confines her based on her skin color.

To Conclude, Adrienne Kennedy's *The Owl Answers* masterfully depicts the multifaceted theme of alienation through the complex character of Clara Passmore. Kennedy delves into the profound impact of societal expectations, racial dynamics and personal struggles on individual identity and belonging. Clara's experience of social, family and psychological alienation highlights the pervasive nature of alienation in the human experience, shedding light on the enduring legacy of racism, social marginalization and existential uncertainty. By exploring the nuances of Clara's alienation, Kennedy invites readers to confront their own perceptions of identity, belonging and the human condition. Alienated Clara serves as a poignant exploration of the universal longing for connection and acceptance in a world marked by division and estrangement, leaving an indelible impression on audiences and scholars alike. Through the lens of Clara Passmore, Kennedy offers a profound meditation on the human capacity for resilience, self-discovery, and ultimately, redemption in the face of alienation.

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Slavery and Identity: Studying an Individual's Journey in Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge*

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Abstract

In the present article, there will be an attempt to examine Caryl Phillips's presentation of slavery and the evolution of an individual's identity in the light of his experiences, including slavery, in his novel, *Cambridge*. Born in Guinea, Cambridge (back then Olumide) is forcefully captured by white traders, and is brought to England. There he enjoys a somewhat stable life, embraces Christianity, and makes sincere efforts to cultivate his mind. Towards the end of his stay in England, he suffers great personal loss. And despite all his efforts to improve himself, he encounters racial prejudice. He is captured again, enslaved, and forced to work on a West Indian plantation. In the present article, there will be an attempt to study Cambridge's experiences and see how these experiences mould him as a person. Although the article will focus on an individual's experience, it will be interesting to see Phillips's projection of slavery and the way an identity evolves.

Keywords: Identity, Irony, Journey, Misery, Prejudice, Slavery

In his fourth novel, *Cambridge* (1991), Caryl Phillips raises several important issues. Slavery, the position of women in English society, and the declining world of the West Indian plantation life are a few of these. The issue of slavery has been raised in his other works too, for example, in *Higher Ground* (1989) and *Crossing the River* (1993). In *Cambridge*, Phillips is concerned mainly with the stories of Emily Cartwright, a white Englishwoman, daughter of the owner of a sugar plantation in the West Indies, and of Cambridge, a slave on the plantation. In the present article, there will be an attempt to study the author's presentation of slavery, in the context of Cambridge's life, and the evolution of his identity in the light of his complex experiences. There will be an attempt to study sections of the text with special attention.

Of course, it will not be prudent to risk generalisation and see Cambridge's case as representative of Phillips's idea of all enslaved people's experiences. Not all people undergo similar experiences. And one's identity is moulded by one's experiences. However, Phillips's portrayal of Cambridge's story says much about his thoughts on slavery and the experience of perhaps some section of black British people's experiences in nineteenth-century England. It is not possible, within the brief span of the present article, to discuss all that Phillips says about slavery and the evolution of Cambridge's identity. However, it will be an interesting exercise to study the same in the context of Cambridge's account and discuss some of the important issues in this context.

The transatlantic slave trade has been one of the most painful episodes in history. Phillips writes of the triangular trade route:

The trading 'triangle' was simple. Goods, be they guns, glassware, iron bars or liquor, would be exported from England to the West coast of Africa, where they would be sold in exchange for human captives. The second leg of the 'triangle', or the 'middle passage', involved the transportation of the captives to the Americas, where they would be sold to plantation owners either for cash or for a combination of cash and crops such as tobacco, sugar, cotton, coffee or any of the 'new world' produce that was becoming fashionable all over Europe. The final leg of the 'triangle' involved a return to England, where the produce was sold to agents and merchants. (Phillips, *Atlantic Sound* 40)

Much of Phillips's writing is marked by his historical sensibility. Set in the nineteenth century, *Cambridge* appeals to today's readers. Alongside Phillips's historical sensibility, mention must be made of the strong potential of his novel to throw light on people whose voices have not always been heard with proper attention. Abigail Ward writes, "In *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River* Phillips aims, via polyphonic voices, to counter the homogeneity of the narrative of received British history, from which, he proposes, several of these voices have been excluded as slavery has been quietly forgotten" (Ward 14).

Cambridge consists of a number of sections: a Prologue, Emily's narrative, Cambridge's narrative, a section like a newspaper article but not entirely so, and an Epilogue. Sometimes a single episode is described from the point of view of different people. One of the purposes of this strategy may be to encourage readers to question their assumptions about incidents and events and not accept any one version of them unthinkingly.

In *Cambridge*, readers are offered a detailed picture of West Indian plantation life. They get most of the information from Emily. After her arrival on the plantation, her initial views on the lives of the blacks reveal a racially prejudiced mind. To put it after Gail Low, "She finds it difficult to disguise her revulsion at the appearance, dress, manners, and language of the black peoples of the island. She repeatedly associates them with the animal kingdom, ..." (Low 124).

If one follows Cambridge's account, one can have a glimpse of some of the horrors of the slave trade. According to him, his countrymen of Guinea in Africa are originally simple and good, but have been badly influenced by others: "It is only the cursed avidity for wealth, and the consequent cruelty, knavery, and practice of diabolical arts by English navigators that has turned the hearts of my simple people from natural goodness, and honest affection, towards acts of abomination" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 166). Cambridge writes, "Many natives in my home country are canting, deceitful people about whom one must exercise great caution" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 166).

The way Cambridge sees the slave trade, having had the experience of being forcefully captured not once but twice, is remarkable: "... I, ... was washed towards the coast and away from my rich and fertile soil by *Christian* Providence, whose unlikely agents were those who drink deep of strong liquors, which serve only to inflame their national madness, the slave trade" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 166). He believes that by taking part in the slave trade, the traders do harm to their own countrymen.

Cambridge, originally named Olumide, was captured forcefully at a young age, when he was probably not yet fifteen. Although he was betrayed by his own countrymen, he

believes that such an act of betrayal was largely the result of others' influence. Olumide had some gold ornaments on him which were taken off, "... breaking off my tenderly formed links with my parents" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 168).

The rough treatment that young Olumide receives at the hands of the whites, his lack of knowledge about their manners and customs instil fear in him. The captured blacks are forbidden to talk in their native language. Olumide is "malnourished" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 168) and often unable to sleep. At this initial stage, Olumide does not find the English language appealing. Later he will esteem the language highly. Olumide fears that he may be eaten by the whites: "I wondered constantly if these men of no colour, with their loose hair and decayed teeth, were not truly intent upon cooking and eating us,..." (Phillips, *Cambridge* 168). Not all of the captured people can tolerate the extremely cruel treatment, and some of them die during the journey.

They reach the coast. "The sea saluted our reddened and miserable eyes, and pain assaulted our proud African hearts" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 169). Cambridge is writing his account some time before he is to be hanged for murdering Mr Brown, a man who has overthrown the former manager of Emily's father's estate, Mr Wilson. By the time he is writing his account, Cambridge has embraced Christianity, and from his writing about his experiences of being captured for the first time, his deep respect for Christianity is evident: "Surely the Lord Almighty was with me at this time, and I believe He whispered to me, a poor heathen, words of comfort" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 170).

The captured blacks are not accorded the minimum dignity of human beings: "Webondagedbrethren were herded about the vessel with scant consideration for age or infirmity, and treated with less regard than one might bestow upon the basest of animals" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 170). They come to know from other blacks "... in the keep of these white men" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 170) that they will not be eaten. Taken to the land of the whites, they will be sold, and they will have to work. Physical ill-treatment is accompanied by verbal ill-treatment: "We were addressed by one common word, *nigger*, as though we all shared this harsh name... . I was later to learn the truth of this vulgar and illiberal word; it is truly a term of great abuse" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 170).

On the ship, the captured blacks are to stay below deck. They have to depart from the land of their birth, and are filled with grief: "Whether affection for one's country is real or imagined, it is not an exaggeration to proclaim that at this moment instinct of nature suffused our being with an overwhelming love for our land and family, whom we did not expect to see again" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 170-71). The magnitude of this separation is made evident: "Our history was truly broken" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 171).

Cambridge recalls certain details of the cruel, harsh treatment that they received on the ship. The conditions in which they had to spend their time were not befitting human beings. Black women were forced to satisfy the sexual desires of the whites. Once again, one can take a look at words from Cambridge's account:

Once below our bodies received a salutation of supreme loathsomeness in the form of a fetor, which affected a manifold increase in the constant grieving and pining which echoed among we brethren. The heat of the climate, the number of cargo, the necessity for loathsome deeds in this common space,

soon rendered this wretched situation impossible. It was to be some days before the vessel set forth. In this time many died where they lay, some on top of others, until the whole scene became one of inconceivable horror. The white men came below with eatables. Those who found the strength to refuse were lashed, often to death. It appeared that bitterness and cruelty were sterner masters than mere avarice. Such malice as these men of very indifferent morals exhibited I had never witnessed among any people. Their most constant practice was to commit violent depredations on the chastity of female slaves, as though these *princesses* were the most abandoned women of their species. These white vulgarians disgraced not only their nation, but the very name of man. (Phillips, *Cambridge* 171)

The journey is to remain an episode of utter misery in Cambridge's mind. However, something happens during this time which points to the generosity of the human heart. Moments before his death, a man from Guinea, who was probably captured like Cambridge (back then Olumide), offers his food to him.

The ship reaches the Carolinas in North America. Olumide is to remain on board, while his fellow countrymen are to disembark. "Their fear caused an uproar the like of which I never again desire to endure. Our *guardians* seized a stratagem to appease their grief; that of the whip, plentifully applied" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 172). Olumide is extremely unhappy. A black man who works under the whites informs him that he is to go to England and "serve *massa*" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 173). He does not immediately find the master. During this part of the journey, he does not have to stay below deck. During a week, he gradually gets used to English food habits. On Christmas, he is washed and clothed like the English, and gets to see his master for the first time. A clerk from Norfolk, John Williams, is appointed to help him "...smatter a little imperfect English" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 174). Olumide's complexion does not deter John Williams from paying him attention. During the journey, the crew members derive fun from telling Olumide that decreasing amounts of food meant that Olumide will have to be killed and eaten soon. However, because of John Williams, Olumide's fears are somewhat allayed as he provides him with true information. He not only helps Olumide improve his English but also gives him instructions in dressing hair, although he does not spend much time on Olumide's hair as he cannot dress it properly.

Olumide's master changes his name to Thomas. On his ignoring the name "Thomas" and responding to "Olumide", he receives "a flurry of cuffs" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 174). John Williams implores him to accept his new name, "... arguing most persuasively that my condition far out-ranked my betrayed brethren, whose backs were breaking under perpetual toil while I carried only the featherish burden of a new name" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 175). However, despite Williams's good behaviour towards Thomas, it remains true that an enforced change of name amounts to a kind of punishment as names are important to people as they negotiate their way through life. When they reach England, Olumide (now Thomas) and John Williams are separated, and this causes grief to both of them.

Thomas is to spend "the greater part of the next decade" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 175) in London. His master encourages him to consider himself his domestic servant and not his

slave. He speaks in a manner that suggests that he does not like "... the trade which had occasioned his fortunes to increase" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 175).

Phillips lets his readers know that by this time, the slave trade was illegal in England. But Thomas's master was not the only one to reap the benefits of the cruel trade. History tells us that even after the abolition of the British slave trade, slavery did not immediately become illegal. David Olusoga writes, "The abolition of the slave trade was an important victory, but slavery itself remained legal and hundreds of thousands of Black people remained enslaved on the islands of the West Indies" (Olusoga 100).

Thomas resides in the "servants' quarters" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 175) of his master's house. There are two other servants—a black woman named Mahogany Nell and a white Englishwoman named Anna. The master often becomes physically intimate with Mahogany Nell. Thomas states that his master's "...only marks of distinction were his black servants, but thankfully we were never pressed to shadow him in the streets" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 176). This may imply that black people were sometimes made "to shadow" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 176) their white masters in English society at that time.

In his master's house, Thomas performs his duties carefully and attentively. The master likes him, and he likes him too. Thomas's proficiency in English increases, and his master tells him that he is free to walk about in London "... and gather intelligence which might help me further appreciate my situation" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 176). In London, Thomas finds black people from "all ranks of life" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 177). He finds black people in "... the higher streets and ... the gardens of the formal and distinguished squares" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 177), but they were often companions of white English people as "fashionable appendage" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 177). There were many other blacks with a lower social position. Thomas talks about "... harlots, entertainers, assorted vagabonds, a motley congregation of *Jumbo's* and *Toby's*, ... Black men too feeble to work ... the *useless* women ..." (Phillips, *Cambridge* 177).

It should perhaps be noted that Thomas is not biased in favour of the blacks. Rather, with the passage of time, he will perhaps come to identify with English manners and customs more than with African ones. Thomas presents the blacks as he sees them. Many of the blacks are addicted to alcohol, and talking about a street entertainer, he shares his suspicion that this person is "... more responsible than most for fixing us in the minds of the English people as little more than undignified objects for their mirth and entertainment" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 177-78). Thomas knows that blacks are stereotyped, and that it may be that some blacks are quite responsible for such negative images. One importance of Thomas's account lies in the fact that it points out the presence of black people in different strata of English society during the nineteenth century. Alongside blacks who enjoyed a comfortable life although mainly as a result of the fashion and caprice of some wealthy English people, "The bustling narrow cobbled streets of London were indeed teeming with a variety of unfortunate negroes" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 177).

If one attempts to study the evolution of Cambridge's identity closely, one will have to take into account certain factors like his coming under a somewhat good master, his inclination for cultivating his knowledge, his growing admiration for English manners and customs, etc. He was earlier introduced to the Christian religion by John Williams. Later, he requests his English master for "... full and proper instruction in Christian knowledge"

(Phillips, *Cambridge* 178). He is sent to "... study under a Miss Spencer of Blackheath" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 178). The change that has come over Thomas with regard to Africa is worth noting: "... already Africa spoke only to me of a barbarity I had fortunately fled" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 178). Thomas studies hard. Miss Spencer helps him improve himself. According to her, a Christian education will enable him, among other things, to "subdue" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 178) people's prejudice against him as a black person. However, part of Miss Spencer's teaching places Africans in a negative light, and that is disturbing. Phillips writes, "... as she related, black men were descended from Noah's son Cham, who was damned by God for his disobedience and shamelessness in having relations with his chosen wife aboard the Ark. This wicked act produced the devilish dark Chus, the father of the black and cursed Africans" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 179).

After Thomas's instructions under Miss Spencer are complete, she gives him a new name: David Henderson. Unlike the first time, when his change of name caused him uneasiness and pain, he welcomes this second change of name. His master is extremely pleased with him. A new livery is ordered for him, and his allowance is increased. Another important change is also to come in his life. Love grows between David and Anna, and she accepts his marriage proposal. David's master raises to him the issue of the prevailing opinions on a match between a black person and a white one. David and his master talk about certain things, and some time later, the master "... pronounced that in addition to his permission we should also have his blessing" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 181). But some days later, his master dies, and David and Anna are told to leave the house by Mahogany Nell. At this point, it appears that she is going to be the only person who will enjoy the benefits of their late master's will. David and Anna seek Miss Spencer's help. She agrees to shelter them for some time, and arranges for David to work as a missionary in different parts of England in the company of Anna. It appears that Miss Spencer is aware of the way black people are stereotyped: "Miss Spencer insisted that the commonly held assumption that a black Englishman's life consisted of debauchery, domestic knavery, and misdemeanour, served as a false and dangerous model, while the notion of irreversible savagery in old Guinea presented an equally untruthful picture" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 182). It is also decided that after returning to London, David and Anna will go to Africa as missionaries, and stay in Guinea for a brief period. David is extremely happy with the plan, and his admiration for an English identity is made evident: "Truly I was now an Englishman, albeit a little smudgy of complexion!" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 183)

David and Anna go to several parts of England. They try to point out to people the negative manner in which blacks are often seen. It is important to note that despite Thomas's negative thoughts about Africa, he cherishes the possibility of joint work by Englishmen and Africans. He wishes to open a school in Africa. "Those of England, who by means or motives of avarice were dishonouring Christianity, might thereafter witness the unnatural nature of their work being repaired by those of both England and Guinea working together in conjoined brotherhood" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 185-86).

David's account powerfully drives home the cruelty of slavery: "... the poorest in England may labour under great hardship, but not one would willingly exchange their status for the life of a West Indian slave. What freeman would resign his liberty for the bondage of the dog or horse?" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 186) Many Africans are subject to extreme ill-

treatment: “My people are born and sold like animals, tortured and all torn to pieces with moil, hunger, and oppression,... ” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 186). An important purpose of David’s mission is to “... rally support towards the noble purpose of banishing the practice of slavery in the Americas that remain blessed with the good fortune to dwell the English flag – the jolly Union Jack”(Phillips, *Cambridge* 186). Many English people treat African strangers brutally. To satisfy the caprice of wealthy English people, to give them something that would allow them some good time, black children are sold: “... London’s *bird and beastshops* where, sad to say, negro children are sold for amusement like parrots or monkeys, although the practice of decorating them with gold or silver collars has mercifully fallen from usage” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 187). However, it should also be mentioned that David finds that while several black servants are subject to ill-treatment, “... there were others whose masters had found occasion to treat them with great decency” (Phillips, *Cambridge*187-88). Thus, Phillips chooses to show that conditions vary from person to person.

Another dark period is to cloud David’s life. “Winter closed in and my poor wife began to take with fever” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 189). Anna is also pregnant. Most of the people of the village where they have taken shelter are not interested in David’s preaching. David and Anna suffer due to lack of money and Anna’s ill health. Near the time of anna’s delivery, David goes to a villager’s house to ask help. The man, his wife, their gardener, and maid come with food and drink to Anna, but both she and her child die. David’s loss is a great blow to him. The next day, the minister tells David that the child cannot be buried in “the parish soil” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 190) as he was not baptised. David tells him that he would rather bury the mother and child together on common land than allow them to be buried separately. To come to a resolution, “The bishop of the diocese was sent for and a compromise was achieved whereby the child might be buried with the mother, but the minister would hesitate to read the burial service” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 190).

Phillips is able to achieve a devastating effect of irony by depicting David’s situation. Despite being an ardent believer in and a preacher of Christianity, he encounters difficulties on religious grounds. In fact, the minister “... claimed he had no evidence of my own Christian status” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 190). Racial prejudice may be a factor behind this.

David returns to London and once again, seeks Miss Spencer’s help. He comes to know that she did not receive the letter that he had written to her in his crisis. It is decided that David is to continue his work as a missionary. After some days, he comes to know that his late master has left four hundred guineas for him and his wife in his will, and that he will receive it if he signs on a document. Collecting the money, David starts on a journey to Africa to continue his missionary work there. But on the ship, the remaining amount of three hundred and fifty guineas is stolen, most probably by a French man who was David’s “rooming companion” (Phillips, *Cambridge*192). Upon his “petition” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 193) to the captain, it is ordered that he should be thrown “... into the belly of the vessel and confine me in irons in a condition of captivity all too familiar” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 193). The irony of the situation is strong as during the first week of the journey, the captain invited David to share his table, and “We toasted in wine the honour due to merry England for having abolished the trade, ... ” (Phillips, *Cambridge* 192). In one lifetime, David is forced to undertake two journeys that are somewhat similar. Later, other people who were forcefully

captured are on board. David's great misery and his attachment to his native language are conveyed, but his statement about his own position and that of Africans is disturbing:

That I could still make a little sense of my own native language among the many spoken gave me some comfort, but the treachery of these white men, even towards one such as I who esteemed their values, tore at my heart with great passion. That I, a virtual Englishman, was to be treated as base African cargo, caused me such hurtful pain as I was barely able to endure. To lose my dear wife, fair England, and now liberty in such rapid succession! (Phillips, *Cambridge* 194)

The ship reaches the Americas, and David is bought by Mr Wilson, the then manager of Emily's father's estate. He is renamed Cambridge. David (now Cambridge) is seasoned in a malodorous hut. He initially believes that he will not have to stay on the plantation for long. He has to live the life of a slave. He earns the respect of other blacks. To them, he is "*the black Christian*" (Phillips, *Cambridge* 200). Cambridge becomes close to a young woman named Christiania, and although they are not married, they start living as man and wife. Cambridge feels that Christiania is spiritually powerful, but "The other slaves claimed her to be a possessor of the skills of obeah, ..." (Phillips, *Cambridge* 198).

Mr Wilson, as already mentioned, is overthrown by Mr Brown. For different reasons, the relationship between Cambridge and Mr Brown turns sour. He tolerates her delusion in believing herself to be the mistress of the plantation owner's house, the Great House, to a certain extent. He does not entertain Cambridge's wish to talk to him. On Christmas, Cambridge once again tries to talk to Mr Brown:

... as I saw his bay mare approach I called to Mr Brown and made note of the anger in his eyes. He dismounted and walked towards me with whip raised, but I had steeled myself to endure no further abuse. In a simple and Christian manner I was merely requesting that he behave towards myself and my *wife* with a decency that one would have afforded a dog. He struck me once with his crop, and I took it from him, and in the resultant struggle the life left his body. (Phillips, *Cambridge* 207)

Cambridge wanted a simple life, a life of dignity, but that was not to be. Without any fault of his own, and with all the efforts that he puts into improving himself, he faces racial prejudice, and is treated cruelly. Phillips's projection of Cambridge's experiences says much about his stance on slavery. The horrendous nature of the slave trade is effectively depicted. The novel records changes that come over Cambridge—changes with regard to his attitude to the English language, some changes in terms of how he sees Africans, although he does not become entirely dismissive of Africans, etc. The issues that define Cambridge's identity engage Phillips's attention. The repeated change of name perhaps suggests, at least partially, Phillips's notion of the instability of identity that a black man in Cambridge's position may experience. It is almost as if with each change of name, his identity is expected to change. Cambridge's narrative conveys his strong wish to see himself as a permanent member of the

English society. The novel raises several questions as to the identity of enslaved people. How were the enslaved black people to see themselves? Did the whites see them as they saw themselves? Phillips's novel also tells Emily's story—a story marked by great anguish. Emily's story has not been discussed in the present article. *Cambridge* stands as an important work in Phillips's exploration of complex issues like identity, race, slavery, etc.

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The Diasporic Perspective in the work of Anita Rau Badami

W Nancy Hephzibah

Abstract

This paper aims at studying the novel of Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem* and analyzing how she represents India, in spite of being located in Canada. The analysis views her perspective as diasporic, taking into consideration her experiences as an immigrant and dealing with issues like nostalgia and fluidity of identity. The current views on Diaspora and immigration are discussed all the while studying if diasporic aspects as perceived by diasporic scholarship are found in the works of Anita Rau Badami and if so, how they are presented.

Key words: Diaspora, Immigrant, Nostalgia, Isolation, Traditional

Introduction

The term "Diaspora" originates from ancient Greek meaning "scattering" or "dispersion." It historically referred to the dispersion of Jews outside of Israel after the Babylonian exile, but its meaning has broadened to include any group migration or dispersion from their original homeland, often due to political, social, or economic reasons.

The first theory of Diaspora appeared, according to Gabriel Sheffer, with the work of John A. Armstrong in his paper, "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas" published in the *American Political Sciences Review* in 1976. Gabriel Sheffer, in his book *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986) wrote that it was a mistake to maintain the concept of Diaspora only for the Jewish people because many others like Nabatheans, Phenicians and Assyrians had subsisted before them and many more with similarities to the Jewish, Greek and Chinese Diaspora appeared in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Anita Rau Badami was born in the eastern town of Rourkela and spent her childhood travelling around India as her father, a mechanical engineer and train designer, so he was transferred frequently. Her family moved approximately eight times before she was twenty. Since her parents both spoke different Indian dialects, English was the bridging language for the family. Badami's second language is Hindi. The convent nuns who took care of her schooling were not always a receptive audience for Badami's budding literary talents. At school the nuns taught Greek and Roman myths, and even Celtic tales. "The only mythology I don't remember learning in school was Hindu mythology," Anita recalls in an interview (*Toronto Review* 117). At home, however, Badami was immersed in the cultures and myths of her family and the multilingual railway workers.

Tamarind Mem

This paper discusses the novel *Tamarind Mem* and locates the diasporic element of nostalgia. It describes the bondage between mothers and daughters and invokes Indian culture. Written in 1996, Penguin Books published it. Later, in 2002, it was released in the US under the title *The Tamarind Woman*. *Tamarind Mem* is a lot like the author's life in many ways. But according to Badami, this narrative is not autobiographical. She says she just started writing this book by transferring recollections from her history into a made-up narrative.

On one side, Kamini sits homesick in her basement apartment, recalling her childhood from the birth of her sister when Kamini was six. She describes a complex family and the conflict between parents that she barely understands. She remembers bitter mother and a father who was always away. On the other side, Saroja (Kamini's mother) recalls her childhood memories. As the eldest daughter, a smart girl whose ambitions to become a doctor are subverted when her family pushes her into an arranged marriage with a man 15 years older to herself. Her marriage remains as stunted as her ambitions, and Saroja welcomes the attentions of a half-caste auto-mechanic.

Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty, (Deputy Director in Monash University, teaching Classical English whose research interests include postcolonial literature, literature of the Indian subcontinent in English and translation, translation theory and practice, etc.), in his chapter "Will the Real South Asian Stand Up Please? Transfer and Writing of 'Home' in the Psychobab(el) of Diaspora" in *Interpreting Homes in South Asian Literature* says:

Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem* (1996) was written in cramped quarters in foreign lands. I will now be bold enough to state that it is the very nature of subcontinental writing in English to be 'diasporic'. If language itself is another country, then the double-bind of bilinguality is in keeping with the double lives of the producers and consumers of (-) Anglian writing. The imaginative flight to new lands has to be written 'home' about. Raja Rao and A.K.Ramanujan's insistence on an alternative (non- English) India is forged not in the bosom of Bharat Mata, but outside of India. One becomes a South Asian (131).

The book explores nostalgia in a bittersweet way. It takes its name from the main character Saroja, who goes as Tamarind Mem because of her sharp tongue. The narrative, which takes place in India, tells the tale of a single family—basically, a family of women—who are confined together in a home and experience both joy and suffering. The book is split into two sections, where readers are given two distinct views on the plot: Kamini narrates the first section, while Saroja narrates the second. The work frequently switches between the present and the past, shifting time zones and allowing cultural items, images, and meanings to move globally.

Anita Rau Badami effectively delves into the profound feelings of alienation and separation experienced by two generations of Indian women, portraying both the poetic and perceptive voices of Kamini and her mother. However, Badami makes sure that *Tamarind Mem* doesn't conclude on a completely depressing one by introducing an optimistic note that

implies the mother's efforts have made it simpler for Kamini and other Indian women in the future to create their own memories and shape their own futures.

Chakraborty, in her essay “Nostalgic Narratives and the Otherness Industry” in the book *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature*, discusses the regional narratives of family in Badami’s works, and she is not interested in the textual nuances of what she call as “nostalgic narrative,” but in understanding why and how these texts may be read and taught as postcolonial literature. She says:

These nostalgic narratives, for me, are the diasporic expressions of third world intellectuals trying to come to terms with life in Anglo- North America, often through the retelling of a particularized socio- cultural collectivity, creating thereby not only a memory of home, but a home in memory (128).

Badami’s *Tamarind Mem* has rich feministic insights and these perspectives are located in a framework of nostalgia and thus the diasporic elements are higher in their tone and manner. The novel offers a subversive reversal of mother- daughter, South Asian diasporic narratives; it is Soraja, the mother, who symbolically breaks the umbilical cord that ties them together and becomes, not the pitiful Hindu widow of traditional narratives, but a free woman with a room of her own: “I do not belong to anyone now. I have cut loose and love only fro, a distance. My daughters can fulfil their destines”(TM 265-66).

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Contemporary Cinematic Narratives: Breaking the Mould

Nagula Naresh

Abstract

The Modern world, with its innovative technology has transformed many facets of art, these transformations is clearly visible in modern cinema and innovative ways in which it allowed the directors to experiment with narratives. These experimental narratives, defying conventional narrative patterns has grown to be associated with creative storytelling. Two examples of this include *Tenet* (2020) by Christopher Nolan and *Searching* (2018) by Aneesh Chaganty. With its complex time inversion narrative, Christopher Nolan's *Tenet* redefines temporal perception. The film defies traditional cause-and-effect logic by having a nonlinear chronology and a physical depiction of reverse entropy, which forces viewers to actively piece together the plot. On the other hand, *Searching* uses an innovative visual storytelling technique, narrating its story only by using computer, Television and mobile screens. Chaganty's approach uses these digital spaces basis to create an engaging thriller. By inviting the audience to understand the protagonists prospective and highlighting the personal, intrusive aspects of digital world, this technique immerses the audience in a familiar yet fresh cinematic experience. Through a sequence of digital exchanges, including social media, video conversations, and emails, the story is told in a way that is both intriguing and puzzling. Both these movies, in spite of their differences in Narrative techniques, open up new areas for investigation by showing how creative structures can improve the narrative. *Tenet* challenges the chronological linearity, and *Searching* incorporates digital screens as the Narrative devices. These movies serve as excellent examples of how defying established narrative conventions may produce an enchanting experience that encourage filmmakers to experiment the narrative structures.

Key Words: Narratives, Nonlinear chronology, Time inversion, Digital screens

Introduction

Storytelling is an art, whether it's a fiction, film, drama or even for instance a song, the way and the method by which a narrator presents a story has pivotal impact on the listener. In the act of narrating a story, the narrative assumes a prominent role as the builder; it is an integral and important aspect in any given story, providing structure and vitality to stories, making them a seamless flow of events. It is the thread that weaves together seemingly unrelated moments, and at times brings together completely opposite aspects to create a meaningful whole, thus, making the ordinary series of occurrences into a saga that speaks of our deepest desires, emotions and the things that we wouldn't be able to do in our world. Hence, making the act of narrative is one of the highly important and crucial elements in the process of storytelling. As we begin this exploration of narrative in storytelling, we look into the

subtleties which render narratives, not simply considering them as the structure of stories but also the beating heart of our collective narratives. When civilization first began, our forefathers were able to etch their stories into the sky as the oral narratives. And these oral narratives are crucial in the development of human civilization as they provide the future generations with the history of their ancestors, customs and other knowledge related to traditions and life. Thus, through their poetic words, elders and bards have woven a tapestry of shared experiences and cultural wisdom.

The skill of narrative was established by this oral tradition that was transmitted from one generation to the next. The development of written language is considered to be one of the greatest inventions in human history, as it brought about a revolutionary transformation in the narratives and their permanency. Stories that were once only oral began to take the permanent residence on stone tablets, scrolls, papers and any other things that the earlier civilization found good enough to hold the script. As the written language developed and formed a particular script, it became a means of extending knowledge beyond boundaries of space and time. Johannes Gutenberg's groundbreaking development of the printing press marked the beginning of the Renaissance. As printed books became more widely available, they promoted literacy and democratized access to stories.

Storytelling in the modern world uses a variety of media. A diverse array of narratives is woven together by movies, podcasts, streaming series, and social media posts. From the flickering embers of oral traditions to the immersive worlds of digital storytelling the narrative has a seamless flow through the generation, there are plethoras of ways in which audiences can interact with stories, and they can opt to engage in the story or simply listen to it. Over the time the narratives underwent a distinctive change as the writers and directors started to experiment with the narratives and they ways in which a narrative is presented, so that they can present the story in a different manner and to resonate with the audience.

The narratives in film is became a crucial component in film making and it usually has a distinctive characteristic features when compared to how a narrative happens in a film. These variations in both media make them a different yet so similar has they share many features in the act of storytelling. The books consist of narrative which is constructed by the writer, using a descriptive language and minute details of the events, and when it comes to film directors his method of narrating a story is completely different, unlike the writer who uses books, pens and imagination to construct the narratives, the director has to rely on many things, such as settings, props, costume, music, actors and many other components which forms part of the film narrative. These components are needs to be handled cautiously as they hold the narrative in a whole. A seemingly misplaced camera angle can disrupt the narrative and gives the sensation to the audience that is not supposed to be happening in the process of storytelling. When it comes to the directors and their choices in story making, in particular with the development of various technological innovations gave them the liberty to experiment with narratives and enhance the new ways of narrating a story using the technology, this liberty as we know usually as auteur theory

Auteur is a French terms which developed from the criticism of Andre Bazin, Alexandre Astruc and Francois Truffaut. Truffaut in particular believed that, in the process of adaptation, the directors merely staging the texts by giving

them visual representation. Which makes them only the ‘stagers’ of the texts and don’t possess any distinct personal influence on their product. In his view a director needs to have a liberty to modify the source material in the process of adaptation to either add variety to it or to enhance the outcome of adaptation for better effect. The director’s personal views and style should be the key factors while shaping a film, thus, making the director the “Author” of the film. Peter Wollen in his “*Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*” analyzes the Auteur theory and the role of the director within the cinematic landscape. Wollen emphasized the role of director in the process of adaptation to “The film director must create his own images, not by slavishly following nature, by bowing to ‘the fetish of authenticity’, but by imposing his own style, his own interpretation. (117).

Thus the auteur theory stresses the role of the directors in the process of adaptation. Not only in reference to the adaptation but the movies without any literary source has to be woven in a careful manner and the director must carefully render these narratives. Yet, the same time the directors can still experiment, tamper, and use variety of ways to present these narratives unless they disrupt the narrative and disrupts the story.

Impact of Technology in Film Narratives

The emergence of technology has significantly transformed the act of narrating in the movies, bringing in a new era of cinema where storytelling is no longer confined by traditional constraints and the traditional norms. Linear and flawless narratives are no longer considered as pristine. Directors can tamper the narratives and make them arrange in a bizarre manner without disrupting the story to present the audience with a new experience.

Visual effects (VFX) and computer-generated imagery (CGI) are one of the most notable changes in this regard. These technological innovations gave the directors to handle the difficult components in the narrative without any difficulty. The ability to create visually attractive and engaging worlds beyond the bounds of practical effects has been made possible by the development of advanced technology in the field of movie making. The advent of digital filmmaking and editing has brought about a significant change in the storytelling process. Filmmakers now have an unprecedented degree of variety in shooting dynamic sequences because to the decision to convert to digital formats. With the fine control over pacing and structure that digital editing tools offer, directors can now explore narrative strategies that were logistically difficult to implement with physical film. This shift in distribution methods encourages the creation of diverse and innovative content that caters to evolving audience preference, film and interactive storytelling are coming together because of the technology that makes audience participation possible. Edward Branigan highlighted this concept of narratives and their resonance with audience in his seminal work *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (1992) as:

Narrative is a perpetual activity that organizes data into specific pattern, which represents and explain experience. Making narrative is a strategy for making

our world of experiences and desires intelligible. It is a fundamental way of organizing data.” (Edward Branigan P. 3)

To put it simply, technology has developed into an indispensable tool for filmmakers, pushing the boundaries of storytelling and creating new avenues for storytelling. From the creation of breathtaking visual worlds to the captivating experiences of virtual reality, technology is continuously changing how stories are conveyed and experienced on television.

Fresh approaches to storytelling in Modern Cinema

Filmmakers are creating stories that go beyond the norm due to innovations in technology breakthroughs and a willingness to explore with storytelling. This investigation allows us to observe the evolving fabric of modern storytelling, in which unorthodox approaches and creative strategies are transforming the fundamental elements of cinematic narratives.

A new wave of films has arisen since 2010, all of them are attracting audiences with their own ways while pushing the boundaries of storytelling techniques especially presenting these movies with a variety of narrative hitherto never seen in filmmaking. This group of movies offers a cinematic experience into the extraordinary, from the surreal scenes, the temporal complexities and the other unique ways in which the narratives of the stories are presented. A few examples of such films which comes under the category of ‘films with unique narrative styles’ include, “*Interstellar*” (2014) directed by Christopher Nolan, “*The Matrix Film franchise*” (1999-2021) directed by Wachowskis, “*The Edge of Tomorrow*” (2014) Directed by Doug Liman, “*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*” (2004) directed by Michel Gondry, “*Inception*” (2010) directed by Christopher Nolan, and the Oscar Winning “*Everything Everywhere All at Once*” (2022) are some of the feature films with the ‘Unconventional and disrupted Narratives’ and yet highly successful films at the box office.

Analysis of *Searching* (2018) by Aneesh Chaganty

The film *Searching* is a good example for the Unique Narration in the realm of contemporary cinema, it is a 2018 film directed by Aneesh Chaganty a Indian origin Hollywood director, who considered by many to be the successor for M. Night Shyamalan. The movie *Searching* defies traditional narrative frameworks by drawing audiences into a story that is told only through digital screens, Video calls and surveillance footage. This makes for an innovative and engrossing cinematic experience.

The story unfolds in a series of screen recordings, video calls, and social media interactions, offering a dynamic and real-time perspective into the life of a father desperately searching for his missing daughter. Because of this break away from conventional cinematography and the conventional narratives makes it one of the path breaking movies in terms of how a narrative and story is told, the story is told with a feeling of intimacy and immediacy as viewers actively participate in the digital investigation alongside the characters. As we witness the protagonist, played by John Cho, navigate through the virtual realm in search of clues, the film captures the complexities of modern communication and the complexities of human relationships mediated by technology. To tell a story using only

digitals screens and devices with minimum characters baffled yet elated many audience. To imagine and to make the audience to sit in a theatre where they see nothing but a screen on a screen should consider as a remarkable achievement. This made possible because of the integration of technology into the narrative which serves as a storytelling device and also reflects the contemporary human experience, where digital interfaces shape our interactions and perceptions. Furthermore, the film's unique narration extends beyond its format to include a tightly woven plot filled with unexpected twists and turns. "Aneesh Chaganty and Sev Ohanian" collaborated on the screenplay, which skillfully navigates the constraints and opportunities offered by the digital storytelling process.

The tension builds as viewers are given bits and pieces of knowledge; the narrative takes on the character of a puzzle that needs to be solved, reflecting the protagonist's search for solutions. To make the audience to connect with the events that are happening on a screen and make them resonate is no easy task, especially when the audience is throughout the story constantly made aware that they are watching a screen on a screen. Another noteworthy aspect of *Searching* is its ability to address contemporary issues related to society inside a thriller. The story threads through issues of online identity, the effects of social media on people and families, and the fuzziness of the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds. With its distinct narrative perspective, the movie turns into a mirror of modern fears and the changing character of interpersonal relationships in the digital era.

***Tenet* (2020) by Christopher Nolan**

Tenet is a 2020 science fiction action thriller *film* written and directed by Christopher Nolan, who also produced it with his wife Emma Thomas. The narrative defies convention in storytelling, offering spectators an engaging and challenging experience that makes them think. Released in 2020, this science fiction thriller explores the subtleties of time inversion while providing temporal puzzles inside a narrative structure that is as complicated as its subjects. And throughout the movie Nolan manipulated time as well as the narrative to provide a unique sensory feeling to the audience.

Tenet revolves around a narrative device that creates a narrative palindrome by combining the past, present, and future. The idea of inversion in which some items and people travel backward in time is the foundation of the film's distinctive style. This time conflict is transformed into a narrative art form by Nolan, who is renowned for his love of complex storytelling especially the ways in which he manipulates the temporal aspects in his narratives. The audience is required to follow these rather bizarre the events as they unfold. The non-linear structure of the film is a distinguishing feature of its unique plot. Rather than relaying stories in chronological order, Nolan purposefully chooses to tell a fractured plot that fluidly transitions between several time periods. A bewildering yet exhilarating journey is presented to the audience, where past events influence the present and future actions have an adverse impact on earlier occurrences. Time in this film almost works like a character, as it's been manipulated in distortive ways throughout the film by Nolan. To take an example who would thought that a lady jumping to the sea to swim at the beginning of a story has so much meaning when it comes to the end of the story. And the concept of time manipulation through inversion, where time flows backward for certain objects and characters. This high-concept

strategy does, however, present some serious difficulties. The movie's complex storyline and heavy use of technical terminology can overwhelm audiences, detracting from the narrative's flow and necessitating numerous viewings to properly understand. Character development is hampered by this complexity since the heroes and antagonists usually feel underdeveloped and are more like story gadgets than fully formed people. And there are gaps in the narrative because of this time inversion which are left vacant till the movie comes to conclusion. The film's narrative style is a spectacle in itself, as characters move through scenes with a precision that mirrors the complex gears of a clock, symbolizing the meticulous orchestration of time within the narrative.

The film's distinct narrative approach gains credibility from Nolan's sparing use of computer-generated imagery and realistic effects. The physicality of the scenes, which range from massive set pieces to inverted car chases, increases audience immersion and gives the temporal manipulation a palpable sense. *Tenet* demonstrates Christopher Nolan's skill at creating distinctive narrative patterns as always especially a narrative pattern that disrupts temporal aspects in a film. The picture offers a cinematic experience that is unmatched due to its non-linear structure, visual storytelling, dedication to practical effects, and narrative ambiguity. *Tenet* challenges preconceptions and goes beyond the traditional boundaries of narrative cinema, allowing viewers to appreciate the artistry of storytelling while they struggle with the intricacies of time inversion.

Considering these cinematic milestones, *Tenet* and *Searching* highlight how storytelling is a dynamic and flexible art form that can transcend traditional limitations. These movies inspire filmmakers to push boundaries and audiences to embrace stories that defy expectations, whether they deal with temporal complexities or immerse us in the digital world and they prove that the disrupted space and temporal aspects can be turned into a successful outcome if you have the skill to handle it cautiously. In this regard both Nolan and Aneesh made a remarkable and path breaking in terms of innovative methods in movie making. *Tenet* and *Searching* leave a lasting impression on the vast field of filmmaking, helping to usher in a new era of narrative that is marked by creativity, complexity, and unique ways in narrative structures.

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‘Karrigadu’ - Othello Reconstructed For Telangana through Physical and Performative Theatre

Ram Holagundi

Abstract

460 years the play Othello was written and none of the appeal is lost. Sir William Shakespeare is a passionate playwright, director, actor or theatre enthusiast. The Bard of Avon as he is popularly known is one of the best English playwrights, a poet and a dramatist this universe has ever produced. Today we are into the Gen Z but still his plays, poems, sonnets are relevant as they are adapted, reconstructed, deciphered, translated and interpreted. ‘Othello’ meaning a Moorish commander in the military service of Venice was scripted by the bard in the year 1603. In the year 2016, ‘Karrigadu’ took shape after the formation of new state of India –‘Telangana’. The political scenario, the racist equations and other similarities of Shakespeare’s Othello gave a strong base for ‘Karrigadu’ to be reconstructed in the shadows of Othello. This article looks at how the contemporary prevailing conditions of Telangana and the story weaved then by the bard strike a balance through the aspect of physical theatre and performative brilliance.

Keywords: Othello, Theatre, Reconstruction, adaptation, Telangana, Culture, Dialect

Introduction

An article from *The Guardian* under the Observer- Shakespeare – written by Dalya Alberge on Saturday, 27th August, 2022, titled “Shakespeare inspired to write Othello after being booed off the stage” opens up saying that, the year was 1603 and a plucky band of actors appeared on the stage at the Globe theatre to perform Ben Jonson’s play, *Sejanus*, a tragedy about a Roman soldier. The performance was such a flop that the cast was hissed and heckled off stage. One member of that cast was William Shakespeare, and now an academic is making the case that this humiliating experience went on to affect the writing of one of the bard’s greatest plays, Othello. As Dalya further explains, Dr John-Mark Philo, an academic at the University of East Anglia (UEA), told the *Observer* that there is a reluctance to think of Shakespeare as “anything other than perfection” and that although the booing incident is known about, its significance has been overlooked. The emergent of Othello happened due to an incident which provoked Shakespeare to write this wonderful piece of tragedy filled with racism, pure love, jealousy, hatred, deceit and remorse. Similarly, the taunts and teases of the so called “true people of Telangana” discriminating and dividing theatre practitioners into different regions and languages gave rise to “Karrigadu” in proper Telangana dialect and form in the year 2016. According to Wikipedia the character's origin is traced to the tale "Un Capitano Moro" in *Gli Hecatommithi* by Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinthio. There, he is simply referred to as the Moor. It is believed that Shakespeare’s *Othello* emerged from

Cinthio's work. "Karrigadu" is the very first adaptation and reconstruction of *Othello* into Telangana as there has been no adaptation or translation of any kind earlier on *Othello* in drama form.

Dominance of Race and Caste

The Vedas and Puranas have clearly defined the society according to the working class and from time immemorial it has been seen that the people were divided into different castes, race, regions and religions as per the requirements. But over a period of time this became a norm and a mandatory classification and division of society which developed into a base or foundation for the class division. The division was led by The Gods (The divine beings), The Brahmins (The knowledgeable priests and academicians), The Kshatriyas (the kings the rulers and the warriors), The Vaishyas (the landlords, goldsmiths and the business magnates), The Shudras (soldiers, servants, maids, farmers) and The Untouchables (sweepers, toilet cleaners, beggars, garbage pickers). As early as 200BC and 200AD it is believed that the origin of the Indian treatise written by Bharata Muni, "The Natya Shastra" was the epitome of Indian Drama was believed to be conceived by Lord Brahma taking shape and spreading the knowledge of drama and theatre in the Indian context. The different types of stages in the book clearly demarcate the seating arrangements according to the classes. The dominance of race and caste has been there all through and is still prevalent today, though in a different context altogether. Today we call it body shaming but still it is prevalent.

When Shakespeare wrote *Othello*, he brought out the character of a Black against a White. In "Karrigadu" we see a Black low caste (Shudra) paaleru servant pitted against an upper caste Land lord "A Dora" as they are commonly known as. Othello falls in love with Desdemona who is a white woman and 'Karrigadu' loves Sitamma who belongs to upper caste Brahmins. In Telangana, the Razakaars, the Nizams, the Zamindars, the Brahmins were the "Lords" in different situations and formats and the Shudras, the lower castes or the downtrodden (untouchables) are the ones who are victimised or subjected to abuse and torture because of their race, caste and community. The caste and race played a prominent role in shaping the characters and script of "Karrigadu" and to strike the right balance between 'Othello' and "Karrigadu".

A Journey of Emotions

Lawrence Benedict, the Hollywood Actor, Author, Editor and Producer at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival said, emotions are the foundation of a performance. An actor is a musician and the emotions are the music. Emotions are the secret to the kind of acting audiences want to watch. They govern every aspect of what you do as a performer. They are even the secret to memorizing lines. Attach an emotion to the line and you will remember it. Not only that but it will come out differently every time you say it. As per American Association of Community Theatre, Neil Simon in, *It happened On Broadway* says, "I want to make the audience laugh and cry within ten seconds, to show just how close those emotions are".

A play performance is always successful when there are ups and downs in the progress of the performance and the story's plot structure is filled with different emotions. As seen in 'Othello', 'Karrigadu' is filled with all the different emotions as described by Bharata in the Navarasas of Natya Shastra. The Navarasas create an impactful everlasting effect on the audiences; especially there is lots of emotional drama which takes centre stage in the staging of south Indian performative theatre. The mood of the play is created through these sentiments. In 'Karrigadu' one can witness Hasya, Shringara, Raudra, Karuna, Veera, Bibatsa, Adhbhuta, Bhayanaka and Shanta all the nine sentiments at different times and different situations which makes 'Karrigadu' a memorable play to be witnessed. In comparison to the west the acts in the Indian Sub-continent especially in south India the performances are filled with and laced with emotions as the actors and the artists are trained to be as vibrant, voluminous, aggressive and as animated as possible to excel in bringing forth the emotions and the energetic body language to the fore. Though 'Karrigadu' is built on the same lines of *Othello* the variations and the emotions of the acts and the characters are soaked with the regional flavour and the vibrancy of the emotional saga making it a perfect blend of drama and intercultural performative labyrinth to be witnessed, to be absorbed to be relished and savoured by the audiences.

Bharata Muni in Natya Shastra while explaining the Rasa Theory in the sixth chapter articulates saying, the awareness of the emotions has to be provoked and invoked in the minds of the spectator for them to relish it. The Rasa Sutra summarizes the factors in art construction that leads to relishing of the Rasa. Bharata states "nah hi rasadh ritey kaschidh arthah pravartatey", means no meaningful idea is conveyed if the "Rasa" is not evoked. The very core of the Bharata's Natya theory is the creation of 'Rasa'. The concept of 'Rasa' is the most important and significant contribution of the "Indian mind" to aesthetics. The study of aesthetics deals with the realization of beauty in art, its relish or enjoyment, and the awareness of joy that accompanies an experience of beauty. Rasa has no equivalent in word or concept in any other language.

Physical Theatre Core Value of the Performance

As far as I'm concerned, all theatre is physical. As Aristotle says you know theatre is an act and an action and he didn't mean just the writing on it, he meant at the centre any piece, there is an action a physical action – Simon McBurney.

The uniqueness of this format gives the audience a new version to look at the performance. Physical Theatre takes the audience away from the usual dialogue and traditional usual theatre format and tries to immerse the audience with the mode of communication through body language and physical actions related to the performances. In 'Karrigadu' an attempt is made to experiment with the play performance involving the physical theatre format, wherein in most of the scenes the body becomes the mode of communication between the actor and the audience. For example, in one of the scenes the inner thoughts of 'Karrigadu', the good and virtuous against the bad and evil 'thoughts' appear physically on stage with stylized costumes headgears and masks while trying to give him ideas through physical actions and movements to disturb and confuse him to such an extent wherein he shouts, yells and rolls down the ramp in abyss, and trying to find himself as

he is lost in the storm of fury, distrust, disbelieve, chaos, suspicion and evil thoughts. The whole scene is aggressively choreographed along with theatrical and dance movements which helps the audience understand the inner feelings of the character to an intricate and methodical level to give a very clear picture of the pain, agony, and the emotions the character of 'Karrigadu' is undergoing which would not be possible in a normal dialogue and stereotype social drama performance. Similarly, the character of Saidulu (Iago) whenever he starts thinking of how to inject evil thoughts into the mind of 'Karrigadu' and disturb the beautiful married life of 'Karrigadu' (Othello) and Sitamma (Desdemona), leading to the death of the protagonists. His evil scheming, his deliberate and astute attempts to sow the seeds of suspicion and hatred through treacherous planning and execution is shown through different heads with masks and stylized costumes as his inner thoughts coming together and echoing his words and physical actions through physical theatre techniques and movements, giving the audience the creepy and eerie effect and an innovative way of looking at the theatrical performance.

Visually Impactful Regional Stage Combat

This age-old martial art form is not just another mode of self-defence. It was once a popular activity during festivals and marriage processions, particularly in rural Telangana. Twirling their sticks and exhibiting their swift moves, these martial artistes used to lead processions and festivities, reports Krithika Raj Reddy in the online news paper – Hyderabad News – (where every word explodes) dated 26th December, 2019. The region of Telangana has unique styles of stick fights known as (Karrey Saamu, Kattey Saamu and Dummi Saamu). They are ancient traditional fighting techniques used by soldiers and warriors during wars and fights, throughout different regions of India especially the southern region. In earlier days the usage of sticks as weapons in kingdoms and villages by the villagers, soldiers and youngsters to safe guard themselves from enemies was a common feature and a mandatory training as part of their physical activity curriculum apart from Malla Yudham (Wrestling), Gadda Yudham (Mace fight), and Kathi Yudham(Sword fight). Today's WWF is nothing but Malla Yudham of ancient India. To adopt the regional flavour prominence has been given to these stage combats with physical theatre movement and rhythmic choreography adding more intensity and vigour to the performance.

Telangana Dialect as the Base for Dialogues

Mr Prashhantam a blogger on Quora a website for social question-and-answer and online knowledge market headquartered in Mountain View, California, while explaining how many dialects exist in Telugu among all Telugu states through the article published on 19th October, 2020 says, Telugu dialects are technically classified into 4 major dialects

1. Eastern Telugu dialect (Uttar Andhra or North coastal dialect)
2. Northern Telugu dialect (Telangana dialect)
3. Central Telugu dialect (Mid-coastal dialect)

4. Southern Telugu dialect (Rayalaseema dialect which also includes dialects of south coastal districts)

But this division is not a hard set one, there are a lot of overlaps among the dialects. And moreover, there are many variations within each of these dialects. All Telugu dialects have evolved from common classical Telugu usage with various improvisations peculiar to each region and all Telugu dialects are “natural and pure variations”

Northern or Telangana Telugu dialect is known for precision in grammar with extensive usage of tenses similar to literary Telugu and a rich set of verbs including neutral verb forms and poetic addressing apart from the well-known innately jovial and happy - go-lucky attitude that is vividly reflected. Telugu scholars adorably refer Telangana Telugu dialect as “టంకశాలతెలుగు / TankaSaala Telugu” (The Mint Telugu) (Mint- a place where the currency is printed and hence known for its precise measurements and artistic portrayal to maintain quality and robustness and attractiveness). The present Telangana dialect is also known as Maandalikam. In Hyderabad due to Persian and Urdu influence the dialect has heavy loans but at the same time interior Telangana has very less impact of that, at present one gets to hear the Decani and the Hyderabad Telangana dialect which is a mixture of all Telugu dialects like it was during Qutub Shahiera, and popular amongst the people of Telangana.

“Karrigadu” has evolved from the base of this strong Telangana dialect with the dialogues laced with Decani and influence of the regional touch. “Karrigadu” is the first ever Shakespeare’s play adapted into the Telangana dialect as most of the translations or adaptations done earlier are typically in other versions other than the Telangana dialect. As it is known to create a strong script, the idea has to evolve and, in an adaptation, and reconstruction it becomes even more mandatory to adapt the language of the region and the mood is created only when the scripting is done with regional flavour which can hold the audiences in rapt attention wherein the dialogues create the drama through the dialect and lines are rendered with the ease of the regional language. Othello is a dialogue drama and to recreate the same gargantuan vision on the similar lines without losing the essence of Shakespeare’s Othello was possible only through the dialect of Telangana region. The words uttered, the sentences spoken and the dialogues delivered left an everlasting impact on the minds of the audiences. Each line written in the script brings out the essence, while creating the mood and the emotion of the characters. Through the dialect, the theatrical performance of ‘Karrigadu’ reached newer heights as a theatrical extravaganza. Regional flavour through technical aspects: The adaptation of Othello as ‘Karrigadu’ to the Telangana nativity had to undergo a sea of changes before the final performance took shape.

The Story Line

Othello is a play which is set in motion when Othello, a heroic black general in the service of Venice, appoints Cassio and not Iago as his chief lieutenant. Jealous of Othello's success and envious of Cassio, Iago plots Othello's downfall by falsely implicating Othello's wife, Desdemona, and Cassio in a love affair. It's a five Act play performance.

Keeping in mind the theme of the play which mainly focuses on racism and patriarchy, 'Karrigadu' showcases the caste, patriarchy, region and the problems faced by the lower castes during the Razakars period. The story revolves around 'Karrigadu' who takes care of his village (gudem) as a young youth and keeps saving the water bodies connected with his village and goes to war with enemies to safeguard the water bodies (which is a burning problem of Telangana even now). Sitamma the daughter of the rich landlord (Dora) who belongs to the upper caste watches Karrigadu fight for his rights and falls in love with him. Though opposed by the landlord and his henchmen, initially Karrigadu marries Sitamma with the consent of her family. Sitamma goes with Karrigadu to stay with him in his village. As the neighbouring villages attack, Karrigadu with the support of Darmesha fight them back and Darmesha becomes his loyal deputy. Saidulu who till then was a close aide of Karrigadu feels let down and out of jealousy and hatred hatches the plot to separate Karrigadu and Darmesha and is successful in his evil plan of creating a rift between the friends and the couple by sowing the seeds of suspicion in the mind of Karrigadu about the beautiful friendly relation between Sitamma and Darmesha, as an extramarital affair leading to distrust, heartburn, hatred, anger, agony death and remorse.

Major characters and their characteristics

Karrigadu – He is a strong youth and community leader and a warrior Brave heart for the downtrodden, belongs to the scheduled caste and tribes. He is tall, well-built and dark skinned with sharp features. Brave hearted, determined, truthful, sincere, well-mannered but can be easily brainwashed or fooled.

Sitamma – She is a very beautiful young woman belonging to the upper caste, daughter of a rich Landlord. Slender, gorgeous looking fair skinned with graceful sharp features. She is innocent, kind hearted, lovable, very sincere and loyal.

Dora – He is a middle aged rich wealthy landlord and money lender, head of villages belonging to the upper caste. He is tall, well-built and fair skinned with good features shrewd looks. He is business minded, authoritative, stubborn, commanding and demanding.

Darmesha – He is a strong youth from the tribes, a great soldier and a loyal being. Well-built, dark skinned with elegant features. He is brave, clever, good natured, dedicated and very loyal.

Saidulu – Handicapped youth from the tribes, a great warrior but a dangerous being. lean, dark skinned, crooked features. Scheming, cunning, poisonous, deadly, sadist, villainy, filled with negativity.

Regionality of Music- Song - Dance

Songs to the popular dappu instrument rhythms and an amalgamation of Dimsa, teen maar and tribal choreographed dances highlight the different occasions of the performance which

are visual treats to the audiences. Especially when Karrigadu returns after being victorious and weathering the storm to the village (gudem) its celebration time where everybody including the women consume toddy (Kalu) and celebrate the return of their hero, with vibrant dappu beats and choreographed tribal dances of Telangana with the energetic Dimsa and teen maar moves.

Costumes – Jewellery – Makeup

The costumes and make up play an important role in the creation of the mood of the play. As the play depicts the Razakars era which was the early 20th century the designing of the costumes depicts that era along with the makeup and jewellery as per the requirement of the character similar to that particular region and time. The difference between the higher caste and the lower caste, the race and the discrimination between the haves and the have-nots is clearly visible through the makeup costumes and the jewellery their wear.

‘Karrigadu’ – Lower -Cycle Pancha (Cotton Dothi tied in the design of loin cloth above knee level), Kamar bhand (waist band made of cotton cloth knotted to one side of the waist), Upper – Cotton cloth cross belts during war times else bare body), Jewellery – big beads necklace with a big pendant made of ivory and copper, earrings made of forest wood, kadiyam (bracelets) for the wrists and legs. Makeup – As the character plays a tribal and from the interiors of the forest and belongs to Schedule Tribes, he is dark skinned so the whole body of ‘Karrigadu’ including the face is painted dark brown and black to bring out that look and hair is trimmed short almost zero level and ‘Karrigadu’ goes without a moustache.

Sitamma – Lower – Rich silk saree nine yards (to be worn in Dothi style), Kamar bhand (waist band made of cotton cloth knotted to one side of the waist), Upper – Rich silk blouse with hands stretching below elbow level, Jewellery – necklace with a big pendant made of gold and silver, earrings made of gold, and lots of bangles made of gold and heavy anklets made of silver, Makeup – As the character plays a rich upper caste woman belonging to the Land lords family she is fair skinned with bindhi (red lined dot applied onto the forehead) and eyes thickened with kajal (eyeliner).

Conclusion

Sir William Shakespeare’s thought process, ideas and conceptualization of his plays during those days has so much of in-depth visualization and vision that even today plays like Macbeth, Hamlet and so many of his other works have been adapted to, and by different genre’s and reproduced, recreated and reconstructed as master pieces for stage, television and films. Every time the bard’s story is taken and reintroduced a new vision, a new thought, a new version, a new angle, a new dimension, a new idea evolves and channelizes and challenges the future directors, actors and technicians to dig and dwell even more. Sir William Shakespear’s plays for any creative person on earth are like the “Akshaya Patra”, its (Sanskrit word: अक्षयपात्र) meaning “inexhaustible vessel”, is an object from the Hindu epic, Mahabharata. It was a wonderful vessel given to Yudhishtira by Lord Surya (Sun God) which held a never-depleting supply of food to the Pandavas every day in their exile. An off shoot of the bard, Othello as ‘Karrigadu’ is no different.

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Bodies and Motives during the Nazi Regime

Samina Firoz Waglawala

Abstract

The United Nations estimates say that the world, as we see it today, is inhabited by 8.1 billion human beings. The role of women in bringing these many human beings on the surface of the Earth is simply unquestionable and unimaginable. However, having or not having a child is completely a woman's choice, but time and again, this choice has been densely dominated by men. In many ancient and popular societies, women have been simply considered as 'baby-making machines' - a human being, with little or no self-rights, just serving as a progenitor of future generations for the society. The paper explains the motives of the Nazi party behind using German women's bodies for creating a racially pure population. Also, this paper dwells into how Jewish women's bodies were heavily abused due to racial politics in order to obstruct, destroy and eliminate the Jewish population entirely. This research is aimed towards revealing how women's bodies were used and abused (differently) during the Nazi regime and how the Nazi aspirations dominated the liberty of a woman's decision to birth, delimit and bring up their offsprings. The research also aims to direct any future studies towards understanding the significance of dismissing feminine liberties to achieve political motives.

Keywords - German Women, Jewish Women, Nazi Motives, Abuse and Torture, Birth Control

Introduction

The existence of women during the Nazi period was heavily impacted by various responsibilities and agendas that the Nazi Regime was running. There were many government-launched programs that motivated the procreation of a biologically elite master race, but at the same time defilement of the Jewish race. Both these agendas took a heavy toll on women's physical condition, however, the pain and perishment of Jewish women was quite higher than that of the German women.

In order to promote their two main programs - *Rassankunde* and *Rassanchande*, the Nazi government exploited women for their bodies and their biological ability to reproduce. Apart from utilizing women for sexual satisfaction and sexual slavery, there were many other motives that propelled the abuse and exploitation of women's bodies. These women included German and Jewish, however their modes of exploitation varied. In this paper, we will explore the ways in which women's bodies were exploited in order to fulfill the motives of the Nazi Regime. Also, we will learn about the various ways in which the womanly attributes like motherhood and parenting were seen differently on the basis of racial identities.

Creation of a Master Race: The Nazi Motive

In a speech on September 8, 1934, Hitler proclaimed: *“In my state, the mother is the most important citizen.”* (The Biological State: Nazi Racial Hygiene, 1933–1939.)

There have been many studies in which the writers have recorded how women’s bodies were heavily exploited to fulfill the Nazi agenda of creating a racially pure Germany and a biologically elite German race. One of these was the author Dr. Beverly Chalmers, who in her book *Birth, Sex and Abuse* (2015) gives a horrendous account of the unspeakable exploitation of Jewish and German women. Her studies prove how Jewish women were considered racially impure due to which their overall motherhood and parenting rights were snatched and heavily exploited. On the other hand, due to the overtly increasing fanaticism about creating a racially pure Aryan race, many German women were advised to bear at least 4 children.

The Nazi regime implemented policies that promoted the procreation of couples deemed racially “acceptable” in order to maximize the number of offspring. The mother of this Nazi Party leader was awarded the “Mother’s Cross” due to the size of her family, which included a significant number of children. The specific date of the event in Germany is unclear. German women of desirable racial background were subjected to significant pressure to bear a substantial number of children for the sake of the Reich. The feminist movement encountered targeted opposition, with societal expectations dictating that women should confine themselves to domestic roles primarily focused on childbearing. In certain historical contexts, it was observed that Aryan men who were married to wives unable to conceive or who had reached an age where conception was unlikely were encouraged to consider divorce and then enter into unions with younger spouses in order to continue their lineage (Czarnowski 1996).

The promotion of extramarital sexual relations was endorsed, and adolescents involved in the Nazi youth movement engaged in sexual activities at an early stage of their lives. Illegitimate births were not socially stigmatized. Simultaneously, the practice of abortion was prohibited specifically for women of Aryan descent. The authors of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum write how the Nazi dictatorship implemented the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases (Hereditary Health Law), which aligned with the aspirations of eugenics advocates. This legislation facilitated the involuntary sterilization of individuals, regardless of gender, afflicted with hereditary conditions such as feeble-mindedness, schizophrenia, manic-depressive disorder, genetic epilepsy, Huntington’s chorea (a degenerative form of dementia), genetic blindness, genetic deafness, severe physical deformity, and chronic alcoholism. These individuals were deemed ‘undesirable’ in the pursuit of producing a racially homogeneous generation of German children (Bock 1983).

The Nazi regime, within its initial 6 months of coming to power, claimed and emphasized on creating a master race which consisted of only the racially pure and biologically fit German people. To ensure its continuity, they launched many programs which promoted the German women to a higher place in the society if they bore and reared more

than 4 children. Many medical programs were launched to ensure the procreation of a biologically elite race.

- a. The Lebensborn Program: This program was established by Heinrich Himmler, one of the most important members of the Nazi Party of Germany and was held as the main architect of the Holocaust. He initiated this in the year 1935, and for the whole next decade, it was executed extensively by the most infamous German paramilitary force *Schutzstaffel* (SS) to create a healthy Aryan race.
- b. The Nuremberg Laws: Nuremberg Laws were implemented by the Nazi Party in 1935. These were such laws that changed the status of 'German Jews' to 'Jews in Germany'. This caused a legal penalisation of Jews in the German establishment, prohibiting them from various things like getting married to Germans, farming, dealing in stocks, and most importantly, compelling them to wear a badge of the Star of David on their dresses as a method of marking and segregating Jews and non-Jews. This led to their segregation and later extermination (The Nuremberg Laws 2023).
- c. Rassenkunde: *Rassenkunde* is a motive that was behind many actions taken by the Nazi Germans in order to establish a racially pure Aryan race. This word means 'Racial Purification'. To legislate their racial beliefs, the Nazis adopted the Nuremberg Laws. They bought into the myth that different races are fundamentally inferior to one another. Germans were deemed by the Nazis to be part of the superior 'Aryan' race. The so-called Aryan Germans were regarded as the superior race. The Nuremberg Laws were a critical factor in accomplishing this motive. In order to achieve this motive, he used and especially forced German women to bear more and more children and promoted many socially and morally stigmatized acts like extra-marital affairs, polygamy, children out of wedlock, and teenage pregnancies.
- d. Rassenchande: Another Nazi motive that heavily influenced the women and their physical well-being was *Rassenchande*. This literally means 'Racial defilement'. Following this motive, the Nazis havoced the entire Jewish population with various atrocities. This was one of those motives that impacted and propagated the heavy use and abuse of Jewish women's bodies in extremely sordid and unsanitary conditions. The main purpose was to completely eliminate the non-German, or in particular, the Jewish population. In order to achieve this motive, Hitler enforced and summoned various medical experts to abort Jewish children in massively unsanitary and life-threatening conditions (irrespective of the month of pregnancy), conduct various medical experiments on Jewish children and women of different age, and exterminate newly born Jewish children along with or in front of their mothers in order to stop the progenesis of Jewish population in Germany (Ghert-Zand 2016).

Initially, the concerned Nazi organizations operated various facilities, with a primary focus on maternity homes, where women could receive assistance during childbirth or seek support for family-related concerns during Rassenkunde. Various projects with similar motives also

admitted single women who were presumably pregnant or had already given birth and required assistance, on the condition that both the woman and the father of the child were deemed 'racially valuable'. Approximately 60% of the maternal population was not married. The programme afforded individuals the opportunity to discreetly deliver offspring in a location other than their residence, so avoiding societal disapproval. If the mothers expressed a desire to relinquish custody of their children, the programme also provided access to orphanages and a foster care service (Crossland 2006).

However, the Lebensborn Program under which many programs that promoted Rassenkunde started in a way that could not be deemed as 'brutal' in its approach. As many women were widowed or left by their husbands during the war, this program seemed to support them and their *racially pure* children. However, in its later years, this program worked extensively on the concept of *Germanisation*. However, also under this concept, many children were abducted from countries like Yugoslavia and Poland, also encompassing Russia, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, and Norway (Fauer 2018). According to reports, Himmler expressed the rationale behind their actions as follows: "*It is incumbent upon us to relocate the children from their surroundings, as either we assimilate any valuable lineage that can be of benefit to our own people and provide it a place within our society, or we eradicate this lineage.*" (Stone 2023)

This brutal approach of uprooting children from their natural parents and giving them foster care became even worse when physically disabled and racially impure children were either taken to concentration camps as slave workers or to the gas chambers to be killed.

Kinder, Küche and Kirche

Raising genetically pure children was the responsibility of the 'hereditarily fit' mother. Therefore, the Nazis associated femininity with childbirth and fecundity. In addition, society no longer valued women who possessed above-average ability. It was also widely held that women belonged only in the private domain of the house, while the public sphere was a place for men only. It was generally accepted that if a woman were to enter the workforce or otherwise participate in public life, she would be unable to fulfill her noble role as a mother of genetically pure Aryan children (Guenther 1997).

A mother's act of giving birth was equated with that of a soldier because it was felt that she was doing her part to defend the country. Therefore, women who chose to become mothers in Nazi Germany were given respect. The Nazis instituted numerous changes that reshaped German society in order to realize their racial motives. Jewish and non-Jewish Germans alike had their personal freedoms severely curtailed by these new laws. Furthermore, the dictatorial character of Nazism meant that the administration attempted to regulate citizens' actions even when they weren't in the public eye. A person's physical being was no longer respected while the Nazis were in power. Instead, the corpse became a landmark open to the public. This allowed Nazi ideology to permeate mainstream ideas about gender and sexuality. The Nazi regime enacted a variety of gender and sexuality-related legislation in order to further their ideology. In the end, these measures had a major effect on German culture (Loroff 2012).

Elimination of the Inferior Race: The Jewish Fate

An independent Canadian scholar, Dr Beverly Chalmers, who has worked extensively on the challenges in giving birth in various social, political, economic, and religious contexts such as those found in Apartheid South Africa, Communist Russia, post-FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) Canada, Nazi Germany, and overly medicalized countries has acutely discussed the condition of women - both Jewish and German during the Nazi regime. She has illuminated the facts of how women's bodies were used and abused to fulfill various Nazi agendas like racial purity and Jewish race defilement. She has highlighted the role played by medical facilities in the Nazi regime in accomplishing these roles.

To *'further illuminate the role played by the medical sector, in particular, in controlling reproductive and sexual lives to accomplish the Nazi goals'*, and to *'integrate the scattered evidence for these Nazi policies and practices'*, Chalmers (2015) argues in the introductory chapter of *Birth, Sex, and Abuse* that *"targeting procreation and sexual orientation was a central theme underlying many aspects of Nazi policy through both 'positive eugenics' and 'negative eugenics.'"*

A careful deduction of her work suggests that Nazi party's reproductive policies with women (Jewish and German) were quite different as their primary motive was to create a population of racially pure Aryan race. Apart from this motive, various other atrocities like sexual abuse, forced prostitution and forced medical experiments conducted on Jewish women was also a part of the Nazi regime. The most sadistic and infamous among these Nazi medical practitioners was Dr Josef Mengele rationalized women coming to the concentration camps like this -

<p>When a Jewish child is born, or a woman comes to camp with a child already... I there are camp normally. permitting the mother</p>	<p>don't know what to do with the child. I can't set the child free because no longer any Jews who live in freedom. I can't let the child stay in the because there are no facilities... that would enable the child to develop It would not be humanitarian to send a child to the ovens without mother to be there to witness the child's death... That is why I send the and child to the gas oven together.</p>
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Women who seemed to be pregnant or who were carrying infants or toddlers were immediately taken to the gas chambers after reception at the various extermination camps. Pregnancy and childbirth among Jewish women in ghettos, disguise, concentration, and labor camps. Women were threatened with death if they were pregnant in any of these situations. As a result, the vast majority of Jewish women who were pregnant had abortions (regardless of how far along they were).

Dr Gisella Perl, who the Nazis recognised as a skilled physician while she was being held in the Hungarian Women's Camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. When Dr Josef Mengele, the camp's head physician, found out what she specialized in; he gave her direct orders to report any pregnant women to him. The fate of these women became immediately apparent to Perl. Thus, if she discovered a woman who was pregnant, she would keep her hidden and either stop the pregnancy or quietly have the baby delivered and then kill it. It was their last hope

for survival; one day, she hoped, the women would even be able to bear children in peace (Gross 2020). In her memoir *'I was a Doctor in Auschwitz'* (1948) she quoted, "*No one will ever know what it meant to me to destroy these babies. But if I had not done it, both mother and child would have been cruelly murdered*".

The situational ethics that as a doctor she had to follow was crucial in order to save women from the massively dangerous medical facilities and experiments that Dr Josef Mengele intended to conduct on these women. A supporting argument to her work comes from the daughter of a holocaust survivor, Eva Hoffman, who says, "*She could not afford ambivalence*", which shows how crucial it was for a child to die in order for a Jewish mother to at least survive.

However, their survivals also barely meant anything because of the other horrors that they would face if they somehow survived the life-threatening experiments and forced unsanitary abortions in the Nazi medical facilities. How non-German women, which included Romas, Jewish, or basically, any other race than Aryans would have to indulge in various other abusive practices like forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and medical experiments. Inmates of concentration camps were subjected to a wide range of medical experiments by Mengele and his fellow Nazi doctors. Finding methods for widespread sterilization was a central theme in many of them. Torture experiments involving medications, x-rays, and chemicals were conducted on Jewish women (and men). In order to study the effects of the therapies on the reproductive organs, the human guinea pigs were often violently sliced open. As would be expected, this usually ended in fatalities. Aliza Barouch, who testified about her experience being sterilized at Auschwitz, is cited by Chalmers. Three times, she spent 20 minutes in front of two separate x-ray machines. Her feces were bloody, she had no hair left, and her skin had gone black. The ovariectomy was performed by a Jewish prisoner doctor.

While Barouch did give birth to four other infants, all of whom died shortly after birth, the doctor only removed one ovary and a portion of her uterus, allowing her to go on to have two healthy children. The Jewish doctor was trying to save Barouch and the other girls, but the Nazis caught on and dispatched him to the death chambers. Barouch claims that the radioactive damage to her skin rendered the stitches in her abdomen useless. She was infected horribly, yet all they did was bandage her wounds and secure them with safety pins.

Also, if these women were deemed to be fit enough for labor work, they would be exposed to exhaustive labor work which would last for more than 14-15 hours a day, or even more. If a woman who was not deemed fit for any of the mentioned jobs, she would be sent to the concentration camp or gas chambers to be killed. However, one most notable fact that we come across is that gas chambers were not exclusively used only to put non-German women to death. These chambers were also utilized if a German woman, who could not contribute to the Nazi motives had to be eliminated as she was deemed 'unfit' to be accepted in the biologically and racially pure and healthy elite society.

Within six months of taking power in 1933, the Nazis instituted eugenic sterilization and euthanasia programmes. The medical community played a role in this since many doctors and nurses accepted the Nazi-promoted ideas of Rassenkunde and Rassenschande. In the end, between 350,000 and 400,000 German men and women were sterilized against their will at one of the 250 designated sterilization clinics. They were sterilized for being 'non-Aryan' or because of their perceived mental or physical incapacity (Usborne 2011).

Conclusion - Twisted Womanhood during the Nazi Regime

Hitler and the Nazi party officials portrayed the ideal German woman as the breadwinner and nurturer of the future generation of German children. Numerous policies and laws were enacted by the Nazis that affected women and Germany's future. By passing these laws, the Third Reich effectively controlled the private life of German women while relegating women to the position of mother and guardian of the next generation. In order for the Nazis to succeed, women had to stay in the 'private sphere' of the house and the kitchen. Women were actively discouraged from pursuing careers in politics and academia. While Nazi males initially determined women's roles, they eventually rejected the traditional role of mothers. Despite Hitler and the Nazi belief in women as mothers who stayed in the 'private sphere', many women served in key positions for the dictatorship. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis came to power and immediately began preaching the superiority of the German race and the necessity of eradicating any threats to it. Many young women were dispatched to the occupied eastern territories to aid the repatriation of ethnic Germans who were trained to identify potential adversaries of the German state. Decisions for sterilization were also made by women social workers. Women were the guards in Nazi concentration and death camps and the nurses who conducted experiments on the mentally sick. While males may have been in charge of the Nazi racist programmes, women were important in their success. Nazi Germany's views on women's responsibilities were deeply rooted in racism (Nelson 2014).

The Nazi motive of creating a biologically healthy and racially pure population became so widespread and out-of-control, that they even implemented various laws that outlawed any sort of bodily freedom for German women. They could not choose to abort their children or have no children at all. If a woman, who was fertile and racially pure resisted child-bearing, she would be put into brothels so that German males, especially soldiers could impregnate them and then they could be put through those organizations which took care of the successful birth and raising of the child. These children would be kept in government approved foster homes and would be given to desirable German parents for adoption. Thus, any method of escaping from the overtly suppressive child-bearing responsibility would not work in favor of German women.

However, on the other hand, the same concept of womanhood that became synonymous with motherhood was not equally valued when the question was about Jewish women. An American novelist and short-story writer Cynthia Ozick, in one of her stories named *The Shawl* describes how Jews were led to their deaths in an unknown direction. The psyche of a woman sifting through the remains of her children's deaths is laid bare by her (Scrafford 1989).

The medical experiments, the most horrific of all other forms of physical torture for women, were personally supervised by the infamous sadist Dr Josef Mengele, who had just begun an acclaimed profession in anthropology and medicine when war broke out. When he arrived at Auschwitz, he saw a myriad of possibilities: a wide range of human subjects available for study without the usual ethical constraints. The purpose of all of Mengele's research, from studying the genetics of eye color to dwarfism, was the same. His work

established a scientific foundation for the Nazi worldview, propelling him to the pinnacle of the new dictatorship (Rice 2020).

Thus, although Nazi propaganda often praised parenthood, women were not immune to the systemic racism of the government. Women were heavily involved in Nazi racism despite the Nazi assertion that they would shelter them from the ‘unfortunate’ side of racial politics.

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Lord Shiva in Contemporary Popular Writings

Saroj Bala

Abstract

Shaivism acknowledges Lord Shiva as the supreme God who is also a major god of the Hindu pantheon. Millions across the globe follow Shaivism for its realistic, ceremonial, and pluralistic approach to life. The magic and fascination attached to Lord Shiva are magnanimous. The legend of Shiva is represented by many authors especially the contemporary trend of mythological fiction has witnessed many additions to the corpus of books on Shiva. The paper attempts to look at the representation of the myth of Shiva in popular Indian writings where subversion is widespread. The paper also focuses on the mythological fiction genre for representing Lord Shiva in works of popular authors.

Keywords: Representation, Popular, Subversion, Contemporary, Mythology

Introduction

Shiva's presence is ubiquitous and captivating because of his power and peculiar lifestyle. Be it scriptures or contemporary writings, he is the supreme deity who is impartial to his devotees as he showers boons on Suras and Asuras. Popular literature has many genres among which mythology-inspired fictional literature is creating waves. Episodes, characters and stories are being fictionalised to lure young readers who otherwise don't identify the rich mythological heritage of India. Besides Sita, Draupadi, Shiva, Ram and other prominent religious figures writers also explore the marginal characters to give them the voice of dissent. Contemporary writers like Amish Tripathi, Namita Gokhale, Devdutt Pattanaik, and others have written about the legend of Shiva for various reasons like lucre and fame. Amish Tripathi has made a mark by adding thrill, suspense and drama to Shiva's adventures in his Shiva Trilogy consisting of *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011) and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013). It presents Shiva as a rough-hewn tribal chief from Tibet who is disgusted with the pointless attacks of the rival Pakrati tribe. As a chief, he is decisive in accepting Captain Nandi's offer to migrate to Meluha, a near-perfect empire. Zina (2021) finds that "Tripathi with his *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series* has taken up mythological characters and transformed them into humane ones without tarnishing their grandeur. He weaves his stories with a blend of fantasy, logic and myth" (21). Along with mythological fiction simplified versions of the *Shiv Maha Purana* are also available in the market. Devdutt Pattanaik is the celebrity writer of such works, which are meant for people who are not acquainted with the scriptures but are eager to grasp the gist of mythology and epics. The famous TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* claims to be based on the works of Devdutt Pattanaik. He has written three books on Shiva in printed form namely: *Shiva: An Introduction* (1997), *Shiva to Shankara: Giving Form to the Formless* (2006) and *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2011). The three online books on the legend of Shiva available in Kindle edition are

Shiva the Destroyer (2016), *What Shiva Told Shakti* (2017) and *The Ultimate Tapasvin* (2018). Graphic Novels are also popular among young readers who enjoy visual representations of their heroes from mythology. “*Shiva: The Destroyer*” by Campfire Graphic Novel is a retelling that makes Shiva’s stories easily accessible to younger readers and fans of comic books.

Literature Survey

Mythology is an essential part of culture that keeps on evolving with time and the addition of new myths, characters, stories, and interpretations is natural in this process. Contemporisation of mythology is also very common in popular literature for example Amish Tripathi’s *Shiva Trilogy* and Devdutt Pattanaik’s books on Shiva and other gods. According to Pattanaik (1997):

Myths are not common tales; they are not parables or legends. They are not conceived in dreams and expressed through symbols as a reaction to man’s inexplicable yet desperate need to validate his presence in the cosmos. They do not teach, they generate experience. And in minds fertilized by curiosity, turn into seeds of profound thought that enable man to discover his true personality, his *Svadharmā* (Shiva: An Introduction, xii).

Dwivedi R R. (2020) comments that “One of the post-modern ventures of progressive creative writers has been to relook into the myths, mythical episodes and characters present therein. Their revisiting is triggered by a kind of dissatisfaction with and grudge against the established narrative of the past”(34). For the contemporary, he observes “As such, they bother to revisit the myths with a motif to critically examine the veracity and the rationale of the context in which they have been created” (35). The liberties taken by the writers of mythological fiction are the product of subversion in the story. Amish (2010) introduces to the reader, his protagonist Shiva in his first book and wonders: “But what if we are wrong? What if Lord Shiva was not a figment of rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become godlike because of his karma” (The Immortals, xvii). Regarding Amish’s *Shiva*, Basu (2021) reveals that “The protagonist is a human being, Shiva whose bildungsroman through the trilogy transforms him into God, but without actually changing any of his physical attributes. Thus, at the level of anthropomorphism, this method of representation sheds light on the humane aspects of divinity” (96). He concludes by saying:

Indian mythology showcases the Gods as flawless in most of the cases, but this series tries to show that there is a flip side to that coin, through alternative representation. Like the tragic hero, Shiva also falls prey to hubris, and thus the representation of the divine being completes a full circle as he comes back to the realm of the human again, after making a grave mistake (103).

Devdutt has popularised the legend of Shiva by giving different meanings to Shiva's persona, symbols associated with the deity and ways to worship the iconic image of a Lingam. Both authors have used Shiva legend to revive Hinduism, Indian culture and the charismatic personality of the Lord. In this context, Devi and Singla (2021) compare the representations of Shiva by Tripathi and Pattanaik:

His blue throat, Trident, His third eye, Aum, Ganas, Halahal, Snow clad mountain that enwraps the persona of Shiva are elucidated. In this era of demythologization and re-mythologization, myths of Shiva are studied from a new perspective. Shiva arose as the cool-hot dude in Tripathi and a high philosopher of life in Pattanaik. Modern trends of guide-by-slide, sage-on-sage and digital humanities have drastically transformed the mask of myth from Nagmandala times to Shiva Trilogy (57).

Besides these many writers have written books on Shiva like *The Dance of Shiva* by Anand Coomaraswamy (2012) is a compilation of essays which is read and cited by Indian and Foreign authors like Fritjof Capra .A K Ramanujan's book, *Speaking of Siva* (1973) contains Basavanna's devotional poems for Lord Shiva. Stella Kramrich's *The Presence of Shiva* (1981) presents Shiva's presence as a living god and Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's '*Shiva: The Erotic Ascetic*' (1973) interprets the myth of Shiva with a Western lens.

Contemporary Popular Writings

Andy McDermott's *Vault of Shiva* (2010) is a fantasy where the deity Shiva's name is used for the treasure hunt. This imaginary story has secret contents and weapons which are kept in the Shiva-Vedas, the records of the god of annihilation. David Frawley's book *Shiva, the Lord of Yoga* (2015) presents Lord Shiva as the Guru of Yoga and meditation. *Age of Shiva* (2014) was written by James Lovegrove who is a New York Times best-selling author. An Indian-origin Maryland-based author Manil Suri (2008) has also written a trilogy by the title *The Age of Shiva*. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's *Shiva the Ultimate Outlaw* (2014) published by Isha Foundation portrays Shiva, as the ultimate outlaw who is Adiyogi as well. He is above the physical dimensions that come in his path of meditation and solitude. This e-book has graphics details of the Lord and his love for Nature. Santosh Gairola has penned five books on the legend of Shiva, *The Love Story of Lord Shiva & Goddess Shakti: A Tale of Divine Love* (2019), *The Incredible Qualities of Lord Shiva*, *The Benefits of Om Namah Shivaya* (2019), *The Magnificent Shiva: Why there is no one like Lord Shiva and Mahadev* (2020), *The Lord of the Lords* (2019). All these books are available in Kindle editions. Santosh Gairola's *The Love Story of Lord Shiva & Goddess Shakti: A Tale of Divine Love* is the story of the Shiv-Sati and Shiv-Parvati union. *Shiva: the Ultimate Time Traveller* by Shailendra Gulhati (2015) depicts Shiva's contribution to the art of Yoga and his consort's devotion to the lord. *The Book of Shiva* by Namita Gokhale (2012) praises Shiva:

Shiva's manifestations are complex and contradictory, for he is the all-encompassing reality who resolves all polarities in his being. His auspicious and terrible aspects are all mirrors of the same primary self. Shiva is the god who must not be named, for to name is to limit and curtail; yet his many names together constitute the sum of his unknowable mysteries (15).

Preetha Rajah Kannan's Shiva Trilogy is based on the stories from the Tamil *Peria Puranam* which narrate the utmost devotion of the Nayanmars towards the Great Lord. Her first book *Shiva in the City of Nectar* (2016) presents Lord Shiva in different avatars. The second book *Son of Shiva* (2017) has stories associated with the exploits of the great son of Shiva, Kartikeya. The third book, *The Hounds of Shiva* (2018) details the devotion of sixty-three Nayanmars. *The Reluctant Family Man: Shiva in Everyday Life* by Nilima Chitgopekar (2019) portrays Shiva as the destroyer of evil who teaches us to use situations and issues with great discretion. Ranjit Chaudhri's *The Shiva Sutras* (2019) describes the dream of sage Vasugupta about Shiva who instructs him to find a special stone near a stream. The book has all the lessons required for leading a contented life with the grace of Shiva. Haroon Khalid's (2015) *In Search of Shiva* highlights Islamic puritanism and extremism in Pakistan which avoids South Asian roots. The shrines of phallic images, sacred trees, animals and antiquity of Indus Valley civilization are in danger of being wiped out by the extremists. The book warns of the risk of Islamic fundamentalism which might destroy the traces of relics and traditions of ancient times which have been there for centuries. *Shiva: The Stories & Teachings from the Shiva Maha Purana* by Vanmali (2002) simplifies the stories of *The Shiva Mahapurana* to show the path to wisdom and enlightenment. Chitralkha Singh's *Siva: The Greatest God* (2005) narrates the numerous manifestations of Shiva described in the scriptures and mythology. His various forms like Rudra, Maheswara, Nataraja, and Yogeshwara are detailed comprehensively with sketches and illustrations. While describing the significance of symbols she states:

Nataraja wears the skin of a tiger, which he himself slew. Ahankara or the skin of egoism is that tiger; it is beastly and ferocious and fiercely fights when attacked, but it has to be killed and Siva could only do so. Desire, which consumes human beings, without even being satiated, can be compared to a tiger. Siva, by killing the tiger and wearing its skin as apparel shows his complete mastery over desire (69).

Vimanika Comics has introduced a series on Shiva's grandeur by the name of *Shiva - The Legend of The Immortal Book-1* (2011) by Kshitish Padhy & Abdul Rasheed which glorifies Lord Shiva's exploits in typical Vimanika style *Mystic Tales from Shiv Mahapurana* (2022) by Dr Prashant Pareek guides human beings about Purushartha (hard work), Dharma (right conduct), Artha (money), Kama (desire), and Moksha (salvation) according to the teachings of the *Shiv Maha Purana*. The book *Siva* by Ramesh Menon categorises *Maha Shiv Purana's* stories to make them interesting for the readers. D K Hari's *Understanding Shiva* advises devotees to be sincere in devotion and surrender for salvation along with worldly pleasures. Prashant Saxena's *Eye of Shiva-Beyond the Quantum Universe* explores the Vijana Bhairav Tantra and Kaivalya Upnishada to understand Shiva.

The most popular among these writers is Amish Tripathi whose *Shiva Trilogy* has set a benchmark in the mythological fiction genre. His sensational series of three novels entitled *Shiva Trilogy* is a retelling of the Shiva Myth of Hindu mythology. Balaji (2016) clarifies that Amish "Attempts to hypothesize how an author can resurrect, reconstruct the mythology and how to bring necessary additions to the ancient story and continue it or create altogether a new story" (58). It depicts the superhuman hero Shiva who is prophesied to be the destroyer of evil. Tripathi has demythologized the characters to make them appear more interesting and convincing. Patra (2018) identifies "Tripathi's handling of myths as "jumbled memories of

true past” harks back to Jung’s monumental idea of “collective unconscious” or a racial memory comprising of “primordial images” and archetypes” (228). His fan following is responsible for his comparison with the likes of *Tolkien* and *Paulo Coelho*. His debut publication *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010) claimed the best-seller title quickly.

Popular author Devdutt Pattanaik has written three books in print form and three online Kindle editions on the legend of Shiva. The isolation of Shiva as an ascetic is given a positive makeover to highlight his grandeur. Pattanaik explains “Shiva is the greatest Tapasvin. He spends no heat engaging with the outside world. All the heat he generates remains contained within his body. Naturally, the world around Shiva, unseen by him, gradually loses all heat and becomes cold” (7 Secrets, 23).

Conclusion

Shiva as a fascinating and charismatic god is popular among young and old readers which can be seen by the number of books written on him in different genres in print and Kindle editions. Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik reign supreme among these writers in achieving success at a larger scale. Books on Shiva are available in Hindi and regional languages also because different types of Shaivism can be found across India and abroad where the population following Sanatan Dharma is residing. Contemporary popular writings on Shiva are in demand from various media platforms for adaptations and translations. The mythological fiction genre has boosted these writings, which are available for readers of all age groups.

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A Study on Human Tendencies and the Backgrounds in KP Poorna Chandra Tejaswi's *Carvalho*

Amshupali V

Abstract

KP Poornachandra Tejaswi's novel *Carvalho* is a story of expedition and adventure which Carvalho takes up with rural people who are rustic and naïve by nature. Story revolves around several incidents like Mandanna's marriage, Narrator's involvement in bee keeping, the special bond which connects Carvalho to vagabonds like Mandanna, Laxmanna, Prabhakara etc and their hunt in finding out the flying lizard.

Keywords: Bee Keeping, Pot Honey, Entomologist, Glow Worm, Illicit Brewing, Flying Lizard, Western Ghats, Malnad Region

Introduction

K P Poorna Chandra Tejaswi son of Kuppali Venkatappa Puttapa (Gnanapeeta award winner) is a renowned writer in Kannada language. His themes are simple yet interesting. Local and mundane things interest him a lot. He has an amazing style of writing which makes a reader hook up to the book till the end. In *Carvalho* he glimpses us with different aspect of nature with the life. Humorous characters add glory to the story of *Carvalho*.

Narrator

The narrator is an educated person who ventures into farming, though he had all the chances to have a well settled life in the city. The narrator is desperate to connect with the nature and the soil and as a result he purchases few acres of land and settles in Moodigere with his wife and daughter. His first encounter with Mandanna and Laxmanna was when he goes to buy honey from the bee cooperative society. As a person from city background he doubts when Mandanna offers one tin of honey for seventy eight rupees. It is seen clearly through his actions that he is not convinced that they both are telling the truth. Despite that he purchases and still in the doubt whether he should trust that kopra look like honey. He confesses his doubts to his wife and Pyara and asks them to check it and taste if it's real honey or not. This sort of skepticism is common among city people. With lots of introspection he trusts Mandanna later.

Mandanna

Mandanna being a village rogue is very well infused into the forest environment. He acts as a guide to Carvalho by briefing him about the whereabouts of the birds, insects, bees and also

flying lizard. He is bee keeper with credible knowledge about the same. He is described as a born naturalist by Carvalho. Many of his antics create unnecessary problems for Carvalho and the narrator. He is a person who lives in the present moment and doesn't hesitate to speak his mind outright. He is gullible and can be easily be fooled as it happens in the case of illicit brewing in the honey pot. He is distressed when Norway Ramaiah is not willing to marry off his daughter to him. He seeks all the possible help to make it happen. Though at the outset it seems that the narrator hates Mandanna but in reality it is not so. Mandanna talks about flying lizard to Carvalho as he had seen it in the Western Ghats. Mandanna accompanies Carvalho in the expedition. Ultimately they were successful in finding out the flying lizard but unfortunately couldn't capture it in the camera.

Carvalho

Carvalho is a scientist who works in Paddy Research Centre and he is in service of the government. He regularly includes Mandanna in his nature excursions because of the knowledge he has on nature. Using straightforward and frequently humorous narrative, the book provides an accurate portrait of rural Kannada life. Mandanna, who is hoping to get married, spends the first half of the book getting into legal difficulty and the second half of the book having to be rescued by the narrator. Then, everyone started looking for an elusive flying lizard, whose confirmed discovery would provide new light on the stages of evolution. With a select group of friends, including Kiwi, his golden spaniel, and Biryani Kariappa, who earned his nickname for his remarkable ability to make biryani, the narrator of the novel embarks on an expedition into the vast woodlands.

Analysis

This study focuses on human tendencies relating to their background, we can understand Mandanna being a villager and a vagabond has no sense of responsibility, unless he is forced to do so. All his interest lies in bee keeping and roaming around the forest observing things. It is because of Carvalho he gets a meaning to life as he is treated very well by Carvalho. No one is worried about his wellbeing, because of his background and he doesn't have a job. Narrator is an educated farmer who wanted to explore farming and agriculture; he is a sensitive man with a family. He cares for the people who love him. Though he speaks rude at times to his servant, he is very fond of them and very kind hearted. He becomes emotionally disturbed when his dog kiwi falls sick, was very much restless until it was healed. He gives surety for Mandanna and makes sure he is out of the jail. He explores life and forest with Carvalho by amalgamating his thoughts.

Prabhakara, camera man works like Carvalho's shadow. He is very much interested in growing in his profession with Carvalho. He gets involved in Mandanna's marriage ceremony. He joins the expedition with Carvalho and his team, and tries his best to click the picture of flying lizard. Biryani Kariappa is known for his culinary skills though in actual he is a tree climber. He is very instinctive by his nature. He does things without thinking about the aftermath. He accompanies Carvalho in their scientific expedition as their cart man. He is more interested in shooting the birds and animals on their way than looking for the flying

lizard. His tree climbing skill is put to use when he grabs the flying lizard by its tail. Yenka the snake catcher who had come in search of his lost cattle joins them in the hunt.

Conclusion

KP Poorna Chandra Tejaswi's *Carvalho* engages entomologist quest in understanding life and its purpose. It tells us about the evolution of man since Stone Age, the environmental changes brought on humans, birds and animals. Carvalho is of the opinion that examples are true and the judgment is illusory and wouldn't believe in anything without evidence. Deep and complex thoughts, far beyond expressible language made them believe in divine nature of time god. Finally, the team becomes successful in finding the flying Lizard but fails to contain it, as it is impossible to capture time.

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Panoptic Power Space in Travels in the Scriptorium by Paul Auster

Abdul Wahid

Abstract

This study delves into the exploration of power dynamics and individual subjectivity within Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium*, employing Michel Foucault's panoptic framework. Focusing on the character of Mr. Blank, trapped within a cryptic prison-like environment, the research elucidates the profound impact of institutionalized control on personal agency and identity. Through an analysis of Mr. Blank's experiences and interactions, the study uncovers the complex interplay between power, space, and subjectivity in Auster's narrative. By situating Auster's work within Foucault's theoretical framework, the research sheds light on broader themes of autonomy, surveillance, and resistance in contemporary society. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of power and control in shaping individual lives and societal structures.

Keywords: Panopticon, Power, Space, Subjectivity, *Travels in the Scriptorium*, Paul Auster

Introduction

Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium* immerses readers in a world of intrigue, where the protagonist, Mr. Blank, grapples with the enigmatic confines of a mysterious room. Within this space, Auster weaves a narrative rich with themes of power, surveillance, and individual autonomy. Drawing inspiration from Michel Foucault's theories, this research explores the intricate dynamics at play within Auster's novel, particularly focusing on the character of Mr. Blank and his experiences within the panopticon-like prison.

At the core of the inquiry lies Foucault's concept of the panopticon—a metaphorical prison—through which we examine the pervasive influence of power/knowledge in the regimes of modern society. Within the panoptic framework, individuals find themselves subject to constant surveillance and internalized disciplinary mechanisms, shaping their subjectivity and behavior.

As Mr. Blank navigates his confined reality, readers are invited to contemplate the pervasive influence of surveillance and control on individual subjectivity. Through an analysis of Mr. Blank's interactions with enigmatic visitors and his struggle to uncover the truth about his situation, this study seeks to shed light on broader themes of autonomy, subjectivity, and resistance within institutionalized spaces.

Through a careful examination of textual evidence and critical analysis, this research endeavors to contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding literature, power, and the complexities of control. By unraveling the layers of Auster's narrative and exploring its implications for contemporary society, we hope to gain insights into the intersections of literature, philosophy, and cultural critique.

Literature Review

In the vast landscape of literary analysis, much ink has been spilled over two intertwined concepts: Michel Foucault's Panopticon and the narratives penned by Paul Auster. However, this study takes a focused approach, honing in specifically on literature relevant to its inquiry questions. Within the realm of Auster's works, particularly his lesser-discussed novella, we have identified a selection of texts that delve into the intersection of Auster's narratives with Foucault's concept of the Panopticon. These works will be explored in the following discussion.

In the essay, "A Foucauldian reading of Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium*" the analysis identifies that the novella "depicts the complex and multidimensional role of the prison as a disciplinary apparatus." It touches the evolution of the protagonist's psychological consciousness throughout various stages of confinement. Beginning with Mr. Blank's disoriented awakening from a drug-induced slumber, the narrative unfolds to reveal his struggle to comprehend his constrained circumstances. The essay meticulously explores the array of disciplinary mechanisms at play, drawing from Foucault's theoretical framework; however, the analysis appears to lack sufficient depth in its examination of the concept of the panopticon as a power-created space, a crucial aspect that will be central to this research. While it acknowledges the presence of disciplinary mechanisms at length within the narrative, the discussion of the panoptic power prison remains relatively brief and surface-level.

In another article titled *The (In)visible Eye of Authority: Notes on Surveillance in Paul Auster's Ghosts*, Foucault's concept of surveillance serves as a lens to explore power dynamics in Auster's novel *Ghosts*, particularly regarding the construction of subjectivity as an object of power. The analysis delves into both the panopticon and the "author function" within the narrative, asserting that writing serves as a mechanism of power to shape subjectivity within a regime of power/knowledge. Furthermore, it contends that the invention of the panopticon not only facilitates surveillance but also fundamentally alters the fabric of modern existence, trapping individuals in a perpetual state of power dynamics. Notably, the analysis limits itself exclusively to the characters of the *Ghosts*.

Joseph S. Walker's *Criminality and (Self) Discipline: The Case of Paul Auster* offers a Foucauldian perspective on Auster's fiction. The article begins by highlighting Auster's underlying themes, noting, "Beneath the often playful and chaotic surface, there is a sense of deep meaning in the fiction of Paul Auster that concerns itself primarily with the position of the individual in contemporary society—more specifically, with how (or whether) that individual can free himself or herself from dominant hegemonic systems to achieve a measure of self-determination." It explores the concept of individuality and its struggle against prevailing power structures. The main focus of the analysis is to examine "moments and images of criminality that recur with startling frequency in Auster's fiction." While the analysis is insightful, it primarily centers on its title's theme rather than this work's investigative context.

After reviewing the above discussed literature on Paul Auster's narratives, a notable research gap surfaces regarding the analysing of the panopticon concept within Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium*. While the literature reviews acknowledges the presence of

disciplinary mechanisms and surveillance analysis in Auster's works, it underscores a need for a more thorough investigation specifically focused on the *panoptic* power prison as elucidated by Foucault in this particular novella. Thus, an opportunity for research lies in conducting a detailed examination of how the panoptic power space functions within the narrative, its impact on character development and power dynamics, and its broader thematic significance in Auster's text. Such a study has the potential to deepen our understanding of the novel's exploration of control, surveillance, and the individual's quest for autonomy within institutional frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research paper draws primarily from the insights of Michel Foucault, particularly his concepts of the panopticon, power/knowledge regimes, and disciplinary mechanisms as expounded in his classic *Discipline and Punishment*. Foucault's examination of how power operates through surveillance, discipline, and normalization within societal institutions provides a foundational lens through which to examine Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium*.

Research Objective

This MPhil thesis strives to explore the portrayal of power dynamics and control mechanisms within Paul Auster's novel *Travels in the Scriptorium*, utilizing a Foucauldian theoretical framework. Through analysis of the panoptic power space within the narrative, the objective is to elucidate its implications for character development, power relations, and thematic exploration. By examining how Auster's narrative reflects Foucauldian concepts of control, subjugation, and resistance within institutionalized spaces, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of contemporary societal structures and the effects of coercive power and control on individual autonomy and subjectivity.

Research Questions

- What are the implications of the panoptic power space within the novel on character development, power relations, and thematic exploration?
- In what ways does Auster's portrayal of institutionalized spaces reflect Foucauldian concepts of control, individuality, and resistance?

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analyze themes of power dynamics, disciplinary mechanisms, surveillance, and individual autonomy within Paul Auster's *Travels in the Scriptorium*. Through close reading and thematic analysis of the text, supplemented by insights from secondary sources such as scholarly articles and theoretical texts by Michel Foucault, this research explores the intricate interplay of oppressive power and subjugation in the narrative. Ethical considerations are upheld to ensure an accurate representation of the

text, while limitations inherent to qualitative analysis are acknowledged. Overall, this qualitative methodology facilitates a nuanced exploration of Auster's work, contributing to our understanding of its thematic complexities and broader implications.

Discussion

At the heart of *Travels in the Scriptorium* lies the enigmatic character of Mr. Blank, whose existence within the confines of the narrative mirrors that of an incarcerated subject within a panopticon. In this discussion, we delve into Mr. Blank's role as a focal point for exploring the themes of power, surveillance, and individual agency within the confined setting of the text. By examining Mr. Blank's experiences and interactions, we uncover the complexities of subtle control and autonomy within the panoptic power space depicted by Paul Auster. Through this lens, we gain insights into how Auster challenges traditional notions of identity and freedom, inviting readers to question the dynamics of coercion and regulation in contemporary society.

The confined setting in the text mirrors the panopticon—a "no-exit" space perpetually controlled by disciplinary power, reminiscent of modern-day institutions such as prison(s). Mr. Blank struggles to identify whether the setting resembles an apartment, a prison, a hospital, or an asylum: "It is unclear to him where he is. In a room, yes, but in what building is this room located? In a house? In a hospital? In a prison?" (Auster: 2). This uncertainty reflects the panoptic nature of the setting, where individuals are constantly under surveillance and lack clear understanding or control over their environment.

Collectively, these social institutions closely mirror the portrayal of the room space in which Blank is imprisoned. Remarkably, Blank's imprisoned situation aligns with Michel Foucault's concept of the resemblances between prisons and other social institutions, as articulated in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*: "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (228).

In the confined space where Blank is detained, suggestive of an educational institution, the act of reading and writing a manuscript assumes paramount importance within the narrative. Visitors to Mr. Blank's quarters—a police constable, two nurses, a doctor, and a lawyer—further indicate the resemblance of the room to a disciplinary institution such as a hospital or a courtroom.

The persistent interruptions faced by Mr. Blank in the novella significantly disrupt his ability to focus and make sense of his location. His amnesiac condition further complicates matters, preventing him from piecing together the clues to form a coherent narrative about his predicaments situation. Even when Mr. Blank challenges them to abandon ongoing tasks, his visitors ruthlessly assign him new ones perpetuating his state of distraction. For instance, Anna's request for medication, the policeman's assertion on recalling a dream, and the doctor's directive to reconstruct a novel fragment all contribute to Mr. Blank's cognitive overload. These interruptions occur at crucial moments, such as when he is engrossed in reading a script or reflecting on past conversations. Each interruption serves to destabilize Mr. Blank's sense of self and agency, exemplified by Flood's accusation of cruelty and Farr's revelation about the script's fictional nature. Despite his resistance, Mr. Blank finds himself

powerless to assert control over his narrative, ultimately becoming ensnared in a web of external manipulation and surveillance.

The cumulative effect of these interruptions compounds Mr. Blank's predicament, rendering him increasingly vulnerable to the relentless control exercised upon him. Sophie's delivery of lunch further disrupts his storytelling efforts, illustrating the pervasive nature of the interference he faces. Despite his protests, Mr. Blank is thwarted in his attempts to proceed with his version of events, highlighting the extent to which he is subjected to external influence. These interruptions not only impede Mr. Blank's ability to make sense of his situation but also erode his autonomy, leaving him trapped within a system of surveillance and manipulation. Through the portrayal of these interruptions, Paul Auster invites readers to contemplate the fragility of *individuality* and agency in the face of external forces, underscoring the pervasive themes of power and control within the narrative.

The strict rule of keeping Mr. Blank unaware of his life worsens his confusion. Even when his visitors share information, it only adds to the chaos. For example, Anna hints at a past connection but accuses him of betrayal, reigniting his guilt. When Anna mentions treatment, Mr. Blank assumes he is in a hospital, "What's wrong with me? Mr. Blank asks. Am I sick? No, not at all. The pills are part of the treatment" (Auster: 14). Anna quickly denies it, saying the pills are just part of the cure, and leaves him with vague references to his past, leaving Mr. Blank to piece together his memories in desperation. All these clues and exercises symbolize the opaque nature of authority within the panopticon. Mr. Blank's inquiry about his detained condition only leads to further obfuscation, emphasizing the insidious nature of control wielded by anonymous figures. This echoes Foucault's notion of power becoming increasingly anonymous and functional, resulting in the intensified individualization of those subjected to its effect. The anonymity of power is a significant characteristic of the disciplinary mechanism as specified in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*: "... as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized" (Foucault: 193). Mr. Blank becomes a mere object of disciplinary machinery to oppress and exercise regulation over him.

Blank encounters Anna for the first time dressed in his pajamas, and she promptly directs him to change into an ensemble of all-white attire, consisting of "white cotton trousers, a white button-down shirt, white boxer shorts, white nylon socks, and a pair of white tennis shoes" (Auster, 25). This uniformity in clothing suggests a sense of being subjected to an experimental condition, akin to adopting a standardized uniform for the experiment. Within the confines of the panopticon room, where the scene unfolds, the environment operates as a laboratory of power, where individual is objectified and manipulated as subject of scientific inquiry. In this scenario, Mr. Blank finds himself under the supervision and regulation of Anna, assuming an authoritative role.

Furthermore, the symbolism of the all-white uniform extends beyond the immediate context to evoke broader societal norms and standards. Drawing from Foucault's insights, these norms within social structures seek to homogenize individuals, thereby facilitating the exertion of power within the system. Such uniformity fosters compliance and control, ultimately cultivating a state of docility among individuals. Thus, the choice of attire features not only the dynamics within the panopticon but also reflects the inescapable influence of institutional norms in shaping one's behavior and subjectivity.

The above discussed textual analysis, with examples of the panopticon, depicted in the story closely aligns with the Foucauldian concept, particularly evident in the case of Mr. Blank, who remains oblivious to being observed. In line with Foucault's panopticon, surveillance operates invisibly, emphasizing coercion without the subject's awareness. However, both Auster and Foucault share a common goal: the exercise of control. Within the text, the panopticon room functions as a sophisticated disciplinary mechanism, meticulously orchestrating the interactions and observations of its occupants. Through the involvement of visitors and the careful arrangement of objects, the room effectively renders Mr. Blank as a subjugated subject, highlighting the power dynamics at play.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has navigated the intricate interplay between Paul Auster's narratives and Michel Foucault's Panopticon theory, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics of power, space, and subjectivity within *Travels in the Scriptorium*. Through our analysis of Mr. Blank's journey, we've illuminated the profound implications of surveillance and confinement on individual autonomy and agency. The panoptic power space depicted in Auster's narrative serves as a microcosm of modern societal structures, wherein individuals are subjected to constant surveillance and internalized disciplinary mechanisms. By situating Auster's work within Foucault's theoretical framework, we have deepened our understanding of the mechanisms through which power operates in contemporary society.

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~English Language Teaching~

Proposed Selection Criteria: Five-feet Apart Stories for Young Readers

Salinee Maia Antarasena

Abstract

Despite the attempts of several research studies to raise the awareness and to remove the stories containing egregious violence portrayal off the shelf, some studies also emphasised the connection between such portrayal and the violent tendencies of the young readers (Enayati, J., 2023; Kayman, F., Avci, M., & Aydın, E., 2023). Today, the presence of such criteria is no longer uncommon, albeit contentious among cultures. This enticing field of study, however, lacks diversity across several domains (Leahy, M., & Foley, B., 2018). Hence, it is not exaggerating to claim that the integrative framework for interdisciplinary research in this field remains nascent. Hence, this paper addresses the issue of subversive themes that might deviates the healthy development of the young readers and proposes a tentative set of criteria for selecting stories for them, as a necessity to avoid the exposure to unwanted or distressing stimuli during or after the narrative consumption. In order to offer interdisciplinary perspectives on the development of young readers, their interests and language levels, this study takes an interdisciplinary approach to explore the multifaceted role of language use and the use of symbols as key constituents of introducing certain upsetting themes (fear-death-and-dying) in written narratives tailored to target young readers. Based on the theoretical framework, the study postulates tentative selection criteria for the stories with the depictions of death as a central theme for children and youth, and discusses an example of a story that fits well with the tentative criteria and a brief discussion for further study.

Keywords: Narrative assessment, Selection criteria, Creative Writing, Young readers

1. Introduction

Several studies have investigated the issues regarding implicit or explicit portrayal in narrative writings when choosing a story to read to young children (Vechiu, A-P., & Romaniuc, M., 2023). To a certain extent, the appropriateness for the young readers include what counts in the relationship between the books and children in terms of needs, language, meaning, points of view, and instructional qualities—all of which, to be appropriate for their developmental stages, and accordingly, the narrative content should not make the young readers feel scared or shaken, nor should they make children feel anxiety by introducing extremely emotional elements or situations. (Çer, E., & Şahin, E., 2016).

While death and grief are natural and universal experience, introducing such themes in the narratives at the wrong time, or in the wrong way, can be disturbing or unnerving. Nevertheless, as death is a prominent feature of personal experience when considering that

every human relationship will be altered by deaths, the depictions of death has been illustrated abundantly in literature, whereby such depictions always involve at least two minds—those of an author and those of a reader—and at times, involves also the minds of fictional characters in the stories (Carroll, J. 2019). Such depictions in earlier studies could be described as the attempt to express some of the emotions of bereavement and to give shape to the young readers about death (e.g. Skelton, J., 2003). In more recent and contemporary studies whereby realism strives to portray life as is, death becomes an integral part of literature for children and youth, whose very nature is close to them, offers them a world in which they could freely develop their imagination, and hence, morphs into a shield to protect young people from the painful reality in “real world” scenarios (Denkova, J., 2022).

Today, it is not uncommon to find most books for young readers, attempting to illustrate the similarities between the young readers themselves and the characters. On the shelf, some stories display an apparent move to draw the connections right from the title, for instance, *Charlotte’s Web* (by E.B. White); *Duck, Death and the Tulip* (by Wolf Erlbruch); *The Invisible String* (by Patrice Karst); *The Day My Dad Turned Invisible* (by Sean R. Simmons); *When Dinosaurs Die* (by Laurie K. Brown and Marc Brown); *When my daddy died, I ...* (by K.J. Reider); *They Both Die at the End* (by Adam Silvera); *The Dead Moms Club* (by Kate Spencer); *Goodbye Mog* (by Judith Kerr); *The Goodbye Book* (by Todd Parr); *Michael Rosen’s Sad Book* (by Michael Rosen); *Goodnight Mister Tom* (by Michelle Magorian); *Sad Isn’t Bad* (by Michaelene Mundy); *The Scar* (by Charlotte Moundlic); *Lifetimes* (by Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen); *I miss you: A first look at death* (by Pat Thomas); *Wherever you are, my love will find you* (by Nancy Tillman); and *Always Remember* (by Cece Meng); *I’ll Always Love You* (by Hands Wilhelm). Others draw the connections portraying the instances of loss and sorrow issues in a subtler way, for instance, *A Stone for Sasha* (by Aaron Becker); *One Wave at a Time* (by Holly Thompson); *Lost in the Clouds* (by Tom Tinn-Disbury); *The Stars Beneath Our Feet* (by David B. Moore); *The Memory Box* (by Joanna Rowland); *Grandpa’s island* (by Benji Davies); and *The Secret Garden* (by Frances H. Burnett).

However, before drawing the conclusion of the criteria for any stories tailored to illustrate the depictions of death for the young readers and to propose certain ways of how to cope with death, the understanding of the connections between the young readers and the fictional accounts of the death in the stories should be clarified. Therefore, this study is grounded on two theoretical frameworks: (1) the developmental aspects of the understanding of death and the relationship of age; and (2) the developmental aspects of symbolic understanding and the relationship of age.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 The Developmental Aspects of the Understanding of Death and the Relationship of Age

In accordance with the human developmental patterns before reaching the adulthood, the understanding of death of children and youth change with age. One study (Martínez-Caballero, M., et al., 2023) points out that four characteristics of death are described in the

stories, which are universality (*we are all going to die*), irreversibility (*no one who dies comes back to life*), non-functionality (*vital functions and psychological processes are lost*) and causality (*death has a physical cause*)—all of which could be arranged according to the developmental stages of children and youth, whereby the idea of irreversibility is the first to develop; universality and non-functionality come next whereas causality comes at later stage. Regarding the maturity of understanding the concept of death, several recent studies indicate it as a cognitive perspective focusing on the recognition of death as a biological event of children and youth and assert that the "biological" concept of death is first acknowledged in their preschool period (Longbottom, S. & Slaughter, V., 2018; Vázquez-Sánchez, J. et al., 2019; Jingjing, L. & Fuyan, L., 2024). In short, this line of studies postulate that during toddler stage, death may be acknowledged as separation, but not as a permanent condition whereas during preschool-aged stage, the biological concept of death could be acknowledged to a certain extent, but the boundary between reality and their imagination is not yet clear, making them view death as something reversible; then, from school-aged stage and beyond, death could be acknowledged in a more realistic way, or as something universal, final and irreversible.

2.2 The Developmental Aspects of Symbolic Understanding and Relationship of Age

Although the symbolic understanding development occurs in different domains at very different ages, one critical element of symbolic understanding, is knowing how a symbol stands for its referent (Uttal, D., & Yuan, L., 2014). As an integral part of child psychology, symbolic representation could be observed in children's play or their pretend play and their understanding of symbolic content signifies their advancement to a new level of cognition: the true reality and the make-believe elements (Veraksa, A., & Veraksa, N., 2015). On this note, narrative methods could be considered to be ideally suited for children experiencing mental health challenges to cope with the issues (Bennett, L., 2008). However, putting therapeutic perspective aside, one study (Eisen, S., Taggart, J., & Lillard, A., 2022) suggests that while children might prefer realistic to make-believe stories but in the case of fantasy, they prefer familiar fantasy, but not the anthropomorphic animals that wear clothes, talk, and behave like humans to be presented in their stories.

3. Methods and Results

Based on these theoretical frameworks, the proposed criteria for stories, the study could postulate that both the understanding of death and symbolic representation of children and youth change with age. The tentative selection criteria for the stories with the depictions of death as a central theme for children and youth could be as follows:

- A story with at least one of four characteristics of death **(1)** including universality (*we are all going to die*), irreversibility (*no one who dies comes back to life*), non-functionality (*vital functions and psychological processes are lost*) and causality (*death has a physical cause*)

- A story with the use of symbols through familiar fantasy but with the absence of anthropomorphic characters

4. Conclusion and Discussion

A story titled *Night on the Galactic Railroad*, or *Night of the Milky Way Railway*, was composed by Kenji Miyazawa. The original version in Japanese (銀河鉄道の夜) is actually a novel-length which might be too lengthy for the young readers but the translated version (2) is more concise (34 pages), which is suitable for parents or caregivers to read it to children, or possibly, for school-aged children to read it on their own.

The story plot is simple: This story follows the life and conversation between two very close friends—Giovanni and Campanella—who find themselves on a miraculous train *Odyssey*, with the tickets to go to the ends of the earth and beyond. Along the train route, the boys talk to each other, meet new passengers hopping on and off and make conversation with them before they both witness the dazzling sights of *The Celestial River*, or the Milky Way nearing their final destination. The depiction of death is conveyed through the different types of ticket, which predesignate the different destination between Giovanni and Campanella, as well as all the passengers they meet along the route. After the fantasy portrayal of the *Odyssey*, the scene revealing Giovanni's death is introduced at the ending part of the story, but not as a portrayal of immense grief of the characters in the scene, but as a scene to confirm the four characteristics of death. Before the curtain closes, the universality concept of death is presented, which indeed allow a dual interpretation, that is—for very small young children, they might just take in the ending scene as is, with Campanella hurrying to go home and waiting for his father; but for older children, they might take in the subtle message that death could take away Campanella's father as well.

In detail, the interpretation of this *Odyssey* may vary according to the age of the readers, but in essence, such nature is beneficial that the story could be indulged by young readers at any age as the depiction of death in this story could be described in more than one way. For instance, for very young readers, the separation between the two boys through the different final destination of their journey might introduce them, to a certain extent, is the concept of irreversibility (the early concept of death typically found in pre-school children albeit as temporary separation or temporary irreversibility). For older children, they might figure out this scene as a permanent condition through the final scene confirming the physical cause of death of Giovanni as a permanent irreversibility resulted from a physical cause.

By using such symbolic representations (*Odyssey*—ticket colours—*Milky Way*, to name a few), as indicated in the tentative criteria, the concept of death presented in the narrative, could be understood according to the age of an individual child, and should be able to facilitate a dialogue about death between the young readers and their parents or guardians according to their understanding of death.

5. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

To validate that these tentative criteria could serve as a basis for selecting stories with death as a central theme for young readers, both criteria require standardized or and reliability tests,

from a research experiment, and might as well be accompanied by an interpretation guide for parents or caregivers who might read the selected stories to the young readers. It should be noted that conducting research with children and youth should strictly follow the ethical principles. The presentation and assessment of death depictions should also be carefully designed, where the risk to the participants could be removed, or kept minimal.

End Notes

- 1 Martínez-Caballero, M., et al., 2023
- 2 Provided by Tohoku University

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