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The Abnormally Normal Conformist

Josephine Joseph

A shift in focus from the individual to the masses in the twentieth century led to the transformation of American society that once respected individual liberty to a "mass society" (Bell 21). The term mass implies that standardized material is transmitted to all groups of the population uniformly. This standardization led to a very important behavioural change in modern man. A tendency to conform to a group or a community or a society at all costs evolved. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries men had been forced to conform to a class or a tribe and to the authority that controlled the clan or the tribe. There the authority was overt and the individual was aware of the identity of the authority that controlled. The consequence of compliance or rebellion towards this authority was definite and known to everyone. But the character of authority has changed since. Erich Fromm, while analyzing modern form of authority and the conformism resulting from it, arrived at the conclusion that industrialization and commercialization have paved the way for an "anonymous, invisible and alienated authority" (138). It is difficult to resist this modern authority when it curtails individual freedom. Though invisible, this modern authority is much more powerful and intimidating and difficult to defy. This modern authority imposes conformity and expects individuals to behave uniformly. In such a society virtue consists in adjusting to the herd and vice is to be different. The individual is trained to conform to the group or society from an early age so that by the time the child grows into an adult he will have internalized the principle of conformity to such an extent that it is no more an external agency but an internal force. Modern childhood

games and education techniques are all designed to encourage this process of internalization.

Unlike the authorities of the past who used physical punishment to impose their power, modern anonymous authority imposes its power through the technique of discipline and normalization. Michel Foucault in his work *Discipline and Punish* throws light on the manipulation of power through the technique of discipline. He argues that imposing discipline through precise norms is quite different from the older system of judicial punishment, which merely judges each action as allowed by the law and does not say that those judged are "normal" or "abnormal":

> Discipline is a technique of power which provides procedures for training or for coercing bodies (individual and collective). The instruments through which disciplinary power achieves its hold are hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination… at the heart of a disciplinary system of power there lies an 'infra-penalty' or an extra-legal penalty which is exercised over a mass of behaviors. In effect what is being punished is non-conformity which the exercise of disciplinary power seeks to correct. (qtd. in Smart, 85-6)

Thus modern authority through discipline punishes non-conformity and encourages normalization. Normalization is a process whereby behaviours and ideas are made to seem "normal" through repetition, propaganda, etc., often to the point where they appear natural and taken for granted. In the process of normalization, the normal is defined through the abnormal and the normal has power over the abnormal. In effect those who conform to the discipline of society are categorized as normal and those who do not conform are categorized as abnormal. The fear of stigmatization forces the majority to conform and appear normal in spite of self-alienation. The normalcy of this majority rests merely on conformity and not on any behavioural normalcy. This normal individual who forms the majority is far from normal

as he suffers from self-alienation. But since the majority in twentieth-century American society is the self-estranged their abnormality is seen as normal. Thus there is a reversal whereby abnormal becomes normal and normal abnormal. This self-alienated majority is unaware of their mental pathology and consider themselves as normal. Even when they are aware of their deviant personality they prefer alienation of the self to isolation. Thus there are two factors that incite an individual in modern society to conform—the fear of isolation and the stigma of abnormality. These two powerful factors contribute to the normalization of the abnormal majority and the isolation of the normal minority who do not conform. The powerful majority, whose behaviours and habits are accepted as normal, which stigmatize the non-conforming minority as abnormal and push them to the periphery of society.

The normal individual of twentieth-century western society is the "other-directed" type whose craving for approval is so great that he has no fixed personality and varies his personality with each encounter and each situation. David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney in their book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* assert that the majority of Americans in the twentieth century are "other-directed" and "contemporary metropolitan America" is the best illustration for a society "in which other-direction is the dominant mode of insuring conformity" (20). They also affirm that since this modern American is not aware of the actual or imaginary group he wishes to please, he wears a mask of happiness and gregariousness at all times. But this constant effort to please others takes its toll and leaves him drained and discontented. The obsession for approval from others results in a neglect of the inner self which leads to self-estrangement. But he prefers self-estrangement to isolation.

Western civilization, from the Middle Ages, had attempted to develop individuality by making the individual politically and economically free and teaching him to think

for himself. During the Renaissance a minority achieved this new experience of individual identity. But before the majority could attain this new found experience, powerful social institutions, realizing the danger posed to them by the thinking individuals, adopted the strategy of normalization. Thus, herd-identity replaced individual-identity in the twentieth century, paving the way for alienated individuals. With the replacement of individual-identity by herd-identity the nature of alienation itself has changed. In the modern conformist society, alienation has become an all-pervasive phenomenon with the majority suffering from self-alienation and the minority suffering from social alienation. When a few individuals in a society suffer from self-alienation the conclusion to be drawn is that it is due to personal neurosis, but when the majority suffers from it, it is to be concluded with certainty that this is a social pathology. Fromm concludes that modern society itself is sick and hence consensual validation which, in the past, was indicative of mental health and normalcy is not so in modern western society. The paradox of modern alienation is that self-alienated individuals who make up the majority are accepted as the normal and non-conforming minority are stigmatized as abnormal (23).

Edwin Arlington Robinson's poems portray both the self-alienated individual of modern society as well as the socially alienated non-conformist. The term self-alienation suggests some or all of the following points:

> (1) The division of the self into two conflicting parts was not carried out from the outside but is the result of an action of the self. (2) The division into conflicting parts does not annihilate the unity of the self; despite the split, the self-alienated self is nevertheless a self. (3) Self-alienation is not simply a split into two parts that are equally related to the self as a whole; the implication is that one part of the self has more right to represent the self as a whole, so that

> by becoming alien to it, the other part becomes alien to the self as a whole. (Edwards 1: 79)

Thus the self-alienated individual is tortured for two reasons. Firstly his self-alienation leads to alienation from his human essence, and secondly, he is torn by an internal conflict between his two selves.

The prototype for the conforming self-alienated individual of a materialistic society is found in the character of Richard Cory, the protagonist of Robinson's poem by the same name. In just fourteen lines the poet compresses the pathos of the "other-directed" man's life, juxtaposing appearance with reality. The dichotomy between being and appearance, the inner self and the projected self, is brought out in a subtle manner. Cory, has conformed to the standards of success laid down by society and has shaped his entire life on the materialistic philosophy. The poet portrays him as a gentleman who is accepted by Tilbury town as the epitome of success.

> Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
> We people on the pavement looked at him:
> He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
> Clean favored, and imperially slim. (1-4)

The decisive factor for his gentlemanliness is his affluence and the graces that he can buy with his wealth. The materialistic society worships wealthy people like him for two reasons—their conformity and their material prosperity. He personifies the American success myth, according to which success is synonymous with wealth and status.

> And he was rich--yes, richer than a king-
> And admirably schooled in every grace:
> In fine, we thought that he was everything
> To make us wish that we were in his place. (9-12)

In the octave Robinson builds up an atmosphere of envy towards Richard Cory, arising from his material success. But in the sestet he abruptly shifts the tone of the poem and concludes the poem with the tragic suicide of Richard Cory. The poem is thus a rebuttal of the American success myth.

Tilbury townsmen are confused by the death of Richard Cory as he was the embodiment of material success. But for Robinson there is no confusion as he believed with certitude that the suicide of Cory was the result of an inner conflict arising from his self-alienation. In spite of his wealth and status, Cory was estranged from his human essence. For the conforming majority Richard Cory is the yardstick for success, but for the non-conforming minority Cory is the prototype of the self-alienated individual of a materialistic society. As materialism rejects spirituality, the materialist is solely dependent on the self for reality and meaning. So when the self loses touch with his own inner core he is rendered totally helpless and commits suicide.

Though Robinson portrays the alienation of the conformist in some of his poems like 'Richard Cory" (*CP* 82), he is more interested in throwing light on the social alienation of the non-conformist. As power is vested in the self-alienated majority, the non-conforming minority are marginalized and pushed to the periphery of society. The non-conforming minority are powerless and voiceless. As self-estrangement is self-inflicted, once the majority is aware of its own alienation it has the power to eradicate it. Social alienation on the other hand is forced on the non-conforming minority and hence Robinson takes up the cause of the socially alienated. He becomes their voice and projects their suffering and loneliness through his poems.

Robinson exposes the two dimensional alienation to which non-conforming individuals are subjected—their isolation as well as abnormalization—through the portrayal of the Artist in the modern age. Robinson knew very well the debilitating effects of social alienation on the artist from his own personal experience. He was isolated by Gardiner society for his anti-materialistic as well as non-conformist ways. Gardiner society, like any other materialistic town in twentieth-century America, demanded conformity from individuals even in the matter of a career or a vocation. Artists were marginalized for two reasons. Firstly, they were

isolated on the basis of utilitarian philosophy which considered art as unprofitable. Secondly, they were isolated for their non-conformist ways—for being different from the herd. Robinson realized very early that conformity and art are antithetical by their very nature since an artist cannot thrive unless he has freedom of creativity. The beginning of the twentieth century was not at all conducive to art and artists and, as David H. Burton opines, the age was inhospitable to the artist in many ways (1).

The American obsession with wealth was the first obstacle in the pursuit of art. Unless art degenerated into a commodity it had no value in a commercial society. Robinson strongly objected to commercialization and he expressed his ire against commodification of art. Robinson's life as a poet is his most explicit rejection of the conformist society. Robinson grew up in Gardiner, aware of the social alienation of artists in a materialistic society. Social institutions, whether family, church or school conspired to isolate art and artists. The conformity creed demanded individuals to conform to careers and vocations acceptable to society. Robinson opposed the conformity principle by opting for the life of a poet. The price that he paid for this act of non-conformity was very dear. He lost out in the race for wealth and status. But more crippling was the alienation that he suffered from society. W. R. Robinson reveals the alienating tendency of materialistic society and remarks that the artist is always an alien in a materialistic society, as there is a schism dividing art and social values (134). The schism dividing art and society is the result of the commercialization of modern society whereby everything, even art objects, are viewed as commodities to be sold. Hence an artist is destined for alienation in modern western society. If he is true to art and chooses art over society he will be alienated by society. In the event of his choosing society he will still be doomed, for he will suffer from self-alienation.

Edwin Arlington Robinson exposes the alienation of an artist in a materialistic society in two of his major poems:

"Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford" and "Rembrandt to Rembrandt". In "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford" he examines the inner conflict that tortures an artist when he is enamoured by societal values. The poem is a monologue in which Ben Jonson tells his guest, an alderman of Stratford-on-Avon, what he knows and thinks of Shakespeare. The poet looks at the character of Shakespeare from a different angle. Though Shakespeare's greatness is emphatically revealed throughout the poem, Robinson's objective in the poem is to portray Shakespeare as a materialist who conforms to the standards of success propagated by society. In spite of his unparalleled success as a dramatist, he harboured feelings of inferiority arising out of indigence in his early life. He attempts to enhance his social standing by accumulating wealth and property. He aspires to own the manor at Stratford as it symbolizes success through material prosperity. He suffers terribly because of his need to conform to society. Through his greed for the manor, Shakespeare stoops to the level of the conforming majority who worship mammon. The conflict between individuality and conformity, between art and world is the theme of the poem. He tries to free himself from the shackles of society and remain true to his self and to his art. But he is so tempted by social success that from time to time he falls a prey to conformity. This conflict between the world and art rages in every artist and each one has to choose between the two. The choice of the world entails self-alienation since it stifles art while choice of art brings in social isolation.

If "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford" exposes the crippling effects of materialism and the alienation of the self in an artist who tries to conform to the dictates of society, "Rembrandt to Rembrandt" depicts the triumph of individuality and art over conformity and material success. Robinson portrays the life of the famous painter, Rembrandt, three years after the death of his wife, Sasika. He had just completed his painting, *The Night Watch* in which he shifts from effects of external brilliance to a world of inner vision

painted in golden light and shadow. The great painter fell from public favour for not conforming to the standards set by the society. Rembrandt was innovative in his poetic technique and broke the conventions of Dutch group portraits. While Shakespeare succumbed to conformity and is discontented and frustrated, Rembrandt protests against standardization which is the hallmark of a conformist society. He rejects society as it opposes multiplicity of perspective and encourages uniformity in thought and action. And Rembrandt knows, it matters not so much: "What Holland knows or cares. If Holland wants / Its heads all in a row, and all alike, / There's Franz to do them and to do them well— …" (54-57).

Rembrandt resents social interference in artistic creation and objects to the commercialization of art. He sacrifices the wealth and fame that Holland can bestow on him for the sake of individual and artistic freedom. He believed that commodification of art destroys the stability and permanence imparted to human life through art. He also refutes materialism which denies immortality to art. The poem reveals both sides of the coin—the dear price that the artist who conforms to popular taste pays and the social alienation of the nonconforming artist. Peace eludes the artist who has betrayed art. Robinson uses biting sarcasm to voice his ire towards artists who conform to the popular taste of the day. He foretells the downfall of such worthless men of art and affirms the transience of reified art. Immortal art is forever in conflict with the mortality of the creator and his worldly ambition: "The taste of death in life – which is the food / Of art that has betrayed itself alive / And is a food of hell" (103-105).

Robinson exposes through his poems the paradox of modern American society whereby the abnormal becomes normal and the normal abnormal. This normalization is the result of conformity and not behavioural normalcy. He denounces materialism and the resulting obsession with wealth and material things as the main causative effect for the

social alienation of the artist and other non-conforming individuals. He gives voice to the concerns of the powerless minority who do not conform and with a crusader's zeal fights for the right to normalcy for the dissenting individual in society.

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(Re) Locating the Self

The Emerging Feminine Consciousness in *The Stone Angel* by Margaret Laurence and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande

Preetha M. M.

Margaret Laurence and Shashi Deshpande are two popular and respected writers belonging to two different cultures whose works deal explicitly with the problems of feminine identity both external and internal. The novels *The Stone Angel* (*SA*) by Margaret Laurence and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (*DHNT*) by Shashi Deshpande can be seen as a search for selfhood, a symbolic search, one by a Canadian woman and the other by an Indian woman to find an authentic self. Both these novels trace the mental workings going on in the psyche of the female protagonists, the suppressed guilt and fear, pride and rebelliousness, the running away from the fears and the final realization that the fears and the terrors were really inside them and hence the futility of fleeing from these. My paper attempts to analyse the cause of the rebelliousness in them and how the gender discrimination affects the feminine psyche of two women who are rooted in two different cultures. It is also worth looking into how Margaret Laurence and Shashi Deshpande have made use of the uncivilized wilderness of Canada and the traditional ancestral home of India, respectively, to help the female protagonists relocate their selves in order to come to terms with themselves.

Hagar Shipley, in *SA* is an extraordinarily proud woman, refusing to depend on others even at the age of ninety. She had spent her childhood in Manawaka with her father and two elder brothers, her mother having died at childbirth. Hagar's father Jason Currie was a self-made man who had

come from the Highlands of Scotland to settle in the prairies of Manawaka. From her early childhood, her father had taught her to be proud of their ancestry as the Curries, and constantly reminded his children that they belonged to the MacDonald clan. Hagar describes the stone angel, which was erected in memory of her dead mother, as "my mother's angel that my father bought in pride to mark her bones and proclaim his dynasty" (Laurence 3). Hagar was given a lot of importance by her father but it was always for the qualities that made her different from her mother. Her father was proud that she was strong willed and had taken after him.

> My brothers took after our mother, graceful unspirited boys who tried to please him but rarely could. Only I who didn't want to resemble him in the least, was sturdy like him and bore his hawkish nose and stare that could meet anyone's without blinking an eyelash. (Laurence 6)

In keeping up to the expectation of her father, she never revealed her fears and weaknesses but always put up pretence of chivalry in front of him and her brothers.

Sarita, in *DHNT*, had an unhappy childhood because her mother showed a marked preference for Dhruva, her younger brother for the sole reason that he was a boy. The mother, conditioned by patriarchal values, could see her daughter as someone to be married off to some other family. She even blames Sarita for the death of Dhruva when he was drowned in a pool of water on a rainy day. Confused and bewildered at the accusation, Sarita rebels against her mother and tries to be different from her in every possible way. She stays in a hostel and studies for medicine and later marries a man of her choice in the hope of shocking her orthodox mother.

The suppression of guilt causes mental disturbances in both the female protagonists in the two novels. Hagar doubts that others think her responsible for her mother's death since she died at childbirth when Hagar was born. She never wanted to be like her mother, whom she considered a "flimsy

gutless creature, bland as an egg custard" (Laurence 2). She could not even put on the mother act when her brother Dan lay dying with pneumonia. Her eldest brother Matt wanted Hagar to put on their mother's old plaid shawl and hold him for a while when he was delirious with fever. But she could not bring herself to do it.

> But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathise. (Laurence 25)

The death of Dan makes her revolt against her own stubborn nature. She suppresses the guilt of her brother's death just as she later does the death of her son John.

The pride and rebelliousness of Hagar and Sarita urge them to marry men of their choice, thereby cutting off all relationship with their family. Hagar's father was proud of his ancestry and the money that he had made since he 'pulled himself by his bootstraps' (Laurence 7). He found Bram, with his unrefined ways, not in any way eligible for Hagar. But Hagar's stubborn pride pushes her to marry him. Sarita in *DHNT* marries a man belonging to a lower caste in the hope of shocking her orthodox Brahmin mother. Though unhappy in marriage, the female protagonists in these novels pretend to be otherwise in front of others. But both these women feel fed up of the false role that they have to play, the mask that they have donned for the sake of others, which manifests later in the form of the need to find an authentic identity for oneself.

According to the psychologist C.G. Jung,

> The persona is a complicated system of relations between the individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed to make a definite impression upon others and on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual. (91)

Taking account of these expectations which society demands, the protagonists in both these novels are forced to submerge

their individuality and develop an artificial personality. This building up of 'too good a persona', according to Jung, results in restlessness and irritability. Since this persona is removed from the self, it causes disturbance in the psyche of these women.

Hagar hopes to carry forward the family tradition and culture, inculcated by her father, through her second son, John. She tries to mould her identity through John, which is evident from the way she gives him the precious plaid pin, asking him to preserve it as a family legacy. She tells him of the proud ancestry of the Curries from the Highlands, hoping to transmit a cultural heritage to him, thereby hoping to find an identity for herself. Though it is through the consciousness of Hagar that her son's character unfolds, the reader realizes that her consciousness is distorted due to her deep emotional bonding with the boy. She seems to cling on to a false image of her son created by a desperate mind, stubbornly refusing to accept him for what he is. By taking John away from his father and moving to the coast with him, she was urging him to uphold the traditional values of the Currie family, away from the influence of his father. There she takes up the job of housekeeper to a rich man, a job she had detested in her childhood when she watched Auntie Doll dusting and cleaning her childhood home. Hence the journey to the coast is a symbolic going back to the past, trying to establish identification with her family history. But the journey failed in its purpose when John returned to his father in Manawaka. The loosing of the plaid pin before starting on the journey to the coast is a premonition of her failure to find an identity there. Hagar compels John to re-erect the fallen statue of the stone angel, which is again a desperate attempt by Hagar to reclaim the family tradition, thereby reinstating an authentic identity. Later John dies and she feels responsible for it. She had disapproved of his girlfriend and had prevented him from bringing her home. So he had taken her elsewhere when both of them were killed in an accident. Though John had failed her in every way, she had still clung

to him and so his death became a terrible blow to her. It hurt more because of the guilt involved, but proud as she was, the feelings were suppressed, making her more difficult and stubborn in her old age.

The integration of the unconscious and the conscious, which is necessary for a wholesome personality, takes place in both the female protagonists in the quiet ambience, one in the uncivilized wilderness of Canada and the other in the traditional ancestral home of India. Hagar's escape to the wilderness is a metaphorical journey to the subconscious, which in turn forces her to confront certain ghosts and to re-examine what she had believed of herself. It was her rebellious nature that makes her take the drastic step of running away from home to escape being admitted to the old age home 'Silverthreads'. In the wilderness she finds refuge in an abandoned building with the sound of only the forest and the sea around her. She had actually travelled to a place beyond, or before history that is reminiscent of a pre-colonial Canada, which forms one of the major themes of Canadian literature. This place in the wilderness, which is a place of nature, is not that of her father but that of the earliest ones who arrived when there was nothing but forest and no ideologies but the ones they brought with them. Untouched by human civilization, she is able to journey deep into her psyche and her suppressed fears surface in the form of a conversation with a stranger who happens to come there in the darkness of the night. Lees Ferney Murray was an insurance agent who too suffered the sorrow of the death of his child. The solitude of the place, the darkness and the mild intoxication of the wine that he offered her made her overcome the fear of self expression and for the first time she speaks out about the death of John. She even identifies Lees with John and this quickens the healing process. Later, after being rescued from the place, she admits: "Pride was my wilderness and the demons that led me there was fear. I was alone, never free, carrying my chains within me, they spread out from me and shackled all I touched" (Laurence 318).

Sarita's return to her ancestral house leaving her husband and two children is also a metaphorical journey to the past, to a place which was free from the artificiality of the civilized society, where she comes to terms with herself. Just as Hagar in the wilderness, Sarita too finds that the lack of material comforts in the old house do not become a hindrance in her journey towards selfhood. Here she sympathises with her dead mother, which helps in the healing process. What is surprising is that the powerful presence of her mother seemed to fill the house even though her mother was no more. Sarita, was flooded with memories of her dead mother, even though there was not a single photograph of hers in the house. The dead mother seemed to live on and everything in the house seemed to function according to her dictates. Sarita is able to imbibe an unconscious pre symbolic energy from the interior depths of the house which helps her to reconstruct the mother daughter bond from which she had been alienated. This bond appears to be so strong that there are moments when she is not able to differentiate herself from the mother. She becomes conscious of such a sensation as she made tea in the old kitchen of the ancestral house:

> She would pump up the Primus into life setting on it the long handled brass vessel always used for making tea, water being measured out first with the cup that had lost an ear. The gestures, the actions, the very words that accompanied them were, though she did not realize it, her mother's. As if she was unconsciously, unknown to herself, mimicking the mother she had never admired, never endeavoured to imitate. But there was in her, as she made the tea, curious confusion. I've done this before. No, not I, but my mother. This is what she did when there were visitors. And she went on jumbling herself with the dead woman, sometimes feeling she was acting out a role, sometimes feeling she was her mother herself. (Deshpande 106)

This merging of identity between the mother and daughter shapes her understanding of herself, enabling her to re-examine her past, strengthening her in the process of introspection.

The mysterious dark interior of the ancestral house, representing the feminine unconscious, creates a unique bonding among the women, recreating the bliss of pre-oedipal fusion with the mother. The house shares its complicity with the women by giving them access to the early delights, the psychosomatic *jouissance*, which, according to Julia Kristeva is channelled from the unconscious and if set against official literary modes, the iron grip of the Symbolic is broken. The emerging subtext of the novel reveals a semiotic community of womanly bonding, the ancestral house having a mothering effect on them. This maternal nourishing space does not allow the woman to be stifled by the Symbolic Law or the Law of the Father. The spontaneity and harmony shared by the women in these houses bind them in a kind of utopia of their own, freeing them from the Symbolic Order of confinement.

It is in the quiet ambience of the house with her father and Madhav a young college student who was staying with her father that she seemed to be looking for bits buried in her repressed memories. It is analogous to Lees Ferney Murray bringing out the repressed guilt ridden memories of Hagar. This delving deep into the recesses of her unconscious, enables her to confront the terrors of the past. The death of Dhruva and the accusation made by her mother had left a split in her psyche. Her search for understanding of her mother is a search for her own feminine side and for the reunification of her split self. When Sarita goes to her old room, she finds that she has been displaced by Madhav, symbolically taking Dhruva's place. She occupies the puja room where her mother used to pray for long hours after the death of Dhruva. This room becomes a womb-like place where she undergoes her regeneration. "The day seemed to stretch into infinity here, with nothing but mealtimes to

break it up into bearable fragments" (Deshpande 46). This is a time where weeks merge into months, and time itself gets lost in the space of the womb. She identifies Madhav with her dead brother Dhruva and even nurses him back to health when he was delirious with fever. Thus the guilt and self blame involved in the death of Dhruva is reversed through the way she eventually helps Madhav regain his health. A doctor by profession, she kneels by him to examine the feverish boy and the rain pours down as it did when Dhruva was drowned:

> And then with a shocking suddenness it began. She heard it coming, rushing to meet them with an eager ferocity. It beat on the windows, the tiled roof, with a maniac fury. She thought she heard Baba say something to her through the din, but she could not hear him. She sat by the sleeping boy, unmoving, as if she had become catatonic. (210)

Sarita cares for Madhav in a night long vigil by his bedside which enables her to attain a fine balance of her professional medical identity and sisterly-maternal care. Saving Madhav gives her freedom from guilt by atoning for Dhruva. The time of the year is the same that Dhruva died in, the end of the mango season. But the rain this time carries a life giving message:

> There was a smell of wet earth and rotting leaves. The trees, their dusty dirty leaves, washed by the rains to a tender sparkling green were like symbols of renewal. It's over, she thought. That's done with. Things will be alright now. (211)

The confrontation with the guilt ridden fears only helped her to get rid of the terrors of the darkness. The stay in the ancestral home has led to internal changes in Sarita, though on the surface there is no apparent change. She has become a successful career woman who can relate to her feminine side, not act negatively to it. Seema Bawa points to how the narrative structure of homecoming has its advantages in offering situations which allow the protagonist to "journey back in time to recapitulate childhood experiences, to give

voice to silent terrors and secret feelings of guilt and to relate the present to the past" (36). This journey into the profound depths of her unconscious has helped to heal the split within her psyche, restoring emotional and spiritual health.

Finally Sarita decides to go back to her husband and children, at the same time to be of service to humanity. Just as Hagar, she realizes that it is useless to flee from the terrors because they were within her all the time. She reflects:

> They came to her then, all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife….persons spiked with guilts. Yes, she was all of them, she could not deny that now. She had to accept these selves to become whole again. (Deshpande 220)

Sarita and Hagar realize that defiance do not ensure them the freedom that they yearned. Sarita's return to the ancestral house and Hagar's escape to the wilderness symbolizes a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, which helps in attaining a balanced personality. Through the psychological journey into their memories, their relationship with their roots is established, thereby leading to a mature understanding of themselves.

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Journey as Quest Motif in Anita Desai's *The Zigzag Way*

K. Usha

> "I did not really come here to get here, I sort of drifted here to get away from there."
>
> —Gita Mehta, *Karma Cola*

The writings emanating from the Indian diaspora testify their success in creating a space of their own in their host countries by adopting and adapting. Thematic explorations in culture, homeland, caste, language, ethnicity, etc. attribute to their success both in their land of origin and in the host countries.

The diaspora becomes a site of constellation, a space that gives equal importance to the logic of exclusion and the logic of identity. The diaspora is undoubtedly the space of overlapping boundaries which constitutes a politics of segregation; an innate ability of the diasporic individual to reclaim his identity as well as construct the 'other' that gives stability to his self. Thus, the basic problem of the diasporic psyche is of not belonging anywhere, of being dislocated and being without any roots.

The condition of the diasporic individual of being 'unhomed' (Bhabha 84) is denoted by his oscillation between the desire to reclaim his past and the inability to move out of the present. The physical and mental nomadism of the diasporic life is captured by the immigrant writer using effective tools, among which the most conspicuous is the journey motif that becomes a potent symbol to represent their fluid state of existence.

Postcolonial diaspora becomes significant in the wake of changing demographic contexts and the diffusion of population between the empires and the diasporas. The new

diasporic writing is self validating in its stand towards the mother land and towards the dominant societies. Hence its narrative logic becomes one of continuous incorporation and appropriation which reinforces this attitude. The new diasporic writers thus try to incorporate its fictional homeland into a borderless, deterritorialised space whose multiple sites are scattered across the most advanced nation states of the world. As the dividing border between the old and the new diasporas also are disappearing the old diaspora merges with the new through a process of reverse osmosis. Thus, diasporas and homelands develop a complex and ambivalent relationship with each other in the context of globalization.

Among the postcolonial diasporic writers from India, Anita Desai occupies a significant position as she started her literary sojourn as one in the old diaspora and now moves on to the new, probably due to being a drifter between Boston, Mexico, the U.S., Cambridge and Delhi. Therefore in an interview for *The Guardian*, she comments that "modern day India is slipping from me" (8).

In an article about Desai, *The Guardian* remarks that at an age when most writers are descending deeper into their own fictional worlds, into meditations on age, identity and the bankruptcy of the modern world, she is exploring lives increasingly remote from her own. But Desai says it is more and more her own experience. *The Zigzag Way* is set in Mexico and Cornwall, and is narrated by a young American writer, a man, who travels to the Sierra Madre without really knowing why. His is a symbolic journey, similar to the one which Desai herself has taken in her life.

> There are two ways of travelling; there is the stumbling, directionless king, and there is the more efficient sort, where you know exactly where you are going and how long it will take. But I think most things in my life have come through chance, through serendipity. (8)

My paper attempts to examine how Anita Desai's novel *The Zigzag Way* exploits the journey motif to show the restlessness of the diasporic individual who is constantly on the move, searching for his cultural identity. Life, for Desai, is a continuous quest, an unending journey of the psychic consciousness. Desai herself has said that she has no desire to clarify herself as an Indian writer.

The idea about this novel was born out of her passion for Mexico. Desai visited Mexico six years before and immediately felt its affinity with India. As she says to Melissa Dener:

> It's such an ancient country; you feel every stone has a history to tell. Mexico and India share a history of colonialism—300 years of Spanish and British rule—along with this much longer past that goes back into myth. (12)

As she tells her daughter Kiran Desai in another interview in *The Guardian*:

> Mexico was … such a strange experience, so entirely new. Never having learned anything about it living in India, I set off with the intent of exploring it and found so much deeply familiar, with close connections between the Indian and Mexican that was also, of course an Indian world. (12)

Hence, though *The Zigzag Way* too, like many of her other novels, has an undeniably European quality, none of her characters belonging to her homeland, there are certain unsaid similarities characteristic of the global diasporic community. The novel focuses on the history of Mexico's silver mines, which for a time employed large numbers of Cornish miners. The places they lived in are now ghost towns, and the only signs they were ever there are the local pasties, and a rumour that the Cornish brought football to Mexico.

The Zigzag Way journeys through various relentless paths which converge at a common point and make the excurses meaningful and related. The primary text delineates

the predicament of Eric, an aimless American graduate student, who is struggling to expand his thesis on immigration into a book. His decision to follow his girl friend, Em, a competent scientist, on her official trip to Mexico, turns out to be a meaningless exercise, as he has nothing to do in particular there. The plot takes a sudden twist after he wanders into a lecture given by a lady called Dona Vera, about the Mexican tribals, called the Huichol Indians who were dislocated with the arrival of the mining communities. This encounter is described using motifs of travel:

> …like stumbling into a rabbit hole- falling, falling… till all was a welter of strange words, strange names churning around him. Then, with a bump, landing upon the startling awareness that many of them were actually familiar to him. It was like being in a crowd of swiftly moving strangers and finding that there were faces among them that you recognized. (31)

The journey becomes meaningful as it becomes a quest for roots among the mining villages where his grandfather worked as a miner and his grandmother buried somewhere there. His quest leads him to Sierra Madre, a onetime mining village which is now in ruins.

The long and tedious journey to the Sierra Madre, the appearance of Dona Vera there on horseback, etc., are examples of using the journey motifs to help in relocating the diasporic space. The encounter with the Huichol Indians at Dona Vera's dining table along with white students exposes the bipolar opposites that are inevitable in a cultural encounter. Eric stumbles on the crossroads at this juncture, wondering if he had channelized his quest into the right track. He had never before taken important decisions alone, but allowed himself to be led by others.

> He wondered if this was what Em wanted him to find, by himself, then if he would find it in unraveling the intricate cat's cradle of the voyages of his own

> family…Were they actually relevant? Did he even believe in the pursuit?" (53)

Hence, when Dona Vera questions him about his intention, he answers rather weakly, "Really, it's just a private quest" (35).

The narratives in the subtexts which follow the first part of the novel also operate within the same framework of spiritual journey. The trajectory of Dona Vera's life opens up certain interesting areas of her diasporic identity. Her passage through the dark and labyrinthine corridors of life finally ends in a brighter landscape after forcibly entering the life of Rhoderigo, a Mexican stranger. The journey to Mexico as Rhoderigo's wife is an attempt to relocate her female space in the diasporic enclave. She had deliberately charted out her diasporic journey by exploiting a multitude of methods like championing the cause of the marginalized Huichol community, becoming their diasporic ambassador across the country, anointing herself as the Queen of the Sierra, etc.

Another interesting subtext is the story of the Huichol's pilgrimage in search of the peyote cactus which would help them to dream and see the dead spirits of their dear ones. Their patient and confident journey towards a known destination is posited against the desperate and sceptic quest of the modern globe trotter. Hence their story has a fairy tale aura as the authenticity of such quests is incomprehensible for the modern quester.

> Winding uphill in single file like pilgrims from an earlier, primal world… clearly still hunter gatherers. Although they politely returned her greeting, they did not pause or show the slightest interest in her foreign presence. (71)

Modern man, on the other hand, who lives in an arid world of incertitude and fragmentariness, is forced to indulge in a quest for roots as a matter of survival. Hence, the information Eric gathers from Humbolt's *The Political Essay on the Kingdom of Spain*, taken from Dona Vera's library becomes relevant in this context. It describes the zigzag

direction adapted by the Indian porters in the mines to ascend heights, so that "their respiration is less impeded when they traverse obliquely the current of air which enters the pit form without" (79).

The section 3 of the novel contains another important and perhaps the most beautiful subtext of the journey of Betty, Eric's grandmother, to Mexico. The narrative of Betty is juxtaposed between the other texts and the final section, thus making the end of the novel more poignant, meaningful and poetic. Betty's delightful journey from Cornwall to Mexico is slowly replaced by the drudgery and alienation which she begins to suffer in spite of her romantic spirits and positive outlook towards life. The letters she wrote to her family that things were fine has a symbolic suggestivity about the socio-cultural shifts that she has to encounter in an alien land. The arrival of the Federals in Sierra Madre, the resistance of the rebels and the consequent exodus of the miners are historiographic portrayals of the diasporic experience: "The pace of life, once a steady jog through the familiar routine, underwent a change, now seeming to race as if to a finish…. Horses galloped over the cobble stones in the night"(138). The nightmarish journey of the Cornish miners jam packed in wagons, refugee camps, Betty's gruesome death in childbirth, the motherless infant, Paul, fed by a mother who lost her baby, Davey's fate of having to bury his wife returning alone to the cemetery etc are fictional responses to the perennial diasporic issue. The alienation of Paul when his father marries again, his subsequent voyage to Canada, marriage to Madelaine, the birth of Eric, etc are meticulously narrated, thus establishing the connection between the past and the present and also between the previous chapters and the next. Desai cites an ancient Chinese belief in time as a ladder, not of ascent into the future, nut descent into the past, a metaphor that gives the novel its unique structure. Just as Eric descends a dark stairwell in the ghost town inn, the novel proceeds backwards in time.

The confusion of the quester continues even after reaching the spot of celebration. Seeing the festive mood, "round and round the plaza he wandered, the same people looking up to see him pass again and again, wondering at his purpose and purposelessness" (160), carrying a bouquet of chrysanthemums to offer at the grave of Betty which he was unsure of identifying, he joins the procession which moves past the remains of the mines where his grandfather might have worked. "But then there was this curious sensation of not being among strangers at all" (164). He meets mourners as well as the dead spirits, and fails to distinguish between both, thus identifying himself with both the past and the present. He encounters the spirit of Rhoderigo, Dona Vera's husband whose revelation of her past is incredible to Eric. The sudden appearance of Betty as the same young sprightly girl is a pleasant shock to him as he has no difficulty in recognizing her. She talks to him casually about various topics including the ancestry of the Mexicans. "Like us, from Cornwall. Such a long way to come" (176). "'Quite a long journey,' he agreed" (177). Eric's spiritual quest ends here with his self discovery and identification with his cultural roots, thereby making his journey into the future meaningful.

Thus the various strands of the novel come together, suggesting that the most satisfying experience is the journey itself, though it may be beset with difficulties. It is worth the trouble as it is the journey of self discovery. Each journey is a unique experience as one never knows what awaits its end. Each journey is an expedition into one's own self and hence at the same time intricate and rewarding. The journey through Mexico's landscape becomes a journey through the innerscape of the modern quester's consciousness.

Anita Desai herself is a quester of new techniques and innovative thematic experiments which characterize her craftsmanship as she progresses through her writings. Her acute sense of history infuses sensuous landscapes. The past, says Desai, "was alive here—crepuscular and underground, but also palpable." thus making the novel a stinging reminder

of that past while also critiquing the delusion which is part of the quest. Hence this novel has the enchantment of a fairy tale, the strength of historiography and the touch of a master cinematographer. Anita Desai has demonstrated her craft of lighting up the hidden labyrinthine of the diasporic psyche in this novel, making the reader also journey through his consciousness to discover his true identity

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Robert Creeley—An Exponent of the New American Poetic Experience

Sanil Raj J.

Robert Creeley is a prominent figure among the Black Mountain Group of poets—the pioneers in new American experimental poetry and he is privileged to have a historical affiliation with it. He became famous as a poet and versatile writer after his association with this legendary group. He also adheres to their concept of poetry which is open in exploring all available experiences against one unified theme. Among the company of contemporary American poets, Creeley stands as one who thinks carefully in the process of composing a poem, specifically in terms of what poetic diction can and cannot achieve. Creeley's writings show great affinities with several precursors of modernism, and he follows a minimalist and pared-down style, and thus, keeps away from the lush extravagant imagery and metaphors of poets like Wallace Stevens. In the contemporary literary scenario, he enjoys an undisputable position in the realm of American Literature.

Creeley shares a common view of metrics as expressed by Charles Olson, the pioneer of the Black Mountain Group, in his theory of poetry "The Projective Verse". The first part of Olson's essay comprises of his letters written to Creeley during the initial phase of their friendship. A key point that Creeley finds in Olson is the notion that "time stands still in a poem, both in its creation by the poet and in its re-creation by the reader or listener" (Ford 32). Both these writers assert that poetry is not something that continues with time from point to point or image to image, but something composed of parts forming a whole, the whole poem being the form that the experience on poet demands. It is similar to a line which is present only as a physical unit of measure; physical in the

sense that breathing is physical and also intimate as speaking is an intimate affair, and the rhythmic patterns of the lines being determined by the intelligence and feeling of the poet. For Creeley, such a poet works on the field and not through sequence and consequence. Olson's theory is that one perception must lead to another perception, while for Creeley, the poem normally possesses one perception under a delicate point of suspended time.

Creeley first came to poetry during his years at Harvard and his poems published in *The Harvard Advocate* and *The Wake* can be marked as his debut. He established himself as a major writer during his stay at Majorca between 1952 and 1955, and his contact and living with the people of the Black Mountain College in regular intervals. Charles Tomlinson, the British poet and artist, was interested in introducing the Black Mountain Poets to English readers, and in 1964, he published a short anthology in the 1964 issue of *The Review: A Magazine of Poetry and Criticism*. It happened to be a significant landmark in the College's history as the literary contributions of poets such as Creeley, Olson, Zukofsky, Robert Duncan, Gary Snyder, Ed Dorn, Jonathan Williams, Paul Blackburn, Allen Ginsberg et al. could find a prominent position in this collection. Black Mountain's magazine, *The Origin*, endowed them with a reliable forum. When asked about the common characteristics of the Black Mountain College in one of the interviews, Creeley commented,

> I'd almost say – the loner quality each seems to have. There really isn't a common idiom, so to speak … I think there was a common feeling that verse was something given one to write, and that the form it might then take was intimate with fact. (Wagner 86)

Creeley was against all sorts of literary establishment, and his "antiestablishment penchant" was vigorous during his stay at the College. *The Black Mountain Review* was the result of his genuine effort to publish the writers who were deliberately ignored by the establishment.

Creeley's poetic achievement is often the subject of critical attention but hardly any attempt has been made to trace the development of his recurrent themes, the alterations of his poetic posture, various facets of organization and his techniques in stylistics. His major volumes of poems include *For Love: Poems, 1950–1960* (1962), *Words* (1967), *Pieces* (1969), and *A Day Book* (1972). Creeley highlights the difficulties of Louis Zukofsky's works in *Contexts of Poetry: Interviews, 1961–1971* and such difficulties are representative of Creeley's own high strung version of meditative poetry that poses for the reader:

> It is difficult to follow a man when he's thinking very closely. And it's extremely difficult to follow him when he's using all the resources that he has developed or inherited regarding the particular nature of words as sound. (*Collected Essays* 18)

A peculiar feature of Creeley's poetry is his use of broken 'nervous' lines that express his mood of anxiety. In his earlier poems, such frantic sound nerves commented on their thematic emphasis. His personal problems, especially his disappointment in love, are communicated through his cryptic poems and he does not intend the reader to comprehend his varied thoughts completely, but just lets them to overhear something, not to understand everything. His posture is merely pretence, and he often fails to hide his human urge for a loving relationship with his wife and satisfaction from his indebtedness to poetry. His isolated stance could not offer any solution to his ailing heart when his first marriage failed. *For Love: Part II* is a collection of tension filled poems where Creeley confronts his feelings and emotions directly, followed by his self criticism in his betrayal of vulnerability in public. The later poems in *For Love* are his expression of feelings about love in a very plain straightforward manner. In this volume, Creeley is an impartial spectator of his own life and he acknowledges his involvement with it.

During the early stages of his literary career, Creeley was known as "a poet of love and hate – as a poet of the fragile point of contact between people" (Ford 73), and in many of his writings; he examines the uncertain edges of human bondages. Peter Davidson comments, "Creeley has a subtle, almost feminine sensibility, and the best of his poems are those dealing with the intricacies that exist between men and women" (85). He is a man of immediate personal relationships among his lovers and friends; still he maintained his identity as an ordinary man. Such a stance being his primary concern, poetic elements like landscape, weather, architecture and human appearances served only as backdrops. He was quite open in his treatment of love and his approach towards it was fairly honest. *For Love* is noteworthy with the way the poems work and not with what they have to convey. Creeley carries the same technique with the subsequent volumes of *Words* and *Pieces*. Robert Duncan alone could comprehend the magnitude of Creeley's poetry entirely and he placed them in the long tradition of love poetry.

Creeley explicitly describes his own version of the world as he sees it in his first published poems collected in *For Love*. It is "a world without substance and without meaning, a world devoid of all except—and this 'except' is vital because his poetry can be seen primarily as an amplification of this 'except'—human relationships" (Ford 76). Creeley's endeavour is to make a thorough study of the double nature of this aspect of human relationships, and on the one hand, it is the duty of the individual to safeguard himself against the void, and on the other, it is evident that such relationships are mixed with pain and suffering. "The Immoral Proposition" puts such a notion bluntly and makes a follow-up with finer distinctions. Creeley sets the lure of the "dispassionate, speculative stance" against the item to be perceived for active participation. The poet's central theme here is "human relationships".

If you never do anything for anyone else

you are spared the tragedy of human relation-

ships. If quietly and like another time
there is the passage of an unexpected thing:

to look at it is more
than it was. God knows

nothing is competent nothing is
all there is. The unsure

egotist is not
good for himself. (*Selected Poems* 10)

The first two lines, plus the first syllable in the third line, breaks relationship into two and in the later part, the "unsure / egotist" is also broken. Creeley deliberately breaks relationships, and the focus is on "ships" like "relationships" which are unpredictable in their ways and movements. The break also summarizes Albert Camus, the French novelist, dramatist and essayist, who addressed the isolation of an individual in alien universe and the estrangement of the individual from himself; and Jean Paul Sartre—the exponent of existentialism who propounded the philosophy acclaiming the freedom of the individual, in a very simple manner. The second assertion appears as less assertive and less confident, but still consistent with the first statement. Sections three and four appear to be contradictory with each other, and thus, heighten the need of confidence. The usage "unsure egotist" is somewhat ambiguous since the poet witnesses the world only in terms of relations, and since relationships are unpredictable, they are painful sometimes. Creeley retreats into Paul Valery's assertion of "Monsieur Teste" (an almost disembodied intellect who knows but two values, the possible and impossible) posture to safeguard his vulnerability that permits him to escape from this material world and to be reborn as one having apparent domination above it. The "unsure egotist" is the poet himself who makes

efforts to be in harmony with this world and also the one trying to be in harmony with his obligations to this world.

Creeley's endeavour is to attain a personal attitude that can enable him to take the world in his own terms. His "essentially self-centered poems record his attempt to maintain a sense of self-worth in the face of often threatening realities" (Edelberg 25). The poet sustains a cool, passive response to apparent hostility in "The Dishonest Mailman" and it can be considered as an introduction to his defiance. The poet's tone is used to defend his statement and in this course, he makes his comments on the poet and the world around him.

> They are taking all my letters, and they
> Put them into a fire.
>
> I see the flames, etc.
> But do not care, etc. (*For Love* 29)

It is not clear why his letters arouse such public anger and whether the poet possesses necessary "courage" to overcome the crisis. The poet uses very casual diction highlighted with "etc's" in a highly pompous manner. He is expected to possess supreme self-motivation, a philosophical perception in analyzing things and at least a polished way of saying "I don't care, etc." "This is something" directly emerges from "I don't care", "the poem supreme" and "courage necessary"; unfortunately the line takes a downward turn, with a defenseless "quite different". All the pretence and sophistication is exposed, revealing the mailman does care to what happens to the letters but not sure whether to admit everything frankly. Creeley's earlier "relationship poems" are his desperate attempts with an instinctive awareness that one should be prudent enough to protect himself against all disasters in the process. His stand is very fragile and what links him with others are his weak relationships. Even in his concept of the function of poetry, he finds himself as a weak link with others.

The implicit conflict prominent with the discrete intelligence ruminating on its own complexities and the human response that faces the awful contingencies of human life are predominant when Creeley deals with women in his poems. In "The Whip", Creeley is a person caught between the "art domesticity dilemma" with respect to two women. The poem is about a restless husband and his unsusceptible wife, with his peculiar fantasy of associating "another woman". The poem begins with a promise that makes his total involvement with the act – "I spent a night turning in bed" (*Selected Poems* 14). But appositional phrases that follow are a matter of concern and frustration – "my love was a feather, a flat / sleeping thing" (*Selected Poems* 14). The last lines of the poem are in the form of an ambiguous statement:

> she put
> her hand on
> my back, for which act
> I think to say this
> wrongly. (*Selected Poems* 14)

It is an expression of the poet's confusion, and the unhappiness he experiences, once he feels himself lonely.

Changes were apparent in Creeley's poetry during the later part of the 1950s. Creeley, during an interview with David Ossman in 1961 said that his broken lines were the result of his broken emotions (59–60). Once his emotions were less broken, he was quite relaxed and more at ease in his world of poetry. He wrote "For Love Part 2" as his reply to the "disordering collapse" of his first marriage. Creeley has the revelation that there is not anything outside in which he can have the absolute trust. He has the immediate realization that he is basically his own. Five years later, after satisfactorily finding a solution to the question posed in "The Whip", he wrote "The Wife". His answer was that he could have the poetic muse and the domestic woman at the same time.

> I know two women

and the one
is tangible substance,
flesh and bone

The other in my mind
occurs.
She keeps her strict
proportion there. (*For Love* 154)

"The Flower" is one among Creeley's memorable lyrics in Part 2. It is a revelation of his open, ongoing, all persuasive mental affliction which qualifies his complacent attitude that was prevailing in the earlier part of his poetic career.

I think I grow tensions
like flowers
in a wood where
nobody goes. (*For Love* 96)

The background of the poet's meditation is an isolated wood and it becomes a transformed place of the poet's "self consciousness". The flower is a matter of tension for him and once it matures, adds to his burden.

Pain is a flower like that one,
like this one,
like that one,
like this one (*For Love* 96)

The above stanza "testify to his verbal stamina in the face of anxiety which executes itself and perpetuates itself with artless delicacy, as represented by the flower" (Edelberg 35). John Constable's description of Creeley's poems in *For Love* is significant in this respect: "Creeley's best poems inhabit that area of tension between the inward life of an individual and the outward world of objects" (27). The kind of diction he uses in "I Know a Man," seems to report the speaker's direct perception of the moment unprocessed by any of the devices which could transform its raw personal content into a self inspiring literary experience.

As I sd to my
friend, because I am

always talking – John I

sd, which was not his
name, the darkness sur-
rounds us … (*Selected Poems* 12)

This poem can be treated as one of Creeley's idiosyncratic enterprises and often it appears as spasmodic in its movements. The poet liberally uses pauses, reminding the readers of Olson's 'projective' style, to separate the short lines which evoke a different experience in the reader's mind.

In the poems of Part 3 also, Creeley continues his obsession with the themes of love and marriage. The poems introduce the poet's radiant hopes, and at the same time, certain confusions that preoccupy his mind once he considers the possibility of being in love again. "The Figures" is a demonstration of the poet's enchanting music and along with that he presents one of his serious concerns with poem making. It had a very sensual erotic mood with the involvement of a creative artist and his medium. The sensual effect is acquired with a mysterious mythical scene. The poem opens with the poet's encounter with "chance".

As I was walking
I came upon
Chance walking
the same road upon. (*Selected Poems* 29)

In a strange way, "chance" transforms into a lady.

It was a lady
accompanied
by goat men
leading her. (*Selected Poems* 29)

"The Figures" has more sophisticated authentic erotic environment than the one presented by "Kore". The poet "focuses meditative attention on the creative process, the act of myth making" (Edelberg 44). It is the artist's total yielding to his material, and the oddities and singularities of the final creation will elevate him to a level of extreme satisfaction. The often repeated "still" and "quiet" accompanied with the

"stolid alliterations" expose Creeley's open stanzas and explain his realm of poetic forms through which he will analyze his own medium—"words". The poem evokes the experience of a sculptor in relation to his artistic raw material "wooden-stone". The very idea that such a "wooden stone" does not exist, never inhibits the poet's inherent interest to substitute words for a wood and voice for hands in his search for a constant source material for his art. Though the artist lacks a strong base, and total satisfaction not assured, the poem suggests that there is possibility of attaining aesthetic goals. The maker can achieve personal gratification with his involvement in "the act of making" and his way of approaching the material entirely fills the creative activity.

Many of the poems in *For Love* explicate the theme of marriage and poetry, and thinking that evolve from the implicit contradiction between the poet's rational thinking, and intuition turns out to be the minor theme. The poet analytically explores the moments of his private experience and realizes that his mental exercises won't support him to find out anything that he could make use of later, in a pre-planned systematic manner. This collection is the poet's archetypal journey from darkness to light. With intense personal honesty, the poems journey through the poet's experiences with love. It is a demonstration of his crisis and his coping with it. In the general sense, it deals with a pertinent human problem—"how to love and how to accept love".

Most of the implicit issues like the consequences of Creeley's disengagement of intelligence and emotion, physical body and mind, reasoning and sensory perceptions, become prominent in "Words". Creeley finds this collection as a "touchstone" to measure his accomplishments in the realm of poetry. His interests do not lay in general assessments and vague phrases. The individual poems in this volume are a means to the poet's self discovery. "It is the way a poem speaks, not the matter, that proves its effects," says he in "The New World" (*Quick Graph* 207). A poem can

communicate through its form and this is what Olson points out as the base of poetry; the syllable and the line. By thorough manipulation of the syllable, syntax and sound are established and through the lines, a poem attains physical "substantiability"; otherwise, if viewed through the "Projective Verse", "a line determined by the breathing of the poet".

The primary concern of "Words" is its balancing rhythm, and the poems speak through their rhythmic patterns. A clear study of the poems of early 1960s will illustrate the co-ordination of rhythms, images and statement, and the range and variety of varied rhythmic patterns. The poem "Water" is noted for its careful use of syntax. The first two stanzas are simple in their outlook representing the reflection of sky in water which, in a way is inferior to the original perception of the sky.

The sun's
sky in
form of
blue sky
that

water will
never make
even
in
reflection. (*Selected Poems* 52)

Each short line, the syllable in particular, emphasizes the fragmentary nature of both reflection and perception. The poet uses the syllables in a subtle manner. The "sun's sky" and the "blue sky" in stanza one reflect each other rhythmically, whereas no such parallels exist in the second stanza which insists as such. The shift to human perceptions begins in stanzas with "Sing, song," an apparent move from one realm to another. It is a parallel to the initial expressions and preliminary to the next expression –"mind's form". The

last lines, "love's / error / in water", also reflect the fragmentary nature of human feelings.

The poem "The Language" serves as a connecting link between "physical object and physical language" and it achieves its meaning from its "actual coming into being". The statement "I love you" exists in a verbal universe and it lacks physical reality. The speaker is conscious of the emptiness of words and tries to attribute a little bit of reality which also turns to be a verbal reality. "The poem creates a conflict between the verbal reality and its physical counterpart" (Rajnath 38). "Love" is one among the abstract usages in common expressions. "The poem appears as simple statement but stretches out gently to touch related themes and images, creating a hovering on the page rather than conclusion" (Ford 63). The poet and the words are engaged in a physical repetitive process, and thus, reveal their mutual dependence. The first part of the poem maintains its stand on "pushing and probing". The poet asks the question, "what is emptiness for?", and his answer is "to fulfill". The poem ends with the assertion:

> I heard words
> and words full
>
> of holes
> aching. Speech
> is a mouth. (*Selected Poems* 46)

The emptiness is on the nature of "pleasure pain relationship". Same as love, the concept of "words are holes acting to be filled" forms one of the recurrent images in Creeley. The poem focuses on twin objectives: the physical substantiality of literal objects when the speaker feels "love becomes holes to be filled"; and the physical substantiality of language when he feels "words become holes to be filled".

Creeley's 1969's collection of poems, *Pieces*, deals with the nature of the thinking mind, the poetic process and the love relationship. The poet's intention here is to reframe his basic themes. He makes genuine efforts to create a self

definition that could assist him to feel at ease with himself at home and at the world that he inhabits. Earlier, he was under the impression that a clear and refined intellect could easily comprehend the details of the mysterious forces that controlled the phenomenal world. He examined the dynamics of his own reasoning power to identify what remained in his experience, accessible to rational thought and what was not. The result was that he found intuition as a means to perception that he could confide and a complement to his mind's logic. Creeley tries to bring a proper balance between "the analytical and the intuitive" in *Pieces*.

One of the dominant themes of *Pieces* is the philosophical significance of the love relationship. Creeley could not give much priority to this aspect in his earlier poems that focused on his tensions with his first marriage, divorce and remarriage. He contemplated his relationship with his second wife in *Words*; he derived comfort and pleasure from this marriage in the general sense, but not in the metaphysical sense. *Pieces* is Creeley's struggle "to reconcile his empirical understanding that he is essentially alone in this world with his recognizably human need to feel a sense of belonging" (Edelberg 86).

Like Olson, Creeley too rejected "the damn function" of figures of speech and word. In his poetry, they existed not as representative of any objects, but as objects as such.

> You want
> the fact
> of things
> in words,
> of words. (*Pieces* 61)

The poet is of the view that words themselves are real and self reliant, that is, "the word become thing". Denise Levertov, another prominent member of the Black Mountain Group, while answering the charges against Creeley being "vague and careless", said that something different happens in his poetry:

> Its very sprawl and openness, its notebook quality, its absence of perfectionism, Creeley letting his hair down, is in fact a movement of energy in his work, to my ear, not a breaking down but a breaking open. (246)

The collection reflects the idea that the poet is obsessed with the idea of "going beyond things to words and beyond the referents of these words to the words as objects, as pieces" (Ford 40).

"As Real as Thinking", the opening poem of the sequence, introduces different themes in which Creeley is interested. The poet being enthusiastic intends to create a wondrous "sentence" that could be a "present" evolving from the "plan of thought". The poet maintains an extemporaneous tone in the first section of the poem.

> As real as thinking
> wonders created
> by the possibility-
>
> forms. A period
> at the end of a sentence
> which
>
> began it was
> into a present,
> a presence
>
> saying
> something
> as it goes. (*Pieces* 3–4)

The poet is preoccupied with the thought that he is an inexperienced beginner when he says, "something / as it goes" and he counter argues it with "wonders created / by the possibility – forms" conveyed through the literal and implied allusions in the poem. He is in an excited mood and has some confusion in declaring what his intention is in his project. The poet's words "a present" is "a presence" reminds

us of Whitman's "He who touches this book touches a man" (*Leaves of Grass*), and the lines, "No forms less / than activity" of Williams' "No ideas but in things" (*A Sort of Song*).

Creeley deserves recognition primarily as a craftsman and he will be remembered for his technical perfection. Both in his prose and poetry, he possesses absolute control over the rhythm. "The line, the pauses, the hesitancies, the syntax and ellipses usually mirror precisely the statement of the poem; in fact, in his best poems and in his best short stories, these elements become the statement itself" (Ford 137). He talks about a world that is shattered and all values lost and his mission is "to give order and value to at least one moment of experience" (Cameron 94). He is bold enough to discover simplicity in his poetic endeavour and to lead his readers towards it. His existential ethics are affirmative, and believes in love devoid of grand methods and statements. He has framed some self imposed limitations upon his poetry and fiction; still his achievements are very impressive. He strikes the reader and viewer as totally open and totally honest about himself, about his poetry, and about his feelings.

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Self-consciously Indian, Sub-consciously Judaic

A Study of Nissim Ezekiel's Poems

K. A. Geetha & O. J. Joycee

> The testimony in Jacob, the covenant of God, were refused by the rebellious generation of the times; they are refused now, except in the doctrine. (Psalm 6)

In the Postmodern literary scene, the prominence of Jewish writers is an important phenomenon. While writers like Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, though ethnically Jewish, try to avoid raising the question of Jewishness in their works, others like Cynthia Ozick and A. M. Kleine endeavour to project their artistic vision through an intensely religious and distinctly Jewish perspective. Nissim Ezekiel, the Bombay-bred Bene-Israel Jew does not belong to either of these categories. He makes no attempt to sweep his Judaic identity under the carpet of Indianness nor is his poems explicit expression of Judaism. As he himself puts it, "My background makes me a natural outsider; circumstances and decisions relate me to India" (Parthasarthy 28). This expression best exemplifies his cross-cultural consciousness. The multiculturalism of the Indian context instils in Indian writers a consciousness of various identities pertaining to religion and region, culture and language. Indo–Anglian literature is replete with such complexities of multiple identities. Ezekiel's poetry illustrates a striking synthesis of not just the Judaic–Hindu synthesis, but more so, the Jew–Indian one. This paper explores this rich dichotomy as represented in his poems. Any attempt to

study the poetry of Ezekiel without the background knowledge of either the Indians or the Jews, their similarities and differences, may fall short of completeness. An extensive account of these two ancient civilizations is beyond the scope of this paper. We begin this paper with a brief sketch of the historical travails and tribulations of the Jews, their beliefs and religion, the community of Bene-Israel Jews of India to which Ezekiel belongs, and his native city, Bombay.

We are familiar with the original creation of the State of Israel from various sources such as the Bible and the history books. The vicissitudes of the Jews began probably with the Roman conquest way back in AD 70. The Jews were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, some remaining in the Palestine area. Richard Bloch in his "Once Upon a Time in a Land Called Palestine" concludes that at this time any semblance of a Jewish political geographic entity in Palestine ceased to exist. What followed are a series of conquests, by the Muslims, the Christians, the Romans, and the British, a cold-blooded anti-semitism and persecution of the Jews, their displacement and their occasional attempts to return to their homeland.

Judaism was one of the first systems of thought to integrate the two systems of belief and ethics into one in which the Jewish people entered into an agreement with God after their freedom from slavery in Egypt:

> The Lord called him (Moses) from the mountain, saying,
>
> Thus, you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the Israelites: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey me faithfully and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is Mine, but you shall be for Me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.' (Exodus 19:3-6)

Richard Bloch observes that scholars have traced the indomitable spirit of the Jewish people to this almost catechismal passage. It is the anchor of the Five Books of Moses (The Torah) and is constantly referred to by the prophets and other writers in the Bible. It is understood that God was present with Jewish people and acted in their earthly existence. It is also believed that the Jews were subjected to various tormenting vicissitudes including their exile because they broke their covenant with God.

The Jews have lived millennia of persecution and they have come to believe that, while material things can be confiscated, their knowledge and belief cannot. They prize education and have had one of the world's highest literacy rates. The Jews, wherever they are, have a common history, lifestyle, literature, hopes and aspirations. Thus the peoplehood of the Jews have defied historical pattern. Arnold Toynbee, the famous British historian, described the Jews as a fossil of history, because they could not fit into his otherwise neat historical scheme. The fact remains that the Jews have survived for over 3700 years.

Judaism, the religion of the Jews has two major sects—the Orthodox and the Reform. Orthodox Judaism, as its name implies, accepts the traditional view of God as mentioned in the Bible. Reform Judaism is a reactionary movement against Orthodox Judaism. The main objective of Reform Judaism was to make religion simple and easily accessible to the modern Jews spread all over the world. They seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that together they can bring peace, freedom and justice to the world. The principle of individual freedom is an essential tenet of Reform Judaism, and it allows each Jew to make a personal decision about his practice of religion. Though it began in Germany, Reform Judaism found a fertile ground in America, from where it spread to other countries in the name of Reform or Progressive Judaism. India has a legacy of three distinct Jewish groups: The Bene-Israels, the Cochin Jews and the White Jews.

The Bene-Israels, Nissim Ezekiel's ancestors, were the descendents of the Jews who fled from Israel by a ship to escape the persecution of the Babylonians in Galilee in the second century BC. The ship was wrecked but the few who survived settled in a village called Navagon on the Western coast of India. Subsequently, they migrated to different parts of India like Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta and Old Delhi and continued to practice the rituals and religious laws of Judaism. Ezekiel's family belongs to the Reform or Progressive Judaism. Ezekiel's name carries with it the prophetic mode—the Rabbi, Nissim, of the 1300's and Ezekiel, a prophet of the Old Testament. He shares the prophet's courage for the freedom to express and differ.

The poetry of Ezekiel springs from the roots of consciousness where Judaism and Jewishness intricately and intimately intermingle with the Indian philosophic and cultural scape. The crucible of his mind could contain the Torah and the Upanishads, Indian philosophy and the Moses' way of life, the Talamud and the Bhagvat Gita, the Jewish ancestry and the Indian milieu of his native Bombay, his wide acquaintance with English literature and strong conviction in the future of Indo-Anglian literature. The cultural idiom which he uses to give expression to this diversity of experience is Indian. But the vision itself is universal in the sense, that it may be the experience of persons in any part of the world. To disemburden the clutter of multipluralism, the poet occasionally delves into the mysterious zones of the self to restore the reserves of the ancient Jewish moral stamina.

Ezekiel's poems reveal two cultural polarities and how he relates to them: his conscious decision to remain an Indian and his inseparable Jewish identity. In an interview with Susheel Kumar Sharma, he says that he is "familiar with the Vedas and the Upanishads to which I often return" (44). He has also been influenced by the philosophy of various thinkers like Tagore and Radhakrishnan but admits that he still tends to be "unsympathetic to Gandhi in his

interpretation of Hinduism and Hindu philosophy," though agrees with Gandhi's opinion that all that is printed in the name of the scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word (44). And here we hear the voice of the Reform Jew speaking. The most striking difference between Reform and Orthodox Judaism is that the former do not consider the Jewish law as binding. The extent to which a Jew follows the Jewish faith is an individual's decision. Further more, it gave the Jews freedom to adapt the teachings of the Torah to suit the need of the society and culture one lives in... In a world of constant flux, the Rabbis fashioned the Talamud as an instrument for the adaptation of the Jewish religion to the ever-changing circumstances of life. "'Ask me a point of law,' taught the Talamudic Sage Rami bar Chami, 'I will answer you according to reason. Yet you will also find its parallel in tradition (that is, in time-tested experience)'", quotes Bosch. And this is precisely what Ezekiel does in his *Latter-Day Psalms*. He adhered to this main tenet of Reform Judaism by rendering a modern re-interpretation to nine psalms in the Book of Psalms of the Bible.

The Biblical Psalms are attributed mainly to King David though Solomon, Moses, and several others have contributed to it as is evidenced from the differing degree of the literary skill and inspiration. This explains why the Psalms as a whole do not represent a unified religious-ethical philosophy. They represent the poetic forms of all stages of religious and cultural development of the Jewish people over eight centuries, most probably beginning with David the Psalmist. It offers thanks for the deliverance of the land of Israel from its heathen oppressors, and includes prayers for the deliverance of the church from internal and external oppressions.

Ezekiel's attitude to the Biblical Psalms is not mere denial but a creative reassessment—an old mould has been used to describe new experiences. The old religious doctrines and mythical patterns have seeped into our consciousness and our

response to them is often mechanical along conventional lines. In *Latter-Day Psalms* Ezekiel is not dismissive or contemptuous; there is no lampooning here or sarcasm. His is a creative extension, at times, a distortion of the original, to be adapted to the diversity and complexity of our times; if we may take the liberty to twist the famous Miltonic phrase a little to suit our purpose, it could be said that Ezekiel is justifying the ways of man to God. He does not approve of the arrogant Old Testament God who reels out rules and doles out retribution to the defaulters. In "Advice to a Painter" Ezekiel says, "Do not be satisfied with world / that God created. Create your own" (204).

Ezekiel's version of the Psalms is rational and realistic. For instance, he feels that it is more rational "to act" rather than "sit and meditate day and night" (252) as mentioned in the Biblical Psalm 1:2. To the lines in the Psalm 1:3

> And he shall be like a tree…
> That bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
> His leaf also shall not wither; and
> Whatever he doth shall prosper

Ezekiel replies,

> Rare is the man whose fruit is
> In his season, yet his leaf
> Must wither, and that which
> Appears to prosper, is often
> Dying at the root. (253)

He agrees that "Salvation belongs unto the Lord" but it is not through "one or the other church." The Lord's blessing is on "all the people of the earth" (254). Why always pray to be led from darkness to light, he asks. The darkness has its secrets which light does not know. Every light distorts the truth (223). In Psalm 6 he advises us to give ear to new parables, unlike the old ones, and to darker sayings than our fathers passed on to us, (256) for, as he says "Blessed is the man that walketh / not in the counsel of the con- / ventional and is at home with / sin as with wife"(252). Here he almost twists the original to contradiction. In yet another Psalm, he

wonders why it is impossible for the rich man to enter the gates of heaven and questions the metaphor of the camel passing through the eye of the needle (213).

Addressing God in an intimate tone is yet another trait of the Reform Jews, and Ezekiel addresses God in different tones. The varied tones are explicit in the *Latter-Day Psalms*. We find that he praises God thus: "How excellent is thy name / and thy glory above the heavens" (254), and asks "Be thou a shield for them as for me" (253) and questions God, "How can I breathe freely if thou breakest the teeth of the ungodly?" (253) and exhorts God to "Do thy duty."

One of the most essential traits of the Jews is that they are always conscious of their ancestral links and historical complexities like the exile, exodus, dispersal, peripatetic internationalism, and Ezekiel is no exception to this angst. Ezekiel shares the collective urge of the Jewry to return to their promised land. This passionate desire has been ingrained in the Jews ever since Moses had to undergo several tests to overcome the immaturity and irresponsibility of the Jewish people before they were allowed into the Promised Land. The dispersal and scattering of the Jews only deepened this desire. In *Latter-Day Psalm* 5, Ezekiel writes "cast off, scattered for a / thousand years, where we shall live in peace" for "we are still outside the strong city" (256). The strong city could possibly refer to the Promised Land, Israel to which the Jews aspire to return. Many Jews in India, including the close relatives of Ezekiel, left India and returned to Israel in the 1960's, but he decided to stay back. In the autobiographical poem "Background Casually" (179), Ezekiel decided once and for all, "I have made my commitments now…to stay where I am."

Ezekiel seeks a balance between an almost existential involvement with life and intellectual quest. The Jewish association of life as a pilgrimage is seen in the title poem of *A Time to Change*. A moral allegory which reveals the restlessness of the mind, the poems falls into five sections—a man's departure from his home, a longing for an organized

future, the means to attain this and finally, the realization of the need to repent for man's secret follies. There are Old Testament echoes in the opening lines of the poem, "we who leave the house in April, Lord / How shall we return" (3). The poem vividly expresses the frustration of the restlessness of the modern man and longing for a stable life. The tormented mind in the poem could be as Bruce King pointed out, "the Jews of Babylon corrupted by unlawful desires, strange gods, and defiled by foreign practices" (92).

Several critics of Ezekiel have also spoken of the quest image. Linda Hess says that Ezekiel is "an endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind" (67). Satyanarayanan Singh talks of Ezekiel's journey "as one going inward into the centre of the being from where he would choose to rise to maximum expansion which would embrace and not reject all his other concerns" (qtd. in T.R. Sharma, 62). For M. Sivaramakrishna it is a "quest for possible metaphysical truth" (62). T.R. Sharma talks of the poetic self of the poet as a voyager in quest of an ideal which neither found in the past nor in the present" (64). Michael Garman interpreted the poems as a pilgrimage (209). But this quest motif in the poems needs to be examined from the angle of a Jewish heritage.

The historical experience of the Jews has instilled in them an existential energy to survive In the midst of a different culture he finds himself "a mugging Jew among the wolves" the one who "had killed the Christ." Yet his poems do not bear the vituperative wrath of A. M. Kleine or the sting of Sylvia Plath's poems on the same theme, for he prides himself in having won the scripture prize at his Roman Catholic school. The Jews believe that the God-humankind relationship is based on the human to human relationship. There is no escape into the pastorals or into meek worlds of religious abstractions; the secret of the Jews' instinct for survival lies in their acceptance of earthly life as it is. They are like the worm in Ezekiel's poem "The Worm" (10) which "…after rain crawling with astounding strength, directed / By an inner eye, towards a dryer place."

The existentialist dilemma that haunts the Jewish Diaspora also springs from their sense of alienation. Ezekiel often wonders how "to feel India his home." He speaks of his ancestors as "aliens crushing seed" for bread. Is he too an alien in this land of mixed cultures? The Jewish determination and will power to endure life against all odds redeems him from this despair. In "Background Casually" he says, "I look about me now, and try / to formulate a plainer view; the wise survive and serve," hence, "The Indian landscape sears my eyes / and I have become a part of it." It is appropriate to mention here that Reform/Progressive Judaism, suggests that the Jews integrate themselves with the culture and society they live in, for Judaism can be practiced anywhere.

The quest motif can be read simultaneously with his desire to belong. The fact that he was brought up a Maharashtrian Bene-Israel Jew seems to have conditioned his sense of belonging to the place of his birth, which he eventually accepts. There is indeed a feeling that he struggles hard internally to persuade himself to accept the "home" and "roots" in India with a sense of resignation, a sense of urgency of reconciliation with the context. He dramatizes the tension between his ancestral urge to gravitate towards the Promised Land and his native urge to anchor in the city of his birth; this makes him conscious of the gap between himself and his environment, his un-Indian roots and the context. A conscious acceptance of the Indian reality is therefore a vital factor in Ezekiel's poetry. Most of the poems in *The Unfinished Man* have the city as the dominant metaphor, such as "Urban", "A Morning Walk" and "Case Study". He has mixed reactions to his "Barbaric city" Bombay which is "sick with slums' and "deprived of seasons," its "hawkers, beggars" "processions led by frantic drums / A million purgatorial lanes." He cannot like the village young man of "Rural Suite" (196) "merge into the landscape;" nevertheless his love for Bombay is not diminished; he has "a strong sense of belonging not only to

India, but to this city. I would never leave Bombay—it's a series of commitments" (Damodar 63). He therefore, pleads

Confiscate my passport, Lord
I don't want to go abroad
Let me find my song
Where I belong. (213)

This dual belonging makes him simultaneously an insider and an outsider; the dual consciousness lends a detached and objective tone to his poems. Poems like the "Very Indian Poem in English" have often been misunderstood as cynical or satirical. But beneath the humour and mild mockery there lie embedded the Indian reality and sentiments as it exists.

Ranjit Hoskote writes that "Ezekiel's ruminative, sometimes almost sententious tenor, his dry wit and self-deflating irony have attracted much notice; few readers counterbalance those with the magnificently lyrical moments when the poet achieves a searing insight into human frailty, when his mastery over formal metre yields before a music of surprise." Incidentally, one of the most Jewish traits observed in Ezekiel is his intense family feeling, so indistinguishable from the Indian sensibility. He vested great value on family relationship and even surrendered to a marriage of convenience for the sake of his family. In the poem "Enterprise" (117) he says, "Our deeds were neither great nor rare / Home is where we have to gather grace." "The Night of the Scorpion" (130) is mostly read as a satire that heartlessly mocks at the traditional remedies, superstitions of the poor folk of India. But it could also be read as an incident at home where the family members did indeed gather grace: the father's anxiety, the tenderness of the mother, her concern for her children even in her suffering and the child protagonist awareness of the mother's love and sacrifice.

A study of Ezekiel's poems reveals that although he is sceptical about religion, his poems brim with ringing tones of Judaic belief. They reflect the moral approach to Judaic way of life and this moral consciousness guides him through

chaos and frustration. "Heaven is always earth redeemed" to the Reform Jew and Ezekiel led his life accordingly. The Jewishness though not overtly manifested in his poems discreetly forms the sub-stratum of his consciousness. This eventually leads him to remain self-consciously Indian and sub-consciously Judaic.

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Arundhati Roy—An Activist for the Greater Common Good

Sijo Varghese

Arundhati Roy is a literary artist who has turned herself into an activist for the greater common good. She has brought out her stringent dissatisfaction with the evil-doers through her non-fictional writings. She became a noticeable figure at the international level with the publication of *The God of Small Things* in 1997. In her fictional work, there is a confrontation between the big and the small, the haves and the have-nots, the touchables and the untouchables, and man and woman. Roy surprised the literary world with the publication of *The End of Imagination*, the first non-fictional work of the author. Roy expresses her love for fiction, and in one of her interviews with Amy Goodman, she distinguishes between fictional and non-fictional writings:

> Fiction is my love. Fiction is what makes me happy. The other writings that I do, each time I write I swear that I never do it again . . . When something happens and I read about what's happening, and then I know that there is something that hasn't been said which I want to say. It sets up this hammering in my mind and I can't keep quiet and I have to do it and do it and most of the times regret it immediately. (2)

In *The End of Imagination*, Roy speaks about the nuclear tests conducted by India in May 1998 at Pokhran. The literary world was expecting a new fictional work from Roy but she took the opportunity to inform the people about the terrible effects of nuclear weapons. The sudden and abrupt shift from fiction to non-fiction raised so many questions about the future Roy. She could not keep her mouth shut when India conducted the nuclear tests at Pokhran. The tests in fact pierced the heart of India and sowed the seed for the

total annihilation of the society. Roy was committed to challenge the Government of India for having conducted the nuclear tests without the consent of the people. She could rise to the occasion with her timely essay "The End of Imagination" in October 1998 to unleash pressure on the Government. Roy has got a burning passion for her country and she is ready to break her idolized self of being a winner of the coveted Booker Prize for fiction. She had specific game plan in her mind as she entered into the new realm of non-fictional writing. In *The End of Imagination*, Roy makes her idea clear:

> I am prepared to grovel. To humiliate myself abjectly, because in the circumstances, silence would be indefensible. So those of you who are willing: let's pick our parts, put on these discarded costumes and speak our second-hand lines in this sad second-hand play. But let's not forget that the stakes we're playing for are huge. Our fatigue and our shame could mean the end of us. The end of our children and our children's children. Of everything we love. We have to reach within ourselves and find the strength to think. To fight. (10)

Roy wrote her second essay *The Greater Common Good* in support for the displaced tribal people who suffer from the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the banks of the Narmada valley. She had taken up the challenge and made it a national issue after having witnessed the sufferings of the people. The people had no other alternative except to leave their land for an unknown destination in the name of development. *The Greater Common Good* clarified the doubts of the intelligentsia with its accurate facts and figures. The book was widely accepted by the activists and it became the 'Bible' of Narmada *Bachao Andolan*. It generated a strong public opinion in favour of the displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley. In the outset of *The Greater Common Good*, Roy describes the deplorable condition of the tribal people: "I could see their airy, fragile homes. I

could see their fields and the forests behind them. I could see little children with littler goats scuttling across the landscape like motorized peanuts" (1).

Roy's *The End of Imagination* and *The Greater Common Good* have been widely received across the country with a lot of enthusiasm. People began to address Roy as 'writer-activist' of the new millennium. She realised the responsibility of being a collaborator with the suffering humanity. Roy does not prefer to be addressed as 'writer-activist' mainly because the so-called professional label will confine her writings to a narrow sense of appeal. It's not out of fame or prestige that Roy has set out to rake over the policies of the Government. But she has realised within herself a pull towards the victims of the pseudo development. When there is a crisis everyone has to contribute his/her share to the society. It is very easy to cultivate an indifferent attitude towards the happenings of the world and when someone loves or hates something, s/he takes a decision forward. The greatest curse of modern democracy is that a great majority of people remain indifferent without having an opinion of their own. In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, Roy speaks about the challenges of being a writer:

> To be a writer—a supposedly 'famous' writer—in a country where millions of people are illiterate is a dubious honour. To be a writer in a country that gave the world Mahatma Gandhi, that invented the concept of nonviolent resistance, and then, half a century later, followed that up with nuclear tests is a ferocious burden . . . To be a writer in a country where something akin to an undeclared civil war is being waged on its citizens in the name of 'development' is an onerous responsibility. When it comes to writers and writing, I use words like 'onerous' and 'responsibility' with a heavy heart and not a small degree of sadness. (189–90)

After the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction for *The God of Small Things*, Roy was nominated for the Sahitya Akademi

Award for her collection of essays *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* in 2005. Roy turned down the national award from India's academy of letters in protest against the policies of the Government of India. Roy had great respect for the jury who adjudicated her work for the Sahitya Akademi Award but rejected the honour for one obvious reason: The Algebra of Infinite Justice consists of a collection of political essays that attack the policies of the then NDA Government such as the testing of nuclear bombs, the construction of big dams, increasing militarization and economic liberalisation. The UPA Government is following the path of its predecessor in carrying out the same mission at a faster rate. The foreign policies of the Government have been vehemently questioned by Roy, especially India's stand to extend a helping hand to the U.S. in combating terrorism and at the same time refusing to admit America's invasion of Afghanistan and the illegal occupation of Iraq for lucrative purposes.

Roy has become a speck in the eyes of many people. The role of being an activist of the modern world is actually a risky job. That's the reason why many of the literary writers do not embrace activism wholeheartedly. Activism cannot please everyone alike as it produces uncomfortable feeling in the minds of transgressors. Roy justifies her role as an activist for the good of the society and she is ready to face the challenges that confront her in the way of progress.

Art has paved way for activism in Roy. She could have remained as a literary artist throughout her life but the social commitment of the author had kindled the spark of activism. She has used her celebrity status for the greater common good. The media is after her and each and every action of Roy gets more prominence in the international arena. Roy is committed to her society, and with immense media support, she is able to solve many of the problems of the people. The non-fictional world of Roy is free from political interventions and all kinds of prejudices. She has become an instrument to bridge the gap between the oppressor and the

oppressed. She finds ample time at her disposal to listen to the pleas of the helpless people and wields her mighty pen over the transgressors. Reddy praises Roy for her genuine effort to blend the celebrity status with activism:

> The credibility of Arundhati Roy's activism stems from the fact that she has been proactive participant in the socio-environment issues . . . She has emerged as the messiah of popular public causes, judiciously mixing her celebrity status with her activism. (2)

In 2004, Roy published the second volume of non-fictional essays entitled *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*. It consists of fourteen essays written between June 2002 and November 2004. The period is noted for its greatest turmoil in the history of the world especially after the Second World War. The suicide attack on the World Trade Centre provoked the U. S. to declare war on terror, especially on the Al-Qaeda network operating in Afghanistan. The U. S. along with the coalition forces played the 'World Police' on the innocent people of Afghanistan. In *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, Roy lampoons the Americans for having installed Hamid Karzai as the "Puppet President of Afghanistan" (37). Roy's non-fictional writing is noted for severe and stringent attack on the disrupters of normal life. Her activistic writings have taken the leading role to fight against the social menace. She will come up with her activistic writing when there is a problem in the society. A non-fictional writer has to undergo a lot of internal conflict because s/he is dealing with a social issue that requires great precision and accuracy. The non-fictional writings should be thought-provoking and capable of meeting the need of the hour. In *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, Roy speaks about the process of writing fiction and non-fiction:

> Fiction and non-fiction are only different techniques of storytelling. For reasons I do not fully understand, fiction dances out of me. Non-fiction is wrenched out by the aching, broken world I awake up to every morning. The theme of much of what I write, fiction

> as well as non-fiction, is the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless, circular conflict they're engaged in. (13)

Roy's activistic writings lend a helping hand to protect the environment and the people alike. She envisages a world without corruption and the people should be free from all kinds of tyranny. Her writings support the defenceless people of the world and Roy has become a persevering writer for the greater common good. Roy is an emissary of peace. She spreads the message of love and brotherhood. The non-fictional writings of Roy strengthen the weak, annihilate the thriving business of weapons of mass destruction, discourage privatization and reduce the growing disparity between the rich and the poor.

Roy took active role in public affairs since the completion of her fictional work *The God of Small Things*. Her love for the Meenachal River has taken the author to the Narmada valley. She has become part of the suffering humanity with her words and deeds. In order to find out the exact picture of the Narmada valley, Roy has spent many days with the tribal people, meeting the homeless and the destitute. She decided to do something for the people of the Narmada valley who suffer in the name of development. The earnest quest for an immediate action resulted in the publication of *The Greater Common Good*. Roy realised the fact that the valley needed a writer who can reach out to the millions of countrymen. She took up the challenge with genuine interest and she could channelize great public support in favour of the displaced tribal people of the Narmada valley. In Gujarat, *The Greater Common Good* was not allowed to be sold and there was a strong protest against Roy for having brought out the facts and figures of the Narmada valley in black and white. The owners of the bookshops were threatened not to keep the copies of the book by the activists of the vested private interest. The artificial necessity hiked the demand for the book and Roy received many letters from the people of Gujarat, asking how

to get copies of the book. *In The Greater Common Good*, Roy makes her position clear by stating that she is not against development projects. The book opens with a quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of the country. It reads, "If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country . . ." (1). The occasion was in 1948 when Nehru addressed the villagers who were to be displaced by the Hirakud dam. Roy begins the essay with an ironic statement, "I stood on a hill and laughed out loud" (1). The obvious reason for her laughter is nothing but the tender concern with which the Supreme Court judges in Delhi (before vacating the legal stay on further construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam) had enquired whether tribal children in the resettlement colonies would have children's park to play in (2).

India is an agrarian country and dams play vital role in irrigating the agricultural field. Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of dams as the "temples of modern India" which he regretted later in his life (Roy, *Greater* 7). The importance of dam has made its way into primary school textbooks and the children are taught only the good aspect of big dams. The dam building industry grew into such an extent that it was "equated with Nation-building" (7). According to the statistical data published by the Central Water Commission, India has 3,600 big dams and 3,300 have been completed after independence (7). The Indian Institute of Public Administration has come up with a detailed study of 54 large dams and the report is a matter of great concern for each and every one. It says, "The average number of people displaced by a Large Dam in India is 44,182" (9). If it is the condition of one big dam, how many people could have been displaced by 3,300 big dams in the country since Indian independence. Roy appropriates the number to 10,000 and calculates the number of displaced tribals (3,300 x 10,000 = 33,000,000) to thirty-three million people (10).

In the case of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, the victims are Adivasis who constitute 57.6 % of the total people displaced

by the construction of the dam. Roy criticises the Government for not having a 'National Rehabilitation Policy'. Though the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 was amended in 1984, "the Government is not legally bound to provide a displaced person anything but cash compensation" (Roy, *Greater* 11). In The Greater Common Good, Roy makes fun of the existing scenario in the following words:

> A cash compensation, to be paid by an Indian government official to an illiterate tribal man (the women get nothing) in a land where even the postman demands a tip for a delivery! Most tribal people have no formal title to their land and therefore cannot claim compensation anyway. Most tribal people or let's say most small farmers—have as much use for money as a Supreme Court judge has for a bag of fertilizer. (11)

The Narmada Valley Development Project is one of the most challenging projects in the history of mankind. When the project is completed there will be 3,200 dams, out of which 30 will be major dams, 135 medium and the rest small. The Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat and the Narmada Sagar in Madhya Pradesh come under "multipurpose mega-dams" (Roy, *Greater* 18). The Narmada Valley Development Project is undoubtedly big and it is a Herculean task for the Government to complete it without dispute. The project is estimated to "affect the lives of twenty five million people who live in the valley" (18). The project can also "alter the ecology of the entire river basin of one of India's biggest rivers" (18). The natural vegetation that supports the eco-system will be affected. The project is estimated to "submerge and destroy 4,000 square kilo meters of natural deciduous forest" (18). The World Bank had taken a special interest in financing the project even before the Ministry of Environment gave a green signal to it. The Ministry of Environment gave the clearance certificate only in 1987 but the World Bank was ready with the first instalment of the loan $450 million for the Sardar Sarovar Project way back in

1985. The World Bank is ready to extend its helping hand to the third world countries and to finance useless projects in the name of development aid as the bank wants interest rather than the capital. The third world countries will never be able to pay back the money that they have received from the World Bank and the officials know it very well that they finance useless projects in the name of so-called development aid.

Through *The Greater Common Good*, Roy has brought out some stupefying facts about the Narmada Valley Project. The book was an open plea to the authorities to react strongly and effectively for the greater common good. She laments the facts that, "Day by day, river by river, forest by forest . . . bomb by bomb—almost without our knowing it—we are being broken" (61). It is high time that the Government did something to protect the people of the Narmada valley from cultural genocide. Roy roused the inspiration for Narmada *Bachao Andolan* with this non-fictional work. She encouraged them to strive towards the goal, the goal of being liberated from all kinds of invasion and achieve peace and serenity in the valley.

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Imagining Democracy

1863, 1947 and 2009

Betsy Paul C.

For ages, humans have constructed, deconstructed, and, reconstructed the idea of democracy. Many societies have replicated with variations, or assumed modifications, the Athenian democratic form. Still other social orders may have evolved their indigenous forms of democracies, many of which might have been obfuscated in the colonial onslaughts and epistemic violence. Just as nationality, nation-ness and nationalism are "cultural artifacts of a particular kind" (Anderson 4), political arrangements like democracy too are artifacts formulated and interpreted contextually. Communities, social orders, and political entities in the present too need to imagine, formulate and materialize their own democracies.

Abraham Lincoln functions as one of the iconic figures, whose person, words, and ideology form a major share in our imaginative understanding of what a democracy is. It will be interesting to see what he imagined an ideal democracy to be on the basis of the Gettysburg address, one of his most popular and precise pronouncements on democracy. This essay explores the evolution of the concept of the democratic state in twenty-first century India in the light of Lincoln's Gettysburg definition of democracy. For the purpose, a close analysis of the Independence Day speeches of two Indian Prime Ministers, is attempted, along with a reading of Lincoln's address.

Uttered after an oration by the prime speaker of the day, as a few "appropriate words" (Wills), Lincoln's speech dedicating a cemetery in Gettysburg to the dead heroes of the civil war have hence found a definite space in history. The

speech begins by tracing the history of the establishment of the U.S. as a democracy, thus obliquely asserting that the civil war, the emerging victory of the Northern states, and the freedom granted to the African Americans, to be definite causatives for the re-establishment of that democracy. It also clarifies the basic tenet of democratic America, as Lincoln saw it, as something that was "conceived in liberty" and dedicated to the proposition that "all men are created equal". Here, Lincoln deliberately prioritized the Declaration of Independence over the American constitution, which, as Bernard Crick points out, "made no reference to equality and tolerated slavery" (71). These ideals of equality and freedom form the basis for Lincoln's politics of democracy.

The second part of the speech poses a challenge already half won with the victories in the civil war. Lincoln exhorts his fellow Americans to join with him so that a nation founded on such romantic dreams may survive. The last part continues this exhortation by emotively linking the principles of democracy, as Lincoln conceived it, to the ideals ("the unfinished work") of the dead soldiers who had made the ultimate sacrifice. The value of these ideals is enhanced all the more by the relative greatness of those who died for the said ideals over those who had assembled there to pay their homage to them.

Lincoln ends his speech with one of the most quoted definitions of democracy, "the government of the people, by the people, for the people". The phrases can be interpreted to indicate his ideal of what a democracy should be. It should be a government "of the people", that is, a government formed from the people's representatives; it should be "by the people", that is, controlled according to the will of the people; and it should be "for the people", having the people's welfare as its prime motive. These concepts on the basic aspects of democratic governance can act as foundation stones and sign-posts for the discourse on democracies being reconstructed in the course of subsequent ages. My purpose is to explore the complex terrain of contemporary democracy

from an Indian context. Here, I confine my discussion to the way democracy is imagined by two prime ministers of the country as seen through their Independence Day speeches to the nation.

The first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, made a poetic address to the newly free nation on the midnight of the 14th August 1947. Nehru too, like Lincoln, began his speech with a reference to the past, connecting the present to it as a pivotal historical juncture. He exhorted his listeners to shape the future by putting in the rhetorical question whether they were "brave enough and wise enough to … accept the challenge of the future".

Yet there is a marked distinction between Nehru's speech and Lincoln's speech apart from the obvious differences in background, age, context and country. Lincoln's words were addressed to a group of listeners whom the speaker assumed to be part of a "we". In other words, they were addressed to, on equal terms, as part of an egalitarian commune dedicated to a single purpose. The persona of the speaker assumes no greater knowledge or responsibility than his listeners.

On the other hand, Nehru, addressing a much larger crowd of listeners, direct and indirect (newspapers, radio, video recordings etc.), assumes a different tone. He is not just addressing a group of fellow soldiers, or even sympathetic political colleagues, but a confused new nation, shaken awake into a monumental freedom struggle which merged divergent trajectories of private interests into a huge unified movement. Though the English educated leaders like Nehru claimed to build the new India based on liberal, democratic ideals, the imagined nation and its governing system were hardly conceived on any uniform ground by the innumerable communities, classes, castes, and racial groups of the country. And the throngs of illiterate masses subjugated by various levels of oppression provoked challenges more complex than those faced by any previous democratic national leader. Consequently, the democratic state of India as imagined by

Nehru brought out two specific groups which at times merged into one.

In the beginning of the speech, India is seen as a unified whole, a cohesive, singular group of people, who had made a temporal journey through history. Gradually, but, the strains of the ruler and the ruled (albeit using the milder terms of representatives and the people) start surfacing: "The service of India", according to Nehru means, "the service of the millions who suffer." And the representatives are the ones bestowed with the charge of alleviating "poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity." The emphasis for the imagined democratic Indian nation was more on "for the people" than "of the people" or "by the people," though the latter tenets were never belittled.

Nehru's speech also reiterated and enlarged a theme merely touched upon by Lincoln, the positioning of a democracy in a larger world. If Lincoln wanted democracy not to "perish from the earth," Nehru exhorted his comrades to work for the "welfare of mankind" for "our dreams" are "for India" and also "for the world."

Sixty-two years later, in 2009, the present Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, makes a long Independence Day speech detailing his government's concepts of and dreams for a democratic India. Immediately after conveying the formal greetings of the day, he asserts: "we are proud of our freedom. We are proud of our democracy." The "we" here is broadened in the same part of the speech to include "lakhs of Indians" who sacrificed for India, consisting of "our freedom fighters, the brave jawans of our armed forces, our farmers, our workers and our scientists."

In the course of the speech, he again makes reference to the Indian "political arrangement." His government is one that has been chosen "by the people." As representatives "of the people" his government is committed to work with sincerity and dedication to fulfil the expectation" of the people of India. Further, Singh provides his version of how a democratic state should function. He tells the nation that it

has voted for "a democratic way of life which provides for resolution of differences through debate and discussion." Thus, the concept of democratic state is extended to mean a plurality where differences are resolved not through violence, but through "debate and discussion." This rejection of violence is reiterated elsewhere in the speech when he talks about terrorism: "Our democracy has no place for those who resort to violence to express their disagreement and the government will deal firmly with such people."

After elaborating the developmental and welfare projects planned and executed by his government, Dr. Singh's speech brings out another aspect of democracy as he conceives it. Democracy is "by the people" and requires people participation. He seeks "active partnership of our brothers and sisters of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in our development processes," and thinks of devising "ways and means to increase the participation of women in all democratic institutions." He talks about having enacted the Right to Information Act and the starting up of the Unique Identification Authority of India which will identify Indian citizens electronically, and which, he clarifies, will bring about the benefits of governance to rural and semi-urban regions too.

Further, in his long speech, Singh asserts the principle of the democratic state which is "for the people." Throughout the speech his emphasis is on the development programs enacted by his government "for the people". Moreover he is careful to point out that his reforms are meant to benefit and fulfil "the expectation of each and every citizen of India" and asserts that "every Indian has a right over our national resources." He talks about the need to remove regional imbalances and his government's programs regarding the "development of rural and urban areas".

If Lincoln and Nehru had been aware of the world around their democratic states, Singh is acutely concerned over the hyper sensitive and volatile dependability of regional events to the international scenario in the contemporary

world. So he points out that "today's world is becoming smaller." At the same time he exultantly announces that "our democracy is an example to the whole world."

Thus Lincoln's 1863 Gettysburg address, Nehru's 1947 Independence speech, and, Singh's 2009 Independence Day speech, though separated in time, space and content seem to converge on the essential principles of democracy though extending through divergent trajectories according to contemporary political praxis. Moreover, this indicates a relatively lesser level of fluctuation concerning the discourse on democracy as a political ideology within the last one and a half century.

A discourse, at any temporal moment, will include dominant and marginalized ideas. And, certain aspects of the issue may remain, or be forced to remain, invisible. Since knowledge, as Foucault has contended, depend upon power (132), Lincoln's succinct definition of democracy too, had contained within itself certain crucial issues, which had once surfaced, and had hence been submerged. One such issue is the question of direct democracy. The founding fathers of the United States had negotiated the choice of a direct democracy over a representational one and had chosen the latter. They had also expressed their fears concerning the mob-rule that may result from direct democracy. For example, James Madison had remarked: "A pure democracy can admit no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will be felt by a majority, and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party." Such fears were not limited to the eighteenth century America. More than two thousand years ago, in Athens, where the first prototype of modern democracy is said to have existed, the philosopher Plato had worried about the rule of "opinion" over "knowledge;" wherein he associated opinion with the masses and knowledge with his philosopher-rulers.

Lincoln clarified the American stand on representational democracy "four score and seven years" after the

establishment of his state. Though "by the people," democracy was also "of the people," that is, a rule not by all together, but by representational means. Nehru's speech establishes the point further by distinguishing the representatives as the ones who have to serve the people. Singh's words, though keeping the Nehruvian distinction, are more inclusive in bringing the represented and their representatives together. Speaking of strengthening the administrative machinery, Singh assumes that communication and information technology can go a long way in bringing similar services received by urban residents to those living in the rural and semi-urban areas. For Singh, People are not just at the receiving end and he seeks their active participation in the governing of the country. Women, scheduled castes and tribes, people residing in rural or remote areas are all called to handle their share of power and responsibilities.

This call for participation is not just the product of the generous liberal democratic ideology of Singh and his party, The Indian National Congress. It is more a catering to the vibes of a time when the world has become smaller due to technological interventions. This situation also calls for an analysis of what most people consider to be an ideal democracy.

One of the indicators of what a culture considers to be ideal can be the advertisements it watch. At least one advertisement, broadcast nationally, illustrates our culture's desire for direct participation in the governance of its state. The advertisement for Idea cellular service (titled "for the people, by the people," in the YouTube) features a minister who is given the advice to build a shopping mall in a village. She seeks the opinion of the hero of the story and he immediately poses the question to all the people who will be affected by it through the new technology provided by his phone. The answer is no and the minister concedes to the voice of the people. Thus, M-democracy (mobile phone democracy) is offered as an answer to the practical difficulties

in twenty first century India (of more than a hundred crore Indians), in the implementation of direct democracy. What needs to be discussed here first, is not the practicability of such a solution, but rather, the desirability of such an ideal. Serious discussions and debates need to take place in the academic and non-academic realms on this topic as E-democracy and M-democracy are in the process of deconstructing and reconstructing democratic values and functions. In this context, Lincoln's Gettysburg address can act as a starting point for a viable and constructive discourse on the democracy that is being reconstructed.

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Postmodern Perspectives

A Reading of Kamala Das's *My Story*

Ann Maria Jose C.

Postmodernism best captures today's transformations. It is a theoretical concept which uncovers and illuminates central social trends of the present. Postmodernism unveils the social condition of the twenty-first century in which the features of the modern world are interrogated and undermined by novel trends. It is a doctrine within which a new climate for ideas has arisen and it has brought with it a new sensibility. Being a typical post-War period phenomena, it portents a constantly developing and modifying attempt to describe and theorize our own situation. Postmodernism in literature parallels with post structuralism in linguistics and theory. It celebrates the act of dismembering the tradition.

Postmodernism being continuation of and a break from modernism its followers inherit the fragmentary self from modernism, but they never grieve over it like the modernists but celebrate the fragmentation. Postmodernism 'shadows and echoes its notes of indeterminacy and insecurity'. Just like poststructuralists, postmodernists are also engaged in deconstructing and they deconstruct 'Enlightenment' (which provided for the reason of modernism) and they propagate against coherence. Post modernists subvert the elitism of modern high culture and are unconvinced of humans being rational. From *avant garde*, they adopt the disowning of conventions. Post modernism dismantles the existing cultures and the multiple forms of irrationality cram the vacuum.

Postmodernism, being 'incredulity towards meta narrative', grand narratives are shorn of and postmodernist writers probe areas which were considered as unconventional or restricted until now. In postmodern writing the rift

between truth and fiction is narrowed. Post modernism is an attempt for decentering and hence there will be a lack of fixity and a sense of loss of security in post modern writings. Postmodernism celebrates antitotalization, disruption, indeterminacy, fragmentation of existence and collapse of self hood (Woods 56).

Kamala Das, a poet and novelist, has got an exceptional stature in Indian English literature. Being a confessional poet and a non conventionalist, she delved into the so called clandestine zones of womanhood. She was considered and celebrated as a rebel. Her revolting nature sprang from the discrepancy that arose between what she thought and what others expected from her. Her controversial autobiography *My Story* revealed how she was in conflict with the society which compelled her to fit into a structured frame work, though later she denied that it wasn't her autobiography at all. *My Story* examined the life and times of its author through the lens of an autobiographical (often cited as confessional) mode of narration. Kamala tries to find solace from the frustration and the doomed life with her husband by writing out and decides not to be tied up by established norms of *pativrata naari* (Menon 96). This paper explores the reasons for including Kamala Das under postmodernist writers and how her autobiography is a testimony to it. Even the act of writing her autobiography can be considered as remapping of the existing patriarchal society which urged her not to publish the book. As Nila Shah and Pramod Nayar writes:

> … It offers among other things, a critique of the victimization of women in a patriarchal society. Das' writing and life display the anger, rage and rebellion of a woman struggling in the male prerogatives, traditional society. The autobiography is itself a gesture enunciating the empowerment of the female when she speaks in protest, in rejection, in an infinitely recessive "desire" within a powerfully restrictive psychosocial matrix. (173)

In her fictional autobiography, she writes about the common things of a woman's life: her childhood, the familial relations, the gossips in and around Nalapatt, the food habits, her growth into womanhood, quest for love, her unhappy marriage, her wishes and dreams etc. What makes her a mirror of rebellious woman is that none or only few of them dared to disclose these things except superficially. The process of writing itself is a show of repulsion for Kamala. Kamala wrote about all these domestic life, with resentment, at a time when women were actually trained to appreciate and respect whatever the destiny had brought them. Though Kamala knows what is expected from her, she is disclosing her private life and is happy about it. She writes in the book's preface: "This book has cost me many things that I held dear, but I do not for a moment regret having written it" (5). *My Story* "deals with her experience as a board which serves as the foundation of her sociological, psychological and even spiritual development". She urges the readers to "re read the social relations and to participate in a revolution of consciousness" (Kohli 181).

Das tries to relocate herself by writing her autobiography *My Story* and calls into dispute the accepted decorum of a Nair woman, who has no right to think of homosexuality, transgressions and marital disloyalty. She narrates many "local events", as befitting to postmodernism, though it was for marketing reasons, from childhood to later stages in life. *My Story* is written in a 'dialogic, ambiguous and contradictory' style. Kamala Das was born to a Nair family in Kerala, who were proud of their heritage and held traditions bound to heart. She always felt out of the pond in her family with her father always busy with his job and her mother engaged in reading or writing literature. She kept an emotional distance from them and was reserved in talking with them or rather disclosing her feelings. She always wondered how she was born to such parents. She found solace only with her maternal grandmother at Nalappatt. She asked for new dress for her birthday, at the age of ten,

insisted by her room mates at the hostel and knew well that it has added to her devaluation by her parents.

Her revulsion against the structure is visible from childhood from the frivolous incidents mentioned, like that, she used to call her great grandmother's younger sister by name though it was not something acceptable. Children were trained to respect elders in the culture. But Das writes: "It was not seemly for a Nair child to call an aged relative by name, but I called her Ammalu" (16). She writes "women of good Nair families never mentioned sex" (24) and remembers how her grandmother dismissed the servant women from the house because they were having illicit relationships. But she assures the readers that she does not belong to the so called orthodox "good woman", by revealing about her husband's conjugal relations with her and how unsatisfied she was with him in the matters of sex. Kamala registers the illicit relations of her husband before marriage in *My Story* and even dares to disclose the gay relationship her husband had with his friend and how she felt totally dejected when she found it out, breaking off the moral codes. Kamala Das is governed by the impulse from childhood to subvert the conventions in society which is revealed through her acts of doing "offensive things". She was instantly drawn towards the 'bad' girl in the college hostel of whom she had got warnings, not to associate with. She remembers loving an 'outlaw' named Govinda Kurup, her class mate and even telling her grandma that she wants to marry him. Once when he was detained from the class for writing some obscenity on the blackboard, Kamala wanted to follow him. Her grandmother called her stupid and felt amused that Kamala wanted to marry him for no obvious reasons. She writes:

> There was a boy [Govinda Kurup] in the eighth standard which was adjacent to my class in the same dusty hall. He was considered an outlaw by the teachers who took a sadistic delight in punishing him every day. He was handsome …and I could hardly take my eyes off his face. Once when he wrote some

> obscenity at recess on the blackboard, the class master slapped him hard…Get out of the class, shouted the angry teacher…The boy kilted up his dhoti and walked away whistling. At that moment I wanted to follow him and tell him that if he were wicked, I was fond of wickedness too. (21)

She feels insecure in the institution of marriage which is supposed to give security and happiness to woman, especially in India. She views her marriage as a punishment by her parents including her loving grandmother. Her inner turmoil is revealed through the lines:

> Why was I being tortured, placed on the track, I wondered. My father was wealthy enough. He could keep me with him or send me to a hostel. I was never a big eater. Nor did I waste money on cosmetics or good clothes. The only luxury I enjoyed was the reading of books perhaps that scared my people. The photograph of Byron on the bedside table smudged by my good night kisses. The tendency to brush my hair with pride every night before the dresser. The habit of slowly smiling into the eyes of the boy cousins… Who knows. Any of these could have been one of the charges against me… Perhaps my marriage was meant to be a chastisement, a punishment to remove the kinks from my personality. (qtd. *in A Writer's Diary*, 25).

Kamala Das embraces disowning the tradition when she writes about the love affairs she had outside marriage. Thus she deconstructs myths by exposing them to the test of experience. She never regrets about her extramarital relations and goes to the extent of saying what she feels to her husband, the last thing expected from a conventional Indian woman. She is drawn to at least a dozen men who vary from foreigners to utter strangers. But even in these relationships she is not at all satisfied and makes herself capricious.

Postmodernists are obsessed with the idea of liberating themselves from the "claustrophobic embrace of fixed

systems of belief" (Lyon 37). Thus Kamala was happy to be in Nalappat, where she had a group of women around her who were the "critiques of Indian marriage as Patriarchal oppression" (Kohli 180). They included her grandmother, great grandmother, her two sisters and aunt Ammini. All of them had liberated themselves from the shackles of marriage. Kamala could not liberate herself from this. But even after the marriage Kamala could invert the conventional decorum. In Bombay while living with her mother in law Kamala feels imprisoned because the old lady was an embodiment of order. She could not accept the fragmented nature of her daughter-in-law who left the child with her and went for dance and merry making.

The precinct of reality and imagination is made thin in her autobiography a sense of loss of security governs the fragmented Kamala. She feels exhausted with life and thought of suicide governs her. She could not find anything meaningful in the mélange of dreams and reality. Das experiences this trauma in her life which urges her to write, "I have lost faith in the essential goodness of human beings" (149) and "I was seeking the cruelty that lies in the depths of a man's heart" (171). The same ambiguity rules over the author when she writes how her maid trapped her with a midnight visitor in her room and she is so perplexed that she cannot remember whether it happened actually. Thus she etches out multiple selves.

Kamala's veneration of Kali, the goddess of death and destruction is a result from the consciousness that woman are capable of immense power which can be used either for destruction or construction. The male oriented society channels this power to love and caress the family and children and fetter the woman. Kali was treated as rebellious and Kamala was the same. The myth about Kali is that she has killed others and is a lonely self. When the community worships this goddess of isolation, hierarchy is inverted (Kohli 180). The young women reach an ecstatic state which is approved by the society only at the time of festival of Kali.

Kali was the goddess of the aboriginals, the Pariahs, who were "regarded as outcastes and kept at a distance" (29). And in January, the month for worshipping Kali, the same Pariahs were treated equal since they were dear to Kali. Thus the worship turned the table on conventional norms.

Kamala knew of the immense power women possessed and could identify herself with the goddess of immense power "When Kali danced, we felt in the region of heart unease and a leap of recognition" (29). Kamala sought her help when she needed protection from her foes at Nalappatt. She writes:

> I hung a picture of Kali on the wall of my balcony and adorned it daily with long strings of red flowers resembling the intestines of a disemboweled human being. Any one walking along the edge of my paddy field a furlong away could see the goddess and macabre splash of red. This gave the villagers a fright. (28)

Kamala's love for Kali may be also due to the transgression of gender in the patriarchal society (Kohli 179). The person who resembled the goddess during the festival was a man, not a woman. This cannot be isolated from Kamala wearing man's dresses like lungies and black shirts and finding a peculiar happiness. She was considered as a freak for doing so. She writes about the celebration for Kali in the month of Makaram:

> After the orchestra ended, the oracle began his dance. He ran up and down, through the crowd of people, brandishing his scimitar before his trance thickened and a tremor quickened his limbs. He leapt and he roared. His voice changed into the guttural voice of an angry goddess. (29)

Das adopts the principle of decentering in her writings. She chooses herself as the centre of her writing, but later finds out that there is no place "outside ourselves that can serve us as our foundation" (Woods 156). Thus she chooses to be withdrawn into a cave which she has made for herself and be

safe and anonymous. By writing her autobiography Kamala Das frees herself from the shackles of conservative womanhood which was adored in India and breathes an 'air of unconventionality and urgency'. She realizes that there is no scope for being noble and wishes for an intense life. Through her autobiography she foregrounds her inner self and attains control of the patriarchal society, she believes.

The postmodern unreliability is obvious in the writings of Kamala Das. Through her writings she wrote about her distorted married life, to which she was compelled into, and the frustrations of married life are washed off by the process of writing for Kamala. But she contradicts her own writings in the interviews. Often she speaks of her loving husband and caring family which gave her support for her existence including writing. She remembers how happy she was with Das, her husband, and how she felt alone without him after his death. The designation of the auto biography as fictional itself advocates to her unreliability. This is evident from the comments of Nila Shah and Pramod Nayar:

> Kamala Das' candour, daring thematisation of taboo subjects, a celebration of the woman's identity…ambivalence of attitude towards the past/tradition, a highly self –reflexive and interrogative stance of the poet can be identified as a post modern trend… Her writing is explicit and frank, frequently violent, earthy, strongly individualistic, meditative and esoteric, paralytically nostalgic and sentimental, gender conscious and uniformly "clever". (49)

Self consciousness pervades the writings of Kamala including her autobiography. She is aware of the gender divisions, and the image culture has shaped for her. Society categorizes women who do not fit into the structured conventions as queer or aberrant. "The self projected in the autobiography is the self that is tried to fit in to these conventions at least in the superficial level," says Pillai but failed miserably because

she realized that the demanding culture cannot be catered and opted for isolation.

Thus through the so called frank and rebellious autobiography Kamala intervened and disturbed the extolled ethical codes of the conservative society. She filled her writing with a 'deceptive casualness' (Kohli 176) which had mass appeal and she could register her protest against the patriarchal society though she had to pay for it.

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Elizabeth and Darcy as the Personifications of Ego and Superego

A Psychoanalytic Approach to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Stishin K. Paul

In the *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry defines psychoanalytic criticism: "Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature" (94). Psychoanalytic criticism, being the application of the psychoanalytic theory, made possible with Sigmund Freud's publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* and has its basis on three assumptions. In the first place, it held that the activities of the human mind are largely unconscious and we have no direct control over it. Secondly, it argued that the major constitutive element of human behaviour is sex. That is, one's altitude to sex determines the person's behaviour. Thirdly, the psyche can be divided into three psychic zones as *Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. *Id* constitutes the libidinal or instinctual part of human psyche. *Ego* stands for reason and reality. *Superego* stands for the moral concepts of life which was developed against the background of social taboos and religious beliefs. And this paper is an attempt to explore the psychic zone that is predominant in the two major characters of the *Pride and Prejudice* of Jane Austen, viz., Mr. Darcy and Miss. Elizabeth Bennet. Here the tool, that has to be used, is tripartite theory of Freud.

Freud assigned the mental activity of human being to three psychic zones—*Id*, *Ego*, and *Superego*. The *Id* is completely unconscious and a large portion of *Ego* and

Superego is also unconscious. The *Id* is the source of libidinal desires and pleasure principle. He considered this pleasure principle as the primordial life principle. It is constituted by instincts and hence devoid of any value, concept of good and evil or of morality. It contains two drives: *Libido* or *Eros* and *Thanatos*, that is, sex and aggression. *Libido* or *Eros* represents the life force in the human being which urges the person to live, prosper and produce offspring; whereas *Thanatos* accounts for the instinctual violent urge of human being. It is written in a *Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*:

> The id is, in short, the source of all our aggressions and desires. It is lawless, asocial, and amoral. Its function is to gratify our instincts for pleasure without regard for social conventions, legal ethics, or moral restraint. Unchecked, it would lead us to any lengths-to destruction and even self-destruction-to satisfy its impulse for pleasure. Safety for the self and for others does not lie within the province of id: its concern is purely for instinctual gratification, heedless of consequence. (157)

The *Id* constitutes the largest part of the mind. It was not an invention of Freud; rather, the recognition of such unreflective drives was already made. In tradition, there existed many phrases to denote this concept. In religion, such primal impulses were equated to devil. In order to show that these instincts are primary and basic, the writers used the phrase 'old Adam'. Learner in *The Literary Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* writes:

> Phrases such as the old Adam suggest that the unreflective drives of self-gratification are somehow primary and basic, that the moral life is attained by the imposition on them of other levels of mental activity. (61)

But the distinctive feature of Freudian *Id* was that he divided its content into the primal and instinctive and the repressed. Freud says: "But the repressed merges into the id as well, and

is merely a part of it. The repressed is only cut off sharply from the ego by the repression; it can communicate with the ego through the id" (qtd. in Gay, 635).

Since this *Id* is endowed with dangerous potentialities it is necessary to have an agency to control it and one of these agencies is called *Ego*. In his essay on "The Ego and the Id" Freud defines *Ego*: "It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the Pcpt.-Cs. [perceptual conscious]; in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation" (qtd. in Gay, 635). Hence there is no strict separation between *Id* and *Ego*, but its lower portion merges with *Id*. The *Ego* puts restriction on id by bringing upon it the influences of the external world. It also tries to replace the pleasure principle that guides the *Id* with the reality principle. Freud calls it as the reason or common sense.

In order to clarify the relation between *Id* and *Ego*, Freud brings the image of a horse rider. Accordingly, just as the horse rider exercises force to control the horse, the *Ego* exercises its force on the *Id*, on its attempts to fulfil its passions. He says:

> The functional importance of the ego is manifested in the fact that normally control over the approaches to motility devolves upon it. Thus in its relation to the id it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with the difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed force. (qtd. in Gay, 636)

Freud called this *Ego* as the bodily ego because the *Ego* is derived eventually from the sensations of the body, mainly from those sensations that spring from the surface of the body. Hence the *Ego* is the "projection of a surface" (Gay 637). Besides, even though the *Ego* is largely unconscious, it also comprises what we ordinarily consider to be conscious mind (Guerin 157).

Another regulating agent of *Id* is *Superego*. Freud calls it 'ego ideal'. He says: "The considerations that led us to assume the existence of a grade in the ego, a differentiation within the ego, which may be called the 'ego ideal' or 'Superego', have been stated elsewhere" (qtd. in Gay, 638). *Superego* is the moral censuring agency and is equivalent to the conscience. It works either directly or indirectly through the *Ego* and represses or inhibits the drives of *Id* which are harmful to the social existence. It also subjugates the impulses towards pleasures that are socially unacceptable and thrushes them back to the unconscious.

Freud speaks of the development of this *Superego*. In the first place he finds it as the outcome of the oedipal instinct of the child. He states:

> The broader general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipal complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications [father-identification and mother-identification, since the child is bisexual] in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or Superego. (qtd. in Gay, 641)

Secondly he finds that the *Superego* is the result of the parental control over the child. When the child does the things that pleases the parents, it is rewarded and if it does the things that are against the interest of the parents, it is punished. The child repeats the things that is rewarded and idealises such things; whereas, it suppresses such acts that are punished. This parental control can be exerted on the child by religion and society or by totem and taboos. When the *Ego* is guided by the reality principle, the Superego is guided by morality principle

The domination of the *Superego* will make a person rigidly moral, judgmental and unbending. According to Saul McLeod, the Superego "incorporates the values and morals of society which are learnt from one's parents and others." It

provides instructions on how to behave in a society, how to treat other people and how one ought to be. If the *Superego* is high, it will lead to demean other people. And the close study of the characters of Elizabeth and Darcy will shed light to the fact that their encounter was an incongruity between ego and superego at the end of which the superego is transformed and controlled by ego.

In the beginning of the novel, Mr. Darcy is presented as an aristocratic gentleman with the fortune of ten thousand pounds per year and of a beautiful estate in Derbyshire, England and a person with high self-esteem. His *Superego* is deeply revealed in his denial of dancing with Elizabeth in the very first part of the novel. When he was asked by Mr. Bingley to dance with Elizabeth, his response was this:

> . . . he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."
>
> Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him. . . . (22)

According to Austen, despite of his fine, tall and handsome features and noble mien, he was

> discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend. (21)

His states of mind are revealed by Austen through their external results to himself and to others. Though he was well bred, his manners were not inviting. He was "haughty, reserved and fastidious" (26).

During the time of Austen, the snobberies of rank were too sharp. Mr. Darcy was a victim of such attitude. It is because of his snobbish nature he feels that the relation of Mr. Bingley with Bennet's family will be destructive to his status and rank. While clarifying the accusations of Elizabeth through the letter, Mr. Darcy indicates the reason for separating Mr. Bingley from Jane. "The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father" (185). His snobbish nature is again revealed when he speaks of the intricate characters. Demarcating the country people, he says: "'The country,' said Darcy, 'can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society'" (49). It was because of his high ideal, he was not ready to reveal the shortcomings of Mr. Wickham to the public. Mrs. Gardiner explains the reason for Darcy's involvement in finding out Wickham and Lydia as follows:

> The motive professed, was his conviction of its being owing to himself that Wickham's worthlessness had not been so well known, as to make it impossible for any young woman of character, to love or confide in him. (291)

He is presented as a generous and benevolent man very much liked by his tenants. He was always eager to maintain their high opinion about him. As a person of high morality, he does not want the people to know his generosity. So he gives his financial support in secret. This is the same that happens in the case of Lydia's elopement. With the help of Gardiners he secretly settles the demands of Mr. Wickham. He asks the Gardiners to tell the Bennet family that they are assisted by Mr. Gardiner.

According to Hannon, Jane Austen's concept of a snob was not about class, family and title but about intellect, thoughtfulness and manners (110). This view of Jane Austen

is embodied in the character Mr. Darcy. It is because of this attitude he could appreciate Jane and Elizabeth and also Gardiners beyond the impropriety of Bennet family. Even when he speaks ill of her family, he bestows appreciation on Jane and Elizabeth.

> It pains me to offend you. But amidst your concern for the defects of your nearest relations, and your displeasure at this representation of them, let it give you consolation to consider that, to have conducted yourselves so as to avoid any share of the like censure, is praise no less generally bestowed on you and your eldest sister, than it is honourable to the sense and disposition of both. (185-86)

He also finds pleasure in the company of Gardiner's family. At the end of the novel Austen gives a rather clear account of their relation.

> With the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them. (351)

It was with the harsh accusation that is darted against him by Elizabeth and her denial of his proposal that forced him to evaluate himself.

In the novel, Miss Elizabeth Bennet is portrayed as a woman with sound ego; a woman with great reason and common sense. There are many instances that provide evidences to her perfect control over her Id and Superego. In the first place, we will see her perfect control over her emotion during the ball in Netherfield Park. There Darcy was asked by Bingley to dance with her. He refuses this invitation by saying that she is not pretty enough to tempt him. About her response on this occasion, Austen writes:

> . . . and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feeling towards him. She told the story however with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively,

> playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous. (22)

Her father had a higher opinion about her intellect. According to him, she "has something more of quickness than her sisters" (16).

Her assessments of the individuals are sharp and accurate. The exception was only in the case of the estimation of Darcy. At first, she finds him as a man of pride and opines about him to Wickham.

> Upon my word I say no more here than I might say in any house in the neighbourhood, except Netherfield. He is not at all liked in Hertfordshire. Everybody is disgusted with his pride. You will not find him more favourably spoken of by any one. (80)

But as soon as she came to know that she was wrong, she corrects it beyond her Superego. When her father speaks of the pride of Darcy after informing his marriage proposal for her, she strongly refutes it.

> 'I do, I do like him,' she replied, with tears in her eyes, 'I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms'. (341)

Robert Garis in his critical essay "Learning Experience and Change" observes the change of Elizabeth's attitude towards Darcy.

> Elizabeth Bennet is something of a rebel against pretension and pomposity and pride, but when she learns to love Darcy, she sees his strength of principle and soundness of judgement, even his stiff reserve, not as limitations to her freedom, but as means to her own self-fulfilment. (70)

Again her perfect control over emotions is clear in her dealings with Wickham. Though she was attracted by his manners at the first meeting, she keeps a respectful distance. It is because of that, when she was warned by Mrs. Gardiner of such an affair, she could refuse it with great ease.

Moreover, even after her awareness of the dishonesty of Wickham, she manages to treat him without showing any sign of her indignation towards him. Even after his elopement and return, she could keep the same manners.

Differing from the common attitude of the girls of her age, she holds a rational view of marriage. For her, marriage is not a means of establishment but a dynamic union of two individuals. It is because of this vision, she rejects the first proposal of Darcy and also the proposal of Mr. Collins. She tells Jane:

> My dear Jane, Mr. Collins is conceited, pompous, narrow-minded, silly man; you know he is, as well as I do; and you must feel, as well as I do, that the woman who marries him, cannot have a proper way of thinking. (131-32)

It is due to her confrontation with him that Darcy becomes aware of the negative impact of the over-domination of the *Superego* and endeavours to correct himself. Just as *ego* controls *superego* by bringing it to the reality of life, Elizabeth brings him down from his snobbishness to the reality of life. His confession to Elizabeth about his snooty nature is the well proof of his attitudinal change. He says:

> As a child I was taught what was right, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principle, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only son, (for many years an only child) I was spoilt by my parents, who though good themselves, (my father particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable), allowed encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own. (334)

Being aware of this, he reforms himself and develops a sound ego. Gilbert Ryle in his critical essay "Jane Austen and the Moralists" commends on his change of attitude:

> Darcy is, to start with, haughty and snobbish, a true nephew of Lady Catherine de Burgh. His early love for Elizabeth is vitiated by condescension. He reforms into a man with pride of the right sort. He is proud to be able to help Elizabeth and her socially embarrassing family. He now knows what is due from him as well as what is due to him. (109)

He is presented as Elizabeth's equal who develops from complicacy to self-knowledge and reformation.

To conclude, Patrice Hannon in his work *101 Things You Didn't Know about Jane Austen: The Truth about the World's Most Intriguing Romantic Literary Heroine* writes:

> Many people who haven't actually read Jane Austen have an idea of her as a prim and proper writer of ladylike prose, or perhaps a writer of extravagant Regency romances. A reading of her novels, with their sharp, dry wit, splendid nonsense, and intricate exploration of the psychological truths behind human behaviour, will completely explode this mistaken notion. (26)

The study of the referential nature of the characters of Darcy and Elizabeth will provide solid proof to this perspective. Jane Austen, being the part of nineteenth century fiction conceived certain Victorian conviction that "Character is a referent" (Oakleaf 296). The characters are graphitized with such a care and artistic skill to believe that they are the living examples of our on psyche. For her, the characters were more important than the plot. And here, through the characters of Darcy and Elizabeth, Jane Austen was aiming nothing but to show the conflict between ego and superego which was prevalent not only within one's mind but also in the social system of her contemporary England. Thus, Darcy and Elizabeth becomes to referents of their society which was marked with high pompousness.

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Power is Productive

Co-existence of Power and Resistance in *Foucault's Pendulum* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

Harish Jose

Contrary to the traditional notions of power which is characterized by its oppressive nature alone, foucauldian power is advantageous in its productive nature. In order to escape from the various forms of manipulative techniques, those, under power, seek alternative measures to tackle the situation resulting in the exploration of the possibilities in fullness. Here the three major power enforcing techniques of foucauldian power, namely, hierarchical observation, normalizing techniques, and examination gets a positive result. Considering foucauldian notion of power as the crux of postmodern power, this paper analyses the manifestation of the productive nature of power in two of the seminal works of postmodern literature—Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. While Foucault's Pendulum narrates the story of three editors—Belbo, Casaubon, Diotallevi—getting involved in a game of tracing the history of Knight Templars and reaches at a point from which they are unable to escape, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* revolves around a mental asylum in Oregon and the "revolutionary" activities of Randle Patrick McMurphy to weaken the dominating power of Big Nurse. Although set in dissimilar contexts, the intertwining nature of power and resistance forms a platform for comparative study.

In his "The Subject and Power" Foucault urges for the search of existing hidden relations of power stating about "a new economy of power relations, a way which is more

empirical, more directly related to our present situation and which implies more relations between theory and practice" (82). Accordingly one has to investigate the forms of resistance in order to understand power relations permeating in all spheres of social life. But quite contrary to the expected attack on the existing power mechanisms, McMurphy, the male protagonist of *OFOCN*, also tries to create his own world of power veiled in the form of resistance. Extended uses of various existing power mechanisms create different kinds of power manifestations in the society. Similar to the use of available forms of power relations in both Fascism and Nazism, the asylum in *OFOCN* represents a galaxy of mechanisms of power which materialize itself in the various actions of Big Nurse and her three helpers. It is against this "pathological forms" of power relations McMurphy raises his voice.

Power creates a form of resistance contributing indirectly to its own existence. In his *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault states that "where there is power there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (95). Resistance can emerge mainly in two different forms; either it can become a part of the dominating power structure or it can be a force from outside trying to survive the impacts of the existing power combinations. As per the foucauldian notions, without resistance, power cannot exist. Foucault argues:

> Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of power relations are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent still others that are

> quick to compromise, interested or sacrificial by definition they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. (96)

Another feature of resistance that Foucault explains is its uncertain character in its manifestations. Resistance is inscribed in the power as an "irreducible opposite." He says:

> the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of body, certain moments of life, certain types of behaviour. (*History* 96)

Considering *OFOCN*, the character of McMurphy and the different kinds of attempts made by him and the other inmates whom he instigates for a rebellion can be seen as examples for the resistance from outside. Sara Mills's reading of foucauldian notion of power and resistance is of much significance here. According to her, Foucault had an understanding of dispersed and diffused version of resistance as he believed in the all inclusive nature of power (48). Similar to the means used by the power to reach its ends, the resistance goes for the same methods to ruin power. She also points out the disadvantage of such a diffused nature of resistance saying,

> the downside of such a diffused set of resistance strategies is that with such a broad-based agenda and diversity of aims it is difficult to co-ordinate resistance or even to know, still less agrees on, what aims everyone is trying to achieve. (48)

Although McMurphy's effort to mess up the Big Nurse's power has a tragic end in the end of the novel, he succeeds to an extant to disseminate his acts of resistance in the same methods used by the Big Nurse.

The arrival of McMurphy with his loud voice and wild laughter foretells the time for the beginning of resistance in the asylum. Bromden, the narrator of *OFOCN*, feels the

inner courage expressed in each move of McMurphy thinking that McMurphy is

> sailing fifty yards overhead, hollering at those below at ground. He sounds big. I hear him coming down the hall, and he sounds big in the way he walks, and he sure don't slide; he's got iron on his heels and he rings it on the floor like horseshoes. (10)

The anxious silence among the inmates makes McMurphy laugh and Bromden discovers the difference in the laugh of McMurphy and that of the Public Relation that it is "free and loud and it comes out of his wide grinning mouth and spreads in rings bigger and bigger till it's lapping against the walls all over the ward. Not like the fat Public Relations laugh. This sounds real" (11). The laugh itself becomes a weapon in the hands of McMurphy to resist the authority of the Big Nurse and announce the beginning of new power relations. The inmates listen to the laugh of freedom after a long time.

Along with laughter McMurphy uses various other methods to get hold of the power structure. Daniel J. Vitkus in his "Madness and Misogyny in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*" points out male hand as a recurring motif in the novel. McMurphy successfully creates a connecting link among the differently "divided" and categorized inmates of the asylum. The hand shaking becomes one of the main symbols of this male bonding in the novel. Bromden remembers:

> McMurphy comes down to the line of chronics, shakes hands with Colonel Matterson and with Ruckly and with Old Pete. He shakes the hands of wheelers and walkers and vegetables, shakes hands that he has to pick up out of laps like picking dead birds, mechanical birds, wonders of tiny bones and wire that run own and fallen. Shakes hands with everybody… (21)

The resistance and power in *OFOCN* is intricately connected with the idea of movement. The resisting capacity

of McMurphy is not something that started after being a member of the asylum. Chief Bromden respects McMurphy since he feels that McMurphy is free from the Combine's control. Instead of being fixed to a particular point in the network of power, McMurphy could maintain his movement. Constant movement signifies not being under the control as Bromden believes

> McMurphy growed so wild all over the country, batting around from one place to another, never around the town longer than a few months when he was a kid so a school never got much hold on him… keeping on the move so much that the Combine never had a chance to get anything installed. (84)

Unlike that of McMurphy, the movements of the inmates are limited to a few rooms inside the asylum. They do not have the opportunity to open up themselves to broaden their viewpoints. Also they are in constant surveillance and the visibility allows the Big Nurse to control and suppress their urge for resistance. The limited movement in the asylum makes McMurphy's desire for resistance to die out gradually. It is his frustration to come out of this paranoiac feeling that prompted him to attack the Big Nurse.

The Group Meeting, the very same mechanism created by the Big Nurse to suppress the voice of the inmates, gradually develops into an atmosphere for expressing their ideas and demands their needs. The inmates start responding to the ordered and rule-oriented style of the Big Nurse, in the playful and careless methods of McMurphy. Incidentally the Group Meetings, along with their leisure time, create an unspoken unity among them having the Combine as their common enemy. When he brings up the issue of the radio being played in high volume, McMurphy gets support from many of the inmates. Believing in the possibility of a more unified association among themselves McMurphy comes with common demand for carnival and protest against rationing of cigarettes. One of the most noteworthy incidents related to the idea of resistance is McMurphy's attempt to

boycott the assigned work protesting the refusal of the unanimous demand for watching the football world series on television. He gets support from fellow inmates as all of them stop their work and join him to sit in front of the blanked out TV.

There are various examples for the gradual change that emerges slowly with the revolutionary attitude of McMurphy. The resistance from the part of McMurphy and the group of the like-minded gets a remarkable turn when they successfully bring Dr. Spivey to their side. They get the support of the doctor for the idea of carnival and shifting the card game to another room. Even though McMurphy tried to form a basketball team, the idea does not work for long since the ball gets punctured. Following this they arrange one deep-sea fishing trip in the leadership of McMurphy. He also arranges for the company of two prostitutes for their trip. Since doctor, one of the primary weapons of the Big Nurse, becomes a part of their trip the resistance against the totalitarian mentality of the nurse seems to be a great success at least for some time. Later Candy and Sandy visit the asylum again with bottles of port wine and vodka. They enjoy their time drinking and smoking cigarettes in the day room. All these activities signify the expression of inner freedom that the inmates enjoy with their new understanding toward life. Although these are seemingly silly incidents, they form the minute points of resistance in the novel. The fact that the postmodern power relations, although becomes oppressive at times in their action, exist in its cohabitation with resistance can be seen in the frequency of acts of resistance in it. Resistance is a never ending activity as acts of power are. The reason for this everlasting resistance is its surety of failure in reaching its desired goal.

The second form of resistance is closely related to the dominating power itself. Barry Smart in his *Michel Foucault* observes that "power and resistance are synonymous with sociality; their respective forms may change, but a society without relations of power and therefore forms of resistance

in Foucault's view is inconceivable" (133). One of the strange aspects of the both power and resistance is that both of them play the roles of each other at the same time. This is where Foucault's observation that every relationship of power implies a potential strategy of struggle. Agilie, who seems to dominate in the relations of power in *FP*, is doubtful about his own arena of power where he demands Belbo to reveal the secret only to him. He does not trust his own people fearing his own tragic end in the hands of his own people. Each of the characters in the novel tries to maintain while resisting the power of others. The seeds of destruction come along with the growth of a structure, whether it is of the power or that of resistance.

Even though the power of the three editors in *FP* seems to develop along with their attempts to create knowledge, it seems to have a diminishing nature with the revelation of the rotted sides of each of the characters. The initial interest in the search for knowledge is unveiled to be the results of Belbo's unconscious childhood obsession for creativity. Efforts to overcome the challenge posed by Agilie slows down with the physical ailment of Diotallevi since the fear of having a connection between his disease and the creation of conspiracy theories gets rooted in Belbo and Casaubon.

It should be noted that the power channelling through the three editors is baseless since it has been built on a bunch of assumptions. Starting from a decayed parchment given by Colonel Ardenti, they develop their theory without much relation to the existing history. They also depend on "Abulafia", the personal computer of Belbo, to create random connections between bits of information whenever they are unable to find connections. Casaubon feels that

> tormented by the daily remorse that for years and years he had lived with ghosts of his own making, he was now finding a solace in ghosts that were becoming objective, since they were known also to others, even though he was the enemy. (531)

The frustration of having lived in a self- constructed world of illusions prompts Belbo to create another world for himself. Here Belbo himself becomes the resistance in the process of the construction of power.

The failure of the secret societies in the end of *FP* comes from their mania for a darker image of themselves. They want to live in their constructed world of secret societies. It is not the map they need, rather, they want an evidence to hold on to their traditional belief that secret societies exist, since they know that their power, though assumed, exists only in relation with such a belief. They kill Belbo only because they fear the nonexistence of such a map. Similar to that of Belbo the fear that the constructed world would collapse creates a resisting point in their power. Casaubon comes to understand this in the end when he says,

> we invented a nonexistent plan, and They not only believed it was real but convinced themselves that They had been part of it for ages, or rather, They identified the fragments of their muddled mythology as moments of our Plan, moments joined in a logical, irrefutable web of analogy, semblance, suspicion. (619)

McMurphy in *OFOCN* faces the same trouble when he wants to create another power structure pretending that he wants to create resistance for the existing domination of the Big Nurse. The Big Nurse rightly assumes that the revolt of McMurphy would subside if given enough time and circumstances. A group of young doctors suggest transferring McMurphy to the Disturbed ward as a punishment. But the Big Nurse strongly opposes the idea since she believes that the revolt or resistance of McMurphy has possibility for its own ruin. As per her understanding transferring him to the Disturbed ward would bring a heroic status for McMurphy. She says;

> He isn't extraordinary. He is simply a man and no more, and is subject to all the fears and all the

> cowardice and all the timidity that any other man is subject to. Given a few more days, I have a very strong feeling that he will prove this, to us as well as the rest of the patients. If we keep him on the ward I am certain that his brashness will subside, and his self-made rebellion will dwindle to nothing… (137)

The Big Nurse, considering the resistance of McMurphy as his power, hopes that it will end by itself since it is nothing other than selfishness that leads McMurphy to create trouble for the authority. She says: "he's simply fond of someone. As a psychopath, he's much too fond of a Mr. Randle Patrick McMurphy to subject him to any needless danger" (137). The unavoidable influence of one's selfish nature defining the course of the power formations can be seen in the major power combinations of both novels. It becomes one of the primary reasons for the unsuccessful nature of the power struggle.

The failure of McMurphy's resistance has many other reasons. The betrayal of Billy Bibbit in the end of *OFOCN* shows the existence of potential resistance within the group formation of McMurphy. Billy Bibbit was being trained by McMurphy to escape from the forced childhood of his life. But unable to escape from his habit, Bibbit easily succumbs to the Big Nurse's insistence to accuse McMurphy as the culprit behind the disorder in the asylum.

The act of resistance, similar to that of power, is not an exchange only between the Big Nurse and McMurphy. It happens in all the relations and mutual interactions in the novel as can be seen in the sympathetic response of Dale Harding, when he was attacked by the other inmates in one of the Group Meetings. There is an element of resistance against the same structure of power in his allegations saying:

> you are a rabbit too, don't try to avoid the truth. That's why I hold no grudge against you for the questions you asked me for the meeting today. You were only playing your role. If you had been on the carpet, or you Billy, or you Fredrickson, I would

> have attacked you just as cruelly you attacked me. (59)

The resistance happens everywhere in the power relations.

Similar to the potential threat in the developing power formation of McMurphy, the Big Nurse is aware of the chance for the budding elements of potential threat in her own power structure. Resistance in the form of emerging dangers can be expected from any member of her own staff. The Big Nurse is afraid of even the young residents coming to visit the asylum. She expects threats to her power even from them as

> she is suspicious of the crew-cut looks of these residents, and that the fifty minutes they are on the ward is a tough time for her. While they are around the machinery goes to fumbling and she is scrowling and making notes to check the records of these boys for old traffic violations and the like…" (33).

Her fear can be detected from her attempt to prevent the Black Boys, the staff of asylum, from grouping together. She trains the Boys to her own regulations that "when she finally gets the three she wants—gets them one at a time over a number of years, weaving them into her plan and her network" (26). She selects doctors to her hospital only according to the nature that suits her own wishes. She selects Dr. Spivey, the docile doctor who she thinks would never go beyond her orders. In another instance, Mr. Turkle, one of the staffs of the asylum, joins the inmates in their celebration with smoking cigarettes and drinking, and even helps them to bring in two prostitutes without other staffs of the asylum knowing it.

The probability of resistance in every power structure is so sure that the doctor supports the inmates in many of their demands. The Combine goes wrong in assessing the nature of doctor, since he supported the inmates in their demands for arranging a carnival and shifting the card game to another room so that the volume of the music can be reduced. The danger created by the doctor reaches the top level when he

joins the inmates for the deep-sea fishing trip despite the dislike of the Big Nurse.

The mutual interaction among the opposing elements has got special significance in connection with the fear of the unknown in both novels. Even the fear of the dominating power structure, which is resisted by the dominated structure, becomes a reason for the ruin of the resistance. While waiting in the museum, Casaubon, in *FP*, feels;

> To escape the power of the unknown, to prove to you in yourself that you don't believe in it, you accept its spells. Like an avowed atheist who sees the evil at night, you reason: He certainly does not exist; this is therefore an illusion, perhaps result of indigestion. But the Devil is sure that he exists, and believes in upside–down theology. (164)

There is struggle taking place in each point of resistance; an inner battle to support the power structure at any cost. Although unconsciously, the power structure successfully makes use of this ambivalent situation. This struggle can be seen in these words of Casaubon.

Another important point of failure in the resistance to the power of Agilie and the group is Belbo's obscure relationship with Lorenza. She is always elusive to Belbo making it difficult for him to go forward in their relationship. The situation worsens with the coming of Agilie, who seems to have a better relationship with her. Belbo gets tensed over this, as Lorenza flirts with the same person on whom they wanted to have power. Here the three editors are having resistance from their own group. They lost their relationship with Agilie, while they saw Lorenza being under his influence.

For Foucault, power cannot exist without certain amount of resistance since resistance actively and unintentionally contributes to the enrichment of power. Resistance is not in attempting to corner one particular individual, rather it, just like power, spreads like a network and reaches out to each

character whenever he or she seems to exercise any mode of power.

Being an intellectual battle for power with knowledge as the claim, *FP* has traces of resistance in the process of "creation" of knowledge from a mere old parchment believed to be a part of the secret knowledge. By cooking up conspiracy theories, the three editors try to satisfy their unconscious desire to be more powerful than Agilie who, they thought, should be resisted at any cost. Even though not considered as an announced agenda, the three editors unanimously exclude Agilie from their discussions related to the secret societies. The creation of TRES, the imaginary secret society is a mode of resistance and an attempt to declare their power over Agilie.

Similarly power and resistance work simultaneously in the character of Agilie for attaining and retaining his apparently powerful position. His, rather, romantic relationship with Amparo, the first lover of Casaubon and, Lorenza Pelligrini, the love interest of Belbo, indirectly establishes a position of power for him. It also helps him to keep both Belbo and Casaubon at a distance and in a challenging position.

Unlike the conventional concept of power, where the success is aimed and expected at its best, the postmodern version of power is doomed to failure at any chance. Just like resistance, failure is written into it. McMurphy's much awaited rebellion fails to achieve its goal and ends without making much difference in any of the policies of the hospital. Although it gives courage for some of the inmates to stop their voluntary commitment, the power formulation remains the same even at the end. Michel Foucault's conception of state as a codification numerous power points make an easy study of the asylum in the *OFOCN* as a differently coded power structure even after the revolution. Everything remains the same with a better and stronger chance for continuation.

The failure happens because the revolt is just another form of "anti-authority struggle" in foucauldian phrase. Although McMurphy's endeavour to thwart the totalitarian regime of the Big Nurse is a part of the mode of resistance, it limits itself to a mere anti-authority struggle when it does not find the real enemy as in the case of any evading postmodern power. Initially McMurphy makes a grave mistake in his assumption and declaration that the Big Nurse is the culprit for their pathetic situation. McMurphy and other inmates fail to identify the nature of the combine and its network kind of structure of which the Big Nurse forms just a part. In his "The Subject and Power" Foucault argues that in anti-authority struggles people criticize instances of power which are closest to them, those which exercise their actions on individuals. They do not look for the "chief enemy" but the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at future date (that is liberation, revolution, and end of class struggle) (98). The main problem with the anti authority struggles is that it not only fails to get hold of the real enemy, but also goes for the ruins the possibility for the wider sources of power. The Combine, the real enemy, escapes punishment with McMurphy's attack on the Big Nurse leaving the Combine to introduce new Big Nurse in the place of the old one. Even though McMurphy attacks the Big Nurse and makes her numb, the effect of the attack remains invalid since the possibility for another Big Nurse is always open. Foucault argues that power is intentional and non subjective simultaneously making it unclear about the origin of power.

In spite of its incapacity to attain the desired goal, the anti- authority struggle automatically traps the individual and limits his potentialities in himself as an individual and in the society as a social being. It "breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on him and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way" (Foucault "Subject", 98). It creates an awareness of one's own status in relation with other relations.

Power in its ultimate game makes the participants unsuccessful and continues to lure them into itself. McMurphy epitomizes the failure of resistance at the end that he does not find his own position in the game of power and merely adjusts to being trapped in his own limitations. As is said in the introduction of *OFOCN*

> "true to the fate of every trickster, he becomes trapped by his own tricks. He cannot resist the temptation to strike through the inscrutable and intractable mask of the nurse and deprive her of her claims to authority and purity. His gambling and his appetites make everyone around him vulnerable to a house that doesn't tolerate high rollers. (xxii)

As has been discussed earlier, one of the most remarkable differences in the postmodern conception of power from the long-established notion is the assertion of the repressive nature of power in all the circulating discourses. Calling it "repressive hypothesis," Foucault takes this understanding of power to another level in finding the positive and productive capacity of power. Even though resistance ends in failure, the interaction between power and resistance results in the production of new possibilities.

An emerging discourse which attempts to counter the existing discourse results in the creation of multiple forms of innovative ideas. The various methods of discourse and elements of knowledge in the malicious discourse of the Big Nurse have a strong rival in the new discourse created by McMurphy in *OFOCN*. The attempts to suppress any upcoming idea naturally results in the creation of the various modes of the same idea. An example is given by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* where he talks about the concern developed in the nineteenth century about male children's masturbation and the attempts made by the elders to give directives to end such practices through a large number of manuals and journals. It created a panoptic atmosphere for the children indirectly making a chance for the development of a suppressed and curious discourse of the infantile

sexuality ultimately resulting in the repetitive conversation about the same sexuality, it tried to suppress. The creation of new forms of sexuality happened with these frequent discourses. Likewise, the Big Nurse had been suppressing any surfacing idea which had even the least potential capacity to lead to a revolt against her authority in the asylum as can be seen in her attempts to scrutinize all the circulating discourses in her favour.

Postmodern power, although it has an apparent repressing nature, indirectly forces its victims to conform to itself. Most of the members of the asylum in *OFOCN* are voluntarily admitted, since they expect some change to take place. Power leads to the opening up of multiple kinds of reactions resulting in new tracts of discourse as in the conversations. Even though McMurphy's protest cannot be considered genuine in its intentions, the effect it creates in the community is positive and productive. A new awareness about the harmful medications they receive is spread among the inmates. McMurphy's approach to deal with the Group Meetings gives courage to the other inmates and they also start raising common issues demanding solutions. Even though the fellow inmates are reluctant to raise their hands in support of McMurphy's request to vote for watching the World Series football, they have a steady change as the plot develops. The changes in the characters symbolically stand for the new directions they have adopted in their attitude towards life at least for the time being. Towards the end of the novel Chief Bromden is able to retain his clear sight moving away from the illusory fog which was affecting him. A total revolution does not take place. Yet, the inmates get an understanding of various possibilities of living in a repressive situation. Multiple discourses arise in order to counter the multiple dominating discourses of the Combine.

The productive nature of power gets a different dimension in *FP* since the plot revolves around the production of knowledge as the main action. The search for knowledge related to secret societies was solely aimed at

being more powerful. The Garamond press calls for manuscripts related to Occultism and numerous manuscripts are discussed in the publishing house. The discussion does not lead to convincing and logical history; it throws light on the production of history. It leads to various realizations for the three editors. While discussing the stale manuscript he has got, Colonel Ardenti says "official history is written by the victors" (123). Being the remaining victim of the power struggle Casaubon recalls the incidents that led to the current situation. He realizes how people behave if put in various new situations. The power relations in the novel have lead to new power combinations. The relation between Agilie and Garamond becomes stronger, soon after he is involuntarily ousted from the company of the three editors. The newly formed relation offers prospects for new events like the gathering of the members of secret societies.

As has been stated earlier, postmodern power cannot be seen as having manifested in between two groups, rather it spreads in every relation in the society. Power and resistance take each others role in particular time making it difficult to identify each other. In both novels power relations are accompanied by resistance both from inside and outside. This inevitable co-existence contributes to each other, even though resistance is always fated to end in failure. According to Foucault, seemingly successful resistance will result in a different codification of the old structure of power, which will lead to the repetition of its methods to keep the victims under control. The surety of the failure of resistance makes Foucault call it "anti- authority struggle" which seeks for the immediate enemy and always overlooks the main culprit. Even then postmodern power has some positive effects in foucauldian understanding.

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True Verse from Worse Truth

The Analogous Poetic Universe of Philip Larkin and Satchidanandan

Sandeep T. G.

The primeval history of human civilization edifies us that from the early days of the evolution of human speech, language emerged as a dominant mode of communication which consequently developed into the form of literature with the assistance of the human faculties of intellect and imagination. The renowned Imagist poet Ezra Pound has defined literature as "language charged with meaning" and great literature as "simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree" (67). As man and mankind progressed, Literature, with its multifarious facets and entire possibilities of expressing itself, began to represent human life through myths, folklore, stories, songs, and poems. Poetry, the most ancient and universal form of artistry, is considered to be an exclusive literary medium that exposes the potentialities of verbal expressions with pre-ordained structures and unique word patterns which could ultimately procreate an intellectual and emotional impact in the avid reader. Standing above and beyond the scientific and rational concepts regarding life and the real world is the world of poetry—a world of emotions, mystery and beauty—endowed with the elevated imaginative spirit. Eminent critic I. A. Richards thus considers poetry as "the supreme form of emotive language" (211).

Poets around the world voluntarily strive and struggle hard to reach that exclusive sphere of fancy and fantasy from where they could bring that inspirational fire which could in turn ignite the impulsive demands of their reader community and cater the urgent cultural need of poise as well as

refinement. Their experience, mastery, approach, style of thinking, treatment, syntax, and ideology may vary but ultimately they manifest the truth of human existence through their distinctive word structures. Whether it be a Movement poet from England like Philip Larkin or a Modernist poet in Malayalam like Satchidanandan, they engage themselves fervently in the act of what T. S. Eliot calls "intolerable wrestle with words and meanings" (25–6). Apart from the geographical distances, linguistic dissimilitude, stylistic incongruity and thematic non-conformity, the poetic universes of both Philip Larkin and Satchidanandan demonstrate a clear semblance since their poetic upheaval was intrinsically a cerebral attempt to interfere faithfully in the numerous social issues that they along with their fellowmen faced and experienced within their respective cultural environments.

With significant traces of Yeatsiean influence, the early poems of Larkin, as in the collection *The North Ship* (1945), embody an exalted cerebral verse which he later detested and eventually discarded. He mentions about "irresponsible exploitation of technique in contradiction to human life as we know it" (*All What Jazz*, 16–17). He had in front of him modern stalwarts of English poetry like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, and W. H. Auden, and, by the 60's and 70's, he established a secure place for himself in the modernist tradition of English poetry with collections like *The Less Deceived* (1955), *New Lines* (1956) and *High Windows* (1974). Considered to be one of the prominent voices of the Movement poets, Larkin vocalized his social commitment in his later poems that are anti-modernist, anti-formalist and above all realistic. Disenchanted with the moral depletion of the English society after the World War II, Larkin's prime concern was to make poetry more transparent and honest. His poems focused on life as it is and they targeted the 'marginalised' in a period of national and cultural decline.

1950's and 60's were the creative prime of Larkin and it was almost a decade later that Satchidanandan, along with another young blood Balachandran Chullikkad, entered the Malayalam poetic grounds with a new creative sagacity and sensibility which could undoubtedly be called modern for the unorthodox diction, imagery and thematic rebelliousness. Growing from the romantic and later realistic traditions, modernism in Malayalam poetry sprouted as a result of certain poets like Ayyappa Panikkar, N. N. Kakkad, Attoor Ravivarma who deliberately and creatively deviated from the established poetic axioms and paths and this thematic and stylistic deviation was purely out of their association with modern English poets. But it was with Satchidanandan that Malayalam poetry witnessed a new artistic habit of bizarre imagery and assertive symbolism. The 70's in Kerala was a period when the spirit of defiance and disillusionment of contemporary youth were so deeply imprinted in the cultural arena that it had its reverberations in various art-forms like Drama, Literature and Cinema, thus bringing forth an intellectual culture of enraged and fiery debates on issues of socio-political significance. Chasing the spirits of European Marxist poets and African– Latin-American poets, the young brigade of poets in Kerala heralded a new artistic tradition by breaking all traditional elements. Satchidanandan's poetic designs focus mainly on sincere reproductions of man and his inescapable predicaments, and his creative originality is an extension of his own translucent personality that craves for elemental human truths. His poems derive from our traditions, myths, civilization, history and culture and he tries to visualise the soul of being in the rural and the agrarian roots of India. When Larkin portrayed the degeneration of post-War England with so realistic an eye, Satchidanandan carved a poetic edifice of contemporary India—an India of spiritual enlightenment (Buddha, Kabir, Meera, Thukkaram, Basavanna and the effect of Bhakti/Sufi movement), political chaos (Emergency), ideology formation (Marxism), radicalism, Dalit/Adivasi movements, agrarian regress, moral

dilapidation, neo-liberal outlook, human rights declarations, oppositions to imperialistic and capitalistic tendencies, Gandhian ideologies etc. The poet in him was ever alert to every happening in every sector.

Like Larkin, Satchidanandan is anti-formalist as he negates form in poetry and stresses theme. He says: "My themes are not new: Nature, Love, Death, Liberation: yet each poet rediscovers them as new and with new word combinations leaves the mark and taste of his own period'' (qtd. in Ramakrishnan, 185). This is what he too attempts through his poetic ventures- to leave the mark and taste of his period. In an interview to Radio France he observed that while undergoing the suffering of creation a poet lives many a life in his single birth and each poem is the rebirth of the poet. He adds that since each experience is different, the attempt to find its contour in language gives the thrill and throb as in birth. While we endeavour an exploration into the thematic universe of Satchidanandan we will definitely marvel its mystery, power, candour, rationalism and splendour. The limitless roots of the massive tree of his poetry extends back to the primordial cultural diversity of human race and its originality as is evident in poems like "Bodhavathi", "The Blind who Found the Sun", "Malayalam", and "Aandal Speaks About Love". They do not exist on the surface; rather they explore the depths of a comprehensive humanitarian philosophy that preaches equality, peace and harmony. Responding fiercely to the primary human conditions and predicaments, Satchidanandan's poems utter those myriad philosophies inextricably woven to our socio-cultural existence. They are not merely the nonchalant musings of an indifferent onlooker but faithful renderings of an emotional participant who shares the pangs and angst of his fellow beings. It is in their emancipation that he finds the obvious truth of life and his poems are a quest to reach that land of fundamental individual liberation. As in the poem ("Finger Prints") he states his belief:

I too imprint on this door
A finger print
with my own blood
A reminder, a warning
To those who will come tomorrow
My poetry

Living in a social system dominated by voices of unilateral market economy his pristine poetic culture itself is thus his supreme ideology because he predominantly believes that language does not confine itself to expressing thought, it also aids in constructing it quite in tune with T. E. Hulme who said, "Language does not report things; it makes things happen" (131). His poetry thus evolves in to prophetic introspections that construct vital realities for the present as well as the future. In poems like "Two Contemporary Nightmares",

suddenly sounded a whistle
And there arose the noise of gunfire
Blood from blood
That's how justice was maintained in my land

he portrays macabre realities of death and murder that reveal their inevitably malign presence in the present social order.

While Satchidanandan went on exploring the origins of his culture and traditions and combined the same with present socio-political realities, Larkin dwelled chiefly in contemporary city streets of England alone. Establishing himself at the stature of Poet Laureate of England with just three collections to his credit—*The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974)—Larkin encapsulates the spirit of English life. His life in the cluttered metropolis is the core of his poetic inspiration and his poems are modern epics on that urban/industrialised struggles and existence with odd images of shops, trains and hospitals that function as powerful word-paintings of the modern English life. As we consider the world of Larkin we can see a definite humane concern for a society that is irreparably marred by the intricate systems of cosmopolitan

existence. Larkin's verse is a world of those men who are perpetually entrapped in a labyrinth of banal experiences and they lack the lucidity of true sights and sounds and are even denied of life's realities. Larkin's solitary introspections of English city life are often criticised to be cynical and pessimistic in nature with the forebodings of isolation, suffering, emptiness, passivity and lovelessness. James Wood calls him "a minor registrar of disappointment and a bureaucrat of frustration" (17). In "The Trees" he laments:

> The recent buds relax and spread
> Their greenness is a kind of grief.
> Is that they are born again
> and we grow old? No, they die too.

It is more evident in poems like Ambulances in which he is apprehensive of the fact that – "The traffic parts to let go by / Brings closer what is left to come…" (28–9). It reminds us that enmeshed within the muddle of city life man forgets even the fundamental truths of life and death. Yet it is seen that beyond that gloomy realism in his poems he proclaims an affirmative sensitivity and faith towards human potential to live on. He contrives a dramatic effect in his poems so as to maintain equilibrium between hope and hopelessness. The "Whitsun Weddings" celebrates the real urban surroundings and the nostalgic/romantic countryside and the poem is a splendid study on this contrast. He thinks of his city as, "I thought of London spread out in the sun, / Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat..." (69–70) and thus combines the urban and the rural elements that are interwoven to his poetic imagination. The 'hatless' poet in "Church Going" is none but the representative of lower middle class, an urban atheist, who is in utter confusion who/what is going to fill the void of religious belief when churches fail in existence. Thus "Church Going" becomes a product of that urban culture where faith, religion and its institutions too are at a permanent loss and quite interestingly the poem mourns that very loss as he recognises church as ''a serious house on serious earth'' (55).

Satchidanandan too had cherished these ardent feelings out of keen individual observations on the surrounding environment, the only difference with Larkin being the dissimilitude of cultural identities. The similarities in their artistic cosmos commences from the fact that both of them are observant of their respective social conditions, changes, degenerations and are circumspect on man's role in such conditions. Satchidanandan considers the existence of poetry primarily as a combat against consumerist tendencies and wishes to imagine his poetry as an extensive expedition exploring the possibilities, dimensions and bounds of freedom.. His fierce social reactions can be seen in poems like "The Tree of Justice", "Impartiality", "A Death, Many Deaths", and "No".

Interestingly Larkin's social consciousness too is vigilant as once he ended an interview by mentioning about his poems: "don't judge me by them. Some are better than me, but I add up to more than they do." His literary skirmish against established norms and deep rooted social conventions are evident in "Afternoons, Best Society", "The Life with a Hole in It", and "High Windows". He stood for "responsive poetry" that was rational, lucid and unornamented which he thought was essential in a post-war period, best suited for the then mental environment of England. Thus inspirationally and thematically both these poets share a fuming sense of anger or frustration on the fundamental cultural and moral decay of man. It arises from a nostalgic view of the past that had promised them and their ancestors all the romantic hues of life. Thus in "Primeval Poets" Satchidanandan asks: "Oh primeval poets / render my words the vigour and benevolence of your old sayings". The post-War urban landscape in Europe in general was draped with nihilism and Larkin's poems embody a melancholic lyricism on the loss of social prestige and the end of an Empire. The elegiac lines in "Afternoons": "summer is fading / The leaves fall in ones and twos/ From trees bordering / The new recreation ground…" show the sudden sense of loss. Satchidanandan too had

experienced the same and both these poets wish to return to an era of glory and gaiety on the 'wings of poesy' while looking at the present with an eyeful of dejection.

There is an emphatic spiritual tone in Satchidanandan's poems like "Good Friday", "Summer Season", "Says Kabir", "Sidhilam", "Bertolt Brecht and Gautama Buddha" and "Thukkaram to God". In "Sidhilam" (Disordered) the poet uses his potent weapon of powerful symbolism in the section called God in Poetry and God in Religion which depicts an absorbing anecdote of the meeting of two Gods and the eventual arrest of the God in poetry by the God in religion, who later wanders around, wearing the mask of mercy. The poem ends in a sarcastic comment—"Now it has become difficult even for the poets to decipher him". He blends the constituents of religion and faith with the current socio-political realties so as to construct new paradigms of thought-provoking meanings. In many of his poems Christ and Buddha emerge out of their mystic planes and amalgamates the particular cultural components of the present, acting as agents of revolutions and their spiritual appearances emphasise a humanistic outlook which they preached and practiced. Christ for him is 'a warrior wounded at the hilltop' and Buddha is the one 'who trains the Adivasi villages of Bhojpur about the secrets of revolts'. Thus both these religious idols hardly convey the auguries of love, forgiveness and tolerance but stand as firm guards of revolutionary ideals of indispensable social change.

So is religion for Larkin who deems it malfunctioning, disoriented and almost on the verge of decline. In "Church Going" he asserts: "but superstition like belief must die" (34); yet he does not forget the significance of this institution as he acknowledges it as "A serious house on serious earth it is..." (55). Larkin's spiritual faculties are tarnished by the sophistication of the metropolis that denies peace to his ever-wandering soul. In an era of spiritual disillusionment he could only lament as in "High Windows": "…the deep blue air, that shows / nothing, and is nowhere and is endless…".

In "The Building" he sees a stubbornly 'locked church' denoting the fact that religion is a closed entity before him. Ignoring the faith he had in the past he preaches a new philosophy apt for the present human condition. Religion for him is a vehicle to illumine the realities of human existence which he witnessed. Seamus Heaney's comment is noteworthy in this context: "If Philip Larkin had ever composed his version of Divine Comedy he would probably have discovered himself not in the dark wood but a railway tunnel half-way on a journey down England" (164). We are not to be surprised when Larkin announces in "Water": "If I were called / To construct a religion / I should make use of water. . .."

Beneath the benevolence that Sachidanandan sermonises, there is a zealous revolutionary who ignites the fire of rebellion and who struggles against social imbalances, oppression and marginalisation. His voice is just for them who are deprived of their voice. It is he who has inaugurated a new creed of fray and fury, and for him there is no room left in the contemporary world for the spirit of love but for the spirit of revolution and aggression. He loudly declares his rebellion: "The sighs of a mother could spark off a forest fire on earth..." ("Empty Room") and "Singing Meghamalhar, we will make arrows shower" ("Three Men Sings") and that "From the dim-lit flames of sooted mind a Sun will emerge" ("Miner of Dhanbad"). Likewise Larkin's literary insurgency too was always active against the established norms and institutional conservatism. He announces in "Water" that "And I should raise in the east / A glass of water / Where any angled light would congregate endlessly." His fiery reactions are against situations where "We neither define nor prove / Where you, we dream, obtain no right of entry" ("Dry Point"). He lashes out at churches and reflects that "...the place was not worth stopping for" ("Church Going"). Thus the revolutionary enthusiasm in Larkin and Satchidanandan, imposes the questions of equality fills their poetry with a strong anti-establishment and anti-romantic sentiment. In a

close scrutiny one could find their affiliation to the Marxian ideology as their poems impart concern towards the weaker and segmented classes. The reality that they experienced in their cultural contexts compelled them to think in apparent gloom and their poems end up in a pricking black humour. Satchidanandan's poems like "Siddhartha and the Swan", "Peethambaram", "Effigies", "Grandmother", "The Cat" etc. contain either black humour or satire. Similarly Larkin's "Church Going", "Ambulances", "Counting", and "Toads" hold that conspicuous traces of self-ordained black humour and suffusing satire.

Death/nemesis is a recurrent symbol that these two employ in many of their poems. The thematic world of Sachidananadan reflects death and loneliness and poems like "Summer Rain", "Surekha", "Three Poems on Death", "Empty Room" etc. are definitely elegiac and mournful with their persistence with the theme of appalling gloom and all-pervasive death. He identifies death in many of his poems:

> Remember
> When you place this body into the pyre
> you are burning a city
>
> Remember
> When you lower this body into the grave
> You are burying a populace. (City, A Body)

In "Contrast" he says, "During night I am waiting for death / And my granddaughter extends a piece of apple towards me". In the "Last Message" he prophesies, "Life's good / Yet, sometimes, for someone / Death is better than that". In his poems it is not anguished waiting for a wishful denial of death, but a pragmatic acceptance of it as an inevitable reality. It even appears in the form of suicide or murder or as an ultimate lesson of some rebellion. Death of the marginalised, of innocent children, of Christ, of unknown mothers and sisters, of martyrs appear with thematic vehemence in his poems and proclaim the indefatigable nature of the conclusive destiny. Larkin's obsession with the theme of

death originates from his sense of spiritual void and social aridity which makes him lament in "Next Please": "Only one ship is seeking us, a black / sailed unfamiliar, towering at her back / A huge birdless silence". Not only the misery of death but the waiting for a miserable end is more exasperating: "The marble clock has stopped. The curtained sun / Burns on:the room grows hot...the only sound heard is the sound of tears" ("Femmes Damnees"). In "Aubade" he is still more honest in depicting death:

> Till then I see what's really always there:
> Unresting death, a whole day nearer now
> Making all thought impossible but how
> And where and when I shall die.

In "Dockery and Son" the poet is aware of the devastating voyage of time and is apprehensive: "Life is first boredom, then fear / Whether or not we use it, it goes?... / And age, and then the only end of age". The illusory environment of urban surroundings compel us to ignore the fact of our own mortality and in "Ambulances" Larkin uses the striking symbol of ambulance as a reminder of a sudden end and in "Church Going" the graveyard of the deserted church reminds him of life's full closure.

Their nostalgic love for countrysides, political/ideological equivalence, resemblance in class consciousness, similitude in the sense of annoyance and disillusionment, affinity towards bohemian experimentation with diction and style, common love for irony and satire can be identified as certain other fundamental similarities in the vast poetic landscape of both Larkin and Satchidanandan. They have proven themselves to be the clairvoyants of ultimate human liberation. Their poems mirror the social psyche that yearns to discern the truths of existence and they react freely and fiercely against an 'easy reticence' that many undertake in cultural realms. Larkin and Satchidanandan entered a self-determined revolution, dreaming about an amended world—a newer, cleaner, braver and saner one—that could celebrate the spirit of free-will. Their verbal revolt,

fury, frustration and even the black humour reflective in their verse manifest their self-imposed responsibility of essential cultural vigil. Larkin, in "Toads", asks:

> Why should I let the toad work
> Squat on my life?
> Why can't I use my wit as a pitchfork
> And drive the brute off? (537)

So is Satchidanandan who asks in the same manner in "Father", "Darkness is besieging our world / Tell me father / Where is that great lustre that will lift entire sunken heads?" These apposite questions of the poets illustrate their poetic mission of a crucial cultural indulgence. In his "Song of Protest" Pablo Neruda observes that poetry should have the purity of both fire and water and that it eventually will clean and blaze every malignity. The poetic endeavour of Larkin and Satchidanandan accomplish this very status of cleaning the sediments of integral malice within the milieu and of inflaming the dilapidated ritualistic routines that control our social surroundings. Eventually they proclaim to man about his right of limitless freedom to fly beyond the seeming limits and limitations.

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A Space 'Booked' Forever

Sruthi Sikhamani

This Is Not the End of the Book by Umberto Eco and Jean-Claude Carriere, Translated by Polly McLean, London: Vintage, 2012, 320pp, £14.99.

"Let us pose ourselves a classic dilemma. The world is under threat and we can only safeguard a few cultural objects. Civilization might be wiped out, perhaps by a massive environmental catastrophe. We have to act fast. We cannot protect or save everything. So what would we choose? And in which media?" Distinguished screenwriter Jean-Claude Carriere is in a gripping conversation with one of the most famous intellectuals, Umberto Eco. "Why run the risk of choosing objects that may become mute and indecipherable? Wanting to choose something easily transportable and that has shown itself equal to the ravages of time, I choose the book," Eco replies immediately.

This delightful conversation curated by Jean-Philipp De Tonnac further matures, straddling wide range of thoughts, ideas, cultures, practices and personal anecdotes, opening a window to a fresh knowledge about books. Both are out-and-out bibliophiles, serious collectors. Towards the end, they get round to comparing sizes. Umberto has 50,000 books in his various homes, plus 1,200 rare titles, while Jean-Claude owns up to 30,000–40,000, of which 2,000 are ancient. There's lots of burbling about bindings and provenance and how best to arrange one's library.

This Is Not the End of the Book is a book about the nature of the book itself. Eco, one of the major voices in Italy's national conversations, impassions us of diverse qualities of books as a representational medium as compared to modern storage devices. The formats of new media have so

far proved ephemeral—floppy discs, videotapes and CD-ROMs have already been superseded, leaving the material supposedly preserved on them increasingly hard to retrieve. Books have proved more durable. "We can still read a text printed five centuries ago. The book is like the wheel. Once invented it cannot be bettered," Eco claims. The question whether the book will survive the e-book era has become highly relevant in today's milieu of digital revolution. However Carriere opines that permanent eclipse of the book is out of the question. He stresses on the insecurity of modern storage devices of the likes of DVDs. You lose electricity and you lose everything forever. Even if the visual and sound recording of the twentieth century are wiped out by a gigantic electricity failure we will always have the books, Carriere argues. While discussing the greatness of books people often tend to extol its physical qualities. Eco is attached to the old book. He says: different colours, annotations and faded edges. Conversely De Tonnac doubts whether such emotional bonds for books are merely old fashioned habits.

This book goes beyond just being conversation between two great men of letters. Rather, it is a peep into the enthralling world of books—its origin, evolution from Incunabulum, Roman Volumni, to Papyrus scrolls and the present thought-of struggle of survival. "I collect books on wrong, Zany, Occult sciences as well as imaginary languages. I am fascinated by error, bad faith and idiocy," Eco reveals. "A Collection dedicated to the occult and mistaken sciences". Eco and Carriere have an enchanting chat on the idea of stupidity which unfolds in the chapter titled 'In praise of stupidity'. The history of beauty and intelligence on which the education concentrates- or rather on which others have decided education should concentrate is only a tiny part of human activity. Perhaps one should ever consider compiling a general history of mistakes and absurdities as well as ugliness. "The education system only cares to teach and

transmit the truth, Stupidity is filtered out." Eco and Carriere blame our system pretty convincingly.

Socio-cultural politics behind published books and those ill-fated majorities of books that never see the light of the day are examined closely in the process of the conversation with interesting anecdotes. Accidental and intentional fires have been part of book history since the very beginning. "I sometimes wonder what the Nazis were thinking when they burned Jewish books. Were they hoping to destroy them all, right down to the last one?" Through the revealing words of Eco and Carriere we get a whole new idea about books—an entirely different perspective. Every time a culture is under threat, we have a propensity to safeguard historical documents and other representational objects. At this time, books are prioritized on cultural importance. All those 'culturally mistaken' texts may be left behind or destroyed. Thus what we have today is the filtered mass of books that were 'culturally correct' for few.

Forgetfulness is the biggest curse on humanity. The 'best faithful' function of books, according to De Tonnac, is to safeguard the things that forgetfulness constantly threatens to destroy. Thus history becomes important. Representation of times becomes even more important so that our future generations abstain from repeating the mistakes already made by our predecessors.

In short, *This Is Not the End of the Book* is an insightful piece of work suggestive of new perspectives on the book in a relaxed chit-chat format. Towards the end of the book the reader will consciously or sub-consciously come to terms with the unparalleled supremacy of the book as the ultimate storage system. Long live the book!

A Hero and Heroin

Rejath P. N.

Narcopolis by Jeet Thayil, London: Penguin, 2012, 304pp, $25.95.

Jeet Thayil's debut novel, the aptly titled *Narcopolis* is like the polis in which it takes place: a mixture of drugs, sex, violence, loves, lives, deaths, and also, stories. "Bombay," the book begins, "which obliterated its own history by changing its name and surgically altering its face, is the hero or heroin of this story,...a great and broken city..." The opening sentence runs on for seven pages and sets the tone of the novel. Appropriately, the use of "heroin" in the opening sentence is not a misspelling of "heroine." Bombay is a drug that sucks people into its enraged jaws." As the title suggests, the book is about drugs, about place, and about much more.

Thayil says that *Narcopolis* is not your typical Bombay book: "It did not feature the great figures of Independence or Colonial history, or even the bit players." It's a special tale told intimately and with familiarity. Thayil affirms that he knew well the world of opium dens, he saw garad heroin destroy that culture and many people's lives, and he struggled to overcome his own addiction for twenty years, finally finding some success in 2002. "This is my secret history," he reveals.

The plot itself is not terribly complicated. The novel is broken up into four "books." Book One, "The Story of O," begins with Dom Ullis's, the narrator's, arrival in Bombay. It is the late 1970s, and he quickly weaves himself into the fabric of Bombay's grimy underbelly, specifically, the opium dens. Here he meets Rashid, owner of a khana on Shuklaji Street where much of the novel takes place; Dimple, the

beautiful hijra who works for Rashid preparing bowls of opium; "Bengali," who manages Rashid's money; Rumi, the fearlessly aggressive businessman; and an range of other characters.

Book Two, "The Story of the Pipe," centres on the Chinese man Mr. Lee: the life story he tells Dimple as he grows closer to death. We witness his childhood and youth, his falling in love, his time in the army, and his subsequent exile and flight to India and, eventually, Bombay, which he hates but stays in because he is drawn to the sea. When Lee dies, he leaves Dimple his family's magnificent old opium pipes, which she barters for a position at Rashid's khana, where she will make pyalis all day in exchange for opium of her own to smoke.

Book Three, "The Intoxicated," records the tumultuous crumble of the mostly rich opium dens into the brutally "effacing world of chemical heroin". Rashid's khana is shut down, reopened, and shut down again. Dimple leaves the brothel she has worked at nearly her whole life to live at Rashid's, on the half landing between the khana and the upstairs floor where his wives and children live. Dimple has been determined throughout to leave the brothel, to make her own future. Her move to Rashid's could be a positive one but is derailed by the new drug of choice in town. Not to mention that she's expected to act as Rashid's sex partner whenever he's in the mood.

Book Four, "Some Uses of Reincarnation," returns narrator Dom to Bombay. It is 2004. After running into an old acquaintance, Dom decides to visit Rashid's. He arrives at Shuklaji Street to find the area disorientingly different. The former red light district has transformed into stores, businesses, and fast food restaurants, and Rashid's khana is now an office, run by his son Jamal. Dom speaks with the aged Rashid to find out what happened to his friends. We catch a glimpse of the newer generation when we follow Jamal and his fiance, Farheen, to a club. Cocaine and ecstasy are the new flavour of the hour, and Jamal follows in his

father's footsteps, as a cocaine salesman. It will always go on; the story doesn't end.

Dom goes through the belongings Dimple left at Rashid's. Among them, he finds the opium pipe. The book ends in the same spot it started—Dom and the pipe and the account they've now made together, a metatextual call out signalling the circularity: "All I did was write it down, one word after the other, beginning and ending with the same one, Bombay." As the final line suggests, the way the story is told is as important as the story itself—indeed it is a key to understanding the story.

There is poetic language and memorable characters do hang around. The variety of characters enabled Thayil to "honour the people I knew in the opium dens, the marginalised, the addicted and deranged, people who are routinely called the lowest of the low; and I wanted to make some record of a world that no longer exists, except within the pages of a book." Though confusing to a reader whose pleasure is in plot development, *Narcopolis*'s narrative style is perhaps the only way to come close to depicting the overwhelming nature of addiction, the ineffable nature of a place like Bombay. The city, the narcopolis, is the central character around which all the human characters swarm.

Finding the Center

Vibin Krishnan K.

The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist: Understanding What Happens When We Write and Read Novels by Orhan Pamuk, Translated by Nazim Dibkaş. London: Penguin, 2011, 200pp, £14.99.

The avid readers are always elated when the writer they adore and admire sets out to explain the nuances of his or her craft: when the long contemplated "interrogatives"—the 'whats' and 'whys' and 'hows' of the trade—are explained and laid bare; when he or she retraces the path took towards perfecting their skill; when the hitherto unlit corner of the master craftsman's workshop is illuminated. In their different and distinctive ways, these writers tell us what they think about their own art form. These extended statements—Henry James's prefaces, E. M. Forster's lectures, and Leo Tolstoy's and Gustave Flaubert's letters, to the more recent impressive lectures and essays of Italo Calvino, Milan Kundera, Umberto Eco or Nadine Gordimer—might not contain the last word on the novel. Still, undoubtedly, they have its worth of being written by people who know how it is done. An entrant to this club is the Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk with his *The Naive and the Sentimental Novelist*.

This slender volume is a collection of transcribed lectures delivered at Harvard, in its distinguished Charles Eliot Norton series, in 2009. Pamuk addresses what Frank Kermode once called "one of the best audiences in the world", "the gifted young" and "their learned elders", and shares his thoughts about novels; specifically, the writing and reading of novels. His non-fiction voice matches the grave and thoughtful narrative style of his novels. Perhaps, he is more a "reflective"—a term he prefers to Friedrich Schiller's

"sentimental"—than a "naive" novelist; the essential division between the novelists that he maintains throughout the book.

For Pamuk, the two artistic activities of writing novels and painting are parallel. He says: "Novels are essentially visual literary fictions. A novel exerts its influence on us mostly by addressing our visual intelligence—our ability to see things in our mind's eye and to turn words into mental pictures." Hence, for him, the process of writing is the search for *l'image juste*, the right image, rather than the *le mot juste*, the "right word" for Flaubert. The novelist gradually learns how to visualize the things he is good at verbalizing and his first task is to evoke each image as precisely as possible in the reader's mind, because it is the closeness and realism of these jumbled details that give the novel its uniquely immersive quality.

The proper subject of the novel thus becomes, in Pamuk's view, not people's moral character but the sensibility revealed in how they react to "the manifold forms of the world—each color, each event, each fruit and blossom." The features of a character's physical and social environment, in turn, must be a "necessary extension" of their inner "emotional, sensual, and psychological world." The snowflakes that Anna Karenina watches from a train "reflect the mood of the young woman to us." He acknowledges how artificial the traditional notion of literary character is: "People do not actually have as much character as we find portrayed in novels." Pamuk harbours a converse view of Forster's theory that a novelist's characters behave independently of their creator's will. For him the protagonist is an extension of the novelist's life.

Much of the book is devoted to ideas of the inanimate world, and how it relates to psychology. He summarises the different attitudes of the French tradition, from Balzac to Georges Perec, towards objects. For some, objects "reveal the social status of the hero"; for others, they are "mysterious and playful entities independent of human behaviour". Most good novelists keep a notebook where they record

interesting objects to "flesh out a psychological world" later. Pamuk cites his novel *The Museum of Innocence* as the most perfect materialization of this and describes how he collected objects that would figure in his novel: "This is how I wrote my novel… by finding, studying, and describing objects that inspired me."

Towards the end, Pamuk explains the term "the center," a feature that he argues is essential to the literary novel: a "profound opinion or insight about life" whose implications suffuse a work "like a light whose source remains ambiguous but which nonetheless illuminates the whole forest." While reading, we are temporarily convinced that the "world actually does have a center," that there is some larger ethical or metaphysical order. A novel can also have several centers, or none, and they can shift depending on "the writer's intentions, the text's implications, the reader's tastes, and the time and place in which the novel is read." To attest his point, Pamuk quotes many luminaries, including Borges on *Moby Dick*: "Page by page, the story grows until it takes on the dimensions of the cosmos."

The most appealing aspect of his lectures is that Pamuk does not merely approach the subject from the master-writer perspective, but as a passionate reader. By narrating his own experiences, we are offered a glimpse of the novelist's life and mind. Amusingly, throughout, he reminds readers repeatedly that one has to take care in how much of the writer's own experience one reads into his or her fiction; do not be the lay reader who assumes it's all true and the "sophisticated" one who maintains everything is a constructed fiction.

Pamuk puts his arguments engagingly, in a pleasant mix of autobiographical titbits, anecdotes, reading and writing experiences, and theory. Though the book fails to convince as one presenting the 'theory of the novel' *per se*, it is, in all respects, revealing about Pamuk—as a "naive" and "sentimental", and visually-oriented, novelist.

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Information for Contributors

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