

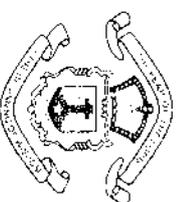
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It is dedicated to all the former teachers of the Department who cherished the desire to see the Department grow and reach excellence in various fields, and who still encourage us with their valuable support.

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Editorial

It has always been the dream of the Department of English and the Centre for Research in English of St. Teresa's College to widen the horizon of our academic activities. We have tried to achieve this by organizing national and international seminars, by establishing contacts with reputed Universities in India and abroad to facilitate visits of eminent scholars and professors, and also by taking steps to publish a Journal of English studies. During the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Department in 2008, an International Seminar was organized in association with London Metropolitan University and during this Seminar our plan to publish a journal took a definite shape. Now we are able to bring out the first issue of the *Teresian Journal of English Studies*. The journal is intended to publish and promote studies in language, literature, culture and gender with theoretical and creative perspectives.

The articles have been selected after discussions and scrutiny to maintain a moderately high standard. In the future issues we will make even greater efforts to move towards higher standards of excellence in scholarly publishing. The contributors are eminent professors, academicians, and writers, people who have made their mark in their area of specialization. There are also a few articles by research scholars who are passionately involved in their work.

I am deeply grateful to all who encouraged us and also shared our dream of publishing a scholarly journal. I am blessed with a committed Editorial Board and an eminent panel of Consultants who have supported me by generously giving their precious time, knowledge and expertise. I am thankful to God for the guidance and help of these persons who are fully devoted to scholarly and creative pursuits and academic excellence.

I am immensely grateful to the College authorities who have given us great support and encouragement in bringing out this journal. I wish all the readers of this journal a very enjoyable and inspiring reading experience.

Kochi - 11,
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Dr Celine E.
Editor

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Emily Dickinson and the Comic Imagination

Dr V.C. Harris

Comedy is usually thought to be funny, witty, humorous, enjoyable, or laugh-provoking. But it is not often necessarily all this. A good joke may not always make the best kind of comedy; on the other hand, certain types of comedy—for example, Samuel Beckett's grim comedy in *Endgame*—may not amuse anyone. It is useful to view comedy as opposed to tragedy, not in the sense of happy/tragic endings, but in the sense that tragedy suggests inevitable trains of cause and effect in life and morals whereas comedy deals often in the unexpected, the inconsequential, and the peripheral. It is this lack of a logical movement from cause to effect leading to unexpected and often incongruous developments that is one of the hallmarks of comedy. Such incongruities may take several forms; for example, in John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," the two lovers are compared to a drawing compass. Here, although the reader understands the application of the image to the central situation (compass suggesting navigation, charts, measurement of distance, etc.), the appropriateness of the compass to the lovers' situation remains questionable. Such questionable relationships, unusual expressions and incongruous materials brought together rather forcedly are the various elements of comedy in poetry. The emphasis is on the unexpected which, together with a willingness not to amuse and a tendency to develop out of untypical, individualized characters, appeals to the reader's thought rather than to his/her emotion. Poetry of this kind does not attempt to state general truths; its pronouncements are all contextual and, to that extent, contingent.

A close examination of Emily Dickinson's poems will show how the comic mode operates in her work. As a first step, it will be useful and instructive to take a look at those poems which in the Subject Index provided by Thomas H. Johnson in his definitive three-volume edition fall under the heading "Tears," not because these four poems are considered major pieces in the Dickinson canon, nor because they are the most effective of her comic poems, but because it is surprising, and

revealing, how even those poems that are usually considered "tragic" and fall under the heading "Tears" are in fact shaped by a comic imagination which depends heavily on the unexpected and the incongruous.¹

The first poem that is included under the heading "Tears" is the following:

It's such a little thing to weep—

So short a thing to sigh—

And yet—by Trades—the size of these

We men and women die! [Poem No. 189]

This four-liner surprisingly succeeds in fusing together what apparently look like two opposing attitudes or perceptions. Weeping and sighing, the poem says, are "little" things hardly worthy of man. The first two lines, thus, provide a perspective on this silly sentimentality which is in tune with the notion of the grandeur of man. But the next two lines mostly undercut this notion and reduce men and women to the size of "these." What the poem conveys is not a tragic vision of man's diminutiveness, though tragedy is implicit in such a scheme; what it expresses is an idea which, finding itself in a *cul-de-sac*, refuses to bow down to the forces operating on it and instead holds them in a comic light, laughed at but yet laughing at them.

The second poem beginning "Each Scar I'll Keep for Him" [No. 877] is essentially about the situation of parted lovers. The "Gem" the speaker wears in her loved one's absence is presumably a drop of tear—"A costlier one." But she feels that if her lover were to count the number of tears that they have both shed, he will definitely find his own outnumbering hers; and so "I'll mis sum them." This is hardly a conventional lamentation, for what overpowers the speaker in her painful separation from her loved one is not the tragedy of the situation but a queer, almost absurd pre-occupation with the "number" of tears and her inability to accurately sum them up. This absurd vision is incongruous with the painful situation, which helps to account for why the poem is essentially a comic one, the comedy lying not in the fact of the lovers' separation but in the speaker's apprehension of and response to it.

In Poem No. 1192, the comedy lies in the way "An honest tear" is almost personalized and made to stand on its own: "No Deputy Suffice." The idea of a deputy to a drop of tear is quite absurd, and this incongruity is further underlined by the reference to bronze which, ordinarily, is not in any way associated with tears. The poem's movement is quite hard to follow: from tear to bronze to cenotaph to deputy to obelisk. All these are brought together, telescoped, in a short, cryptic poem of eight lines in such a way that the reader is at first taken aback by the sheer incongruity of the images that follow one after the other in quick succession, totally unexpected and rather illogical. An honest tear which is "Reared by itself" and is "durable than bronze" is a tough, uncompromising image that draws strength from a comic imagination attuned to the incongruous and the absurd.

In the fourth poem which Thomas H. Johnson has classified under the heading "Tears," but which does not explicitly mention tears, it is the "pretty Rain" that takes herself, and the speaker, and us, by surprise. There is a "wrestle in her simple Throat," but she fails to hold the feeling down and bursts into tears. However, the tears seem to be not of sorrow but of some joy, or passion, or in the poem's word, "Fervor." This "sudden crown" speaks not of any tragedy but of some vital impulse, a deep feeling, which surfaces in a moment of uncontrolled passion; and the poem, which is full of martial images—"wrestle," "vanquished," and even "Crown"—gains in effect by keeping at a distance any association whatsoever of tears with tragedy.

The poems of tears are thus seen to enact an inherent comedy which by itself is nothing but incongruous. But these four poems are not generally considered major pieces in the Dickinson canon, and in order to prove the point about Dickinson's comic vision, one should examine a few of her "masterpieces" which are usually taken to be grim, tragic, and even morbid. Dickinson's obsession with death, which is a recurrent theme in her poetry, is one reason why she has been denied any claims to the comic mode. Although some critics have commented on her "silly playfulness,"² no one seems to have paid enough attention to the significant comic elements in her work. Take, for instance, the poem, "I felt a Funeral in my Brain" [No. 280]. The standard critical opinion is that, as James Reeves has put it, it is "a unique and daring

statement of a condition of mind near to madness, realized with terrifying fidelity: a state of near-hysteria has been transmuted into a signally powerful poetic utterance."¹³ No doubt it is a unique, daring and signally powerful poetic utterance; perhaps terrifying too. But there is a sense in which the poem can be said to be operating on a different level, on the level of comedy. James Reeves refers to "a condition of mind near to madness," but this madness lies in the sheer incongruity, or absurdity, of the whole situation. A funeral in one's brain is not a normal happening; it can occur only on an imaginative plane that is removed from ordinary experience. To call this madness is one thing; but trying to account for it takes us, paradoxically perhaps, to the realm of comedy. The last line of the poem is significant: "And Finished knowing---then---". It implies that until then the speaker has "known" everything, that is, she remains master, or mistress, of the situation (which James Reeves believes saves the poem from bathos, but he does not explain how or why). The speaker remains in control of the situation by "playing" with it, that is, to her the situation is more comic than terrifying—it is the comedy of a mind which, knowing well that it has come to its final moments, yet tries to fight it out, not to win and reverse the situation, but to remain graceful till the last, to prove to itself that whatever happens is merely one experience among many. The persona of the poem has recognized that she has reached a *cul-de-sac*, literally a dead-end, and that there is no escape anymore. But she responds to this end-game situation not in the conventional way—which ranges from tragedy to lamentation—but by exploiting her despair for comic ends. This is the comedy of Beckett's *Endgame*; and this is the comedy of all those writers who believe that, though they can improvise comic expressions of their despair and helplessness and give these improvisations the detached control of the artist, poetry, as W. H. Auden would say, can never make something happen. That is why Emily Dickinson's poetry is an end in itself—because it can never have any other end.

The entire situation in "I felt a Funeral in my Brain" is out of this world. The mourners treading to and fro, the service beating like a drum, the "Box" creaking across the persona's soul, tolling space, the Bell-like heaven—all create an eerie world of such improbability that it is difficult to speak of tragedy here. There is no mention of suffering,

no pain, no anguish—only a mind going numb. The numbness is quite inevitable in a situation like this which can happen only if a "Plank in Reason" is broken. There is no reason here, no logic, no sense—the incongruous details work themselves up to a frenzy and fall, dropping down and hitting "a World at every plunge." Not only the persona but the reader too finishes knowing then. "I heard a Fly buzz— when I Died—" [No. 465] is a kind of companion piece to this poem. Here, too, what is recorded is a peculiar kind of post-mortem sensation, or experience, which is incredibly close to comedy. The speaker, even at this stage, is so much in control of the situation that until the last moment, that is, the last line, she conducts herself in a cool business-like manner.

In another remarkable poem, "My life closed twice before its close" [No. 1752], James Reeves finds "something which precludes the possibility of mere invention," and he believes that the statement "strikes us as being made, not of words, but of life."¹⁴ Such an explanation says very little about the poem, and it fails to account for the sheer impact with which the poem comes down to the reader. The dramatic opening line has a tremendous power that is generated by the speaker's absolute control over herself; but what generates the drama of the line is the tension between two words, "closed" and "close." It is as though the closure were never complete, in that the second "close" takes on a tentative, almost unreal quality after the reference to "closed twice." Certainly, the persona is conscious of the fact that a "third event" is highly possible, and this possibility plays on the first line in such a way that, whatever its first impact, on a second reading one gets the impression that there is something elusive, slippery, about that line which simply cannot mean what it appears to mean. It is this tentative, contingent quality which brings out the underlying comedy in the poem. The events are "huge" and "hopeless to conceive," that is, they simply don't happen in this world; they can happen only in a world which is controlled by the poet's imagination, a world which is the poet's imagination. It is noteworthy that the last two lines are strongly reminiscent of John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn." It is as though Emily Dickinson were parodying Keats' lines. Whereas he talks about beauty and truth as all that we know, and need to know, on earth, here,

Dickinson says that paring is all that we know and need to know, of heaven and hell. The dialectical tension between beauty/truth and paring is carried on into another dialectic of earth and heaven/hell. All this tends to clothe the poem in the garb of a grim comedy which knows very well that there is no way out of the terrible situation.

Another poem, "My life had stood—a Loaded Gun" [No. 754], has given Dickinson's critics much trouble. Louise Bogan writes: "Is this an allegory, and if so of what? Is it a cry from some psychic deep where good and evil are not to be separated? In any case, it is a poem whose reverberations are infinite, as in great music; and we can only guess with what agony it was written down."¹ But can we? If the reader does not know what the poem is all about, or at least how exactly it reverberates, how is she to guess the "agony" of its creation? Or why speak of agony at all? Louise Bogan further states: "this power to say the unsayable—to hint of the unknowable—is the power of the seer, in this woman equipped with an ironic intelligence and great courage of spirit."² This is all very well if Bogan does not go on to say that the "snuff of Emily Dickinson's imagination is of this world."³ It is certainly odd: on the one hand, the poet is called a seer, one who has the power to say the unsayable; on the other, her imagination is considered to be of *this* world. Louise Bogan says that the poem "defies analysis," her reading too is of the same order. What she has failed to notice is the gallows humour, the macabre comedy, of the situation described in the poem. Right from the beginning, with the reference to the speaker's life as a loaded gun, down through the six four-line stanzas, the poem exudes a comic aura which is not overpowered even by the last two lines that border on the tragic and just (but just) keeps from slipping down into the sentimental. A loaded gun which can kill but does not have the power to die is indeed a pitiable thing, and it becomes all the more pitiable after the Master dies, for without the Master's orders, it cannot even kill. This irony, however, transforms the entire poem into a terrible exercise in absurdity. The terror (or agony, according to Louise Bogan) of the loaded gun becomes the absurd terror of a meaningless existence; and the poet's vision is such that it allows no room for lamentation; on the contrary, what gives the poem its sheer control is an uncanny sense of the comic which directs its vital movement.

Emily Dickinson's comedy is not, however, confined to such dark humour; at times, it succeeds in creating poems that virtually bristle with gaiety and sheer abandon. "I taste a liquor never brewed" [No. 914] is a good example. It goes without saying that this poem derives its charm from an unadulterated joy in living and in a vision of life unshuffled by any pain or suffering. The inebriated "Debauchee of Dew," "the little Tippler/ Learning against the Sun" (or "From Manzanilla Come"), is the portrait of a woman who has brushed aside the anguish of living and gone abroad to drink and drink the more. The comedy lies not only in this total absence of the tragic and the dreadful, but in those images (a liquor never brewed, tankards scopped in pearl, serapils waving their snowy hats, saints running to the windows) which by their sheer absurdity create a world far removed from reason or sense. As the persona revels and rollicks in fun, the reader is transported to a world where the comic vision reigns supreme.

Notes

1. Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, 3 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1955.) All quotations from the poems are taken from this edition, and the poem numbers are given, in the text in brackets.
2. Yvor Winters, "Emily Dickinson and the Limits of Judgment," 1938; "pt. *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Richard B. Sewall (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 29.
3. James Reeves, "Introduction" to *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. James Reeves (London: Heinemann, 1959), p. xxxix.
4. *Ibid.*, pp.xx-xxxi.
5. Louise Bogan, "A Metaphysical Poet," 1960; rpt. *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Richard B. Sewall, p.142.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.142-43.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

A Note on Sri Aurobindo's Exposition on the Nature of Poetry

Dr V. Nithyanantha Bhai

Sri Aurobindo expresses his profound views on poetry in his masterpiece *The Future Poetry*. He deals with the highest power that is demanded from poetry: the nature of poetry, and its essential law. He begins his discourse on the *Essence of Poetry*, by pointing out two common errors that the ordinary mind, and the critic or the intellectually conscientious artist are often liable to. To the ordinary mind, judging poetry without entering into it, "looks as if it were nothing more than an aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect and the ear; a sort of elevated pastime" (*Future Poetry*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1978, 9). Sri Aurobindo of course admits that we expect pleasure from poetry as from all arts. But according to him "the external sensible and even the inner imaginative pleasure are only first elements" (*FP* 9-10).

For the intelligence, the imagination or the ear are not the true recipients of the poetic delight nor are they its true creators; "they are only its channels and instruments: the true creator, the true hearer is the soul" (*FP* 10). Sri Aurobindo, therefore, believes that poetry has not done its highest work "until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument and transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul" (*FP* 10).

The second error to which the critic, of a certain type, the intellectually conscientious artist are liable, is that they will talk "as if poetry were mainly a matter of a faultlessly correct or at most an exquisite technique" (*FP* 10). Sri Aurobindo admits that in all arts good technique is the first step towards perfection. But he observes that there are so many other steps, "there is a whole world beyond before you can get near to what you seek; so much so that even a deficient correctness of execution will not prevent an intense and gifted soul from creating great poetry which keeps its hold on the centuries" (*FP* 10).

Sri Aurobindo adds that technique, however indispensable, occupies a smaller field perhaps in poetry than in any other art. He observes:

The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value, a quite immaterial element, its significance or thought value, and both of these again, its sound and its sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing about them. And though this comes to birth with a small element subject to the laws of technique, yet almost immediately, almost the beginning of its flight, its power soars up beyond the province of any laws of mechanical construction. (*FP* 11)

Sri Aurobindo accepts that the poet has to possess technique but he believes that:

... in the heat of creation the intellectual sense of it becomes subordinate action or even a mere undertone in his mind, and in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous form of his soul: that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving the mechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature. It is this highest speech which is the supreme poetic utterance, the immortal element in his poetry, and a little of it is enough to save the rest of his work from oblivion. *Soulpan apyasya dharmasya!* (*FP* 11)

Sri Aurobindo considers Vision as the characteristic power of the poet. The ancients held that the *Kavi* was the seer and the revealer of truth. According to Sri Aurobindo the greatest poets have been always those "who have had a large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision of Nature and life and man and whose poetry has risen out of that in a supreme revelatory utterance of it. Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Valmiki, Kalidasa, however much they may differ in everything

else, are at one in having this as the fundamental character of their greatness" (*FP* 30).

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Poetic vision, like everything else, follows necessarily the evolution of the human mind and according to the age and environment, it has its levels, its ascents and descents and its returns.

Sri Aurobindo asserts that:

... it is not sufficient for poetry to attain high intensities of word and rhythm; it must have, to fill them, an answering intensity of vision. And this does not depend only on the individual power of vision of the poet, but on the mind of his age and country, its level of thought and experience, the adequacy of its symbols, the depth of its spiritual attainment. (*FP* 36)

Sri Aurobindo now takes up the question of the ideal spirit of poetry that could be expected in an age of the increasingly intuitive mind, because he has hope in the possibility of such an age. He considers Mantra as "the highest intensest revealing form of poetic thought and expression" (*FP* 199).

By Mantra, the Vedic poets meant:

... an inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking, attended by a realisation ... of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed. It was a thinking that came on the wings of a great soul rhythm, *chandas*. For the seeing could not be separated from the hearing; it was one act. (*FP* 199)

The great poet, according to Sri Aurobindo, "interprets to man his present or reinterprets for him his past, but can also point him to his future and in all three reveal him the face of the Eternal" (*FP* 203). He adds, "An intuitive revealing poetry of this kind which we have in view would voice a supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit" (*FP* 203-204).

Sri Aurobindo observes that the seeing speech or the poetic speech has itself different grades of its power of vision: the simplest power

limited to a clear poetic adequacy, a power that tries to go beyond this fine and perfect adequacy in its intensities attempting a more rich and more powerful expression, a greater spirit and a less intellectual and more imaginative sincerity and elevation of thought, feeling and vision that will give a sublimer poetic rhetoric, a richer and subtler poetic speech. But superior to this "there is a more intimate vision, a more penetrating spiritual emotion, a more intense and revealing speech, to which the soul can be more vibrantly sensible" (*FP* 273).

Sri Aurobindo remarks that the genius of a poet can do work of a high beauty of a considerable greatness in any of these degrees of poetic speech, and adds that it is the poetic speech that is more purely intuitive, inspired or revelator-utterance that is valued most. Its power not only "moves and seizes us the most, but it admits the soul to a most spiritually profound light of seeing and ecstasy of feeling even of ordinary ideas and objects and in its highest force to thoughts and things that surpass the manner and range and limits of depth of the normal intelligence" (*FP* 277).

Sri Aurobindo's own poetry is a rare example of a lofty mystical vision. Here are two examples:

1. Transformation

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream;
It fills my members with a might divine:
I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.
Time in my drama or my pageant dream.
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme
And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine
Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.
I am no more a vassal of the flesh,
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh,
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.

2. A Dream of Surreal Science

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
 At the Mermaid, capture immortality;
 A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
 Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.
 A thyroid, meditating almost nude
 Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
 And, rising from its mighty solitude,
 Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right.
 A brain by a disordered stomach driven
 Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell.
 From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.
 Thus wagged on the surreal world, until
 A scientist played with atoms and blew out
 The universe before God had time to shout.

Recursive Strategies in Escher and Stoppard

Dr. C.S. Jayaram

Maurits Cornelis Escher, the Dutch graphic artist [1902 – 1972], is often considered in the Surrealist context. His best-known works are interrogations of customary notions of perspective, and they intentionally create confusion of planes of reality through ambiguous interpretation of different images.

Tom Stoppard, the Czechoslovakian-born British playwright shares a remarkably similar vision with Escher, in spite of the former's ambivalent attitude to *avant garde* art. Stoppard's dramatic art is, as Jim Hunter puts it, "the juggling of different explicit perceptions" [*Tom Stoppard's Plays*, 19 – 20]. In a universe of perpetual transformations where "all absolutes discredit one another", Stoppard asks how one can be consistent about any thing [ibid]. The counter logic that runs through his works bears proximities to that of Escher in the form of recursivity.

In a general sense, any visual field is modulated by a figure/ground relationship. The filtering process of perception directs its gaze at any one time on specific portions of environment and blurs the background. There are, however, certain situations in which the figure and the ground become reversible. When equivalent portions of field interlock, a visual staccato results, teasing perception into extreme shifts of frame. This interspatial isomorphism may be called recursion:

A cursorily drawable figure is one whose ground is merely an accidental by-product of the drawing act. A cursive figure is one whose ground can be seen as a figure in its own right. Usually this is quite deliberate on the part of the artist. The 're' in 'recursive' represents the fact that both foreground and background are cursorily drawable... [Hofstadter, 67].

Escher's woodcut, *Day and Night*, is a "masterpiece of positive and negative interwoven" [ibid 255]. The visual *mise-en-abyme* takes the form of a single reflection, the right side signifying Night rigorously

duplicating the left side signifying Day. The movement from left to right thus bounces back recursively. What offsets the rigidity of this schematism is the upward movement that generates a magic transformation whose dislocatory effect is akin to what Gregory Bateson describes as a schizophrenic construction of reality, where the surface realism of the technique does not provide any metaphorical clue to facilitate perceptual transition [Bateson, 192]. Shoshana Felman compares this kind of recursion to a spiral:

The spiral consists of a series of repeated circlings in which what turns is indeed bound to re-turn, but in which what circularly thus returns only returns so as to miss anew its point of departure... [Quoted by Spence, 192].

The upward movement in *Day and Night* is a spiralling action in which patches of fields cinematographically dissolve into birds. The lack of a sharply delineated interface problematizes the binariness of the concepts of day and night.

Stoppard's play, *The Real Inspector Hound*, mounts a similar interrogation of the traditional opposition of fiction and reality. The mise-en-abyme of the play employs a similar mirror-reflection as in Escher's *Day and Night*. But whereas, in Escher, recursion takes place in a syntagmatic space, in Stoppard it operates as a play-within-the-play. The frame-play itself is a mirror reflection of reality. Moon and Birdboot are two theatre critics who occupy the audience space in a fictional theatre, thus bringing the real audience face to face with itself.

The first thing is that the audience appear to be confronted by their own reflection in a huge mirror. Impossible. However, back there in the gloom – not at the footlights – a bank of plush seats and pale smudges of faces. [*The Real Inspector Hound*, 9]

Moon is a second-string reviewer, ambitious to step into the shoes of the first-stringer, Higgs. Through a series of tromp l'oeil audience gestures, he establishes himself as a simulacrum of the real audience. He is soon joined by Birdboot, an old hand, fond of forming liaisons with promising actresses.

The entry of Mrs. Drudge, the charwoman, marks the play-within-the-play, manifesting the frame that separates Moon and Birdboot from the characters of the inset play. The intercurring remarks of the critics consciously maintain the clear boundary between their world and the fictional world of Muldoon Manor.

Once the divide between the play world and the non-play world has thus been delineated, Stoppard proceeds to deconstruct the opposition by integrating them through the technique of recursion. The transgressive phone call that starts the third Act of the Muldoon Manor play carries a voice that is not in the script. It is for Birdboot from his wife. As he steps on to the stage to answer the phone, the action of the inset play resumes, irrevocably implicating him in the role of Simon Gascoyne. The irony of misidentification lies, as June Schleuter points out, in the recursive parallel in the situations of Birdboot and the fictive Simon Gascoyne:

Just as Birdboot spent the previous evening with the actress playing Felicity and is now ready to abandon her for the actress playing Cynthia, so did Simon spend the evening with Felicity and is now ready to abandon her for Cynthia. [*Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama*, 93-94]

Transformation in *The Real Inspector Hound* is not confined to Birdboot alone. Moon's attempt to retrieve his partner results in a similar frame transgression. The moment he crosses the border, he confronts a similar face of altered identity. Cynthia's entry thrusts upon him the fictional role of Inspector Hound, and he is lodged in a situation as inescapable as Birdboot's. The recursive principle in both cases is the same inevitability of the consequences of role-taking.

The imbroglio of multiple role-taking reaches its parodic climax with the introduction of the marginalized Puckeridge. Moon's understudy, who comes to occupy the centre of the frame-play and the play-within-the-play, assuming four identities, three of which belong to Moon: the real Inspector Hound, Magnus, and finally Albert Muldoon, Cynthia's long-lost husband.

The recursive pattern reaches its closure when the actors who played Simon Gascoyne and Inspector Hound step outside the Muldoon Manor drawing room and assume the role of critics, occupying the seats occupied by Moon and Birdboot. The 'reality' of the frame play which is a fundamental requisite for the whole play to repeat itself is made questionable by this frame transgression of the inner play. The recommencement of the play depends on the redelineation of the boundary between reality and fiction, for which purpose a new audience will be required.

This eventual 'bottoming out' is a crucial fact which distinguishes recursive structures from circular ones. The space of recursive closure is the 'inviolable space' of the author, where the tangled interaction of fact and fiction is to be viewed as taking place [Hofstadter, 133]. Hofstadter's schema of Escher's picture, *Drawing Hands*, shows Escher's own 'undrawn, but drawing hand', lurking behind the whole composition, outside the 'two-hand space'. An adaptation of this schema to Stoppard's play similarly reveals the authorial space, a reconstruction of which at the end underlines the autonomy of illusion, depriving the frame-play reality of its right of separate definition.

The question of the illusion/reality opposition is at the heart of the recursive process of both Escher and Stoppard. They insistently pose absurd riddles as a way of systematically defying the combinatorial logic of syntax. The paradoxicality of their constructions mounts a critique of the stenographic transcriptions of reality. The recursive process of making simultaneous two mutually exclusive modes of perception thus operates, in both Escher and Stoppard, as a subversive strategy directed against any inherited notions of perspective.

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Mind Transition and Self Expression in the Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande

Dr. J. Sundarasingh

"There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation...."

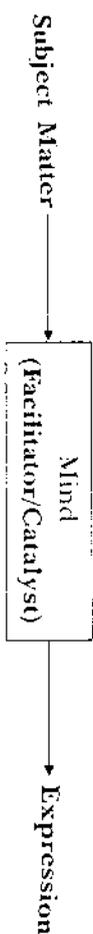
- Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health* ?

In the context of significant advancement, appeal and desirability in the genre of Indian Writing in English, the present paper is attempted to fathom the profundity and success of thought expression in the selected novels of Shashi Deshpande. Subsequently the paper gives a detailed account of the effectiveness of the expression of the characters about themselves, their customs, traditions and ideas through the mental transition that takes place as each character expresses the experiences that they go through in their lives. This study is significant since the writer, the characters, the setting, the story and the dialogues are completely Indian in nature. This paper highlights the approaches to 'Mind style' as projected by Roger Fowler and Mark Turner, discusses the themes of the works of Deshpande and justifies the significance of the application of mind style on her writing. Her novels mainly focus on woman-man relationship and the human struggle for 'recognition' and 'belonging'. Society consists of human beings and effective social interaction is possible only with better human relationship. The men and women in the middle class go through the mental confusion of their faiths, beliefs, traditions, histories and their specified roles in the society and family as they are prone to transitions in society and family. These women go through a significant mental metamorphosis and due to that their selection of expressions also goes through changes.

1. Mind Style: A General Perspective

Mind not only conceives the subject matter, but also prompts an appropriate way of expressing the subject. Mind processes the subject matter and decides the mode of presentation. It can be stated that

subject matter is the world and the view of the world depends on the mind. In this context mind may be treated as a 'catalyst' or a 'facilitator' for the expression of subject matter. This can be better explained through the following flow chart:



Besides, all emotions find expression in language; all emotions find effective expression in the style of the language; and all emotions find most appropriate expression in the mind style of the language. Effective and successful presentation of the subject matter depends on the comprehension of the workings of mind which can be termed "mind strategies". Mind expresses through a language based on its understanding of the world. M.A.K. Halliday says "the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world" and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness; his reactions, cognitions and perceptions; and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding" (1973, p.106).

2. Definition of Mind Style:

A fiction 'represents' the real world which is filled with people. Though the characters in the fictions are not 'real', they reflect the characteristics of the people of the world. To identify the mind style of a character, it is necessary to examine the language used by the character as the characters express themselves through the language. Thus the mind is revealed through the choice of language. A short comment on each of the theoretical aspects of language and mind style, as expressed by the experts in the field, is given below:

2.1. Roger Fowler:

Roger Fowler coined the term 'mind style' in 1977 and he says "mind style refers to any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self" (1977:103). He is of the view that certain aspects of human life strongly influence the character's worldview. His definition of mind style is as follows:

"Cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a 'mind-style'. (1977:76)

Mind style relates mental abilities of the cognition of realities and experiences. Such deviations may be completely personal and idiosyncratic or they may be shared among characters/members of a society with similar mindset. He uses the linguistic description of Chomsky and Halliday to focus particularly on the ways individual sentences add up to a larger textual shape, on their power to suggest distinctive mind style in authors and characters within the novel (Ibid, p. ix). His theoretical presentation on mind style mainly revolves around the study of the relationship between language and mind style:

The 'worldview' of an individual or a society depends on the relationship between the language and the workings of the mind. He states:

"Language and the inner representation of outer reality are intimately interconnected.... The connection of language and worldview, and the availability through linguistics, of a theory and a descriptive method for handling their connection, have some very notable implications for the study of fiction" (p.17)

Each culture looks at the world in its own distinct way and each individual comprehends the world in his/her own way. Hence the worldview differs from person to person as the expression goes through changes in accordance with the experience. Language communicates a subject matter, adding an attitude to it. There is a specific connection between language and worldview, and language and community. The individuals' habitual perspective of a reality is influenced by his/her place in the socio-economic structure. "The influence of social structure also operates to encode these cognitive habits in typical patterns of language usage" (p.77). The awareness of the audience also affects the expression of the speaker. It is common to all languages. Selection of words and the structure of sentence have their own impact on the content of a fiction. Fowler concentrates on the functional aspect of the language, which is expected to result in the world view or the 'mind style' of each character, as it reveals the lexical and syntactic significance

of the work of art. For him, creativity is founded on the author's critical consciousness of these resources of discourse, and the practical skill to deploy language to a defamiliarizing effect" (1986:168). Language codes encode the systems of ideas of the cultures which produce them. "In effect the author is constituted by the forms and the ideas of the discourse which s/he experiences" (Ibid, p.168).

2.2. Mark Turner:

Mark Turner in his *The Literary Mind* comes out with a distinctive finding that mind works in a unique way which may be deviant from what appears to be. Every mind is essentially literary. While examining story, projection and parable, he writes that "Narrative imagining" (in other words 'story') is a "form of thinking", which is a "fundamental instrument of human thought" and the "means of looking into the future, of predictions, of planning and of explaining. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition. (1996: 4,5). Thus the mind of every person is literary in nature and fundamental to human cognition. He further says that human experience is organized as "stories" and make a "projection" of the same through "parables". He asserts that the literary mind is the mind of everyone and the 'cognitive principle' is applied in every situation, even in our mundane activities. Thus mind makes our language either simple or complicated. In other words, it is only the mind that projects and language is an instrument for such projection.

Every incident happening in human life can be viewed as a story which has its own distinct characteristic of impacting the life of individuals and the life of the people around. The mind is actively involved in analyzing the story and creating new stories for comparison and association. He describes 'parable' as a combination of 'story and projection'. He adds:

"This classic combination produces one of our keenest mental processes for constructing meaning.... The ... genre of parable ... follows inevitable from the nature of our conceptual systems. The motivation for parable are as strong as the motivations for color vision or sentence structure or the ability to hit a distant object with a stone" (1998, p.5).

Literary aspect of a story is one of the artifacts of the mental process. Mind does not work the way it appears to be and also consciousness is not the one that reveals the mind. However an assessment of mental process can reveal the working of mind. This will enable fixing the personality traits of individuals.

3. Themes, Characters and Mind Transition:

Every author has his/her own theme, the theme that he/she feels most important in the society of that particular century. Deshpande deals with the problems of middle class families. In all her novels, she has tried to show that 'mind is the cause of all pains'. All her characters appear to be thinkers and hence her writing is highly philosophical. The primary focus of mind style is to study how a language is used to express a subject matter. The subject matter is born out of the experience of an individual and this experience differs from person to person and from situation to situation. Each individual's mind style is exposed through a particular ideational structure. Hence mind style approach is appropriate for studying the themes of Deshpande. The characters of Deshpande go through the acute mental process of varied experiences. A foregrounded mental process with an introspective mind style conveys different images of what is going on in the world. This I wish to call Mind Transition or Mental Metamorphosis. By evaluating the expressions uttered by the speakers, it would be possible to evaluate the thought processes that were going on in the mind.

4. Critical Summary of Novels using Mind Transition approach

Deshpande's career started with short story writing. Her short story collection *The Legacy* was first published in 1978. Her fiction writing started with the publication of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* in 1980. Her writing went through the mental development of an author in different phases. Her first phase ended with the publication of *That Long Silence* in 1988. Between these two novels there were three novels published namely, *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1982) and *Roots and Shadows* (1983). In the first phase the author goes through a mental transition from short story writing into fiction writing and as a fiction writer from a confused mind to recreate mind. She confesses in her *Writing from the Margin and other Essays* that, after becoming

a wife and mother, she has felt her intellectual self being suppressed. Due to the "conflict between female self and the intellectual self that self expression began" (2003:5). A writer requires ideas, the urge to express and the ability to use language with comfort and understanding. Exposure to experiences ignites imagination in creative writers and the imagination lingers in the mind until it is expressed. Deshpande says that the characters of her novels come from the society wherein she lives and faces the complexities of life. Deshpande feels that the characters alone control the story and their expressions.

4.1. The Dark Holds No Terrors

Deshpande's first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (hereinafter *The Dark*) tries to fathom the mind of its protagonist Sarita who goes through the struggles of being a doctor by profession, a wife, mother, daughter and an individual. Though this being the author's first full-length novel and also it is a transition from shorter version of story writing, the author proves to be successful in bringing out the complexities of the mind of the heroine. This novel made Deshpande realize that "writing a novel was like embarking on a voyage of discovery" (2003:13). In the process, she discovers the complex mind and moods of men and women, apart from vehemently criticizing the follies of man-woman relationship. By symbolizing the husband as a stranger and describing the most intimate experience between husband and wife as rape-like experience in the prelude, the author describes the detached mind of a professional woman of a middle class to personal, sexual and social suppressions. However the author does not miss the detailed sketch of the mental metamorphosis of the central character in realizing her individuality. Sarita, often called as Saru, is the unwanted in her home, especially after the premature death of her brother Dhruva by drowning before her own eyes. Her mother reminded her often that she wanted only her brother to live. Against her mother's desire, Saru pursues medicine and marries Manohar of lower caste, but a promising poet with a dream of going to be cared and loved by somebody.

But Manu, the Manohar, proves to be otherwise with his inferiority complex of having to live in comforts with the earnings of his wife. She, due to the demands of her job, does not make either a good wife or mother and patiently endures the sexual assault of her husband. She

leaves her home and reaches her father's home only to find herself a stranger there. Here Saru's mind goes through development and finally reaches the state of self-assertion and individuality. Now "there were no thoughts in her, except those of the child she was going to help" as a doctor and as she confidently hurries out of the house, turns around and says to her Baba "if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can" (*The Dark*: 221). Now she can say:

"My life is my own... somehow she felt as if she had found it now, the connecting link. It means you are not just a strutting, grinning puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness. If I have been a puppet, it is because I made myself one" (The Dark: 220)

She had been considering herself a "guilty sister", responsible for the drowning of her brother, "undutiful daughter", for having married a low caste man against her mother's desire and "the unloving wife", and giving importance to profession. But now she has to believe herself. Otherwise she cannot go on. "If we can't believe in ourselves, we're sunk" (*Ibid*, p.220). Thus the mind of Sarita creates its own "parables" and gets influenced either positively or negatively and this was presented in the novel. Finally she gets convinced in her mind that there is still hope in life and with this realization her language also gets changed.

4.2. Roots and Shadows:

Roots and Shadows delineates the mental state of a woman who goes through the conflicting experiences in her life. This novel is significant for its undiluted expression of the emotions, inhibitions and dejections of Indu, the main character of the novel. Indu marries Jayant against her Akka's desire to prove herself a 'free' woman. In the process of relinquishing her parental submission, she is slowly dragged into surrendering herself to the desires of Jayant in the name of love. She finds herself incomplete either in parental home or in the home of her in-laws. She critically views her own life saying that it is full of deception and pretensions. She views her illicit relationship with Naren as less dishonourable than her pretensions towards Jayant. She criticizes love as she was deceived by it and she rather accepts 'sexual' instinct as real. It is due to her detachment between her emotions and experiences.

As it is found in any society, human relationship becomes a mutual adjustment between people. The so-called 'less powerful' is expected to submit to the 'more powerful' in the guise of 'love', 'sacrifice', 'devotion' and 'obedience'. Indu found herself obedient to either parent or husband. She complicates her own life by leaving home to be trapped into Jayant. The author shows the mind of Indu, as she desperately looks for freedom from bondage. She presents with all vehemence how the character retraces her past and how her mind developed from dreaming into deciding sensibly. Indu, once being attached to her parental home, detaches herself to be attached to her husband only to be detached and in the process loses control over her own life and get damaged only to be repaired finally. Indu shows that mind is responsible for all these changes. The novel narrates the mental struggles of a middle-class Indu. Finally she determines in her mind "to be herself" and "now she is a changed person who is aware of the stirrings of her conscience, her quest, her identity, her individuality, her place and role in the family and society" (*Sarabjit Sandhu*, p.110).

4.3. That Long Silence

In *That Long Silence (hereinafter TLS)*, Jaya narrates her own story. Jaya, her husband Mohan and their children Rahul and Rati have been living an 'insured life' before 'Jaya-anticipated' tragedy strikes the blissful family in the form of Mohan being suspected by his higher authorities for having accepted bribes and being advised to go into hiding in the guise of a 'long leave' by his accomplice for some time. As a result the wife has been compelled to go along with the husband against her wishes, after sending their children with their friends for a vacation, to their old Dadar flat from their sophisticated Churchgate bungalow. The busiest middle-class couple has become inactive overnight and it is an idle 'fleeting of time' even for the 'Writer Jaya' for the next few days before a ray of hope is sighted by Jaya herself.

During the days of misfortune and uncertain future due to the bribery scam against her husband, Jaya goes through the nostalgic mental process of reminiscences and compunctions. In the retracing of the past of her husband, her acquaintances and herself, surprisingly, she has been able to project only the pessimistic aspects, though a

glimpse of optimism is traceable even to the readers in every life situation of Jaya. It prompts us to state that the mind carries the present failure to the past to view it in the light of the 'seemingly present vanity' so that the present tragedy can be forgotten or manageable. Due to the quarrel with Jaya, in anger, Mohan leaves home to an undisclosed place. Jaya goes through the experience of uncertainty, which gets intensified at the news that her son Rahul has been missing. The process of her mental metamorphosis is complete as she receives Rahul safely, escorted by her brother-in-law, as well as an apparently positive word from her husband Mohan "All well returning Friday morning". For a woman who "sighed for a catastrophe", it is now a desperate realization that the "life has always to be made possible". Thus Jaya goes through a pessimistic mental process in which she projects a series of stories with a personalized selection of words.

4.4. The Binding Vine:

The Binding Vine also revolves around the freedom of "self-expression". In this novel the protagonist Urmila comes forward boldly in spite of her own tragedy of losing her infant daughter, to support the rape victim Kalpana and publish her mother-in-law Mira's poetry. Kalpana is in coma after being brutally raped by her uncle. Mira is no more after having expressed through her poems all her loneliness, anguish, broken dreams, unfulfilled ambitions and rape in marriage. Urmila decides to make aloud the silent suffering of these two women by going to police for investigation of rape and press for publication of the poems. The society's attitude towards rape victim is projected. Urmila, already a dejected lady, finds solace in Mira's forgotten poems and in helping the mother of outraged Kalpana. However she is horrified to see the society being indifferent to her crusade. Even Kalpana's mother Shakuntal herself says: "But sometimes I think the only thing that can help Kalpana now is death" (*The Binding Vine*:178). She is afraid of the society which, she thinks, will make everything public and consequently distort it to the extent of affecting the marriage of her other daughter.

However Urmila makes a bold attempt saying: "It's not fair, it's not fair at all. And we can't go on pushing it - what happened to them

- under the carpet forever because we are afraid of the disgrace" (Ibid, p.174). So she goes to the press, making a big issue of shifting Kalpana to a suburban hospital. She feels that this would bring justice to the affected one. She does not receive much approval from her family members and friends. However Urmila is able to influence Shakuntal and she also starts talking about going to police when the culprit's wife, her sister commits suicide. Urmila, who is affected mentally due to the death of her daughter, comes out of mental depression by helping and encouraging others, and in the process she finds herself a mentally matured and developed person. Her choice of expressions reveal her mind style. Mark Turner's 'projection model' is found in the life of Urmila as she projects her own sad story on to the stories of other characters and thus "narrative imagining" helps her to come out her own problem.

4.5. A Matter of Time

A Matter of Time is a critical summary of the follies of human life. It also carefully assesses the validity and genuineness of the man-woman nuptial relationship. The author in this novel makes it very clear that one cannot escape oneself and one's reality. Based on Yagnavalkya's argument with his wife Maitreyi about renouncing married life, as told in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the theme of the novel reveals the complexities of married life. Gopal attempts to break himself free from bondage of marriage for no specific reasons. However the voice within the novel tries to analyse and find out the reason for his strong determination to leave his beautiful wife, Sumi and three daughters. Sumi does not understand the real motive behind his decision and determines to ask him the reason for his leaving if at all she gets a chance to meet him. In the long process of finding the cause for his 'walking on his family' quite a lot of philosophical utterances are made.

The novel puts forth a question, which is important - whether living or loving. Gopal leaves home fearing that the emptiness that he is suffering from may affect his family. However he has forgotten to see the void that he created by his absence. Now Sumi is left alone with her three daughters. She finds a job and looks after her daughters. She finds solace and liberation in writing "The Gardener's Son", a drama

for a function at her school. Her mother Kalyani is desperate to find the reason for the estrangement between Sumi and Gopal. She could not understand the human mind, though her life itself was another example of marriage entanglement.

In the big house namely 'Vishwas', meaning 'trust', Kalyani and her husband live together but in isolation, not talking to each other for two decades. They are in the same house but live in different rooms. Their marriage disarray is no inferior to the failure of their daughter's. The house stands as the ironical symbol of mistrust in marriages. The image reveals what is happening in marriages. In their seeming efforts to love each other, they end up doing things against each other. It is shown in every novel of Deshpande that the mind of the person goes through so many changes and the same affect their way of living both in isolation and togetherness.

Regarding the reason for leaving home, Gopal confesses vaguely that he was frightened of his emptiness and its possible effect on his wife and children. The author indirectly criticizes such husbands by showing the sufferings of Sumi and the children. Sumi meets Gopal and talks to him about their life. Finally she dies in an accident along with her father Sripati, leaving her mother and husband to seriously consider the purpose of living and the meaning of dying. This novel discusses the very important aspect of human life in this world. Men and women relate with each other only through the body. Once body is gone, the relationship, the attachment, the desire, love and feelings are gone. Death makes a person/actor leave the life/stage and he/she is pushed to the unseen world, but the drama/life continues for every other person. Though he/she goes back stage, the person makes his/her own mark and thus his/her past is felt in the present and its existence may be felt in the future also. Now Gopal's mind is cleared of all the doubts and is able to see a ray of hope in living.

4.6. Small Remedies

In *Small Remedies*, Madhu, the protagonist, is projected as a writer, who is assigned the work of authoring the biography of Savitribai Indorekar, a famous singer. Like many of Deshpande's characters in other novels, the characters here are also lofty thinkers with little

satisfaction of their present life. The workings of their minds are beyond comprehension, constructing abstract sentences and asking complicated information-seeking questions. Their lives are also clouded with failures of one kind or the other. Madhu herself is a failure with the loss of her son and the loss of the trust of her husband. Her youth was bereft of chastity as she was sexually overwhelmed by her father's friend during an emotional moment. She is also confronted with the life of her aunt Leela, a widow, who married a Christian named Joe in her second marriage. Both of them live happily though they do not share their food and god.

The life of Savitribai was also miserable. She leaves her conservative home to pursue music and live with her lover and tablaji Chhulam Saab and their only daughter Mummy. Mummy, looking for a respectable life, leaves her parents, changes her name to Meenakshi and works towards respectability as she returns to her grandparents' family. Listening to Savitribai's life, Madhu realizes the futility of life. Whatever happens to one's life, whether positive or negative, the life moves on. Importantly, Madhu, the writer realizes that truth lies beyond the words that are uttered and very little truth is attached to the words. She realizes that it was a blunder telling her youthful sexual experience to her husband. Hence there was a lengthy quarrel between them and when Aditi, their son, entered the room, they asked him to leave the room immediately. He leaves home and gets caught in the Bombay religious violence and his body gets blown up along with many others in a bus. One day, reaching home after attending a concert, Madhu finds a letter from Som expressing his desire of living together. She understands that as long as there is a memory, there is a chance of retrieving the past and the loss is not fully complete.

5. Mind Transition and Self Expression

All the characters in Deshpande struggle between the consciousness of the reality and the individual conviction, which goes by its own ideologies. The following table presents the details about the main characters of the above-discussed novels. All the characters go through the experiences of failures and rectification. This process takes place in their mind and they approach their life experiences accordingly.

No.	Novel	Main Character	Socio-Psychological Context	Mind Style	Mind Transition
1.	THE DARK FOLDS NO TERRORS	Sarita	1. Rejected by her mother - conflict between them 2. Haunted by the death of her brother by drowning as she witnessed it 3. Marries Manu, and suffers ill-treatment by him 4. Silently suffering, feeling alienated and passively resisting	1. Introspective mind style 2. Confused state of mind due to conflicting experience	Personality changes as the mind goes through the life process and develops from self-isolation to self-recognition and from ignorance to comprehension of world.
2.	ROOTS AND SHADOWS	Indu	1. Suppressed by Akka, the Anambath of the house. 2. Married Jagan, only to assert her individuality and to break the parental bonds 3. Marriage makes her dependent and her extra-marital affair Jagan's bet. 4. In her attempt to get detached, she finds herself attached with everyone around her	1. Passive questioning mind. 2. Confused state of mind due to the lack of answers for many questions	Clashed with so many failures, the mind of Indu gets confused and struggles to find a solution. Conclusions may be drawn by individual readers. She suffers from "societal worthiness"
3.	TLS	Jaya	1. Arranged marriage, Sonarier than Mohan, but not outspoken 3. Death of her father, her insane cousin Jagan and her emotionally intimate friend Kanak haant her 4. Follows her husband into exile	1. Transitional introspective mind style 2. Passive questioning mind	Mind metamorphoses for betterment as it is revealed in her language use
4.	TITE BINDING VINE	Urnitha	1. Affected by the death of her infant daughter 2. Finds solace in helping Kalpana, the rape victim and in taking efforts to publish Mira's poem. 3. Elaborate discussion on rape within and outside marriage 4. Realizes that her suffering was comparatively lesser than the suffering of others.	1. Introspective mind style 2. Inquiring mind, analyzing the life of Mira, Shabana and Shabana's daughter Kalpana	Less internal suffering, so the protagonist appears to be strong, opposing the society.

3. A MATTER OF TIME	Gopal/ Sunitra	1. Projection of estrangement between Gopal and Sunitra. 2. Also points out the entanglement between Shripati and Kalpana 3. Gopal leaving home for vague reasons and Sunita taking care of their daughters. 4. Death of Sunita in an accident	1. Philosophical mind. 2. The mind style between Gopal and Sunita	In the struggle to find the meaning of life and death, Gopal loses Sunita and realizes that human relationship endures as long as the body exists.
6. SMALL REMEDIES	Madhu	1. Haunted by the memory of the death of her only teenage son in violence. 2. Writing the biography of Savitri 3. Her relationship with Manu and Manu's isolation from her parents 4. The estrangement between Madhu and Sonu	1. Discovering mind 2. Mind goes through the process of healing and thus Madhu discovers her true self	Being strengthened by events found wisdom, Madhu returns to her husband

Thus it is shown that the characters in the novels go through transition both in their mind and in their lives. In close reading it is found that the source of the conflicts between individuals is traced in the conflicting mind of each person and the same was revealed in their self-expression

6. Comparison of significant words in the novels

The following table makes a revelation of the lexical repetitions in the three important novels chosen for the assessment. This shows the recurrent theme of 'human relationship' in the novels of Deshpande. The repetitions have both positive and negative implications. This reveals the mind style of the author with regard to her understanding of the society, her angry confusion with the plight of middle class families and the silence of the women of the same status. Frequent use of typical Indian collocations and repetitions reveal the mind style of the members of the society of Deshpande. Among some of the lexical items selected for highlighting the recurrence of family environment in the novels, it is made very clear that the families are not broken

because of the children as "The children" ... the words have been our final argument, our sacred cow, our justification for everything, even for living" (*TLS*, pp. 19,20). The Indian family is stable because of certain traditional cords and one of those cords is 'child/children'. In spite of even serious problems between husbands and wives, they get along because of the relationship, which is valued in the families.

All the three novels use "something" more than hundred times; and to precisely state, *TLS* uses it 116 times, *The Dark* 145 times and *The Binding Vine*, comparatively a minimum of 101 times. In spite of each fiction having a specific theme and each character/narrator having a specific problem to put forth and call for discussion, the voice of unfaithorable "something" is being heard through out the fiction. "Something" is used when the "thing" could not be explained or the "thing" is not known.

Besides, the repetition of particular word-expression reveals a particular mind style of a person. At the same time it is the style of Deshpande to allow the audience/reader to make all the guesses and find out the truth. Deshpande believes that the understanding should be individual as the experience varies from one person to another. However, recurrence of a particular aspect/theme makes a revelation of certain awkward realities and follies of human life. All the three fiction highlighted above reveal how "love" gets replaced by "monotony of bodily togetherness" in married life and ironically 'outward life' is given first place. In the process of giving importance to it, "love" is denied even the second place and hence all the marriages are found tragically loveless.

Deshpande presents only her 'observation' and it is expected from every character/person to go through introspection and find change for oneself. This is the uniqueness of the style of Deshpande that the characters themselves are allowed to go through the mental metamorphosis and take corrective measure after recognition of one's own self. The lexical words given below are very closely related to human life in general and family life in particular. Hence these words are taken for the comparison. 'Child' dominates frequency list, as the main characters are 'women in the families' and the stories also revolve

around families. Another important feature is the use of 'nothing', which signifies the mindset of the characters. The sentences like 'Nothing my mother says can move him', 'And it means nothing to you', 'And yet you said nothing', 'For he revealed nothing, I'm just nothing', and 'There was nothing in her tone, neither surprise, curiosity nor welcome' from *The Dark* reveal the experiences of the characters. In *The Binding Vine* also there are sentences with 'nothing' which reveal the mindset of characters. The characters use the sentences like 'But the truth is that there's still nothing, I can do nothing right; Nothing existed but our physical needs, and those were all fulfilled; Nothing happened; Nothing is ever lost or forgotten; Nothing will change to reveal the modalities.

LEXICAL WORDS	THAT LONG	THE DARK HOLDS	THE BINDING
	SILENCE	NO TERRORS	VINE
Child	182	197	144
Die	139	100	110
Nothing	127	166	94
Something	116	145	101
Cry	73	31	70
Marry	70	55	70
Anger	70	42	39
Fear	61	64	73
Husband	57	47	33
Love	56	63	75
Wife	55	28	22
Laugh	45	43	46
Silence	41	41	48
Sleep	31	41	28
Mind	30	41	37

6. Conclusion:

Since 'human relationship' is her main concern, Deshpande is not able to deviate from writing about women and men. Since she is interested in introducing a little bit of her experience or the experience of someone she has come across, her characters are exposed complex

in nature with philosophical mind style. Her characters are either creative writers or women rejecting traditional beliefs or trying to find sexual companionship out of marriages ironically divulges the rejection of family institution. However the characters could not help going through mental transition which is betrayed in their self expression and end up in self-discovery. Thus Deshpande beautifully portrays the mental metamorphosis that happens within individuals, couples, families and societies.

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has published abstracts of all the scholarly articles published during the past twenty years. In India too medical journals have begun to publish articles on poetry therapy.

Poetry Therapy utilizes reading and discussion of poems related to one's problems either alone or with the help of a therapist. Many poetry therapists use group therapy settings for reading and relishing the insights which provide the fuel for inner change. The writing of poems is also used as an avenue to gain insight as well as to express one's innermost experiences. A reputed medical journal has published an article by a seriously disturbed person who finally recovered from his malady by writing poems (Silverberg 131-35). But in such serious conditions Poetry Therapy is recommended only after regular professional evaluation and the use of standard procedures. The famous psychologist D.W. Winnicott has successfully used Poetry Therapy in his practice. He frequently employed the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins to help clients obtain insight into the problems related to the self (56-68).

Hopkins's *Journals and Papers* bear ample evidence of his concern for individuality and selfhood. He was a keen observer of the uniqueness of persons and things around him. As W. A. M. Peters says, "...Hopkins habitually looked at objects with the fixed determination to catch what was distinctive in them in order thus to arrive at some insight into their essence as individuals. To express this set of individuating characteristics in a suitable term he coined the word 'inscape' " (2). Hopkins's other prose writings like *Sermons and Devotional Writings* and *Letters* contain insightful descriptions of the experience of one's own self and the "selfiaste," which has come to the attention of philosophers, psychiatrists and poets. Hopkins captures in words the unique taste of one's own self as: "...my self-being, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of I and me above and in all things, which is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the smell of walnut leaf or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man (*Sermons* 128).

The celebration of the glory of selfhood as well as the poignant expression of its vicissitudes is found in many of Hopkins's poems. Ever

The Poetry Therapy of Depersonalization and the Unique Self Taste of G.M. Hopkins

Liina Antony

The therapeutic power of literature was known to the world from the time of ancient Greek dramatists. Among primitive tribal communities rhythmic music and chanting were not only expressions of joy and victory but also of sorrow and tragedy. In the first century A.D. the Roman physician Romanus is said to have prescribed poetry and drama for curing patients (Longo 1). Sigmund Freud has acknowledged that he obtained insight into the working of the unconscious mind from literature. He expressed his indebtedness to the ancient Greek dramatists by naming the different psychological complexes using terms borrowed from their plays. The Oedipus complex is a notable example (Freud 296). In recent years, mental health professionals have started using literary works for psychotherapy. This method is known as Bibliotherapy. The term became popular in psychiatric circles in the middle of the twentieth century. *Dorland's Pocket Medical Dictionary* defines it as: "use of books and reading in treatment of nervous disorders" (85).

Poetry therapy is a branch of Bibliotherapy and was first known as "poem therapy". It was first used in New York hospitals in 1959. An authoritative work on this subject entitled *Poetry Therapy* was published in 1969 by Dr. Leedy. A Poetry Therapy Institute was established in Los Angeles in the 1970s. As the number of poetry therapy practitioners increased in the USA, the National Association for Poetry Therapy was formed in 1997. This regulatory body gives certification for practising poetry therapy. An academic journal called *The Journal of Poetry Therapy* regularly publishes scholarly articles. Book length and shorter studies on Bibliotherapy and Poetry Therapy are regularly published by several reputed academic publishers. An Internet search for Poetry Therapy revealed 227 articles with the words "Poetry Therapy" in the titles in reputed academic publications including Medical Journals. *The Journal of Poetry Therapy* in its 2008 June issue

since these poems first appeared, they have been used for psychotherapy. According to Jerome Bump, one of Hopkins's teachers in Highgate, Richard Watson Dixon, over a century ago praised the ability of Hopkins's poetry to carry "one out of one's self with healing" (Bump 67-68). Gerald Roberts speaks about the therapeutic value in Hopkins's poetry, especially in the poem "The Loss of Fairydice." He remarks that "no one could read 'The Loss of Fairydice' without the deepest and most ennobling emotions" (Roberts 1-5). Because of the "health-breathing" quality of Hopkins's poetry, Bump begins each day by reciting his poems "Pied Beauty" and "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" (68).

Jacques Derrida was much impressed by the concept of self in Hopkins. He observes: "...close to St. Francis, Hopkins not only tastes the landscapes but all the inscapes of being human that range from joy to deep despair. Self-taste can have no final assessment because its worth is without price and beyond the cost of calculative accounting" (qud in Zlomuski 65-66). John Bradshaw bases his psychotherapy on Hopkins's poem "As Kingfishers Catch Fire." This is a poem in which the poet stresses the uniqueness and individuality of each being:

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;

Selves—goes itself, myself it speaks and spells,

Crying *What I do is me; for that I come.* (Hopkins, *Poems* 53)

Winnicott speaks about the experience of a patient in poetry therapy. Her chief problem was that she was always trying to avoid the acceptance of her own self. Even her efforts to use poems to gain touch with the self proved to be unsuccessful as she moved from one poem to another in a compulsive manner like a chain smoker until she came across Hopkins's "Carrion Comfort." The poem provided the insight to perceive that she was always wishing "not to be." With the help of the poem Winnicott directed her to her sense of self (Winnicott 72).

R.D. Laing, a brilliant contemporary psychiatrist and author, in his *Self and Others* speaks about the change that took place in Hopkins who used to enjoy his self taste which was as distinct as ale and alum, what

leaf and canphor during his years of conflict. In one of his "terrible sonnets" Hopkins says:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Biter would have me taste; my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfcast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse. (*Poems* 65)

It is to be noted that along with the self taste of ale and alum Hopkins is also capable of accepting with equal willingness his transformed self experience. Even in the darkest moments of despair, he is trying to be true to his self, and this captures the admiration of R.D. Laing: "Thousands of people have come to psychiatrists to be 'cured' of less than this" (36). Hopkins who used to admire the individuality and selfhood of persons shows here his insight into self-taste and the loss of it. No wonder that his poetry has a therapeutic effect on persons who are preoccupied with the problems of self-feeling and its loss. As he says in another poem, "O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall/frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap: May who ne'er hung there" (Hopkins, *Poems* 62).

There are several poignant expressions of the bitter taste of one's self in despair and its acceptance with great resignation in the poems of Hopkins. This attitude of self-acceptance has great implications in the psychotherapy for problems related to the loss of self-feeling. People in post-modern society who complain that they do not have an adequate feeling of self or reality can find a ray of hope in the poetry of Hopkins:

NOT; I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not least on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me or: most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can;
Can something; hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

(*Poems* 61)

Constantly experiencing one's own self and the external reality as unreal is now diagnosed as Depersonalization Disorder by psychiatrists.

are very common. But in a small percentage of individuals the symptoms assume a permanent form and run a chronic course extending almost their entire life-span.

Though there are centres engaged in clinical research on Depersonalization, it continues to be an elusive malady. There are at present two centres engaged in full time research on the medical aspects of depersonalization, namely Mt. Sinai Centre, USA, and DP Research Unit, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London.

According to Dr. Daphne Simeon, a very prominent researcher in this area, there is no commonly accepted treatment option for it. Although a variety of treatments for Depersonalization have been reported in the literature, efficacy has not been demonstrated convincingly for any treatment, and Depersonalization is generally regarded as rather poorly responsive and refractory to treatment. Although numerous pharmacological agents have been tried in the treatment of Depersonalization, the overall outcome has been rather grim. (Simeon 383)

The Depersonalization stories published by the sufferers of this malady at Depersonalization web sites show that the majority have not derived any benefit from drug therapy. Only very few have had some improvement, but they too have to depend upon the drugs to maintain that improvement. It is painful to know that talented young men and women have to pull on with an impoverished sense of self and a feeling of unreality all through their life. The huge wastage of human resources apart from personal misery of the sufferers is something which should capture greater attention of universities and research organizations. The failure of drug related therapy points to the need for exploring new avenues of interdisciplinary approach to the problem.

Hopkins's insight into self and its vicissitudes holds great promise for Depersonalization victims as the problem is related to the awareness of self and reality. Hopkins's concern for it could be explored from this point of view. His insight into the malady of the self is stressed by R.D. Laing: "Hopkins knew that this taste, of ale or of gall was him. To be 'cured' of this is more problematic than any other cure, if the

In literature and philosophy it is known as alienation. The existential philosophers and novelists have considered it as the central predicament of humanity. Kafka, Camus and Sartre have taken up this theme in their novels. *Nausea* identifies it as an existential malady. Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, and Albert Camus's *The Stranger* reveal the phenomenology of Depersonalization. As Hopkins says, "To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life! Among strangers" (*Poems* 65).

In medical literature the term was first used by Krishaber in 1872. Another psychiatrist Dugas describes it as "the feeling of the loss of ego" (Stenberg 223). In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* the symptoms of the condition are a feeling of detachment or estrangement from one's self and the patient's feeling that his or her body is unreal, is changing, or is dissolving; or that he or she is outside of the body. The individual may feel like an automaton or as if he or she is living in a dream or a movie. There may be a sensation of being an outside observer of one's mental processes, one's body, or parts of one's body. The individual with Depersonalization Disorder maintains intact reality testing (e.g. awareness that it is only a feeling and that he or she is not really an automaton) and therefore not psychotic or mad. Depersonalization is a common experience, and this diagnosis should be made only if the symptoms are sufficiently severe to cause marked distress or impairment in functioning. In recent years Dr. Oscar Jaungar, who himself experienced depersonalization in his life, has made a thorough exploration of it. He had been preparing a book-length study on depersonalization. But, unfortunately, he died recently without being able to complete the study. Marlene Steinberg and Maxine Schnell have recently published a book on dissociative disorders called *The Stranger in the Mirror*. Although depersonalization disorder is one of the major dissociative disorders, it is a poorly researched condition, and very little is known about its biological underpinnings. *The Stranger in the Mirror* is a major book length study that has devoted a section to the study of Depersonalization.

A study published in the British Journal of Psychiatry shows that symptoms of transitory feelings of Depersonalization lasting for a few hours have been found among 50% of the population. Similar studies in the USA also show that the symptoms of transitory Depersonalization

cure is to become estranged from one's self-being, to lose one's very self" (36). As a renowned poet with great concern for the self, taste, a poetry therapy based on his poems seems to hold a ray of hope for the unfortunate victims of Depersonalization. The unique self taste in Hopkins stands out because at the experiential level it is a reality which is incommunicable through ordinary language.

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Gulliver's Travels: Subtextualising Proto-post Colonial Narrative

Murali Krishnan

This paper proposes to conduct a political, anti-colonial and post colonial reading of *Gulliver's Travels* and to bring out the polemical stance adopted by Swift on issues, which were discussed during the early eighteenth century England. The superficial innocence projected by the writer deceptively camouflages the intense political dialectics related to his colonial and anti-colonial views prevalent during his period. The discourse of the text aims at an audience who were initiated to "new world order" which was solely Euro-centric. People had known experiences of sea-faring men. They also had enough awareness about the eastern continents through travel reports. But it would be improper to consider the reading public of those days to be naïve enough to believe in Lilliputians and Brobdingnagians as real. Swift's strategy was to de-contextualise the Englishmen from their contemporary situation and to provide them with a story of Lemuel Gulliver's experience in an illusory setting without failing to sub-textualise the political intent in the discourse. So an attempt to re-read the text from this perspective would surely help to identify the anti-colonial and postcolonial implications in the work.

The theory of New-historicism does generally agree with certain critical paradigms related to Post-colonialism. Post-colonial theory shows how no form of intellectual or cultural activity is innocent of power hierarchies, highlighting the collusion between literary representation and colonial power. *Orientalism*, the seminal work published by Edward Said, has taken the view that every branch of knowledge is part and parcel of the establishment of European political hegemony through the process of colonial conquest and domination. The concept of post-colonialism has expanded to accommodate a wide variety of subjects including the history of colonial conquests, of anti-colonial struggles, the exigencies of post-colonial nation formations, power - knowledge nexus and the politics of cultural domination. "Historically, it had begun

by looking at post-colonial periods, after the process of colonisation had started, that is from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and thus was part of the deconstructive questioning of the European Enlightenment. More recently, post-colonial scholars have begun to delve further back in time, and in a healthy partnership with new historicism, are now examining the process of Renaissance self-fashioning, as it pertains to travel and the 'discovery' of 'new lands'." (Azim: 237)

Post-colonialism covers a wide and diverse range of writing and it developed through several stages. As Bill Ashcroft *et al* states, "the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world (Ashcroft et al: 7). Poststructuralist theories, with their emphases on deconstruction and decentering, have informed the rise of postcolonial theory and this has highlighted further the ethnocentricity of European literature, and in particular the *Englishness* of English literature. *Orientalism* augurs the change in positioning of a colonial identity bequeathed by the invaders on the natives. "Said links Orientalism to Gramsci's concept of hegemony; he draws on Gramsci's distinction between the civil and the political society, the former being composed of non-coercive units such as the family, schools, unions and the latter being state institutions such as the militia and police. As Gramsci argued, culture operates largely in the civil domain and by consent rather than domination." (Webster: 120). A major limitation pointed about Orientalism is that it pictures the colonized as mute and passive and the colonizer as victorious and ubiquitous. Homi Bhabha rejects such a binary dialectical relation; instead he sees an emergence of a new hybrid identity. For him the new colonial subjectivity becomes a strange amalgam- a hybrid, born out of mimicry of colonial forms. The effect of this is that power positions do not remain well defined any longer; but are rendered ambivalent within the colonial encounter. Gayatri Spivak sees the deteriorated status of woman in the post-colonial discourse as projected by Said in his *Orientalism*. It had highlighted the erotic dimensions of colonial conquest, where conquered lands were depicted as passive women waiting to be ravished. She points out that colonial domination renders the women/subaltern mute, making it impossible to decipher her voice except in a tangential and masked manner. Aijaz Ahmed asserts that the term 'third world literature' is

most applicable because the new post-colonial literary canon adheres to the political power divisions envisaged by the 'three worlds' theory. According to him any form of writing or critique that emerges as a result of collusion with institutions like western publishing groups and media should be examined carefully since they are fully complicit with the cultural dominance of the western world.

The term "new historicism" was coined in 1982 by Stephen Greenblatt to characterize a collection of Renaissance essays he had edited viz *Allegory and Representation*. In 1985 he contributed to *Political Shakespeare*, a volume edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, in which the editors outlined a three-stage process organizing power relations across literary and non-literary Renaissance texts alike: consolidation, subversion and containment. Greenblatt's general thesis is that, in order to sustain its power, any durable political and cultural order not only to some degree allows, but also actively fosters subversive elements and forces, yet in such a way as more effectively to contain such challenges to the existing order. However, this view has been criticized as "pessimistic" and "quietist". Such a 'strong containment' thesis has been taken as distinguishing new historicism from the more liberatory left wing political edge of British cultural materialism. From Raymond Williams' initial delineation of the field of cultural materialism in 1980, the name remained dormant for a brief period until it received a very specific focus in *Political Shakespeare*. Cultural Materialists stress that their criticism is itself oriented toward political intervention in their own era, so as to show "commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender, and class." There is also an allegiance to Foucault's discussion of power and discourse. One can perceive that new historicism is primarily *descriptive* in its procedures, even though it is self-consciously so, cultural materialism is *interventionist* as well as *descriptive*. Indeed some critics are of the view that new historicists limit themselves to describing social domination and exploitation in literary texts of the past, but stop short of a commitment to remake the present social order. However, in the 1994 second edition of *Political Shakespeare*, Dollimore states that cultural materialism has always shared the new historicist concern to confront 'the forces which prevent change' (Dollimore & Sinfield: 1994).

Gulliver's Travels can be read in different ways: as a picaresque tale, an imaginary voyage, an exemplary history, a novel, a children's book, an allegory, a spiritual biography or conversion story, an early science fiction, a travel book, a philosophical treatise, a political satire, a narrative satire. Over many centuries people read *Gulliver* in different ways and criticized it on many grounds. Critics during the early eighteenth century approached the text from a moral perspective and commented that Swift had "satirized women and degraded human nature" (Fox: 19). Many writers, like Thackeray, objected to the fourth part of the book quite strongly. Further towards the nineteenth century the analysis centered on the biographical details of the author. Some writers like Sir Walter Scott involved a search for historical analogues and sources. Towards the first half of twentieth century, critics like Sir Charles Kitch tried to identify a hidden history of British politics, starting with the reign of Queen Anne. But Alan Downie asserts that Swift's method of political satire relies on allusion and analogy rather than on any consistent allegory. Critics have also explored the psychological implications of Gulliver's obsession. As a failed idealist, Gulliver shows that we create our own heavens to create our own hells. Our ideas of perfection can make us feel hopelessly imperfect, even drive us insane. Gulliver is struck by a vision of perfection that alienates him from his former life and delivers a shock from which he cannot easily recover. In 1948, Ricardo Quintana did a *new critical* analysis, in which he argues that Swift is as much outside the text as we are. What is present is a fictional self, or persona, in this case Gulliver, who like other literary characters inhabits his own world, independent of the author. That world is the text. Much of *new critical* studies of Gulliver's Travels concerned itself with Swift's use of irony and impersonation. This was questioned later by *Reader-response* critics. Claude Rawson identified *bewilderment* as the chief weapon of Swift, who unleashed the savage energy on the unwary reader with little warning and made them realize the incessantly shifting status and function of the parodic element. This view enhanced the scope for looking at the text from a different perspective in which a creative relationship exists between interpreter and text. With *theory* getting prominence by 1980s, studies have become divergent with new insights into the text.

In each of his voyages, Gulliver met with new and different inhabitants. They had their own culture, tongue, system of administration, laws, educational system and customs. He learnt their language and tried to imbibe their customs, clearly aware of the fact that he was an outsider. In Lilliput, he found himself a giant among a diminutive people. Though amused by their miniature state and toy like prettiness, he realized later that they are as treacherous, malicious, ambitious and cruel as human beings. In Brobdingnag, a land of giants, he found it something of a *utopia*. The political wisdom shown by the king could be contrasted with the inhuman regulations of the then British institutions. In the third voyage, to Laputa, Swift elaborates the extremes of theoretical and speculative reasoning, whether in science, politics or economics. The court of Laputa is composed of musicians and scientists, who live wholly in the air, the feet never touch the earth, their heads are in clouds, and naturally their minds are usually befogged. The final voyage sets Gulliver between a race of Houyhnhnms (pronounced "whinnems") who live entirely by reason except for a few well-controlled and muted social affections and their slaves, the Yahoos. Their bodies are obscene caricatures of the human body. They have no glimmer of reason, but are mere creatures of appetite and passion.

As we analyze the text, certain rudimentary elements of post-colonial thoughts can be identified: a master/slave theme, the suppression of the marginalized (the *subaltern* question), an attempt to distort the past, legitimating the discourse of cruelty, sensuality, despotism, a journey to a remote, incomprehensible destination and the dilemma of a hybridized identity.

Sea voyaging was seen as an activity, which could reap monetary benefits. Gulliver, a surgeon, took part in various voyages by which, as he says, "I got some additions to my fortunes" (GT: 6). Such sea explorations and visits to "East and West Indies" (*ibid*) became popular activity during Swift's period and one can juxtapose this to the establishment of East India Company in India- the age that presaged the colonial rule in the Indian Subcontinent. By the end of the seventeenth century British commerce was growing faster than agriculture. "Between 1690 and 1760 imports of merchandise rose from 16s to £1 12s per head of population, and exports rose from 18s to

£2s per capita-having grown at an annual rate of 1.5 per cent throughout this period....the trade with the North American colonies, the West Indies, Africa, India and the East Indies increased by leaps and bounds. The trade with British colonies was barred to other countries; all goods to or from the colonies had to be carried by colonial or by British vessels. The gain went to British mercantile interests" (Gidding: 4). Gidding refers to the speech made by Robert Walpole in 1721, where he asserted that "the balance of trade may be preserved in our favour, our navigation increased, and the greater number of our poor employed" (Gidding: 6). The text is an evident attempt to feature a journey to remote, incomprehensible destination, which, like *A Passage to India* and *Heart of Darkness*, invites the reader to interpret "as a geographical metaphor for psychological and philosophical voyages: the relationship of western to colonized communities" (Webster: 121). Gulliver becomes a slave to various "masters" whenever he chances upon reaching unexplored remote lands and this position he retains through his travels for sixteen years. Chapter xii is vital in understanding what Swift believes regarding the explorations of lands. The remark "whatever lands are discovered by a subject, belong to the Crown", is significant because that shows the prevailing notion of furthering the empire's interest. Gulliver is dead against invading countries such as Houyhnhnms; instead he wants them to be used for "civilizing Europe" and teaching them "the first principles of honour, justice, truth, temperance, public spirit, fortitude, chastity, friendship, benevolence and fidelity" (GT: 313). In the same chapter Gulliver gives an excellent illustration of how a colony is set up, plundering the country and torturing the inhabitants: "A crew of pyrates are driven by a storm they know not whither; at length a boy discovers land from top mast; they go on shore to rob and plunder; they see an (*sic*) harmless people, are entertained with kindness, they give the Country a new name, they take formal possession of it for the King, they set up a rotten plank or a stone for a memorial, they murder two or three dozen of the natives, bring away a couple more by force for a sample, return home, and get their pardon. Here commences a new dominion acquired with a title Divine Right. Ships are sent with the first opportunity; the natives are driven out or destroyed, their princes tortured to discover their gold; a free license given to all acts of

inhumanity and lust; the earth reeking with the blood of its inhabitants" (*CT*: 313-314). Gulliver tries to defend the British position immediately but the underlying spirit of the text denies any such pretensions because the criticism leveled at the political practices of Britain by the King of Brobdingnag does not go unnoticed despite Gulliver's patriotic zeal. In Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (1712), Belinda is made seductive when decked in goods and finery plundered from the four corners of the earth:

*From each she nicks cuts with curious toil,
And docks the goddess with the glittering spoil.*

*This, casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.*

The tortoise here and elephant unite,

Transform'd to combs, the spectral and the white. (Canto 1: 131-136)

Moreover, Swift, like Gulliver, was a kind of intermediary: "An Irishman from an oral culture writing largely for an English print culture" (Murfin: 293). Canole Fabricant says that Swift served in effect as translator between alien and alienated communities separated not only by national and cultural differences, but by class divisions as well. For Swift, moreover, "the conflict had a very special resonance in terms of the clash between English and Irish culture, between a civilized *colonial* power buttressed by various linguistic and political structures and a *primitive* society functioning largely through oral traditions". The ambiguity and confusion surrounding the whole question of identity would have had a particular resonance for Swift as noted in his bitterly facetious question, "Am I a freeman in England and do I become a slave in six hours by crossing the channel"? (*Prose Works* 10:31). The peculiar character of the political struggle between England and Ireland in his time, in which the colonizers and the colonized were differentiated as a means of denying Ireland's claim to equality with England under British law, provided suggestive material for the definitional anxieties and absurdities depicted in the *Travels*. However Gulliver is noted for his ambivalence in his approach. On the one hand he is a chauvinistic Englishman voyaging to foreign lands, where he is eager to "celebrate the praise of my own dear country in a style equal to its merits and

felicity", at the same time he more nearly approximates to the role of a displaced Irishman, finding himself an object of ridicule, a prisoner and a condemned man. As historian too, Gulliver alternates between colonialist and anti colonialist narratives. Interestingly the main anti colonialist narrative, quoted at length above, was omitted from all editions of the *Travels*. The question of the troubled identity of Gulliver requires some explanation. Gulliver finds himself quite out of place at the end of the narrative after visiting Houyhnhnms, "I must freely confess, the sight of them (his wife and children) filled me only with hatred, disgust, and contempt" (*CT*: 309). This he attributes to the "vices and ideas of those exalted Houyhnhnms" (ibid). At the end he finds solace in his horses that "understand me tolerably well." He finds his identity hybridized "neither here nor there" (ibid). In part three, while giving an account of Glibbulbubrib, Gulliver realizes how incorrect modern history is. He finds "how the world had been misled by prostitute writers" (*CT*: 210). He understands "how many innocent and excellent persons had been condemned to death or banished" and "how many villains had been exalted to the highest places of trust, power, dignity and profit" (ibid). Gulliver finds direct access to historical truth blocked. This idea provided the need to a broad-spectrum reinterpretation of history, which, once a colonizer takes over, changes according to his political necessity.

Another important element that invites attention is the marginalized section of the narrative. The prominent among the subalterns of the *Travels* include the women and the Yahoos. Swift has been attacked by the critics for his inhuman treatment of women in his *Travels*. The women are either made a butt of ridicule ("a careless maid fell asleep while she was reading a Romance" *CT*: 46) or of loose morals as in Laputa or in Brobdingag. The women in Laputa (in Spanish *la puta* means 'the whore') are largely excluded from political participation on their alleged irrationality compared to their rational counterparts. Gulliver is the object of aggressive "native" women and this accusation of uncontrolled sexual desire in "native" women is only a justification for the adultery among male travelers. This can be juxtaposed with idea that the colonies are nothing but "untouched females" to be ravished by the colonizing male. The other victim is the Yahoo of the fourth chapter. Yahoos are a race portrayed as repulsive creatures resembling

human beings in form and they are characterized by the most disgusting traits. The yahoos are found to be quarrelsome ("battles have been fought between the yahoos of several neighborhoods without any visible cause"), avaricious (their "unnatural appetite" for hiding shining stones in their kennels), gluttonous ("their undistinguishing appetite to devour everything that comes in their way"), disease prone and dirty (G.F: 217-18). Gulliver notes that Yahoos are "the most unteachable of all animals" and they are "cunning, malicious, treacherous and revengeful". There is no sympathy shown to the Yahoos. In the grand debate at the General Assembly, the Houyhnhnms even discuss about exterminating the whole race of yahoos (G.F: 288). This plan of genocide shows how the oppressor could decide rather unilaterally to homogenize the existing plurality of the society. They are not given any aboriginal status and according to the tradition of Houyhnhnms, the yahoos came later ("many ages ago, two of these brutes appeared together upon a mountain; whether produced by the heat of the sun upon corrupted mud and slime, or from the ooze and froth of the sea was never known" *ibid*). They are thus even denied a history. It is also to be noted that Gulliver himself is addressed a "yahoo" among the Houyhnhnms. As Terry Eagleton points out, "Swift's Yahoos are both colonized wretches and humanity as a whole, which allows him to suggest that the imperialist is no better than the natives while continuing to promote a demeaning stereotype of the latter" (Eagleton, 2003:5)

The present reading thus attempts to throw light upon the divide between the colonial and the anti-colonial instincts in the text. It questions the trend to legitimize the colonized/colonizer, oppressed/oppressor, slave/master relations as prevalent in the eighteenth century. *Gulliver's Travels* documents many of the present widely debated issues in its rudimentary form.

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Violent Geographies and Bruised Bodies: Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Dr. Vincent B. Netto

Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American novelist, was named the 2006 Humanitarian of the Year by the U.S. office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This was for his work as a goodwill envoy attempted in the capacity of a novelist through his debut *The Kite Runner*. If his first novel *The Kite Runner* narrates the story of male relationships of two boys growing up in Kabul, their love, betrayal and redemption; his second book *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, is its fraternal twin: a tale of women, about love and loss and endurance. The amazing repertoire of eyewitness accounts and stories in *The Kite Runner* take us to the world of men in Afghanistan while those of in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* help us see the women under the burqas against the background of the Soviet invasion and Taliban intrusion.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is the chronicle of thirty years of Afghan history set against the increasing dilapidation of a nation, as Afghanistan is passed off from the abuses of Soviet domination to the relentless violence of the Mujahideen, and then to the religious repressions of the Taliban. The Soviet incursion left Afghanistan in a state of chaos. The division of power, the division of land and division of spoils in the wake of Taliban infringement turned it a mutilated place with violent geographies and bruised bodies. Women suffered not only through the frequent bombings and indiscriminate shelling but also were beaten, tortured, imprisoned and humiliated. What makes the situation horrendous is the gender-based abuse in addition to the violation of their fundamental rights. The women were sold and abducted as slaves, forced into marriages, dragged into prostitution, and raped. It is held that sexual violence during times of war and political turbulence reflect the tendency of cultures to make women feel ashamed of their bodies and sexuality; men learning to see women as objects of sexual target. The violence, the cruelty, the oppression, the bloody killings were

perpetrated by both the ruling agencies, the religious fanatics as also the offensive public.

The sad and sordid tale of misery and oppression in the wake of the new political conditions leaving behind it a complex baggage of traumatic memories is the theme of Hosseini. He has taken to the genre of novel to depict violence and death, resulting in a mass reshuffling of populations and a searing of age-old roots resulting in dislocation, displacement and disruption. More than horror it is an anguish that characterizes everyone's lives. Violence that is brutal and irrational becomes an abhorrent reality. Ashis Nandy points out to the need to talk about traumatic happenings lest the memories sink into apathia and return as fantasies of orgasmic violence... [tantalizing] us to actualize our dreams of annihilating the enemy" (3). Probably, Hosseini's narratives serve as antidote to the brutality waged on Afghanistan (Afghan and humanity).

The novelist seems to present the facets of female sensibility wherewith the women characters question and probe the links between cultural conditioning, psychosexual determinants and religio-political factors which govern their destinies; and also seeks to explore and discover alternative ways of survival and empowerment. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* narrates the story of two women brought together by war, cultural mores, and marriage to the same abusive man, Rasheed. Mariam is a harami (the scorned illegitimate daughter) of a wealthy businessman Jalil and Nana, his one time servant. The father visits the daughter on almost every Thursday with gifts and toffees at the Kolba. Mariam insists on her father taking her to his abode, but the man refuses. One day she visits him against her mother's warning and, on her return, is shocked to see her mother hanging herself in a tree. She goes to live with her wealthy father, his three wives and their ten children. Later she regrets and repents for having chosen Jalil over her own mother (280).

At the age of fifteen, Maria is forced to a marriage with Rasheed, a forty-year-old shoemaker with a hideous temper who grows increasingly brutal with the advancing years. The husband, a notoriously abusive man never allows her to have friends, talk to people or show

and sexual assault. She is acutely conscious of marital confinements with ominous realizations. The world that surrounds her is full of cruel and oppressive relationships.

War and drought devastate the land of Afghanistan. Poverty and starvation take hold of Rasheed's house too. Laila is forced to put her daughter, Azia by Tariq in an orphanage against her yearning. On her way to the orphanage she happens to meet Tariq long after several years. Rasheed noses the incident and begins torturing Laila. He begins beating and bruising her and the torture exceeds all limits that she can endure no more. One day she revolts by punching him back. She has longed for this act of defiance that would have ended the suffering of all her indignities (291-293). On another occasion and that too for the last, Rasheed catches her, throws her up against the wall, and beats her with the belt and the buckle slams against her chest, shoulders, arms and fingers, and drawing blood wherever it smacks. The physical assault gains brutal dimensions when Rasheed hurls Laila to the ground with his hands wrapped around Laila's neck. Her face starts turning blue with her eyes rolling back as about to be killed. Mariam feels herself foolish, wretched and ungrateful to stand the situation without any protest. She takes a shovel, calls him by name, hits him across the temple and kills him (337-344).

Mariam forces Laila leave the place with Tariq and the children. She admits the crime, and is imprisoned and finally executed. Her thoughts before her death reveal the courage of a woman:

she thought of her entry into this world, the harami child of a lowly villager, unintended thing, a pitiable, regrettable accident. A weed. And yet she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back. She was leaving it as a friend, a companion, a guardian. A mother. A person of consequence at last....This was the legitimate end to a life of illegitimate beginnings. (361)

Later we learn: "But, mostly, Mariam is in Laila's own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns" (402). Laila builds a prosperous and happy life in Murree with her lover Tariq and finally returns to her own native land to work for the rehabilitation of destitute

her face in public, and beats her on a regular basis. It is through the sub-text of silence that Mariam reveals the saga of her suffering. Rasheed indulges in pornographic pleasures while demanding strict and austere life from his wife. Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* observes: "A man enforces chastity upon a woman" but for himself looks for pleasure. "There is a double demand which dooms woman to duplicity: he wants the woman to be his and to remain foreign to him. He fancies her as at once a servant, an enchantress but in public he admits only the first of these desires, the other is a sly demand which he hides in the secrecy of his own heart and flesh" (221).

In the story one doesn't find many choices being offered to the female and even when she is given an opportunity, there is nothing much to pick from among equally painful alternatives. Laila is a smart and spirited fourteen year old girl whose only other options, after her parents are killed by rocket fire, are prostitution or starvation. She, a pregnant teenager orphaned by the war, learns that Tariq, her lover has been mortally wounded and agrees to marry the old man to avoid the shameful situation of unmarried pregnancy. Predictably, this second marriage of Rasheed is an affront to Mariam and she wages a cold war on Laila. She blames and targets Laila, who on her part, takes the abrasive treatment with malice towards none and no complaints to Rasheed. After an initial rivalry, Laila succeeds to win over Mariam and they become steadfast friends.

Born a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are two women brought together by war, loss and fate. Both are poles apart in their temperament and demeanour. She is a literate girl, with a father whose ideas can be considered very progressive. Her father strongly believed in getting her an education and later a job—those were days when women could study and work in Afghanistan. She nostalgically recollects the good old days of love and happiness with her boyfriend Tariq. Mariam on her part accepts the insult inflicted on her personality by Rasheed condescendingly. She would put on the burqua, tolerate his forced love makings, suffer physical assaults, corporal punishments and even chew the pebbles forced into her mouth by her husband, break her molars and spit blood. A marriage without love or consent tantamounts to rape

children. As she does so, she re-lives Babri's farewell ode, lines from a 17th Century poem by Saib-e-Tabrizi in praise of Kabul:

"One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs,
Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls." (381)

The Afghan society is crystallized in a matrix of male domination wherein the inequality of sexes is both a divine mandate and a cultural construct. Hosseini gives a powerful portrait of patriarchal despotism where women are agonizingly dependent on fathers, husbands and sons—the bearing of male children being their sole path to social status. In the novel, one becomes conscious of the role accorded to women by the society and the patriarchal culture that is in conspiracy against the individuality of the female folk. Women have no freedom, aren't allowed to work and are not permitted to travel without male chaperone, to list only a few. They repeatedly become victims of male rage. The marginalization of the female biological body is an everyday reality. The gendered nature of violence has aggravated the nightmare existence and the disruption of location. Its aftermath is being enacted in the everyday life in the form of domestic rifts, ethnic riots, enclosed spaces and the politics of dislocation.

Women share a territory of lived experiences set apart by their oppressions, compromises, endurance, silences, and thwarted aspirations and ambitions. They continue to be a burdensome appendage. Hosseini explores and probes into the experience with intensive precision and concreteness. The regular pattern of abuse, wife battering and rape are pointers to the fact that women are vulnerable to marital violence. A woman internalizes the man-made constructs even from early childhood. She has no say on her future and has no right to protest or to complain. Maria's mother has convinced her as early as a child that she needed no schooling but only to learn to "endure" because a woman like her would have nothing but rejection and heartache in the outside world (18-19). The rights over the body guarantee the male possessors categorize women as the objects of subjugation and objugation. The Afghan men's rights to starve their wives who deprive them of sex is a pointer to this fact. Bodies, Judith Butler comments, are made to matter within relations of power, it is within these that they are made useful and knowable (qtd in Gedalof, 187).

Violence against women can be read literally as the suppression and exploitation of the other and metaphorically as symbolic of the chaos of the times when the native land is being mutilated, looted and raped. In the vast and macabre drama of death, people themselves enact the ritual of looting, abducting, killing and raping. Women are the most awful sufferers and lose their dignity, self respect, and individual esteem. But then what is robust about Hosseini's narrative is that women can not be always at the suffering end or be sites of perpetual subjugation (subjection and objectification). Marian and Laila become allies in an asymmetrical battle with Rasheed, whose violent misogyny exceeds all limits. The two wives, after some initial tension, form an unbreakable familial bond that can help them endure the ever escalating dangers around them — in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul. Their bonding that makes them sisters to each other ultimately alters the course not just of their own lives but of the lives of others too. The two women emblemize the spirit of tenacity which sustains and enriches each others' lives. They struggle and strive for a meaningful relation with the situation around them as to prevent the world from sliding further into ruins.

What makes this book stand out is the author's astounding ability to flesh out the characters' motivations, strengths, flaws and fears. Hosseini writes succinctly about the behaviour and struggles of women. The two main female characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are a kind inspired by his collective sense of how women lived in Afghanistan, particularly since the withdrawal of the Soviets and the breakout of anarchy, criminality and extremism. The writer clarifies his position in writing the novel as "...to breathe life, depth, and emotional subtext into the two-dimensional image of the Afghan woman in a *biyoga* walking down the street" (Khatab Hosseini in Conversation with James Musich). His tale is a powerful, harrowing depiction of Afghanistan as also a lyrical evocation of the lives and enduring hopes of its resilient characters. It is an ode to the undying spirit of the people of Afghanistan in general and to the thousands of Afghani women in particular who have survived despite the odds. The narrative recalls the interpersonal negotiations in order to reveal the intricate process of self-making. The personal becomes the political and the political personal. This narrative

that tries to capture the moments of rupture is a baton to the urge to remember, to order and to hope.

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Perceptual Contamination through Language: Social Issues at Stake

Dr S. Kannammal

Marginalization of women in society was mainly done through language. The secondary status assigned to women is not because of their natural aspects. One wonders why such a long continuance of this secondary status when everything in the society and the world has changed. Language preserves and transmits the cultural and social constructs and in doing so it has greatly helped to transmit and retain the hierarchical structure where man is privileged over woman, whether it is within the family structure or outside it. The present paper focuses on some of the male points of view on woman that have come down several generations through language. It shows the process of rigidifying of these perceptions on women through language.

Rose Mary Agonito in her book *History of Ideas on Woman: A Source Book* (1977) has compiled the ideas on women right from Aristotle down to the 20th century writers, and it is a very commendable and noteworthy work. It has helped the present study extensively. What this paper tries to do here is to fish out the contradictions of these male points of view down the ages and in doing so it shows in relief the anxiety of these male intellectuals to retain the secondary status of women in society in the first place and secondly it points out the amazing and the surprising fact of the perfect concurrence of these intellectuals placed distantly in time, culture, nationality and significantly ideology. The best minds dig deep into their intellectual capacities to argue out the case against women of all times. It is all done at the cost of being self-contradictory and throwing their ideologies to wind.

These intellectuals have used language as an able and powerful tool to carry the perceptions down the ages. Phrases related to women such as 'the fair sex', 'the weaker sex', 'the primary sphere is the family', 'delicate and beautiful' and so forth reverberate in the air even now. The great feminists like Simone De Beauvoir and Mary Wollstonecraft

also seem to have been trapped by the infected language. While Beauvoir, for all her revolutionary stance, believed in the natural and separate spheres of women. Wollstonecraft fell into the trap of placing women as the 'help mate' of man.

Knowledge, culture and language are so interrelated on a number of dimensions. No civilization could be built without language and they reinforce each other. As cultures are evolved and civilization progresses, the myth-making and attitude-building processes also become the dominant group's efforts in establishing the power structure. As we have a society or rather a world that had been for a long time dominated by men, the myths, social structures and cultural constructs were mainly made by men and obviously to their advantage. The systems founded and the norms formed are not genetically transmitted down to posterity but through language. The following discussion in this paper shows some of the ways in which language has helped to perpetuate and rigidify gender differences and hierarchies. This would help the feminists to appreciate better the relevancy of language analysis in dealing with gender problems.

The following discussion shows how philosophers, natural scientists and sociologists alike, while arguing for the emancipation of man, sanctioned the secondary status of woman in the family structure. Though their arguments were grounded in varied spheres ranging from moralistic philosophy to downright reasoning and logical questioning, they arrive at the same point of view that woman's secondary status is natural, necessary and there can be no alternative to it.

Rousseau, during the Enlightenment era, while challenging the absolute political authority in his *Social Contract* (1760), argues for the continuance of the patriarchal family system, where man holds the absolute authority. In fact, he moves toward establishing the absolute authority of man in the family:

But how could the government of the State be like that of the family, when the basis on which they rest is so different?... In the family (emphasis mine) that the father ought to command. In the first place, the authority ought not be equally divided between father and mother;

the government must be single and every division of opinion there must be one preponderant voice to decide. (Vide Agonito 1977: 118/119)

Further, Rousseau contradicts himself by arguing that roles assigned to men and women are social constructs in the light of the concept of private property. He asserts that women need to develop timidity and modesty:

If the timidity, chasteness and modesty which are *social inventions*, (emphasis mine) it is in society's interest that women acquire these qualities; they must be cultivated in women and any woman who disdains them, offends good morals. (cited in Rendal 1990: 10)

It is very amusing to see the anxiety on the part of Rousseau to keep woman pinned down to the secondary position at any cost. Interestingly, while the privileged position is taken to be 'natural' for men, the timidity on the part of women, necessary to keep her down to the secondary position is to be 'cultivated' and a stern warning is issued to any woman who thinks otherwise. Such a thing happening during the Enlightenment era is something that is unbelievable and lends anybody's reason or logic.

John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690) in the guise of allowing the rights of the mother, establishes the secondary position of woman: "If the father dies whilst the children are young, do they not naturally everywhere owe the same obedience to their mother, during their minority, as to the father were he alive?" (Vide Agonito 1977: 109). A careful reader would notice here that John Locke while seeming to be arguing for the authority of woman actually speaks for the man's primary and privileged position in the family. It is only at the death of the father that a mother could exercise her authority over her children.

Immanuel Kant restricts women in the sphere of education. He extols the image of a lady in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764):

A woman therefore will learn no geometry; the principle of sufficient reason or the monads she will know only so much as is

George Hegel seems to have derived his ideas about women's education from Kant himself. In his *The Philosophy of Right* (1821) he makes allowances for the education of women but makes a psychological research about the functioning of a woman's brain regarding her adaptability for higher sciences. One wonders whether he is expressing his fear of allowing women for higher learning or making a real psychological study of women's capability:

Women can, of course be educated, but their minds are not adapted to the higher sciences, philosophy or certain of the arts. These demand a universal faculty (vide- Agonito 1977:167)

Here one could notice that what was a stricture imposed on women in the words of Immanuel Kant that "women will learn no geometry" in 1761 came down to Hegel in 1821 as inability and lack of universal faculty. While Kant warns women against filling "their heads with battles", Hegel passes the judgment that women lack the efficiency to govern the State:

If women were to control the government, the State would be in danger, for they do not act according to the dictates of universalty, but are influenced by accidental inclinations and opinions" (Agonito: 167).

Therefore his conclusion is that the right place for women is the home: "The sphere of woman is essentially marriage" (Agonito 1977: 166).

Kierkegaard, as an existentialist committed to the view that there is no single view of humankind, could not resist the temptation to denounce women consistently. The only difference between Kierkegaard and the earlier writers described here is that he does it with infinite possibilities. In *Stages on Life's Way* (1845), he sets a stage for many speakers to give their views on women but all of them, curiously enough, deny any mental ability or greatness to woman. The following are some of the views of the various speakers (Vide- Agonito 1977): "Woman is the weaker sex" (176); "woman's significance is wholly negative" (178); "everything in life is a matter of fashion" (185); "a subdivision (that) she is related to man as his mate" (189).

needed to perceive the salt in a satire which the insipid grubs of our sex have censured. The fair can leave DescartesFontenelle... Alagarotti... Newton. In history they will not fill their heads with battles, nor in geography with fortresses, for it becomes them just as little to reek of gun powder as it does the males reek of musk (Vide- Agonito 1977: 131).

It is surprising to note that exceptions to this are not allowed by Kant and if ever a woman, by any chance, happens to be educated like a man, she is not fit to be called a woman:

A woman who has a head full of Greek, like Mme Dacier, or carried on fundamental controversies about mechanics, like the Marquise de Chatelet, might as well even have a beard; for perhaps that would express more obviously the mien of profundity for which she strives. (Ibid :131)

If Indira Gaudhi, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir or Hillary Clinton had been infected by these perceptions and modeled their lives on such maxims history would have been different.

Interestingly Kant, while restricting woman in selecting subjects of study that require diligence describes her as not inclined for those very spheres that need diligence:

The beautiful understanding *selects* (emphasis mine) for its objects everything closely related to the finer feeling and *relinquishes* (emphasis mine) to the diligent, fundamental and deep understanding abstract speculations or branches of knowledge useful but dry (Ibid: 131).

It is surprising to see Kant's use of the terms like 'needed', 'becoming', 'will not have' and then slide to 'selection' and finally describe all these as 'inborn' feelings. Kant, after restricting women to the sphere of beauty and holding out a stern warning if ever they transgressed their limits, attempts to read the responses of such a restricted category as natural:

Women have a strong *inborn feeling* (emphasis added) for all that is beautiful, elegant and decorated. (Ibid; 130)

These maxims, as it were, reverberating in the air even in the 21st century, bears proof to the argument that language is the culprit in rigidifying and bringing down to posterity several negative notions about women.

Arthur Schopenhauer in his essay "On Woman" in *Studies in Pessimism* (1851) retains virtually all negative aspects of traditional ideas on women. A woman according to him should show "submission to her husband, to whom she should be patient and cheering companion" (Vide- Agonito 1977). Schopenhauer, in fact, echoes the language of Immanuel Kant and Hegel in restricting the sphere of a woman and establishing her 'secondary status':

The keenest sorrows and joys are not for her; nor is she called upon to display a great deal of strength. The current of her life is more gentle, peaceful and trivial than man's, without being essentially happier or unhappier. (Vide- Agonito 1977:191).

He sounds like a sociologist when he makes his observations of the behavior of a woman:

The woman is by nature meant to obey; may be seen by the fact that every woman who is placed in the *maternal* position (emphasis mine) of complete independence, immediately attaches herself to some man, by whom she allows herself to be guided and ruled. (Vide- Agonito 1977:206)

Surprisingly, he turns to be a scientist also in explaining the short-sightedness of women: "A man reaches the maturity of his reasoning powers and mental faculties hardly before the age of twenty-eight; a woman at eighteen.... She may in fact be described as intellectually short-sighted, because of her weaker power of reasoning" (Ibid: 195).

The religious, philosophical and speculative ideas on women's secondary status gain a decisive scientific sanction with Charles Darwin's essay on "The Descent of Man" (1871):

Man is more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman and has a more inventive genius. His brain is absolutely larger, but whether or not proportionately to his larger body, has not, I believe, been fully ascertained. (Vide- Agonito 1977:252).

A careful reader would notice that when Darwin had not ascertained the proportion between the brain and the physical body, he is 'absolute' about the superiority of man's intelligence.

Further, Darwin while pointing out the difference between the mental powers of the two sexes, does not differ much from either the logicians or the philosophers:

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man's attaining to higher eminence, in whatever he takes up ... the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman. (Agonito 1977:260/261)

It is very interesting to note that similar ideas were expressed by Aristotle in 300 BC itself, even though he was not a scientist like Darwin. In *The Generation of Animals* composed between 347 and 322 BC, he says:

With all other animals the female is softer ... the male, on the other hand, is more spirited than the female, more savage, more simple and less cunning. (Vide- Agonito 1977: 48)

Further he states that the man- woman relationship corresponds to the master-slave relationship and therefore man is to command and woman has to obey. (Vide- Agonito 1977:54):

Clearly then moral virtue belongs to all of them but the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and a woman are not ... the same. *Courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying* (emphasis mine).

The above discussion shows that the writers, in whatever ideology they were grounded and in spite of their different spheres, have concurred in rigidifying the secondary position of woman in society and family. Even in the Enlightenment era the position of the woman was analyzed in new terms of logic and reason and yet her secondary status was established by reference to what was natural to her rather than divinely ordained. Here one could see that reason and logic replaced religion without damaging the privileged position enjoyed by man in society. In fact they differed only in the methodology of their analysis

of the issue, but arrived, nevertheless, at the same conclusion. This could be seen right from Aristotle down to Charles Darwin. It is a clear indication that language carries down to posterity the societal structures. Human perception shows through language and rather language is contaminated with human perception. Robert Scholes (1985:97) points out:

Language, culture, our social frame of reference — all these exert a tremendous pressure on the selectivity of perception.

Social perceptions on women have been largely influenced by language. Hence it becomes imperative to destructure the language that carries the hierarchical and oppressive social/familial structures.

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She Came First: Doris Lessing's *The Cleft* as an Attack on Certain Collective Phallogentric Fantasies

Ramesh K.G.

In all male-dominated cultures, man and his interests occupy the centre and woman is the ignored, repressed, marginalized other. A close examination of each and every aspect of such cultures will let one perceive the expressions of male-domination and female-marginalization everywhere. Myths constitute one of those cultural aspects that is worth scrutinizing. They are the treasure-houses of cultures and an analysis of them leads to the conclusion that most of them preserve and spread nothing but male prejudices and ideologies and aim at the subjugation of women. Kate Millet in her celebrated text, *Sexual Politics*, says:

Conservative factors such as religious myth and kinship ties are, in the absence of more concrete evidence, the most lasting vestiges of that vast historical shift whereby patriarchy, probably by slow degrees and stages, and most likely at different moments in each locale, replaced whatever order preceded it and instituted that long government of male over female. (112)

The recognition that myths are not impartial to women forced certain women writers to start the practice of revising existing male-centred myths. In America during 1960s certain women poets published some revisionist works in which familiar figures from male tradition were re-presented from a female perspective. Alicia Ostricker in her work *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* explains some of the major revisionist endeavours such as Hilda Doolittle's *Helen in Egypt*, Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* and Anne Sexton's *Transformations* (210 - 238). Doris Lessing's 2007 fictional feast, *The Cleft* is such a revisionist attempt and it decentres certain collective phallogentric notions. Quite paradoxically, a lion's share of the tale is narrated by a male, an old Roman senator at the time of the Emperor Nero. It can be better appreciated as a narrative device

to legitimize the revisionist attempts in this predominantly patriarchal society. The Roman relates this pre-historic "history" based on some ancient documents, which were compiled from even earlier oral records. His narrative is full of digressive tales and those tales are parts of his life and they analyze the intricacies of male-female relations of his time. However, a small portion of the novel is narrated from an explicitly feminine perspective of one of the characters, Maïre..

Woman or man—who is the first in origin? The answer is pre historic and therefore quite obscure. But for the majority it is not obscure because of certain deeply ingrained myths. All major myths that deal with the origin of humanity, including the most famous Adam-Eve myth, declare it is man who is first in Origin. According to the Biblical myth, God created Adam first and Eve was created from one of his ribs.

"Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him a helper as his partner". . . . So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept: then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. (*The Holy Bible, Gen 2: 18, 21-22*)

In *The Cliffs* Doris Lessing attacks all such phallogocentric myths on human genesis and creates a new gynocentric myth in which she precedes him in origin.

Even while approaching the age of ninety, Lessing is, amazingly, at the plenitude of her imaginative capacity. In the novel, she creates before her privileged readers, a surrealistic shore which existed centuries before. There were only women who procreated asexually without the assistance of men. They lived in caves and were very friendly with the sea. That placid, primitive, all-female world was not at all stained with the concepts like individuality, ego, jealousy, beauty, old age and of course man and woman. They called themselves the Cliffs and were living under the comfort of The Clift. One of the Cliffs, Maïre describes The Clift:

The Clift is that rock there, which isn't the entrance to a cave, it is blind, and it is the most important thing in our lives. It has

always been so. We are The Clift. The Clift is us, and we have always made sure it is kept free of saplings that might grow into trees, free of bushes. It is a clean cut down through the rock and under it is a deep hole. (Lessing 9-10)

From the description it is quite clear that The Clift is a mighty symbol that stands for female sexuality and its power. The all powerful Clift played the most important and inevitable part in their life. It controlled the blood flow of them.

Maïre says:

When the moon is at its biggest and brightest we climb up to above The Clift where the red flowers grow, and we cut them, so there is a lot of red, and we let the water flow from the spring up there, and the water flushes the flowers down through The Clift, from top to bottom, and we all have our blood flow. That is, all who are not going to give birth. Very well, have it your way, the moon's rays make the blood flow, not the red running down through The Clift. But we *know* that if we don't cut the red flowers—they are small and soft like the blisters on seaweed, and they bleed red if you crush them—if we don't do that, we will not have our flow. (Lessing 9)

This account of Maïre makes explicit the ability of Lessing to create a mythic atmosphere and it is one of the most alluring attractions of the novel.

Suddenly the Cliffs began to witness the birth of some strange, deformed creatures. They called them monsters and often subjected them to death by putting them on the killing rock. Eagles waited near the killing rock to fetch the deformed babies. From the descriptions the readers can recognize that the monsters are males. Fortunately or unfortunately some monsters survive and create a world of their own in another part of the island. The surviving males hire the eagles and they often hover the island to rescue the new-born monsters from theutches of the Cliffs. Men rewarded those eagles with huge pieces of flesh. The community of males came to be known as the Squirts. They lived in huts and hunted wild animals for food. Initially the Squirts were

feared of the Clefts. But later natural attraction brings certain females to men's valley. Maire and Astre were two of them. After the visit and sexual intercourse they often returned to their shore. Old Shes and those who preferred the traditional ways of the Clefts were against the younger women who favoured relations with the Squirts. As a result the community of women witnessed a lot of dissensions. However, new sort of babies began to be born and slowly the Clefts lost their capacity for self-procreation. This is Lessing's new myth on human origin and in it she comes first. He is a sudden afterthought of God. Really, it attempts to dethrone hitherto believed male-centred notions on human genesis.

After the creation of this new provoking myth of human genesis, the major narrative thread meets with an ellipsis. The part of the novel that precedes the ellipsis attempts two more feminist invasions into the phallogocentric world of myths. It attacks the Freudian myth of penis envy and breaks the myth that language is man made. Simone de Beauvoir states:

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. . . . She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her. She is the incidental, the inessential—as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other. (5)

This observation of Beauvoir provides enough light to reveal the folly of the concept of penis envy. Freud measures woman with masculine parameters and says she lacks in male sexual organ and feels envy for it. Patriarchal values always attempted to inject inferiority complex into women and Freudian envy is one of the many tools. In *The Cleft*, Lessing creates a pre-patriarchal world. Away from the patriarchal tools of subjugation women never felt any sort of lack in them. They considered themselves nice. Again, when the Clefts see the first male babies they value males from their perspective, using female parameters. Maire says to her male narratees:

You get angry when I say Monsters, but just look at yourself—and look at me. Go on, look. I am not wearing the red flower belt so

you can see how I am. . . . We are nice to look at, like one of those shells we can pick off a rock after a storm. *Beautiful*—you taught us that word and I like to use it. I am beautiful, just like The Cleft with its pretty red flowers. But you are all bumps and humps and the thing like a pipe which is sometimes like a sea squirt. (Lessing 11-12)

Instead of feeling penis envy, the Clefts felt it ugly and called the first males, monsters. There is a revision of the concept of penis envy; an envy for the power that it holds in the patriarchal society.

As mentioned earlier, in *The Cleft* Lessing decentres the commonly believed notion that language is man made. In the novel the Clefts are the masters of language. They used language well and until they visited the valley of men, the Squirts were speaking a sort of childish language. When the Squirts heard the language of the Clefts, they recognized it superior and tried to study it. "They kept at her, saying sentences and words in that childish speech of theirs, while she replied to them, and they copied what she said, not for its sense but its sound" (Lessing 65). But after mastering it, men added a lot of words into it and made it phallogocentric.

Phallogocentric-myths always tried to represent men more rational than women. Most of the mythic women are embodiments of frailty and they easily succumb to evils. In the *Bible* for example, it is Eve who plucks the forbidden fruit. Besides, mythic men who give an ear to women's words, always fall in pits. In Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, Adam regrets:

. . . and perhaps

I also erred in overmuch admiring

What seemed in thee so perfect, that I thought

No evil durst attempt thee, but I rue

That error now, which is become my crime,

And thou the accuser. Thus it shall befall

Him who to worth in women overtrusting,

Lets her will rule. . . . (Book IX, 1177-1184)

In the part of the novel that follows the ellipsis, Lessing attacks and destroys the myth of the irrationality of women. Horsa, the leader of the Squirts, and Maronna, the leader of the Clefts, are the central characters of this part. Horsa plans an adventurous trip of the Squirts in search of other shores. Maronna warns him of the impending dangers and tries to discourage him. He never hears her words. Some boys and a few of the Clefts accompany the Squirts in the trip and the journey becomes a jeremiad. In that quite fruitless trip they inevitably lose the lives of several children and Horsa himself gets wounded. It is really a revision of the conventional and prejudiced portrayal of women as irrational beings.

Finally, some of the Squirts destroy The Cleft and its irruption turns the women's shore dry. The Clefts' emotional attachment to The Cleft and the shore is beyond words. They start crying. Soon men reach there with helping hands and lead them to a new shore. The destruction of The Cleft and the loss of the women's space symbolize the end of the women's superiority and independence. The narrator says: "The explosion of The Cleft is both the end of a race and the beginning of the next. Historians who wrote long ages before me agreed on that—and so let it be" (Lessing 260).

Even though myths are not incontrovertible facts, they usually have an unsuspected status in all cultures. But with the development of feminism, women writers began to recognize that myths are the creations of male-centred cultures and they often attempt to oppress women. More precisely myths are phallogocentric and bear nothing but collective male fantasies. In order to decentre those masculine fantasies preserved in myths, some of the postmodern women writers create new gynocentric myths. Doris Lessing's *The Cleft* is such an attempt. It decentres the male centred myths on the genesis of mankind, the Freudian myth of penis envy, the myth that language is manmade and the myth of the irrationality of women. Then provides the readers with new gynocentric myths. Helene Cixous says:

Phallogocentrism is. History has never produced, recorded anything but that. Which does not mean that this form is inevitable or natural. Phallogocentrism is the enemy. Of everyone. Men stand to

lose by it, differently but as seriously as women. And it is time to transform. To invent the other history. (234)

In *The Cleft* Lessing does so. She invents a new mythic history, a subversive one against phallogocentrism. Let it occupy the centre, at least for some time.

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Cyber Virulence and the Global Chaos: A Reading of Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*

Jisha John

A significant corpus of critical theory today is dedicated to the cause of the rapid transformation witnessed in world economy, politics, society and culture where capitalism holds centre stage. nation-states are supplanted and local cultures eroded by the forces of globalisation, a globe spanning network of exchange which has inspired numerous interpretations. On the economic front this has resulted in the realisation of a common global market where there is a free movement of goods and capital aided by the global financial infrastructure. The political ramifications has guaranteed the rise of a new world government in the form of the United States which has taken care of the global affairs on account of its strong economy. At the level of culture, this phenomenon has accentuated cross cultural contacts, forged new categories of consciousness and identities and enabled the realization of a consumer culture. The spreading of multiculturalism and pop culture (Pokemon, Sudoku, Orkut, Facebook and My Space), access to cultural diversity (through Hollywood and Bollywood movies) and greater international travel and tourism are all its repercussions. However, the most poignant and perceivable consequence of globalisation came along with the establishment of the global telecommunications infrastructure facilitating greater transnational data flow using technologies such as the internet, communication satellites, fibre optic cables and wireless telephones.

The technological revolution involving the computerised network of communication, transportation and exchange has been the dominant force being the massive global restructuring. Jean Baudrillard, the post-modern theorist has observed that technologies of information and social reproduction (simulation) have permeated every aspect of the society and the social environment. The technological monoculture has perpetuated a new kind of vulnerability, a massive electronic Achilles' heel with the emergence of a new apocalypse: cyber virulence. The

deliberate use of the computer virus (a self replicating programme) for unleashing terror and paralysing the critical infrastructure of nations (energy, transportation, telecommunications, banking, finance, and government operations) has become the newest form of terrorism of the digital era. This new mode termed "cyber terrorism", coined by the computer wizard Barry C. Collin, denotes the pre-meditated attack against information, computer systems, programmes and data which result in violence against a noncombatant target by a clandestine agent. This major risk of the globalised digital culture is the chief preoccupation of the British Indian novelist Hari Kunzru in his novel *Transmission* (2004), as he takes the readers on a roller-coaster ride following the exploits of Arjun Mehta, a 23 year-old software programmer from India who lands in the Silicon valley, California's spiraling hi-tech sector.

In the novel, cyber virulence is taken to a new level when the lives of all the major characters including the protagonist Arjun Mehta, Leela Zahir, a Bollywood starlet and Guy Swift, the head of *Immoria*- a world class brand consultancy agency are intertwined by the chief dramatic agent, a computer virus, the impelling force behind a major technological fallout with global repercussions. Aspiring to become a big shot in the US, his dream destination, Arjun realizes that he too has joined "a bunch of starving coolies" (42) transported to the country on a work-for-hire basis whose primary job is to sit on the bench waiting for a call. He soon gets hired by Virugenix, the global computer security specialist dealing with anti-virus software, but realizes that he is fired on account of the company's downsizing policy in the face of the prevailing economic recession. Unable to imagine getting back to India, and letting his parents down he makes a final effort to stick to his firm by unleashing a virus Leela01, named after his Bollywood dream girl Leela Zahir, hoping that he would soon be called back to find a solution for halting the spread of the lethal virus. However things do not turn out the way he wants to and instead happen way beyond control. Within no time the Leela virus gets transmitted via emails as a little pixilated dancer with a "radiant 21 year old smile" (8).

In his essay "Prophylaxis and Virulence" included in his collection, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, Jean Baudrillard

anticipates a similar situation when he observes that human beings have become eminently vulnerable to technology. All hyper-integrated systems create their own internal virulence, and when the saturation point is reached such systems go through alteration and undergo self destruction. When virulence takes hold of a network and resolves itself into a combinatorial system of elements, internal proliferation takes place which results in ramified systems. In the novel the mutated variants of the virus spread as a horde by their power of metamorphosis. The Leela viruses elude scanners, begin to use encryption to hide themselves, taking on new forms at will and never staying the same long enough to be recognised:

There were versions of her that broke completely with the past, that were targeted at the complex operating systems used by business and universities, at the stripped down ones designed for cell phone handsets and personal organizers. So many Leelas. So many girls with the same face. (108)

According to Baudrillard "software networks have become the preferred field of operations of electronic viruses" (64). The mildest of cyber viruses "whether it vitates the Pentagon's memory banks or merely erases a shower of online Christmas messages has the potential to destabilise all data contained in information systems" (66). This extreme phenomena is destined to become more extreme still as the systems become more complicated and hyper-connected making it effectively impossible to eliminate all weaknesses. The density of networks of interdependence makes the consequences far reaching and disastrous. Kunzru seems to voice this idea when he estimates the enormity of the trail of violence created by the Leela viruses:

How many did she infect? Thousands? Tens, hundreds of thousands? Impossible to count. Experts have estimated her damage to global business at almost 50 billion US dollars, mostly in human and machine downtime, but financial calculation doesn't capture the chaos of those days. (3-4)

In the novel Kunzru suggests that at the boundaries of any complex event unity starts to break down. The global catastrophe created by the

variant forms of the Leela virus is indeed devastating. Across America, people start to look with suspicion at the computers on their desks. These machines which had always terrorized them in small ways-by crashing, hanging and demanding meaningless upgrades-are now revealed to harbour something more sinister, something with an agenda. Alarms are raised at various US government offices, power plants, dams and military offices. In Honduras, the virus is suspected of blowing light bulbs in the Ministry of the Interior. In Bihar, the police confiscate pirated copies of Leela Zahir films which are believed to be spreading disease.

The Leela virus, a creation of the protagonist Arjun Mehta aimed at unsettling and pressurising his employer to get back his job, unwittingly becomes a Frankensteinian monster far outwitting the grasp of its creator. The extent and the scale of its disaster impel terrorist groups to claim responsibility:

Maoist revolutionaries in Chiapas sent a fax to a Mexico city newspaper announcing that Leela was the latest step in the campaign to cripple the infrastructure of global capitalism. A Lithuanian hacking group called the Red Hand Gang revealed that they had conceived it to demonstrate their superiority to their rivals, the Riga-based Hacktikons. (148)

Amidst the outrage perpetrated by the virus, hackers start making crude alterations to the subject line of the delivery email. As the crisis soars to an alarming peak, global law enforcement agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation step in to take stock of the situation. People, especially those with record for computer crime are caught for questioning and phone records and news-group postings examined for clues related to the source of the epidemic. On a false tip-off they even arrest an American teenager with the CNN news channel breaking the news that the terror suspect is held. However, in spite of a massive global hunt, the authorities are unable to arrive at even the slightest hint regarding the terror mastermind. It can well be reasoned that with globalization at the backdrop it may be easy for people to be scanned and checked for security reasons but terror can always infiltrate beyond the realm of man via cyberspace. A "terrorist or economic migrant"

(237) can be caught for trespassing but the terror perpetuated by the world of cybernetics proves ever elusive.

According to Baudrillard contagions, chain reactions and proliferations are the inherent sources of "fascination" (69) for mankind. Despite being labeled a terrorist by governments and media agencies around the world, Arjun Mehta has admirers. The range of innovations in the variant Leela viruses is considered simply breathtaking. Mehta's programming techniques are studied as part of an extensive research and several applications based on this are arrived at. Mehta becomes a hero to the younger generation of disaffected hackers who feel their contributions are undervalued and misunderstood by a ignorant and hostile public. The supernatural perfection of the vanishing act of Mehta only adds to his mystique.

Kunzru's novel is thus a treatise on the transmission of communication in the globalised world and how it may come to a halt and paralyse global activities when affected by cyber virulence, the emergent terror of the twenty first century. As a biological virus can infect a cell by creating copies of itself, so can a computer virus, a self-replicating programme that gets attached to the hardware of a computer's operating system, infect computers and exploit the phenomenon of transmission. The absolute preoccupation with technology and the vulnerability of the interconnected world are exposed when the affairs of the world come to a grinding halt with a viral onslaught. Kunzru considers the period of the impact of the virus as an informational disaster and terms it as "Greyday" (257), although it lasts for a much longer time. The power of its impact is exposed when he states towards the close of the novel: "the name captures a certain cybernetic gloom that hung about the time, the communal depression of network administrators yearning for perfection while faced with appalling losses, drop-outs, crashes and absences of every kind" (258). As Kunzru says we are today drenched in the world of information and for perfect information to happen, the signal should be transmitted from the sender to the receiver without loss or uncertainty. In the real world, however, there is always noise. Transmission is often caught in chaos and this chaos is what Kunzru exposes in his novel.

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The Language of African Literature: A Reading of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

Marin Theresa Chakany

African literature can be divided broadly into four sections. The first thematic area is a movement of poetic expression entitled "Negritude". The word Negritude was coined by the poet Aime Césaire of Martinique, who is generally regarded as the major inspiration of the movement among the French speaking poets. Originally the movement was an expression of resistance to the French colonial policy of "assimilation". The poetry of Leopold Sédar Senghor, a leading figure of the movement portrays all the familiar themes of Negritude. The pervasive presence of the dead and their guiding influence upon the living ("In Memoriam", "Night of Sine"); the devastation of ancient Africa and its culture by white Europe ("Paris in the Snow"); the harsh rigidity of the modern west and its desperate need for the complementing qualities of Africa ("New York"); and the warm triumphant beauty of African women ("You Held the Black Face").

The second thematic area can be called "the colonial experience". A wide range of literature has sprung from the encounters between Africans and the policies of various colonialists. The response to British policies produced "the Pioneer Poets," a group that included R.E.G. Armatooe and Dei-Amang of Ghana and D.C. Osadeby of Nigeria. The Pioneer Poets wrote in English and were active in the struggle for Independence. The third area requires a rather elastic label as it has expanded rapidly in recent years. It may be termed "the post-colonial experience" and embraces a wide variety of themes. These include the conflicts between the oral and literary tradition of poetry; tensions between modern and traditional Africa (the Ugandan poet Okot p'Bitek's poems, especially his "Song of Lawino" and "Song of Ocol", explore this theme); the rift between town and country, the quest for self-identity (the works of Okigbo and U' Lam'isi); the place of Africa in the world at large and the reconciliation of the remnants of colonial European culture with African culture.

The last of the four thematic areas is called "protest poetry," a term that is used to describe poems that are specifically and overtly political. The work of black poets from Southern Africa is the starting point of a study of such poetry. "Death" by E.Mphahlele, Johannesburg by Serote; "Gumba Gumba Gumba" and "Paper Curtains" by Pascale Gawala and "Some How We Survive" by Dennis Brutus are poems representative of this genre.

African poetry possessing an inherent vitality is amenable to change. It often adopts new motives and functions other than the traditional. In addition it possesses a triple identity. It may be religious or ritualistic, social and political. The propensity of the Negro writer to ritualistic or religious poetry occurs because his white counterpart is not steeped in African lore and legend. In addition he has the benefits of an oral tradition, found in every African village.

The oral tradition of Africa is a strong force, alive and vital, even in modern day Africa. We are provided with an authoritative view on this tradition in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Ngugi tells us that Gikuyu was the medium of conversation at home and in the fields of Kenya. In the evenings there was story telling around the fireside" (10). These stories were retold by children to other children as they worked in the fields.

The stories contained mostly animal characters. The Hare being small and weak but full of innovative wit was their hero. "His victories were our victories and we learnt that the apparently weak can outwit the strong" (10). The children followed the tribulations of the animals as they struggled against the hostile forces of nature. This confrontation led the animals to seek forms of cooperation. The children were also interested in the struggles of the beasts among themselves. These twin struggles, against nature and other animals, reflected real-life struggles in the human world" (10). What is striking about his work is that in it Ngugi shows us how the oral tradition of Africa could be employed as a potent weapon against colonial domination.

Ngugi tells us that the language of these story sessions and of the children's immediate community as well as their work area were one.

With the declaration of Emergency in Kenya in 1952, all schools run by patriotic nationalists were taken over by the colonial regime and the medium of instruction changed to English. Ngugi writes "English became the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education" (12). If a child failed in English it was as good as failing the exam even if he had done extraordinarily well in other subjects. This led to a situation where literally education was determined by the colonial language. As a result orature or oral literature, in Kenya, came to a halt.

It is interesting to note what Kenneth Parker, a non-negroid writer, has to say about the functions of language. Parker begins his book, *The South African Novel in English* with the sentence "Apartheid—a word with a potent appeal to the longing for racial exclusiveness. A word with a thousand meanings and no meaning but with the curious power to change the meaning of other words" (1). Apartheid is indeed the ultimate metamorphic agent. In the language of apartheid, political protest is a "riot", humans are "located" and the maintenance of the system is justified as the "restoration of law and order".

Parker tells us that a random selection of some acts of the South African Parliament will illustrate vividly the difference between inferred title and explicit intention. "The Citizenship Act does not confer citizenship but withdraws that status from certain people under specified conditions" (2). Likewise, the Industrial Conciliation Act (1942) is not designed to regulate employer-employee relationships, but to split trade unions according to different races, while providing for the reservation of jobs. This is by proclamation and benefits certain racial groups, usually whites.

The Extension of University Education Act (1957), contrary to its title, prohibits qualified black students from attending the so-called open-universities of Capetown and Witwatersrand. Then there is the Publications and Entertainments Act which is actually a mechanism for censorship of books, films and other forms of artistic creativity when these are suspected of conflicting with the ethos of the state.

Commenting on the metamorphic function of language Ngugi writes, "the choice of language and the use to which language is put

is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment" (4). Under such circumstances Ngugi points out the absurdity of a system wherein a writer of African literature was allowed to participate in a conference on African literature, only if he wrote in English or a European language. This automatically excluded the writer who employed his native tongue. Ngugi sarcastically remarks: "Yet despite this exclusion of writers and literature in African languages, the first item on the agenda (was)...what is African literature" (6).

Ngugi observes that what they wrote was never seriously questioned as to whether it qualified as African literature. "The debate was more about the subject matter and the racial origins and geographical habitation of the writer" (6). The degree to which the colonists had succeeded in brainwashing their more favoured natives is gauged from the words of Ezekiel Mphahlele, who writes in a letter to the journal, *Transition* (no: 11) that English and French had become the common language with which to present a nationalist front against white oppressors!

The reason for this sort of brainwashing appears clear enough. The colonial system had ensured that "the night of the sword and bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard" (Ngugi 9). What further increased colonial influence was the possibilities of benefits which colonialism brought in its wake. The new world order seemed to provide equal opportunity to all, based on economic and educational status. However, the truth was quite contrary to these expectations.

Though colonialism brought plenty and the possibilities of conquest of hunger and disease, its selective treatment led to mass starvation and disease-ridden populations. What is pitiful about this situation is that the native people no longer had recompense to herbalists or traditional psychiatrists (witch doctors) because their practices had been condemned as witchcraft. Capitalism had introduced the possibilities of conquest of nature through the use of science and technology but indiscriminate use led to nature's domination by way of desertification and drought.

What is perhaps the most dangerous fall out is that language and literature were stifled under colonial "progress". Though missionaries introduced writing to many African languages, a situation arose whereby the same language had different orthographies (due to various interpretations of symbols by the different Christian denominations). According to Ngunji as a result "two Gikuyu speaking children could well have been in a position where they could not read each others letters or essays" (66).

Literature and literacy were confined to the civil services. This meant that a large portion of the African population would remain illiterate. In addition the method of "selective information" was employed by governments to keep the people ignorant of facts. Thus it was left to the intellectuals to apprise the citizens and indeed the world of the country's oppression. Naturally enough, this made the intellectuals targets of nervous Autocrats. In South Africa, the intellectual was not a single voice, rather he was according to Seymour Smith, the collective psyche of various races and their adherent view points.

The power of knowledge is vividly illustrated in two stories by Gordina. We read in "A Soldier's Embrace" that "A few wealthy white men who had been boastful in their support of the colonial war, knew they would be marked ... left at once" (12). She also remarks in "Oral History": "The men who have been away to work on the mines can read, but there are no newspapers" (134). In the first instance the men (the colonists) are in the know of things and hence can take necessary safeguards to protect themselves. In the latter case men (the colonized) have been placed in enforced ignorance). The only way to counteract these forces, according to Ngunji, was to create the African Novel. He remarks that the most crucial discoveries and technical breakthroughs were products of the working class. The influence of the peasantry and working class was felt the most in the area of language. The use of slang and local pronunciation ensured the formation of new legitimate words, phrases, expression and even dialects. Based on the fact Ngunji argues: "Why should not the African peasantry and working class appropriate the Novel?" (68). He continues "the novel itself was an outgrowth from the earlier tradition of oral tales ... these were certainly the art forms of the peasantry" (69).

The next problem was the content of the novel. Ngunji had observed that the African people quite happily accepted digressions and interventions in narrative. It was part and parcel of the oral tradition of story telling. Proverbs, songs and conversational tone added to the success of the tale. However Ngunji required material which modern day society could relate with. The difficulty was that in a neocolonial setting truth was often stranger than fiction. According to Ngunji how did one capture the attention of readers from a reality more captivating than fiction?

One day it occurred to Ngunji that he should use basic themes adapted to present day situations: "Then one day I got it. Why not tell the story of men who had sold their souls and that of the nation to the foreign devil of imperialism" (Á la Faust) (81). The next stumbling block was illiteracy. "How does one overcome the isolation imposed by poverty and illiteracy?" (Ngunji 81). The answer lay in the oral tradition of story telling. Even in rural areas there were people educated in their native language. They became the modern day story teller in pubs, in factories and in buses. Novels composed in native languages were read aloud by these innovators of tradition. This meant that the group reception of art with its attendant comments, discussions and interpolation was resurrected.

The popularity of a novel in its native tongue led to its publication in other native tongues, apart from European language. Ngunji saw this kind of communication between languages as forming the real foundation of a genuinely African novel. In the final analysis we have to agree with Ngunji when he says that the African novel with its dependency on a willing author, translator and publisher will ensure "a progressive state which would overhaul the current neocolonial linguistic policies and tackle the national question in a democratic manner" (Ngunji 84).

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Inter-semiotic Interpretation of Samuel Beckett's *Breath*

K. Ponni

The study of signs and their interpretations shares classical origins. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols. Human beings produce and interpret signs. Its scope spreads to a circumference which would include their perception depending upon the orientation, as well as the stimulus and response processes. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913) who coined 'Semiotics' thought of both the signifier and the signified as purely psychological constructs. This phenomenon finds a connection to the physical world through the sensory motor system of the interpreter.

Saussure's study of language structures led to the formal discipline of semiology and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 – 1914) an American chemist and philosopher, who extended logical reasoning from the natural science to explain the manner that we extract meaning from signs. Saussure and Peirce worked to better understand the relationship between physical signs and human understanding. (Wikipedia.org)

Intersubiosis is a term introduced by Peirce in the process of his conceptualization of "meaning". The interpreter enters into the web of semiosis in his attempt to find the meaning for a sign. The fabric of the semiotic web creates a new thread for each segment of experience which leads to a new relation. The design or the outcome is altered in accordance with the individual's register. The appropriate parameter to achieve an inter-semiotic interpretation would be the carrying through of meaning from the source system to the new representation. Peirce's notion of meaning can also be employed to explain how an interpreter experiences the environment. Jaha Julio writes, "Emitter and receiver must share the code for communication to occur. Peirce calls this common ground the "communicational interpretant".... This is more than the linguistic code: it is all that universe of experience

to which reference is made." What is transposed from one semiotic system to another is the meaning of sign. According to Peircean categories inter-semiotic interpretation illustrates the meanings of signs and grow away from the initial object that started the semiotic process. His theory postulates generation of meaning whenever inter-semiotic interpretation occurs.

This paper takes up the concept of intersemiosis to interpret Samuel Beckett's *Breath* which lasts for only 35 seconds and has no characters. But considering *Breath* as an art and Beckett as an artist whose landscapes deconstruct themselves anew on their own to the readers. Reading and re-reading of *Breath* bloom out with significant fragrance. This kind of magnified fractions is a common catchment area for any interpreter. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology comes to the rescue since it is "the reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first person point of view" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/phenomenology>). The object of consciousness need not be physical "apprehended in perception: it can just well be a fantasy or a memory. Consequently these structures of consciousness i.e., perception, memory fantasy etc., are called intentionalities." The etymological root of "Intention" refers to a "stretching out". Intentionality is often summed up as 'aboutness'.

Art, according to Samuel Beckett has nothing to do with clarity. The purpose of art is not to explain but to contemplate. His art is not an attempt to solve any social problem in its prevailing sense. It is to comprehend by perception and intuition not by intelligence. Beckett always seemed too clever for any philosopher or linguist. Jacques Derrida remarks that "Beckett whom I will thus have 'avoided' as though I had always already read him and understood him too well." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/phenomenology>) Derrida's dismissal of Beckett as "too well" resists any interpretation.

Breath was written in 1969 and even now it is a theatrical novelty. Bringing theatrical minimalism to its utmost limits, Samuel Beckett used only a single breath as a sole content of his play. The stage directions of *Breath* occupy a single page and takes longer time to read.

The stage direction goes as follows:-

Curtain

1. Faint light on stage littered with miscellaneous rubbish hold about 5 seconds.
2. Faint brief cry and immediately inspiration and slow increase of light together reaching maximum together in about ten seconds. Silence and hold about five seconds.
3. Exasperation and slow decrease of light together reaching minimum together (light as in 1) is about 10 seconds and immediately cry as before. Silence and hold about 5 seconds. (*Collected Plays*, 371)

There are no terms to be explained and no sentence to mean, no players to look upon, but a bleak polluted stage. A play of 25 seconds enumerates profoundly and speaks volumes. In the words of Beckett, "Rubbish: No verticals, all scattered and lying" (*CP*, 371) vertical posture is a beginning; it is a direction to follow; a point of germination. But Beckett's audience should be too intelligent to find a beginning among the "scattered and lying". A stage strewn with debris becomes visible in a light that starts as faint, becomes less faint, thus fades again. Along with the visual effect the audience hears a faint cry, what Beckett calls an "instrument of recorded vaginas" which means "a birth cry". In this audio visual fantasy, another faint cry is heard as the light fades and the curtain falls.

Intersemiosis may provide ample space for a strange kind of hermeneutics. The annals of psychotherapy may specify that deep breathing reduces stress, deepens insight, expands consciousness and increases intuitive perception. According to medical practitioners, the increasing power of inhalation and exhalation is associated with the strengthening of upward or downward currents of energy. The field of *Kriya yoga* may view the breath of God as the breath of human beings. This text may reveal the Jungian dilemma of modern man in search of soul and the search is a mythic quest. Martin Esslin the one who christened, "absurd theatre", has a different opinion: "In a meaningless universe, it is always fool hardy to make positive statements" (15).

Breath poses a challenge to the intellectual interpretative art with radical devaluation of language. The impact proliferates by the correlation between the creator's refusal to explain and the readers' urge to get an explanation. The disembodied voices signify the birth and death cry respectively. In between the two cries, the creator has permitted only a streak of light.

"Maximum Light"

Not bright. If 0=dark and 10=brilliant, light should move from about 3 to 6 and back". Beckett the creator has laid down this criterion to make the readers believe that even though light has the possibility of 100 percent, the maximum percentage of human is only 30% to 60%. The universe has much resources but the span of human life between birth and death has its own limitations. There is no decibel hindrance and a human being has to perspire to achieve.

In this minimized art, Beckett manages to achieve something that seems impossible: action, plot, logos are all synthesized into breath, light and cry. It is a drama with no act and a tragedy with no words. But still intersemiosis may lead the audience to the realm of the Aristotelean definition of tragedy to the extent that *Breath* "is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude.... With incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions...." (<http://www.2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/poetics.html>)

According to Aristotle, tragedy dramatizes what may happen. It is rooted in the fundamental order of the universe; it creates a cause-and-effect chain that clearly reveals what may happen at any place or time because that is the way the world operates normally. "Tragedy therefore arouses not only pity but also fear, because the audience can envision themselves within the cause effect chain." (<http://www.2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/poetics.html>) *Breath* evokes the sympathy and fear in the reader. The important and perfect act in *Breath* is life, which is presented in its complete form. A faint vagitus cry-inhalation-silence for five seconds, exhalation-light for ten seconds and an immediate cry-silence. The skeleton of a human life is sketched here. Any more microcosm of life is quite impossible. It comes with a cry; evolves breath

after breath; ends in another cry. The emotions of the audience are stirred along the rudimentary breathing and strange cries, to the most primordial agonies of the human beings that is life and death. The space is boundless and time is endless. Human brain has to grope and begin the process of solving the crisis.

The light fading in and out stresses the basic act of breathing. The scattered rubbish reminds the physicality of human existence, which is doomed to decadence and death, just like a material thing that has been used up and thrown away. If the play has the inbuilt potency, it would stimulate and inspire, in spite of its brevity. Because in the words of Watt:

Matter is an illusion of time

Time is an illusion of matter

The 'now' is time-less and matter-less

(<http://www.2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/poetics.html>)

Heert Sura of Buddhism sums this as "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form" (<http://www.2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/poetics.html>). A kind of individualized perception, inspired by *Breath* can be altered for benevolent reasons. Modern medicine uses the virtual reality computers to reduce the psychic pain in phobias and post-traumatic stress, by illustrating how a strong illusion of reality can readily alter one's perception.

Breath is not an illusion of reality, but a reality of illusion as far as the researcher is concerned. The fractions of illusions generated by human beings are enlarged within a brief span. By the law of Nature light precedes; sound follows. In the theatre performance there is no vertical rubbish in the parview, since it symbolizes growth. The rubbish scattered and dying may signify the chaos, the only survival circumference for any human being. The theme of the writer takes a wider suggestive significance than the situation warrants.

Unlike the theatrical performance, the readers of Beckett should have the intellectual creativity to feel the lightless light and soundless sound in the void which is one of the basic elements of the Universe.

Currently the physicists talk about the concept of 'Zero point energy'- the infinite interconnected energy simultaneously existing at every point in space. The physicists believe that "we are not only perceive union with zero-point energy." (<http://www.2.cnr.edu/home/bmennanus/poetics.html>) since consciousness is transcendent, a brave new world can be created through the conversion of possibility into actuality. Many dimensions can be generated from nothing. It is the blank void from where life begins for the readers of Becker. It is the germinating ground for a better future with a realization that it is not an individual personalized experience. This has been experienced ever since Adam and Eve were created at any point of their life. When a person starts feeling that he is also one among the many and not a lone sufferer, the suffering becomes a shared experience.

This kind of mental balance reduces the chances for the expression of negative emotions like "anger, rage, arrogance, uncontrolled desire, violence, self-pity, melancholy, loneliness, boredom, dissatisfaction, inadequacy or envy. It can lessen the behavioural negatives like fear, shame, guilt, arrogance, envy, jealousy, greed, phobia and many other". (<http://www.charminghealth.com/negative-emotions.html>). German Philosopher Immanuel Kant thinks that "how individuals see their world is not actually through experience of the objects, but through inference of them" (<http://www.carloversvet.com/philosophy.html>). Intersemiosis enlarges interpretations through inferences. The readers should have a mental frame like astronomers or navigators to search for meanings to the lightless light and soundless sound in the boundless space with endless time. Human brain with its limitless caliber would certainly deke and fly deep and wide in search of sustainable survival. Of course, it is a strange kind of hermeneutics.

The earth is a cosmic waste thrown away by the all pervading universe. Persistence of so many lives down the ages is a standing example of the phoenix fervour of existence. While the scientists are in search of sustainable physical energy, since the human race has led the natural resources to their devastation, Samuel Becker instills the same in the readers for their intellectual and emotional rejuvenance.

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Alienation: An Interregnum for an Awakening:

Loneliness Portrayed in the Poetry of Eunice de Souza,
Monika Varma, Anna Sujatha Mathai and Mamata Kalita

Juju Abraham

The emergence of women from darkness to light has involved the arduous move from discrimination and compromise to the struggle for emancipation and self-expression. Modern women stand at the brink of an age in which human life presses forward to actualize new forms. They are in the process of developing a new consciousness which can eventually lift them above the isolation and ignorance that envelop them today. They are gradually emerging from the abyss of meaninglessness and suffering, to be renewed and replenished in the totality of their life.

Writing at times can be extremely subjective and individualistic. Along with talent and experiences, circumstances also shape the literary works of an artist. An artist's use of the term artist, the writer and the work should be viewed against the background of her time and milieu. Women, having barely come out of their traditional role, have to first come to terms with their feminine identity and gradually, through their writing, they have to universalise their private experiences and perceptions in a hope to be understood by others.

The growing discontentment of women is of enormous significance and will have a decisive influence in the battle for the humanization of the society. Modern women, cutting themselves free from traditional anchorage, scrutinize the various facets of cultural and traditional values and beliefs. Woman, imprisoned in her traditional role, has lost all vital contact with the throbbing and pulsating world of nature. In her loneliness she steps out of the grey uniformity of her emptiness to become one with nature as she is, "attuned to nature by the fertility of her womb," (*The Second Sex* 631). Loneliness brings in an ecstatic feeling of kindredness with nature which leads her to reflection and contemplation. As Beauvoir observes:

Enslaved as she is to her husband, her children, her home, it is ecstasy to find herself alone, sovereign on the hillside; she is no longer mother, wife, house keeper, but a human being; she contemplates the passive world, and she remembers that she is wholly a conscious being, an irreducible free individual. (631)

Absorbing the survival tactics of the resilient nature, women, like Anna Sujatha Mathai in "City of Sorrows," try to learn how to survive in the harsh and lonely environment:

Out of the caves. Into the forests
To the sea and to the mountains,
Out of the city of sorrows
Out of the ghetto,
Back to our true inheritance.

.....
She of the rooted sorrow
Learns with the plants
How to survive. (*The Attic of Night* 72)

A woman craves for a place where she can survive with dignity. Her isolation is the logical culmination of her bitter experiences. Freeing herself from the captivity of the social symbols prescribed by traditional society, she becomes reflective and takes a serious look at herself in isolation.

Alienation implies a pause, a review and an assessment of the causes of fragmentation in isolation. It means estrangement from the established mainstream of religious, social and cultural milieu. Sociologically, alienation "register[s] the inability to relate outside one's self" (*Existentialism in American Literature* 163) and existentially it indicates an "alienation from the self, the failure to experience one's self which may arise from an excess of conformity or a lack of individuality and spontaneity" (163). An existentialist's attitude to life involves an honest encounter with the facts of one's situation. The individual's willingness to examine himself and his context is always bound to yield a perception of truth, even though in a purely subjective manner. To arrive at the root of the problem, three broad aspects of

the phenomenon of alienation deserve intense scrutiny: (i) alienation from the traditional religious ethos (ii) alienation from currently accepted socio-cultural mores, and (iii) existential alienation" (*Studies in Indian English literature* 77).

Religious need is rooted in the basic conditions of existence of human species. Religious attitudes spring from much deeper regions of the human psyche than social values: the concept of God being the psychological necessity of each individual; the proverbial straw for the drowning man. Religious faith in the traditional sense claims to pronounce ultimate, unshakable knowledge which is believable, because it carries the feeling of certainty. Without faith men become sterile, hopeless and afraid to the very core of their being.

Threads of unflinching faith in the all-pervasive presence of God run through the colourful tapestry of early Indian English women poetry. A childlike acceptance of the supreme deity and a childlike faith in its power to protect, as seen in Tom Dutt's poem "Prabhad," tormented women across troubled waters:

In him I trust
He can protect me if he will
And if this body turn to dust
He can new life again instill.

(*Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* 151)

But for modern women, faith is the crutch for those who want to be certain, those who want an answer to life without daring to search for it themselves.

With industrial progress, technology has made man omnipotent and science has made him omniscient. Experience rather than blind acceptance, has become the order of the day. Faith now is an inner orientation, an attitude rather than a belief in certain formulations created by others. Now "the Gods of his forefathers not only do not elicit his veneration; he also often looks at them with an ironic glint in his eyes" (*Studies in Indian literature* 77). Hollow gurus and false prophets misuse religion for their own personal gains. In "Varca, 1942," using satire as a weapon, Eunice de Souza exposes religious hypocrisy and social disparity in a single stroke:

The Archbishop said
Great landlords and peasants
must worship together
so the great landlords of Varca
shot at their Archbishop
(they missed)
And the Archbishop
barred the church doors and said
No landlord will enter the church
.....
after many months
the archbishop relented
the landlords repented
and everyone worshipped together.
And the landlords were landlords
And the peasants peasants
Ever after. (*Contemporary Indian Poetry* 58)

Despite the fact that spiritualism has given way to scepticism, the modern insecure, perplexed generation finds the confrontation of hard, social realities equally disconcerting. Social divisions have sharpened and have given rise to a mass of alienated people. Lack of social concern and social consciousness was the hallmark of the early Indian English women poetry. Since women's upbringing of those times emphasised their feminine roles and they lived within the narrow confines of their homes, they were denied access to and familiarity with the very ingredients that would have made their writing authentic and more socially revealing. Their writing voiced the cry of lonely sensitive souls with a melancholic streak. Monika Varma laments in "I Need Words":

Lost in this wilderness
I need words – words that belong
To people and poets, . . .
Words that speak from one loneliness
to another. (*Quoted Questions and Queries* 9.)

The society reflects the contrary pull between a glorified tradition and the uncertainties of a modern one. Modernism has brought in an individualism which is accompanied by self-centredness and selfishness. The change in thinking is most pointedly reflected in the outlook of the younger generation. The erosion of values has ushered in an era of Machiavellianism, where the end justifies the means. Maima Kalia in her poem "Tribute to Papa" voices this unconventional attitude:

I wish you had guts, papa,
To smuggle eighty thousand watches at a stroke,
And I'd proudly say, "My father is in import
export business, you know." (*Tribute to Papa and Other Poems* 9)

If society has lost its moorings on the present generation, they find the cultural scenario equally appalling. Culture is not a matter only of arts. It goes into life styles and modes of living. It goes into all that man lives by. Modernity, having conjured up a world without values, estranges man and makes him acutely aware of his own cultural alienation. India has always absorbed other cultures and synthesised them into something indefinably Indian. Western influence, that is intrinsically linked to progress, has moulded the shape of modern India making her a synthesis between the East and the West. The indigenous intelligentsia are not passive receivers but they selectively appropriate the western and traditional culture to suit their own needs. Consciously or unconsciously this synthesis played an inevitable role in the formation of new identities. As Joshi in his book *Culture, Communication and Social Change* states, "The process of foreign cultural penetration is already posing a serious threat to our national cultural identity" (12). This new alien culture brought in by the impact of Westernization has estranged man from his age-old cultural milieu.

In their own way women explore their environment and their respective cultural dislocation very much like an expatriate. For an expatriate, everything "becomes an existential dilemma, the dilemma of two cultures, of displacement and dislocation, of living two lives in one place or one life in two places, physically in one place while dream, and memory and longing are pulling you into another" (*The Hindu*

Pre-Independence Indian English women poetry surfaced over the romantic, fanciful, mystical, the dejected, the rejected and the idealized. But now it has risen above the "sigh's and thigh's" (*Common Quarterly* 27), moving towards being documents of critical inquiry.

Issues relating to women remain the primary concern of their newly aroused social consciousness, as is seen in Eunice de Souza's "Sweet Sixteen". Here girls are denied even their womanly possessions and are continually taught many affected codes of conduct:

Well, you can't say
They didn't try
Mama's never mentioned menses,
A nun screamed: you vulgar girl
Don't say brassiers say
Bracelets and pinned paper
Sleeves onto our sleeveless dresses.
The preacher thundered:
Never go with a man alone
Never alone
- And even if you are engaged
Only passionless kisses. (*Contemporary Indian Poetry* 57)

At present, apart from the portrayal of matters concerning just women, there is a gradual transition, an emerging from the cocoon and there is a conscious effort to react to other issues of the social scenario with vehement passion.

The neglected and oppressed marginal strata of society, writhing under inherited discrimination and exploitative social order, are individuals in their own right. Monika Varma glorifies that "Man in the slums" in her poem "Man":

But he is alive, he is man,
An individual,
Perhaps a cipher but a cipher without whom
There would be no meaning, no country,
No love, home.
No me ... no you.... (*Quartered Questions and Queries* 27)

Literary Magazine, Sunday). And like Monika Varma in "The Spinners" they weave a strange cloth in their exile from culture:

Let me sit spinning
Spindles of sunshine,
My hand and I, old gossips
.....
we weave cloth, strange threads run in
patterns run out
the loom, the known and unknown
people and worlds, words and thoughts
my hand and I, old gossips, spin....
(*Hoss: English Verse by Indian Women* 96)

Indian women caught between two cultures, doubly alienated, lead a marginal existence that take them nowhere. The conflict between their loyalty to a dominant tradition and their compelling need to break through the conventional barrier has left Indian women in a double framework of mind where feelings of doubt and isolation, and feelings of conviction and assertion, alternate with each other. Here they face unprecedented rootlessness and alienation which leads to a severe identity crisis. But as Simone de Beauvoir says in *The Second Sex*, "An existent succeeds in finding himself only in estrangement, in alienation; he seeks through the world to find himself in some other shape, other than himself" (88). Modern women who are basically existentialists, move in accordance with their own personal rhythm and enter realms that lie beyond social sanction. Their journey to self-hood follows the lines of their natural evolution as a person. These women represent a new consciousness. They refuse to live in the traditional role of a meek housewife. Their intellectual passion itself seems unorthodox and threatens male supremacy. But they are essentially questioners who seek the nature of fundamental truth of all aspects of life as they feel that all appearances are deceptive. To them self-fulfilment is an attainable dream. These women preserve their integrity and fulfil their need to exist as individuals in a society that still operates on a system of patriarchal conventions. As Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* avers, "For she, too, is an existent, she feels the urge to surpass, and her project

is not mere repetition but the transcendence towards a different future..." (96). Beauvoir further makes clear that what women "demand today is to be recognized as existents by the same right as men and not to subordinate existence to life, the human being to its animality" (97). In transmitting their own philosophy for living, women and their followers have redefined and modified their old role definition. The former imprisoned spirit of women, that did not allow them to respond even to their existence, has been set free. Women by influencing their own destiny enrich themselves and in turn enrich others:

She is not one of those
Tightly guarded
Self-preserving ones,
But self-revealing,
Sharing
Gloriously giving,
.....
She renews others;
Therefore is renewed herself. (*Crucifixions*, 27)

Now instead of concentric circles of speech that merely celebrate loneliness, there is an unfolding of silences, where women try to make a self-conscious effort to explode negative silences. Modern women, who are basically existentialists, move in accordance with their personal rhythm and enter realms that lie beyond social sanction. Their journey to self-hood follows the lines of their natural evolution as a person. These women preserve their integrity and fulfil their inner need to exist as individuals in a society that still operates on a system of patriarchal conventions.

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The Value Challenges on the World Wide Web: Teachers of Higher Education and a Healthy Internet Culture

Dr Edward A. Edezhath

The Internet and the related information and communication media play a pivotal role in the multifaceted process called Globalisation. The World Wide Web is an umbrella of diverse possibilities and processes. People all over the globe use it to connect with individuals of other countries and cultures.

With its unlimited prospects, the information and entertainment revolution on the Internet is transforming minds and life styles. The 2008 figure of the number of people online is 1,596,270,108¹. Our own country, though in its early stages of IT revolution, had 5 million internet users in the year 2000, but in 2008 the figure jumped to 81 million users². Surely the Internet culture is fast invading our own land.

For the common man possibilities of the Internet are the e-mail service with its instant messaging possibility, the online face to face Chat, also with the possibility of voice mode, the news and views groups and anonymous Internet sites with measureless hoards of precious information. As someone so enthusiastically put it, "It's opened up a whole new world. You never know exactly where the journey will take you. Doors open and you take off in new directions. You can learn about anything — I mean anything! And you never have to be lonely — there's always someone out there to connect with."³

The Internet being a novel and complex world of communication media, unprecedented challenges are posed by it to the modern society, especially the growing generation.

But for some people, the computer world rivals their real world. Some people choose to commune with a computer, rather than their spouses and children. While they expand their horizons electronically, they insulate themselves from intimate settings and

relationships. Internet abuse has been cited as a contributing factor in the disintegration of marriages and families and the collapse of promising careers.³

Masked individuality has become the rule of the Web, whether it be in an email message, in a chat room, on an Internet bulletin board or in a multi-user interactive game. At present there is no possibility to ascertain the identity of the person you are coming in contact with on the Web. In a chat room a young girl from South India could easily masquerade as an elderly scientist from Canada. With email addresses, your choice is easily available and sending bogus emails is also not so very difficult. There is no one to restrain you from stating a web page of any content or style.

The old world was so different. Indecency, whether in word or deed, was difficult when one is face to face with another person. It could be thus psychological diffidence that intimidates many people from engaging in vandalism of any kind. This in-built hesitation, coupled with the force of authority of the institutions in question as well as the law enforcing agents of the land administer discipline and decorum in society at large. In the telephonic mode of person to person communication, though there is much room for dissembling, enough checks are there in the form of direct voice contact and recognition as well as the technological possibility of tracing the caller.

Internet communication when it is one to one contact is free from the possibility of personal identification and when it is public media, like the news and information sites, is not shackled by any kind of legislative or governmental control. The cause of the growing vandalism ranging from obscene messages to viral attacks can be traced to this sense of ultimate freedom experienced under this masked individuality.

Bill Cooley, a drug demand reduction specialist with Keester's mental health clinic, believes the anonymity of the Internet communication, which allows a person to escape from reality, has great potential for compulsive behaviour or misuse: "Many individuals go on-line and gain a sense of acceptance from people they don't even know," he suggested. "It's a coming-home feeling that can entice people to the detriment of family, home, career and health."⁴

There was a time when attacks on the Internet and computer viruses used to be the interest of the elite few. Now the virus attacks are the common knowledge of almost everyone. Unlimited, though performance imaginary, freedom and power experienced on the cyber space, coupled with a possible anonymity, somehow engenders some of the modern-day cyber demons capable of severe damage, not only to the numerous computers and programs but to the well being of the society as a whole.

There is so much of information available and it is so easily accessible that the Internet has become an unbelievably vast store house of news, views and information. And it is growing not by day but by minute making it a labyrinth of gems as well as junk. This itself is creating problems of its own. Here's some information about information:

The script for a 30-minute broadcast by CNN would barely fill the front page of a newspaper. A weekday edition of a newspaper contains as much information as the average person in the 17th century would be exposed to in their entire lifetime. In 1971 the average American encountered 560 advertising messages a day; by 1997 that had grown to 3,000. Gallup and the Institute For The Future calculated last year that the average British working day consists of 171 messages, 46 phone-calls, 22 emails, 15 internal memos and 19 items of external post.⁵

Information Overload, with its psychological, social and physical implications, is emerging as a serious threat to any surfer. A person exposed to the internet is bombarded by 24 hour news update, an avalanche of email messages, faxes together with the junk equivalent of all these. The end result of all this is the dullness we experience and the information we need finally eludes us.

David Shenk coined the phrase 'data smog' in his 1997 book of the same name. This deluge of information dulls the mind, making it harder to apply to yourself the facts that really matter:

There is a growing concern that information glut may be contributing to employee health problems and increased job

disatisfaction. To determine the extent of the problem, Reuters Business Information conducted a survey of 1,300 managers. They published startling results in an October 1996 report. "One in four [managers] admitted to suffering ill health as a result of the amount of information they are having to handle." Moreover, "two-thirds of managers [said] stress from information overload increases tension with colleagues and lowers job satisfaction." These figures illustrate that information gluts have become a serious problem, impacting workers in perhaps unexpected ways. Companies and individuals would be well-advised to start making a conscious effort to find effective ways to deal with information overload.⁶

There are a number of ailments that are attributed to Information Overload. The modern worker is assailed by so much of work to be done and the result is indecision and inaction. Dr David Lewis, a psychologist who has recently published a book, *Information Overload*, recognises that the sheer volume of information we have to deal with daily means that work stress spills out into home life, our sex drive is impaired, we cut back on sleep, and our heads become so full of data that we find it hard to sleep. The final result of this can be Burnout Stress Syndrome (BOSS) that was formerly most common amongst psychiatric nurses in the States. "As deadlines get tighter due to the speed of information, people are always inclined to feel the information they have is out of date." Is it only the problem of the worker of the West or is it slowly encroaching into our domain also.

The most serious threat that is emerging in the field of Internet is what many call Internet Addiction. Dr. Ivan Goldberg, a New York City psychiatrist who coined the term "Internet Addiction Disorder," explained IAD is not a recognised medical addiction like alcoholism, but "more like an out-of-control behaviour that threatens to overwhelm the addict's normal life."⁸

Many psychologists believe that Net Surfing can become an obsessive addiction just like other ordinary activities such as eating, sex, work or exercise. This in turn can upset a person's psychological, physical and relational well being. They believe that a sizeable number of the internet users fall under this category. Of course, there are many

others who refute this theory and argue that this term itself is a misnomer as the addiction is not to the Net but to sex or some other interest which is only the subject matter of the Site concerned. The controversy apart, the excessive allurements of the Net definitely needs special attention.

There are numerous web sites dealing with this problem. There are different online de-addiction clinics offering help for the afflicted. The Site, <www.netaddiction.com> has a concise description of the problem and attempts a classification⁷:

Internet Addiction is a broad term covering a wide-variety of behaviours and impulse-control problems. It is important to understand that there are five specific types of Internet addictions:

1. Cybersexual Addiction - Individuals who suffer from cybersexual addiction typically are either engaged in viewing, downloading, and trading online pornography or involved in adult fantasy role-play chat rooms.
2. Cyber-Relational Addiction - Individuals who suffer from Chat Room Addiction become over-involved in online relationships or may engage in virtual adultery. Online friends quickly become more important to the individual often at the expense of real life relationships with family and friends. In many instances, this will lead to marital discord and family instability.
3. Net Gaming - Net gaming encompass a broad category of behaviours including obsessive online gambling, gaming, shopping, or stock trading behaviours. In particular, individuals will utilise virtual casinos, interactive games, e-auction houses, or e-brokerage houses only to loose excessive amounts of money and even disrupt other job-related duties or significant relationships.
4. Information Overload - The wealth of data available on the World Wide Web has created a new type of compulsive behaviour regarding excessive web surfing and database searches. Individuals will spend greater amounts of time searching and collecting data from the web and organising

information. Obsessive compulsive tendencies and reduced work productivity are typically associated with this behaviour.

5. Computer Addiction – In the 80s, computer games such as Solitaire and Minesweeper were programmed into computers and researchers found that obsessive computer game playing became problematic in organisational settings as employees spent most days playing rather than working. These games are not interactive nor played online.

Dr Kimberly Young, the recognised leader of this field and founder of the Center for Online Addiction, argues that the phenomenon has to be called addiction as it interferes with daily life activities and has serious negative consequences. This could result in social isolation and loss of a career. There is no doubt that the problem needs special attention.

Many of us may consider the World Wide Web and the grave maladies that torment the netizens are still alien to the 'ordinary' citizens of our third world country. The above mentioned challenges will easily be kept apart as the problems of the affluent West or as that of the urbanised few of our own country. Are the ailments of the Internet relevant to us today?

The emergence of the Internet and the related facilities, to a larger extent, was accelerated by the enthusiasm of the campuses of Higher Education in the United States and Europe. With the fast approaching LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation) into the scene in our country will also undergo a sea-change, soon making it a preferred tool of learning, research and information dissemination.

The national policy documents on education¹⁶ looks at the field of higher education (HE) as "an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity". The strong point of HE is that its special contribution to the national development is through the dissemination of specialised knowledge and skills. Today this specialised training role is fulfilled not by the arts and science stream nor by the majority of the professional institutions, but by the enterprising private streams and specialised centres of education.

Gradually the general field of HE is painfully becoming conscious of its underdeveloped state and the resultant incompetence and discrimination even from the part of the students. As a result the HE field of our country is forced to venture into the sea of IT, especially the Internet. In the next phase of modernisation of our institutions, they are bound to face these problems of values and formation that are already faced by the urbanised few.

Human excellence and community leadership being its twin goals, formation in values becomes the backbone of learning and research process of Higher Education. The centrality of the emerging medium of the Internet with its new-found challenges in values and lifestyles will pose newer problems for the HE of this century. The NPE says: "The growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society has brought to focus the need for reafirmments in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values"¹⁷

At a time when there is an oft-repeated threat of the redundancy of the teaching person in the information gathering process, the latest challenges of the emerging field of information technology points in the direction of the teacher assuming a newer and distinct role in the field of HE. The teacher will have to play a crucial part in transmitting the right approaches, attitudes and values to the growing generation. Though he/she has been doing this all the while, for the netizen learner the problem and context has become so very different. The teacher has to do the tricky role of packing "the old wine in new wineskins". This means re-presenting the eternal values of integrity, wholesomeness and right relationship in the context and language of the Internet.

College and University teachers may have to be trained with a special role they may have to play in the changed conditions:

- At least a minimum familiarity with the Internet and some awareness concerning its judicious use are a must for the modern teacher of HE.
- There are a variety of software that monitor one's internet access in terms of moral values and block objectionable and obscene materials and Sites. Knowledge about these is essential.

- > Introducing students to healthy and diverse chat rooms, mail lists, e-groups and Sites will have to become one of the important roles of the teacher of the present century.
- > In this age of grassroots initiative, there are numerous youth efforts and student groups that circulate value based information and circulate up-building email messages. Encourage such initiative.
- > Bringing the student from the unreal yet alluring world of the cyber space to the reality of history, culture and society with its real values will be a great challenge. The old fashioned library is a very important ingredient in this.
- > Relocating the modern learner in peer groups and community life will perhaps be the best antidote to some of the pitfalls of the emerging Internet culture. A sure sign of Netaddiction is the aloofness from the normal social life. Ensuring mutual acceptance and self esteem of the student will safeguard him or her from the snare of this addiction.

Some of the challenges posed by the fast advancing internet driven culture, such as the abundant possibility for dissembling, the wilderness experience of Information Overload and diverse forms of addiction raise disturbing questions for those who form the mind and personality of the younger generation. In this context the field of higher education especially teachers have to rediscover their special role and dynamics to be employed. This new challenge and a serious effort to rise up to face this can transform the scene of higher education as whole.

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Judas & Judas

A. S. Francis

Try man, try; throw off despair;
Dip in your tears and cross for a prayer:

What did you call? Me a man?

The darkest kiss that killed the Son of Man!

Try man, try; throw off despair;

Dip in your tears and cross for a prayer:

What did you say? To dip in my tears?

I am ardently soaked in fears.

What did you say? To cross for a prayer?

Prayer is the cancer where sorrow burns;

Prayer is the fragrance of the melting mind;

The tax-collector's bow against the Pharisean pose;

But I am the emptiness after the ecstasy of expectation.

I was close to His lips, the closest any could be;

I am the farthest, the farthest any can be.

Try man, try; throw off despair;

Dip in your tears and cross for a prayer:

Me they call Madrigny,

I only kissed Him into those roguish hands;

If so, I am the malignity of the baker kneading the dough;

If so, I am the malignity of the potter pressing the clay.

His was a tree;

But of choice pine and free.

Mine too a tree;

But the darkest in history.

Tree is the cause;

Tree is the effect;

Tree is the beginning;

Tree is the end.

An Eternal Hope

Dr. Celine E.

This day I pledged my love to you
This day I see you slip by -
into the beyond.

My life caught in the
ebb and flow of the passing tides.

Away you went, without ever
turning to gaze back
at the door that was closing -

where I stand waiting forever
and knock intermittently
at the door
closing behind your receding shadows.

Will I, ever see that lingering smile?
Caught in the twilight of the chinning Angelus.
Leaving behind a glow of the shimmering stars,
To be forever, spreading its luster
in the darkness of my soul.
Will that be an adieu
or the rays of a hope that
binds us in eternity.

Book Reviews

An Unflattering Account of an Assertive Egoist

Dr. P. Radhika

The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V.S. Naipaul

Patrick French

London: Picador, 2008

Pp 555.

Rs 595/-

For Naipaul-watchers who have so far alternated helplessly between sheer admiration for the man's single-minded pursuit of literary ambitions as well as his unshakable self-confidence on the one hand and strong hatred on the other for his uncharitable comments on practically everyone and everything in this world, the authorized biography *The World Is What It Is* comes as a huge relief. Hereafter most of his readers, without any feeling of guilt, will have enough reason to snuff out their admiration; and to hate if not abhor him wholeheartedly. Surely, not a pleasant outcome even for an open-minded detractor. This may not have been Patrick French's aim either when he set out to profile the formidable Nobel Laureate. But the book is bound to worsen the bad press Naipaul has already been getting all over the globe through the long decades of his literary career.

Well-researched and strongly fortified with verifiable documents and interviews, the biography covers a span of 100 years – an impressive period of time required for our proper understanding of its subject. It begins with Naipaul's maternal great grandfather Capildeo leaving India in 1894 in the hope of making his fortune in the Caribbean islands, his subsequent disappointment (his brahminical status notwithstanding, he is forced into indentured labour) and his triumph that comes as much with his admirable industry as with an expedient

marriage. With this starting point, French is able to show his readers the various historical forces and social environments that went into the making of Naipaul the man and his unique vision of the world. The book concludes with Naipaul's (second) marriage to the Pakistani journalist Nadira Alvi in 1996.

Vidia, as he is referred to throughout the biography, comes through as a cold hearted man who felt no qualms about sacrificing anyone at the altar of his artistic ambitions. In 1983, in response to a questionnaire prepared by a German magazine, he stated that friends are liabilities because "[i]t has been hard to keep them through the twists and turns of a long creative career" and his favourite heroines are "[t]he women who loved me" (413). *The World Is What It Is* shows just how this personification of ego used and threw both friends and heroines out of his life with callous disregard for their feelings. Thus this authorized biography incidentally ratifies the authenticity of *Sir Vidia's Shalimar: A Friendship Across Five Continents* (1998) a memoir Paul Theroux wrote about the growth and decline of his thirty-year long personal and literary association with Naipaul.

French also records, candidly and non-judgmentally, the double life that Vidia led for close to two decades – one, with his English wife Patricia Ann Hale who provided invaluable intellectual support and secretarial assistance right up to her last days; and the other, with his Anglo-Argentine lover Margaret Gooding (a married woman with three children) who gave him sensual gratification and fed his male chauvinism till he discarded her for Nadira Alvi. What is noteworthy about these segments is that French is able to convey such incendiary data with remarkable élan. A less-experienced biographer may have either spluttered with rage or cooed with sly pleasure over the handling of all this salacious material.

For neutral Naipaul-scholars too, the book has much to offer. For instance, it will no doubt come as a surprise that his trip to India which eventually led to the writing of *An Area of Darkness* was more to find rest and write a novel (*Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*) than to seek the light of knowledge about the real India of his forebears. Also, that his sequel *India: A Wounded Civilization* was not what Naipaul originally

set out to write. He was commissioned by the editor of the *New York Review of Books* to "write a series of articles about India, which was lurching towards economic and constitutional chaos, with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the verge of declaring a State of Emergency" (369). Naipaul had agreed to undertake the trip in the company of his lover Margaret and do the needful. He changed his mind later and the Emergency gets mentioned only in passing in the book.

Seamlessly woven into the tale of Naipaul's personal life are accounts of the different circumstances that sowed the seeds for his numerous novels; the reviews they received, the awards they fetched him; the constant financial troubles he faced and the various overseas trips he made in order to keep his non-fiction canon alive and ever-growing. Together they reveal how Naipaul was driven by a monomaniacal desire to make his mark in the world as a writer *sui generis*. French finds the motif that ruled Naipaul's life in the opening lines of *A Bend in the River*: "The world is what it is: men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it". Naipaul was a man who wanted to earn an unignorable place in the world and that explains French's choice of title for the biography.

Perhaps the only complaint that can be levelled against this work is French's strange and unexplained decision to have the year 1996 at its closing point. A momentous event marked Naipaul's life later – his winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001. It is true that the five-year interval did not witness the publication of any substantial work (besides *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* in 1998). Trueer still, that Naipaul was by common critical consensus well past his artistic prime by then. But having conducted some of his most crucial interviews of Naipaul, his old friends, acquaintances as well as members of his family in 2002, 2004 and 2006 for the purpose of writing this biography, French's omission appears rather mysterious.

A Tale from the Heart of Darkness

Rebecca Thomas

"The White Tiger" by Aravind Adiga

Harper Collins, 2008

Pp 321

Rs 395/-

Conflicting emotions of sadness and indignation grip you as you turn the last pages of *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga.

Sadness, that the dog-eat-dog-life of India's poor is still a reality; indignation, that Adiga could find only unflattering colours to paint India with.

But it stands to his credit that the judges who plod through reams and reams of English fiction thought it fit to declare him winner of the prestigious Man Booker Prize for 2008.

It's curiosity that draws us to the book. One more Indian has won the Man Booker. And you wonder what makes Adiga tick. What's it about *The White Tiger* that makes Adiga join the league of Rushdie, Roy and Desai?

The White Tiger is a symbol of all that's Indian, its poverty, inequality, corruption and social evils. The reader sees all frames through the eyes of a village lout Baiрам Hawai, another one of those nameless, anonymous human beings who constitute the real India, the Heart of Darkness.

But this "Half-Baked : Thinking" Indian is different. He's got wit, nurtures dreams beyond the pale of his reach, is ruthless and remorseless. He refuses to live and die like a dog, the way his father did, abused by the landlords who fatten themselves on the carcasses of their slaves.

The book begins with the arrival of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India. And Adiga begins his satire. He makes Balram Halwai tell his story to the Chinese Premier.

Beats us why, of all world leaders, Adiga plumped for Jiabao.

Over the course of seven nights, under the splintered lights of his huge chandelier, he tells his story...of how he was born poor, rose above his poverty and killed his master to finally become a symbol of an emerging India....an entrepreneur. How the White Tiger in him was lurking somewhere, ready to pounce, ready to replace his master in a happening world where he could switch roles and be the oppressor, not the oppressed.

Halwai enlightens Jiabao about the real India. "India is two countries in one: An India of light, and an India of darkness.

"Neither you nor I speak English, but there are some things that can be said only in English. My ex-employer's wife Pinky madam, taught me one of these things. In fact, when great men like you visit our country, I say it. Not that I have anything against great men.

"Our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy or punctuality DOES have entrepreneurs. Thousands and thousands of them. Especially in the field of technology. And these entrepreneurs we entrepreneurs have set up all these outsourcing companies that virtually run America now." How very ironic!

Now why would the gentleman from China be interested in this story, we ask ourselves.

Visual after visual shows India at her tragic best, her life flawed, her people doomed. The images roll from the Black River, the Ganges, whose murky waters swallowed his dead mother, to the ruthless landlords who make mincemeal of people's lives.

This is no Incredible India. Nor is it shining. The reality that is destiny and destiny alone that marks one out for success or failure, is like a slap in the face.

Suddenly we see India as it was, is and will be for years to come. For somewhere down our chequered history, we lost our sense of priorities. We forgot our poor. The strobe lights of the west had an irresistible allure. We grew cosmetically, but not spiritually.

This "Half-baked yokel from the village" with his pan stained teeth and ugliness latches on to his dreams with a frenzy, determined to make a go of things by fair means or foul. He sees his one singular ray of hope in the man who trusted him, but whose throat he slit.

Adiga does not preach. Nor does Halwai. He is the White Tiger, that rare breed, intelligent, so full of beauty and verve. And purposeful. He will strike.

The deed done. The White Tiger frees himself of the chains that bound him to his landlord. To absolve himself of the crime he evolves a comfortable philosophy: "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days there are just two castes: Men with big bellies and men with small bellies."

Despite the tugs at our comfortable conscience, the book drags with Adiga's perception of a decadent system. What's he trying to tell? That in India corruption can kiss the skies and murderers never get caught?

"There's no end to things in India. You give the police all the brown envelopes and red tags you want and they might still screw you. Yet even if all my chandeliers come crashing down to the floor, even if they throw me in jail and have all other prisoners dip their beaks into me, even if they make me walk the wooden stairs to the hangman's noose, I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant."

Hercin lies the tragedy of the tale. Only he who has been a servant can know what it is to have one's dignity trampled upon. It surely is the story of a sad India, a sad Indian.

Secrets & Lies

Pavathy Premnath

by Jaiشree Mishra

London, Harper Collins, 2009

Pp 398

Rs 275/-

"The secret that binds them could destroy them" - The latest novel

"You girls were not the reason for Lily taking her life" said Mrs Lamb. The four women sat in silence, their heart overwhelmed with mixed emotions. Was it relief? Or guilt?

Jaiشree Mishra's latest suspense thriller *Secrets and Lies* unravels the mystery of Lily's death after fifteen years at a school reunion. Lily D'Souza, the beautiful, talented newcomer to the school was despised by everyone in her class. The little world of Anita, Bubbles, Zeba and Sam was shaken by her arrival and they did everything they could to restore their lost glory. And that included their plan to get Lily killed.

Fifteen years later, Anita Roy is a top journalist with BBC. A spinster even at the age of thirty one, her arrogant, cheeky disposition makes it difficult for her to stay in a relationship for long.

Bubble Raheja and Samira Hussain have nothing in common except their empty marriages.

Zeba Khan, the diva of Bollywood, seems 'perfect' to her fans around the world. But it didn't take long for Zeba to realize that her life had given her nothing worth living for.

Now, with a letter from their former school Principal Miss Victoria Lamb, their lives are all set to take the most unexpected turn.

The "best seller" author here presents the new generation modern women who have the charm, wit and intelligence to make the world

their own. The four friends, in *Secrets & Lies* are on a journey to 'dig up' the mystery of Lily's death that lies buried in the churchyard of their school. In the process, they find what they have been searching for fifteen years, their individuality and a purpose to their 'messy' lives.

The domestic and the social drama which moulds/bends themselves in their stereotypical roles is the backdrop for the novel. Anita, Samira and Bubbles, in London, find themselves in a similar situation. A socially committed author like Jaiشree Mishra has purposefully exposed the social and domestic parameters that dominate the intricate lives of modern women — incestuous relationships, child sexual abuse, homosexual behavior and extra marital affairs.

The latest 'mystery thriller' from the author of "Ancient Promises" and "Accidens Like Love and Marriages" has a story line similar to "Classmates", a commercially successful motion picture in Maharashtra but with a wider, clearer perspective of the brutal realities of the modern life and modern women in particular.

The novel "Secrets and Lies" is a definite page turner and the author sustains a sense of suspense until the very last page. Quite typical of Jaiشree Mishra, I would say.

CONTRIBUTORS

- Dr V.C. Harris : Professor of English & Director, School of Letters,
Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.
- Dr V. Nidhyanautha Bhat : Research Supervisor in English, Mahatma
Gandhi University, Kottayam and Hon. Director, Sukrūndra
Oriental Research Institute, Thannaman, Kochu - 682 032.
- Dr C. S. Jayaram : Former Head of the Department of English, Sacred
Heart College, Thevara.
- Dr J. Sundarsingh : Head, Department of English, Karunya University,
Karunya Nagar, Coimbatore - 641 114.
- Lima Antony : Lecturer, Department of English, St. Xavier's College,
Aluva.
- Dr Murali Krishnan T.R. : Lecturer Selection Grade in English, M.E.S.
College, Marampally, Aluva - 683 107.
- Dr Vincent B. Netto : Reader, Department of English, Fatima Matha
National College, Kollam.
- Dr S. Kannammal : Former Head, P.G. & Research Department of
English, Vellalar College for Women, Erode.
- Reinesh K. G. : Research Scholar in English, Mar Athanasius College,
Kothamangalam.
- Jisha John : Lecturer in English, Mar Athanasius College,
Kothamangalam.
- Maria Theresa Chakunny : Research Scholar in English, School of
Letters, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.
- K. Ponni : Head, Department of English, Dharmapuram Guanambigai
Govt. Arts College for Women, Mayiladuthurai - 609 001, T.N.

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Jiju Abraham : Research Scholar in English, Mar Athanasius College,
Kodumangalam.

Dr Edward A. Edzellath : Lecturer Selection Grade in English,
Department of English, St. Albert's College, Ernakulam.

A. S. Francis : Former Head of the Department of English, Fatima Matha
College, Kollam.

Dr. Coline E. : Reader in English, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam.

Dr. Radhika P. : Reader, Department of English, Fatima Matha National
College, Kollam.

Rebecca Thomas : Associate Professor, Department of Communication,
St. Peter's College.

Pravathi Premnazar : Scholar, Department of English, St. Teresa's
College, Ernakulam.

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