Postgraduate & Research Department of English

The American College

(An Autonomous Institution Affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University)
(Re-accredited [2nd Cycle] by NAAC with Grade 'A' & CGPA of 3.46 on a 4 point scale)
(A Mentor Institution)

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Editorial…

Articles in this issue include, but are not restricted to, the select ones from those presented at our International Conference held in March 2023 on 'Postmodernist Perspectives in English Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies'. We espouse the conviction to value voices from all quarters and this postulates the possibility of multiple truths. In a world that is ever changing and full of uncertainties, it may be an extreme form of naiveté to claim or even to assume that we are the keepers of the key and custodians of truth. Good that we had an occasion through which we could remind ourselves of the ancient parable that shows how certain blind men try to perceive an elephant by feeling some random part of the animal.

The narrative propounds what in the Jain tradition is called the *anekantavada* or "non-absolutism". It is also related to *syadvada* (theory of conditioned predication) and *saptabhangi* (sevenfold predication) which affirm that to a perceived reality there are at least seven possible dimensions such as: 'perhaps it is', 'perhaps it is not', 'perhaps it is and it is not' and so on. The watch word here is perhaps or may be. In the world today wherein grand narratives are deconstructed with the foregrounding of mini narratives, it has been fruitful to collect and publish research articles that ruminate on this idea alongside the other ones that add up to the collection. As a step towards encouraging young researchers to come forward to publish their ideas, ACJELL is collecting NO FEE for publication or even postage.

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 Christober, Principal & Secretary of the American College for encouraging and patronising this academic endeavour all along.

Rajendra Pandian, Ph.D.

Jayapandian Paul Jayakar, Ph.D.

CONTENTS

Interaction and Interpretation: A Postmodernist Reading of Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* and *Harvest*

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Abstract

Human interaction, shaped by a mutual exchange of interpretations, lays the groundwork for socialisation. Manjula Padmanabhan's plays Harvest and Light's Out deal with the interaction of family members and society that portrays the picture of progressive global citizenship in an urban space, manifesting the paradigm of the postmodern world. Sociologist J. Macionis described symbolic interactionism, as a hypothesis that holds people's regular contacts with one another create civilization, acts as a significant tool of social construction of reality. The conflict between the 'reality' and its simulation is manifested through the complex narrative mode of relativism in Padmanabhan's representation of 'modern' family. The framework of symbolic interaction within the human world and cyberspace helps in understanding the problematisation of identity through the practice of choice in the selected plays. The paper will try to address the cultural debates of personal reality. It will consider the paradigm of postmodernism to discuss the incorporation of hyper reality and Padmanabhan's use of linguistic interpretation to establish the failure of modernity and disillusionment with the idea of progress.

***Keywords**: Postmodernism, Symbolic Interactionism, Reality, Identity, Modernity.*

Like modernism, postmodernism focuses on fragmented pictures to understand human experience. It focuses on the personal reality characterised by individualism, choice and identity formation. Each of these factors brings out a narration of contradiction, unfinished and ambiguous truth and is self-reflexive and influenced by social construction in some way or the other. Human interactions are the manifestation of objectivity, detachment and multiplicity of voice. According to Faberman, "symbolic interaction can make a profound contribution as a theoretical voice for an identity politics of a postmodern future and beyond" (Fee 1992). To look into this idea of studying symbolic interaction to interpret the

postmodern paradigm, two plays of Manjula Padmanabhan, *Harvest* and *Lights Out* have been considered.

Manjula Padmanabhan, an Indian playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, and children's book author, has depicted the post-modern numbness of society wearing the cloak of 'cultured' and 'progressiveness'. The disillusioned idea of progress in a global world and its manifestation through digitization is critically addressed through the realistic portrayal of hypocrisy of the human world. In the futuristic play, *Harvest*, she depicts a dystopian world of technological and medical advancement, primarily dealing with the organ trade and technological colonisation.

The play is set in one of the chawls of Mumbai, where a poor Indian family of four members is struggling for survival. Om, the elder, married son is looking for jobs and has fallen prey to organ trafficking. He has been lured by promises of economic prosperity and better lifestyle. This Faustian deal is conducted by a first world global company called Interplanta services which uses the fantasy of Ginni, a white skinned blonde 'wet dream' to manipulate and control the mind of the family through cyberspace. The interaction of the family members, especially Om and Jaya, indicates the acceptance of chaos, disorder and instability within relationship and family structure. Om introduces his wife Jaya, as sister to Ginni to be part of the deal and convinces them to be part of this facade.

The same chaotic conversation is portrayed in the marital relationship of Bhaskar and Leela in the play, *Lights Out*. In this play, an affluent and 'modern' family of Bombay, is going through a weird experience of indulging in voyeurism of a sexual crime in its vicinity. From the window of their multi-storied apartment, they can hear the cry of help of wom(e)n constantly becoming victim to gang rape. The scream of pain and violence is subdued under the 'interaction and their interpretation'. The theoretical and logical explanation of the event by Bhaskar and his group of friends that includes Mohan, Surinder and Naina, ultimately succeed to overlook the humanist approach for help. Their conscious metanarratives of the situation are repeated by their peripheral community and the level of inaction establishes utter disorder of contemporary society. The conversation leads us to the mind of the characters and reveals that Bhaskar had been watching the incident from the comfort of his house, possibly even taking pleasure from the heinous crime. The 'male gaze' objectifying

the female body and enjoying voyeuristic pleasure does not hesitate to blame the women or question their morality.

BHASKAR: He wanted to see it-

LEELA: You wanted to see it!

MOHAN: (Unrepentant) Sure! Why not?

LEELA: (She's not amused) But why! Why see such awful things, unless you must!

MOHAN: Well, I was- curious.

LEELA: About such things! (Padmanabhan, 1986)

The assumption of the incident as an act of pleasure and blaming the women to be a 'whore', questions the 'progressive mindset' and rational behaviour of society. The indifference of the people coming from the social construct of oppressing the marginal highlights the postmodern tone of the narrative. The biased mentality and superiority complex is allowing them to showcase their intellectual self. The cynical representation of 'victim-bashing' is to highlight the flawed temporality of traditional patriarchal society. The participation of women and their position reflects the 'metaphysics of presence' and 'multiplicity of voice'. Naina's denial to be part of the group and initiating a cultural debate posits an optimistic postmodern trend that believes in gradual change of social institutions. The failure of modernity irrespective of class consciousness can be sensed through the symbolic interactions.

Symbolic interaction is a sociological term derived from the work of George Herbert, *Mead*, to measure or understands the human psyche by interpreting the interactions. According to Macionis, symbolic interactionism is "a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of everyday interactions of individuals" (Fee, 1992). The identity politics of the characters are visual through its spectrum. Another occasion where those "dirty, ugly sounds" are bothering Leela as it is polluting her house (Padmanabhan, 1986). She explains her discomfort by saying,

> But their sounds come inside, inside my nice clean house and I can't push them out!.. If only they didn't make such a racket, I wouldn't mind so much! Why do they have to do it here? Why can't they go somewhere else? (Padmanabhan, 1986)

The linguistic significance of 'somewhere else' raises the question of space and belonging. The mind deciding the 'spatial awareness' and constructing its own personal reality can be considered another benchmark of social construction. Moreover their conversation and discussion is an intentional decision for inaction. Discussing the possibilities takes away their responsibility of informing the police at the right time or resisting the act by intervening. Not doing anything, engaging in the variety of discussion and waiting for the right moment of action with a lot of explanation reminds of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Frieda, the house helper, remains silent throughout the play, exhibiting the dehumanised characteristics of the modern society. The silence of Frieda is another aspect where the patronising position of the male has subdued the subaltern. While Leela voices her concerns, Frieda can only feel as if she has been reduced to the state of a robotic figure. The mute role of Frieda only adds to the helplessness and trauma of the female class as she could easily be the next victim.

The futility and the helplessness have been endorsed by the sound imageries. Thus advancement of technology and the setting of sound within the plays have taken it into another level of understanding. Even the pause and the silence have exhibited absolute helplessness. Postmodernism shares with modernism the conviction that there is no objective truth and that truth is relative. According to postmodernism, truth is not reflected in how humans see it, but rather, the mind tries to understand its own personal reality. Facts and lies can thus be used interchangeably. Similarly, facts and figures keep changing in the play *Harvest*. Again coming back to the understanding of personal reality, it keeps on shifting in the physical and cyberspace of the play. While Leela chooses to ignorantly survive in her modern stone age, Jaya, the protagonist of Harvest, fights for her space against the panoptic surveillance.

In the play *Harvest,* the equation is reversed as the disturbing sound holds the power and controls life through a computer-animated wet dream, Ginni. Here the sound coming out of the 'contact module' and the apparent orders brought in by Inter Planta service reshapes the family structure. She is another form of fantasy that provoked the character to fall prey to false hope. The rational inner voice is deceived. The virtual remote not only interferes in the economic and social arena, it also changes the marital relationship. The voice of the module

is unavoidable and evident as the module itself utters, "Always I listened to you, Zhaya. I heard every word in the room- even when the Module was off, it recorded" (Padmanabhan, 1997).

Jeremy Bentham's concept of 'Panopticon' as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind" is very much applicable here (Chandran, 1999). Panoptic creates a consciousness of permanent visibility as a form of power, where no bars, chains, and heavy locks are necessary for domination any more (Padmanabhan, 1997). Manjula Padmanabhan's portrayal of 'living room' is reminiscent of the panoptic mechanism of cyberspace. Hint of postmodern trait of cyborg culture and metaverse can be located here.

Moreover the Super Deluxe Video Couch ordered by Om's mother is representing her electronic annihilation, her self-imposed withdrawal. Her total absorption in the fantasy world is her choice not to react to rational voices. On another level the virtual voice of Ginni through the module is a pedagogical tool delivering the sounds of first world countries. They are dominating and exploiting the economically marginalised nations, with their false tone. Globalisation has allowed another opportunity to the developed nations to exercise their 'neo-colonial voice'. The conversation of Virgil brings up crucial issues regarding the 'digitalization' of identities and the disconnection from the physical form. The problematisation of identity in cyberspace is essential to post colonialist discourse. Identity politics and pain are embedded in the physical body of the oppressed class. In *Harvest,* the first world uses boundless resources and wireless connection to exploit the third world. The ideology of posthumanism is the desire for the bioscientific dispersion of the 'self' and the eradication of the 'self's' limitations and flaws and can be witnessed through Virgil, the old man's wish to shed off his old self and embrace the new body of Jeetu. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the stories of self-transformation in American culture served as an unrelenting search for the ideal 'Other'. His quest for immortality is visible in his desire to involve Jaya as a birth-giving 'machine'.

Jaya resists such capitalist dominance in a postcolonial manner. Through the corporeal restriction of death, she asserts her claim to her body, which symbolises her dignity. The fury within Jaya finally comes in the end when she herself chooses to deal with the virtual voice. The frustration is visible clearly when she utters, ". . . And in the meantime, I want

you to practise saying my name correctly. It's Jaya—'J as in justice, 'J' as in jam". (Padmanabhan, 1997)

It demonstrates how far new media has spread in fusing the lines between the self and technology; it comes to the point that human identity is in peril. Padmanabhan highlights the emergence of the 'posthuman' while also depicting circumstances that attempt to resist it. The places of self and non-self, equilibrium and non-equilibrium, body and awareness are all redistributed in this. *Harvest* and *Lights Out* need to be understood in the perspective of posthumanist theories that are based on shifting Western notions of the self, identity and social constructions. The organ trade and its negotiations in the third world countries are narratives of postmodern medical humanities in it.

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M.T. Vasudevan Nair's *Second Turn*: A Re-reading

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Abstract

Randamoozham, translated into English as Second Turn, is M.T.Vasudevan Nair's magnum opus in Malayalam literature. M.T.Vasudevan Nair, popularly known as MT, is considered as the pioneer of a new trend in novel writing in Malayalam literature. In Second Turn, MT tries to interpret, reread, and rewrite the pregnant pauses in the epic, Mahabharata. He transforms the character Bhima into an archetypal hero. He retells the epic in humanistic terms without losing the authenticity of the original text.

Keywords: *Narrative Structure, Reread, Rewrite, Humanistic, Archetype.*

A premiere writer in Malayalam literature, M.T.Vasudevan Nair, attempts in this work an unconventional interpretation of the epic *Mahabharata*. It meant a shift of focus from society to private dreams and personal sorrows of the individual. MT employs and develops the psychological growth of the characters in his works in general. Particularly in his novel *Second Turn* (*Randamoozham*), MT rewrites the epic tale of *Mahabharata*, where Bhima is placed as the central character and the narrator of the text. M.T. Vasudevan Nair considers the human situation of the epic *Mahabharata* as the core of his novel. For MT, *Mahabharata* is not only a war saga but it is the story of a family with its cultural and social background. M.T. Vasudevan Nair tries to revitalize the epic tale by finely dismantling its realms of values. In the original text, the epic tale is narrated by a detached *sutha*, a singer, but in MT's novel *Second Turn*, he rewrites it with the voice of Bhima. That is, it is narrated from the vision of Bhima.

MT Vasudevan Nair in his novel *Second Turn* makes a thematic change from his usual kind of writing. Instead of portraying the matrilineal joint family system and the feudal status of the society, he presents a world of epic, *Mahabharata*. But still, he connects the epic tale with his own community and his rural society. In the process, he brings down the characters from epic heights and presents them in the backdrop of a family life. The *Mahabharata* is an epic tale, narrated by a singer that tells the story of three generations. The epic is rich with characters of different types- legendary, didactic, ethical, heroic, aesthetic, philosophical, political etc. It includes a range of sentiments-- from the heroic to the elegiac, the whole gamut of human experience, the effortless and spontaneous use of figures, the beautiful imagery, the conflict of emotions and possible allegorical readings throughout. Mahabharata means a long story or Maha Katha that incorporates different styles or forms of narrative style and technique.

The *Second Turn* by MT is a rereading of *Mahabharata* wherein Bhima, the lone warrior is portrayed as the archetypal hero. The novel *Second Turn* is actually a work inspired by *Mahabharata*. According to MT the readers of *Mahabharata*, would consider Bhima as a strong man with human weakness. Bhima is considered as a vigorous warrior who has his own passions, hopes, and disappointments. He is presented as a simple man and he never believed in the laws of his own Aryan community. His purity of character is evident in his relationship with Draupati. Like the other characters of MT, Bhima also shares the convulsive resentment from neglect. He is similar to the characters like Appunni of *Naalukettu (The Legacy)*, Govindankutty of *Asuravithu (The Demon Seed)*, Sethu of *Kaalam (Time)* and Vimala of *Manju(Mist)*. The textualisation of MT mainly relies upon his extraordinary presentation of idioms and lyrical style of writing. In *Second Turn*, he uses a free play of language and gives his own language and ideology to his character, Bhima.

The historical period of Mahabharata, so to say, is the milieu of the novel *Second Turn*. However, the action here does not take precedence over the characters. The Mahabharata war in *Second Turn* provides a massive setting against which the simple and basic human emotions of the characters unfold. The characters portrayed in modern fiction have their own uniqueness with heterogeneous qqualities. In *Second Turn*, clearly the character occupies the central position. Indeed, the complete novel unfolds from the point of view of Bhima.

The Bhima in *Mahabharata* is a strong warrior with a towering height and well built physique. In literature, he is depicted as a gourmandizing tumefied fat person with a quick temper. However, he is the unsung hero of *Mahabharata*. The Bhima of MT is a different person. He is portrayed as a lone warrior, bestowed with a wrathful mind and a distressed psyche and the entire novel is a rereading of his inner self. During the war chronicle of *Mahabharata,* Bhima is perhaps the only character that shows bravery other than Arjuna, Yudhishtira or Karna. Bhima killed almost all the Kauravas in direct confrontation. According to the norms of Aryan community Bhima should be the king but as the second born he is condemned to wait for his turn. Hence, the *Second Turn* depicts the tragic story of the second born, Bhima.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair, in his novel *Second Turn,* transforms the unsung hero to a glorified one. Bhima is characterised with a familial setting and by this MT demystifies the epic. For MT, Bhima is meted out an unjust treatment in *Mahabharata*. He is perceived as a man of strong physique but no spirit. The meaning of his name, Bhima, itself stands for bulk and prodigious man and that puts him in bad light. Nevertheless, MT transforms Bhima into an archetypal hero and also a common person with all his weaknesses and strengths.

MT opens his novel with the physical description of Bhima. In the epic, Bhima's valour is treated almost as foolishness. All the other characters in *Mahabharata,* especially the Kauravas,treat him as a naïve. Bhima is the only character who fights bravely with Keechaka, Jarasandha, Hidimba etc and because of him only the Pandavas won the Kurukshetra war. Even his wife Draupadi excited only his bodily powers. Bhima knows the fact about his strength. Nobody considered his inner self and MT brings out the character's strong inner side by reworking the epic. Bhima himself accepts the fact about his physicality. When he tries to escape the stereotyped perception of his physique he fails and gets confused about his own identity.

In *Second Turn* MT fills the pregnant pauses in the epic. In *Mahabharata,* Bhima is portrayed as a flat character whereas MT pictures Bhima as a round character. The author tries to place Bhima as an archetypal hero to the readers. MT has endeavoured and resuscitated the epic, and finely subverted it with the realm of values. He has made it

accessible to the modern readers by 'retextualising' the original text. He attempts multiple interpretations by rewriting the work and the readers are left to interpret and reread the text with their own and supposedly modern imagination. The novel is the reconstruction of human values from the perspective of the protagonist, Bhima.

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Theme of Diaspora in the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This article is about diasporic women writers who experienced migration and suffered cultural dilemmas triggered by life in two different countries. Clubbing the chosen writers for comparison may lead to understanding the universality of human behaviour. Current readings in postcolonial diasporic literature emphasise how such literary works "write back" to the existing empire and its various discursive formations.. The Introduction here surveys and critiques the emerging discourse of diasporas across various intellectual traditions: Jewish, black British and postcolonial. Subsequently, the article situates the postcolonial diasporic writing within a field of tensions which are marked by several antimonial tendencies. Drawing on the work of a diverse set of critics put by various authors in postcolonial and minority cultural studies, it specifically argues for an antimonial view of diasporic literature, which is found to be caught between conflicting affiliations and commitments.

Keywords: *Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee, Indo English Writers, Diaspora etc.*

Introduction

A comparative study is intended because it helps to expand the sense of understanding the intensity of the issue of diaspora. Clubbing the chosen writers for comparison may lead to understanding the universality of human behaviour as well as experience of their individual lives. The select women writers of Indian diaspora have different approaches to diasporic women. However, they carry a common diasporic consciousness as those women are aware of their problems. The points of comparison are more acceptable, authentic, reliable and valid and even accepted by all. The writers in question are deeply attached to their centrifugal homeland, and they are caught physically between two worlds and not satisfied with this experience. Their experiences are very painful, and they stand bewildered

and confused and do not know how to come out of it. In their aim at self-definition and the expression of their expatriate experiences, women from 1970 onwards chose literature to pour out their passions. Diasporic women writers sought to find words and forms to fit their experiences and have chosen narrative strategies like the autobiography, the novels, and the short stories to to express their life experiences.

Jumpha Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri is a second generation diasporic Indian American writer, born to Bengali parents. Lahiri came to acclaim with her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for fiction. This book was then translated into twenty nine languages and have become a bestseller within the USA and other countries followed by *The Namesake* in 2003 which is now a famous motion picture. She wrote another collection of short stories with different story content titled *Unaccustomed Earth* which came out in 2008. For her brilliant work in writing, JhumpaLahiri has received many literary awards besides the Pulitzer Prize. Lahiri is a product of three countries – having Indian roots but born in London and later, raised in Rhode Island in the United States. She has experienced first-hand the diasporic trauma of never being able to fully connect to any particular place as she belongs to three places. In this regard, Sah comments thus: "Growing up with ties to all the three countries, Lahiri has lived with a sense of hopelessness and an inability to belong to any of these countries and has accepted this fate" (132). Nonetheless, her search for identity is not weighed down by insecurities but is rather, a peaceful, mature, as well as reflexive one and she, knows why so. Her stories are the product of an observant, reflexive mind not of the insecure mind.

Lahiri's works are mainly based on first and second generation Indian diasporic writers as they know the problems of an immigrant. A commendable aspect of her writings is the honesty in her narrative style which touches everyone. Being in a diaspora all her life, Lahiri obviously has no real experience about life in India, her inherited homeland where her parents were born. Undoubtedly, she had gathered a little knowledge about India from her frequent visits to India when she was younger but other than that; she has no real experience of daily life in India other than whatever she had heardfrom her

parents. Thus, she does not write about resident Indians but instead, about a subject, she knows intimately, and that is the life and predicament of Indians living abroad because living far away from countries make them realise their country's importance. Multi-cultural societies are a result of extensive diaspora that has been taking place, especially over the last 200 years at various levels or social strata, with varying magnitude and for as many variegated reasons. Indian diaspora was mainly a choice of individuals, particularly for academic pursuits or economic gains. The natives reacted differently to the waves of immigrants but in almost all cases the expatriates faced a clash of opposing cultures, a feeling of alienation which was then followed by the attempts to adjustand accept. All this is reflected in 'expatriate writings' or 'writings of the diaspora.' JhumpaLahiri is accepted as a writer belonging to this category, a second generation expatriate who writes about the dynamics of migration.

Lahiri can be categorised as a multi-cultural, diasporic, post-colonial, marginal, South-Asian woman writer. She provides in her writings her truth-as an outsider and yet an insider living in the US. Her stories patiently accumulate each and every small detail, and gradually builds up a powerful emotional charge for the readers. They do not present any intrigue, mystery or formal denouement in the traditional sense. Her stories are the statements of the human despair felt particularly within the institution of marriage. Her characters often display shattered minds and frayed nerves, beneath which the nervous whisper of morbid passions is clearly audible. Her stories offer an inner resolve and determination to overcome the emotional imbalance and the indication that it is never too late to begin life afresh. Her technique of writing is so unobtrusive, subtle and unimposing that at times the reader feels that she is not resorting to any technique at all. Lahiri in this regard becomes a living example of the adage, "still waters run deep" (54).In Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, out of the nine stories, two stories present Indian characters exclusively in an Indian backdrop- locale, characters, superstitions, and taboos; the other seven are based on the inner landscape and strafes of Indians who have settled-out of choice or compulsion-in Boston or beyond: beyond symbolizing the emotional and spiritual reaching out**.**Lahiri views herself as "an interpreter of emotional pain and affliction" (Lahiri 56).She boldly and brilliantly maps the shores of her protagonists' inner

world, often blurring the lines between the concepts of optimism and pessimism, constantly underlying the fact that questions on which a meaningful happiness of life depends can be tackled in two ways- intellectually and existentially. Her characters intuitively understand that intellectual answers are superficial and lead to a banal existence, as the receptive and emotional absorption of experience is largely absent in such answers. At the same time, however, her stories suggest that questions related to life and their meanings often do not even require precise solutions. The simple narrative technique of the story charms the reader, but "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" somehow falls short- the presentation of details of Mr. Pirzada's routine remains a mechanical and superficial instead of giving us any glimpse of his inner turmoil. Pirzada at his best comes out as a wooden character.

Lahiri has evolved her own style by changing the mode of narration from the past to the present and again reversing it without being nostalgic. Her style is almost cinematic and with the help of montage, one gets a glimpse into the meaning of the story. One reading is not enough to understand any of her stories. She is considered an important voice of the present. Reviews had hailed "her uncommon elegance and poise" which gives her the ability to exhibit the "same painstaking craftsmanship as Buddhist sages apply to the making of a mandala" and "to chart the emotional temperature of her characters with tactile precision" (Jain). Her stories reinforce Lahiri's view that she expressed in a press conference in Calcutta: "No country is my motherland. I always find myself in exile whichever country I travel to, that is why I was tempted to write something about those living their lives in exile" (Lahirin.p). The stories revolve around individuals who are caught physically and mentally between two worlds- being pulled in two directions and as Turner would say are "transitional beings" or "luminalpersonae" (Turner 95).

Chitra Banerjee

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Asian American writer with her ancestral roots in India. Living in the U.S. Divakaruni is more mindful of the distinctions existing in a culture which encourages her to investigate every basic. Indeed Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning author and poet. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruniis known among youths as an

Indian-American author, poet, and the Betty and Gene Mc David Professor of Writing at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program. Her themes incorporate the Indian experience, contemporary America, women, movement, history, myth, the delights and difficulties of living in a multicultural world. Her novels *One Amazing Thing*, *Oleander Girl*, *Sister of My Heart* and *Palace of Illusions* are being converted into motion pictures. Divakaruni's works are generally set in India and the United States and they regularly concentrate on the encounters of South Asian immigrants. She composes for kids and in addition to the grown-ups. She has authored realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism, myth, and fantasy. In her works, the hybridisation begins bit by bit, Americanisation creeps in and social pointers have no unmistakable stamp. Change in portrayal turns out to be clear; at that point, there is a period when she needs to overlook her past and questions its being.

Critics have praised Divakaruni's storytelling powers, evocative language, and poignant characterisations. They have also appreciated her for retelling the dilemmas of immigration and portraying the diverse lives often marginalised by mainstream American society. Many of her novels, such as *Sister of My Heart*, *Vine of Desire* and *One Amazing Thing*have multiple narrators. This allows her to present the contradictions and ironies between how two or more characters understand the same event in their lives. This is certainly seen in the case of *Oleander Girl*. South Asian American writer Chitra Banerjee is a storyteller who writes about immigrant women. Her major themes center on love, friendship, assimilation, the self-identity of South Asian women. She writes about what she knows and feels. Divakaruni as a diaspora writer never takes the use of language for granted. She has described the Indian women who must face the contradictions between the country they left behind and the one that they must stay. Her language allowing her readers to imagine the atmosphere of her characters' lives and their feelings is evident in her comment: "I want to give a sense of the language and the cultural thinking that is different from the Western way. That's a challenge" (Divakaruni iii). The lyrical language of Divakaruni casts a spell upon her readers and creates the magic which mesmerises. Divakaruni has a quality by which she is able to divert the reader's focus or readers thought from the clichés through the beauty of her writing. Her poetic language or the ability to write, elaborate descriptions to anything like place or person or any kind of emotions, and symbolism really do place her writing from otherwise cliché themes on a higher level" (Turner 122).

Comparison

Indian-American authors Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and JhumpaLahiri have reliably adhered to the shared theme, i.e. sense of belongingness, rootlessness, multiculturalism as well as displacement from their origin or homeland. Both the writer's works frequently ponder on to be supposedly-autobiographical as most of their stories are located in the regions where they live in the surrounding, tackle the immigrant experience especially of Indians who settle in the US. -and inspects the investigation of Indian-American women both in India and America and their lifestyle. The certainty that both of them are born of the Indian parents and cross borders overseas makes them both migrant and diaspora writers. They write on Indian diaspora and related stories that circulate the imbalance of the concept of identity which is important for a person and cultural difference in the space of diaspora in their works which defines two different countries (Thorat).Identity crises are the central theme of this comparative study between Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* and Lahiri's *The Namesake* as both state that identity is important for a person. Both the authors share the identical lineage, i.e. Indian Bengali origin that is left behind. Divakaruni's literary output treats all shades of Identity Crisis such as alienation, marginalization, despair, nostalgia, readjustment, assimilation, adaption or adoption. As a woman writer, her writings are autobiographical. She portrays a kind of cultural in-betweens. Such 'marginal' people are found in the ever communal group, where a cross-fertilisation of cultures takes place. The United States of America, a land of opportunities and a culturally pluralistic society, is no exception to it. She also contrasts the lives and perceptions of first-generation immigrants with that of their children born and raised in a foreign land. And, inevitably, it includes the Indian-American experience of grappling with two identities.

In *Queen of Dreams*, Divakaruni narrates a captivating tale of a second-generation immigrant who has been rooted out from origin struggling to look and search for her identity along with her dream-interpreter mother, Mrs. Gupta who helps her and offers magical and mysterious tinge to the story. While depicting the common experiences of the Indian diasporic community, *Queen of Dreams*synthesises an Indian –American experience with magic realism. The major problems faced by the immigrants are the search for identity and a sense of emotional fulfilment. The narrative of *Queen of Dreams* explores the connection between wakefulness and subconscious. The author has spun an enchanting

story of a second generation immigrant trying to divine her identity, with her dream-interpreting mother contributing to the mystery and magic. The picture of ancient India and contemporary America is simultaneously projected through the mother, who migrated from India with her husband and her daughter Rakhi. Rakhi, a young artist and divorced mother living in Berkeley, California, trying to find her footing in a world which is alarmingly in the process of transition, torn by Violence and horror.

JhumpaLahiri's debut novel *The Namesake* examines the themes of cultural dilemmas and heart-breaking experience of the first and second generation Indian immigrants. Isolation is probably one of the vital issues of the expatriate community in their chosen land. *The Namesake* deals predominantly with the central character, Gogol and the entire predicament happens to owe to his 'namesake'. Like a typical second-generation Indian-American, Gogol makes a wilful attempt to be incompatible with his parents. He continually longs for a world rid of Bengali culture, from the traditions that tie him down to a country and culture he does not know. He confronts a cultural dilemma on frequent junctures during his life. He experiences the feeling of distraction among the two nations which culminates in being withdrawn from both the lands. One of the main themes that might be conveyed through the entire novel in *The Namesake* is the theme of identity, and the fight for an identity. In the novel, almost every person is just a little bit lost or a lot lost, honestly as an immigrant. Practically every character struggles along with his or her identity, for the reason that every character feels the tug and pull of different cultures, different traditions, as well as different dreams because everyone's identity is being lost and their fight for its existence. This comparison illustrates a study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* probing the theme of identity crises in both the novels. The cardinal problems of diaspora writing are the feeling of dislocations without roots. The diaspora undergoes homelessness and alienation in the foreign land.

Conclusion

When an individual visits the unknown land, he is a non-member in a no man's land, and there he has to strive a lot for his existence, overpowering these recent feelings of nostalgia. He yearns for a new region and navigates himself totally with the temptation of

the west. He entertains himself with a new character and builds emotional bond with the place he locates in. The living 'in-between' condition is very nasty and diminishing for the diaspora people. They torment cultural dilemma and rise perplexed and mystified. Within the next generations these ignorance, drawbacks, and cravings become mild as they get guided by the culture of their host country. Moreover, changing them to it assertively. This is true in the instance of both Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's*Queen of Dreams* and JhumpaLahiri's*The Namesake*. Both the novels research the thoughts of isolation as well as identity, just not only personal but cultural as well. The characters in both the stories repeatedly run into crises of identity linked to inabilities to reconcile the American identity with their Indian identity. There is a distinction between the first generation diasporic people and the second. While there is the desire for assimilation among the second generation existing diasporic people, there is a lack of it among the first generation diasporic people. The first generation are nostalgically and reminiscently pining for their mythic homeland. So, perhaps it can be said that the first generation diasporic people may be considered as expatriates and the second generation as immigrants according to varying perspectives.

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Panchatantra: A Narrative Understanding

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Panchatantra, an ancient Indian text written by Vishnu Sharma, is a narrative of fables. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* describes narrative as "the act, process or skill of telling a story." It further defines the fable as "a traditional short story that teaches a moral lesson, especially one with animals as characters." These two terms become essential in situating the text in the context of ancient Indian literature. The text thus carries within itself the long history of oral tradition and attempts to impart moral values through the act of narration. But, through its narrative technique, *Panchatantra* moves beyond this spectrum and has the potential to travel through time and space. The act of narration thus enables a creation of space to understand the cultural period in which the text was situated, it provides a resolution of crises through stories, it transgresses boundaries to assume newer understandings, and finally through the multiplicity of voices that the text represents it counters hegemonic discourses.

Panchatantra, as a narrative text, reveals the cultural period of the time. In India, since the Vedic period, there was a rich heritage of oral tradition, wherein knowledge was shared through stories. The text was originally meant to be a treatise of *Nitisastra*, to educate the three ignorant princes of the King through stories. Thus Vishnu Sharma, who is collectively accepted as the author of Panchatantra, developed five *tantras* that covered various aspects of a person's life, which would allow leading a fulfilling existence. Moreover, there is a frame story, and manyother mini- narratives are introduced within that. Edgerton describes the frame story as a narrative structure where "at least one story and usually more which are 'emboxed' in the main story called the 'frame-story'" are present and "sometimes there is a double emboxment: another story is inserted in an 'emboxed' story'" (Edgerton 10). In Panchatantra, where multiple emboxments take place within the larger story. According to David Herman, this narrative technique of inserting various stories within the framework of

another story can be seen as a means of "shared thinking, or socially distributed cognition" (Herman 46-64). This is evident in the text, where each framed narrative has a larger theme that ties all the other stories together. For instance, the First *tantra* called "Conflict among Friends" has many different stories, but the essential factor that connects the network of stories is the theme of friendship. Similar is the case in all other *tantras*. Moreover, the various myths that operate through archetypes are present in our "collective unconscious," as Carl Jung terms it, which binds the community together.

Multiple myths operating in the text; for instance, the myth of salvation in the fifth *tantra* called "Action without Consideration," wherein the merchant Manibhadra performed various charitable acts to achieve salvation. The myth of sin also gets told in "The story of The Thief and the Brahmins", wherein Pingalaka considers killing Sanjivaka a sin and is full of remorse. Thus, a reader of the modern times who is aware and has faced the situation of what Yeats phrases when "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" in his poem "Second coming", may find themselves in this collective feeling created by these myths (Yeats 4). These values projected by the myths seep into the consciousness of the modern man too. Therefore, myths and narratives allow the transformation from a fragmented self to a holistic self. Moreover, myths thus not only create a collective unconscious of a particular society, but also fluidity the binary between the past/present and ancient/modern. Therefore, T.S Eliot rightly elucidates that myths can be seen "as a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot 177). Thus, *Panchatantra* evokes a worldview that was culturally shared and understood in the ancient Indian past which made this act of narration and transgression possible.

In addition, narratives not only reflect the culture in which it is situated, but it actively helps produce a particular culture. They create a literary repository of culture and, as Jean Francois Lyotard says, "define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question" (Lyotard 23). So, the moral codes required for proper conduct of life revealed at the end of each story also simultaneously produce various other notions regarding the realm of law, ethics and morality. We see that those who transgress the accepted cultural norms are punished in the text. For instance, in "The Story of Dharmabuddhi and Papabuddhi",

Papabuddhi due to his excessive desire for wealth, tries to frame Dharmabuddhi as a thief, but ultimately, he is hanged to death.

Similarly, in "The Story of the Camel with a Bell Round his Neck," the camel gets killed by aLion because of his conceit. And the monkey says:

He who, out of conceit,

Does not follow the good advice of virtuous people,

Shall certainly be destroyed

As the camel, with a bell round his neck, was by the lion. (Sharma 205)

Thus, though ancient Indian thought had a holistic and collective worldview, it also came with asense of crises.

James and Gilliland define a crisis as an experience of an event which is beyond one's capacity to tolerate and which exceeds the person's coping mechanism. Resolution of crises can be considered one of the essential features of narratives. All the stories in *Panchatantra*, first pose a problem, a conflict, and to make sense of it, various characters narrate stories. The main aim of the text was to resolve the crisis of King Amarshakti, who had three sons called Bahushakti, Ugrashakti, and Anantashakti. In contrast to him, his sons were highly incapable and worthless. Thus, Vishnu Sharma, a highly revered Brahmin was called to enlighten his sons, and thus *Panchatantra* was narrated. Therefore, the act of narrating itself becomes a valuable tool for sense-making. Moreover, all the stories are in the form of dialogues, thus developing a very positive means of dealing with crises. As Mikhail Bakhtin in his *Dialogic Imagination* notes that language is a form of relationship between speaker and a listener. So, when the audience hears or reads the stories, it also instills an urge to resolve the conflicts within them. Thus, narratives can have a therapeutic effect. Moreover, the text talks about dealing with one's emotions and how failure to control one's feelings can lead to a downfall. This can be seen in "The Story of the Lion and the Donkey", wherein the Donkey's lust leads to his eventual destruction as he ends up being eaten by the Lion. Similarly, the Crow in "Crows and Owls" says this verse: "No wise man should speak ill of others In an assembly, even if it is the truth, For it may lead to his own downfall" (Sharma 140). Thus, Panchatantra facilitates the creation of emotional intelligence which helps people navigatethrough their emotional conflicts.

Furthermore, narratives transgress boundaries and encompass a new cultural understanding of the world without losing its original essence. *Panchatantra* is considered "the most frequently translated literary product of India" (Olivelle 2006). Moreover, it has been translated to many languages across cultures. Mikhail Bakhtin, in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" talks about how a narrative not only exists in the chronotope, that is the spatial and temporal framework in which the text came into existence, but it also transgresses and exists in different chronotopes according to its reception- "the reality reflected in the text, the authors creating the text, the performance of the text (if they exist) and finally the listeners or readers who recreate and in doing so renew the text- participate equally in the creation of the represented world in the text." (Bakhtin 253). This can be understood by taking the example of the wild tomcat in "The Story of the Hare and the Partridge" who talks about religionand says:

Our bodies are perishable
And even our money does not last forever,
We face death continually,
So we must live according to the shastras.
A man who passes his days irreligiously,
Is like an ironsmith's bellows
Which breathes, yet has no life. (Sharma 138)

Now, this can be understood in the current context wherein people try to understand events such as epidemics and pandemics by going back to familiar religious frameworks present in the ancient narrative traditions. Thus, in the event of a pandemic, when people were reminded of their transient lives, they tried to make sense of the current chronotope, that is, their present space and time, by performing religious rites to protect themselves from the uncertainties of life. An article called "The *Panchatantra* Virus" published in the Open Magazine, tries to make sense of an epidemic of encephalitis which struck Gorakhpur caused by the Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) by referring to the first *tantra* of *Panchatantra* called "Conflict Among Friends". It says that the JEV "leads a *Panchatantra* existence: its closest companions are a pig, a stork and a mosquito," and that "thousands of years ago, in the forests of Indonesia, JEV lived with its friends, the ancestors of the pig and

the egret. JEV visited the pig and the egret by hitching a ride with the mosquito. You could say that JEV's life was spent traveling from one friend to another, it did not possess a home of its own." But then the mosquito betrayed and rode JEV to an outsider, and the outsider was a man, which led to the outbreak of an epidemic. Thus, the article tries to make sense of an inexplicable event by drawing themes from *Panchatantra* stories. Therefore, *Panchatantra* provides a familiar framework to comprehend uncertainties across cultures and periods. As Northrop Frye, in his essay, "Myth, Fiction and Displacement," elucidates that myths and stories are "no more hampered by barriers of language and culture than migratory birds are by customs officers, and made up interchangeable motifs that can be countedand indexed" (Frye 594).

Additionally, even though Children's literature emerged as a literary genre after independence, Panchatantra can be understood as a precursor of children's literature. Stories are an essential part of one's childhood; it is around stories that one's personality is constructed. As Seinfeld says, "it is through such stories, or representations, that we develop an understanding of the world and how to live in it" (Sinfield 23). The tales in Panchatantra are didactic in nature; it exposes the various nuances of leading a good life. It informs about the multiple types of people that exist and how to deal with them. The animal characters in the text are representations of human types. So, while reading the "Story of the Heron and the Crab", it also instills within the readers this feeling that one should not be like the Heron, who tricks people and causes harm to them. Similarly, in "The Story of the Lion, the Jackal and the Cave" there is a verse which talks aboutthe vices and says:

An ill-fated man
Considers his enemies his friends
And destroys his real friends
He mistakes good for evil
And evil for good. (Sharma 167).

Therefore, narratives of the ancient Indian past and the ideas they present can transgress both spatial and temporal boundaries and help create a newer understanding of the present culture. The multiplicity of voices present in the text also helps in this transgression. According toMcComas Taylor, *Panchatantra* does not have a single author; instead, it has a

plurality of voices. We see Vishnu Sharma himself appears as a character in the story. Gerard Genette, in "Narrative Discourse," terms this crossing of boundary as Metalepsis. Furthermore, Michael Foucault talks about how the presence of an authorial figure also leads to the individualization of narrative. But *Panchatantra* evades this kind of individualization due to its diversity of voices, since Vishnu Sharma assumes the 'author-function' only to the extent of providing authenticity to the text. There is a narratorial voice of Vishnu Sharma, but it does not sustain throughout the text. Other voices take over the narration like Damanaka, the mouse, the monkey, the King, the judge etc. And no voice assumes a dominant attitude; rather, the text produces what Bakhtin calls'heteroglossia,' that is, diversity of voices. So, the text becomes a site of dialogic interaction of multiple voices.

Furthermore, in the text there is an amalgamation of different genres of both prose and lyric. As Walter Benjamin says that narratives are also about the art of repeating stories, whichwe see in *Panchatantra*, wherein certain stories are also taken from other texts such as Jatakas, the *Mahabharata*, the Vedas, and the Upanishads. Thus, the postmodern technique of what Julia Kristeva calls 'intertextuality' is also present in the ancient text of *Panchatantra*. For instance, the story of the "Lion and The Bullock" which appears in the first *tantra* is found in the Jatakas. Similarly, the story "The crows and Owls" is present in the *Mahabharata*. Also, the various discourses on war and politics can be seen in *Arthashastra* by Chanakya. For instance, in the tantra "Crows and Owls" six diplomatic methods are talked about when dealing with a powerful enemy: "Peace, war, retreat, entrenchment, Seeking the help of allies or intrigue" (Sharma 126).

Moreover, intertextuality is not restricted to just the prose section, but it extends to verse forms also. According to Taylor, these verses, which are also part of the larger ancient literary text, provide a sense of authenticity, as he asserts, "the verses are the nectar churned from the ocean of the narrative; they are the distillation, the quintessence, of the discursive truth of the stories" (Taylor 139). Thus, this makes the text plural. This method of narrative technique not only recognizes the existence of multiple narratorial voices but also simultaneously creates a space for the existence of multiple readers and, by extension, multiple discourses, thus subverting any chance of a hegemonic understating of the text.

In conclusion, *Panchatantra* is a seminal text not just of the ancient Indian literary tradition; rather, it transgresses spatial, temporal, and cultural boundaries and carries the reminiscence of the ancient past and simultaneously a space to assume new meanings. As any text of historical importance, *Panchatantra* informs the readers about the cultural context and tradition in which it was situated. Also, through its narrative techniques it reveals the cultural period of the time and produces the moral codes that formed the culture of that period. Furthermore, it facilitates conflict resolution not just in the text; but also in the larger cultural space. In doing so, it fluidifies boundaries between past and present and thus helps make sense of the current temporal and spatial framework. The multiplicity produced in the text is of such extent that it facilitates the existence of different narratives and, more importantly, different readings and meanings of the text, thus countering any form of metanarrative. Thus, the power of *Panchatantra* to move beyond boundaries and hold multiple meanings makes it an invaluable piece of literary work.

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Seduction as a Tool for Revenge: A Study of Gender Stereotypes' Reinforcement in Malayalam Cinema

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Introduction

"Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (Woolf 69).

Cinematic traditions across the world have given cause for concern among feminists and film critics due to the misrepresentations of gender identities to provide gratification to the viewers. Representations of Grand Narratives increase the pleasure from the side of audience as well as helps audience to relate with these representations. But the following of these grand narratives rather than breaking it causes these grand narratives to be repeated again and again later evolving as 'truths' in the minds of the society. Therefore, an imperative need is required for the implementation of the postmodern technique of breaking the grand narratives in today's Kerala's Society (as my focus is on Malayalam film industry). The issue with the representations is mainly because of their partial interpretations of a gender rather than absolute. "In a world where 'femininity' is forced upon women, the least they can do is to be vigilant in their representations of themselves and how they read and decode such representations by others" (Pillai 11).

Notions of pleasure, spectatorship and gender identity in the works of Laura Mulvey have addressed the issue of how popular cinema relies in the representation of patriarchal desires to flourish. Cinema has come to play a very important role in the study of the woman's question today as "With its capacity to create and then celebrate or berate types, cinema can exploit women to conform to certain types while rejecting others, allowing them to be moulded and defined by hegemonic social structures, and in the process unconsciously assisting in the reproduction of these hegemonies" (Pillai 13). As noted by Helen Cixous,

> You will understand why I think that no political reflection can dispense with reflection on language, with work on language. For as soon as we exist, we are born into language and language speaks to us, dictates its law, a law of death: it lays down its familial model, lays down its conjugal model, and, even at the moment of uttering a sentence, admitting a notion of 'being', a question of being, an ontology, we are already seized by a certain kind of masculine desire, the desire that mobilizes philosophical discourse. (Pillai 14)

The woman yearned to have agency, subjectivity, and a speaking voice, and is also forced to acknowledge the ways in which language not only articulates us but also the values and standards of the social structure it upholds. Women are currently enmeshed in the maze of a language that is already replete with the aspirations, plans, and tactics of patriarchal hegemonies, so women still have to figure out newer, more subversive ways of 'looking against the grain'.

This paper will mainly focus on two films namely *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* (1999) directed by T. K. Rajeev Kumar and *22 Female Kottayam* (2012) by Aashiq Abu. The first section would discuss how even female oriented films like these, for the sake of giving pleasure to spectators, end up reinforcing gender stereotypes. The latter section would deal with how the use of seduction as a tool for revenge, is a double-edged sword which causes problems that run deep into the society for a long period like normalising/adhering of the patriarchal norms.

Pleasure through Reinforcement of Stereotypes

To experience pleasure, women need the reinforcement of stereotypes, as they are conditioned in a way that, it is these stereotypes that help us to relate more to the film resulting in the obtainment of pleasure. As noted by Mulvey, "this satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film industry hitherto must be attacked" (3).

The power of pleasure is determined by the existing social order that is patriarchal. They identify in films this patriarchal hegemony as its foundation. And the most crucial element for sustaining this social order is through the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Taking

the two films *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* (1999) and *22 Female Kottayam* (2012) into consideration, it is noted how the pleasure women derive from these movies are through the reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

Set in the background of a typical village of Alleppey, a town in Kerala, the story of *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* revolves around the protagonist Bhadra, a female low-caste agricultural worker. The ways in which she tries to take revenge on her parent's murderer is the main plot of the story. Similarly, *22 Female Kottayam* is another movie, set in the town of Kottayam in Kerala. Here also, the story of a revenge-seeking female protagonist, Tessa is highlighted. She seeks to take revenge on people who have wronged her. At the end of the movie, spectators especially women spectators feel justice being meted out and here lies the issue. The underlying patriarchal ways through which justice seems to be meted out is the problem to be discussed.

In the above films, it is noted how woman is still in the role of a spectacle and man as the bearer of looks, making things happen. Women also note how men are portrayed as the representative of power in both the films, a social stereotype being reinforced.

> According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify (Mulvey 5).

In both the movies, men are the representatives of power in both socio-political ways. The power hierarchy between the female and man are at extremes. In *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* the men play the role of landlords whereas the woman protagonist is a low-caste agricultural labourer and in *22 Female Kottayam* the revenge is taken by an ordinary woman with average financial background against a wealthy rich Boss. A critical analysis of the plot would show how the narrative progresses through the actions of men and not

women where woman: "stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies…… woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning." (Mulvey 3). In both the movies, the actions of men decide what happens next in the narrative. For example, in *22 Female Kottayam*, Tessa plots a plan to castrate Cyril by disguising herself as a model. But Cyril, aware of who she is *gives* her an appointment only after which she can execute her plan. In *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* also she *needs* the landlord's permission to stay in his house to execute her plan, which re-establishes man's role as the active one forwarding the story, making things happen.

These films also reinforce the idea of women as a mere object of visual pleasure. Woman is considered as an erotic object by both the characters and the spectators. As drawn by Mulvey,

> Her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then must be integrated into cohesion with the narrative. As Budd Boettcher has put it 'What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents… In herself the woman has not the slightest importance'. (4)

In *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu*, there are several instances where the projection of women on the screen gives a voyeuristic pleasure to the male actors as well as the spectators. And readers note the striking similarity between the male antagonist and the male spectators as "By identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too" (Mulvey 6). The slow take on the harvesting scene where women are bending and the showcase of their cleavages (Kumar, 00:23:24), Kanakkam, a minor female character as a figure of sexual pleasure and the deriving of the word "Kannakkantham" comparing her to a magnet, the portrayal of the protagonist's body and a close-up of water oozing down her face and the movement of her lips where the main antagonist Nilan playing the role of a peeping Tom all evoke voyeuristic pleasures (Kumar, 01:27:01 & 01:34:07). In *22 Female Kottayam*, the scene where the protagonist shows her shoulder and how 'it freezes the flow of action' and the filming of the forced dress removal of the protagonist during rape do provide voyeuristic pleasures. Mulvey argues that there are

mainly two kinds of pleasure that men get from film namely "scopophilic" and second "developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, coming from the image seen" (4). In both these films, the two pleasures are readily available to the male spectator.

> Cinema seems to have evolved a particular illusion of reality in which this contradiction between libido and ego has found a beautifully complementary fantasy world….. Sexual instincts and identification processes have a meaning within the symbolic order which articulates desire. Desire, born with language, allows the possibility of transcending the instinctual and the imaginary, but its point of reference continually returns to the traumatic moment of its birth: the castration complex. (Mulvey 4)

And this castration complex is very much highlighted in these films. Even *22 Female Kottayam* being labelled as a feminist film, fails to eradicate this from the mind of its female protagonist. The way she takes revenge on Cyril is problematic, castrating Cyril believing that he would not rape anymore does feel like a validating point, but the later scenes shown are problematic. She takes care of him and at last challenges him to take his revenge for this when he can, for which Cyril says he would. Now, only when he is lacking his phallus, the protagonist has the courage to stand face to face with him, challenging him straightforwardly. In just a shot before (before castration), she has to act timid and then manipulate him through seduction, to execute her plan which reinforces the power vested upon the phallus. In *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* its more evidently shown. Specifically taking two scenes, first where the protagonist's mother before suiciding says to protagonist "Achanta Veera Bhadra akkanam" meaning "you should be father's courageous Bhadra" and also later reference by Rosakutty that even when the protagonist's mother used to call her "Bhadra" her father would call her "Veera Bhadra" meaning "Bold/courageous Bhadra", all this reinforces the notion of power and courage associated with penis and reinforces patriarchal stereotypes (Kumar, 01:54:20). As noted by Mulvey "The function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold, she first symbolizes the castration threat by her real absence of a penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic" (1).

There are several such dominant ideologies and stereotypes reinforced in both these films used in a way that makes spectators feel pleasure. To name few more, women as an emotional figure and perpetuators of superstitions whereas man as the embodiment of

reason (Tessa, *22 Female Kottayam* protagonist as an embodiment of kindness and childishness, women in *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* as the perpetuators of superstitions and who are emotionally vulnerable whereas men in both the films possess reason), the natural domain of women as family (Tessa's ultimate goal been narrowed down to having a life with Cyril and her readiness to consider her rape as a trivial matter) etc. "To experience pleasure, Miss Pauline sitting in the dark must imagine herself transformed, turned into the white woman portrayed on the screen (Hooks 7). These stereotypes increase our relatability with the events in the movie, which results in the increase of emotional attachment thus giving us pleasure. But the pleasure derived by both male and female are different, the former gets the earlier mentioned two kinds of pleasure whereas the latter relates herself to the character, thus feels justice being meted out especially in revenge movies. But for "spectators who have 'looked too deep', the encounter with the screen hurts" (Hooks 7).

Revenge through Seduction

Women have always been subjected to the male gaze on and off screen. To understand how seduction became a feminine characteristic, it is imperative to understand women's socio-political situations throughout years.

> 'From the ancient world through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, physical differences between men and women generated a hierarchy that came to be 'naturalized' in early examples of social theory' which associated greater physical strength with increased intellect and feeling. As the somatically stronger sex, men had a scientifically endorsed superiority to women in almost every aspect of life. (Moore 4)

It is noted how the wrong interpretations of religious scriptures and myths played a crucial role in determining the role of a women in her society. For example, the description of woman as the 'weaker vessel' in the Bible and several references to women in several other sources as mere sexual objects and the portrayal of women as seductress all gave way to the consideration of seduction as a feminine characteristic even worse degrading women's power to be solely determined by her sexuality. In "Shakespeare and Sexuality: How Women Use Sex as the Ultimate Tool in the Art of Manipulation," Moore points out

> So far as Elizabethan heroines were concerned, any want of conformity to, or act of disobedience against, the rule of man was deemed grounds for dramatic and critical castigation," to the point where most women avoided confrontation altogether. In the absence of any political or societal voice, women depended on their sexual wiles to manipulate those around them in order to gain power, success, and independence. (5)

Now, readers need to draw our attention to the production of revenge films where women use seduction as the ultimate tool in gaining justice. By the portrayal of seduction as the revenge tool, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and adherence of dominant ideologies occur.

> Such films are classic examples of Mulvey's proposition of how the female spectator internalises the 'male gaze'. As she looks through the eye of the camera, she is in fact seeing through the eyes of the character who activates the look, who is invariably male. All such films could be flagged under one label, 'See yourself as He sees you and make yourself seen by Him'… Thus, when a woman is represented, she almost always represents man's desire. (Pillai 17)

In *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* and *22 Female Kottayam* audiences note the reinforcement of several patriarchal ideologies and stereotypes with the adoption of seduction as the tool of revenge. In the former, the patriarchal notion of fear and seduction being associated with women is reinforced. The continuous failure of plans executed by Bathra and Rosakutty in taking revenge through other methods reinforces the power hierarchy and perpetuates pleasure to spectators through adhering to the dominant ideologies. After the failure in her first attempt to murder Nilan, the antagonist, she is struck with fear, degrading her to an emotionally vulnerable being whereas all the male characters are embodiment of courage and the so called 'manliness'. In latter, also viewers do note the depiction of woman as a mere emotional being. Tessa, on her second encounter with the boss goes hysterical rather than acting through reason trying to find a way to rescue her. All this leads to the conclusion that, women are emotionally vulnerable beings who can fight only through emotional ways.

Yet another issue with the portrayal of women in these revenge movies is, they become the perpetuators of male gaze. For seduction to be used as a manipulative tool against her enemies she has to subject herself to the patriarchal norm of beauty and eroticism giving

pleasure to the character and spectator which reinforces the patriarchal beauty norms and also the notion of women's power tied to her sexuality. In *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* viewers see the objectification of the protagonist of her own body, dressing and suiting her form desirous to a male. The protagonist is portrayed as a bold character yet as a tool of reinforcement of stereotypes which increases her level of attraction among men. The song she uses to sexually arouse Nilan, "Prana Nathan yanikku nalkkiya paramanandha sugathea…"(Kumar, 1:23:21), a song praising her lover's sexual capacity, making the male spectators and characters to experience erotic pleasure. "Thus, when a woman is represented, she almost always represents man's desire" (Pillai 17).

In *22 Female Kottayam,* when the protagonist is raped and confronted with sexual trauma, she takes the route that patriarchy expects of a woman. By objectifying her body, by becoming a willing victim she attains her goal which is very problematic from a feministic lens. The dialogue of Tessa's Jail mate is also quite problematic "Women are born with a weapon, our body. Our weakness and strength lie in it," which degrades 'women as Image and men as the bearer of the look' (Abu, 1:28:09). Patriarchal domination invested in male sexuality triumphs. Tessa has warm memories of her previous relationship with Cyril, and he makes it through the castration without any regrets or being broken in spirit. In fact, Cyril states with certain that he will definitely meet her in Canada.

By refusing to question patriarchy, these films perpetuate and reinforce a double standard, women as independent, but continuing to be victims of patriarchy. With creative narrative techniques and the promise of tackling themes that were marginalised, New Generation films aim to provide a unique experience. This has sparked fresh depictions of women in movies.

> However, womanhood in the new Malayalam films, despite being set in the contemporary global and urban world, remains fettered by convention, and stereotyped by the patriarchal hegemonic class. When depicting female identity in this globalized reality, cinema falters, failing to explore beyond superficialities; there is no real exploration of the female psyche and its potential. The images are those conditioned by gender-biased social institutions, and women characters end up being vain and trivial with marriage and motherhood as the iconic female identities that every woman strives

to achieve in life. These movies attempt a shallow probing into a womanhood that is supposedly liberated from the confines of patriarchy but fail to rise above patriarchal norms and values; they end up using the same tactics and measures of female worth. (Raj 70)

Conclusion

The researcher notes how the physical differences between man and woman resulted in a social hierarchy in which man is superior. It became a man's world where women lived according to the set of norms and ideologies set by men. One of the self-destructive method women have chosen is the use of seduction as a tool for revenge. Indeed, it is a double-edged sword with its negative effects piercing women deep resulting in the prevailing of the stereotypes which made them choose this method. In an interview with one of the film directors of women-revenge films, "Chandra suggests that these violent films are generated in response to the voracious viewing habits of an audience that wishes to see something different from the stock male 'action' film…" (Gopalan 2). This way of providing pleasure to its spectators by the reinforcement of gender stereotypes should be stopped. Grand narratives like, body as the only powerful tool for women, women as the emotionally vulnerable beings etc should be challenged. Rather than representing these as such to increase the relatability of audience and immerse them in the visual pleasures desired by them, films should highlight the social conditions forcing women to take this way of avenging and also the association of rationality and strength to only male should be questioned. As noted by Bell Hooks in her essay "Oppositional Gaze" viewers must start to 'look against the grain'. The two films *Kanneyuthi Pottum Thottu* produced in 1999 and *22 Female Kottayam* produced in 2012, even after having a twelve-year gap, highlights the progress viewers have made in depicting women characters in Malayalam cinema. Even female oriented films become a prey to the unconscious representation of grand narratives and it is bound to convolute the existing situation.

Hooks urges us to "see our history as a counter-memory, using it as a way to know the present and know the future" and she borrows Stuart Hall's vision "of a critical practice that acknowledges that identity is constituted 'not outside but within representation' and invites us to see film 'not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exist, but as that

form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover who we are'" (17). Adapting this vision in the future productions of films would help us form a society where power is autonomous of physical/ biological differences.

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My Beloved Private Property: A Feminist Critique of Monogamy and Romantic Love

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The term 'monogamy' literally means 'single marriage' and refers to the social practice of being bound to a single person by matrimony for life (as the Christian vows say, '…till death do us part'). While at the conceptual level the institution of monogamy seems bound up with the institution of marriage, in reality, it extends beyond that in contemporary times with pre-marital and non-marital relationships rapidly gaining popularity, especially since the sexual liberation movements in the mid-twentieth century. Thus, it is proper to talk of 'monogamous relationships' in referring to relationships (whether married or not) that follow the monogamous code of conduct in general. The defining trait of monogamous relationships can be stated as follows: "The number of partners involved in the [relationship] must be two and only two (as opposed to three, four, five or any of the almost countless other possibilities of intimate union)" (McMurtry 589). Central to the idea of monogamy is the idea of fidelity (that each partner must be 'faithful' to the other) and possessive love (that each partner's feeling of 'love 'towards the other gives them the right to 'possess' their beloved). These two ideas are, of course, interrelated and it is precisely the idea of having a possessive right over the other person that justifies expectations of fidelity– that just because one partner claims to love the other, it legitimates the notion of having an exclusive right over the other's affections and sexuality, and that the other must acknowledge and respect this right of ownership by not forming intimate bonds of affection or sexuality with anyone but their partner. While such a monogamous code of conduct is legitimised via a contractual obligation in the case of marriages (which gets dissolved with a divorce), its hold extends beyond married couples and shapes the way casual romantic relationships are imagined between teenagers and young adults. Thus, even in such romantic relationships prior to marriage, one finds notions of possessive love and

expectations of fidelity between partners, almost as if they were rehearsals for marital life in the future.

The institution of monogamy is one of the world's most naturalised ones, uncritically and unquestioningly accepted by the vast majority (regardless of their other political stances) as the pre-given ideal basis for the flourishing of intimate bonds, and this view of monogamy as 'natural' often pre-emptively negates the possibility of critiquing it. Thus, as Victoria Robinson describes, "the often unquestioned acceptance of monogamy on the part of both the Left and feminists allows the public discussion of these issues to be carried out in the vocabulary and emotional language of the Right" (144). And yet, the reality of the situation is that such normative expectations of fidelity and possessive rights, justified by the notion of 'love' (or, rather, a severely-restricted form of it which can imagine such love between two and only two partners) are anything but "natural", and require constant socio-cultural policing so as to keep people from transgressing them. Thus, as McMurtry has noted,

> The fact that this monolithic restriction seems so 'natural' to us . . . simply indicates the extent to which its hold is implanted in our social structure and that if it were truly 'natural' of course, there would be no need for its rigorous cultural prescription by everything from severe criminal law to ubiquitous housing regulations. (McMurtry 589-590)

Furthermore, the notion of possessive love inherent in monogamy points towards its affinities and shared histories with the institutions of patriarchy and capitalism, and opens up the space for a feminist critique of the same. This paper attempts precisely such a critique by arguing that the institution of monogamy perpetuates the notion of one's beloved being their private property, by normalising expectations of fidelity and exclusive emotional/sexual access between partners. It claims that the notion of 'love' is narrowly constrained to constitute the category of 'romantic love', which inherently carries monogamous norms, and which sees its consummation in the formation of 'romantic relationships' which codify and enforce private property relations between people claiming to love each other.

First, the essay looks at the conjoint histories of monogamy, patriarchy and capitalism, discussing ways in which they mutually reinforce each other and formulating the object of a feminist critique of these institutions. Secondly, the contradictions within the institution of

monogamy are examined, to argue that its central tenets ultimately lead to consequences that are not in keeping with its promises. Finally, a symptomatic reading of the modern notion of 'romantic love' is presented, arguing (in Slavoj Zizek's terms) that it can be read as a 'symptom' of the pre- modern notions of women being men's private property getting repressed in the transition to the modern liberal era of 'free love', and reappearing in the distorted form of monogamous love relationships which conceal the logic of property relations. This implies that there's a fundamental contradiction within the modern popular conception of romantic love, as a particular species of 'love' in general, that subverts its own fundamental premises and ideologically interpellates people to willingly subject themselves (and their loved ones) to the norms of private property.

Monogamy, Patriarchy, and Liberal Capitalism

It is well known that for the longest time, until recent feminist pushback, the institution of marriage (historically monogamous in nature) considered women to be the private property of men. It was, thus, a specifically gendered configuration of social relations wherein the subjective agency of women was not recognised, while men had ownership over women's bodies and sexuality. The woman was not free to act upon her affective and sexual desires as she pleased and instead was legally and culturally obligated to remain 'faithful' to her man. It must be noted that historically men have had far greater freedom in choosing marital and sexual partners than women have had, which is to say that monogamous restrictions have never applied equally across gender lines. Thus, whenever there have been exceptions to the monogamous norm in the form of polygamy, the notion of one man having multiple wives or concubines (polygyny[1]) has had far greater cultural representation and popular acceptance1 than that of one woman having multiple husbands/sexual partners (polyandry). As noted by David Herlihy, "polyandry . . . is very rare in human societies, develops under peculiar ecological circumstances (for example, in the mountain valleys of Tibet), and usually involves brothers sharing a single wife" (575). The Indian epic Mahabharata furnishes us with just such an example, the five Pandava brothers 'sharing' the wife Draupadi. However, such instances of polyandry simply imagine the woman as being the shared property of multiple men, instead of the woman being the

one that seeks out multiple male partners of her own volition. In contemporary times, with pre-marital romantic relationships between teenagers becoming more prevalent than ever before, such gendered monogamous norms have trickled down to asymmetrical cultural notions regarding male and female sexual promiscuity: particularly, that men who tend to engage in multiple romantic/sexual relationships are typically viewed as more desirable, having greater virility, and are informally labelled as 'studs'; while women who tend to exhibit similar behaviour are typically dehumanised, thought to be lacking 'moral character', and are referred to as 'sluts'. All of this readily points up the fact that the institution of monogamy has never been gender or sex-blind and, instead, has historically served the interests of patriarchy: which has been to possess and police the bodies and sexual desires of women.

[1] In Islamic cultures, for example, polygyny is both legally and religiously sanctioned as permissible.

Although feminist struggles over the past two centuries have done a lot to ameliorate these asymmetries across gender lines, to the extent that in most Western societies within so- called 'first-world' countries–and among the more urbane populace in third-world nations– women are no longer legally and culturally considered to be the private property of men, what has gone largely unchallenged and unchanged is the very logic of property relations governing the structure of monogamous relationships. Additionally, with this logic of what I shall call 'mononormativity' getting uncoupled from marital relationships and becoming the underlying principle of romantic relationships in general, the idea of private property itself (crucial to the endurance of liberal capitalism) gets increasingly naturalised as the basis for social relations. As noted by Robinson, "monogamy rests on a key capitalist principle—the ownership of property (the property here being women and through them the lines of inheritance are maintained)" (145). One also finds striking similarities between the self-motivated individual subject of liberal capitalism, operating according to the principle of self-serving interests and competition, and the themes of jealousy and selfishness that crop up within monogamous relationships. Robinson has discussed how the flourishing of non- monogamous relationships "can serve to disrupt some of the assumptions monogamy makes about human behaviour", which can be seen to be analogous to the liberal

assumptions regarding "human nature" as well (144). Thus, the uncritically accepted belief that "we are inherently jealous and possessive is challenged if we allow ourselves and others the choice to experience relationships with more than one person", and it must be noted that assumptions of inherent jealousy and possessiveness also underlie laissez-faire capitalism, pointing to how monogamous norms help the perpetuation of capitalist ideology and vice-versa (144).

A feminist critique of monogamy must, thus, necessarily look at how it helps perpetuate both patriarchy and capitalism. More specifically, it must recognize, with Heidi Hartmann, that patriarchy and capitalism has historically been in partnership and thereby examine the affinities between monogamous structures and the patriarchal-capitalist nexus (Hartmann 104). While feminists have been highly critical of the erstwhile prevalent notion of women as the private property of men, and a lot has been done to undo this situation, what has escaped and slipped through the cracks meanwhile is the notion of private property in general which, as we shall later see, now governs relationships universally irrespective of sex and gender, in a manner that conceals its true functioning. Furthermore, the notion of romantic love as the prime motivator of relationships, another uniquely-modern phenomenon, ideologically interpellates loving subjects so that they willingly subject themselves and their beloved to notions of private property, something that we shall deal with in greater detail later. For now, it is important to note that the institution of monogamy, working hand-in-hand within a culture of heteronormativity, ultimately seeks to perpetuate the existence of the traditional biological family unit: men and women are encouraged to come together and form bonds of sexual and emotional access in terms of exclusivity and fidelity, as these are thought to be the ideal conditions for the growth of children, which is a crucial aspect of the reproduction of the means of production in society and, thus, the perpetuation of the capitalist order. But as we shall see in the following section, some of these fundamental assumptions regarding the institution of monogamy, which seek to defend and perpetuate its hegemony, are not as well founded as the ones who champion them might expect.

Contradictions within the Institution of Monogamy

Monogamy is typically rationalised and justified via two lines of argumentation: first, monogamous relationships promote "a profound affection between the partners which is not only of great worth in itself but invaluable as a sanctuary from the pressures of outside society" and, second, monogamy provides "a specially loving context for child upbringing" (McMurtry 591, 592). In other words, it is claimed, that when two people choose to enter a relationship where each partner has exclusive access to the affections and sexuality of the other, thereby binding both by expectations of fidelity, it makes for a much more satisfactory bonding which also happens to furnish the ideal conditions for raising a child. It must be noted at the outset that the latter justification reveals the interests of the monogamous institution in perpetuating the traditional biological family unit: the implicit assumption here being that people who love each other must of necessity, sooner or later, enter into a relationship which must progress into a marriage that results in the birth of children. Given that biological reproduction is exclusively the preserve of women, this shows how the institution of monogamy is inherently bifurcated along gender lines: the normalisation of monogamy implicitly carries with it the notion of 'compulsive motherhood', the idea that 'motherhood is destiny' for female bodies. However, even if we were to accept such presumptions, it turns out that there are several aspects to the logic and operation of the principles of monogamy which suggest that it actually inhibits the realization of its stated goals of maximising satisfaction in relationships and furnishing ideal child-rearing conditions.

Firstly, it must be noted that our monogamous societies never really allow couples to take full charge of their relationships and, instead, there are always legal or cultural pressures that impose monogamous norms upon the partners in the terms in which they are interpreted in particular societies. Marriage itself must operate under centralized official control, and neither its recognition nor its dissolution is entirely in the hands of the couple. Furthermore, married people are also expected to behave in certain ways and refrain from certain other activities, especially in non-Western societies, in that a certain set of cultural expectations (having nothing to do with fidelity towards one's partner) are brought to bear upon the couple: that a married woman must also look after the groom's family, married

men and women must avoid certain behaviour that might be fit for bachelors but is "unbecoming" of them etc. In Ismat Chughtai's short story Gharwali ("The Housewife"), we see how the attitude of people towards the woman Lajjo changes overnight after she gets married. All the men in their locality who have been lusting after her for years, suddenly enact a change in their disposition towards her and treat her with greater dignity and respect. Aside from highlighting the cultural notion that a woman is not an individual who deserves respect unless she is somehow associated with a man (and in Indian contexts, being 'with a man' equals being married to him), it illustrates what's known in Hindi-speaking areas as the 'bhai ki bandi' phenomenon (the bro's girl is off limits), where the way men act towards women is governed by the fact of her being married or not. All of this goes to show that monogamous norms aren't simply regulations that partners may simply follow of their own volition but, also, that they are culturally imposed upon people to induce them to act in socially desirous ways. Thus, as noted by McMurtry: "Profound closeness between the partners–or at least an area of it–is thereby expropriated rather than promoted, and 'sanctuary' from the pressures of outside society prohibited rather than fostered" (McMurtry 592).

Furthermore, the "limitation of the marriage bond to two people necessarily restricts, in perhaps the most unilateral possible way consistent with offspring survival, the number of adult sources of affection, interest, material support and instruction for the young" (McMurtry 592). This observation counters the accepted wisdom of monogamy furnishing the best conditions for child upbringing. The restriction of the monogamous relationship to two and only two members creates the structural conditions for problems such as sibling rivalry for scarce adult attention. In the context of capitalist societies, where adults are also expected to devote the greater part of their life to working and securing means of sustenance, which leaves them drained of energy, one can easily see how upbringing children might work out much better in polyamorous relationships where the number of parents is more than two, and the adults take turns to attend to the children. Furthermore, monogamous relationships inevitably pave the way for feelings of jealousy and envy to desecrate a loving home environment. As McMurtry notes, "formal exclusion of all others from erotic contact with the marriage partner systematically promotes conjugal insecurity,

jealousy and alienation" (593). All of these point towards the fact that monogamous relationships are far from providing the ideal conditions for raising children.

Thus, the justifications furnished for the perpetuation of monogamy don't hold up to scrutiny. Neither does monogamy ensure the maximisation of emotional fulfilment from relationships (only spoiling the same by provoking feelings of jealousy and control), nor does it help in providing children with ideal environments. Additionally, in justifying monogamy on these grounds, it is often overlooked that "at least half the span of a normal monogamous marriage involves no child-upbringing at all", an oversight that only points to the fact that monogamous restrictions have less to do with ensuring fulfilling love relationships than with simply perpetuating the traditional biological family unit, and thereby ensuring the reproduction of the means of production in capitalist societies (McMurtry 592).

Romantic Love as Monogamous Ideology: A Symptomatic Reading

One of the biggest changes brought about by modernity was supposed to be the introduction of the capitalist free market, which would allow for never-before-seen freedoms in trade relations and, being "a very Eden of the innate rights of man", would champion the values of liberty and equality in everyday social life for all strata of society, as opposed to the oppressive feudal relations between lord and serf that had been abolished (Marx 52). However, upon close analysis, the farcical nature of the freedoms engendered by the new world order is easily revealed by Marx. He shows how the free labourer in the free market must necessarily be "free in the double sense" i.e. both legally free to sell his labour-power but also 'free' (i.e. deprived) of any other commodity in his possession (49). Slavoj Zizek has noted how this particular case of freedom appears as a 'symptom' within the Marxist frame of analysis of bourgeois society. Zizek defines the 'symptom' as "a particular element which subverts its own universal foundation, a species subverting its own genus" (Zizek 511). In other words, the 'symptom' is any particular disruptive aspect within a general framework, that simultaneously acts as the latter's constitutive moment as well as its internal negation. For example, as Zizek elaborates, the set of bourgeois values revolving around various notions of 'freedom'–such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press,

political freedom etc.– also necessarily contains provisions for the worker to freely sell his labour-power in the free market, an action which entails the worker actually losing his freedom because "the real content of this free act of sale is the worker's enslavement to capital" (511).

Thus, in the eyes of Zizek, the relations of domination and servitude between the Master and Serf, characteristic of feudal times, get repressed in the transition to capitalism via a displacement of the fetishistic relations between men to the fetishistic relations between commodities (the Marxian notion of "commodity fetishism"). Once distorted and concealed in this manner, the exploitative relations reappear as a 'symptom' in the form of the bourgeois universal of equitable exchange, because the latter also allows for the sale of the peculiar kind of commodity known as labour-power, the 'free' exchange of which necessarily results in the exploitation and loss of freedom of the worker who sells it. And while this specific instance of freedom seems like a negation of the bourgeois system of liberal values, it is also a crucial constitutive element of it, given that free trade of commodities is one of the fundamental promises of modern capitalism, thus fitting Zizek's definition of 'symptom' as given above. Thus, we see how the liberation promised by the transition from feudalism to modern capitalism can, in certain fundamental aspects, be quite illusory.

It is my contention that the modern conception of romantic love, inherently monogamous, can also be read as a 'symptom' of feudal property relations reappearing in a distorted form. The relations of private property between Husband and Wife, characteristic of pre-modern times, get repressed in the transition to modern love marriages via a displacement of economic relations to love relations between marital partners. The shift that takes place can be characterized in the following fashion: while previously men and women got together in relationships for economic purposes (sharing the financial burden of running a household and producing children), with love being something that merely developed as a post-marital possibility, now partners get together because they (freely) love each other and marriage is something that seems to develop as a post-romantic possibility. Once property relations have been distorted and concealed in this manner, they reappear as a 'symptom' in the form of the bourgeois universal of monogamous love, because the latter also allows for

the subjection of one's partner to the norms of fidelity and possessive right, the imposition of which necessarily results in the constraint and curtailment of the social freedoms of that partner and, thereby, negates the fundamental promise of the possibility of 'free love'. In other words, the ideal of the modern love-relationship distinguishes itself from pre-modern relationships precisely by prioritising the possibility of 'free love': that two people are in a relationship together precisely because they have freely chosen to love each other, and not out of economic interests. And because dominant notions of modern love essentially posit it as monogamous, the notion of exclusivity is additionally thrust upon love relationships: that two people are together not only because they have freely chosen to love each other, but because they have chosen to only love each other and, thereby, each is justified in binding the other to expectations of fidelity and exclusivity. It thus becomes apparent that notions of private property reappear in a disguised manner within modern relationships, shorn of their gendered asymmetrical character and economic concerns, but nevertheless denying the full realization of the subjective agency of each romantic partner.

Parallel to Zizek's notion of the 'symptom' as described above, we can see how this modern notion of love (as simultaneously possessive and "free") is simultaneously a negation of the bourgeois system of liberal values, as well as a constitutive element of the same. It is a negation because, in atypical monogamous romantic relationships, the very idea of being "in love" with one's partner becomes the grounds for giving up one's freedom to pursue other possible love interests and tying oneself to their partner for the foreseeable future (if not for life). Thus, the very idea that my partner is someone whom I choose to love and be with "freely"–what marks the fundamental distinction between modern and pre-modern relationships–is contradicted when my freedom to love and form affectionate bonds is so narrowly restricted by the social norm of monogamy. Also, insofar as liberal notions of love emphasise the primacy of the bounded individual and conceive of 'love' in terms of care and respect for the autonomy of the individual (i.e. if I love someone, I wouldn't infringe upon their personal subjective autonomy and, instead, would seek to maximise it), such notions are subverted by the monogamous restrictions accompanying romantic relationships.

But, also, in line with Zizek's 'symptom', this particular notion of love as it manifests in romantic relationships in the age of liberalism, in addition to being negative as discussed, is also constitutive of the general notion of modern love that's part of the bouquet of ominant liberal values. For the very idea of entering into a romantic relationship with a partner (regardless of whether it leads to marriage or not), because you love them, seems to indicate a necessary shift in the register of social engagement with that person that differentiates it from all other social relations (friendships, familial ties, business partnerships etc). In other words, in the modern construct of romantic love, the idea of loving another person seems to imply a need to 'consummate' such love with the entry into a monogamous relationship which, via its imposed restrictions on the affections and sexuality of persons, concretizes the loving bond between the two people. As McMurtry has noted in discussing apologetics for monogamous marriages (which normalise monogamous love in general), one of the key lines of defending the same claims that "our form of monogamous marriage promotes a profound affection between the partners which is not only of great worth in itself but invaluable as a sanctuary from the pressures of outside society" (McMurtry 591). The notions of exclusivity and fidelity attached to monogamy are seen as the necessary sacrifices/rewards that must of necessity accompany 'love', and which make romantic relationships special by marking them as fundamentally different from other social relations and other modes of loving. Because I love my partner, I willingly choose to be 'faithful' to them by restricting my subjective agency in sacrificing other possible love interests and, in turn, because my partner loves me, they owe me the reward of exclusive access to their affections and/or sexuality. In most typical scenarios then, the claim of loving another person only accrues meaning if and only if the lover is willing to enter into this restrictive monogamous arrangement so as to 'prove' their devotion to their partner. The dominant culturally-entrenched notions of 'one true love' seem to pre-emptively discard possibilities of romantic love operating in non-monogamous forms.

We thus see how the distinctively modern phenomena of romantic relationships, premised on the notion of 'free' love, can be read symptomatically as "a point of breakdown heterogenous to a given ideological field and at the same time necessary for that field to achieve its closure, its accomplished form" (Zizek 511). Romantic relationships are

conceived within the liberal capitalist order in a manner that negates the fundamental promises of love and individual liberty (by imposing monogamous restrictions on subjective autonomy in a fashion uncharacteristic of a loving bond), even as the imposition of such restrictions seem to be constitutive of the dominant notion of monogamous love, that which consummates it and proves its existence. It can, thus, be argued that the modern notion of 'romantic love' appears as a 'symptom' of the property relations governing pre-modern marital relationships, the latter getting repressed in the historical transition to the modern liberal social order and re-appearing in distorted and disguised forms, similar to the notion of the Marxian symptom of freedom (in the double sense) of the wage labourer. The logic of private property that erstwhile governed marriages now dictates the norms of romantic relationships and shapes the cultural conception of 'love' (insofar as the dominant connotation attached to 'love', as evidenced by numerous cultural representations of the same from 'love songs' to terms like 'lovers' or 'love jihad', happens to be that of romantic love). While previously the woman was legally and culturally obligated to be 'faithful' to her man (who effectively 'owned' her), with the notion of love occasionally arising after extended periods of marital fidelity, nowadays people (both men and women) willingly enter mutual property relations with each other to substantiate the feeling of romantic love they share.

Romantic love, therefore, operates within the liberal order as an ideological effect that serves to produce ideal loving subjects. Louis Althusser's notion of ideology is such that it represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 109). Ideology induces certain modes of acting and behaving within individuals which they believe they have "in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject" (113). For to be a subject is to inhabit the double sense of the term: subject of ideological representations, acting upon the world 'freely' and claiming responsibility; and also, subject to ideological representations, acted upon by the world, obeying its laws and behaving as per its dictates. Furthermore, Althusser claims that ideology functions through the structure of recognition/misrecognition (reconnaissance/méconnaissance): ideology gets individuals to recognise as real an imaginary representation of their relation to their conditions of existence, a representation that ideology itself supplies, while its inverse happens to be the misrecognition of their real conditions of existence that ideology simultaneously

dissimulates (116). We can see how the institution of monogamy, inherent within the modern notion of romantic love, functions ideologically: it gets people to act and behave in a manner that treats their 'loved' ones as private property, and unlike pre-modern times such behaviour is willingly indulged in on a mutual basis i.e. subjects believe themselves to be the sole authors of such a mode of behaviour, as opposed to a set of social norms being imposed upon them. The 'lover', then, subjects their beloved to ties of exclusivity and themselves are also subjected to notions of fidelity to their partner.

'Love', as conceived in the romantic- monogamous mould, gets people to misrecognize their real conditions of existence (the fact that their beloved is someone whose best interests they have at heart, and that this condition is antithetical to restricting their social freedoms) and instead recognise an imaginary representation of their real relations (which are represented as property relations, stemming from the recognition of one's beloved as their private property). Thus, functioning ideologically, the dominant notion of romantic love seeks to produce the ideal loving subjects, who might one day become the ideal married couple and thereby constitute the traditional biological family unit which, as is well known, serves capitalistic interests by aiding the reproduction of the means of production in a society.

Conclusion

In discussing lesbian monogamy and non-monogamy, Victoria Robinson has argued that monogamous love "separates women from each other" and so "if women's friendship is vital for feminism, then the means by which we are divided from each other needs to be examined" (144). Considering the same logic in a general non-lesbian (but also non-heterosexual) context, it can be argued that monogamy universally separates humans from each other by engendering private property relations within bonds of love. In fact, it appropriates the notion of love in precisely such a fashion, and constitutes the category of 'romantic love', that it makes sense only in terms of fidelity and exclusive rights over the other person. Thus, following Robinson's logic and extrapolating it, if solidarity between humans is vital for any progressive change, then the logic of private property that corrupts our imagination and execution of amorous relationships needs examination. While property relations were explicit within relationships in pre-modern times when it was seen mainly as

an economic transaction (evidenced by the practice of dowries), modern notions have sought to 'free' love and re-imagine the same in more egalitarian and liberal terms. In the process, however, notions of private property got repressed and reinstated in distorted forms through the construct of 'romantic love' being imagined as inevitably monogamous. While feminist critiques have done a lot to even the scales across gender lines when it comes to relationships, what has largely escaped attention is the logic of property relations underlying the same and functioning ideologically to produce monogamous loving subjects. Thus, instead of simply women being the property of men, modernity sees both men and women (and people beyond this gender binary) treated as each other's private property within romantic relationships. For a feminist critique that aims to challenge the dominance of the patriarchy-capitalism nexus, a serious examination of the institution of monogamy thus proves indispensable.

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Literary Nexus of Industrialisation, Climate Change and Women: Reading Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* as a Text of Materialistic Ecofeminism in the Indian Context

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Abstract

The present study is an ecofeminist exploration of the novel Fire on the Mountain by Anita Desai highlighting the materialistic trajectory underpinning the theme of the novel. It examines the ill effects of industrialisation and its impact on women, nature and animals and focusses on the significance of nature and women relationship which is a major concern of ecofeminism. Literary analysis through close reading and content analysis helps in a critical, analytical, and interpretative evaluation of primary and secondary sources. Materialistic ecofeminism identifies globalisation as an outgrowth of capitalism, which, according to their analysis, is the locus of social and environmental crisis. Sydee and Beder argues that "the essential characteristic of capitalism lies in its patriarchal nature" (2001). The novel rightly portrays the patriarchal structure and capitalism which are the main elements favouring the domination of women and nature. In the novel Fire on the Mountain Desai interweaves the penetration of industrialisation into the world of nature and its aftermath effects on women, animals, environment and climate.

Keywords*: Industrialisation, Materialistic Ecofeminism, Climate Change, Anita Desai, Fire on the Mountain.*

Introduction

Ecofeminism claims that the domination of women and nature are intrinsically linked. Sydee and Beder states "Materialistic ecofeminism in particular, focus on the material

conditions of women lives locating the source of this twin domination in patriarchal capitalism" (Sydee and Beder 2001). A materialist view connects some institutions such as labour, power, and property as the source of domination over women and nature. There are connections made between these subjects because of the values of production and reproduction. This dimension of ecofeminism may also be referred to as "social feminism," "socialist ecofeminism," or "Marxist ecofeminism." Ecofeminism in this sense seeks to eliminate social hierarchies which favour the production of commodities over biological and social reproduction. Pandey says that "Materialistic ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of the relationship that women in developing countries have with nature due to their large dependence on it for their life" (2013). This shows exactly how globalisation impacts them through environmental degradation and usurping resources as they depend greatly on the environment. Materialistic ecofeminism inherently works to support the socialistic agenda by aiming to counteract the environmentally destructive forces of neo-liberal-globalisation in developing countries. The key activist scholars in materialistic ecofeminism are Maria Miles, Veronika Bennholdt Thomsen, Vandana Shiva, Ariel Saleh, Marry Mellor and Ansa Ilu.

Intrudence of Industrialisation into Nature

Merchant argues that "popular renaissance literature was filled hundreds of images associating nature, matter, and the earth with the female sex. The earth was alive and considered to be a beneficent, receptive and nurturing female" (Merchant 1995). This shows how the earth was regarded high as a living mother until industrial revolution and rise of capitalism.

The novel rightly represents this interference of industrialisation into the forest lands. It represents the establishment of forest areas by research institutes, tourist resorts, and military depots inside Kasauli hills. Desai has employed her characters as symbolic representations of ideas and themes whereas the second section titled 'Arrival of Raka' symbolically represents the arrival of capitalism into the web of nature as she is the one through which the author gives major incidents and evidences of the capturing of forest lands in the name of urbanisation. Desai has beautifully described the view of Carignano

which is surrounded by rocks, hills, gardens, trees and pines. There was light and air, and in every direction it gave a sweeping view to the south and north of the mountains and plains. More than that the house of Nanda Kaul was beyond description. It gleams bright in the sun shine with its windows wide open to the far blue waves of the Himalayan Mountains with its rivers flowing and the backside of the house had apricot trees and clumps of iris blooming brightly.

In one instance, when Raka is wandering down the hills, she notices shoals of rusted tins, bundles of stained newspaper, peels, rags and bones, all snuggling in grooves, hollows, and cracks. Wastes from factories have been flown in the ravine which all become the symbolic representation indicating the presence of factories amidst the forest in Kasauli hills. Raka also notices pine trees with charred trunks and contorted branches which show the deforestation of forest lands to build industries and factories inside the forest areas. On the other side of the hills Raka sees enormous walls of the factories with their chimneys evoking smoke. She also sees how this large enormous black smoke reaches and spreads into the blue sky which again represents the dominant role played by the factories inside the forest area of Kasauli. These incidents puzzle Raka as she never heard of factories in hill stations of Kasauli. She was always told of the beauties and delights of the Himalayan hill stations by Raka's parents.

In the novel, the presence of Pasteur Institute in Kasauli hills is seen as an example of forest areas being invaded by industrialisation. Through the character of Raka the description of the institute is well shown. She describes the huge cement walls covering the institute with its chimneys always evoking large humps of smoke. When she questions about the factory which evokes smoke, Ram Lal explains to her about the Pasteur Institute. He says "That is the Pasteur Institute. It is where doctors make serum for injections…'Why is there so much smoke?' she asked, in a somewhat weak voice. 'Oh, they are always boiling serum there – boiling, boiling. They make serum for the whole country" (Desai 31). This shows the occupancy of institutes into the forest lands.

Desai has also shown how the natural environment of the forest areas are getting materialised by building concrete slabs and cement payments which degrades and changes the natural beauty. This is shown in an incident where Nanda Kaul and Raka visits monkey

point where they find cement benches and concrete ceilings build in between the forest lands for the tourists. Nanda Kaul says, "The municipal corporation had built some benches and some concrete shelters, like bus-stands, under the trees. It had the shabby, desolate air of a deserted bus-stop. And slabs like bus stands" (Desai 35). This shows the transforming of the forest areas into the materialistic world of urban life.

The novel also shows the occupancy of tourist resorts in the forest areas which is another invasion by industrialisation where the forest lands, trees and plants are exploited and destroyed by building tourist resorts, hotels and clubs. Nanda Kaul, the protagonist of the novel expresses her anger and despair to the invasion of large number of tourist resorts which is ruining the natural beauty of the forest environment. "Tourists and passers-by often scratched their names on trees by the succulent blades and there they remained – names and dates, incongruous and obtrusive as the barbed wire: 'Too many tourists. Too much army. How they are ruining this – this quiet place." (Desai 37). These scratched names of the trees and branches again become the strong representation for the intrudence and the dominant role played by the industrialization.

Nanda Kaul in one her encounter with Raka describes how the Kasauli hills once appeared like a heaven, when she first visited the place. The natural surroundings of Kasauli made her to relate to a G.M Hopkins poem which aptly matched the place with its pleasant atmosphere bloomed with flowers like spring season which was free from dust and pollution. She also mentions how the natural beauty has slowly been degraded due to the intervention of factories, institutes, military cantonments and tourist resorts. Nanda Kaul said bitterly, her breath coming faster and her step fumbling. 'It really is – is saddening. One would have liked to keep it as it was, a – a haven, you know. When I first came here, I used to think of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem – do you know it? I used to be reminded of it constantly:

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.
'And I have asked to be

Where no storms come,

Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,

And out of the swing of the sea,

'Of course, it was not written about a place, any place, but about

A vocation – a nun's vocation, as it

happens – but, all the same, it seemed to apply. (Desai 37)

The above poem by Hopkins praises the beauty of nature. The poet advises the ordinary person not to expect the material happiness in the world, but rather to enjoy the true essence of nature. Similarly, Nanda Kaul who once enjoyed and felt the true essence of nature, presently feels that it is getting lost due to materialist features. Thus, the novel *Fire on the Mountain* clearly and explicitly represents the interference of industrialisation into forest areas and how it slowly captures the beauty and life of the natural environment.

Industrialisation and its Effects on Women and Nature

In her book *Staying Alive: Women Ecology and Environment* Vandana Shiva states "Industrialization has created a limitless appetite for resource exploitation and modern science provided the ethical and cognitive license to make such exploitation possible, acceptable and desirable" (Shiva 1988). Carrying this idea forward, Desai in her novel *Fire on the Mountain* has shown the darker side of development and its possible effects on environment and women.

All the women characters in the novel are shown as strong victims of capitalistic patriarchal society where they are denied of power and rights, and are considered weak and inferior under men. Jena states "The idea of distinction and conflict between nature and human is possibly due to the result of scientific prudence" (Jena 2015). The novel starts with Nanda Kaul's stay in Carignano where she has decided to spend her rest of her life. Being a Vice-Chancellor's wife imprisoned in the four walls of city life, she finds Carignano at Kasauli hills as a complete rest from all the responsibilities imposed on her in the past. She finds everything she wanted in this place and this likeness towards this place is shown in its vividness and beauty which gives both internal and external peace to the

protagonist who was depressed of the past life where she was seen as an object fulfilling only the desires of patriarchal capitalistic society.

> Everything she wanted was here, at Carignano, in Kasauli. Here, on the ridge of the mountain, in this quiet house. It was the place, and the time of life, that she had wanted and prepared for all her life – as she realized on her first day at Carignano, with a great, cool flowering of relief – and at last she had it. She wanted no one and nothing else. (Desai 12)

Desai describes the past life of Nanda Kaul who is the wife of the vice-chancellor. Gopal accurately explains that "as a woman she was intended to take care of the children, welcome the guests, prepare tea and entertain them with snacks" (Gopal 1999).

Nanda Kaul gets what she preferred so long which is completely peace and soothing atmosphere where she is free from the turmoil of city life. The life here at Carignano seems to give complete rest and silence and this is evidently shown by Desai where even the sounds of telephone is heard often. Through this Desai parallels city life with its materialistic features where silence is questionable. It portrays how the advent of materialism in the name of culture hinders peace and beauty in ecological sphere. The lack of beauty when nature gets materialised is described through the house of Nanda Kaul where the garden has cement pathways and badminton court which seemed odd and contrasting.

In the novel Desai also instructs how nature should be left free without adding or altering it which in the case of present situation is completely different where people tend to artificialize things in the name of modernisation. Greg points this as "man in his process of searching happiness and fulfilment tend to alter nature according to his own will" (Greg 1993). But Nanda Kaul is strongly against this as she describes that the mud wall should be falling to pieces and if there is a pond, it should be overgrown with water plants. It is not essential that the garden be covered with sage-brush, but weeds should be growing through the sand in patches, for this gives the place a poignantly desolate look. The novel slowly moves from the description of Kasauli hills to the arrival of a letter informing Nanda Kaul's great granddaughter Raka. Raka who is another vital character is a symbol of present generation who is prone to ill health due to environmental pollution and also due to the lack of care and affection by the parents who are given to materialistic life. She comes to Kasauli

from the faraway city of Bombay, which is full of congested houses, dry weather and pollution. Raka's mother is also another victim of patriarchal society where her husband mistreats her and makes her ill thus leading Raka to a state where she is left uncared and thus becoming physically and mentally imbalanced. Thus, Raka is sent to Carignano to recover from her illness.

> Poor little Raka looks like a ghost and hasn't quite got over her typhoid yet. She is very weak and the heat and humidity of Bombay will do her no good. Everyone who sees her says she should go to the hills to recuperate. So, Tara and I have decided it will be best to send her to you for the summer. Later, when Tara is settled in Geneva and has set up house, she will send for Raka. (Desai 16)

Raka in the novel is shown as a victim of modernised world where she experiences only stress and struggles. Jena explains this situation that "due to the pollution and deterioration of natural balance which makes survival difficult" (Jena 2014). Raka feels the difference as soon she visits Carignano where she admires the pines, plains, pleasant atmosphere which is free from disturbing sounds of urban life. She newly experiences silence which she had never heard before. "She listened to the wind in the pines and the cicadas all shrilling incessantly in the sun with her unfortunately large and protruding ears, and thought she had never before heard the voice of silence" (28). This incident draws the darker side of the materialistic urban life where peace, calmness and silence become questionable.

Through the arrival of Raka, Desai has also indicated the embracing of industries and factories and their emergence and growth into the forest lands, slowly feeding on the natural resources. The smoke which the factories evoke mixes with the natural environment and changes its true nature "scarves of smoke, black on the milky blue of the afternoon sky" (Desai 33). Jaswinder Kaur (2018) rightly interprets this as a materialistic notion where man is responsible for this emergence of industries. Raka during her stay on the Kasauli hills observes "Chutes emerging from its back wall seemed built to disgorge factory waste into the ravine and immediately below them were small, squat structures that looked like brick kilns amongst the spiked, curved blades of the giant agaves that were, besides the pines, the only vegetation of that blighted gorge" (Desai 30). These industries and factories not only pollute the air but also discharge chemical wastes which thereby polluting the water bodies

and soil thereby shrinking farming lands. This is evident in Kasauli where agricultural lands compared to factories appears like small shapes of square.

During her great granddaughter's arrival Nanda Kaul thought of filling the vase with flowers from the garden but she found that the flowers were perfect outside than indoors. She saw such flowers flourish only outdoors and thought that it might not retain its shape or colour inside. This becomes the present state of Kasauli hills which is slowly losing its true nature, colour and shape being under the violence of industrialisation. The perfect harmony of every trees, plants, animals, plains and mountains tends to degrade when it encounters materialism.

Ila Das is another strong character and victim of capitalist patriarchal society, who is a social worker and she works against child marriage. Even though she faces many kinds of oppressions, she strives to work hard for her own living. In the third section of the novel, Desai parallels the oppression of land with the mistreatment of Ila Das. They also kick her umbrella which rolls and falls on the dust. She is used to this kind of treatment from her young age as she is physically challenged "mobs had taunted her and derided her" (Desai 45). She was also hated by teachers and classmates during in her childhood. Through the representation of Ila Das, Desai subtly explains a state of woman's world where she is dominated and denied of rights and left uncared by capitalistic patriarchal society. It also shows how still women are not given equal rights in education, job, property and society which makes them powerless and weak. Through the life of Ila Das, Desai portrays the constant struggle of women to win against the male dominant society. Women are used for in times of need and at last left uncared and forsaken.

> The family fortune, divided amongst three drunken, dissolute sons as in a story, and not a penny of it to either of the two clever, thrifty, hard-working daughters, Ila and Rima, was then quickly becoming a thing of the past, no longer retrievable, barely believable. (Desai 68)

Ashley Batt notes that "Pretty Singh rapes and kills Ila Das to show his power over women. Men at large extent have an access to economic and social resources which bestows them to hold power over women because women at larger extent are economically and socially dependent on men" (Batt 2012). It makes them powerless thus becoming the

victims under the violence through which men assert their strength and power. “Crushed back, crushed down into the earth, she lay raped, broken, still and finished. Now it was dark”. (Desai 77) This rape of Ila Das can be parallel with the exploitation of land in Kasauli hills where nature is left to rot and die at last.

Ruth K Rosenwasser rightly comments, “by challenging male authority, Ila Das espouses the feminist cause through her conscious need to empower women” (Rosenwasser 1999). As a challenging woman, Ila das combines energy, determination and courage to protest male dominance which relegates women to positions of subservience and submission. Ila Das in her conversation with Nanda Kaul when happily devoured over her past memories suddenly shifted to a sullen and cold mood. “Now the pink lichees, the badminton games and piano tunes fled from Ila Das’s side, leaving behind a shrivelled, shaking thing. Little by little, all that sweetness, that softness died or departed, leaving her every minute drier, dustier and more desperate” (Desai 70). This sudden change also indicates the sudden transformation of nature from blooming and sweet state to slowly becoming the victims of capitalism.

In this fast evolving materialistic world with the depletion of agricultural lands, Desai has given insights about the importance of agriculture and how it is livelier and more useful than other artificial things like western education or technology. Ila Das says “‘Isn’t it absurd,’ she rattled on, ‘how helpless our upbringing made us, Nanda. We thought we were being equipped with the very best – French lessons, piano lessons, English governesses – my, all that only to find it left us helpless, positively handicapped” (70). Through this, Desai intends the importance of planting trees, or growing plants and agriculture which should be given more attention and respect than relying on modern culture which doesn’t gives complete happiness.

Desai has also shown how the occupancy of hotels, factories, institutes and bazars pollute and degrade the forest lands thereby resulting to other problems like climatic changes. This shows how capitalist world had dominated the natural world as it dominates over women. By exemplifying the mistreatment of man over the land Desai also provides a strong note on how women connect herself with nature, where she loves and always care. Jaswinder Kaur rightly says, “In the novel nature on one level is conquered in the process of

human desires and also shows how women connects herself closer to it. She dwells and become one with nature without disturbing or ruining it" (Kaur 2018). "She would return with her brown legs scratched, her knees bruised, sucking a finger stung by nettles, her hair brown under a layer of dust, her eyes very still and thoughtful as though she had visited strange lands and seen fantastic, improbable things that lingered in the mind" (Desai 32). This is evident, where Raka spends most of time with rocks, pines and stones. Her dust spread hair, clothes, and body shows how she finds nature as something close and fantastic. All the three women characters share the same love and attachment with the nature.

Industrialisation and Climate Change

Climate change is seen as a result of industrialisation. Nnaji and Mgbemene states "Climate change can be described as the persistent change in the weather pattern endangered by anthropogenic activities mostly linked to industrialization" (2016). In his article, Fox observes, "The climate of our planet has always changed and fluctuated, due to natural drivers that control our climate system. But recent variations in the earth temperature , weather events, sea levels and sea ice are indicating there is a catastrophic change happening to our environment" (Fox 2020). Industrialization and degradation of forest lands are the main reasons for the imbalance in climatic conditions. Desai has brought out this major issue in the novel where the Kasauli hills experiences various climatic changes such as unusual rain, cold and unbearable heat during summers and failure of rains during monsoon which stands as the universal representation which is experienced in every part of the country. Desai has also brought out other problems due to the climatic changes like dust storms and forest fires.

Desai has seriously dealt with the problems of climatic changes which are mainly caused by industrialisation. She describes how the summers of Kasauli hills become drier and hot every year resulting in lack of sufficient water and this rise in temperature becomes a root cause for forest fires. In his *Critical Spectrum on Desai's novels* Singh encounters that "people residing near forest areas faces drought, forest fire, and dust storms due to imbalance in climate and nature" (2009). Forest fire in another significant problem dealt in the novel as it results in bringing damaging to trees, animals and humans. In the novel Desai

has well shown the past victims of forest fires such as beautiful houses and trees which are burnt down. This shows how the forest fires largely affect the forest lands destroying its resources. “Hut? It was a beautiful cottage. An English Mem lived there. It was burnt down in a forest fire”. (Desai 34) Desai has also noted how the government remains numb in addressing these problems.

> This is how forest fires do start. I can’t tell you how many forest fires we see each year in Kasauli. Some have come up as far as our railing. You can see how many of the trees are burnt, and houses too ‘Yes, they dragged it down by jeeps, but there was no water. There is a water shortage every summer in Kasauli. (Desai 35)

Globalisation is one of the major causes of Industrialisation which makes the earth hotter due to the depletion in ozone hole thus giving way to climatic change. In the first section of the novel the author has indicated at many instances how the hills are getting abnormally hot which is unbearable to the people living around the hills. The novel also shows how the climate on Kasauli hills which was cool and pleasant but is presently becoming dry and hot. Nanda Kaul during her walk with her great granddaughter remarks how the weather is hot thus making it difficult for her to walk. “Sighing under the weight of her destiny, she poured out another cup of hot, black tea, murmuring ‘How hot it’s grown. Too hot. Do you think you’d like to take a walk or is it too hot?” (Desai 31). Similarly, in another instance Raka also experiences extreme heat as she went down the hills. The unbearable heat makes her to sweat all over the body.

The novel also addresses another important disaster namely “dust storms”. Dust storms are common in deserts where weather is extremely high and the humidity is very low. The imbalance in climate and the extreme heat in Kasauli hills are seen as the important reasons for dust storms. Ram Lal says, “Yes, I had better take your bucket in before the dust-storm arrives. Look, look, it is coming,’ he shouted, holding down his cap about his ears as the wind tore across” (Desai 36). Raka stood up on the stone and watched the dense yellow haze gather and hurl itself across the plains, blotting out the scattered villages and mango groves, sweeping on to the foot of the mountain. It raised higher and higher over the cliff and left the air in a gritty mass of dust. Due to these dust storms, vegetation lands of Kasauli get polluted and also lead to degradation. It not only affects the soil and land but also the air which gets polluted leading to breathing problems and airborne diseases to the living beings in the forest areas.

The major problem which the novel addresses is forest fire which is often faced by the Kasauli hills due to extreme heat in summer. The disaster management (2021) explains that one of the main reasons for forest fire is the rise in temperature and low moisture in air. This shows that climatic changes may also stands a cause for forest fires. In the novel Raka hear stories about forest fires and how it has largely affected the people, trees and living beings around and inside the hills. Due to extreme heat Kasauli also suffers from water shortage where they struggle to put off the fire.

> Yes, they dragged it down by jeeps, but there was no water. There is a water shortage every summer in Kasauli. There was no water to put out the fire and the whole house burnt down, and the cowshed with two buffaloes in it.' 'This is how forest fires do start. I can't tell you how many forest fires we see each year in Kasauli. Some have come up as far as our railing. You can see how many of the trees are burnt, and houses too. (Desai 43)

Desai by dealing with the problems of nature has also credited it with its unparalleled presence. She has pointed how nature looks so beautiful and enhancing compared to clubs and bazars. Similarly, in the novel Raka finds the things in nature harmonious rather than visiting clubs and malls is. All her women characters strive to care and love nature leaving in its own way without altering it. At one point Nanda Kaul thinks that even though she had amused Raka by adding unrealistic things she has not done the same with Carignano. Even when at her most desperate to beguile Raka, she had not used, or misused, Carignano, for that shameful purpose. Carignano she had kept clean, true, pen for the wind to blow through… the house, left bare, and silent. Desai has also given the idea of materialistic ecofeminism who always strive to liberate nature as Gina Gabrel states that "like socialist feminism it strives to dismantle global capitalism" (Gabrel 2018). This is shown in the novel where Nanda Kaul rejects the idea of owning Carignano or writing a will for Raka, as she found no meaning in owning it. She strongly valued Carignano for its loneliness and didn't wished to own. "Would she own it herself one day, Carignano?...Certainly, it belonged to no one else, had no meaning for anyone else" (Desai 23). From this Desai pulls out the fact that nature should be left on its own and it does not belong to anyone else.

Conclusion

The novel which is set on the Kasauli hills presents the capitalistic intrudence into the forest areas which leads to many environmental problems such as deforestation, climatic changes, dust storms and forest fires. This materialistic interruption equally affects women, nature and animals, where they are dominated, oppressed and are considered as objects devoid of feelings. The novel *Fire on The Mountain* tells the dramatic story of Nanda Kaul who after her husband's death retires to a cottage up the mountain at Carignano in Kasauli. "Nanda lives out her old age in isolation in a Himalayan town Kasauli away from the world she knew as a wife and mother, not because of any religious or social responsibilities but "out of vengeance for a long line of duty and obligation" (Desai 30). She creates a space of her own and embraces a life of solitude, privacy and confinement. She is equipped with the bare necessities, accompanied only by Ram Lal, the cook. Nanda loves Carignano for its barrenness and isolation, its steep heights, scary ravines and slopes where becomes one with this desolate landscape. In the novel *Fire on the Mountain* the three main women characters: Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila are shown as victims of the materialistic patriarchal society. They are dominated and are left voiceless all through their lives. The novel parallels the violence imposed upon them with the violence meted out to nature in the background setting of the novel. Industrialisation and its effects on women, nature and animals as addressed in the novel may deserve further research.

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Foucault's Power Play in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

Michel Foucault, the French Postmodernist, saw power as stemming from sporadic sources, rather than a fixed one. Power keeps on shifting, 'Power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere'. Foucault saw the entire power struggle as an individual's efforts to take power, rather than struggling against power. That's exactly what Balram Halwai, the protagonist of Adiga's The White Tiger does, when he murders his master, robs his money and uses it to start his business venture. Initially, Balram waits for changes to happen in society, but later understands that the key for change lies in his hands. The article draws on Foucault's theory of Power Play that is applied here to highlight the interesting facets of power in Aravind Adiga's "The White Tiger".

Keywords: *Postmodernist, Power Play, Localistic, Resistance.*

Michel Foucault, the French Postmodernist, pitched forth the cry "Power is everywhere" and "…comes from everywhere" (Foucault 63). He saw power displayed in "dispersed and pervasive acts", rather than as "episodic or sovereign acts wielded by people" (Gaventa 2003). Foucault observes, "a person does not struggle against power, but he struggles to take power" (Gaventa 2003). That's exactly what Balram Halwai, the protagonist of Adiga's *The White Tiger* does. Balram waits for changes to happen in society. He misreads a secretive stirring among the people who are huddled together around the fires that they had lit up in the streets. Balram muses,

> Speak to me of blood on the streets, I told Delhi. I will, she said. I saw other men discussing and talking and reading in the night, alone or in clusters around the streetlamps. By the dim lights of Delhi, I saw hundreds that night, under trees, shrines, intersections, on benches, squinting at newspapers, holy books, journals, Communist Party pamphlets. What are they reading about? What are they talking about? … And if

there is blood on these streets - I asked the city - do you promise that he'll be the first to go- that man with fat folds under his neck? (Adiga 221)

Whenever such thoughts beset him, he waits with bated breath for a breakthrough pioneered by such revolutionaries. But, soon, he understands that no such thing is going to really materialise. He, as an individual, has to plan out his freedom, his breaking away from the oppressive power structure that weighs him down. Foucault terms such an act as "a localistic form of resistance, stemming out of individualistic efforts, that does not wait for totalistic strategies for liberation" (Pickett 1996). Thus Foucault's theory of power play could be used to bring out the interesting aspects of power wielded by individuals in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*.

There are subtle references to this power play throughout the novel. All the four powerful men who exploited Laxmangarh, whom Adiga rightly calls 'the Buffalo, the Stork, the Wild Boar and the Raven', live in high-walled mansions just outside the village. Once the children of these men lived a carefree life until one of them, Buffalo's son, was kidnapped and killed by the naxals. This incident caused a stir, so that these men became alert and sent their sons and daughters away to Dhanbad or to Delhi. This incident goes on to prove Foucault's notion that "power can spring from surprising quarters challenging notions of established power hierarchies" (Mondal). The exploiter now becomes the victim and the power balance gets thoroughly tilted to the other side.

The relentless struggle between driver number one and driver number two not just reveals the ugly face of religious bias, but also sharply highlights power dynamics. Ram Persad, the driver already employed, and Balram had to share the servant's quarters. There, Ram Persad sleeps on the big bed and Balram has to lie down on the floor. As days go by, Balram spies on Ram Persad and soon finds that he, in fact, is a Muslim, secretly keeping to his holy fast and visiting the mosque, without the knowledge of his masters. This knowledge becomes his trump card which he uses to threaten not just Ram Persad, but also the Nepali guard, Ram Bahadur. Ram Bahadur had always insisted on Balram calling him 'sir'. Now, with the expose everything changes topsy-turvy. Balram says,

> The Nepali was watching me from behind the black bars. I took his key chain from him and put it in my pocket. 'Get me some tea. And biscuits'. I pinched his shirt. 'And I want your uniform too. Mine is getting old.' I slept in the bed that night. (Adiga 110)

Manipulation and exploitation are spun together in the narrative and we see glimpses of the changing dynamics of power play throughout the novel. The very same Balram who was flexing his muscles before the other servants at Dhanbad becomes 'the Country - Mouse' in Delhi. The other urban drivers of Delhi find his rural background funny and 'Vitiligo- Lips', one of the drivers at Delhi, starts the jibe. Everybody joins in calling him 'the Country - Mouse', much to his shame and dismay. Thus, the novel traces the shifts in power as Balram goes through a roller- coaster ride from a white tiger, to the coal breaker, to the driver number two, servant number one, country mouse and finally to 'Ashok Sharma, the White Tiger of Bangalore'.

The incident of the 'spittoon' also goes on to prove Foucault's theory. The spittoon is a symbol of power as Stork spits his *paan* into it. If he spat it out of the car window, it might streak the sides of the car. The socialist leader once comes home during his election campaign. Stork had given him a sum less than the amount quoted by him as a bribe for all the tax cover ups that gave an edge to Stork's mining business. As the negotiations were going on, the Great Socialist had his mouth fill up with red paan spittle. So Balram rushed to the car to bring the spittoon. When he came back with the spittoon, the Socialist deliberately turned to Stork's son, Mukesh and asked him to hold the spittoon. He spat into it, splashing some on Mukesh's shirt. This shamed him and thereby it became a pivotal scene which initiated a debate to change over their political allegiances. Strangely, Vijay, the pigherd, who rose to the position of a bus conductor in Laxmangarh, later becomes the political mediator for Stork. All these incidents lead us to the connect between class and power.

> Unlike the Marxist ideology, Foucault does not believe in the class analysis of power and he also rejects the idea that ultimately the state holds the power. Foucault also floats the dictum that there are no relations of power without resistances. Thus, for Foucault, postmodernity is in all respects power-knowledge relationship. (Mondal)

In his definition of postmodernity, Foucault prefers localized struggles as a way of curbing the challenges of capitalism. “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.” (Pickett, 1996)

“You were looking for the key for years, but the door was always open” the lines of Urdu poetry that Balram comes across in an old book shop keeps echoing in his heart (Adiga 253). When he doubts that his stint as a driver to Ashok is about to end, he decides to take the life of his beloved master. The plan that brews in his mind, not just comes as a surprise to the reader, but to Balram himself. He had always adored Ashok to the point of mirroring his actions, in his own small way possible. To him, Ashok is not just a master, but almost a soulmate, for whom he secretly cherishes a special kind of love and affection. Adiga sketches out a profile of Ashok as a tender person who is courteous and is sensitive to others. He, certainly, is not the typical master as Stork, Mongoose and others who are portrayed as arrogant and who lord it out over their servants. Still, Balram chooses to do away with Ashok, because to him, that’s the only way to take power. Being a menial servant, Balram doesn’t see many opportunities before him to break free. Something unconventional needs to be done, to wrench away from the oppressive system. “The notion of the individual as subject, as fixed within a series of hierarchies that limit and constrain, is overthrown through this war of power” (Foucault 93).

This notion of a fixated hierarchy is poignantly brought out by Adiga through the image of ‘the rooster coop’. The rooster coop becomes at once an image and symbol signifying the position of the poor in the Indian society. Balram understands that this coop is guarded from the inside. It’s his own fellow working class people who prevent others of their kind from progressing. So, Balram takes the most unconventional route to success by performing ‘an act of entrepreneurship’. One is shocked by this cool phraseology, where a heinous crime gets equated with an upstart business venture. Balram manages to escape to Bangalore and starts a taxi business and thereby establishes himself as a successful entrepreneur. He has the audacity to call himself Ashok Sharma, and by taking on the name of the person he has murdered, he gains complete mastery over the situation. His power play

becomes unquestionable and he emerges as 'the white tiger' that he has always believed himself to be. His transition from a menial servant to a towering master becomes complete. This goes on to prove Foucault's theory that 'Power is everywhere' and that 'Power comes from everywhere'.

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Literary Criticism: Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom...

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Writers *write*; and there are also those who *describe writing*—an activity that is known as literary criticism and which many writers view with scepticism.

In those descriptions, and without usually having been asked for their approval beforehand, writers may find their work being labelled, as "social realist", "magical realist", "utopian", "dystopian", "symbolist", "mythopoetic", "experimental", etc., or as belonging to some well-known and popular genre. For a more practical reason, publishers do this labelling too, and many authors will welcome it, because it draws the attention of fans of that particular kind of writing. Some of those fans may even dip into their wallets. My own novels include works labelled as "science fiction" and "historical fantasy", though also one that my publisher advertised as an "erotic detective novel", thereby announcing it to *two* sets of potential readers—while missing out on a third, albeit far smaller, group, since *Cold from Your Breath* (2019) is also a "campus novel", a niche genre that has already attracted the interest of literary critics like Elaine Showalter (2005).

There are authors of (let us say) more ambitious works than my own who would be less happy to be shunted into a category. Or to find themselves assigned to a particular "school". I remember one writer telling me that he had left his last school behind him (thank God) not long after discovering girls and cigarettes; nor would he have any truck with "movements", which as far as he was concerned were things that he experienced, most days, shortly after breakfast. (Non-literary intellectuals have been known to take a similar view. The famous sociologist Max Weber, asked as to his "field", is said to have replied that he didn't have one, since he wasn't a donkey.)

One possible indication of quality is when a work *doesn't* allow itself to be confined in this manner. Far from being reducible to a set of "typical" and therefore predictable features, it may reveal multiple aspects, including surprising ones, to different lines of investigation.

This is more or less how I feel about literary criticism. “Let a hundred flowers bloom”, as Chairman Mao once put it. I’ve been involved in describing writing, whether as a pupil, a student, a teacher, or a critic, for more than sixty years. In that time I’ve witnessed radically different approaches to literary criticism, and students today have every right to be bewildered by what is currently on offer.

My teachers at school (in the United Kingdom in the early Sixties), and, later, some of my teachers at university, had been taught or influenced by F.R. Leavis and his followers. The **Leavisites** were known for their high moral seriousness, belief in the social responsibility of literature, and inclination to ascribe the highest value to writers like (in particular) D.H. Lawrence, or George Eliot, who supposedly met those criteria, while dismissing writers who supposedly *didn’t*. They tended to be preachy, and lacking in humour.

At school, we had *The Rainbow*, a wearying read for a teenager if ever there was one, forced down our throats, and my last English teacher even seemed to model his beardy, tweedy personal appearance on that of Lawrence. The critics and commentators that were recommended to us were often Leavisites, or intellectuals like Richard Hoggart, David Holbrook, Raymond Williams, or Boris Ford who had been influenced by Leavis.

At many British universities, however, the default setting in the Sixties was American-style **New Criticism**. This emphasised the need for close reading of the text as a self-contained work, i.e., without drawing on the author’s biography or the historical, social or political context; without speculating as to the author’s intentions; and without considering the reader’s response—these are the notorious “Fallacies” condemned by the New Critics.

I became personally (and painfully) aware of the “Fallacies” in a seminar, taught by a highly regarded lady professor, on the English Novel (Part One). Things had got off to a poor start for me anyway when I discovered that I was the only student in the group who had prepared for the course by reading *all* the novels on the reading list. My fellow students had apparently limited their attention to the shorter and/or easier works (and later, unsurprisingly, there was fierce competition over who was to be awarded these as their presentation topics). As a consequence, our professor reluctantly decided that we would not be covering, for example, Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*, since only one person had read it (me). *Clarissa* (1748) is considerably longer than the Bible, and it had taken me weeks to

finish it, so I was not greatly pleased about that. Or that I was assigned the presentation on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; I would have preferred almost any of the other novels on the list. Still, never mind, I would do my best.

It was made clear to us that we would be expected, like good little New Critics, to concentrate on the form and structure of our novel, the techniques and devices used, and the language, including the symbols and metaphors. In the course of doing this, I discovered that there was a surprising amount of hidden sexual imagery in *Jane Eyre*.

Really? Young men are notoriously prone to such steamy imaginings; however, I am not the only person to have reached such a conclusion about this novel. I recently came across an American doctoral thesis (in Psychology!), from roughly the same period, entitled "Sexual Symbolism as a Function of Repression in *Jane Eyre*" (Jo Anne Mae Randall, PhD, Case Western Reserve University, 1971). My big mistake, though, was not that I announced my findings in my presentation, but that I then linked them to Charlotte Brontë's biography. I told the seminar how, as a young unmarried woman, Charlotte had spent several years working as a teacher in Brussels and had become obsessed with her headmaster, Constantin Héger, to whom she wrote love-letters. Might she not have reworked, even sublimated, her unrequited passion in her novels? It seemed a fair enough speculation.

The professor reacted extremely negatively. I had committed an unforgivable sin against the Sacred Doctrine of the Fallacies! I was pilloried, crucified, humiliated, in the (to my mind) most shocking manner. I gave far worse presentations than this one during my student years, and I handed in some pretty terrible essays, but on no other occasion was I treated like this. In shock, and fearing that I would fail the course, I complained to my undergraduate supervisor, who consulted her colleagues. One of them asked to speak to me. With great patience, she explained that her friend "Jennie" (the professor) was a middle-aged woman who, after years of spinsterhood, was now finally engaged to be married. Perhaps, deeply in love, she identified herself with Charlotte Brontë? And perhaps she was also just a little bit apprehensive about the, er, *physical* side of wedlock? Would a true gentleman not show some understanding, forgive "Jennie" her over-reaction, and withdraw his complaint?

It was cleverly done. I returned to the seminar (though I kept my head down after that), no more was said, and I passed the course. As for the "Fallacies", here is an extract from Martin Amis's 1984 review of a volume of literary criticism by a fellow-novelist, Angus Wilson:

> It may be convenient for a critic to pretend that creative writing takes place *in vacuo*; but try telling a writer that. Wilson routinely commits the Biographical Fallacy, because he knows that the relationship between a writer's life and work, while not direct or unwavering, is there on the page, detectable in imagery as much as in content: what is Dickens without his blacking factory, or Kipling without his boardinghouse? Wilson intentionally commits the Intentional Fallacy, because he knows that a work of art, if it is alive, will lead the author down diversions to unscheduled stops: hence pretension, hence incongruity, hence failure. And Wilson proudly commits the Subjective or Affective Fallacy, because he knows (with Nabokov) that the sole end of art is "aesthetic bliss", and that the critic's spinal cord is as vital as a tuning fork. Wilson also knows this from experience. Actually, we all know it. It is what we are thinking and feeling when we read (76).

The Affective Fallacy could be seen as the most dangerous of the three, because when indulged it leads, subjectively and even relativistically, away from the work itself. Yet it is undeniably a major factor in poetry, because of poetry's visceral and disorienting effects on the reader or listener, and in drama too, through the thrill of live performance, Lorca's *duende*, that is transmitted from the stage to the audience (see Jarman 2023, for essays that discuss these phenomena).

But to return to the college English Department of the Sixties: it wasn't necessary to commit strongly to either Leavis or New Criticism, as there was still room for other ideologies. For instance, the most inspirational teacher that I personally encountered made no secret of being a (High Church Anglican) **Christian**, and his beliefs suffused his tutorials on medieval poetry (a context in which that seemed wholly appropriate).

Another professor announced to our seminar group that we would be looking at the set topics through the lens of **Marxism**, unless (he growled) someone objected. Did anyone object? Obviously not, though I remember spending much of the term battling against his arguments. I was awkwardly out of place in the group, a bit like "George Carmody" in

Malcolm Bradbury's brilliant campus satire *The History Man* (1975). A Maoist fellow-student went so far as to inform me (outside the seminar) that, when the Revolution came, I would be one of the first to be "put up against the wall and shot". Nevertheless, to the professor's credit, he gave me a decent grade for the course. (And the experience usefully inoculated me for life against any kind of Marxism.)

There is an amusing mock survey of the chaotic state of literary criticism in the Sixties in the form of a casebook collection of essays, "edited" by the American academic Frederick Crews, on those children's classics by A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928). The essays in *The Pooh Perplex* (1963) are in fact hilarious parodies of (then) influential critics like Leavis, R.P. Blackmur, and Leslie Fiedler; of such familiar generic figures within the academic world as the effete, whimsical aesthete, or the populist lecturer who vulgarly showboats to his students; and of specific critical approaches or styles like Christian humanism, Marxism, **Neo-Aristotelian structural analysis**, **source criticism**, or **Freudian psychoanalysis**.

The essays deftly prick pomposity, but they also expose in caricature weaknesses of the types of criticism that they claim to represent. On the whole they are good-natured, with the notable exception of the contribution by "Simon Lacerous" (Leavis), "Another Book to Cross Off Your List", which is an extravaganza of intolerant, vituperative paranoia.

> The great English novels are [Lawrence's] *Sons and Lovers*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and *Women in Love*. Some malicious persons, who have had the cheek to call me narrow-minded in the past, will doubtless welcome this statement as proof of their views. I don't care; I let it stick. There will always be literary scum to laugh at every honest effort to make tasteful discriminations, and we are now in greater need than ever before of critics—or shall I say, of *a* critic—who will stand up as a moral and aesthetic guide, leading the culture-hungry masses to the finest and purest literature and keeping the rest in outer darkness. If destiny must choose me as its messenger, I do not shirk from the call, but cry out in all directions: Beware, you complacent dolts who are still wallowing in Victorian trash! Beware, you academic leeches who will praise any dull sonnet you can find that has not already been worked over by your brethren! A

> judgement day is at hand! You are going to have to submit your crackpot notions and juvenile tastes to the severe gaze of common sense, intelligence, and Life! (101-2)
>
> Needless to say, "Lacerous" is not impressed by *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which is a "vast betrayal of Life" (103), deserves "a zero for moral seriousness" (106), and "violates the absolute canons of taste" (111).

But then came **postmodernism**. Bang! The postmodernist revolution shook many disciplines to the core with the claim that there was no "grand narrative" of things, only multiple viewpoints. That seemingly generous position, which might be described by the first half of the famous Mao quotation that I have taken as the subtitle for this essay, has much to recommend it.

And yet, completing the quotation ("… let a hundred schools of thought contend") hints at a problem. Postmodernism opens the door to relativism, that deadly enemy of competence in every field. Who but an idiot would assert that every standpoint, every take on an issue, every view or belief, is of equal value? Can we afford to be relativists when we entrust ourselves to someone for a medical operation? Or to fly us somewhere in an airplane? Or to explain a difficult mathematical problem to us? Or a complex work of literature? By all means let there be a multiplicity of options, yet let there also be contention between the theories and procedures, to separate the effective and sensible from the ineffective or foolish. (Not that the postmodernists, when it comes to respecting each other's efforts, are relativists *in practice*, but more on that shortly.)

Among the wide range and ever-growing number of postmodernist studies there are no doubt some that offer a refreshing new perspective on a specific work or author, but too many are just pretentious gobbledygook. Caution is required. There is a need for careful scrutiny-which goes for *every* critical text, of course, since none of them should be allowed to shelter behind the magisterial reputation of their particular author, the renowned intellectual X, say, or behind the deluded belief that the ABC school of criticism is necessarily privileged over all others.

My "first postmodernist" was a hip young tutorial assistant who required us to evaluate each of our set texts using tools provided by Barthes, Derrida, or some other Continental authority. He was so successful in this that although I can remember Barthes and Derrida

well enough (whilst not being overly appreciative of them), *I can't remember a single one of the authors or texts that we applied them to*—the memory is gone. Had we deconstructed the writings to death? Was it for this that I was studying English literature at university?

A year or two later, I switched on my TV one evening and found the arts programme midway through an extended interview with an unidentified francophone person. The impression grew upon me that the interviewee was seriously confused, even deranged. I asked myself: why were they interviewing such a fruitcake? Was it a report on mental illness? And then the identity of the interviewee appeared at the bottom of the screen: Jacques Derrida. Nuff said, I thought.

I had a small personal revenge on Monsieur Derrida in *Cold from Your Breath*. The protagonist of my novel, a fairly naïve young university lecturer named Richard, is seduced by a super-confident student, Miriam (a good Lawrentian name, incidentally). Miriam is researching contemporary philosophy for her doctorate—and, as a sideline, investigating the sexual behaviour of her professors. At a climactic moment in her encounter with Richard she shouts "Derrida!", and they both burst out laughing (160). (I hasten to add that, while some of the plot is autobiographical, that scene most certainly *isn't.*)

In 2001, Frederick Crews repeated his humorous savaging of ridiculous literary criticism with a second "casebook" on the Winnie-the-Pooh stories. The title, *Postmodern Pooh*, clearly indicates the target, and the satire is now harsher. The imagined editor of the collection of essays, "Professor Hobbs", informs Crews that the new literary pedagogy is now focused not on the works of literature themselves but on the disputes between the different (postmodernist) approaches.

> A Teaching-the-Conflicts English department says in effect to expectant nineteen-year-olds—and Hobbs kindly wrote out this baffling lingo at my request—"Here is Husserlian phenomenology, here are the Jungian archetypes, here is Jakobsonian structuralism, here is Zizekian Lacanianism, here is Counterhegemonic Post-Gramscian Marxism, and here is the Deleuzoguattarian Anti-Oedipus; now *you* decide which hermeneutic should prevail."

As the *Los Angeles Times* reviewer Merle Rubin pointed out, *Postmodern Pooh* is a much angrier book than its predecessor.

> The reason can be found in the footnotes to the papers delivered by Crews' demented panellists. Though the papers are Crews' clever parodies, the footnotes [and many of the quotations within the papers, *F.J.*] include actual quotes from real-life academic writing. What some of these academicians have said in print is even more outrageous than Crews' inventions.

Another reviewer found the citations from the likes of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "so bizarre that the smiles become head shaking grimaces" (Devlin 2003).

And the original works of literature (you might ask), where does that leave *them*?

Because, apart from its vulnerability to relativism, its more than occasional preposterousness, and its frequent unreadability, there is an aspect of postmodernist literary criticism that I find even more deeply troubling: that it so often *diminishes* authors and their work, reducing them to products of power relationships and mechanisms of oppression. It is as though the postmodernists don't actually like or value the literature they are feeding on, and are simply exploiting it as an opportunity for the display of personal cleverness.

How many schools of literary criticism are there now? I wouldn't dare to try and guess. But I would agree with David Daiches (1956), whose seminars on modern literature I attended as a postgraduate, that "[every] effective literary critic sees some facet of literary art and develops an awareness with respect to it; but the total vision, or something approximating to it, comes only to those who learn how to blend the insights yielded by many critical approaches" (393).

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Embracing Authenticity: Navigating the Tropes of Gay Identity in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*

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Abstract

The contemplation abounds with profuse reflections on Funnny Boy's gay identity in Arjie, the protagonist of the novel. It discusses the repercussions of the child coming to terms with his homosexual orientation. The situation turns out depressing when the family and friends ridicule his oddity which is contrary to heteronormality. The child is in the process of creating his own identity by confronting the self and thereby decides to live an authentic life. The queerness of the gender issues finds a place in this exploration. Arjie decides to break the wall of hetero-normative conditioning and asserts his homosexuality. The discussion will also dilate on certain aspects of the existential philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre as Man is confronted with choice and free will in his strife for authentic living. Further it underpins the motif of representation by alluding to Guerrero's "Essence".

Keywords: *Feminality. Homosexuality, Oddity, Ostracism, Trauma, Gender concerns, Representation*

The novelist Shyam Selvadurai employs a child narrator to make his point of view sound authentic as the boy is not yet corrupted by the society. The child's perspective foreshadows original thoughts, unbiased and straightforward reflections. The narrative is semi-autobiographical which bears a little resemblance to the author's own life. The ethnic riot-torn Sri Lanka in 1983 drove the author's family to Canada, when Selvadurai was 19. Hence, he is labeled as Sri Lankan - Canadian novelist. Currently he resides in Toronto with his spouse Andrew Champion. Curiously a spider is named after him as Brignolia Shyami. The narrator Arjire also flees Colombo to escape the genocide of the Tamil race in the midst of ethnic conflict. Many historical incidents of the Sri Lankan war form the sub-text of the novel which is yet another phase of the novel dealing with the historical identity of the Sinhalese.

Arjie, the child protagonist is exposed to confrontation. Gynosexuality is the first gender identification in him. He enjoys the company of his female cousins at Ammachi's place in Ramanaygam road, while his male cousins play cricket. The game *bride-bride* makes Arjie identify his feminality. He tries to magnify his oneself by draping sari, pinning veil to his head, smacking his lips with lipstick and applying kohl around his eyes. While doing so, he emerges from the constraint of his self and ascends to a brilliant and more beautiful world. That gives him a great sense of satisfaction when coming to confront his self and be what he wants to. When the family discovers his queerness, he is ridiculed and punished. Arjie is mocked with so many feminine terms as 'girlie- boy', 'Pansy', 'a faggot', 'a sissy', 'funny one' and so on. Selvadurai has arrived at the title by picking one of the above said mocking terms. His father recognizes him as Rankotwera boy and blames his mother for bringing him so. Further he is averted from the world of girls, restricted and made to cleaning and dusting things at Ammachi's home. He battles with daily repression and their disciplinary techniques. During his lonely times, he would long to be in the feminal world but infers that he would never be allowed to enter into that charming world anymore.

Determining identities, the queer theory claims that identities are not fixed, meaning they are fluid and changing within the same person at different times. This characteristic of queerness foreshadows in Arjie when he tries to sort out his identity. Earlier he tries to identify himself as gynosexual. He ends up in loneliness. He is caught between the boy's and girl's worlds not belonging anywhere or wanted in either. Later during the arrival of Daryl uncle his identity undergoes changes. He learns the truth that Daryl Uncle is his mother's ex-boyfriend. At the Hill country the boy seems to observe and admire Daryl uncle body and thighs pressed against shorts. The boy comes to witness a change in his sexual identity during his transition to teens: "Lately, I had found that I looked at men, at the way they were built, the grace with which they carried themselves, the strength of their gestures and movements" (Selvadurai 157). This happens with the arrival of Jegan Parameswaran. The youth's visit elates his mind. He used to hide behind and admire the handsomeness of Jegan's muscle in his arms and neck. Jegan is employed by his father. The boy is at ease in the company of Jegan and enjoys his company for quite some time. The ethnic conflict during the Sri Lankan riot brews animosity in and around all neighborhoods. This dispels

Jegan from his work unwinding his father's trust. His departure deeply disturbs Arjie almost shattering him emotionally.

Daryl Uncle and Jegan are the identifiers of Arjie's sexual identity during the phase of his teens. With Jegan, he develops a strong bond. The transformation of his sexuality is identified apparently at the school Victoria Academy when he encounters Shehan Soyza. Both the boys withstand the cruelty of Black Tie, the Principal of Victoria Academy. The principal who gives select beatings to not-so-manly boys dictate how society treats the homosexuals. Michael Foucault observes in his *The History of Sexuality* that hegemonic powers produce immense pressure for individuals to display hetero-normative behaviour. The gays dread to reveal their sexual identity to the world. Especially Arjie couldn't come to accept his own sexual identity nor believe it. The hetero-normative conditioning makes him feel ashamed of this identity. Unlike Arjie, Shehan identifies his homosexual identity and is candid at school. The entire inmates of the school know about his homosexuality and his relationship with the Head Prefect. The class boys tease behind his back when he goes to meet the Prefect during the intervals.

Shehan's confrontation means his honesty to his self, as well as to the society. There is a breakthrough from the decisive existential crisis by forging his personal space in the society. The boy is honest with his choice with regard to identity which strikes similarity with the philosophy of Sartre. Just like existentialism is humanism, homosexuality also is perhaps a part of existential humanism which deserves consideration in the mainstream culture. This demonstrates that they have the right to decent and open living among the hetero-normative society. Shehan withstood the suppressions of Black Tie's brutal punishment which was an effort to make him normal like other boys. No external reinforcement can change his non-conformity, because the process of his identity is heuristic. Contrary to Shehan, Arjie is an escapist and glosses over his identity. The suppression leads to isolation from his family and society. The idea of morality is yet another towering claim. So the internal struggle seems endless until his encounter with Shehan.

Arjie's friendship with Shehan strikes a similarity between the two. Their bond develops from physical to emotional. His love is powerful and comforting than the love of his

parents. They cannot understand the world in which he inhabits. Shehan helps him to deal with his sexual identity when he tries to conceal. After their first physical encounter, Arjie felt he had committed a crime against the trust and love of his parents. He experiences anger and hatred towards Shehan in the sexual conduct. But Shehan brings him to face the truth of his sexual identity. Shehan reflects, "I know your type. You and the head perfect and the others like you. Pretend that you're normal or that you're doing it because you can't get a girl. But in the end you are no different from me" (Selvadurai 259). This feeds sense into Arjie. He identifies and compromises with his self. The same night he dreamt of Shehan and his love making. Shehan's words resonate truth. Thus Arjie decides to have authentic living by his new found identity.

Existentialism claims that man is confronted with the possibility of choice and the crisis can lead him to authentic living. Here Arjie was undergoing existential crisis among his family and friends trying to articulate his choice of living with regard to his sexual identity. By doing so, he becomes a human project and defines his essence in his existence. His action proclaims his identity in the mainstream culture. After the publication of *Funny Boy* many Gays around the world identified their homosexual identity and unleashed their real self to find a space besides the conservative culture, claimed Selvadurai in one of his interviews. His existence defines the homosexual living among the gay society of the world. Thus they decide to be authentic by demonstrating their gender identity. Arjie becomes responsible for his choice and benefits the homosexuals. Indeed the book is an eye opener to gender issues of homosexual community.

It is essential to probe into the psychological aspect of these homosexuals. There is always a trauma behind their existence. It almost receives immediate rejection from the society to which they belong. They don't find a space and are forced to leave home. So naturally they have to find their own counterpart for their survival. When Arjie's aunt finds out his oddity, he is dragged and exposed in the family gathering. They smirk at him as 'funny boy' which embarrasses his parents too. Right then the family keeps a check with all his associations. This leads child Arjie to hide his other self as he grows to create his own identity. Though he is with his family, there lingers a deep and unsaid dissatisfaction in him. It places him as an outsider in his paternal world as well as with his own siblings. Shehan

also undergoes the worst embarrassment and humiliation at school. He is prone to consistent beatings confining him to an embittered state. Besides, he also has a sad family story of living alone in an old house with an old maid and far from his separated married parents.

The school Victoria Academy is a blessing in disguise for Arjie. He befriends Shehan here. Though both are identified under the stern eyes of Black Tie and punished brutally, their bond grows stronger. It is with Shehan he identifies himself. When Shehan is humiliated and titled as "ills and burdens" it depresses Arjie. It propels him to action to save Shehan from the manhandling of Black Tie. Arjie takes the opportunity on the day of prize - giving to deliver his partner from the taskmaster's repressive violence. He has the naïve to purposely mangle the lines of the poems during the recital which puts Black Tie's position in jeopardy. He did this for Shehan to relieve him from the psychological depression caused by ill treatment: "I did it for you, I said. I couldn't bear to see you suffer anymore" (Selvadurai 277). So he becomes the savior for his friend to liberate him.

The gay partners benefit each other by their bold gestures for survival. Their relationship indeed has had an impact on the family. The mother and son bond falls out. When Arjie looks at his Amma, he senses sadness: "What had happened between Sehan and me over the last few days had changed my relationship with her forever. I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me" (Selvadurai 278). Together they break the walls of the heteronormal conditioning and forge their space. Arjie chooses his way towards authentic living. Sartre's existentialism also enforces this choice of living, as man can act on free will. That essentially is humanism. Arjie is not born with these sexual instincts. As he grows up he comes to know and identify his self. Each individual is an individual project and so do the gay projects exist in the human society. They express their own value structure and offer a distinctive perspective in the world. Arjie and Shehan emerge from their existential identity crisis by defining their essence.

Further Sartre's observation of 'being' finds an indispensible place here. He talks about two types of being En-Soi which is 'being-in-itself' and Pour-Soi, 'being-for-itself' in his *Being and Nothingnes*s. En-Soi is not conscious of its essence where as Pour-Soi means is being super conscious of one's own existence. Arji makes headway from the former to the

latter, being conscious of his identity. It also throws light on sanctity and freedom of individual. An ancient Sanskrit text Kama Sutra postulates the argument. It has influenced art in the 4th century CE which has sculptured unions of same sex in old Hindu temples in India. Michel Foucault observes, "For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality" (Foucault 3). His book *The History of Sexuality* claims the hetero-normative practices are repressive structures to exert power in society.

Considering queerness, it is also an aspect of humanism which cannot be disregarded. A contrary rendition appears in the short story "Essence" by Jose Claudio B. Guerrero where he celebrates the essence of Gay relationships. He observes, "Whatever he touches, he leaves an essence.…our essence meld. We become one" (Claudio 5). The characters Patrick and the unnamed narrator enjoy discussing their new found relationships in their respective work spaces. But in *Funny Boy* it is an expression of angst and battle for non-conformity. The book is a depiction of reality in a more nuanced storytelling. Though the author had penned this coming-of-age novel in 1944, it was a social taboo to address such identity issues then. Though in the current scenario it is legally accepted, the gay and lesbian union is still unacceptable according to the gender norms of the society. It is still the odd among the evens. Contemplating the ancient Greece it is portrayed as a place of gay utopia. Oscar Wild postulates, "the love that dare not speak its name" was the very basis of Plato's philosophy.'""(Smith 10). Where are the representations of women? Queer women are absent from the history books and have lived a silenced life. Sapphic women existed right from ancient Mesopotamia. The right example to quote here is the poet Sappho of Lesbos from Greek literature. Her lyrical poems accompanied with lyre divulge into the themes of love, passion, longing and desire for women.

The narrative *Funny Boy* renders a new dimension of love and humane outlook. The novel also has a film version to its credit. Besides *Funny Boy* the author also has *Cinnamon Gardens* and *Hungry Ghosts* to his merit. His composition "Coming out" recounts an account of the discomfort he and his partner had experienced during their stay in Sri Lanka. Shyam Selvadurai creates a space through his writings to dispel the sex bias by hetero-

normative conditioning of society. In this attempt, he renounces both his literary and gay identity. The current scenario records LGBTQIA's relentless struggle for equality though legalised. Several literary contributions evolve to embody queer lives and their stories of discrimination.

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Subversion of Masculine Tropes and Renewal of Greek Mythology in Madeline Miller's *Circe*

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse how the Greek mythological character Circe is retold in a feminist perspective for a modern audience. Mythology has been a part of our lives since the beginning of human civilisation to the present-day. Myths and legends which talk about ancient Greek Gods heroes and their rituals are called Greek Mythology. It is known for being arbitrary and sexist. In recent times there is a surge in the retellings of mythology especially by women writers who have revised the narrative which gives voice to women who had lost it or had been silenced in the patriarchal system. In the novel Circe, Madeline Miller gives us Circe's *(denounced witch known for turning men into pigs) point of view, in all its fragile glory. The article also reflects on how she broke the conventions of the patriarchal system which is still suppressing the women of today's world.*

Keywords*: Myth, Mythmaking, Feminist Revisionism, Sexism, Reclaiming Identity.*

German philosopher Hans Blumenberg in his book *Work on Myth* explains that the purpose of Myth is to help humanity deal with reality and he believes myths evolve as time progresses. He observes, "Myth is best conceived not as a collection of fixed and final stories, but as 'a work' an ongoing and ever-changing process that is expressed in oral and written narratives and involves the diverse ways in which these narratives are received and appropriated" (Abrams and Harpham 230). Myths go through the process of evolution in the hands of the modern authors who try to show the sidelined characters, more importantly women characters, in the limelight. These women were seen as objects that could be exploited or used as an aid to the lead male characters or sometimes in the worst case silenced and forced to remain invisible. In certain cases women of power are stamped as villains as in the case of Circe who is described in *The Odyssey* as "a fearful goddess" (Homer, bk.10, lines 180-184). Sometimes they fail to mention the hardships that women

have gone through in the hands of men and vilify their deeds done in acts of self-defense. Medusa, a Gorgon treated as one of the most popular villains in the history of Greek Mythology turned people into stone if they gazed into her eyes. But she was actually a rape victim, who was raped by the God of Seas, Poseidon, but not many talk about it. She refused Poseidon because of an oath that she had pledged to Goddess Athena. Instead of helping her, Athena blamed the victim and turned Medusa into a monster and the act is justified as a well deserved punishment in *Metamorphoses* (Ovid, bk.4, lines 1182-1195). Blaming the victim is a miserable part of our cultures. Mythological retellings aim to shed light on the silenced stories or characters and bring about a new perspective. The contemporary society is gradually lending its ears to the problems of women and it can be seen in the field of literature too especially in the retellings of Greek Mythology. Revisiting these mythological stories or characters gives us more insights and helps us to relate our sense of self with them as they get tossed by the agencies of power, loss, love, and responsibility.

The French writer Helene Cixous in "The Laugh of Medusa" says, "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing", which only means rewriting or retelling histories from the female perspective (875). Circe, a minor goddess from Homer's *The Odyssey* is turned into a central figure in Madeline Miller's novel *Circe,* voicing out her own tale. In an interview on her novel, Madeline reveals "I see Circe as a coming-of-age story, the story of a woman in a society that is really hostile to her power….., finding a way to power and independence, and sort of discovering who she is" (Brown). Her divine journey, from reliance to rebellion, and from rejection to self-discovery is incredibly enthralling. She plays many roles such as an innocent daughter, devoted sister, passionate lover, exiled witch, rape survivor, and a single mother who accepts men as they are without ever seeking fulfillment in them.

Circe's endurance and self-sufficiency is a result of a tough childhood. Her parents were neglectful and unloving, and so are her siblings who tormented her verbally commenting on her physical appearance. They also derided her voice which was more like a mortal's than a goddess', "Circe is dull as a rock. Circe has less wit than bare ground. Circe's hair is matted like a dog's" (Miller 35). One of the most significant components of identities are names. They help us understand who we are, which our place in the world is and where our

communities are. But in Circe's case she lacks identity, and doubts her existence. She spends her entire childhood silently so that no one would notice her. In doing so she has subjugates herself. When she confesses to her father Helios that turned Scylla into a monster out of jealousy because Glaucos chose Scylla over her, he announces that she will be sent into exile to a deserted island called Aiaia. Mortified Circe tries to defend herself but she wasn't able to, so she expects her brother Aeetes to advocate for her but he doesn't. She mourns saying, "I wanted to cry out, to plead….My voice, ever thin, was gone. Aeetes will speak for me, I thought…he only looked back with all the rest" (Miller 63). Apart from silencing herself, she is also silenced by others. This rejection has helped her to brace up herself and rely on her inner power.

Circe grows and acquires powers as a witch. The narrative revolves around her self-development and voice reclamation. She was able to do this only in her exiled home, Aiaia, where she was free of everything and everyone who were constraining her. Her emotions reveal, "I sang, which had never been allowed before, since my mother said I had the voice of a drowning gull" (Miller 71). The island gave her a space to be herself and do the things she always wanted to do and not get ridiculed by her own family. Aiaia is a symbol of freedom and power for Circe, where she found her full strength as a Pharmakis (witch) and realized that she could bend the world anyway she want to. She becomes a confident woman who is able to protect herself and others. She is not the timid girl anymore who ran behind her father and remained invisible for thousands of years.

Ann J. Cahill in her book *Rethinking Rape* states, "Understand rape as a threat to the possibility of the bodily integrity of women, and therefore as a threat to her status as a person" (Cahill 10). Circe in history is portrayed as the witch who turns men into pigs but the truth is she was trying to protect herself from the men who tried to assault her sexually. Punishing the men was her way of processing the traumatic experience, a poetic justice. It began when she was raped by the captain who came to her seeking refuge. He not only raped her body but violated her voice as well, making her incapable of using her magic to protect her. Thus she becomes completely powerless and oppressed in the hands of a man. Being alone in Aiaia, without any male protection Circe was aware of the dangers that she was prone to. But after fully discovering the power of her magic, she was so confident that

she has become truly invincible. This incident made her realize mortal or immortal, with or without magic, it's not a safe world for a woman to live in. She posits, "I was alone and a woman, that was all that mattered" (Miller 170). This rape changes her perspective of men and the world and as a result she becomes very cold and started transforming men into pigs to punish them. By doing so she showed the world that women are not so delicate as patriarchal structures made them out to be.

Cixous observes that "Woman must put herself into the text, as into the world and into history, by her own movement" (875). Miller's *Circe* is well aware of how she would be portrayed by men but she handles it with complete indifference. "Humbling women seems to me a chief pastime of poets. As if there can be no story unless we crawl and weep" (181). She is not intimidated by Odysseus and treats himself as her equal. This way Miller has freed Circe from the clutches of Homer's fixed narrative. She no longer plays the supporting role of helping Odysseus with his adventures. Instead, she plays the protagonist to whom Odysseus comes for help. Both help out each other without losing their independence and at the same time satiating their sexual desires.

The fragile Circe who was silenced all her life at her father's house gradually gains the autonomy over her voice and power. She transforms herself into a strong-willed and confident woman who isn't afraid of defending her loved ones and goes to such extremes of opposing the Olympian Gods. For example she uses her power over Apollo by saying, "I will not be silenced on my own island" when the latter tried to insult Circe for her mortal voice (Miller 200). She also rebukes her own father and for the first time in her life she talks back and orders him to count her out from his family. She bonds with Odysseus' wife Penelope when she comes to Aiaia seeking Circe's protection and realizes that each woman fights her own battle and protects the ones they love in their own twisted yet loving way. She also finally understands what it means to be a woman in a man's world. "It is a common saying that women are delicate creatures, flowers, eggs, anything that may be crushed in a moment's carelessness. If I had ever believed it, I no longer did" (Miller 274). Circe was able to taste sisterhood only after she met Penelope, though she had a sister of her own. Unlike Circe, despite being a mortal and powerless, Penelope's calmness and endurance in times of adversity amazes her. Circe's relationships with Penelope and other

characters such as Daedalus, Ariadne, Telegonus, Telemachus etc., prove that she is able to build her own home and strong relationships despite her cruel upbringing.

In her essay "Women and Greek Myth", Vanda Zajko writes, "Myth is important to feminism because it is one element of literate culture that has the potential to incorporate women's traditions and perspectives" (387-406). Miller in her work has deconstructed Homer's version of Circe's. Circe becomes the author of her own life by giving up her divinity to lead a life with Telemachus. "I have a mortal's voice, let me have the rest" (Miller 333). By choosing mortality over immortality, she freed herself from the patriarchal suppression that she was wallowing for a long time. Knowing that life is precious even though it is fleeting, Circe accepts mortality with all its weakness and imperfections. She is not ashamed of her voice anymore instead she has accepted herself for what she is. The myth of the gods' perfection is also demolished by Circe, who exposes the cold-heartedness, deceit and unending indifference that lurks beneath their exterior beauty.

Miller's renewal of Circe's story has given her a new identity. She is not Circe, the daughter of Helios, who turned Scylla into a monster and turned sailors into pigs but she is Circe, the powerful witch of Aiaia, a loving mother who broke all conventions of the Greek gods just to save her son. She not only saved her life and reclaimed her identity but also helped Penelope claim her's too, by leaving the island to her and letting her practice magic, proving the powerful sisterhood. Miller has brought Circe back to life in the moden era, where women are still resisting the establishment. She created a link between the Greek mythological Circe and contemporary women, highlighting how although their circumstances may have altered, their challenges remain unchanged. Circe is an epitome of the powerful female force who defies everyone who stands in her way. She feels loss and pain but flourishes in love and magic. Through her endurance and sheer will, Circe has broken all the shackles that women are chained to.

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Dream vs. Reality in Christopher Nolan's *Inception*: A Psychoanalytic Study

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Abstract

This paper identifies the theme of Dream vs. Reality in the movie Inception for a psychoanalytic study. The movie is written and directed by Christopher Nolan. The movie revolves around Dom Cobb and Arthur played by Leonardo Dicaprio and Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who are extractors. They use an experimental dream sharing technology to extract information from a person's subconscious through dreams. They work for corporates by helping them in extracting information on their competitors. Cobb and Arthur have criminal background and a billionaire named Saito promises to clear their criminal history in exchange of implanting an idea into the son of a Businessman. Saito wants to bring down their business empire. The movie focuses on multiple layers of dreams. The idea of dream and reality will be explored through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach and interpretation of dreams. Freud states that dreams are usually unfulfilled wishes and choices that stay and are built in the subconscious mind. Unconscious thoughts and emotions are processed in mind during sleep. The main idea of the paper is to show the ramifications of lucid dreaming and interpretation of Dream vs. Reality.

Keywords*: Lucid Dreaming, Psychoanalytic Theory, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Subconscious Mind, Inception Paradox, Neurology.*

Introduction

The movie *Inception* deals with a fictional technology that helps the protagonist share his dreams with multiple people and enter into a shared dream which looks and feels like reality. The protagonist Cobb and his associate Arthur use the technology to get information from corporate business men and sell it to the opposite party. Both of them have criminal record for multiple theft cases. Both are on run for escaping from people who want to kill

them. They use the technology and create a world that is dissimilar to the real world and manipulate the prospective victims. Saito, a billionaire approaches Cobb and asks for help in implanting an idea in Robert fisher, son a big business emperor. Saito wants Fisher father's empire to get destroyed. Saito promises to clear Cobb's Criminal records, so that he can go back to his children and live happily. Cobb arranges a team to manipulate Robert fisher. Adriane, an architect student from a university is to build various dreamscapes along with Eames, who has specialised in identity theft and Yusuf, a chemist who can give powerful sedatives. Every time when Cobb attempts to steal an information in dream, he uses Inception Paradox which is dream within a dream. But to get into Fisher's mind, Cobb needed more powerful sedatives from Yusuf and three layers of dream. Normally when a person dreams like getting killed, they would wake up in reality but while using the sedatives of Yusuf if a person is killed in dream, the person will be sent to limbo (a world of infinite subconscious). Time plays a big role in the film. The time in dream works in 1:20 ratio. The time gets slower whenever they reach layers of dream: 5 seconds in first layer will give 2 minutes in second layer and couple of hours in third layer. They have to give synchronised kick to wake up everyone in all layers of dream. The movie will be internal fight between Cobb and his dead wife Mal in his dreams. Whenever Cobb goes into a dream, his wife will appear from his subconscious and tries to ruin the plan. If they have succeeded over the heist or lost themselves in the dream is the core of the film.

Literature Review

The Guardian reviews that "Nolan is the new Lewis Gilbert, director of "The Spy who Loved Me" (Bradshaw). *Inception* is known for technical brilliance and ingenuity, and there are some dizzying flourishes of FX magic in the movie. Invention runs lower once we are on those snowy slopes, and the hard narrative punch keeps disintegrating into a floating cloud of pixels.

Analysis

The movie *Inception* is based on the theme of conscious dreaming. There will be parallel narrative of dream and reality. Christopher Nolan used lucid dreaming as the core plot of the movie. Lucid dreaming or conscious dreaming is defined as the person who is

dreaming is well aware of what they are dreaming. They gain control over the dream and decide the structure of the dream. They design the dream they wish. Lucid dreaming may benefit for life but it is difficult task to achieve. It will be hard and confusing when attempting for first time. Nolan brings the idea of shared dreams by gaining control over others' dreams. In such way a person using the technology can implant something in or interrupt subconscious mind of other people. Freud believes that dreams are mostly common for every individual. Dream is represented as distinctive fulfilment of a repressed wish. Dreams like teeth falling out, sex, natural disaster, falling from height are most common among all humans. On the other side nightmare is a replay of a person's stress, sleeplessness and trauma. Nightmare feels more real and gives a kick that makes the person jump out of sleep; this may cause fear and stress.

In this movie all the character names are in the abbreviation as 'Dreams'. The protagonist Cobb's mission is to give sedative to the victim and connect in their subconscious through dream sharing technology. This will help them to analyse them as a person and extract the information needed. *Inception* is a dream created with layers and nesting. Cobb uses inception flashback to attain the deeper subconscious. In each layer of dream, a different person starts the dream, same individual cannot start dream in all layers of dream. Under sedation, if a person dreams like getting killed, they wake up but while using Yusuf's sedative, if a person died they end up in limbo. The important thing to identify dream and reality is to fix an object believable to each individual like a totem or a dice. The kick will synchronise with music and alert the person dreaming to use the kick. Freud believes that dreams are filled with symbol that will later help us to make decision in real life. In a scene in the movie, Eames tell Arthur to dream bigger and not be afraid of dreaming big. Dream has number of possibilities and endless creativity. Cobb is considered as the protagonist of the movie, but the main character through whom the movie revolves around is Mal. Mal is Cobb's wife, they both created a whole new world in the dream and started to live there for years which is like days in real world. The important idea to be careful about is that dream in multiple layers is not to replicate the real-world architectures. Mal unfortunately creates the house she grew up as a child in the dream; she started to believe the dream to be real. Cobb wants to return back to reality but Mal disagrees that she

is dreaming. While dying in dream and returning to real world, Mal started to feel strange and plans to end her life with Cobb. On their anniversary Mal jumps out of a hotel window while Cobb was conversing with her. From that very incident Mal started to live in Cobb's subconscious.

As Cobb and his team are on the Inception mission, they go on a three layer of dream and during that mission Saito gets shot and let in critical stage. While Saito is on third layer of dream he dies. Meanwhile Mal interrupts a mission in third layer and kills Robert Fisher. Fisher entered fourth layer and Saito went to limbo, so Cobb enters Fourth layer with Adriane to save Fisher from Mal. The fourth layer is Mal's world and Cobb sacrifices himself by saving Fisher and Adriane. He kills Mal in dream and enters Limbo to search for Saito. After finding Saito they both kill themselves to wake up in real world. From this scene the audience has the doubt of dream and reality, whether it is Cobb's dream or is he in reality. He lands in airport with the team and goes to his house and finds his kids. To find the dilemma of dream or reality, he spins his totem. But he does not wait for the results. He just goes to see his kids. The movie cuts away in this scene. Every time when Cobb spins his totem, it stops after few seconds in real world but in dream it never stops. As audience, Nolan doesn't want us to find the difference and keep in dark and suspense. What Cobb does not want to think much about is that he in real world or dreaming. As he does not want to end up like Mal, he accepts the way it works, his only goal is to clear his criminal records and get back to his children. Whenever we are dreaming, we never know how the dream is started, we always remember only from the middle. In Yusuf's lab there are more people in underground using the dream technology and stay in dream for days. When Cobb asks him for the reason, he states they do not want to accept reality so they choose to live in their dream. Like-wise there is a scene when Adriane meets Cobb for the first time, they are in dream and Adriane feels shocked by knowing how she ended up in dream. In both Cobb and Mal's cases, they both wanted to be happy with their loved ones but it gets wilder when they start to indulge more in their dreams. Cobb is a young man but he lived nearly a century in his various dreams combined. He is in a state where he cannot control his dream, so Cobb accepts, after waking up in final act, whatever he has seen is real.

Summation

Freud suggests that dream keeps us from waking and helps us avoid unpleasant awareness of repressed wishes. Dreams are constructed not to conceal or disguise forbidden wishes but to bring the underattended areas to attention. Dreams are the place where we can live as we imagined in our mind and create fictional universe to ourselves. The people in Yusuf's Lab are doing the same thing. Cobb used to dream every night about the places he visited with Mal and he explains that dream is the place they are together. So, Cobb agrees to live in the dream in the final scene whereas Mal is an extreme opposite of Cobb: she refuses to believe in reality and commits suicide to enter the dream considering that it is the real world. Meanwhile the writer of the movie establishes that the final act of the movie is in the real world, as Mal appears in all of his dreams and he wears his wedding ring in his dreams. However, it is to be noted that both are absent in the final act which is real.

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Trauma in Children: A Historiographic Reading of Gila Almagor's *The Summer of Aviya*

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Abstract

Trauma is regarded central to the historiography of Holocaust. Historiographical research on this topic shows that Holocaust is perceived not as an isolated act of the past, but that which still exists and has an indelible impact on the families of survivors, especially of the subsequent generations of Jewish community. Transgenerational transmission of trauma in various aspects of second-generation lives is evident in many literary works today. *This study aims at a self-reflexive historiographic reading of Gila Almagor's "The Summer of Aviya" which captures the lingering after-effects of Holocaust on the surviving Jewish children through the perspective of the mentally ill mother Henya, a Nazi death camp survivor.*

Keywords: *Holocaust, Trauma, Second-Generation, Gila Almagor, Transgenerational Transmission, The Summer of Aviya.*

Introduction

Gila Almagor, born as Gila Alexandrowitz, in Haifa, published her autobiographical novel *The Summer of Aviya* in 1986, documenting her special relationship with her overly protective mother who is a mentally scarred holocaust survivor. Almagor's depiction of the character of her mother, Henya, is remarkably deep, exhibiting shifts in mood and temperament as she narrates the impact of the Holocaust that stays with the survivors and also affects their children. In doing so, Almagor highlights the transgenerational scars of trauma on the children of the Holocaust.

Almagor examines how the ten-year-old Aviya, like her mother, is a survivor in the face of persecution. As Henya gets treated for PTSD following the trauma of the camps, Aviya lives in a special institute. In an attempt to rehabilitate her relationship with her fragile but emotionally unavailable mother, Aviya goes to stay with her during the summer vacation.

But it turns out to be the most difficult summer for Aviya as her mother has nightmares and mental breakdowns. Amidst all this, Aviya is desperately looking for her father and a lot of problems arise from this hopeless search. At the end of summer, Henya's health worsens and is hospitalized, and because of which Aviya finds herself back in boarding school. Staying true to the theme of the novel, Almagor concludes the story rather unhappily. Unlike much of children's literature which avoids dealing with unmitigated grief, *The Summer of Aviya* undoubtedly differs significantly in capturing the transgenerational trauma in children of the Holocaust.

Discussion

Evidence was obtained from the 1950s and 1960s regarding Holocaust trauma that its impact was not restricted to the survivors, but was passed on to their children, known as the "second generation" (Kellermann). The expression "second generation" was coined to depict the children of people who survived the Holocaust and were born after the date of the tragic event but got to grow up in its shadow in his study found that the children who were there during the period of Holocaust, in conjunction with their children who were not there, have seen to illustrate certain characteristics including the effect of the trauma in various aspects of their daily lives (Berger and Ivgi). In the 1960s, various studies had observed that children formed a huge percentage of the people who were in attendance during the Holocaust (Rakoff et al.). The voices of the children along with parental anxiety have been illustrated in different works including that of Gila Almagor. The field of trauma studies in literature has gained a lot of significance since 1996 with the publication of works like *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* by Cathy Caruth and *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* by Kali Tal. Trauma theory by Cathy Caruth and Kali Tal show a homogenous interpretation of the different representations of trauma and the exchange which occurs between memory, language, experience and place. There have been various theories of trauma which portray its impact by metaphoric and material means. For instance, the transgenerational theory of trauma has showed that the impact of growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust can be seen in a variety of facets in the lives of the second-generation members also and it is found in the works of Gila Almagor.

Almagor's works have shown shifting representations of the suffering of survivors observed through the reflexive relationship between adults and their children. She has used the classic model of trauma to depict the unspeakable void as the dominant concept in her literature. In her novel *Aviya* which is based on the survivors of Israeli Holocaust, Almagor observed that the adults who survived along with their children had a disturbing predisposition, haunted by the ugly memories of the Holocaust incident (Hass). Even after the war, Israeli people tended to find this behavior of their people as showing traces of madness and being mentally ill which has been described in the novel *The Summer of Aviya* by (Gila). On the contrary, other studies have shown that the differentiator between being emotionally ill and otherwise strong patients is very fluid (Ofir). The works of Gila Almagor examined the symptoms of anxiety and depression of the children along with depicting their emotions about losing their loved ones.

Intersection of Personal and Collective Trauma

The historiographic reading of *The Summer of Aviya* emphasises the intersection of personal and collective trauma. The novel portrays the ways in which individual experiences of trauma are shaped and influenced by broader historical and cultural narratives. Aviya's mother's trauma is intimately connected to the trauma of the Jewish people as a whole. The novel portrays the ways in which the trauma of the Holocaust has affected not only the individual survivors and their families but also the broader Jewish community.

The novel effectively captures the complex intergenerational effects of Holocaust trauma on children. Through Aviya's experiences, the novel portrays the ways in which the trauma of the Holocaust has been passed down from one generation to the next. Aviya is deeply affected by her mother's trauma, even though she herself did not experience the events of the Holocaust first-hand. The novel emphasises the importance of bearing witness to the past and the dangers of for getting or ignoring the traumatic events that have shaped the world.

Memory, History, and Testimony

The novel emphasises the importance of memory, history, and testimony in shaping our identities. The novel portrays the ways in which personal and collective memory are intertwined and highlights the dangers of forgetting or denying the traumatic events of the past. The novel also explores the role of testimony in bearing witness to historical events and the ways in which testimony can serve as a means of both preserving and shaping historical memory.

One of the key themes of the novel is the idea of memory and its role in shaping our understanding of the past. Aviya's mother is haunted by her memories of the Holocaust, and these memories have a profound effect on her sense of self and on the lives of those around her. Aviya, too, struggles to come to terms with her own identity in the wake of her mother's trauma. Through Aviya's experiences, the novel explores the ways in which memory can be both a source of strength and a source of trauma. It highlights the complexity of trauma and its effects on both individual and collective memory.

Conclusion

In the historiographic study of Almagor's *The Summer of Aviya*, Holocaust is seen to be perceived as an event which affected the adults as well as the children. In spite of the increasing availability of information regarding transgenerational transmission of Holocaust trauma, this topic has still remained a source of substantial disagreement. Moreover, the literature regarding the voice of the children of Holocaust survivors is much sparser. It has been found that these families possess certain definite patterns in their relationships which show that there is a tremendous impact of the Holocaust on the children owing to transgenerational transmission. Almagor's close examination of Aviya and Henya's experiences and psychological struggles depict the lasting effects of those who have lived through the trauma of the Holocaust. The novel has highlighted the complex and multifaceted nature of survivor's experiences, from feelings of guilt to the difficulties of reconnecting with the outside world after the war. The vivid portrayal of the characters' emotional journeys underscores the importance of understanding the individual experiences of Holocaust survivors and the need for support and healing for those still affected by the

trauma. *The Summer of Aviya* serves as a reminder of the atrocities of the past and the importance of acknowledging the ongoing impact of Holocaust on survivors and their families.

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Centering the Uncentered: Decolonialising Stage in Briar Grace Smith's *Nga Pou Wahine*

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Abstract

The colonial rule across the world has uprooted the cultural integrity of heritage and power. The Post-Colonial literatures try to revive their lost tradition by elevating and imbuing their ethnic practices through the elimination of western hegemony. Nga Pou Wahine entails on Te Atakura, a young Maori girl, who embarks on a journey in search of her history. Grace Smith's construction of the play demolishes the idealisation of Western stage by the active adhesion of the traditional Maori rituals. Nga Pou Wahine exemplars the indigeneity of New Zealand's Maori culture. This study attempts to center the process of 'decolonialising' New Zealand theatre by establishing Grace Smith's negotiation of Nga Pou Wahine as a Marae Theatre.

Keywords: *Decolonialising, Theatre Marae, Maori, Syncretic theatre.*

New Literature is a new domain that embodies the literatures of settler colonies and invaded colonies. The settler colonies include nations like Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where English is considered as a prominent language, unlike the invaded colonies where English is enforced onto the native people by the colonisers. New literature embossed on the post-colonial setting formulates various techniques to reclaim and reestablish the native tradition. One such process that articulated in New Zealand is the Marae Theatre, which negotiates the process of decolonising New Zealand theatre.

This article demonstrates the process of decolonising New Zealand theatre through the close study of Grace Smith's *Nga Pou Wahine.* Grace Smith is one of the acclaimed writers of New Zealand. She is an actor and writer in Maori theatre. *Nga Pou Wahine* is her debut play that laureled her with Bruce Mason Playwright award in 1995. She is awarded with Chapman Tripp Theatre award for her best-known work *Purapurawhetu.* She has written

multiple scripts for various television series**.** The article is structured with three main parts- Introduction, Critical Analysis and Conclusion, with relevant sub-headings. This article will first address the colonial impacts on indigenous theatre and will establish the formation of Marae theatre. Next, it will illustrate the process of decolonising the stage in relation to Grace Smith's *Nga Pou Wahine*.

New Zealand is a settler country in Oceania. Polynesians are the first settlers in the island, who later developed the indigenous Maori culture. The Maori people trace their origin from the Polynesian settlers. The Maori people owned a self-made language, mythology and performative arts. The western influence on the Maori pushed the existence of their own traditional and culture to the periphery, thereby establishing the hegemony of English as the supreme one. The Maori, who were subordinated in all means of economy, literature and socio-political situations, plunged in the revival movement. The Maoris embarked on the Maori Protest movement in 1960s. The succeeding section of this study highlights on the theatrical revival that lead to the birth of Marae Theatre.

The Maori Renaissance of 1960s demanded indigenous recognition and revival of their past tradition. In the field of performative arts, Marae Theatre was formed in 1970s aiming for all Maori casts. As Helen Gilbert states that the establishment of Marae Theatre Trust "gave impetus to the development of a vital indigenous theatre tradition, fueled at various points by key political events" (Gilbert 348). Rangimoana Taylor and Jim Moriarty are the two prominent figures who were instrumental in the foundation of Theatre Marae. Both emphasised on the holistic development of the theatre, giving importance to content, form and thereby giving a new vision for the nature of the theatrical encounter in its own self.

The Marae theatre encompasses the rituals and cultural ethnicity of their native Maori people while not premising the western rudiments of theatre in the center. The following section elaborates on the rituals of Theatre Marae.

Ritual action encompasses those activities that contain a conscious formality and traditionalism which includes elements of indigenous performative actions. Helen Gilbert opines that it is impossible to find a Maori theatre staging a play without rituals. Theatre Marae focuses on the conscious performance of ritual activities, felicitating in uniting

people and enabling the Consciousness Transference of traits amongst the audience of diverse culture. Theatre Marae follows multi fold practices of Maori tradition

Theatre Marae begins with welcoming the audience and ends with a feast. The audience are asked to remove their footwear outside the *Taki Rua* or theatre. The ritual begins with *Mihi* (chant) followed by *Karanga* (call) and ends with *Hui* (feast). *Mihi* and *Karanga* welcome the non-Maori audience to their "focal point for the Maori theatre community nationally" (Gilbert 348). The chant and the spiritual call provisions non-Maori audience to encapsulate the Maori tradition, further channeling for the consciousness transference. *Karanga* is a spiritual call heard from the Marae and it epitomises the power of Maori womenfolk. *Karanga* is practiced to seek the blessings and presence of Tupuna (ancestors). It is the belief of Marae theatre that *Karanga* cleanses the soul of the participants.

The inclusion of the mythical past is one of the key characteristics of Theatre Marae. Helen Gilberts ideates that culture and rituals are revived through the memory of the mythical past. The application of the characteristics of Theatre Marae in *Nga Pou Wahine* is analysed in the following section of the article. *Nga Pou Wahine* is the debut play of the author, which was first staged in Taki Rua in the year 1995. All the features of Theatre Marae are imbibed in Grace Smith's play *Nga Pou Wahine*.

Grace Smith decolonialises the western stage by consciously incorporating the features of Mara Theatre and drifting theatrical components to the periphery. Grace smith has nomenclated the play with a Maori title *Nga Pou Wahine* which means women positions. According to Anderson, "writing in English would exploit the cultural unification" (147). Yet, Grace Smith writes the play in English with Maori title. Her attempt to title her play in native language, sets the foundation in the process of decolonialising New Zealand theatre which is western in outlook.

Nga Pou Wahine begins with a *Karanga*, where *Waiora*, a *Tupuna* (ancestor) cries out to the spiritual world to help them regain their power. The prayer is in Maori language, which symbolises their communion of peoplehood. According to Robert K. Thomas and Tom Holm, the four factors of peoplehood are language, sacred history, religion and land which interweave and dependent on each other. Throughout the play, Smith uses Maori

terms to emphasis their communion to peoplehood and tradition. The final lines of *Karanga*:

Strand by Strand I sever my hair
As red as blood
Where then shall the Combs rest?
The Severed strands are left unto the people
A symbol of power and strength for a future time
If there is no hope, all will be lost my people. (Smith 363)

The lines are translated into English to facilitate the readers in capturing the essence of their history which is mythical past.

Nga Pou Wahine is set around Te Atakura, a young Maori woman, who is on a search of her identity. This play is based on the mythical past of Waiora. Waiora is a Tupuna who embodies power and strength of Maori people. When Waiora was captured by Takimoana, she willingly cuts her red hair and sprinkles it onto the waves, in order to pass on her *Mana* (power) to her people. This mythical past is revamped through Kura's mother and later to Kura. Grace Smith ideates Theatre Economics by making a single character to perform the whole play. It is through the prism of Kura; other characters are performed. The incorporation of Theatre Economics contradicts the lavish western stage, thereby aiding in the formulation of decolonising the stage.

The *Poupou*, a wooded frame hanging on the walls of Taki Rua, is an important stage element of theatre Marae. Poupou is used both as a stage device and an individualistic symbolization of characters. In *Nga Pou Wahine*, the poupou of Lizzy has an inscription of a cross denoting her religious commitment. Walter's Poupou has a symbol of a hook, which reflects his interest in fishing and hunting. There is no poupou for Kura, which signifies her non-individualistic presence in the present, while she is forever in her fantasy and memory. The rituals are practiced in one or the other way in the play. The rituals of traditional heritage enter into the western world through literature, and this concept is described in the following paragraph.

One of the brilliant and significant ways by which Grace Smith initiates and negotiates the process of decolonialising New Zealand theatre in her play *Nga Pou Wahine* is through

the employment of syncretic theatrical elements. Grace Smith makes *Nga Pou Wahine* a syncretic theatre by the infusion of the indigenous elements into the western Stage. Christopher Balme defines syncretic theatre as "the process whereby heterogenous signs and codes are merged together". In his book titled *Post-Colonial Stages: Critical and Creative Views on Drama, Theatre and Performance,* Balme describes Syncretic theatre as a "result from the interplay between the Western theatric-dramatic tradition and the indigenous performance forms of a postcolonial structure" (147). The heterogenous signifier presents a unified theme and Aisha Khan, an Anthropologist, opines that syncretic theatre is known for its fluidity than being crystallised.

Grace Smith amalgamates both the traditional and western stage through language in *Nga Pou Wahine.* The western language emotes the rituals cultures of the Marae. The characters in the play indulge in both formal and informal rituals. The Protagonist Kura exercises informal rituals like dreaming about the ancestors and her decision to trace back to her origin represents the way futuristic aspect of western world twinned with the determination of marae woman. Meanwhile, Lizzie follows formal rituals.

Grace Smith anchors the decolonialisation of New Zealand theatre by dissecting the linearity of the play. The play moves froth and back in time through the active memory of the characters. Also, she deconstructs the patriarchy of western stage by making a young woman to present the whole play, while in west the female characters were plays by disguised men.

The incorporation of rituals results in five elements: unified congregation, action towards completion, truthfulness, a unified purpose and resultant permanent change. *Nga Pou Wahine* equates Horelt's ideology that the society does not create ritual but the ritual that creates society. Smith's contribution to the process of decolonising New Zealand theatre is vitalised by the deliberate inclusion of Mara tradition such as *Mihi, Karanga, Hui*, matrilineal stage, theatre economics, and recurrence of mythical past.

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