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Postgraduate & Research Department of English
The American College
Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

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(Re-accredited [2nd Cycle] by NAAC with Grade 'A' & CGPA of 3.46 on a 4 point scale)
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rajendrapandian@americancollege.edu.in

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Editorial...

Humanity has been moving ahead even with challenges such as the unending war on Ukraine; growing gun culture in America; US-China tensions; aggravating climate crisis; unemployment, inflation and a possible economic recession; and resurgence of the right across the world. As writers have been responding to life and its challenges, we, as learners and teachers of the English language and literature, are bound to be aware of such happenings, be sensitive to them, and be spontaneous in shouldering the burden of our fellow humans. As the American College has been an institution ever committed to the ideals of brotherhood and universal love, and so do the literatures we learn, teach and pursue through our undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes, this is perhaps the time we renewed our commitment to help one another in whatever ways possible. ACJELL and its contributors are out there to perform this act of benevolence—that of loving humanity—by sensitising themselves and the readers towards that.

The delay caused in launching the XII issue (2022) of ACJELL is regretted. The reasons could be a few, and the foremost has been the not-so-robust number of articles we received for publication. ACJELL is not a UGC-CARE journal whereas teachers, scholars and students here at large have an obvious preference for publishing their papers in the CARE journals as it will help them boost up their APA score and CAS prospects in a better way. Against this backdrop comes the paradox that ACJELL is in the process of being catalogued in the Library of Congress, Washington. We believe that this added prestige will attract more articles in the days to come. We shall let our contributors and friends know once the process is complete and we get ACJELL properly showcased in the South Asia section of the LOC.

Thanks to every teacher in the English Department for their overall support, particularly to Ms. O. Alisha, Assistant Professor of English (SF) who meticulously formatted the References / Works-Cited part of the papers. I thank the authors for sending their papers to this volume—we consider it our privilege to publish them. We convey our gratitude to our readers whose sustained interest in ACJELL makes the journal grow from strength to strength. And also, on behalf of the Editorial Board as well as the PG & Research Department of English, I thank Dr. M. Davamani Christofer, Principal & Secretary of the American College for encouraging and patronising this academic endeavour all along.

Rajendra Pandian, PhD
Chief Editor-ACJELL

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Hypofemininity: An Analysis of Superheroines in the Marvel Cinematic Universe

ALISHA, O

Assistant Professor of English (SF), The American College, Madurai

Email ID: alisha@americancollege.edu.in

Abstract

Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is a media franchise producing superhero films and series based on Marvel Comics with twenty-nine movies and ten series. The paper analyses the female superhero characters with less femininity. Superhero characters in Marvel Cinematic Universe have the privilege of having a girlfriend, wife, children, and family despite their busy schedule in saving the earth. Superheroines like Black Widow, Scarlet Witch, and Captain Marvel play a vital role in mid of (male) superheroes. Other minor superheroines like Wasp, Mighty Thor, Rescue, Gamora, Valkyrie, and She-hulk serve as supporting heroines for superheroes. Drawing upon the ideas of gender studies post-feminism, they are expected to subjugate their femininity to shine in the Avengers group. They should leave the role of girlfriend, wife, and mother in order to become superheroines; otherwise, they should be superheroes' girlfriend(s). Subsequently, the paper argues that gender stereotypes in the male gaze exclude family and personal life for becoming a superheroine.

Keywords: Hypofemininity, Sexism, Misogamy, Captain Marvel, Black Widow, Scarlet Witch

Marvel Cinematic Universe is a media franchise and shared universe that is centered around a series of superhero films produced by Marvel Studios. The MCU includes a range of interconnected films, TV series, and other media that feature characters from Marvel Comics. Marvel films occupy the highest-grossing films of all time and influence millions. Marvel films and series has more than four million people as fan followers. In the Hollywood New Age, the contemporary era is dominated by Superhero films. Marvel is a major media force, and many fans hold its characters in high regard. The brand's comparable outcomes are more committed fans, and the depiction of a multitude of characters only helps their enormous fan base. However, there are very less female

characters in Marvel's films. Particularly noteworthy is the retelling of historical superhero tales; at a time, fewer public characters are identified as women. They are portrayed as followers rather than leaders and are subjugated to the role of girlfriends, wives, and mothers.

The term Hypofemininity is not a commonly used in academics or literature. Merriam Webster dictionary uses the term "hypo-," which means "less than" or "below normal," and "femininity." The term refers to the portrayal of women in which the character exhibits less-than-typical feminine traits or behaviors. However, it is important to note that femininity and masculinity are complex and multifaceted concepts that vary across cultures and over time, and there is no single or universal definition of what constitutes feminine or masculine behaviour. Additionally, using terms that pathologise or stigmatise individuals based on gender identity or expression is not recommended. In this research paper, hypofemininity refers to the quality of some women (superheroines) who suppress their femininity and reject the role of mother, girlfriend, or a family in order to become a superheroines. This concept is examined from the male gaze and misogynist perception while analysing the films. The paper divides female superheroines into two categories. Superheroines like Black Widow, Scarlet Witch, and Captain Marvel play a vital role in the midst of (male) superheroes. As mentioned, these characters are expected to suppress their femininity to become superheroines. Other minor superheroines like Wasp, Mighty Thor, Rescue, Gamora, Valkyrie, and She-hulk are treated as supporting heroines for superheroes. There is still a long way to go, but significant change for feminism in the Marvel Cinematic Universe is on the horizon. Given that Marvel keeps making movies and does that well, audience can only infer and speculate as to whether the traditional gender roles are what they want to see. In addition to examining the perceptions in portraying and stereotyping women, this research also aims to explore the interpretation of female characters by Marvel movie fans.

Natasha Romanoff, as Black Widow, is introduced as a super-spy undercover agent in *Iron Man* who works for S.H.I.E.L.D, and is raised by a Russian training programme. When Tony Stark sees her photos on the internet in swimsuits and says, "I want one" (*Iron Man* 01: 22:54), she is seen as a cold-hearted woman and the first superhero in the

Avengers group. During the Russian training, she is forced to undergo a hysterectomy to avoid children and family. Natasha continuously mentions herself as a “monster” to Hulk because of her inability to produce a child. She is also projected as a glamour doll when she flirts with other superheroes like Iron Man, Hulk, Hawkeye, and Captain America. Her romances with other men are always seen as tricks of a cunning spy in order to get information. Her sacrifice in *Avengers: End Game* shows the presence of “soul”; she has no family or boyfriend to lose, but Hawkeye has a perfect family. Her famous line “Pain only makes us stronger” (Russo and Russo 00:43:34). It took more than a decade to get an individual film *Black Widow* (2020). The goal is to demonstrate that women need not fit into the superheroine concept because the Black Widow image does not even depict superpowers. She is portrayed as a flirty lady who makes use of her attractiveness, and she sacrifices herself and passes, making the movie’s final fight scene too masculine.

Captain Marvel is powerful because she can absorb the power of the Tesseract, also known as the Power Stone, one of the Infinity Stones that can destroy entire universe. She was already an exceptional human since she was a respected Air Force pilot; because she survived the event, she was transported back to the Kree world of Hala, where she was infused with Kree blood and made to be on par with Ronan in terms of her strength. Because she had the power, to begin with, she could control the increased energy level she was given. She was criticised for being overly sensitive, and a male character directed her abilities. The gender representation in the MCU is exemplified by the portrayal of Captain Marvel, who demonstrates an entirely different kind of female strength, one that some males may find more intimidating. It was considered unrealistic for the female protagonist to come out on top in confrontations against cosmic villains. On the other hand, the female protagonists were just normal old humanoids.

At the film’s beginning, Captain Marvel is given a monologue in which her commander and trainer advise her to become a more effective combatant and learn to control her emotions better. She turns out to be an extremely emotional person as well as a very valiant fighter. She does a better job than any other female protagonist who is open and honest about her weaknesses throughout the film. Her compassion makes her a more effective soldier and a better person overall. This kind of hero should appear more frequently in

movies; the ones who make normal mistakes and are not judged differently for them. Most definitely those who have benefited from realistic suits that are not solely for the character's aesthetics.

The others treat Scarlet Witch like a toy, making fun of her telekinetic and mind-control abilities. The sequence from *Avengers: Age of Ultron* in which Natasha reveals to Bruce that she was forcefully sterilised in the Red Room is directly repeated in *Multiverse of Madness*, where the Scarlet Witch's wicked twist that she cannot have children. After hearing this shocking information, she asks him, "Still think you're the only monster on the team?" (Whedon 01:35:23) This line is sexist and seems out of place. In Scarlet Witch's storyline, she expands on the concept of the horrible mother, follows this direction, though it is a colossal error. Scarlet utters the following line to Doctor Strange, "You break the rules and become a Hero. I do it, and I become the enemy. That doesn't seem fair" (Raimi 00:23:40).

Black Widow's "monster" comment is so out of character that it eclipses her. She was the only significant female character at the time in the MCU, and it turned out that parenting was crucial to her identity. Natasha's intriguing complexity was pared down to base gender stereotypes in *Age of Ultron*, even though she had long suffered from the guilt of her past. Scarlet Witch continues in a similar vein, although this scene scared spectacularly. Even if *Wanda Vision* had already covered her psychotic break in which she became overprotective of the fake family she summoned, *Multiverse of Madness* proceeded with this story. Considering how the Scarlet Witch's narrative ended, this is extremely shocking. When maternity is associated with evil, it's problematic for the MCU to have its two most famous female characters reduced to their relationship with their mom. "I'm not A Monster, I'm A Mother" (Raimi 01:45:23). Natasha was monstrous for her infertility, and Wanda was monstrous for wanting her children too impatiently.

As mentioned, other minor female characters like Wasp, Mighty Thor, Rescue, Gamora, Valkyrie, and She-hulk are treated as supporting heroines for superheroes. The heroines' hourglass figures and scant or form-fitting attire are evidence of the extremely impact of sociocultural loaded portrayals of the female body that permeate the medium. They are also more likely to be described as seductive, nude, or beautiful than males of all ages and thus

subjected to sexual objectification. Laura Mulvey stated that because films were slanted toward men, male moviegoers were more engaged than female ones and that women were merely used as objects of desire by both the male viewers and the male protagonists. She refers to this male gaze as, “women as significant in movies, but only as passive subjects and a source of visual pleasure” (Mulvey 8).

In the past, Marvel Cinematic Universe portrayed female characters from a sexist and misogynist view. Drawing upon the ideas of post-feminism, female characters are expected to subjugate their femininity to shine in the Avengers group. In order to become superheroines, they should leave the roles of a girlfriend, wife, and mother; otherwise, they should be the girlfriend/s of superheroes. The absence of femininity/motherhood or a cruel mother and evil sister replaces the part of glamour dolls from the past. It is still a stereotypical portrayal of women that has taken different forms. Now Marvel has started to encourage female directors to take female-lead superhero films. It has created six films in the past four phases and is expected to increase in the upcoming phases, five and six.

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Conversational Narrative in Thomas King's "One Good Story, That One"

ANITA CAROLINE, T

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English

The American College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Email Id: tanitacaroline@gmail.com

Abstract

This article intends to analyse the narrative pattern and style in Thomas King's short story, "One Good Story, That One". King is known for his experimentation in his writing style and some of his select writings are perfect examples of inter-fusional literature. The text chosen for analysis in this paper can be categorised under this type. The article further analyses different techniques used by King to bring alive the native oral storytelling in written form.

Keywords: *Conversational Narrative, Inter-Fusional Literature, Natural Narrative*

Thomas King is one of Canada's widely acclaimed writers, of partly Greek and Native descent. He has done extensive research on oral storytelling. King's innovative writing style gives a simulated understanding of the native oral storytelling experience to a non-native audience. "One Good Story, That One", a short story by King which employs a conversational type of narration is analysed in this paper to exhibit the varied writing techniques and styles adopted. King has experimented with his writing style to portray native oral storytelling in written form.

Fludernik, in her book, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* opines that conversational narrative can be called the original and basic type of oral narration and upholds that it is an important component of storytelling. Conversational narrative is further classified into two types: spontaneous and unspontaneous. Spontaneous conversational narrative is distinguished from unspontaneous conversational narrative, in which the former type is unsolicited (unprepared) while the latter is solicited (prepared priorly). Hence the name "natural narrative" is given for spontaneous conversational narrative by Labov and Waletzky. "One Good Story, That One" employs a spontaneous conversational narrative,

the nameless narrator in the story is an old native Indian man who engages his audience with a warped story enriched with his native vocabulary and oral style.

The narrative instance in this story is fashioned by King convincingly, paying a lot of attention to the context of the situation. Three white men who are anthropologists, are brought to the summer place of an Indian man by another native man called Napiao. Napiao requests his friend to entertain the visitors with an old Indian story wherein he decides to narrate them about how the world was put together. When the narrator realises that he is going to be recorded on tape, he decides to use the opportunity wisely. He settles to narrate a retold version of the Christian story of creation passing a sly remark that “Maybe not so long either, this story” (King, “One Good Story” 313).

The narrator’s voice and narrative structure in any literary text plays a vital role in influencing the perspective of the readers. In this story, the narrator is given an interesting role, for he attempts his own native version of the Christian story of creation. His narration in a larger way influences the tone and flow of the story. King has broken the regular pattern of short stories by making important changes – the story is written as it is orally narrated, the broken sentences capture the natural rhythm, the pauses and breaks highlight a realistic mode of narration, the native words and names used add richness and a native touch to the text. Furthermore, the narrator converses with the visitors and Napiao, making the narration more natural and believable.

Okay, I says.

Have some tea.

Stay awake.

Once upon a time. (King, “One Good Story” 314)

In “The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction”, Fludernik states that natural narratives are quite often repetitious and interwoven with repeated dialogues. To instil realistic mode of narration King has used repetition as a device in many parts of the story. The reference to the white teeth of the white men and the native names of animals is repeated multiple times in the story to bring the effects of naturality.

According to Fludernik in “Conversational Narration/Oral Narration”, pseudo-orality focusses on the mode of utterance giving importance to dialect and colloquiality in the

written mode of speech. The technique of pseudo-orality is expansively used by King in this story. The narrator renames some of the characters and places in the Biblical story of creation, ideas which are considered foreign to the natives are given altered names. Thus, Eve becomes Evening, Adam becomes Ah- damn, Eden Garden becomes Evening garden, the forbidden fruit is mee-so. While other creatures are given native names, the serpent is Ju-poo-pea, deer is Me-a-loo, dog is A-ma-po.

King has made a careful lexical choice in “One Good Story, That One”. Some words such as Ga-ling, Laa-po from the Native language have been used. English names such as Adam and Eve are deliberately mispronounced. Throughout the story there are many instances of incorrect usage of personal pronouns and subject-verb errors. “They says, those ones” (King, “One Good Story” 313). These mistakes are not careless but deliberately made to create the impression of native pattern of speech.

The addressing of nature and natural elements with personal pronouns is a striking feature in the story. For example, a river which the Indians call Ka-sin-ta or Na-po is referred to as “him” in the text, this exhibits the Indians’ closeness and oneness with nature. As the river is renamed as Saint Merry by the whites, the narrator is clueless about what this might mean. This can be studied as one of the reasons for the native man’s renaming of foreign names in the creation story. Renaming of biblical characters can be looked at as a revenge act on a lighter note.

The shift in King’s story from the graphotext to the phonotext stage offers a near real experience of listening to a live native narration. This can be better explained as the visual capture of the text transformed into an aural/oral phonemic utterance by the reader. Hence this style of writing can be considered a fine example of “...interfusal literature, literature that blends the oral and the written” (King, “All my Relations” xii). King’s writing style is infused with stylistic elements such as: rhythms, patterns, syntax, and sounds, which give a realistic touch to the narrator and the narration. Other rhetorical strategies such as frequent digressions, repetitions, short pauses, asides, short sentences are also used.

The narrator subverts the Christian theory of creation and his retold version is humorous. It has mock elements and on a serious note questions the authenticity of the white man’s story. Parallely, it expresses anger over invasion of their native land.

Humour in this story is used as a weapon to lash out at the outrageous act of conquest and loot. Since the white visitors are anthropologists, the narrator through his story instigates them to dig up the past and come to terms with the truth of stolen lands, stolen heritage, stolen history and stolen resources.

The narrator is strongly opinionated that white men are villainous, dangerous and not to be befriended. The cleaning of their track marks indicates that they are tricksters just like the coyotes. “Too bad those”, (King, “One Good Story” 313) is how the white visitors are referred to by the narrator. Like in all of King’s stories, this story too has “coyote” as one of the characters and the visiting white men are referred to as having “coyote” like qualities in them. This comparison suggests that the white men are deceitful, untrustworthy and pretentious.

The author also implies a heavy pun on the material needs of the west. Instead of simple lives, the west’s chase after easy lives have resulted in lots of necessary and unnecessary inventions. “To many, maybe those ones say, too many noise that one needs for the world” (King, “One Good Story” 315).

King further picturises God to be an angry man intolerant with anyone who overrules the conditions laid by him. “Bad temper, that one. Always shouting. Always with pulled down mean look” (King, “One Good Story” 315). The narrator instinctively suggests that, “But that fellow, god, whiteman I think...” (King, “One Good Story” 317). The furious god drives the couple out of his place when they eat mee-sho, the forbidden fruit, “... Evening and Ah- damn better leave that good place, garden, Evening’s garden, go somewhere else. Just like Indian today” (King, “One Good Story” 316-317). The narrator compares the fate of the first couple to the plight of the Indians who are stripped of all that originally belonged to them.

The story is concluded on a note that Ah- damn and Evening settle down in the native Indian land and begot children and led flourishing lives. This reinforces the idea that they are the rightful owners of the land which later is invaded and falls victim to the white supremacy. Thus, the narrator uses the white man’s story against him. The many disguises of the coyote is simply a hint at the multiple entries of white men in foreign shores under different guises as merchants, missionaries and saviours. While Kipling’s “White man’s burden” ideology is laughed at, the story also expresses the angst of the natives.

King has effectively made use of narration as a liberative, defensive tool in this story. The nameless narrator's voice acts as a weapon to regain the lost voices of his native land. Story telling is camouflaged to serve the purpose of chronicling history. Throughout his literary career, Thomas King has strived his best to keep alive the native oral tradition of storytelling. In the narrower canvas of this short story the author has made careful use of the limited space, enlivening the reading experience by experimenting with inter-fusional literature.

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Ideological State Apparatuses and Hegemony: A Re- reading of Tagore's *Mukta Dhara*

CHRISTOPHER RAMESH, V

Assistant Professor of English

Sri Meenakshi Government Arts College for Women (A), Madurai

Abstract

*The regression of many countries in the twenty first century into entities of anachronistic identity-based culture, politics and governance prompts literature to react with its own perspectives and expressions. Literature, unlike traditional history that deals with the rulers, stands with the ruled, the common people, and has been critical of power and domination across time and space. This paper re-reads Rabindranath Tagore's play *Mukta Dhara* through Louis Althusser's theory on *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus* and discovers interesting and intersecting ideas relating to identity formation and hegemony.*

Keywords: *Ideology, Hegemony, Identity, State Apparatus, Interpellation*

There has been an increase in conflicts due to identity and ideology-based governance and politics across the world in the new millennium. Though they seem to be anachronistic in the age that has come a long way from the European colonialism and cold war, this is a reality. Literature, with its history of playing a conflict-resolution role through centuries, has been critical of this aspect. Rabindranath Tagore's play *Mukta Dhara* makes an interesting read in the contemporary geo-politics as the play is still relevant in its theme related to identity, ideology, hegemony and conflict. The re-reading of Tagore's play becomes effective with the application of Louis Althusser's influential theory entitled 'Ideology and ideological State Apparatuses' for interpretation and critical appreciation. This paper limits the study of the play to its theme of identity-based hegemony and cites only the parts of the play and characters that underscore this aspect.

A state relies on instruments of violence as legitimate means to deal with hostile entities within and outside its territory to protect its sovereignty. Police and the armed forces are such instruments of violence. However, beyond the interest to protect the sovereignty, the

rulers of countries whose desire to prolong or perpetuate the power to rule the state or to extend their power to rule beyond the stipulated constitutional period or boundaries of their nation may impose violence on their political opponents of their own nation or other nations. Yet, the complicit nature of the armed forces and approval of the government's actions by the people in this direction require a robust system of ideological influence strategically infused by the rulers through cultural institutions. This ideological influence is key to achieve establishment or perpetuation of a repressive state.

Humans evolved into civilisation from hunting societies. The hunting life required aggression and tendency for violence for successful hunting and self-defence from the wild animals. In a sense, violence helped the early humans in their survival. The same violence that was helpful in hunting was also helpful in protecting early humans from hostility from other humans who were not part of their immediate society.

This phenomenon reveals that from early times onwards humans lived as groups with cooperation among the members of the in-group and violence and aggression against members of the out-group for survival purposes. However, except for the motive of physical survival, protection of members of the in-group and competition over hunting boundaries, no other reasons could be attributed to such primitive violence. Yet, the same could not be claimed as reasons for mass and institutional violence as wars since the beginning of civilizations.

The credibility and legitimization of wars and institutional violence come from civilizations' development on the ideological basis of group existence which reinforces identity and consent as part of culture and nationalism in a country. As culture is a human way of living by controlling and harnessing natural elements to their advantage like in agriculture, animal husbandry and technology, humans use culture, a controlled nature, to live as society. Membership in a society requires consent and adherence of the members of the society to its norms for cooperative living and conflict resolution. Culture, with many of its human-made institutions like language, education, religion, arts, literature, science and technology, and politics, help members of the society acquire common traits that constitute their identity. This sense of identity, assumed under culture and nationalism, permeates into all spheres of life, including leisure and sports.

Cambridge Dictionary defines a country as “an area of land that has its own government, army, etc.”, and nation as “a large group of people of the same race who share the same language, traditions, and history...” (“Country”). State, according to Althusser, “...is explicitly conceived as a repressive apparatus...which enables the ruling classes...to ensure their dominance over the working class...” (7). Nation-State is described by the Encyclopaedia Britannica as a “territorially bounded sovereign polity-i.e., a state-that is ruled in the name of a community of citizens who identify themselves as a nation. Members of the core national group see the state as belonging to them Accordingly, they demand that other groups...recognize and respect their control over the state” (“Nation-State”).

Neo-Marxist Louis Althusser’s ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ explains how ideology creates identity, culture and nationalism among the simple and obedient citizens of a country thus converting them into identity conscious subjects of a nation. The process involved in this aspect is called “Interpellation” by Althusser and he claims that the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) “...function ‘by ideology.’” (Althusser 11) which are implanted through institutions such as “the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade unions ISA, the communications (press, radio and television, etc.) ISA, the cultural (literature, the arts, sports, etc.) ISA”(11). If citizens refuse to conform to such ideological traits as their identities, the state employs the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) such as army or police to enforce discipline among the subjects. Althusser reiterates that “...while there is one (Repressive) State Apparatus, there is a plurality of Ideological State Apparatuses” (11) as above.

Tagore’s *Mukta-Dhara* is about two peoples in a state: the people of Uttarakut, the up-stream land of river Mukta-Dhara, and the people of Shiv-tarai, who live down-stream. The people of Uttarakut, whose King Ranajit also rules Shiv-tarai, believe that the Shiv-tarai people are physically and culturally inferior to them: “...they are bad men...their religion is very bad.... They haven’t got high-ridged nose...” (Tagore 23). They believe so because this is what their ruler wanted them to believe. Because the Shiv-tarai people are presumably inferior they are expected to be humble and under the control of Uttarakut. Uttarakut has the power in the form of machines, which Shiv-tarai does not have, and controls the most important natural resource of Shiv-tarai, the river Mukta-Dhara, by

erecting a dam. In addition, their modern machine and army are capable of unleashing terrible violence to bring Shiv-tarai to its knees, if there is any resistance. Both the ISA and RSA are employed by the ruler in the play to distinguish the in-group, the Uttarakuts, from the out-group, the Shvi-tarai, to reward or punish according to their obedience or disobedience to the rulers' ideology. Thus, "There is no such thing as a purely repressive state apparatus...the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally..." (Althusser 11) with unconditional obedience and serve as role models to the subjects of the state.

The Uttarakut is an example of how majoritarianism, material advantage and surplus resources create a sense of power and superiority in the minds of those who own them. They feel empowered, with the aid of science and technology, which is an Ideological State Apparatus. This is evidence that while the "[Repressive] State Apparatus belongs entirely to the public domain, much the larger part of the Ideological State Apparatuses are part...of the private domain. Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc., etc., are private" (Althusser 11). They have the machines of power and control that make them narcissistic and dominant in spirit. They enjoy the surplus of resources, both natural and man-made. Shiv-tarai, on the other hand is an example of how marginalization, exploitation and subjugation create a spirit of rebellion in the victims' thoughts and actions. Dhananjaya, a leader of Shiv-tarai, reflects how the marginalized respond to their predicament when he says, "Our excess food is yours; the food of hunger is not...greed brings you only stolen goods,...What you seize by violence can never be yours" (Tagore 47). They suffer deprivation of resources. The role each nation plays creates animosity and enmity between the two.

The two sets of characters represent two sides. The King of Uttarakut, Ranajit, who is also the ruler of Shiv-tarai, is greedy for power. He exercises his power with the help of modern machines and weapons. His power greed is supported by the royal engineer Bibhuti who creates machines of control and terror. He also constructs a dam that stops the flow of water into Shiv-tarai. The King wants to "...pierce Shiv-tarai with thirst spear, and fling it before the throne of Uttarkut" (Tagore 20). Thus, he is ambitious to control people by controlling the natural resources. He is proud that he is the controller of natural resources

and has the freedom to dispense with people under their rule when he says that “The purpose of my dam was that human intelligence should win through to its goal, though sand and stone and water all conspired to block its path. I had no time to think of whether some farmer’s paltry maize crop would die....(Tagore 12). This tendency betrays the attitude of the ruling class to treat public properties as private ones because Althusser explains that “The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its ‘authority’” (11). Consequently, governments with tendencies to treat natural and man-made resources as personal wealth turn into plutocracy irrespective of whether they are aristocratic or democratic in nature.

Bibhuti enjoys his power by the power of his machine. His extreme narcissism makes him believe that he is a creator who can even challenge god. He challenges a messenger of peace saying, “... in the strength of my Machine I can take over their divine office myself, and I undertake to prove it” (Tagore 12). Bibhuti loves his power to decide the life and death of a people. He is so proud that he has made a Machine with capital ‘M’, which would choke the flow of river. He has the capacity to control and alter the course of nature. Bibhuti’s Machine turns into a Repressive State Apparatus, aiding the King in his oppression of the Shiv-tarai, as it is an instrument of violence against both the river, a natural element, and the out-group people. His self-esteem becomes so high that he believes that he is the most elite among his own people as he is a bourgeois in the present unlike in his past when he was just a proletariat like his village people. His old friends lament that “He would like to rub his upbringing out of his skin altogether” (Tagore 25). Thus, Bibhuti, a “techno-capitalist” (Kathleen 558), becomes a template of consummate interpellation showing absolute conformance to the Ideological State Apparatus and recipient of rewards for this loyalty to the nationalistic ideals.

The power of the King and the intelligence of Bibhuti make the people of Uttarakut so proud and awe-struck. The government carefully manipulates this sentiment to perpetuate its power and respect. Bibhuti opines to King about the usefulness of propagandists like the school Master that “...fellows of this kind have their uses. Day after day they repeat mechanically, exactly what they have been told. Things wouldn’t run so smoothly if they

had more sense” (Tagore 24). Rulers employ propagandists like the Master who teaches his disciples to worship the King and royal engineer and hate the people of Shiv-tarai as follows, “They have learned from childhood to honour everything that is to the glory of Uttarakut....The greatness of our race!...they will conquer...” (22,23). His system of education promotes blind glorification of their nation’s technological achievement and hatred for others, and it discourages thinking and the Master assures the King, “ Rest assured, your Majesty, all these boys will be a terror one day to all wretched foreigners...it’s we school masters who mould men-your ministers have merely to use them...(24).When the Master discovers insincerity or disobedience among his students, he does not hesitate to threaten them with prospects of punishment: “You’ll be getting a taste of the cane, I can see. Loudly now, shout, Jai! Rajarajeswar!” (22). The Master becomes an example to Althusser’s statement that “ ...Ideological State Apparatuses function...predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression...this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic...Thus Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment...The same is true of the cultural IS Apparatus (censorship, among other things), etc.” (11,12). Althusser reiterates his thesis that Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses are compatible, complementary, and interchangeable.

Contrary to what Rousseau said about the state that “...the state is established and acquires legitimacy in terms of the ‘general will of people’ rather than by force” (Kathleen 362), even democratic governments turn out to become repressive states in the postcolonial world. The redefinition of national boundaries on the lines of ethnic and cultural identities of peoples in many parts of the world as an aftermath of colonialism has re-opened primordial sense of group affinity and in-group aggression against out-group. Though modern science has debunked the concept of race as redundant and modern governance has become democracy from aristocracy or tribal society, the lingering or resurgent “political legitimacy” lent to “consanguinity” (Kathleen 363) blurs the difference between the extinct dynastic empires and contemporary Ideological States in many parts of the world. This situation reinforces Max Weber’s claim that “...belief in the ‘nation’ is politics, involves the promotion of ‘prestige interests’ of an intellectual elite that assume

‘cultural leadership of the constructed community’ (363). These prestige interests foment rivalry and enmity between different peoples and prevents peaceful co-existence.

Tagore’s *Mukta Dhara* and Althusser’s ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ are helpful in making sense of the pervasive identity and ideology based politics in many parts of the world. These two works, though being independent of each other temporally and spatially, demonstrate how the universal concerns in great literary works have been critical of hegemony and sympathetic of the powerful and voiceless people across space and time and can work in tandem as critical pedagogy to resolve conflicts.

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Resilience to Resistance: A Post-colonial Reading of Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*

DENSINGH DANIEL, D

Assistant Professor of English (SF)

The American College, Madurai

Abstract

Django Unchained is a 2012 American revisionist western film directed by Quentin Tarantino. It earned a leading of five nominations in the 85th Academy Awards. The film is set in 1858, where a black slave named Django is brought in slave trade. He is a black with good potentials. However, the whites around him continue to reject him even after his freedom. He is freed by Dr. Schultz, a doctor-turned bounty hunter. Django is an object of hate because of his black identity. He is hated for riding on a horse alongside a white. Even then, he becomes a bounty hunter and a trained shooter. He rebels against his captivators in his struggle to free his wife Broomhilda from Calvin Candie. Thereby, he becomes an icon of resistance in the film. Individual empowerment shifts power from the coloniser to the colonised. In the process of shifting, resistance becomes the voice of the disempowered individual.

Keywords: *Resistance, Voice, Disempowered, Black, Reverse Canon*

Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* is a visual text which projects the colonial oppression enforced upon a black slave. It also shows the struggle of the blacks to reclaim their past and reconstruct their identity. Films which are considered as visual texts has a connection between the word and the shot. But simply, stringing words together does not produce intelligible discourse. As well as, merging separate photographic shots together will not produce intelligible works of visual art either. Visual text is a combination of visual features and verbal features in the context it has been used. This brings life experiences as well as background knowledge to what is being viewed. Visual texts are influenced by cultures, values, ideologies and world views in which they are created and consumed. In the film, the black culture, their struggles and perspectives are shown to the audience for a better understanding of what it means to be 'a black'.

The film *Django Unchained* addresses several questions out of which the researcher identifies the following two for analysis:

1. How does the film explicitly represent various aspects of colonial oppression?
2. What does the film suggest for reversing the power structure?

The term imperialism includes power, authority, command, dominion, realm and empire. It is a strategy whereby a state aims to extend its control forcibly beyond its own borders over other states and peoples. A ruling power (coloniser) will often impose not only its own terms of trade but also its value system, its own cultural values and linguistic dominion upon a subject state (colonised). Every historical narrative inevitably takes side with a dominant ideology. It often forgets to note the violence that forms the dark side of the same experiences. The coloniser insists on the binary opposition between what signifies culture and nature. The fundamental framework of post-colonial thought has been furnished by the Marxist critique of colonialism and imperialism. Post colonialism has embraced numerous aims including: to re-examine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonised, and to determine the economic, political and cultural impact of colonialism in the colonised peoples. Postcolonial discourse analyses the process of reversing the power structure with the aim of achieving political liberation. The process includes equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination and the articulation of political and cultural identities.

The existing condition of the once colonised is nothing more than a shattered state which means that the colonised are deprived of a unified self. The colonised do not know who they are exactly and where they originally belong due to the attributes they show of both their own culture and the Western civilisation. People who are colonised become multicultural and thus colonised culture cannot be considered pure. Although, it is believed that colonialism has ended, it has left its traces of footprints in the postcolonial age making the colonised culture a concoction of western and native qualities. "Reality is represented in an unquestioned norm, so that the situations depicted can stand for all possible forms of human interaction"(Barry 218). What has happened to the Africans in American soil is a matter of history, which has been seized with the wings of time. Africans were subjugated and silenced losing their humanity, history and identity. Their roles in building their own lives were denied and ignored.

Whenever a universal signification is claimed for a work, then white Eurocentric norms and practices are being promoted by a sleight of hand to an elevated status and all others correspondingly relegated to subsidiary, marginalised roles. (Barry182)

The film opens with a scarred Django, a black slave brought in chains through slave trade into the American soil. Slave trade was an international institution from which nation states benefited economically. Django and other slaves have numerous scars on their back indicating the cruelty that the slaves were put through. Throughout the film, blacks are referred to as ‘niggers’, an offensive term found impudent in modern times. Dr.Schultz is a white dentist and a bounty hunter who buys Django through winning a due land releases the other prisoners from their captivators. Dr.Schultz offers Django his freedom with a condition to help the doctor in his bounty hunting. Django agrees to the offer and rides with Schultz as a freeman. The locals in the town stare at Django, which gives the notion that there has not been a black person riding a horse and that too alongside a white. Even the fellow blacks could not accept the fact of their own people being free. This strange awkwardness shows colonial dominance over the other people. The relationship between Django and Schultz is that of Prospero and Caliban. The identity of the colonised is exposed to the world by means of coloniser’s arrival. This is all about the upper hand deciding the marginalised roles. “Colonised people in finding a voice and identity is to reclaim their own past. First step towards post colonial perspective is to reclaim one’s own past” (Barry 193). Identity is a complex concept which is difficult to define. It is an eternal mark which is left behind to speak of one’s own existence. Based on race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture, people distinguish themselves from the other groups. These factors serve as the base for one’s identity. When people move from one place to another, it is not just lands they leave behind but their identity too. Often colonizer rob the colonised identities and they have to fight for it. They are looked down upon by the society when they try to fight for it which further complicates their life. The protagonist Django finds the past in Broomhilda, his wife who has been sold as a slave. He wants to find her and reclaim their own past. With the help of Dr.Schultz, he gets a lead to find his slave wife in Mississippi.

Linguistic deference amounts to a sense that the linguistic furniture belongs to somebody else and therefore should not be moved around without permission. Some

postcolonial writers have concluded that the colonisers' language is permanently tainted and that to write in it involves a crucial acquiescence in colonial structures. (Barry188)

Django finds hard to read in English. Schultz helps him in reading English, as Prospero teaches Caliban. Django is taught to read which he uses as a defensive means in slave world. The language of the coloniser becomes a weapon for the colonised to attack the coloniser.

Despite a residual racism in certain quarters, which would see representational realism as a form appropriate to lesser; what is particularly noticeable is just how many post colonial writers break the boundaries of realism. This may take the form of very simple subversion of the mundane real as in the number of films which straight forward assume the unproblematic co-presence of material. (Herman et al, 454)

Material is considered superior or inferior depending on the situation and demands. Money outweighs human slaves in the world of colonialism. The material consists of money, humans, means of production, punishment, trade and values. In bounty hunting, a warrant is an essential notice that gives authority to kill and slaughter the criminals under government registration. It is a sign of authority. Warrant as a material co-exists with Django's freedom and the lives of people dependent on him. Slaves are considered as materials by the colonisers who give corporal punishment to tame them. Mandingo fights are common during slave era where two slaves fight to death for the honour of their masters. These masters bet on the slaves and make money. In Mississippi, the landlord Candie earns profit by selling Mandingo fighters. One of the Mandingo fighters tried to escape, for which he would be lynched and given as food for his dogs (material being). Production of materials is inevitable, but it happens at the cost of colonised lives. Those people materialised, undergo double alienation; Mandingo fights are a trademark of economic significance for the coloniser. The best fighter is sold to the highest bidder. *Django unchained* shows the truest face of the oppressors: When Broomhilda tries to escape, she will be bound naked without food and water for ten days in a coffin. When Django tries to rebel and take his wife back, he is punished and about to be castrated. A black child gets sixty lashes for breaking an egg. The colonized are made to carry the scars of slavery throughout their lifetime. They are showcased material for the whites to attain pleasure and ecstasy. The fact that the law is presented as an inscription in the body indicates that the

force can hit even those areas of life not included in the human anatomy. Hence the law becomes a measure that decides on the basic expressions of life, it has the exclusivity to decide on the issues of life and death.

The second step towards a post colonial perspective is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which the past had been devalued. Only by understanding and embracing the idea of cultural hybridity, an attempt to explore the concept of past identity, any individual can truly hope to communicate the lasting effects of process. (Barry 196)

Django embraces his past with Broomhilda as well as accepts his fabricated present of being a bounty hunter incorporated by his mentor Schultz. Quentin Tarantino reverses the power structure by promoting and sustaining resistance through the character Django. He (Django) fights his freedom back again from the colonising whites by playing their own game. Post colonialism is continuously going beyond the boundaries of the colonisers' thought and reborn with new self-awareness, critique and celebration. With this self-awareness comes self-expression in the form of resistance. Django carries the Will of Schulz that he executes the whites claiming his freedom and his wife's freedom. Blacks who opposed him as a freeman start to respect him as a hero of resistance. Though resistance means killing the other, there is reversal of roles in the oppression. The whites who seize power to control the blacks are killed in their own rights. Django executes the whites with same treatment, how his people were terminated before. (Calliban cursing his master in his master's language.) The wheel of judgement is reversed, though it is not the only way of decolonisation; Tarantino chooses violence as a means of resistance.

The aim of communism, according to Marx was to realise the promise of freedom, democracy and equality which was articulated but not fulfilled. In stark contrast with the rich and revolutionary contributions of the colonised has opposed and neutralised with the aid of honest intellectuals who truly desire revolutionary change for the mass of people. (Habib 398)

There is always a direct relation between violence and resistance. Interestingly, it is obvious that the burden of colonisation is much laid upon the colonised for major exploitation. When the latter attains enlightenment informally from violence, the empire (colonised) fights back the emperor. Such agitated violence creates honest intellectuals such as Django who truly desire revolution for the sake of his own people. Tarantino expresses

his disillusionment with the social conditions of post colonial world in which the blacks of the past still face hostile society that does not let them live as free and independent individuals. Stephen Warren, another fellow black has lived in the stigma of colonial oppression that he becomes a victim of the ideals and tries to imitate his master. In order to survive, he accepts the existing order and takes the position of the colonisers. Tarantino chooses two traits of the same group, Django and Stephen Warren, who are both products of colonialism, yet one strives to shoot back at the emperor while the other strives to live and die under slavery. This is where, democracy and equality fail in the system. Post colonialism promises a future for those who strive to seek a change and not for the ones who simply yield to colonial oppression. Thereby, the film suggests of reversing the canon to promote and sustain resistance.

The most powerful images used in the film intersect the tactile with the visual. Using such violent visual and disturbing images, visual texts (films) have powerfully captured the painful history that prevails in the society. Civilisation is the biggest myth, where oppression and slavery have become part of colonial imperial motives. Django Freeman is a character representing slavery, who beats the slave trade and reclaims his past- Broomhilda. Also, the film has taken a leap from the master-slave relationship between Schultz and Django to a father-son relationship in order to prove that the world is a better place to live in. Only a very few agree, but then have a scar to remember forever like that of George Floyd, who was choked to death by white policeman. As a result, there is a violent protest all over the world supporting the victim. Reversing the power structure is not just playing the coloniser's game, but also a powerful back lash against the colonisers and their ideals.

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Quotas and Quality: How (Not) to Revise a Poetry Anthology for Schools

FRANCIS JARMAN

Email ID: francisjarman@gmail.com

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the OCR (Oxford, Cambridge, and RSA) awarding body is one of the major boards for school examinations, including the GCSEs routinely taken by 16-year-olds. In recent years, it has courted controversy with the syllabus for the poetry section of its English Literature exam. This syllabus is based on an online anthology, *Towards a World Unknown* (2020), of 45 poems grouped in three “themed poetry clusters”: I. Love and Relationships; II. Conflict; and III. Youth and Age.

The collection comprises “literary heritage and modern poems as well as poems from around the world”.

“Literary heritage” presumably means “older poems”, though nothing earlier than William Blake is included. Thus, there are no Metaphysical poets, and no Milton, Pope, or early ballads. There are poems by Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats, but none by Coleridge, Shelley, or Robert Burns, and nothing from either of the two supreme masterpieces of the English language, the works of Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible, both of which contain sublime poetry. (There is, however, a separate paper in the OCR GCSE requiring the study of just *one* of Shakespeare’s plays.)

The “modern poems” are mostly very recent poems, and there are no works by Kipling, Yeats, Eliot, Auden, MacNeice, Spender, Betjeman, or Dylan Thomas.

The “poems from around the world” are by non-British writers. There are Americans and Caribbean writers, but no Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, or South Africans, and no translations from other languages.

This 2020 collection may seem less than ideal, yet the real uproar came in 2022, when a third of the poems were dropped and replaced with new texts. There was outrage in the

British media that certain major (and much loved) poets had been scrapped, to be replaced by writers you'd never heard of.

The project of revising such an anthology is perfectly legitimate—if done well. Here is how the new material is described on the OCR's website (my emphases):

“OCR is delighted to announce the 15 exciting and *diverse* poems that we're adding to our GCSE English Literature [...] Our anthology for GCSE English Literature students will feature many poets that have never been on a GCSE syllabus before and represent *diverse* voices, from living poets of British-Somali, British-Guyanese and Ukrainian heritage, to one of the first Black women in 19th century America to publish a novel. Of the 15 poets whose work has been added to GCSE English Literature, 14 are poets of colour. Six are Black women, one is of South Asian heritage. Our new poets also include disabled and LGBTQ+ voices”. [In case you didn't know: LGBTQ+ stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual / transgender, queer (or questioning)”, with the “+” encompassing similar identities, plus political-ideological allies.]

On the same webpage, Jill Duffy, the OCR's Chief Executive, declares: “This is an inspiring set of poems that demonstrates our ongoing commitment to greater *diversity* in the English literature that students engage with. [...] Our approach is broad; we want to reflect *diversity* and inclusivity [...].” Judith Palmer of the Poetry Society also voices her support: “These poems will speak powerfully to the experiences of young people today.”

The key criterion is plainly “diversity”.

Which is commendable: diversity is a hugely valuable social, economic, and cultural resource (Zachary 2003; David & Jarman 2017; and many others). Yet I have misgivings about this particular “diversity project”. I would argue that the OCR's aim is not genuine diversity, but increased representation of specific groups.

There are, nevertheless, two perfectly good (and overlapping) arguments for wanting to include diverse “voices” in such an anthology.

The first is to encourage curiosity about the Other, the Not-Self, leading to *empathy and understanding*, and consequently to personal growth. The more homogeneous a culture believes itself to be, the greater the need for this.

The second is to address the different forms of experience that exist within a diverse society, documenting and representing the feelings and viewpoints not just of (for instance)

educated, middle-class, White males, but also those of women, Blacks, gays, the disabled, and so on. No-one should feel excluded.

Even so, I can't agree that the choice of texts for a literature course should be made primarily for social reasons (by *quotas*) rather than according to aesthetic considerations (by *quality*). And (playing devil's advocate for a moment) if the main point of the exercise is indeed to mirror the composition of society, its *diversity*, giving a voice to its different constituent groups, then the choice of poems should do precisely that, and in a fair and representative manner.

But is that the case here?

53% of the poems in the revised anthology are by women, which is close to their share of the British population (51%). (Whether women have written half of the best poetry of the last two hundred years need not be debated here, since there is plenty of superb writing by women to choose from.)

The comparable figure for LGBTQ+ poets in the anthology is by my reckoning at least 24% (undoubtedly an underestimate, since not all writers advertise their sexual orientation). This is substantially more than the probable percentage of LGBTQ+s in the UK population: in 2020, an estimated 3.1% of people aged 16 and over identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, the figure rising to 8% for the 16-24 age-group (Office for National Statistics). (On the other hand, 24% as the proportion of "fine writing" produced by LGBTQ+s might not be too far off the mark, since many gay people choose careers in the arts, and many writers have been sexually adventurous.)

Ethnic identity is a trickier matter. The population of England and Wales in 2018 was estimated as being 86% White, 7.5% Asian, 3.3% Black 3.3%, 2.2% Mixed, and 1% Other (e.g., Arab). Yet only 53% of the poets in the revised anthology can be identified as White, while 28% are Black, 7% of Asian heritage, and 8% of Mixed ethnicity.

Black poets and poets of Mixed ethnicity are therefore hugely *overrepresented*, whereas White poets are heavily *underrepresented*. Why should that be? I have never heard the argument that there are proportionally more good poets among Blacks than among Whites.

It is correct that there are areas of the country, including London and the West Midlands, where the non-White population is proportionally much greater, encouraging the

false impression (reinforced by the media, which are London-dominated) that Britain is a “multi-ethnic society” nationwide. There are even schools in such areas where 80% or more of the pupils are non-White. For schools like these it would be reasonable to offer curricular choices modified to take the (by national standards) untypical social and cultural background of the pupils better into account.

Otherwise, though, and notwithstanding arguments about encouraging empathy with those different from oneself, is it reasonable to require majority (White) pupils to work their way through so many texts by and about people from an unfamiliar ethnic and cultural background? Wouldn't they expect most of the texts to be about *them*, *their* families, and *their* concerns? Texts that (in Judith Palmer's words) “speak powerfully to the experiences of young people today”—but of *all* young people, and not just those belonging to certain ethnic minorities.

What makes the situation even more bizarre is that the Black poets are drawn from different parts of the world, and not all of them have a connection to British culture. What they *do* have in common is that they are not White. Their skin-colour is apparently what matters most to the OCR editors, who have emphasised the “non-Whiteness” of their new writers in the 2022 revision.

A selection that deliberately underrepresented *non-White* writers would quickly be branded as racist! So why are they doing this? Wouldn't a representative handful of well-chosen texts by Black British writers have been enough? And perhaps dropping the poems by non-British Black Writers, unless these were retained because of their exceptional sensitivity and high literary quality?

One explanation could be that the OCR is using the term “diversity” in bad faith, thereby making its own small “woke” contribution to the culture wars currently gripping Britain and the United States. “Woke”, as the currently fashionable Critical Social Justice (CSJ) movement is widely known, is an ugly neologism that taps into the idea of “awoken” in the sense of being enlightened, of being able to see through the power mechanisms of oppression. In CSJ, the word “diversity” (like “inclusive”, or even the word “critical” itself) is a treacherous cross-over term. You and I might think that the word means something like “a condition of variety”, and therefore, in the context of ethnic identity, “people from

different ethnic/cultural backgrounds”. But in CSJ, such keywords are programmatic, not descriptive.

It is part of the CSJ agenda to increase the number, power, influence, or representation in any social context or institution of members of groups who define themselves as victims of historical racism and contemporary discrimination. What these groups have in common is “lived experience of oppression” (for whatever real or imagined reason). The CSJ programme is to redress grievances and change the balance of power, by subversion, and eventual takeover, from within: this is the notorious strategy, inspired by Gramsci and, later, the German Marxist Rudi Dutschke, of the so-called “long march through the institutions”.

The culture wars began to cast their shadow over the teaching of literature long ago. In 1994, Harold Bloom warned that aesthetic and even intellectual standards were being abandoned in schools and colleges “in the name of social harmony and the remedying of historical injustice”; “what is being taught,” he wrote, “includes by no means the best writers who happen to be women, African, Hispanic, or Asian, but rather the writers who offer little but the resentment they have developed as part of their sense of identity” (7). Bloom objected to the great figures of Western literature, many of them “dead, white, European males”, being pushed aside in the academy to make room for inferior, though ideologically more acceptable, writers; he saw, “at this bad moment, [...] inchoate moralists appropriat[ing] literature for purposes they assert to be conducive to social change” (320).

More so than when studied at university, English literature for 16-year-olds needs to strike a balance between aesthetic and pedagogic purposes. Some of the texts should indeed mirror the lives and concerns of the pupils, though without skewing the lessons exaggeratedly towards subjects better left to Politics, History, or Civics classes. The task here is to produce a corpus of fine poems for youngsters to engage with, texts that will both appeal to them and provide them with aesthetic and intellectual nourishment. (Both those aims are important—if it were only a question of giving them what they can easily relate to, the pupils could be spoon-fed, and kept quiet, with pop music texts, a stratagem only too familiar to schoolteachers.)

Many of the kids will have had little experience of poetry, will show no great interest in it, and (in the case of the boys) may even view it as effeminate, old-fashioned, and

snobbish. Does the OCR anthology, despite it being lumbered with unnecessary ideological baggage, provide poems that are good enough to overcome such reluctance and prejudice? There is no space here for a detailed analysis and discussion of all 60 texts (the 30 that were retained, the 15 that were scrapped, and the 15 new texts), yet it should be possible to give a rough answer to that question.

A reasonable number of the poems, I believe, should have a direct and obvious appeal. They should be capable of grabbing the readers' attention with their dramatic verve, and of stirring emotion with the force and beauty of their language.

Not all poetry sets out to do this, of course. There are many poems of high quality that are slow burners: they are contemplative, introspective, confessional, complex, linguistically subtle. These may prove hard to teach and be less likely to arouse the enthusiasm of 16-year-olds without a great effort—I suggest that there shouldn't be *too* many such poems in the anthology.

And there should be at least one or two poems that meet A.E. Housman's famous criterion for recognising true poetry: that it should produce a *physical response*, an excitement, in the reader or listener. Housman mentions the hair on his skin standing up; a shiver down the spine; "a constriction of the throat and a precipitation of water to the eyes"; a feeling in the pit of the stomach (46-47). Many young readers will have experienced this thrill from music, but they will not be expecting it from literature, and only now will they become aware of the remarkable epiphanic power that poetry can have. (I have discussed some of these issues in an essay, forthcoming, entitled "Why Poetry Needs to Mess with Your Head".)

What is the best way to tackle a poem? *Silent reading* is not the only option.

Another (preferable, even) is to read *italoud*.

Or to try to *learn it by heart*.

A less obvious approach, to be applied to poems in free verse, is to write out the text as *prose*. Once the outward structure, the form that announces "Look, this is a poem!", has been removed, how much then remains that is genuinely poetic, and not simply a string of sentences and fancy phrases pretentiously arranged? (This method of weeding out

substandard free verse proved useful some years ago when I was doing editorial work on a poetry magazine.)

University students who are not first-language speakers of English could also try their hand at *translating* the poem, which in my experience is the finest way to unlock its secrets.

Here are some brief notes on the 60 poems—highly subjective, but you are most welcome to repeat the exercise for yourself. All the texts can be found online; at the time of writing, the OCR anthology had not yet been updated to include the 15 “replacement poems”, but these can all be found with a little online detective work.

Love and Relationships

Helen Maria Williams’s *A Song* could be used to start a discussion about love, though its sopiness and its archaic language (“boon”, “bosom”, “woe”, “billows”) would be a turnoff for many pupils.

Keats’s famous sonnet *Bright Star* would quickly elicit the response “What’s he on about?” Is this one of those “negative calorie texts” where the benefit gained from chewing over the lines is not proportional to the effort expended?

The **Browning** sonnet *Now* is arguably more rewarding, though only after several careful readings (out loud).

Emily Brontë’s simple *Love and Friendship* makes its point, but has it been included because of the recognition value of Emily’s name and to up the number of women poets? (There are much finer, deeper, short poems about love in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.)

Derek Walcott’s *Love after Love* is the first of the poems by “Black” writers. I love its Cavafian cadences, though 16-year-olds might find it dull—isn’t this a topic for an older, more experienced, person?—especially after it’s been picked apart to discover what it’s actually about.

Sylvia Plath’s challenging *Morning Song* has very beautiful moments but is over freighted with images, only some of which work.

Liz Lochhead’s *I Wouldn’t Thank You for a Valentine* and **James Fenton**’s *In Paris with You* are amusing and charming.

My reaction to **Carol Ann Duffy**'s *Warming Her Pearls* was "Wow! But a bit too kinky for youngsters?"

Jackie Kay's rather plodding *Dusting the Phone* didn't do well on the write-it-out-as-prose test.

Turning to the five poems that were dropped: *Long Distance II* by **Tony Harrison**, about bereavement within the family, and grief, I might have kept.

Charlotte Mews's *Fin de Fête*, with its shifting tone and metric oddity (an orthodox rhyme-scheme, but lines of varying length) is unsatisfying.

The dropping of the other three texts (by **Thomas Hardy**, **Edward Thomas**, and **Philip Larkin**) provoked indignation, because these poets are much loved and admired in Britain, certainly among middle-class, middle-aged readers. However, better poems by the first two are available, such as (since this section is about love) *Adlestrop*, Thomas's lyrical declaration of love for the English countryside. *An Arundel Tomb*, with its famous last line "What will survive of us is love", may be one of Larkin's best-known poems, but he himself wasn't fond of it and considered it (in part) badly written (Haffenden, 125). It is slow and difficult—I too would cut it, and add a Larkin poem elsewhere.

Are the replacement poems an improvement?

Rita Dove's *Flirtation*, a snapshot of a "laid back" moment, is spoilt by some overwrought images and the (probable) need to look up the meaning of "topiary" to be sure what the poem is saying. And, given the editors' urgency to introduce "poets of colour", what is distinctively "non-White" about this poem?

The same could be asked of **June Jordan**'s *Poem for my Love*, although it does include a reference to "black men waiting on the corner for a womanly mirage". The poem relies heavily on conventional "poetic" images of stars, leaves, the rain, "the holy flesh".

Fatimah Asghar's *Lullaby* is a sad memorial to the poet's dead parents. Ah, those stars again! Referring to stars doesn't necessarily plunge a poem into cliché-dom (see the Byron poem in the next section), but nor does it magically bestow poetic quality on the text. Apart from mention of Pakistan, what places this poem outside Western culture? "Henna-dyed hair" is now common in Europe. Why then select this text to represent "poets of colour"?

Looking at Your Hands, by **Martin Carter**, is a clumsy, shouty protest poem.

Rewritten as prose, much of *The Perseverance*, by **Raymond Antrobus**, is conversational. It is poignant, but the poignancy derives more from *what* is said than from *how* it is said. Nevertheless, the poem could be a starting point for discussing something that is a common problem in many West Indian families.

I would keep Browning, Plath, Lochhead, Fenton, and (possibly) Walcott, Antrobus, and Harrison.

There are plenty of poems, passionate, ironic, serene, funny, or desperate, about love and other relationships. For example: **Christopher Smart**, *My Cat, Jeoffrey*; **John Betjeman**, *The Olympic Girl*; **W.H. Auden**, *Funeral Blues*, or *O Tell Me the Truth about Love*; **John Arden**, *The Young Woman from Ireland*; **Ted Hughes**, *Lovesong*; **Hugo Williams**, *Along these Lines*; **Wendy Cope**, *Bloody Men*; (from Scotland) **Robert Burns**, *A Red, Red Rose*; (from Ireland) **W.B. Yeats**, *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*, or *For Anne Gregory*; **James Joyce**, *On the Beach at Fontana*; (from America) **e.e. cummings**, *may I feel said he*; **Robert Hayden**, *Those Winter Sundays*; **Robert Lowell**, *Man and Wife*; **Anne Stevenson**, *The Marriage*; (from Australia) **Gwen Harwood**, *In the Park*; (from New Zealand) **Katherine Mansfield**, *Friendship*; **Fleur Adcock**, *The Video*. Or a remarkable poem by the greatest of all English poets, **Shakespeare's** *Sonnet 130*.

Conflict

Why has **Mary Lamb's** *Envy*, with its moralising and pretty flowers, been kept but **Blake's** more muscular *A Poison Tree* dropped?

The excerpt from **Wordsworth's** *Prelude* is demanding. The reader will have dozed off, lulled by the iambic pentameter, before the “main event” is reached, when the narrator, having gone for a spin in a stolen boat, suddenly imagines himself being chased (though still in the same stately metre) by a huge cliff (yes, really).

Byron's *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, with its thrilling anapaests and bold images, comes as a relief—at last an “alpha poem” that grabs the reader! (Though I am surprised that it was chosen, given its Biblical inspiration.)

Emily Dickinson's poetry is notoriously challenging, and *There's a certain Slant of light* will frustrate most young readers, who will rely heavily on their teacher for help. Another great Dickinson poem, *Tell all the truth but tell it slant*, might have been more suitable.

Keith Douglas's *Vergissmeinnicht* is moving despite being restrained in tone

The first three stanzas of **Intiaz Dharker's** *Honour Killing* have a strong momentum, but the following stanzas lose this impetus; however, the topic of the poem is one that some 16-year-olds in Britain might find involving.

The other "retained" poems in this section are preachy, with political axes to grind.

The best of them, *What Were They Like?* by **Denise Levertov**, is an anti-Vietnam War text that rather sentimentalises Vietnamese village life.

Gillian Clarke's *Lament* is even more victim-focused, a confusing hodgepodge of images of suffering.

John Agard's *Flag* lambasts flag-waving nationalism, as though this were the only element or motivation in war.

Sujata Bhatt's *Partition* fails the write-it-out-as-prose test.

Besides the Blake poem, four other texts were excluded.

Wilfred Owen's sonnet *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, a tender elegy for the lost young lives of the First World War, is one of the great English poems of the twentieth century, and is horribly relevant today, when the "monstrous anger of the guns" can be heard every night on television broadcasts from Ukraine. Scrapping this poem was an act of vandalism.

The dropping of **Seamus Heaney's** *Punishment* also provoked indignation. Excluding the most gifted poet in the English language of recent years is a serious error, which also means that no Irish poets are represented in the anthology (and *why* no Irish, although there are an enormous number of people of Irish descent in Britain, yet so many Guyanese poets?). However, the more accessible *At a Potato Digging III* might have been a better choice.

The Man I Killed, by **Thomas Hardy**, is a slight piece, certainly compared with Wilfred Owen's majestic, more complex, *Strange Meeting*, to which it could serve as a stepping-stone.

Jo Shapcott's *Phrase Book* mixes images and phrases evoking sex and war, and does so in an incoherent and confusing manner—perhaps intentionally? Be that as it may, the poem doesn't seem a very rewarding read.

And the replacement poems?

Frances Harper's *Songs for the People* verges on the trite.

Fred d'Aguiar labours to make an anti-colonial statement in *Papa-T*.

Louise Bennett, in her satirical dialect poem *Colonization in Reverse*, achieves the same far more effectively with humour.

IlyaKaminsky's *We Lived Happily during the War* looks feeble when stood beside texts like Martin Niemöller's great confessional "First they came for the Communists..."

Caleb Femi's *Thirteen*, despite the powerful irony of its ending, could as well be prose.

As with so many of the contemporary poems selected: lots of politics, not enough poetry!

I would keep Blake, Byron, Owen, Douglas, Heaney, and Bennett.

Some alternatives: **Matthew Arnold**, *The Last Word*; **Thomas Hardy**, *Channel Firing*; **A.E. Housman**, *The Laws of God, the Laws of Man*; **Rudyard Kipling**, *Harp Song of the Dane Women*; **D.H. Lawrence**, *Snake*; **Stevie Smith**, *Not Waving but Drowning*; **John Betjeman**, *Meditation on the A30*; **W.H. Auden**, *Say this City Has Ten Million Souls*, or *Behold the Manly Mesomorph*, or *The Fall of Rome*; **Philip Larkin**, *Toads*; **Thom Gunn**, *Innocence*; **Roger McGough**, *The Lesson*; **Sophie Hannah**, *If People Disapprove of You*; (from Ireland) **W.B. Yeats**, *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death*; (from America) **Ezra Pound**, *E.P Pour l'Election de son Sepulchre IV-V*; **Langston Hughes**, *Harlem*; **Randall Jarrell**, *The Death of the Ball-Turret Gunner*; **Louis Simpson**, *Carentan O Carentan*. Or (to inspire young readers to write?), *Mourne*, with which a 15-year-old Belfast schoolgirl, **Kerry Carson**, won the Observer Poetry Prize c. 1988 (her poem was adopted as a GCSE text).

Youth and Age

Blake's *Holy Thursday* invites comparison with its "twin poem" from the *Songs of Experience*.

The Bluebell, by **Anne Brontë**, connects themes of nature, carefree childhood, and disappointed adult experience in a Wordsworthian manner that teenage readers may find twee.

Hardy's *Midnight on the Great Western* is a difficult poem that challenges the reader to work out its meaning.

Robert Frost's *Out, Out—* is more about the fragility of life than about “youth and age”.

Thom Gunn's *Baby Song* is slightly (but pleasantly) shocking.

Not every reader will quickly grasp that *You're*, by **Sylvia Plath**, is about pregnancy. Like *Morning Song* (I), this too is a string of poetic images, some more convincing than others.

Gillian Clarke's *Cold Knap Lake* is principally about the nature of memory, so somewhat off-topic.

My First Weeks, by **Sharon Olds**, is a fine, vivid text, but to my mind more prose than poetry.

Venus's-Flytraps (**Yusef Komunyakaa**) is an intriguing free-verse poem with a child's-eye-view of the exciting, colourful, dangerous world out there.

Kate Clanchy's *Love* is touchingly suffused with her wonder at her newborn child.

Regarding the five poems that were dropped: **Keats's** sonnet *When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be* is about the fear of death and a life unfulfilled, hardly an attractive topic for 16-year-olds.

Gerard Manley Hopkins's *Spring and Fall* is too difficult.

The whimsical *Ode*, by the Pre-Raphaelite **Arthur O'Shaughnessy**, is not a huge loss.

Anne Sexton's disturbing *Red Roses* is about the abuse of a small child by his mother, from the point of view of the victim.

Owen Sheers's *Farther* hovers between free verse and prose, meandering (like the climb it describes) before eventually coming to its point.

The replacement poems are all by contemporary “poets of colour” (or mixed race). All of them are stronger in the message than the medium.

Theresa Lola's taut and witty *Equilibrium*, which has just a touch of Thom Gunn to it, would probably sound best read in a Nigerian accent.

Zaffar Kunial's awkwardly constructed *Prayer* strains too hard for effect.

Neither *Happy Birthday Moon* (**Raymond Antrobus**) nor *Tea with our Grandmothers* (**Warsan Shire**) does well on the prose test.

Langston Hughes's *Theme for English B* doesn't convince as a poem about "youth and age".

I would keep Blake, Hardy, Gunn, Clanchy, Lola, and (possibly) Komunyakaa.

Possible alternatives: **Lewis Carroll**, *You are Old, Father William*; **Thomas Hardy**, *I Look into My Glass*; **A.E. Housman**, *Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now*; **Rudyard Kipling**, *His Spots are the Joy of the Leopard*; **Hilaire Belloc**, *Jim*; **D.H. Lawrence**, *Piano*; **Stevie Smith**, *But Murderous*; **Philip Larkin**, *This Be the Verse*; **Christopher Logue**, *September Song*; **Cal Clothier**, *She Pops Home*; (from Wales) **W.H. Davies**, *The Inquest*; **Dylan Thomas**, *A Refusal to Mourn, or Fern Hill*; (from Ireland) **W.B. Yeats**, *When You are Old*; **Patrick Kavanagh**, *Memory of My Father*; **Seamus Heaney**, *Digging*; (from America) **Marianne Moore**, *Silence*; **John Crowe Ransom**, *Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter*; **Elizabeth Bishop**, *Manners*; (from Australia) **Judith Wright**, *Woman to Man*.

Comparing the OCR anthology with two published collections obviously intended to attract people to poetry, Ted Hughes's *By Heart* (1997) and a similar selection by Laura Barber (2009), you might expect a considerable overlap, but only three OCR poems are in Hughes (Dickinson's *There's a certain Slant of light*, and two poems that the OCR dropped, Hopkins's *Spring and Fall* and Wilfred Owen's *Anthem*), and *Anthem* is the only OCR poem in Barber.

Ted Hughes, despite his high standing among modern British poets, is not in OCR—he is loathed by many feminists because of the suicide of his wife, Sylvia Plath (although Plath had a long history of mental problems and suicide attempts). Two of Plath's poems *are* included.

The Hughes and Barber selections are comparatively traditional, containing no "relatable" poems by contemporary writers with an obvious appeal to teenagers. Yet do the OCR poems have such an appeal? Where are the poems that speak to concerns of young people in Britain today (other than sex), concerns like fashion and personal appearance, music, gangs, football, or (perish the thought) computer games? These are topics that 16-year-olds are concerned about, not colonialism or Indian Partition.

The OCR collection has a different, more serious, purpose to those by Hughes and Barber, but it is fair to ask which of the three collections would most likely arouse an enthusiasm for poetry in young people. It would certainly not be the OCR's.

And if you asked which of the three contained the best poetry overall, the answer would I believe be the same.

So why shouldn't young people be offered the best that English poetry has to offer?

The Black British social commentator Sir Trevor Phillips referred to the OCR controversy while describing the sight of a prominent left-wing politician, Angela Rayner, her "ankle tattoo fully on display", sipping champagne at the Glyndebourne Opera:

"Last week one exam board struck Philip Larkin off the GCSE syllabus on the grounds he was not 'inclusive'. The presence of Labour's top class-warrior at the poshest of arts festivals was a slap in the face for the kind of joyless knee-jerk leftism that tells young people from poor and minority backgrounds that high culture isn't for them. Socialism has never meant cancelling the cultural pleasures that the middle classes take for granted, but instead opening the doors of every mind to great art, music and literature, irrespective of the race or sex of the artist."

This is what the OCR should be focusing on. May we therefore hope for another revision of the anthology?

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Intersectional Identities: A Controversial Discourse in David Henry Hwang's *M.Butterfly*

JASMINE ISAAC

Assistant Professor of English (SF), The American College, Madurai

Email Id: freyajas@gmail.com

Abstract

The discourse is a reflection on Orientalist perceptions of the Chinese culture by the Whites. The playwright has intelligibly structured his play by trying to draw a parallel between the Chinese and French cultures. But neither of the culture is depicted superior but is drawn asunder. Edward Said's Orientalism finds a major discussion in this play. Love and politics steer the plot of the play. The lovers are accelerated by their respective country to defraud and pry on each other's secrecy to establish their imperialistic power in Vietnam. Through the imagery of the Butterfly the stereotypes of the whites' perception of the East is conveyed. The East is perceived to have submissive cultural representations. So the protagonist Rene Gallimard finds the oriental culture appealing.. The fantasy blinds him of the disguise and finally the scales fall off his eyes to witness the truth. The play renders an ironical twist with an emerging framework on intersectional identity by putting off homosexuality.

Keywords: Theatre Art, Cultures, Intersectional Identity, Homosexuality, Gender Concerns

David Henry Hwang being a librettist has a preconceived notion of penning his play for a performance. The play serves dual purpose for reading and enacting. The expansion of M.Butterfly is Monseieur Butterfly but one might easily take it to Madam Butterfly. The plays artistry has an Opera within a play. It is this opera which carries the title Madam Butterfly composed by the Italian Opera composer, Giacomo Puccin. The last scene of the opera is a highly sensational performance which would move any audience to sympathy. Butterfly's husband arrives to claim the child. She blindfolds the child so that the child could not see the new white mother and stabs herself to death. The performance exhibits the submissive femininity which attracts the white audience. This last scene of the opera becomes the play's plot but the end turns ironical.

Both the opera and Henry Wang's play traverse on the same plot of how a French diplomat falls for the stereotype Butterfly but fails to see the truth behind the female disguise. The protagonist is Pinkerton in opera whereas in Wang's it is Rene Gallimard. The antagonist is Cio Cio San and in Hwang's it is Song Liling. Song is referred to as Butterfly in the story. The opera and the play are based on the true story of a French diplomat Mr. Bouriscot who is accused of passing information to China after he fell in love with Mr. Shi whom he believed for twenty years to be a woman. This came up as a casual discussion at a dinner table of artists and the playwright finds a two paragraph story in the New York Times which becomes the major spark to his play.

The plot of the opera is a sheer cultural stereotype and Henry Hwang had the idea of doing a deconstructivist to *Madam Butterfly* that turns out to be his play as *M. Butterfly* that carries a French title within. He tries to make it more anti-Asian but retains the Caucasian man's romance alone. The cultural stereotype in Puccini's opera reveals the woman Butterfly as submissive, passive, demure and enduring. But in *M. Butterfly* Wang recoils the conflicting views of Orient and Occident where the Butterfly wants to redefine the Oriental thought to be egalitarian. After the performance of Butterfly at the German ambassador's house Gallimard gears himself up to Song to appreciate her performance. But he receives a counter-blow. He receives a reply so, "It's one of your favourite fantasies, isn't it? The submissive oriental woman and the cruel White man" (Henry 17). She also reinforces to expand his mind. Deconstructivism takes a serious contemplation here as not to see things from a white perspective but to see as it. Cultural encounter should not be biased nor should see the other as inferior but to be unbiased. Song is embarrassed when he appreciates the performance of her story is good. Contrary to his praise there is nothing encouraging in the story. One can see an abandoned wife, bereaved mother and an agonizing death. There is nothing romantic and hence she contradicts him. Song may sound feministic but more of her is to break the stereotyped conception of his.

Edward Said's *Orientalism*, 1978 seeks to critique the cultural representations of how the western world perceives the orient. It examines the social, political and economic contexts. The western representations build a hostile image of the Eastern culture as inferior, stagnant and degenerating. This is where the play succumbs to the oriental

discourse. Butterfly is the imagery used by both the artists and the imagery connotes different meanings in their respective art. One connotes submission and the other defiance. They exhibit the power structures in the society. Nevertheless, the Eastern culture has a magnetic effect which attracts the whites for its rich culture and submissiveness.

The political aspect of the novel shows the imperialistic power of two nations France and China. They extend their imperial power over Vietnam which is a propeller in the play. The lovers Rene Gallimard and Song represent two nations. Gallimard represents the French and Song China. The French learns that Galimard is trusted by an Eastern woman. Both the superpowers harness the lovers to their set goals. They start probing into the secrecy of the other making use of the lovers to ascertain the political secrecy. Vietnam is severed into two, one is under the communist regime and the other non-communist supported by the Americans. France and America are shown as allies who strive to procure Vietnam from China. China being the neighbouring nation of Vietnam aims to extend its imperialistic power to establish its communist regime. Gallimard loses himself in the new found affair. He starts sharing the secret documents of the French decisions to his lover without bothering to enquire what she does with it. China is aware of the French moves and secrets by the romantic spying of Song.

Amidst these politics and imperialism, real love brews between the lovers. The French diplomat is allured into the relationship by her submissive nature. Though being married for eight years to his white counterpart Helga, he finds this Eastern relationship more comforting and promising to his masculinity. He never imagines that Song is in a woman's disguise and he has fallen for his fantasy stereotype. In the narrative technique of the play the audience comes to know that a male is in disguise of Song. This is only revealed in the latter part of the Act 2. Here the audience knows the identity whereas Gallimard does not. The suspense is sustained till the end where Song strips off her dress to reveal her male identity in the court.

Homosexuality is non-conforming to Maoism in China. Song practices homosexuality with the love-stricken Gallimard. Song is permitted by the Chinese embassy to wear the feminine costume only for the opera. But when the maid Miss. Chin visits her in her flat she finds it weird to see Song in female costume. Song and Chin are Chinese diplomats and

spies in reality. Chin observes, “Yeah. Is that how come you dress like that?” Chin (Henry 48). The maid finds this simply grotesque and strictly warns her to avoid such weird mannerisms which would end her in peril. She further contends that she has to represent their Chair Mao in every position she takes. They had several physical encounters still he couldn’t make out Song’s identity. The initial part of the play begins with sarcasm among trio making fun of the incident such ‘it was dark’, and ‘she was very modest’. This becomes a subject of ridicule among the French society. To the surprise of the readers they have lived together for twenty years and Gallimard’s ignorance of truth sets the humour in the play.

The climax of the play opens up to certain revelations. The disguise is exposed and Rene Gallimard comes to know the true identity behind the Kimono. Song strips nude in the presence of the court to reveal her male image. Gallimard’s embarrassment is quite the melodramatic part of the play. The scene shows him internalizing the fantasy image. He dresses himself like Butterfly in her kimono and sets himself in a ‘seppuku’ posture and stabs himself to death. The internalization of the fantasy stereotype of Butterfly gives him satisfaction and alleviates his turmoil before his death. He recaptures the essence of his love and relationship because Song reinforces his sense of manhood. By committing this act he feels he is doing justice to him as well as to the French society where he is deprived of shame. The following lines reinstate the idea there, “Death with honour is better than life...life with dishonour” (Henry 92). His gesture might sound coward to the audience but that is what he wants, to die an honourable death.

The resolution of the play depicts the melodrama with the dancers and music from “Love Duet”. The music and the dance add more effect to the murder scene with several beats. A special music illuminates the arrival of Song on the stage. He stares at the dead Gallimard and two words leave his lips, “Butterfly? Butterfly?” (Henry 93). The last line evinces the angst of the lover that his relationship is ignored by Gallimard. His homosexual relationship is openly denied but not the fantasy image. Homosexuality then was the subject of ridicule even in the French society. The line also shows acceptance of the reality is quite demanding. Fantasy can never be a permanent solution to reality. Towards the end reality stays intact and fantasy dissipates.

The language of the play, discourse and dialogues are quite concise. It yields to wide range of meanings. At the beginning of every act the prison scene comes up which reveals the present status of Gallimard's mind. Light and darkness are shown to distinguish the past and the present. The playwright also uses Gallimard that is the actor himself to narrate the scenes or introduce the characters which is unconventional and a free style. The play comprises of three acts with each act having more than ten scenes. It fulfills all the characteristics of a play where the action is accompanied with music, which is of two types one is 'Love Duet' the other is Peking opera. There are also dancers and drum beats to enhance the play which represents different situations and emotions.

Hence the contemplation surmounts to different perspectives regarding the play. It begins with opera within a play, war between two nations, love, homosexuality, social and cultural convergence and divergence. The last visit of disrobed Song to prison to meet Gallimard is to propose his homosexual relationship. Gallimard's refusal to this shows his sheer ignorance of Songs' male identity. This also affirms his sexual identity that he is not a homosexual and that he pines for a man-woman relationship. His death redefines his identity towards the end. Theatre itself is an imagery here which has the ability to make people believe illusions. Prison stands for his mental as well as physical imprisonment. Mental imprisonment talks about sexual insecurity in marriage. His physical imprisonment is six years of incarceration by the French government. So his death emancipates from these Different types of controversies shed light here. The American playwright with his Chinese origin to his claim adds a local flavour to his writings.

Theatrical devices such as cross-dressing and Opera within a play enhance the play. The play screened in 1993, revised again in 2017 reflects the current discourse of intersectional identities. The term intersectional identity is originally conceived by Kimberle Crenshaw. It is a representation of oppression or victimization of women of colour. It stems from critical race theory where Kimberly demarginalises the intersection of race and sex. "Recognizing that identity politics takes place at the site where categories intersect thus seems more fruitful than challenging the possibility of talking about categories at all. Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences will find expression in constructing group politics" (Crenshaw 1299). Here it

gives a different rendition of Rene Gallimard's sexual oppression. He is duped by Song in an altered state. Since he did not have a progeny from Helga he feels he is inept. His manhood fails for the second time with his camouflaged lover. So to prove his sexual competence he wears the female kimono and stabs himself to death. Death is to the body where as his act is immortal in the play. The resolution merges the two genders by evolving a new perception to the play. Irrespective of culture, race or nationality two identities intersect to make a cohesive whole. Henry Hwang deliberates an unusual ending to his play.

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Navigating Trauma in Douglas Stuart's *Shuggie Bain*

JENI, RV

Assistant Professor of English (SF), The American College, Madurai

Abstract

Shuggie Bain, by Douglas Stuart, follows the lives of Shuggie, his mother Agnes, and, to a lesser extent, his siblings Leek and Catherine in Glasgow during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The dramas of family connections, trauma, and addiction are played out against the backdrop of a time of industrial decline, poverty, and subpar housing. Agnes, her trauma, the clashing adult relationships that she had, her challenges as a parent, and her alcoholism are the main subjects of the novel. In the meantime, her children who struggle to understand the world, find their places, and eventually survive. The book contains numerous lessons about overcoming adversity. The trauma theory in literature is the foundation of this work. This article aims to demonstrate how Douglas has portrayed *Shuggie Bain* as an ever-optimistic hero, and this is done by analysing the novel's characters.

Keywords: Trauma, Sexuality, Alcoholism, Poverty, Domestic abuse.

Trauma refers to a distressing encounter which has detrimental long-term effects. In essence, the individual minds are impacted by prior tragedy and terrible memories. Common triggers for trauma include sexual assault, workplace discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic abuse, violence especially in relation to childhood events. Violent behavior in humans can be significantly influenced by childhood trauma. Traumatic incidents such as war, deceit, betrayal and sexual assault all result in psychological trauma and different people react to trauma in different ways.

The conventional trauma model developed by Cathy Caruth sees trauma as an occurrence that shatters awareness and inhibits direct linguistic representation. The concept emphasises the degree of suffering by implying that the traumatic event permanently alters the psyche. Trauma is an unassimilated occurrence that shatters identity and persists outside of typical memory and narrative representation. Fragmentation or dissociation is seen as the direct cause of trauma. Traumatic experience and its resulting dissociation prevent the

allocation of definite value to the experience because the intensity of fear impairs the mind's capacity to understand and linguistically code it. The experience functions like a malignancy in consciousness that damages the self, even though it may never be described or precisely understood. This approach places a focus on the pain brought on by an outside factor that alters the mind on the inside and permanently alters identity. The argument that intense experience breaks language and consciousness, creating enduring harm and necessitating distinct story forms, underlies the critical emphasis on trauma's inability to be expressed. The incident is not present in everyday consciousness, but it is kept in a timeless and in explicable state just outside of comprehension and it nevertheless hurts the mind.

In the book *Shuggie Bain*, the brutalising effects of poverty, the savage cruelty of homophobia, and the muck of alcoholism are all depicted in a realistic manner. Because of the continued patriarchal nature of Glasgow's society in the 1980s, the city was heavily struck by the decline of the manual labor sector and after reaching twenty six percentage, it remained that high for ten years. The men's sense of identity, purpose, and self-worth in life were all lost along with their professions. And the damaged masculinity quickly deteriorated. As a perverse means of regaining their lost sense of authority, many men inflicted psychological and physical assault on the women and children, foreshadowing the domestic abuse that we have depressingly and regularly witnessed throughout the recent pandemic's economic crisis.

In her 1996 book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth discusses how traumatic experiences might recur in the form of flashback recollections. Shuggie is already sixteen years old and is forced to fend for himself, which leaves him vulnerable to exploitation after everything he has experienced with his mother and after that the author goes back and tells us what happens before Shuggie's birth. So, the author employs an unusual method of communicating the suppressed memories in Shuggie who serves as a sort of author-surrogate.

Shuggie battles the discrepancy between himself and society's standards of masculinity from the very beginning of the book. He developed the habit of memorizing football statistics early on thanks to a book that Eugene, his mother's ex-boyfriend, gave him. He does this in an effort to appear normal. The following quote alludes to Shuggie's

misperception of his sexuality and masculinity. “He stared and tried to find something masculine to admire about himself.... It wasn’t how real boys were built to be. He scrubbed at himself again.” (11). Even the individuals who care about Shuggie, including his older brother, try to convince him to change in order to conform to the standards of his macho neighborhood because there has not been any significant talk regarding sexual diversity. He is also sexually exploited by boys of his age and by older men too.

The lack of a father figure forces Agnes’ kids to start working for money at a young age. Shuggie had to mature early as well because he had a poor support structure in place for his parents. His adulterous and abusive father is one of the key causes of his mother’s addiction. To distract herself and lessen the agony of his abandonment, she engages in smoking and drinking. Shuggie and Agnes had always got along because he was the youngest and he was the only one who had constant access to her. He had witnessed her being assaulted by both his and by her own father, as well as in numerous other compromising circumstances with other guys. He had also witnessed her remorse, her tears and pain as a result of her errors. He was torn between leaving her like his siblings and staying with her, and he decides to stay. He was moved to lend his mother a helping hand because of his unwavering devotion for her. But every time he had to force himself to attempt to forgive her transgressions, he was putting a heavy burden on himself. He was struggling with his morals and virtue and eventually had to sacrifice all for the benefit of his mother. He knew that his mother could disappoint him if he tried to justify her behavior.

Due to its reputation as the most socially acceptable one, use of alcohol and addiction to it is particularly challenging for common people to comprehend. Many people use alcohol to have fun initially before becoming its victims. Booze is first used by colorful, vivid, life-affirming personalities to celebrate life, but then something happens and the alcohol turns on them and kills them and that is essentially Agnes’s tale. We see Agnes’s decline into a life of useless drunkenness in a number of separate scenes, as well as Shuggie’s attempts to save his mother. When the alcohol gets to her, Agnes becomes vindictive, conceited, destructive, and cruel or at the very least, criminally negligent but she is also warm and humorous and the only option Shuggie has. Sometimes she gets drunk to anger her husband who sexually assaults her and acts normal as if nothing has happened.

“When he was done he put his face against her neck. He told her he would take her dancing in the lights again tomorrow” (46). The passage is crucial because it displays Shug’s callousness to his deepest levels as well as the turmoil and suffering Agnes endures in their marriage. Although Agnes is far from flawless, Stuart gives her a well-rounded personality by highlighting her hopes and struggles. She is unhappy with her life and is aware that she may improve it. Either due to self-sabotage or the men in her life, she never succeeds in her endeavors to improve her life. When she joined the Alcoholics Anonymous, her life briefly shone in the spotlight, where her dream of living a sober life became a reality. After Eugene, her boyfriend, persuades her to start drinking once more, her life falls apart for a second time and for good. She was hopeless, lonely, and depressed until she died. And only in her death she finds peace. “Her face changed then, the worry fell away, and at last she looked at peace, softly carried away...” (Indu 476).

Stuart does not hold back on the specifics of what it is like to coexist with an alcoholic parent, including the deceit, the mess, and most importantly the ongoing conflict. And how addiction may fully take over a person’s life, robbing the addict’s family and those close to her of a childhood. The book contains a lot of heartbreaking scenes. Like Shuggie, Leek and Catherine were forced to take the brunt of their mother’s issues. However, they managed to leave on their own. In order to escape the chaos around him, Leek turns to his art. He finds his father and waits outside his home to observe him with his happy family, which is so unlike Leek’s own. In order to get as far away from her mother as she can, Catherine leaves the family and moves to South Africa with her new husband. She knows she will not be able to care for her mother and doesn’t want to.

Only the young boy Shuggie cares for Agnes during her difficult days. Every child promises to their parents that they will protect them in future. Parents have taken care of us and given us every comfort, security and affection since the day we were born. Every child therefore owes this to their parents. For Agnes, she was incapable of becoming a good mother to her kids. She adored them, nevertheless, due to a variety of problems, was unable to articulate her feelings. Without noticing Agnes’ suffering Catherine and Leek left her life. Catherine never contacted her mother before or after her marriage. Agnes was no longer a part of her life at all. They showed little regard for Agnes’ situation. They just abandoned

her in search of solace. If Agnes' children had remained by her side the entire time, she would have cut down on drinking gradually. Despite all setbacks, Agnes has a pride and determination, in her appearance and speech, in her dignity amongst neighbors and ultimately, however distorted, in her love for children.

To conclude, children are asked to assume an excessive amount of responsibility for their own care and that of their parents. They are asked to participate in the parents' nefarious schemes. Before he even realises he is gay, Shuggie is aware of how he differs from his peers. He initially expresses his world through play and the use of toys, as youngsters naturally do. He enjoyed dolls and bright plastic horses, despite the clichéd appearance. As he becomes older, using gay terminology or story seems to be against the law leaving him with no choice but to create his own narrative in how he interacts with people. Through Leanne, Shuggie finally comes to a conscious and hesitantly expressed realisation of who he is. Leanne and Shuggie become friends as a result of latter's acceptance of the former for who he is. His survival depends on this friendship. Despite the hardships and terrible childhood, Shuggie is hopeful because he is able to form wholesome relationships. The connection suggests that everything will be alright for him. He can map out the path to his future. He is creating a fresh, uplifting story of himself.

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In Search of Authentic Self: A Feminist Reading of Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

PAUL JAYAKAR, J

Associate Professor of English

Dean for International Exchange & Study Abroad, Director-Satellite Campus

The American College, Madurai, Tamilnadu

Abstract

Margaret Atwood, a celebrated Canadian feminist novelist, in her first novel The Edible Woman highlights the protagonist's search for an authentic self. The study demonstrates the idea of female space and the physical 'space' of the female body. The way Atwood portrays the female appetite, how it relates to identity and power, and how she emphasises the cultural significance of feminism are all things taken into account. These themes show how a female's experience affects her artistic ability and how the body 'feeds' her identity. By closely examining patriarchy, the researcher examines the extent to which Atwood's fiction could challenge culturally-ingrained notions of femininity and offers a helpful counterargument to conventional interpretations of the female body that equate the re-embodiment of the individual with the re-embodiment of culture.

Keywords: *Feminism, Patriarchy, Identity, Re-embodiment of Individual and Culture*

Introduction

Canadian women novelists write about women's struggle for identity. Even today, they engage with issues of female self in contemporary Canadian society. As an internationally known Canadian woman writer, Atwood reached readers through her poems and novels. After 1962 she held academic and non-academic positions for ten years, and she began to publish poetry and fiction. In 1969 her first and most famous novel, *The Edible Woman*, appeared. The novel is about an average young woman Marian Mac Alpin and her struggle to have her own identity in a consumer-oriented urban society.

In *The Edible Woman*, Margaret Atwood addresses topics of consumerism and sexual identity, in a rich somewhat fantastical way. The novel's themes of consumption function symbolically. Is Marian's romance consuming her to the point where she cannot eat?

Her inability to eat food and her unhappy relationship with Peter are examined in *The Edible Woman*. However, it was released when there was little public discussion of the psychopathology of eating disorders. Margaret Atwood has published numerous books. Although *The Handmaid's Tale* was just a famous one, *The Blind Assassin* won the Booker Prize. Wilson claims:

She is renowned for using unusual approaches to explore contemporary social topics, such as feminism, and for developing powerful characters. One of the most well-known Canadian authors and a key character in contemporary literature is Margaret Atwood. (Wilson 82)

Marian in her quest for identity gets associated with some women. They are the 'scheming female' Ainsley, 'the earth-mother' Clare, 'and the office virgins' Lucy, Emmie and Millie. She involves herself with their ideas and feelings but does not accept their choices. Because in some way they depend on men and surrender themselves to men. When Marian attracted Peter with her sensitive qualities and actions, his previous ideas about a wife were left to air. Marian's outward actions made him think wrongly. According to him, Marian is the kind of girl who would not try to take over his life. He believes that she suits the role of a wife very well. In the hope of leading a peaceful life (unlike his friend's situation), Peter involves in a love affair with Marian. Peter, quite against his thinking, proposes to Marian because she appears to him as a compassionate girl, and he hopes she would not dominate him. He gives some reasons for liking Marian. He says, "I can always depend on you. Most women are pretty forgetful, but you're such a sensible girl. You may not have known this, but I've always thought that's the first thing to look for when choosing a wife" (Atwood 101). Marian accepts Peter because she hopes to have a good life with a well-mannered person. It seems she believes in first impression. She is delighted with his appearance; she says, "Peter is an ideal choice when you think of it. He's attractive, found to be successful, and neat, which is a significant point when you're going to live with someone" (Atwood 116). Peter and Marian met each other before their engagement. Their meetings gave scope to them to understand each other. Observing Marian, one can conclude that Marian studied every inch of Peter's actions. She made constant analysis of Peter's doings. She says: "Peter gave me a distant, loving smile amid a sentence, and I

thought I recognised it. He regarded me like a two-dimensional, silent, solid stage prop. Unlike possibly, he wasn't ignoring me" (Atwood 79).

Marian's sensitivity and humble nature gave them a chance to Peter to gain some favours from her. Marian is helpful to Peter by listening to him and praising him when he boasts of himself. Peter took pleasure in narrating his stories of adventures to Marian. Through his narrations, Marian has become closer to Peter, understands him, and comes to a conclusion about him. She says:

Peter and I avoided discussing the future because we knew it didn't matter; we weren't involved. Now, thought, I decided we were concerned; indeed, that was the explanation for the powder-room collapse and the flight. I was evading reality. Now, I would have to decide what I wanted to do at this very moment. (Atwood 86)

Even Peter's looks, actions and mannerisms make Marian realise how perfectly he manages to overtake her. Marian is ordered to be perfectly dressed for their engagement cocktail party, which Peter arranges grandly. Peter wants Marian to be an attractive woman beside him as the commander's wife in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Marian's inner feelings slowly grow to possess her identity when she is in the makeup process. Her feelings of oppression haunt Marian even while she is taking a bath in the tub, which is meant to relax one from the physical and mental stress. It appears that her sensitivity to pressure grows more intense; all of a sudden, she was terrified that she was melting away, separating into individual pieces like a piece of paper in a gutter puddle. According to her, they decorated and delicately iced her forehead like a cake. The attention and care that were taken to make her beautiful troubled Marian. She fears surrendering herself to Peter. Her fear makes her question her destiny.

Marian is much more conscious, even about minute things. The whole process of makeup makes Marian realise the natural state she is being transported to. Decorative life is a mere death to her; she does not want to live a life of a puppet but as a free human being who can enjoy fundamental rights and freedom. She feels shocked when Peter catches her picture in his camera. She describes her face as "vastly spreading, papery, and slightly dilapidated: a giant billboard smile, falling away in folds and patches" due to her shock (Pieraccini & Biggs 9).

Her burst of inspiration to release her strain is similar to the spark of Peter's camera. She recognises him as the murderous lunatic with a dangerous weapon in his arm who had been waiting for her in the centerline, disguised by the other people all along. She finally enters a stage of raised consciousness when she is intimately involved with herself, and her ideas and patterns are subjected to a harsh test still after being severely damaged physically and psychologically. She flees the engagement party as her emotions bubble to the surface. Peter was perplexed by Marian's odd behaviour, which included a desire to obliterate her personality.

As she notices that he is a manipulator and exploiter, she feels very depressed and develops a hatred for food. Mathanavalli considers it "anorexia nervosa". Marian develops phobic and anorexic reactions that symbolise her awakening protest. (Mathanavalli & Robinson 4) Marian, to gain a new identity, turns towards Duncan unknowingly. She diverts herself to the predator Duncan. She tries to protect herself and her identity. But against her hopes and wishes, Duncan exploits and shatters Marian's dreams. He convinces her, saying, "if we went to bed, god knows you're unreal enough now. All I can think of is those layers and layers of woolly clothes you wear" (Atwood 224). When Marian realises that Duncan is not a different man from Peter, she knows more about his true nature. Instead of rescuing her, she suggests taking her own decisions. He says, "Don't ask me: that's your problem. It looks like you ought to do something: self-laceration in a vacuum eventually becomes boring. But it's your cul-de- sac. you invented it, you'll have to think of your way out" (Atwood 295). And thanks to his suggestion, she acts by herself. Duncan escapes from Marian, leaving her to act on her own. Regaining her identity begins with her creative act of carefully baking a woman-shaped cake. It appears by preparing the cake; she brings all the body parts under her control from which she can act herself. Marian achieves a symbolic purification of herself by refusing to eat and her final act of baking a cake in the shape of a woman. While offering the cake, she shares her feelings in association with him. She says, "You've been trying to destroy me..... you've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you wanted all along" (Atwood 303). She refuses to be the edible woman; now she can

act as herself. She has determined to take her own decisions. Her position is shifted from 'she' to 'I' or from the 'acquired one to a diving identity'

In her attempt to achieve her identity, she is not bothered about the world and its people around her. Her vital decisions made her stand still to have her own identity. Marian's stand is an excellent example to herself and future generations of women. A woman's equality or human essence is possible only with struggle and sacrifices. Marian is a compassionate woman who can recognise and react to the nature of others. A woman in contemporary society must have such sensitivity to achieve her self-identity even with oppressors. Thus Atwood brings out the protagonist's identity crisis and awakens the readers, especially women. *The Edible Woman* describes the life of a young woman protagonist after her studies.

Like any other graduate, Marian is searching for her job, and exposed to trials for a better future. The discrimination against women makes Marian think about the status of a woman, and she tried to overcome the problem and gain equal human rights. Atwood attacks the patriarchal power structures. Marian's problem of becoming constitutes and expresses Atwood's feminist polemics against restrictive gender roles imposed upon women in paternalist society. (Texmo 67)

According to Tolan, the hierarchical world Marian inhabits appropriates her identity and reduces her to being an in-between thing and a mindless body. The protagonist assesses who represents a woman's conventional roles in a patriarchal society. They were brought up to play traditional role models. Women are not born but are made. Atwood in her *Negotiating with the Dead* (2002):

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature. Women accept their traditionally assigned roles as societal norms and lead submissive lives. They unquestioningly accept society's definition of woman as a role occupant to fulfil the function of a wife. (194)

Marian, by her assessment, concludes not to be under any oppression because no woman is happy and enjoys absolute human rights under the pressure of hypocritical men. Peter, who is against female domination, likes to take Marian's hand, who appears to be "passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional" (Atwood 195). Marian is in the hope of

leading a life with equal rights, but soon realises the true overcoming nature of Peter. She is not satisfied with the option she has chosen after her experience with Peter, Marian is determined to overcome her problem of becoming a woman. She resolves to act by herself and decides to give up food.

As a result, Marian makes arrangements to teach a lesson to men like Peter and Duncan. She says, "You've been trying to destroy me you've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you wanted all along" (Atwood 284). Marian regains feminine life by offering them a lifeless cake. Now Marian is out of the crisis. She leaves all the superstitious beliefs and behavioural codes, which are hindrances and cause damage to women, their personality and identity. She has not thought about the people around her. Marian's only aim is to have her own identity to act herself. Thus Atwood brings out the symptoms of woman's oppression and paves the way towards eradicating the problem. Through *The Edible Woman*, she brings feminist polemics against patriarchal power structures.

Marian's struggle for identity is much more concentrated in her affair with Peter thus bringing a state of nervousness. Marian's apprehension of marriage is doubled when she merges her inner feelings to act according to her wish. Atwood has presented articles on woman's identity crisis and national identity in the form of a love story in a patriarchal society. Through her female characters, she shows women's unworthy positions and submissiveness and the men's hypocritical domination. Atwood, in a way asks her readers to come out of the invisible cocoon.

To enjoy the beauty and freedom around them as butterflies, as rightly pointed out by Sussman, "*The Edible Woman* not only proposes a hypothesis for a solution to - woman's exploitation and oppression in the gender system but also serves as a guide to feminist struggle" (186). The novel *The Edible Woman* deals with the protagonist's protest against the submissive role of a woman. Her protest is against the man who behaves in a cruel way and tries to exploit women sexually. Marian is transformed from a passive woman into an active feminist. The protagonist, Marian's quest for identity simultaneously becomes a search for a woman's identity in a patriarchal society

Summation

Atwood's feminism is incredibly expansive and all-encompassing, and it provides a new viewpoint on the issues faced by women. Atwood uses her work to address critical feminist issues. She continues to be primarily concerned with the issue of the gender. Examining Atwood's female characters from *The Edible Woman* reveal that each woman who is marginalised and victimised by politics and gender is represented in her writings. Within the confines of their homes, she depicts the miseries of her female heroines. Strong feminist consciousness runs as an undercurrent in all of Atwood's novels. Her main characters finally transcend their gender-based roles, calling for a positive inter-gender bond. Although her female heroines start as victims at the hands of their male counterparts, they eventually end up as survivors. Sometimes, Atwood's female heroes turn rebellious to maintain their existence. Her female heroes fight valiantly to carve out a fulfilling existence for themselves. Despite being victimised in several ways, her female heroes eventually manage to survive.

Although each protagonist is subjected to varied victimisations, they all persevere and overcome their obstacles. Margaret Atwood expresses through her books that women and men should be represented relatively because they share the same human qualities. She vehemently opposes discrimination based on gender and believes that when both genders should have equal opportunities to advance and thrive. In a patriarchal culture, Atwood criticises the traditional gender roles forced on women.

She aggressively advocates for the creation of an environment that is supportive of women's holistic development. In her books, Atwood criticises the patriarchal system of power and masculine dominance. Her books show the hypocrisy of moral relativism and prejudice towards women in this patriarchal society. Her female heroes demonstrate that rebelling in the oppressive system is the most effective method to stop women from being victimised. As a result, Atwood's female heroines understand that they each have a unique personality that might be unique to them alone. That said, Atwood contributes significantly to modern fiction by giving hope to the oppressed and victimised female protagonists.

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The Body as an Agency of Negotiation in Emily Ratajkowski's *My Body*

PHOOJAA, K

II M.A English, The American College, Madurai

Email ID: preethipooja01@gmail.com

Abstract

Emily Ratajkowski or Emrata's essay collection, My Body, is a liminal space between empowerment and objectification. As a model and actress, Emrata is often the subject and the object of unfiltered opinions and unhinged criticism rather than encouragement. Being women on camera comes with the stipulation that they no longer have a say in how their bodies are portrayed. Ratajkowski documents her attempts at negotiating with the capitalistic media industry: taking back ownership of her body and choosing how to commodify the same. While Ratajkowski's parents did not restrain her from modelling, their support was not unconditional. Her mother especially, influenced and shaped Emrata's career and how she perceived her own body. My Body is an oscillation between conforming to and resisting the cultural expectations. This paper will analyse how Ratajkowski negotiates with objectification and gaze of the media.

Keywords: Agency, Cultural identity, Objectification, Ownership, Power structures.

Emrata's *My Body* is personal, conflicting and most importantly, representative. She is a model in her prime and a much sought after one. She is also powerful, in a sense, everything she does become headlines. She is the face of several brands and billboards. She generates an income with every move. But with the power and publicity come scrutiny and an expiry date. She is equally powerless if she chooses to defy what the society and media demand. Genuine intentions and self-preservation cannot be in the equation. She has to willingly commodify or go unnoticed.

Being big also means becoming a target. But by inviting people's gaze and attention and therefore their attacks, I have a sense of more power, less vulnerability, since I'm the one putting myself out there. Or at least that's how it feels, some of the time. (Ratajkowski 59)

Her desire to pursue this path of fame is riddled with conflicts. She is cleaved between being comfortable in her skin, telling the world that women do not have to be ashamed of being expressive, and questioning if she is really worthy without her physical appearance in consideration. Her insecurities, the need for external validation and to be desired, deeply resonate with most women. Her book is a reassurance that no woman is alone in her constant question of self-worth, regardless if she is a model or not.

The human body is a production caught in a network of power relations, each in its own way shaping and disciplining its materiality in accordance with historically shifting standards of normalization. (Foucault)

Emrata's self-consciousness and awareness even from a very young age make her question this oscillation between expression and true recognition. Social norms are the frames within which individuals are deemed to exist. While it is impossible to remove these frames, it is plausible to negotiate with and manipulate them to create a space for a self-steered identity. This paper intends to recognise and analyse such negotiations alongside Ratajkowski's realisations in the book. And that it is possible for a female body to exist in a liminal space between creative self-expression and being the object of another's gaze, through negotiations.

Body studies involve analysis of the body, its actions in a social context, and approaches towards and conceptions about body. It traces how bodies are constructed, evaluated, perceived and experienced, how social configurations and power relations shape the body in macro and micro levels. After the nineteenth century, awareness of how bodies can be used to manipulate and test the world spread. In a feminist context, the initial focus was on how feminine bodies were commodities to entice men into matrimony for livelihood and materiality. After Simone de Beauvoir it shifted to how women internalise the gaze of the other and understand their own sense of being. Michel Foucault, Norbert Elias, Umberto Eco and Michael Sandel are some of the theoreticians involved.

I realised that the depressing familiarity of the abuses that Ratajkowski chronicles is precisely the point. The anecdotes in *My Body* dramatise what is always true, if often implicit: that women can neither fully escape nor fully inhabit bodies that men are bent on appropriating. Though Ratajkowski grasps that her allure is a form of power, she also

understands that ‘whatever influence and status I’ve gained were only granted to me because I appealed to men.’ Her body is valuable only insofar as it functions as a commodity, ‘a tool I use to make a living as a model.’(Rothfeld)

The notion of preening women to invite male gaze has not much changed throughout the centuries. Ratajkowski’s mother played a very important role in her debut as a model. On her first casting, she recalls her mother commanding her to flip her hair. Later on, her mother emphasises that a boy watched Emily flip her hair. She adds stories of men watching her from time to time.

That boy looked at you when you stood up and flipped your hair,’ my mother said.

‘He was watching you.’

What did he see? I wondered (Ratajkowski 17).

Her mother incites a consciousness to male gaze, sets a benchmark for Ratajkowski to always crave for the external validation and overlook the fact that they are objectified, sexualised and passivised. This is a preset to stifle self-empowerment or even be aware of her authority to make choices. Initially holding the male gaze could look powerful. But then one loses sight of choices and is shaped by how one wants to be seen. What begins as appropriation then turns into identity crisis.

I scroll Reddit, reading and weighing the comments in my thread, wondering if I am ‘overrated,’ as one user notes, or in fact ‘one of the most beautiful women in the world,’ as another says.... I collect this data more than I want to admit, trying to measure my allure as objectively and brutally as possible. I want to calculate my beauty to protect myself, to understand exactly how much power and lovability I have. (Ratajkowski 18)

Ratajkowski lost the ability to distance her personal life from her life on camera as well. She describes instances of her first boyfriend and later her husband talking about other women and recalls being physically sick, afraid of not being the object of attention. An individual’s existence should not depend upon being objectified, but the male gaze shapes women to conform to it, irrespective of their age. “My stomach twisted. I began to sweat. What is wrong with me? I wondered. Why was my body responding this way to my boyfriend talking about other girls he’d found attractive?” (19)

I am newly married to my husband when he remarks casually, “There are so many beautiful women in the world.” I freeze when he says this. I know it is a perfectly acceptable and truthful thing to remark on, and yet I feel a familiar twist in my gut. I want him to console me, too, but I am unsure why I need it. Why do I suddenly feel as if he doesn’t love me enough?” (Ratajkowski 21)

‘Preening’ and shaping women to fit into the gaze starts right at home, not in the society. Her mother unconsciously put the idea of competition between women to gain power and validity. As the book progresses it becomes evident that Emrata’s mother herself competed with her daughter’s beauty, albeit indirectly. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Wollstonecraft and Taylor Mill voiced against women being maintained to marry. About 200 years later, women are still trained the same way. But it is no longer the men who train them, it is women themselves.

My mother seems to hold the way my beauty is affirmed by the world like a mirror, reflecting back to her a measure of her own worth. How had I already been introduced to the concept of competition between women before I had even learned to read? (Ratajkowski 18)

Capitalising on the body and choosing to show skin came to be one of the ways to hold power and agency to address societal concerns. Women paying their own bills, is the chief defiance against patriarchy. And if women in media can achieve that by choosing to express themselves without barriers, it is in defiance and to steer their own career. “While cheesy, it paid the bills. The ability to make a living off my own image shouldn’t be cause for embarrassment, I figured” (58).

“Money means power, I thought. And by capitalizing on my sexuality I have money” (65). If body can attract attention, the attention could be as well used to generate an income. Imploding the social system from inside by becoming a part of it is perhaps the most strategic way to regain control. Most women in media have their own brands of clothing, makeup, lingerie, perfume and skincare, which is essentially their preferred way of capitalising. But nudity holds more power and these women have to use it to manipulate the system and advertise their own brands. “At least this paid vacation (or job, or whatever one

wanted to call it gave me the chance to push my own brand, which I'd started, financed, and now operated.." (62).

Without this so called 'aesthetic nudity,' women's agency for any social issue would be ruthlessly discounted. Emrata shares her space with a few women including the business mogul Kim Kardashian, whose prominence rose from a sex tape. Today she is a billionaire with several brands including an equity firm. She is the most googled woman not because she went to the white house or she advocates justice, but because she often wears bikinis. "Would anyone have cared about Kim's fight for justice reform if she hadn't had a sex tape?" (66)

She talks about a book of photos named 'Emily Ratajkowski' which had nude photos of her that were not shot for publishing. When she sued the photographer for publishing without consent, he shot back saying she was naked in videos and shoots and she was not a victim. Years later, the same photographer called her 'empowered' for feeling comfortable in her nudity. She dismisses the incident and finds a space where she knows power could shift either way in time and waits for it. This stoic indifference to every incident's ebb and flow, the oscillation between objectification and empowerment is the liminal space she occupies.

Eventually, Jonathan will run out of "unseen" crusty Polaroids, but I will remain as the real Emily; the Emily who owns the high-art Emily, and the one who wrote this essay, too. She will continue to carve out control where she can find it. (116)

There is a very thin line of demarcation between violation and empowerment. It is the consent and choice that shift power from the man to the woman. Emrata's realisation that control can go back and forth, changes years of struggle. This realisation gives a space for negotiation and manipulation that women can use to their advantage. Her experiences throughout the years are representative; every woman at some point in her life combats consent, body issues and objectification. But finding a space to hold control comes through negotiation and one can conclude it is always plausible.

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Vikram Seth's *Arion and the Dolphin*: A Post-structuralist Reading

DOMINIC SAVIO, G

Former Head, Department of English (UG), The American College, Madurai

Email ID: gdsavio@gmail.com

Abstract

Vikram Seth in his Arion and the Dolphin portrays the complexity of human life which defies a full rational analysis. The verse play composed in nine scenes lays emphasis on three aspects of life: Man, Nature and Animal world. The harmony of life lies in a close interrelation of these three strands of life. The playwright's depiction of the human world is pervaded by the presence of both good and evil. The problems and the complications that the human world faces are perhaps more in comparison with the world of nature and animals. Man's life is crowned by the faculty of reason. Though this quality of reason makes him the head of creations, he fails to pay attention to the sublunary and sub-human world which contributes the meaning of life. Vikram Seth's Arion and the Dolphin will illustrate this thesis in the light of a post-structuralist reading.

Keywords: Rational analysis, Man, Nature and Animal World, Sublunary, Sub-human, Post-Structuralist Reading

Literary Criticism, like literature, has become complex in the contemporary age. The main reason for the complexity is that the old foundations of tradition and convention no longer hold good. In this respect, the principle of Post-structuralism remains relevant to the modern context. By way of comparison and contrast, the concept of post-structuralism stands in opposition to the old theory of structuralism. Centre, foundation, fixity, objectivity, stability, pattern and design are the identical words which serve as critical equivalents to the root meaning of structuralism. The post-structuralists speak of de-centering everything; this decentring may be described as a major process of deconstruction. What it means is that the conventional idea of fixed meaning for everything is questioned. This habit of dispensing with the centre leads to a drastic critical examination of the old valuations of life. Structuralism is based upon the self-sufficiency of reason

whereas post-structuralism is based on questioning the inadequacy of reason. Therefore in post-structuralism, there is a plea for probing the non-rational dimensions of life. What is ignored in text on account of preoccupation with reason is pointed out by them.

Vikram Seth in his *Arion and the Dolphin* portrays the complexity of human life which defies a full rational analysis. The verse play composed in nine scenes lays emphasis on three aspects of life: Man, Nature and Animal world. The harmony of life lies in a close interrelation of these three strands of life. The author's depiction of the human world is pervaded by the presence of both good and evil. The problems and the complications that the human world faces are plenty in comparison with the quiet and carefree world of nature and animals. Man's life is crowned by the faculty of reason. Though this quality of reason makes him the head of creations, he fails to pay attention to the sublunary and sub-human world which contributes the meaning of life. The story of the verse play, *Arion and the Dolphin* will illustrate this paper.

Periander, the tyrant-king of Corinth dissuades Arion, his court musician from participating in the musical contest which is to be held at Sicily. Arion's enthusiasm to participate and Periander's warning which entails the death of Arion in the event of his failure in the contest set the tempo of the play. Arion moves away from Greece to Sicily in a ship. Looking up at the night sky, he sings to the sea:

And you, dark, restless sea
be gentle on my way
from Greece to Sicily. (14)

Strangely enough the ship is a destroyer and preserver of his own life. Therefore, the ship must be viewed as a symbol of a particular cross-section of life where one comes across both bad and good people. The sailors of the ship represent the dehumanising soulless materialism of the world. They care for silver, bronze, and when they get it, gold (18). Their interest is not placed in the finer things of life. The captain of the ship represents an anti-thesis to the sailors. While the sailors are devoured by emotions and passion for avarice, the captain is a man of good heart who believes that the charm of life lies in becoming charitable to others.

Vikram Seth's purpose is to contrast the anesthetic temperament of the sailors along with the finely developed sensibility of the Captain. The sailors are typical 'men of the world' while the Captain is a 'man in the world'. The captain wishes good luck to Arion's participation in the musical contest (Sicilian festival). He promises to pick him up in the return journey. A very great singer like Arion is exposed to the temptation of the world of pleasure the moment he lands in Sicily: "But now it's pleasure before business, I'm afraid" (24).

Pleasure before business seems to be the principle of the Sicilians. Arion's innocence and goodness are of no avail before the temptation of drink. He is an excellent singer but his aesthetic talent does not secure defence against the peril in which he is to be placed. Neglect of duty and lack of sufficient caution make him forget the contest. He is drunk and is about to be perished. This proves the truth that a talented person need not be a balanced person.

Arion takes part in the competition. He goes wrong in the first two starts. With a warning, a chance for the third start is given. He is helpless but now he remembers the conch-shell given by the captain. Once he puts it to his ear, he listens to voices ringing in the conch-shell and they awaken his inner sense which induces him to sing perfectly. This incident can be viewed on a double plane. The good nature of the captain in presenting the conch-shell to Arion is seen. The need for some extraordinary or divine assistance for inducing the neglected and dormant talent is equally seen. Arion's power of his musical talent is obscured by indulgence in pleasure. Arion often forgot his duty while indulging in pleasure but is not left in the lurch. A divine assistance comes to his help. He is saved by the captain and his conch-shell.

The middle of the drama presents the play of treachery and human betrayal. Arion gets into the ship with lots of gifts: gold, gold coins and gold dust. The sailors set their covetous eyes on them. They feel that what belongs to Arion must be made their possession. The captain who comes to know of the plan of the sailors censures them for harbouring such evil motives in their hearts. But the sailors threaten him with the warning of killing him if he non-cooperates with them on this. Again this incident can be viewed on a double plane. The malicious motive of the sailors in plundering the golden gifts of Arion indicates their loss of human dimension. Though the captain is good at heart, he does not have the courage to come out into the open and fight against evil. Truth cannot be established without

sacrifice. The biblical truth that one has to lose one's life in order to save somebody else's life is to be remembered here.

Arion is thrown into the sea. It is a fall from human world into sub-human world. The human world betrays him while the sub-human world saves him. Arion fails to get justice in the human world and what is surprising is that he learns the meaning of life in the sub-human world. The evolution theory of progressive perfection of things meets with impediments here, because the sub-human world is more perfect than the human world. The dolphins save Arion's life. They appreciate Arion's power of singing. There ensues a genuine friendship between Arion and the Dolphin. It almost becomes impossible for the dolphin to live without Arion: "I love Arion, and would like to be bound to his voice and him eternally" (46).

The dolphins are more sensitive to the singing talent of Arion than the human world which Arion inhabits. The dolphin is so much attached to Arion that she carries him ashore to Corinth. The final catastrophe erupts in the form of climax.

Periander does not believe Arion's story of his having lost all his gifts and so Arion is imprisoned. Periander who sees only the surface level of life lacks the power to think deeply and so his procedure of judgment is without investigation. The dramatist perhaps feels that there is a divine judgment which is above human judgment. The divine dispensation of judgment comes through a tragedy. This builds up the climax and it also announces the closure of the play.

Arion is punished by being imprisoned. The pity is that he has secured victory in Sicily and the tragedy is that he has lost the golden treasure which is an evidence of his victory and the eventual outcome is that he is treated by Periander as a liar and traitor. Instead of being rewarded, Arion is simply punished for no fault of his. The Dolphin's separation from Arion is what sets the climax of the play.

Periander who represents dry reason and abstract principles has not understood the Dolphin's longing for seeing Arion. In the sub-human world of dolphins, Arion is accorded a king's respect: "forget the world you've left and bask in the warm rhythm of our Dolphin masque" (44), whereas in the human world of Periander, he is treated as traitor. Arion's supposed failure is success in the world of Dolphin. Periander is superficial because he

thinks that the talent of a person must be tested and seen only in a trial. But the Dolphin loves Arion irrespective of trial and test.

According to the world of the Dolphin, a person is known by being what he is, but Periander's world applies a different criterion: a person is known by what he proves to be. It is this kind of dry reasoning which does not enable Periander to do justice to Arion. Periander is shallow and the Dolphin digs deep to discover the roots of things. Arion is only a passive victim pleading innocent in the face of Periander's accusation of Arion's fiction-telling.

The differences in value-judgment between what a person is and what he proves to be through the process of trial and test make Arion and the Dolphin tragic victims of a world dominated by cold-blooded diplomacy and calculation. Periander's world is in keeping with the world of science and technology which judges the world by what it proves to be. Periander suffers from moral myopia. When Arion narrates his version of the story of his victory in Sicily followed by the sailors forcing him overboard and the subsequent life saving efforts of the Dolphin, Periander imprisons him just because the Dolphin does not speak:

... It is my wish

the Dolphin speak. Command it so to do.

I, Periander, wait. Speak now, speak well!

Speak! Speak! (65)

It is a verification which protects the value of truth. Naturally the dolphin fails because she does not speak as expected by the king. Arion becomes helpless and the only alternative for him is to remain speechless. Arion's imprisonment makes the Dolphin languish in a state of sorrow. Arion's separation comes to the dolphin with the vigour and force attached to human bereavement. The dolphin, unable to see Arion breathes her last saying, "Arion ... Arion ..." (53).

The death of the Dolphin opens the eye of Periander and he frees Arion. A tomb is erected by the state in memory of the Dolphin. Arion sits near the tomb recalling the love the Dolphin had for him:

Alone I am, and sad that you are dead,
That you are dead, not I
That you were kind to me and that led you
When all is done and said – to die
When all is said and done,
You were my friend, the only one. (60)

When Periander orders to kill the captain and the sailors, Arion intervenes and pleads for their lives; he brings in reconciliation by singing a song:

Dark sea protect all the voyagers whose home
rests in your foam.
Warm earth, teach us to nourish, not destroy
The souls that gave us joy.
Bright stars, engrave my dolphin and my lyre
In the night sky with fire. (60)

A close reading of the play confronts the reader with some basic facts. Periander embodies dry reason while Sicily represents pleasure principle. The captain indicates the goodness of human nature while the sailors represent the evil materialism. The sub-human world of the Dolphin signifies the unconscious goodness of all things. The human world needs to learn much from the animal world. Man's misery comes from his unwillingness to listen to the life rhythm of the animal world.

The Dolphin stands foremost among the principal characters of the play as she "is the substance and soul of the story" (Daruwalla 31). The captain's good-nature is seen in his presenting his conch-shell to Arion but the world of the captain is not the world of the Dolphin, because the world of the Dolphin is a world of love and sacrifice. The captain is good at heart but is not a crusader who can resist evil. The Dolphin is not only a helper but creature imbued with the principle of self-sacrifice.

Vikram Seth's *Arion and the Dolphin* is subjected to a Post-structuralist scrutiny. The non-rational dimension which becomes the watch words of the Post-structuralists becomes the evaluative norm for understanding this enchanting play. Periander is a king whose perception is superficial. Arion does not have the quality of trickery and dishonesty.

The so called human world is rotten, in comparison with the sub-human world of the dolphins, signifying the unconscious goodness of all things. According to the established norms, the human world must be imbued with all the virtues of love, goodness, charity and decency. The irony is that the human world as represented by the sailors is characterised by deception, tyranny and avarice. The sub-human world, by contrast is more perfect than the human world and the human world needs to learn much from the animal world. Man's misery comes from his unwillingness to listen to the life rhythm of the animal world. Arion, as he appears to be, is not the hero of this libretto. This amounts to decentring the old critical idea of the chief protagonist. Post-structuralist perspective would assign a leading role to the Dolphin and not to Arion. The Dolphin a creature that belongs to the race of fish.

Men in the human world are not as enamoured of the musical talent of Arion as the Dolphin. What is the reason for this negligence? Post-structuralist would say that men have become too busy with other things and music is peripheral to their instinct. The Dolphin's life is reared in the background of music. It is the Dolphin who becomes the real friend of Arion:

In air and water both, our voices part and blend
And I/You, who never sought a friend
Have found one in the end. (46)

Men in the world betray Arion and doubt his skill in music. Periander is unsure of himself and so he is unsure of others. The captain is sure of himself but is not for open conflict. The rational world, according to the Post-structuralists, falsifies itself by maintaining shallow relations. Periander, Captain and the sailors constitute the rational world and the Dolphin constitutes the non-rational world. Arion stands midway between the two worlds. The sailors are evil minded. The captain who appears good-natured bothers himself about his family only: "I cannot bear the pain/that they (his family) should wait for me and not see me again" (32). Periander is false because he is a tyrant.

Set against the confused human world is the Dolphin who neither finds a place nor receives a world of appreciation from the human world. A warm friendship ensues between Arion and the Dolphin. The human world looks upon Arion as a traitor and the Dolphin is viewed as a strange creature of nuisance and a playful object.

Roll up, roll up, and see the dolphin play.

Free for the under-fives. Half-price on Saturday. (51)

Post-structuralist perspective is that what is sense for the human world is non-sense for the sub-human world and what is non-sense for the sub-human world is sense for the human world. Arion cautions the Dolphin not to come to the world lest it would corrupt and dehumanize her. This can be taken as a post-structuralist's farewell to the human world. The Dolphin is attracted to the human world. Arion as a post-structuralist warns that such attractions are dangerous and deceptive. His warning is not understood by the Dolphin because she remains blissfully unaware of the treachery, wiles and guiles of the human world. Moreover, it is Periander who pays no respect to the Dolphin because he dismisses it as a sub-human creature. Post-structuralists would say that Periander's dismissal of the Dolphin as a sub-human nature is prompted by the voice of reason. When the sailors take away by force, the gold treasure of Arion, the captain remains non-resistant. Post-structuralists would call the action of the captain as a mark of betrayal/expediency. His security is more important than the security of Arion. When Periander insists on Arion's evidence of victory, he looks for rational proof. Arion has nothing to reveal about the Dolphin story. For a thing to be true, there must be proof. Arion had proof – gold treasure. But unfortunately, it was plundered by the sailors. Periander does not believe this story. Post-structuralists may convince themselves thinking that the rational world simply convicts him for his crime and condemns him to imprisonment. Ultimately, post-structuralists would say that the triumph of reason erupts in the death of the Dolphin, but then in this superficial world, the shallowness of reason always prevails letting one conclude that reason is meaninglessly successful.

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Kanmani Gunasekaran's Select Short Stories: A Study in Folklore

SHANTI, N

Assistant Professor of English

Sri Meenakshi Government Arts College for Women, Madurai

Email ID: shanthipremkumar.n@gmail.com

Abstract

Kanmani Gunasekaran, a Tamil regional writer, has authored stories which are replete with the life and colour of the villages of the mid part of Tamilnadu. A sensitive reading of select stories from the collection titled Poorani Porkalai helps highlight not only the unique relationship, rituals and practices associated with the worship of village deities but also the range and fluidity of the writing style of the author. Local idiom and words combine to impart a rare authenticity to the rustic world which the author strives to explore in his narration.

Keywords: Village deities, Casualness and Camaraderie in Relationship, Rustic World, Writing Style Flavoured with Local Idiom.

Sirutheivangal or Village deities are an intrinsic and integral part of village life. They are a slightly forgotten, distanced part of the lives of people who have migrated to cities- at best remaining as a nostalgic memory and commitment that such people heed once or twice in a year on specific dates. Surhone, Tennoe and Henssonow observe in their book on the subject that village deities found all over India and particularly in Tamil Nadu do not belong to the 'agamic pantheon' of Hinduism. What is unique about these village deities or *sirutheivangal* as they are called by folklorists is the closeness and kinship that the people have with them.

Tamil writer Kanmani Gunasekaran's collection of short stories titled *Poorani Porkalai* manages to bring out this special relationship with a remarkable degree of authenticity. This paper takes into consideration all the stories in this collection in general and two of the stories from the collection in particular to attempt an analysis of the way local speech idiom of the area that is often designated as 'nadunadu' in Tamilnadu state (the area surrounding

Virudachalam, Neyveli, Villapuram and the nearby villages) comes alive in the writing of Kanmani Gunasekaran ushering in at once, a sense of immediacy and reality.

Where a feeling of awe mixed with varying levels of devotion, affection, love and sometimes, very rarely, even passion mark the relationship environment in the worship of major gods (*perundeivangal*). And there is a sense of close belonging, intimacy, and kinship marking the worship rituals and relationship with regard to *sirutheivangal*. Although this applies to most village communities in Indian society in general, this paper concerns itself with a depiction of this relationship in Tamil villages that provide the base for Kanmani Gunasekaran's stories.

Kanmani Gunasekaran creates a rustic world of magical realism in his stories where along with the dust and heat and demands of life that are more real and pressing, the gods also are near and real, living with the people, talking to them and being an essential part of their pain and pleasure; doubt and faith. There is no dividing screen of awe to separate the devotee and the deity. The devotee converses with his god, pulls him up in frustration and anger, feels tender affection and reverence, travels long distances and happily spends a large portion of his meagre earning to clear his debt and commitment to his family deity. What is more, the different deities guarding the borders of different places have conversations, feel guilty and sad, overworked, content and more. The horses of the deities and the heralds have a crucial role to play too. The tinkling of the anklets of Ayyanar and the approaching thud of the hooves of his horse which continue to this day to be part of the belief system of simple people, are a recurrent feature in many of the stories in the collection, serving as live heralds of the approach and presence of the gods of their land. But what is special and unique about the gods and the people in the stories is the casualness and camaraderie between them, that seem to facilitate a dialogue of familiarity almost to the point of what would be constituted as irreverence under a different set of codes and beliefs.

Poorani Porkalai depicts the plight of the deities themselves forced into taking to the streets because of the greed and self-centeredness of people in their purview. Ayyanar along with his wives Poorani and Porkalai and his once-magnificent horse is leaving the village and his temple. The affairs of the village and the safety of its people and produce had always been administered by Ayyanar and his horse. Poorani and Porkalai had rarely ever stepped out of the precincts of the temple situated outside the village right among the

fields and by the *Kanmai* (water resource). Ayyanar had made this decision to leave the temple and the village altogether. He had overruled the pleas of his wives and his horse, both of whom found it painful and difficult to leave the ties that attached them to the village and its people.

Ayyanar himself had not made the decision easily. Neglect and abandon from the villagers had hurt him. The temple premises and path had been encroached upon and the lake water that he had once upon guarded over to ensure that the cattle had water all through the year and the fields had access to planned irrigation was now shrunk to a measly dried-up pond. The headman of the village had seen in his dream, a man with a head cloth in his head standing near his house holding his horse loosely by its reins. The headman had enquired the other man about who he was and he had been perplexed by the expression of injury caused by insult in the man's face as he turned and left the place. It was Ayyanar himself and it had been the final blow. The headman had not even recognised the supreme god and guardian deity of his village. In another dream a few days later, the headman sees the same man saying he was leaving the village and he has two women and a horse along with him. When the headman shares his strange dream with his wife and mother, they declare in lament that Ayyanar had deserted their village. The story ends with the guilty and disturbed headman seeing the same man with two women and a horse on the highway engaged in doing some petty work to earn an income. The world of the tale sucks you in with all the fears and problems and suffering, and most important of all, the simple faith that is as basic and living as the Earth and the scorching sun and enveloping rain.

The other story titled "Aran" begins with the ruminations of the protagonist, Veerapandian. There was a disturbance in him that was going round and round in him in a compulsive whirlpool of adamant thought. He was going to break a promise—not a promise to ordinary people but a promise to Ayyanar himself. He had been an able youth with muscles hardened by tough physical work. He was sincere and committed to his work. But he had that one vice that is the despair of many a labouring family. His evenings after work were dedicated to drinking to the extreme point of losing all his senses. When Chithirai Selvi fell in love with him and got ready to leave her uncooperative family and take his hand in marriage, she put one condition on him. She insisted that he should tie a small chit to the feet of Pudhupatti Ayyanar's horse stating that he would abstain from consuming

alcohol thereafter, and he had done it. He had followed all the necessary ceremonies with regard to the tying of the chit and had made the promise. But now, he wanted to break the promise, after six years of abstinence. He wanted to take back that chit, his mind was in a state of hurt and turmoil and he was unable to sleep.

Veerapandian was deeply hurt by his wife's words that had poured out like vitriol. Sleep had eluded him for more than three days. He can sleep, only if he can dull his senses with alcohol. He would do it. He would forget himself in alcohol for three or four days and have undisturbed sleep. But to do that, he needed to take the chit away from the feet of Ayyanar's horse. He tells the hesitant priest at the temple that he would again come and tie the chit after a week of drinking and sleeping. The priest however warns him that even though he had got back his chit, the horse would not let him free to drink and the words had come true. He saw the horse as the bus was about to start. It started following the bus. The horse that starts following the hurt and erring protagonist is a tangible presence in the story. As the bus speeds up, the horse foams at its mouth but keeps following the bus, now just parallel to his window, now a little further away, running across the fields, but always in sight with its mane shimmering in the moonlight.

Now our protagonist has already got a bottle of liquor secured to his waist. But principled man that he is, he is waiting to reach the outskirts of his village to drink it. He alights from the bus and starts walking across the dark streets and fields. His hands are tightly clutching the bottle of liquor tied to his waist and there is joyous anticipation in him to get drunk. But then there is a bout of sharp, intense barking from the dogs. They seem to be looking at something behind him. He looks back and is terrified by the group of horses standing behind him. He starts running. There is the sound of tinkling anklets and the sound of approaching hooves, coming nearer and nearer. He faints down with exhaustion near the bus stop. When he regains his senses, everything is quiet. Slowly, timidly, he takes out his bottle and unscrews the lid. There is a sudden intense sound of tinkling anklets and the neigh of a horse. In the bright moonlight, he sees a huge horse, monstrous in proportion just in front of him. The horse's legs are huge with thousands of small chits tied to them. The horse raises its hooves, aiming them just at his chest. In absolute terror he drops the bottle and starts running. Running desperately, he reaches his house door. Now the voice

that calls “Chithira”, “Chithira Selvi” has lost its hurt and anger and the hands that open the door hold him in tender love. Thus ends the story.

The range and extent of the vocabulary the author employs in aid of his narration is noteworthy. There is an impression of largeness and space that is usually lacking in a writer with a smaller repertoire of regional dialect and diction to tell his story. Description of minute details of the physical world and mental states of both the people and their deities is made possible by this. A housefly fallen into porridge and struggling helplessly is the image used to describe the predicament of Ayyanar. He and his temple are in such an impoverished state that his eye sockets look like pits into which a large handful of rice (*orukuthuarisi*) would need to be poured in to render smooth.

Word modifications in keeping with the lifestyle and dialogue habits of the people of the land enable and as certain the authenticity of the narrative world in the stories. Regional speech variations like ‘nella’ instead of ‘nalla,’ ‘vayisi’ instead of ‘vayasu’, use of old Tamil words with distinctive regional identity like ‘saedai’ for agricultural land, ‘soothuthuni’ for cloth covering the private parts are a few samples to highlight the above said observation.

In sum, it can be said that the spirit of life in the villages and small towns of the North Arcot district of Tamil Nādu are given flesh, bone and breath in the unique writing style of Kanmani Gunasekaran with words and idiom dipped in the tradition of the land, its thought and the deepest beliefs.

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Incorporating Level Appropriate Tasks for Effective Language Learning in the ESL Context of Business Communication among Tertiary Learners at Anna University, India

SHOBA, KN

Assistant Professor of English, Anna University, Chennai

Email ID: shobakn@annauniv.edu, shobaknau@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper presents the usefulness of integrating level appropriate tasks for language learning for management graduates of the Business English course focusing on aspects of corporate communication. It examines how tasks lend themselves to autonomous language learning focusing on a particular form of the target language. The postgraduate students pursuing Masters of Business Administration at Anna University (n=45) work their way through the assigned tasks in order to achieve a defined end and in the process learn specific language skills encompassing all the four domains. By exploring the various aspects of task-based and task-supported approach in learning in the management studies classroom, the paper demonstrates how various other non-linguistic skills can also be fostered through this approach. The paper attempts to provide a few insights into how productive tasks can be designed, adapted and implemented in classrooms in customised ways. A few practical recommendations have also been made which teachers can adopt into their own language classrooms situated in their own educational settings.

Keywords: Business English, Task-Based Language Teaching, Level Appropriate Task, Corporate Communication

Introduction

In order to make the teaching and learning of Business English more effective as well as interesting, several innovative approaches and strategies are being adopted in the current academia. A closer look at these approaches would elucidate the incorporating of learner involvement in such learning environments. The Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach is a significant and breakthrough approach in this direction. Moreover, this approach has been variously employed in the teaching of specific language skills, i.e.,

specific tasks for teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing at various levels, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. The present paper, however, sheds light on the business English contexts, exploring how appropriate tasks can be adopted in facilitating effective learning of the language. The paper surveys the traditional language teaching methods in Business English Classrooms in general, juxtaposes them with TBLT as an emerging approach and analyses its usefulness in the same context. Task based language teaching as an approach focuses on tasks which are adoptable to authentic business settings and therefore lend themselves to effective usage in the classroom.

Context of Business English Communication for Management Graduates

With the growing demand of English as lingua franca, the need to learn the language has become indispensable in the courses of business management, where the language is taught more as a discourse catering to a special need. Business English is categorised under English for Specific Purposes which subsumes other categories like English for Academic Purposes, English for Information Science and Technology, etc.

Sarani and Sahebi have studied the salient features of English for Specific Purposes and summarise it as: a) the curriculum is designed to meet the specific needs of the learner, b) relevant in content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, c) centered on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantic and so on, and analysis of the discourse, and d) contrasts widely from “General English” (119). Thus, considering the above criteria, it can be elucidated that Business English caters to learners oriented to business contexts, the content it uses is adopted from real life business situations, focusing on language aspects necessary to carry out business transactions on a day-to-day basis.

Traditional Methods used in Business English Classrooms

In the conventional teaching of Business English, especially during the 1960s, it was vocabulary that usually assumed centre stage, and it failed to validate the prior business related knowledge of the learners. The authors of *Teaching Business English*, Ellis and Johnson point out, “there was no consideration of how the learner might apply the language in real life, and no development of skills such as interacting in meetings or writing letters”

(4). The authenticity of the contents used as learning materials was questionable and the challenges faced by non-native learners were much worse in such a scenario. By explicitly teaching the vocabulary that one would require to communicate in the business contexts, the courses stood apart from those of General English.

During the 1980s, the shift of focus from vocabulary to interaction can be witnessed. The communicative aspect of business English was stressed, with an added emphasis on skill-based approach. Incorporating behavioral skills in business communication was in practice as business English was considered not just the vocabulary it required. With a broad range of learners opting in for these kinds of courses, there arose a need to categorise their needs and offer what was exactly necessary for their situation. As most of the learners showed some level of background experience in business, a need-based approach was adopted. Similarly it was crucial to understand the goals and intentions of the learners and what they expected out of the courses. It is only after a thorough analysis of these parameters, it was able to mirror the real-life situations of business contexts inside the classroom.

Another challenge faced by academics working on framing the learning content was the socio-cultural turn of the communication. As business relationships were unique to certain countries and cultures, an international or a universal framework would be highly generic which might not sync with the specific requirements of the learner. The formulaic language patterns were to be exploited preparing learners to accomplish a wide variety of functions ranging from writing emails to making presentations. It is in this key context that the methodology of Task-based Language Teaching can be helpful in establishing the bridge between needs and outcomes of Business English courses.

Task-based Language Teaching for Business English Classrooms

The present section examines the characteristics of tasks and how they can be applied in the business English classrooms. Samuda and Bygate have explored the concept of a task – its theoretical and conceptual aspects from a historical point of view and its contemporary implications in their text *Tasks in Second Language Learning*. Tasks require holistic language use as acknowledged by Dewey and Freinet. Their definition of a task

characterises it as “a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge with the overall aim of promoting language learning through a product, process or both. Ellis (2003) defines a task as ‘a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes’ (p. 16). Nunan’s definition summarises the other definitions given: “My own definition is that a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather to manipulate form” (4).

The rationale for using tasks in the language teaching lessons are that tasks integrate the focus on meaning with a focus on language. Just as the popular educationist John Dewey points out that student-centred education is better than the one that is material or teacher centred. It is by achieving this balance that holistic learning can take place. Moreover, tasks enforce learning by doing as learning is hands-on and experiential. By actively enquiring into the task, the learner engages cognitively and learning takes place. Tasks also provide learners with practice that is relevant to their specific academic or occupational, vocational or social survival purposes. By emphasising communication over accuracy and by designing lessons that make learners stretch their language experience beyond classrooms to authentic situations, task-based learning helps learners to acquire the essential business English skills. Business English is also generally framed on the various business interactions that happen in real business contexts and it is similar tasks that are used in the language classroom that employs TBLT. Thus, tasks are naturally suitable for effective learning in a business English classroom.

Usefulness of a Task-based and Task-supported Approach

The task-supported-language-teaching approach is another emerging field of research and practice within the task-based approach. While the TBLT requires a framework of syllabus that has to be essentially based on it and the assessment pattern also has to be mapped according to the teaching methodology. This may not be possible in many cases and the syllabus may not lend itself to such a practice. In these scenarios, a task-supported approach can be very useful. Many research studies have been carried out to compare the efficacy of a task-based and a task –supported learning environment.

Understanding Pedagogic Tasks

Several Second Language activities are done in the classrooms to promote an understanding of the principles of Business English. However, a pedagogic task can be highly effective when implemented in a structured and phased manner. The four essential criteria for something to be an effective-pedagogic task are:

- Meaning is primary.
- There is a communicative problem to solve.
- It has a relationship with real world activities.
- And task outcome is more important.

Examples of simple pedagogic tasks in the language classroom are describing an illness to a doctor, telling a story based on pictures, while task complexity can be scaled through activities like listening to an academic lecture or writing a cover letter for a job application. It is important that tasks may involve any of the LSRW skills. Similarly several types of tasks have been identified by language experts. Some of the prominent ones are:

- Target vs. Pedagogic Task,
- One-way vs. Closed Task,
- Convergent vs. Divergent Task,
- Focused vs. Unfocused Task,
- And Input-based vs. Output-based Task

Designing Effective Tasks for Business Communication

Every task based lesson has three clear phases. They are pre-task, during-task and post-task. The Pre-task phase aims to prepare the performance of the task in order to make sure that it is conducive to language acquisition. During- task phase draws attention on task completion. Students are made to work individually, in pairs or groups. The teacher's role during this phase can be active or passive. The post-task is the phase which focuses on form. The task is repeated in front of a larger audience, which was earlier brainstormed and discussed in a group. Jane Willis goes a step further and drafts a framework for a task-based lesson which consists of:

- Pre-Task Phase
- Task Cycle
- Task Phase
- Planning Phase of Task Cycle
- Reporting Phase of Task Cycle
- Language Focus
- Analysis Phase of Language Focus
- Practice Phase of Language Focus

Sample Business English Task-supported Lesson Plan

The present section provides a sample lesson plan that uses a task-supported language teaching especially for the teaching of Business English. The lesson plan is task supported because, the curriculum for the MBA Tourism and Management degree programme at Anna University is not task-based and therefore tasks like the one that follows can be integrated as required. The class contains 45 postgraduate students whose language proficiency is intermediate and they have a paper "Spoken and Written Communication". Most of the language items are oriented towards communication in business contexts. The classes are usually for 90 minutes and we meet twice a week. All the four LSRW skills including the receptive and productive skills are taught. As the teacher designs the essential materials required for the class, tasks are used extensively.

Pre-Task

Students are given a short article from a travel magazine like Outlook Traveller, Lonely Planet, Luxe, etc. The article highlights a particular state with special focus on its tourist attractions and things to do while in the state in India or any specific country. Students are assigned in groups and they choose to work on a particular state. The article also helps the learner in priming himself or herself with the essential vocabulary. The students should also work out on the best tourist attractions in the given state.

During-Task

The teacher then introduces the main task for the day. Learners will have to work on a detailed itinerary for a novice traveler. The novice traveler can be the teacher and students in a group are expected to make a presentation with the support of a detailed itinerary chart which the teacher distributes to every group. The choice of the form of presentation can be left to the students. This promotes autonomous learning among the members of the group as they have to brainstorm and make a decision. The various forms of presentations can include a power point presentation, a prezi, a video, a brochure, a map, etc. Students can innovate other forms of presentations. The duration of the trip to a particular state can be fixed by the teacher or it can be left to the learners to plan an ideal duration with logical justifications. The students construct sentences with the given vocabulary as found in the article. The teacher can facilitate the process by pointing out to the use of tenses like ‘take a cab from ...’ – imperatives, and other language aspects in focus. They practice among themselves and prepare the target product. Thus the task involves both the process of interaction and the end product, i.e., the itinerary.

Post-Task

The students repeat the entire process which was generated and finalised during the task and report it to the class and the teacher. The teacher evaluates it and probes into gaps, if necessary. The entire group participates and the other groups also get an opportunity to question. The other groups who are observing the itinerary can be given the task of writing a summary of it or even more imagine a trip taken and write about it to be presented in the following class.

Conclusion

The learners have had adequate exposure to language in the undergraduate programmes which have been general in nature. In continuation with this, the learners are given a substantial level of independence to work as individuals and pairs. Their discussion helps them prepare and report to the class. The lesson plan also emphasises on the cooperative aspect of learning where the learners and the teacher work together at least in the initial phases. The lesson plan can be suitably adapted to teach other business tasks including group discussions, business presentations, draft/memo/email writing and other aspects included in the syllabus.

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J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a Campus Fiction: A New Materialist Reading

THAMARAI YAZHINI, T

Research Scholar, Fatima College, Mary Land, Madurai

Email ID: thamaraiyazhini@gmail.com

Abstract

J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace is a Campus fiction that revolves around David Lurie, a Communication Lecturer at the Technical University of Cape Town. J.M. Coetzee, a South African-Australian linguist and writer, is the recipient of Nobel Prize for Literature, 2003. Coetzee presents the dynamicity of power that uprooted the lives of the characters in the novel. Many researches have been done on Disgrace, widely focusing on the themes of racism, post colonialism, power, sex, love, gender and time. This study attempts to deconstruct the notion of reconciliation in J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace under the lens of New Materialism. New Materialism is the reviving interdisciplinary theory that opines on the materiality of the subject and ideates on the 'Turn to the matter'.

Keywords: Materialism, human, non-human, Disgrace, Materiality, Power.

Campus Fiction, the new genre of literature, began to evolve from the mid twentieth century. Campus fiction is set in and around an academic institution. It poses either a student or a professor as its protagonist and it deals with the happenings of the campus and its community. According to Chris Baldick, Campus fiction is "either a comic or satiric representation of the action which unfolds within the closed environs of an academic setting or such familiar backdrop" (238). The major themes entailed in the campus fiction are power, love, lust, time, class and the schools of philosophy may include Marxism, Consumerism, Existentialism, Structuralism, Absurdism and Materialism. This study attempts to decode J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a new materialist text focusing on the subjection to the materiality of lives by the dualistic power of the world.

New Materialism is a paradigm shift towards a more materialistic emphasis of socio-cultural aspects of life. Chad Shomura explains that "New materialisms reject

fantasies of human mastery and affirm the entanglement of humans with nonhuman animals, vegetables, and minerals”. Being a non-anthropological study, it critiques the foundational binaries that include nature/culture, object/subject, human/thing. It rejects dualism and encourages vitalism. The proponents of New Materialism are Rosi Braidotti and Manuel DeLanda. Braidotti defines New Materialism as “[r]ethinking the embodied structure of human subjectivity after Foucault” (158).

J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* encapsulates the life of the professor, David Lurie, who is twice divorced and leads a life of disgrace because of his immoral sexual life. The male professor’s lusty nature makes Melanie a victim of the power he exerted over her. The exploited freedom of power makes him devoid of the agency of power. On the complaint lodged by Melanie, Lurie resigns his job at the university and moves to the country house of Lucy, Lurie’s daughter. Their life at farm is collapsed by the gang rape. Lucy is gang raped by a group of three black men. Lucy denies to report rape, despite her father’s insistence. The discordant life of Lurie is harmonised by “the natural rhythm of the farm” and the animals. The interplay of the non-human objects that play a vital role in curating human behaviour is emphasised in this study.

Multiple research articles have been published on the acclaimed work, J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*. Ashutosh Yagnik in the article titled “A Representation of Identity Power and Freedom in J M Coetzee’s Major Novels” details on the identity crisis, power politics and freedom. Many researches have been done on the themes of racial discrimination, freedom struggle, rape, violence and power system. However, none of the articles is on *Disgrace* from the New Materialistic approach, and hence this paper.

The duality of power and violence is interdependent. The agency of power can exert its materiality through violence. Violence in turn materialises its power through violence. According to Foucault “Violence play a constitutive role in generating power” (208). In J.M Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, the materiality of the power and violence is exerted in two spheres. The Protagonist David Lucie, being a Professor at the Technical University, exploits his agency of power through sexual violence. Lucie brutally violates his boundary with Melanie.

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go back, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away. (Coetzee 25)

The supremacy of power entertained by Lucie makes him exercise his power over the powerless and when condemned to apologise for his mistake in public, Lucie replies, “I was enriched by the experience” (Coetzee 56). The instance where violence interplays to attain power is the gang rape of Lucy. The gang of three black men loot the farm of Lucy, attacks her father and rapes her. The black men’s act of dematerialising the materiality of non-human objects (farm, house and animals) and destruction of the materiality of human body to attain power validates the dualism of power and violence that aids in materialising their vigour. In a research article titled *Campus Fiction a Critical Study* by Santhi, a researcher, details the characteristics of campus fiction that,

These novels paint the noisy world of academe with all its absurdities and follies while recreating how sexuality and rivalry work within the tiny community of learned men and women who behave in a primitive manner...The world of academe is the muse by providing a world ready-made, just waiting to be translated on paper, with its own set of distinctive customs, seasons, rituals and foibles, where the factors that motivate human behaviours - power, ambition, rivalry, lust and anxiety can be displayed to their full extent and anatomized. (3-4)

This novel being a campus fiction entails and represents all the insecurities of the macrocosm of society. The materiality of the hegemonic power is well elicited in the novel through the realistic portrayals of racial and gender indifferences.

The reconciliation of the present situation is attained by the humans through non-human matters. Lurie strikes a balance to correct his disembarked life through his interplay with animals. The impermanence of life is instilled in Lurie through the death of dogs and the incineration of corpses. Lurie works with Bev Shaw, who owns an animal shelter. Lurie’s perspective of life highly changes through the work he does with Bev Shaw. The death of the dogs and also the sheep that was butchered for the party hosted by Petrus greatly startles him, leaving him to ruminate on his deeds over the powerless girl students.

The 'non-human' dog plays a pivotal role in the reconciliation of the characters. The dogs owned by Lucy are her assets. When the rapists rape her, they say "Call your dogs! Go on, call your dogs! No dogs? Then let us show you dogs!" (Coetzee 160). They brutally kill Lucy's dog to rob her of the material power, the materiality of her life is robbed, thus making her helpless. Petrus, on the other hand calls himself a 'dog-man' to territorialise the interplay of his motive. Petrus, by arranging to rob Lucy's properties, makes her powerless and extorts his power to protect her. Lucy, in turn, by neither reporting the rape nor aborting the conceived baby falls a prey to subservience and subjugation of power. The materiality of the material power has high significance on who becomes what.

The aspect of New Materialism is that it is not dependent upon the foundational or transcendental power such as God, fate, system and structure. Lucy, a white woman, gang raped by black men decides neither to report of the rapiststo the police nor to abort the foetus conceived by the rape. She stands deterministic stating that it would lead to no justice in the New South Africa. She breaks the racial structure by her strong declination to abort. Lucy argues, "I am a woman. Do you think I hate children? Should I choose against the child because of who its father is?" (Coetzee 198). Also, she breaks the Marx's structure by allowing a black man to own her land and give her protection. The land with its materialist power exploits the existing structure.

Most of the campus fictions are new materialistic in nature. As a campus fiction, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* stands as an encomium of social injustices and indifferences. The structuration of plot in such a way ironies and satires the political hegemony. Set in a closed environment, *Disgrace* warns and advices the society on the decoronating aspects of the old school practices. It does away with the binaries and social indifferences of the dichotomic and hegemonic world.

The New Materialist reading of Coetzee's *Disgrace* has lighted on the importance of non-human materiality of objects and has highlighted the Anthropologist Daniel Miller's idea that "Things do things to us and not just the things we want them to do". The new Materialist reading of *Disgrace* has constituted to Barad's thought that says "world is dynamic, in the constant process of intra-activity and materialism".

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