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# Sympathy, Hospitality and Love in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pick Up*

Mamadou Abdou Babou Ngom, Ph.D.

Nadine Gordimer(1923-) is a high-profile white South African novelist, critic and essayist. She rides the crest of fifteen novels, not to mention a body of short stories and plays. Additionally, she has had many literary prizes conferred on her by virtue of the felicity of her style and the moral as well as political purport of the themes that she broaches in her novels. She will, doubtless, go down in history as the first African female writer to have ever received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1991. A woman of mixed parentage her mother was born in England and her father in Latvia, then tied to the Russian Empire, Nadine Gordimer ran the gauntlet of apartheid strictures in terms of censorship owing to her gutsy championing of black resistance to racial oppression and scathing criticism of the sanctimoniousness of institutionalized racism. Unsurprisingly, Gordimer's wholesale interest in the political and social life of the rainbow nation did not end with the demise of apartheid. Rather, her deep awareness of the travails plaguing the democratic era in South Africa and their potential impact on its future shines through her postliberation fiction, i.e., *None to Accompany Me*, *The House Gun*, *The Pick Up*, *Get a Life* and *No Time Like the Present*. Amongst these postapartheid novels I have chosen to work on *The Pick Up* within the ambit of this research paper as it is not only concerned with such new South Africa maladies as xenophobia and economic migration but also with the universal issues of sympathy and hospitality.

To be sure, *The Pick Up* is a novel of riveting gravitas. It came out in 2001 and recounts the story of two characters whose social origins are poles apart: Julie Summers and a man named Abdu. (Not until page 109 is his full name disclosed as Ibrahim Ibn Musa.) The novel is partly set in postliberated South Africa and partly in an unnamed Arab country. Julie is brought up in the cocoon of a caring, wealthy

family from whose glitzy lifestyle she is anxious to cut herself loose; whereas Abdu is a hapless poor immigrant who attempts to make something of himself in the postapartheid era in South Africa, working as a grease-monkey educated though he is. These two persons are thrown together by a queer quirk of fate. If anything, when Julie's car packs up on a street in Cape Town Abdu, unlike young white people who taunt the car owner so glaringly that she cannot help but feel that "Nothing gives a white male more of a kick than humiliating a woman driver" (PU, 6), bails her out. From that chance encounter results a close acquaintanceship that wraps up growing into love.

Though my intent in this paper is not to carry out a thoroughgoing literature review of *Sympathy*, I will, nevertheless, try to present a summary picture of definitions and perspectives from diverse angles. The issue of "Sympathy" has always been a pet subject, as it were, for philosophers. Defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as "the feeling of being sorry for somebody", the term has given rise to impassioned debates among thinkers throughout history. Indeed, as early as the eighteenth century British historian and philosopher, Adam Smith, gave it his undivided attention and discussed it at length in his seminal work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. From the outset, Smith is at pains to underscore his premise that Sympathy is inherent in human nature as "there are some principles in his [man] nature which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him."<sup>1</sup> From a Smithian perspective, no human being, however self-centred he may be, is altogether bereft of the faculty of casting in one's lot with a fellow being who is upon the rack. Among those principles pity and compassion, which are two sides of the same coin, stand out:

Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally, the same, may now, however, without impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.<sup>2</sup>

Along the same lines, nineteenth-century German sophisticated philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, contends that sympathy is the be

all and end all of human nature. In *Human Nature: Essays in Ethics and politics*, he goes to great lengths to hammer home the point that “fundamental disposition towards others” can take on the “the character either of Envy or of Sympathy.”<sup>3</sup> Although admitting that “these two diametrically opposite qualities exist in every man”, Schopenhauer makes no bones about the meanness of envy in that it “builds the wall between Me and Thee thicker and stronger.” Conversely, he extols the virtues of sympathy in sort of glowing terms: “Sympathy makes it [the aforementioned wall] light and transparent; nay, it sometimes pulls down the wall altogether; and then the distinction between self and non-self vanishes.”<sup>4</sup> It is worthwhile noticing, though, that what Schopenhauer calls “*the primary ethical phenomenal*”<sup>5</sup>, to wit sympathy, does not arise from the sight of another’s sorrow. Rather, it results from processing in one’s mind how one would feel when one puts oneself in the shoes of someone else falling apart at the seams. Hence the term “sympathetic imagination”:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation. We conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations and feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.<sup>6</sup>

Sympathy is so paramount to a telepathic feeling that twentieth-century French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas views it as the most cost-effective way of displaying one’s responsibility for the other:

Towards another culminates in a for another a suffering for his suffering, without light, that is, without measure, quite different from the purely negative blinding of Fortune which only seems to close her eyes to give her richness arbitrarily.<sup>7</sup>

Any person steeped in the consciousness of his humanity cannot elect to remain unfeeling in the face of a fellow being’s suffering. Sympathy is a tribute to our humanity besides being one of the dividing lines between mankind and animals. (The latter are, indeed, devoid of it. However, that does not imply that they are not sensible to suffering.) On that score, it is supposed to cut across racial and religious as well as ethnic divide.

Sympathy and hospitality as well as love are interwoven in *The Pick Up*. The author, with consummate craft, uses the trials and tribulations of a hapless immigrant, and the open-mindedness of a woman from the South African gentility to ram home this interconnectedness. That reality shows from the inception of the novel when a mechanic from an unnamed Arab country lets a South African woman, whose car has broken down on a busy street, off the hook. As a matter of fact, all through the narrative, Julie Summers is unswerving in her drive to debunk the old-school shibboleth of racial or religious difference, and, unsurprisingly, strikes a blow for the virtues of otherness through her sympathetic attitude towards Abdu: "To be open to encounters-that was what she and her friends believed, anyway, as part of making the worth of their lives"(PU, 10). Another case in point is supplied by Julie's stubborn reluctance to look on the grease-monkey as a nonentity. On her way with Abdu from the garage to the spot where the car has packed up, Julie, speaking through the agency of the narrator, gives compelling sidelights on her mindset:

He carried a bulky handleless bag with a new battery and tools and it was awkward to walk beside him through the streets with people dodging around them, but she did not like to walk ahead of the garage man as if he were some sort of servant (PU, 7).

Here, Miss Summers concretely emphasizes the sense of oneness that she feels towards Abdu. Although her social background is a far cry from Abdu's, Julie shies away from displaying superciliousness vis-à-vis the mechanic. By the same token this one, rather than following in young white folks' footsteps by making jibes at Julie, he wisely chooses to be sympathetic to Julie. No sooner had he learnt about the woman's predicament than he wasted no time in coming to her help although, initially, Julie thought that "he listened to her without any reassuring attention or remark" (PU, 7). Furthermore, he is unsparing in dishing out heavy-duty advice to Julie. Witness his urging the latter to jettison her "old rattle-trap" and buy a new one because "it can be a danger for you to drive. Something can fail that can kill you" (PU, 10-11).

Julie stops at nothing to live out her lodestar that a human being, whatever his walk of life, deserves sympathy and respect. This throws

into sharp relief the South African notion of Ubuntu defined in the Oxford English Learner's Dictionary as "the idea that people are not only individuals but live in a community and must share things and care for each other." It takes two to tango. This kind of maxim shines through Julie's animus against the use of foreignness for racist ends, and in her strenuous endeavour to shield Abdu from being the butt of derogatory remarks and "bourgeois xenophobia". As it turns out, difference in social or racial background is not a hindrance to the exercise of sympathy and hospitality by any stretch of the imagination. Little wonder Julie strives with every fiber of her being to make Abdu feel comfortable in her own country, taking him to the El-AY Caf patronized by folks who "have distanced themselves from the ways of the past, their families, whether these are black ones still living in the ghettos or whites ones in the Suburbs" (PU, 23). Her solicitude for Abdu, to be sure, raises her friends' eyebrows: "Where did Julie pick him up?" asks one man (PU, 22). In the same breath, a white business man, Abdu's boss no less, is baffled as to why Julie, despite her aristocratic stock, has a crush on a squalid migrant worker to the point of dancing attendance upon him:

That young lady who hung about every day, coming in to talk to him [Abdu] low-voiced where he paused in his work, tools in hand, there to fetch him in her car every evening: she had class, you could see, never mind the kind of clothes all that crowd at the caf s wear, not all the whites had class around these streets, but she had. As a white father of daughters himself, it was a shame to see what she was doing with this fellow from God knows where, nothing against him, but still (PU, 31).

This racist slur, instead of taking the wind out of Julie's sails, acts as a fillip to her ethical action. As a matter of fact, her concern for Abdu is embedded in the Ricoeurian term of 'ethical intention' whose backbone is described as "aiming at 'the good life' with and for others in just institutions."<sup>8</sup> Unlike the owner of the garage workshop who is disdainful of the mechanic out of racist proclivities, Julie is on moral high ground; so, she can't find it in her heart to treat Abdu like dirt owing to his status as an immigrant. By electing to seek her own

happiness in Abdu's happiness (to paraphrase nineteenth-century English thinker Jeremy Bentham) Julie stakes out her claim to the practice of virtue<sup>9</sup>. Her guileless, steadfast concern for her lover unnerves many a person in her entourage and community for that matter. The proprietor of the garage attempts anew to make Julie see sense by playing on her aristocratic extraction:

Don't get me wrong. For your own good, you're a nice girl, a somebody, I can see. He's not for you. He's not even allowed to stay in the country. I give him a job, poor devil, I mean, God knows who it can happen to, and it's the other kind, the real blacks who get what's going nowadays (PU, 32).

Upon hearing this claptrap Julie comes near to throwing a hissy fit but knows better out of concern for Abdu:

Her temper hit her like a lash. She was ready to attack him with the arrogance of 'somebody' in her he recognized—but there intervened at least something she had learned of an alternative reality to her own: the indulgence might lose her lover her cover; this place where she discovered him under a car (PU, 32).

The backdrop to these exchanges reported by the narrator is the deliverance of a letter from the immigration authorities to Abdu, care of Julie. Indeed, she "came to the office counter to ask whether the fellow was out" as "she hadn't found him in the workshop and she had an urgent message for him" (PU, 32). The instant that "The employer took the folded piece of paper" he "looked at her" and said "He's bad news" (PU, 32). This scene is a standout moment in the narrative as it marks the time when Julie comes into her own, throwing everything but the kitchen sink to prevent Abdu's deportation to his country. If anything, the case must be made that there is more to Julie's concern for the grease-monkey than meets the eye. Sheer love is not simply at the bottom of it. Julie's 'effective benevolence' to Abdu is, at bottom, in sync with Immanuel Kant's vision of hospitality. He ties hospitality to the way in which a foreigner is treated in his host country:

...hospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility. The latter may

send him away again, if this can be done without causing his death; but so long as he conducts himself peaceably, he must not be treated as an enemy<sup>10</sup>.

From a Kantian perspective, although a stranger has no entitlement to “a right to be treated as a guest” as “a special friendly compact on his behalf would be required to make him for a time given an actual inmate,” the fact remains that he “he has the right of visitation.<sup>11</sup>” In Julie’s books, Abdu answers to the description of a stranger behaving himself; so, on no account must he be given a raw deal as if he were an enemy. To boot, he genuinely earns his keep as a mechanic, educated though he is. As it happens, when the contents of the letter from the Department of Home Affairs is disclosed to her, Julie’s hackles rise; she teeters on the brink of snapping, all the more so because she’s baffled as to who squealed on Abdu : “Then she became angry. Who told them? How did they find out? After how long? How long? Two years...Who? But who would do it, what for?” (PU, 53). The mechanic does not pull any punches when it comes to answering Julie’s questions: “Anyone. Someone who wants my job, may be. Yes. Why not” (PU, 53). Abdu’s brush with the Department of Home Affairs stems from the fact he overstayed the span of time he’s legally allowed to live in his host country, and that’s

in contravention of the termination of his permit of such-and-such a date to reside in the Republic. This was a criminal offence...and he was duly informed that he must depart within 14 days or face charges and deportation to his country of origin (PU, 52).

On account of the gravitas of the matter, Julie does not want to fritter away time pointing fingers. As Abdu’s significant other and sheet anchor, she starts to mull over ways and means to sort of roll back the downsides of “this document passing a sentence on his [Abdu’s] life” (PU, 55). Foremost in her pushback drive is her decision to “abrogate any rights that are hers, until they are granted also to him” (PU, 55). In other words, she ups the ante and is intent upon following “no obedience to truthfulness ingested at school, no rules promulgated in the Constitution, no policy of transparency as in the Board rooms where the investment business code applies” (PU, 55). Over and above this,

she tries to enlist the support of Mr Hamilton Motsamai, a one-time lawyer and a friend of her dad's. This one, though, does not live up to Julie's expectations as he tells her four square what he thinks about her lover's predicament:

The chances of appeal succeeding for Mr ... ? would have been perhaps marginally better if you had been married. He would have had the advantage of the provision that the spouse of a national and of course, Julie Miss Summers, you are unquestionably that has the right of permanent residence (PU,77).

As if nipping in the bud any urge from her to rush headlong into going down the aisles, Mr Motsamai strikes a note of warning to Julie:

A moment: wait... To resort to marriage now at this stage would only prejudice your case further; it would be seen as a device to gain residence, that's all. Marriage to a national as a positive factor in seeking entry to a country or appealing for permanent residence, a stay of expulsion order, has to have been of a duration proof that it is genuine (PU, 77-8).

Undaunted by Motsamai's sincerity and, by extension, inability to help, Julie, disappointingly, asks: "So you can't suggest anything, Mr Motsamai?" (PU, 80). Feeling for her, the lawyer promises to "get my assistant to call my colleague the moment I am free, and I've spoken to him she'll call you she has your number, Miss Summers, you have a cell of course" (PU, 81). In the meantime, Julie toys with the idea of getting Abdu out of the clutches of the Department of Home Affairs by way of kickbacks. Nevertheless, she soon discovers that this way out is a non-starter as "there is a big exposure of corruption in that very area, that very Department, right" (PU, 85). Actually, the powers that be have launched an anti-corruption drive due to their realization that "It is the epidemic that attacks the freedom won for our country, sickening us from inside, one of the running sores of immigration" (PU, 79). Little wonder that, in a last-ditch attempt to save Abdu's bacon, Miss Summers turns to another lawyer who happens to be a friend of Mr Motsamai's. Unexpectedly, the latter's effort has paid off as his application on behalf of the illegal for "the 14 days' grace to be

extended” (PU, 83) is successful. Julie’s hope for a happy end to Abdu’s limbo status is short-lived, nonetheless, since “on the seventh day of the reprieve” the lawyer drops a bombshell on both of them:

All possible avenues have been explored. Up to the highest level, he might add. Motsamai had been helpful. There is no possibility that permanent residence will be granted. He greatly regrets to say: nothing further can be done, by himself or anyone else. He must tell the client this in order to save vain hopes and useless expenditure (PU, 85).

As a result of this, Abdu “will have to leave the country within ten days. I was able to extend that from a week, for him” (PU, 85). Miss Summers is a tough cookie—this latest body blow does not in the least dent her willingness to leave no stone unturned till Abdu is let off the hook.

Sympathy and hospitality as well as love are, arguably, what makes Julie tick. This three-pronged dimension to her concern for Abdu is anchored in dyed in the wool liberal values. As a matter of fact, liberalism was a powerful weapon against colonization and apartheid. To all intents and purposes identified with white writers, it went a long way to dismantling the racist ideology of apartheid. Nadine Godimer, André Brink and J.M. Coetzee are its main votaries in white South African Literature. Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson shed some light on core values of white liberalism:

Belief in the power and efficacy of the judicial system; belief in “civilization” and the continual progress of humankind; an abhorrence of violence, accompanied by an attitude of tolerance and rationality; a capacity for fairly ruthless self-scrutiny and a sense of guilt which can be incapacitating; and, more significantly than all of these, a belief in individual autonomy and in the freedom choice<sup>12</sup>.

Liberalism posits the humanity in the ‘other’ and, accordingly, the respect for human dignity. When Elizabeth Costello, a lead Coetzeean character, says “I believe in the irrepressible human spirit. I believe that all humankind is one,<sup>13</sup>” not only does she underscore the oneness of

mankind but also her liberal conviction that all human beings deserve sympathy which, from a Schopenhauerian perspective, “shows itself in a sincere participation in the friend’s weal and woe, and in the disinterested sacrifices made for the latter.<sup>14</sup>” Julie Summers sees eye to eye with Elizabeth Costello when she claims in no uncertain terms: “Even this I’m wearing, this dirty...even whatyoucallit, a shed, a corner in the street to sleep in, that’s his, not mine. That’s how it is. Whatever I have is his” (PU, 54). Liberal characters, to wit the likes of Miss Summers, belong to the type of folks for whom “humanity is a non-ego,”<sup>15</sup> and deeply believe that “all love is Compassion or Sympathy.<sup>16</sup>” No wonder then that Julie goes the extra mile for Abdu. The recognition of her ‘self’ in him in terms of compassion as well as love is so strong that she can’t imagine Splits-ville with the mechanic, and living a long way from him. Being unable to turn the tables and prevent Abdu’s deportation, she makes up her mind to leave South Africa with her lover. She springs a surprise on Abdu:

So he was there when she came home from her work with the envelope from the travel agency. She handed it to him where he lay. He delayed a moment, reading the name of the agency, with its logo of some great bird in flight, as if to convince himself of its portent. He made a slit in the top of the envelope with his nail and slid a forefinger along to open it. Inside, there were two airline tickets (PU, 93).

Understandably, this announcement comes as a shock to Abdu. His sense of bewilderment is all the more glaring as he does not feel up to grasping the rationale for Julie’s choice to elope with him, back to his country of origin. At one time he thinks that Miss Summers has taken leave of her senses:

It’s impossible, this idea of hers. What else could she do there? What’m I expected to do with her. There. Responsible to her father, she thinks he doesn’t matter but his somebody in this city and I’ll be the filthy wicked foreigner who’s taken her to a run-down depraved strip of a country...She’s not for me, can’t she realize that? Too indulgent and pampered to understand that’s what she

is, (...), she doesn't know that the one thing she can't have is to survive what she's decided she wants to do now. Madness. Madness. I thought she was intelligent. Stupidity. That's it. That's final (PU, 95).

This quote speaks volumes about the degree to which Abdu is flummoxed by Julie's decision. Actually, his theory is that her genteel extraction is not commensurate with the drabness of life in his part of the world; but when it dawns on him that Julie has no intention of backing down, Abdu tries to meet her halfway:

With the acceptance of love there comes the authority to impose conditions. They have never said the worn old words to one another, for her they are bourgeois clichés left behind...but there is a consequence common to both: if you love me you will want to do as I say or, or at least make concessions to please me. It was right that she must inform her father of her decision (PU, 97).

Abdu knows only too well that for Julie to relinquish all the perks that go with middle class life and go with him back to his country, there must be something beyond her control. Love is, indeed, an overpowering feeling, nay passion that escapes being resisted. It's like a juggernaut. Its importance led Arthur Schopenhauer to bemoan the fact that it is "disregarded by philosophers altogether" while in actual fact it "plays throughout so important a part in human life."<sup>17</sup> He then elaborates on what marks love out from other kinds of passion:

Certainly, it is confirmed by experience, although not by the experience of every day, that that which as a rule only appears as a strong yet still controllable inclination may rise under certain circumstances to a passion which exceeds all others in vehemence, and which then sets aside all considerations, overcomes all obstacles with incredible strength and persecution, so that for its satisfaction life is risked without hesitation, nay, if that satisfaction is still withheld, is given as the price of it<sup>18</sup>.

In light of the foregoing, it's not astonishing why Julie toes Abdu's line, and, for good measure, goes to keep her father posted about her

decision to leave her country along with her lover. Nigel Acroyd Summers, Julie's dad, is understandably dismayed at his daughter's intention, not to mention amazed to be informed rather belatedly. Anger and haughtiness tinged with racist undercurrents are writ large in his reply to his daughter:

...I've never thought the people you mix with worthy of you don't smile, that's not to do with or class but I've always thought you'd find that out for yourself...And now you come here without any warning and simply tell us you are leaving in a week's time for the worst, poorest and most backward of Third World countries... Who is he where he comes from? What does he do there? What kind of family does he belong to? What we do know, what everyone knows, is that the place is dangerous, a country of gangster political rivals, abominable lack of health standards...You choose to go to hell in your own way. (PU, 98).

It's safe to contend that Nigel Acroyd Summers' dress-down to his daughter is a throwback to apartheid ideology. What can be read into his standpoint is that, despite the repeal of institutionalized segregationist practices two score years back, racism still lingers in democratic era in South Africa; that some people live in a kind of time warp as they are stuck in the old ways of thinking. However, this much waters down dad's hidebound mindset his daughter's sympathetic bent and animus against any race-based exclusion.

As has already been pointed out, a thick wall of racial and religious differences separate Julie and Abdu. All the same, Miss Summers' stubborn effort to bridge the yawning cultural gap between them shows all through the narrative. If anything, sympathy and hospitality as well as love factor into her acceptance of whatever prerequisite Abdu sets to her leaving with him. True to type, Abdu avoids acting in a way that flies in the face of his religious and cultural beliefs; so, when nothing is left but departure, he asks Julie to make one final concession: "If you must leave with me marry then we must marry. I cannot take a woman to my family, with us like this" (PU, 107). Rather than recoiling from the demand, she gratifies it willy-nilly:

She laughs, with tears.

He took her in the arms and kissed her solemnly as if expecting a vow. Two days before the aircraft took off they went to the Magistrate's Court and before a marriage officer, the first time he had dared show his face in any place of law enforcement (PU, 107).

The weirdness of their union vindicates Schopenhauer's theory that "marriages from love are sometimes consummated between natures which are mentally very different."<sup>19</sup> What bears testimony, though, is that neither of them allows the weight of cultural and religious divide to mar their relationship. Each of them goes out of their way to downplay the customs and mores that can potentially be an impediment to their marriage. Abdu, now known as Ibrahim Ibn Mussa, does not mind disobeying his mother when it comes to shielding Julie against the strictures of life in his part of the world: "He has sharply resisted his mother's taking him aside to insist that his wife put a scarf over her head when leaving the house or in the company of men who were not family" (PU, 123). He fesses up to the fact that it pains him to refuse to toe his mom's line in that "this is his mother, whom he wanted to bring away to a better life" but he is beholden to his wife and has a duty to her. Mindful that "Language is a communication system and carrier of culture by virtue of being simultaneously the means and carrier of memory"<sup>20</sup>, and that "To speak...means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization"<sup>21</sup>, Julie Summers makes a decision: "I have to learn the language" (PU, 121). At the same time, she strives to make it possible for her in-laws and other village denizens to know about her culture through the English language: "Julie was teaching English not only to Maryam and the quiet young neighbourhood girls and awkward boys who sidled into the lean-to whispering and making place for one another crossed-legged on the floor" (PU, 142). She is, to be sure, a byword for docility and dutifulness, always making a point of befriending Ibrahim in his hour of need. This one, after several unsuccessful bids to gain entry visa to Australia, Canada and Sweden, is at rock bottom. But Julie never leaves him in the lurch; she is even worried about his demeanour:

His silences distressed her more than any other argument between them would have, they were retreats into thoughts that barred her; (...)

(...) She bent over him, her arms going around his waist and her cheek against his bare back. To her, the essence of him, the odour of his skin, overcame his silence and received her (PU, 148).

Actually, since being deported back to his country from South Africa, Ibrahim has had it in mind to emigrate anew. The idea of making something of himself in his own country is anathema to him. Still his mother and uncle, fearful that he may “run away again” (PU, 223), do their level best in order to thwart his attempt to go down the path of migration again. Their effort hits the rocks when Ibrahim turns down an offer from his uncle Yakub “to take charge of his uncle’s workshop” (PU, 186). His loved ones including his wife are bewildered, understandably so, that he passes up “the chance of a life time” (PU, 186). The crux of the matter is that Ibrahim does not give a hoot to folks’ spiteful remarks that he “had taken himself off to foreign countries and made nothing of himself there, come home with only a foreign wife to show for it” (PU, 188) he sets his sights on emigration. When he at last manages to secure a visa to the United States of America his beloved are astounded. Julie puts a damper on his excitement, though, making it clear that she won’t travel with him: “I’m not going to America. Of course you are going to America No. I’m not going” (PU, 248).

What’s encapsulated in Julie’s adamant refusal to move to the US together with her husband is a rejection of emigration as a way out of misery, and, more significantly, a deep-dyed sense of ‘otherness’ anchored in her strong belief in the redemptive value of sympathy, hospitality and love. Come to think of it, Julie has no stomach for emigration because she feels as though she fulfilled herself in her husband’s country. Indeed, what matters to her in life is not so much money or modern conveniences but “loving-kindness” something her in-laws have shown to her no end despite their wish that Ibrahim married the girl earmarked for him: “They had a bride for him. Of course. Since he was sixteen or seventeen years old there had been a girl marked out” (PU, 113).

In the final analysis, takes a back seat to compassion and hospitality in *The Pick Up* nonetheless, jibes with Nadine Gordimer’s literary

compass, namely the broaching of political and moral issues in her fiction. Through a deft characterization and narrative sleight of hand she seeks to sell the paramountcy of such moral values as sympathy and hospitality. If the latter percolates through every human action, it can, from the author's perspective, go a long way towards keeping a lid on the devastating effects arising from the absence of ethical responsibility and by extension, scorn for 'otherness'.

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### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Adam Smith. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790). São Paulo: M&A Libri, 2006, p.3.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.
- <sup>3</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer. *On Human Nature : Essays in Ethics and Politics*. London: Sonnenchein & Co., LIM., 1902, p.7.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.
- <sup>5</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer. *The Basis of Morality*. Translated by Arthur B. Bullock. London: Swan Sonnenchein & Co., Limited, 1903, p.176.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, *op.cit.*, pp.5-6.
- <sup>7</sup> Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2011 (ninth printing), p.18.
- <sup>8</sup> Paul Ricoeur. *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992, p.172.
- <sup>9</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Deontology or The Science of Morality*, Vol.1. London: Rees, 1834. In this wonderful book nineteenth-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham expounds on his vision of morality. Right from the word go Bentham underscores man's bent, as it were, for selfishness: "...every man is thinking about his interests. It is part of his nature to think first about interests", p.13. The cornerstone of his moral philosophy is, though, the notion of

happiness which he describes as “the possession of pleasure with the exemption of pain. It is in proportion to the aggregate of pleasures enjoyed, and of pains averted”, p.17. Much as man’s tendency for egoism is natural it behooves him, after striving to gratify his own need for happiness, to “Seek the happiness of others”, p.17. Actually, from a Benthamian standpoint, the exercise of conscience, morality rests on two stanchions, so to speak: virtue and effective benevolence. Going into specifics he writes: “...the claim of virtue will be found to girdle the whole of the sensitive creation – the happiness we can communicate to lower natures is intimately associated with that of the human race,- and that of the human race is closely linked to our own”, p.13. “Virtue” he explains “divides itself into two branches– prudence and effective benevolence. Prudence has its seat in the understanding. Effective benevolence in the affections; those affections which, when intense and strong, become passions,” p.15. Substantiating away the notion of Prudence, Bentham says that it “has two divisions –that which respects ourselves or self-regarding, ... and that which respects others, and which may be denominated extra-regarding prudence,” pp.15-6. When it comes to paring effective benevolence to its bare bones the thinker underlines that it “is either positive or negative. Its operation is by action, or by abstaining from action. Its business is either with the augmentation of pleasure or the diminution of pain,” p.16. In light of the foregoing it is to all intents and purposes safe to make the contention that what Julie carries out on Abdu at full throttle is positive effective benevolence in the sense that she goes all out to make the mechanic happy notwithstanding the odds that she is up against.

<sup>10</sup>Immanuel Kant, *A Perpetual Peace : A Philosophical Essay*, translated with introduction and notes by M. Campbell Smith. London: Swan Sonnenschein & CO, LIM, 1903, pp.137-8.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.138.

<sup>12</sup>Graham Huggan, Stephen Watson, *Critical Perspectives on J.M.Coetzee*. London: Macmillan, 1996, p.209.

<sup>13</sup>J.M.Coetzee, Elizabeth Costello. London: Secker and Warburg, 2005, p207.

- <sup>14</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, translated from the German by E.F.J. Payne, Vol.1. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969, p.376.
- <sup>15</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Basis of Morality*, op.cit., p.276. Arthur Schopenhauer divides humanity in roughly speaking two kinds of individuals: to the one type “humanity is a non-ego” and to the other it is “myself once more.” The former is a strong believer in the theory that “plurality and difference belong only to the appearance-form” and, as a result, “draws less distinction between himself and others than is usually done” p.273. Conversely, the latter individual “feels everywhere that a thick wall of partition hedges him off from all others. For him the world is an absolutenon-ego, and his relation to it is an essentially hostile one” p.277.
- <sup>16</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, op.cit., p.375.
- <sup>17</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, “The Metaphysic of Love” in *The World as Will and Idea*, translated from German by R.B.Haldane and J.Kemp, Vol.III. London: Keegan Paul, 1909, p.338.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.337.
- <sup>19</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, op.cit., p.354.
- <sup>20</sup> Ngmg- wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*. New York: Basic Cavitass Books, 2009, p.20.
- <sup>21</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove, 1967. Reprint of *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Points, 1952.

# **Dialogism to Answerability: The Mediation of Gandhi and Bakhtin in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Dr. Johnson Mathew

Bakhtin and Gandhi are two great thinkers - though in completely different domains – who emphasized the roles of dialogue and answerability (interpersonal reciprocity) in social life. Bakhtin developed the concept of dialogism to account for the “double voicedness” of language and novelistic discourse. Ken Hirschkop in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* observes that he had in mind various kinds of literal dialogue, which characterize Western liberal political debate and the philosophy of ethics. For Bakhtin, life is an ongoing, unfinalizable dialogue, which happens at every moment of daily existence. He considers open-ended dialogue as the single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life. He observes:

Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue, a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogue fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (*Problems of Dostovesky's Poetics* 293)

This focus on the dialogue involves a Socratic search for truth and a countering of doxa- the official ready-made truth. He observes: “Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (PDP, 110). Bakhtin envisages dialogics as an effective way of resisting all kinds of monologization and essentialization in language, philosophy and public life. Bakhtinian dialogism detests monologism because it shuts down the possibility for dialogue. Monologism is a demand for ultimate truth claims whereas dialogism or dialogue provides creative opportunities for individuals to

respond to the discourse of the Other. Dialogue is participatory and has the capacity to embrace differences. Bakhtin's philosophy places emphasis on morality and dialogue as the central principles of inquiry. Dialogue, for Bakhtin, is an ongoing social process of making meaning that involves the relationship between subjects. It is a creative and a complicated process as it involves not only the spoken and the written words but even the tone, sound and body language of the dialogue participants. Bakhtin envisages dialogue as a Socratic enterprise, which is based not simply on asking questions, but on the practice of ". . . anacrisis and syncrisis, the drawing forth and juxtaposing of different ideas and different persons not for the purpose of persuading but for the purpose of testing, contesting, and creating ideas" (Quoted in Zappan 37). Dialogue is a change and an exchange between the speaking subjects. However, this is not just an exchange of utterances, but a viewing and testing from the perspective of the other through heteroglossia and dialogized heteroglossia. Bakhtin's heteroglossia is not a mere mix of languages but the viewing of each from the perspective of the others and the inter-animation of each by the others – a dialogized heteroglossia (Zappan 44). Bakhtin's affinity with Socratic dialogue is manifest in his concepts of polyphony and carnival where the multiplicity of voices are tested and evaluated and where the ideas are contested. Both polyphony and carnival are means to social transformation and renewal (Zappan 39). Bakhtin's combining of the Socratic dialogue and the Einsteinian physics in developing his concept of dialogism points to the socio-cultural implications inherent within concept. He realizes the relativity of every utterance and the carnivalesque potential of Socratic dialogue and proposes his dialogics as a dynamic means of representing the social and cultural interaction within society. The carnivalesque within the Socratic dialogue is implicated in Bakhtin's dialogism too. It is a contrast and an opposition, a debate between polar opposites, a mix of differences and a certain resolution.

It is this same dialogic engagement in the diverse aspects of religious and political life that marks out Gandhian philosophy too. The eclecticism of his religious understanding is an outcome of this dialogic ethics. Probing his own religious convictions, Gandhi often asserted that he was not a literalist as far as the scriptures are concerned. He

categorically asserts: “Therefore I try to understand the spirit of the various scriptures of the world. I apply the test of ‘satya’ (Truth) and ‘ahimsa’ (non-violence) laid down by these very scriptures for their interpretation. I reject what is inconsistent with that test, and I appropriate all that is consistent with it” (*Young India* 1925:27-8). The ultimate test for the validity of any scripture or doctrine for Gandhi is its underlying emphasis on truth and non-violence. They provide the criteria for the test of the narrative injunctions they promote.

The eclecticism of his religious perspectives manifests in his political dialogue as well. Unlike the “linear” or “rational dogmatic” style of the Enlightenment reasoning, Gandhian dialogism/rationality accommodates the different sides of the argument in a manner that would resolve the difference. His *Hind Swaraj* bears witness to this dialogic orientation of his thinking where the Socratic and the *Gita* like debate and dialogue are embedded. If *Hind Swaraj* marks a dialogue between an editor (Gandhi) and a reader (Gandhi’s adversary), his autobiography represents the conflict within himself. The inconsistencies of his pragmatic philosophy, a philosophy which he never wanted to develop as a grand ideology, were the result of this inherent dialogism. He considers his inconsistent thinking as a strategic method, a pragmatic method in which knowledge arises from discussion and not from a unified philosophical discourse. According to Volosinov, any true understanding is dialogic in nature (Morris, 35). This Volosinovician formulation underscores the fact that knowledge is not an individual revelation but the result of a dialogic interpretation and consensus. Gandhian rational consensus is very different from the Enlightenment rational agreement. Whereas the Enlightenment rationality insists on the indivisible and universal truth, Gandhian philosophy allows for the relativity of truth and considers the insistence on a particular truth as coercion. As far as Gandhi is concerned the only ultimate truth is God, who is of course incomprehensible for the human beings. All human truths are contingent and contextual; the result of praxis, experience and errors, debate and dialogue. The truth claims which Gandhi makes are distinctively different from the truth claims of Western tradition. The Western notion of rationality which Habermas elaborates in his theory of communicative rationality envisages logical argumentation

and refutation as the means to truth claims. Though Habermas includes the aesthetic, the therapeutic and the explicative within the rational set, the means of rational consensus, according to him, depends upon the logicity of linguistic utterances and the inter-subjectively shared validity claims. This rational inquiry does not account for the higher order of moral scrutiny, *ahimsa* and experiential knowledge which guided the Gandhian inquiry of truth.

Gandhi was quite unsure of his own truths until they were tested with the tools of truth and non-violence. He even made his civil resistance strategies of dialogics according to his philosophical perspective, to the extent that even the wretched and the downtrodden could advance their cause using superior moral force. Gandhi's *satyagraha* was a dialogic engagement with the other. He always insisted that he made use of the fast to make those who love him reconsider their views. He believed that reason alone is not always successful in achieving one's ends; it needs emotional and political force. However, even during protests, demonstration marches, hartals and non-cooperation and fast, Gandhi was open to dialogue and debate. This he believed to be the distinctive mark of a *satyagrahi* and necessary to avoid bitterness and resolve disagreement in achieving truth. Gandhian philosophy thus is primarily a dialogic philosophy which bases itself on the question of dialogue, mutual reciprocity and responsibility. His principles of non-violence and *ahimsa* rest on the principle of the dialogic discovery which is achieved particularly through narrative discourse. The concept of truth for Gandhi is a process of becoming as the actor experiments with different notions of truth and dialogue with oneself and others. In his autobiography, he emphasizes the role of the narrative mode of thought in attaining truth. The narrative mode essentially involves dialogism and effectively counters monologism. Narrative engenders counter-narratives and in their perpetuation they crystallize truth. This narrative configuration is not dependent on any scientific doctrine and therefore involves a process of becoming. Truth, according to Gandhi, has the possibility of transforming and widening the domains of political and philosophical discourse as it can incorporate the plurality of voices and perspectives. This dialogic engagement with truth is a means to developing a non-violent and dynamic society.

Now the critical question is: what do these dialogic orientations of Bakhtin and Gandhi orient to? The answer perhaps lies in the Bakhtinian notion of answerability, which is an inescapable presence within the notion of dialogism. According to Bakhtin, “[E]very word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates” (DN 280). For Bakhtin, answerability is all pervasive and integral to the dialogic life of everyday existence. Unlike the Habermasian notion of answerability, which relies on rationality and rational consensus, Bakhtinian answerability depends on interaction. It is an interaction where the creative aspect takes on its own course in spite of its rational orientations and produces much more in the process of rational discursivity. According to Bakhtin, “The actually performed act in its undivided wholeness is more than rational – it is answerable” (1993, 29). The answerability achieved in dialogue is of a unitary character as it combines in itself the claims of objectivity, normativity and sincerity. He observes: “[T]he answerability of the actually performed act knows a unitary plane . . . in which its theoretical validity, its historical factuality, and its emotional-volitional tone figure as moments in a single decision or resolution” (Bakhtin 1993, 28). However, Bakhtin places three moments of the inter-subjective relationship (I for myself, I for others and the other for me) against each other and characterizes an unfinalizable openness as the core of answerability. The Kantian ethical question: “How ought I to act?” leads Bakhtin to his concept of the philosophy of the act where he postulates that one should act towards another so that both grow in knowledge. One ought to act not because of rules, juridical reasons or because of someone’s expectations, but because the ought, my ethics, implies answerability. So Kant’s “how ought I to act” becomes “how I ought to act towards another” for Bakhtin. Gandhi’s emphasis on the truthfulness of both ends and means also rests on this question of answerability. Dialogue, therefore, for both Bakhtin and Gandhi, is an interaction which modifies participants as well as the community. It is a question of mutual reciprocity which sustains humanity and the world at large.

This paper would therefore like to restate some of the important questions such as: How do Gandhi and Bakhtin negotiate the concepts

of truth, non-violence, dialogue and answerability in the collective and communitarian existence of man? What are the points of convergence and negotiation between Gandhi and Bakhtin? How far the notions of dialogism and answerability create a philosophical framework for confronting the contemporary issues of terrorism, exploitation, violence, oppression and injustice? How far can these concepts mediate and negotiate the contemporary globalized world which is apparently unified and at the same time fraught with internal contradictions? How relevant are these Gandhian and Bakhtinian concepts for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

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# Visual adaptation of Novels: A ‘reading’ of the text and (film) cinematic versions of *The Guns of Navarone*

Vidhu Mary John

*Art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories*

- James Naremor in *Film Adaptation* (2002)

In the preface to *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon claims; “Work in any medium are both created and received *by people*, and it is this human experiential context that allows for the study of the *politics* of intertextuality” (xii). This very notion opens up the possibility of re-visiting, re-creating and re-forming works from one form to another and one medium to another.

Walter Benjamin noted that translation is not the rendering of some fixed non-textual meaning to be copied or paraphrased or reproduced; rather it is an engagement with the original text that makes us see that text in different ways (21). Adaptation may be seen in this light and may be read as autonomous ‘texts’ that seek to reinterpret and recreate the source text. They may be examined as “deliberated, announced and extended revisitation of prior works” (Brian McFarlane, 201).

A novel is a popular medium and has mass appeal. Through its very nature it engages the reader(s) and creates a personal reading experience that is unique to each individual. A film is a real-time mass medium in the sense that it reaches out simultaneously to a large crowd. Despite its varied natures, literary work has often been the fodder for script writers and film directors. McLuhan observed that the “content of a movie . . . is a novel or a play or opera” (Cosser 28). The possibility for such adaptations exist because “novels and films tend to unravel the very word and image divide they have been conscripted to uphold, since novels contain pictures and undertake pictorial effects and films

contain words and undertake verbal effects” (Elliott 14). Adaptations are considered safe bets and as Hutcheon notes “there is an obvious financial appeal to adaptations as well . . . It’s not simply a matter of risk-avoidance” (5). Seger observes “A best-selling book may reach a million readers; . . . but a movie or television adaptation will find an audience of many millions . . . .” (5).

On the other hand, there have been many criticisms leveled against such pursuits. “In spite of their verbal-visual hybridity, novels and films have become just so much fodder in the word and image wars. . . . [they] wrangle in a relationship that Bluestone describes as “overtly compatible, secretly hostile”” (qtd in Elliott, 14). Michael Alexander used the term “palimpsestous” to refer to adapted works, for these are works that are created and received in relation to a prior text (qtd in Hutcheon, 6) and Newman opined that the move from literary to the filmic is seen by purists as a move to “a wilfully inferior form of cognition” (129).

The way the film is ‘read’ is different from the reading of a novel. The language, narration and audience differ. An adaptation from one form to another affects the ‘texts’ in multiple ways. Literary works are richly layered and boasts a sign system that is different from that of cinema. The language, narrative possibilities, music and sound effects and most importantly, the forms of engagement differ for the latter. It is in the context of the “verbal-visual hybridity” that this paper seeks to explore the common denominators, identify the differences that arise as the result of the process and task of adaptation and comment on the motives behind the said differences. It attempts an analysis of the novel *The Guns of Navarone* and its film version.

*The Guns of Navarone* (1957) was written by the best-selling Scottish writer Alistair MacLean. It has been described by the publisher as a classic World War II thriller and, indeed, it has all the elements that MacLean’s works are famous for. Tightly woven and intricately detailed, the book traces the military operation of a group of Allied saboteurs who have been sent on the important, but impossible, mission of silencing the guns on the fortified island of Navarone in the Aegean.

The 1961 Columbia Pictures production with the same title is based on the book and has the same basic plot, yet it is not a mere reproduction of the book. It takes on a life and character of its own under the direction of T. Lee Thompson and in the screenplay produced by Carl Foreman. While the aim and the general premise of the film are the same as that of the novel, the film differs in structure, narration, characterization and even in the message that is being conveyed.

The director has sought to the pack into 158 minutes of high adventure a tale that stretches over a period of 4 days and 410 pages. Where the novel has a straightforward beginning (the prelude introduces us to one of the main characters and a minor character who remains, even invisible, a part of the narration), the film is not devoid of drama and it cannot be, considering the nature of the medium and the genre it belongs to.

Greece and the islands of the Aegean have given birth to many myths and legends of war and adventure . . . ours is a legend of our own times and its heroes are not demigods but ordinary people. In 1943, 2000 British soldiers lay marooned on the island of Kheros exhausted and helpless. They had exactly one week to live . . . unless they could be evacuated. But the only passage to and from Kheros was guarded and blocked by two newly designed and radar controlled guns on the nearby island of Navarone- guns too powerful and accurate for any Allied ship to challenge. What took place over the next six days became the legend of Navarone. (*The Guns of Navarone*, film)

This narration, by James Robertson Justice, sets the stage and provides information about the crux of the movie. The images that accompany the narration which range from panoramic view of the peaceful Aegean to monstrosity, lend an air of drama and is a subtle reminder of the reasons why the Allies embarked on a war - to return peace to lands that once celebrated beauty and peace, and a justification. It is an action-oriented war movie (that relies on images, action and associative music by Dimitri Tiomkin) and the prelude attempts to stir a sense of curiosity, anticipation and instill in the viewer the thought that

something worthy of being deemed a 'legend' is about to be narrated/ 'shown'.

### **Sketching the characters- in the Novel**

At the beginning of the novel, Cpt. Keith Mallory of the Long Range Desert group has been called in by Cpt. James Jensen of the Royal Navy to head a sabotage group. The reader forms an opinion about Jensen from Mallory's thoughts and his perceptions. With a few well-chosen words, the author creates a powerful figure who is well-qualified (a strategist, master of disguises and leader of men) to send the team on what amounts to be a desperate and suicidal mission.

Cpt. Mallory has been chosen because of his special qualifications (skilled at guerrilla operations, speaks Greek and German like a native) not the least of which is the fact that he is "the human fly, climber of the unclimbable, the scaler of vertical cliffs and impossible precipices" (MacLean 20). He is to climb the "unclimbable" south cliff on Navarone, the only spot that is supposedly unguarded on the island, and lead the team into Navarone.

Again, it is through Mallory, as he assesses his teammates, that we make acquaintance with Mallory's team. The first the reader 'sees' or hears of Corporal Dusty Miller, with his "heavy transatlantic drawl" (MacLean 27), the first of the gang that he/she is exposed to, is on the second phase of the trip to Navarone. Miller is a genius with explosives, resourceful, deadly and a fine saboteur. The reader also encounters Petty Officer Casey Brown who is an engineer and first class guerrilla fighter, Lieutenant Andy Stevens who has been charged with navigating their caique to Navarone and is an expert mountaineer and finally Andrea, who had been Mallory's lieutenant, who is among other things, "their insurance policy against failure" (MacLean 33). Mallory gazes upon Andrea and muses, "Andre had become his alter ego, his doppelganger: to look at Andrea was to look in a mirror and remind himself what he was like" (MacLean 32).

The reader also meets the indomitable Louki and "dark, saturnine, unsmiling" Panayis, the "foxes of Navarone" (MacLean 202-205).

## Sketching the characters in the Film vis-a-vis the Novel

The film, after the prologue, begins on almost the same vein as the novel. Cpt. Mallory (Gregory Peck) arrives to meet Commodore Jensen (James Robertson Justice), who introduces himself with “I’m your boss. You’ve been working for me”, unaware of the task that he is to undertake. It is Peck (the Hollywood star who has been chosen for his star power and ability to draw the crowds), not Mallory, who saunters in with confidence. He is unaffected and appears to treat Jensen as an equal. In the novel, Mallory is aware of his place in the hierarchy and while not be over-awed by *Cpt.* Jensen, his demeanor is quietly respectful and this indicates confidence without a trace of arrogance). Roy Franklin (Anthony Quayle) is a transmuted character (based on Andy Stevens) who, during the course of the film, suffers a fatal injury, succumbs to gangrene and is saved at the end. Unlike Andy, Franklin is not a complex character (Stevens is aware of his impending death, chooses to say behind, to sacrifice himself and protect his team members while they make their escape). As opposed to the novel, there is no “Mallory’s Merry Mountaineers” (MacLean 20) as Roy, a fine mountaineer and a ‘lucky’ man, is to lead the expedition. Mallory remains one of the main players. Considering, the star and brand value of Peck, the viewer is left in no doubt that at some point Mallory will assume leadership. The scene that follows remains true to the novel and the viewer, through the outspoken Australian Squardon Leader Barnsby (Squardon Leader Bill Torrance in the novel), played by Richard Harris, who lead the failed aerial attack on Navarone with tragic results, gets a picture of the impregnable German fortress and stronghold and understands the magnitude and impossibility of the task. The profanities mouthed by him underscore this and his smoldering bitterness about the war in general is evident.

In the novel *Cpt.* Jensen says “You’re going to be the star, whether you like it or not” (MacLean 9). In the film, Mallory upon judging the task that he has been called to perform- scale the cliffs of Navarone which has never been climbed- impossible, states as much. Yet, upon reflection, aware that the lives of 2000 men (the number is 1200 in the novel) on Kheros depends on him trying (“This is out last hope...

Those 2000 men on Kheros are going to die next Wednesday unless somebody climbs that cliff” he is told by Commodore Jensen), agrees to this suicidal plan. Here, it is a *choice* that the hero Mallory chooses to make and for which he is thanked by Franklin, the first indication that the main hero is Mallory. The comment from Jensen, delivered with vehemence, the expectant look on a junior officer’s face, as he overhears this conversation and the cut to the clock (underscoring urgency) indicate how much is riding on Mallory’s agreement and how little time is left. This technique is effectively used to create a sense of intense urgency. It is also through Franklin that the director lets the audience know of Mallory’s reputation as the “human fly”.

Mallory is told that Andrea Stavrous (Anthony Quinn) will be joining him on the job. The Andrea in the film is the antithesis of the one in the novel and this is one of the elements in characterization that makes the film an “autonomous work”. The close ties between Mallory and Andrea (he address Mallory privately as “My Keith”), in the novel, is solid and reassuring. In the film, Andrea has sworn vengeance against Mallory and he is depicted as hard-nosed and coldly efficient. When Franklin is injured, Andrea suggests that they shoot Franklin as there is no hope for him without treatment and it’s not expedient to transport him- an idea immediately discarded by Mallory. The Andrea of the novel believed that “To kill, to take the life of his fellows, that was the supreme evil, for life was a gift that was not his to take away. Not even in fair fight” (MacLean 189), thus breaking away from Quinn’s Andrea. This altercation shows Mallory in a favourable light. Though his reasons appear calculated, he is not cold enough to kill just because it is an easy out.

Commodore Jensen hands him the dossier on the other team members whom he describes as “pirates and cutthroats”. Corporal Miller (David Niven), by and large, escapes unscathed (though he has been given the additional qualification of being a professor of Chemistry) in the cinematic version. Casey Brown is transformed into Butcher Brown, the Butcher of Barcelona, who is an expert with knife, besides being an excellent engineer. There is, however, a new character in the film- Spiros Pappadimos, a “born killer” whose father is the Allies’

chief Resistance contact on Navarone. In the novel, there is no Resistance group because as Monsieur Eugene Vlachos (another character missing from the film, whose family had owned Navarone for generations and who provides the detailed map of the island that the group navigates by) points out “the people of Navarone have neither the skill nor the experience for successful guerrilla operations. They have not had the chance” (MacLean 23).

The fact that the team in the novel works the way a team should, and its members respect and admire each other, is one of its strengths. In the novel, the challenges and difficulties are external; the enemy/crisis is external (symbolised by the Germans). In the film, the danger is two-fold- external and internal. The disharmony, vengeful attitude of Andrea towards Mallory, the disdain and dislike that Miller feels for Mallory (“I just hope that before this job is over I get a chance to use you the way you’ve used him [Franklin]”) place additional strain on an already impossible situation.

At Castelrosso, Captain Briggs in the novel becomes Captain Baker (Allan Cuthbertson) but the scene plays out along the same tune with the spy Nicolai (Tutte Lemkow) being found out. The scene remains unchanged, possibly because it is vital to the story arc. When Franklin demands that Nicolai be arrested, is refused and subsequently threatens Baker, Baker turns to Mallory and asks if he is going to allow Franklin to act in such a manner, thereby directing the viewer to the fact that Baker has pinned Mallory as the natural leader.

The journey by the old, dilapidated caique (to escape suspicion as far as possible) is one of the few instances in the film when the focus is on Brown (Stanley Baker), a minor character, though in the novel he is an important, contributing member of the team. He says about the boat, specifically the engine, “she’s a bit of a monster. But I think I’ve got her worried.” Miller for all his laconic behaviour has a chink in his amour and falls short of MacLean’s Miller when he constantly mouths “[Remember], I can’t swim”. Miller in the novel is someone who has Mallory exclaiming “My God, but he’s tough, that Yank” (MacLean 102).

Maria Pappadimos (Irene Papas) and Anna (Gia Scala), two transmuted characters appear in the place of Louki and Panayis. Maria is identified as Spiro's sister and is there to meet them in the place of her father who has been captured. She talks of Anna (who lies unconscious after being clubbed) and reports that Anna has suffered much at German hands (as had Panayis and the same facts are related as in the novel).

Brown meets his end and Spiro is gunned down, leaving only Miller, Mallory, Andrea, Maria and Franklin (who is in a German hospital) alive. Of the five who set off on the operation, in the novel, with the exception of Stevens, all make it out of Navarone.

Hutcheon notes "The units of the story ... may well change- often radically in the process of adaptation and not only (but most obviously) in terms of their plot ordering. Pacing can be transformed, time compressed or expanded. Shifts in the focalization or point of view of the adapted story may lead to major differences" (11). This may be well observed in the film and it reveals only those portions of the novel that are essential for advancing the story line.

The search by the German boat, attack and sinking of the vessel are all on par with the novel, except for the scene where Brown is shown to slip up and hesitate in killing an enemy soldier (a pointed note by Mallory- an impression the camera points out). In the film they sail into the storm and towards Navarone, while in the novel they make a forced stop- a dangerous one- at an island held by Germans. Here, the reader also gets a better look at and understanding of the "genial, hail-fellow Andrea" (MacLean 95) who transforms himself into a soldier extraordinaire.

The conversation between Mallory and Franklin, held at the wheel, during the storm- a sequence exclusive to the film- is vital on three accounts. First, they discuss the fact that the Germans had earlier questioned them in English and surmise that Baker had let Nicolai go free and thus compromised their plans. Franklin also apologises to Mallory for dragging him into this task. Both allude to the fact that Franklin considers Mallory his equal. The scene also sets Mallory up

as the natural choice as leader in the event Franklin has to step down. Secondly, Miller who is well-known to Franklin, is brought into the scene. After Miller leaves Mallory remarks in response to Franklin's comment "I don't mind him as much as he seems to mind me." This one dialogue is the first indicator that there is a storm brewing within. The third development that this sequence throws up is something that the reader of the novel may not be able to easily digest. The camera cuts to Andrea, who is working furiously on the deck and the camera's POV is that of Mallory's and Franklin's, giving the impression that they are watching him. Mallory confides "He's going to kill me when the war is over" and explains the reasons behind Andrea's determination. He points out it was his "stupid Anglo-Saxon decency", the same decency that pushed him into joining this operation, that has set him at odds with Andrea and remarks "He's from Crete. Those people don't make idle threats". This indicates that he is aware of the danger that Andrea represents but his plans to ask for a transfer does not materialise as he agrees to join this mission. Once again, the viewer is reminded that they have a protagonist who is noble and puts the welfare of others before his own.

"Technical constraints of different media will inevitably highlight different aspects of ... [the] story" (qtd in Hutcheon, 10). The novel describes the trip through Mount Kostos as "The hours ... were hours plucked from the darkest nightmare, endless ..." (MacLean 170) and the chapter subtitled 'Monday Night 0200- 0600' comes to an end with them taking shelter in a cave, worn out, cold and hurting. In the film, this ordeal that taxes them is almost an afterthought and they are shown to wake up in a cave, which the viewer knows is on Mt. Kostos.

Spatial and temporal elements are addressed by superimposition of maps and intertitles. Movement from one location to another, through space, and time, are thus tackled quite easily. This makes the film past-paced (as befits an action-oriented war film) but without the depth of the novel. 39 minutes into the movie (108<sup>th</sup> page of the novel), they have arrived at Navarone. The visuals manage to underscore the difficulty of landing at Navarone in the night storm. By the 45<sup>th</sup> minute, their boat is gone and the climb lies ahead of them. The camera zooms

in on the 6 men who range out next to each other, looking up at the cliff, before all eyes turn to Mallory, the expert mountaineer, who picks up the baton now. This shot is symbolic, as it is an indicator of the change in command, and prophetic. From this point on, it is Mallory who leads the team.

The climb up the south cliff, after all the professing about it being unclimbable is completed in about 3 minutes. There is virtually no drama. The dramatic moment comes when Mallory, in the process of helping Andrea, slips, falls and hangs out over certain death but for his grip on Andrea's hand. The audience is left wondering- Will Andrea send Mallory crashing to certain death? Will he not? The answer comes after a few tension- fraught seconds. Mallory is helped up.

In the novel, Stephens falls partway down the cliff and suffers from multiple fractures. This does not in any way alter the command structure. The others make the choice to transport (carry) him. "We've got to save him, Dusty," Mallory spells out and 'Medicine-Man Miller' steps in to tend to the ill. In the movie, of course, the chain of command alters. Mallory takes charge.

In the sequences that follow, we see the story moving in the same line as the novel, with the one notable difference being the timeline to Franklin's attempted suicide and Resistance members' entry. Where Franklin's attempted suicide occurs before the entry of Maria and Anna in the film (Intertitle Third Day 2000 hours), the reader has been introduced to Louki and Panayis by the time Stevens drags himself off. In fact, the group is arrested almost immediately after this. In the film, they meet up with Maria and Anna and move to Mandrakos (Day 4).

This affects the story arc. In fact, from this point till Mallory and Miller's entry into the cave that houses the guns, except for the escape from the aerial attack, the interrogation and escape sequence, the film develops quite independently of the novel. A German party is shown disturbing the peace and bringing a wedding procession in Mandrakos to a halt as they pass. The group lies waiting in a grove and the viewer sees 1) Brown apologising to Mallory for his slip up 2) that Franklin has been affected with gangrene 3) Andrea, on noting Franklin's bravery

in accepting his situation uncomplainingly, commenting “This Franklin. He’s not a bad fellow.”

In the film, the group is captured after their entering the village. Mallory, Miller, Spiro and Anna are taken at a wedding party. In fact, they surrender without a struggle because they do not want to risk the lives of innocent Greeks. The locals are fully cognizant of the fact that the strangers are wanted by the Germans yet refuse to raise the alarm when they join the party. Moreover, they subtly welcome them.

The arrest and interrogation, in the novel, depicts German efficiency tempered with a vein of humanity. The lieutenant and his subordinates are gentle with the injured Stevens. The lieutenant is also full of admiration for Mallory and bitter about meeting him at a time when they are on opposite sides. The viewer of the film also sees the same nobility of spirit in the film yet not in the same depth. Mallory muses “how easily one could respect, form a friendship with a man like Turzig if it weren’t for this damned, crazy war” (MacLean 265). When he forces the lieutenant into cooperating and aiding their escape, he apologises quietly “I hate to do a thing like this to a man like you” (MacLean 274). The World War II is a thing of the past and effort is made to highlight the fact that most Germans are as noble as the Americans or the British and not all Germans are representative of the Third Reich rulers.

In the novel, when Panayis is exposed, only Miller and Mallory are present. In the film, though, all the players are present (with the exception of Franklin) which adds to the drama quotient and the fact that a woman is a traitor makes it all the more shocking. The viewers who have been led to expect a possible romance between Mallory and Anna are disappointed.

There is the budding romance between Andrea and Maria in the film, a possibility that does not arise in the novel. Maria is upfront and professes “Mr. Stavrous, I like you” and Andrea responds “I like you too,” which has Mallory who is seated between them raising his brows. In fact, in the end, instead of sailing away (as is the case in the novel), Andrea chooses to go back to Navarone with Maria.

The equation between Mallory and Andrea changes completely when Mallory pulls a weak and wounded Andrea into the boat, thus saving his life. In fact, Andrea offers to shake hands with Mallory as they part.

It is also interesting to note that the filmmakers who shot almost solely in Greece make an attempt to flatter the nation and its citizens by writing in parts and events that show them in a favourable light. This is only to be expected in a film that beginnings with the acknowledgement “A Special debt of gratitude to the Royal Hellenic Army, Navy and Airforce, and to the many departments of the Greek government and to the Greek people for their unstinting aid, cooperation, hospitality and friendship throughout those aspects of the production in Greece”. The addition of the Resistance group (there is no such group in the novel) must also be read in this context. The courage and fortitude of Greeks is reinforced. Maria says of her father who has been captured, “He told them nothing. He would die first”. Spiro, her brother, has left his safe life in America to join the war, on the side of the ‘good’. He bravely faces death and is killed in the final conflict. The villagers of Mandrakos welcome and show their support, as has been detailed earlier. They refuse to betray the group and their village is burnt down in punishment. The locals join the fight against the Germans and a Greek monastery opens its doors to them and gives them the opportunity for some much needed rest.

Where Panayis, in no way arouses the sympathy of the reader, the film seeks to justify the Greek Anna’s, betrayal with the statement “It’s easy to be brave when you are free” (highlight the fact that the Americans and the British are free, as opposed to the locals, and such an environment breeds strength of character) and by pointing out that it was the threats and the fear of the Germans that made Anna turn traitor. This is a blanket statement that forces the viewer to consider the circumstances of the time that forced at least some Greeks to betray the Allied troops. Most importantly, it is Maria, a Greek herself, who shoots her treacherous compatriot dead, thereby restoring the balance.

The subtle message about the futility of war is woven into the fabric of the novel. Yet there are instances in the film, when the message is

overplayed (as if the makers doubted the ability of the viewer to grasp the idea) in the form of opinions voiced by Miller and Brown and Mallory's response to the same and this changes the quality of the message.

Hutcheon aptly notes "to tell a story, as in novels ..., is to describe, explain, summarize, expand; the narrator has a point of view and great power to leap through time and space and sometimes venture inside the minds of characters. To show a story, as in movies ... involve a direct aural and visually visual performance experienced in real time (12-13).

The novel takes the reader on a meandering journey, leaves one wondering, while making the reader a part of the journey. The film sets the viewer outside the framework and asks the viewer to watch what is about to unfold. This 'externalizing' works for the film; just as the 'internalizing' works for the book. The novel is a thriller which relies on the build-up of tension- the plot, challenges faced, life-threatening situations and the strong, emotional undercurrents (the strong veins of humanity and nobility that runs in the characters, loyalty, friendship, sacrifice) add depth to the narrative- and the cinematic version in a larger-than-life creation. The latter attempts to take the viewer through a roller-coaster ride fraught with high drama and tension and whose characters are brave, breezy, nonchalant men who can face any danger. The attempt is to impress upon the viewer that the heroes are exceptional men. In the novel, of course, it is not the body language, star power and the charisma of the leading actors or their witty way with words (as is the case in the film) that lend this impression but their reaction to events, their perception/take on war and the skills they bring to the table that justify their presence.

The two forms of *The Guns of Navarone* make an interesting 'read'. The adaptation often develops independently of the source and retains enough novelty that the viewer is confronted with a scope for examination and interpretation as a self-determined work, even while it echoes and cites the novel. For the reader who oscillates from the film to the novel, the layers, depth, measured pace and delivery, appeal and provides an intimate and exceptional read.

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# **Post-9/11 and Politico-cultural *Zeitgeist*: Representation of British Asian Muslim women, Memory and Identity in *Brick Lane* and *Yasmin***

Divya Girish Kumar

This article explores the representations of identity of British Asian Muslim women in film after the September 11 attacks, with particular on two films, *Brick Lane* (2007) and *Yasmin* (2004), to elucidate the theme mentioned above. Representations of Asian Muslim identities in media and popular culture have gained wide public attention since 9/11 that often reiterate Muslims as “enemies within”. Although still sidelined in the schedules, films like ‘*Brick Lane*’ and ‘*Yasmin*’ have presented convincing accounts of how British Muslim identity confront the conceptions of female identity constructed by the inner politics of the religion, complicating the binary ‘us’ v/s ‘them’ constructed within the larger framework of a highly racialised ‘white’ Britain. The article probes the question: In what ways have British Muslim women artists and writers been constructed as representative voices within contemporary British culture?

In post-9/11 era, the concept of ‘homeland’ has become an evocative spatial metaphor, radiating range of meanings, most commonly linked with ‘security’, ‘terrorism’, ‘loyalty’, ‘Otherness’ and the like. The events of 9/11 have been a major turning point in world politics, international relations and even in Cultural and Religious Studies. The attacks brought, mainly, Muslims and Islam under the spotlight and led to the assertion of broad-brushed references to Islam and its followers, as propagated by a large section of the media. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were looked upon by the world as a culmination of Huntington’s thesis of ‘clash of civilizations’. In “Homeland Insecurities”, Amy Kaplan states that although the US has been at war before 9/11, it was with the announcement of George Bush’s ‘War on

Terror' that the term 'homeland' became a signifier of the US (85). The dynamic moment in world politics points towards a major confrontation of cultures, East v/s West, which has been reinterpreted as Islam v/s West, with discussions focusing on Muslims, terrorism, radicalisation, extremism, incompatibility and conflict. The London bombings of 7 July 2005 (7/7) raised similar concerns in Britain. But the violent attack, when it came to the UK, was executed not by hardened al-Qaeda operatives but by young British Muslims (Baxter, 1). The repercussions are reflected in the cultural sphere, especially in arts, literature and film. But such representations and discourses are often criticized for its propagation of certain misconceptions on Islam, especially in post-9/11 era. The West views Islam as monolithic and increasingly associated with 'terrorism', circulating synchronous definitions of identity that refuse to focus on the significant role of memory in shaping identity. However, there are a limited number of representations that aim at a 'counter-telling' to deconstruct the atrophied versions of expostulation in which British Muslim identities, deracinated and uprooted, are designated as likely 'enemies within the State'.

This article looks at two British films on South Asian Muslims in Britain set in the 9/11 period: *Yasmin* (2004) and *Brick Lane* (2005). As 9/11 is identified exclusively as a 'male-operated' affair, majority of film and literary representations focused on inscribing their male protagonists as variants of the stock image of the young, fiery Islamic fundamentalists who encourage *jihad* to fight against Western hegemonic tendencies. It is also pertinent to look at gendered spaces of femininity that construct meaning to post-9/11 British Asian Muslim experiences. It is highly important to examine how the boundaries of 'home' are actually shifted to reconfigure new 'imaginative homes' in a politically tumultuous situation while inhabiting multiple interstices in the diaspora. The films under study turn their gaze from the usual themes of diasporic ambivalence and cultural confusion to a more concrete display of the problems enveloping diasporic life that straddles between implosions of the inner psychological domain of memories *vis a vis* the violent political outbursts in a number of imagined geographies, both within and outside their community frames.

According to Stuart Hall, “identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past”(Hall 225).The close relationship between ‘memory’ and ‘identity’ emerge from their interdependence in unveiling revelations that emanate from their chronological aberrations or misplacement of actions and events (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003).Identities are never fixed in an essentialised past that they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power (Hall 1990). Thus, identities are ‘fluid’ which are subjected to the shifts and changes in the physical, political and cultural make-up of any community.British Muslim identities are highly diverse, multi-faceted suggesting differences at regional, traditional and social levels. The 2001 census in the UK states that there are indeed differences based on region, language, and politics back home. While Bangladeshi Muslims in the UK migrated largely from Sylhet region, British Pakistanis exhibited heterogeneity in linguistic and traditional terms, although *Azad Kashmir* proved a major identity marker even in the Pakistani diaspora (Ballard 2004). Apart from these distinctions, Muslims who migrated to Britain via East Africa (following the ethnic cleansing of Idi Amin) were connected to the diasporic thread through a different migratory history which has played a role in shaping a distinct British Muslim identity. There were also differences in the migration patterns; Pakistani and Bangladeshi women joined their men in the UK at a later stage unlike the East African Indian Muslims. Thus, the process of ‘belonging’ and integration becomes contentious that always involves reciprocity, as Bhiku Parekh suggests, ‘one cannot belong...unless the community also accepts one as its valued member’ (449).

The voicing of British Muslim women hints at re-writing the traditional, ethnic views of Islam as a reply to the narratives of ‘neo Orientalism’ at play. In films like *East is East* (1999), *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), the tropes of homeland/ hostland, generational conflicts and identity are featured impressively. But, 9/11 zooms in on heavily in *Brick Lane* (dir. Sarah Gavron, 2007) and *Yasmin* (dir. Kenneth Glenaan, 2004), highlighting British Muslim women’s experiences in a highly charged and hostile political and social environment. *Brick Lane* (2007) is based on Monica Ali’s controversial

novel, *Brick Lane* (2003), that has attracted wide public attention and criticism. Both the films, *Brick Lane* (2007) and *Yasmin* (2004), depart from the usual diasporic themes of nostalgia and frustration. Instead, they focus on British Muslim women eclipsed in the social and cultural domains and the marginalized status of British Muslims post-9/11.

In *Brick Lane*, the protagonist Nazneen's (Tannishtha Chatterjee) childhood memories in Bangladesh is pictured through lush metaphoric landscapes that contrast heavily with the lustreless life in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Young Nazneen and her sister lead a joyful life, running barefoot through paddy fields and dreaming about their 'Prince Charming', in their tiny village in Bangladesh. But their father, as an option to reduce the number of mouths to feed, compels Nazneen to marry the middle-aged, pot-bellied Chanu (Satish Kaushik), a Bangladeshi immigrant in London. Nazneen accompanies Chanu to their tiny flat, filled with Chanu's books, in a housing project called Tower Hamlet on Brick Lane. Their daughters Shahana, 14, and Bibi, 10, are brown-skinned girls with East-End accents, much more acculturated to English ways of life. Nazneen suppresses her loneliness in grey-toned London and keeps her nostalgia for her life in Bangladesh to herself, except when she writes to her sister. As Nazneen acquires confidence through her financial and sexual independence, she gradually constructs a strong sense of belongingness in London, making her "nostalgia and memories [to] illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 147). Nazneen utters: "You can spread your soul over a paddyfield. You can feel the earth beneath your toes and know that this is the place, the place that it begins and ends. But what can you tell to a pile of bricks?" (12)

As the film proceeds, Nazneen's memory flashbacks become sparser and ephemeral as hankering after a lost 'golden' past disintegrates her attempts to condition her mind with the new opportunities in the new land. The movie has an impressive ending which conveys deeper semantic layers of 'belongingness'. Nazneen and her daughters are found lying in the snow in the courtyard of their council flat – 'pile of bricks'. All the three are found experiencing endless happiness, hope and freedom where their search for a 'place' has ended. Thus, *Brick*

*Lane* constructs Nazneen's identity in binary terms- the conversion of a Bangladeshi village lass to 'a competent urban British Muslim woman in London metropolis. The interweaving of 'imaginary homeland' memories and the struggles in a hostile white land fabricate the mental landscape to fashion a hybrid identity. Also, Nazneen's Muslim subjectivity wakes up only when she is forced to confront with a non-Muslim British mainstream, unlike her happy childhood in Bangladesh. Although she refuses to send her daughters to the local *madrassa*, offers prayers sporadically and maintains an illicit affair with the British Bangladeshi lad named Karim, as against Islamic principles, Nazneen feels the heat of religious fervor only in the wake of 9/11. *Brick Lane*, thus, engages explicitly with 9/11 and the impression it has created on Muslim sensibilities. Chanu expresses himself as a secular Muslim who believes in the values of humanity that Islam propagates. At a community meeting of the Bengal Tigers post -9/11, he intervenes and touches his heart to say, "My Islam is in here and it's the only thing worth defending." While Chanu reminds the gathering of the attacks of West Pakistan on East Pakistan in 1971, breaking the consensus of a 'global *ummah*', Karim (Nazneen's lover who is the organizer of the meeting) resists the contention by explaining *jihadist* views. Nazneen witnesses the violent reactions of far-right extremists called *Lion Hearts*, especially on Muslim women in her near neighbourhood. The female protest wing, the *Bethnal Islamic Girl's Group*, taking part in the demonstration of *Bengal Tigers*, symbolizes the emergence of new subsets of extremist Islamism. The film narrates the production of new gendered spaces of ethnicity; a redefinition of their ethnic make-up against the established conventional religious structures.

With its focus on female British Muslim identity, Kenneth Glenaan's *Yasmin* (2004) also narrates the influences of state repression and violence in Britain on British Muslims in post-9/11 era. Set in the northern town of England, *Yasmin* (2004) articulates the complex dynamics of social, political, sexual and racial confusions in Britain in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. The film begins with the Muslim *Adhaan* (call to prayer) and moves on to the life of Yasmin (Archie Punjabi), the protagonist of the film. Yasmin leads a dual life: a secret Western style in her work place and traditional Pakistani appearance in front

of her religious father. Unlike the British-Asian comedies like *Anita and Me* or *Bhaji on the Beach*, or *East is East*, *Yasmin* evokes a chillingly realistic vision of a Northern town inhabited by the Asian Muslim community, with its snow-covered frosty hills strewn with the debris of life. Yasmin is caught between the strict rules and regulations of her ethnic community and a liberal Western society. At home, she dresses in her traditional salwar kamiz and 'hijab'. When away from the vicinity of her house, Yasmin drives into the hills to transform herself anglicized, wriggling into jeans, wearing sunglasses, divesting herself off her visible signifiers of 'South Asianness' as she continues on her way to work as a care taker. Every evening she cooks food for her father and brother and takes it to their house next door. Her husband, Faisal, is a recent immigrant who has come from Pakistan using Yasmin as a passport to enter the UK. Yasmin was forced into marriage and she always considered her husband as a "banana boat". She finds happiness and a certain kind of freedom in her fleeing into her job and in her association with her White colleague, John. When 9/11 happens, mostly a tele-visual event in Britain at the start (both *Brick Lane* and *Yasmin* picture the event in similar ways), Yasmin's Islamic identity is blown into a freefall, relegated by her female White colleagues. They identify herself as a terrorist and as an accomplice of Osama Bin Laden. A disheartening indictment of British institutional racism, policing, paranoia and violence get unveiled in subsequent scenes. The film impressively juxtaposes the distressing effects of British racism and Islamic extremism that disrupts the multicultural spirit, making the notion of 'Britishness' even more problematic. When one reads *Yasmin* (2004) as an intertext, it becomes clear that the intertextuality is part of what has moulded the post-modernist hybrid cinema of British film since early 1990s, which proves important for the presentation of female subjectivity in *Yasmin*. The shifting identities of younger generation British Asian Muslims are portrayed as detached from their elders who are equally bemused by the surge of 'Islamophobia' and Islamist extremism. Yasmin's father, who is a moderate Muslim, nurtures his dream to build a 'fine house' in Pakistan. He tries to uncrumple the image of the Union Jack during a "Stop and Search" raid on his home and utters, "they made a mistake, may be they have their own reason". Yasmin's masquerade and her brother Nazir's drug trade and radical

religious stance point towards a confused generation of Asian Muslims who remain suspended in a 'Trisanku'.

Both *Brick Lane* and *Yasmin* are hybrid texts that stand out in addressing the impact of 9/11 on British Asian Muslims, especially women. The films capture the British mainstream societal tendency to brand Muslims as "enemies within". The tautness between nostalgically framed 'homes' and hyphenated identities feature throughout the films, along with representing the heterogeneity of 'South Asianness'. *Brick Lane* and *Yasmin* succeed in reinstating the humane values and diversity of Islam that have been eclipsed largely by Western media and cultural (mis)representations. The films, being directed by British citizens, address the gaps in comprehending the complexities of British Muslim identity formation and challenge the biased representations of 'us v/s them' polarity.

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## **Eldhose A.Y interviews Kathryn Blume, playwright, performer, and environmental activist**

**Eldhose A.Y. (EAY):** What makes you think that a worldwide movement like “The Lysistrata Project” should to be launched?

**Kathryn Blume (KB):** It didn’t start out as a worldwide movement. It started out as one small reading of Aristophanes’ anti-war Greek play *Lysistrata* in New York which quickly grew into a few more readings around the world, and then surprised us by getting as large as it did.

**EAY:** What do you feel when Bush government goes ahead with Iraq invasion even after all sorts of protests?

**KB:** Bush was famously quoted after a day of worldwide protests that he wasn’t interested in “listening to focus groups.” They invaded Iraq not because of 9/11 and not because of WMDs [Weapon of Mass Destruction] which didn’t exist. They invaded Iraq because they wanted to invade Iraq. They didn’t care a whit about what the public - or anyone else thought, and that was pretty clear. In fact, the war was opposed by Marine General Anthony Zinni, forty-one Nobel Laureates in science and economics, former chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler, conservative columnist Paul Craig Roberts, and a host of major Republican donors who took out a full page ad in the Wall Street Journal asking Bush to please not invade Iraq. I was angry and depressed, but I wasn’t surprised.

**EAY:** What provoked you to turn yourself from the status of an artist to an activist?

**KB:** I’ve never really thought of myself as an activist. I’ve thought of myself as a citizen of the world, with a responsibility to address the problems that we’re facing. Having chosen the arts as my profession, I want to use my creativity to create relevant, meaningful work which helps make a difference.

**EAY:** Technically how do you define an activist?

**KB:** I suppose that would be someone who sees a problem or an injustice and tries to solve it.

Also, while I was vehemently opposed to the war on Iraq and am certainly opposed to climate change now, neither of those things have, as yet, adversely affected my life in any way.

I didn't have to protest the war. I could have gone on just the way I was, and the war wouldn't have made much difference to the course of my life. The war was never going to impact me directly. The fact that I opposed the war - both with *Lysistrata Project* and *The Accidental Activist* - actually served to improve my life in countless ways. It is the way in which I saw the problems around and I tried to solve them.

**EAY:** Your plays *The Accidental Activist* and *The Boycott* show activism through literature/theatre. Activism through literature is indirect in its application. What make you think about the importance of activism through literature?

**KB:** Playwright Arthur Miller famously said, "I think the job of the artist is to remind people of what they have chosen to forget." And all powerful social movements have works of art very directly associated with them. For example, in the United States, the horribly abusive meatpacking industry in Chicago was finally addressed and transformed thanks to public response to a novel called *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. Theatrical performances have caused riots all throughout the history of theater.

So, I don't think activism through theater or literature is at all indirect. Part of the way you create a movement is by starting to change the way people think and see the world. That's a huge part of what the arts can do. For example, I think the current wave of acceptance of homosexuality in the US right now has as much to do with TV shows like *Will and Grace* and *Glee* as it does with anti-discriminatory policies.

**EAY:** Most of your works and the *Lysistrata* project appear as an adaptation of Aristophanes' ancient anti-war Greek play *Lysistrata*. How

far do you think the Aristophanes' idea of sex denial is effective in its aim to protest against social issues?

**KB:** Actually, sex strikes happen in the real world all the time: to protest a nationwide gold mining project in Turkey, to end tribal violence in the Sudan, to end violence between drug lords in Colombia, to get US Congressmen to change their vote, to end fighting in Mindanao, to prevent fireworks at Christmas in Italy, to protest the restriction of birth control in Poland, to protest discriminatory wages in Iceland... The list goes on. And the thing is, it always works. Always.

**EAY:** Do you ever face any kind of threatening or ill treatments from US government as response to your writings?

**KB:** None whatsoever.

**EAY:** As an environmental speaker how are you addressing US policies of nuclear weapons and other environmental degrading activities?

**KB:** I haven't focused much on nuclear proliferation. I spend most of my time talking about climate change. But ultimately - and I do talk about this - it comes down to what kind of world we want to live in, and what we're willing to do to make that happen.

As far as climate change is concerned, while everyone on this planet is affected by the dangers inherent in the rapid rise of global CO<sub>2</sub> and the degradation of our planetary ecosystems, I'm far less of a victim than the residents of Tuvalu or coastal Bangladesh or the far reaches of the Arctic. I'm not a traditional Bolivian or African farmer whose inherited agricultural practices no longer work as weather patterns change.

I'm far less a victim than the countless species that are having great difficulty adapting to rapidly changing ecosystems or going extinct all together. In fact, as an American, I'm actually more of a perpetrator than a victim - although that's an extreme way of looking at the situation. We're all caught in unsustainable systems into which we were born (or have developed around us) and are very challenging to change.

**EAY:** *The Accidental Activist* sympathizes with extremist groups who fight against American despotism. Do you think we should listen to the voice of so called ‘terrorists’?

**KB:** I don’t support terrorism in any sense. But I will say that I don’t believe anyone starts out in life saying, “When I grow up, I want to be a terrorist and cause mayhem and destruction wherever I go.” I think people reach points of extreme violence for a reason. Not that I condone the violence, but I think it’s worth uncovering their history and perspective to see what led them to this point.

**EAY:** You used a solo-performance format in *The Accidental Activist* and *The Boycott*. In which you used your body itself for creating a dissent towards despotism. How you manipulated and conditioned your body in this performance to create a dissent? Was all the gestures and body movements pre-planned?

**KB:** No. They weren’t. I had general blocking to which I adhered, and over time, there was a great deal of movement which started spontaneously and then evolved into a consistent pattern. But it’s not like, say, a traditional dance form where everything from where you look to what you do with your feet and fingers is pre-planned. My theatre is more or less a testimonial theatre that uses monologues and body for creating meaning in the stage. Dissent sprouts even from the beginning, like when you start thinking about the topic. Then it passes to writing, directing, performing and finally to the audience psyche. See, in performance, body is the greatest tool for an artist. I moved in the stage with ease. I avoided most of the props. This help to catch the audience maximum attention to me; to my monologues; to my actions; and to my dissent.

**EAY:** “I will work to try to end the violence as quickly as possible.” This is one of the most touching dialogues from *The Accidental Activist*. This is an emotionally contented dialogue, packed with hope and faith which you send to people in Middle East countries? What makes you think about the possibilities of adding mails, letters and real people’s conversations in to a play text?

**KB:** My personal experience is that audience members found this inspiring. If you're telling a true story, it's always fun to hear about what actually happened. From a playwriting perspective, while it's lovely to include that kind of material, it's always important that it serve to forward the action of the story.

**EAY:** I am coming to *The Boycott* now. The Lysistrata Project as well as *The Accidental Activist* were inspired by a political issue immediately after 9/11 World Trade centre attack. But your recent work *The Boycott* marked a shift of focus from political to sociological and environmental issues. What caused it?

**KB:** As far as I'm concerned, these are all social, political, and environmental issues. They're all intimately connected.

My undergraduate degree is in environmental studies and theater, and I've always been interested in these issues. If you remember in *The Accidental Activist*, I was working on a Lysistrata-inspired screenplay. That screenplay was an attempt at an eco-Lysistrata story. As the tour of *Activist* was wrapping up and I started thinking about what I might like to do next, climate change was starting to surface as an issue and I thought about getting back to that screenplay.

However, solo performance seemed a better vehicle for me - as I mention in the text of *Boycott*. So I got a grant from a local arts organization to develop the story and produced it in a workshop performance at a Burlington, Vermont theater. A woman who is a major donor on climate-related programs saw the show and contacted me about helping develop the piece and brings it to a national audience. 10 months later, I was opening for a 6-week off-Broadway run in New York.

**EAY:** You have mentioned in the official web site of the play *The Boycott* that "And I'm in a chronic, weepy panic over the fact that serious climate change is happening now and while the whole point of this piece is to help save the world, I'm afraid it's already too late." Do you think that enough possibility still exists in changing people's attitude towards environmental degradation and climatic changes?

**KB:** We can absolutely change peoples' attitudes. They're changing all the time. The reality, though, that climate change is accelerating rapidly. We're not going to stop it. So how do we activate people to undertake a heroic level of systems change fast enough to a) slow things down; b) adapt to the changes we cannot avoid; and c) build social, economic, energy, and agricultural systems which are resilient enough not to break down completely in the face of massive climate-related disruption.

**EAY:** I felt that Blume's plays created a separate public sphere for discussing certain immediate socio-political issues of the times. What are your up coming efforts to continue these discourses?

**KB:** Climate change is my biggest concern right now, and I'm very interested in activating as broad a spectrum of the population quickly, and with as much hope and empowerment as possible. So, I've helped create and launch a community sustainability game called "Vermontivate!"

Over the course of a month, players take on a wide range of sustainable living challenges, earning points for their town or school team. At the end of the game, the winning town gets an ice cream party from Ben&Jerry's and the winning school gets a life-sized teddy bear from Vermont Teddy bear.

We're entering our third year of running the game, and have started to gain broad community support for our fun, hopeful, and relevant approach to tackling climate-related issues.

Our long-term goal is to make the game available on a nationwide level.

# **Metamorphosis of the Self: Nostalgia and Displacement in Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma***

Dhanya Johnson

Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* is the novel in which she has made a conscious effort to embrace social reality. The novel lends itself to a postcolonial reading as it tries to destabilize hegemonies based on caste, gender and class. It is through violence that the reader is given a glimpse into hierarchies in rural societies. Fadia offers in her writing a stereotype of Arabs - savage, brutal, poor etc. The paper justifies Fadia's successful delineation of postcolonial traits in these social and political events mentioned in the novel. It can be concluded that laws are created or manipulated by the ruling classes for the protection of their economic and political interests. As their tragic tales unfold, one gets the impression that Fadia's text is attempting to articulate the silences of centuries of exploitation, domination and oppression of women.

By the rivers of Babylon— there we sat down  
and there we wept when we remembered Zion.

On the willows there we hung up our harps.

For there our captors asked us for songs,  
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!

Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,

if I do not remember you,

if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy. (Psalm 137:1-6)

King David wrote these verses expressing the feelings of the lovesick Israelites making their exit from the life of a beloved; their homeland.

Embodying the displaced subject of post modernity Fadia Faqir, a major writer from Jordan in the wide field of Muslim writings raise important questions about belonging, identity, ethnicity, migrancy, diaspora, nation and multiculturalism in her works. The vitality of her writing spring from posing the stark contrast in the histories, cultures, languages and politics of the two countries that Mistry inhabits.

The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse. Unceasingly certain communities are bombarded with Pseudo- realities manufactured as a consequence of this power structure in the play. The Age of Reason gave way to the Age of Structure where the drive for power has become the principal indicator of social approval and has turned to be the measure of social merit. In the post 9/11 era, the notion of a 'Muslim' stigma becomes increasingly significant in literature. Muslims as characters, and to an even greater extent as writers, did not appear much in literature. They were often confined to a lower status, such as Edward Said's cultural 'other' or Gayathry Spivak's 'subaltern'. 9/11 was a provocation for Muslim narratives.

Fadia Faqir explores sex and gender and shows how a woman in the diaspora is subjected to oppression and patriarchy in her host and home societies. Fadia addresses the debate between traditionalism and westernism in Post-colonial Arab discourses, in order to create an alternative position between the two cultures. Faqir commented on the difficult position in which Arab women find themselves victims of both native and colonial patriarchy:

Holding a mirror to Arab and British societies and thereby equally critical of them, Fadia Faqir in her *'My Name is Salma'* brings forth the affluent colonial space that remained within her from childhood as well as the preconceived ideas about the Arab world and Arab women. It can be viewed as a novel of daily life exploring the constraints of human condition, migration and racism. This socio-political novel picturises tragic figures where even the English landlady Elizabeth who mistreats Salma had to suffer, though we tend to forgive her excesses on the revelation of what she had lived through and survived. Thus the work aims to humanize not only the Arabs, but the English, the Americans and the Indians.

Depicting the immigrant experience in Britain, the novel presents Salma who is torn between her past, in the idyllic rural village and her present in England between the Arab and English cultures. It reflects Salma's conflict who is linguistically and culturally unprepared to face the West. Thus displacement becomes a dominant theme in the novel.

*My Name is Salma* focuses on the migrant experience rather than commenting on the gendering of nationalism, Faqir narrates from the perspective of an uneducated Arab Shepherdess, Salma who flees her village of Hima because of her unmarried pregnancy. She feels culturally dispossessed in the middle of the alien world far removed from her Bedovin village. She altogether had to change herself to an English rose, a white confident person who uses elegant English accent.

We also get to know a feisty young Pakistani girl, Parvin who ran away breaking the bondage of her unsuccessful arranged married life. Salma identifies herself with this Pakistani girl in some respect and makes friendship with her. Both of them feel that they have few restrictions in western society as compared to the strict morality of their rural village. This brings to the surface the position of women, especially Muslim women in this technologically advanced modern world. Both of them are drawn to their idyllic and cruel past in the old country and are trying to grapple with an alien, but liberal society in the new country thereby negotiating a new path. Thus they emerge with a new composite identity.

The transformation of Salma's life in England from an uneducated lower class Arab refugee to a woman earning a modest income and living independently in rental accommodation is partly due to her relationship with a second-generation South Asian woman named Parvin. She attempts to teach Salma how to embrace and use her rights as a British citizen, and is the first to rush to her defense whenever they encounter racism. This relationship embodies female empowerment. They mutually support one another, enabling their integration into society. Parvin also teaches her the need to assimilate: 'I must first ask you about this scarf you keep wearing. [. . .] It will be much harder to get a job while you insist on wearing it. My friend back home, Ash, was sacked because of his turban although they said that he did not meet his targets'

(108). Parvin is an assimilated British Muslim, having rejected an arranged marriage and the head scarf. However, Faqir conveys Parvin's position as problematic: she is on the run and outcast from her conservative Asian family in order to be assimilated as a British female subject. Furthermore, when Salma attempts to heed her advice, Faqir portrays Salma in an intense state of distress, torn with guilt.

Salma continually struggles to let go of her cultural heritage and it serves as a constant reminder of her failure to fit in. She tortures herself with how she believes other Bedouin Arabs would perceive her behaviour and this acts as a repeated theme throughout the novel that hinders her development. For example, she recounts how, when she removed her veil, it felt as if my head was covered with raw sores

I had taken off the bandages. I felt as dirty as a whore, with no name or family, a sinner who would never see paradise and drink from its rivers of milk and honey. When a man walked by and looked at my hair my scalp twitched. I sat down on the pavement, held my head and cried and cried for hours. (114)

Faqir highlights how Arab women are conditioned and socialised to believe that it is dirty to expose their hair, which ties in with the idea of a female body being the subject of male honour. The symbolism of the shedding of the veil is not perceived as a joyous exercise in being free as a Western reader might perceive it; instead, it is synonymous with the realisation that she is no longer a part of her non-Western community and therefore she has lost a part of her identity. The Algerian poet Malek Alloula's response to the French colonial attempts to gain control of Algerian women is useful when reading Salma's decision to stop wearing the veil. He explains the psychological and political symbolism of women's bodies:

Converting the woman, winning her over to the foreign values, wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of destructing Algerian culture [. . .] Every veil that fell . . . was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer.

When Faqir's protagonist Salma is crying inconsolably, having been unveiled, she is not predominantly concerned with her own personal honour but with the burden of her nation. Her body has become an 'ideological battleground' that weighs heavy with symbolic meaning. (53) Salma accepts societal perceptions of her responsibility for this violation of her body, which creates a secondary level of shame associated with the action of veil removal.

Faqir's decision for Salma to stop wearing the veil represents a rejection of Salma's duty to her 'nation', and a step towards 'individuation', asserting an identity separate to that of her cultural heritage. This choice is parallel to Faqir's decision to rebel against Arabic, masculinist restrictions by adopting a new Anglo-Arabised language.

Salma experiences a dual alienation: she remains anonymous in Britain as an outcast immigrant and her identity comes to be forged around her roles as a wife to John and mother to Imran. This does give her a sense of security, but she never feels settled or at home in Britain. She refuses to accept this marital/maternal status, and her narrative is littered with references to her past, and to the desire to escape and return to her village in Hima. However, she has been alienated from the Arab world and forced to leave; because this was imposed upon her and she tries instinctively to regain what she has lost. Therefore, her alienation as a contemporary Arab is 'less a matter of the alienation of the individual from society, than of the alienation of society from the individual'. Salma commits an act that results in her being cast out from her home and family but Faqir does not isolate Salma as a victim of just Bedouin society. This is particularly the case concerning the theme of imprisonment. Salma is incarcerated in a prison in the Levant for protection, and she also remains in a port detention centre in Britain: 'There was a huge difference between the port prison and the prison room I had left behind' (130). Furthermore, Salma is not the only victim in the novel; Elizabeth, Salma's landlady is not allowed to marry Hita, the Indian man with whom she is in love. Faqir presents women from two different cultures who are confined and oppressed by power structures of gender, history, geography, and cultural idioms.

Faqir conveys the problems in British society in relation to its treatment of immigrants, whilst also conveying the problems of Bedouin society in which Salma is victim to an androcentric patriarchy which places great value on a family honour maintained through sexual purity. In the Bedouin village men are at the centre, dictating the world from a normative male perspective. This results in 'annihilating women's sense of self-hood. Women are defined as "other", not "center" and as "object", not "subject". As a teenage shepherdess peasant girl, she is characterised as at one with nature, emphasized by floral imagery to metaphorically represent her virginity: 'in darkness or at dawn keep your petals tight shut and legs closed! But like a reckless flower opening up to the sun I received Hamdan' (33). The descriptions of Salma's illicit meetings with Hamdan are portrayed as though he is stalking her like prey: 'I screamed with excitement knowing that the brown eyes of Hamdan were watching me, his ears tuned to my cries' (24). This decision for Salma to actively receive him and relish in her sexuality subverts the image of a sexually docile Arab woman.

Faqir exaggerates the paradox of their relationship: 'he ran his fingers through my hair, tightened his fist and walked away to come back later and claim what was his already, releasing me and imprisoning me for the rest of my life' (23). This emphasizes the conflicting relationship Salma has with her body: although she chooses Hamdan, she naively believes that '[he] would propose, I thought, but he left me in the valley and took to the mountains' (276). Instead, he perceives her as a disposable possession, particularly now that her value has decreased with the loss of her virginity: 'you are mine, my slave girl' (33). Faqir's choice of the word 'slave' lends itself to Hegel's 'master-slave dialectic', the practice of slavery and slave-taking among nomadic and sedentary communities of Mediterranean Africa, and its easy translation into gender relationships.

If Faqir had allowed Salma to stay in England, we might have read this as a supposed triumph of assimilation; but whilst Salma succeeds in climbing up the proverbial ladder in her host society, she also remains a slave to her past forever running from the 'masked man'(29). Faqir might also have been charged with relying on oriental tropes, as Britain would be construed as a saviour from the brutal violence of the 'East'.

Instead, Salma's return is emblematic of a rejection and abandonment of her privileged position within her host society in favour of engaging in her struggle for home. In this way, Faqir creates a discourse for women marginalised in both home and host societies, and she constructs a diasporic modernity which is flawed but authentic. Salma achieves liberation from patriarchy and male-enforced passivity when she returns to Hima irrespective of her death, because this decision marks a refusal to allow another to dictate her life, whether in British or Bedouin society. Salma is willing to risk her life in an effort to obtain freedom on her terms for herself and her daughter. In this way, her return to Hima is symbolic of self-sacrifice because she continually refuses to conform or/and be oppressed.

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# **The Packaged Identity: Implications of Internet Applications and Identity Formation among Contemporary Youth**

Duna Liss Tom

The impetus for this paper is provided by two personal events separated in time by a period of one year. The first took place on 6 January 2013, after my lunch I just took my mobile phone and signed into my Facebook account. While browsing through the newsfeed, my eyes got struck on a particular status update by one of my friends. The news was about the demise of one of my classmates in a bike accident that morning. With a panic stricken mind, I rang my friends and teachers and confirmed the news. I soon realized that the Facebook account is not a story but reality. It is starkly ironical that the friend who died in the accident lived just 2 km away from my home. It is only after knowing the incident from the Facebook I checked it in the news paper too.

The second incident was a conversation with my friend. During a casual conversation, one of my friends enquired whether I have a WhatsApp account. To my negative answer to her query, she replied “you are not a part of the contemporary world, you have not yet come the doorstep of modern digital era”. These two particular instances serve to underscore not only the current patterns of living among the contemporary digital youth, but also the effect and implications of an “app milieu” on the present youth.

We are living in the most modern world where the “Mobile phone frenzy” is “hitting” the humanity in a persuasive manner. Towards the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, the developments in the field of mobile telephony began to improve tremendously. Although it is the practical nature of the mobile phone which caused its popularity among the youth, the fact that the mobile device represents the *Zeitgeist* is indisputable. George Myerson observes: “Mobiles are practical;

beyond the practicality, the mobile is the object which most closely embodies the spirit of the changing environment”(3). While conversation was the prime aim of the mobile telephony, later, by adopting itself to the changing environments, mobile phone developed its functions and adaptability. Instead of the old style conversation with its focus on person to person communication and presence, now we have the multiplication of talk. Myerson says that the “Old slow-moving talk is being rapidly pushed aside by its faster cousin communication”(9).

With the tremendous progress in technology, the present age witness the multiplication of the functions of mobile phone. Usually mobile phone is considered as an object and a technology which facilitates communication in a rapid and incisive way. But now the mobile has become a part of the communication discourse which transcends the function and application of this pervasive gadget. From its technological portion, the mobile phone has become a cultural product which extended its function culturally.

Myerson observes this magical change as follows:

Symbol of the new global economy one minute, the very next minute the mobile is an emblem of the new revolution. It seems as if this magic thing can release the hidden power latent in the ordinary process of communication. By the magic of the mobile, a few truck drivers and farmers are transformed into a ‘petrol blockade’ of Britain to rival the Second World War. ..The destiny of the mobile is to take us beyond the world of talk into some other world where communication means something far richer and also far quicker (9).

Thus we have arrived at a time where the phone has become even a way of looking at everyday life. The phone has become part of an idea of the family, of intimacy, emergency and work. The traditional concept of ‘talk’ itself is being remade and even overtaken in the project of the mobile phone as it enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The developments in the mobile phone technology even alienated human beings away from it. We may assume that we know what a phone is, what it does and what it is for. But the developments are so fast and show that you don’t

yet even understand your phone. The functions associated with mobile telephony has thus transformed into much revised equipment. The new meanings and associations the mobile phones obtained in progression with time pushed away its normally associated functions such as contact, talk, and mobility.

The changed functions of mobile telephony for Rich Ling are as follows:

Mobile telephony originally gained a foothold as a voice based communication system. However, teens' adoption of text messaging has changed the nature of mobile communication. It has opened a new way of communicating and changed the way we orient ourselves to group coordination. Even as I write these lines, the mobile telephone is being transformed. It is becoming an anywhere/ anytime Internet terminal, complete with the ability to send and receive music. Cameras are being added to terminals, allowing us to take, send, and receive pictures; in addition, "push-to-talk" features are being adopted. Location transmission services, where one can locate the physical position of friends and colleagues via the use of mobile telephones, promises to allow the same type of radical shift in the way we organize our daily activities. Thus, mobile telephony is moving away from its traditional base into new, uncharted waters (22).

The mobile telephone shifts ideas about where and when we can travel, how we organize our daily life, what constitutes public talk, and how we keep track of our social world. In addition, our use, or refusal to use, says something about us as individuals. Like all groups, teens use the mobile telephone to coordinate, and it is a way to provide a sense of security. Its use as a type of lifeline and its use in the coordination of everyday life are nothing if not functional and instrumental. Beyond the functional use of the mobile telephone, it has led to a different understanding of interaction and networking within the teen peer group. While many of the interests and activities are the same, the way in which they are organized is different. It allows for anytime-anywhere-for-whatever-reason type of access to other members of the peer group. This means that the social network is more tightly bound together and

that it is dynamic in its organization and location. Beyond this, the mobile telephone is also seen as a type of fashion accessory.

Mobile telephony has become a part of adolescents' everyday life and is used for the functional coordination of family and peer interaction; it is used by parents to allay their fear that their child is in trouble and out of reach; it is used to tie the peer group together; it has become a new point of orientation in the evaluation of status and fashion astuteness; it has allowed new forms of social intercourse and has become an element—and indeed a point of contention—in the interaction between child and parent; and it is a midwife to the eventual emancipation of the children. In sum, it has become a part of teen life and the emancipation process.

Use of the telephone, not just the mobile telephone, implies physical access, the mastery of certain motor skills, psychological development, and linguistic competence with which to handle the particular situations presented by a telephone conversation. It is through understanding of the salience of these issues that we can understand the place of mobile telephony in teens' lives.

One of the main tasks of adolescence is to progressively learn how to function outside the sphere of the family. Adolescents are asked to master a set of skills upon which they will rely in later life. These skills include, among other things, the mastery of their personal economy; interaction with various institutions and bureaucracies; dealings with friends, acquaintances, and even those with whom they are less disposed to be on friendly terms; the role of sex and sexuality; securing work and the expectations within the working world; and a sense of personal style and integrity. Beyond simply learning the formal expectations in these various realms, the adolescent must also learn the degree to which the formal rules need to be observed, the degree to which they can be flouted, and how to deal with the gray zones.

The breadth of “texting” includes more than the simple transmission of text-based material from one mobile telephone to another. Increasingly, “text” messages are including photographs, sound files, and other attachments. In addition, text messages are being

adapted into various forms of gaming and TV voting, and they are starting to move across platforms. Both I-mode and enhanced GSM telephones can send messages to Internet addresses, and vice versa. We can also engage in various types of “chat” and instant messaging sessions from mobile telephone terminals, albeit at a lower transmission rate.

Text messages are asynchronous; that is, the sender does not need to engage the complete attention of the receiver in order to communicate. In addition, the sender can compose, edit, and send a message. The receiver can pay attention to it as time allows. This dimension of texting has also sparked a type of quasi-mediated form for developing romantic relationships. In this process, initial contact is made face to face, for example, as in a party or other social gathering. As a part of the contact, you exchange mobile telephone numbers. In the days that follow, you send a text message to the other, reopening the contact and further developing the potential relationship. The contact usually takes the form of a noncommittal question, since this implies a response. Here the use of texting allows one to compose and edit our message, perhaps with the aid of friends. In Goffmanian terms, the indirect nature of text messaging gives the teen a chance to arrange “face.” Rather than fluster through an awkward telephone conversation, the teen can carefully edit the message before sending it.

The expansion in the mobile phone technology has enhanced remarkably so that the modern-day youth have widened their sense of identity with the applications. The exteriorization of mobile function bestowed the contemporary youth an online identity. They have their recourse in the multifarious applications the mobile companies provide rather than their physical existence. Thus “[A]s a result of these developments, people are more identifiable online, their online lives more interwoven with their offline lives. Indeed, today’s young people seldom make a distinction between their online and offline selves” (Gardner and Davis 52). At this instant it is crucial to consider what the term “application” or “app” means and how the youth form their identity in relation to these applications. The question that permeates in this situation is how youth’s identities shaped and expressed in the age of app.

Howard Gardner and Katie Davis define an app as:

...a software programme, often designed to run on a mobile device, that allows the user to carry out one or more operations...apps can be narrow or broad, simple or grand, and in either case are tightly controlled by the individual or organization that designed the apps. Apps can access tunes or the *New York Times*, enable games or prayers, answer questions or raise new ones. Crucially, they are fast, on demand, just in time. You might think of them as shortcuts: they take you straight to what you're looking for, no need to perform a web search or, if determinedly old-fashioned, a search through your own memory (14).

Speaking about 'the increasingly fragmented and fractured' modes of identity in postmodern times, Kellner outlines that "in traditional society identity was relatively fixed and stable (based on a range of identifiers such as work, gender, ethnicity, religion, age), in late modernity, identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to exchange and innovation"(247). According to this conceptualisation of identity what matters is not who we are but what we might become and such a concept is not firmly grounded in any stable forms of unity but rather in the endless dynamic processes of historical movement. In the case of the mobile phone application, Kellner's concept is pertinent. Because the features he identified with the postmodern identity is applicable to the identity sense that the mobile phone application among the young people have formed. Apps provide a multiple, personal, self-reflexive and innovative identity that has developed as a historical process. Thus "...young people growing up in our time are not only immersed in apps: they've come to think of the world as an ensemble of apps, to see their lives as a string of ordered apps, or perhaps, in many cases, a single, extended, cradle-to-grave app. (we've labelled this overarching app a "super-app".)" (Gardner and Davis 14).

The progress in mobile phone apps has become so evident that human life is more or less identified with these applications. Whatever human beings might want should be provided by apps and if the desired app doesn't yet exist, it should be devised right away by someone. The

youth is even ready to sacrifice their desires for the sake of an app and if no app can be imagined or devised, then the desire simply does not matter for them. The young generation developed a close sense of identity with the mobile technology. A world permeated by apps can in many ways be a wondrous one: and yet, we must ask whether all of life is—or should be—simply a collection of apps or one great, overarching super-app.

Apps are great if they take care of ordinary stuff and thereby free us to explore new paths, form deeper relationships, ponder the biggest mysteries of life and forge a unique and meaningful identity. But if apps merely turn us into more perplexity and if they do not think for ourselves, or pose new questions, or develop significant relationships, or fashion an appropriate, rounded, and continually evolving sense of self, then the apps simply line the road to serfdom.

Gardner says: “the apps arrayed on a person’s Smartphone or tablet represent a fingerprint of sorts—only instead of a unique pattern of ridges, it’s the combination of interests, habits, and social connections that identify that person. A new app might be sandwiched between a fantasy sports app and a piano keyboard app, revealing multiple facets of one’s identity. Because many of these apps provide access to various online communities, each facet allows the owner to find ready communion with similarly oriented people. ...the app identity is multifaceted, highly personalized, outward-facing, and constrained by the programming decisions of the app designer.”(59)

Youth take care to present a socially desirable, polished self online. They are enthusiastic to present shinned-up versions of themselves online. Features such as asynchronicity and anonymity allow young people to craft strategic self-presentations by deciding what information to highlight, downplay, exaggerate or leave out entirely. They create the most exclusive and innovative profile and accounts in their virtual home, even by risking their lives. Recently a newspaper covered a news which reported the death of a sixteen year old boy who died while posing in front of a moving train for a photo to be uploaded on Facebook.

The depiction of app icon in mobile phone itself delineates this condition in a suggestive manner.

As suggested by the app icon itself, the identities of young people are increasingly packaged. Packaging has the consequences of minimizing a focus on an inner life, on personal conflicts and struggles ... as the young person approaches maturity; this packaging discourages the taking of risks of any sort. On the more positive side, there is also a broadening of acceptable identities (it's OK to be a geek; it's OK to be gay). Overall life in an app -suffused society yields not only many small features of a person's identity but also a push toward an overall packaged sense of self \_as it were an omnibus app (51).

Katie Davis talks about the 'externally oriented' identity of the contemporary youth. She says that the present day youth who are more educated and career oriented focus their attention mainly on good jobs and keeping good relationships. In order to maintain or achieve this identity, they are elaborating their profiles in the social networking sites in the most attractive manner. They concentrate more on developing their digital characteristics to present before others. The pragmatic, careerist focus of today's college students occurs within the context of a broader social trend toward individualism and away from a more community minded, institutional orientation.

Facebook and other social network sites emphasize self presentation by organizing their sites around user's individual profiles. The basic elements of a profile in Facebook such as profile picture, cover photo, newsfeeds, profile etc projects the most attractive aspects of the users, and are used to package the self for public consumption. Thus digital media give youth time and tools to craft an attractive identity, as well as an audience to view and respond to it.

Apps also prove instructive in contemplating the rise of the packaged self. Individualism and self focus are evident in the vast market place of apps, which gives youth an endless opportunity to personalize their distinct combination of interests, habits, and social connection. The app icon itself is worthy of more explanations. One

could argue that the icon serves less to signify the purpose of an app more to represent a particular brand and the life style values, and general cachet associated with it. In other words, part of an app's appeal lies in its external representation rather than its internal functionality.

Packaging the self for others involves an element of performance. Forms of identity are often internalized by the individual who takes them on. This process can be theorized in terms of what Judith Butler has called 'performativity'. This refers to the repeated assumption of identities in the course of daily life. Butler, who concentrates on the example of gender, argues that 'there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender . . . Identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (Weedon 7). In Butler's language, this 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names. For instance, the apps that gained considerable popularity among teens are Facebook and WhatsApp which illustrate this performative aspect of identity in a digital age. In both of these applications you have to enact the thing you are going to post and share as videos and audios. WhatsApp lets users take pictures and short videos with their phone, add text or drawings and send them to a fellow user.

The modern Digital media technologies have given rise to an excess of new tools and contexts for youth to express and explore their identities from social network sites, instant messaging platforms, and video sharing sites, to blogs, and virtual worlds. A growing number of youth enter these contexts through an app on their Smartphone or tablet. The app interface then becomes an integral part of the way they choose to express themselves online

Communication on these newer sites incorporates audiovisual technologies which the youth explore through their Smartphone and high speed internet facilities. These facilities ensure a faster user friendly ambience which makes it easier for the youth to capture and share images and videos of their like. WhatsApp lets users take pictures and short videos with their phone, add text or drawings, and send them to a fellow WhatsApp user

The question of the internet's impact on self focus has also become an issue among social scientists, who've generally observed an incongruity between youth's presentation of an external polished appearance and their internal insecurities. In their endeavour to present the polished self before their audience-sometimes even to their family members- they compromise their personal self. The contemporary youth are less ideological. They prefer a 'whatever generation' and are not internally secured. Along with the changes in economy, education and other social environment, the digital media also play a greater role in framing the self of the individuals. Thus in its totality the apps provide a 'carefully crafted', 'packaged', 'performative quality' to the externalised self of its users.

The modern-day youth enjoys freedom in their co-ordination of daily lives through the active use of social networking sites. In a way they are capable of making good relations across the world. The groups and communities in the apps offer freedom to have their choice. There are no limits at all. Hiding themselves behind the mobile phone and tablet screens, the youth enjoy their leisure time using the apps. By being active with all these applications they maintain their social relationships too- it is not just people that are becoming interconnected but technologies and systems.

The mobile telephone changes the way we communicate with one another. Instead of calling to a fixed geographical location as is the practice with the landline device, we call to an individual, wherever they may be. It also allows us to interlace our telephonic communications (and our text messages) into the weave of our other activities. The mobile phone has developed into a type of safety link for those who would otherwise be tied to physical locations. It has changed the way that the teens coordinate, or perhaps micro-coordinate, our meetings and our daily interactions. It has changed the way teens interact with parents and with peers and it has changed the dynamics of social networks and the development of social cohesion. Mobile telephones are used by teens to make and break appointments and to keep their friends updated.

The mobile phone has become a dimension of how we construct our own identity. The mobile phone is not just a functional item it is also a symbolic item. The selection of mobile telephones and mobile telephone services is not only a signal to others of how we wish to be seen, but also a way that we integrate our self-image.

The mobile phones have captured the day. The app metaphor synchronizes how the present-day youth form their identity. The externalised and packaged self help the youth to alter their experience of mind. Unlike the landline and other mass communication devices, mobile apps offer different things and bring about tremendous changes in the form of interaction in postmodern times. They add dimensions of flexibility in their daily schedules and often allow us to compress activities and thus help the youth to individualize communication. The youth develop their social status and identity through the constant use of social networking sites and internet applications. And the mobile alter their experience of mind.

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# Existence as Carnival: Scouting Basheer with Bakhtinian Tropes

Alwin Alexander

This study employs Bakhtinian tropes to explore the presence of a carnival sense of the world in Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's novel, *The Chief Diviner of The Place*\*. Basheer, known as Beypore Sultan, redefined the language of Malayalam literature and remapped the literary landscape of Kerala with his lancinating irony and Borgesian imagination. He constantly problematised the ideas of 'self' and History. This doyen of Malayalam literature used subversive strategies in his creative endeavours. Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian literary theoretician, is also known to have employed such strategies in the realm of critical studies in language and literature. This is the common ground on which these figures are brought together here. Basheer serio-comically garbs his radical views by profusely employing the absurd and the ridiculous in *The Chief Diviner of The Place*. His satirical genius is unleashed in this subversive work. The narrative is infused with parody, meta-history, fetishes and the occult. Though the protagonists of the novel are felons and swindlers, Basheer presents them as patriots, philosophers and martyrs. He explores the elements of resistance and social critique involved in their transgressions. Ponkurissu Thoma (Gold Cross Thoma), Aanavari Raman Nair (Elephant Scooper Raman Nair), Karumban Chennan (Black Chennan), Kandambarayan, Thorappan Avaran (Rodent Avaran), Driver Pappunni, Ettukaali Mammoonju (Spider Mammoonju) etc are aberrant personalities and subaltern selves, who inhabit the social fabric of 'The Place', the locale of the novel. The story is replete with the farcical escapades of these characters. Together, they yarn a carnival tale, full of carnival acts of resistance, in the carnival square of 'The Place'.

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\* Translation of *Sthalathe Pradhaana Divyan* by Vaikom Muhammed Basheer

## **Carnival and Carnavalesque Literature**

Bakhtin designates carnival as a performance without footlights, where everyone participates actively and everyone communes with each other through carnival acts. All hierarchical barriers are broken and everyone becomes equal. This breaking of barriers is the essence of the carnival spirit. About this carnival sense of the world Bakhtin says:

The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure... that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people.... All distance between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: free and familiar contact among people. This is a very important aspect of a carnival sense of the world (The Problems 122-123)

Though Carnival is not a literary phenomenon, it propagates a carnival sense of the world which continues to exist in literature. Bakhtin explains,

Carnival has worked out an entire language of symbolic concretely symbolic forms – from large and complex mass actions to individual carnivalistic gestures. This language...gave expression to a unified (but complex) carnival sense of the world, permeating all its forms. This language cannot be translated in any full or adequate way into a verbal language, and much less into a language of abstract concepts, but it is amenable to a certain extent into a language of artistic images that has something in common with its concretely sensuous nature; that is, it can be transported into the language of literature (122).

Carnavalesque literature emulates the spirit and function of the carnival. Its public square is the page written for the reader. It subverts authority and hierarchy and temporarily equates and eliminates social boundaries. It is oppositional to the formal and hierarchical official culture. Carnivalised literature questions the hegemony, ridicules those in power

and delights in reversals. The text becomes the carnival space in carnivalised literature and subsumes the second world of reversals. In this space, like in real carnival, the monologic vision of everyday life (perpetuated by the official hierarchical church and the ruling hegemonic powers) is mocked and the heteroglot experiences of the common people are celebrated.

### **Centripetal/Centrifugal Voices and Grotesque Realism**

The carnivalesque is an opportunity to confront the authorial voice through acts of debasement or grotesque. It is often manifested in connection to the body (through juxtaposed images of life and death, such as the pregnant hags who represent birth and death in one). Bakhtin's carnival theory subsumes the presence of grotesque and scatological figures and events. He spends much time in his Introduction to *Rabelais and his World* discussing the grotesque, typified by a focus on the body which "debase[s], destroy[s], regenerate[s] and renew[s] simultaneously" (*Rabelais* 151). He views the bodily element as "deeply positive," representing a "cosmic and all-people's character" (19) that represents "fertility, growth and a brimming-over abundance" (47). Grotesque images are used in carnivalesque texts because they "ignore the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body," and in that way the images themselves rebel against conventional boundaries and subvert the power society assigns to boundaries (318).

Bakhtin opposes the grotesque body to the orderly, static, well-defined and self-sufficient classical body (320) which defies or rather exceeds limit(ation)s, and which is never completed but rather always in process both within and without. Accordingly, the grotesque "is looking for that which protrudes from the body" (316), e.g. bulging eyes, bulbous noses, gaping mouths, bowels, anuses and phalluses, and likewise for hyperbolically rendered processes of eating, digestion and excretion, copulation and pregnancy, dismemberment and cannibalisation, i.e. all those acts "performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body" (317).

According to Bakhtin, two oppositional forces - the centrifugal and the centripetal - act within a text or its context. In Bakhtinian

terminology, “centripetal,” is a dominant discourse, inserting itself as a centralizing force that absorbs and converts more marginalized discourses. The marginalized discourses, however, resist centralization by acting as “centrifugal” forces, pulling at the edges of the dominant discourse, deconstructing its hegemony. Centripetal language reinforces the dominant ideology, defending the assumption that a single way of speaking and understanding can be “correct” and sufficient for ordering society. But the privileged status of a centripetal language is always being dismantled by discourses pulling at it from the fringes:

Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward (272).

### **Manifestations of Bakhtinian Concepts in Basheer**

*The Chief Diviner of The Place* demonstrates an almost uncanny realization of Bakhtin’s theories of Carnival, Carnavalesque, Grotesque Realism and Centripetal/Centrifugal Voices. The aim of the work is “to destroy the official picture of events ... [to] summon all the resources of sober popular imagery in order to break up official lies and the narrow seriousness dictated by the ruling classes” (Bakhtin, PDP, 439). The major characters of the novel, Ponkurissu Thoma (Gold Cross Thoma), Aanavari Raman Nair (Elephant Scooper Raman Nair), Karumban Chennan (Black Chennan), Kandambarayan, Thorappan Avaran (Rodent Avaran), Driver Pappunni and Ettukaali Mammoonju (Spider Mammoonju), and the descriptions of their eventful lives, quintessentially represent the qualities of the carnival and the carnivalesque. These felons and swindlers are depicted as artists and small scale industrialists. This inversion is typical of carnival and carnivalised literature. This logic of inversion works when the criminals Thorappan Avaran and Driver Pappunni are hailed as patriots, philosophers and comrades by the people of the Place and also when outlaws like Ponkurissu Thoma and Aanavari Raman Nair are heralded by the author as noble protestors who fight against injustice. The Place (Kaduvakkunnu) is the carnival space where these inversions occur. and Kaduvakkunnu also participates in this inversion within the carnival space

of the text/novel. The denizens of the Place consider their land to be the centre of the world and they claim credit for many discoveries and inventions, the chief of it being the discovery of the sun:

It was the residents of the Place who first discovered the sun. Similarly, razor, lacertilian science, fire, astral projection, card sharp's game, dream analysis, cookery, cockfight, water, bullock cart, wrestling, sorcery, dagger etc were discovered for the first time in the world by the residents of the Place. In Bulgy Nanu's opinion, the Place is the exact centre of the world. (Basheer 11)

They are naively convinced that the seven occult beings (called the seven world powers) under the power of Kandambarayan, the chief diviner of the Place, control the all the events of the world and that nothing occurs without their knowledge:

Does anything happen anywhere without the knowledge of these seven mighty world powers? The fall of foreign empires, decrownings, military coups, assassinations of Presidents and Prime-Ministers and the like are done by the power of these. Famine, torrents, droughts, diseases, earthquakes, war – all these are caused by them (39-40)

Along with these inversions, reversal of roles also form part of the carnival. Such reversals are aplenty in the novel. The most significant among them is the role reversal that happens in the police station, when the policemen of the Place are deposed (for aleeedly robbing a lumber) and replaced by the felons Ponkurissu and Aanavari. These outlaws take control over the station, Aanavari acting as the head constable and Ponkurissu the constable. This is an ultimate subversion of hierarchy. It is in the same carnival spirit of reversal that Driver Pappunni and Thorappan Avaran morph into sanyasis and social reformers who exhort Ponkurissu and Anavari to start a bus service using the car stolen by them and later to begin a school in the Place. The carnival category of 'free and familiar contact' among people is operational everywhere in the Place and especially so between Kandamparayan and his occult beings – 'kuttichathan' (poltergeist), 'ottamulachi', 'aanamarutha', 'chamundi', 'paduvan', 'arukola', 'gulikan' etc.

The category of parody that is organically inherent to carnival is evident here. This direction of laughter towards the higher world orders is integral to a carnival sense of the world. The parodic element manifests itself very well in the fight between Ponkurissu and Aanvari, where Ponkurissu threatens to throw choriyanpuzhu (a kind of worm causing itch to the skin) at Aanvari. This worm is described hyperbolically as a deadly biological weapon (22), parodying the threat of biological warfare posed by the developed nations. The impact of the worms is inflated beyond proportions:

Is it without reason? Three hens of the bulgy eyed Andrew are dead. The only Cobra of the chief snake charmer of the Place his excellency Veerapandya Pandaram passed away just two hours back....Kariyil Pathrose Mappila has lost three piglets. One kitten of One-eyed Pokker's daughter Sainaba is ailing. The chief drunkard of the Place Pachu is babbling deliriously. The cause for all of these is the deadly choriambuzhu! (23)

The dominant discourses of the centripetal force that try to centralize everything in the society using its power and rule, and try to absorb the marginalized discourses are resisted by the centrifugal forces, symbolized by the felons and swindlers of Basheer. They pull at the edges of dominant discourses of authority (police and the retrogressive government) and deconstruct their hegemony. They become an integral part of the Place and are approached even by the Namboothiris (aristocracy) of the place for help.

Bakhtin's schema of Grotesque realism is fully realized in Basheer's novel by portraying carnival images in grotesque exaggerations. Scatological figures and images, and juxtaposing of birth and death are replete in the story of Karumban Chennan, the courageous martyr of the Place (a professional criminal).

Karumban Chennan had great scholarship in astral projection and hypnotism. He has conducted many thefts even in foreign lands. Everyone feared him. Even in broad daylight he would conduct robberies and no one could stop him. He conducts robbery in the light of the lamp lighted by the oil got by melting the foetus of pregnant women (36).

The man who has committed these blood curdling crimes is seen as martyr by the residents of the Place. Basheer's description is classic grotesque realism! This martyr's skull is preserved by Kandamabrayan, the chief diviner of the Place. The strongest examples of grotesque could be found in this character and his antics. He becomes an exaggerated caricature also in the illustrations to the novel. Basheer's unique vision of the grotesque is exemplified here. Kandambarayan takes on a number of bizarre forms which question his humanity. Here is how he is presented:

A loner - no father, no mother, no wife, no children, no one. Very aged. Slow to hear. Hair, beard and moustache – these are entwined like many snakes writhing. Both eyes are bloodshot and they protrude. No one knows the real colour of his skin. Covered with clay and ashes, he would sit nibbling at a salted mango, in the vision induced by ganja (39).

This description is veritably one of a grotesque self/body – debased, degraded and degenerated, ignoring the closed, smooth and impenetrable surface of the body, thereby rebelling against conventional canonical bodies, and subverting the power society/hierarchy assigns to finesse and sophistication.

The gifts that are taken to him while they visit him for the oracular pronouncements are absurdly sacrilegious.

He does not need money. Those who go to visit him must go with a little ganja or a black cat or an owl to mount Kaduvakuzhi and ascend the eighteen steps and standing in the yard declare loudly "Kandambra, Kandambra". If not under the spell of ganja, he would reply "who?". "Blackcat' or "salted mango", proclaim devoutly, the name of the gift (40).

The inchoate blabber that comes out as the oracle along with the dance with Karumban Chennan's 'skull' is yet another instance of carnivalesque grotesque in the novel. Ponkurissu Thoma, Aanavari, Ettukali (Spider) Mammoonju and the idiot Muthappa receive the oracular word 'hanthonthu' – a meaningless utterance. Yet they infest

it with meaning. The whole episode is a confirmation of Kandambaran's grotesque self and carnival activities. He qualifies well to be a carnival fool in Bakhtinian terms. Similarly, the grotesque bodies of Ettukali Mamoonju and Ottakkannan Poker also oppose the idea of orderly, static, well defined, self-sufficient, classic and canonical body.

To conclude, Basheer's novel is a highly carnivalised work, to say the least. The various discourses layered in the sub-text of the novel are illuminated by this Bakhtinian concept, revealing a non-official aspect of the world where the margins occupy the centre. The novel, as in a carnival, proposes a counter culture which problematises the meta-narratives of dogmatized religions and social structures.

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# The Politics of Sound in *The Metamorphosis*

Shivshankar Rajmohan A K

Walter Benjamin states that there are “two ways to miss the point of [Franz] Kafka’s works. One is to interpret them naturally, the other is the supernatural interpretation. Both the psychoanalytic and the theological interpretations equally miss the essential points” (127). According to Benjamin one misses the mark in Kafka either by “oedipalizing and relating him to mother-father narratives” or by trying to “limit him to theological-metaphysical speculation to the detriment of all the political, ethical and ideological dimensions that run through his work and give it a special status in the history of literature” (127).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari seem to agree with Benjamin when they make the remark that each of the studies on Kafka avoids what might be called a “political-ideological recuperation” of Kafka and fall back upon “hard segment: the binary machine of social classes, sexes, neurosis, mysticism and so on” (10). Despite the differences in perspectives Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari pinpoint the need to make way for new philosophical, literary and psychological categories to come to terms with this unique writer, as to lead readers out of the “impasse created by so many readings of exegesis” (Deleuze 10).

Kafka remains one of the widely read German authors in the twenty-first century and in the opinion of Stanley Corngold and Ruth V. Gross, there has hardly been a period since the Second World War in which Kafka scholarship has not thrived (7). He has been claimed as one of the foremost Jewish authors of his age, as “the greatest modernist prose writer in the German language, and as an icon of both German and Austrian literature” (Preece 1). He has enriched the imagination of readers with imperishable figures like Gregor Samsa, the feckless traveling salesman, who wakes up one morning to find himself changed into a verminous beetle, Joseph K., a high-ranking bank official who is accused of a nameless crime and stabbed to death in a quarry, the prisoner on a remote penal colony, strapped down on a writing

machine designed to cut his sentence into his flesh, a pretend land surveyor, who, lost in the snow, desperately seeks entrance to the castle and countless others.

Kafka is extraordinary not only for the volume of citation he has provoked, but also for having attracted virtually endless interpretations. Kafka's small, seemingly introspective body of work turns out to have responded to a wide range of intellectual, cultural, political, and social real-world forces. Hence, interpretations that might be characterized as theological, biographical, existential, gender-political, psychoanalytic, Marxian, and so on, have all proved rewarding in their own way. A major problem confronted by the readers of Kafka's short stories is to find a way through the increasingly dense thicket of interpretations.

In his stripped down fictional world, ordinary mundane objects accrete significance. However closely one reads Kafka's text many details would remain opaque. On the other hand, by withholding easy answers, Kafka affirms the freedom of the reader and shows himself to be in the forefront of modernism. One is invited to read Kafka's novel not with complacency, but actively, against the grain, looking for the possibilities which Kafka himself rejects or is denied. The freedom which the fictional protagonist cannot use is available to the reader. Hence, each new reader may hope to throw fresh light on some aspect of these complex and elusive fictions by attending closely to the details of textual patterning which create particular, often paradoxical meanings from the general store of language. In other words, the act of interpreting Kafka's fictional scape is similar to the little sentences in Samuel Beckett's *Worstward Ho*: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better" (1). They seem to be a noble epitaph for Kafka's writing and a good injunction for our reading.

This paper makes an attempt to follow the path laid down by Benjamin. As Benjamin has pointed out, there are many aspects in Kafka's literaryscale that remain unaddressed. One such area is what Deleuze and Guattari call "sonic" territories (*Thousand* 331). The aspect of sound, though it plays a vital role in Kafka's literary world, has not been properly analyzed. The aim is to explore "not only a new vocabulary, but a new syntax in the making" (Lecerle 182), paying

attention to how discordant or “nonsense” sounds such as screaming and poorly performed music clash with the hegemonic sonic territories of clear and sensible speech, for productive readings of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. It also tries to show how Kafka used sound to indicate the weakness of the boundary between the empowered and the oppressed in the political terrains of his short story.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: “What interests Kafka is a pure and intense sonorous material ... a deterritorialized ... sound, a cry that escapes signification ... a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying” (*Towards*6). Noise is difficult to pin down precisely because it is that which evades conceptualization. Douglas Kahn defines noise as “that constant grating sound generated by the movement between the abstract and the empirical. It need not be loud, for it can go unheard even in the most intense communication” (25). Kahn theorizes noise as the empirical body of abstract information. At the extreme limits of abstraction, this noise is what is suppressed - the guitar noise is that which is never entertained in a performance, and the bizarre noise of the phone line irritates people. Like the characters in Ionesco’s play *Rhinoceros*, nobody would entertain the intrusion of “the noises of the passing rhinoceros” (5) in conversations, for they are irrelevant, meaningless and irritating.

Kafka’s text contains a lot of such “meaningless utterances,” in the form of screaming, babbling and poorly performed music. A close analysis of such seemingly nonsensical sonic instances would lead to the opening of unexplored avenues for Kafka scholarship. To Kahn, the attempt to conceptualize noise would make noise itself into a signal, an abstracted concept. To speak of sonic noise had been to cleave noise from real, empirical sound (25). Like Kahn who sets out to bring noise “to bear on noise,” to excavate that which is suppressed in the conceptualization of noise, “the de-noising of noise” (25) in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* is essential in the understanding of both his politics of writing and also the working of power dynamics in his text.

Gregor’s metamorphosis provides him a brief reprieve from his familial and business obligations and it opens a new life for Gretea’s “line of flight” (*Towards* 14) in a household that has considered her

“somewhat useless” and has allowed her to rot away in her room, “dressing herself nicely, sleeping long” (*Metamorphosis* 46). She escapes the life that has given her mother “asthma, which troubled her even when she walked through the flat and kept her lying on a sofa every other day panting for breath” (46). She represents a potential threat to the patriarchal power structure. Like her mother and like generations of well-to-do women before them, she has spent most of her life “resting”: sleeping, dressing, eating very little, and playing the violin. In the nineteenth century Europe, playing the violin was one of a handful of approved parlor arts that a woman could practice openly. Her skills in one of these after-dinner arts could even win her a husband.

Despite all her practicing, Grete plays the violin badly. Her parents listen in parental adoration, but the lodgers’ reaction provide an objective viewpoint. They note how her tune diverges from the score and turn away in disdain. She has not fulfilled the nineteenth century woman’s role of providing pleasant after-dinner entertainment for potential suitors. It is Gregor who appreciates the music more than anyone. He fantasizes about carrying Grete off to his room for a private concert, and the narrator exclaims: “Was he an animal, that music had such an effect upon him?” (80). Grete’s discordant music, like Josephine’s brand of singing or the supplicant’s piano playing, indicates a rupture with the social system. This rupture is confirmed by Gregor’s reaction, as he—the most removed from the approved social order—appreciates Grete’s music the most. The schism between the lodgers’ reaction and Gregor’s, would lead to the conclusion made by Vladimir Nabokov in his lecture on *The Metamorphosis*: “Grete’s unconventional playing stands outside the socially approved sound-world” (278). The “sound” that she makes is at odds with the patriarchal power structure cued by the social phenomenon of a young woman’s parlor concert. It was the lodgers who invited her to their room expecting that she would play cheerfully. Instead of providing relaxation, Grete’s playing of violin strangely irritates the three men.

It now seemed really clear that, having assumed they were to hear a beautiful or entertaining violin recital, they were disappointed, and were allowing their peace and quiet to be disturbed... The way

in which they all blew the smoke from their cigars out of their noses and mouths in particular led one to conclude that they were very irritated. And yet his sister was playing so beautifully. (78, 79)

Grete's playing disturbs them, for it deviates from what they have heard and experienced before, hence is not recognizable. The sound that Grete makes is unconventional and revolutionary in the sense that the male members cannot identify it with the sound of any violin they have heard before. She "fails" to conform to the nineteenth century concept of a woman, whose life depends solely on the male members of the family and society, and therefore does everything to please them. Grete, like her music, is a discordant and traumatic noise that penetrates into the "beautiful and cheerful" (78) realm of music, which is relaxing but makes people complacent. The discordant violin note, thus, disrupts the smooth borders of patriarchy.

Nina Pelikan Straus, in her essay "Transforming Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*," observes that Gregor "relinquishes his male status" to Grete, and that gender roles can be exchanged in a closed economy of replacement. Straus's in her article sees Grete's story as a woman's struggle to "become a man," dividing the sexual playing field into two mutually exclusive player-positions (137). Her penultimate conclusion reveals Straus's counter-feminist outlook: "[Grete's] self-empowering, the transference of a woman into a position where a man used to be, does not transform the social system... but merely perpetuates it. When women become as men are, Kafka seems to be saying, there is no progress...." (139). If one follows Straus's underlying assumptions about the binary male-female, strong-weak and empowered-disempowered oppositions, there does not seem to be room for social progress. It is in this aspect one has to locate Kafka's real politics. Though he is not a proclaimed feminist writer, he foretells what Judith Butler and other feminist critics later pointed out, that liberation does not mean a woman in the socio, cultural and political position where men used to be. Kafka makes his ideology audible that wearing the false skin of man is not the way to female emancipation.

The power Grete earns through economic independence makes her feel that there is a way to escape the territory constructed and imposed

upon her “natural body” by the patriarchal discourse. But as Deleuze theorizes, every act of “deterritorialization” would, invariably, be followed by an act of “reterritorialization,” for no “natural body” can exist without a territory. There must always be a grid in place, even if the grid is insanity, schizophrenia, or nonsense (*Towards* 27). Though Grete’s independence in terms of economy leaves an illusion of liberation from the domineering presence of not just her family, but also from an oppressive discourse, it never actualizes. She gets continuously reterritorialized by the stealth functioning of an “omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent” patriarchal power system. At the story’s close, Grete confidently stretches herself after a ride in the country with her parents. Her parents want to reterritorialize Grete into the patriarchy by arranging her marriage. Grete’s parents notice:

Mr. and Mrs. Samsa almost at the same moment saw their daughter, who was getting more animated all the time, had blossomed recently, in spite of all the troubles which had made her cheeks pale, into a beautiful and voluptuous young woman. Growing more silent and almost unconsciously understanding each other in their glances, they thought that the time was now at hand to seek out a good honest man for her. (96)

This leads her parents to what Kafka, with a hint of irony, calls their “excellent intentions” (96) of marrying her off. Where Grete is concerned, the patriarchy falls a bit out of joint.

Representing the subjugated housewife of the nineteenth century, Grete’s “old mother” has such bad asthma that it “troubled her even when she walked through the flat and kept her lying on a sofa every other day panting for breath beside an open window” (46). On initially seeing Gregor, she “first clasped her hands and looked at his father, then took two steps toward Gregor and fell on the floor among her outspread skirts, her face quite hidden on her breast.” Although she gathers strength and “sprang all at once to her feet” she immediately “fled from the table and fell into the arms of his father” depending on his physical strength to supplement her weakness (23-25). The physical weakness of Grete’s mother is only a façade, deliberately constructed by Kafka to voice his ideology and politics regarding gender.

Kafka uses an intensely sonorous material, the “tormenting” and omnipresent “noise” of coughing and strained breathing of Grete’s mother to articulate, rather implicitly, the idea expressed by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar regarding the pathetic state of existence of women in a society that is patriarchal in its essence.

Gilbert and Gubar observe that physical weakness in upper-class women like Mrs. Samsa is a symptom of patriarchal oppression:

Patriarchal society literally makes women sick, both physically and mentally... Such diseases of maladjustment to the physical and social environment as anorexia and agoraphobia did and do strike a disproportionate number of women.... In the nineteenth century... the complex of social prescriptions these diseases parody did not merely urge women to act in ways which would cause them to be ill; nineteenth century culture seems to have actually admonished women to be ill.... throughout much of the nineteenth century upper- and upper-middle-class women were [defined as] ‘sick’; working-class women were [defined as] ‘sickening’... It was, as Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi wrote in 1895, ‘considered natural and almost laudable to break down under all conceivable varieties of strain—a winter dissipation, a houseful of servants, a quarrel with a female friend, not to speak of more legitimate reasons....’” (53-55)

As Gilbert and Gubar point out, the twentieth century has its share of “female disorders” such as anorexia in young girls. Grete exhibits, at least, one of the symptoms of this disorder, she does not eat. It was the cultural discourse of the nineteenth century that actually produced a “cult of female invalidism” (53) characterized by the ease with which women became anxious, faint or even ill.

In keeping with the argument that the dynamics of oppression can be traced in sound, at the beginning of *The Metamorphosis* Grete sounds like her mother: “on the other side of the door his sister was saying in a low, plaintive tone ... his sister whispered” (15). But as she gains power in the family by taking care of Gregor and getting a job, Grete becomes much louder. She cleans Gregor’s room in a “noisy scurry,”

“banged the door shut” (84), and when deprived of mopping out Gregor’s room she “burst into a storm of weeping” and, “shaken with sobs ... beat upon the table with her small fists” (73). When she finally makes the decision to “get rid of Gregor, she does so in a “passion of sobbing,” “crying” and “shrieking.” No longer willing to pick up her brother’s bug droppings when her life has otherwise improved tremendously, Grete “explicitly” articulates her demands, and they are met (83-85).

When Mrs. Samsa is vocal, as when Grete makes the final decision to get rid of Gregor, she is “coughing too much to hear a word” (85)—the helpless language of the asthmatic, oppressed wife. In contrast, the patriarch “made a habit of reading the afternoon newspaper in a loud voice to [Gregor’s] mother,” (15) while otherwise “not a sound was now to be heard” from any other inhabitants of the family, as the women do not make noise but actually “admonish each other to be silent” (34-36). When chasing Gregor back to his room, Mr. Samsa creates such a din as to sound “no longer like the voice of one single father.... making [an] unbearable hissing noise.... hissing and crying ‘Shoo!’ like a savage” (76).

The sudden and rather elusive change in Gregor’s father’s habits needs to be analyzed in detail, for it is not the direct repercussion of Gregor’s metamorphosis, but that of Grete. While Gregor was working and supporting the family, his father used to read the newspaper aloud. But Gregor’s metamorphosis leads to a situation where, as Straus points out, Grete becomes the central figure who provides economic support for the family. When the family territory is disrupted by Gregor’s deterritorialization, however, the rigid laws become supple enough that Grete can become more like the empowered, strong charwoman, who threatens even the patriarch. With new confidence, power and strength, Grete becomes louder and more demanding, slamming doors, shouting, “explicitly” articulating her desires and generally getting what she wants. The economic independence of Grete, which ultimately leads to her enthroning as the “head” of the family, silences the patriarch. As Straus expresses, it is Grete who takes the crucial and emphatic decision to “get rid of Gregor” (84) towards the end of the short story. Kafka

articulates the inversion of the “usual” family hierarchy and the “dethroning” of the patriarch, which are the direct results of woman’s financial independence, through the “enforced silence” (Straus 136) of Gregor’s father. For Kafka, “silence,” as Deleuze theorizes it, is never an abyss that contains no signification, on the contrary, it is an encrypted entity that would get decrypted when one employs enough “thought” (qtd. in Hulse 54).

A query that lurks around and demands an explanation would be regarding the reason why Grete and the Charwoman’s rebellions become unheard. The possible resolutions for such a query lie in the deconstruction of the binary logic that classifies sound into “voice” and “noise.” Henry Cowell follows the Deleuzian notion: “To think of sound one must engage not with music but with the strangeness of sonic noise” (*Difference* 181), when he asserts that noise is an element of even the purest tones. Noise is not only inescapably present to all music, but to all sound, as even a pure tone from a laboratory is likely to reach the ear having been “corrupted by resonances picked up upon the way” (Cowell, 23). This corruption is the result of the empirical circumstances through which sound must resound. A sonic signal is thus inseparable from and grounded in this noise. The thinking of sound is compelled by the spectral presence of noise, the insistence of the strange material of sound that will not be properly suppressed by any model. But it arbitrarily defines noise as its outside, as corruption or non-signal, and thus fails to account for its “signal’s immanence to a more essential noise” (Cowell, 23).

Elaine Showalter puts forward an argument that is essential to an understanding of the functioning of patriarchy, and thereby sheds more light into Kafka’s politics of writing. She says that:

what women have found hard to take ... is their [male] self-deception, their pretense to objectivity, their emotion parading as reason.... the term ‘rational’ relegates to its opposite term all that it refuses to deal with, and thus ends by assuming itself to be purified of the non-rational, rather than searching to identify and assimilate its own surreal or nonlinear elements. (127)

This classification of whatever caters to the interest of patriarchy as acceptable and recognizable “voice”, and any other sound that carries the tone of rebellion or conflict as unacceptable and irritating “noise”, is a deliberate “methodology and an intellectual instrument of patriarchy” (Showalter, 127). It also projects the underlying reality that the noise/voice binary and the devaluing of one particular sequence of sound as non-signifying are not natural but mere constructs of a discourse. Everything that attempts to pose challenges to the system that is in power will be arbitrarily relegated to the realm of non-data, for an oppressive social and cultural institutions like patriarchy depends a lot on the classification of disruptive and disturbing information as non-data for its survival.

To put it in terms of music, no society would inhabit the realm of harmony always. Noises—contradictory ideologies and conflicts—are essentially part of any society. Michel Foucault states that: Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (qtd. in Chaput 45)

It is the existing discourse at a given time that determines which is to be accepted as “true” and which is to be rejected as “false.” The categorization of certain sounds as meaningful “voice” and certain other as insignificant “noise” is an instance where Foucault’s notion of discourse and power dynamics works. The power structure silences the discordant “noises,” to sustain the system. Like noise which is ever part of voice, struggles against patriarchal domination, ideology and power dynamics are ghostly non-presences of any given society, but they are tagged as “noise,” “meaningless,” and relegated to the garage of unheard rebellions, for they are “interference” which would cause severe disturbance and damage to the functioning of the patriarchal system.

The answer to one of the perennial questions regarding Gregor Samsa's animal "noise" could be understood in this light. The patriarchal society would not desire to hear the "noise" of a man who tries to escape its boundaries, who "behaves like a woman" (Straus 134). As Straus observes the voice of a "castrated man" would not be accepted as meaningful utterance, for such a man not only goes astray from the "standard" and accepted definition of "man" as a stable and unified entity, but also poses a challenge to the system (135).

The patriarchal society which determines the male and the female identities, would never allow the voice of a "feminine man" to be heard. The early seeds of the post-feminist theories of Judith Butler could be traced back to Kafka. Butler has asserted that the real emancipation a woman needs is not from the territory of the gender "female," but from the notion of gender itself. According to her even the sex of a person, which appears to be biologically determined and natural, is not free from the oppressive clutches of the discourse on gender constructed and maintained by the patriarchal society. In other words, a woman in the disguise of a man will not provide her a "line of flight" (*Towards* 14). Kafka seems to predict what Butler affirms in the post-modern context. This politics of the patriarchal society is the reason why Gregor's sound becomes an acceptable and understandable "voice" for him, and at the same time a meaningless clamour for both his manager and his family.

When Gregor did not appear in his office, his Manager came in search of him. Gregor said something in reply to the manager's question. "Did you understand a single word?" The manager asked the parents. "Is he playing fool with us? That was an animal's voice.... Gregor had become much calmer ... people did not understand his words anymore, although they seemed clear enough to him" (17, 18). Kafka explores and exposes this politics of a society or discourse that is patriarchal in its ethos through his deliberate employment sonic instances.

Deleuze and Guattari assert that there is a "deliberate absence of social critique in Kafka" (*Towards* 88), but when *The Metamorphosis* is scrutinized, paying attention to each and every minute and seemingly

irrelevant and nonsensical detail, “deliberate social critique” seems apparent. Kafka’s critique of patriarchy is systemic rather than absent. Kafka’s writing not only depicts subjects such as the trials of women living in a patriarchal society, which is similar to what a *écriture féminine* might represent, but it acts out against patriarchal language in the same way, revealing the vulnerability of the characters who stand outside or are oppressed by the patriarchy by reflecting their endangerment grammatically. Like Ophelia’s “nonsense” noises, discordant noises in Kafka often signal distress. This distress is the noise of the territorial grid caging a character who might otherwise threaten it, of a character’s attempt to escape or protest the menacing oppression, which is always knocking at the door in Kafka.

Discordant noise can also signify conscious or unconscious rebellion—Josephine twists the mouse-language to include, although it must eventually exclude, artistic noises; Greta twists classical music to the despair of the three male boarders who have a clear idea of how music “should” sound.

Kafka seems to consistently critique the social system rather than investigating his female characters as if their social conditions were anything other than socially determined. He does not seem to suffer under the illusion that patriarchal oppression is a result of essential “feminine” characteristics such as passivity, weakness, or lack of reason.

Deleuze and Guattari’s attack on Kafka for the deliberate absence of social critique remains valid only until one pays attention to those minute details that Kafka intentionally hides in his text. The seemingly irrelevant “noises” employed by Kafka contain a lot of signification deep in the shallows. In order to understand Kafka and his politics what one needs is a precept, a new way of approaching the writer and his text. The paper that has focused on the aspect of sound is only one among the infinite ways of approaching Kafka.

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# Dehumanization: A Study On Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*

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The arithmetically perfect society of the One State in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* exemplifies a social engine that attaches itself blindly to the securities of logic and science as the saving graces of its human populace. Its citizenry is left with little choice except to deny their individualistic qualities and become nothing more than the mass-produced, uniform components of the State's mathematically perfect communal machine. Zamyatin's One State reflects the early twentieth century's anxiety of technological advancement, to the pervasive and ancient echo of Plato's *The Republic*. On the surface, several comparisons can be drawn between Socrates' concept of a perfect city in *The Republic* and the One State of *We*. Both societies assign their citizens, jobs and occupations based on their fitness for those jobs as do they share children communally.

The inhabitants of Zamyatin's glass-enclosed city have numerical labels instead of names, and they are even referred to as numbers rather than people. These numbers have lost all true individuality; they are merely interchangeable parts in the giant machine of the State. As the book's narrator D-503 explains, nobody is one, but one of (Booker 26). In other words, through using mathematical symbols as a technique to substitute names is to create a sense of belonging to a whole and at the same time, being deprived of identity if one is left out of this formula. This deprivation of people from their individuality constantly reminds them that they are meaningful only within society, in line with the search for stability which is the common goal in all the dystopias. Once a Number learns that he or she is nothing outside One State, he or she would work for the continuity of this system in order to protect the meaning and identity of his or her life. In addition, by using numbers as the linguistic material to name people, they are transformed from human beings who are

capable of having irrational feelings into creatures who behave according to the predictability of numbers which do not allow any indeterminacy. Therefore, they are expected to act in accordance with the mechanical order that is imposed through the Table of Hours which divides the day into the periods in which Numbers are supposed to act in the same manner with the other cells of the organism of One State.

D-503 tells one about the time table, Every morning, with six-wheeled precision, at the very same hour and the very same minute, we get up, millions of us, as though we are one. At the very same hour, millions of us as one, we start to work. Later, millions as one, we stop. And then, like one body with a million hands, at one and the same second according to the Table, we lift the spoon to our lips. (WE 13)

What is expected from a Number is to act in accordance with others in a way to realize this established harmony. Since they are surrounded by glass, everyone is aware of what others are doing at a given time. The result of the factor of transparent glass walls is the successful diffuse of One State ideology. (WE 14)

What remains outside this order can only be ridiculous and a source of embarrassment because, it would be as irrational as not believing that two times two equals to four. Since it is the case that One State is taken into account as the other side of the equilibrium in a mathematical operation like two times two, it is possible to argue that not following One State's principles are as absurd and irrational as claiming, for instance that two times two equals to five. (WE 9)

Social reality is constructed in a manner that anything that belongs to this perfect order has to be flawless. One may witness this in D-503's words in his diary which, he writes for propaganda that would be used in the process of colonizing other planets, this, will be a derivative of our life, of the mathematically perfect life of One State, and if that is so, then won't this be, of its own accord, whatever I wish, an epic? (WE 6). The language system of One State is also

constructed as perfect because of being derived from the perfect order under the rule of Benefactor.

In Zamyatin's dystopia, it is not the system that gives the language its perfectness, rather the sense that One State is perfect is partially a linguistic construct. In other words, by relying on mathematical forms and adapting them into the language, reality is manipulated in such a way that what is defined through this perfect language must also be rational. As a result, it becomes indispensable for the Numbers to believe what is proposed by the language for the sake of being rational. This is why D-503 gets confused about his feelings for Number, I- 330, and asks, "Maybe that nonsense about love and jealousy is not just in stupid old books" (WE 63).

It may be argued that the existence of the words like love and jealousy should not be understood as an indication of One State language's capability of signifying the so-called irrational feelings. According to James Connors in his essay on *We's* influence on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Zamyatin's "guiding principle, for the government of the One State is happiness, whereas the government of Oceania is built on pure evil" (Connors 116). The words such as ancient One will meet with this same operation again in terms of searching for the justification of the system but in a completely different understanding in the examination of the *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In this sense, perhaps this survival is not a result of a natural process; rather it may be the case that the rulers of One State intentionally left out some words from ancient times during their process of reconstructing language.

It is a natural process, lead by the rulers, that these remnants of ancient languages are controlled and used in a way to confirm the unmistakable and rational character of One State and its language. In this context, what is argued by Booker concerning the relationship between One State and history is also applicable for the relationship with language. He argues that in this state "existing accounts of the past are designed merely to demonstrate the superiority of the present, indicating an 'impassable abyss between the present and the past' and depicting the past as a savage time of misery and chaos". (WE 40)

In *We*, education is given less or no importance. A transformation in education at the grass root level is what is needed. But, the transformation is a Herculean task. Man is a myth. He has not yet happened and has tremendous potential to be actualized. If the intellectual potential is not unleashed, man will be nothing more than a living vegetable. Nietzsche says in his monumental work *Thus Spake Zarathustra* that “man is a rope stretched between the animal and superman, a rope over an abyss”(4). He adds, “What is great in man is that, he is a bridge not a goal” (Nietzsche 5). Man as Nietzsche says, is fluctuating all the time. This fluctuation causes angst. Unless man becomes crystallized, his problems will continue to haunt him. The very crystallization of his personality should be done by attaining wisdom and maturity. This can only be achieved through education which should be blended with the faculty of thinking and the awareness of enduring values. In a nutshell, a holistic education is what is needed to attain a fair, humane and harmonious governance.

Achieving sustainable education is not a utopian dream, but calls for a social transformation in the education system. Societal attempts to achieve sustainability has already begun and it is still a long process. This has to be continuously improved and sustained. Values like cooperation, cleanliness, courage, devotion, faithfulness, good manners, gratitude, honesty, helpfulness, justice, kindness, leadership, obedience, punctuality, patriotism, quest for knowledge, reverence for the old, self-discipline, self-reliance, social service, socialism, team spirit, tolerance, universal love, universal truth, environmental values are to be inculcated into the system of education, to make it holistic.

Aesthetics made instinctive, perfection made manifest and humanism made essential are central to the holistic education programme that will leverage the paradigm shift. A perfect governance and world peace can only be possible through such an education enriched with human values. Only this can save humanity from the clutches of utter helplessness and from the shackles of enslavement. Freedom, both for the individual and the society, benevolent governance and individual thinking men and women are the essential requirement for a ‘Paradise Paradigm,’ which can be

realized only if every individual in the society changes through education. The society is a collection of individuals, so without changing the individual, trying to change the society will only be a cry in the wilderness. Hence, every individual must realize that improper governance affects the progress, prosperity and pace of the society. This change can be realized only through holistic education.

The study of *We* establishes the fact that although totalitarian government have, to a large extent, ceased to exist in the contemporary world, the projections of this novel constitutes a set of warnings on the rising of new totalitarian governments in the future. The nightmares of all dystopian writers can be avoided through the establishment of proper governments, a paradigm shift mediated only through the establishment of holistic education for all citizens.

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# **Shakespeare, India and Intercultural Performances in Theatre and Films**

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The proliferation of satellite channels in the recent years has increased viewership across the globe. These channels with 'pay and watch' facility through their website editions have made available hosts of programmes to any part of the world. With internet and satellite advantage, one can access information across borders. The shape of things today promises more research assistance to students writing their assignments on intercultural approximation of Shakespeare than it did few years back. Local issues with representations of Shakespeare that were previously inconspicuous are now being rediscovered through sites like Youtube.com, Dailymotion.com etc. Articles, commentaries, reviews of these amateurish or rather understated productions are now a part of the growing scholarship on Shakespeare. There are hosts of them on social networking sites, free webspaces, private websites and others officially maintained university databases. When the media and the academy are agog with Shakespearean exhibitions of all kinds, its high time that we estimate how it started and whether the proliferation of material has been favorable or obscurant to our proper valuation of Shakespeare.

The phenomenal presence of Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century started with the globalization of the British movies and animations that were adaptations. As these were widely distributed in the British colonies, it greatly expanded the entertainment quota of the non-English-speaking nations. It is worth mentioning here that during the process of adaptation of the popular works, the English artists and theatre practitioners focused on the ferrying of the content from one medium/mode of representation to the other. In that case, they hardly met with any subjective, contextual or rhetorical conundrums to unscramble and explain. The entertainment industry relying heavily on popular writers and their works explored market in other countries and

produced something new to titillate the audience. The international distribution of British adaptations – for instance, Shakespearean films such as Branagh's (*Henry V* 1989) – expanded the audience engagement with the Bard outside Great Britain. Art festivals, film festivals and cultural programs in different countries created another fan base through their indigenous and unconventional Shakespearean productions. By the time of the revolution in the electronic, print media and the internet, Shakespeare was already a global citizen, and a first citizen within the dominions of the theatrical activity.

The British have a long-standing history of travelling into other regions and selling their product. If Shakespeare stands bedraggled and defaced, it is not because of the medium or presentation issues for anything that is universal will appeal in any format or shape. This is largely because Shakespeare has been used forever to serve the vested interests of people who aggressively put their views in his mouth. In the nations under the British Empire, Shakespeare was deliberately twisted and refashioned to suit the larger interests of ruling British community. Availability of the definite literature on English education and role of theatres during the British rule in India indicate that it was sponsored as a state policy to strengthen its hold on the Indian soil. Shakespeare was introduced 'as he was' to the British rulers living in India but when he was shown to the natives, it was not him but 'a piece of him'. The *Calcutta Theatre* that opened in 1775, catered to the English audience only. In fact, all the English theatres in Calcutta were barred for the natives until 1848 when The *Sans Souci Theatre* gave a memorable performance of *Othello* in August, and cast a Bengali youth Baishnav Charan Adhya as a black moor opposite Mrs Anderson as Desdemona. The appearance of an Indian in an exclusively English playhouse was phenomenal as thereafter the theatre allowed a few aristocratic Indians, to watch the performances along with the British spectators. It was only after that a few more theatres relented and opened English plays and performances for anyone who loved Shakespeare and had interest in theatre. The theatrical activity in Calcutta was a reflection of Shakespeare's popularity in England between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the mid-Victorian period, the Bengali elite were fairly exposed to the theatrical conventions of the

west. The Chowringhee Theatre opened in 1813, was very popular for its performances of *Henry IV*, *Richard III*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. On one hand, the Bengali elite had been seeking a cultural identity through the study of and exposure to English dramas, on the other hand, the British rulers used Shakespeare's characters and plots as a part of their 'civilizing mission' in colonial Calcutta. Considering this fact Shakespeare's works held a revered position in the colonial society.

We all know that Shakespeare has long been a kind of icon of the English and of England<sup>1</sup>, and that he elevated English to a prestigious level by coining hundreds of new words and phrases. We see how some of these words or phrases have actually posed a challenge to his translation from one language to another. When Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar brought out *Bhranti Vilas* an Indianized translation of *The Comedy of Errors*, he changed the title of the play, gave Indian names to the characters and replaced all the western cues and customs with apposite cultural equivalents. But in this translation, he removed some phrases that did not go along with the dominant cultures (Hindu and Muslim) in India. For example 'The capon burns; the pig falls from the spit' (I II: 44) was removed as this could have offended the Hindu and Muslim sensibility. In this connection, *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance (2005)* highlights cultural variations in the representation of Shakespeare in this part of the world. This book leads one into a comprehensive investigation of conditions and constraints of projecting Shakespeare that are different from those in the West.

On the whole, Shakespeare's contribution to enriching both English language and literature in general has been unanimously acknowledged by scholars and directors. His linguistic faculty, his dexterity in vernacular usage and, above all, the universality of his themes continue to exert their power even in heavily edited versions such as those brought out by Bevington and Kastan. To many, his works are Shakespearean because of the power of his language and figures of speech; if the translations or adaptations and scripts for actors do not recognize his canonical phrases, they disable a faithful dramatic representation. That's true for English to English adaptations and

appropriations. But to consider his translations and appraisals in a different language, one needs to include local constraints and contexts of performance. Harish Trivedi is of the view that merely translating the concept of 'love' in *Romeo and Juliet* to convey fully its cultural value is to investigate the growth of modern India's sense and sensibility (2005: 75). Attempts have been made to institutionalize Shakespeare based on different performative modes, which has resulted in reading from the postmodern, postcolonial, intertextual, neo-liberal and a host of other standpoints.

### **Shakespeare and Cultural Studies**

Nationalist appropriation is one way of studying Shakespeare. It means that prior to independence; Indian dramatists used Shakespeare as a model to build a national identity and a unified nation. Many of his plays were translated into regional languages and were performed at fairs. In Germany for instance, the Bard's Germanic affinity was used to generate a national literature consisting of his works reappropriated and performed with variations. As he was performed between the two World Wars, the private values were subordinated to public ones in tragedies with heroic leadership dominating (Habicht 1989: 110-15). These plays helped the natives understand the concepts of justice, equality, liberty and education. While informing on these concepts, the plays emphasized more on English values but with a regional flavor. No sooner did the natives graduate to that level of understanding; the English rulers passed the reins of the government into their hands. This would mean that Shakespeare not only civilized the natives but was also responsible for their freedom. This seems rather a skewed viewpoint contested against in the light of Charles Grant's<sup>2</sup> own statement:

The primary objective of Great Britain, let it be acknowledged, was rather to discover what could be obtained from her Asiatic subjects, than how they could be benefited. In process of time, it was found expedient to examine how they might be benefited in order that we might continue to hold the advantages which we at first derived from them....[Their] happiness is committed to our care<sup>3</sup>

If the theory of colonial instigation is considered, then Shakespeare arrived in India with the arrival of the British. The Bard's work found appreciation among masses on its own irrespective of any ulterior policy of the British government. The Empire landed in India with a mercantile purpose and soon strengthened her hold in the subcontinent through legal, bureaucratic and military procedures. Shakespeare's arrival here was more a matter of education than a harbinger of modernity or entertainment. The importance of English language among the colonial intellectuals, and Shakespeare as a means to prevail Anglicism over Orientalism, are other concerns. Proponents of this theory contend that since there was no movement to change the existing conventions followed in the theatre, the artists looked to Shakespeare and produced hybrid plays. The hybridization caused immense change in both the directions: conqueror is enslaved by the indigene and vice versa. In a counter blast to this theory of colonial instigation, I argue that he was forced to come to India as a tool of cultural imposition since he was the cultural icon of the British society.

Intercultural revision is the most experimental type of Indian Shakespeare that avoids political negotiations with canonical texts and moves in self-conscious, aesthetic realms. When we say intercultural, we mean deliberately adapting Shakespeare in a mode and meaning distinct from the time and place of its earliest representation. In fact, this concerns all that which the West considers outside the aesthetics of the Shakespearean plays. Intercultural revision removes Shakespeare's plays from its canonical elements and creates a second text, another identity that is neither original nor entirely new, but the *summum bonum* of the performative interaction. Clearly, the mode relies heavily on the director as a creative mediator. Moreover every live staging of the printed play is an adaptation. The text of the play does not provide copious instructions to actors about such matters as gestures, expressions and tone of voice. So an adapter is free to choose the manner in which he wants to stage the play. Space constraint in the theatre is another factor which demands that the director craftily manage the spectacle on stage (Miller, 48). Gulzar opines that stage constraints make the same play different in every performance; hence watching a play gives the

audience a new experience, unlike a film. In conversations with Nasreen Munni Kabir, he speaks about the physical limitation of the stage:

In a play, you need to develop action and character as you do in the cinema, but the stage itself limits you. Say a man enters a room and looks down from the window at the street below. You can show the man entering, but obviously, you cannot show the street from his point of view. You have to consider the unity of the set, time and place of your story. (2012: 167)

A director going for an intercultural experiment must consider every minute aspect of the script before staging it. For example, while translating *Macbeth*, the witches are given names as *Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati* because the three words are feminine and form a unit, the entire roles and lines spoken by them will have to be changed because names also carry significance in the play. Lending these names will make them divine rather than witches. Regarding stage constraints, that part of the stage where a burial has been shown should not be used for performing a *Yajna* or a *havan* (a Hindu ritual of lighting a consecrated fire to appease Gods). Bhartendu Harishchandra in his translation of *The Merchant of Venice* had faced the queer problem of Jew-Christian relationship, as he could not find any suitable alternative in the Indian scenario. You would find that most of influential practitioners of Shakespeare from Europe like Ariane Mnouchkine or Peter Brook have been severely flayed for their apathy towards the attributes of traditional and religious performance modes of India, because they held that art is exempt from the politics of cultural appropriation.

### **Shakespeare and the Parsi Theatre**

Earlier attempts to universalize Shakespeare across cultures saw critics discussing the reception of his plays based on the principles of human psychology. They maintained that human nature is the same everywhere and transcends the barriers of space and temporality. The Parsi theatre that became conspicuous during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century was known for its Shakespearean performances. Pestonji Framji started a company in 1868. This touring company made a fortune by performing in western theatrical techniques in the province of Bombay. Emboldened

by the success of the Framji's company, other Parsis also started their companies and performed *The Merchant of Venice* as *Dilfarosh*, *Comedy of Errors* as *Bhoobhulayya*, *The Winter's Tale* as *Muradshoak*, *Cymbeline* as *Zulm Naza*, *Measure for Measure* as *Husnaara*, *Romeo and Juliet* as *Bazme Phani*, *Hamlet* as *Kohhon – e – Wafa*, *Othello* as *Shahid – e – wafa*, *King Lear* as *Har Jeet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* as *Kali Nagin*. By 1870 more than 20 Parsi companies had sprung up in Bombay. Flamboyant acting, hyperbolic speeches, exotic curtains and sceneries in the backdrop and mesmerizing music marked their productions. These companies toured all over India and went as far as Singapore and Rangoon. While performing in different colonies of the British Empire, they carried on the Empire's mission of 'civilizing the natives' through spectacle and drama. According to Loomba, the presence of Shakespeare on Parsi stage negotiated discourses on colonial formation, decolonization, national culture, post colonization and a new world order. Thus as the larger plan of the British Empire, Shakespeare was begun to be taught and staged as an instructor, a politician, a reformer and as a management *guru*. But people change with years. The moral principles according to which our ancestors lived their lives may not hold the same distinction today. Similarly, the perception towards how we see a particular action of a character varies according to cultures. For example, in Christian Europe a suicide is seen as 'dishonoring the God's will' a mortal sin that brings damnation; Sikhs on the other hand have a very strong belief in reincarnation and rebirth. An act of killing in the hope of rebirth might be the best solution available to lovers separated by cause or family feuds and they see suicide with optimism as in *Heer Ranjha*, *Mirza Sahiba*, *Sohni Mehwal* and other tragic romances of Punjab. Thus, one would find many instances of context being changed to suit the cultural difference. The difference between what Shakespeare was and what he appears to us now is so big that critics have tended to recognize a separate category of plays from nations that have a history of cultural struggle against the colonial rule and India is one among them. The matters concerning Christianity, theatrical method, verse and psychology of characters are so different today that it calls for a distinct level of understanding. Since the attitude and the perception of individuals change with time, Shakespearean criticism in the recent years has shifted its focus to the performative history between

the great divide of five centuries, his immigration/emigration into a different culture and the difference in reception of his plays.

The English Speaking nations did not approve of the bulldozing of Shakespeare's language to contemporary idiom; it is a different matter that it helped in teaching him easier in schools and colleges. The actors lent a simplified version of the plays purged of archaic English. For instance *The Merchant of Venice* in English may appear to be a pack of quotations, but in Hindi, Krishna Hasrat's *Ek Aurat Ki Vakalat* (The Pleading of one Woman 1908) it is a new play. It is different because this translation emphasizes on the dexterity of heroine in interpreting the law (Trivedi 2005: 51). The less knotty version in turn became sources for further adaptations and came in handy for appropriating local circumstances and social history. As Walter Benjamin in *The Task of the Translator* writes, 'Translation is not the rending of some fixed nontextual meaning to be copied or paraphrased or reproduced; rather, it is an engagement with the original text that make us see that text in different ways (1992: 77)', the loss of the original languages in the translated text (seen more in a performative mode) is redeemed by the gains in contemporaneity.

This paper does not intent to compile in a single document a comprehensive study on Shakespeare adaptations in India, which would be impossible given the copious criticism and national issues associated with these performances from time to time. However, there is a pragmatic reason to strengthen the 'indigenous studies' model that serves to show Asian literature and art distinct from the West. To a non-western scholar, area studies is a part of cultural anthropology that considers Shakespeare as a 'pre-modern fixed entity' institutionalized and disseminated through indigenous values of approximation. This approach is important that it gives local and cultural performances of Shakespearean its due. Earlier criticism could not transit well between foreign cultures and was fettered in western imperialism hence limited in scope. The 'anglo-centric' approach annexed the Shakespearean productions in India to anglophone initiatives leaving a major chunk of artists playing and performing Shakespeare in their regional languages.

The first performance of Shakespeare in India was by amateur English actors who performed for the British officials and other educated *babus* in Kolkata and Mumbai in the 1770's. However, the interest generated by these small productions soon spread among the natives particularly with the Indian bourgeoisie, who borrowed the colonial edification initiatives to reset the performative tradition. The *Hindu Theatre* of Kolkata opened in 1831 with performances on *Julius Caesar* and an English translation of a classic Sanskrit play. The popularity of European forms of theatre soon spread to other areas with the coming up of Parsi Theatre Company that toured widely and performed plays in English and local languages for commercial gains. Shakespeare was a regular feature in Parsi theatres. A free adaptation of *Hamlet* titled *Khoon – e – Nahak* by Ahsan Lucknawi in 1900 pulled in more crowds than any other production. Agha Hashr Kashmiri blended traditional Indian music with European stagecraft and enthralled the audience with his *Safed Khoon* (an adaptation of *King Lear*), *Said – e – Hawas* (adaptation of *King John*) and *Khwab – e – Hasti* (adaptation of *Macbeth*). The Parsi Theatre also staged some Gujrati adaptations of Shakespeare, which included Dinshaw Talyarkhan's *Nathari Firangiz Thekani Avi* (a translation of *The Taming of the Shrew*) in 1852. Through this translation, Talyarkhan delights the audience in watching Kate tamed. The clever use of the title *Nathari Firangiz* indicates that Kate was not Indian but a Firangi, a European female. Other than the Pestonji Company, another company *The Victoria* also cashed in on Shakespeare and for staging Gujrati adaptations. The Gujratis also formed their own associations as the one called *Desi Natak Samaj* founded by Dayabhai Dhoshalji in 1897. This samaj staged independent plays like *Ashrumati* and *Veenavali* crafted on similar lines as those of *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*. Of all their productions, one free adaptation of *Othello* titled, as *Soubhagaya Soundari* was immensely popular. Here Othello is not shown as a Black Moor but is a handsome boy who does not know his identity. Desdemona falls in love with him and elopes with him into the kingdom of Othello's father. On learning about Othello's bravery, the King appoints him as the commander of the army, the position earlier held by Iago. This makes Iago jealous and he contrives to poison Othello against

Desdemona. Othello throws Desdemona into the river but she is rescued by Othello's mother. In the end, Iago confesses his guilt, all misunderstandings are cleared and the King is reconciled with his lost son Othello. The play ends with the coronation of Othello (Loomba 1997: 122). Shakespeare had a strong influence in the establishing of the indigenous Gujrati theatre. Though the plays followed a seven to ten acts structures as delineated in the Sanskrit dramaturgy, they bore traces of resemblances with popular Shakespearean works like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. The Parsi Theatre in indianizing the Shakespearean plays worked mainly on the story's emotional turbulence and violence of action. This means that they removed much of what is thought of as essentially Shakespearean from the plays still they are recognized for widely performing the Bard within the Indian theatrical scene. Ania Loomba regards the escalation in Shakespearean representations as one of colonial India's ironies. Strangely enough, the interest in the foreign dramatist didn't lessen after independence; Geoffrey Kendal with her 'Shakespeare Wallah' performed extensively in South Asia until 1960's. Other companies carried on the their individual performative traditions, some of them are maintained to this day and can be seen in regular Shakespearean play productions in NSD (National School of Drama), IPTA, Prithvi Theatres and other eminent theatre schools. It is important to acknowledge the work of Utpal Dutt, who made changes to the Shakespearean text in an attempt to construct an appropriative regional and nationalist identity at large. Dutt was Bengali actor and director and worked with Kendal in 1947. Dutt revived *Jatra*, a folk theatre of the working class, by adapting Shakespeare into the mythic life of the villagers.

Not many critics approve of Shakespearean texts being 'tinkered with' and adulterated into a new language and for representation in lesser known exotic performative modes which they contend, do not show Shakespeare but someone else. What are they adapting? What part of him? How do they estimate him as a theater director or a writer? Do they appropriate his stature in India as a culture ambassador or an imperialist product? Contemporary issues are traced to Shakespearean text and its relevance aggressively contested as 'he said it'. Shakespeare's presence is phenomenal even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; thanks to industrious

interpretations by the academy, commercial appropriations by TV channels and a host of other activities bringing out new meanings in his text thus ensuring his immortality in future. Are these interpretations same everywhere? Does an Indian take on Shakespeare in theatre, or film or in a dance form invoke the same emotion response (*rasa*) in an audience irrespective of culture and nationality? Obviously not. The response will be different for different cultures and would vary according to the mode of representation. The make-up of the actors, their style of dressing, *mise-en-scene*, will decide how a play will be received. By performing Shakespeare in a particular mode – say the *Kathakali* dance form and claiming to have made him Indian doesn't suffice. In this dance form the makeup of the artists are done so as to create stereotypical characters – that are absolutely divine or devilish. Then Hamlet and Horatio will be represented as absolutely virtuous and the King and Polonius as absolutely nefarious, thus destroying the psychological complexity and moral turpitude within the characters. That's why the presentation for *King Lear* as a Kathakali dance at Edinburgh Festival in 1990 drew severe flak from both Western and Indian critics. It is not a matter of one or two variants to define Shakespeare but a multitude of them combining to make him more than their sum.

Edward Said reminds us that the Orient has a deeply problematic history and what we call Asia is not made up of a one landmass but scattered masses with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world's population. Harish Trivedi notes that there are merely 5% of the Indians competent enough to understand Shakespeare. However, that 'mere' percentage amounts to 60 million people, the approximate population of The UK. The People's Linguistic Survey of India has claimed that at present there are 780 different languages spoken in this country. With a multitude of ethnic groups, religious communities and cultures, it becomes difficult to ascertain that Indians have a unified approach to Shakespeare across this diversity. It bids that local issues and social structures will exert influence on theatre practitioners to use Shakespeare the way they want. All adapters took a free rein in changing details of style, above all metaphor. Not all of Shakespearean fans will be pleased with the adapter's work. Given the situation, the *Natyasastra* a theoretical treatise

on Indian performing arts, can offer a pragmatic framework for understanding Shakespeare productions in different parts of India. Though comparisons have been made between Greek and Indian drama and early historians (usually westerners) attributed Greek influence to Sanskrit plays. However, there was a vast repository of epics, religious beliefs and mythology in India to provide creative impetus to playwrights. The *Mahabharata* and The *Ramayana* themselves were veritable gold mines for prospective writers. Moreover, Indian drama is vastly different from those of Greeks in subject matter, plot and sentiments. Greek drama has only two forms: comedy and tragedy, in contrast *Natyasastra* identifies ten types of plays ie *roopakas*.

### Shakespeare in Sanskrit

R Krishnamacharya did the earliest of the Sanskrit translation of *The Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1892. This and other translations were meant for reading than performing that is why the Sanskrit version of *The Merchant of Venice* could be staged only in 1964. A group of scholars did one translation of *Hamlet* titled *Candrasenah: Durgadesasya Yuvarajah* in 1980. Here *Hamlet's* indecision about avenging the death of his father has been explained in his change from *rajasic* to the *sattvik* character (Ramaswami: 1999). In this adaptation, moral dilemma and turpitude within the conscience have been probed from the Indian religious and philosophical viewpoints. According to Hindu philosophy wealth brings in its train a number of other evils which act as a hindrances on the path of God-Realization. Bharata in his *Natyasastra* mentions about three gunas viz *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamasa*. The *sattvika* aims at light and knowledge, the second is limited to selfish desires and third kind is where every action is governed by external influences. A *tamsaic* person squanders money on frivolous pursuits and utilizes it in oppressing others. He is deprived of the guidance of reason and is smitten by evil desires. In keeping with the Sanskrit tradition, *Hamlet* does not die on stage but is shown to leave the world of *Maya* the goddess of illusion in Hindu mythology. It is under of the influence of *Maya* that men possessing sagacity and wisdom forget their duty and become attracted to the glamour of materialism.

## Shakespeare in Kolkata

The Bengalis were the first to Indianize Shakespeare to appeal to the native taste. Haran Chandra Ghose rendered in prose and verse the Bengali adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* named *Bhanumati Cittavilas* in 1853. This adaptation Indianized the dramatis personae of the original play and focused only on Portia, the heroine of the play. Likewise, another Bengali translation of the same play titled *Suralata* (1877) though it retains most of the original text, gives importance has been given to heroine than the merchant. In Sanskrit theatre, the romantic and the melodramatic were the most popular genres. Because the most accessible emotions that humans can experience are love and sorrow, the most common *rasas* displayed in theatre were *sringara* and *karuna*. Women characters were so developed that they alone could handle the prominent *rasas* in the play. Moreover, classic theatres borrowed heavily from religion and mythology where women characters were seen as the epitome of virtue and values. Hence, in those days there existed a trend of naming the drama after the women characters of the play.

In 1860, Dinabandhu Mitra wrote the first tragedy for Bengali stage titled *Nila Darpana*. This was the story of the death of each member of native indigo planters family because of the tyranny and greed of the European masters. The play modeled on the five-act Shakespearean division of the plot became immensely popular with the Bengali community. The Indian theatre shaped by the canonical theories of *rasa* and *dhvani* was supported by aristocratic families for centuries. When the Moughals came they added Urdu couplets into the art and altered the aesthetic structure to suit the taste of the affluent Mohamedens. For example a play *Shahjahan* (1910) by Dvijendralal Ray was modeled on *King Lear* (Yajnik: 217). It shows the life of Mogul Emperor Shahjahan whose son Aurangzeb usurps the throne by overthrowing his three brothers and incarcerating the old king. Though the theme was different the manner of the treatment, mode of expression and speeches all recalled the spirit of the English tragedy. The Emperor raves like Lear in the famous storm scene of *King Lear*: 'Oh Earthquake, arise with a terrible noise and tear the bosom of this earth into a thousand

pieces'. Another striking resemblance with the Shakespearean play is the character of *Dildar* which is modeled on Lear's Fool. Ray has followed the Shakespearean practice of mixing comic elements in the tragic plays to create a tragic-comic effect.

Cinema in Bengal as an organized endeavor will complete 84 years in 2014. Unlike Mumbai where the religious and mythological themes dominated the early period, in Bengal the tradition of literature and theatre influenced the outlook of the filmmakers. Prabodh Maitra writes about the Bengali cinema:

right from the beginning 'social' emerged in no time, thanks to the time-tested popularity of Bankimchandra, Ranbindranath and Saratchandra. The latter two were in the fullness of their creative life in the twenties and the thirties and their presence was itself a source of inspiration. Literary material was considered 'safe' as the audience was supposed to be familiar with the big names and perhaps the content of the stories and novels and milieu in which the most stories were woven. The middle class audience lapped up the screen version of the famous books. (1995: 244)

The influence of literature on cinema was so strong that some producers in Calcutta particularly New Theatres, shot double versions of the same film in Bengali and Hindi to extend the market beyond Bengal. The flavor of the Bengali literary was often a sure success formula in other parts of the country hence the vogue of Hindi films like *Devdas* (Dir. PC Barua 1936), *Parineeta* (Dir. Bimal Roy 1953, Dir. Pardeep Sarkar 2005) and *Sahib Biwi aur Gulam* (Dir. Gurudutt 1962) which were inspired by their Bengali versions of the same name. On the Shakespearean front *Bhrantibilas* (1963) was the screen adaptation of Vidyasagar's *Bhranti Vilas* which itself was based on *The Comedy of Errors*. With Bengali literature already rich, Shakespeare found little representation in the Bengali Film Industry. If at all he has been used, it has been only to get recognition in the international arena. While discussing the inset performance of Shakespeare in *Shakespeare Wallah* together with two Bengali art films *Saptapadi* (Dir. Ajoy Kar 1961) and *36 Chowringhee Lane* (Dir. Aparna Sen 1981), Richard Burt writes:

The common melodramatic focus in these three films on the twin losses of Shakespeare and of romantic love, serves not to localize or indigenize Shakespeare in Indian Cinema but to use Shakespeare's obsolescence as a means of entering the world cinema. (2010:73)

### **Shakespeare in Mumbai**

Shakespeare's adaptations in the Province of Bombay were different from those of the Bengali versions. Here the dramatists expressed their revolt against the British rule and laid emphasis of the distinct Indian culture as opposed to the liberal west. V K Kirtane produced *Thorale Madavro Peshwe*, that was billed as the first Marathi tragedy in 1862. Nanasahab Peshwa's *Hamlet* in Marathi was written in an active nationalist and revolutionary spirit. Such Shakespearean translations created a new wave of changing social norms in terms of caste hierarchy and gender relations in the Indian society. When Mahadev Govindshastri adapted *Romeo and Juliet* in 1882 it became immensely popular. The audience could relate the lovers with legends of *Laila and Majnu*, *Shirin and Farhad*, *Heer and Ranjha* and *Sohini and Mahiwal*. Agarkar's *Vikara Vilasit* (1883) was the adaptation of *Hamlet*. The play was Indianized rather Sanskritized to a large extent. It followed some rules of performance in the Sanskrit traditions. Familiar episodes like the *Ashwathma – Drona* episode from the epic *Mahabharata*, replaced the allusion to European myths and legends. Even Shaleya (Polonius) pours didactic Sanskrit verses in Act I scene ii. In keeping with the decorum of the Indian stagecraft, lines with suggestions of coition were removed or changed to convey a different meaning. For example *Hamlet's* words to Ophelia, 'Lady, shall I lie in your lap?' (Act II, ii 101) have been changed to 'Will you allow me sit beside you?' (Das: 79). The translation is strengthened with Mallika's (Ophelia) sad but sweet songs rendered in Marathi lyrics. Nana Jog was another Marathi writer who worked hard to bring out a three act adaptation of *Hamlet* in 1957 which to this day, is hailed as the Marathi parallel of the Bard's blank verse. As Marathi theatre has forever been related to social reform and revolution, Marathi heroes like Pratap and Shivaji modeled on Shakespearean heroes (Richard III and Henry V), were treated with

greater reverence and pride than Shakespeare treated the originals. The Province of Bombay is now Mumbai and is the buzzing centre of theatre and film related activities. Any discussion on Shakespeare's transformation in Bombay would be incomplete if we did not consider his adaptations in Hindi and Marathi films.

The fascination with Shakespeare and subsequently the establishment of a genre in the history of Bombay theatre dates back to when two reputed filmmakers projected the story of a young prince caught in an intricate political dragnet set up by his uncle. Sohrab Modi's *Hamlet alias Khoon ka Khoon* (1935) and Kishore Sahu's *Hamlet* (1954) are the earliest experiments with the Bard. The former production was inspired by an English stage performance and the latter bore much from Laurence Olivier's 1948 adaption of *Hamlet* on screen. Bollywood<sup>4</sup> directors however have worked with far more flexibility and freedom while adapting popular works for films. You would find adaptations with many divergences from the declared principles. For example, Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara* (2006) tries to suppress the unpleasant aspects of even villains like Iago and Roderego. Roderego (Rajju) is changed in the *prasangika* (sub-plot) to a gentleman who is betrothed to Desdemona (Dolly) and Iago (Langda Tyagi) is changed in the *adhikarika* (main-plot) from villain to a character who explains that he did not want Generalship but was fed up of his wayward living and wanted salvation from the hands of *Omkaara*. Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* expands the character of Lady *Macbeth* from a scheming and manipulative adulteress to a conscience smitten repentant until a more sustained balance is achieved. Though violence was fashionable on the Restoration stage, Bhardwaj avoids vivid gruesome and coldblooded scenes in these gangster films. In the event of unavoidable death of the principal character, contemporized *Maqbool* ends with the birth of an heir who appears to survive after *Maqbool*'s death. Similarly to remove the violations of poetic justice, Langda Tyagi (Iago) is made to die at the hands of his wife Indu (Emilia).

Other areas where adapters have worked on are the songs, spectacles and item numbers which were added to the films as attractions. Music and dance play an important part in the Indian film

industry and songs can be composed for almost any dramatic situation. Mansoor Khan's *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) loosely based on *Romeo and Juliet* was a musical hit and had six songs composed by Anand – Milind. Since an average Indian film has five songs and if the length of one song is like 3-4 minutes, it takes up about twenty minutes of the performative time. This led to heavily edited versions of the canonical texts.

### **The Intercultural Experiment**

Despite the obvious success stories, serious problems beset the representation of Shakespeare in Indian theatre and cinema in contemporary times, ranging from possible extinction of rich traditions of performance to the dubious social influence and popularity of the domineering commercial Hindi films to the onslaughts of western satellite television that hook ordinary viewers. A multifarious heritage is in danger of becoming transformed in a tasteless melting pot where the idea of art itself is threatened. Yet many dedicated and often unrecognized artists continue to produce new, thoughtful creations, which I have highlighted in this paper. The juxtapositioning of two different cultures to create a hybrid has never been an easy task for theatre and film professionals. There are instances of the entire story been recycled and made into a new product that bears little affinity with the original text. However, there are other faithful adaptations as Nana Jog's Marathi translation of *Hamlet* that labours to preserve even the blank verses of the Shakespearean texts. Other theatrical experiments like Utpal Dutt's mixing of Shakespeare with Bengali folk tradition of *Jatra* was new of its kind. Director Habib Tanvir while working on the intercultural transformation for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the rural Chattisgarh stressed on the urban refinement in an actor who attempts to perform Shakespeare. During one of his intercultural performances, he had to make illiterate actors perform Shakespeare. He hit upon a plan of using the technique of bilingualism especially to deal with the problem of performing 'Pyramus and Thisby' within the play. As a result, the Duke and his entourage spoke English; people in the woods conversed in Urdu and artisans would opt for their Chattisgarhi dialect.

Anyone who practices a craft belongs to his or her own culture but also to the culture of the craft. He or she has a cultural identity shaped by a long history of the performative tradition. The search for the identity of the Sanskrit theatre has inevitably become a sustained effort to understand the regional ethos that is preserved and practiced in the numerous living theatrical forms of the entire country. Theories of the *Natyasastra* originated in certain practices, which prevailed in different regions of India from very ancient times. These practices originated in various performances of different regions including those of the aboriginals and isolated communities known as tribes. The realization of this fact prompted many directors to probe into the essential element of the regions theatrical traditions. The *Natyasastra* and the Sanskrit tradition will continue to guide the director/adaptor in his intercultural productions. More references to the staging of Shakespeare's plays in Indian languages in India can be found in the Shakespeare Centre, Stratford – on – Avon, and the Shakespeare collection of the Birmingham Central Library. Similar information and references must be lying unnoticed in our country. It will be quite a job to trace all these material but someone ought to start before they get lost.

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### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> R.W. Desai in his reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has contested that Shakespeare has never stood for English or England.
- <sup>2</sup> Charles Grant was one of the earliest administrators of the East India Company.
- <sup>3</sup> Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers (1831-32). General Appendix, "Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain", as quoted in Gauri Viswanathan. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.p 26
- <sup>4</sup> The term Bollywood refers to the specific genre of films produced since the 1990s. It does not include variances and alternatives that characterize Indian film history with such movements as the new wave and the realist cinema.

# **Repudiating of Home Culture by Second Generation Immigrants : Jhumpa Lahiri's “*The Namesake*”**

Meena Theresa

Immigrants are a special kind of strangers, who are unacquainted with the ways of the host country. They find themselves confronted with people who speak a foreign language and confront a whole host of social customs that differ markedly from the home. Due to the generation gap, the immigrants and their children, who are considered as second generation immigrants, occupy a different space in the host country. Being born and brought up in the host country they undergo certain traumatic experiences such as nostalgia, rootlessness, identity crisis, alienation, insider-outsider syndromes and the process of assimilation. This results in a total multicultural lifestyle a central theme in many of the second generation writers.

Indeed, it is the second generation of an immigrant family that occupies a particularly vexed position in regard to identity. They have become the outstanding voices for their compatriots because their concerns and cultural pulls have been the same. They confront identity crisis, the feeling of “in-betweenness” experiencing a belonging “nowhere”. Although they celebrate having two homelands, they also experience a dual alienation. They observe a largely static representation of their cultural inheritance in their daily lives and are not accepted because of racial or ethnic differences from the majority.

Jhumpa Lahiri, a second generation immigrant writer imbibes the multicultural life style of the immigrants, which becomes a central theme in her debut novel *The Namesake*. Through this novel Lahiri examines the subtle negotiations of identity in the cultural borderland between India and America. Her novel underscores the evolving nature of both immigrant and mainstream American cultural formation, mainly by depicting, with sensitivity and perspicacity, the lives of these second

generation Americans. Being “an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration” and like her parents having the experience of “the perplexing Bicultural universe” of Calcutta in India and the United States, “Lahiri mines the immigrant experience in a way superior to Bharati Mukherjee and others” (Sinha 2).

Lahiri explores the difficulties of establishing a sense of self for the second generation. “She is a pioneer into the heart of her own heritage, a welder of her Indian memories and western reality” says Anil Padmanabhan and Ishra Bhasi. Lahiri also demonstrates how the second generation immigrants are educated about their home culture, often not through a process of formal education, but as a private, familial experience. Lahiri describes her own acquired knowledge: “I never experienced anything but a very superficial interests from my friends and my teachers about India and so I never felt motivated to know more. I felt my heritage was a private part of me to be experienced through my home and parents” (Shankar 3).

As a second generation immigrant writer, she portrays the diverse life experiences of immigrant Indians in the host nation. The second generation finds the host culture and values difficult to adopt, but in order to create an identity in the host land they accept and follow the host culture rather than follow their own home culture. The present study is on the repudiating of home culture by the second generation immigrants in *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. According to the *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* the term ‘repudiating’ means “reject, refuse to obey or recognise, deny” (*Illustrated Oxford Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 698). In the novel Gogol, Moushumi and Sonia are the second generation immigrants, who confront identity crisis and experience belonging nowhere, especially during their interaction with the people of the host country. They are caught between two worlds- one unacceptable, the other unaccepting, they ultimately become outsiders to themselves in this search for identity. They comfortably adapt themselves to the new environment and their assimilation is tension free. They are ready to accept the host culture by rejecting the home culture to create an identity. But whether they are accepted into the main stream of western life or not is a moot point.

One thread that binds the novel is the name Gogol, which itself is an accident caused by collision between ancient Bengali custom and American rush into formality at the outset. Through a series of errors, the first generation Bengali immigrants Ashoke and Ashima nickname their son Gogol, which becomes his official birth name. Gogol's discomfort with his name increases as he grows older. As he prepares to set foot in the outside world, he feels more and more uncomfortable about his name. It signifies to him an identity that he is uncomfortable with, which he wants to cast aside: "...his name, an entity shapeless and weightless, manages nevertheless to distress him physically like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear"(76). He is deluded by a false sense of freedom as he legally changes his name to Nikhil, feeling "stunned at how easy it is" (102). Gogol and Sonia, having been brought up in America, are more at ease in their day to day life than their parents are. They behave and speak like Americans, and "salesmen...prefer to direct their conversation to Gogol, as though his parents were either incompetent or deaf"(67-68). Though Gogol and Sonia have adopted and assimilated the culture of the host country to get an identity, they are only accepted as a part and parcel of the host country, but their identity is related to the migrant history of their parents and grandparents.

When Gogol gets a fellowship, his parents think that he will choose the MIT, which is his father's *alma mater* and would move to Massachusetts. But instead, he chooses Columbia University for his Architectural Programme and moves to New York, a place not known to them. The reason being that he wants to be away from home and his parents. He doesn't want to go home on weekends, "to go with them to pujas and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world"(126).

It is common knowledge that "identities have always been results of many cultural interrelations" (Vipin Kumar 57), and so plenty of cultural varieties have to be there for a person to choose and inculcate, rather constitute his distinctive identity. Gogol stands for all those second generation Indian-Americans who have ultimately found their identity in a foreign land. His immediate response to his discomfort

is to reject his Indian self by changing his name from Gogol to Nikhil. As Nikhil, his attempt is to live like an American teenager, by imitating the things the American guys do. Gogol like an American, dates girls and Sonia his sister dates an American. Gogol, in his affairs with the American girls Ruth and Maxine, emerges as the Lyotardian amnesic who thinks that by forgetting his distinct cultural identity, he will be able to merge with the mainstream. He discovered that there is a vast difference between the identity his father preserved after coming to the foreign land, and the identities that he attempted to create for himself.

He joins a new firm and does well. He uses his name Nikhil here and feels: "There is a possibility of eventually becoming an associate, of the firm incorporating his name. And in that case Nikhil will live on, publicly celebrated, unlike Gogol purposely hidden, legally diminished, now all but lost" (290). Living in the cultural borderlands, Gogol speaks Bengali to his parents at home and English to his girlfriend Maxine's family. This way he becomes South Asian with his Indian parents and American with his girlfriend and her family. He constantly integrates and balances these cultural forces, creating and recreating his identity based on his personal needs.

Gogol, despite of his life-long residency in America and rejection of much of his home culture, is invariably identified with India. At Maxine's summer house, Gogol encounters Pamela, a middle-aged white woman who insists on viewing him as Indian. "But you're Indian," Pamela says, frowning. "I'd think the climate wouldn't affect you, given your heritage"(157). Maxine's mother corrects Pamela, asserting that Gogol is American; but later she too hesitates and asks him if he was actually born in the United States. Everything comes to an end and Gogol soon gets over the love he developed for Maxine. He loses the chance of entering into wedlock with a lovely and cultured Maxine, through which he loses the chance to lead an American life, to create an identity.

On the advice of his mother he marries a Bengali girl named Moushumi, daughter of old friends of Ashima. She too is a second generation immigrant, whose affair with Graham had ended on the eve

of their marriage when she had heard him criticizing her relatives and life in Calcutta. He had said that he had found their life style “repressing” and again, “Imagine dealing with fifty in-laws without alcohol. I even couldn’t hold her hand on the street without attracting stares”(217).

Both Gogol and Moushumi are assimilated in the American culture, while keeping their home culture. Throughout their relationship they follow the American lifestyle with a Bengali subculture. They occasionally use Bengali phrases in their language and have traditional Bengali ceremonies in order to please their families. Moushumi experiences the same struggles that Gogol has between the home culture and the host culture and does not want to marry a boy like Gogol, who has a Bengali background. Like Gogol, she too hates the name ‘Gogol’. Gogol feels that they are living a normal married life but gets hurt when she refuses the name Moushumi Ganguly. Her aim is to be with her white schoolmate, whom she met during a journey. She wants to be with a white American named Dimitri and this becomes the reason for their divorce. Moushumi’s attitude of not sticking to one culture or country shows how the second generation immigrants are becoming Global and becoming multi-cultural and are exploring new identities. Her decision to control her own cultural identity may well prove to be the normative behaviour of the later generations, but by this act the actual home culture diminishes.

Gogol, who has passed through many emotional setbacks because of his bicultural identity is feeling dejected, distressed, displaced and lonely at the end. He is confused and doesn’t know what to do after this because his wife has left, his father has passed away and his mother has left to India. Gogol, the confused *deshi* (native) seems to appear decisive and when he comes back to Pemberton road for the last time, he chances upon the book of short stories that his father had given him on his fourteenth birthday. Gogol had not read the book and now after his failure in all the attempts for creating identity, he starts reading the book. Thus the novel ends with Gogol reading the book, which symbolises the course he will follow in later life.

Caught between the two worlds in search of identity, the second generation immigrants appear to be returning to their world. Lahiri has described the experience of the immigrants as a change, which leads to social evolution and so we may take some and lose some. Being a second generation immigrant writer she becomes the perfect voice of her immigrant characters. Many of her characters in her novel wish to mix up or marry within their community. They come back to that even after some misadventure somewhere else. Lahiri is nostalgic about the past and it seems that she strongly wishes to go back to that homeland. At the end of it all, we may manage to survive and we may remain 'we'. So no matter how these second generation immigrants try to assimilate into the native culture, there is always a consciousness, which haunts them that they are outsiders.

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# Spiritual Ecology of Gerard Manley Hopkins

“And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;”  
 (“God’s Grandeur” – Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Dr Lima Antony

Gerard Manley Hopkins, a priest-poet of the nineteenth century, is noted for his originality of style and poetic excellence. He remained almost unknown as a poet during his lifetime and also for many years after his death in 1889. Ever since the publication of the first edition of his poems in 1918, there has been a growing interest in the exquisite sensibility, spiritual depth, and meticulous craftsmanship of his poetry. It is only recently that his ecological concerns have attracted academic interest. This paper intends to illustrate that the insight of Hopkins that the unique, individual form and pattern in nature including human selves will reveal the beauty, grandeur and transcendence of the divine may offer a lasting solution to our ecological crisis.

Awareness is now slowly growing that the world is on the brink of a great spiritual transformation. This hope is expressed not only by spiritually minded people or religious groups, but by scientists, thinkers, artists and those who show great concern for ecology. Bruno Guiderdoni, an astrophysicist at the Observatory of Lyon, France remarks: “The notion that fact can be cleanly separated from value is absurd. The notion that our understanding of the material world can be cleanly separated from our experience of the spiritual world is impossible.” This view of reality also finds expression in Bruce A. Schumm’s recent work on subatomic physics with the title, *Deep Down Things*, a phrase adapted from the above quoted lines from Hopkins’s poem, “God’s Grandeur”: “The connection to the devotional poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins is also well made; whether one is religious or not, to appreciate particle physics is to appreciate the miracle of nature” (ix). With deeper exploration into the subatomic world the old

definitions of the separation between the physical and the non-physical are undergoing drastic changes. Hopkins's insight that nature reveals unique forms and patterns is endorsed in the research in particle physics and higher mathematics with the model of reality as "form and pattern." To some of these scientists the form and pattern of nature reveals insight into a divine pattern resembling the inscape of Hopkins.

The destruction of ecology occurring now all over the world at an alarming intensity is causing deep distress among thinking and sensitive people. But the destruction of values and spirituality among many modern cultures along with ecological degradation is more vicious; perhaps a sinister manifestation of the destruction of the "internal ecology" or micro-ecology of the spirit. Lerner observes that "the upsurge of Spirit is the only plausible way to stop the ecological destruction of our planet. Even people who have no interest in a communal solution to the distortions in our lives will have to face up [to] this ecological reality. Unless we transform our relationship with nature, we will destroy the preconditions for human life on this planet" (138). More than forty years ago a noted historian Lynn White observed: "Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion" (1203-07). So the attempt to see ecological degradation in the context of spirituality, to see the ecological crisis as a spiritual crisis, is being researched in many leading universities.

In the prologue to *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*, Leslie E. Sponsel defines "spiritual ecology" as "the diverse, complex, and dynamic arena of intellectual and practical activities at the interfaces between religions and spiritualities(sic) on the one hand and on the other ecologies, environments, and environmentalisms"(xiii). A bibliographical search of "spirituality and ecology" on Google search engine yields lists of large number of studies, especially of book length, numbering up to 700. But when the search is narrowed down to "spirituality and ecology" related to Christianity the list of book length studies gets reduced to 29. There are also a large number of websites on this subject which are multiplying at an amazing rate. When the search is still narrowed to "Hopkins spiritual ecology" on Google scholar

(accessed on 24 June 2014) there are only nine results, out of which 7 are related to a research article on Hopkins's ecological concerns in "Binsey Poplars" which has drawn considerable attention from Hopkins scholars. This article traces the origin of "Binsey Poplars" to a hitherto unknown poem called "The Old Trees" by Manley Hopkins, the father of Gerard Hopkins. This poem first appeared anonymously in the weekly *Hampstead & Highgate Express* (December 28, 1878) as a response to a public controversy over the decision of the Trustees of the Wells Charity to cut down the trees on one side of the avenue in Well Walk. Mariacconcetta Costantini remarks: "A new impulse to compare their poetry has come from a recent essay published by Jude Nixon, which uncovers the text of the Manley poem on the Well Walk trees that for years had remained speculative" (487-510).

According to Brian J. Day, scholarly work on ecological concerns of Victorian poetry has been very inadequate. He gives a neat summary of the situation in these words:

As an interdisciplinary endeavour, ecocriticism, "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment," has been with us for more than a decade, yet its impact on the study of Victorian literature has been slight, and on Victorian poetry even less. Jonathan Bate devotes part of a chapter to John Ruskin and William Morris in his ground-breaking study *Romantic Ecology*, but little else appeared until the publication of *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature*, an essay collection edited by John Parham. In his own contribution to the volume, "Was there a Victorian Ecology?" Parham briefly lays out the ecocritical credentials and potential of a number of Victorian writers, asserting, in the final paragraph, that "[Gerard Manley] Hopkins was the one Victorian poet who consistently, imaginatively re-created the specific conditions of the Victorian ecosystem." (170-171)

Purham has recently published a book length study exclusively on the ecological concerns of Hopkins entitled, *Green Man Hopkins: Poetry and the Victorian Ecological Imagination*. Tracing the trajectory of Hopkins

criticism from Robert Bridges, Purham finds the development attaining ecological dimension with the publication of Tom Zaniello's *Hopkins in the Age of Darwin* (1988) and Daniel Brown's *Hopkins' Idealism: Philosophy, Physics, Poetry* (1997). According to him these works "highlight an interest in precisely the ideas that would underlie the origins of ecological science (see, furthermore, Banfield 2007; Beer 1996; Nixon 2002)" (100).

Hopkins's concern for ecological damage can be properly evaluated only in the context of his spiritual, philosophic and artistic vision of reality. His insight into the unity of reality with the self, world and God is the ground of his concern for the delicate relationship between species in the environment. Hopkins's conviction that meaningful discussion of nature is impossible to be considered outside a vision of total ecological relationship between the self, world and God in love and beauty deserves closer study in the light of his *inscape* and *instress*. The observation of Costantini is very relevant:

In responding to his father's bitterness and escapist yearning, Gerard took on more responsibility for the destruction of nature and the experience of loss that awaited the future generations. The ontological commitment he shows, in describing the felling of the poplars, is proof of his particular approach to the world, which was fuelled by two main drives: spirituality and intellectual curiosity. A fervent believer in God's immanence in creation, he was also animated by a keen interest in science, which encouraged him to look at the world objectively. The epistemological framework he developed, which pivoted on the concepts of "*inscape*" and "*instress*," was meant to reconcile these conflicting modes of apprehending reality. In his view, natural observation was the first step to validate the presence of the numinous with scientific exactitude. (487-510)

The romantic poets showed deep concern for the beauty of nature and did not want that beauty to be spoiled. But they were mostly unaware of the ecological implications of the damage to nature with the keenness of perception and philosophical probing manifested in the writings of

Hopkins. Moreover the manifestation of the divine in nature was limited to “intimations” in romantic poetry. As Cary H. Plotkins in *Charles Darwin and Hopkins* remarks, “Nature for Wordsworth contains intimations of a transcendental something which the poet best perceives and so communicates: poetry is, indeed, the only source of such intimations. . . . This is like that. Nature is an analogue of God. This will not prove sufficient for Hopkins.” For Hopkins nature is never mute or passive or lacking individuality like “this is like that,” but “thisness” which God has “charged” with grandeur to last for a long time:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; (*The Poems* 66)

As W. A. M. Peters observes, “The consciousness of the presence of God in things markedly influenced his loving admiration of the inscapes of the world, for as his attention concentrated more and more intensely on the individual and on the individual as ‘charged with love, charged with God’, he came more and more to look upon the object as worthy of a personal love”(7). But thoughtless, selfish human activity often obscures the glory:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell:

the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod. (*The Poems* 66)

But the gloomy picture changes in the sestet of the poem. It contains a beautiful and hopeful picture for an ecologically devastated gloomy “black West.” In spite of the damage human beings have done to ecology “there lives the dearest freshness deep down things.” We find this entry in his *Journals and Papers*: “It is not that inscape does not govern the behaviour of thins in slack and decay . . .” (211). It is for the human spirit to respond by looking hopefully at the Holy Spirit that is waiting to enliven the world with “warm breast and ah! bright wings:”

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
 And though the last lights off the black West went  
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs  
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
 World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
 bright wings. (*The Poems* 66)

Though there was much ecological degradation due to industrialization during the Victorian age, it had not become a pressing issue for that generation. But Hopkins possessed the foresight to anticipate the catastrophe for the successive generations. The poignancy displayed by Hopkins while watching the ecological damage surpasses the sensibilities of romantic ecology. In “Binsey Poplars” he laments:

After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.  
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve  
 Strokes of havoc unselfe  
 The sweet especial scene,  
 Rural scene, a rural scene,  
 Sweet especial rural scene. (*The Poems* 79)

This fear of the “strokes of havoc” makes him an ecopoet and not merely a nature or environmental poet. As Kate Dunning remarks, “A potentially critical difference between environmental poetry and ecopoetry is the desire to issue a “warning of some kind” (67-95). One can find numerous examples of such warnings in Hopkins’s poetry and prose.

Hopkins who was in the habit of discovering with great joy and admiration, sometimes instantly and sometimes with great effort, the individuality of unique forms and pattern in nature, was in anguish when he found such inscapes destroyed:

The ash-tree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lopped first: I heard the sound and looking out and seeing

it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not to see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more. (*Journals and Papers* 230).

The destruction produced deep sorrow and sense of loss because the inscapes of trees and flowers revealed the beauty and glory of God: “I do not think that I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace, like an ash-tree” (*Journals and Papers* 199).

It is interesting to note that Hopkins mentions his concept of “instress” for the first time in the essay on Parmenides’ philosophy of being: “His feeling for instress, for the flush and foredrawn, and for inscape / is most striking and from this one can understand Plato’s reverence for him as the great father of Realism” (*Journals and Papers* 127). Hopkins seems to emphasize Parmenides’ insight that there is no greater truth than being. Truth is equated with being as nothing is truer than being. Assertion of being is the assertion of truth. As Hopkins puts it, “. . . *things are or there is truth*. Grammatically it=*it is or there is*. But indeed I have often felt when I have been in this mood and felt the depth of an instress or how fast the inscape holds a thing that nothing is so pregnant and straightforward to the truth as simple *yes and is*” (*Journals and Papers* 127). The acknowledgement of being by the verbal response of assertion, “yes” or “is” is of great importance for Hopkins. His coinage “instress” is evolved in this context. As J. Hillis Miller points out, the key to “instress” and “inscape” lies in the philosophical insight into being and self (276-317). Paul Mariani in his outstanding biography of Hopkins remarks that his concern for being (developed from his study of Parmenides) was further strengthened by Duns Scotus philosophy and the Ignatian spirituality to develop into a theodicy and a poetics which would facilitate and sing what his whole self—head and heart felt (3).

The attitude of Christianity during certain periods of its development was not favourable to the love and protection of nature. Nature was seen as something to be conquered or exploited, or as an

enemy or temptation for the soul, hindering its passage or progress towards God. We find this attitude in Hopkins too during his boyhood and youth and sometimes in his adulthood as well. This fear finds expression in his prose writings as well as in poems like “Mortal beauty dangerous.” He resolved this conflict to a great extent, at least aesthetically and spiritually if not psychologically, through his discovery of Duns Scotus and the concepts of inscape and instress: “But just then when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus” (*Journals and Papers* 221).

There have been abundant studies of the concept of inscape stressing either the individuality and uniqueness of objects or the unity of pattern. Hopkins’s own varied use of the term in his journals, letters, devotional writings and poems contribute to the multiple interpretations. Dennis Sobolov in his recent study, *The Split World of Gerard Manley Hopkins: An Essay in Semiotic Phenomenology*, after giving an impressive summary of the interpretations of the term by leading scholars comes to his own well informed reading of the concept:

In light of the analogies he proposed (“melody in music” and “design in painting”) one can arguably conclude that in his explanation of the meaning of inscape Hopkins consciously uses two terms whose semantic fields coincide only partially (“design,” “pattern”) in order to foreground two distinct, though related, components of this, the meaning unique form and the structural principle of repetition. (38)

Sobolov’s observation of inscape in 2011 as “the unique form and the structural principle of repetition” holds a striking similarity to the conclusion arrived at by an earlier researcher, Antony, in his doctoral dissertation of 1993. He finds the polarity of inscape to be the “individuality of form” of an object, or a group of similar objects, a species, the unique pattern of a poem, the selfhood of a person and the finding of similarity of pattern, unity or synthesis with Christ or the incarnation of God in space and time: “it is individuality of distinct form or pattern enabling a believer in Christ to have insight into the pervading unity and mystery of being” (32).

Hopkins indicated in the essay on Parmenides that “Being draws being home” through the impression it leaves on the individual observer (*Journals and Papers* 128). The impression may be so powerful that even after the act of observation it remains “to the mind’s eye as fast present here; for absence cannot break off Being from its hold on Being” (*Journals and Papers* 128). According to Purham, “Due to its double-sided quality the concept of instress offered, simultaneously, the reinforcement of a concept of nature analogous to the ecological notion of dialectical interdependence — i.e. the idea that living forms are ‘upheld’ (sustained) by ‘force or energy’ – and an aesthetic principle designed to convey that truth” (131). As Mariani observes, “And when the beheld and the beholder once met, when the essential nature of the thing was instressed upon the eye, ear, tongue, and mind, the heart would not help but rise up as at a sudden unheard symphony, a dance, the heart growing “bold and bolder” as it hurled itself after its Creator, the One who bode there and abided” (3).

Hopkins frequently listened with all his senses to nature, an act of healing we now realize is necessary to make amends for ecological damage. Thomas Berry, a noted writer in this area, remarks on our disconnection with nature: “We are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers, we are not listening to the wind and stars. We have broken the great conversation. By breaking that conversation we have shattered the universe. All the disasters that are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual “autism” (44). Hopkins frequently took in inscape with every sense: “The bluebells in your hand baffle you with their inscape, made to every sense” (*Journals and Papers* 209). He remarks on another occasion: “This is the time to study inscape in the spraying of trees, For the swelling buds carry them to a pitch the eye could not elsegather” (sic) (*Journals and Papers* 205).

Bateson remarks that “our self-reflective purposive consciousness illuminates but a small arc in the currents and loops of knowing that interweave us. It is just as plausible to conceive of mind as coexistent with these larger circuits, with the entire, “pattern that connects.” (qtd. in Lee, 152). Hopkins’s poems provide a therapy for establishing this spiritual connection. Brian John Day argues that for “Hopkins, to see

entities as possessing selfhood is to perceive their Christ-likeness, and that is an ecological perspective supporting a moral ecology in that it is grounded in a recognition of the fundamental interrelatedness of the obligation of humankind to nature” (345).

According to Purham, the development of Hopkins’s theory of being and beauty in his concepts of inscape and instress is the culmination of his ecological theory of being and energy: “Once Hopkins succeeded in the development of a “canon,” by means of his own twinned concepts of inscape and instress, he achieved a fully recognisable Victorian ecology, one which emerged independently from, but in anticipation of, Haeckel’s” (p. 129). Earnest Haeckel, one of the world’s best-known and most-read zoologists, is considered to be the scientist who first named and defined a new science, “Oecologie” (286) and formulated theories of modern ecology by studying the relationship that existed between species. It is interesting to note that some of his sketches bear strong resemblance to the sketches of Hopkins in his *Journals and Papers* on the similarity and difference in pattern of leaves and trees.

The infinite variety of contrasting quality of things and the inexhaustible source of energy in the universe is always a window opening to the glory of God: In *Pied Beauty* Hopkins says,

All things counter, original, spare, strange ;  
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how ?)  
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
 Praise him. (*The Poems* 70)

Again in “Hurrahing in Harvest” he sings ecstatically:

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wieldingshoulder  
 Majestic as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!  
 These things, these things were here and but the beholder  
 Wanting; which two when they once meet,

The heart rears wings bold and bolder  
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him oft  
under his feet. (*The Poems* 70)

In Purham's words, "Understanding occurs, therefore, when, through a cumulative process of observation and verification, the observer begins to intuit God through natural forms. While this is what occurred when Hopkins came to 'know the beauty of our Lord' by the bluebell, the process might also be seen as ecological in that we gain knowledge by focusing both on distinct species and on the flows of energy that maintain them" (138). Going to the Ultimate Being or God through the unique inscapes of trees and other objects, individual selves, and the genuine acknowledgement through instress of the relatedness of rhyming relationship of being is the true ecological consciousness in Hopkins. As Hueser puts it, "every fixed form in nature pointed to an underworld of ideal reality" (21).

The environmental crisis, Sallie McFague asserts, is a theological problem, "a problem coming from views of God and ourselves that encourage or permit our destructive, unjust actions" (31). Assumptions about who we are and who God is are usually taken for granted in a culture and may be seen as too personal, abstract, or intimidating for civil conversation. Yet, all of our day-to-day decisions and actions are rooted in these very deep, and often unexamined, assumptions. So, if we begin to examine and to change these basic assumptions, our behaviour may change as well.

One can regain hope for regeneration not by denying the ugly and the painful in nature or in self. To focus on the fallen and the degraded and to look for the deepest sources of strength and the potential for transformation through the infinite creative energy of God is the hope and the spirit that are deeply implied in the poetry of Hopkins. Our hearts are broken again and again when we hear ecological catastrophies, especially those which are irreversible. How can we retain hope? As the poet Stanley Kunitz puts it, "How shall the heart be reconciled to its feast of losses?" (23).

Hopkins's ecological concerns derive from his Christo-centric vision of nature, the incarnation of the Divine in time and space, which takes us to the heart of his aesthetics, theology and spirituality, namely *inscape* and *instress*. We find in his poems the attempt to "read" God's purpose in nature, both in its beautiful as well as frightening aspects. The rainbow tells a story, the storm teaches a lesson, and the bluebells reveal the beauty and strength of God. All the glory, mystery and beauty of nature require human selves to respond with "yes." It calls for deep acknowledgement, a response of *instress* of the *inscapes*. As Cotter puts it, "Instress is man's *yes* in response to Being felt and known; *inscape*, the *is* that marks not individuality but Being itself: it "holds" each object whole within the plenitude of IS" (13).

The hope sustained by Hopkins in the ecological regeneration of the world is informed by his theological and philosophical convictions. For him nature with its laws and infinite diversity and subtle ecological balance is a manifestation of God's mystery, power and beauty. He believes that this marvellous manifestation could only be sustained by an infinite power of being. This is the being which is explored by philosophers from Parmenides to our own times. The "isness" in "thisness" finds its *instress* in him in the form of praise for the mystery.

It is transcendent significance and spiritual meaning that modern ecological movements require either in *ecopoetics* or environmental activism, to save everything from a heap of nuclear waste or ecological catastrophe. Hopkins's poetry and prose writings provide an aesthetically superb solution to this crisis. His writings tell us that nature is a magnificent classroom where we gather beautiful insights about human selfhood, nature's own selves and God.

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# Mapping Migrancy In M.g. Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* And *No New Land*

Babu Gaonkar and Dr. Manjula K.T.

There's no new land, my friend, no  
New sea; for the city will follow you,  
In the same streets you'll wander endlessly.

*The City* by C.P. Cavafy

Thou shalt be a diaspora  
(or dispersion) in all kingdoms of the earth

Deuteronomy 28.25

This article proposes to trace the trajectory of migration and dislocation in M.G. Vassanji's select novels amidst postcolonial betrayal and political ambiguities. Yet another immediate objective of the article is to enquire into certain assumptions, even tendencies concerning such migrations and dislocations. It analyses the translocation of characters over time and space in *The Gunny Sack* (1989) and *No New Land* (1991). The article is underpinned by other reference books and articles, and the interviews conducted with the writer.

M.G. Vassanji is a prolific Canadian-African-Asian writer with Indian decent. His works include *The Book of Secrets* (1994), *Amriika* (1999), *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), *The Assassin's Song* (2007) and *The Magic of Saida* (2012). Two of his short story collections are *Uhuru Street* (1991) and *Elvis, Raja* (2005). He has got to his credit a collection of essays called *A Meeting of Streams* (1985) and a travelogue *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* (2008).

The impetus for Vassanji's writings always remained the South Asian community in East Africa. South Asian community in East Africa is a minority community occupying and in-between place, between

Whites and Blacks, amidst political and social upheaval in East Africa. Vassanji felt the need to advocate South Asians cause in East Africa as they were always mistaken by the indigenous Africans. M.G. Vassanji articulates rather sadly in one of his interviews, "...if we don't write about ourselves, we might as well consider ourselves buried..." (Wahome, 1993:13).

### **Migrancy: A Literary Concept**

Travel, the Victorian used to say, broadens the mind, but it can also be a play with the past and the future of the self. Great inventions helped Vasco da Gama, Columbus and others to cross the borders of their land and explore the world. Within the colonial worldview, the victory of history and the theory of progress signalled human victory over time and space. Howard Stein opines: "When you conquered and dominated distant lands and shaped their futures, you transcended your own temporal and spatial limits. You not only crossed borders outside, you crossed them within" (1987).

Thus journey started taking the form of life; curious, mysterious, and exploratory. Classically, a journey is another name for migration because there were no journeys without migration. Greeks have beautifully used 'journey and migration' as a powerful concept of literature. Greek literature provides us ample of examples where its great heroes embarked on impossible journeys. Even the two great Indian epics of the time the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are organized around the idea of exile and migration. The exiles in these epics are also great voyages. These voyages redefine both the life that has gone on before and the life that might be lived after the journey has been completed.

If you look up the word 'migrancy' in *Merrim-Webster's Dictionary*, it reads: "the fact, condition, or phenomenon of habitual movement from one place of resident to another to live there for a short time" and the second meaning: "to pass periodically from one region or climate to another for feeding or breeding" (753). The usage of the word is more associated with the lifestyle of animals and birds that change their habitat as per the seasons or climate. Paradoxically, today,

we see more and more human beings with this experience giving rise to 'Diaspora Community'. As a result 'migration' has emerged as a powerful literary mode of expression. Salman Rushdie says:

Migrants – borne-across humans – are metaphorical beings in their very essence, and migration, seen as a metaphoric, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples (15).

Raja Rao, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Kamala Markandaya, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and many more proved in their writings that 'migration' is a powerful tool in making of literature. Seidenberg, analyzing the reasons for Indian immigration to East Africa, writes:

The Indian immigrants came to East Africa not only in pursuit of economic opportunities that were made available by the imperialist expansion of the former British Empire, but also as a result of a series of occurrences, such as rapid population, natural calamities and shifting patterns and land tenure in the nineteenth century India, these made emigration not only possible but (also) necessary (1996:21).

The "migration chart" of South Asians, based on historical study, shows that in the beginning of the eighteenth century the South Asian community started its mass migration from their native continent Asia-towards East Africa. Later, during second diaspora, it moved further from East Africa towards Europe and third, back to Africa. The first migration in massive scale was a result of historical factors of imperialism, religious unrest and natural calamities in India. In East-Africa, the coming of independence was a major cause of second migration while from Europe back to East Africa, third migration, was caused by racial discrimination and the need to trace one's roots (Malak, 1993).

Migrancy can be traced both at the physical and psychological levels. It belongs to a unique body of literature that mitigates and acts as a bridge between different cultures and continents and which with

its unique characteristics, provides a diasporic view. Vassanji has used the concept of migration effectively in his works. Since he himself has undertaken many migrations due to circumstances, he is undoubtedly a right authority on the subject. Vassanji through his works articulates these diasporic visions given his privileged status as an in-between, mediator between different cultures. He often presents the cue which emphasizes movement and mixing of cultures, races and languages. Like other migrant writers, Vassanji's works articulate a migrant identity as one that undergoes a radical shift from the very initial stage and which results in the altering of self-perception and an ambivalence towards both their old and new existence. Through his characters, he vouches for a movement away from a simple nostalgic remembering of the past to a conformation with the present. Migrancy in Vassanji's works suggest a relatively voluntary departure with the possibility of return where characters move back and forth physically and psychologically between two or more continents through a voluntary search for an improved life and in the process the relationship between the past and the present is made dynamic; yet does not inhibit the freedom that accompanies migrancy. Vassanji, like other writers such as Rushdie and Mukherjee who fall into the category of "migrant" writers by virtue of their transplantation, shares a transnational experience, which is celebrated in his works. Migrancy as a concept disturbs the definition of identity as fixed and stable, hence the idea of identity as a construct. Like Vassanji, characters in the works under study who migrate to the West are motivated by a desire to better their lives and, though projected as successful in preserving their cultural heritage, albeit with difficulty, cannot sacrifice their economic aspirations that are associated with modernization. Vassanji's characters carve out a space that, as Pries would put it, "successfully renegotiates the relationship between progress and tradition, individualism and communitarianism" (Pries, 1999) and as such the notion of home and migrant identity becomes a site of constant transformation.

### ***The Gunny Sack: Flight into Unknown***

The myth about Africa that "it was one mass of forest and unconquered land teeming with economic potential waiting to be

exploited” forces Dhanji Govindji to migrate into unknown land East Africa. Whenever some boy from the community goes astray they used to say:

“Go to Africa,” they told him. “Go to Jang-bar. See what Amarsi Makan did for himself, and he was no better than you...” from a loafer, to a stowaway, to the sultan’s customs master and the richest man on the island; now there was a man... (7).

Dhanji Govindji thus becomes an explorer whose personal desires constituted the most overt target and provides a more cultural drive for migration. The stock images of Dhanji Govindji’s exploration is in itself testimony to the pervasiveness of such myths in India as well as the West, that Africa was one mass of unexploited land and their inclusion in the novel forces us to consider the difficulty of attempting to free identity representation from perceived influence from outside.

In *The Gunny Sack*, Dhanji Govindji travels from Porbander on a ship and arrives in Zanzibar after a two months. He is received by Amarsi Makan, in whose store Dhanji works as a clerk for one year, after which he migrates to Matamu and was received by the Mukhi of Matamu, known as Ragavji Devraji, who helps Govindji to set up a shop and throws in an African slave girl who was to be his servant but would also keep Dhanji Govindji ‘warm’ during the cold nights. Soon the liaison between the slave girl, Bibi Taratibu, and Dhanji Govindji ends up in the birth of a son called Huseni. For Dhanji Govindji, the transplantation to East Africa and immersion into a completely new way of life leads to a sense of dislocation and identity crisis, an anxiety that results in his liaison with Bibi Taratibu whose ghost of guilt haunts him. In keeping tune with the wishes of his community, Dhanji Govindji marries Fatima and soon settles down and this means the exit of Bibi Taratibu, who goes and settles in a village bordering the forest where she sold tea and sweets to transient “Mshenzis” (native Africans) from the interior. The relegation of Bibi Taratibu to the margins of the village is a metaphor for the inner psychological recess to which the native Africans have been relegated to by both the British and the Asian communities.

The coming of Germans into Tanganyika faced resistance from the natives and this resulted in the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905 to 1908. At such moments, the Indian community is perceived by the natives as a group that is favoured by the Germans and that enjoys some relative peace and security from the German forces. *The Gunny Sack* depicts the harshness of German colonization of East Africa, especially its cruel, humiliating system of whipping called 'Khamsa Ishirini' that was meted on the native Africans. This is a pointer to the fact that the South Asians enjoyed a relatively convenient working relationship with the colonial authorities and being a minority, they were given a semblance of privilege. This practice was naturally positively regarded by the minority community who were keen on the economic advantages that East Africa offered other than the security granted by the Germans. But this was never taken kindly by the natives. This can also be perceived as a political strategy that enabled, and still enables, them pursue their economic interests without engaging in political bickering in the host countries to which they emigrate:

Among the trading immigrant peoples, loyalty to a land or a government, always loudly professed, is a trait one can normally look for in vain. Governments may come and go, but the immigrant's only concern is the security of their families their trade and savings. Deviants to this code came to be regarded and dismissed as not altogether sound of mind (69).

The British occupied the coastal town of Kilwa and Mombasa and further inland to Kampala and this caused Indians migration to Dar-es Salaam from Zanzibar. This internal migration by the Asians is a pointer to the fluid nature of identity among the diasporic South Asian community whose sense of migration and settlement enhances their hybridity by allowing a mixing with the natives of East Africa while willingly accommodating the in-coming British by giving them room along the East African Coast.

Meanwhile Huseni marries Moti (a local girl from Govindji's community) as per his father's wish. But this marriage doesn't last long as he leaves the place getting angry towards his father for opposing

his meeting Bibi Taratibu (mother). Huseni never returns and this becomes the reasons for Moti's second marriage and her migration to Voi in Kenya. Moti and Rajesh Nanji Kara migrate further to Kibwezi, where he dies and Moti once again re-marries again. This third marriage could not work well with children from previous marriages. Therefore, Moti had to give away her children, Juma and his three sisters to Awal Pirbhai, her sister, who lived in Nairobi. This is another migration for Juma and his three sisters. Through Moti, Vassanji demonstrates how cultural relocations and the unfolding of migrant identities involve constant negotiations with their old and new environments. Juma's marriage with Kulsum takes them to Ngara. Juma's sudden death brings Kulsum to Mombasa from Nairobi and later she migrates to Dar-es Salaam where she is accommodated by her mother Hirbai.

The end of the First World War sees the defeat of Germans and Shamsi Asian has to report to the new British Commander in Dar-es Salaam, hence another migration becomes inevitable though not to all Asians. This freedom is short lived as the Africans in Kenya are undergoing a political reawakening and the Mau Mau has struck killing a young European couple in a farm in Kinangop. This sent Kenya in a state of emergency. More changes are to be witnessed with the coming of independence in Tanganyika. Apart from the nationalization of enterprises, there is also the africanisation of civil service posts. This made many South Asians flee from East Africa and embark one more journey towards Europe, USA and Canada. Salim Juma, the narrator and grandson of Huseni, too migrates to Canada because of the fear of the arrest due to his links with Amina, who was a Marxist and launched an anti-campaign against the government. Salim says: "I think I ran away from the marriage, an impossible domestic situation...like my grandfather, Huseni...and even his father Dhanji Govindji who went to look for him (325). The migrations in Dhanji Govindji's family at last left Salim Juma in a basement of a hotel in Canada. He is tired of the feelings of unhomeliness and the impossibility of belonging; he talks of return which symbolizes another migration – a migration to solace, happiness and permanence.

***No New Land: “Its time, Go home my ass...”***

The close association of South Asians with the colonizers, invited a lot of problems after Uganda and Kenya's independence. More over they had no role in the Mau Mau and Maji Maji movements which were fought for the East Africa's freedom and their assimilation in African culture was dubious. Their 'dukhwallah' image made Africans to view Asians as exploiters and exclusivists. Independence in Uganda made Idi Amin (then president) to roar, "Asians must be expelled from Uganda and be stripped off their citizenship" (Final Solution). John Kenyatta, the President of Kenya, called Asians as 'guest race' and insisted 'guests can't stay permanently, they must leave' (Guest Race). Recalling the tempo of the African mood towards South Asians, Rana Warah writes, "If you came to serve the British colonial government, and they left after independence, then why are you still here? (1998: 26)". Over all the African reaction was – "Its time, Go home my ass (Asians)..."

Migrations continue even in *No New Land*, but the nature of migrations differs. In *No New Land* migrations are caused by the World Wars, internal African freedom fights, ethnic hatred and racism. On the whole these migrations appear 'forced migration' where subjects are left with no choice. Here migrations are taking place not to 'better ones prospectuses' but 'to save oneself'. In *No New Land*, Haji Lalani goes to Tanganyika in 1906 when the Germans are recruiting British Indian subjects to help build the German empire in Africa. Haji Lalani is taken up as an apprentice by an Indian firm based in Bagamoyo, where he works as a manager and finally sets up his own shop. Haji Lalani's marriage takes him to Dar es Salaam as Bagamoyo is in the war front during the First World War. His eldest son Akber migrates to Tabora enroute to Belgian Congo. It is during this time a wind of change is sweeping over Africa and with the clamour, comes Tanganyika's independence. Since most Asians did not expect such fast-tracked changes, some die out of shock as was the case with Haji Lalani:

But the winds had only now gathered strength; the fury soon begun. The governor general duly left after a year and the republic was declared on the Island of Zanzibar, a coup finally toppled Arab

rule in a bloody revenge by the descendents of the slaves...within a few weeks followed mutiny in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. During the short-lived mutiny in Dar, looking out, frightened, through their window, Asians witnessed their shops being looted (23).

In Tanzania, radical change looms large with British monopoly in business circles being replaced by Chinese, English language is replaced with Kiswahili being spoken in schools and with it comes the nationalization of business premises and banks. South Asians were denied even their basic rights. "The prevailing unease and chaos prompted the South Asian's mass migration towards Canada and USA, because, "Canada was open and, for the rich, America too. Thus began a run on Canada" (25). But, in the West very soon they became the target of racial discrimination and this created a wish further migration."

The transformations undergone by characters as they emigrate have far-reaching impacts on their adaptations in the new world. This is their first brush with racist reality. As they land in London, they are packed into a plane to Canada with their passport stamped with conditions that they should never visit the United Kingdom; but the harsh reality of being in the alien West sets in when they have to put up with their new hosts, the Abdul Nanji's, where a small fight between the children over the TV makes Abdul feel his children are being bullied by Fatima and this opens a new wound. The Lalani's realize that they have become an economic burden to their host and with this, Nurdin and his family have to migrate to Sixty-nine Rosecliff Park Drive. The Lalani's represent the instability occasioned by migration within or among the diasporic South Asians so that the decision to settle down in a particular suburb reflects a corresponding profile in the social composition of the migrant population. Family regrouping is not only made difficult by the economic precariousness of limited financial resources, but is also hindered by their legal status as migrants.

Nurdin Lalani experiences racism at a personal level as he could not find a job for reasons that he lacked 'Canadian experience' (44). When he finally gets a job at Ontario Addiction Centre he is accused of sexually assaulting a white woman when he was actually trying to

help on seeing her on distress. Nurdin's ambivalence finds expression in his being victimized. For him, independence in East Africa has left him with a past against which he rebels, but which nothing has replaced. Ultimately he feels:

We are but creatures of our origins, and however stalwartly we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new worlds, the ghosts from our pasts stand not far behind and are not easily shaken off (9).

In *The Gunny sack* and *No New Land* migrations remain a centrifugal force in the lives of South Asian community. Here characters emigrate at various points of time and space and in the process under go a number of transformations at both psychological and social levels resulting in their embracing new ways of thinking and living. Migrations here make, de-make and re-make South Asian community transforming them into new as Stuart Hall describes:

...they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power...identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past...(394).

Migration doesn't end in both the novels *The Gunny Sack* and *No New Land*, but of course they end with a wish:

The running must stop now, Amina. The cycle of escape and rebirth, Uproot and regeneration, must cease in me. Let this be the last run away, returned with one quixotic dream. Yes, perhaps here lies redemption, a faith in the future, even if it means for now to embrace the banal past, to pick up the pieces of our wounded dreams and pretend they are still intact without splints...(269).

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# A Shard from the Skies

Maria Sebastian

A tap on the pane, a pat on my cheek

I quivered up from my silent slumber

Is it the usual lark?

here for her grain n'gruel

Behold! Hark! The pitter n'patter

The gods've spilled nectar from their goblet

n'she's here again! The mid april shower

She planted a lustful kiss on the sand so dry

It steamed, blushed; n'went all red

She nuzzled the droopy buds with palms so gentle

they blinked, yawned, stretched; alas! they've bloomed

then she tip-toed to the plovers n'pigeons

who squeeled in merriment n'reeled around

But brace yourself there's more to this

The sun then lifted his majestic veil

n' winced at the april siren's illicit game

Scorn he did, n' flung at her his golden spears

The cheeky girl dodged in glee

he blazed in great fury

Apollo can't be tamed, he can't be played

Still our ignorant maiden kept prancing 'round

The gallant man then gathered all his might

ready to slain our drizzling beauty

He ordered his twinkling slaves to bring in a coffin

The word spread like forest fire,

alarming the tender lass - night sky's luminous wench  
 Scurry off she did, along a dark alley  
 A worry wart she is, always pale, throwing fits of fright  
  
 Go away!! Go home!! Sun's gone mad  
 She begged n' pleaded with her showering pal  
 Even I could hear her shrieking n'weeping  
 Nevertheless our terrible tot ever did budge  
 Down on her knees went the wench, paler than ever  
 Bemused! The naughty lass sighed n'gave in  
 Gracefully did she retreat, under my gaze

Then to the night sky's great frenzy  
 Miss pitter patter casted one last look  
 At the waspish devil, boiling in irate red  
 Facets of emotions trotting round her face  
 Then to everyone's profound wonder  
 She broke into a long seductive grin  
 n'winked at the gentleman who wakes in the west

## My Glow

Quivering in the sinister chills,  
 a tacky dame with smokey eyes  
 all braced in a paisley bandanna.  
 A sigh flitted off her, pranced 'round  
 n' sneaked unto the evening mist.  
 Then a quaint smile she bequeath,  
 at me! Why me? I spat  
 Why not? she shot back

The hazy summer saw her  
bathed in the moonlight  
Lying next to me at the seaside  
as the night train 'choo'ed our tales heavens away  
n' the willows whispered our warmth to winds astray  
when the oceans crashed our frenzies unto boulders at bay

Ever more alluring in the desolate dark  
wincing at the porch light, champers in hand  
as the sweltering shades of my garden gnomes  
embraced her lust stricken smile  
drunkenly my hands crept gently,  
along the creases of those lovely hazels

One tug of love n' she came tumbling down  
peals of laughter flooded the autumn air  
I Hauled her foxy spirit, 'er zeal n' all.  
Tethered together in her auburn mane,  
scents n' sensations lingered in air.  
My world went numb that sacred moment

An illicit kiss beneath the mistletoes  
then hazy memoires we unleashed  
amongst ivied broken walls  
n' her shriek severed that eerie night  
as our ecstasy painted the stained glass  
lord blew his breath unto her  
n' now I kiss this glow so precious

# ***Thousand Splendid Suns* : Khaled Hosseini**

Publisher : Bloomsbury India

Publication Date : May 22, 2007

Edition : First

Pages : 384

Prathiba Pradeep

The story set in Afghanistan from the 1960s to the 1990s, spanning from Soviet occupation to the Taliban control, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* narrates about the lives of two women from Herat and Kabul which will unfailingly move you to tears. Hosseini a natural storyteller intertwines both the history of Afghanistan at the time of war and the story of Mariam Jo and Laila that takes the reader through a thought provoking read.

Mariam Jo who constantly waits for her father's once a week visit, titled as a 'harami', an illegitimate child, lives with her unmarried mother in Herat. Branded as an harami, Mariam faces many prejudices and blames from her father's family and even from her own mother. Not long in the story Mariam discover's her father's hollow love for her and after the shocking incident of her mother's suicide, she is compelled to marry a man, Rasheed, more than 30 years her senior. Mariam betrayed by her father's love leaves everything behind, even her favourite teacher Mullah Faizullah, in the hope for a better life with Rasheed.

But what awaits Mariam after her miscarriages is more than terrible. The bitter and archaic Rasheed puts her through intolerable times, Mariam's marriage becomes worse than a prison: "Mariam was afraid. She lived in fear of his shifting moods, his insistence on steering even mundane exchanges down a confrontational path that, on occasion, he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks and sometimes try to make amends for with polluted apologies and sometimes not." Hosseini vividly brings home the plight of women in such a wounded society.

Just as the impatient reader, stricken with the moving story, think what more could happen, Hosseini switches the story from Mariam's life to that of her neighbour, a young girl Laila. Laila hails from a liberal family with a father who believes in her education. As the war proceeds Laila gets separated from her beloved, Tariq, and a series of tragic happenings follow. Torn from her love and orphaned, Laila agrees to marry Rasheed who saved her. All the way through the novel Hosseini brings the information about the situation and politics of Afghanistan although Hosseini ensures that it is not the driving force of the story.

As Laila joins Mariam's household, we see a bitter Mariam at first who feels dejected and resented towards Laila who married Rasheed. Gradually we can find the slowly growing friendship of the two wives who share the abuse from Rasheed. Laila looks at Mariam, and "For the first times, it was not an adversary's face Laila saw but a face of grievances unspoken, burden gone unprotested, a destiny submitted to and endured. If she stayed, would this be her own face, Laila wondered?" The women's only hope is the growing bond between them and in their love for Laila's children. Laila and Mariam finds consolation in each other and their bond grows as deep like soul sisters, as strong as a relation between a mother and a daughter.

The story moves on to tell the horrific reign of Taliban. The rules brought out by the Taliban startles the readers, stirring the minds, especially the women. "You will stay inside your homes at all times. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the streets, you will be beaten up and sent home." During their reign there is a drought and the living conditions in Kabul become poor. Rasheed's workshop burns down and he is forced to take up jobs that doesn't suit him. He sends Aziza, daughter of Laila and Tariq, to an orphanage that makes Laila undergo several number of beatings from the Taliban in attempts to visit Aziza alone.

Following another saga of crucial events, Rasheed savagely beats Laila and one day nearly strangles her to which Mariam reacted killing Rasheed. Mariam, an epitome of unconditional love and sacrifice, decides to stay in Kabul as Laila with Aziza, Zalmai (son of Laila and

Rasheed) and Tariq leave for Pakistan. Living most of her life in misery, Mariam Jo not finding a difference between death and life knew she had to do something in her life and that was to sacrifice her life for Laila. Mariam is publicly executed for murdering Rasheed.

Last part of the book is in the present where Laila and Tariq live in Pakistan. After the reign of Taliban, Laila with her family returns to Afghanistan. Already moved by the novel, Hosseini moves us to more tears when Laila goes to Herat to find a letter, videotape of 'Pinocchio', and a small sack of money left by Mariam's father, Jalil. The letter is heart-warming speaking of his unconditional love for her. Laila and Tariq returns to Kabul to set up the orphanage.

Mr. Hosseini, who was born in Kabul moved to US later, through his magical narration even moves the hardest of hearts. Chain of desperate and tragic happenings may even take the reader to a point of numbness. We might feel the story is melodramatic with the missiles after missiles separating families but often we find that truth is as melodramatic as that. This book makes us think of the mysteries behind the burqas of women. The women were tested beyond their worst imaginations, yet with the power of love and sacrifice overcame the daunting obstacles. The book speaks not only for the women in Afghanistan but for the vast majority of women who are on the same boat: "As a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman."

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* is an unforgettable story of a devastated country, deep relationships of family and friendship. Hosseini's knack for storytelling rolls down large tears that smudge the pages. The book comprises of all kinds of love, and touchingly in the end, the earlier mistaken and doubted, love of Jalil for Mariam. The narrative style of wearing historical information gives the feel of a true story rather than a fiction. Unlike his first book of two male protagonists, Hosseini through his female protagonists brings out the strong voices of women that often goes unheard in a society. In the end, however, against all odds it is love that triumphs over devastation and uncountable miseries and Mariam is sealed inside the hearts of the readers forever. "One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs. Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls."

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