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(The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World)

**Facts, Distortions and Erasures:
Literature as History; History in Literature**

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EDITORIAL NOTE

MEJO, or the MELOW Journal of World Literature, is a peer-refereed Ejournal brought out biannually by **MELOW**, the **Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World**. It is a reincarnation of the previous publications brought out in book or printed form by the Society right since its inception in 1998.

MELOW is an academic organization, one of the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in World Literatures. The Organization meets almost every year over an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages and grooms younger scholars, and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The essays presented at MELOW conferences are screened, selected, edited and published by a Board of Editors especially appointed for the purpose. Whereas in the initial years the Society favoured a book publication, in subsequent years it was a journal that was published annually. With the changing times, MELOW decided to move on to online publication. The result is *MEJO*.

Dear readers, this is the third issue of *MEJO*, the MELOW Journal. While the first two issues brought out the essays selected from the 2016 conference held at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, in February 2016, this issue contains essays from the 2017 conference held at Chandigarh. The papers have been selected by a panel of reviewers from the presented and revised submissions.

We, at MELOW, wish you happy reading!

EDITOR

About MELOW

MELOW (The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World) was first set up in 1998 as MELUS-India. It is an academic organization, among the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in world literatures, and literature across borders of time and space. The organization meets every year over an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourage younger scholars and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The MELOW revamped journal has existed in hard print for about a decade. The present issue comprises a selection of papers presented at the 2017 MELOW Conference in Chandigarh.

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ISAAC SEQUEIRA MEMORIAL FUND



Professor Isaac Sequeira
(5 January 1930—7 September 2006)

Professor Isaac Sequeira from Hyderabad, who worked at the Osmania University and was closely associated with the ASRC, Hyderabad, was a mentor and patron to several generations of academics in India. His sad demise in 2006 created a void hard to fill. We, at MELOW, wish to keep alive the memory of our Patron and guiding light who played a key role in all the activities of our organization.

We have set up an Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund out of which a cash prize of Rs. 5,000 is awarded for the **best paper presented at our conferences** (see details below).

With effect from the 2010 conference, there is a **Special Invited Lecture** by a person of eminence funded by the Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund.

Several individuals have come forward to offer contributions towards the corpus and donated generously to the ISM fund. Donations of Rs. 1,000 or more may be sent in cash/by draft **payable to MELOW at Chandigarh**. Contributions may be mailed by registered post/courier to Prof Anil Raina, Dept of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh-160014.

THE ISM AWARD

- In the memory of Prof Isaac Sequeira, MELOW annually awards a prize for the best paper presented at its conference. The award comprises a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 5,000.
- The competition is open to Indian citizens who are members of MELOW. The participant/delegate should be less than forty years of age at the time of the conference. The abstract and complete paper should be submitted by the stipulated deadlines before it is presented at the conference.
- A panel of Judges is appointed by the Office Bearers of MELOW.
- If required, these rules may be amended by a simple majority of members present and voting at the Conference.

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Keynote Address

Apocryphal Canons: The (Post)Modernist Turn of the Spanish Golden Age

Manuel Broncano

Professor

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Abstract: Ever since Aristotle established the superiority of literature over history, the debate on the relationship between the two forms of accessing the past has not abated and in our times, this controversy probably is more intense than ever. Poststructuralism and postmodernism have demonstrated the tenuous borderline between the two discourses, since both share many common elements. In this paper I revise briefly the notions of Grand Narrative and Master Narrative, as defined by Jean-Francois Lyotard and others, and propose the notions of Apocrypha and apocryphal as the inevitable contestation to any canonical, authoritative imposition on the part of the State. While master or grand narratives (or even meta-narratives) refer to stories that seem to assimilate different cultures into a single course of history dominated by the West, apocryphal stories / histories subvert the very attempt to encompass the discourse of peoples “without history” into the totalizing speech of eurocentrism. Apocryphal, in this respect, is synonymous with subversive and anti-hegemonic. The counterpart of the apocryphal, the canonical, is the materialization, or better, verbalization, of power, but as long as it is sustained by language, it becomes an aporia. If language is fluid and ambiguous, the canon cannot be fixed and immutable. I base my argumentation on two classic texts from the Spanish Golden Age (16th-17th centuries): *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes*, the first picaresque novel, published anonymously by Diego Antonio de Mendoza (1554), and Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615), the work that paves the road for the modern novel.

Keywords: Apocrypha, Aristotle, Don Quixote, Ecclesiastical censorship, Golden age, Eurocentrism, grand narrative, history vs. literature, intertextuality, Lazarillo, master narrative, novel of chivalry, picaresque, (Post) Modernism, Spanish literature, subversion, translation.

Ever since Aristotle established the superiority of literature over history, the debate on the relationship between the two forms of accessing the past has not abated, and in our times, this controversy probably is more intense than ever. Post-structuralism and postmodernism have

demonstrated the tenuous borderline between the two discourses, since both share many common elements. In my paper, I will propose the notions of “Apocrypha” and “apocryphal” as the inevitable contestation to any canonical, authoritative imposition on the part of the State. While master or grand narratives (or even meta-narratives) refer to stories that seem to assimilate different cultures into a single course of history dominated by the West, apocryphal stories / histories subvert the very attempt to encompass the discourse of peoples “without history” (I borrow the term from anthropologist Eric Wolf), into the totalizing speech of eurocentrism. Apocryphal, in this respect, is synonymous with subversive and anti-hegemonic. The counterpart of the apocryphal, the canonical, is the materialization, or better, verbalization, of power, but as long as it is sustained by language, it becomes an aporia. If language is fluid and ambiguous, the canon cannot be fixed and immutable. I will illustrate my argument with Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605, first part, 1615, second), and the first Spanish picaresque novel, *The Life and Adventures of Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), attributed to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza.

In chapter IX of the first volume of *Don Quixote*, Miguel de Cervantes addresses, in a highly parodical key, the interplay between literature and history, as well as the ways in which events from the past can be rendered and endowed with meaning in literary and historical discourse. Likewise, Cervantes discusses the role that translators and translations play in the transmission of those discourses. While the passage is not long, it provides the reader with some valuable meta-textual clues to understand the subversive, or apocryphal, drive of the novel. As is well known, the narrator of the first eight episodes finds himself at a loss when his unidentified source (a manuscript by an anonymous author) comes to an abrupt end while Don Quixote and the valiant Biscayan are in the midst of a frightful battle. Intrigued by the outcome of the episode, and of the life and deeds of the wondrous knight-errant, the narrator undertakes extensive but fruitless research. One day, however, “chance and good fortune” guide him to the market in the city of Toledo, where he runs into a boy with a load of pamphlets and old papers the boy is trying to sell to a merchant. Picking up one of those pamphlets, the narrator immediately realizes that it is written in Arabic, a language that he does not speak. He immediately looks around for a translator, a bilingual “Morisco” (that is, a Christianized Arab) who can help him understand the tenor of the Arabic text. As a side note, the narrator explains how easy it was for him to find one, for even if he were in need of a translator for an “older and more respectable” language, they were to be found in abundance. Obviously,

Cervantes is quite explicitly invoking the importance that Toledo had had during the middle ages as a multilingual and multiethnic city with a flourishing school of translators who engaged in the recovery of classical texts in Greek and Syrian from the Arabic into which they had been translated. Without the patient labor of compilation carried out by Arab scholars and translators in the city Baghdad during the high middle ages, and the later expansion of the Islam through the conquest of Spain and Italy, Western Europe would probably never have recovered some of the most crucial texts in philosophy, science and history from antiquity.

Once a symbol of tolerance and inclusion, in Cervantes' time the city of Toledo, like the rest of Spain, was languishing under the racial and religious intolerance imposed upon the country by Ferdinand and Isabella and the subsequent Counterreformation that would sweep Southern Europe as a response to the Lutheran schism. Meanwhile, Spain was engaged in the construction of one of the mightiest empires ever seen on earth and was actively defending Christendom from the Ottoman threat. Cervantes was nicknamed the "one-armed hero of Lepanto" because he participated in the most decisive naval confrontation between the Spanish and Turk navies and lost an arm in battle (October 7, 1571). When Cervantes decides to attribute his novel to an Arab historian, Cide Hamete Benengeli, he is obviously parodying the convention of the chivalric romance, the most popular literary genre in medieval and renaissance Europe. The sources for those whimsical and incongruous romances were systematically attributed to a manuscript found by chance and authored by a reputed historian or "sage," thus claiming historical validity to the story, or rather "history," that is being presented to the reader. There are innumerable examples of such convention, which in the case of Cervantes also suggests the need felt by literary authors to legitimate their narratives by claiming their historical truthfulness, not being the product of fantasy and fictional whim but of rigorous and accurate research into the annals of the past. Cervantes makes the point clear: "no history can be bad so long as it is true," and by so stating he places center stage the time-old debate on the borderline between history and literature. The fact that the life and adventures of Don Quixote had been written by an Arab historian is double-edged. On the one hand, it guarantees the reliability of the events related, but on the other, since Arabs were enemies and lying was a "very common propensity with those of that nation," Cervantes suspects that Cide Hamete Benengeli had followed a strategy of omitting and silencing some important

facts about the most fascinating knight-errant ever to walk the earth. As a historian, however, Benengeli would never distort or manipulate the facts, since, as Cervantes states:

It is the business and duty of historians to be exact, truthful, and wholly free from passion, and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor love, should make them swerve from the path of truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, storehouse of deeds, witness for the past, example and counsel for the present, and warning for the future. (Part I, chapter 8)

Having established the truthfulness of the narrative, Cervantes feels legitimized to undertake his narrative, or better, his “history” of Don Quixote and his demented exploits. In so doing, Cervantes gives voice to that “other” Spain, the Spain of the dispossessed, the oppressed and the persecuted because of religion and race. There is increasing agreement among scholars that Cervantes was in fact a “judío converso” or “converted Jew” (or “marrano” [pig], as they were pejoratively called), and his life a constant struggle to overcome such condition. Despite his heroism in the battle of Lepanto, the writer never rose in the military ranks; his repeated attempts to get authorization to travel to America were systematically turned down; despite his growing literary fame, he was never granted a public office beyond that of a “tax collector,” a job traditionally carried out by Jews. The State had imposed the “limpieza de sangre” or “purity of blood” as the iron rule that differentiated those who had full citizen rights, the so-called “Old Christians,” and those whose rights were strictly limited because of their religion, even if they or their ancestors had embraced the Catholic faith, the so-called “New Christians.” Such a distinction, by the way, also traveled to the American colonies and became the basis for the racial categories implemented in the New World. The term “Jew” appears only once in *Don Quixote*, when Sancho vindicates his historical worthiness (and his literary value) because of his loyalty to Spain’s imperial project:

If I had no other merit save that I believe, as I always do, firmly and truly in God, and all the holy Roman Catholic Church holds and believes, and that I am a mortal enemy of the Jews, the historians ought to have mercy on me and treat me well in their writings” (vol. II, chapter 8).

And yet, the novel abounds in veiled allusions to the orthodoxy dictated by the State and executed by the Holy Inquisition, the implacable tribunal that persecuted through torture any vestige of religious or political dissent since its implementation in the late 15th century.

In *Don Quixote* and other works, Miguel de Cervantes articulates an alternative history of Spain that subverts and contests the grand narrative told by the State since the imposition of an absolutist regime by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1478. Such a grand narrative speaks of a country with a “manifest destiny” to become the champion of Christendom and the carrier of civilization to the New World. Not in vain in 1494 Pope Alexander VI bestowed upon the monarchs the title of Catholic Queen and King for their unparalleled efforts in defense of the Catholic Church and the expulsion of all those Jews who rejected baptism, as well as the defeat of the last Muslim kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula. In that sense, the history of Spain was seen as “exceptional” and unique, as later the history of the United States would also be. Such narrative is obviously monolithic or, in Mikhail Bakhtin’s terms, a good example of the “monoglossia,” proper of the epic mode, which never allows the interference of voices other than the bard’s, and the ideology that the bard conveys (Bakhtin 13). In this respect, we can read the demented knight-errant as the grotesque personification of the divine mission to eradicate dissention and heterodoxy, and spread / impose the only true faith and the only ideology sanctioned by the State.

In Francois Lyotard’s terminology, the grand narrative or metanarrative of imperial Spain was univocal and monolingual, and did not allow for any “little narrative” that could undermine the hegemonic discourse. In fact, during the long dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1936-1975), this imperialist and intolerant discourse was recovered and imposed anew on Spain, which was split once again between those who had supported Franco and the fascist cause, and those who had fought in defense of the legitimate government of the Republic, who were dispossessed of most civil rights. What Lyotard labels as grand or metanarrative directly relates to the notion of canonical and canon, and its counterpart, “petit recite” or little narrative, is a synonym for “apocryphal.” The hegemonic discourse of the West has pivoted on *logo-centrism*, which, in my usage of the term, refers to the possession of the written (and spoken) word as the measure for “civilization,” in opposition to “barbarism” and “savagery.” As is well known, in its origin, the term barbarian referred to those individuals who did not speak Greek and whose speech resulted thus unintelligible for the inhabitants of the polis, the city, hence its primordial meaning as “foreigner.” The word is an onomatopoeia reproducing what the Greeks actually heard when a foreigner spoke. The dichotomy between civilized and barbarian is therefore based on the possession of the “logos,” both in a linguistic and a religious sense.

For centuries, Western hegemony has imposed a canon perpetuating the official discourse of the State. History, religion and politics are totalitarian or monolithic discourses that admit neither dissenting interpretations nor counter-narratives. While master or grand narratives are stories that seem to assimilate different cultures into a single course of history dominated by the West, apocryphal stories / histories subvert the very attempt to encompass the discourse of peoples “without history” (that is, without civilization) into the totalizing speech of eurocentrism, as I stated at the beginning. Apocryphal, in this respect, is synonymous with subversive and anti-hegemonic. The counterpart of the apocryphal, the canonical, is the materialization, or better, verbalization, of power, but as long as it is sustained by language, it becomes an impossibility. If language is fluid and ambiguous, the canon cannot be fixed and immutable, despite the efforts on the part of State and Church to perpetuate meaning. The history of the Bible, literally a collection of “little books,” illustrates the strategy of exclusion of those writings that did not conform to the orthodoxy dictated by the ecclesiastical authorities. The Gelasian Decree, a sixth-century list of canonical and “heretical” books, included dozens of works and authors that were deemed apocryphal, and therefore heretic, even if many of them had been admitted earlier as part of the biblical canon:

These and those similar ones, which Simon Magus, Nicolaus, Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides, Ebion, Paul of Samosata, Photinus and Bonosus, who suffered from similar error, also Montanus with his obscene followers, Apollinaris, Valentinus the Manichaeon, Faustus the African, Sabellius, Arius, Macedonius, Eunomius, Novatus, Sabbatius, Calistus, Donatus, Eustasius, Jovianus, Pelagius, Julian of Eclanum, Caelestius, Maximian, Priscillian from Spain, Nestorius of Constantinople, Maximus the Cynic, Lampetius, Dioscorus, Eutyches, Peter and the other Peter, of whom one disgraced Alexandria and the other Antioch, Acacius of Constantinople with his associates, and what also all disciples of heresy and of the heretics and schismatics, whose names we have scarcely preserved, have taught or compiled, we acknowledge is to be not merely rejected but eliminated from the whole Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church and with their authors and the followers of its authors to be damned in the inextricable shackles of anathema forever. (Dobschütz)

In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes uses the term “apocryphal” at least five times, which suggests the word was quite common in everyday parlance. Even though the etymology of apocryphal reveals that its meaning is “hidden” or “obscure” (from the Greek “apó,” outside or distant, and “krýpto,” to hide or conceal), the term has come to mean both in English and Spanish “fabulous,” “false,” or “spurious,” but the term also refers to works that offer alternative, oftentimes subversive, versions of the official narratives. For the State, apocryphal refers to all those writings that question or negate the grand narratives imposed by power. In one of the most famous passages of the novel, Cervantes parodies the ecclesiastical purgation of books considered subversive or unhealthy. In this case, all those popular romances of chivalry that had intoxicated don Quixote’s feeble mind with outlandish deeds and impossible ideals of universal justice. And like the knight errant of old, Cervantes’ protagonist finds his platonic love in Dulcinea, a rather homely peasant—Aldonza Lorenzo—who becomes in Don Quixote’s fanciful imagination the most beautiful lady of La Mancha. Cervantes adopts through the priest the role of a literary critic, or rather “censor,” who vindicates realism and verisimilitude as the standard for literary value, and in so doing establishes a canon of texts as the true representatives of Spanish and universal literature, throwing the rest into the bonfire to be consumed by the merciless flames. This metafictional chapter fulfills a double function: on the one hand, it provides standards of artistic value in literature. On the other hand, the chapter satirizes the common practice of the Inquisition, and of the Church at large, of expurgating any writing that did not conform to the orthodoxy in religion and in politics. This early chapter in the novel paves the way for the metafictional realm in which the modern-day knight-errant will perform his wondrous and impossible deeds. Furthermore, Miguel de Cervantes inserts himself among the authors and works that the priest is assessing, and the clergy, a time-long friend of Cervantes, obviously praises the author and his writing, vindicating the recognition that the reading public has denied to the writer:

“But what book is that next it?” “The ‘Galatea’ of Miguel de Cervantes,” said the barber. “That Cervantes has been for many years a great friend of mine, and to my knowledge he has had more experience in reverses than in verses. His book has some good invention in it, it presents us with something but brings nothing to a conclusion: we must wait for the Second Part it promises: perhaps with amendment it may succeed in winning the full measure of grace that is now denied it.”

The ten-year gap between the publication of the First and the Second parts of *Don Quixote* suggests for some scholars that Cervantes might have considered the novel completed with the first part. It would have been the publication of the so-called “apocryphal Quixote”—a continuation of the novel signed by Alonso Fernandez de Avellaneda, the pseudonym of an unidentified author--that led an irritated Cervantes to compose the second part. While approaching the city of Barcelona, Don Quixote and Sancho are met by a party of riders in livery who extend a glad hand to the knight and his esquire:

“Welcome to our city, mirror, beacon, star and cynosure of all knight-errantry in its widest extent! Welcome, I say, valiant Don Quixote of La Mancha; not the false, the fictitious, the *apocryphal*, that these latter days have offered us in lying histories, but the true, the legitimate, the real one that Cide Hamete Benengeli, flower of historians, has described to us!” (Vol. II, chapter 41, my emphasis).

By this time, both Don Quixote and Sancho are aware of their role as literary (anti)heroes, and of the fame that precedes them everywhere they go, and are well satisfied for being the matter of history, like the knights-errant and esquires of old. These words of welcome to the city of Barcelona, furthermore, reinforce their authenticity as the only true protagonists of Benengeli’s historical account.

In his dismissal of Avellaneda’s sequel as “false,” “fictitious,” and “apocryphal,” Cervantes—in the guise of an unidentified bourgeois—plays the same role as the priest in the first part, that of the censor who opens or closes the gates of the canon. By this time, knight-errant and esquire are fully aware of their textual nature, being creatures who inhabit a universe of words, characters in a narrative discourse rather than individuals dwelling in a tangible, “real” world. While Cervantes’ novel is a pristine example of “history,” inasmuch as it relays, almost verbatim, Benengeli’s chronicle, Avellaneda’s un-authorized fabulation stands as a prime representation of apocryphal writing deserving expurgation from the roster of “authorized” books. Once again, Cervantes dictates the whats and whatnots of the literary canon, never giving up, however, the satiric diction that questions and subverts that very role. In the end, it all becomes a labyrinth of confronting mirrors forever differing signification and, in so doing, Cervantes undermines the edifice of

linguistic and literary meaning as fixed and immutable, in a strategy that anticipates postmodernist aesthetics by several centuries.

Don Quixote is a “hidalgo,” a member of the lower ranks of Spanish nobility. The hidalgos were, literally, “hijos de algo” or “inheritors of some fortune,” and conformed a class that had lived for centuries off the rents collected from their properties. They were direct descendants of those soldiers who had participated in the warfare against the Muslims and, in exchange, received lands and perpetual exemption from taxes. Hidalgos were old Christians who looked down on any kind of manual labor as too menial for their rank and lineage, even if their income had dwindled dramatically by the time of the novel, as it was the case of Cervantes’ protagonist. Don Quixote’s income allows him to lead a life of relative ease, with enough money to provide for his household and his meager sustenance. He spends most of his income, however, on romances and poetry chapbooks, quite an expensive commodity at the time. Such costly hobby forces him to sell his land acre by acre, in order to afford those novels of chivalry that infect his mind with such nonsensical absurdities as “the reason of the unreason with which my reason is afflicted so weakens my reason that with reason I murmur at your beauty” (part I, chapter 1). Spanish nobility was an institution in open decline, being taken over by a pragmatic plutocracy that was finding its way to power through wealth, rather than ancestry. In this respect, Don Quixote stands as a representative of a class that seeks in vain to restore its social and political role, oftentimes by invoking a past that no longer exists, if it ever truly did. This new society has no room for grand ideals and principles, which this emerging moneyed class scoffs at as a product of whimsical and feeble minds. This is, in my opinion, where the true greatness of Cervantes’ novel lies: Cervantes confronts the world as it should be--even if represented by a maddened knight--and the world as is, prosaic, unjust, greedy, discriminatory and cruel. Even those who find succor in their distress, scorn and even beat the gallant knight in exchange for his help. Such clash of the ideal and the real is no doubt the central drive of the novel. Thus, for example, the episode in which Don Quixote liberates a chain of galley slaves he and Sancho run across on the road, convinced that they are innocent victims of royal injustice, only to find himself and his esquire stoned and robbed by the very convicts he has just freed. Despite the burlesque tone of the whole chapter, as of the book at large, the reader is confronted with the most excruciating evidence of the unviability of man’s loftiest ideals of universal justice:

[Don Quixote] addressed them as follows: "To be grateful for benefits received is the part of persons of good birth, and one of the sins most offensive to God is ingratitude; I say so because, sirs, ye have already seen by manifest proof the benefit ye have received of me; in return for which I desire, and it is my good pleasure that, laden with that chain which I have taken off your necks, ye at once set out and proceed to the city of El Toboso, and there present yourselves before the lady Dulcinea del Toboso, and say to her that her knight, he of the Rueful Countenance, sends to commend himself to her; and that ye recount to her in full detail all the particulars of this notable adventure, up to the recovery of your longed-for liberty; and this done ye may go where ye will, and good fortune attend you."[. . .] The ass and Rocinante, Sancho and Don Quixote, were all that were left upon the spot; the ass with drooping head, serious, shaking his ears from time to time as if he thought the storm of stones that assailed them was not yet over; Rocinante stretched beside his master, for he too had been brought to the ground by a stone; Sancho stripped [. . .] and Don Quixote fuming to find himself so served by the very persons for whom he had done so much. (Part I, chapter 22)

The episode of Don Quixote and the galley slaves provides a good transition to the second novel I will discuss in this paper. The punishment of forced service in the army and the navy in expiation for crimes committed was an extended practice, since the Emperor Charles V and later Phillip II had ever-increasing needs of manpower to assist soldiers and to maneuver the galleys in the various wars Spain was fighting in the Old and the New Worlds. Thus, in the first picaresque novel, *The Life and Adventures of Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), Lazaro—narrator and protagonist—reveals the reason why his natural father, a miller of questionable habits at a watermill by the river Tormes, just outside the Spanish city of Salamanca, was conscripted:

“When I was a child of eight years old, they accused my father of certain misdeeds done to the sacks of those who came to have their corn ground. He was taken into custody, and confessed and denied not, suffering persecution for justice's sake. So I trust in God that he is in glory, for the Evangelist tells us that such are blessed. At that time there was a certain expedition against the Moors and among the adventurers was my father, who was banished for the affair already mentioned. He went in the position of attendant on a knight who also went, and, with his master, like a loyal servant, he ended his life. (Kindle Location 45-45)

Lazarillo de Tormes is the direct precursor of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, to the extent that the Spanish classic would be in its present form without the inspiration provided by this foundational picaresque. *Lazarillo* portrays one of the earliest antiheroes in Western literature. Lázaro de Tormes is a young *pícaro* (rascal or rogue) that parodies the classic hero and its medieval inheritor the knight-errant. By means of this subverted heroic figure, the writer undertakes a bitter portrayal of a country in which pervasive corruption and ecclesiastical hypocrisy contest and subvert the gran narrative of the Spanish Empire. In fact, Cervantes pays homage to the book in a very explicit exercise of intertextuality by invoking the title of the novel and praising its truthfulness, even if with an ironic twist:

"I am Gines de Pasamonte, whose life is written by these fingers."

"He says true," said the commissary, "for he has himself written his story as grand as you please, and has left the book in the prison in pawn for two hundred reals." . . . "Is it so good?" said Don Quixote. "So good is it," replied Gines, "that a fig for 'Lazarillo de Tormes,' and all of that kind that have been written, or shall be written compared with it: all I will say about it is that it deals with facts, and facts so neat and diverting that no lies could match them." (Kindle Edition 85)

For centuries, the real identity of the author of *Lazarillo* remained unknown, and only recently scholars have agreed that the author was Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, a Spanish poet and a diplomat, who would have carefully hidden his authorship because of fear of the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals. This short novel is the first Spanish, and most probably European, narrative to expose nakedly the incongruence and cruelty of a society in profound crisis. In the conclusion to his autobiographical account, Lazaro explains: "All this happened the same year that our victorious Emperor Charles made his entry into this celebrated city of Toledo, and there held his court, bringing with him a season of feast and jubilee, of which all must have heard." The year Lazaro finishes his narrative is thus 1524, and the choice is not mere coincidence. At 21, Lazaro has achieved the success his lineage would have denied him in earlier times, and obtains a royal appointment as town crier and dealer of wine, a coveted position that comes, however, at a cost, as we shall see. Like the books expurgated from the Bible by the Gelasian Decree as heretical or apocryphal, *Lazarillo* was prohibited by the Spanish Inquisition as early as 1559, and yet not soon

enough to prevent its immense popularity in Spain and Europe, which led to a number of editions published in different countries. The book was first received as an autobiographical account and not as a work of fiction. Tired of the novels of chivalry and their whimsical fantasies, the Spanish readership welcomed the freshness and the realism of a story portraying the many contradictions of a country torn between an imperial agenda based on religious orthodoxy and territorial expansion and a society leaving behind the immobility of medieval hierarchies.

In the *Lazarillo* we find, at least to my knowledge, the first European statement of fear to the “racial Other” in modern literature. Thus, after the death of Lazaro’s father, his widowed mother becomes the concubine of a Black slave named Zayde, who provides the humble household with food and firewood and other items that he steals from his master. At first, Lazaro did not like him, because of “his colour and his ugly face,” but the boy soon took to him, because his visits were “signs of better living.” Racial fear is thus replaced by filial love in a boy whose life will be determined by hunger and need, in a world that he sees but does not understand, even if he suffers in full, for very rarely does he find help and succor along the road. Eventually Lazaro’s mother bears a son, a mulatto who is unaware of his skin color and therefore bears the same prejudices about blackness as Lazaro earlier:

One day my mother gave me a pretty little brown brother, whom I played with and helped to keep warm. I remember once that when my stepfather was fondling the child, it noticed that my mother and I were white, and that he was not. It frightened the child, who ran to my mother, pointing with its finger and saying, “Mother, he is ugly!” To this he replied laughing; but I noticed the words of my little brother, and, though so young, I said to myself, “How many there are in the world who run from others because they do not see themselves in them.” (Kindle Locations 53-57)

Even though the passage about Zayde, the black slave, has received scant critical attention, it certainly fulfills a central role in Lazaro’s universe, for he is a fatherless child who is forced to seek on the road a surrogate progenitor. His father Tomás is killed in battle—perhaps the most honorable deed in his life—while his step father Zayde is flogged and tarred as punishment for his petty thieveries. While at first Lazaro did not like his mother’s “friend” because he was scared of his color and his sinister looks, he gradually takes to him, since Zayde brings supplies that are

badly needed at home, and eventually gets to love him well. Lazaro's early acceptance of the racial other may not be fully altruistic, but it represents a step forward in a world in which color and blood, along with religion (obviously Zayde is a Muslim) are the markers for social exclusion. Lazaro will probably never make this acceptance extensive to all non-whites but he at least concedes that Zayde is good, like Huck Finn in Mark Twain's 19th century novel gets to accept that Jim, the runaway slave, is "white inside."

Once those fathers, the real and the putative, are gone, Lazaro sets out on a journey of self-discovery that will turn him into a servant of different masters, all of them surrogate fathers who abuse him but also instruct him on the ways of the world. In this respect, *Lazarillo* is a travelogue, like Don Quixote, like the *Odyssey*, like the medieval allegorical play *Everyman* or the more modern *Pilgrim's Progress*, and like the romance of chivalry and its wondering knights—errant. The *Lazarillo* anticipates the genre of the bildungsroman by several centuries, since it traces the coming of age of a wretched lad who climbs the social ladder by means of his wit and endurance. Lazaro is both protagonist and narrator of his story, the archetypal story of a young man who rises "from rags to riches," as Horatio Alger's "Ragged Dick" would in 19th century America. His mother, out of necessity after Zayde is out of the picture, hands over Lazaro to a blind man. The blind man promises the mother to adopt the child as his own son rather than his "servant," and will instruct him in the ways of the world. Lazaro begins his education in the school of life in the most painful way, since upon arrival at the bridge that leads out of Salamanca, the blind man and the pupil come across a stone figure remindful of a bull that presides over the bridge. In his kindest of tones, the blind man invites Lazaro to approach his ear to the bull because he will hear the sea:

"I did so, like a simpleton, believing it to be as he said. When he felt that my head was against the stone, he raised his hand and gave me a tremendous blow against the devil of a bull, so that I felt the pain for more than three days. Then he said to me, 'This will teach you that a blind man's boy ought to be one point more knowing than the devil himself'; and he laughed heartily at his joke."

And Lazaro does indeed learn the lesson, feeling as if he had awoken abruptly from the dream of his infancy into the reality of a world in which he is completely alone, and alone will have to fend for himself. This early epiphany will guide his feet in the long journey ahead of him and will lead

in due time to exact revenge in the cruel blind beggar, after a myriad other tricks the child plays on him. As in the biblical “an eye for an eye,” Lazaro replays the episode of the stone bull, but this time it is a stone pillar and the victim the blind man. Lazaro tricks his master into believing that he needs to ford a creek with a good jump: “The poor old man, balancing himself like a goat, gave one step backwards, and then sprang with all his force. His head came with such a noise against the pillar that it sounded like a great calabash. He fell down half dead.” Despite his greed and his meanness, Lazaro’s master provides the kid, however, with an education quite similar to the schooling that Herman Melville received aboard a whale-ship, his only “Yale College” and “Harvard” in the school of life and of letters, as Ishmael says in *Moby Dick*.

The different masters Lazarillo serves compose a gallery of archetypes representing Spanish society, much in the line of *Don Quixote*, and in so doing, the novel gives voice to individuals silenced by the State’s grand narrative through a collection of “little narratives” (or episodes) that counteract and subvert the very pillars of the State. After the blind sage, Lazaro spends several months in the service of a village priest, a greedy miser who starves the boy almost to death: “I had escaped from the thunder to fall under the lightning. For compared with this priest, the blind man was an Alexander the Great. I will say no more than that all the avarice in the world was combined in this man, but I know not whether it was naturally born in him or whether it was put on with the priestly habit” (Kindle Location 647). The satire on the clergy at large was in the first edition of the novel so acerbic that not only did the ecclesiastical censors prohibit the book for decades, but also demanded a thorough expurgation of all references to the corrupted practices of the Church before approving the work for reprint.

One of the most pathetic—in the etymological sense of “arousing pity”—masters Lazarillo serves is an esquire that he finds upon arrival in Toledo. In fact, this anonymous esquire belongs in the same rank of lower nobility (*hidalgos*) as Don Quixote, and I suspect Cervantes may have found in him inspiration for his mad knight-errant. The esquire leads a life of appearances, since for him honor is the only principle worth living for: “For a gentleman owes nothing to anyone but God and the king; nor is it right for a man of honour to forego his self- respect” (Kindle Location 1005). The esquire’s material possessions are but a cloak of fine fabric and an old sword. Without money or food, he spends his days walking about the streets with an aristocratic air, attending mass daily

or strolling by the riverbanks, where ladies in search of wealthy husbands gather whenever the weather allows. A stranger in the city, the esquire has moved to Toledo, and rented a house he cannot pay for, in order to seek some royal appointment that will fit his rank. Instead, he discovers that such coveted positions are assigned to clergymen. Fully dispossessed, the esquire claims to have a large estate back in his hometown, as befits an hidalgo:

"Above all, I am not so poor but that I possess, in my own country, an estate of houses which are well-built, sixteen leagues from where I was born, in the vicinity of Valladolid. They would be worth two hundred times a thousand maravedis if they were in good repair; and I also have a pigeon-cote which, if it was not demolished, would give out two hundred pigeons every year, as well as other things about which I am silent, as it might touch my honour. (Kindle Locations 1017-1018)

Even if such claims were true, the present condition of his possessions is so ruinous as to be worthless, since restoring those buildings to their former glory would require an impossible investment. The esquire thus stands as the representative of a class that is gradually waning away, hidalgos frozen in a glorious past that will never return, as the world that Don Quixote inhabits in his feverish imagination never will. And it will become Lazaro's task to feed the esquire through begging, therefore becoming his master's master, in an ironic twist that reveals the real drive of the novel, since his master proves to be as much of a *picaro* as Lazaro by vanishing into thin air when the landlord finally requests payment of his rent. The young boy, despite the deprivations suffered with the esquire, does not feel anger but pity and sympathy for a man who equals him in poverty but lacks the ingenuity to cope with it. The whole episode is as much a satire as an elegy that leaves the reader with bittersweet feelings.

Lazaro's last masters are all representatives of the Church, which explains why the author of the novel never accepted his paternity of such subversive text. After the esquire's disappearance, he briefly serves a friar of the Order of Mercy, who Lazaro describes in passig in a very cryptic language, clear enough however to reveal the friar to be a womanizer and a glutton who spends his days walking about the city. The short passage finishes with a hint at even worse things about the friar that he is ashamed to tell. His next master is beyond doubt the most corrupted member of the Church invoked in the novel, and is remindful of Chaucer's Pardoner in *The Canterbury Tales*,

for he is also a seller of Catholic indulgences. No wonder religious authorities ordered expurgating the whole chapter from the text as a condition for authorizing its reprint. Lazaro opens the episode with a very explicit condemnation of his new master: "He was the most shameless and impudent distributor of them that ever [indulgences] I saw or hope to see, nor do I believe that anyone else ever saw one like him. For he had and sought out his own modes and methods, and very cunning inventions." In truth, the seller proves to be the most corrupted representative of the ecclesiastical business and does manage to swindle the whole city with his cunning alliance with the city constable, as roguish as himself, to the extent that even Lazaro is greatly shocked: "How many more tricks will the rogues play on these innocent people!" (Kindle Location 1167).

After two short stints with other masters, Lazaro finally receives reward for all his suffering and starvation and achieves what the esquire, and the likes of him, had longed for. Thus, Lazaro reaches social respectability—even if somewhat questionable—and economic success, becoming a true member of the rising bourgeoisie, the social class that was displacing the old social ranks dependent on lineage and inheritance: "This was a Government appointment such as enabled no one to thrive except those who occupied it. In it I live and reside to this day, in the service of God and your Honour," explains Lazaro to his unidentified narrate, beyond the opening address to "Your Honour." Lazaro becomes the official crier of the city and a successful intermediary in transactions of wine, to the extent that all merchants make use of his advice. Thus, the prophecy that the blind man made years earlier: "If there is a man in the world who ought to be lucky with wine . . . it is you," is fulfilled. Seeing Lazaro's success as a merchantman, the Archpriest of St. Saviour secures his services and proposes the young man to marry one of his servant girls, which Lazaro gladly accepts. His rise from rags to riches and fame is hence accomplished. "Evil tongues," however, try to make Lazaro doubt his newly wed wife, claiming that she may be more intimate with the Archpriest than Lazaro may suspect. Well aware of his concerns, the Archpriest plainly tells him: "'Lazaro de Tormes . . . he who listens to evil tongues will never prosper. I say this because your wife may be seen entering my house and leaving it. She comes with honour to herself and to you, and this I promise you. Do not attend to what they say, and be assured that what I tell you is for your good.'" For Lazaro those words suffice to extinguish his concerns and thus he threatens any evil tongue with his wrath. The reader will decide how to interpret this final twist.

The general title of the conference that gathers us here today is “Facts, Distortions and Erasures: Literature as History; History in Literature.” The two texts I have chosen for my paper clearly illustrate some of the ways in which literature can challenge the grand narrative of an empire based on orthodoxy and exclusion. The *Lazarillo* is, furthermore, an outstanding materialization of the subaltern’s resistance to suppression and silencing by the State. The young protagonist is the perfect embodiment of subalternity, since Lazaro serves different masters who use and abuse him in multiple ways. Paradoxically, however, Lazaro arrogates to himself the role of the State. Not only does he affirm his white supremacy over his mulatto half-brother, but he also offers example as living proof that the State accepts in its lap those individuals traditionally relegated to the margins, providing the individual willingly accepts servitude and even shame as the toll for economic success.

Blackness is also present in *Don Quixote*, revealing the pervasive presence of slavery and racial discrimination in Spain, which official historiography has to a great extent deleted from the national narrative. Thus, in his simplicity, Sancho Panza gives voice to the prejudices against the racial and the religious other, as we already saw in the passage in which he affirms his orthodoxy through his hatred towards the Jews and his blind obedience to the Church ordinances. In another passage, he daydreams of future wealth through slave trade:

“The only thing that troubled him was the reflection that this kingdom was in the land of the blacks, and that the people they would give him for vassals would be all black; but for this he soon found a remedy in his fancy, and said he to himself, "What is it to me if my vassals are blacks? What more have I to do than make a cargo of them and carry them to Spain, where I can sell them and get ready money for them, and with it buy some title or some office in which to live at ease all the days of my life? (p. 117)

While *Don Quixote*, in his madness, fights to protect the weak and the dispossessed, Sancho, in his sound pragmatism, plans to thrive in life through the exploitation of them. That is how Cervantes substantiates the two Spains in the knight-errant—embodiment of the apocryphal—and his esquire-embodiment of the imperial grand narrative, in a reading that no scholarship has ever addressed. Both novels, paramount representatives of the Spanish Golden Age, anticipate by several centuries both modernism and postmodernism and their literary practices, from the

questioning of visible reality to the conviction that literature, as well as history, find their referents not in the world itself as much as in other texts. But that goes beyond the scope of the present article.

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Intentions of History and Literature

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Abstract: History and literature should not be just tools of intellectual inquiry or mimetic representation but create a new awareness to improve the consciousness of the individual and the process of living. Over the centuries both history and literature have been used and misused to identify with an intellectually evolved culture of the past and create a national identity. The once collapsible categories of history and literature have become rigid making it difficult for scholars and readers to draw benefit from them. In the wake of European collapse and American implosion of civil society in the twenty first century it is now possible to move beyond rigid western foundationalism and include the fluid boundaries of the Upanishads, Vedas and the yogic sciences to understand the representations of the past and present through techniques of self-development. It is possible to create a new renaissance of learning to move from historical and literary compulsiveness to historical and literary consciousness.

Keywords: History and literature, history as literature, intentions, boundaries of the Upanishads, Vedas and the yogic sciences.

Today I wish to interrogate three words which are basic to the intellectual content of the MELUS 2017 Conference namely, intentions, history and literature. Intention refers to a wish, a conception formed by directing the mind towards an object. The word comes from the Latin *intendere* meaning to direct attention or stretch towards something. In Sanskrit the word *sankalpa* implies a representation of desire or positive thought that we want to manifest in the world—a promise we make to ourselves. *San* means idea found in the heart and *kalpa* means “rule that I will follow.” In yoga, which implies a connection or union with the world, we make *sankalpa* to manifest self-development, to realize something. It is not “I want” but “I am” involving both effort and surrender. In the 34th chapter of Vajasaneyi Samhita Shukla Yajurveda *sankalpa* becomes a part of *maya* not as illusion but through the mysterious power of the will or *sankalpa sakti* that allows gods to create the world between reality and illusion. The *maya* is *prakriti* or primal matter and possessor of the *maya* is *maheswara*. The word *cetana* is frequently used in Buddhism to imply direction and urge.

Therefore intention is a method, a vidhi which can be realized through purification. The eastern conception is positive and involves both effort and surrender at the same time a belief in the illusion of creation. The word history deals with past events with a belief that the past can be systematically studied and accessed; it creates a systematic narrative.

The changing nature of history and literature in the west over the last two centuries has created confusion regarding their boundaries and beliefs. In the early decades of the twentieth century the distinction between the two was just a matter of nomenclature but gradually this began to change. Theodore Roosevelt writing in *History as Literature* (1913) argued that the distinction between history and literature was just a dispute of “terminology.” He explained that the Romans did not distinguish between history, poetry and science—“poetry was accepted by a great scientific philosopher as the appropriate vehicle for teaching the lessons of science and philosophy” (Roosevelt 1). The Greeks accepted history as a method to know the world. The Greek word *historia* means knowing by inquiry. The Sanskrit tradition in India did not see a distinction between history and literature. In India we understand history as *ithiyas*, which range from heroic history (*ithiys charitra*) and family history (*vansha charitra*) to royal history (*royal history*) and old traditional history (*purana*). The Indian conception of *ithiyas* differs from the western conception of history significantly. *Ithihas* includes the bardic songs (of Rajasthan), old traditional stories (*purana*) and biographies (*charitra*) and are not necessarily written narratives with a significant ideology to interpret the past.

The written forms of history and literature are widely accepted. Inheriting the western tradition it is possible to see history as a written form. Histories are never made, they are written. And because they are written, they are read. Literature is not organic reality but written and read. Both are accessible only through language. We assume that events in the past can be meaningfully understood and spoken about. We assume that we can give significance to human emotion (White 2). The narrative a historian places upon events and emotions express the temporality of human experience manifested through language. This is more so with literature. We also assume that issues in liberal education are more Eurocentric, foundational and West-oriented and categories such as “history” or “literature” also share such assumptions.

History and literature should not be just ideological analysis or mimetic representation but a consciousness and method to live a better life that the ancient wisdom of the Upanishads, Vedas and Yogic sciences propagated centuries ago. History and literature should not be just separable or collapsible categories but reveal the constantly improving process of lived life within by giving significance to it.

Some of the past is not just retrieved but enacted and lived as significant memory of the past. To place a strict cause and effect continuity over large bodies of historical past is not our main concern. Since the western historical tradition does this it becomes somewhat contentious. The rise of subaltern history or fragmented histories is a revolt against a causal narrative. Historiography is somewhat different. It is the study of writing of history--solutions, technologies and applications. The attempt to claim a past through history and construct a national identity along those lines is well-understood now through the works of Indian and western scholars. Sudipta Kaviraj points out that Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay attempted to claim an Aryan past like many Bengalis and Bhudev Mukhopadhyay imagined India in the phrase *Swapnalabdha Bharatvarser Itihas* or a “dream history of displacements.” The desire for a “collective self” meant claiming the Aryan past as their past (Kaviraj 123). K. N. Panikkar also argues that the historiography of modern India emerges from the renaissance of pre-political anti-colonial phase (Panikkar 1). Historians concentrate more on historiography and interpretation and less to understand people’s way of life and beliefs.

Intentions of History and Literature

Both history and literature arise from subterranean human intentions as inorganic forms of representation, negotiating the boundary of the self and other, dreaming an unrealized past and reaching out to an unknown future. The ideological underpinnings of German philosophy, the ascendancy of Europe and the rise of American English as a global lingua franca universalized European intellectual and cultural specificity creating an intellectual marketplace, a global literary audience and a network of texts. Anglophonic writers inherit this global marketplace and gear their ideas and anxieties to address a cosmopolitan audience. A convincing representation of “historical fact” and “social reality” through major discourses of literature, history and anthropology are embedded in foundational belief of non inferential knowledge and use artful

rhetoric to reveal the “truth.”

Both history and literature are powerful, often ideological, forms of writing, representing a time relationship within a culturally specific moment. They imitate reality in specific ways and create a hypothetical empiricism or idealism through rhetorical devices. Therefore, convincing literary or historical texts are those which are rhetorically moving and artfully contrived. Often facts in history are interpretations or even biases of the historians, while fancy in literature might at times convey oft-ignored truths. The selection and choice of reality are inherent in literary and historical representation. The mood, temper, fashion and ideas of the age often determine which “facts” from the past are converted into “believable facts” of history and literature. The present also influences the working of history and literature. The mimesis of literature and the historiography of history learn from each other to provide a better understanding of the world we inherit.

The Impact of Colonialism on Modern Indian Scholarship

The intellectual tradition and the present academic scholarship in India as it is practiced today are largely shaped by colonial practices. We see the impact of British colonialism in the growth of popular scholarly disciplines like law, history, and literature. We still have a strong belief in paper work and procedural process in government, bureaucracy and trade. The habits of our mind embrace modernity but time and again these habits return to orientalist assumptions spread by the Empire. The early nationalists were aware of the colonial burden Indians carried and explained it through economic and cultural metaphors. The economic ideas of nationalism and the negative impact of colonialism were largely accepted by a wide spectrum of nationalists from Savarkar to Gandhi. There was hardly any vigorous attempt to engage the colonial conquest or the Indian response to it in modern intellectual terms. Williams and Wanchoo believe that cultural understanding was based on the “benign” understanding of India which was encouraged by the works of scholars like William Jones, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Maurice Winternitz, Max Muller, Sir Henry Maine and others. Many of the British and German orientalists promoted the ideas related to the “significance of Sanskrit, the plurality of village republics and the spiritual heritage of India.” Over the last three decades the works of scholars and historians like Edward Said and Bernard Cohn have made us conscious of power relations affecting the production of knowledge. Cohn has shown how the result of the census impacts on Indian self-perception and

defines boundaries (Williams & Wanchoo 2-3).

Early in the eighteenth century the German orientalists saw a connection between the Aryan mind and culture and the German culture. Later when the British orientalists came in the nineteenth century the connection between the German and Indian cultures was already established. The works of British orientalist Maurice Winternitz identified the influence of Sanskrit literature on German literature and philosophy in the eighteenth century. He discovered a relationship of “mind and culture” between the Germans and Indians because of their “common Indo-Aryan linguistic background” (Williams & Wanchoo 20). The spread of orientalist ideas and study of Sanskrit in the nineteenth and twentieth century was largely responsible for creating “the wonder that was India.” Sanskrit texts were used to codify knowledge about Indian laws, comprehend religious texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, the epics, and the Sanskrit aesthetics. This would lead to arguments about the philosophical wisdom of the ancient Aryans, the absence of a caste system, the existence of assemblies and republics, systemization of law, philosophy, philology and science.

A new interest in Sanskrit texts made the study of the Vedas, Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita revolve around popular themes of Aryan wisdom. Sheldon Pollock has explained that the Sanskrit lexicography and its evolving intellectual tradition became the foundation of the vernacular thought of the north and south. The rise of the Sanskrit cosmopolis expanding from Central Asia to South East Asia made Sanskrit the lingua franca of intellectual inquiry and discourse without the geography or politics of an Empire (Pollock 6-37).

Understanding the Mind—East and West

The mind as we understand in the west is capable of using the sharp knife of intellect to dissect and understand the world of the five senses. It can only present or represent what it has collected through direct experience or reading. To be impartial and free from ideology and personal biases is impossible without accessing the energy of life or kriya. Both literature and history are partial representations of life and can be seen as partly illusory, just as life itself is a big illusion. So in India history was not represented the way it was in the West where there was a clear demarcation between written forms of history and written forms of literature. This led to western orientalists and many modern day scholars to assume that India lacked a sense of history. Edward Said argued

that orientalism in history arose out of “fundamentally fractious” circumstances and was therefore connected to the “tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history” (Said xvi-ii). Maurice Winternitz who systematized the history of Indian literature concluded that Indians had no sense of history. In recent times V.S. Naipaul complained that Indian writers like R.K. Narayan have no sense of history; and consequently their writing “hangs in the air.” Writers like Narayan see the isolated eternity of Malgudi and ignore the 400 years of Indian history in their writing, a history replete with conquest and defeat (Suroor 2). Romila Thapar on the other hand explains that ancient Indians may not have had “conventional form of historical writing” but they did have a “historical consciousness of the past.” According to her there were three distinct historiographies in ancient India—the Bardic tradition, the Puranic and the Shramanic. She believes that the Puranas were “not entirely mythical, since they contain references to historical events” (Thapar 30). Krishna Charitra by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya attempts to find the real Krishna separating him from myth and legend. The past is also connected to the concept of linear or circular time. Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutra* believes that past, future and present exist eternally. The difference amongst them is to do with their moral character (Ranganathan 283). Both history and literature also grapple with the concept of time to conceptualize the graspable past.

History today concentrates more on analytical historiographies and ideological debates. Historians see themselves more as interpreting and analyzing historical facts and not as creators of the past. They do not want to understand how people lived, believed or died. To narrate the history of the past with conviction a historian needs the urgencies and skill of a creative writer. Hayden White states that “believable” history is written by those who can convince others with their rhetoric.

Literary writers have often won international prizes for documenting the emotional life of an era—the courage and suffering of ordinary people. Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievich won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2015 but the citation referred to her “monumental” work in documenting the “suffering and courage in the Soviet Union.” Sir Winston Churchill’s writing was singled out for praise in 1953 for possessing “historical and biographical” detail and a style with “brilliant oratory” that defended “exalted human values.” A historian could use a powerful style to document historical events to make them more convincing and interesting, something that authentic historians would object. The revisionist representation of the First World War by Niall Ferguson

had a profound effect on the general public as serious piece of history though it was derided by academics for eliding difficult historical questions. Today nobody reads Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) but often its irony, detachment and wit can be quite interesting.

Conclusion

We work under the shadow of western disciplines and find it somewhat difficult to use our methods or vidhi to investigate reality. In the world of digital technology knowledges from the west and east are merging as they once did in the 18th century. Just as German and English orientalists sought the knowledge of the Sanskrit tradition we should also create a third wave of globalization, create a new cosmopolis that would address the concerns of our day. In the last 35 years the rise of digital technology has created a new explosion of knowledge both in the academic world and outside encouraging a new interaction of disciplines. The power of western publishing houses and universities is on the decline giving way to a new synergy of marginalized knowledge. With the implosion of the West and the United States due to demographic and racial reasons a new knowledge space is opened for the East to emerge once again. The issues that confront us today in literature and history are the tremendous unhappiness of displaced populations, economic inequality, cultural and linguistic tensions, closing down of national borders and environmental degradation. All these and much more prevent the spread of cosmopolitan feeling of concern for the other. Can we grasp the new challenge? Can we occupy the newly vacated space?

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Examining the Personal Accounts of Takeda and Qureshi as Literature and History

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Abstract: The paper analyses the early twentieth century published travelogue of Takeda and unpublished memoir of Qureshi to show the trade connections between the Indians and the Japanese, the social and trade networks and the rhetoric of a travelogue and a memoir. Both the accounts present historical evidence regarding Japanese society and Diasporic movement and yet rely heavily on literary devices such as point of view, first person account and emotion. Together they add new evidence to the history of the early and mid-twentieth century dealing with Japanese society and Indian politics.

Keywords: Hariprabha Mullick Takeda, Ghulam Ahmad Qureshi, Literature and history, Indian and Japanese.

The paper examines the personal travel accounts of two Indians who portray the society and institutions of early modern Japan both as literature and history. Recently postmodern scholars have argued over the collapsing boundary between literature and history and some have even proposed the redundancy of history (White 1-5). The paper assumes that personal accounts such as travelogues, diaries and memoirs are objective representations of the past and therefore a part of historical facts using creative texts, narrative and rhetorical devices to convince the reader.

The paper examines the travelogue of Hariprabha Mullick Takeda (1890-1972) and unpublished memoir of Ghulam Ahmad Qureshi (1915-1990) to shed light on the Indian trade Diaspora in Japan during the early twentieth century. Though Muslim, Parsi and Sindhi traders who came to Yokohama and Kobe during the 1870s and 1890s were large, it was the Indian intellectuals, royal family and travelers, who left behind written accounts of lived life during this period. While some like Nawab Hamid Ali Khan (1875-1930) visited Japan for sightseeing and published their travelogue in 1896, a majority of travel writers were seeking political independence, economic progress or Japanese modernization (Green 615). Their visits were often highlighted by local

newspapers and documented in their own writings, which help us to recreate the past.

Though hardly recorded, the Indian traders were more prolific during the late nineteenth century. In this sense the accounts of Takeda and Qureshi provide us with the encounter with the Japanese culture and Indian Diasporic mobility. Takeda, a Bengali married to a Japanese trader in Dacca, and Qureshi from a Yokohama trading family joining INA in the twentieth century, constitute the Indian trade Diaspora of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Though their works are neither standard nor representative history, their writings reflect their unique perceptions about Japanese society, customs and life during this period.

Bangamahilar Japan Yatra: A Travelogue of Hariprabha Takeda

Hariprabha Takeda was from the orthodox Brahmo Samaj Mullick family of Dacca, who married a Japanese migrant, Uemon Takeda in 1906. Since 1902, Uemon Takeda worked in a soap factory around the Bay of Bengal and immediately afterwards established his own soap factory in Girigram, Dacca. With the national policy of promoting new industries in Japan, Kobe and Osaka started flourishing as the producer of light industrial goods including soap and the rapid expansion of intra-Asia trade led some pioneer Japanese to venture abroad as Uemon Takeda did, though the marriage with a foreigner was uncommon both in India and Japan.

Takeda's travelogue cum socio-history memoir, *Bangamahilar Japan Yatra* or *A Bengali Lady's Visit to Japan*, was on her four months sojourn from Dacca to Japan from November 1912 to May 1913,¹ originally written as a half-demi size 64 page travelogue in Bengali and published in 1915 in Dacca.² As Japan lifted the travel restrictions for foreigners only a decade before their visit to Japan in 1899, Takeda was one of the earliest foreigners to travel and explore Japan beyond the foreign settlements in major ports of Japan. Her account ranges from sea voyages, family gatherings, interaction with neighbors, visit to Nikko, Ueno and Imperial Palace, social manners, kimono wearing, wooden house architecture, fear of fire, visiting temples, describing education for women, marriage rituals, women's hair styles, use of tissue paper instead of handkerchiefs, difficulty of learning Japanese script, rice cleaning, mechanical tools and bathing rituals.

In contrast to other anti-imperialist and reformist accounts from Bengal and Hyderabad,³ Takeda's account presents a wide variety of Japanese social and cultural practices. It is unique in presenting the global trade diasporic movements of the twentieth century during the rapid modernization in Japan, the perspective of Bengali Brahman women of the period and an insider's account of lived life in Japan.

The travelogue begins with the short description of Takeda's eagerness to meet her in-laws in Japan some day, the long aspired wish since her marriage, which was about to be fulfilled. On 30th October 1912, the trip to Japan was formally decided and she started writing the record of the journey to Japan. The Takeda family took a local ship from Naranyanganj port to Goalanda where they changed to a train to Calcutta. In Calcutta they stayed with Shimizu families who provided boarding and lodging and Hattori families helped them buy underwear and gloves and food for their journey such as biscuits. From Calcutta, they went on to a cargo ship that had converted some space for passengers. It took over forty days from Calcutta to Kobe, via ports of Rangoon (where they stayed with Hariprabha's schoolmate), Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong and Moji, before visiting her in-laws in the village in Nagoya. It is possible to see a large diasporic network of friends the Takeda family had and used their help.

The motive of the journey to Japan for Hariprabha Takeda was somewhat unique as it was not for a political purpose or tourism but to visit her in-laws and to seek their blessings. However she does bring in her identity as a Bengali Brahmin and the popular discourses that she might have encountered regarding nation and identity. Her prejudices and biases are reflected in her description and observation of social manners and customs and the understanding of class structure in Japan. Being a devout Brahma Samaji her family conducted two farewell ceremonies before her departure for her protection and self-development; one in the Brahma Samaj temple in Girigram Dacca and the other in her own house. The Raja Bahadur of Dinajpur granted 25 taka before her departure to Japan as well.

When she observed the education system at women's schools for young girls in Tokyo she admired

the opportunities available there and wrote about the wide varieties of humanistic and scientific disciplines such as Chemistry, Botany, Geography, gymnastic exercises together with cooking, washing, cleaning, gardening, sewing, music, art, moral education and English available for them. She was appreciative of such opportunity, writing that there seems to be all possible opportunities given to them to become complete human beings for the nation through such an education system.

Such a viewpoint is shared in other descriptions too; for instance in her writing on a day of the Japanese women. Takeda describes that women in Japan begin a day's work by opening the doors of the house, folding beddings before making breakfast and sending children to school. During daytime, some women work outside as well as completing household chores and bringing wages for the family. To her surprise, there is no objection or hesitation among women in having an occupation. Women in this country, she continues, whether rich or poor do not spend more than twelve hours to cook, eat and sleep. The rest of the time is used for important personal and social work such as self, family, and progress of the nation.

Her travelogue after arriving in Japan hardly records conversation, however, her impression and opinion on the social norms and habits in Japan are expressly written. Based on the detailed description of her observation of scenery and behaviors of people, the account provides rich information of Japan from the perspective of a Bengali Brahmo woman.

Hariprabha also shows us an insider's perspective of the Japanese society with quite descriptive and visual representation of scenery, attire and behavior. For example, she provides an in-depth analysis of the *ho-ji* or a Buddhist service conducted by the parents-in-law in celebrating the safe return of the son and his bride. The *ho-ji* ceremony, which started by taking a picture of sixty relatives, including 12 monks and their family wearing good quality expensive attire was conducted in the morning, afternoon and the next day with four hour long prayer with all the monks reciting the sutra followed by the male family members reciting the sutra together. Food was provided to the family and neighbors during the *ho-ji*, but as the numbers unexpectedly became large and became three hundred or four hundred, as people expected to see Hariprabha, donation was requested and 15-6 yen (equivalent to 23-24 rupees) were collected even though each gave a little. The money collected was given to the monks. Being in the curious crowd during *ho-ji* made

her feel exhausted and her brother-in-law had to take her inside the house. Though she details her experience in a Japanese household, it is possible to see that she is treated as a foreign guest.

As can be seen from above, Takeda's socio-cultural travelogue eloquently describes the social customs of Japan and shows an interesting narrative of the experience of the early trade diaspora. Her writing is not strictly written in a diary format as she skips dates and often summarizes and comments on events which may not have taken place on that day. Though her travelogue is primarily social and personal and does not mention about her husband's business, it does give a picture of the Japanese trade network in South and East Asia.

G. A. Qureshi's Unpublished Memoir

The unpublished work of Qureshi has many personal reactions about his life in Japan, the INA, travel to Harbin, his identity as a Muslim, and capture in the Red Fort at Delhi. The memoir is not uniformly written and skips dates and years but highlights the reactions of Indians living abroad and their negative perceptions of leaders involved in India's freedom struggle. It is an important account of India's trading Diaspora involved in the political and social struggles of their mother country. Written half a century after Takeda's travelogue, a memoir by Qureshi sheds light on the experience in Japan as an Indian growing up in Japan.

The manuscript runs into 41 pages and covers his early childhood in the 1910s to his family memories in the 1940s, followed by the 1950s when he devoted himself to the freedom struggle movement and left Japan. The original manuscript was in the possession of his relatives in Japan but unfortunately the latter half was lost and the script covers the time only till the 1940s. It is uncertain when exactly this manuscript was written but as the usage of the term "Bangladesh" suggests, it was written after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Qureshi was 56 in 1971 so it can be assumed that this manuscript was written during the later part of his life as his own biographic memoir.

Qureshi was born in Kanagawa, Japan, as the grandson of an Indian merchant, Abdool Kaza, who married a Japanese lady from a large trade family. Kaza was originally from Madras and started trade business in Yokohama and Kobe from the mid-1890s dealing with Japanese curios and indigo

trade and succeeded reasonably and later expanded the business between Japan, India, China and Russia. Though Kaza became a Japanese citizen he still wanted to maintain his Indian roots and sought an Indian trader, Said Qureshi (father of G. A. Qureshi) for his daughter's hand in marriage.

Sharing both Indian and Japanese connections, Qureshi involved himself in the trade across borders and learnt Japanese, English, French and Russian. As his grandfather was one of the earliest Indian Muslims to settle in Japan and hosted the gatherings of Indians, Qureshi as a boy was surrounded by a "good many Indian revolutionaries" who had a "high revolutionary spirit" such as Rash Bihari Bose, Raja Mahindra Pratap and Bal-u-Guatta who frequently gathered at his (grandfather's) house for secret meetings. He himself was motivated to get involved in the freedom struggle and in 1942, at the age of 27, joined the Indian freedom struggle movement.

He joined in the South Asia Movement from Japan, became the director of the Swar Youngmens' Training Institute (S. Y. T. I.) in 1942 and then worked as a personal staff for S. C. Bose as he could speak multiple languages. This memoir is interesting, though short and incomplete, in shedding light on pre-war commerce by Indians from Japan to India and to Harbin; the experience of an Indian individual who was drawn into the freedom struggle, and the activities of INA members in Japan in pre and during the Wars.

The memoir of Qureshi has four major concerns that are, complicated family issues, the freedom struggle involvement, brief commentaries about Indian Political leaders and women in his life. Qureshi's writing does not follow a clear format of a diary and apart from rough categorization of months and / or years, no chronology is maintained and therefore it is hard to place a cause and effect narrative on Qureshi's writing. Undoubtedly it falls into the category of a memoir with a political bias. Qureshi's memoir is often interspersed with personal and emotional appeals to the readers imbued with his feelings and reactions. Takeda is better written perhaps as it was later edited for publication. Qureshi's memoir was never intended to be published and till date has not been published.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning, the diary and the memoir create a figural realism which falls

between history and literature and uses the methods of both. They are neither purely imaginative nor completely factual. However they do provide an individual point of view to understand the social and political reality with an overarching cause and effect narrative. While Takeda's travelogue covers the year 1905 while Qureshi's memoir covers forty years. Both Takeda and Qureshi's accounts weave a literary and historical narrative which holds our interest as part of lived experience.

Notes

1. This travelogue is about her first journey, though she travelled later to Japan in 1924 and 1941 during which she met Rashbehari Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose who were present in Japan, and later works as a war correspondent on behalf of the Azad Hind Fauj.
2. The Japanese translation consists of 26 pages and is kept in the Kobe City Archives (*Kobeshi Monjokan*).
3. See Green (2013) for the varied writings on the visit to Japan with an anti-imperialist gaze and Aqeel (2010) for the educational reform of Hyderabad.

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A Postethnic Revisiting of History in Rita Dove's *The Yellow House on the Corner* and *Thomas and Beulah*

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Abstract: This paper analyses Hollinger's theory of postethnicity as an attempt to formulate a new "collective memory" by challenging the metanarrative of history as a racialized domain with parallel frames of memory for blacks and whites in America. It will trace two of Rita Dove's collections of poems, *The Yellow House on the Corner* and *Thomas and Beulah*, as foreshadowing a trend in African-American writing whose specifics Hollinger would define in the nineties by the term "postethnic." Building on the precept that race is an "anachronistic term" that nevertheless gained the force of reality through segregation of domains in the psyche reinforced through racial memory, Dove seeks to counter historical myths through metaphor and imagery. Thus, while *Thomas and Beulah* foregrounds individual lives against the backdrop of slavery, it eschews the celebration of Blackness as a counter to the ethnocentric, essentialist norms of identity construction for African-Americans. *The Yellow House on the Corner* builds on Dove's travels to Europe to effect a transatlantic crossing over in the psyche that corroborates Hollinger's view of the postethnic countering of race through "voluntary affiliations." Through her revisiting of the spatio-psychological domain of the memory, Dove's poems reformulate the framework which defines historicity and the epistemology of race. In this epistemic formulation of history, Dove emphasises how cultures carry their antecedents and memory perpetrates itself through signification. Even as the language of the poems retreats into the symbolic, it emphasises the role of perspective in framing ideologies which then become learned truth.

Keywords: America, postethnicity, history, metanarrative, memory, trauma.

Historical narratives in America have traditionally conformed to racial domains, and parallel frames of memory exist for the races. The prevalence of prescriptive identities conforming to

specific ethno-racial blocks has contributed further to polarisation, and the present and the past are conjoined in a dichotomous framing of events that depends on racial affiliations. Although it has long been accepted as “artificial, constructed, and without inherent meaning” (Kolchin 157), and “an ideological, political deployment rather than a neutral, biologically determined element of nature” (Jacobson 14), the role of race in the construction of identities in the United States has been very real. Even as it results in contradictory socio-political and cultural notions of what comprises “national identity” in the United States, it nevertheless plays an undeniable part in constructing the framework that supports notions of history as a twin legacy. In the 1990s, David Hollinger realized that this dichotomous framing of the past prevented interracial connections being formed, with identities having to adhere to prescriptive ethno-racial labels. He posited the theory of postethnicity as a way to accept the realities of a multicultural society made more complex by the legacy of slavery and miscegenation, and stated that “identity,” which was static, needed to be replaced by voluntary “affiliations” (7), which would take into account both the legacy of the past as well as the postmodern fluidity of existence. This paper will analyze Rita Dove’s foreshadowing of Hollinger’s theory of postethnicity in her poetry in an attempt to formulate a new “collective memory” by challenging the metanarrative of history as a racialized domain. It will trace two of Dove’s collections of poems, *The Yellow House on the Corner* and *Thomas and Beulah*, as initiating a trend in African-American writing whose specifics Hollinger would later define as “postethnic.”

W. E. B. Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, talked of race as a “social construct,” saying that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line” (xi). African-American writing has traditionally exhibited traits of Du Boisian “double consciousness”... “two warring souls in one dark body” (194), where the linearity of the gaze subscribed to the traditional notion of trapping imagery within the binaries of black / white, us / them, centre / margin, looking out from the white centre, as it were, at the fringes. This consciousness of the racialized self at the fringes builds itself through imagery. In a study that focuses on racialized imagery as constructing reality, Richard Dyer observes that images organise the modern world, observing that “...since race in itself—insofar as it is anything in itself—refers to some intrinsically insignificant geographical / physical differences between people, it is the imagery of race that is in play” (1). Dove’s poetry inverts this imagery to deliberate on how history is constructed through images that are dominated

by colour. Historically, the colour of the skin became the sole identifier of identity for African-Americans, and the term “black” a pejorative signifier that carried undeniable associations with slavery. The links between the present and the past were forged through the colour of the skin.

In a marked departure from this trend, Dove’s poems eschew both ethnocentric singularity and an assimilationist outlook, exploring the possibilities of a postmodern blurring of frames of existence to revisit historical narratives. Building on the precept that race is an “anachronistic term” (Hollinger 9) that nevertheless gained the force of reality through segregation of domains in the psyche reinforced through racial memory, Dove seeks to reveal the politics of this dichotomous framing of the past. Her poetry seeks to counter the linearity of historical frames through metaphor and imagery, making the black and the white collaborators in an attempt to juxtapose parallel frames of memory. Thus, while *Thomas and Beulah* foregrounds individual lives against the backdrop of slavery, it eschews the celebration of Blackness as a counter to the ethnocentric, essentialist norms of identity construction for African-Americans. *The Yellow House on the Corner* builds on Dove’s travels to Europe to effect a transatlantic crossing over in the psyche that corroborates Hollinger’s view of the postethnic countering of race through voluntary affiliations. Through her revisiting of the psycho-spatial domain of the memory, the poems in both these collections reformulate the framework which defines historicity and the epistemology of race. In this epistemic reformulation of history, Dove emphasises how cultures carry their antecedents and memory perpetrates itself through signification. Even as the language of the poems retreats into the symbolic, it emphasises the role of perspective in framing ideologies which then become learned truth.

The Yellow House on the Corner, published in 1980, was Dove’s first collection of poems. The work juxtaposes frames of memory from the past with her travels in Europe. Dove traces the experience of being an African-American, both as a slave in antebellum America and as a traveller in contemporary Europe. Building on her own experiences, she traces the cultural effects of travelling, both figuratively as one who attempts to go back in memory to the site where slavery becomes the present, and literally in her transatlantic travels in the 1970s. Her poems, thus, transcend space and time in attempting to explore what it means to be African-American. In her writing, slavery is a recurring motif, and colour remains a potent symbol of identification.

The first section of *The Yellow House on the Corner* initiates the transatlantic crossing over as Dove borrows from Japanese and European myths. In this section, titled “The Life,” she portrays an awareness of objectification and of being “black,” the colour of her skin making her the representative of the suffering of slaves. As she travels through Germany, Dove becomes aware of her own alienation—“the object of cultural stereotyping” (Righaletto 7). The traveller who says, “...the possibilities / are golden tresses in a nutshell” (5-6) soon comes face to face with reality, saying of herself, “I a stranger / in this desert, nursing the tough skins of figs” (17-19). This awareness of racialized embodiment makes her aware of the signifiers that confer labels that then translate into identities. Her writing reflects the need to transcend these prescriptive ethno-racial identifiers to reach back to the white roots of the black man in America. Believing that Europe is an inescapable part of African presence in America, she posits a postethnic crossing across boundaries of colour. Righaletto says of Dove: “As a writer she turns her own estrangement to account” (8). White and black converge to portray the unchanging nature of existence for the African American—“Our lives will be the same” (14). Exploring these as cultural motifs, the poems trace the complex nature of the transatlantic crossing that defies labelling.

History plays an important role in the construction of images that then live on as truth. The construction of dichotomous identities on either side of the colour line excludes the important role played by the Other in history. Dove feels the need to revisit history for a reconstitution of images that construct memories of slavery. Her poems strive to transcend the DuBoisian “double consciousness” (194) that results from parallel frames of memory for the centre and the margins by juxtaposing both the frames in a symbolic exposition of colours. Her awareness of the constructed nature of double consciousness leads her to explore difference as a myth. The other poems in the collection deconstruct both European and African-American history to expose trauma as a common area for both. In these poems, history functions as a symbolic spatio-temporal domain wherein trauma is neither black nor white, and its myths are exposed as constructed. In these poems, Dove undertakes a transatlantic crossing over to create a parallel frame wherein both black and white become symbols of a traumatic past. In a poem titled “the Snow King,” she talks of “a far far land” (1) where lime filled spaces symbolize the not too distant holocaust, and the snow king cries for “the night as soft as antelope’s eyes” (7). It is a world of destruction, where diversity

is dead, and the heart of the perpetrator “cracked...a slow fire, a garnet” (10). In the next poem, titled “Sightseeing,” Dove explores the meaning of symbols of history as we view it. While visiting a church destroyed after the Allies bombed it, she talks about the impossibility of viewing history devoid of symbols. The temporal distancing of the present from the past lends the past symbolic meaning. Dove says:

Let's look
At the facts. Forget they are children of angels

and they become childish monsters.
Remember, and an arm gracefully upraised

is raised not in anger but a mockery of gesture. (23-27)

In her poems, Dove juxtaposes American and European myths to create a frame wherein she explores these as strategies for survival in an adverse world. Inferring that history itself is a symbolic reconstruction that provides an escape from “the vulgarity of life in exemplary size” (28-29), she then attempts to deconstruct the myths that prevent an objective view of the past. The next poem in the collection, titled “Upon Meeting Don L. Lee in a Dream,” portrays the mythical Civil Rights leader as a figure whose stature is diminished as the myth surrounding him disintegrates. Her description of Lee is anything but reverent:

I can see caviar
Imbedded like buckshot between his teeth.
His hair falls out in clumps of burned-out wire.
The music grows like branches in the wind. (13-16)

The three poems that follow this poem visit contemporary black neighbourhoods. The satirical reference in these poems to Biblical wisdom brings to the fore the distorting nature of both religious and cultural beliefs aimed at imprisoning the black man in the past. The first poem in the next section, titled “Five Elephants” also talks of memory and of how the past limits the present. Emphasising that memory has been constructed through imagery, Dove uses the same technique to deconstruct their power across spatio-temporal erasures:

Five umbrellas, five
Willows, five bridges and their shadows!

They lift their trunks, hooking the sky
I would rush into, split

pod of quartz and lemon. I could say
they are five memories, but
that would be unfair.

Rather pebbles seeking refuge in the heart.

They move past me. I turn and follow,
and for hours we meet no one else. (7-16)

Dove's assertion that memory limits experiential transcending of barriers, visible in the image of the metaphorical trunks of elephants "hooking the sky" (9), permeates her sense of African-American identity being limited by cultural and social norms structuring identity construction. In the process, Gilroy's assertion that cultures cannot be "sealed off hermetically" (2) is reflected in the contentious role of race in constructing identities structured by memory. It is a conscious understanding of how the mechanics of memory are constructed to restrict the individual that permits him to transcend these barriers. The poem "Geometry" sets the writer free of such restrictions. Dove contends that the mere realization of the presence of systemically structured norms that inform images that in turn construe memory as distinct frames opens up a transcultural space that is heterotopic in nature. She says:

I prove a theorem and the house expands:
the windows jerk free to hover near the ceiling,
the ceiling floats away with a sigh.

As the walls clear themselves of everything
but transparency, the scent of carnations
leaves with them. I am out in the open" (1-7)

The need for a space where frames of memory juxtapose is defined by the concluding lines of the poem "Geometry." It is only after the ceiling floats away that perspectives, symbolised by "windows" can turn into winged butterflies:

I am out in the open

and above the windows have hinged into butterflies,

sunlight glinting where they've intersected.

They are going to some point true and unproven. (6-9)

The deconstruction of memory as a frame built through (racialized) imagery lends credence to the concept of contingent historicity. Hollinger, in proposing postethnicity as a way to build affiliations across the colour line, talks of the growing acceptance of historicity, that is, “the contingent, temporally, and socially situated character of our beliefs and values, of our institutions and practices” (60). Dove’s poems examine closely the myths and beliefs that live on as larger-than-life truths in the memory, preventing emotional distancing. In her first collection of poems, she posits travelling as a way towards this distancing. As “the ceiling floats away” in the memory, the poet revisits slavery and the sites of historical trauma. Each poem in this section deals with individual lives affected by slavery. The use of colloquialism in “Belinda’s Petition” combined with an emphasis on historical authenticity in “The Transport of Slaves From Maryland to Mississippi” brings to the fore individual consciousnesses buried in the metanarrative of disjunctive frames of memory. Vendler talks of Dove’s “willingness to make her readers uneasy,” yet ascribes to her poetry a “wish to achieve historical linguistic probability” (66). In terming her poetry “relatively unsuccessful historical excursions in a lyric time-machine” (66), however, she misses the pattern that does not aim for historical authenticity or lyrical perfection, but uses both to light up memory built through images that are perspectival.

Having achieved this, Dove then presents history as individual, rather than part of a collective memory. This is an attempt to reconstitute the entire framework that constitutes memory. Her third collection of poems, titled *Thomas and Beulah*, written in 1986, revisits slavery as a “lived experience.” The poems foreground the lives of Thomas, a male slave, and Beulah, a female slave, against the backdrop of historical events that mark the twentieth century. This collection builds on the deconstruction of the real and the mythical in her first collection, as well as the objectivity that permits an acceptance of the Other as part of individual history. For Dove, history is lived apart from official records; it is in the everyday lived experience of common men and women that history is to be found. Here, the personal is the political. It marks the struggle of its protagonists as each aspires to the American Dream, and the poems examine closely what it means to be black in postbellum America. Gender lines are drawn as the lives of both Thomas and Beulah play themselves out against the backdrop of historical events.

Thomas and Beulah is divided into two sections, the first tracing the life of Thomas, and the second of Beulah. The first poem, titled “The Event,” marks the beginning of Thomas’ journey from Tennessee in 1919 as part of the Great Migration. The mandolin, central to Thomas’ life, marks the first poem that records both hope and sadness. Music, for Dove, was the black man’s language, drawing him into its stoic folds in a racialized world. The poem also presents the wheel, a powerful trope in the life of Thomas, and a symbol of the black man’s powerlessness:

They spat where the wheel
churned mud and moonlight,
they called to the tarantulas
down among the bananas
to come out and dance. (9-13)

However, Thomas’ companion drowns, and Thomas is left to reach Aakron, Ohio, in 1921, alone. The second poem, titled “Variation on Pain” marks grief as the mandolin lives the gasps of Lym as he struggled for air. The third poem, titled “Jiving” sees Thomas arrive in Aakron, alone and full of dreams. As the poems trace Thomas’ life in Ohio, personal history dominates the frame. They follow Thomas’ courtship of Beulah, and await with him the birth of his first child. “The Charm” talks of memory, as the days in the South flash into the reality of a life spent pursuing the American Dream:

The canary sang more furious
than ever, but he heard
the whisper: *I ain’t dead.*
I just gave you my life. (18-21)

The memory of Lem’s death never leaves Thomas as he lives out his life in the North. The poems follow him as he lives through the war, and the weariness of spirit is reflected in “the negativizing of the imagery of light in the poems” (Righelato 84). The title of the last poem in Thomas’ section, “Thomas at the Wheel,” indicates that life has come full circle for him. Ironically, although he is at the wheel, Thomas has never been in complete control of his life. He has lived through two world wars and has spent his life trying to assert his identity in a world marked by economic hardship and racial inequality, and his journey is marked by the image of water wherein it began:

This, then, the river he had to swim.

Through the wipers the drugstore
shouted, lit up like a casino,
neon script leering from the shuddering asphalt. (1-4)

Beulah's life is marked by colour. Her section of the collection is titled "Canary in Bloom," the image of the encaged canary in direct contradiction to Thomas' freedom symbolised by water. The first poem of the section, titled "Taking in Wash," shows her awareness of her blackness: "She was Papa's girl, / black though she was" (11-12). The poem emphasises the mother as the strong moral centre of the family, protective of her daughter and firm in the face of her husband's vagaries: "*Touch that child / and I'll cut you down / just like the cedar of Lebanon*" (24-26). Dove portrays the female spirit encaged as it seeks solace in "wavery memory" ("Dusting", 21). Memory for Beulah acts as a protector who helps her weather hardships during the war. For Beulah, reality is much like a dream, and memory takes on the shape of reality. In a poem titled "Weathering Out," she describes herself as "large and placid, a lake" (13) even as "outside / everything shivered in tinfoil" (23). Beulah becomes a calm refuge in a disturbed world, helping both herself and her family to weather the storm. Colour reiterates its presence in the poem titled "The Great Palaces of Versailles" as Beulah contemplates on the difference between myth and reality: "*Nothing nastier than a white person!*" (1). This decentering of European greatness dismantles the projection of greatness vested on the white man in history, making his palaces but symbols of the evils which fostered them.

The section on Beulah acknowledges the past and changes in the present in a more direct manner than the one on Thomas. Even as Beulah reiterates the importance of history, saying, "Where she came from / was the past" ("Wingfoot Lake," 32-33), she expresses no understanding of the yearning back to roots in Africa, saying, "What did she know about Africa?" (26). History for Beulah is personal, and the past is "12 miles into town / where nobody had locked their back door" (33-34). The past for her transcends events as they live on in public memory to result in a weaving together of bits of personal memory. This new fabric woven out of bits of individual lives forms the new "collective memory" that Dove believes is necessary for a postethnic transcending of ethno-racial borders. The lives of both Thomas and Beulah counter history as a metanarrative, emphasising instead the smaller events that become linked in memory. In this collection, as in *The Yellow House on the Corner*, Dove emphasizes personal memory over the official narrative.

Thus, both *The Yellow House on the Corner* and *Thomas and Beulah* emphasise history as personal. Race remains a recurrent trope in both the collections, but Dove eschews a celebration of blackness and black history, choosing instead a wide canvas that exemplifies Hollinger's precepts on the need to replace identity with voluntary affiliations across colour lines. This marks a new trend in contemporary African-American writing, moving away from an ethnocentric approach to race and history to a juxtaposition of collective frames in the memory to form a new collective memory. Arguing that double consciousness occurs when the white origins of African-American identity are repressed to stress ethnocentrism, Dove's poetry repudiates black cultural nationalism in favour of the individual perspective. Positing that an emphasis on black identity only emphasises the white normative, Dove seeks to counter the racialization of memory in her poetry.

Foregrounding history as a personal, transcultural space where frames of memory are juxtaposed to reveal the constructed nature of racially informed identities and affiliations, Dove's poems create what Steffens terms "artistic enspacement" (111), exhibiting a "post-black" sensibility that revisits race, memory and history as racialized psycho-spatial domains, celebrating the fluid nature of identity construction as a journey that must deconstruct race through a transatlantic crossing over into the domain of the white to reclaim its share in history. Using history, myth and language in her poems to effect this transatlantic crossing, Dove attempts a new mode of identity construction that foregrounds the individual over officially recorded public memory.

Post-blackness stresses the liminal; Hollinger's theory of postethnicity presupposes an awareness of the structural networks that function to construct memory. In her attempt to create a textual domain that is at once liminal and heterotopic, Dove's poems initiate a journey into the psycho-spatial domain to admit the Other into this area, thus creating space for a dialogue wherein frames of memory can be juxtaposed. In the process, the forces that go into the making of these frames are analysed as constructs filtering experience. Most importantly, in foregrounding the individual, Dove gives force to Hollinger's contention that postethnicity must allow for a voluntary, individual crossing-over across boundaries of race. In doing so, her work portrays an attempt to reframe not

just the protocols of Black writing, but the entire discourse on race, memory and historical narratives in contemporary America.

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History or Story?: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

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This foul substance is called what?
This foul substance is called history.
And its opposite?
Is the chronicle.
Which may be illustrated?
Profusely.
Is colourful?
In the extreme... (Sealy 376)

Abstract: The writing of history has been vivisected by the surgeon's scalpel in the writing of Amitav Ghosh. It suggests the possibility of meaning concurrent to one historical event and in the wake of such discovery, it emerges that there could also be more historical documents / spaces / aporias to be recovered. This reversal of the quest in history from the interpreter and discoverer forwards many postcolonial dilemmas and existential anxieties which have been overlooked so far. That their interdependence is governed by forces which are predetermined and exploitative in nature becomes evident as the narrative unfolds. Amitav Ghosh does this by putting "retrospective intelligibility" into the narrative. The problematic of representation and reality is interrogated through recovering some fissures of the past and rendering their "incompatibility" with the present. The question arises about the limits of historiography and whether there is any such thing as complete objectivity or is it just a chimera. The paper seeks to examine all these aspects in the light of postcolonial theory. I have made an attempt to examine the difference that results when experience is articulated variously through the discourses of history, stories and

anecdotes. History as a tool of reconstruction of experience used by the state is seen to be in conflict with private reconstruction represented at two levels by stories and anecdotes.

Keywords: History, Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, riots, public and private spaces, Indian Writing in English-Historiography.

In this study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, I have tried to bring out the production and multiplicity of meaning which occurs in historical obliteration and exaggeration. History as a tool of reconstruction of experience used by the state is seen to be in conflict with private reconstruction represented by stories told by individuals. This question about the general nature of representation gets linked to some very debatable questions in contemporary India (the period in which the book is set, the latter half of the twentieth century) revolving around the issues of identity, nation, community and citizenship. The celebrated objectivity of Indian History gets displaced, if not demolished in an attempt to arrive at a comparison of these different discourses. The aforementioned constructions that are vital to the identity of Indian people have been problematised in the novel and the conflict emerges through a comparison of collective and personal narratives. The characters in the novel echo these voices and present the case alternately for history and personal stories. Some characters, therefore, become the carriers of these discourses and appear as the voices of history while others invent history in stories. This study sees the central character of Tridib, the Historian, as the voice of history and the unnamed narrator himself as the storyteller. The mind and body of Tha'mma, the narrator's grandmother represents the site where conflict between these occurs and raises questions on the nature of nation, community and history, issues that are at the heart of this novel.

Simply put, history is the recording of actions of human beings done in the past, however if seen as a discipline that is specific to societies, one can see its significance as a disseminator of ideas. The definition sees the act of recording as essentially unproblematic which is what has driven Western Historiography since Enlightenment when the context and methodology of what constitutes the subject of history today first got formulated. It was only in the twentieth century that this act of recording got problematized. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* was one of the early historians to shift the emphasis vis-à-vis the act of recording from outside facts to the subjective realm of the historian's mind (Collingwood 150). He saw history as the record of past

thoughts reenacted within the historian's mind. According to him, the knowledge of an earlier era becomes possible with the historian projecting him (her) self into an earlier context. He also saw the past events with a greater sense of complexity than as being easily understood and verifiable phenomenon. In this regard he says that the historian investigating any past event makes a distinction between what can be called the inside and the outside of the event. By the outside is meant everything belonging to it that can be described in terms of bodies and their movements. In order to understand what constitutes the outside of the event he gives the example of the passage of Caesar accompanied by certain men across a river called Rubicon or spilling of his blood on the floor of the senate house at another. While by the inside of the event he means that in which it can be described in terms of thought: Caesar's defiance of the assassins. Collingwood sees the Historian, as investigating not mere events but actions and an action according to him is the unity of inside and outside together ... "for history the object to be discovered is not the mere event but thought expressed in it." With the coming in of the thought of the historian in the process of representation, the extent of the professed objectivity of history is altered. Different historians at the same time or different historians in different places read differently the significance and the thought process behind events. Certain debates in contemporary times, especially the school of postmodernism, have forwarded the idea that makes it virtually impossible to separate the event (as it happened in the past) and its representation that we get in documents and through history. Some like Hayden White have claimed through this line of reasoning the complete obliteration of the line between history and fiction (White 44). Ankersmit provides a useful metaphor in describing this state of history: like a dike covered with ice-flakes at the end of winter, the past has been covered by a thick crust of narrative interpretations; historical debate is as much about the components of this crust as about the past hidden beneath it (Callinicos 14). Callinicos says that postmodernists go as far to claim that there is crust all the way down. This paper does not take this extreme position; however it draws on another important idea that the school forwards: that of history employing the device of narration. This reading of *The Shadow Lines* tries to examine this feature of History especially in relation to the writing of Indian History and its treatment of certain events in Post-Independence India, like the Partition and Civil Strife. Also the function of ideology vis-à-vis historiography comes in which can in turn be linked to the aforementioned Collingwoodian idea of events embodying thoughts and their subsequent understanding and articulation by historians.

Postmodern historians like Hayden White have put forward the idea of history as having a literary base with a play of elements like teleology that Ricoeur describes as “retrospective intelligibility” (Sethi 180) which considers the course of history not as a diverse variety of discrete incidents but as a successive and logical sequence leading smoothly to an end that has already been arrived at. Some voices in contemporary Indian Writing in English have studied the writing and historical justification of Partition in this light. Historians have tried to read a communal angle into the event and tried to trace a genealogy of such events with a “retrospective intelligibility” that leads to a known and expected end. It is interesting to note, therefore, in this light that while they highlighted stray incidents of communal violence in the pre-partition time to give a historical justification to the inevitable phenomenon of Partition, in *The Shadow Lines*, on the other hand riots, civil strife and communal riots do not find expression in the official records. This happens because the same incidents which at one time supported the political decisions will at the present only go on to hamper its legitimacy. In both cases the community experience and its depiction suffers. The accounts of partition completely ignore the fact of the composite quality of relationships that existed between people of different religions and that there were other potent facts of their cohesion like a shared cultural ethos. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh talks of such a definition of community in the village of Manomajra (Singh 5). Some of these books show the existence of an alternate religion with people of different faiths looking upon a common shrine (in this case a sandstone slab) as religious. Interestingly, this feature about close knit cohesive communities later gets transported to the imagined community of the state of otherwise riot-ravaged India. Through history the nation represents itself and also tells certain stories about itself. This novel asks questions about how history portrays experience and also how and why historical justifications are provide to the ideas upheld in the present while on the other hand certain experiences (for all that they do to individual lives) go utterly underrepresented as events in spite of their effect on people. Whose history does it claim to be? Does that event for its significance to the people concerned remain underrepresented in history because “it was improper to make any suggestion that nationalists may have written one thing and done something else, failed in their courage, wisdom or rationality or any of the many different ways in which human beings are known to fail?” (Kaviraj 39).

The Shadow Lines is as much about the act of telling as it is a story. There are scores of stories hidden in the novel and scores of storytellers. These storytellers not only tell different stories but

also the same stories differently. By doing this the author not only explores these various types available but also obliquely comments on the final variation that results in treating a narration in different ways. By raising questions on the nature of public and private, their co-existence and their conflict, their simultaneity and their separation, the author ultimately points at the modes of their articulation. Are the different forms we speak about suited to cater to the difference in these realms? Is there any way the deeply personal in its articulation spills over into the public realm and vice-versa? Coming to the aforementioned public and private spaces, can the dark basement of the Raibajar house and the sexual play of the narrator and Ila carried out there come out in the daylight for everybody to inspect? What are the dangers that accrue with such a possibility? Intercourse between May and Tridib does happen in a bustling public place, The Victoria Memorial in Calcutta but leads to consequences that are disastrous. Do public and private have to remain separate if sanity is to prevail? Are the various texts in conflict with each other, are there strategies working behind them or are they spontaneous and natural? Are there any ideal texts? Which ways of telling are upheld in the novel?

This brings us to the important part of questioning the role played by Tridib, who is the uncle of the unnamed storyteller. In ways more than one the narrator of *The Shadow Lines* is himself treated like a reader or a listener rather than a teller. Also he is exposed to the perils of being in the listener category quite early in the novel. In the adda scene where Tridib talks of “his English relatives,” the author realizes that despite his incessant objections to Tridib’s lies, the eager and gullible crowd willingly believes him. Tridib’s lies are more acceptable to the crowd than the young narrator’s objections to them. Here the strength of the speaker does not lie in the truth value of his utterances but in the strength of his credible image as to know—all histories and as the adda’s agony uncle. The narrator in spite of knowing and speaking the truth has obvious disadvantages of age, lack of aura and the ability to convince. Tridib in a significant aside confesses to the narrator that if you believe anything you’re told, you deserve to be told anything at all. The narrator is exposed to this truth about the power of the narrators as well as the business of who controls power in the public sphere. It is for these reasons that in this study Tridib represents the voice of history or alternatively public documentation as a form of narration. Is history then a tool of the powerful who choose to use it over the uninformed? In the novel there are other instances of the state / historian / powerful

individual / newspaper taking on the role of an unreliable agent disseminating information to the masses / reader / powerless individuals incapable of interrogating the former.

The Shadow Lines, written in 1988, was the author's response to another unprecedented event in the Post-Colonial Indian Scene: the 1984 anti-Sikh riots that swept the nation after the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards. In keeping with the opinion that allegedly the state sponsored these riots, which in their magnitude, compare to the earlier communal frenzy of the 1947 partition. The novel situates the 1964 communal riots in Calcutta experienced by the narrator as a young school-going boy centrally in his psyche. It is drawing on this experience that he questions the difference of perception that the state and individual display while recording such events. In the book these riots and the riots at Dhaka become the occasion for the acid test of the veracity of these recording systems. The author does a brilliant job with the use of mundane and fleeting journalese (that the late twentieth century newspaper devourers are so used to) thereby contrasting it with the power that the narrator's personal articulation about the same event has.

This of course leads him to analyze the reasons behind this selective silence in history and also the challenge that it faces from the other two forms: stories and anecdotes. The author's imagination therefore stands beside history as a competing version of the '64 riots. But ironically the inequality of their stature is immediately recognized, with one being properly documented, supported by newspaper reportage and the other utterly alone, shrieking voicelessly, with unavailable experience as the only validation.

The challenge to history comes from the quarters of personal experience as source of knowledge. The book shows how personal experience, by its admittance and articulation can often question the recorded histories. What is significant to note is that this conflict that the author seems to be throwing up between histories, stories and anecdotes is also reflected in the rise of historical fiction in recent times. We have witnessed the burgeoning of genres like memoirs, short-stories, diaries or first-hand accounts pertaining to events such as the Partition, Post-Independence riots and other political events which have been repressed or the state-articulation of which has been met with discontent. A significant portion of the book later takes a closer look at what makes history repressive.

The novel then presents another mode of narration, which is the story mode. It is significant that the author himself comes across as more of a story teller than a historian or an anecdote teller. Stories in this book are in circuitry, without definite beginnings and endings; they are indiscrete and seem to belong to no one. In this regard it is pertinent to note that the author, in spite of his omniscience, is unnamed and his stories are mostly in the form of renderings of the versions of other characters. These stories become more intelligible when the narrator joins them into meaningful wholes after collecting all the possible versions of the incident described.

The silences that history imposes on a number of events that damage the fabric of historical ideas survive through this realm. Stories occupy another place; they are seen as the discourses of the communities. And since this book situates a partition victim in the center, it is essentially her lost articulation that it represents. The anonymity of the narrator of *The Shadow Lines* adds to this experience which goes on to emphasize the primacy of community experience over individual or monolithic historical experience. The study makes use of the story-community relationship by closely engaging with Sudipta Kaviraj's essay (Kaviraj 39). This novel becomes the story that the communities have lost. Also, a story is a more democratic form because unlike history it is not imposed and unlike anecdote its applicability is not limited to the individual alone. As has been demonstrated earlier, the fact of the narrator being anonymous points to this quality of the story that is unpossessed and not limited by state ownership. In another significant way also the novel is like a story because it is through the novel that other issues in the book like community and citizenship "get discussed" through all possible vantage points. The novel becomes a platform where all the definitions of these concepts find expression. Amitav Ghosh writes in the tradition of the story, in that he gives articulation to community experience. At one level is his community that has suffered due to partition, of which Tha'mma is prominently the representative; at another level are the present day communities that suffer civil strife. He reconstructs the experience from the viewpoint of the community which suffers. He uses the story form because a story is a community exercise and is more representative. Through the construction of the novel he revives the form, both structurally and ideally, thereby recuperating experience which otherwise would have been irretrievably lost.

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History/Herstory: Mata Hari and "Madeleine" Noor

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Abstract: New Historicism approaches history in a way that is more holistic than Old Historicism, but it tries to flatten out the differences in identity negotiation by its constant allusions to power politics. Feminists argue that power is not the only monolithic determinant in assessing history: gender can be studied with respect to identity, its intersection with other parameters and resistance. This paper interrogates how a historical subject is configured in history, especially if she is a woman. It takes up the points of view of feminist critics of New Historicism and investigates the history-literature interface of the lives of two women, Mata Hari and Noor Inayat Khan, perhaps spies involved in the two World Wars. In April 10, 2014 Britain released information on Mata Hari who was tried for causing the deaths of 50,000 soldiers, arrested and executed in 1917 in Paris. British official history of the Second World War informs us that Noor Inayat Khan was a wartime British secret agent code-named Madeleine, the first female operator sent to Nazi-occupied France by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), captured, tortured and executed. The paper examines the idea of embodiment; questions of identity formation of women as subjects in the masculine project of war itself are discussed, and pertinent questions of race are raised as well. It also interrogates whether historical accounts and fictional works offer different ways of understanding historical figures, like Mata Hari and Madeleine or Noor Inayat Khan.

Keywords: Spy, gender performance, war, identity, race, embodiment, New Historicism, feminism.

Introduction

New Historicism approaches history in a way that is more holistic than Old Historicism, but it tries to flatten out the differences in identity negotiation by its constant allusions to power politics. Contrary to this, the renowned feminist Judith Butler argues that power is not the only monolithic determinant in assessing history: gender can be studied with respect to identity, its intersection with other parameters and resistance. She argues that gender must be seen from the point of view of “a constituted social temporality” (141). Judith Newton illustrates how Foucauldian New Historicism constructs dominant ideologies as monoliths, and how Feminist ideology sees them “not just as complexly oppressive but as more internally unstable, as constantly in need of reconstruction and revision” so that the conditions necessary for social change and the agency of the weak may be possible” (465). Alison Conway sees the analysis of literary history and cultural history as mere theoretical exercise if they are not located within contemporary debates and political or other ideology, as against the anecdotal approach of the New Historicist. She hopes that “our abiding love of historical narratives will not prevent us from examining the large epistemological questions that theory so capably frames” (30).

This paper interrogates how a historical subject is configured in history, especially if she is a woman. Does New Historicism see, for example, women caught up in warfare, only as a part of power politics following Foucault’s arguments as is its overarching tendency? Or does it take the identity of the woman caught up in war history as a source of further debate? Is her “story” less important than her place in official history? This paper takes up the points of view of feminist critics of New Historicism and investigates the history-literature interface of the lives of two women, Mata Hari and Noor Inayat Khan, perhaps spies involved in the two World Wars. The idea of embodiment, questions of identity formation of women as subjects in the masculine project of war itself are discussed, and pertinent questions of race are raised as well.

The paper is based on official documents, dossiers as well as biographical accounts. The web of fact/fiction generated in novels and newspaper articles have also been keenly examined to determine their role in the World Wars and their dramatic and sensational deaths as also what happened thereafter. It traces the tragic life and career of Mata Hari who has been immortalized in history by examining the two recent novels of Michelle Moran, *Mata Hari: Dancer, Lover, Spy*, and Paulo Coelho’s *The Spy: A Novel*. While Moran writes a romantic historical novel, Coelho

writes about the last week of Mata Hari's life with reference to historical documents and past biographies. The paper has also drawn from Russel Howe's *Mata Hari: The True Story* and Pat Shipman's *Femme Fatale: Love, Lies, and the Unknown Life of Mata Hari*.

The paper also sketches the life story of Noor Inayat Khan, who was posthumously awarded the George Cross by the British Government. Official records on Noor have yet to be released but British official history of the Second World War as documented by the BBC details the role of Madeleine, another name of Noor. The novel by Shrabani Basu, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* is an account of her life-story.

The sources extensively quote from historical documents: dossiers, letters, confessions and court statements taken during trials under oath. They also use personal interviews, private and undisclosed papers, letters, notebooks, diaries and creative writing. Thus, though fictional, even the most recent texts, Coelho's novel, Moran's novel and Shrabani Basu's novel are not works entirely based on the author's imagination.

I

Margaretha Gertruida "Margreet" Zelle MacLeod (7 August 1876-15 October 1917), better known by the stage name Mata Hari, was an exotic dancer and courtesan, convicted of being a spy and executed by a firing squad in France under charges of espionage for Germany during World War I.

Margaretha's life in the Netherlands before she invented herself as Mata Hari was ordinary. Eldest of her siblings, forced to live with relatives after her father remarried, she married the elderly and abusive Captain Rudolf MacLeod at the age of 18. He was an army officer, 22 years her senior, living in the Dutch East Indies (Biography). The marriage soon left both frustrated and after the birth of their children, the couple divorced (Shipman 450). To escape her marital woes, she had begun taking dancing lessons at a local dance company fascinated as she was by the Indonesian dance styles. Soon she became adept and revealed her artistic name, Mata Hari, (literally, "eye of the day"), in her correspondences home to the Netherlands. In 1903, Margaretha moved to Paris and thereby began her struggle to make a living. Within a period of two years, she won fame as an exotic dancer and made her debut as Mata Hari in a captivating, successful act at the Musée Guimet on 13 March 1905. In her dances, she openly flaunted her body and made imaginary claims

about her origin (Kent). She introduced a new style of entertainment and elevated erotic dance to a more respectable status.

She soon became the long-time mistress of the industrialist Émile Guimet, who had founded the Musée. She posed for provocative photos and had wealthy admirers. Her show toured several places and audiences in all major cities were fascinated and mesmerized by what she had to offer (Kent). However, after 1912, her career suffered since she was no longer a novelty and many others, young imitators of her dance style, grew in popularity. Her last public performance was on March 13, 1915, almost a year into the First World War by which time she had established relationships with several high-ranking military officers, politicians and influential persons (Howe 63).

When war broke out, Mata Hari was trapped in Berlin where she had gone for a performance. Her fur coats and money were seized and it was only because she managed to charm a Dutch businessman that she could manage her train fare to Amsterdam. While in Holland, Karl Kroemer, the German Consul approached her and told her that he was recruiting spies and offered her 20,000 francs and a code name, H21. Pat Shipman, her biographer, is of the view that she took the money as a compensation for her seized furs and money and had no intention of doing any serious spying for Germany (Mata).

In late 1915 she returned to her home in Paris via England and Spain. In England she was arrested and interrogated by Scotland Yard on suspicions of being a German spy. The MI5 report noted, "...although she was thoroughly searched and nothing incriminating was found, she is regarded by police and military to be not above suspicion..." (Rennel). Unaware of being trailed, Mata Hari continued her flirtatious glamorous life. Her meetings with a German intelligence officer Kalle were turned against her, twisted to claim that she was handing over French secrets to the enemy. On February 10, 1917, the French war minister signed a warrant for her arrest. Three days later, she was arrested and imprisoned at Saint-Lazarre, a prison for women (Howe 143).

She was tried in a military court in Paris on July 24 and 25, 1917 and accused of being a double agent at a very prejudiced trial. Even though the French and British intelligence could not produce definite evidence that she was spying for Germany, the investigative magistrate, Pierre Bouchardon decided to "unmask" her (Mata). She denied all the charges but her French

interrogators were convinced that everything that she did and said was lethal fiction. They refused to trust her because she had spun a web of lies and invented a fictional life for herself (Cockfield 331). Her defence attorney, veteran international lawyer Edouard Clunet, was denied permission either to cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses or to examine his own witnesses directly. Mata Hari was pronounced guilty of passing information to the Germans, which had caused the death of many French soldiers. The verdict for this was death by a firing squad. Mata Hari's executioners fired guns right through her heart on October 15, 1917, at the firing range near Paris. After she was executed her corpse lay unclaimed and was donated to a Paris teaching hospital (Polmer 358).

Mata Hari's biographers have no final answers to whether she was guilty of the charges for which she faced execution. They are uncertain whether she was a dangerous spy or double agent. Michelle Moran paints her as a sort of dreamy innocent woman, a victim of circumstances, often a shrewd woman with a phenomenal memory who was severely abused. She has also been portrayed as a naïve woman in need of money, willing to do whatever asked to. Perhaps she was not absolutely innocent. But was she a master spy who sent information that sent thousands of soldiers to their deaths, as has been claimed? (Flanner 126). Julie Wheelwright suggests in her study that Mata Hari's death was a useful tool in wartime social control: "The demonization that followed her execution in 1917 made her a convenient pillory for women's attempts at sexual, economic and marital independence" (Scutts). It seems she was a victim of circumstances created by the Great War. There was no conclusive evidence to establish her as a perfect spy /double agent who left no incriminating evidence behind. If she was only a victim, how did she become such a legend? In October 2001, documents released from the archives of MI5 were used by a Dutch group, the Mata Hari Foundation to ask the French government to exonerate Zelle as they argued that the MI5 files proved she was not guilty of the charges she was convicted of (Jeffries). Many mourned her death, and now there is a Mata Hari Collection in the Friesmuseum in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. Perhaps, until the French government declassifies the Mata Hari papers in 2017, (Kent) we are left with unanswered questions. The documents, offering a more human side to this woman, as a victim of domestic abuse and historical circumstances, may finally vanquish the historical slut-shaming of Mata Hari.

Noor Inayat Khan, the British spy, who was captured and killed by the German army was the great-great-great granddaughter of Tipu Sultan and the first woman radio operator who was sent into German-occupied France by the British. Noor was born in 1914 to Hazrat Inayat Khan and Pirani Ameena Begum, born Ora Ray Baker. Inayat Khan, a Sufi mystic and an expert in Indian classical music, had travelled the length and breadth of India with his musical band, The Royal Hindu Musicians. Armed with his interest in music and desire to propagate Sufi thought, Inayat left India and travelled to several countries across the world. The family moved to Paris and then, on the outbreak of WWI, to London, where Hazrat Inayat Khan founded the Sufi Order in 1915 (Sufi).

While in Russia, Noor, his eldest child, was born. The family soon moved to London and later in the autumn of 1920 to France, settling at Fazal Manzil, Paris. In 1927, while on a visit to India, Inayat Khan died. Amina Begum collapsed in grief and the burden of looking after the family now fell on Noor's tender shoulders. After obtaining a degree in child psychology in 1938 from the University of Paris, she became a writer of children's books and also contributed literary articles to newspapers. She also broadcasted on radio on the French Children's Hour (Noor).

When the Second World War broke out, Noor and her family left Paris and went back to London. When the fascist forces occupied France, Noor decided that she wanted to do something for her country. It was not an easy decision for the daughter of a Sufi pacifist to enter the battlefield but Noor was determined. British official history of the Second World War as documented by the BBC details the role of Madeleine (Dalton).

Noor had undertaken a course in nursing from the Red Cross and cherished the ambition of helping war efforts. Her ability to speak French and English with equal ease caught the interest of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) created by Winston Churchill. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in November 1940 as Nora Inayat Khan and was trained as a wireless operator. She was posted in February 1943 to the Directorate of Air Intelligence and was trained for espionage and sent to France in June 1943, her code name being, "Madeleine." Madeleine was trained to transmit messages, set up live and dead letter boxes, be vigilant and alert, dodge those following, handle questioning including extreme techniques if ever caught. Noor, along with some others landed at a secret airstrip in the Lori Valley behind enemy lines as a children's nurse, Jeanne Marie Renier and was the first woman radio operator to be flown into occupied France. Under the

garb of a children's nurse, she was to find a flat, demonstrate French mannerisms and transmit pertinent and important messages to London (Helm 6, 13).

Soon after she landed in France, most of her colleagues and members of her Prosper and other networks were arrested. Noor managed to dodge German intelligence and continued to transmit messages to London under very trying circumstances. "She refused to abandon what had become the most important and dangerous post in France and did work" (London).

She was captured by the Germans on a tipp-off by a jealous woman. Madeline faced interrogation at the Gestapo Headquarters in Paris but she did not crack and even managed to escape again. Despite her training, she was careless and had left her codebook around (Noor). The Gestapo continued transmitting messages to England as Madeline and the MI5 did not realise this for several months. On September 11, 1944, transferred together with three other SOE women prisoners to Dachau concentration camp, she was shot in the head on the morning of September 13, 1944 (Visram 143). Her last word was "Liberte!" Since she was working as a civilian, she was not protected by the Geneva Conventions (British).

III

It is interesting to examine how the lives and identities of Mata Hari and Madeline are negotiated through the mass of literature that continues to pour in. We need to look at these women as persons, as living and breathing human beings as well as parts of interesting and dangerous history. Interestingly, there are some aspects which are startlingly similar in the lives of these women, one who played a role in the First World War and the other in World War II.

In 1990, Judith Butler coined the phrase "gender performativity," (179) discussing how gender performance was a phenomenon that was being produced and reproduced repetitively. The films on Mata Hari (Fitzmaurice 1931, Harrington 1985, Berry 2016) evince such diverse approaches by the directors and actresses essaying these roles, just like the books written on her. Sue Harper's study shows how British film production of the Second World War was controlled by the directives of the Ministry of Information. They depicted women as vulnerable victims of war, to which feminist scholarship responded critically, much later. An interesting study by Penny Summerfield in 2009 directs the gaze of scholars to the contradictions inherent in the female presence in four films detailing the Second World War. While they were portrayed as heroic women, the aspect of

female vulnerability was strong in the narratives. Summerfield concludes: “The women were national heroines but they shared an identity as victims of the war with millions who suffered persecution and displacement in Europe and across the globe.” She noted in a footnote that the story of Noor Inayat Khan was excluded from a film on four women SOEs in the Second World War, because she was not blond, a Hitchcockian standard of film-making (“Public Memory” 957, 948).

The depiction of victimhood of women has been critiqued by later feminists like Lise Nelson, a geographer, who critiques Judith Butler’s notion of gender performativity as repetitive enactments of gender norms. She argues for a more thoughtful and nuanced use of performativity, which would allow geographers to map how concrete subjects negotiate their identities through many trajectories across time and space. This is perhaps where we locate Mata Hari and Noor. Both the women, before and after the wars, had travelled far and wide, which gave them insights into human behaviour and culture. Coelho, Moran and Basu detail in their novels how Margarethe made friends everywhere as did Noor wherever she went. Both were extremely popular and impressed whoever met them, be it in Spain, Italy, Germany, Indonesia, France or England.

Paris mattered to both. Mata Hari always spoke of her beloved Paris, and was grieved to see its condition during the war, and it was as she says “the only true north of my life, the only city where I felt like a human being and everything that means” (Coelho 919). The fact that she was implicated in betraying France was anathema to her. Moran writes in Margarethe’s voice, “France is my home!... For most of my life I have lived in Paris. Am I a courtesan? Yes. A traitress? Never!” (3049). Love for France was very strong in Noor as well. She missed her house in Suresnes, Fazal Manzil. She “felt her natural home was France” (Basu 1250).

In her work on the bodies of European women, Kathleen Canning suggests that embodiment is a process of becoming a body in social space. In the light of this, even before the First World War, Margarethe’s body had been under watchful eyes. The entire upper class European gentry, men and women, made use of her body either by sexual contact or through picture postcards, magazine and newspaper articles and other memorabilia. Noor was no less visible as a person of exotic origin who practiced Indian dressing and sufi music. Though she gave these up later, she had attracted attention wherever she went, in Europe or in the UK, because of her gentle yet resolute behaviour as Sharbani Basu mentions in her book.

Both the women were very beautiful. Mata Hari was described, in the Home Office Report of 16th November, 1916, as a “Handsome, bold, type of woman” (Coelho 1376). She was seen not only as a dancer but as a courtesan by whom married women felt threatened. Alison Conway’s work on the courtesan Nell Gwyn, an eighteenth century actress and woman very similar to Mata Hari, shows how “Courtesan narrative opens a window onto a continent of religious controversy and sexual politics that offers no safe harbours for those travelling its coastlines” (Carnell 64). On the other hand, Noor’s body was her most important asset: she looked frail and exotic and beyond reproach and disguised herself cleverly. She managed to dodge German intelligence and continued to transmit messages to London under very trying circumstances, as Shompa Lahiri discusses in her book, and as Basu details in Chapter Eight “The Fall of Prosper” (2233-2489) and Chapter Nine “Poste Madeleine” (2504-2833). The historian Juliette Pattinson has recently shown in 2011, in her book, how the strategies of masquerade, mimicry and passing were utilised by female SOE agents during the Second World War. Her quick disguises, her hair, dyed red, blond and brown, and the speed with which she could run, and even sense danger, saved Noor’s life on many occasions.

The women under discussion were single women. Women in wartime Europe were not the most free nor most admired. In the words of the fictional Mata Hari in Michelle Moran’s novel: “No one trusts a woman alone” (2298). The British intelligence officer in Holland added to Mata Hari’s dossier that he had heard rumours about payments to her from the German Embassy (Rennell). In the voice of Mata Hari, Paulo Coelho writes about how the warring factions could not leave alone a “woman whose greatest sin was having a free mind” (1033) in a war-torn world. Captain Bouchardon, the man who testified against Margarethe and headed the tribunal which tried her, wrote “In the battle of the sexes, all men, no matter their expertise in various arts, are always easily defeated” (qtd. in Coelho 1302). Even during the Second World War, single women were suspect: “In wartime, as in peacetime, women who did act independently, were attacked on moral grounds, by other women as well as by men” (Summerfield 7).

Both women were entirely self-made and carved their destinies indelibly on a society torn by war. By virtue of their birth, by dint of their character, their own abilities and talent, they were very well connected. Margarethe could easily travel all over Europe during the war, and Captain Ladoux’s statement says “I am convinced that a person who is able to travel during the time in

which we live and has contact with so many officers is already proof enough” about her guilt (qtd. in Coelho 1247). Noor could hide in all her earlier friends’ houses like the Jourdans and the Prénats, which were safe havens during her Paris days, as Shrabani Basu shows (2616, 2632, 2648).

Margarethe and Noor were polyglots: their abilities to speak multiple languages were their great assets and in a way, marked them out during the war. The report on Margarethe cited this: “Speaks French, English, Italian, Dutch, and probably German” (Porter 1916). Noor was hired specially because of her native French, and for her qualities and her appearance as well. Her personal file has this entry: “Has interesting linguistic qualifications which might make her of value for operational purposes.” Jean Overton Fuller remembered Noor’s peculiar accent: a mix of Indian, English, French and American (Basu 986, 813). However, it was not her language skills alone that was the reason for her recruitment as an SOE officer. Assuming that would be to severely undermine her qualities as a professional and a person of integrity. Shrabani Basu documents through personal interviews, books and official records; she fitted the bill of the SOE recruitment policy, as she had “character and steadfastness of approach,” “Rugged honesty” and “essential guts” (Buckmaster 27). Her recruiter also found this to be true within a few seconds of their meeting. Her chief recruiting officer Selwyn Jepson says that “in spite of a great gentleness of manner” she had an understanding and “an intuitive sense of what might be in my mind” regarding the possible threat to her life if she joined the SOE (Fuller, “Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan” 110).

Interestingly, both Margarethe and Noor had exemplary artistic talent: Margarethe was a dancer and Noor a musician, story-writer and poet. Strangely, yet truly, the high order of their art is perhaps not as much discussed as their beauty or desirability. Perhaps this is the part of their gendered subjectivities that the New Historic approach ignores. They were seen as women first, victims next, and artists later. Noor continuously expressed the desire to Fuller to learn and practice music, writing and singing after the war. Margarethe knew no other life, struggled with weight issues and waning popularity in the war years, but still wanted to dance and entertain audiences in war-torn Europe.

In short, whatever they did, they accomplished with the highest standard: as a dancer and a courtesan, Margarethe was exemplary. In the argument of the prosecutor Dr Mornet was the claim that “Zelle is the kind of dangerous woman we see nowadays,” and adds that her language skills,

especially in French, “her numerous relations in all areas, her subtle ways of worming onto social circles, her elegance, her remarkable intelligence, her immorality, all this contributes to her being seen as a potential suspect” (Coelho 1244). This could only now, in hindsight be seen as grudging admiration, but at that time was the most morally incriminating, though technically flimsy evidence. Noor was one of the most courageous and talented Special Operations Experts. Even at the time of recruitment, Selwyn Jepson comments on how he could not forget the impact Noor had on him: “the small, still features, the dark quiet eyes, the soft voice, and the fine spirit glowing in her” (Basu1159).

Apart from the gender performance angle, the racialised bodies of these two women were also reconfigured down the ages, when they lived and after they died. The distinct aspect that these women present about their knowledge and complicity in constructing racialised identities is that they did it out of choice, as represented through the time-space axes of their lives. Both the women had tenuous links with India, which added to their exoticism. Margarethe followed her husband to the Dutch colony of Java. Colonialism itself, like war, is a sign of superb male self-aggrandisement. She trained herself to dance with the help of a famous Javanese dancer, Mahadevi, as Moran calls her, and by sheer observation, understood the male fascination for the oriental female body. She put forth stories about herself being an Indian princess born in an Indian temple, and even answered, questions about India and Hindu temples to M. Guimet. Margarethe constructed a fable of her having been born in India (Moran 151-165), and trained in the East Indies, (Coelho 349). Her insistence on sandalwood, incense, garlands of marigold during her dance at Guimet’s Museum in Paris suggests how well she understood Orientalist tendencies among European men. “Her liminal body allowed exoticist men to have intercourse with an Orientalist fantasy of the divine.” This aspect was what also completely isolated Margarethe from her erstwhile “friends”: no one came to stand as witness for her innocence as no one wanted to be implicated in their personal, social and professional lives with a woman of her notoriety. One of the interesting overlaps of history also overlooked by many is the way that Mata Hari performed several times with Inayat Khan and his music troupe, The Royal Hindu Musicians, as they were photographed in her garden at Nuielly. They performed in December 1912, to “illustrate a lecture on Asian temple festivals by Paul Olivier, music critic for Le Matin” (Cohen 34, 32). Thus, the spurious “indigenesness” of Mata Hari was used even by scholars and researchers to give credibility to their work, ironically with the authentic classical musicians led by Inayat Khan.

Strange cultural crossroads brought these two historical figures together, and Noor Inayat Khan later.

Noor's engagement with race is also worth noting. Noor had actually travelled to India as a child (Basu 483-485). Though in some ways a princess, a descendant of Tipu Sultan, Noor never used this aspect of her identity for her career or otherwise. Noor had many lovers as is claimed: Islamic sufi, Jewish, English and French. However, Fuller said to Basu in a personal interview that there was "lot to get away from" the Sufis, (qtd. in Basu 879) and that Noor wanted to live an independent existence away from their prying control. Though everyone who knew her in the SOE knew her as Nora Inayat Khan, she put the Church of England Christianity as her religion, attended Church Service, and never revealed her Indian antecedents. She always respected India and Indian politicians, and even during an extensive interview before being appointed in the SOE, she defended them and their right to carve their own destiny. Her brother Vilayat Khan said in his reminiscences to Basu that she would have joined the Indian freedom movement had she lived after the war.

There are references to negative racial stereotyping in her records, however. Firstly, she was often believed to be dreamy and inconsistent, distracted and too honest in her dealings as she never wanted to lie. She was, later in her career, known as the daughter of the Sufi master, and that went against her as if she valued spirituality over practicality or was, in some ways, weak. What the SOE later realized was that she survived so many crises as an agent, and later so many imprisonment-related hardships only because she meditated, using her skills as a sufi believer. Secondly, she was "given the special treatment" as she was "creole-looking," (qtd. in Basu 3256) as a German officer told Lieutenant Colonel Wickey, a Canadian officer, after the war. Vera Atkins privately believed that she was probably raped, abused, stripped, kicked and beaten before being shot (Basu 3272). Perhaps her mixed race origin was the cause of her terrible fate; she suffered more than what her white peers must have.

This paper celebrates the two women: their intelligence, their agency, their cerebral approach to their work, though it makes place for the naivete and innocent charm, and shows how both gender and race intersect in their reception to their contemporaries and to later research as well. Noor Inayat Khan's life has since been recaptured in several films, and recently her champion has been the Asian origin scholar Shrabani Basu. The classified French official documents about to be

released and made accessible to scholars in October this year will hopefully be able to read Mata Hari / Margarethe to a different assessment by later scholars.

The comments made by Alison Conway become significant here. She says in a footnote that though she accepts Judith Newton's suggestion that "feminist theory can provide a corrective to new historical blindspots, creating a more accurate narrative," she herself argues that "feminist theory allows us to interrogate, more broadly, what we bring to our study of the past" (30).

The tremendous capabilities and talent of the two women which have been undermined in earlier historical references have been given new resonances by feminist theory and in literary works.

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Recovering Her-Story of Islamic Revolution: A Critical Analysis of Selected Memoirs of Diasporic Iranian Women

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Abstract:

Writing a memoir is a way of re-appropriating the past and a device to redress the enforced silencing of the “subaltern,” the marginalized. It is also seen as a strategy for political empowerment. The memoir form does not focus solely on the personal development of the subject rather it seeks to deliberate on a particular context in which history is made. The subject of a memoir is a real person who refers directly or indirectly to the incidents taking place in the history of a country. In the process, a memoir provides access to personal histories, minor resistances and gaps in official history. When women turn subjects of their own histories, they re-centre the knowledge produced about them and articulate the silences of the recorded history. The paper undertakes to study three memoirs by diasporic Iranian women—*Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi, *Lipstick Jihad* by Azadeh Moaveni and *Persepolis* (graphic memoir) by Marjane Satrapi—in the backdrop of the Islamic Revolution of Iran of 1979. The examination of the texts reveals an alternate history of the daily struggle of the Iranians, especially those of women, as they protest against the newly imposed veiling and other restrictions. Iranian women’s discourse challenges the mythification of an ideal Muslim woman and appropriation of religion by the theocratic regime. Iranian women’s reaction to the retrogressive steps of Ayatollah Khomeini defines women’s engagement with feminism in the region. The memoirs grasp the whole picture of the Islamic revolution and underline its implications for the women of Iran as well.

Keywords: Memoir, history, Islamic Revolution, Iranian diaspora, Persian women, Her-story, Islamic identity, veil, East versus West, patriarchy.

Memoirs are usually celebrated for being the “authentic” firsthand accounts, almost considered a slice of life taken from the subject’s life as it intersects with the life of the nation or society. But they are not trusted as a form of historiography because of the intentional or unconscious element of personal interest that creeps into the account. George Egerton identifies this peculiarity as the “endemic defect” of the memoir. It is by virtue of this “endemic defect” that the memoir challenges the hegemonic discourses toppling the masternarrative from its superior position. It replaces “history” with multilayered her-stories. It may not lay its claim on being reliable history, but certainly disputes the truthfulness and adequacy of the official history. “History is always the group’s language, the official narrative that is pressed between covers of gold and trotted out for ritual ceremonies of self congratulation” (Mernissi 10). As Fatema Mernissi admits in the introduction to *The Veil and Male Elite*, “the memoirs are intended to be narratives of recollection, gliding toward the areas where memory breaks down, dates get mixed up, and events softly blur together, as in the dreams from which we draw our strength” (10).

The most popular form of literature exposed to a wide readership and critical acclaim in the first decade of the 21st Century is the Iranian memoir. Memoirs are being written more often, with greater confidence by Iranian diasporic writers with western readership in mind. Although Iranian feminist critics Farzaneh Milani and Afsaneh Najmabadi claim that there had been no established tradition of autobiography in Iran, yet they have stimulated a lot of critical response. Invariably, all of them address the issue of the institutionalization of patriarchy following the revolution and its implications for women. Iranian memoirs are rooted in a turbulent period of Iranian history and culture with the US “war on terror” looming large on the horizon. According to Roya Hakakian, a journalist and writer, writing a memoir is a revenge of sorts. She insists that the greatest jihad under Islamic theocracy was “one against the self.” Under the Khomeini regime, all difference between the public and private was obliterated. Imposition of the veil and execution and imprisonment of dissenters became a norm. Self-censorship and state censorship led to the silencing of individual histories. The diaspora, exiled, and the refugee who left following the revolution eventually became the carriers of history. The historical moment of the Islamic Revolution got frozen in the memory of the exiled taking the shape of memoir. These life narratives, told from women’s perspective, recount the everyday history of persecution, trauma, exile and loss of the home leading to “a little death of the self.” Consequently, a re-centering of

history takes place in these memoirs. Women are building a formidable her-story through the writing of memoirs. They are re-appropriating the past to redress the enforced silencing of the marginalized. It is also a strategy for political empowerment. Her-story is different from history in the way women select the fragments from the past and the manner in which they choose to present them. Walter Benjamin once said, “To articulate past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’...It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (par.vi).

The paper undertakes a detailed analysis of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2008) by Azar Nafisi, *Lipstick Jihad* (2005) by Azadeh Moaveni and a graphic memoir *Persepolis* (2008) by Marjane Satrapi. All three of them have studied and worked in the West. Their memoirs lament the loss of a bright, dynamic and progressive culture to the Islamic Republic that acted as a catalyst for these memoirs. The word memoir is linked etymologically to the idea of mourning through memoir and carries with it the shadow left by the dead. It also mourns the transformation of Iran from a progressive country to a dystopia for women. While Azar Nafisi taught as a Professor at the University of Tehran at the time of the revolution and left the country after falling out with the authorities, Azadeh Moaveni and Marjane Satrapi can be called the daughters of the revolution. Moaveni spent the years of war and political separation abroad but inherited the feelings of pain and loss from her parents. She returned to Iran to find a country taken over by the Islamic Republic. Satrapi was an adolescent at the time of the revolution who left for Europe as she realized the precariousness of life for women in Iran. These three writers attempt to re-narrativize the Islamic Revolution of Iran and its implications for Iranian women. Their memoirs react to the retrogressive moves and hypocritical stance of the totalitarian government regarding observation of gender segregation and veiling.

The Islamic Revolution

The history of Iran is narrated as a fall into colonialism. In pre-revolutionary Iran, due to the impact of colonialism and Western reforms introduced by Reza Shah, women had started venturing into the public sphere. The mass unveiling order by Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1936 was a culmination of Shah’s attempts to westernize the Iranian society. Pahlavi was also vocal about his reformist agenda which equated veiling with women’s backwardness. By the government decree of 1936,

women of all age groups were forced out of their veils. As a result veil-less women became the target of the wrath of reactionaries. Unveiling came to be equated as a sign of imperialism and a threat to Iranian identity. Pahlavi's mindless mimicry of western modernity was called *Westoxification (Gharbzadegi)* by a prominent Iranian writer and thinker.

The Islamist movement, in contrast, projected women empowerment campaigns as leading to western decadent practices, godless secularism, promiscuity and weakening of the family unit. Shah's ideas of reform imposed from above eventually precipitated into the 1979 Islamic Revolution which was a watershed moment for women in the history of Iran. Iranian women had participated alongside men in the revolution only to be betrayed later on. The Shah of Iran, "a puppet of England," was dethroned and exiled. The monarchy gave way to the Islamic Republic of Iran. To women's chagrin, the clock was reversed many years back as far as women's rights were concerned. In post-revolutionary Iran, the regime sent out contradictory messages to women. They were encouraged to participate in the rebuilding of Iran after the revolution but their legal rights were severely curtailed. Under the Ayatollah's regime, the age of marriage for girls was reduced to nine, the right to divorce and children's custody was taken away from women. They were forbidden to move in public without a veil and unaccompanied by a male relative (*mahram*). In the 1980s, miniskirts common in the early decades gave way to headscarves again. Women found themselves increasingly disenfranchised by the hardened stance taken by the revolution after its initial "spring of freedom." Mandatory veiling was projected as the Republic's attempt to protect the faith and dignity of women. Unveiled or improperly veiled women and mingling of genders in public was forbidden by the state. This new religious fervor empowered men to monitor the appearance and behavior of women. Within a month of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini exhorted women to wear the Islamic form of modest dress. This led to demonstrations but the regime assured women that government was not willing to impose veiling and that Khomeini only believed in guiding women. These justifications notwithstanding, veiling was re-institutionalized slowly and diplomatically till it was made mandatory in all public offices in 1980. This step could only evoke disorganized resistance and ultimately the regime went on to make veiling compulsory for all women in 1983.

The introduction of mandatory veiling and Sharia-based law estranged the Iranian women who had been enjoying many liberties under Reza Shah. They fought the ordinance tooth and nail. The transgressors were persecuted, jailed, flogged and humiliated. They were treated like criminals for wearing makeup or violating the obligatory dress code. Their criminalization was turned into a spectacle to instill fear in those women who did not conform to the Islamic Republic's gendered disciplinary apparatus and stepped out of its firmly guarded boundaries. The regime also exhorted women to put on the veil using such methods as political rhetoric, slogans and wall-writings. Motherhood, however, was hailed and valorized. Equality with men was considered degrading as it alienated them from their essential nature. Khomeini appealed to women to contribute to society by fulfilling their Islamic duty. Women were elevated in the political rhetoric as the "pillars of the nation, forts of virtue and chastity." It is this construction of the image of an ideal Muslim woman that urged women to take up the pen and write back to the regime.

Reading Lolita in Tehran: Real and Imaginary

Nafisi taught English Literature at the University of Tehran in the 1980s and got expelled for refusing to comply with the directions of the rigid regime. The regime not only imposed a dress code for teachers and students but also banned the teaching of certain western classics in the university. At that point began her estrangement with the system. Against this backdrop, her secret class was engendered on Thursdays. She embarked on a teaching mission gathering seven of her best students in the privacy of her home in order to follow her passion for books. The memoir is divided into four sections namely *Lolita*, *Gatsby*, *James* and *Austen* depending on the works they take up for analysis. In the course of teaching, the literary classes spill on to the doings of the Islamic Republic and the personal lives of the seven students. The classes in the living room run parallel, like an underground stream, to the external life interpreting the events happening in Tehran through Western classics. The moment of denouement comes when Nafisi finally decides to leave for the USA and the classes disperse. Her departure coincides with the coming of age of all her students. Throughout their classes they continue discussing their doubts, dreams and plans for the future in the wake of new restrictions under the theocratic system.

Reading Lolita in Tehran is an imaginative and intellectual piecing together of historical events. It owes its origin to the author's habit of diary keeping. This re-membering of the past, as Tony

Morrison terms it, is different from history as it disrupts the chronological sequence and claim to authenticity of the official history. Daphne M. Grace points out that the writer of autobiography is justifiably at liberty to manipulate his or her construction of a past out of the fragments of memory. “For doing so, she adopts different means of emphasis, juxtaposition, commentary and omission” (Smith 45). Nafisi’s memoir is aimed at creating an alternate reality which provides the marginalised a refuge in the repressive regime bent upon the subordination of women. This class is their safety valve. In the section titled *Lolita*, she says:

Our class was shaped within this context, in an attempt to escape the gaze of the blind censor for a few hours each week. There, in that living room, we rediscovered that we were also living, breathing human beings; and no matter how repressive the state became, no matter how intimidated and frightened we were, like *Lolita*, we tried to escape and to create our own little pockets of freedom. And like *Lolita* we took every opportunity to flaunt our insubordination: by showing a little hair from under our scarves, insinuating a little colour into the drab uniformity of our appearance, growing our nails, falling in love and listening to forbidden music. (Nafisi 25-26)

Akin to Woolf’s “Room of One’s Own,” the group exercises an active withdrawal from hostile reality. The reading of texts helps the students understand their own selves and their precarious situation in the Islamic regime. The texts committed to “democracy, freedom and equality” convey to the girls that to comply with the totalitarian regime is similar to “participating in their own execution” or “dancing with their jailor.” In Nabokovian terms, the room is the space ruled by imagination and curiosity—the very essence of insubordination and individualism. Nafisi deliberately embarks on a mission of reading and teaching the selected texts that can help them in their “present trapped situation as women.” She hopes to find a link between the “open spaces” the novels provided and the “closed ones they were confined to.” The memoir in books, as Nafisi calls it, is self-reflexive in this sense. The critical reading of the works attributes a quality of transcendence to literature. It explores the ways literary works sustain people in hard times. The Thursday classes serve as a platform for the girls to reorder the crisscross of their lives, further complicated by the absurd and whimsical nature of the regime.

Nafisi, too, is “at home” in her living room, “the other world of tenderness, brightness and beauty” where her students come to life after unveiling, baring their colourful selves and shedding the clumsiness of a black robe. Nafisi articulates the sense of alienation Iranian women experienced in the new regime using the symbol of the room. She contemplates the room as symbolizing her nomadic and borrowed life which sets off the theme of feeling exiled in one’s own homeland. The room where curiosity, imagination and transgression rule through reading is an oasis in the desert of the alienated selves. Nussbaum opines that the milieu of the book group in *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is a highly cultured setting for the acts of transgression. It is a highly aestheticized space that turns its back to the street. While the girls enter the front door, the anarchy and oppressiveness of the outside world are cast off like the *chador*. The opposition between reality and imagination is deliberate and sustained in the space of reading. The moment they leave the room, their return to reality is perceived as a return to alienation with their individuality and unique character dissolving into a nondescript and colourless mass under the latest directions for Muslim women in the Islamic regime. The symbol of “the room” recurs in many forms—the classroom, the room of the magician (Nafisi’s mentor), the green door and so on.

The emphasis on personal feelings adds the psychological dimension to the narrative. This function of literature enriches history by making it complex and subtle. Evelyn Accad is of the view that creative works are more appropriate to understand social and political realities because they give us the complete picture. They not only explore the social, political and cultural but also allow us to enter the imaginary and unconscious world of the author. Apart from her individual vision, an author suggests links to the collective “imaginary.” These complexities and subtleties are not found in more direct scientific documents. Nafisi plays mind games to come to terms with the traumatic experience. She imagines her body as disappearing while she is being searched by a female guard to cope with the pain of humiliation. Nafisi may be resorting to denial to deal with atrocities too terrible to confront. She also describes the paralyzing effect of fear instilled among women owing to harsh punishments under the regime.

The ordinance of re-veiling drew the maximum reaction from women. Most of Iranian women’s encounters with religious vigilantes happened on the issue of mandatory veiling. While the Islamic regime impressed upon Iranian women to see the veil as a symbol of national identity, Iranian

diaspora perceived it as a vestige of Khomeini's patriarchal ideology. Nafisi claims that the Islamic revolution did more damage to Islam by using it as an instrument of oppression than any alien ever could have done. Nafisi talks of recurring nightmares that she and her students continued having after the regime's decree. She believes that the mandatory veiling was an attempt to force social uniformity through an assault on individual and religious freedoms, not an act of respect for traditions and culture. Her student Razieh was killed by the regime even though she had never torn off the veil from her body. All this, because they happened to belong to a rival religious group. The regime was intolerant of dissenting voices. Nafisi recounts little known histories of ordinary people including harrowing tales of torture, incarceration, rape and murder at the hands of the regime's representatives. The women who refused to wear the veil were penalized and their punishment was made into a spectacle to instill fear in public. On refusing to wear a veil, she explains, "We (Nafisi and her friend), in refusing to accept that ideal, were taking not a political stand but an existential one. It was not that piece of cloth that I rejected, it was the transformation being imposed on me that made me look into the mirror and hate the stranger I had become" (Nafisi 165). Nafisi cites the example of her grandmother who resented the fact that her veil, which symbolized her sacred relationship with god, had now become an instrument of power, turning the women who wore them into political signs and symbols.

Reading Lolita in Tehran ends at an optimistic note. Despite the Islamic regime's new restrictions on women's mobility and dress code, nobody can take away their right to think freely. This is the territory that the totalitarian state cannot sabotage. In that sense, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* celebrates the "Republic of Imagination." The memoir has come under attack by Iranian critic Farzaneh Milani who refers to it as a "cocktail of fact and fiction intermingled." But Nafisi's memoir promises an "epiphany of truth" which goes beyond the specific time and location and assumes transhistorical significance.

Persepolis: The Black and White World

Persepolis is written in an autographic style popularly known as the comic book. It is unique in its juxtaposition of the comic form with the most serious in the Iranian history. Unlike the other two

memoirs, it communicates more through its gaps and silences than its statements. Marjane Satrapi recounts the unfolding of the revolution in Iran from the perspective of a child which justifies the author's use of the medium comic, the literary form meant to be consumed by juveniles. Hence the narrative maintains its childlike tone and playfulness. The contrast between the seriousness of historical events and the comic style undermines the authoritative and grave tone of the official history.

Persepolis is a highly subversive text. It offers resistance to the dominant discourse indirectly. The Republic in its rhetoric hailed women as revered figures and reinforced the image of a vulnerable and bashful woman by glorifying the veil. Its slogan—a woman modestly covered is like a pearl within a shell—was a strong reminder of this image. Satrapi, in contrast, trivializes the veiling ordinance of the regime. In the chapter “The Veil” of *Persepolis*, Satrapi undermines the veiling ordinance of 1980 by showing young school girls using their headscarves as skipping ropes, as a harness, as a monster mask and in other ways that are contrary to their supposed purpose to guard female modesty. The second part of *Persepolis* shows Satrapi challenging the image of a pure, ideal and compliant Persian girl popularized by the Islamic regime. Satrapi is always trespassing the designated spaces despite the fact that transgression invited terrible retribution. Satrapi neither conforms to cultural expectations of society nor the Islamic regime's orders. She is unabashed about her sexuality. Nahid Mozaffari in her review of Satrapi's memoir observes that the model of a shy, pure and acquiescent Persian girl did not stand up to the test of real life and real women that populate Iran. Satrapi aims to correct the overwhelming image of Iran as a nation of “women in chadors and guys with guns” as she claims this image of Iran is far from the truth. The narrative also attempts to dispel the fallacies of the western observers and introduces the reader to the bright, progressive and liberated Iranian people.

A majority of Iranians disagreed with the extreme Islamic ideology of the regime. The memoir is replete with incidents of resistance where young Iranians defy the regime's orders by tricking the morality police. Satrapi, too, gets into ideological clashes with the religious authorities. While appearing for an interview for admission to an arts college in Iran, she is asked whether she had been wearing a veil while studying in Austria, to which she replies, “No, I have always thought that if women's hair posed so many problems, God would have certainly made us bald” (286).

Persepolis resists the war-mongering of the Islamic regime in the name of nationalism. After the revolution, Iran immediately went to war with Iraq which continued for nearly eight years. As the death toll in the war mounted, and the culture of death prevailed everywhere, the ideologues and militias tightened their control over the entire population. This gave the government an excuse to subordinate the issues of civil and political liberties to the so-called higher goals of protecting national sovereignty and avoiding US intervention. Satrapi exposed the hypocrisy of the government as it tried to cover the absurdity of war. Boys as young as sixteen were brainwashed into joining the crusade against Iraq making it seem like a religious mission. *Persepolis* brings out the cruelty and absurdity of war through its “slippages.” Satrapi and her friends drowned themselves in drumbeats, drinks and dance while young boys were blown to pieces on the front with “keys to paradise” around their necks.

Though *Persepolis* employs black and white graphics, yet the text emphasizes that the truth consists of many shades of grey. The easy categorization of culture into eastern and western is a white lie that underlies the reigning discourse. The whole edifice of Islamic regime was built on the pretext that the country needs to be saved from the corrupting influence of westernization. However, the gaps and silences in the memoir call into question this new form of Islamic nationalism and problematizes both pure Islamic and westernized identities. Nima Naghibi and Andrew O’Malley, while analyzing *Persepolis*, conclude that decoding the meaning of a comic book takes place in the space between panels, known in the comic book trade as the “gutter.” “The gutters are empty spaces in the text that can either be filled with easy answers provided by the dominant ideology or they can function as sites of aporia. In the gutters between the panels of *Persepolis*, the reader has to interact with and interpret historical, political, and cultural silences; this is the space in which new meanings that deflate the overdetermined categories of East and West have the potential to be generated” (246).

Lipstick Jihad: Women’s Counter-Revolution

Azadeh Moaveni, an Iranian-American, returns as a journalist to work in Tehran to have a first-person experience of her homeland, the subject of her mother’s longings and exilic myths. On her

return to Tehran, Moaveni finds the Iranian society “as culturally confused, politically deadlocked and emotionally anguished.” Moaveni, inherited the memories of the “dark, evil force called revolution” from her parents. Returning two decades after the revolution, Moaveni studies the after effects of the revolution and women’s ongoing struggle for visibility and space in the Iranian history. The memoir foregrounds that the past is the present is the future.

Iranian women invariably engage with the question of veiling because they believe that veiling is not about appearances alone. Moaveni, along with Nafisi, doesn’t perceive mandatory veiling as a return to Islamic identity as the Republic would have them believe. Moaveni feels that putting on that dumb scrap of pink meant betraying her personal beliefs. “Though most women in modern day Iran might not consider the veil their highest grievance, they knew it symbolized the system’s disregard for women’s legal status in general. Mandatory veiling crushed women’s ability to express themselves, therefore, denying them a basic human right” (Moaveni 170).

The veiling decree did not achieve the desired results. Conversely, it unleashed a whole lot of maladies unforeseen by the regime. Reactions to mandatory veiling were varied ranging from the paralyzing fear, depression, and neurotic behavior among women to the “schizophrenic” way of life among younger Iranians. While depression was writ large over the faces of Iranian women of the generation of Moaveni’s parents, the younger women reacted differently. The latter developed “survival games” to outsmart the moves of the morality police. They embarked on a “lipstick Jihad.” Women broke into a riot of colours underneath their chadors. They indulged in colour with a vengeance despite harsh punishments. Gradually, they began simulating normalcy and asserting themselves—“women started wearing lipstick, exposing their toes and curves, wearing their veils halfway back ‘as if’ they have a right to be uncovered” (62). They started transgressing the defined border while dodging the watchful eyes of the morality police known as Basij. Iranian women fought the regime by resorting to fashion as resistance, observes Moaveni. She marvels at the intriguing concept of fashion as resistance. She sees the daily defiance of the dress code as part of the struggle.

Moaveni exposes the hypocrisy of the regime and the schizophrenic way of life Iranians had been leading. She says, paradoxically, restrictions meant to instill decency on the lines of Islamic faith,

inflamed people's carnal desires. "Made neurotic by the innate oppressiveness of restrictions, Iranians were preoccupied with sex in the manner of dieters, constantly thinking about food. The constant exposure to covered flesh—whether it was covered hideously, artfully, or plainly—brought to mind, well, flesh" (Moaveni 71). Moaveni also exposes the Islamic regime's hypocrisy and lack of vision regarding the status of women in Iran. "The regime fed young people such contradictory messages—women were liberated but legally inferior; women should be educated but subservient; women should have a career but stick to traditional gender roles; women should play sports but ignore their dirty physical needs" (Moaveni 179). She challenges the double standards of the regime to readily label a woman as "westernized."

Westernized was a convenient label for any female behavior that defied oppressive tradition. It could and was attached as easily to an Iranian woman who has never left Iran as it was to me raised outside. But men were like Teflon; the Westernized label did not stick. The other names for their conduct—hypocritical, womanizing, temperamental, fickle, bossy, headstrong—were still organically Iranian. The culture makes room for their transgressions. (200)

An Islamic nationalism was offered as an antidote to westernization denounced as west-toxication by the clerics. Under the leadership of Iran's supreme religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini, a Sharia-based law was implemented according to which western-wear, alcohol, partying and intermingling of sexes was prohibited. Moaveni questions the justification of these draconian laws in *Lipstick Jihad*. She insists that ordinary Iranians were averse to the religious rhetoric of the regime. Iranians were not interested in discussions about the role of Islam in modern society as the "need for secularism was as obvious to them as the blue of the sky." In fact Iranians felt a harsh contempt for the clerics who had taken over an oil-rich country in the name of Islam and sunk its economy. Moaveni detests the government's attempts to run Iran like an "Islamic theme park." She reminisces that the cat-shaped country her father taught her to draw was secular Iran and not the Islamic Republic, and the sanctity of that difference was the foundation of their lives in the diaspora.

Conclusion

Acting as magnifying glass, the narratives perform the important function of revealing the micro histories of individuals. They unveil mass killings, extra-judicial executions, persecution, torture

and disappearances under a totalitarian regime, facts normally hidden in the official history. In her article “Staying Alive,” Ahdaf Soueif emphasizes the role of women as history keepers. “Preserving history and telling the story—these seem to be at the heart of [our] women’s concerns right now” (119). Apart from this, women’s writing engages in the war of symbols that usually follows the actual wars and revolutions. The examination of texts reveals that Iranian women are liberating themselves from religious prescriptions and reclaiming their social and political histories through writing. Nafisi, Moaveni and Satrapi re-inscribe Iranian women’s identity which is far removed from the image of Muslim women commonly projected in the Islamic regime’s rhetoric and the western discourse. They unanimously reject the identity thrust on them of women who have to carry the burden of tradition and culture. Despite the regime’s newly imposed restrictions, women are gaining a victory in making their stories heard. Iranian diaspora writers, through their memoirs, are relentlessly engaged in the process of not only seeing but “seeing through;” not only articulating but interpreting the historical and political situation in their native and host countries. By putting the revolution and its implications for Iranian women in perspective, Iranian women are exposing the conspiracy of the regime to institutionalize patriarchy. Undoubtedly, in its imaginative appeal and interpretative quality, women’s autobiographical writing will continue to have an edge over history.

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We All Bleed History: Alternative Historical Viewpoints Expressed in *Maus*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Schindler's List*

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Abstract: We were told that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. As it happens, the same stands true for history. A historical event changes dramatically, depending on who is narrating the story. In Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, we hear Vladek Spiegelman's retelling of the Holocaust. As a survivor of both the war and the Auschwitz concentration camps, Vladek's story is filled with the grim remembrances of a man who had to do whatever it took to survive. Erich Maria Remarque shows us the battles of World War I, but from the point of view of a German soldier in *All's Quiet on the Western Front*. In popular culture, Germany is often reproduced as the antagonist in the great wars. However, Remarque shows us that for a soldier nothing exists on the battlefield other than death, violence, and a few glimmers of friendship. *Schindler's List* is yet another intriguing version of the Holocaust where Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi Party, does all that he can to save the Jewish workers in his factory. This is not just the viewpoint of someone close to the infamous party, but also glimpses of kindness and compassion in one of the darkest times in human history. My paper will attempt to understand the importance of these alternative glimpses into history and try to problematize the concepts of "truth" and "history."

Keywords: Alternative History, *Maus*, *Schindler's List*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, war, Holocaust, history, comic book.

History was, at one point, believed to be set in stone. Careful analysis of the artifacts from historic periods would present us with an objective image of the times gone by. However, as we approach recent history, the usefulness of such methods comes under scrutiny. The reasons for this are the personal accounts. Historical events, such as the Holocaust, have been witnessed by several individuals who have lived to tell the tale. Such retellings have come with a perspective quite

different from the one which is usually found in critical and / or authoritative texts. It is not being posited that a personal account is in any way superior to an unbiased academic one. However, both narratives hold equal importance, as they report history from different perspectives. According to Jan R. Veenstra, who elaborates Stephen Greenblatt's take on New Historicism, literary texts are not autonomous entities, as they shape, and are in turn shaped by sociohistorical events. Thus, to a certain extent, all texts can be considered personal. The aim of this paper will be to approach history from the viewpoint of personal narratives, as given in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Schindler's List*, and review their importance in the creation of history and truth.

Our first text, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, is set primarily during the Second World War which was a turbulent time, to say the least. It was filled with many horrific and tragic events. Amongst them, the one that surpasses them all in its notoriety is the Holocaust. Hitler's attempt to purge Germany of all those whom he deemed unworthy has left a scar on the world that has yet to heal fully. Such a traumatic experience is hard to imagine, much less put into words. Kate Douglas, in her book *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory* talks about the challenges of helping children with trauma come to terms with their condition:

Gilmore discusses the paradox that trauma is largely considered “unspeakable” or “unrepresentable”—that language is inadequate to articulate trauma—yet, at the same time, writing and speaking are authorized as the primary modes for healing trauma. (Douglas 107)

There is a need for a medium that allows expression of such emotions. Comic books have come to be such a medium, due to their two unique properties. Firstly, with their amalgamation of pictures and text, comic books bypass the restrictions that words have when it comes to expressing traumatic events. As such, comic books allow a more personal rendition of tragic events. Secondly, as Dr. Pramod K. Nayar puts it, comic books provide "hypervisibility" to traumatic topics:

By “hypervisible” I mean an “augmented visibility,” beyond that of CNN or BBC newscast, official histories, or documentations. I see hypervisibility as a feature in the democratization of historical trauma in its availability, accessibility and format. The graphic narrative format, I suggest, makes historical trauma available in a common format—a format we recognize easily from the comics strips in the daily newspaper. (Nayar 59)

Thus, a comic book not only incorporates a viewpoint beyond that of “official histories,” but does so in a manner which feels familiar to the reader. These two properties of the comic book facilitate the proper expression of traumatic memories from one individual to another.

Of course, when we speak of comic books and traumatic experiences, the one name that cannot be missed is Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*. Whenever one talks about Holocaust literature, one expects to read a heart-wrenching and terrifying narrative, especially if it consists of first-person accounts. Spiegelman’s *Maus*, however, begins by easing the reader into the story. The book starts with a young Art Spiegelman getting hurt while playing with his friends. A while later, when he tells his father about the incident, his father exclaims:

Friends? Your friends?... If you lock them in a room with no food for a week... then you could see what it is friends. (Spiegelman 5)

This conversation establishes the tone of the narrative as told by a man traumatized by his experiences, especially those in Auschwitz. But it does not start with the events of Auschwitz itself. As a matter of fact, there is no mention of the Nazis or Auschwitz in the first chapter. The narrative focuses solely on establishing a connection between the past and the present, as well as between the story and the reader. The reader is not immediately burdened with facts and figures; instead the reader is given the opportunity to witness the turn of events in history, as they took place. Vladek Spiegelman’s narration further delineates the narrative from traditional historical writings by incorporating his unique point of view regarding the Holocaust, Auschwitz, and life in general.

The story of Vladek Spiegelman is, at once, the story of every Jew in the Concentration Camps and of no one but himself. The purpose of the first chapter of *Maus* is to establish Vladek as a person, not just another name in the annals of history. Vladek himself tells his son not to put the incidents of his past in the book as "It has nothing to do with Hitler, with the Holocaust" (Spiegelman 23). Art Spiegelman counters his father's point by saying that the inclusion of such moments made "everything more real--more human." He also points out that the main objective of his book is to "tell your [Vladek's] story, the way it really happened." Reality here is taken as Vladek's point of view. This shift of importance from the “official” iteration of history to a personal one not only underlines the desire for a re-evaluation of history, but also the need Art Spiegelman feels to learn more about the tragic past bequeathed to him by his parents.

Vladek himself, of course, is not the most reliable of narrators. An old man at the time of *Maus's* inception, Vladek at many instances side-tracks into other memories, especially those of his late wife Anja. For instance, talking about his first memory of Auschwitz, Vladek begins a spirited discourse on how he and Anja were always together, albeit on a spiritual level:

Vladek: No! The war put us apart. But always, before and after, we were together. Not so like Mala, what grabs out my money-

Art: Auschwitz, Pop, Tell me about Auschwitz. (Spiegelman 25)

His discourses regarding his experiences are coloured by his prejudices and personality. One such moment comes to light when Françoise, Art's wife, picks up an African-American hitchhiker while driving home with Art and Vladek. Vladek becomes furious at having a "Shvartser" in the car, saying that their belongings could have been stolen at any time. Such racism further highlights the fact the Vladek is not perfect and, by extension, neither is his version of the holocaust. However, his memories are still true and they imbue history with a vitality that factual textbooks do not possess.

Vladek had survived throughout the war and within the concentration camp by his wit and whatever goods he had at his disposal. Speaking about his time at the Jewish ghetto, waiting to be taken to Auschwitz, Vladek tells his son how he traded valuables with his cousin Haskel Spiegelman in an attempt to escape. Art and Vladek's conversation at this point is enlightening as it relates to the deterioration of relationships under the strain of a great crisis:

Art: Wouldn't they have helped you even if you couldn't pay? I mean, you were from the same family...

Vladek: Hah! You don't understand.., at that time it wasn't anymore families. It was everybody to take care for himself! (Spiegelman 114)

Vladek's experiences had quickly made him a cynic, even when it came to his own family. The only person he did not judge by these standards was Anja. Vladek's story, therefore, at many many times sounds business-like. Even within Auschwitz, in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale II*, he tries to curry favour in order to survive and help Anja. One such attempt (although on behalf of a relative) even enrages his Polish supervisor who yells, "You Jew! You've only been here a few days and you're

ready to do business?!" (Spiegelman 33). At many points, Vladek's accounts do not tally with the popular notion of Jews in concentration camps, which is that of constant horrors and suffering. Although Vladek himself experienced numerous hellish moments, they were sprinkled with times of hope and relief. Vladek narrates such an instance when, in Auschwitz, he was able to earn considerable amounts of food by fixing the shoes of the SS soldiers.

While we have discussed the Holocaust from Vladek's perspective, the narrative of *Maus* contains the viewpoint of Art Spiegelman as well. Whenever the narration of the story comes back to the present, we are presented with Art Spiegelman's take on the Holocaust as well as his father. James E. Young, in his essay "The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Afterimages of History" reminds us that the autobiographical representation of history does not start with the narration of Vladek but with Art Spiegelman's childhood:

Maus: A Survivor's Tale also opens in Rego Park, Queens, circa 1958, with the young Artie's relationship to his father. Indeed, every detail of his childhood life is already fraught with his father's memory, already shaped by his father's experiences. (Young 678)

Art, in an attempt to faithfully reproduce his father's memories of the Holocaust, makes certain choices while creating *Maus* that give the text its distinctive appeal. Hye Su Park in the essay "Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*: A Bibliographic Essay," looks at Art's usage of his private moments with his father as a violation saying, "Artie violates his promise to keep Vladek's testimony personal by turning Vladek's private memory into a public text" (Park 144). Art Spiegelman also shows concern regarding the honest and unflattering manner in which he has depicted his father. He confides, in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale I*, to his father's second wife, Mala that he was afraid his portrayal of his father would become akin to a "racist caricature of the miserly old Jew" (Spiegelman 131). Mala also tells Art that she, as well as all of her friends, went to the camps but none turned out like Vladek. Art Spiegelman's father is perhaps not the best example of the survivors of the concentration camps. However, the fact remains that he is a survivor and his recollections as authentic as that of any historian. Such is the nature of personal narrative that it puts before us a different variation of history, and not always one which is complementary to the popular version. My second text, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, also went against the established notions of history and nationalism at its time of publication. For its

stance, the novel was challenged, and banned at many places, but the truth of its narrative triumphed in the end.

Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* is considered to be a seminal anti-war text. Placed during the First World War, the novel focuses on German soldiers on the "western front," which was opened by the German army after their invasion of Luxembourg and Belgium. The events of the novel take place mostly on the battlefield and the trenches, with a few scenes of the protagonist's, Paul Bäumer's, hometown. The brutality and terror of war is given a fresh perspective when looked at from a soldier's eyes. Bäumer's himself says that the war reduces people to their basest instincts, doing whatever they can to survive, which is akin to Vladek Spiegelman's take on the Holocaust:

We have turned into dangerous animals. We are not fighting, we are defending ourselves from annihilation. We are not hurling our grenades against humans... the hands and the helmets that are after us belong to Death himself... (Remarque 81)

Similar to *Maus*, the depiction of war in *All Quiet on the Western Front* is quite different from the widespread narrative. Since the novel is narrated by a soldier from Germany, a country popularly considered the antagonist in both the First and the Second World War; it looks at history in a divergent manner. Joseph A. Tighe, in his essay "*All Quiet on the Western Front: A Phenomenological Investigation of War*," says that it is possible for a war to have a "universal account." Tighe calls for a phenomenological study of the novel, as it is more of a felt experience than an objective account of the First World War. An individualistic recording of history, for Tighe, is more accessible and accommodating. He refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty saying:

Our experience *of* experience is ambiguous, at once ours and anyone else's. Meaning, then, is meaning-for-us and meaning-for-others. Merleau-Ponty does not see complete meaning as inaccessible, but not because meaning is non-universal; rather, Merleau-Ponty sees meaning as inaccessible due to its temporal nature--any immanent meaning is at once a meaning which may become more determinate at a later time. (Tighe 52)

Tighe looked upon meaning as ever-changing. This is in close conjunction with the reception of Remarque's work. The novel, shortly after its release, was criticized by many groups, foremost of which was the German National Socialist Party, as being an inaccurate and overly harsh

description of Germany's war efforts. However, in due time, the novel was hailed for its depiction of the plight of soldiers and the stark representation of the horrors of war. It can now be stated that the underlying truth within *All Quiet on the Western Front* has been fully realized.

Remarque also questions the nature of the nation and its politics. In the novel Kropp, one of Bäumer's fellow soldiers, is of the mind that a war should be between the politician's themselves:

He [Kropp] reckons that all declarations of war ought to be made into a kind of festival... like they have at bullfights. Then the ministers and generals of the two countries would have to come into the ring... Whoever is left on his feet, his country is declared the winner. (Remarque 29)

Kropp finds this to be a fairer solution, as he believes that "the wrong people are fighting each other" (Remarque 29). Kropp's words reveal an exasperation that soldiers had with the protracted war and the sense of disillusionment that was building up within them. In conjunction with this idea, it needs to be noted that most of the characters in *All Quiet on the Western Front* did not join the army on their own volition, but were coerced into doing so. Bäumer talks about his teacher Kantorek who had pressured the young boys into joining the war, saying, "I can still see him, his eyes shining at us through his spectacles and his voice trembling with emotion as he asked, 'You'll all go, won't you lads?'" (Remarque 8). However, Bäumer doesn't put the entire blame on Kantorek as he is sure that "there were thousands of Kantoreks, all of them convinced that they were acting for the best"(Remarque 9). "The best," of course, is for the nation as a whole. In his essay "Nation in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*," Brent M. Smith-Casanueva posits that war is required to forge the narrative of the nation. In his opinion, "War plays an essential role in the construction of national identity as nationalism is linked to warfare" (Smith-Casanueva 3). Thus, what is considered to be for "the best" of a nation is also taken to be in the best interest for the people of the said nation. This line of thought can not only be used to justify war and other forms of violence, by considering it as beneficial for a country, but also denies individual opinions. It is taken for granted that all citizens have identical ideas of nationalism and how it can be achieved. *All Quiet on the Western Front* shatters this illusion through the narrative of its characters and their personal notions of war, nationalism and patriotism.

All Quiet on the Western Front, as stated earlier, is an anti-war novel and as such, does not share the aforementioned views about war. The novel endeavors to explain how war is a wastage of human life and potential. Peter Leer, Bäumer's classmate and later brother-in-arms, was an intelligent and talented young man who always carried his textbooks with him, hoping to continue his studies after the war. Upon his death after getting hit by a shell fragment, Bäumer began to contemplate how all of Leer's achievements and merits had been for naught. Bäumer asks himself, "What use is it to him now that he was such a good mathematician in school?" (Remarque 200). Questioning the prevalent rhetoric of nation and nationalism, in Smith-Casanueva's opinion, is integral in creating a different and, in Tighe's words, a more accessible form of history. Says Smith-Casanueva, "I argue that *All Quiet...* destabilize[s] this equilibrium by resisting narration of nation through subverting dominant war narratives and structures of national mythology" (Smith-Casanueva 3). The equilibrium Smith-Casanueva mentions is the dominant ideology of a nation and its activities. Remarque, through his novel, portrayed war as a venture filled to the brim with remorse and suffering in order to counter its glorification.

Our third text, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, is not an anti-war film in the way in which *All Quiet on the Western Front* is an anti-war text. It does not initially condemn war and we are never shown scenes from the Second World War in the movie. On the contrary, the protagonist Oskar Schindler, towards the beginning of the film, considers war to be the catalyst for the success of his business venture. We are, however, presented with the atrocities committed upon the Jews by Germany's Nazi Party throughout the duration of the war. The movie works on two levels. Firstly, it portrays the brutality that took place under the Nazi regime, without any attempt to shield the viewers from the acts of violence. Secondly, it established the fact that hope and mercy can come from the unlikeliest of places. The movie is based on the life of Oskar Schindler, a Nazi party member who comes to Krakow in order to make a profit by running an enamelware factory and hiring Jews because they were paid less. Soon Schindler begins to care deeply for the people working for him and goes to great lengths, spending a fortune and repeatedly risking arrests, in order to keep them alive and well. Due to his efforts, more than a thousand Jews from Poland escaped the terrors of Auschwitz. The movie was unanimously well received. However, concerns were raised as to the way in which history could be influenced with the help of popular culture.

Schindler's List is a historical fiction film, which means that it narrates a historical occurrence in a creative manner. What differentiates Spielberg's magnum opus from a documentary film is its artistic narration and character building. Christoph Classen and Kirsten Wächter, in their essay titled "Balanced Truth: Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* among History, Memory, and Popular Culture," state that the concern critics had with *Schindler's List*'s popular reception had much to do with the attempts to deny the occurrence of the Holocaust. According to Classen and Wächter, after the Second World War ended, Germans and other post-war societies "showed little empathy toward this group of victims [Jews]" (Classen & Wächter 82). Most of them did not wish to accept the horrific tales regarding Auschwitz. In order to establish the reality of the Holocaust, it was essential that narratives based primarily on facts were widely circulated. Thus, facts became indispensable when it came to the depiction of the Holocaust. Any connection with fiction could potentially place the authenticity of the film's portrayal of history in jeopardy. Interestingly, it was fiction itself that helped *Schindler's List* become the iconic Holocaust film that it is today.

As we had discussed earlier, a personal account of history (meaning-for-us) can become everyone's (meaning-for-others) account of history. The problem with earlier cinematic accounts of the Holocaust was that they had become too intellectual and failed to reach the masses. Barbie Zelizer says in the essay "Every Once in a While: *Schindler's List* and the Shaping of History," that Spielberg's film had achieved a "moment of rupture" that critical documentaries could not attain. She explains:

Distributed mostly in art cinemas and consumed mostly by the intellectual elite, films such as Lucino Visconti's... *The Damned* (1969), Liliana Cavani's... *The Night Porter* (1974)... and Hans Jurgen Syberberg's Wagnerian, *Hitler, A Film from Germany* (1978) have failed to reach the masses. Their effect on global historical consciousness has therefore been limited. In contrast, *Schindler's List* has penetrated historical consciousness on a global scale and has transformed the image of the Holocaust as perceived by millions of people all over the world. (Zelizer 2)

There are instances in *Schindler's List* that are theatrical, such as Amon Goth attempting to shoot a Jewish worker with two separate guns, both of which inexplicably fail to fire. However, such moments make the narrative more engaging and personal. As Art Spiegelman would say, it makes the story "human."

Schindler's List does change the image of the Holocaust for its audience. It no longer appears to be a tragedy that took place long ago and far away. Spielberg succeeded in bringing the Holocaust to the people without compromising on any of its savageries. But, as stated earlier, the moment of epiphany takes place when we see that hope and good can flourish within the presence of great evil. The film shows a Jewish wedding taking place in a concentration camp, the happiness of the workers within the walls of Schindler's factory, and their joy when Schindler asks them to stop working and observe the Sabbath. Schindler also creates a new discourse of power when he tells Goth that power lies not in punishing people, but in forgiving them. Goth himself feels a forbidden love for his Jewish maid Helen Hirsch. When Schindler comes to rescue Hirsch, offering to pay Goth handsomely for her, he refuses saying, "She [Helen]'s not going to Auschwitz. I'd never do that to her. No, I want her to come back to Vienna with me. I want her to come to work for me there. I want to grow old with her" (2:25:54-2:26:04). Thus, even within the brutal and inhuman character of Goth, there was a spark of kindness. In short, *Schindler's List* shows us the truth behind a horrific tragedy and, at the same time, gives us hope for the future.

From our readings, it can be said that history is many-faceted and multi-dimensional. The truth about history changes with a shift in perspective, narrator or medium. However, an absence of a "universal history," as Tighe puts it, gives us the opportunity to explore alternate versions in order to further enrich our understanding of history. Our analysis of *Maus*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Schindler's List* has provided us with enough evidence to suggest that no rendition of a historic event, especially the chaotic periods of war, can be considered exhaustive. We also come to the realization that no period in history is governed by one emotion. In the most horrific of instances, we have seen a sliver of hope. It does not undermine the tragedies that have occurred, but stands as a testament to the strength of the indomitable human spirit. With the passage of time history will be continuously reevaluated, with each new interpretation adding to its overall meaning. By accepting such new renditions, we will be creating a space for further dialogue and discussion.

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Facticity and Fictionality: Mahesh Dattani's *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*

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Abstract: Literary writings advance crucial insight in understanding history and it is assumed that a literary text is coterminous with history. The notions of “history in literature” and “literature in history” or the “historicity of text” or the “textuality of history” as propounded by Brannigan and Montrose, respectively, are of profound importance in contemporary literature. Literary writers have used the medium of fiction to explore those areas of political and socio-cultural history that have been unvoiced or unwritten and mostly debarred by the dominant narratives of official history. The aim of this paper is to study Mahesh Dattani's *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?* (2012), by applying interpretative strategies and approaches for analyzing the dynamic fusion of the past with fiction, an imaginative combination of historical facts, memories and conjured up scenes and characters that he laces with subtle. By examining *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, this paper also endeavors to explore the literary representation of partition as a potential means of presenting much of the suppressed or silenced history of the marginalized women whose perspectives have largely been excluded in the embryonic discourse of history. In fact, the backdrop of the historical partition in this play allows for a re-thinking and re-visioning of alternative versions of partition, mainly from a woman's perspective.

Keywords: Facticity and Fictionality, Mahesh Dattani, *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, Partition, history in literature

Literary writings advance crucial insight in understanding history and it is assumed that a literary text is coterminous with history. The notions of “history in literature” and “literature in history” or the “historicity of text” or the “textuality of history” as propounded by Brannigan and Montrose, respectively, are of profound importance in contemporary literature. According to Montrose's formulation:

By the historicity of texts, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the Social embedment, of all modes of writing—also the texts in which we study them. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question. (15-26)

Literary writers have used the medium of fiction to explore those areas of political and socio-cultural history that have been unvoiced or unwritten and mostly debarred by the dominant narratives of official history. The aim of this paper is to study Mahesh Dattani's *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?* (2012), by applying interpretative strategies and approaches for analyzing the dynamic fusion of the past with fiction, an imaginative combination of historical facts, memories and conjured up scenes and characters that he laces with subtle humour. By examining *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, this paper also endeavors to explore the literary representation of partition as a potential means of presenting much of the suppressed or silenced history of the marginalized women whose perspectives have largely been excluded in the embryonic discourse of history. In fact, the backdrop of the historical partition in this play allows for a re-thinking and re-visioning of alternative versions of partition, mainly from a woman's perspective.

Mahesh Dattani is one of the pioneering Indian playwrights writing in English, who explores the controversial or taboo issues "that people wanted to be kept in darkness" (*Me and My Plays* 32). He tries to give voice to the deep agony of the people who have largely remained on the periphery as exploited, and sometimes as unheard and at other times as muted beings: women, gays, lesbians, disabled and those belonging to the third gender. Dattani has also tried to unravel the religious hatred, communal frenzy and painful suffering of the people through his plays. *Where did I leave my Purdah?*, first performed on 27 October 2012 in Mumbai illustrates Dattani's awareness of the fine line between fact and fiction as a means to accomplish the larger truths of life. He has blended facts with fiction through a close juxtaposition of "time and memory" as he himself asserts, "(these) are important elements that provide a plot to my plays" (40). Additionally, through the parallels between the past and the present in this play, he is able to probe the themes of isolation and estrangement, undercurrents of hidden and transferred resentments, religious communalism, embittered and thwarted relationships between a man and a woman, and a mother and a daughter, breaking away from the patriarchal hegemony, quest for identity, truth versus falsehood, tradition

versus modernity, acceptance and rejection, all via the sinister echoes of the partition that linger on in the personal and collective memories.

Set in the world of theatre and cinema, against the backdrop of the Partition of the Indian sub-continent, it explores in depth, the guilt-ridden past and the success-filled career in dance and drama of Nazia Sahiba's life spanning nearly sixty years. The paper traces the psychological journey of this actress, who decides to move to India during the Partition, leaving behind her the *Purdah* of Muslim traditions in order to establish her own theatre company in India. The opening of the play introduces Nazia as a wrinkled, frail, funny, and grotesque woman in her late eighties, who looks like the "quintessential widowed dadi maa of television and Bollywood movies" (54). She seems to be a feisty, self-assertive, dominant and self-absorbed diva, who wants to live life on her own terms and who does not want to compromise at any cost. She is fed up of playing the monotonous one-line roles of a mother or a grand-mother in the films. At the moment, upon coming to know that Sanjay, the director of the film has not altered the role according to her instructions, she decides to leave the films and rejoin her theatrical world. She remembers her days of glory as one of the most successful theatre dancers and actors of her times. She unabashedly says:

Times have changed...This is it. There is always a time in your life when the truth strikes you...why didn't I see it? What am I doing here? I don't belong here! (*Taking off her wig*)
No more grandma roles for me. I am going back to the theatre! Dancing! That's it. I am leaving. (58)

Nazia's decision to rejoin the theatre is a moment of realization for her that in turn reveals her all-consuming passion for the theatre and her preference to live life on her own terms and conditions:

No matter what, nobody can take away the dances you've already had...I want more dances. Dances that nobody can take away from me. Oh! This van is too small! It can't take my dancing. Your cinema is too small for me. My life is big. I am BIG and GENEROUS! Only the theatre deserves me! (59)

She intends to resurrect her theatre company named "Modern Indian Theatre" to interestingly renamed, "Post-Modern Indian Theatre" by staging the modern version of the grandest production in her repertoire, *Abhijyan Shakuntalam*, renamed *SHAKU*. She plans to portray Shakuntala, the abandoned pregnant wife as a modern and liberated woman and Dushyant as an impotent man,

which suggests her strong desire to subvert the male hegemony and present an example of a society free from patriarchal domination. However, the sponsor wants Nazia to stage the original version. So, she straightforwardly rejects reconsidering her plan:

He doesn't want a modern version?...No, I don't want to do the original. He can take it or leave it...Okay! And tell him his Shiraz tastes like a mix of vinegar and cow piss anyway!
(84)

Another aspect of the play is that Dattani's Nazia, the veteran theater actor, living amidst the backdrop of partition and involved in various theatrical activities, is based on the experiences and artistic accomplishments of Zohra Sehgal. She is modeled on Zohra, who has defied the expectations of the traditional patriarchal society and has made unconventional choices in her personal and professional life. Sehgal, despite being a Muslim woman, is "a quintessential Bollywood diva who essayed character roles with aplomb in a career spanning over seven decades in both theatre and cinema" (*The Guardian* 1) and is known to be India's first professional ballet dancer and theatre diva. Dattani himself asserts:

It explores the life and travails of Nazia, a stage actress who has lived a life in the theater for sixty years. The play is a tribute to the great actresses of company theaters, who were courageous enough to pursue their passion for the stage at a time when stage actresses were, looked down upon...my inspiration the legendary Zohra Sehgal...somewhere the spirit of the doyenne lives in Nazia. (*Me and My Plays* 40)

Dattani has combined various facts of Zohra's life with his fictive imagination. To achieve his goal, he has innovatively and artistically presented Nazia working in a film with real actors like Ranbir, Deepika, and Rishi, directed by Sanjay, and sharing close relationships with actors like Waheeda and Nanda—the popular actors of their times for "the reality effect" (White 15). In fact, Zohra has acted in her last Bollywood film *Saanwariya* (2007) with Ranbir Kapoor and Sonam Kapoor directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. The inclusion of elements like Nazia's unstoppable spirit, her acting skills and dancing ability, successful cure from cancer, and so on are based on factual elements of Zohra Sehgal's life. She is known to be the leading dancer in, "Uday Shankar's troupe and danced across Japan, Egypt, Europe, and US...in 1994 she got cancer but her will power beat that too" (*The Guardian* 2). The play can be called a docudrama in which "[E]verything

is presented as if it were...both real and imaginary—realistically imaginary or imaginarily real” (White 68).

The play is not merely set against a theatrical backdrop, Dattani has imparted the story a unique intensity and complexity that heightens the tension by placing the core of the story during India’s partition, with all its upheavals and far-reaching physical and psychological consequences that remain in the sub/consciousness as shown through the reminiscences of Nazia. As Lillete Dubey notes:

A story set against the backdrop of the theatre, tracing some of the theatrical forms that constitute our history, recounting a tale that mirrored the stories of a multitude of women artistes who were consumed with a love for their craft, almost at the cost of everything else. These were dynamic women who were driven by a deep compulsion to fulfill their artistic needs, in spite of the fact that their work would live only ephemerally in memory. And so was spun the story of the irrepressible, irreverent, iconoclastic and utterly human Nazia, who is inspired by a legion of Amazonian legends that have blazed across the stage, living, loving and even sacrificing all for their art. (*Me and My Plays* 48-49)

Partition, the most catastrophic event of recent Indian history has been used to revise much of the suppressed or silenced history of those women who witnessed and suffered partition, and tried to not only resist but reconcile and refashion their lives in the changed situations. Dattani’s juxtaposition of Nazia’s traumatic and disturbing experiences, and her troubled and embittered relationships with her loved ones with the historical moment of the Partition of the Indian sub-continent by using psychological concepts like memory, forgetting, remembering and misremembering have played an important role in making facts become fiction and fiction become fact. The play is especially occupied with the moments when personal lives are entangled within the forces of history and depicts the importance of replaying the past to come to terms with it, of confronting loss, acknowledging guilt, and taking responsibility. The fictional trials and tribulations that Nazia endures in her personal and professional life during and post-partition reflect the truth of the problematic, risky and challenging lives that women have been subjected to or lived throughout the history. Though Nazia wants to free herself of the cruel past by all means, she realizes that ghosts of the past cannot be buried so easily. She painfully explains that to forget one’s past is not an easy task:

You think it is so simple? ... Things don't get finished. They just hide in a dark corner like a ghoul and grab at you when you are not looking. And sometimes you have to beat the shit out of the ghoul to make it crawl back into the dark corner. (89)

The play's temporal shifts to the pre/post-independence era and the intermingling of play-within-the-play, *Abhijyan Shakuntalam*, are integral to the development of the plot. Dattani, through these techniques, not only links the past with the present but also reveals the true motives behind Nazia's decision to abandon her husband and hiding the truth of Ruby's parentage. Lillete Dubey avers:

The play operates within the different time zones and realities. The present, the past and the play-within-the-play (where we rediscover a classical play Kalidasa's *Abhijyan Shakuntala*) flow seamlessly into each other, but with their own individual rhythms and beats. Each segment mirrors and echoes the other, the whole coming together like one piece of music, underlining the trajectories of the protagonists on many levels, including off the stage and on. (49)

The play reflects the horrors of the partition when the action shifts to Lahore of 1948, soon after Independence, and Nazia and Suhel as Shakuntala and Dushyant are performing a scene where Dushyant saves Shakuntala from the bees, when suddenly the pandemonium of violence breaks out. Suhel is a Hindu and a woman of the troupe shouts, "we should never allow Hindus in our troupe...Hindus must leave! Go to India" (75-76). But Nazia acts quickly and gives Suhel a Muslim (praying) cap and handles the violent mob, "[T]here are no Hindus here. Only us artistes" (77). But a man while leaving the theatre remarks:

We know the kind of plays you put up, prancing around naked on stage. And then you move around with that Hindu. Whores like you will find no place even in hell. (77)

Dattani poignantly portrays the animalization of human values in the midst of the vitriolic violence that saw the killings of millions of Hindus and Muslims, and more specifically, resulted in the brutal molestations, rapes and murders of countless women during the forced migration. Through the scene that takes place midway in the play, he effectively conjures and conveys in a fictional way the realistic accounts of the partition about the human realities of the 1947 upheavals, and the sexual violence that accompanied it. The announcement of the partition makes the erstwhile peaceful Hindu and Muslim neighbours suddenly awaken to and realize their differences with

horrific consequences. Nazia's decision to migrate to India with Suhel costs her too much. Her sister, Zarine, sacrifices herself for Nazia's life. She is brutally molested and murdered by the violent mob in the train, "The infamous Flying Mail 9 Down" (128) to India. Nazia recalls the whole frightening incident:

She gave me her burqa. She was always the one who was uncertain. She was always the one who was uncertain. She was always afraid of making a wrong decision! But now--she did not think twice! There was no doubt in her mind... (130)

More than the primary events of the partition itself, this play explores the sexual exploitation of the displaced girls and women by men, irrespective of their religion or region. A gang of Hindu men sexually molests Nazia while Suhel watches on inert. This makes her feel betrayed, and sad and desolate. She feels more victimized when she gives birth to a child as a consequence of this gang-rape. This and similar violence against women symbolizes the vulnerabilities of the women whose bodies are used as battlegrounds by men for taking revenge and preserving their fragile and false male egos. The play offers a realistic depiction of the gendered aspect of partition like Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1987), Kamleshwar Singh's *How Many Pakistans?* (2000), Sadat Hasan Manto's partition stories and *What the Body Remembers* (1999) that artistically depict the vandalism women have had to endure during partition. Menon and Bhasin in their book *Border and Boundaries* rightfully opine:

Sexual violence—against women—now charged with a symbolic meaning that serves as an indicator of the place that women's sexuality occupies in all-male patriarchal arrangement of gender relations between and within religious or ethnic communities...The most predictable form of violence experienced by women, as women, is when the women of one community are sexually assaulted by the men of the other, in an overt assertion of their identity and a simultaneous humiliation of the Other by "dishonouring" their women. (41)

Dattani, too, through Nazia's words, gives the graphic details of the heart-wrenching incident of violence against Zarine and her:

The butchers were on her and all the others...We crossed the border after bribing someone...I was still wearing that piece of black cloth. But we were in another country, with a different set of demons...They came at me. They pushed me down behind the bushes. Five or six or seven, eight of them. I don't know. They tore at my clothes and at my flesh. All I could think of is why isn't Suhel saving me? These are his peoples! I stopped

looking at those eyes, so much anger and hatred! Hell bent on humiliating me. I stared back with hatred too, but they hurt me even more till—I stopped looking into their eyes. . . The train arrived from across the border. Filled with bodies. . . I recognized Zarine. Only just then. She was killed by her own people. I . . . (131-133)

Nazia gets married to Suhel but the play poignantly expresses the truth of her hollow, disjointed and frustrated relationship with him, which can never be like before:

We only remembered the pain...We are not who we were. And I think it is a good thing. Of course, I wish I were beautiful as I was. I wish you were too. We were both beautiful but what's the point now? It's over. No point. Cobwebs...He (Suhel) said he would bring up the child as his own...but – I could sense it in his touch. Somewhere, we had forgotten each other...we only remembered the pain. (134)

By mingling the scenes from the play *Shakuntala* between Nazia and Suhel as Shakuntala and Dushyant onstage and offstage, Dattani truthfully mirrors the deep agony of Nazia and the dismantled love/marital relationship between the two. Nazia's soulful rendition of *Shakuntala*—her feelings of empathy with *Shakuntala*'s suffering—prefigures the fate of the protagonist as well as that of Nazia. The dialogues of the play uttered by Suhel as Dushyant make her feel that Suhel wants to convey to her his feelings which he can never express to her in real life:

NAZIA. Why is it that when you play Dushyant—especially this scene—I feel that—you are accusing me?

SUHEL. Maybe because I am a good actor...

NAZIA. Why are you all so cruel to me?...

SUHEL. Is it the company you care about? Or the roles you play? *Jasma Odan, Shakuntala*. You choose the scripts with care making sure you have the meat, while you feed the rest of us the bones!...

NAZIA. Move on? I am trying—trying to do that, but you keep reminding me of what happened...I just have to look at you and it all comes back! I can't play *Shakuntala* because of you. And in the court when you spurn me, the look in your eyes! You mean every word you say!...I can't love you anymore.

SUHEL (*unbelieving*). You still blame me for what happened?

NAZIA. You did nothing to stop it! Nothing!

SHAKUNTALA. Look at me and say you have not married me under the gandharva tradition.

DUSHYANT. How can I, by accepting a woman with obvious signs of pregnancy, invite upon myself the infamy of being called the husband of a woman who is pregnant by some other man?...Even females that are not of the humankind are clever without training to be so. Don't you know that the cuckoo, whose voice seems sweet to everybody, displays such cleverness that she keeps her young ones in the nests of other birds!

SHAKUNTALA (*angry, more as Nazia*) NO! NO! O Mother Earth!...Please take me away to some place far away where I can forget my troubled past. (95-105)

These also explain Nazia's insistence on staging a subversive retelling of *Abhijyan Shakuntalam* with a sturdy Shakuntala and an impotent Dushyant, since this was what she had felt like after her horrific experiences during the partition and later on during her loveless marriage. Nazia decides to look forward in life with strength and self-will and never peep into the reprehensible past. She commits to not following the stereotypical boundaries of the male dominated society and to create her own world free of the patriarchal set of norms, those partial sets of feminine norms which assign a woman the role of an obedient and subservient wife and selfless nurturer as a mother, and who passively and silently endures all cruelties. Therefore, in order to free and unburden herself from the memories of her sinister past, she abandons her husband and declines to be the mother of an unwanted child. Then she unveils the truth about Ruby's parentage which turns out to be a horrific revelation for Ruby:

You were born....You were my flesh, wounded, humiliated. I didn't cry when you came out. I was relieved—that the tapeworms infesting my belly, left by those pigs that ate at my flesh, were out of my body...I could not hold you...Not because I hated you, but because I hated myself...even today when I look at you...it comes back. I tried really hard to forget. I tried. And I will keep trying. Help me. Just leave me alone! (134-135)

Thus, the primary reason for neglecting Ruby becomes clear. Ruby is an unwanted child, a living emblem of the horrors perpetrated on Nazia, and hiding Ruby's true identity is one of her defense mechanisms to forget the dreadful and horrible memories of her past life. And, Ruby after knowing the truth of her parentage expresses her inner pain of being a neglected child and Nazia's apathetic

behavior towards her, “I didn’t exist. Everyone sympathized with me. Poor girl, her own aunt doesn’t want to look at her... You were so close to me and yet you may as well have been thousands of miles away” (124-125). However, what is lamentable is the fact that this cycle of pain, neglect and apathy continues in Ruby’s behavior towards her daughter Nikhat. The partition has not only made lives insufferable to those who had to go through it but has repercussion for the coming generations as well as the cycle of hate and suffering continues. Nikhat endures the same agony, the rejection and neglect by her mother as her mother, Ruby, had gone through before her:

NIKHAT. You gave what you got. Oh, you were always around at home, trying to compensate and making sure I didn’t go through the same feeling of abandonment. But even when you were holding my hand waiting for the school bus to pick me up, you were thousands of miles away... There was a whole week when you would give me my lunch box without packing my lunch in it, and at a lunch break, I would open an empty lunch box. You went through the motions all right of being a caring mom. But you weren’t. You couldn’t. I was angry too. (126)

As the play reaches its resolution, the line between the past and present blurs, as they become one in spirit—an emotional reunion of Nazia with her daughter Ruby, and Ruby’s reunion with her daughter Nikhat—that ends the hidden resentments within them against one another. But the whole scene imaginatively portrays the real pains and physical and psychological traumas that both of these women have suffered, during partition and post partition.

Thus, the study shows that the historical and fictional elements are amalgamated deftly in the play. The play not only reflects but also rather actively participates in the reconceptualization of the historical moment of partition. It analyzes how Dattani integrates historical facts within the fictional framework to present a deeply personal yet almost universal story of fortitude and courage, as well as the tragic tale of loss and pain ably and aptly, speaks of the agony of women by employing a feminist retelling of the partition and by focusing on the double victimization and suffering of women for being women through this journey of Nazia’s. Additionally, Dattani, through his humanistic portrayal of the personal experiences during times of political and religious upheaval, gives glimpses of the tribulations faced by avant-garde theatre actresses as a whole. Nazia’s zeal to create a world of her own by denying to act in restricted roles, both literally and metaphorically, effectively unveils her true powerful self and of other women like her.

Furthermore, adaptation and reinterpretation of *Shakuntala* as *Shaku* can be seen an endeavor to make women aware of and caution against internalizing the retrogressive patriarchal beliefs concerning the feminine which are meant to subordinate or marginalize the women in every sphere of life—political, economical and cultural. By linking fictive scenes of *Shakuntala* with the personal traumatic experiences of an almost real Nazia, with the continuous shifting of focus from the present life of the characters to their past and vice versa, Dattani has been able to bring out all the deep-rooted pains and desires of various characters, and perhaps hopes to achieve a similar catharsis for all those women who actually suffered during partition and others after them.

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Tracing Racial History: Mildred D. Taylor's *The Land*

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Abstract: Mildred D. Taylor, a highly acclaimed writer for young adults, narrates her stories by fictionalizing African American history. Invariably she delves into her own family's past to spin tales that would teach young adults about African American history. Black life for her is all about surviving, maintaining self-respect and dignity even when living in a racist cultural context. Winner of numerous awards, including The Coretta Scott King Award, Taylor in her works urges for an understanding and acceptance of the traumatic black history even as her themes encompass real world problems from which her characters emerge lovable and brave. Taylor's stories unveil tales of struggle, racial tension, and tragedy, as well as triumph, pride, and family honour. She puts together highly believable tales and tells them with much humour and insight. Taylor's aim is to shape identity rooted in positivity, racial pride and communal sharing. The paper, in particular, focuses on her *The Land* (2001), considered a prequel book within a series of seven books about several generations of a southern African American family named the Logans. For Taylor "land" becomes a metaphor for examining issues of ownership, entitlement and identity in the face of prevailing racism and marginalization of the blacks in America. Through these stories, Taylor traces racial history for the young adults so that they may have a better perspective on the past. The paper examines how and whether stories tracing such a painful racial history can help young adults forge better race relations in the contemporary times.

Keywords: Racial history, Mildred D. Taylor, *The Land*, African American.

From the very beginning African American writers of young adult literature selected the themes which addressed discrimination, racism and ways of overcoming their impact by obtaining literacy, enacting forms of protest as well as maintaining family and community solidarity. In African American Young Adult Literature also, these themes were found in a number of genres, most notable among these being August Wilson's history project in theatre. Wanda Brooks in her article "An Author as a Counter-Story teller: Applying Critical Race Theory to a Coretta Scott King Award Book" aptly points out "these accounts recontextualized and often challenged past representations of racism or conveyed alternative depictions of African Americans through the voices of triumphant men and women who surmounted oppression solidarity" (p.34). Such retellings thus aimed to put forward the other points of views which had traditionally been ignored, neglected or negated in mainstream history. By attempting to convey such details to the young, African American young adult literature takes upon itself a very serious and necessary responsibility. In an introduction to Mildred Taylor receiving the Neustadt prize for Children's Literature, literary scholar Dianne Johnson explains:

Every genre has its place and its value. The genre of historical fiction, of which Mildred D. Taylor is a master, will always be important in sadly ahistorical time. The particular era of which much of Taylor's writing is situated--the American Civil Rights Movement in its broadest configuration--seems like ancient times to contemporary children. So work like hers becomes more and more important as time passes. In truth though, Mildred Taylor's writing is timeless; in a most profound way; it is bound neither to date nor place because she writes not only about American civil rights but about human rights and the human spirit. She is the consummate storyteller, and few are her equal as literary artists. (p.1)

Thus Taylor, as also Walter Dean Myers, Sharon Draper, Julius Lester etc., has been contributing handsomely to a reconstruction of the African American image among the young Americans. Currently, the historical fiction genre maintains its place as one of the most published, popular, and awarded of the past decades. With respect to the genre at large, a plethora of historical works continue to be included within language arts, reading and English curriculum. Along with *The Land* (2001), a short list of well-known African American young adult historical fiction that currently stand as favourites includes: *The Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963* (1995) by Christopher Paul Curtis, *Fallen Angels* (1988) by Walter Dean Myers, *Anthony Burns: The Defeat*

and *Triumph of a Fugitive Slave* (1988) by Virginia Hamilton, and *The Glory Field* (1994) by Walter Dean Myers, *Day of Tears* (2005) by Julius Lester, *Copper Sun* (2006) by Sharon Draper and *Elijah of Buxton* (2007) by Christopher Paul Curtis etc.

The Land (2001), Taylor's much acclaimed book, is the first book in her Logan family saga though it was written last. Like other Logan family stories *The Land* too is based on her family's personal history. In a "Note to the Reader" Taylor acknowledges that "All of my books are based on stories told by my family, and on the history of the United States."

As Taylor explains, the tales about the Logans are derived from her own experiences and memories of Mississippi. Included throughout the series of books are pieces of wisdom passed on from her father as also an expression of the love extended to her from family members across generations. As a writer, Taylor chooses to situate her books in a personalized legacy that differs, in part, from non African American and even other African American authors. One aim of the Logan saga includes presenting readers with a rival portrait of African American life. Taylor has "recounted not only the joy of growing up in a large and supportive family," but also her "own feelings of being faced with segregation and bigotry" ("Acceptance" par 3). According to Davis Undiano, Taylor presents herself to readers as "a writer always working fundamentally on behalf of her community" (p.2). Barbara Bader (2002) thus calls the stories of Taylor as representing the seminal family saga of the second half of the twentieth century, one closely paralleling the all American.

Taylor's *The Land* is the first book in a series of seven about several generations of a southern African American family named the Logans. Through the Logan family Taylor chronicles the time from the late 1800s to the 1960s. So this book may be treated as telling the history of Blacks prior to their getting civil rights in 1964. The novel describes Paul Edward Logan's initial attempts to purchase land once he and his best friend Mitchell leave the former plantation of Paul Edward's white father. Prior to their departure, readers learn about the inception of the Logan family, which includes Paul Edward's multi-racial sister, Cassie, and mother of American Indian and African ancestry named Deborah. As a woman once enslaved and raped, Deborah Logan bore her white master two children. At the same time, she also raised his three white sons. Paul Edward and his older sister grew up largely unaware of the racial tensions persisting outside of their white father's

family. They are in many ways treated just like their white sibling counterparts. However, throughout the novel's progression, and primarily when Paul Edward becomes a teenager and then a young man desiring to acquire acres of land, he learns firsthand of bigotry and oppression as well as the racialized life he must lead. Despite being afforded opportunities denied to his recently emancipated African American peers, such as gaining literacy and apprenticing in a trade, Paul Edward is not able to escape the confines of his ethnicity.

The Land may have the trajectory and several elements of a narrative invested in the tale of a tragic mulatto, but it turns away from this all too familiar vector toward something far less tragic and much more hopeful and empowering. In many respects, "the land" has been used symbolically as a mythical divide along with racial lines. Black people were not to own land or property (along with humanity and dignity); they were supposed to be property and on paper synonymous with the land itself. Through the portrayal of Paul Edward Logan, Taylor disrupts this American mythology and asks readers to reconsider the ambiguity of racial and geographical divides in America.

In America before and after the Civil War, it was vital that people of colour be aware of their place in the racial hierarchy of American society. To overstep racial boundaries of behaviour and privilege, in northern or southern states, could easily equate to severe punishment or death for the blacks, enslaved or free. Thus, in situations where racial boundaries were unclear, it was necessary that the racial identity of children and adults be carefully negotiated. It was the duty of black mothers to tell their biracial or multiracial children of racial practice. Explaining to children why they were not equal to their white father's white children surely posed some difficulty for black mothers. However, such difficulties must have been overcome by any means necessary if their children were to be safe from crossing any inappropriate boundaries of racial identity and privilege. For a child of a light complexion, as in the case of Paul Edward Logan, it was the responsibility of his parents, particularly his black mother, to teach the rules of racial inequality as an act of love for that child, however harsh or painful.

Although Paul and his sister Cassie are the product of a black and Indian slave mother and a white slave-owning father in East Texas, the children are not allowed to be confused by their racial identities:

Now, I always called my daddy “Mister Edward,” just as Cassie and my mama did....it seemed peculiar to me at first that I called my daddy a formal name while Robert and Hammond and George called him “Daddy.” But my mama had broken both Cassie and me when we were still little from ever calling Edward Logan “Daddy.” She had broken that misspeaking with bottom-warming spankings whenever we did. (*The Land* 41)

Despite the support that Paul received from his black mother, he does go through a relatively brief but difficult stage of learning to navigate the racial boundaries located around his family members. Because Edward Logan insisted that his white sons treat Paul as a brother and not as property, Paul experiences some confusion as he enters adolescence. This disorientation, however, is not to be confused with the condition associated with the tragic or doomed protagonist made famous in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s nineteenth century novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). Paul’s experiences in *The Land* are far from those of the tragic Uncle Tom. Rather Paul is a hero who has the ability to understand the gaze of the surrounding world and manipulate that gaze to his advantage.

As an award winning novel under the category of children’s literature, *The Land* evokes an unusually critical discussion of the employment and deployment of race and Reconstruction America. The text is unusual for a number of reasons, the most important being the presence of multicultural protagonists at the centre of the narrative. In a survey of multicultural protagonists in children’s historical fiction made by Agosto, Hughes-Hassell, & Gilmore-Clough in their article “The All-White World of Middle-School Genre Fiction: Surveying the Field for Multicultural Protagonists” only 447 out of 1605 works featured a protagonist of colour. Furthermore, Taylor’s main protagonist is more than African American; Paul Edward Logan is a person who identifies as black, white, and Native American, but more importantly has the ability, if not the desire, to pass as white. Taylor’s protagonist represents one of the greatest fears of white America at the turn of the twentieth century, a blurring of the colour line. It appears that Paul’s identity might be read as a response to the persona made famous by W.E.B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk*: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness this sense of always looking at one’s self though the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks in amused contempt and pity” (p.11).

Although there is no mention of Du Bois’ double consciousness theory in Taylor’s novel, Paul develops a fully functional ability to see through the eyes of both the oppressor and the oppressed.

Paul Edward Logan has a wisdom that is well beyond his years and experience. For Paul, the concept of manhood is inextricable from his racial identity and the difficult decisions that he is forced to make while still in his childhood.

Through his understanding and acceptance of his racial identity, Paul learns that race does not have to define and confine his life. Paul is fortunate enough to possess a mirror that reflects very clearly his racial complexity. Paul's father, Edward Logan, made no apologies for his white privilege and social status, just as his mother made no excuses for her status or her pride in her own Native American father, Kanati, which "means the lucky hunter" (*The Land* 42).

In many respects, Edward Logan disrupts most, if not all, widely accepted performances of white men in postbellum America. Edward Logan makes great efforts to teach Paul the lessons of racism himself before Paul has to learn them from much more dangerous sources. Logan goes as far as whipping Paul on a Christmas Eve in front of some white guests because Paul struck two white males in defence of his horse and himself. Logan tells him, "I'm going to teach you a hard lesson and I'm going to teach it to you right now. You get those clothes off, or I'll cut right through them....Who said it was about fair?" (*The Land* 83). After the beating, Logan finds Paul in the woods and explains how the whipping was an act of protection more than a brutal punishment:

All your life I've protected you. Don't you know that? But I just can't protect you in the same way I do Robert, George and Hammond. I know how white men treat colored men, how white folks treat colored folks, and I know maybe I've been wrong in not making you understand earlier that the way I treat you is not the way every white man is going to treat you. (*The Land* 85)

Despite the brutality and embarrassment that Paul suffers at the hand of his father, Paul's mother refuses to provide any words of sympathy. In fact, Paul's mother seems to be pleased with the lesson and its methodology. "I been telling you and telling you those brothers of yours are white and you ain't. I been telling you and that the day was gonna come when things wouldn't be the same between you and them....I been telling you but you ain't been listening....Now the day's come. Merry Christmas" (*The Land* 90). Paul's mother has no illusion about the role that she plays in the life of Edward Logan. She also understands that despite her long-standing liaison with Edward Logan, she is a black mother responsible for the safety and future of her black children.

Thus, from her perspective, it was very important that Paul learn he has two families, one black and one white.

Before the conclusion of his narrative, Paul must learn that despite the love he has for “his family’s land,” because he is black he will have no legal right to the land owned by his white father. Because of his racial heritage Paul Edward Logan will not be allowed to share in his father’s land or white privilege. Paul’s plight is ironic because Edward Logan’s land was stolen from the people of Paul’s grandfather, Kanati. In a conversation between white father and black son, the theft of land is discussed without shame or regret.

“This land,” I said, “it belonged to his people first.”

“That’s a fact,” my daddy agreed. “Maybe that’s where you get part of your love for the land.” (*The Land* 42)

Whatever may be the reason, Edward Logan does not answer to the irony of Paul’s situation. As a result, Paul must embark on a mission for his own piece of property and racial identity. Education, a trade, and a love of reading assist Paul in the achievement of his goals. He finally finds his way home after a long journey filled with hard-fought battles and daunting tasks. Paul’s home thus entails much more than the land that he has successfully procured by the end of the story. Paul’s home is a place in the world that he has earned with a great deal of hard work and sacrifice. His home is a group of friends and family who have supported him under the direst of situations, the love and memory of his ancestors and friends populate the soil he will live on. Consequently, Paul Logan’s home transcends a deed to a parcel of land or the land itself; the term that becomes the title of Mildred Taylor’s novel ultimately evokes the notion of “homeland.” A homeland is a location synonymous with notions of family, ancestors, friends, sacrifice, and love. In an epilogue, Paul reminds the reader how much he is aware of the connections between family and land:

I won’t deny that I miss the family of my youth. I loved my mama, and Cassie, of course. I loved my daddy, and I loved my brothers too. And I loved Mitchell....there are times I think of my daddy’s land and my childhood there. I think on it, but I don’t dwell on it, for I know that I have been blessed to have a family now of my own, and I have been blessed to have the land. (*The Land* 369)

For Paul, the land that he is able to obtain symbolizes a rite of passage. With his land, he is able to ascend to a level of masculinity equal to his father's and to gain the admiration and pride of his mother.

The novel thus presents a sensitive portrayal of prevalent racial tensions without letting the story lapse into a clearly divided bipolar world of white and black. Taylor's focus rather is on the blurring of boundaries between black and white, personal and social, good and bad, the real and the ideal. Taylor as such provides a more balanced, different perspective to be considered by young adults, black as well as white. Her work acknowledges the divisions inherent in the white and black worlds, but she also indicates the possibility of reconciling these divisions and going beyond the conflicts.

Mildred D. Taylor thus successfully revises the slave narrative tradition by way of empowering one of the tradition's most infamous tropes. By refiguring the concept of mulatto and positioning such a character as both heroic and masculine, Taylor has reinvented what it means to be biracial or ambiguously identified. There can be no better location to introduce such an original theme as making the ambiguous acceptable than in a literature targeting young readers. By writing Paul Edward Logan as an identifiable protagonist, Taylor does more than disrupt American mythologies of racial divides; she disrupts the mythology of national and cultural divides. *The Land* does the work of transforming a traditionally African American trope into a universally identifiable image.

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From the Margins to the Centre: Translation of Folk, Legend and History in *The Restless Quest* by JP Cross

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Abstract: Translation in the strict sense is a practice of transfer of meaning from one language system to another. However, as Shashi Deshpande in her seminal lecture “Dimensions of Translation” noted that the non-native creative writers writing in the English language are in a way translators themselves because they are translating the words of characters who do not speak English. Interestingly, translation not only involves the linguistic elements, but also the socio-cultural aspects of the text. Translation, thus, becomes a sort of transcreation, where the focus is not merely upon equivalences, but also on the cultural transfer. *The Restless Quest* is one such novel that can actually be regarded as a creative translation of oral narratives handed over the generations, through the common thread of Nepali folklore and beliefs. This paper will try to explore, as to how the very act of writing of this novel (into another social-cultural language system), becomes an act of translation or transcreation. In addition, this paper will also examine the effects of this intercultural transcreation on the history of the Indian subcontinent.

Keywords: *The Restless Quest*, Translation of History, legend, folklore, transcreation.

Introduction

The Restless Quest is historical fiction set in 18th century Nepal. At that time, present day Nepal was divided into about fifty small principalities. In about the mid of this century, king Prithivi Narayan Shah of Gorkha kingdom began a unification campaign to unify these principalities. He believed that sooner or later the British forces would enter into the hills and would easily defeat these small kingdoms. In 1744, he took possession of the strategic town of Nuwakot and in 1767

captured the town of Kirtipur. Eventually entire Nepal came under his rule. After his death in 1775, the unification campaign continued and the Gorkha army reached Kangra in 1805. Finally, in 1815, the Gorkha army was defeated by the British army, putting an end to the military ambitions of Kathmandu. This eventful epoch in the Nepali history caused a lot of pain and miseries, not only to the people of Nepal, but also to the people of the *Naya Mulk* (newly acquired hill territories from Kumaon to Kangra).

Apart from this disturbance, life in the Nepal hills was simple and most of the people were engaged in farming and animal rearing. The main religions practiced in Nepal were Buddhism and Hinduism, but the people believed in, and were in perpetual fear of numerous demons, spirits, ogres and ogresses. They practiced a number of religious and esoteric rites to appease these extra-terrestrial elements and had blind faith in a number of superstitions. The kings were revered as the representatives of God on earth and had absolute rights in all matters within their kingdoms. The jobs of people were defined by the kings and each caste and sub caste had to perform a particular work. Even the dress they had to wear and whatever “socio-cultural usage” they had to perform was pre-defined (Shrestha 25). During this period, Nepal had economic ties with both India and Tibet. The black woollen blankets of Nepal were famous in India and Tibet. The Nepalese people bought salt, cotton and metals from the Tibetan traders passing through their country.

JP Cross was born in 1925 in London. After joining the British army in 1944, he remained in Asia for the next forty years. He spent his entire military career in a Gurkha regiment. His last posting in the British army was at Pokhara in Nepal. After his retirement, he decided to stay in Nepal and eventually acquired Nepali citizenship in the year 2015. From his interviews and the fiction he has written, one can easily surmise that JP Cross had a great love and respect for the people of Nepal. The long and intimate contact with Gurkha soldiers provided him an opportunity to learn about the history, legends, myths, folklore and also the language of Nepal. This acquired knowledge had found a voice through a number of historical fictions written by him. *The Restless Quest* is one such fiction where he tries to trail the sequence of events that had led to the Gurkha contact with the Britishers.

***The Restless Quest* as Intercultural Translation**

The importance of cross-cultural interaction in literary translation cannot be overemphasized. The elements of literary translation are, “... attitudes, subjective thinking, figures of speech, setting

flora and fauna” (Jyothiraj 148). These elements are an important contribution in any act of literary creation. The global mass culture created by the diaspora and the mass media has dislocated the concept of homogeneous culture. No two cultures share equal power relations and translation can occur only between two unequal cultures. For a translation like the one we are interested in, the author does indulge in strategies of domestication, but the interesting fact here is that no source language is involved and the appropriation is limited to social-cultural aspects. Octavio Paz once remarked, “When we learn to speak, we are learning to translate; the child who asks his mother the meaning of a word is really asking her to translate the unfamiliar term into the simple words he already knows. In this sense, translation within the same language is essentially not different from translation between two tongues...” (152).

In an interview with Cross that was posted on YouTube, the editor of the video felt that “Being from two cultures means two clocks on the wall” (“Britain” 01:33). So, the novels of JP Cross are like two clocks on the walls of his creative writings. He has been living in Nepal for a considerable number of years and has been writing about the Nepalese people and its culture. His writings, hence, “... operate in a space between cultural and linguistic traditions” (Akai 179). In addition, his writings also operate between the oral narratives grounded in legends that are translated into the text (Historical Fiction). This interlanguage translation from the oral source is indeed a challenging task, as the author has to be a master of the original language. JP Cross in writing this novel has tried to negotiate the second challenge of accurately representing and communicating the Nepali socio-cultural sensibilities into the English language. As the translator of peculiarities, special qualities, myths, legends, social values, culture, traditions and the customs of the Gorkha people, the author has tried to mentally assemble the overlapping array of language-cultural systems and their subs that constitute Nepali society. The question is: How far has he been successful?

Paul St-Pierre writes, “... even an intended act of homage to the language and culture of the original can result in the opposite effect; violence can be endemic to the act of translation itself” (16). So, it is quite interesting to study the attitude of the author in translating a work of an absent author and the text (as legend folks and myths do have no particular author) to see if he has in any way inflected or altered the language of the novel. Another question which is relevant in such a

translation is regarding the “cultural artefacts” (qtd. in Pierre 19) of the source culture and whether such artefacts have been reduced to “abstract entities” (Pierre 18) or not. Another important question is regarding the degree of indulgence of the author in twisting the translation to accommodate the western audiences of his novels, as most of Cross’s books are published out of Nepal and have international audiences as target readers.

The answer to these and such questions is not an easy one and requires a more comprehensive study, but on preliminary examination it is observed that the author has attempted to negotiate between the Nepali and the British culture and has made a conscious effort to produce an equal effect of both the cultures on the readers. It is a fact that the words in the target language shift when used to express the culturally loaded words of the source language. To a greater degree this shift is absent in the novel under study, possibly due to the fact that there is no original text and the author has only translated from oral narratives. Still, the intercultural translation undertaken in the text has resulted in the creation of “abstract entities” and domestication of the source culture. For example, the imagination and perspective of Chegu Dura, Rajas, the villagers, soldiers and other native characters has been represented in a way as if they have been educated in Cambridge University. When Chegu and Le Chef were imprisoned by the Raja of Makwanpur in a dungeon of the palace, Chegu tells Le Chef, “I hate to stay here for long” (126). When Pahalman (Chegu’s brother-in-law and a fellow Dura) decides to go and look for Chegu, his wife saya, “Husband. Lord. Half of me does not want you to go but the other half sees no other way out of resolving our quest” (219). Now who can speak such words but the characters from English classics? The rituals narrated in the novel are as if viewed by the outsider and not by the one who actually practices them. It may also have happened that whosoever told the author about these rituals and practices had himself translated these rituals into a language so as to make sense to the author.

The Nepali language, like any other language, is “loaded with crucial attitudinal, emotional, social and other semantic and semiotic messages” (D’Costa 255) like “tone of voice, rhythm, intonation, register, body language, facial expression and body language” (Achai 179). Unless and until an author is able to translate these elements in the target text, he remains unsuccessful in his endeavour. Another challenge before the author in such an intercultural translation is to translate the language of the working-class oral culture to the language of the urbane and the middle-class

reader. Linguistically, the Nepali language operates differently than the English language at both the semantic and syntactic level. Hence, it is important for the author to communicate the Nepali culture in English and it is also equally essential that the author not only satisfy himself and the international audiences, but also the Nepali speaking populace. For this complicated task, it is expected that the author develops a writing style acceptable to all the stakeholders.

Though the scenes in the novel shift from the hill villages of Nepal to the residences of the Muslim royalty in Bengal, and from the British cantonments of Bengal to the French garrison in South India, the style of language throughout the novel remains the same. Except for some transliteration and loan words taken from the local languages, the words in the novel are steeped in the colonial flavour and use of archaic language is common. Even the sentiments of the local people are expressed through the native English language, causing some loss of meaning and expression. Now observe these lines from the text: “The stench was nauseating. Jackals, packs of feral dogs, flocks of vultures and crows crowed, picked at, flapped and fought menacingly over the scattered corpses on the mountain side” and also the expressions like “rats gnawed,” “fetid air,” “snowy ramparts” (242). This brevity of expression is the result of the author’s unconscious attempt to be faithful to the target language. If this fiction was written by some Nepali resident, we would have got a different semantic and syntactic style of writing; closer perhaps to the source language.

JP Cross used techniques as well as strategies of appropriations which are being exploited by skilled translators. Akai writes:

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin describe "strategies of appropriation in post-colonial writing" in/through which difference or foreignness is constructed as including such "authorial intrusions" as in-text glossing, borrowing (transcribing), inter-language, syntactic fusion/variation, code-switching and vernacular transcription. These very same strategies are labelled as translation strategies above. (190)

The very textualization of this novel is a translation of a particular epoch of Indian-Anglo-Nepali history. This is the same as, “giving meaning to experience” in the “imperial literary mode of expression” (Itwaru 2). On the surface level, the translation and literary writings seem to be in a dichotomous position, yet one complements the other. St-Pierre writes about this dichotomy in “Translation and Writing”: “translation and writing are ... perceived as the two terms of a binary

opposition, in which the first—"translation"—is negatively marked, and the second—"writing"—is positively valorised” (223). This binary opposition of writing and translation parallels the dichotomy between history and legend and just as the difference between history and legend is blurred, so is the distinction between translation and acts of literary writings. The writings about the legends, myths and the folklores of Nepal (especially by a Western author) can be termed as translation, not in the conventional sense, but under a different category of inter-cultural translation.

There are a number of instances in the novel where it becomes evident that the author has creatively re-narrated (in English) something that was already known to the Nepali people in their collective conscience from many centuries. The story of Chegu Dura alias Bhakti Thapa is a legend in itself. JP cross had researched about this legend and creatively translated this story into English. The events narrated in the novel like the journey to Trisula lake, the eating of cockerel reserved for Baba Gorakh Nath, the saving of Chegu’s life by the Cappuccino monks, the salt test performed by the brothers of Chegu to verify the authenticity of Puspa’s (Chegu’s sister) dreams, the battle of Kirtipur, the death of Pahalman, Chegu’s encounter with Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah and lord Clive are based on Nepali legends, folks and myths.

The author in writing this fiction relying equally on the authentic historical sources, on memories and on legends. This could be due to the reason that the author saw the Gurkha life from very close quarters, living among his foster Gurkha family. The novel traces the life of Chegu Dura of Khaje village whose ancestors were *dwarees* (door keepers) in the Lamjung, a small kingdom in the north of Kathmandu. The British in the second half of the eighteenth century were still struggling to get their feet in India, while the contemporary Mughal regime tried hard to resist the red banner. The situation was crucial and destiny could have turned either way. The British however, were favoured by luck. The historians credit the success of the British to their better management of men and material, their organizational skills, superior weaponry, well organized army and the leadership qualities of their officers, as some of the reasons for their success. The author however, gives credit to history being affected by four unrelated and obscure events: death of an insignificant woman in Lamjung who had died during childbirth, a Frenchman in Lyons caught in an act of incest, the incident of the hornet’s attack on a group of pilgrims and the injustice meted to an

innocent man by a British army officer. The historical details in the novel are authentic while the story is built on the flesh and the blood of Nepali legends.

The author writes in the introduction: “The historical bones of the story are strong and true, the flesh is as English historians have it, the blood as the Nepalese have it. The cloths as seen by me, who has seen the hill men of Nepal for 65 years....” The customs, legends, beliefs, superstitions, lifestyle, attitude and thinking of the Nepali populace is foregrounded. The cry of a jackal during the day and the death of a person across the river are suggested to be inevitable, correlated events and the superstitions like this are given legitimacy, against the well-recognized rules of logic and reasoning. The story of the novel began at the time of Chegu’s birth on an inauspicious day. This was considered as a bad omen and it foretold a dangerous future for the parents. Baby Chegu’s tiny hands covered with blood predicted difficulties and struggle for the boy in his later life. As the narrative in the novel progressed, both these predictions came true. The mother of the boy dies immediately after giving birth to Chegu and his father died while undertaking the Mata Tirtha pilgrimage near the Trishuli river. After getting permission from the Raja, Chegu’s father Balram embarks upon the religious journey with his two sons as they wanted to see the reflection of their dead mother’s face on the surface of the lake. Their journey, however, was doomed from the beginning, as the “white cockerel” that was promised to Gorakh Nath was mistakenly eaten by the family the night before the pilgrimage. The sub-human shrieking at the start of the journey spelled doom for them. The cry of the jackals during the daytime predicted death. To make matter worse, Jagati Khan, who had accompanied them, earned the ferryman’s curse for his highhandedness. Similarly, before the start of the Kirtipur campaign, the commander of the Gorkha army, Kalu Pandey, is sure about his death as after the inspection of the troops a hen had crowed like a cock, which was believed to be a terrible omen. Further, after he had performed the predawn prayers, minutes before the battle, a jackal had howled facing him. Likewise, Puspa’s dream prophesied that Chegu was not dead and it was verified by the salt test ritual.

Toppling the Dominant Discourses of History

The second issue this research paper seeks to examine is how this intercultural translation establishes a relationship between the Nepali history (as authentic documented record) and the novel *The Restless Quest* (as an unverified creative endeavour). Language, according to deconstructionists is fickle, untrusting, delusive, and full of paradoxes. Thus, to call history

objective, which uses the medium of language to construct itself is a paradox in itself. Hence, history per se and historical fiction stand on almost equal grounds. By relating four obscure and unrecorded incidents of minor nature with recorded history, JP Cross has unconsciously indulged in the deconstruction of history. The history here is reconstructed from the point of view of the Nepali, French and the English people. The novel tries to fill the unexplained gaps in recorded history (that is largely from the Western perspective) and tries to answer the questions that history per se could never provide. The answers to these questions are dear to all Nepali people. This is like re-writing an alternative version of history from the perspective of a relatively marginalized community or a racial group. In this sense, the very act of creation of this text becomes a site for the “deconstruction” or the “decentring” of the so-called “objective” and “scientific” history.

The main character of the novel Chegu Dura, alias Bhakti Thapa, slips in and out of his memory in the entire novel. He oscillates between legend and history. The narrative of the novel links the Nepali history with this legendary figure. The legends narrated in the novel are based on the collective memory of the Gorkha community. The various characters and events, which form the narrative of the novel, are nearer to the truth and its veracity can be verified from the official version of Nepali history. The “Battle of Plessey” was indeed fought on the banks of the Bhagirathi River. In this battle, the British army gave a crushing defeat to the Nawab’s forces. It is a well-known fact in the historical records that Robert Clive (Governor General) had bribed Mir Jafar (Commander-in-Chief of the Nawab's army) for buying the latter’s neutrality in the battle. In addition, the infamous incident of the “Black Hole” also forms part of the historical records. The author had supplemented history by narrating an interesting incident which resulted in the British army carrying the day. In this incident Chegu Durra while being trapped in homosexual lust of Siraj-ud-daula escapes from the Nawab’s camp and lands in the British camp by mistake. Here he inadvertently gave the message of Mir Kasim’s neutrality that he had picked up on the way to Mir Jafar’s camp. When Robert Clive gets this information, he exclaims: “Lad. You’ve saved the Company. You’ve saved England. You’ve saved the day. By the stroke of unbelievable luck, you’ve given the Mir Jafar message to Clive. I am he” (156). So this small incident which may have been the main reason for the success of the British in the “Battle of Plassey” had not formed a part of mainstream history. Similarly, other historical episodes, like the attack on Kirtipur and its subsequent capitulations are attributed to reasons which are different than those provided by the official version of history. In the official history of Nepal, the three attacks on the fort of

Kirtipur in 1757, 1764 and 1767 AD are well recorded. However, in *The Restless Quest* the reasons for the failure of the Gorkhas in the first two attempts have been convincingly explained. Also, the success in their third attack is attributed to the stratagem on behalf of the king. According to this plan, a number of Gorkha men disguised as peasants were sent into the valley of Kirtipur. Over a period of time, these men had assimilated with the local population and had settled well in the area. Eventually, the Gorkhas achieved success in their well-planned third attack in 1767 AD. In the battle of Makawanpur (that too found mention in Nepali history), the historians attribute Gurgin Khan's defeat to the hit and run strategy of the Nepalese forces. However, according to the narrative in *The Restless Quest*, the author attributes the success of the Gorkhas to the vital information provided by the Chegu Dura. *The Restless Quest*, hence, becomes a meeting point of history and legend. Hence, the historical narrative in the novel undergoes deconstruction, as well as the reconstruction of history.

History remains a mystery, as there are a number of unexplained gaps. Only conjectures can be drawn, but they too are not sufficient to fill these gaps as speculations cannot form a part of historical documents. However, the fictional writers are free to fill the gaps with their fertile imagination. The "incident of hornets," at a metaphorical level signifies the insufficiency of history in bringing out the truth. Cappuccino monks and Le chef tried hard to explain logically the circumstances of Chegu's fall from the cliff and the death of his father, brother and a soldier. Ultimately, when Chegu, who can be metaphorically compared to fiction, regained his memory, that Pahalman was able to make out the truth that none could have ever dreamt of.

Another question worth discussing here in brief is how this decentering or deconstruction of history in the novel results in the marginalized being magnified and the unheard or ignored voices given representation. Apart from the life of the rich, powerful and the important historical figures of the time, the novel gives strong representation to the low and marginalized section of Nepali society. From the towering figures of Sir Robert Clive, Sir Warren Hasting, General Eyre Coot, Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, Kaji Amar Singh, Mir Kasim, Prithivi Narayan Shah and other hill Rajas, the novel also gives sufficient space to the ordinary people. The ferryman, who is a victim of caste based hierarchies of the social setup of the time, is depicted to be more prudent than Jagati Khan, "a close confidant of the Raja of Gorkha." An insignificant potter saves Chegu's life with the deftness of a skilful surgeon. He is the one who thinks of an

excellent plan to escape out of the Gorkha territory. Pahalman, a high caste Dura, shuns the prejudice of caste-based hierarchies and accepts to live and eat with the potters. The wisdom of the regent queen in exposing the keeper of the seal, the spy of the Raja of Palpa, breaks the myth that women rulers are less capable than their male counterparts.

Conclusion

The Restless Quest is a historical novel based on a country that had never remained under the British subjugation. Studying about a novel written by a British author who is writing about the Gorkha people (from a non-colonial angle), is one of the interesting cases in the literary research arena. Just as some of the characters like Chegu or Nicholas and Pahalman or Paul in the novel have dual identities, this novel too has a dual identity of work of creative writing and intercultural translation. By being both faithful and unfaithful in the representation of the source culture, the text has tried to bring into the mainstream, those repressed elements from history, which Alun Mellus calls “otherness.” The author in writing this novel has attempted to integrate regional elements of the Gorkha culture with the English language. Though the language in which one writes, “can never go against its own grain,” but it is also a fact that the language used in the translation seldom belongs to the source and the target code. In the absence of any source text, the transcreational shifts (at the linguistic level) are minimal; however, the cultural artefacts of the Nepali community are altered in a slightly negative manner. By giving equal preference to history and legend, the author has indulged in the deconstruction of recorded history.

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Voices from the Margins: Her-Story in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract: Historically, the Indian women have been leading a life of marginalization and oppression, more so because of a complex of other social factors like caste and class. Belonging to a particular caste furthers this marginalization by relegating them to the periphery of already sidelined castes. This marginalization is further complicated within the framework of a marriage that tends to work as the microcosm of the more general macrocosm, the society. This paper seeks to recover these historically repressed voices through a critical analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* where she gives voice to her women characters and highlights the prevalence of caste system in India. The analysis uses the postcolonial feminist perspective to study her representation of the marginalized and oppressed women characters. The three women characters, despite belonging to upper castes, are as marginalized as the one untouchable "man" in the novel. Collectively, they are representative of the subaltern and this paper is interested in studying the agency they display in spite of their marginalized and oppressed status. The oppression and the suppression work at more than this (now) very apparent level, and the paper is concerned with critically analyzing the gender balance that exists within the more intimate relationships, particularly the marital relationships, as well as among the women themselves.

Keywords: Marginalisation, oppression, periphery, repressed, subaltern.

Introduction

Historically, the Indian women have been leading a life of marginalization and oppression, more so because of a complex of other social factors like caste and class. Belonging to a particular caste furthers this marginalization by relegating them to the periphery of already sidelined castes. This marginalization is further complicated within the framework of a marriage that tends to work as the microcosm of the more general macrocosm, the society. This paper seeks to recover these historically repressed voices through a critical analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small*

Things where she gives voice to her women characters and highlights the prevalence of caste system in India. The analysis uses the postcolonial feminist perspective to study her representation of the marginalized and oppressed women characters. The three women characters, despite belonging to upper castes, are as marginalized as the one untouchable “man” in the novel. Collectively, they are representative of the subaltern and this paper is interested in studying the agency they display in spite of their marginalized and oppressed status. The oppression and the suppression work at more than this (now) very apparent level, and the paper is concerned with critically analyzing the gender balance that exists within the more intimate relationships, particularly the marital relationships, as well as among women themselves.

Gayatri Spivak argues, “the subaltern has no history and cannot speak” (15). Both as an object of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (28). Simone de Beauvoir’s “humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself” (5) is so true of the world depicted by Arundhati in *The God of Small Things*. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir remarks that a “woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality” (20) and comments on the social construction of a woman, “One is not born but rather becomes, a woman” (445). Taking this further, she comments on the condition of married women thus, “marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (Beauvoir 425). This similarity across cultures in treatment meted out to women can be seen in Roy’s *The God of Small Things* when compared with Chinua Achebe’s *Things fall Apart*. Despite portraying two different social setups, countries and continents that their respective female characters belong to, they share a common bonding in the form of the oppression inflicted on them by the male members of their families. Achebe does not conceal the negative elements of the Igbo society as being patriarchal in various ways, including wife beatings, infanticide and other taboos, and Roy follows likewise in her portrayal.

The three women characters in the novel, namely, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Ammu are moulded by a strictly patriarchal husband and father, and they themselves are always in danger of falling to and following the tenets of that skewed patriarchal mindset. The same goes for the male

protagonist, Velutha, an untouchable or *paravan* in the caste system of India, who is as marginalized despite being a man. This study will focus on how these women characters relate to each other, to Velutha and to other men around them, and how they despite their marginalized status display agency through their actions. The differences in their ways of relating to this untouchable man reveal different aspects of their characters and their lifelong conditioning, having grown up and lived in not only a patriarchal setup but also in a society that has been divided along caste lines.

Although the status of women differs in different cultures, the common feature of almost all has been their attitudes towards women, who have been considered inferior to men, and thus have been, by design, kept away from all centres of power and decision-making. Mostly, they have been restricted to familial roles, as Mary Ann Fergusson so rightly points out that “in every age women have been primarily as mother, wife, mistress, sex object – their roles in relationships to men” (Fergusson 4-5) and Sushila Singh concurs by saying, “woman has not been defined as a subject in her own right but merely as an entity that concerns man either in his life or his fantasy life” (Singh 7). This is the reason why, “[T]he Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution ... are nothing. The real revolution is women against men” (Lessing 88). The question that automatically arises is, why women who are a part of half of the humanity are against men? They are not. However, although it looks like they are fighting against men, the reality is that more specifically, they have been and are still fighting against the mindsets and ideologies that are historically grounded in patriarchy, sexual politics, sexism and sexual colonialism.

These ideas regarding women’s subordination can be traced via the history of Western intellectual thought to the two most influential philosophers of the pre-Christian theology, Plato and Aristotle. While the former’s attitude to women was contradictory advocating fair deal for women or assigning them an inferior status, the latter regarded women as “[T]ota mulier in utero” i.e. “woman is womb,” procreation being considered their defining function. Later, according to Rousseau also, the fact that women have the ability to bear children became the reason for their subordinate position in the society. The fact that the females give birth, instead of according them a higher status, became a reason to assign them a subordinate position with respect to men not only with regard to their sexuality but also in all other matters. However, an increasing awareness of

the injustices done to women gradually resulted in the feminist movement. The women started raising their voice against this marginalization and have achieved a fair degree of success in their struggle for equal rights. In the Indian context, the dilemma has been more complex. In the contemporary times, women are caught between tradition and modernity, and have to bear the burden of not only a shackled past but also live up to the aspirations for a free future. The man-woman relationship is struggling to come out of the age-old system of man to rule, woman to obey, and man for the fields and women for the hearth mentality. This is what Roy is also doing via her novel: registering her disgust at male chauvinism, and dissatisfaction with the unfair and oppressive patriarchal system.

The women in the novel are positioned as subalterns as a result of their marginalized and oppressed status in the society. Instead of crying or suffering in isolation, some of them try to bring a change in their own positions and perhaps in the society by means of their small acts of resistance and transgressions. There is a sensitive portrayal of these women characters, and their plight, fears, dilemmas, ambitions and contradictions are all dealt with finesse. However, the more important aim is to provoke, which does happen as these female characters continuously struggle to get out of their confined territories, to interpret their lives with individual freedom, and to bring about a change through resistance which takes shape of transgression in behaviour. They interrogate both the confines of the hierarchically structured gendered roles they are forced to lead and the caste system in implicit and explicit ways and by their small acts of violating the codes of conduct meant specifically for them, try to shatter the patriarchal hegemony and convey a positive vision of womanhood.

Analysis

Narrated by Rahel, the woman protagonist Ammu's daughter, the main events in the novel take place in Ayemenem, a small town in the equatorial South Indian state of Kerala during some weeks in the year 1969. A story of love, loss, betrayal and torrid emotions of inherently flawed characters, it is interesting to see "how [it] represents women, what it says about gender relations, how it defines sexual difference" (Belsey and Moore 1). Roy's women characters live their lives according to the prevalent Hindu customs; something concluded by Susan Wadley and Doranne Jacobson also. These dual views with relation to women that are seen in Hinduism consider a

woman both as a benevolent and bestowing creative force, as well as an aggressive destroyer. Despite being a Syrian Christian family located in India (and many a times historically converted from Hinduism), they cannot help being influenced by Hinduism. P. K. Balakrishnan in his study on Kerala history, observes that the Syrian Christians considered themselves as high caste in the caste hierarchy of Kerala as they believed they were the descendants of higher castes or Brahmin converts of St. Thomas, the Apostle of Christ who arrived in Malabar in A. D. 52 (Vishwanathan 13).

The eldest among the three women characters in the novel that this paper deals with is Mammachi (Soshamma Ipe), simply meaning grandmother. She is a Syrian Christian, married to Pappachi (Benaan John Ipe), the grandfather, seventeen years older than her, who regularly physically abuses her. Some of these beatings with a brass vase leave “crescent shaped” scars on her skull. “He beat her constantly for no apparent reason, the beatings weren’t new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place” (47-48). Her personal accomplishments like proficiency in playing the violin become causes for her husband’s jealousy that is manifested not only in the abuse he subjects her to but also in other acts like breaking that violin. There is obviously a lack of mutual understanding, cooperation and love in Mammachi’s marriage to the sadist Pappachi. She begins a pickle business where he refuses to help her simply because he considers that pickle making is not “a suitable job for high-ranking ex-Government official” (47). Although he is the one who is responsible for her marginalization, it cannot be said that she herself has no role to play in furthering that marginalization, even when it comes to her daughter. Ironically, she is submissive to people who are senior to her, like her husband, but oppressive to her juniors, like Ammu and her children. According to her, being the children of a divorced mother is a fate “far worse than inbreeding” (59). Her starting the pickle business and succeeding in it could be read as one act of defiance in the face of all the abuse that her husband hurls at her.

The second important female character is Baby Kochamma (Navomi Ipe), Mammachi’s sister-in-law. She loves Father Mulligan, an Irish Monk, who is studying Hinduism in India. According to Binayak Roy, “[T]he beautiful, headstrong eighteen-year-old Baby and the young, handsome Irish monk Father Mulligan fall passionately in love. But the ‘Love Laws’ operative from time immemorial, get in their ways” (59). She converts to Roman Catholicism and enters a nunnery in

the hope of establishing physical relations with the monk. She was sent to the Rochester University but even then her father selected a course befitting a woman who is supposed to remain within the premises of the house that is a diploma in ornamental gardening. In the end, all her efforts fail, and she starts living in isolation in the Ayemenem house. She is oppressed by her frustrated sexuality as well as the status of a spinster at her brother's house. She also places herself on a higher position of morality and chastity and believes that people like Ammu who are weak human beings cannot achieve such a position. Uma Chakravarti in this regard says that the concept of *pativrata* or chaste was one of the most successful ideologies constructed by any patriarchal system in which women themselves controlled their sexuality and believed that they gained power and respect through the codes they adopted (Gendering 74). Her one-sided devotion to Father Mulligan continues even decades after they meet, and part, with the result that she considers herself as a chaste woman and believes this has been possible due to her self-restraint. She shows agency in her defiance of tradition by deciding to love, convert for that love, enter a nunnery and ultimately, deciding to live alone rather than enter a loveless marriage.

The third character is Ammu, the eldest child of Pappachi and Mammachi, who tries to escape her miserable life at her parent's house. Born in a well-to-do family, she could have been brought up with love and care but her upbringing has been devoid of both and reflects the imbalances within the household and the society at large where the son is well taken care of while the daughter is ill-treated. After her schooling, "Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl," so she is not allowed to pursue higher education whereas her father sends her brother Chacko to Oxford for higher studies. This makes her dependent on the men in her life, the father or the husband. She is kept as a bride in waiting but no proposals of marriage come for her, as the family cannot afford a decent dowry required in the marriage market. She constantly chafes at the confines and manages to escape from Ayemenem and visits a distant relative at Calcutta where she accepts a proposal for marriage from a Bengali Hindu who is a tea estate manager in Assam. Though initially appearing to be an acceptable match, he unfortunately turns out to be an alcoholic and abusive husband who wants to prostitute his wife for his personal gain. She divorces after a couple of years, and along with her twins, Estha and Rahel, is forced to return to her parent's house, "to everything that she had fled from a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children and no more dreams" (42). Her rebellious act leads her back to where her subjugation

began: home, where she now faces double marginalization, from men as well as women, for herself as well as her children. Her economic dependence is the reason that she has to return to her parent's house after her divorce. Chacko reminds her that she being a daughter has no legal right to the property at all. Susan Viswanathan in her study on the Christians of Kerala observes that theirs is a patrilineal society. In this system of transmission, the house becomes the symbol of not merely habitants but also of religious values and their expression (129). A married woman in a Syrian Christian society has no right in the family property and is not welcome if she has to return. For Syrian Christians, "marriage is seen as a sacramental and permanent bond, and the arrangement of a match requires the serious attention of elders. Even today, marriages within the same denomination ... remain the practice ... and inter religious marriages are taboo..." (Viswanathan 103). A separated woman, according to Viswanathan, has no place in Syrian Christian society. She goes on to say that if a woman has any moral courage she will remain in her husband's house despite all constraints (Viswanathan 112). Ammu in this regard has committed a blunder by marrying a Hindu and returning to Ayemenem after divorce. The Ayemenem family staunchly believes in their community's views regarding a daughter having no claim on her father's property. Women of this community are an oppressed and subjugated lot as they are not allowed higher education, are denied any claims on their fathers' property as well as have no say in the settlement of dowry, which is also controlled by males in the family (Viswanathan 113).

Though Ammu works in the pickle factory established by her mother yet Chacko insinuates that all this property belongs to him being a son. These repeated rejections eventually lead Ammu to seek emotional refuge in Velutha, the one person who shows empathy and sympathy towards her. The secret emotional and physical relationship, "to love by night the man her children loved by day" is her act of transgression against societal rules that forbid a girl from making choices about her own life. This affair with an untouchable is perceived as a great stain on the honour of the family. Since it's impermissible for an upper caste woman to have physical relations with an untouchable man, and vice-versa, both of them are made to pay its price. Velutha is "accidentally" killed by the police after being framed for rape. Ammu, humiliated by the police, exiled from home, and separated from her children, dies. Even in death, she has to bear the humiliation of being refused a burial by the church, and is cremated in a public electric crematorium meant for the poor and for those dying in police custody. Despite the apparent failure towards the end, Ammu displays

agency by way of her decisions to run away from home, marry for love, choose to love again, and finally deciding to care for herself and her children.

Historically, Indian women have been marginalized because of economic and political reasons that have left them deprived of their social, political, economic, legal and religious rights. And their position is the outcome of the pre-colonial customs as well as postcolonial laws. Roy in *The God of Small Things* focuses on the economic oppression of the female characters. Although they belong to the upper class, these women are as economically deprived as the one low caste man, which along with the resonance of the commoditization of women in the novel, testifies to the fact that marginalized people's lack of access to the resources is in fact the main reason for that marginalization.

Despite initially calling the novel about biology, Roy later relocated its significance in the power structure; the powerlessness and the vicious confrontation, which goes on in the continuum of history. As observed by Tickel (2007), she captures this differing violence and oppression on the marginalized people and attributes it to history. Giles (2011) also studies the novel in its historical context tracing the history of oppression from the ancient past of India. Various factors leading to the marginalization of characters are interlinked with this historical oppression arising from local superstructures, the class and the caste systems, and the religion and the patriarchal. These forces further converge into different oppressions relating to traditions and value systems and which are represented through the novel's characters. The society has different standards as far as women, and people from lower castes, are concerned. Whereas the social set up permits a man like Chacko to marry a woman from a foreign country or satisfy his "Men's Needs" with the pretty low caste women working in the factory, and allows for deliberate construction of a separate door for his nocturnal activities with labour class ladies and that too by Mammachi for his men's needs, the disastrous love affair between Ammu and Velutha continues for thirteen days only and finally when it gets revealed, it results in mayhem for both the woman, Ammu, and the untouchable, Velutha. Tickell (2007) observes that the love laws as mentioned by Roy can be traced back to the Manusmriti, the legal text as codified by the Hindu sage Manu, which distinguishes between *shudras*, the untouchables, and others and sanctions this discrimination for the first time. Manu fixed the code of conduct for women as well by setting a life fully dependent on a male in the

family--father, husband or a son. The ancient feudal system, along with dogma, doctrine and fear that replaced religion (Ahsan 20), marked the beginning of classification in the shape of the powerful and the powerless; and also the privileged and the unprivileged leading further a further categorization between the loved and the loveless. This continued till the Aryans who based this categorization on class and continued building and bolstering the power hierarchies already in place. The love laws set forth by the society during those times had deep and lasting effects, which are seen in what happens to Velutha, the fourth marginalized character, and the male protagonist, in the novel.

Velutha, a paravan, and the lowest in the hierarchy of untouchables, lives in a small hut near the Ayemenem house with his father and brother. Considered inferior and unclean, he, like others like him, is segregated from childhood onwards. Educated in a separate school meant for untouchables, Velutha trains to be a carpenter. He works at Mammachi's pickle factory where he encounters Ammu and her children. In Velutha, Ammu finds a person who loves her children sincerely and creates for her children a world of "hooked fingers and sudden smiles" (176). His one act of compassion as well as transgression, of loving and having a physical relationship with a woman of higher caste costs him his life. As Uma Chakravarti says, "while a lower caste man's alleged, or actual, sexual relationship with a 'higher' caste woman causes hysteria, and brings swift and violent retribution upon the lower caste man and often on both persons ... the upper caste man's casual and or continuous use of a lower caste woman is naturalised" (Chakravarti 85).

Conclusion

Women in India have been marginalized in almost all the spheres of life, be it social, economic, religious, political or cultural. The three female characters in the novel share the same lot, being dominated by men in the family, so much so that the Ipe family truly symbolizes subjugation and submission of women. Roy has structured the life of these female characters in such a way that they show coherence and unity in their societal experiences, developing a linear connection in their characters, a unity in their social experiences, having a common history, though every woman's suffering is different from the other. These sufferings sprout from a common root of historical oppression of women in the Indian society. Tickell (3) has defined the novel as the one that "resists categorization," being not only indefinable but at the same time being a plethora of various things.

These women are most of the times put on the margins by the male members of the family who do not grant them an equal status in the institution of marriage or family life. They are neither educated to the point where education imparts social awareness and economic independence, nor allowed to decide for themselves. However, each one of these women displays agency in different ways, though small and short-lived that end in tragedy and disaster for some.

Mammachi decides to take up a business independently and prove her capabilities as a businesswoman. She runs the pickle factory on her own and makes good profit. Baby Kochamma defies the society by changing her religion, and then tries to emancipate herself by not marrying any other man. Ammu tries to escape the tyranny of an abusive father and decides to marry a man belonging to a different religion, divorces him when he turns out to be an alcoholic man, rejects the entrenched norms of the caste system by daring to love an untouchable man. Velutha makes an attempt to be free of the shackles of caste and class and risks loving an upper-caste woman. Although, each one of these characters is human and as flawed, Mammachi discriminates between Ammu and Chacko, helps the latter in his physical misdemeanors while at the same time being intolerant of Ammu's love for Velutha; Kochamma lies for the false family honour, files false charges for rape against Velutha and hurls abuses at his father; Ammu is ultimately unable to do anything for the man she loves or the children she bore; and Velutha is unable to either protect himself or the woman he loves; but each character tries to change their own life as well as the society through their small acts of resistance against the perceived and imperceptible inequalities. Despite their marginalised and oppressed status, these characters display responsibility and agency. They show the courage to reject the various layers of oppression in the society. Roy's characters are reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's in *Things Fall Apart*. And, though they belong to two different countries, they share the common bond of oppression, and Arundhati Roy, like Achebe, does not conceal the drawbacks of the Indian society, including wife beating, caste violence, among others.

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Negotiating Contours of Colonial Violence: Applying Fanon's Studies to Caryl Phillip's *Crossing the River* and Jane Harrison's *Stolen*

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Abstract: History is about anything that has taken place in the past. But it is its very pastness which impinges on the consciousness and the present of people who have suffered interminably for varied reasons. For a writer of an oppressed race, the historical representation is impregnable with the subversion of monolithic accounts of history undermining truth. Postcolonial reconstructions of history by native writers provide an authentic version of history. Being written from below, that is, from the point of view of the marginalized / oppressed native, this history involves, to use T.S. Eliot's term, "a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence..." (109). Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* devotes a full chapter to discuss the psychological effects of colonization on people on both parts of the frontier. Though it is the victims of police brutality who remain for the most part at the receiving end, the perpetrators of this violence also become mentally disturbed. The present paper seeks to apply Fanon's psychological studies of the victims of Algerian War to literary works of African and Aboriginal writers to show how literature's depiction of history in imaginative but representative hues manage to bring out the myriad facets of colonization. Caryl Phillips's (b. 1958-) *Crossing the River* (1993) and Jane Harrison's (b. 1960-) *Stolen* (1998) shall be analysed against their varied backdrops, which belong to different cultures, i.e. Africa and Australia respectively, in the light of Fanon's psychological examination of his war-affected patients. By doing so, the paper would unravel as to how race remains an inextricable angle in carrying out the project of colonization in both the cultures and eventually becomes the so-called benchmark for undermining the history of the natives.

Keywords: Violence, Mental Disorders, Trauma, Stolen Generations, Fanon.

There has been considerable focus on Africa, the Orient and Australia as an occupied space leading to psychological disorders of the natives. “As contact and negotiations of power among multiple interests ensued, so flourished tales of alienate and disturbed individuals, both ‘white’ and black” (Luangphinit 60). Many agents of colonial empire have themselves suffered a setback or psychological disturbance due to the violence they perpetrated on their victims. Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) in his “The Madness of Private Ortheris” (1888) also shows how a colonial British soldier, Stanley Ortheris suffers bouts of insanity due to a long time in war. He wants to leave the army and denounces it as “hell,” disgustingly kicking “his ammunition boots” (5). The effects of war and colonization have affected both the communities but it has affected the natives to a greater degree.

Fanon was acutely aware of the effects of colonialism and the therapist-patient relation in French and Algerian society. As an individual he knew the political side of colonialism but as a therapist he wanted his patients to “reintegrate themselves into society. A society that was often diagnosed as exploitative and oppressive” (Gendzier 504). There is a deep relation between psychology and imperialism. Individual psyche somewhere gets affected by the process of colonization as it invariably inflicts psychological and physical wounds on memory and the body. Freud does not view these disorders in isolation as many pro-establishment psycho-analysts have done but views these in relation to the socio-political power structures and in opposition. His role as a socially committed activist and a psychiatrist underlies his concern for the war affected people.

He worked in Blida-Joinville hospital in Algeria on a prestigious position as he did not like his workplace in France. While living in France, he already had some knowledge of Algerian migrants there. Though Fanon was not well conversant with Islamic or Algerian culture, he knew colonialism and its damaging and deleterious impact on the Arab people. He resigned from his position following dissension / disagreement with the French administration in Algeria in 1956. He thereafter joined the Algerian National Liberation Front, FLN. When he moved to Tunisia, he was sent as an ambassador to Ghana by the Tunisian government on behalf of FLN. In *A Dying Colonialism*, he talks about the colonial onslaught on Algerian individual imagination: “It is not the soil that is occupied. It is not the ports or the airdromes. French colonialism has settled itself in the very centre of the Algerian individual and has undertaken sustained work of cleanup, or expulsion of self, or rationally pursued mutilation” (65). The Algerian School of Psychiatry “saw

the Algerian as biologically brutish and impulsive, Fanon turned to more social explanations for those instances when the Algerian's behaviour manifested those characteristics" (Wright 27).

Fanon shows his disagreement with the Algerian School of Psychology and opines that "the reality of colonial oppression necessitated a 'socio-diagnostic' or in essence, a sociogenic perspective" (Wright 9). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon rebuts Mannoni's formulation of "dependency complex of colonized people," who argued that the inferiority complex of the colonized is pre-colonial. Fanon, on the other hand, argues that colonialism invents such an 'inferiority complex' where black the man finds himself inferior as part of a systematic colonial strategy / ideology. He even terms Blacks' Negritude as a white artefact. It is in the light of this that the following discussion ensues.

Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* (1993) brings to the fore the pain of a father who rues "I soiled my hands with cold goods in exchange for their warm flesh" (1). The prologue brings to the fore the common history of the African slave trade through the dispersal of a family. The nameless father's looking towards the sea is akin to the trauma of many such fathers who had to part with their children. His three children Nash, Martha and William find themselves carried off to different locations and speak from different perspectives. Alan McCluskey argues that Caryl Phillips "employs experimental narrative structures that interweave disparate voices from different places and historical periods" (1). Nash Williams, who is instructed by his master Edward Williams for seven years, now becomes morally sound and hence is assigned by his master to civilize the natives in Liberia. Edward considers his instructing nearly three hundred slaves in his mission school in Christianity a great service to the American Colonization Society, founded in 1816. When Nash William is sent to Liberia, he calls it a fine place where "a coloured person can enjoy his liberty . . . for there exists no prejudice of colour and every man is free and equal" (18). He calls it a land of his forefathers and resents ever returning to America. He works endlessly for the Christianisation of the natives. Further, he is distanced more from his biological father as he thinks his lord better "than natural father" (20). The colonial strategy of disrupting the family ties in a more subtle way gets recorded here. He regards his Father better than others as they disown and sell their slaves after purchasing them but that his Father had not deserted him. He calls himself

and other servants as “the coloured property” (22) which shows that he had internalised the master’s cultural ways and was gradually moving away from his own natural father and his culture.

The health of Nash on African soil eventually begins to deteriorate. Unable to cope with the harsh climate, his wife and son York succumb to fever. He, however, works relentlessly. In his letters to his master, Nash requests certain things for survival like cloth, an umbrella, a bonnet, flour, pork, potato but feels sad when his letter elicits no positive response from the master. He says how some natives start criticizing him for his moral laxity as they find that a boy born to a native woman resembled Nash. He, however, realizes the fact that “this would appear only natural in that we shared the same ancestry” (34). Though he knows his roots, he does not so far fully identify with the natives. On his subsequent marriage to a native woman and subsequent birth of a male child, he further shows his regard to his owner by baptising his son as Edward so “that he might emulate” his lord. However, he intends it as his last letter to his master as his previous letters have fetched no response.

Edward in turn feels disturbed on not receiving any letter from Nash, his most trusted slave. Since his wife Amelia had concealed the letters as Edward was becoming more occupied with Nash, both were having miscommunication. He now tries to prevail upon the American Colonization Society that he needs to visit Liberia to trace Nash on whom he had invested hugely and that Nash’s disappearance “could signal a humiliating defeat for the Society’s ideals as a whole” (13). On reaching Monrovia, where his former slave Madison lived / lives, he feels abandoned. On other day, Edward heads for a tavern but keeps thinking about Nash’s fate. The thought of having banished many slaves “in this inhospitable and heathen corner of the world” (52) disturbs him. He now realizes: “Perhaps this business of encouraging men to engage with a past and a history that are truly not their own is, after all, ill-judged” (52). When next day, he visits an inn where he could find some whites and relate to them his worries, he is asked there about his business by a black of American origin. He feels disturbed as it was for the first time that he had been questioned by someone and asked to wait “like a beggar” (54). He feels further broken when, to his disgrace, the coloured man at the bar reveals that the white members had barred his entry to the club without assigning any reason.

The eventual return of Madison brings no hope but only adds to his misery as he informs that Nash is dead. He feels dejected: “Nash Williams, the boy he had brought from the fields to the house, the boy who won his love, freely give . . . this Nash William was no more” (58). When Madison delivers the last letter of Nash to Edward, written in January 1842, Edward asks Madison to take him to the last settlement where Nash lived but Madison cowers. This letter is actually a realisation and assertion of Nash of his identity and goes on questioning this whole project of colonization. Having now three native wives and six children, he relates how they are teaching these children in “the African languages” (60) and how he himself is also learning the native language. He calls these as “strange words and sounds” which shows how the native language was quite alien to him due to his instruction in the colonial language. He now learns that Liberia has not corrupted him from a “good Christian” to a heathen but asserts that it is the finest country for the coloured man. He finds the journey back home as spiritually redeeming as Thomas Bonnici observes: “Nash’s spiritual journey to Africa leads him towards the rejection of an alien God and Eurocentric civilization” (146). He opines that this Commonwealth of Liberia has opened his eyes and removed “the garb of ignorance” (62). He also challenges the Christian missionaries and hates to continue with the settlement schools:

This missionary work, this process of persuasion, is futile amongst these people, for they never truly pray to the Christian God, they merely pray to their own gods in Christian guise, for the American God does not even resemble them in that most fundamental of features. (62)

It shows the subversive tendencies of the oppressed to remain stuck to their culture / gods while feigning to obey those of the colonists. This subtle, persuasive conversion to Christianity is attacked by Nash here. He says that it has taken long for his dark mind to absorb this knowledge. He, therefore, disowns his master and chooses to freely “live the life of the African” (62). African writers and critics point out this aspect of Christianity as Paul Adjei observes:

I was personally disturbed and disappointed when I realized that Christianity—a religion I hold dear and devoted myself to since childhood—was complicit in the enslavement, genocide and colonization of my people. It was a personal torture for me to deal with this truth. (79-80)

He also dissuades Edward from coming to Africa but if he happens to visit Africa, he might want Edward to explain “Why you used me for your purposes and then expelled me to this Liberian paradise?” (62). Eventually when Edward insists to be taken to Nash’s house, Madison unwillingly obeys him. His intention in going there is to take Edward’s children to America to make them civilized. However, when he reaches Nash’s place, he retreats back in revulsion. Edward fails to decipher as to “what occurred in the Christian soul of his Nash Williams to have encouraged him to make peace with a life that surely even these heathens considered contemptible” (69).

Edward now has a feeling that ‘He had been abandoned’ (70). Lonely and desperate among the natives, he begins to pray while the natives feel pity for this “strange old white man” whose soul, they think, must have been bewitched by spirits. The master suffers for taxing the credulity of Nash and the latter equally suffers for having been kept ignorant of his roots under a systematic manipulative historical bias. Though slavery affected the Blacks to a great degree but somewhere the slave owners also suffered its pangs. While Edward now realizes the futility and inhumanity etched in slavery, Nash’s awakening makes him an apostle of African culture. The trauma lasts long and both find themselves unable to cope with the situation. While Nash dies, Edward also feels mentally broken and shattered. Edward now “feels guilt and shame well up since, in a way, he realizes that he is responsible for Nash’s ‘demise’” (Pilcher 5). Taking both voices of slavery, of the colonized and the colonizer, Phillips avers that “negative aspects of slavery might affect both colonized people as well as colonizing people” (Bakkenberg 1).

Keeping this in mind, Fanon’s studies become quite relevant as he considers Algeria’s seven years’ war of liberation as a “breeding ground for mental disorders” (181). In his case studies of this war’s victims, he titles one study as Case No. 4 in Series A. In this case, A was a twenty-eight year old man who worked in an anti-FLN brigade where he would torture people for extorting information. One of the civilians had nearly died when being tortured; he would scream endlessly pleading his innocence. A would hear these screams at home and in his dreams. So when A was treated, he found one of his Algerian victims in the same hospital, who fainted at his sight. Similarly, one victim was found in the washroom trying to commit suicide, scared that A had come to take him to the police camp again. Both of them, the perpetrator and the victim—had become victims of war and hence psychotic depression. Nash, the perpetrator who wanted Edward, his slave to work for the so called civilizing mission becomes a victim himself as he feels like an alien

amidst the blacks. On the other hand, Nash himself suffers immensely and dies, when unable to cope with the trauma of slavery.

II

The second part of this paper discusses one of the most inhuman and hotly contested issues of Australia where half-blood Aboriginal children were taken from their parents to assimilate them in the white system. Jane Harrison, an indigenous Australian writer, brings to the fore the psychological trauma of stolen children through her much celebrated play, *Stolen*. Indigenous plays register a note of protest against white Australia's attempts to mystify the Aboriginal past as Wesley Enoch notes: "Indigenous plays are a way of weaving our perspective into the public storytelling of this nation. So much of the [background] general public knows about indigenous Australia comes from a white perspective, filtered through the white-owned media" (2007, x). The term "stolen generations," refers to all those children who were forcibly removed from their parents under the so called "Protectionist Acts." Aimed to eventually assimilate the Aboriginal children into the white communities, these Acts caused the stolen children immense pain of being uprooted from the warm cocoon of their families. The Aboriginal writers salvage their past from such distortions and denigration and reinvent their history in an authentic way.

Stolen records the personal experiences of five young children who are made to become oblivious of their family and cultural roots. The child-mother bond is a universal human emotion and the separation of one from the other often leads to emotional and psychological trauma that haunts both throughout their lives. Jimmy is such a child who is stolen from his parents in infancy. His longing to meet his mother is suppressed by the white authorities' proclamation that his mother is dead. On the other hand, the letter of Jimmy's mother written to her son a long time ago exposes that they were never allowed to meet each other.

The playwright throws light on the assimilation policy which, in essence, ruined the lives of these children. "Euphemistically known as protection, these official policies had a twofold structure of biological segregation and absorption" (Renes 33). The practice not only led to their emotional breakdown and psychological trauma but also made them addicted to alcohol. Jimmy's frustration on being repeatedly told about his mother's death fills his mind with negative thoughts:

Nobody loves me.

Everybody hates me.

I think I should go and eat worms.

Worms that squiggle and squirm . . . (12)

Though away from each other for almost half of their lives, their hopes of a reunion are still alive. However, this reunion, if it ever happens, would be marred by doubts, apprehensions, and tears and so on. The collection of twenty-six birthday presents symbolizes the lapse of twenty-six years which the mother and her son have spent without each other and the ever renewing pain they undergo. Because of being removed from each other since the son's infancy, they do not even remember each other's birth dates. The prospect of fear and doubt at their imagined meeting finds echoes in the following lines again:

JIMMY. What do I tell her? Good stuff? Or all the bad stuff? . . . God, I hope she's not dirty or something.

JIMMY'S MOTHER. Will he like me?

JIMMY. She might not even like me.

JIMMY'S MOTHER. Will he love me?

JIMMY. Will she feel like my mother . . . ? (30)

Though Jimmy himself suffers for being black, he is conditioned by the white system in such a way that many a time he too harbours the thought of the Aboriginals' inferiority. It is a fallout of such conditioning that makes him imagine his mother being "dirty." Jimmy's mother, in turn, also internalizes the same thoughts where she imagines her son to be like them, that is, the whites. Unable to cope with the dilemma of facing such a situation, she dies.

The play also underscores the fact that continuous abuse and racial discrimination leads to a complete loss of self-esteem. In fact, it results in self-contempt and self-castigating tendencies. Jimmy's humiliation at the hands of the whites turns him hostile against his own self. In a fit of rage and despair he calls himself a 'black dog . . . scum of the earth, filthy black boong' (33). Despondent and desperate, he hangs himself. However, Jimmy's death does not indicate the end of the Aboriginal protest and their movement towards equality. He dies, yet pleads for the struggle which would someday make things better for the natives. The sense of remorse and grief over his mother's death shakes him:

They kept saying she was dead . . . but I could feel her spirit. Mum was alive and I waited and waited for her to come and take me home . . . Brothers, don't give up fighting . . . Don't let them take babies from their mothers' arms. (34)

He urges his people to continue raising their voices of dissent against racism so that future generations may not suffer in the same way as he himself did. The play emphasizes that the colonial Government was not a neutral agency which would accommodate the interests and rights of the Aborigines.

Stolen, thus grapples with issues “ranging from serial child theft, sexual abuse, alcoholism, suicide in custody, cultural confusion, mental illness to physical and psychological cruelty” (Thomson 137). Hence, every character in the play, both as a stolen child and as a grown up individual, protests against the exploitative racial system of governance. By voicing the pain of the stolen children, it strikes hard at pro-assimilation authorities rendering these children traumatized forever. Removal from their families has far reaching consequences for the native children. Though Jimmy takes his own life, he urges his fellow-beings to continue their struggle for racial emancipation. In its corrosive impact, the victims of colonialism, thus “continue to grapple with the emotional complexities of the colonial world” (Bullard 138).

Nash Williams in *Crossing the River* and Jimmy in *Stolen* die. Colonial pedagogical influences drift them away from nativity. The colonial education thus, “is so insidious that even those who claim to have been decolonized occasionally gaze on things with colonized lenses” (Adjei 80). Frantz Fanon, thus, does a great service to the marginalized. His objective behind looking into the mental conditions of war affected people was to relate the symptoms to socio-political conditions and what Homi K. Bhabha says about him is worth quoting: “Remembering him is never an act of introspection and retrospection, but rather a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (120). In a way thus, all the characters discussed above suffer the “psychological damage caused by the breaking down of the family” (Bonnici 133).

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Representation of History in Kuntala Kumari Sabat's Fiction: Revisiting *The Woman with Nine Voices* and *Raghu, the Orphan*

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Abstract: History is the record of the past events and is the story of humanity. It posits facts. Literature is an imaginative creation. It is an artistic form. Both literature and history deal with feelings, emotions and thought. Literature and history are often intertwined. There is interface between literature and the social, political, economic and cultural ethos of an age. Sometimes literature reports and represents history. It imaginatively recreates the past and its events. For instance, some of Shakespeare's plays are based on historical events. Homer's *Odyssey* interfaces literature and history. Literature explores history as well as intervenes in history in its own way. It mingles fact and fiction. So the interface between history and literature is as old as history itself. My paper foregrounds the representation of history in two novels, *The Woman with Nine Voices* (1926) and *Raghu, the Orphan* (1928), the English rendering of two Oriya novels *Naa Tundi* and *Raghu Arakshita* respectively, of the first woman novelist in Oriya, Kuntala Kumari Sabat (1901-1938). Kuntala Kumari was at once a physician, poet, novelist, essayist, fiery orator, social reformer and political activist. She lived at the high time of national struggle for freedom under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. She was not only a witness to the historic *Swadeshi* Movement and Non-Co-operation Movement, but an active participant as well. This paper highlights how she interweaves the historic national struggle into the plot of the novels and her intervention and attitude to the mega event.

Keywords: *Swadeshi* Movement, Non-Co-Operation Movement, Kuntala's novels.

History is the record of the past events and is the story of humanity. It posits facts. Literature is an imaginative creation. It is an artistic form. Both literature and history deal with feelings, emotions and thought. Literature and history are often intertwined. There is interface between literature and the social, political, economic and cultural ethos of an age. Sometimes literature reports and represents history. It imaginatively recreates the past and its events. For instance, some of Shakespeare's plays are based on historical events. Homer's *Odyssey* interfaces literature and history. Literature explores history as well as intervenes in history in its own way. It mingles fact and fiction. So the interface between history and literature is as old as history itself.

This paper foregrounds the representation of history in two novels, *The Woman with Nine Voices* (1926) and *Raghu, the Orphan* (1928), English rendering of two Oriya novels *Naa Tundi* and *Raghu Arakshita* respectively, authored by the first woman novelist in Oriya, Kuntala Kumari Sabat (1901-1938). She was at once a physician, poet, novelist, essayist, columnist, fiery orator, social reformer and freedom fighter. She was a witness to the national struggle for political freedom from British colonialism under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Inspired by Gandhiji's clarion call, she took active part in India's struggle for freedom both in body and mind. She was not only a witness to the historic *Swadeshi* Movement and Non-Co-operation Movement, but an active participant as well. Like poets Subramania Bharathi (1882-1921) and Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941), she ignited the minds of Oriyas with love for freedom and nationalism. Her collection of poems *Ahwan* (Exhortation) (1930) and *Spulinga* (Spark) (1929) exhorted Oriyas to throw away their idleness and awake to the cause of freedom of Mother Kalinga (Orissa) and Mother India. *Ahwan* was an instant success. Attempt was made to ban her patriotic poem "Ahuti" by the British government. After the execution of martyr Bhagat Singh, she authored a poem in English titled, "Tribute to Bhagat Singh." Thousands of copies of this poem were distributed in the Karachi session of the National Congress. The poem she composed in English entitled "The Neglected Land" testifies to her spirit of patriotic ardour. Kuntala Kumari took active part in the Salt Satyagraha at Srijanga, Inchudi and Kaliapada in Balasore district in Orissa in 1930. In her works of fiction, *Kalibohu* (The Dark Bride) (1925), *Naa Tundi* (The Woman with Nine Voices) (1926) and *Raghu Arakshita* (Raghu, the Orphan) (1928), she interweaves the theme of the national struggle for freedom with the main plot and intervenes to highlight her reformist zeal.

Gandhiji advocated not only political freedom from the hands of the British, but social freedom from the clutches of superstitious beliefs and outdated practices. He said that political freedom was meaningless without economic and social liberation for the masses. India would achieve real freedom when freedom reaches the poorest of the poor village of India. In the words of Gandhiji, “Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever.” Gandhiji’s concept of freedom was broad, encompassing all aspects of life.

The National Congress was formed in 1885 to liberate the country from British colonization. Political consciousness had been growing in Orissa because of spread of modern education, rise of new middle class intelligentsia, publication of newspapers and periodicals, the formation of socio-political associations and development of means of communication. The Oriya people were enlightened and were aware of the socio-political developments taking place elsewhere in India. But its impact could not be felt in Orissa till 1905, the year of the “*Swadeshi* Movement” in the neighbouring state, Bengal. This movement called upon the people to boycott foreign goods. In Orissa, in August, the same year at Cuttack, Madhusudan Das inspired the people with patriotic and nationalistic feelings and urged them to boycott foreign goods and to use indigenous goods. Gradually the *Swadeshi* Movement spread to other districts of Orissa like wild fire. People spontaneously boycotted foreign clothes and Liverpool salt and used indigenous salt, sugar and handspun clothes. Even students gave up their studies at schools and colleges in order to avoid English education, education of the colonizer, and moved from village to village spreading the message of the “*Swadeshi* Movement.” People made use of hand-woven saris and clothes made at Maniabandha, Sambalpur, Berhampur and Cuttack.

The Non-Co-operation Movement which started in 1920 had a tremendous impact on Orissa. Its flame engulfed all parts of Orissa within no time. Gopabandhu Das, known as *Utkalamani*, the gem of Orissa, conveyed to the people of Orissa the pledge of the Congress to boycott foreign clothes, schools, provincial legislatures, government titles and jobs. Thousands of freedom fighters picketed in front of shops dealing with foreign goods, courts, offices, post offices, schools and colleges and almost paralysed the British government machinery.

When Gandhiji visited Orissa in 1921, he called upon both men and women to take active part in the national struggle for freedom. He urged for the uplift of women, untouchables and other

marginalized classes of society through spread of education and training in order to bring them to the mainstream without which attaining freedom would be a distant dream. He stressed the need for rooting out untouchability, which was the bane of orthodox Hindu society. The response to Gandhiji's call was overwhelming. Women like Rama Devi, Sarala Devi, Malati Devi, Janhavi Devi, Kokila Devi, Kiranbala Sen, Bhagyabati Pata Mahadei, Sarojini Chaudhury, Kuntala Kumari Sabat showed indomitable courage and played significant roles in the freedom movement. They took up activities of social reform as a part of the national struggle for political freedom. In *The Woman with Nine Voices* and *Raghu, the Orphan*, Kuntala Kumari foregrounds the issues of women as a part of the contemporary issue of national struggle for freedom which laid emphasis on social reforms for the uplift of the marginalized people in general and women in particular who were victimized by the unjust social practices based on superstitious beliefs.

In *The Woman with Nine Voices*, Kuntala lays stress on economic and social reforms as a means of attaining political freedom of India. But unlike Lakshmi in *the Dark Bride*, here the heroine Ratani is not fettered by social conventions. She is bold and courageous. Being the daughter of a poor day-labourer, she has nothing to lose so far as honour in society is concerned. She is more concerned with earning her livelihood than anything else. She is neither frightened of humans nor scared of ferocious animals. She is not afraid of even the zamindar of the village and his followers. She cares for nobody. She is ready to do any menial work in order to earn her livelihood. Here Kuntala Kumari lays emphasis on the dignity of labour and capabilities of women. She shows how economic freedom leads to social freedom. The only drawback in the character of Ratani is her quarrelsome nature. But zamindar Krushnachandra appreciates her boldness and marries her. He educates illiterate Ratani and trains her in many other skills like spinning thread, singing and drumming. The quarrelsome Ratani is transformed into a docile, disciplined, skilled and intelligent leader of the womenfolk in the village like her husband. She instructs the village women about spinning thread and weaving clothes with the help of the spinning wheel. She instructs them in various simple ways to improve their lives and the lives of their children. In this novel, Kuntala depicts how education and economic liberation of women would pave the way for their social liberation and ultimately the political liberation of the country as women constitute almost half of the population.

In this novel, inspired by the Non-Co-operation Movement of Gandhiji, Zamindar Nabin puts on khaddar even during the scorching heat of the summer. Kuntala pleads for the use of indigenous products through the words of Nabin. He says, “If you don’t like the food and clothes produced in your own country, you are traitors” (51). His brothers, Krushnachandra and Hari, and their friend Lokanath do not want to learn English, the language of the colonizer, and leave their colleges. They devote themselves to spreading the message of spinning thread by spinning wheels, weaving clothes, using indigenous goods, establishing village schools for low-caste children and setting up of village Panchayats. Zamindar Krushnachandra tries to convince the upper-caste people regarding the worth of the lower class people:

Now, look, we look upon these hardies, panos, mochies, chamaras as
“low castes” and we become impure just by touching them . But, think it
over, who can do the work they do for us? If they do not perform their
duty, we cannot make do it. It won’t do if we keep our great benefactors
and call them; untouchables. Will the Providence bear it! (63)

In other words, they leave no stone unturned to uplift women and low-class people economically and socially in order to bring them to the mainstream.

In *The Woman with Nine Voices*, Kuntala Kumari depicts ideal characters modelled after the great social reformers of her time. Zamindar Krushnachandra, Hari and Lokanath follow the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi for the uplift of the marginalized classes like women and untouchables of society.

Kuntala Kumari has made the nationalist movement an integral part of her plot in her major fiction *Raghu, the Orphan* as well. At that time, the education of women was a part of the great mission of the nationalist struggle for freedom and Kuntala Kumari was an ardent supporter of the cause as well. Social transformation was her primary goal. At that time women’s education in Orissa was at its lowest. There were few schools for women. Social taboos and superstitious beliefs prevented people from sending their daughters to schools or educating them. A few zamindars and well-to-do families appointed tutors at home to educate their daughters. Like Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir, Kuntala Kumari makes an urgent plea for educating women in order to arouse their consciousness and to put an end to social evils perpetrated by male dominance. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) argues that women

are not inherently inferior to men. Lack of education was the root cause of their inferiority. In the words of Mary Wollstonecraft: “A rational examination reveals the real cause of the retarded state of many women’s minds to be not their sex but their poor education.” Kuntala Kumari believed in educating women in order to subvert the social evils perpetrated by dominant patriarchal conventions.

In *Raghu, the Orphan*, Kuntala Kumari portrays Jagannath *kabiraj* himself teaching his wife Taramani, going against the wishes of his parents and the criticism of others. Further, Kuntala Kumari portrays Raghunath’s wife Maya, a highly educated young lady, as one who is broadminded, intelligent and practical in her attitude to life. Unlike illiterate women, she does not feel jealous of Sita, her husband’s one time beloved. She knows that her husband loves Sita still and cannot forget her, though Sita is married. Like other educated women, Maya is concerned about the plight of other women and works for their uplift and the uplift of her motherland. Chemanlal’s widowed daughter, Tuka, is saved from disgrace and suffering as a widow because of her education. Tuka devotes herself to the cause of the freedom of the nation. In the words of Kuntala Kumari:

Tuka was no longer the woman she used to be, she had wholeheartedly devoted herself to the service of her country. On hearing her lectures and reading her articles published in the *Hindustanki Samachar*, the ordinary people of India were inspired with feelings of patriotism. Tuka moved from village to village and town to town and spread the message of patriotism. (393)

Though Kuntala Kumari advocates education for women, she never suggests that they should compete with men or neglect their domestic duties and responsibilities. She portrays all educated women like Maya and Tuka as proficient in domestic chores and management of their households. She depicts them carrying on their activities of social welfare and participation in national struggle for freedom along with their household responsibilities.

Besides, Chemanlal’s family is entirely devoted to the cause of the freedom of the nation. His house is truly Indian in spirit where no differences of caste and religion exist. After the Hindu-Muslim riot, Chemanlal’s family does not hesitate to give shelter to Abdul Aziz, a Muslim, and his family in their house. Kuntala Kumari writes:

Raghunath was surprised to see that the house of Lachhman was a sacred

meeting ground of the Hindus and the Muslims. There, those who believed in Islam and those who did not, were bound by one chord of love, like two brothers and the Aryas and the Yavans were each others' friends. (393)

After Maya passes away and widowed Sita refuses to marry Raghunath, he comes to Chemanlal's family for solace. Inspired by Lachhman, Raghunath takes the great vow to devote the rest of his life to the cause of his motherland, Orissa.

Gandhiji preached against caste distinctions which divided the Hindus. He called the untouchables, "Harijan," that is, God's people. He encouraged inter-caste marriage as a means of ending caste distinctions. Inspired by liberal western education and the call of Gandhiji, Kuntala Kumari comes down heavily on casteism which was acute in her time and depicts the changing attitude through the character of Jagannath *kabiraj*. Jagannath *kabiraj* does not follow caste distinctions and purificatory rituals associated with it. He gives shelter to a low-caste orphan girl, Rupa, when she becomes an orphan. He does not care, though he is ostracized from the community on account of it. He also welcomes Raghunath who is married to Maya, a *Brahmo* woman. Besides, Raghunath, a pure *Brahmin*, stays and eats in the house of Kewalkrushna Haldar, a fisherman by caste who is converted to *Naba Vidhan Brahmo*. Raghunath, who is educated, does not bother about upper and lower castes. Kuntala Kumari highlights the changing attitude of Raghunath in these words:

Raghunath was no longer the Raghunath one knew earlier. He now thought about his country and her people. The ignorance, superstition, poverty and suffering of his country hurt him. Nowadays his thoughts centred on how his country could be rejuvenated and how society could be reawakened. . . .He no more bothered about the fact that he was a Brahmin and that the members of this family were untouchable fishermen. He had already realized that it is not a man's caste, but his humanity which makes him great. (266)

Kuntala Kumari was herself a Christian and was later converted to *Naba Vidhan Brahmo*. She did not bother about caste distinctions. She was an ardent follower of Gandhiji and his ideals and teachings. Sachidananda Mohanty rightly comments:

Kuntala's record in the national freedom struggle is equally noteworthy.

She took part . . . in the various meetings in leadership roles at the

national and the state level. However, her untimely death in 1938 cut short her further contribution in this regard. Even so, many of her literary works are an eloquent testimony to her sense of patriotism. . . . Her poem “Nari Shakti” suggests the role she envisaged for women for the liberation of the country. (72)

Though Kuntala Kumari took active part in India’s national struggle for freedom, basically she was a social reformer and feminist. She was always worried about the uplift of women and her country. So in these novels she highlights the issues like illiteracy, child marriage, widowhood, polygamy that plagued women in general and Orissa women in particular. Like many other social reformers of her time, she strongly believed that illiteracy and ignorance of men and women was at the root of all social evils. So she finds out remedies for the uplift of women in these novels and interweaves these with the larger issue of India’s national struggle for freedom. Kuntala Kumari portrays idealized characters modelled on the great social reformers and nationalist leaders who strove to uplift the depressed classes of society for the overall progress of the nation and inculcated patriotism among them. As a whole, Kuntala Kumari imaginatively recreates the contemporary historical events of her time mingling with fictional characters and places while her reformist zeal and social concerns remain as the backbone of the plot.

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Fiction as Social History: A Study of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* as a History from the Other Side

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Abstract: The early twentieth century marked the beginning of the dominance of America on the world scene. It was the period when the USA recovering from its post civil-war trauma supplanted the chaos with the notion of the “American dream.” This idea encompasses a rosy picture where America becomes a land of dreaming spires, where one’s fortunes see a dramatic shift over a short period of time. Consequently, thousands of people immigrated to America to have better opportunities but their hopes and lives were shattered when they got into the nasty terrain of capitalism. The novel, *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair serves as a text that not only unveils and attacks the vagueness of the American dream but also brings forth the evil face of industrial capitalism through its vivid description of inhuman conditions of the working class, especially the immigrants. It played a role of journalistic importance, besides portrayal of human pathos and communist propaganda. It was instrumental in the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, which established the Bureau of Chemistry that would become the Food and Drug Administration in 1930. The paper studies how *The Jungle* as fiction plays the role of presenting history from the other side by focusing on the lower strata of society, which exposes the vanity underneath the idea of the American dream.

Keywords: American dream, socialism, social activism.

As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my

situation--either react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

The aforesaid statement underscores the idea that qualms of adversity can be transformed into a potent force which can bring revolutionary changes in a social system. This latent force for the sake of multitudes gets manifested in the form of social activism. This paper studies Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* written in 1905 as marginalized history as well as how a text became a creative force to bring forth social activism. It examines how certain symbols of capitalist progress have been used to lambast exploitative capitalism itself. Lastly, it seeks to understand as far as social activism is concerned, how *The Jungle* was a misfire. Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle* presents the social and economic plight of the meatpacking workers by the capitalist society in every walk of life. The workers are not only marginalized in terms of economy and social status, but they also fall prey to con-men who rob their hard earned money as they cannot rob the rich because of the higher social status and political power of the former. The novel underlines poverty, the absence of social programmes, unpleasant living and working conditions, and the despair prevalent among the working class, which is contrasted with the deep-rooted corruption and exploitation on the part of those in power. Sinclair presents before the American public, the state of affairs in the meatpacking industry, beckoning that something must be done to do away with the prevailing system of "wage slavery" (Young 467). This novel served as a tool of social criticism, presenting a history which remained ignored under the aegis of capitalist class rule. Not for nothing do Marxist critics of the Frankfurt School like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer laud modernist writers such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Samuel Beckett for the way they fragment or disrupt social structure by yielding a "negative knowledge" of the dehumanizing institutions and social processes under capitalism (Abrams 149).

The story of *The Jungle* is about a Lithuanian man Jurgis Rudkus and his extended family, who emigrate from their homeland to the United States of America to make a fortune and fulfil their aspirations, and wipe out all misery and squalor from their lives. But the harsh working conditions and his socio-economic exploitation made him lose even his meagre possessions. One of the novel's central criticisms of capitalism is that it has a destructive effect on the institution of family.

In their hope of owning a house, the family falls victim to a loan scheme that robs them of all their savings in payment of a house in a slum that is out of their reach. The family enters such a state of financial crisis that one by one, all the family members . . . the women, Jurgis's sick father, and even the young children have to find jobs in order to contribute to their meagre family income. Jurgis's father gets a job only after agreeing to pay another man one-third of his wages for helping him obtain the job. The job is too hard for his old age; it quickly takes a toll on his health, and kills him. Ona's pregnancy makes a job difficult for her. Ona's supervisor, Miss Henderson runs a prostitution ring, and most of the female factory workers are forced to be prostitutes. Ona gives birth to a boy, but she has to return to work a week later which ruins her health to a great extent. An injury results in the loss of his job for Jurgis, and circumstances force him to work in a fertilizer plant where the chemicals affect his skin making his own odour unbearable to him. Family children die of food poisoning and Rudkus's wife is raped by her boss, making her job dependent on her giving him sexual favours. Jurgis violently confronts him in revenge, leading to his arrest, unfair trial, and imprisonment by the bribed judge. On his return, he finds Ona dying of premature labour in her second childbirth because Jurgis is unable to pay money for a doctor. All these incidents thwart the then popular idea of the "American Dream" by exposing its hollowness through the plight of the Lithuanian family in the narrative. It is shown that America is indeed a land of aspirations and ambitions, but only for the industrial capitalist class who pile up their fortunes on the miseries of the working class.

The novel also stresses the idea of "lost childhood" in the American working class when the USA posed itself as the most equal and just society in the world. The childhood for the upper-class children was beautiful and promising. For the working classes, it was no better than a slavery system into which they had to sink out of need, unlike the blacks in the nineteenth century who were forced by an overt system. The death of Stanislovas Lukoszas, Teta Elzbieta's son, presents an extremely deteriorated state of being for the factory workers' children. He is thirteen years old in age and often has to bear frost bites at the workplace. One night he accidentally gets locked in a store-room of the factory and is eaten alive by the rats. Similarly, when Kristofonas, Elzbieta's crippled son, dies; the family is relieved of an unproductive member who would have been a burden on the family. The drowning of Jurgis's son Antanas in a muddy street displays the pitiable condition of livelihood in the vicinity of the lower class quarters.

The title of the novel symbolizes the competitive and opportunistic nature of capitalism. The socio-economic ambience of Packingtown in Chicago is like a Darwinian jungle in which the strong prey on the weak and all living beings are engaged in a cut-throat fight for survival. The title draws attention specifically to the doctrine of Social Darwinism, an idea used by some nineteenth-century thinkers to justify the abuses of wealthy capitalists. It justified the social and economic gap between various classes as the natural order. This idea essentially held that the social system was designed to reward the strongest and ablest people, while the unsuccessful and the lowly people were kept at an inferior level. By relating the story of a group of honest, hardworking immigrants who are destroyed by corruption and evil, Sinclair tries to rebut the idea of Social Darwinism, implying that those who succeed in the capitalist system are not the best of the human resource but rather can be the worst and most corrupt of all.

The primary target of the novel is the evil system of capitalism. Sinclair considers it as destructive, violent, and inhuman; reducing a human being to a mere cog in the wheel of production. The slow annihilation of Jurgis's family at the hands of the cruel economic and socio-political system exemplifies the effect of capitalism on the working class as a whole. As the immigrants who have a strong belief in the concept of American Dream, which promises life of fortune for all those who invest hard work in this land of aspirations, Jurgis landed with his extended family in America but life becomes progressively torturous for them; bringing them to a state of utter despair. He intends to universalize the evil consequences of capitalism on humankind at large, by underlining in the novel every negative effect of capitalism on society.

Sinclair views socialism as the cure for all the maladies brought into the system by the epidemic called capitalism. The socialist ideology is introduced in the book in chapter 28 of the novel, paving a way free from the sufferings and torments of capitalism. He wages a political attack on capitalism, and persuades the readers to strive for the socialist alternative. Socialism is shown to be in a binary opposition to capitalism; whereby capitalism destroys the majority of the population for the benefit of a few, socialism works for advancement of the whole society. It is even depicted in the novel that a true Christian faith can flourish only in a socialist state. Every aspect of the novel's plot, characterization, and conflict is designed to discredit the capitalist political system and illustrate the ability of a socialist political system to restore humane social justice to the

downtrodden, exploited, and abused working class. Thus, the novel also turns out to be a gospel of socialism.

The novel consists of some vital symbols which at an abstract level signify the crude and gruesome reality of human life. The most significant symbols in the novel are the animal pens and slaughterhouses of Packingtown, which explicitly represent in a shocking way the plight of the working class. Just as the animals at Packingtown are herded into pens, killed without mercy, made to suffer, and given no choice about their fate, so is the fate of the thousands of poor immigrant workers forced to enter the pyre of the meatpacking industry, which grinds them brutally and kills them without giving them any choice. Sinclair uses the cans of rotten and unhealthy meat to represent the essential corruption of capitalism and the hypocrisy of the American Dream. The cans have shiny, attractive surfaces but contain a mass of putrid meat unfit for human consumption. In the same way, American capitalism presents an attractive face to immigrants, but the America that they find is rotten and corrupt. The dismal state of the meatpacking business is underlined by the following excerpt from the fourteenth chapter of the novel, which exposes the unhygienic conditions in which the business takes place:

[T]he meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There were the butt-ends of smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water—and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast. (334)

The novel aimed at transformation in the working and living conditions of workers in American industries, but historically it caused a public outcry over the novel's portrayal of the meat industry's practice of selling rotten and diseased meat to unsuspecting consumers (Young 473). This novel led to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act in 1906, which advocated for a hygienic environment in the food manufacturing industries (Young 476).

Sinclair was not much pleased by the social response to the novel, although it was largely successful in commercial terms. The writer's mission in the novel was to strive for the workers' rights, but the public responded selfishly by voicing their concerns for their own health, pure food, and hygiene. It shows how the hegemonic state apparatus created a middle class which was capitalist in temperament, driven by economic and personal interests. Besides, in the United States of America of the early twentieth century, the management norms were guided by the principles of the then prevalent management theory of Taylorism. It considered a worker as an economic man, who is solely motivated by the desire for money. The maximization of work was the chief goal of the managers, without even considering for the social well-being of the workers. Taylor was against the concept of a trade union, and considered it as a hindrance in the process of industrial production and hence in economic development. So, Taylorism had its impact upon the American capitalists, making them more economic in temperament rather than humane.

All this made Sinclair a strong votary of a socialist ideological revolution in his career as a politician. Another important issue that is significant is the solution posed by the novel to the problem of workers through socialist parties and labour unions. The United States of America, being a capitalist nation was averse to anything having a tinge of socialism or communism. It is testified from the fact that the demand for labour unions was publically supported when raised as a vital issue by the Democratic Party, while the same plea under a socialist garb could not even receive average public response. Owing to the socialist agenda raised in the novel, most of the American critics labelled it as political fiction, therefore diluting its primary message which was in favour of the well-being of workers. This shows how socio-political forces apart from production also influence reception of a text.

As far as the question of suggestion of socialism as a solution to this problem is concerned, socialism cannot be a remedy to this social malady. Even in socialist countries, social ownership of property exists only in name. Under socialism, the workers have faced similar plight as under capitalism. Socialism has led to over-regulation and curbs one's independent zeal to grow. An ideal system would be one which would not affect the individual liberty, at the same time maintaining social equity. Thus, literature is the source of oppositional values, whereby it uses either the traces of what Raymond Williams calls "residual" culture or the "emergent" values to thwart the dominant ideology of the upper classes prevalent in the society (Berry 184). Therefore,

a historical study should be conducted after taking into consideration multiple perspectives on a subject. Despite being largely textual, this mode of criticism can trace the past, which can at larger levels give rise to an oppositional culture, leading to social activism for affirmation of their identities.

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Gender Dynamics: Struggle of Women in the Black Panther Party

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Abstract: The Black Power Era which is bracketed between 1966 and 1975 was very masculine and misogynist in nature. Male supremacy was considered to be a tradition which was supposed to be accepted and followed. The women in various movements during the 1960s were seen as mere sexual objects and subordinates. Traces of sexism were apparent in the revolutionary Black Panther Party too but this party was also one of those rare organizations which tried to eliminate the chauvinism in the party and criticised such patriarchal systems in other Black Power groups. The women in the party endeavoured to emphasize that their role in the revolution was equal to that of men. This paper studies how the party evolved and realised that struggle against the draconian power bloc had to be waged equally by men and women. These gender voices were suppressed under the media representation of the party which was manipulated greatly by the state agencies. There is immense contradiction in the accounts which were presented by the media and those narrated by the leaders of the Black Panther Party. Thus the most reliable accounts are the writings of the women who were a part of the party. This paper critically analyses two essays written by the Black Panther women who devoted their lives to the revolutionary cause of emancipation of the blacks in America. Their struggle was not only against the racist system but also the intra-party gender bias that these women overcame through their conviction, perseverance and strength.

Keywords: Black Power, Black Panthers, Sexism, gender.

The phrase “Black Power” has always been associated with evocative and inspiring images of Black men in the 1960s. They wore black berets, dark sunglasses and carried guns or shouted aggressive Black Power slogans that challenged the racist world order. Such masculine images of

black power dominated the public attention in the 1960s and 1970s. But despite the presence of women in the visual record, they remained absent from the historical records. The interest in feminism destabilized and complicated the male-centred histories and research began to be carried out to shape and enrich the concerns of women and gender.

The question of gender and its connection to women has been a burning question across cultures over time. Gender is the social construction of sexual relations. Women have always been categorised as the “weaker sex” and this idea has been met with a lot of criticism in the recent decades. Through ages, women have been defined, not by their work but by their sex. Every effort of women to gain equal rights was condemned by critics as illogical. The women bore this discrimination for long, but with the feminist wave of the 1960s, the women realised that there was no justification for compartmentalizing them as the lesser humans. African American women had to experience the painful marginalization and suffer because of being black and female in a world dictated by whites and males. The voice that these women raised for equality united all the women of the world through a shared plight. Continuing with the same intention, women emphasized their position in social, economic and political realms too. Toni Morrison’s analysis confirms, “The black woman has nothing to fall back on, not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, not anything. And out of profound desolation of reality, she may very well have invented herself” (15).

Women have participated in every aspect of the world revolutions but their contribution has always been questioned. In the 18th century, when the focus was on the emancipation of women, it was restricted to Right to Education, not the right to vote. The writers of the era of enlightenment also viewed women as biologically and socially inferior and destined to play the traditional role of family rearing. Every effort of women to gain political rights was condemned by the critics and their demands for equality troubled the set construct of “proper roles” for women.

Black feminism was the second wave of Feminism in the 1960s. The African American feminists examined the race, class and gender linkage in this decade initiating the long process of changes in social and political dynamics. The actions of men and women are influenced by the structure of authority and identity. Politics and gender are inter-related. Political change can make available or curtail the possibility of change in society.

The relation between gender and politics is made clear by the tragedy of Mohamed Bonazizi's self-immolation, the event that paved the way for the Arab Spring in 2012. The Tunisian street vendor's action ignited a mass national protest which led to the fall of the Ben Ali government. But the case in point brings forth the bitter fact that he did not set himself on fire because he was denied his right to make a living, he did so because a woman had slapped him in the face. Bonazizi was a man who had fallen victim to the assault of the abusive state apparatus at many other instances, yet the insult to his masculinity was so improper that it led to the sabotage which engulfed the whole Middle East.

To understand this better, one has to study the beginning of the movement and its composition. The 1960s in America was the time when the people had started feeling tired of "turning the other cheek," the idea professed by the Civil Rights Leaders of non-violence as the means to achieve freedom from racism in America. The Civil Rights movement was led by eloquent speakers like Martin Luther King Jr. who were relying on peaceful policies.

Within this context, the Black Panther Party was introduced in 1966 to claim the leadership of the African-American masses. The Panthers were the young African-American men who had decided to pick up the gun to defend themselves and demand their rights. The party was initially created to defend the African American community from the rampant police brutality but later it expanded to include the welfare of the community as a whole. Led by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the party gained significant attention due to their visual and rhetorical appeal. They were the young men dressed in black jackets and powder blue shirts, toting guns and speaking with profound charisma. The Black Panther Party was an amalgamation of vigour, wisdom and fearlessness of young educated men who had resolved to organise the community against the injustices of the state powers. Discrimination, oppression and subjugation were the phenomena which had defined the existence of Blacks in America since the beginning. The Blacks had to face harassment every day at the hands of the police who resorted to brutal lynching for the sake of enjoyment. Though many movements began and strived for the betterment of the status of Blacks in America, yet little could be changed.

While the male-centric visual appeal fascinated the men, the women of the community also volunteered to join the party. The Black Panther Party always raked attention due to various controversial reasons and one of the most discussed amongst those was the sexism that the female

members of the party experienced. By 1970, women formed two-third of the party, yet the party remained mostly male-centric. Despite the macho portrayal of the party, it was the women who played an instrumental role in sustenance of the party. The Black community was already in the throes of discrimination and segregation; therefore, it became necessary to remove all traces of differences within the party.

The Black Panther Party at the outset was an all-male organisation out on the quest for regaining of Black Manhood. The long history of lynching and discrimination had instilled so much fear in the Blacks that they had begun feeling castrated. So when the party was created, it was an opportunity for these men to reaffirm their masculinity and put an end to racial mistreatment. The inclusion of women in the party was not given much thought and when the women expressed their willingness to join the party, some men took it as a distraction from the main focus of their platform. The masculinism of the Black Power era relegated women to familial, reproductive and supporting roles. The first issue of *The Black Panther* Newspaper published in 1967 had a gendered analysis of the party presented by Huey P. Newton and Elridge Cleaver. The call for recruitment read:

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF-DEFENCE really has something going. These brothers are the cream of the Black manhood. They are there for the protection and defence of our black community... BLACK MEN!!! It is your duty to your women and children, to your mothers and sisters, to investigate the program of the PARTY. (5)

Tarika Lewis, the first woman to join the party was a Black Panther artist who contributed to the paper in its early years and her focus was only on creating powerful male imagery, but slowly she started drawing women in powerful roles too. Recognizing the potential of *The Black Panther* newspaper in creating iconic images of the male members, Lewis took up the task of drawing real life images of female comrades who stood shoulder to shoulder with male comrades for liberal causes. Thus, these images provided the women the privilege of being the heroes too and expanded their domain from being mere caregivers.

There are some pioneering essays written by the Black Panther women which can be used as a basis for deriving substantial information about the internal politics of the party. Two essays which I have studied for the purpose of this paper are “Why I Joined the Party: An Africana Womanist

Reflection” by Regina Jennings and “The Most Qualified Person to Handle the Job: Black Panther Party Women, 1966-1982” by Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest.

Jennings in her essay comments that although instances of male dominance formed a part of the prime years of most black women, yet after joining the highly popular party, she realised the existence of double standards within the party too. The aggressive and direct mystique of the Black Panthers attracted thousands across America. The trauma of racism is explained by her through various incidents in the neighbourhood that affected her in adverse ways emotionally and physically. The recognition and the power that the party provided to her gradually helped her in distancing herself from all vices. During her induction into the party, she was taught about race, society, and self-defence to allow her to understand her situation better and undrug her mind. She mentions how all the new recruits were taught from an Afrocentric perspective. She says in this regard, “I had never considered black people as a subject of knowledge. I had been taught only to revere white people as a source of world progress” (260).

It is interesting to note that she calls the relationship between Oakland, California Panthers and the black community as a “mutual love affair.” She compliments the party by acknowledging how she was impressed by the Panthers who worked in a disciplined manner for the betterment of the society without demanding anything for their personal benefit. She also acknowledges that after 1968, the FBI was on a rampage to destroy the party through instigation and infiltration. Being a young organization, they could not discern what was real and what was fake. Thus the party began crumbling under the pressure of so much tension and despair. What makes this essay significant is the fact that Regina Jennings dared to be vocal about the sexual harassment that the party leaders meted out to her. Despite giving all of herself to the movement, she mentions with great regret that the captain of the Oakland Panther chapter tried to make undue advances on her and her resistance angered him enough to make her survival difficult in the party. This incident throws light on a case like many other Panther women who fell victim to the sexism in the party. Although she is unbiased in her opinions and shares her experiences of sexism in the party, yet she concludes the essay by conveying regard and respect for the party

The second essay, “The Most Qualified Person to Handle the Job: Black Panther Party Women, 1966-1982” by Angela D LeBlanc-Ernest is an extensive analysis of the complete tenure of the party. The Black Panther Party in its former years (1966-1967) was a distinctly male-oriented

organization which primarily focussed on recruiting brothers off the block. The party soon realised that it was incomplete in the absence of women.

During the most formative years of the party, Kathleen Cleaver joined the party and became the first woman to sit on the central committee of the organization. She never stated any incident of gender discrimination in her tenure in the party. She remained unaware of the gender bias in the party and the reason for that could be the fact that she was the wife of Elridge Cleaver, Minister of Information which shielded her from discrimination. Despite that she admitted that the male members of the party had a tendency of overlooking the ideas suggested by the women in the party. According to Kathleen Cleaver:

If a woman would express an idea, because that idea is coming from a source that they're not looking for an idea from, it would be discounted... They looked to women to help them, to take care of them, to nurture them, to be their mothers, to be their lovers. But they did not look to women for their ideas. (55-56)

Cleaver rightly remarked in this context that the women were bearing the state repression equally as other men and the intraparty harassment was adding to their repression. In an excerpt from a letter sent to Ericka Huggins from the third world, and published in *The Black Panther* on July 5, 1969, Elridge Cleaver quotes the message sent by Huey P. Newton:

The incarceration and the sufferings of sister Ericka should be a stinging rebuke to all manifestations of male chauvinism within our ranks...let it be a lesson and an example to all the brothers, that we must understand that our women are suffering strongly and enthusiastically as we are participating in the struggle... The minister of Defence Huey P. Newton has said that it is mandatory that all manifestations of male chauvinism be excluded from our ranks and that sisters have a duty and the right to do whatever they want to do in order to see to it that they are not relegated to an inferior position, and that they are not treated as though they are not equal members of the party and equal in all regards. And they are not subjected to male practices. (98-99)

Saying this did not bring a sudden transformation in the attitude of the male Panthers, but this formal position was an advance over other Black organizations in the 1960s which did not even consider gender inequality to be a concern.

The double standards in the party became one of the primary reasons for the demise of the party. The greatest flaw of the party was that the organizational structure of the party had not given thought to the integration of women in the party and when the women started volunteering, there was conflict of opinions in the party. There was no democratic procedure for challenging the men in the leadership positions. The women in the party offices were physically abused at times, yet there was no channel to handle this misbehaviour. If there were any external bodies to check discipline within the party, the unfair practices against women might have been checked. The efforts made by party leaders to address the problems of women proved to be inefficient. Bobby Seale had created rules regarding the appropriate behaviour with women, yet it appeared to be a feeble attempt to save the public image of the party. The women in the leadership positions also felt that the orders they gave in the party were met with resistance and were contrary in regard to the response the male leaders got. Elaine Brown, who became the Chair of the party in 1974, explains the mindset of male comrades in her autobiography, *A Taste of Power*, as “A women in the movement was considered, at best, irrelevant. A woman asserting herself was a pariah. A woman attempting the role of leadership was, to my proud Black Brothers, making an alliance with the counter-revolutionary, man-hating, lesbian, feminist white bitches” (357). These problems were left unchecked in the beginning due to which the foundation of the party weakened.

Despite the mixed experiences of women while being Panthers, they all admitted that the discipline and passion that the Panthers had for their work was commendable and the missions were followed aggressively. The presence of the women in leadership positions was a change from the traditional roles they were relegated to even during the Civil Rights era. These women rose above the subordinated roles in order to serve their community. Rather, they set forth models for the efficient working of all races in the society based on the shared love for humanity. The issues raised by the party are salient in the context of the blacks even in the twenty first century.

Conclusion

The women who overcame social, economic and physical barriers to join the Black Panther Party deserve a place within the greater historical narrative. Their struggles allowed them to achieve an alternate identity for themselves. They rose against the oppressive power structure to acquire respect and equality for themselves. Apart from the revolution, these women made a great contribution towards achievement of women’s rights. They proved that they were an indispensable

part of the revolution by successfully managing the community programs. These programs were responsible for letting the people see beyond the negative image that the FBI had resolved to present in front of the masses. The stigma which was associated with the guns of the Panthers was replaced by the programs for community welfare. The Black Panther party was not restricted to self-defence, but they made substantial contributions to the African-American masses by rescuing them from the status quo. The party has to be looked at with consideration of the political complexities of representation.

There are accounts which portray a negative image of the treatment of women in the party and there are positive accounts too. What is most relevant is that the Party gave women a platform to step out of the social and political invisibility. After incarceration of most Black Panther Leaders, the reins of the party were handled by the women and the shift of the trajectory of the party in the positive direction can be attributed to the women who fought like brave soldiers for their civil rights. These women aimed to serve the society with their knowledge and abilities to lead to the “reconstruction” of the society which was plagued by many evils like racism and sexism.

To conclude, it can be said that the women deserve greater respect than the male comrades because their struggle involved fighting *with* the Black Panther Party to attain liberation to fighting *in* the Black Panther Party to demand respect. The women in the party resisted slavery, segregation and racism, thus contributing significantly to the African American history. Overall, the study of Black Panther women offers us rich analytical and descriptive points for framing our historical understanding of the Black Power era.

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Revisiting History Through Memory: A Study of Nawal El Saadawi's *Memoirs from a Women's Prison*

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Abstract: The idea of recollecting the past through memories has travelled from St. Augustine's *Confessions* in 397AD. In the twentieth century, it was French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who explored the relationship between individual and collective memories in his works. Halbwachs maintains, unlike others, that the dynamics of collective memory lie not with the event that took place, but with the people who experienced them, providing a direct link between history and memory. Historian Hayden White discusses the relationship between history and narrative, which gives us a paradigm to interpret personal narratives with a historical perspective. Extending these links, this paper proposes to explore the links between memory, history and self. To hypothesize the study, I propose to study *Memoirs from a Women's Prison* by Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian physician and political activist, who raised her voice against women's physical and psychological problems in Egypt. As a consequence of her 1972 book *Woman and Sex*, and her political activities, she was dismissed from the Ministry of Health, and after a few imprisonments, she was forced to flee Egypt. *Memoirs* contains her experiences of Qanatir women's prison in Cairo where she was incarcerated with many other political prisoners by President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. Establishing a relation between self and history, this paper shall also discuss how human self is constituted and understood in relation to the times in which one lives.

Keywords: Memory, History, Prison, Identity

Though the idea of recollecting the past through memories has travelled from St. Augustine's *Confessions* in 397AD, it was around the twentieth century that scholars from different disciplines

became interested in the intersection between culture and memory. Memory Studies has established a link with disciplines as diverse as literature, sociology, psychology or history emphasising the necessity for an inter-disciplinary approach.

Maurice Halbwachs, a French philosopher and sociologist, explored the relationship between individual (autobiographical memory) and collective (historical memory) memories in his book *La Memoire Collective* in 1950. As per Halbwachs, an individual's memory intersects with the collective memory when recalling an event that affects the nation or masses on a large scale. At the same time, however, individual memory maintains its unique aspects as it emerges from the subconscious of the one who actually experienced the events (50).

French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur explains that a life understood as a narrative constitutes self-understanding. As per Ricoeur, a narrative can help us reach a higher understanding through the three-step process of Mimesis (Mimesis1, Mimesis2, and Mimesis3). Ricoeur emphasises *emplotment*, a part of Mimesis 2, which means situating the events of a story (fictional or historical) in time (83-87). Furthermore, Historian Hayden White discusses personal narratives in "Postmodernism and Historiography." He explains that after the Holocaust and the Atomic genocide, the survivors of these events became more interested in telling how it had felt rather than what had happened. Just knowing the facts was no longer enough. White has also enumerated three ways of documenting historical events in "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." The first is the Annals, the second the Chronicle, and the last, History proper. History, explains White, is closer to narrative in structure as it explains causal relations between the events and brings the story to a close. White's prerogative towards a narrative form of writing gives us, the students of literature and memory, a paradigm to interpret personal narratives.

This paper looks at a person's memory as an alternative literary genre; the focus is to move from history to histories, to understand the past in the present, while also shedding light on the self of the writer. When thinkers and activists document their memory, such narrativization becomes a source to understand not only the ideology of the thinkers, but also their struggle. Their writings provide an alternate view to political, historical and cultural aspects of their epoch.

The paper will discuss *Memoirs from a Women's Prison* by Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian physician and political activist, who raised her voice against women's physical and psychological

problems in Egypt. Owing to her political writings and activities, she was dismissed from the Ministry of Health and later from the position of Chief Editor of a health journal. *Memoirs* contains her experiences of Qanatir women's prison in Cairo where she was incarcerated with many other political prisoners by President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. She was released only after his assassination. While reading the memoir, one learns much about the culture of Egypt, gets a glimpse of history, and gains insight into Nawal El Saadawi as a woman, a writer and a political activist.

El Saadawi's political activism may have been recognised much later, but her struggle against everything that discriminated, differentiated, otherized or marginalized started as early as her childhood. Her protests, both loud and subtle, are interwoven in her life which is quite evident in her writing. When she writes about blaming God for treating her mother and father differently, when she writes in her autobiography about not using any powder or make up because she "did not believe in a femininity born with slave society and handed down to us with class and patriarchy" (Saadawi 7), one finds a mind that is rational. Because of a self-respecting mother who demanded and commanded respect in her marriage, and a patriotic father who fought against the monarchy of King Farouk, and later against the British, El Saadawi learnt to question and to stand up to abusive display of authority.

El Saadawi demonstrated her absolute refusal to accept unlawful display of abusive power throughout her life—whether it was against people in her own family, colleagues, the Internal Security Officer in the prison, or Anwar Sadat himself. *Memoirs* narrates El Saadawi's experience of meeting Anwar Sadat before he took on the Presidency of Egypt. She had seen Sadat about two or three times in person. She had never spoken directly to him, but had spoken in the gatherings where he was present. She recalls one such instance which, as she explains, must have taken place "earlier than 1970 because Gamal Abdel Nasser was still alive" (Saadawi 76). Anwar Sadat was then the Deputy to the President of the Republic. Saadawi was a member of the Council of the Physicians' Syndicate, and in that meeting of about 300 doctors, lawyers, engineers and people from other professions had waited for two hours for Sadat to arrive. On a public platform, during this session, El Saadawi spoke against this delay which no one had even dared mention. Sadat had spoken about making the economy great by increasing production everywhere, yet people had to

wait for two hours which meant they were kept from working and producing for two hours, reasons El Saadawi. Her comments were dissed; no one responded to any of the points she raised.

On a later occasion, El Saadawi recalls a gathering in 1962, the national conference for the popular forces, in the presence of the then president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, where a question was asked, “Who is the peasant?” Nobody answered for a long time. When her turn came to answer, El Saadawi replied, “The peasant is the one whose urine is red” (Saadawi 111). By narrating this incident, El Saadawi educates the reader about the plight of an average peasant in Egypt. It was believed to be normal, even healthy, for a peasant to have red coloured urine. Unfortunately, no one ever realised that it was blood, that it was a serious disease that affected the kidneys. Her paternal grandfather, who was a peasant, was “feeble and perennially ill, always urinating blood; he died while still young” (Saadawi 109).

El Saadawi’s activism continued inside the prison, too—against the living conditions in prison. The book covers El Saadawi’s experience of being held in a cell with 13 other women, who sported different political and religious ideologies, and hence, they did not get along that well. However, personal differences or political focus was the least of their worries. El Saadawi writes, “We began our life in prison by repairing the state of the toilet. That was the first point of agreement and it was the beginning of a common ground among all cellmates, veiled and bareheaded” (Saadawi 41). It did not matter that the veiled women were from opposing religious groups and thus had more disagreements than agreements; it did not matter that the bareheaded women shared similar ideologies, all 14 of them agreed to get the toilet fixed. Additionally, the worm-infested bread, lack of clean clothes, and the habitation of insects of all sorts were only some other issues the women faced. They were living a subhuman existence. At the same time, they were constantly being told by the prison warden and the Internal Security Officer that this prison and these conditions are heavenly, as compared to other cells, and other prisons.

El Saadawi spent almost three weeks in that jail cell, under these unbearable conditions, before she could deduce the reason behind her detention. El Saadawi was taken forcibly from her home, without a warrant, without any knowledge of why or where she was being taken. Those who had heard the President’s speech and those who had read the newspaper that morning were prepared for it. El Saadawi was clueless. Moreover, political prisoners were forbidden to contact their families. So she could gain no information from that front either--or at least tell her family where

she was. The mention of pen and paper to write a letter home was enough to order a strict search of the jail cell to ensure that no one had any on her person or hidden somewhere in the cell. The Internal Security Officer had gone so far as to say that it would be easier to give them guns, but not pen and paper. The comparison shocked El Saadawi, but it betrays a truth. The power of a political prisoner does not come from a weapon she may wield, for none of Saadawi's cellmates in the Barrages Women's prison owned or had ever owned a firearm. The power of a political activist comes from their thoughts, ideas and ideologies that have the courage to challenge an oppressive government. Those thoughts find expression on pen and paper and spread through the common man like wildfire. To stop this from happening, the state of course had to ban activists from exchanging information and knowledge. Knowledge was taboo. To explain this point, El Saadawi mentions that in her culture those who aspired to gain knowledge were seen as aspiring to know something only God had a right to know. El Saadawi, however, was always hungry for knowledge. She believed that not knowing was like dying.

One also learns that political prisoners were not allowed to go out into the courtyard to sit in the sun or under a tree, they could not talk to prisoners from other cells, and newspapers and radios were off bounds. Basically, they were to be isolated from any contact.

But they found a way—El Saadawi wrote this book on toilet paper in the dim light of the night when the whole prison slept. It was difficult to write on, but easier to obtain and hide. Slowly, the prisoners also smuggled a small radio into their ward. And one fine day, El Saadawi could finally manage to sneak a letter out to her family. The reply of her letter also had to be smuggled in. Among other things, she learnt from the reply that people from all over the world, those who have read her books, are with her and against this unlawful detention. She was, at the same time, appalled and worried by the fact that no one from Egypt had spoken for them. She contacted many of her colleagues at the Egyptian Syndicate of Physicians, and her writer friends at the Writer's Union. But in reply she received total silence. People were afraid to raise their voice against Sadat. They chose to hide.

But in spite of the letter and radio, the reason behind her detention still remained a mystery. We learn that she was detained following the President's speech wherein he orders "precautionary detention measures against the instigators of sectarian rift." However, when El Saadawi goes for the investigation three weeks after her incarceration, these charges come unfounded. The charges

had been manufactured. After much bewilderment and speculation, El Saadawi concludes that she must have been detained because she did not support the peace treaty with Israel. She arrives at the said conclusion after meeting fellow activists who were sitting in the waiting hall, awaiting their turn to speak to the prosecutor. The only thing she found common in all of them and in herself was opposition to peace with Israel, which Anwar Sadat believed was necessary to stop the war and thus the depletion of economic resources.

A memoir or an autobiography can tell us much about the person who has written it. And when the person in question is an activist, the narrative becomes a rich source to understand their ideology and identity. Revolutionaries go beyond these parameters and attain a human identity. They cease to identify themselves with and therefore limit their actions according to the identities imposed on them by birth or gender. Instead they identified themselves with humanity; issues of larger humanity concern them. This removal of oneself, this refusal of letting gender or religion or race define oneself is very strong in Nawal El Saadawi's work and life. She absolutely refuses to accept society's definition and thus treatment of what it is to be a woman. In her autobiography, *A Daughter of Isis*, El Saadawi explains her dislike of make-up or removing hair from the body. She preferred exercise and a strong body instead. In *Memoirs*, she writes "I realised early that I needed two strong arms with which I could defend myself when necessary—in the street, or in a bus, whenever any man would try to turn my being into a female body which he could grab from behind or from the front" (Saadawi 41). El Saadawi never gave primacy to her gender over her mind, which in itself is a revolutionary act in a society which was so obsessed with assigning power and rights with the male sex and helplessness and the right to be abused with the female sex. El Saadawi's narratives tell us that a body can be abused, particularly, a female body. A man can exert his will upon, either through his stick with which he would beat his wife, or through his genitals with which he would again establish his supremacy over any woman—his wife, his niece, his colleague. Men and women were seen as just that—men and women; never more than that, never going beyond what their bodies were; never recognising the brain, the soul, the intellect, the feelings that the body carried, never allowing a woman to an identity all of her own. To highlight this lack of identity, El Saadawi quite often uses the term "body" to refer to her fellow cellmates or others in *Memoirs*. From her autobiography one learns that school girls, with whom El Saadawi studied, had dreams and ambitions, but they were married off as early as eleven or twelve, because that is what a female is supposed to do—marry and raise children. The girls and women feared; they

feared the men in their families. In the jail cell, the veiled women were afraid that men would see their hair uncovered more than they feared death.

While reading *Memoirs*, one learns about yet another fear that even men have. El Saadawi worked for the UN from 1979 to 1980 because she believed that here she would be free of the government and thus the subjugation of it. However, what she found surprises the reader. She found that the UN experts “fear for their monthly salaries as all civil employees do” (Saadawi 3). And racism and sexism are just as prevalent in the UN as in the most conservative parts of the world. She mentions fellow writers who no longer wrote what they wanted to, and prison doctors who would write fake reports out of fear of either their salaries or of the dictator.

El Saadawi feared neither men nor the system—her parents made sure of that. She is a political activist and her battle is against an oppressive system, a system that wants to gag their voices, and instil fear to kill their will, their agency. At one point, writes El Saadawi, that when the gloom of their reality began to grow on her, she got up and started exercising. She says, as long as she could move her limbs and control her body, all was right with the world. She also says that she had made up her mind to live in the prison just as she had done outside it. It did not matter if the conditions were unfavourable; she would not let them take over her mind and body.

Exercising was a form of protest, ploughing the prison garden was a form of protest, teaching a 17 year old fellow prisoner how to read the Arabic alphabet was her protest against the darkness of her reality, against the endless wait for orders “from above” (Saadawi 52) or the investigation to start or release. It was all a protest against the oppressive government.

Revolutionaries see a romance in protest. El Saadawi’s protest has been against oppressive social practices, against patriarchy, against voices that say “if you rebel against him you get buried in the ground” (Saadawi 118). El Saadawi’s *Memoirs from a Women’s Prison* introduces the reader to a woman who is a proud nationalist, who protested against the British when she was still in school. She loved going to demonstrations and protests, and during one such demonstration, she was the only girl in a crowd of male students proudly hoisting the banner “Men and Women Students of Medicine.” In *Memoirs* El Saadawi writes that unlike her fellow doctors or writers she would never write something that she did not want to out of fear of the dictatorship. She refused to surrender or compromise on her ideals. Of writing, she says, “The pen is the most valuable thing in my life. My

words on paper are more valuable to me than my life itself. More valuable than my children, than my husband, more than my freedom” (Saadawi 116).

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