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EDITORIAL

American Literature has acquired varied ramifications through the centuries with the rise of ethnic and diasporic American literatures. These developments have established New Ethnic Literatures as worthy objects of academic study. To analyse and discuss the myriad aspects of American Literature, an International Seminar on AMERICAN LITERATURE—TRENDS AND PROSPECTS was organized by the P. G. Department of English and the Research Centre for Comparative Studies, Mercy College with two American academicians, Dr. Lars Erik Larson and Dr. Molly H. Hiro, Associate Professors in English, University of Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., Fulbright-Nehru Scholars at the University of Mysore during Fall 2014, as keynote speakers. The Seminar instigated scholars and academicians all over India as evidenced in the collection of papers in our two special issues of PURSUITS. We are proud to launch the thirteenth volume of the our Peer Reviewed journal in which we bring out the papers presented at the International Seminar which focus on the relevance of American literature in the present scenario. We hope that the articles contained in these two issues will serve this purpose to a great extent.

I am grateful to the paper presenters, readers and our contributors for their continued support and encouragement which, I am sure, would go a long way in establishing our Research Journal PURSUITS as a valuable source of knowledge.

Dr. W. S. Kottiswari

ROUTES AND ROOTS: AMERICAN LITERATURE AS A MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY SPACE AND PLACE

Dr. Lars Erik Larson

“... the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started /And
know the place for the first time.” (T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*)

In recent years, I've shifted my thinking. I've been a student of American culture all across my life. And I've always pursued it in a direct manner. I centered my college studies on American culture's stories, I've driven thousands of its roads to encounter America's variety, I've watched its hundred-year archive of films, listened attentively to its two centuries of music. And from coast to coast, I've lived in seven of its cities.

While this strategy of direct experience has enabled me to gather a great amount of information about American culture, I've come to realize its limitations: there's so much data that I can't distinguish what's valuable and what's not. To know what American culture is, should I pay attention to Malcolm Gladwell or Malcolm Forbes, *The New York Times* or *People Magazine*, Miley Cyrus or Miles Davis? Because the world's cultural conversations, technologies, economies, and values change so rapidly these days, I feel a decreased ability to know which artifacts of American culture will be part of our global future, and which should be relegated to the dustbin of history.

So I've decided to step away: I've come to India in order to be an outsider rather than an insider. It's said that fish are the last to understand what water is — because they live in it all their lives. By inhabiting an outside perspective — a space apart — I'm hoping I can better understand what's most alive and important in American humanities.

This idea of cultivating an indirect point of view was not my own idea, but that of our field of literary study, particularly in its recent “planetary turn.” In the past decade, a number of literary critics have urged us to move from the micro to the macro: to stop thinking about the small scale of the regional or national, and instead read literature through a *planetary* lens.

Columbia University's Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls this the scale of “planetarity,” arguing it's the most fitting one for literature, compared with the leaky level of nationality, or even the overly-financial scale called “globalization.” Similarly, Wai-Chee Dimock, at Yale calls for us to reconsider American literature through the defamiliarizing lens of deep time — that's an enlargement that brings the imagination to ponder a far wider chronological framework that of literature's existence — or even humanity's. Deep time is a period “binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations” (3). In this way, Dimock explains, we can find connections that leap across geology's 600-million-year record, or perhaps even the universe's 14 billion years. Such scholars invite us to bring to bear on literature a larger concept of both space and time.

I'm drawn to these astonishing enlargements of scale as a way of seeing things in a perspective that is arguably more clear, more true, and more ethical. For example, this move from the local to the planetary could help us know when to abandon myths of national exceptionalism. It compels us to notice patterns *across* nationality's imagined communities. I'm convinced that American Studies — and any nation's studies — would be better served through these wider perspectives, through the nearly-inconceivable

dimensions of deep time, the radically post-national scale of the planetary, and the ethical notion that no one on our planet is any more or less valuable than ourselves.

My family has been fortunate in acquiring this outside perspective through the Fulbright-Nehru scholarship that brought us here to India to study and teach for a semester. Above all other countries, we were drawn to India: because it's an area whose layers of civilization reach back so deeply through time (compared with America's recent vintage). It's a country that's justifiably called Earth's most heterogeneous (with superlative diversity at the levels of language, ethnicity, culture, religion, and so on). Unlike America, it achieved its independence through love rather than violence. India's a fellow democracy soon to be the most populous and economically dominant country. So, given India's major role in the planetary present and future, as well as its parallels and differences with America, we felt we could better understand the U.S. by viewing it from India's ghats, its roads, its temples, mosques and stupas, its rivers and mountains, its ancient villages and its truly modern cities. I'm arguing that you, here, occupy an excellent place for studying American literature. And I'm pleased to join you on your perch, knowing that our ultimate goal is not merely to learn about our mutual countries, but most importantly to know deeply what it means to be human on our planet.

Such creative experiments with space have long informed my interest in literature. Since college years, I've anchored my research interests around how literature responds to the material world. I'd been drawn to architecture and city planning from an early age, but switched to literature and American Studies as an undergraduate. That decision happened because I found the imagined world of the text can bring us closer to humanist truths than just the existing, built-up world alone. Literature reminds us not just *what is*, but also *what can be*.

At the University of California, Los Angeles, my Ph.D. dissertation explored American literature's fascination with the highway system. Roads evolved across the 20th century from a humble collection of dirt trails to become the American superhighway network that forms earth's largest engineering project. I found that writers like John Steinbeck, Vladimir Nabokov, Jack Kerouac, and Emily Post used their novels and nonfiction not just to comment on the system, but to "rewrite" its spaces. They aimed their narratives to redefine such things as who should use these new roads of high-speed circulation, how they should be used, and how roads should be thought of. Using the critical lenses of feminism, new historicism, and cultural geography, I found new ways of looking at the classic American genre of the **road narrative**, including how the genre so closely identified with macho masculinity was largely begun by women writers. I also found how a genre associated with freewheeling, liberal, and libertine behavior also features an equal measure of conservative values, impulses, and anxieties — a dialectical mix that I found all road narratives share.

At the University of Portland, I teach curriculum built around the literature of certain spaces: for example, Literature of America's Pacific Northwest states, or the literature of cities. This latter class, on how American literature has responded to urban existence, looks at key tensions that arise across the 250 years of American urbanization. Through such authors as Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, and Wright, we look at the classic narrative of country-to-city migration, frustrations and liberations within the experience of social compression, the genius of connectivity, and the implications of urban riots (as forms of both progressive social expression and dehumanizing mob mentality). What adds urgency to such a space-based course is that over half of humanity now lives in cities. (And while only a quarter of India chooses

an urban existence, as you know, that percentage is rising rapidly). Such a class gets readers to think about solutions to the problems with which our inevitably urban future confronts us.

All of the areas I've talked about — my switch to the English major, choice of dissertation, and courses to teach — were made possible once I learned about the opportunities of literary spatial theory.

Now, I don't know what your feelings are about **literary theory**. Some find it fascinating, full of astonishing paradigms. Others find it arid, useless, or even damaging by turning people off from literature. Of late, a number of pundits have even claimed that literary theory is dead.

Personally, I often find theory hard to understand. Or unnecessarily convoluted. Or I read and instantly forget it. But I still champion its existence. I define literary theory as more of a *process* than a thing, and believe that anyone reading a book is practicing some form of theory, whether they're aware of it or not. As William Germano suggests (via a computer metaphor), literary theory is like “a big Refresh button poised smack in the middle of the humanities curriculum.” He values theory because it can refocus one's “attention on one's own tool kit” (142). It helps us both see literature freshly, and develops our self-awareness of what we seek from the practice of reading. It also helps us maintain a scholarly rigor: against those who think of the sciences as hard and the humanities as soft and squishy, literary theory helps us avoid flabby self-indulgence or nostalgia, ensuring we hold ourselves to providing strong evidence for our literary interpretations. In short, literary theory helps us be, in Germano's phrase, “professional readers” (143).

So, let us peer into what *spatial* literary theory might teach us about contemporary American literature. A few words on the concept of space. Clearly, I'm not using that word to refer to cosmic outer space (despite India's impressive venturing recently to Mars and beyond). Rather, we're talking of the space around us, at our human scale — such as this auditorium and everything in it. Most often, we think of this space as inert, neutral, as a silent background upon society's stage. This is wrong. In fact, space is a dynamic, active constituent — a creator — of our economic, social, philosophical, and political worlds.

Winston Churchill, in his lifetime said many misguided and uncharitable things. But he was wise when he wrote this sentence: “We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us.” In other words, we might be conscious architects in pushing the world around to meet our needs — but the built world will inevitably push back. We'd be wise to become more conscious of the ways the spaces around us push us to exist in certain ways, do certain actions, and believe certain things.

In his essay “Clearing a Space, Amit Chaudhuri notes that space is the “domain of the ‘real’ in the secular world” (35). It is therefore something to be taken seriously. But as Chaudhuri notes, the nature of space is transitional — it's always becoming — and always highly contested. Moreover, space is valuable not only in making us aware of what's present, but also nurturing “a consciousness of absences” (14).

The politics of space has never been more pressing than in the present era, which geologists have recently dubbed “the Anthropocene” — the epoch of humans — due to the overwhelming impact our species has had in shaping the planet's habitation, appearance, ecology, weather, and temperature. As I noticed during some recent local travels, this is an era when at Jog Falls, we can *turn off* the mighty Sharavati River like a washroom tap through hydroelectric diversion. On a perch above Shravanabelagola we can carve a 60-foot human out of a single rock to inspire ten centuries of visitors. We can abandon a

city's infrastructure for 500 years – as happened at Hampi's Vijayanagara (with its former 5-lakh population) – yet still see its traces everywhere among the boulders of its desolate landscape. We can dam the Kabini River to reinvent the area's ecosystem from a tiger-filled forest to a fish-filled lake. And the thousands of lightbulbs adorning the Wodeyar palace in my city of Mysuru can turn night into day.

So I would like to offer some productive ways to read texts for their spatial implications in the Anthropocene era. And India is an ideal place to do it. This country has been deeply influenced by its history of space-making, with such phenomena as its continental pushing-up of the Himalayas, its historical tides of northern invasions, maritime contacts, British colonialism, and the Partition, each event imposing a new set of maps for shaping the nation's societies. These maps are both real and cognitive, and like literature, every spatial map is also a story.

Recent literary critics have demonstrated the fertility of interrogating the Subcontinent's spatial dynamics. They've done this within many contexts: literary history (I've mentioned Chaudhuri's *Clearing A Space* [2008]); post-coloniality (Sara Mills *Gender and Colonial Space* [2005]); feminism (Malashri Lal *Feminist Spaces* [1997]); mobility studies (Marian Aguiar *Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility*) [2011]). Perhaps the work of other scholars of Indian space now come to mind.

Reading literature through a spatial lens has no single, stable political stance: it's not necessarily oppositional, it's not inherently Marxist or feminist or any other “-ist.” But it does seek to shed light on the invisibility of space, unearthing hidden agendas of our material surroundings and bringing to light the power structures involved. If there's an agenda to spatial literacy, it's about opening up opportunity by raising awareness of the full range of options a person has. It provides alternate maps of reality from the official ones, distinguishing imagined walls from the real. Whether your focus is America, India, or any other place, exploring the spatial implications of literary texts can offer a deeper awareness of the seemingly-inert world around you.

So: how do you apply a spatial lens to literature? Since all stories take place in space, just about any novel, story, drama, or poem from any region can work. It's useful to ponder first how space gets constructed. This happens not just through bricks, concrete, and tile, but through language, stories, and tensions.

Let's call language the first major component. Language is a tool that orients our lives in space *as much* as our eyes do. Dale Carnegie, in his 1930s book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, invites his reader to ponder this question: what's the most beautiful word in any language? Carnegie's answer is: your own name. Of course! No other word can match its emotional appeal to you. No generic “miss” or “madam” or “sir” can replace the siren song of hearing in public discourse your own name – a word that validates your existence in the universe and signifies to you something of the unfolding story of your life. From there, language offers further words of affiliation, which like a garden of forking paths serve to connect or disconnect us with various others. At one linguistic crossroad, we usually identify with either the word “male” or “female” while regarding the other as “Other.” We feel warm kinships through the labels of certain interest groups, political parties, occupations, religious memberships, regional locales, and sports teams. And at the same time we cultivate a deliberate distance from the labels of other groups. The language of affiliation and disaffiliation thus builds in our minds a *virtual* world of spaces – of things and people that are “us” and “here,” and those that are “them, over there.”

Language “chunks” the world into categories that organize the storehouses of our minds. The nation-state is a salient example: we’ve split the world into some 200 chunks called nations. And we think of them as if they were natural and transcendent, despite the fact that they are the products of our social imaginations, with borders that can’t be seen from outer space. We organize our identities and even our literature classes along the category of nation, though academia now offers alternative models, whether Paul Gilroy’s multi-regional literary space of the “Black Atlantic,” or even Mercy College’s innovative curriculum of “Diaspora Studies.” Scholar Amitava Kumar of Vassar finds that his true sense of belonging these days is no longer to his home-country of India or to the U.S. of his present, but to the human tribe of which you and I are members: the tribe of *academia*. As Kumar says, “I realize that I’m a sad provincial; for years, I’ve been living in a place called the English Department. . . . The most significant turns in my scholarship, and in my writing, have been attempts to first fit into, and then violently move away from, the existing codes of naturalization for gaining citizenship in the English Department” (20). As shown by the category of nation and its alternatives, language and its categories are a major spatial shaper of our sense of identity.

A second component in the construction of space is storytelling. Humans are the storytelling animal — no other creature does it, and none but humans depend upon stories for our very existence. Our brains are hardwired to hammer and bend language into stories that construct our worlds, that shape a coherent narrative out of the chaos of our lived experience. American poet Muriel Rukeyser has said “The world is made of stories – not of atoms.” While this sounds anti-scientific, she’s absolutely right, in the sense that the only way the human mind can understand the truths and the things of the world is through the tool of stories. We come to understand history through the stories of historians; we understand scale through the stories of mathematicians; and we understand morality through the didactic stories of our culture. Even in Rukeyser’s example of the atom – a structure too tiny for humans to see – its reality is made understandable through a *story* about what an atom looks like and how it works. And when authors grow tired of describing the world’s existing spaces and things, they make up entire regions from their imagination — the way R. K. Narayan invented Malgudi, or JRR Tolkien invented his Hobbit world, or William Faulkner invented his troubled Yoknapatawpha County of the US South.

A third component of space is tension. For any story to be of interest, it must have the drama of friction. It must have some dialectical pivot on which to seesaw. American novelist John Gardner identified two such archetypal tensions when he famously said that all stories are built around just two possible plots: a.) the hero goes on a journey **or** b.) a stranger comes to town. Since I’m sure you’ve personally experienced these two events in your own life, you can see how crackling tensions arise from either of these movements in space.

In parallel with Gardner’s two plots of coming and going, the spatial tension I’ve found most useful to pursue involves **routes** and **roots**: between the desire to circulate and the desire to stay put. It could be said that modernity’s defining characteristic is its opposing tendencies of mobility (the routes of networks and transportation) and stability (the roots of place-making and identity formation). Humans variously hunger for both. And a great many of our stories describe the tension of these competing appetites.

So let’s turn to some literary examples to illustrate spatial literary criticism’s attention to language, storytelling, and tension. Spatial analysis does not merely consider a book’s background *setting*, but interrogates that setting’s participation as an active *force* in the narrative. Just to take an example I read

recently, in E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India*, the first thing to notice is the novel's division into three sections: Mosque, Caves, Temple. These three spaces act not as mere background for the action, not as inert stage-settings, but as forces that push the characters to think of themselves as one thing and not another, and to set into motion the tragic, comic, and wistful events that spring from the swirling forces of social politeness, sexuality, religious background, revenge, and forgiveness. Just as the author has chosen to structure these themes around the book's three spatial sections, any reading of the book should at least touch upon this structural ecology.

Complicating such discrete places as mosques, caves, and temples, is the fact that all spaces are composed of a deep and abiding hybridity. Humans hunger for pure and uncomplicated spaces, and we usually project them upon the past — the Golden Ages we fantasize returning to, homelands we wax nostalgic about, and we rue how things became mixed-up by the changes of the present. But our fantasies get in the way of seeing the preexisting hybridities that *always already* composed those spaces. And we often forget how our presence also adds further hybridity. As Lucy Lippard notes, "Each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really all 'local places' consist of" (5-6). The strongest texts keep us aware of active hybridities within our most local of spaces.

Many texts might be categorized by what they do with their tensions in spatial terms. Consider the dialectical poem. Irish poet William Butler Yeats once said that an essay is what you write when you have an argument with the world, but a poem is what you write when you have an argument with yourself. Thus, many poems might be called "dialectical" in the sense that within their self-arguments they keep hopping between a thesis and its antithesis, in the hope of some eventual synthesis.

Take Robert Frost's 1914 poem "Mending Wall." It stages an argument about the use and uselessness of maintaining stone walls between ourselves and our neighbors (a topic as fitting in Frost's rural America as it is in today's Jammu and Kashmir). This blank verse meditation seems to involve a debate between the neighbor's stubborn belief that "good fences make good neighbors" and the speaker's playful mocking of the wall's absurdities. But the speaker is himself devoted to rebuilding the wall each year, half convinced by his neighbor's reassuring dictum of the goodness of wall-building — an act Frost reveals as something humans have been doing throughout our history — even as gravity and nature conspire to send our walls tumbling. We're offered no resolution to the debate over whether our walls are worth maintaining. We're only given a clear picture of why we hunger for both the building *and* the breakdown of walls between Us and Them. Like language, walls are something humans constantly shape, and so they end up shaping us across generations.

As a case in point, consider Katherine Boo's National-Book-Award-winning spatial work of nonfiction *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. The title involves an invitation to be spatially creative: to strike through the pasteboard masks of commercial ideals to confront the social realities behind them: in this case, behind the wall of roadside advertisements outside Mumbai's airport to concentrate on the slum it screens. As a sociological study posing as a vivid series of stories, the book charts the slum's levels of mutual dependency, independent ambitions, and foibles of character. We see in microcosm the recognizable patterns of humanity's dreams, desires, and follies. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* builds its narrative around a problem of space: when one family makes itself wealthy by resourceful recycling, they decide to improve their kitchen by hammering apart and rebuilding the wall they share with a neighboring family that has long felt a simmering jealousy. This small incident leads to a tragic death and an alleged crime that drags the community into years of trauma — all set off by the mending of a wall.

Wall-building has always been one of the ways that we establish the territory for our roots, whether the roots of an individual, a family, or a community. In an era of the world's increasingly *bewildering* speeds of globalization, mobility, and technological change, radical cultural sedimentation is one way to resist the way of the world: to root more deeply in place by building stronger walls of self-definition and conservative grounding.

But a counter-desire to such stasis is to crash through walls by pursuing routes of circulation: a generative, willed dislocation of the self in the world. The logic here is that place has come to be defined its opposite. Arjun Appadurai offers frameworks for our modern day flows of individuals and globalization. Place, he argues, is dependent on a deeper conception of the many non-places of the present: "we need to understand more about the ways in which the forms of circulation and the circulation of forms create the conditions for the production of locality" (69). He is thinking, for example, of the way Benedict Anderson has shown how print circulation could generate the imagined community of a unified nation in a case like the Indonesian archipelago (with its 18,000 islands).

But circulation doesn't need to be conceived of in epic distances or scales as big as the nation or globe. As Foucault and company pointed out a few decades back, we are not the sovereign authors of ourselves, but the product of discourses. While others are the primary author of these discourses, we individuals do have a certain limited agency to steer ourselves toward, or away from, ongoing discourses. As Michel de Certeau makes the case in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, the simple mobility of our feet gives us a degree of power over the architects and city planners of our inhabited world. Certeau points out our ability to steer our bodies to violate the grammar of social space and articulate our own chosen paths. Circulation becomes a creative strategy for resisting domination. Anthropologist James Clifford argues that a postmodern world of motion almost necessitates that one practice displacement — to achieve a kind of existential insideness through making outsideness routine. Motion through shoes, bicycles, cars, trains, ships, planes would be one way of keeping pace with the 21st century, not to match its often immoral speeds, but for reasons of increased perception and problem-solving.

As an example, consider a 2007 novel by the Native American writer Sherman Alexie titled *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Circulation has most often been the privilege of the rich and powerful, but Alexie shows how mobility can benefit one born into the lowest stratum of a culture. The title is a comic exaggeration, with irony arising from a work of fiction being an "Absolutely True Diary." By "Indian," Alexie is of course referring to Columbus's 500-year old misnomer for Native Americans, still used to this day. And the idea of a "Part-Time Indian" is Alexie's postmodern outlook on identity; his protagonist is the son of two Native American parents, but in a refusal to essentialize ethnicity, Alexie draws attention to the many simultaneous identities within a person, including being defined by habits, life-ways, outlooks, nation, clothing, and so on. For Alexie, there are no full-time identities.

Moreover, the novel insists that identity is contextual, rather than fixed; the space we happen to be in at any given moment alters and defines our persona, at least in that moment. As a result, the more spaces one moves within, the more fluid the identity — a fluidity that can be deeply troubling, but also empowering. Alexie's teenaged protagonist, Junior, is faced with the challenge of being born into one of America's poorest spaces — the rural ghetto of a Native American reservation — while choosing to attend the academically stronger but all-white high school in an agricultural town 35 kilometers away. While this bright 9th grader enjoys the academics, he feels like a racial traitor to be the only student to

leave the reservation for his schooling. He comes to feel not only alienated by the white culture of his school, but also that his fellow Spokane Indians no longer accept him.

But while this horizontal pivoting between two spaces exposes him to the anxieties of an unfixed identity, mobility offers a positive side: circulation raises his awareness of a broader spectrum of possibilities he has in life, which were invisible in his previous, sedentary existence. He comes to recognize how he has plural memberships at a variety of social scales: that of family, community, state, ethnic family, nation, economic class, and gender. The simple act of climbing trees — of altering his vertical altitude — is another way circulation raises his insights. Sitting high atop a 300-year-old reservation tree allows him to see the entirety of his reservation from a pine that he realizes is older than the United States nation — thus undermining the seeming timelessness of nation-states and adding to his feeling of pride for his home.

Junior's bitter friend Rowdy offers the book's closing insight. Rowdy, who never leaves the reservation, acts as a figure of frustrated stasis, in contrast to Junior's circulatory choices. But Rowdy mentions to Junior reading in a history book that Native Americans were previously nomadic. Rowdy tells Junior: "I'm not nomadic . . . Hardly anybody on this rez is nomadic. Except for you." (229). He continues with this renegotiation with Native American identity: "You're an old-time nomad . . . You're going to keep moving all over the world in search of food and water and grazing land. That's pretty cool" (230). By finding from the past a part of identity that no longer holds true in the present, Rowdy offers Junior a sense of cultural legitimacy, despite feeling like a cultural traitor. And the insight validates in the present the migratory moves of past humans, whether Native American or otherwise. Junior's heightened consciousness of power, richer sense of historical time, and acceptance of identity's flexibility all show how one in a position of low social and economic capital can use mobility to achieve a kind of cognitive capital.

It's a case of motion of the feet adding power to the head — like Mohandas Gandhi's leaving his Gujarat home for law school in London and trials in Durban, South Africa. Or Charles Darwin's insights evolving by leaving England to take a worldwide walk with his Beagle. All exemplify disorientation as a tool in the service of what Arjun Appadurai would call "the politics of possibility — against the politics of probability — in the era of globalization (1). Circulation is a risky proposition, for you can always end up losing your seat. But Alexie's book suggests that only by moving can you learn whether or not your seat was worth occupying in the first place.

But for all the anxieties and insights and pleasures of routes — as we see in the wild cross-country kicks, joys, and darkness of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the consciousness-raising of Ralph Ellison's picaresque *Invisible Man*, the broadened horizons of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* — circulation can be taken too far when one completely loses sight of a sense of roots.

The characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's novels like *The Lowland* and *The Namesake* wince and agonize under the growing pains of transnational and intergenerational existence. Newly married couples in her *Interpreter of Maladies* stories squabble as they try to re-shape their shared new homes into places that can accommodate their separate roots.

And in Alice Walker's much-anthologized short story "Everyday Use" (from 1973), losing sight of your family leads to bitter alienation. "Everyday Use" features two African-American siblings who have been raised by their single mom on a farm in the American South's rural Georgia. As teenagers, the monumentally shy Maggie stays behind on the farm as her bold sister Dee goes off to college in the city

to become a true cosmopolite. Unlike her sister and mother, Dee has an appreciation for literature and learning, and bears the supreme confidence that comes from participating in the era's Black Pride movement. At college, Dee learns about the long history of her African-American roots, adopts the vogue for wearing clothing from Africa, and abandons her given name out of a new awareness of its distant ties to slavery. We understand why her mother is deeply proud when her accomplished daughter finally comes home to Georgia for a rare visit.

But for all of Dee's learning about history and the world, she's willfully forgotten everything about her family and its recent past. She's cultivated self pride at the expense of community pride. And while Dee chides her unworldly sister for not knowing her heritage, it is Dee that has deliberately lost touch with her roots. The fact that Alice Walker's own biography resembles Dee's chosen path is a recognition of the value of circulating in the world. But the ethics of the book reveal Walker's insistence on not losing the connection to one's roots in the process. And so Walker dedicates the story to "your grandmama." "Everyday Use" involves a turning back to the past that mirrors the closing gesture of Sherman Alexie's Junior as he is reminded of his nomadic ancestors who retained a sense of community even in their motion.

I've always valued the disruptive power of literature – how it intrudes upon my life and pushes aside my established ways of thinking. These intrusions can be uncomfortable, disorderly, frustrating. But they are also rejuvenating, enabling me to grow even in middle age. This semester away from America serves for me a similarly disruptive role. And as T.S. Eliot urges, the point of humanity's restlessness is not merely to leave behind our native place, but to return to it with the tools and knowledge necessary to understand it truly and deeply. We should come home with renewed lessons: that our place in the universe is a humble one, that we truly have more options than we had previously dreamed, that difference is not deficiency, and that we should pursue our wide-roaming routes without losing touch with our stabilizing roots.

Literature, with its wonderfully spatialized perspectives, can draw our attention to the powers and politics lurking invisibly within the worlds we build and those we inherit. I'm convinced that when read through a spatial lens, literature can give us the tools to better see our 21st century world for what it is, granting us fuller possibilities and broader horizons of choice.

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BLACK ENOUGH? AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS AND THE VERNACULAR TRADITION

Dr. Molly H. Hiro

Since the cultural studies revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, the canon of American literature has been exploded wide open. No longer limited to “great men” such as Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville, American literature courses now include many examples of texts by women writers and writers of color, among whom African American writers are perhaps most common. Indeed, African American studies has become a discipline of its own, with most U.S. colleges offering courses in African American literature and history, and many larger universities staffing whole departments and majors dedicated to the field. Even here in India, or at least in Mercy College’s M.A. program, African American literature is significantly represented in the American Ethnic Literature and American literature courses.

Yet just because African American literature is now institutionalized, this does not mean its definition is necessarily clear. It’s still worth stopping to ask from time to time: What is African American literature? The answer may at first seem quite simple: would not African American literature as a category be delimited to those novels, stories, poems, plays, and works of nonfiction by writers who are themselves African American? Perhaps, although defining precisely who is African American has also been controversial in the U.S., thanks to a history of racial intermixture and shifting understandings of blackness. Moreover, delimiting the field in this way leaves out some pretty fascinating and telling representations of African Americans by white authors—consider for example Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, or Mark Twain’s “Nigger Jim” in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Even if we could agree on a clear definition of who, precisely, is African American and therefore delimit the field of African American literature, there might still be further narrowing to do. Indeed, most classes in or collections of African American literature in fact choose texts not only by racial others, but also somehow about the experience of being a racial other. Another - and this is the one I will focus on today - is to root the genre of African American literature in the tradition of the African American vernacular. Applicable to any culture, the term “vernacular” refers to a folk tradition, and is frequently used in contradistinction to the more mainstream, dominant tradition. Literature of the vernacular is often oral, rather than written, and collectively authored, rather than the work of one individual. In African American literature, this term can describe texts as diverse as the spirituals, work songs, and folk tales from slavery times, as well as blues and jazz from the 20th century, and hip-hop lyrics from today.

In what follows, I argue that such an association between the vernacular or folk tradition and the boundaries of African American literature has been both useful for conceiving of a unique and distinct tradition, and important for recuperating vernacular forms which were once thought of as lesser. However, what I want to argue in this paper is that any such attempt to draw more narrowly the boundaries of an identity-based genre can produce a restrictive litmus test, by which critics and readers become preoccupied with whether a text is or is not “black enough,” rather than thinking about what is new and interesting about its engagement with race—or with any other concern. At the end I will suggest alternative methods of engaging with identity-based literature.

In the 1980s, as the field was coming into its own, Henry Louis Gates published his landmark work *The Signifying Monkey*, which argued for the central role of vernacular culture to both African American

literature and literary criticism. For Gates, African American literature as a genre is unified by certain characteristics: it is linked, overtly or subtly, to the African American vernacular; it builds or riffs upon previous artistic forms; and in so repeating previous forms, it parodies them or comments upon them, often in a spirit of irony, humor, and, at the same time, protest. From ragtime's syncopated take on familiar classical music, to contemporary hip-hop's sampling of 1970s funk lines, to Toni Morrison's weaving of African folk tales and 19th century forgotten histories into her novels *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*, African American art in Gates's characterization is double-voiced - simultaneously imitative and innovative.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, when the first edition of the Norton Anthology of African American literature was published in the 1990s - with Gates as one of the chief editors—the vernacular tradition occupied a fundamental place in the nearly 3000 page collection. Indeed, while Norton's other anthologies (of British and American literature) are organized according to a rigorous chronology (by the author's birthdate, from earliest to most recent), this Norton opens not with the earliest published African American author, Jupiter Hammon who was born in 1711, but with a 150-page sheaf of samplings from "The Vernacular Tradition," featuring spirituals, worksongs, folk-tales, and even blues and hip-hop lyrics from recent years. This editorial choice, then, is quite significant and not at all accidental. Indeed, by making students pass through a sort of "vernacular gateway" before they encounter even the earliest black American writers, the Norton makes a clear argument that this tradition forms the foundation of African American literature as we know it.

This claim then serves to problematize the place of certain writers, especially those from before the twentieth century, in the African American literary canon. Take the case of Phillis Wheatley, for instance. By any account her story is astounding: born in Africa in 1753, she was sold into slavery and shipped to America at the age of seven. She had the great fortune to end up with a liberal slave master who recognized her prodigious mind and provided her an education, and by the age of 16, she had written a book of poetry in the neoclassical style in fashion in her Eighteenth century era, published in 1773. Yet, the earliest assessments of African American writing express at best ambivalence about Wheatley as a foremother of the genre. Branding her work pathetic, imitative, or passionless, some argued that her poems didn't speak to the truths of black experience or to the horrors of slavery and as such do not represent a good model of African American literature.

A look at her most famous poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773), can help us grapple with why she has been such a controversial figure:

Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan
land, Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour
too: Once I redemption neither sought nor
knew. Some view our sable race with
scornful eye, "Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,
May be refin'd and join th'angelic train. (*Norton* 219)

It's not hard to see what readers have found unsettling about this poem. What Wheatley calls "mercy" - the bringing of hundreds of thousands of people from Africa to become slaves in the U.S.- others would label brutal human trafficking or a radical corruption and betrayal of American ideals.

Yet we must also keep in mind the pressures Wheatley faced in her efforts to publish her poetry. So unbelievable was it that a mere slave of African descent could produce such writing by herself that Wheatley was summoned to appear in court before Boston's most prominent leaders who doubted the veracity of her authorship. They required her to answer a series of questions to test her knowledge. She passed the test, but to be published, her book had to include a preface and authenticating statement signed by eighteen white men to attest that she had in fact written the poems that followed.

In this context, then, we can see the real *impossibility* for Wheatley to write more broadly than she did. How could she speak out against slavery when the men who held power to publish her work were themselves slave owners? How could she incorporate folk cultural forms if these forms did not even count as art to Boston's male judges? Indeed, if today we think of the differences between folk cultures and Western enlightenment culture in a pluralistic way—both having their virtues— in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (and in much of the twentieth as well), the arbiters of culture and civilization would have dismissed the oral, collective folk forms of Africans (and indeed, Native Americans, Indians, etc.) as entirely insignificant and inferior to Western enlightenment culture. Since vernacular cultural forms didn't count as art, African Americans were thought to be totally devoid of an artistic tradition, and since literature was thought to be the very mark of humanity in eighteenth-century thought, their lack of any such tradition meant that they were not really human, and if they weren't really human, owning them as property under the system of chattel slavery was easy to justify. As such, what looks like an abandonment of "authentic" black vernacular culture by Wheatley and other early African American authors could instead be understood as a subtle sort of anti-slavery protest—if slaves like Wheatley could create beautiful art in the style of Alexander Pope, isn't it wrong to enslave them?

Jumping ahead some one hundred and fifty years, after the abolition of slavery, the granting of certain civil rights to African Americans, and the mass migration of black folks from the agricultural south to the urban, industrialized North, we find a new and utterly different relationship between African American writers and the vernacular tradition. In this era, widely known as the Harlem Renaissance, vernacular forms became a point of pride—legitimately artistic rather than inferior to Western forms. Perhaps the most famous artist of this era is poet Langston Hughes, who self-consciously broke with traditional English meter and turned instead for inspiration to the rhythms of jazz and blues—which themselves evolved from indigenous African music.

Here's a sample, from Hughes's 1925 poem "The Weary Blues":

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway. . . .
He did a lazy sway. . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!

Swaying too and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues! (Norton 1294)

This poem celebrates blues and jazz both as subject-it's about a blues musician-and as form-it's syncopated, inviting the reader or listener to tap her foot along with the poem's rhythm.

While Langston Hughes is most famous as a poet, he also served as a spokesperson of the Harlem Renaissance, aiming to put defining terms to the movement as well as to African American literature as a budding genre. In his 1926 essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," we find him testifying that mere racial phenotype does not make one a so-called "Negro Artist"; something more in terms of subject matter is required. He starts off by discrediting artists who want to set aside their racial identity, when he says: "One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, 'I want to be a poet- not a Negro poet,' meaning, I believe, 'I want to write like a white poet'; meaning subconsciously, 'I would like to be a white poet'; meaning behind that, 'I would like to be white.'" (Norton 1311) Later in the essay, Hughes specifies in more detail what he believes it means to be a real "Negro poet," or even a real "Negro." Arguing that most "high class" black folks spend their time aping white culture, he praises the lower classes for being more authentically black:

But then there are the low-down folks, the so-called common elements, and they are in the majority-may the Lord be praised! The people who have their hip of gin on Saturday nights and are not too important to themselves or the community, or too well fed, or too learned to watch the lazy world go round.... These common people are not afraid of the spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child. (Norton 1312)

What we clearly see here is Hughes's belief that African Americans ought to embrace rather than shy away from the vernacular tradition - they should not be "afraid of the spirituals" and they should recognize that "jazz is their child." But what do we make of the associated fact that according to this description, to be authentically black is to be "common," "low-down," "lazy," not too well learned or well fed, and carrying a "hip of gin"? Surely Hughes is attempting to carve out a fundamental difference between white folks and black folks, but isn't it disconcerting that that difference requires blacks to be uneducated and hungry? Here is one clear problem to the test of authenticity, as Hughes created it and as current readers sometimes create it-it is often based on a social and economic hierarchy that keeps African Americans down in order to "keep it real," as the expression goes.

Ralph Ellison is one African American author who would likely object to Hughes's prescription for how black writers ought to position themselves. Most famous for his 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, Ellison's essays offer equally dense and brilliant accounts of racial otherness in twentieth-century America. In this excerpt from his 1958 essay "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," Ellison responds to another critic who had argued that Richard Wright, a contemporary of Ellison's, was a better black writer because he engaged more directly with the black vernacular tradition. Here's one sample of Ellison's rejoinder:

I use folklore in my work not because I am Negro, but because writers like [T.S.]Eliot and [James] Joyce made me conscious of the literary value of my folk inheritance. My cultural background, like that of most Americans, is dual.... I knew the trickster Ulysses just as early as I knew the wily rabbit of Negro American lore, and I could easily imagine myself a pint-sized Ulysses but hardly a rabbit, no matter how human and resourceful or Negro. And a little later I could imagine myself as Huck Finn...but not, though I racially identified with him, as “Nigger Jim,” who struck me as a white man’s inadequate portrait of a slave....

My point is that the Negro American writer is also an heir of the human experience which is literature, and this might well be more important to him than his living folk tradition. (*Norton* 1578)

Were Langston Hughes to have responded to this essay, he might have argued that Ellison was similar to that poet whom he accused of wanting to be “white.” But what I read in Ellison’s words is a desire to be able to write as a singular person—a unique subject not limited to his racial identity or to the cultural inheritance of the black vernacular, but composed of a lifetime of various and diverse influences.

We have seen thus far several pitfalls of making the presence of African American folk forms a prerequisite for writing authentic black literature: such connections may be impossible (as for Wheatley) or they may restrict the literature to too narrow a portrayal of blackness. Here is another problem I wish to explore now: many times in American history, the prescription that African American literature should be rooted in the black vernacular has come not from inside but from out: from the white majority. In this way of thinking, to mark African American literature as distinctly tied to an “authentic” black tradition can turn out to be simultaneously a means of solidifying white superiority and power.

The example of Paul Laurence Dunbar, a lesser-known poet and novelist from the late nineteenth century, provides an interesting demonstration of this dynamic. Dunbar was born to former slaves, but never knew slavery personally; he attended all-white schools and was an avid reader. He wrote two distinct styles of poetry—one, using the standard English in which he had been schooled; and the other, in African American dialect. First, here is an excerpt from an 1895 dialect poem, “When Malindy Sings”:

G’way an’ quit dat noise, Miss Lucy-
Put dat music book away;
What’s de use to keep on tryin’?
Ef you practice twell you’re gray,
You cain’t sta’t no notes a-flyin’
Lak de ones dat rants and rings
F’om de kitchen to de big woods
When Malindy sings.

You ain’t got de nachel o’gans
Fu’ to make de soun’ come right,
You ain’t got de tu’ns an’ twistin’s
Fu’ to make it sweet an’ light.
Tell you one thing now, Miss Lucy,
An’ I’m tellin’ you fu’ true,

When hit comes to raal right singin'
'T ain't no easy thing to do. (*Norton* 916)

In this excerpt and what follows, Dunbar speaker creates a contrast between Miss Lucy's failed attempts to teach herself to sing and Malindy's comparative ease and mastery of good singing. What is fascinating about this poem-apart from its written representation of black oral speech-is the way it validates Malindy's "nachel" (or natural) singing over the "music book" Miss Lucy is trying to learn from. That is to say, the poem explicitly opposes "raal right singin'" (or black authenticity) and book learning, and thus makes a distinction similar to Langston Hughes's that we have just seen.

This becomes even more fascinating when we compare "Malindy" to a standard English Dunbar poem from the same year, titled "We Wear the Mask":

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,-
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be overwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask! (*Norton* 918)

What is this "mask" Dunbar's speaker laments, a grinning mask that hides "torn and bleeding hearts"? Perhaps it is dialect - and the cheerful subject matter dialect always seems to be expressing in Dunbar's poems. If so, this is a compelling reversal of what we would expect: dialect would seem to be the natural and authentic expression of the black subject, but here Dunbar suggests it is instead an unnatural, smiling, and painful mask covering over his truer desire to write in standard English.

And why would Dunbar imply that dialect is more painful than pleasurable? It might have something to do with the way in which dialect, and black vernacular more broadly, were portrayed in white popular culture of the era. A generation after the abolition of slavery in 1863, African American oral and folk culture rose to prominence as objects of caricature in vaudeville and minstrel shows, as well as in advertisements and print culture. If African Americans were no longer naturally slaves, the color line between black and white became vaguer and blurrier. Depicting blacks not as modern urban workers, but as happy slaves down on the plantation, singing cheerful work songs and performing cake-walk dances, would recreate and reinforce that hierarchy for whites eager to regain their dominance. Given this context, it's easier to understand Dunbar's frustration with the well-known white editor who praised his dialect poems and discouraged him from writing in standard English; as he once wrote in a letter: "I've

got to write dialect poetry; it's the only way I can get them to listen to me." Whereas for Langston Hughes, the African American vernacular provided a font of inspiration and racial pride, for Dunbar, it represented a devil's bargain, allowing him to gain readers while risking that his work would therein promote a limited, stereotypical picture of black people.

Nearly a century later, Amiri Baraka's surrealist play *Dutchman* (1969) presented more dramatically the hegemonic white mandate that African Americans adhere to a restrictive form of blackness. The one-act play depicts two strangers—Lula, a seductive white woman, and Clay, a young, naïve, aspiring black man—meeting on a New York subway. They first banter flirtatiously, but soon their dialogue turns uglier, as Lula calls Clay out for failing to acknowledge his racial self as she understands it. She accuses Clay: "What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard." Lula bases these judgments in her presumed knowledge of African American folk forms, insisting that Clay join her in a public performance of the "belly rub" to prove his authenticity: "Come on, Clay..let's do the thing. Uhh! Uhh! Clay! Clay! You middle class black bastard. Forget your social working mother for a few second sand let's knock stomachs. Clay, you liver lipped white man. You would be Christian. You ain't no nigger, you're just a dirty white man. Get up, Clay. Dance with me, Clay" (Norton 1956-57).

When Clay finally loses his patience and lashes out at Lula, he angrily insists on his own authority on matters of blackness: "You don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart" (Norton 1958). And further, he bases this authority upon a superior knowledge of blues dance and music: "The belly rub? You wanted to do the belly rub?...you don't even know how.... [White folks] say 'I love Bessie Smith' and don't even understand that Bessie Smith is saying, 'Kiss my ass'" (Norton 1958). Yet while Clay's invective reclaims the black vernacular as belonging exclusively to black people, he doesn't have the last word—or rather, his words get invalidated when Lula suddenly pulls out a knife and murders him to silence him once and for all. The conclusion of *Dutchman* thus seems to suggest that any argument over black authenticity and black vernacular is ultimately trivial compared to the hegemonic violence of white superiority.

Baraka's implication that the demand for authentic blackness can become deadly may seem a bit hyperbolic, but I hope the examples I've shown succeed in demonstrating the pitfalls of rooting African American literature too rigidly in a certain origin or formula or subject matter, be that vernacular culture or any other prescribed racial form. To be clear: I do not wish to argue that we should abandon the category of African American literature—or any other hyphenated minority literature for that matter (Native American, Asian American, Indian American)—although such arguments are common in what many consider a "post-racial" historical moment. And moreover, I do think that studying African American writing with black vernacular in mind can enrich our study of that literature greatly. But insisting that black writers engage with the folk tradition—or indeed with any content or form—to qualify as authentically black involves projecting our own desires and wishes onto a text rather than reading it for what IS there. I advocate that we move away from these insistences, choosing rather to read African American authors, texts, and characters in a way that privileges multiplicity over singularity.

Too often, critics and scholars of minority literatures read and interpret in what I call an **evaluative** mode, asking questions of texts such as:

- How true is this text to the African American (or woman's, or working class) experience?

- How well does it reveal, and how loudly does it protest against oppression (e.g. racism, or sexism, or classism)?

Instead, I propose that as readers, scholars, and teachers, we practice an interrogative mode, pursuing questions such as:

- What does it **mean** to be black in this text?
- What are the signifiers of race and how do they intersect with those of class and gender?
- How does the character's sense of racial/gender/class identity change or evolve throughout the narrative?
- What might be some essential paradoxes or contradictions in the way othered identity and community get characterized?

I suggest this approach not simply because I dispute the hubris involved when we subject literature-or people-to a litmus test, but also because I think literary analysis, with its openness to ambiguity and valuing of multiple interpretations, can be a particularly useful vehicle for thinking more deeply and complexly about categories of identity. By checking our presumptions at the door when we read, we can push beyond letting literary texts affirm *what* we already know and believe about identity, oppression, and power and instead investigate *how* each text constructs its own representations of identity, oppression, and power.

In this way, we can avoid what Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie calls the "Danger of a Single Story." That is the title of her brilliant TED talk from 2009. Reflecting on how her native place of Africa is often perceived (as a land of mere poverty, war, and sickness) as well as on how her work has sometimes been criticized for not being "African" enough," she says: "... to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." To avoid "the single story" when it comes to African American and other minority literatures means avoiding the temptation to evaluate a work of literature based on whether it is "black enough," or "feminist enough," or "political enough." Exposing oppression and creating solidarity among those oppressed are important tasks, but literature, I contend, is better positioned to get us to multiplicity, complication, and thereby to new discoveries about the things we already thought we knew.

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**THE HOLOCAUST THAT FOLLOWS ROSA TO AMERICA: A “TRAUMATIC”
READING OF CYNTHIA OZICK’S *THE SHAWL***

Ms. Abheeshta Nath J. R.

The Holocaust, which the Nazis euphemistically but cannibalistically called “the final solution to the Jewish question,” (Berger and Cronin 35) comes from the Greek word *Holokaustom*, referring to an animal sacrifice offered to a god in which the whole animal is completely burnt. Thus the word “Holocaust” could imbibe the full spirit of the catastrophe both in letter and spirit. While literally it became true for all those who succumbed to death in the gas chambers and electric fences of the concentration camps, those who escaped, and those who survived to be freed finally by the allied powers, were burnt alive metaphorically as the Holocaust experience consumed their original selves and traumatized them forever.

The trauma followed them even after they sought shelter as Jewish immigrants in different parts of the world with the vain hope of starting their lives afresh. Sadly enough, this trauma did not confine itself to these survivors alone but was passed on to their children who were often referred to as the second generation Holocaust victims. In fact, Jews all over world even today identify themselves with this catastrophe as they find it an inseparable aspect of their identity as Jews.

Psychologists agree in unison that the first and inevitable step in the healing process of a traumatized individual is to narrate his/her experience; to speak or write about it, though the experience may be above linguistic confines. Ironically, it took almost three to four decades for the Holocaust victims to start speaking about what they underwent, for the silence to be broken and for the psychological denial to erode and the survivors to have an audience who did not silence them the moment they shared their horrific past. Thus appeared memoirs and autobiographies of survivors like the famous Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, and Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*. The second generation victims also came out with writings revealing their experiences with their traumatized parents, the latter’s silence regarding it, their ambivalence and dilemma in being “the Children of Holocaust.” Even those Jews world over, who did not share the Holocaust experience in any way except that they also belonged to the Jewish fraternity, came forward to speak about the catastrophe, which had fortunately spared them. The name of Cynthia Ozick tops such a list of writers.

Cynthia Ozick, the American - Jewish short story writer, novelist and essayist, has had no direct link to the Holocaust, in the sense that she neither experienced it nor had immediate relatives who underwent it. She was born in New York City in the 1920s to Russian born Jewish parents. Growing up in Bronx, she always found her Jewish identity condemned and humiliated. She remembers stones being thrown at her and being called a “Christ killer” as she ran past the churches in her neighbourhood. In school, she was publicly shamed for refusing to sing Christmas carols. But all these experiences only helped her reinforce her Jewish identity and identify herself with the Jews of all times, all over the world, with all their indelible experiences. Hence, when she decided to become a writer, she was determined to become a Jewish writer, striving to concern herself with Jewish themes and the Jewish textual traditions in her writings. Thus, though she had no direct link to the Holocaust she strongly felt the need to write about it, as it was integral to the Jewish continuum.

The Shawl is Ozick’s most acclaimed Holocaust fiction. She reveals her inspiration for *The Shawl* to be a line in William Shirer’s work, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. This one line from the book

told a real event about a baby being thrown against an electric fence: “And that stayed with me and stayed with me and that was the very explicit origin of *The Shawl*, she says (qtd. in Kauvar 67). *The Shawl* consists of two parts; namely, “The Shawl,” a short story about a young woman Rosa Lublin during the Holocaust and its sequel novella, “Rosa,” depicting the same woman after thirty years as a Jewish American immigrant in late 1970s Miami. The main focus of the novel is the horror and the loss she encounters in the concentration camp and the trauma which follows her even after years as an immigrant in a far away foreign land.

The Shawl begins in *medias res*, when Rosa; her niece, Stella; and Rosa’s baby, Magda are walking down a road and are likely to be transported to a concentration camp. Next, the three women appear in a concentration camp, where Magda is hidden inside a shawl until one day Stella takes away the shawl off the baby because she feels cold herself. This causes Magda to be discovered by the guards in the camp who murder the baby by throwing her against the electric fence.

Ozick has taken every effort to showcase the terror of the Holocaust and the traumatic effect of it on the characters. In the beginning of the story, she does not create an objective documentary narrative of a concentration camp reality. She believes that “the Holocaust should not enter fiction but rather be rendered in a strictly documentary style” (qtd. in Kauvar 128). She fears that the Holocaust will be corrupted by fiction, and hence she communicates the same through a more emotional narrative. That is why, rather than opening the novella with the outlines of the place or the facts, Ozick starts with a passage introducing the inhumanity that her three female characters Rosa, Stella, and Magda face, through a fragmented language. Also, the use of fragmented language as a medium of narration allows the author to represent this monumental historical event as an atrocity that disturbs the continuity of life. It also allows readers to see that the victims’ experience comes from outside the linguistic system, because even the defining power of words is insufficient to describe the mood. She also uses a non-linear narrative to convey a new reality since the linearity of time has been shattered after the Holocaust.

In concentration camps, the inhumanity of the Holocaust is dominantly created by enforced silence that forbids the victims to create any human contact and indirectly present their absolute resignation to the Nazi’s demands of racial cleansing. Besides the physical suffering in a concentration camp including whipping, random killing, and rape, the victims faced psychological torture, such as witnessing a loved one being tortured and gauge their reaction. In the novel, Magda’s death is an example of such torture. Rosa is forced to be an onlooker to her own daughter’s slaughter by a concentration camp guard.

In her description of Magda’s death, Ozick manages to present Rosa’s reaction as an outcome of the Nazi’s barbarism. Rosa is voiceless while witnessing the murder of her daughter not only because she is in shock, but also she is unintentionally protecting herself. Through the enforced silence, the Nazis proved themselves powerful, and the Jews powerless. Threat of being killed governed the lives in the concentration camp, and in the case of Rosa, she knew that, if she ran she would be shot. Thus, she is forced to repress her maternal instinct, silently witnessing her daughter’s murder.

The shawl which covers Magda acquires different meanings and purpose as the story progresses. Initially, it conceals Magda from the eyes of the guards, and then it goes on to nourish the child when she sucks the linen out of it as her mother’s nipples go dry. At another level, it also keeps Magda, with her blue Aryan eyes, away from the eyes of her own mother who never wanted to accept the reality that the baby was the result of a rape inflicted on her in the concentration camp. When Rosa looks at her child, she sees

a miniature of her enemy. She is like the scarlet letter embroidered on to Rosa's chest, serving both as her punishment and her reward. Thus, when she wraps Magda in the shawl, she manages to keep her off her sight, keeping the consequence of the torture she has undergone hidden. Finally, when she becomes a helpless witness to her daughter's brutal murder, Rosa holds tight the shawl that she used to wrap her daughter's body. The shawl replaces Magda, and Rosa holds onto it as if she is holding her daughter. The shawl that used to nurture Magda—a symbol of life and a shield that protects Magda against the power of death—now nurtures Rosa, and it becomes her daughter,

Now, the novella "Rosa" takes place thirty years after Magda's murder. Fifty-nine year old Rosa moves to New York, and opens a second hand furniture store in Brooklyn. After smashing it herself, she moves to Miami. There she starts living in a dark hole, a single room in a hotel similar to the barracks she was once forced to live in. She almost starves herself and barely gets by with the financial help from her niece Stella. She writes letters to her dead daughter in Polish, creating countless lives for her, imagining her as a professor of Greek philosophy at Columbia University. She continues to cherish her obsession with Magda's shawl, and eagerly waits to receive it from Stella, who has kept it from her.

It becomes clear that Ozick has created two separate stories that are wedded by a mutual metaphor—the shawl and the imagery of hell, thereby making use of an important theme that governs most of the Holocaust literature ie, continuity, which is two-fold as we can see in the two works. Firstly, it shows how the Holocaust continues to torment its victims and perpetuates victimization. Secondly, it reveals the desire to maintain the Jewish identity, and the consequent fear of losing it in the alien land. She sees everything and everyone as a threat to her Jewish identity. She isolates herself from everything that is non-Jewish and attaches herself to anything that reminds her of her Jewish self. However, her niece Stella acts as a foil to her as she is too eager to forget her past, even her Holocaust experiences, in her eagerness to get assimilated into the American society. Rosa scorns at her for her reluctance to speak their native Polish tongue. Ozick uses three subjects that Rosa is attached to as a guard against assimilation and thus rendering the continuity of Jewish memory possible: the shawl, Polish language, and Magda. In fact, it is the same fear and insecurity regarding the loss of one's Jewish identity in America that prompted Ozick to become a Jewish writer and voice the experience the Holocaust through her writings. To every Jew, Jewish identity and the Jewish history are incomplete without the Holocaust.

In the sequel, we are introduced to a new Rosa who is very destructive. Ozick presents her as a mad woman and a scavenger, who gave up her store, smashed it up herself, and moved to Miami. Just as the Nazis crushed her life and forced her to see other lives destroyed, she smashes her life in New York. It is when she realizes that the contemporary society fails to respond to her story that she responds violently. She reacts with great rage, destroying her shop, and later on disconnecting herself from any human contact, just as the Nazis had forced her into silence.

She also refers to a group of people who are too willing to listen to her traumatic past. They are none other than the university people like the scientists and psychiatrists, who unfortunately take human beings for specimens and want to make a study of the survival trauma. This enrages Rosa, who feels singled out, as if she is treated like a specimen and not a human being. She even detests the word "survivor," feeling as if she is part of a human circus.

The second reason why Rosa becomes destructive reflects the madness of Holocaust. Her destructiveness is a response to the atrocities of the Nazis. America as the land of freedom allocates that

space, so she can respond at the cost of being called as a mad woman. Trauma theorists point out the importance of normal grief after the loss of the loved ones, and since the Holocaust survivors were forbidden to react due to the absolute necessity of silence as demonstrated here, their attachment to the loss carries on, and thus they keep the dead alive. In addition to the impossible mourning, Dominick La Capra, the famous historian, suggests that the feeling of guilt is another reason why the survivor cannot let the past remain safely in the past. Ozick's application of this component into her Holocaust survivor elucidates why Rosa ignores the present in favour of the past by repeating her past experience as a mother. She feels guilty about not being able to save her daughter. So, rather than moving on as a healing process, she moves backwards so that she can be with her daughter and avoid the feeling of guilt.

Her trauma as a woman is also portrayed in the novel. She speaks of her aspirations to be a chemist or a scientist before "the thieves stole her life" (75). She claims that Magda's father was a friend of her own family before the Holocaust, but also admits to having been raped by a German, more than once. She, however, disregards the possibility of Magda being the offspring of a Nazi by saying that she was too ill to conceive at that time. The effect the frequent sexual assaults she faced is shockingly revealed to us as she shows unnatural frenzy over her missing underpants. She considers it "degrading" because "an old woman who couldn't even hang on to her own underwear" is a shame (120).

We see a change in Rosa when Persky Simon comes into her life. He listens to her with understanding, though she hesitates to trust him initially. He begins the process of untangling Rosa's life and, towards the end, Rosa even trusts him with the box containing Magda's shawl. She even lets him touch it. With Simon, the readers start to hear Rosa's voice through a direct narrative. Persky begins to talk about his wife, who is institutionalized because "she's mixed up that she's somebody else" and Rosa feels more comfortable around him because she begins to see that since the "thieves" took her life and "without a life, a person lives where they can" and when they are left with nothing but memories "that's where they live" (94).

Persky's occupation is also significant to his character, and this can be seen as another reason why Rosa creates a humanly contact with him. He is in the business of buttons and, to Rosa, buttons signify the smallest presence in the world like herself. In Rosa's view, she and Persky share the same fate of being thrown away like a button. As a result of this similarity, for the first time, Rosa considers the life of someone other than herself. Through Simon, she sees herself, and he reconnects Rosa with the human community, much like the function of button connecting two separate sides. This is the reason why she privileges him to open the box that contains Magda's shawl.

Through the image of Madonna, Rosa likens her Holocaust experience to Jesus's crucifixion. She likens herself with the Holy mother, and Magda, with Jesus. Just as Mother Mary suffered with every nail that pierced Jesus' flesh, Rosa suffered witnessing her daughter's death. Therefore, Rosa represents everything that Virgin Mary represents: an emblem of honour, purity of body and soul, eternal innocence and chastity. Also, since Madonna is rarely depicted without her child, Rosa regains an eternal connection with Magda, which can never be destroyed. Magda's death is depicted in a similar way to Jesus's crucifixion; the Nazis had thrown her to an electrical fence. In this sense, Magda begins to represent what Jesus's crucifixion represents: a willing sacrifice to atone for humanity's sin and salvation. By allowing Persky to open the box, she assigns him the role of humanity, who acknowledges the suffering of both Virgin Mary and Jesus, and appreciates the eternal connection between a mother and a child.

At the end, her act of disclosure of her trauma to a man like Persky is rewarding. It helps her to come to terms with her tattered self, and even to come to terms with reality. As the novella ends, we find her even offering prayers for the soul of her dead daughter. Thus, Ozick concludes the story by implying the beginning of a new period in Rosa's life.

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MIXING MEMORY AND DESIRE

Mr. Amal P. Mathews

Gabrielle McIntire, in a study of T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland," opines that memory and desire are two markedly different categories of human experience. They are incompatible elements, with memory, "insistently backward glancing" and desire producing "futuraity". But they are crucially close in the backdrop of loss and parting. Eliot is, in fact, pointing towards "a poetics of desire and memory which would claim a porous and interdependent affiliation" between the two (194). The portrayal of desire in the pretext of a loss by means of memory is etched in Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (2002), Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2003) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). An analysis of the myriad and creative ways employed by the novelists reveals their strategy of mapping the tragic loss and the painful process of remembering in their works.

The depiction of pain, grief, and trauma in the above novels gains relevance as the three novels were published post 9/11. Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* is a novel narrated by a dead girl, aged fourteen. The novel's blurb proudly claims that the novel has been inspired by a neighbourhood tragedy, and turned it into literature. The fourteen year old young girl is the narrator of the novel. Interestingly, she is the victim of an abduction and gruesome murder. Susie Salmon, the narrator-victim, is in heaven, and is looking down to see what is happening in her absence, how her loved ones cope with her terrible death. Even with the victim as the narrator, the novel is not essentially a victim narrative. Also, as Margaret Atwood affirms in her essay, "Negotiating with the Dead," the story speaks of the "unique power of the fictional terrain where voice is still heard beyond death" (85). This fictional possibility is put to good use by Sebold in her lovely portrayal of multiple desires left behind in a loss, in an otherwise tragic victim narrative.

The novel is a piece of creative writing taking sustenance from a loss and the subsequent trauma. The toning down of the private grief and the blunting of sorrow among close relatives is also portrayed. The desire to relive Susie's memories diminishes with the passage of time. The fractured family slowly takes its first and tottering steps to negotiate her memories. The rhetoric of trauma in the novel also break down the stereotypical image of "bones," as hinted at in the title. It deconstructs the image of bones from a horrific reminder to an abstract and positive idea. The Freudian concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* ("afterwardsness") can be applied here. *Nachtraglichkeit* refers to a belated understanding or retroactive attribution of traumatic meaning to earlier events. William Jones translates *Nachtraglichkeit* into English as "deferred action" (Lauretis 118). Freud says that memory becomes a trauma by deferred action. Thus, desire and memory intertwine to invoke the elemental feeling of trauma. However, this trauma is not carried much further as we have the narrative moving onward to piece together the future after a trauma. The need for a closure in memory is also suggested, as Susie Salmon watches her family members, guiding them through the maze of grief and dysfunction, from her personal heaven.

Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife* makes the most of the backdrop of a family to deal with erratic absences and temporary loss. The titular time traveller, Henry De Tamble, shuttles in time and space, which chaotically affects his life and relationships. He undergoes an odd predicament by which he travels involuntarily through time. Henry De Tamble can be defined as a CDP-Chrono Displaced

Person or as a mercurial time traveller. He and his wife Clare Abshire are often out of sync in their family relationship, as Henry chaotically disappears every now and then. The Chrono Impairment is portrayed as a quasi-medical condition that catapults him, unwillingly, from one random point in time to another. This is an imagined disease condition where the protagonist's experiencing of time is out of order as he is lost in the folds of past, present and future. The trauma of the interim disappearances operates in two ways as Henry loses a footing in his own life. He is unable to get rid of the past or to have a grip in the present or to face the future, without already being aware of what is to happen. He is simultaneously tossed around and left alone in time and space. As his past and future feverishly collide with his rather delicate present, he is without an anchor in his life. In the second level, Henry's wife Clare is always left behind experiencing the trauma of waiting for Henry to come back without any mishap. Also, the parting forced upon Clare is abrupt and forced. At times, Henry makes a comeback almost imminently whereas it can also take days and days.

With the scaffolding of a familial set-up, Niffenegger cogently captures the dilemmas of slippage in human relationships. The readers are presented with a character with absolutely no control over his present, his space-time location, his relationships, desires and memories. All of the above things are extremely jumbled up or is rendered topsy-turvy by means of his time- travelling phenomenon. Here, it is episodic memory which represents the memory of experiences and specific events in time in a serial form, from which one can reconstruct the actual events that took place at any given point in our lives. Episodic memory is the memory of autobiographical events (times, places, associated emotions and other contextual knowledge) that can be explicitly stated. In the case of a normal individual, this memory is constructed bit by bit and piece by pieces, with a rootedness to space and time. In the case of Henry, this memory is strangely haphazard. As the blurb of the novel states: "This is the story of Clare and Henry who met when Clare was six and Henry was thirty-six, and were married when Clare was twenty-two and Henry thirty." The above quote points to the peculiar jumbling of space and time which wrecks havoc in Henry's personal life and relationships. Don Locke in his book, *Memory*, lists the forms of memory as factual memory, practical memory and personal memory. Just as factual memory might be defined in terms of factual knowledge, practical memory is defined in terms of practical knowledge and personal memory is the memory of people, places, things, events and situations that we have personally experienced. In Henry's case, all these forms of memory are blurred and hazy as he is unavoidably whisked around in time. So unfolds the portrait of an individual affected with a bizarre loss/tragedy as he fails to have a connectedness to his own life. This exactly is the sense of trauma experienced by people when affected with a personal loss or tragedy. Hence, the novel becomes a gripping negotiation of loss, trauma and desire of an unusual nature, intensity and often undefined.

Again, the caricature of this trauma is a bit uplifting too as the novel is a soaring celebration of the victory of love over time and the age old dictum of love triumphing over all sorrows and grief and in fact, a reiteration of "tomorrow is another day," as the timeless heroine Scarlet O' Hara exultantly proclaims in *Gone with the Wind*.

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* also fits in the category of post 9/ 11 novels. Nine-year old Oskar Schell is shown to lose his father in the WTC attack. The novel depicts

Oskar's confrontation of the loss and the subsequent stages of Limbo that he undergoes. Safran Foer caricatures the protagonist as an exceptional child: amateur inventor, Francophile, pacifist, inventor, letter-writer, detective etc. Oskar discovers a key, placed in an envelope with the name "Black" written on the back of the cover, a couple of years after his father's death. He embarks on an incomparable journey across New York's five boroughs, in an attempt to locate individuals with Black as surname.

Oskar's quest is of magnificent proportions as he scurries along borough after borough finding out all the various people whose names end in Black. He encounters "a motley assortment of humanity," who turn out to be survivors of their own traumatic tragedies in life (115). Oskar becomes an ever-willing listener to many New Yorkers, helping them to reiterate and relive their trauma from their present circumstances. In the backdrop of 9/11, Oskar is the conduit through which the older traumas are re-visited to bring newer dimensions of understanding and compassion. The Dresden bombings of World War II are brought in by the narratives of Oskar's grandparents. Thus, through a juxtaposition of 9/11 and World War II, the author reminds the fact that every trauma has to be represented and reiterated. The coping of any trauma invariably calls for the revisiting of a/any trauma. Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian-born political philosopher and cultural critic explicates that "the essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such" (qtd. in Edkins 1).

"Remembering is often suffused with emotion and is closely involved in both extended affective states such as love and grief and socially significant practices such as promising and commemorating" (Sutton 14). The title *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* echoes the reckoning of the voices of the departed through the sensations of hearing and touch. It also directs our attention to the tangible absences and presences left behind in every trauma. Oskar is a good listener as he listens and yearns for a tactile contact with his dead father which he constructs by means of listening to many others around him, each grappling their own traumas. In other words, listening is paramount in any trauma, even if it is listening to the sighs and silences. This is more relevant when the telling becomes more difficult. Richard Gray in his book *After the Fall*, states that "If there was one thing writers agreed about in response to 9/11, it was the failure of language; the terrorist attacks made the tools of their trade seem absurd" (67). This was a collective dilemma faced by the American writers in the aftermath of 9/11. Hence, the novel portrays Safran Foer adequately maneuvering little Oskar through New York's innumerable lanes, people and the individual traumas of the past to confront his reality of loss with a greater traction.

To conclude, the above novels have elements of memory and trauma which provide a bedrock and serves as the potter's kiln in which the plot is shaped. The extrapolations made out of loss and memories are vividly captured in these works. However, they cannot be seen as an innocent and naïve rendering of coming in terms with a traumatic loss. The confrontation of any loss post 9/11 in the American milieu is acutely etched in the looming backdrop of the cataclysmic 9/11. Hence, the collective trauma of the nation is a singular undercurrent which cannot be ignored in any of these narratives. The complex matrix of loss, memory, and desire result in a massive sense of slippage and silence in relationships. All these narratives constitute a mirage of reassurance; of being capable of experiencing what is gone, even in traces.

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TONI MORRISON'S *SULA*: A FEMINIST/GYNOCRITICAL READING

Mr. M. Anith Prem Malaravan

Gender has momentous implications in the description of the self; the condition of being man and a woman. The term “gender” refers to the socially-constructed notions of masculinity and femininity as well as the socially accepted relationships between man and woman. The subject of African-American gender identity is closely related to the long history of slavery and the evil effects of patriarchy.

The issue of gender mostly pertains to the female, and the treatment of the issue in Toni Morrison's *Sula* may be analyzed in the light of feminism. Feminist theories focus on gender politics, gender relations, and sexuality. Elaine Showalter's model of gynocriticism is a sort of socio-historical investigation. It explores literature on the basis of subject matter, historical background, and the structure of literature written by women.

Toni Morrison is the first black woman writer to be awarded Nobel Prize for Literature. In her opinion, “a criticism that needs to insist that literature is not only ‘universal’ but also ‘race-free’ risks lobotomizing that literature, and diminishes both the art and the artist” (*Playing* 12). Feminist reading allows the reader to explore deep within, pondering the questions that have shaped him/her individually, and what we have become as a society. Some of these new recognitions may be distressing and cumbersome to navigate, but are well worth the journey. Being a black female writer, Morrison offers not only an insight from an African American point of view, but also gives a detailed perspective of life, love, and community. “Morrison ... emphasizes the interconnection of community stability and individual survival. The two values coexist in a state of tension; neither deserves to be emphasized one above the other” (Harding 103).

In *Sula*, the community of the Bottom looks unfavorably upon the seemingly-selfish and nonconforming Sula, who chooses to wander, and find her own path, instead of taking the well-worn path of the other women in the community, which includes her mother and grandmother. Sula's best friend, Nel Wright, chastises Sula for her nonconformity, saying, “You *can't* do it all. You a woman and a colored woman at that. You can't act like a man. You can't be walking around all independent-like, doing whatever you like, taking what you want, leaving what you don't (142). Instead of becoming a part of the Bottom, Sula distances herself from it, creating a wedge of alienation between herself and everyone else. The hostility is given to Sula because of her choices; it is evident in the deterioration of her friendship with Nel Wright; her estrangement from her own grandmother, Eva; and the general mistrust and suspicions of the rest of the community. The circumstances Sula finds herself in, as well as the choices she made for herself and the resulting hostility she encounters, portrays the dynamic sense of family that is expected from everyone in the Bottom. This is also evident in the many different texts by African-American writers, in which the collective whole is considered more important than a single individual within the community.

In *Sula*, members of the Bottom community, depending on their various qualities, are given clout and control over local affairs. As critics Wendy Harding and Jacky Martin note, “Culture's multiple divisions result in a complexity of intersections” (6). There is a socially constructed linear flow of “intersectionality” in the novel, especially the way it relates to hierarchy and oppression, starting at the top (those who hold the power) with rich, white, heterosexual males and ending at the bottom (those with

none of the power) with poor, black, lesbian women. Scattered between these two polar opposites are all others, and varying according to their levels of “intersectionalities,” they are positioned so as to provide maximum benefit of power for those at the top.

There are several themes which Morrison chose to explore in her novel *Sula* which directly connect back into the main issues in African American theory. Morrison’s decision to probe into issues such as intra-racial racism, internalized racism, and the intersections of racism, classism, and sexism is, in its own way, proof of the African-American struggle to persevere through life’s negative experiences. The characters in *Sula* share a variety of these issues, sometimes even embodying all of them simultaneously. Many black members of the Bottom community are targeted frequently and severely. Lighter skinned blacks are also taunted and discriminated against darker skinned blacks in the novel, whereby Morrison points to intra-racial racism, as well as internalized racism.

The logical reasoning behind this is that due to the systematic racism practised by the white people, it is nearly impossible for the blacks to avoid internalizing these values of hatred, even for their own people and for themselves. If a person is told often enough that they are less worthy of consideration, opportunity, and quality of life, it is only a matter of time before they begin to believe it. After years of this type of white ill treatment, black people end up becoming their own worst enemies, in addition to the white people who continue to perpetuate racism and discrimination. An example of intra-racial racism at work within the novel can be seen when the people of Medallion contain evil within Sula, so that they can use her to contain their anger at those evils they are powerless to remedy. A certain level of internalized racism and hatred is evident in *Sula*, as her conflicted sense of identity and community create polar opposites within her internal make-up. When Sula returns to the Bottom, she confides in Nel that half of Medallion needed to be killed, confessing her aversion for the surrounding town and community. It seems that this conflict may be the main reason for Sulas abandoning the Bottom in search of comfort and identity elsewhere.

Morrison employs both the use of orality and folk motifs as a technique in the structure of her novel, following the literary tradition of many other African American texts. By giving her characters the voice of everyday dialect such as black vernacular English (an African-American variety of American English), Morrison immediately submerges the reader in a new territory; reading her novel forces her readers to give up their preconceived notions about language, and how it shapes and is itself a product of society.

Folk motifs are prominent in *Sula*, especially in the opening story of Shadrack and his founding of National Suicide Day. Even in the telling of the folk stories, there are exaggerations, colourful language, and vivid fantastical descriptions which make the illusions come alive. The story of Shadrack seems to be dream-like, even as his days at a mental institution are recounted: “Just as he was about to spread his fingers, they began to grow in higgledy-piggledy fashion like Jack’s beanstalk all over the tray and the bed” (9). This motif is also evident in other colourful accounts being told throughout the novel, such as the drowning of Chicken Little, the strange wind which tore through the Bottom, Hannah Peace burning in the yard fire, the speculative story of Eva Peace’s leg being severed by a train in order to collect the insurance, and the plague of robins which accompanied Sula back to the Bottom.

Another vivid reflection of folk underpinnings in Medallion, according to critics Harding and Martin is the way in which Sula’s birthmark is “a constantly renewed symbolism expressing [her] personality as a response to others” (22). Her birthmark takes on different roles and meanings, as it morphs into a variety of shapes specific to the observer as a projection of themselves. The people of Medallion see

themselves in Sula, and it is through their own interpretations of her chameleon-like birthmark that Sula's presence is established in their hearts and minds.

Character types also come to embody certain folk practices. Eva Peace can be seen as the matriarch, Shadrack can arguably be seen as the trickster, and Sula Peace seems to take on the form of the conjurer (at least to the rest of the Bottom community). Particularly, Eva's amputated leg may be taken as a symbol for the whole Bottom community, the maiming being emblematic not only of a woman's sacrifice but also of the whole community's deprivation." The residents of the Bottom also rely heavily on storytelling in order to share and pass down wisdom, as well as create a sense of community feeling.

As Morrison illustrates in *Sula*, community and self-identity can sometimes intertwine and clash with one another. Specifically, black women find themselves in a specific intersectional conflict, where they "must negotiate the conflicting requirements of their relationship to the Black community as a whole – their solidarity with Black men against racist oppression – and their relationship to women of all races in an effort to resist sexist oppression" (Tyson 389). Sula is the perfect example of this intersectionality, as she finds herself torn in different directions as the different passions which induce her to act also serve to motivate her. The struggle for her own self identity is prevalent throughout the novel, and this is one of the focal themes which the story unfolds, as Sula Peace defies cultural stereotypes of femininity. Sula has been doubly oppressed by race and gender, which she overcomes by building solidarity with other black women. This solidarity among one another is unique to black women, as black feminists have long pointed out.

Sula is obviously torn between sexual and racial politics, as Morrison makes clear in her characterization of Sula and her choices. When Sula leaves the Bottom, speculation arises as to where she had went, rumours swirling about that she was either in college or assimilating into white society and, some pointing to her moral integrity. Sula's only chance for survival lies within the community, and outside the community she faces the threat of annihilation. Breaking away from community results in the breakdown of Sula's character. It is also the beginning of the end for Medallion, for if Sula had not left the Bottom, her destiny would not have been fulfilled. Regardless, the possible negative explanations for Sula's disappearance were looked upon unfavorably by the rest of the Bottom community since they all alluded to a possible treason towards the community.

The black woman as suppressed artist is also a dominant theme in *Sula*, as the protagonist is frequently denied an adequate outlet for herself expressive tendencies. Instead of merely accepting what life has handed her, she disrupts a linear course in favour of erratic behavior and an unpredictable path, even disrupting her personal connections along the way. She becomes destructive to fill the void in her life caused by lack of artistic tools and an outlet for her artistic temperament. She does whatever she wants regardless of the consequences, acting out all of her unconventional behavior until she is feared and despised by the whole town of Medallion. The sacrifices made to pursue a life of excitement and spontaneity wreaks havoc in the town, and further secludes her from any sense of comforting community. With an increase in her individuality, Sula must also accept an increase in isolation. In order to become fully accepted into the community, she would have to "exhibit a dual allegiance to self and to collectivity" (Harding 87). While other members of Medallion questioned Sula, she, in turn, sought to question and reclaim her past, as well as examine her relationship in whole to the black community. As a way of providing some sort of answer—some sense of security—within the Bottom, Sula is seen as a political personification of the African American experience. Through Sula, the community can be purged of their

wrong doings. Thus, “confusing and dangerous as she is, Sula becomes a means of limiting evil, of keeping others good, safe and secure” (Peterson 55).

In *Sula*, gender issues play a major role in the definition of self. Women are oppressed at all levels on account of gender politics. Firstly, women are oppressed by the patriarchal institutions of the social world. Secondly, being black and woman is a double burden for the female characters. Thirdly, the brutal institution of slavery robs them of their right of motherhood as well as of womanhood. Employing gynocentric perspective as an interpretive literary analysis helps one to make significant steps forward in understanding the Black experience, and also probe the lives of women in African-American social worlds in a far better way.

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RE-VISIONING FEMININITY: A READING OF TONI MORRISON'S *A MERCY*

Ms. Ansa C. Prasad

Femininity, which originates from within societal structures, describes a socially-constructed image of femaleness. It refers to the set of rules governing female behaviour and appearance, which aims to make women conform to a male ideal of sexual attractiveness. As masculinity and femininity are the opposite ends of the same parameters which differentiate basic sex differences of the 1950s, now situation changes and both features are not opposite ends of the same dimension, but are two independent dimensions so that anyone can be high or low or either. This paper challenges the idea of femininity by re-visioning it in the postmodern era through Toni Morrison's novel, *A Mercy* (2008). The novel begins and ends with the tragic victimization of women.

Toni Morrison sees motherhood an important experience for women; she does not limit women's roles in the society to motherhood. The mother is not only an individual, but Morrison represents, symbolically as the mother of all black people. Elaine Showalter examines the situation of mothers and points out that "children are the compensation of feminine surrender" and that "...childbirth is not a victory: it is an acceptance of the compensations of giving in and giving up" (Showalter 305-306). *A Mercy*, Morrison's ninth novel, exposes what slavery meant to a mother in early America. The unnamed mother offers her daughter, Florens, "maybe seven or eight (3)" a black slave girl to a stranger in payment for her master's debt in the hope of preventing her daughter from being sexually abused. But Florens misunderstands her mother's reasoning in sending her away and remembers with sadness:

I know it is true because I see it forever and ever. Me watching, my mother listening, her baby boy on her hip. Senhor is not paying the whole amount he owes to Sir. Sir saying, he will take instead the woman and the girl, not the baby boy and the debt is genera minha mae begs no. Her baby boy is still at her breast. Take the girl, she says, my daughter, she says. Me. Me." (5)

Florens' mother has no other option. Along with other members of the tribe, she too was brought from Africa when the tribe was defeated. She was sold to Senhor who took her north to his tobacco plantation. Soon after she was purchased, she was taken to a curing shed, along with two other slave women. It was night time and shadows of men sat on barrels: "They said they were told to break we in. There is no protection. To be female in this place is to be open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below" (161).

Florens' mother chooses to send her daughter because "Sir" has "no animal in his heart" (163) and at the same time men in the house in which they are residing have raped the mother multiple times and are already noticing Florens' femaleness. Mother thinks of a chance and asks: "Take you my daughter. Because I saw the tall man see you as a human child, not pieces of eight. I knelt before him. Hoping for a miracle. He said yes (164). This acceptance of girl was a mercy that her mother prayed for. At the age of eight, Florens lost her mother and her mother even does not know about her father. According to Freud, the girl's first affection is for her father and boy's first desires for his mother. In the essay, *Female Sexuality* (1931), Freud explains the intensity and duration of the girl's first attachment, her relationship with her mother: "Our insight into this early, pre-Oedipus phase in the little girl development comes to us

as a surprise, comparable in another field with the effect of the discovery of the Minoan-Mycenaean civilization behind that of Greece” (Gunew 178).

Unfortunately, lack of mother’s affection creates distrust in Florens, which she carries with her throughout the novel. Her love affair with a freedman and her unwillingness to share him with an orphaned boy reflects her violent nature. When she primarily meets the boy, she recognizes: “This happens twice before. The first time it is me peering around my mother’s dress hoping for her hand that is only for her little boy. The second time it is a pointing screaming little girl hiding behind her mother and clinging to her skirts. Both times are full of danger and I am an expel” (133-134). She cannot accept the fact that her lover loving more than one person: “I worry as the boy steps closer to you. How you offer and he owns your forefinger. As if he is your future. Not me” (134). She narrates: “He is silent but the hate in his eyes is loud. He wants my leaving. This expel can never happen again” (135). Florens hatred towards the society tempts her to attack the boy. “And yes I do hear the shoulder crack but the sound is small, no more than the crack a wing of roast grouse makes when you tear it, warm and tender from its breast. He screams screams then faints” (138). Her lover feels angry at her barbaric deed and rejects her. This rejection from mother and lover create a rebellious nature in her, and she raises her voice against the limitations of the society.

Toni Morrison always highlights the agony of being a black oppressed by the whites, a poor exploited by the rich, a woman amongst overbearing men, a child among authoritarian adults. The marginalized girl child in her novels originates in her own psyche and it is an examination of archetypal feminine growing up process. Her girl child is pubescent, half-woman, half-child and she is Pecola, Claudia, Frieda, Dorcas, Felice, Denver, Sula, Nel, Jadine, Florens, and most of all, *Beloved*. Rebellious and sensitive, they find at traumatic moments that powerlessness is their multifaceted attribute, for it belongs to them as blacks, females and children. The mother in her novels is shown as the penetrator of patriarchal and racist constructions of female subjectivity. The mother once innocent as her daughter, to the society and family was socialized in the approved manner and must do the same to her resisting daughter. Morrison exposes the mother-daughter as idealized and an ideological construct. The gulf between the mother and daughter is determined by the patriarchy so that there is a silence between them. In Florens’ and mother’s case, the misunderstanding of the daughter is due to the silence.

In African community, due to slavery, stable woman-man relationships were not possible. Compared to men, women were more likely to be available to the children. Consequently, matriarchal families were the norm in the black society of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. There is a realization that the mother is a strong but a suffering being. Kristeva comments: “Women generally write in order to tell their own family story. When a woman novelist does not reproduce a real family of her own, she creates an imaginary story through which she constitutes an identity; narcissism is safe, the ego becomes eclipsed after freeing itself, purging itself of reminiscences” (Kristeva 166). Amidst the sufferings, Florens learns to read and write from the Reverend who risks his own safety to teach her. The religious humiliations she suffers as an adult scar her deeply. The puritans accuse her of being a demon. She feels something precious is leaving from her: “I am a thing apart” (113). She realizes: “With the letter I belong and am lawful. Without it I am weak calf abandon by the herd, a turtle without shell, a minion with no telltale signs but a darkness I am born with, outside, yes, but inside as well and the inside dark is small, feathered and toothy” (113).

Jacob Vaark, a farmer and trader in the North eastern colonies, who owes three slaves at home and also exchanges land for the toil of Willard and Scully, who are working through ever-extending debt contracts. But in addition to farming, Jacob increases his wealth by lending money. Rebekka questions God when she loses one baby after another but Jacob tries to compensate the death with the presence of Florens.

Vaark is still hopeful that Rebekka would still bear more children, especially a boy. But her predictions are:

. . . servant, prostitute, wife, and although horrible stories were told about each of those careers, the last one seemed safest. The one where she might have children and therefore be guaranteed some affection. As with any future available to her, it depended on the character of the man in charge. Hence marriage to an unknown husband in a far-off land had distinct advantages: separation from a mother who had barely escaped the ducking pond; from male siblings who worked days and nights with her father and learned from him their dismissive attitude toward the sister who had helped rear them; but especially escape from the leers and rude hands of any man, drunken or sober, she might walk by. (75-76)

Lina, Sorrow, a newborn and Florens, the servants of the farm knows that if both their master and mistress die, “three unmastered women and an infant out here, alone, belonging to no one, became wild game for anyone” (56). They are scared of the fact that either Baptists claim or auction the farm. Lina says, “we never shape the world . . . The world shapes us” (69). Morrison depicts the three women as powerful feminine victims of slavery. After Jacob’s death and Mistress’ fall, Lina sends Florens out to find the blacksmith who can save mistress’ life. Florens’ episodic journey takes on a symbolic quality. She meets labourers who will set themselves free, then young Native Americans who treat her kindly, and a bard of Puritans. Morrison’s female characters heal themselves by revising the stories of the past. Lina while sending Florens hopes they will be together after he saves mistress. But all hopes are in vain and he rejects, saying, “You are nothing but wilderness. No constraint. No mind” (139). Her passionate love for the blacksmith turns her mind. She confesses, “I promise to lie quietly in the dark-weeping perhaps or occasionally seeing the blood once more - but I will never again unfold my limbs to rise up and bare teeth . . . You can think what I tell you a confession, if you like, but one full of curiosities familiar only in dreams and during those moments when a dog’s profile plays in the steam of a kettle” (1).

Morrison uses Symbolism and animal imagery to describe the feminine character of her heroines. As a child, Florens hate to be barefoot and always begged for shoes. Her mother criticizes her need and gives her shoes. According to Lina, Florens’s feet “are useless, will always be too tender for life and never have the strong soles, tougher than leather, that life requires” (2). This motif of shoes is symbolized as a token of love in which a mother provides her daughter .Florens’ starts her journey to find blacksmith, she dreams of “those moments when a dog’s profile plays in the steam of a kettle”(1), dog’s image is that of Florens and her sense of loneliness and emptiness is exposed. She dreams about the “boneless bears in the valley” (3) which explain her love for blacksmith. Lina shares the story of the eagle with Florens. She summarizes: “an eagle laid her eggs in a nest far above and far beyond the snakes and paws that haunted them” (60). This fierce mother has a beak “like the scythe of a war god” (60). This imagery represents Morrison’s female characters, who are maternal and ready to save their younger ones from cruel hands. The eagle cannot defend against one thing: “the evil thoughts of man” (60). It attempts to

attack the evil hands of man, but he strikes her with the stick and sends her falling into eternity. The splendid imagery of eagle shows Lina's inability to save Florens from her lover.

Florens's words on the walls of Vaark's house, "There is no more room in this room. These words cover the floor . . . I am holding light in one hand and carving letters with the other. My arms ache but I have need to tell you this . . . You read the world but not the letters of talk . . . Maybe one day you will learn. If so, come to this farm again . . . and come inside this talking room in daylight" (45). These words reflect an autobiographical tone of black femaleness. In Wardi's words, Florens's act of inscription, "can be read as an awareness of the power of dominant imperial discourse to shape reality and she maps her own narrative onto the piece of power. Realising that she has no legitimate claim to place, she not only inserts herself onto the home by occupying it but she marks it as her own. She writes herself and her belonging into being" (Wardi 34).

In her final reclamation, she embraces her complexity as a black female: "See? You are correct. A minha mae too. I am become wilderness but I am also Florens. In full. Unforgiven...None. Hear me? Slave. Free. I last. minha mae too"(159). Florens' journey to find the Blacksmith ends up as a journey to find herself. She is the symbol of African Diaspora, the lack of affection and caring towards her forces her to express real feminine submissiveness.

In this novel, Morrison reaches back to past before slavery to trace feminine qualities and reconstructs that history with narratives of four women. Like postmodern women, Florens' is open for changes and is self-assured and actively takes control of her life. She does not let herself be made the victim of the circumstances, but rather takes control of it. Empowered by their own self confidence, Morrison's women share a collective struggle for self and identity beyond the slavery. Due to radical feminism, women began to be encouraged to recognize their own strengths and adapt themselves to the structure. Thus, Morrison, through her protagonists stresses most of the feminine qualities and entangles it with the postmodern era.

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**“LESBIAN GOTHIC” IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE:
PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE STRAIGHT WORLD**

Ms. Aparna B.

In the kernel of each of our lives lies the making of a ghost. Sleeping in each of us lies the void that they wander in, voiceless till we allow them to speak. (Venita Coelho)

The eminent French philosopher Alain Badiou's conceptual category of the "subject" provides a theoretical insight into the politics of the genre, Lesbian Gothic. Analyzed in the context of the numerous definitions of women's subjectivity and victimization, one finds Badiou's idea of "subjectivity" all the more relevant when it comes to women's world. According to Badiou, one becomes a subject by maintaining fidelity to the truth of an event. If one admits this definition regarding women's subject positions, there will occur a radical paradigm shift in the public gaze of women. Women's position will shift from that of a passive victim to one who actively participates directly or indirectly in one's personal and hence social politics. The process leading to this "subjectification" is a complex one. In the context of Lesbian Gothic narratives, through the "playful performance" of storytelling, from the silent objects, women are transformed into beings of truth, content, and individuality. Lesbian Gothic fiction, a comparatively recent genre which has gained popularity in America, can be considered one such tool in transforming women into creative and rebellious Badiouean "subjects" in patriarchal, heteronormal, elitist societies. Lesbian Gothic fiction does it through the deconstruction/subversion of the normative binaries and reclaiming the repressed identities. This again includes employing techniques like "playful performances" such as storytelling, challenging the man-made spaces, resisting hegemonic interferences in women-made spaces, resorting to symbolic violence, redefining power structures, indulging in discourses on gaining access to knowledge systems, organizing women solidarities etc. Contemporary Lesbian Gothic exemplifies the Badiouian subject positions of women who actively participate in social spaces, and resist Other's definitions of women's roles.

Gothic fiction is believed to combine horror and fiction. Works like *The Castle of Ortranto* and most of the early Gothic works tried to evoke an enjoyable horror, while many of the later works focused on the psychological, social, and scientific factors as well, which may not always offer a pleasant reading experience. Gothic fiction was born in England in the eighteenth century, and gained popularity in the next century. In the literature produced in English language, Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe are the best known for experimenting with this genre. A basic structure can be observed in most of these gothic fictions- medieval buildings where the stories take place, the mystery/curse element, deceitful ways, fragile heroines, courageous hero, death, madness, supernatural etc.

There were many experimental versions of the Gothic. Some fictionalized the fears of the society, some dealt with the female Gothic, and some explored the terrors which affect the soul. There also appeared the urban gothic, gothic literature on outcasts and monsters, folklore, realistic horror fiction, the aesthetic horror, explaining the supernatural, and so on.

In America, Gothic fiction developed into a popular form of literature and there are several contextual reasons behind this popularity. When one relates the Gothic genre to the history of America, the effect of Puritanism on American literature should be remembered. Just as the influence of Christianity and the guilt element are major themes in American literature, the Gothic fiction was also affected by these twin

concepts. The natural wilderness, the hostile relationships between the settlers and Native Americans, slavery and the resulting miscegenation are all part of the American context which led to the development of Gothic fiction in America. The mysteries the strange land opened to the settlers were simultaneously alluring and frightening. Hence, the symbolic representations of the irrational and guilt in American Gothic. Puritan imageries, Puritan punishments, the notions of sin were all employed by the Gothic fictional writers like Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Fear of the unknown and theory of evolution also found expression in gothic fictions.

In 1790s itself, one can observe homosexual positions manifesting itself in the form of the Gothic. The early writers who employed the queer Gothic motifs in their works include Oscar Wilde, Matthew G. Lewis, and William Beckford. Lesbian feminism is a feminist cultural movement in the 1970s which gained momentum in North America in the second half of the twentieth century. Demanding revisions of heterosexual social culture, denaturalisation of the idea of “normal,” and emphasizing the female choice, lesbianism intervened in many areas of social and political life.

As a component of the feminist movement, Lesbian Gothic emerged as a new form of literature—one that can be called a literature of resistance. Female sexuality, desire, and pleasure found resonances through the Gothic. Paulina Palmer, in her article on Lesbian Gothic, considers Lesbian eroticism as transgressive in the context of patriarchy and heterosexual normativity. Hence, Lesbian Gothic provides women a space for discourses on the unutterable and the long suppressed.

In *The Apparitional Lesbian*, Terry Castle analyses the ghost itself as an image for lesbian secrecy (46-47). The Gothic essentials in Lesbian Gothic fiction, if considered, are all reflections of the marginalized life of the queer. The night life, the spectres, the vampires/witches/ghosts, the haunted subjects, the misunderstandings, mysterious castles with its numerous unknown cabins, the irrational, and the anonymous—everything symbolically represents the outcast, homosexual realities one encounters in the so called liberal humanist societies. Fear, another elementary attribute of the Gothic, corresponds to the unconscious fear in the minds of the heteronormative society towards the lesbian/queer community. Even then, the repressed sexuality of the women manifests itself circuitously through the literary form of Lesbian Gothic, revolting against the curbing sexual norms imposed by a society insensitive to their anxieties. Disrupting the rational and the ordinary, the Gothic and Lesbian cultures find parallels of their intricate subsistence. The Lesbian and the Gothic pose some ontological questions, and attempt to mark their identity in a hostile society which is often apprehensive of “the other.”

The vampires and the witches in Lesbian Gothic fictions share a community life of intimacy, which is very similar to that of the lesbians. The threat that the “outsiders” pose in these Gothic communities is also figurative of the haunting of the lesbians by the “straight”/ “normal” public. The patriarchal homosexual society considers the lesbians as a threat to their existence, just as the witches and vampires are considered precarious by the human beings. The hunter-hunted, the haunter-haunted images also signify the lesbian predicament of uncertainty and insecurity.

Through Lesbian Gothic literature, women writers in America strategically resist “man-made” history, culture, and institutions. Lesbian Gothic tries to position women characters in a community of their own, maturing and growing up together. The witches and vampires lead a community life sharing resources, happiness, and anxieties. Woman-woman relationships are strong in the stories of Paula Martinac, Jewelle Gomez, and Celia March while Eliza Fenwick portrays lesbian desire in her works like *Secrecy*. Rebecca

Brown (*The Haunted House*, *The Terrible Girls*, *The Gifts of the Body*) Mary Wings (*Divine Victim*), Djuna Barnes (*Nightwood*, *The Antiphon*), Katherine V. Forrest (*Apparition Alley*, *Murder by Tradition*), Ellen Gifford (*The Fires of Bride*) are writers of American Lesbian Gothic, who are either lesbians or LGBT activists. Sarah Schulman, in her 1995 novel, *Rat Bohemia*, besides discussing the holocaust, AIDS issues, reveals the beauty of lesbian relationships too. She points her finger at a society which supports heterosexual dating of their children, but not queer relationships. Schulman seems to be concerned about friendships, love and togetherness among people-queer and otherwise. In many of these Lesbian Gothic works, one can identify gay/lesbian characters' resistance against marginalization and demonization.

Adrienne Rich, through "Lesbian Continuum," a term she coined, examines woman-woman relationships. She analyses camaraderie, friendships, the institutions of women, and the support-providing networks among lesbian communities. Elizabeth Ammons, in an online article, investigates another American writer Sarah Orne Jewett's works to explore the bonds between women-maternal, filial, sororial, and erotic. In Jewett's short story, "The Foreigner," female bonding, women's space, and the strength of women characters are defined and redefined. Jewett and other writers wrote in an American society, like many other countries across the world, treated lesbianism as deviant, dangerous and even blasphemous. They wrote in a time when psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud did not sustain queer ideologies. And yet, contemporary American Lesbian Gothic writers in America explore same sex relationships and portray them through distinct acts of storytelling, establishing sisterhood, mutual sharing and healing, touching, kissing, feeding, supporting through advices and the like.

Female Gothic features trapped women, either in domestic space or in social spaces, and attempts to escape this space either by subverting or by transgressing it. Madness is one such attempt of subconscious mind to escape the restrictions placed by people/conditions. "Uncanny," as Freud uses the term, is an apt word for Gothic genre, standing for both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. This uncanny is also related to Julia Kristeva's concept of the "abjection." The familiarity with the object is caused by the recognition of the past of the object.

Supernatural represents the other side of humans—the darker, mysterious, unsure side of the human mind. Thus, ghosts push open the frightening "other side" of the human self which has long repressed. The moral/immoral, good/bad, virtuous/evil, useful/harmful, obedient/questioning dichotomies decided the fate of a woman, and the definitions were often made by the patriarchy. In such circumstances, women felt the dire need to create a space for them to be powerful, apart from the power-zone allowed to them by the patriarchy. Supernatural stories bestowed them with a creative platform which could be turned into a power-zone. Their structural resemblance to daydreams assigned them the form of dream rather than art or literature. Hence, psychoanalysis offered valuable observations to analyse the historical, social and cultural context of the supernatural. The world of fantasy provided them confidence to travel through the life of injustices. On the one hand, it was a defence mechanism to protect oneself from the socially constructed "harsh realities" intended only for women. On the other, it was a way of protest of the powerless/oppressed against the powerful/oppressors. Both provided happiness through a kind of "horrotainment."

The supernatural can, most probably be, a psychological defence mechanism like repression, condensation, displacement, sublimation, or projection. In the very common, yet unnoticed form of repression, unfulfilled desires, depressing thoughts and distressing memories are flung out from the conscious mind

into some other unknown realms to remain silent and forgotten. This repressed thoughts and memories may not return in the original form. They may take another form in a different context which relates to the original context in some distant way. This usually leads to anxiety and neurosis in the mind of the person who has repressed them believing they are forbidden. According to Sigmund Freud, dreams, literature, jokes, and some “Freudian slips” of the tongue illustrate the return of the repressed. The “libidinal longings” may return and manifest in myriad ways.

To Freud, the uncanny is also a recurrence of the return of the repressed (*Uncanny* 246). Freud also hints at the reasons behind uncanny projections when he says that human beings could never completely overcome the fear of ‘silence, solitude and darkness’ (*Uncanny* 252). These three factors are imperative in the lives of women of all times and more so in the life of lesbian women. One reason behind women’s interest in the Gothic genre must be the forced silence and loneliness in their lives and the darkness to which they are thrown into. The repressed and long silenced memories, hopes and fears may return through language—usually literature and songs. Most of the American Lesbian Gothic writers belong to the lesbian community is an evidence for this. The repressed normally returns not as it is, but in more complex, difficult to comprehend and indefinable ways. Also, when the forbidden is thrust open by some unanticipated causes, it will be difficult to manage the situation. The danger of it perplexes the whole being. Therefore it is not unusual that its representation in language produces fear as the inevitable outcome.

Traci L. Turski has written about the “healing power of women’s stories” in a work of the same title. The structure, narrative, context, and themes of the story relieve the maker/teller/listener of the stress—the burden she carries within. The writing and reading of Gothic texts or stories/myths/legends of the supernatural provide comfort to women, since they present things which are otherwise not presentable. Fictionalizing issues, philosophising, and expressing political thoughts are all indirectly made possible behind the facade of the gothic. The ghosts represent an alternative world where the human, societal rules are not applicable. The cruel, wicked, blood-thirsty ghosts, in a way, are manifestations of women’s freedom and subversion of the traditional, accepted version of feminine identity. This identity formation is another attraction of the Gothic. In a demanding world, where women have to conquer their true identity as fanciful, sentimental subjects to enter the practical competitive world of order, reason, theoretical discourses and rational thinking, Gothic literature and storytelling offers an occasional journey to the beautiful, fanciful inner world of imaginations. The performativity of the act of storytelling is not a superficial or external one, but has an internal origin which demands a genuine performance of expressions. This performance is an attempt to be free from the repressed self. This becomes obvious in the story telling episode in Jewett’s *The Foreigner*.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon points out only one cure to the violence against the long suppressed or the colonised - that one cure is violence itself (61). The colonized are left with no other option but to respond with the same kind of violence. In the case of lesbian women who suffer oppression, physical violence is an impossible option. They either have to remain silent and accept their predicament or resort to emotional violence or hysteria. The possibility of violence of any sort becomes impossible for the women who do not resort to writing and talking. Ghost stories, whoever tells it, are acts of violence. Women raise their voice against the injustices in society through story telling. Storytelling, hence, is a creative, cultural and political resistance. The political act of storytelling is a discourse on the public spaces which are denied to women at all times. Also it is a legitimate and peaceful revolt against the monopolising of knowledge and entertainment. When the other kinds of knowledge, togetherness, and

entertainment are denied to women, they find out alternative methods. Storytelling evolves from this political and historical context of hegemonically marginalising the powerless.

In Lesbian Gothic fiction, what is repressed is projected outwards so that it would disrupt the normal/abnormal, real/unreal, acceptable/detestable dichotomies about “the Other.” This act of revolution is a revolt against the norms set not for the peaceful, safe life of the Other, but to oppress them permanently. Robin Wood’s observation in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Raegan*, a work on American horror pictures, that everything that is repressed/oppressed by our civilization “dramatically re emerges for recognition in the horror genre” (230) holds true for Lesbian gothic in America too.

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**RACE AND / OR CAPITAL: THE CONFLICT OF ETHNICITY AND ECONOMY IN
TONI MORRISON'S *TAR BABY***

Ms. Aswathi M. P.

No ideology can advance simply at the cost of its own. Racism is a powerful ideological stance carefully built upon the ethnic superiority discourses placing body, specifically, skin as the source of superior existence. This fact cannot undermine the complex ties between racism and other ideologies acted as nurturing instrument for racism. Capitalism, as a movement and ideology, laboured to safeguard racism from mutiny, by covering up the tracks of overt racism. The means of capitalism is highly hypocritical as it emanates the notions that it is a necessity of the times to make the personalized dreams come true. Consequently, it acts, not only as a means of achieving the goals, but fixes itself as an unavoidable perspective to be considered, when one takes in the vision of life. As Adam Smith remarkably observed, “a system is an imaginary machine invented to connect together in the fancy those different movements and effects which are already in reality performed” (352). Capitalism lays the glory of wealth and the successive approval in the society, as an elixir to the depressed ethnic groups in the racial context. By advertising education, for subjugation as the education for liberation, leading the individual to wealth, and to the post Second World War paradigms of success constructed under the umbrella of “American dream,” capitalism, in America, in some sense, promotes race treachery, under the pretext of promoting multiculturalism. The novel, *Tar Baby*, bearing the mythical associations of the present with the mythical stories contextualizes the tensions between the two worlds—the ethnic kingdom of purity and the new economic empire of multiculturalism. The individual, living amidst these polarities, belonging to subaltern tribe, when forced to make the selection out of the two, confronts this dilemma. An analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby* brings forth the deliberations of economy and ethnicity, which are sometimes at war, and at other times, meet at a common goal of accomplishment.

In the work, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, C.B. Mac Pherson used the term “possessive individualism” to indicate the legitimate relationship between ownership and individualism. The confidence of ownership or authorship is a promise to embrace capitalism. Capitalist America was not essentially a byproduct of feudalism, as was England. As for America, capitalism is derived from the production in industries. The protection of the property was the great challenge that American individuals confronted, and government was often sidelined to a biased agency with the aim to safeguard the interests of a group of owners. Later, the gravity of the term owner was expanded or extended from property to the labourer, and led to private appropriation of labourer. This paved the way for the retention of slavery. Thus, economic equations rejuvenated psychological slavery and the waves of racism. Since the market was localized, the workers too had to be localized as a cost-effective measure to increase production for a better world. The ethnic groups, whose sustenance lay in the complementary existence with nature, were attracted by the new call of cosmopolitanism. This is how the umbrella of multiculturalism was extended to include the mainstream values of a certain cultural groups, under the pretext of coexistence.

The meeting point of racism and capitalism are the economic definitions that promoted both. In the novel, *Tar Baby*, this tangible wisdom is instigated through the folk tale of Tar Baby. “Tar Baby” is a term used pejoratively to indicate a sticky situation. On examination, one can find out the unassailable link of the story of B’rer rabbit and Tar Baby to the contemporary symbolic existence of Black Americans. The B’rer Fox of Uncle Remus tales is claimed to be the owner of a farm, where B’rer rabbit did the theft

continually. Because of this sense of possession, B'rer fox created a doll named Tar Baby out of tar to protect the field. Rabbit, unmindful of treachery, talked, and got stuck on it and somehow managed to escape. The tar baby image survived in literature, standing for the Black's feigned loyalty to the scarecrow of whites against the black thieves. Thus, the native black figures are designated as robbers, with the help of boundaries and unemotional black bodies. To put it bluntly, robbery was the feasible weapon used to enhance the importance of possession, property, value and money. By making the story as the string to connect the characters, Toni Morrison attempts to unravel the economic deliberations also.

In the character moulding of *Tar Baby*, Toni Morrison employs a three-tier system in which the whites, the blacks with white values, and the blacks with black values are placed in an integrated pattern. This classification can be seen as an oversimplified if one dive into the complexity of the relationships. Valerian Street, the white man, the owner of a Caribbean island, owned the consciousness of Jadine, the Sorbonne-educated Black American lady sponsored by the Streets. The son of Valerian Street, Michel, least fond of accumulating money, had left the family, while his wife, Margaret, developed herself from the principal beauty of Maine to the racist house wife of Valerian. Valerian is a seemingly placid US-based industrialist, a white man, who appears in the novel as the employer, patron, or protector of most of the characters. The major role he plays in the capitalistic structure is that of a white holder of wealth. He apparently felt himself as a fortunate individual after his second marriage with beauty of Maine. The real reason for the marriage was not the charm or love he radiated, but the monetary benefit he could offer the future wife. It is stated in the novel that, just after the wedding of Margaret and Valerian Street, Margaret was in good terms with the servants in the family. Gradually, the passion of Margaret to partake herself in the traditional roles of a house wife subsided, and the economic equations she did not inherit due to her ethnic back ground but due to her social background survived, and remained with her in the form of sluggish lethargic nature. The middle aged Margaret, whom the readers meet in the novel, is a woman spoiled by economy. Through this example of Margaret, the author conveys the image as to how an economic set up can spoil the nature of an individual, both physically and psychologically.

Economic equations play a vital role in the familial relationships also. While considering the family life of Valerian Street, in spite of his sense of possession of having a beautiful wife, the wife he bought did not provide the love that is to be attained from the familial sphere. Margaret is equally a failure in convincing her son about her love towards him. She could not attract the attention of either the father or the son due to her gluttony for material comforts. Not only in the white circle, but also in the black circle, she presents herself as an object of ridicule. In the conversation between Ondine and Sydney, it is clear that they obey Margaret not because of the understanding of her as a part of the superior white race. The simple reason for Ondine's obedience to Margaret is the money she gains out of that obedience.

Ondine and Sydney, the black servants in the white family, felt that they had acquired a superior stance in the society, as their existence is invariably tied with the white existence. In the presence of Gideon and Therese, they exhibit an air of supremacy, not only because of being the insiders in the white man's house, but also from their feeling that they shared the white wealth. They felt at home, to be a part and parcel of the wealthy home of Valerians, whereas the other blacks felt to be uncomfortable to mingle with them as they are, though not the whites, to a few, they are not the blacks too. This superior status is attained by conforming themselves with the white taste in food and the white detachment to the other blacks.

Jadine Childs, the niece of Ondine, is a person occupying a higher realm due to her educational status. During her visit to the Caribbean islands, to meet her patron, uncle, and aunt, she expresses her superior status by having the dinner with the Valerians, with Sidney as the waiter. Jadine acquires this status, by forgetting her ethnicity, and embracing the potency for economic stability and the resultant independence. The chief cause of Jadine's sharing the dining table with the whites is the impression that she has created among the whites that she is worthy of being taken as one among them. But thinking about it from Jadine's perspective, she believed that, Valerian Street, the patron, was the savior who made her capable of enjoying the white-equivalent status. Also, the culpable act of imbibing the white values, according to Son, was an act that led Jadine to independence. Thus, the economic values, the selection/ rejection norms, the freedom due to whiteness, and the rejection of black femininity, all these emerge out of the economic discourse of the novel.

If one compares Jadine with the other black characters, one can easily detect a pattern, indicating financial stability and financial independence. Jadine is an earning and popular person, where as Theresa and Ondine are earning, but unpopular. Ondine is earning, working for Valerians since she is driven to that. So, to Ondine, the job is a source for money for husband, and for Theresa, whether it is stealing someone's property or doing a job is a means of making both ends meet. So, in the case of Theresa and Jadine, one can find some kinds of financial independence, but in the case of Ondine, the independence component is absent. The difference is not because of the ethnicity, but because of the way how the individuals perceive economic values. But in the case of Son,, the economic values are quite contrary to that of the other characters. He simply considers money as a tool to hire the conscience, and considers it as a slot of colonization. This being the economic value he carries, he feels it unnecessary to get educated and to be placed in a fortunate position. So, economic stability, to Son, is what hampers ethnic purity. So, in order to secure the pure black values, he believed it as essential to discard the white monetary values, which are essentially capitalistic. This ideological difference based on the monetary benefits, disguised under the ethnic difference ultimately leads to Jadine-Son separation.

The setting also plays a leading role in the case of the ethnic-economic conflicts. The possibilities of spending the money are limited in the Caribbean island, whereas in the shopaholic culture of New York and Paris, the situation is quite different. This is the simple reason why Jadine and Margaret prefer to live for a short term in Caribbean, where as the other characters such as Valerian and Son wish to remain there. Gideon and Theresa remained on the island because the option available for them due to the monetary status made them comfortable to be on the island if not the ethnic reasons. Thus, the spending preferences and the ethnicity does not always intersect. More than ethnicity, belongingness matters, at least, in Jadine's case.

Altogether, the capital overthrows the racial preferences, if one has not formed any equations between race and capital. Son and Michel, being the characters who formed their own perspectives on the dimension of capital they discarded the centers of capital. Margaret followed and Jadine discarded the ethnic equations due to their perceptions of the capital. Theresa and Gideon get caught in ethnicity and they identify themselves as the victims in capitalistic sphere and patriots in the ethnic sphere. Ondine and Sidney gives equal importance to both and they place as belonging to a particular ethnic group and at the same time did not hold any aversion to capitalism. Thus, in the novel, while a group took capital along with ethnicity, taking race and capital together, another group rejected one in favour of the other, and a third category rejected both the race and capital in search of freedom. So, the novel, without bringing forth a

homogeneous equation, unfolds the multiple possibilities that the individuals explore, prefer, and ignore. But since the novelist puts the future of the hero ambiguously and that of the heroine in plain terms, the comparison of two positions i.e. race and capital together, or race alone, are juxtaposed before the readers, to weigh, consider, and react.

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**THE INTERSTITIAL PLIGHT OF ETHNIC SUBJECT AND THE TRAUMA OF
MARGINAL ABJECTION IN CHANG - RAE LEE'S *NATIVE SPEAKER***

Ms. Atheetha K. Unni

Trauma is a liminal experience of radical deracination and calamity that brings about a violent rupture of the order on both the personal and the social level. The unspoken grief of minority subjects and their social abjection remain outside the realm of the social symbolic. The paper examines trauma from a psychosocial perspective, with a specific focus on the issues of social oppression, disempowerment, and disenfranchisement of the minority subject in America. It also analyzes the traumas of minority subjects, and examines the narrative functions of healing and defiance, the issues of immigration and cross-cultural passage by analyzing the interstitial plight of Asian-Americans portrayed in Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995).

The protagonist of the novel, Henry Park, is a Korean-American born to a Korean immigrant couple, and the main plot covers his activities as an ethnic spy working for a multinational information-gathering corporation, as well as his working through difficulties with his estranged Caucasian wife, Lelia, after their son Mitt's death in an accident. Both Henry's emotional entanglement with his family members and his professional quandary of betraying his own ethnic community stem from his problematic internalization of social abjection as an interstitial ethnic subject.

Many psychological conflicts and insecurities of the protagonist in *Native Speaker* are intertwined with, and echo, the dilemmas new immigrants faced as ethnic interstitial subjects. In many cases of trauma, the phenomenon of persistent haunting and recurrence of the painful past testifies to the indestructible, untamable power of trauma. But Lee's novel provides its main character with some measure of insight about the nature of his traumatically difficult past, which is inseparably entwined with his parent's struggle as immigrants and his status as an interstitial ethnic minority. By doing so, Lee enables Henry to distance himself from the gripping force of the traumatic incidents in his life. Putting the troubling past in perspective and making peace with it is one of the most effective ways of halting the vicious cycle of trauma.

Loss is inseparable from trauma. Loss is a painful experience that implies losing part of the self and some integral self-experiences, which in some cases causes an irreversible rift in one's life and self-narrative. Whether the loss comes in the form of a death of a loved one or losing one's ideal in moments of disillusionment, a close examination of the psychosocial dimension of loss shows that whereas not all losses are traumatic, traumatic events inevitably involve a significant loss difficult to accept and acknowledge in the first place and even more difficult to cope with and recover from to a certain degree. Cultural relocation or immigration involves inevitable loss, separation, and anxiety and entails a significant identity change. Although the hardships the individual faces may differ depending upon the circumstances precipitating the departure from the native country and the attitude of the host country toward the ethnic group to which he or she belongs, immigration is a serious upheaval that puts a tremendous cumulative strain on the individual's coping mechanisms. The individual has to face a radical ontological insecurity and endure chronic anxiety in the process of adjusting to a new society, cultural relocation or immigration leaves long-lasting repercussions in its wake.

At the centre of Freud's theory is the seemingly contradictory presence of a man's powerful need to seek a strong protective father figure, and an equally compelling desire to repudiate and displace him to take his place. Yet of particular interest here is the fact that Freud places this Oedipal conflict and ambivalence toward one's forefather not in the setting of a nuclear family but in the broader context of the politico-religious evolution of a group through its continuous contacts and exchanges with other groups. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud revisits ancient Jewish history and speculates that Moses was actually an Egyptian nobleman who imposed a monotheistic religion on the Jewish people, who subsequently killed him in a violent resurgence against him.

Freud's interpretation seems to imply that whatever people fear and want to repudiate, be it an atrocious crime of the past, a history of betrayal or a threatening object or situation, they tend to assimilate it into themselves and perpetually recreate in a different and distorted fashion. Interestingly, this assimilative recreation of the painful past or trauma, in many cases, is closely related to multiple leave-takings and coming into contact with ethnic, religious or cultural others. Of many ethnic groups, Asian-Americans, particularly, are the target group that suffers most from the overly zealous assimilation-oriented rhetoric still dominant in America, and this symptomatic phenomenon is a telling sign that reflects a troublesome Asian immigrant history in America. The long arduous strife of Asian-Americans and their subjugated status as others in the American national scene exemplify the double dilemmas of losing a crucial part of one's native culture as a holding environment and repeatedly finding this loss canceled out, ignored, or trivialized. As Ronald Takaki explains, the mainstream American society still sees Asian-Americans as "foreigners," "sojourners," or "strangers from a different shore," regardless of their several generations-long history of settlement. In this respect, the hegemonic society's treatment of Asian-Americans is different from that of African-Americans, although both groups suffer from racism and discrimination. While African-Americans are degraded and mistreated, their status as Americans is not questioned, but Asian-Americans' claim for their legitimate status as citizens is constantly jeopardized.

The "interstitial ethnic subjects" are such a product of diasporic border crossing. Hence, these interstitial ethnic subjects have both spatial and racial or ethnic implications. They are placed strategically in the liminal zone between the potentially threatening or polluted outside and the guarded inside, and they are often used by a white hegemonic society to strengthen and promote its economic, political, and cultural stability and advantage. In addition, being an Asian-American in America means being caught in the strife between the blacks and the whites.

Chang-rae Lee's highly acclaimed first novel *Native Speaker* portrays the interstitial plight of Korean-Americans. The novel poignantly foregrounds the psychological impact that the occupation of the precarious, liminal zone between the outside and the inside, as well as between blacks and whites, puts on the Asian-American interstitial ethnic subject. In addition, the novel also hints at the Korean-Americans' group-specific problems as a middleman minority and the post-1965 Korean immigrants' struggle for survival in the urban world, which is densely populated by other people of colour. Although not specifically mentioned, the novel also has as its backdrop the sense of betrayal and disillusionment those post-1965 Korean immigrants must have felt. Present in Lee's novel, in a highly controlled, subdued tone, are some of the key issues associated with immigration, cross-cultural passages, and assimilation, such as loss, mourning, trauma, and delayed grieving.

Although *Native Speaker* takes the form of a spy novel, which, on the surface, seems to follow a somewhat formulaic plot based upon Henry's infiltrating the political campaign of a Korean-American

New York City councilman named John Kwang, the hidden crux of the novel revolves around several traumatic incidents in his personal life and his deferred mourning for them. In Lee's novel, both personal and professional areas of Henry's life are so intricately conjoined that internal conflict in one dimension reflects and echoes those in the other dimension of his life. Thus, the difficulty Henry faces in his constrained relationships with his immigrant father and his Caucasian wife, as well as the multiple losses of loved ones he endures, cannot be dissociated from the context of immigration and cultural relocation.

Many psychological conflicts and insecurities of the protagonist in *Native Speaker* are intertwined with, and echo, the dilemmas new immigrants faced as ethnic interstitial subjects. An Inverted Oedipal Drama and a Traumatic Chain of Unspoken Grief Henry's relationship with his father is one of the areas in which the predicament of his interstitial subject position is played out in a highly emotionally charged way. Rather than reflecting a simple generational conflict, the highly complicated relationship between them reveals much more about the social conditions surrounding immigrant families that obstruct and contaminate the strongest and most natural bond imaginable in the world, and about the distorted pattern of object relations the oppressive social conditioning produces. Henry's strong ambivalence and even muffled resentment toward his father may appear to be Oedipal in nature. However, the Oedipal conflict and structure portrayed in the novel is not the typical one with a powerful father symbolizing the law of society and the son's successful socialization being accomplished by his relinquishing the forbidden libidinal object and obeying the father's law. Immigrant experiences create a unique, inverted Oedipal drama in which the authority associated with the parental disciplinary power is displaced onto the society outside the household, leaving the father feeling deposed and inadequate. The position of Henry's father is comparable to that of the Antillean who finds himself trapped in an incomplete, aborted circle of recognition, which does not recognize him.

In a sense, the immigrant father is already symbolically castrated, and facing constant reminders of inadequacy is painful and traumatic. The conditions of the immigrant father's life, which come with his diminished authority in society, also make him feel that his masculinity is under serious attack. Many "feminized" professional activities Asian-Americans immigrant laborers engage in, such as doing laundry, cooking, tailoring, or cleaning, for example, show how economically driven modes of feminization cling to bodies not only sexually but also racially. Similarly, Henry's father's work in *Native Speaker*, which concerns buying and selling the produce and groceries for household consumption, belongs to the category of the "feminized" professions that his Asian-American ancestors were compelled to choose. Conscious of the belittling nature of the work that does not do justice to her husband's higher professional degree, Henry's mother admonishes Henry not to ask his father anything about his job. "Don't shame him! . . . It's below him. He only does it for you," she advises Henry in a hushed voice (56). Shame is a natural emotional response to a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. Additionally, the feeling of shame also gets transferred to those who witness an individual in a state of helplessness. Thus, abject shame, along with the harrowing sense of guilt, surrounds and contaminates Henry's relationship with his father. The timidity he shows in his interaction with white neighbors clearly indicates that he has adopted a coping mechanism typically associated with social underdogs. It also testifies to the existence of an impenetrable discriminatory barrier separating those who make home in America but cannot make themselves at home in it due to their different racial and cultural background, from those others whose freedom and rights associated with their citizenship make them immune from the exclusionary politics of home. Immigrant experiences that involve a prolonged state of displacement, degradation, and emotional anguish can be quite traumatic, especially if the internalization of shame and inferiority is involved and translates the

racial or cultural differences of immigrants into a lack that they need to redeem or compensate for somehow.

The death of Henry's mother is a critical turning point that signals the breakup of closely knit family ties and Henry's moving away from his Korean family and ancestry. In Henry's family the much needed presence of the mother is sorely missing, and this missing presence also accelerates Henry's estrangement from his father, foregrounding the conflict and tension between the son and the father. Overall, Henry's undercover activities as an ethnic spy, as well as his difficulty in establishing and maintaining an intimate relationship with his family members, symptomatically reflects his plight as an interstitial Asian-American subject. Always on the artificially created border between "us" and "them," interstitial Asian-American subjects are expected or dictated to become "good enough" for the acceptance and approval by others by effacing themselves to the point of invisibility in order to serve them. The novel poignantly foregrounds the psychological impact that the occupation of the precarious, liminal zone between the outside and the inside, as well as between blacks and whites, puts on the Asian-American interstitial ethnic subject.

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EMOTION IN CONTEXT: CONSTRUCTION OF TERROR IN TWO AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

Dr. Betsy Paul

The experiencing and the presentation of emotion are currently reckoned to be contextually determined. Sociologists and psychologists, among others, have studied the everyday occurrences of emotions in minute detail, and many of them present a strong argument favoring the critique of the assumption that emotions are innate or biological. Norbert Elias, in one of the seminal texts of sociology, *The History of Manners*, details how, through time, human emotions got “civilized” and were made appropriate for their particular times. Another work which demonstrates how the experiencing of emotion varies through ages and societies is *The Lonely Crowd*, a landmark study of American character, published in 1950. *The Lonely Crowd* roughly divides societies into three: tradition-directed, inner-directed, and other-directed. According to the book, for those belonging to inner-directed societies “loneliness and even persecution are not thought of as the worst of fates” (70), whereas for the other-directed individual, loneliness is something that is to be avoided at any cost as in such a society “contemporaries are the source of the individual” (21). Thus, the book demonstrates that an emotion like loneliness is experienced in entirely different manner by members of different communities and ages.

More recently, Sarah Ahmed has elucidated this flexibility of emotional experiences and expressions in her work, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, where she explores “how emotions work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies” (7). Citing Elias, she reiterates that there is a hierarchy between emotions. “Some emotions,” according to her, “are ‘elevated as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain ‘lower’ as signs of weakness” (9). Further, she points to what psychologist Daniel Goleman had argued, that “good” emotions could function “as ‘tools’ that can be used by subjects in the project of life and career enhancement” (9). If emotions have such power, and could be used as, to borrow Goleman’s term, “tools” (227), people are bound to be wary of its expression. Since, as Ahmed avers, “emotions work to shape” the individual and collective bodies, the nurturing as well as presentation of emotions play a large part in the identity formation of the individual and, consequently, that of communities which are inevitably made of individuals. The emotions one allows oneself to experience, and those one bothers to express depend on the individual’s understanding and desire of self-presentation. Erving Goffman who, through his seminal sociological study, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, attracted serious academic attention to the concept of self-presentation, writes about how “when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which is in his interests to convey (4).

The motive of self-presentation need not always be simply to make a good impression. Roy F. Baumeister gives two primary motives for self-presentation, namely, one, “doing what the audience likes and prefers,” and the other “involving constructing one’s identity by publicly claiming desired attributes.” It was even seen that many times these two motives clashed against each other in individual performances and that people will even “do things that the audience will dislike or reject” if such action “will help the person claim a desired identity” (Baumeister 178).

It is possible to see how far the experiencing and expression of even such a primary emotion as terror is subject to the complexities of human interactions detailed above. Since literature is a medium

through which emotions are imaginatively and realistically depicted, two short stories, written half a century apart in the United States of America, are analyzed on this basis. These two stories, Tillie Olsen's "Tell Me a Riddle" and George Saunders's "Tenth of December," will give insights to the differing ways of construction, experience, and expression of the emotion of terror.

At the outset, a clarification concerning the term "terror" seems expedient in the contemporary context, where terror is used synonymously with terrorism, which is used as a political term. The feeling of fear is reckoned as a universal emotion that affects all humans and many other living organisms. Human languages have recognized this feeling, and have distinguished its varying facets through multiple synonyms. "Terror" is one such word within the spectrum of fear-related words in English. *The Oxford Dictionary* lists four definitions for terror, where the first given definition is "a feeling of extreme fear." "Terror" in this sense, is a word which conveys "extreme fear," rather than something related to the political activity of terrorism.

Many human societies, through the ages, have acknowledged the emotion of terror, in the sense of extreme fear, as something essential to the cohesion of the respective social orders. This means that terror was not understood as a negative emotion by most ages and societies. That is, the meaning of what constitutes terror for an individual, and, what it shows about his or her value systems, is not a fixed or given truth. On the historical understanding of terror in the European intellectual and cultural history, historian Ronald Schechter remarks that "at the most obvious level, terror today appears as an unmitigated evil, whereas prior to and during the French Revolution many writers and political actors saw it as a positive force" (31).

If the value of an emotion (like terror) shifts through communities, it may also be that communities imbibe emotions with value. Further, individuals living in a community may possess different value systems and, hence, may attribute entirely differing values to same emotions. Moreover, an emotion may be triggered by entirely different circumstances for individuals.

A short story, as critics like Martin Scofield would concur, focuses on "the most intense and life-changing experiences" (238) in the life of the characters. Since terror is often an inevitable accompaniment of such experiences, short story seems to be a medium one can rely upon in order to study terror. Further, as the back cover of *The Vintage Book of American Short Stories* proclaims, short story could be called America's "most distinctive national art form," and may function as an appropriate form to consider that nation's changing concepts regarding emotions.

Tillie Olsen, born of Russian Jewish émigré parents, writes about an elderly couple of Russian Jewish origin in the title story of her 1961 collection of short stories, *Tell Me a Riddle*, which won the O. Henry Prize for the best American short story in 1961. The story begins with the old couple, David and Eva, having a big quarrel which takes them almost to the verge of separation. The bone of contention is the house, the home in which they live in the beginning of the story. David wants to sell the house and go and stay in the Haven, a sanctuary for the elderly, where their needs will be taken care of, and they will have company. Eva, the wife, ferociously opposes it, and wants to guard her seclusion within the house. Their adult children try to pacify their animosity. Meanwhile, they discover Eva's illness, which was found to be terminal, with her having less than a year to live.

As the couple shifts their stay from one child's family to another, the narrative says about Eva during her delirious days. Her revolutionary past in Russia, her coming to the U.S., her dreams crystallized in the recital of Victor Hugo's beautiful dream about twentieth century, her being taught by a cold blooded revolutionary woman capable of murder, her desire to read, to participate in intellectual discussions are all juxtaposed with her clichéd wife-mother existence of silence and sacrifice. The illness and the consequent delirium goes on to bring out David's sympathy and concern, and also a feeling of being left out from her life, her past, and her memories, as Eva withdraws more and more into her memories before her marriage with David. Published eleven years after the publication of *The Lonely Crowd*, the story seems to explicate the two societies, the inner-dominated and the other-dominated, detailed by Riesman, Glazer, and Denny. David, in his yearning for company, and in his terror of losing connectivity with other people, illustrates the typical contemporary American of *The Lonely Crowd*. According to the book, he conforms to its "tendency to be sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others" (8), and his "contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual" (21). He is so terrified of living alone with his wife who shuns company and, for him, the "haven" where he can be with other elderly people seems to be the symbol of his salvation.

On the other hand, Eva is shown to be a product of the inner-directed society, where the individual has to forge his own destiny, following an "an internalized set of goals" (8). But her tragedy was that, during most of her active life, other people, even her own children, encroached upon her time, space, and liberty of choice that she could hardly follow any goals. And, at the end of her life, she was terrified of losing the time and space she enjoys within their home, as her husband was forcing her to sell all that in return for the company of others in the haven. She resists the move with all her might and, yet, dies without reaching the home she so yearned for. The story exhorts the readers to sympathize with Eva's terror of assimilation and support her resistance. As Blanche H. Gelfant notes, "in dying, Eva awakens David (and the reader) out of an accommodated stance into a potentially oppositional one" (429).

George Saunders's story "Tenth of December" moves between real and imagined realms to bring out new versions of terror in the twenty-first century. The collection which contained it, also named *Tenth of December*, was proclaimed by Joel Lovellin of *The New York Times* to be "the best book you will read this year." The story centres on a fifty-three-year old Eber, who was suffering from a serious disease, and an uncouth young boy, Robin, whose daydreams portray him as a rescuing hero. Eber was planning a suicide by wandering out in the snow, as he was terrified of his disease. He had a step father, whose kind nature was transformed by disease, and the latter's memory accentuates Eber's terror of his own disease. He was afraid of being a burden to his family and the suffering he might cause them. Robin finds Eber's coat during his meanderings along the snow, fighting his imaginary conflicts with the non-human "Nethers," one of whom was trying to abduct a girl from his school. And he tries to help Eber out. What happens is the reversal, as Robin sinks into the snow-covered lake, and Eber rescues him. With great effort, Eber covers Robin up with his clothes, makes him move his limbs, and forces him to run home. Robin's mother comes to Eber's rescue, and all ends well with Eber with his wife.

What terrify Eber and Robin most are issues entirely different from those who inhabit Olsen's story. Robin was terrified of what he himself really was, a clumsy fat boy with a not very feminine and graceful mother who idolized him. Eber was terrified of what he might become, a disease ridden burden to the ones whom he love most, his family. Still, they confront their terrors, and return to what they are, stronger, more confident, and having faced their terror, less terrified.

Making broad generalizations and inane simplifications will always be a risk one has to take while placing a story in its milieu. Yet, since these two stories were well received and critically acclaimed at the time of their publication, they may indicate the concerns which were of relevance to many at that time.

Terror, in Olsen's story, is the terror of the "inner-directed" individual carving out a future in a new country, leaving the traditions and the close knit tribe of his/her past, albeit all its frustrating conflicts. And the terror emanates from an ingrained value system that emphasizes individual achievement and projected futures. Eva is afraid of losing her individuality (if not individual achievement) in an environment of assimilation, which was the hallmark of, to repeat the terminology of *The Lonely Crowd*, the "other-directed" Americans of the mid-twentieth century with their new-found prosperity; a concern that might have been shared by a large number of first generation immigrants and many of their children who might have inherited the legacy of their mindsets.

Saunders's story was written hardly a decade after 9/11, the traumatic destruction of the twin towers which housed the World Trade Centre on September 11 2001. It was a huge blow to the American psyche, and hardly any work of literature written immediately after escaped its impact. In her article on post 9/11 literature, Catherine Morley identifies the "themes that emerge most strongly from the literature that self-consciously responds to 9/11." They are, the "seeming redundancy of language and the resultant possibilities for literary act, the will to understand or make sense of "the other," and domestic discord" (247). Though "Tenth of December" need not be termed as a "self-conscious" response to 9/11, all these themes find their place here. The basic value system that informs the story seems to be one that gives importance to familial. Terror emerges from one's fear that one may fail one's loved ones, especially when one realizes the presence of "the other" in oneself (as the Nether in Robin and Allan, the step-father in Eber). The logical resolution then, is what happens. Robin tries to help a stranger, Eber, and Eber, in turn, rescues Robin, and both return to their loved ones – Robin to his mother and Eber to his wife, both emboldened and enriched by their experience. Eber remembers the years of his early marriage:

When they were first married they used to fight. Say the most insane things. Afterward, sometimes there would be tears. Tears in bed? Somewhere. And then they would—Molly pressing her hot wet face against his hot wet face. They were sorry, they were saying with their bodies, they were accepting each other back, and that feeling, that feeling of being accepted back again and again, of someone's affection for you always expanding to encompass whatever new flawed thing had just manifested in you, that was the deepest, dearest thing he'd ever (254)

Terrors are acknowledged and expressed at the end of the story: "That was him. That was part of who he was. No more lies, no more silence, it was going to be a new and different life, if only he" (324). This could be an entirely different world, which idealized Eva and her need to be alone. Thus, these two stories stand as pointers to show us that the emotion of terror experienced in different ages and different communities has diverse origins and resolutions, and that differing attitudes encircle their expression, which further complicate their experience, expression, and resolution.

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MULTICULTURAL AMERICA – A PATHWAY TO THE LIBERATION OF INDIVIDUALS
IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *THE VINE OF DESIRE*

Ms. Bhavyha R.

*The American Dream is that of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller
for every man, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.*

(James Truslow Adams)

It is this perception of the American Dream that drives the characters of Chitra Divakaruni to create an ideal self and safe condition, which ensures them a cozy, comfortable, and satisfying stay in the host country.

Immigration has become a vital stage in human evolution in the present era of globalization. The immigrant gets the essence of both, the native and immigrated country, which helps them grow as international citizens. Hence, when they receive the best both countries can offer, they grow as independent individuals. In this process, their ethnic culture is overtaken by their host culture. A unique breed of identity, i.e. hybridism, is formed by the immigrants when they live and adopt the Western culture. Thus, these people, especially of South Asian Diaspora, form the centre of focus in most of Divakaruni's works.

In the United States, the literature of the South Asian Diaspora has been viewed as a minority discourse, which has been taken up only for cultural studies. South Asian Diaspora, though the fourth largest community in the Asian American Society, is still being overlooked by the historians and social Scientists in the United States. But, with the arrival of the South Asian writers in the mainstream writing in U.S, the scenario which kept the minority invisible is changing and paving way for more such writers, who migrated to North America post-1965 immigrant wave. Debjani Banerjee in her article, "Home and Us," makes the following observation: "Although on the peripheries of mainstream culture, the diaspora can provide an empowered space that produces subversive narratives which complicate questions of American and South Asian identity" (9). Homi K. Bhabha, in his essay, "DissemiNation." writes, "The boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the Western nation may imperceptibly turn into a contentious *internal* liminality providing a place from which to speak, both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent" (149). The location which Bhabha mentions turns out to be a large pool of opportunity, where the South Asian diaspora starts articulating their voice about their community diapora. Some prolific writers belonging to Indian diaspora are Salman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul, Raja Rao, and Amitav Ghosh.

Indian women writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Parameswaran, and Divakaruni, belonging to the Indian diaspora, have made huge impact on postcolonial world literature. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, like Uma Parameswaran, is a first generation immigrant, whose study on the American way of life experienced by Indians have earned her a number of American readers. Divakaruni's writings have stirred up curiosity among Americans interested in knowing the lives of the foreigners living among them. The experience of inhabiting two geographical and cultural spaces simultaneously is wrought with, subtle and involuted tensions which get polarised into patterns such as dislocation, relocation, domicile vs. diasporic consciousness, dispossession vs. integration, heritage vs. hybridity and exile vs. involvement. Such tension, however, has proved to be an active source of creative energy and resulted in the emergence of a powerful and impressive body of expatriate writing.

Divakaruni, a prolific novelist, short story writer and a poet, is best known for her portrayals of Indian immigrant women. Divakaruni's immigration to the U.S. made her re-evaluate the role of Indian women. Most of her writings are partially autobiographical, as she draws real life events into her works. She brings into her stories, the real plight of Indian immigrant women, whom she had met through her NGO, "MAITRI." In an interview with Jim Lauffer, when asked about her inspiration for her work, Divakaruni states, "In some sense, immigration made me into a writer... It gave me a strong desire to write about my experience in India... I find my inspiration in my community—stories I overhear, stories that are told to me, things I read in the Indian American newspapers. These form the kernels of my own stories" (96-97).

Divakaruni's *The Vine of Desire* is a sequel to her 1999 novel, *Sister of My Heart*. The novel takes off where *Sister of My Heart* ends. Divakaruni brings in new dimensions to the story of two sisters, Anju and Sudha, who are now in United States. Their questioning of their identity, longing for home, and the need to adopt the new culture are given voice in *The Vine of Desire*. The novel, thus, focuses on the themes of alienation, rootlessness, assimilation, and hybridism of the South Asian diaspora.

Sister of My Heart ends with the miscarriage of Anju in America, and the dissolution of Sudha's marriage in India. The much-anticipated sequel, *The Vine of Desire*, takes the story further, and one finds the maturity with which the Chaterjee girls overcome all the hardships of their lives. Anju, despite her miscarriage, is overwhelmed, and receives Sudha to the U.S. with love and warmth. Such is the love of Anju for her sister Sudha. Anju, whose marriage life began as a fairy-tale, and later becomes a disaster with the twists and pulls of events around her. In the opinion of Lopamudra Basu, "Anju's marriage, which began with such fairy-tale promise, facilitated by the excitement of beginning life in a new country with a handsome, considerate, and generous stranger, disintegrate under the strains of immigrant life; the isolation and the disappointments drives a wedge in the marriage" (246). But Anju, instead of giving it to the hands of fate, decides to bounce back on life, by departing from her husband and making a life of her own.

In *Vine of Desire*, Anju adapts to the new culture easily, and given her rebellious nature, encourages her cousin to leave behind all traumatic memories, and start life afresh. One can see Anju's assimilation into American culture from the very beginning of the novel. It is this Westernized thinking that made Anju call her sister Sudha, who is rooted to her tradition, to come out of her failed marriage : "The day Sudha stepped off the plane from India into Anju's arms, leaving a ruined marriage behind, their lives changed forever" (9). Anju's love for Sudha made a big breach in Anju's married life with Sunil. At the anniversary party of the Chopras, Anju is very keen on hitting the dance floor with Sunil. When Sunil refuses, she at once joins Lalit, and says "He's nice" (137). Anju's love towards Sunil is like that of an American rather Indian, which lacks emotional bonding. This becomes very evident in her writing, when Prof. William Lindley remarks on her assignment on Sunil: "I am not sure how you will work this into a full length memoir piece. Maybe you should just start over with a subject you feel less emotional about" (167). Anju, by this time, is fully detached from Sunil. Though they live together, she leads a lonely life. Her loneliness is revealed in the letters which she writes to her dead father: "Here is a fact. I am of no use to my household" (169). In course of time, Anju learns to be practical, and battles her fear and loneliness with small, precise, and geometric actions. She gets her education from the United States, and her broken marriage makes her join the writer's group comprising of women. She learns new things in life, including yoga, to overcome her sorrows. Thus, at the end, she she feels liberated from all the clutches of life.

On the other hand, Sudha's assimilation into American culture is very slow. She says, "I have been in American parks before. But this time, looking with undistracted eyes, I see more. It is always this way. When I am alone, it is as though a scapel has cut a cataract away" (80). After Sunil's advances, she tries to sharpen her perspectives of the American culture. Through Sara, an exchange Indian immigrant student, she gathers few more information about America. Sara's American ways of life, her Western robe, and the freedom she enjoys in America challenges Sudha, "You got to get out of this valley, girl" she says. "See the other Americans. There's too many men chasing after sex and money here, who think the word *no* doesn't apply to them" (84). Sudha thus decides to detach herself from Anju and Sunil's life, and looks out for a job, seeking the help of Lupe.

The mainstream American culture gets into Sudha gradually. As a kind of response to it she wishes to wear American clothes. "I wish I had a pair of jeans," she is heard saying (91). In the host land, Sudha expects the Americans to recognize her, and acknowledge her by appreciating her dress. On wearing a sari, they will fail to notice her and, by adapting Western attire, she wishes to gain their attention.

Sudha turns down the offer of Ashok, who had come to America to win her heart again. When Anju asks Sudha about her refusal, she answers as a free and independent American immigrant, "I turned him down because I didn't want him to take care of me... I wanted to be independent. And it seemed like America was the best place for that" (92-93). She even gets into an affair with an NRI, Lalit, whom she meets at a party. Their relationship begins, in spite of Sunil's disapproval. Lalit continues to communicate with Sudha over the phone, and conveys his desire to date her. Sudha's new-found freedom does not restrain her from accepting his proposal. She begins to talk with an American attitude which, according to her, gave her full freedom to move freely in society especially with Lalit. Sudha, in the end, decides to walk out of every other relationship, and lead her life in her own way.

The blurb of *The Vine of Desire* says:

It is a novel of extra ordinary depth and sensitivity. Through the eyes of people caught in the clash of cultures Divakaruni reveals the rewards and the perils of breaking free from the past and the complicated, often contradictory emotions that shape the women's passage to enjoying independence. Finally Sudha, who waves for liberty, learn that 'freedom doesn't come cheap.'

In Western as well as Oriental societies, men and women are given complicated roles. For women, their native homeland pressurizes them to be subservient to their parents, husbands, and in-laws. Conversely, the host culture encourages them to be independent and self-reliant. So, naturally, women like Anju chooses Western culture over their native culture. Though Anju and Sudha belong to the same background, their thoughts and approach towards life differ. Yet, they exhibit this once they set their foot in America, a land which promised freedom and equality. Though there are pros and cons in immigration, it is the right attitude that both the protagonists of Divakaruni possess that makes them champions, who come out victoriously. According to Basu, "Divakaruni also deconstructs the idea of America as a retreat against gendered oppressions, and offers a far more nuanced understanding of the geographies of suppression, women's desires, and circuitous passages to fulfilment" (248).

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UNDERSTANDING AGONIES AND ARTICULATING ASPIRATIONS: STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S WRITING

Ms. R. Bindu

Women of African origins in the United States have always been keenly aware of the impact of race, class, and gender oppression in their lives. The second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 70s made a difference in the lives of women in the United States, but the women's movement was often recognized as "too white." Many black feminists responded to women's liberation movement, and critically analyzed the second wave of feminism, thereby asserting that feminism had traditionally been white, ignoring the lived experiences of blacks and women of colour, even as it propounded the idea of a "universal women's" question. Most of the African American women writers imbibed the spirit of feminist politics, and an affinity with the issue of emancipation of women is evidently seen in their writings. Black women writers in America discuss issues connected with not only gender and sexuality, but also class and race in their works. Being aware of the fact that the black woman's oppression was the result of a double bind (of being woman and being black), black feminism is opposed both to patriarchy and white feminism. Writers like Alice Walker and Maya Angelou, who struggled for women's equality through their vibrant activism, made their creative works sharp weapons, not only to fight against the supremacy of white culture, but also to resist the tyrannies of black patriarchy. They sought the empowerment and emancipation of women not just in relation to whites but also in relation to black men. They graphically described the agonies associated with the black woman's existence, in a thoroughly hostile situation, with utmost fidelity to details and, at the same time, explored possible alternatives through the bold articulation of their aspiration for freedom and equality. The analysis of the ways in which various strategies of resistance are employed in the creative writings of African American women writers, in the light of black feminist theory, helps in contemplating the ways of fighting for justice. The exploration of the ways in which black women writers address their thrice-marginalized situation (based on the three axes of oppression – gender, race, and class) has its political value in addressing questions connected with all sorts of oppression and suppression.

Black women's writings often explore the possibilities of community loyalties. This stands clearly opposite to the individualism that marks white women's writings. Black feminist theory thus takes as the starting point not the individual as subject and agent but the community as a whole. Most importantly, of course, is the fact that it is the black woman that forges this community linkage. The creative writings of the first African American woman who received the Nobel Prize for literature, Toni Morrison, are closely linked to the culture and history of her community. "I write . . . village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe," she says in the essay, "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation." In order to write literature deeply rooted in the African American culture of her community, she synthesizes Black art, myth, music, folklore etc. According to Morrison, she situates herself within the African American community and its tradition of resisting discrediting views of the dominant society rather than align herself with a totally separatist feminist approach. In her opinion, for an African American woman writer, it is more important to nourish the African American community, including both men and women, than separate herself from it by assuming a Black feminist stance. Morrison remains loyal to the politics of Black Nationalism/ethnicity and the rejection of a separatist feminism.

At the same time, it cannot be negated that, for black women, the main problem has often been

oppression by black men, and the suffering caused by their irresponsibility is a major theme in the writings of African American women. They tell the truth about the way black men often treated their women. They focus on Black family life, and provide graphic picture of how blacks really live and function, in a white-dominated society. Thinkers like bell hooks have noted that, even within the black arts movements and the massive civil rights movements, the problem of black women was rarely addressed. Black women have also argued that black power movement was inherently patriarchal. Some black male readers have levelled serious criticism against such representations, but no criticism can erase the abuse and neglect that have been incontrovertible facts in many black families. Black women writers in America largely dealt with the patriarchal nature of black society and traditions, and recorded the agonizing experiences of the black women within the framework of the family with utmost fidelity.

Both Alice Walker and Tony Morrison describe violence, incest, and rape of black women and girls in powerful prose narratives that are often painful to read. In novels like *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple*, the abuse befalls defenceless, innocent girls like Pecola, Breedlove, and Celie. The male sexism of the black community has apparently been more systematic and archaic than the one found in western society. An additional factor is the oppression of black men by white men, which created a compensatory need to subjugate black women. Racist abuse thus led to self-denigration and violence. At the bottom of this hierarchy, one finds the black woman, whose self-image is even more engendered.

It is in this context that Alice Walker's concept of womanism makes sense. Walker's proposition of womanism as a stand point for African American women to voice their difference from white feminism. It was formulated against the marginalization of colored women in the framework of feminist critical theory and politics which focused only on gender oppression. Walker first used the term "womanist" in her work *In search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*. According to Walker, a womanist is, "a woman who loves another woman, sexually and/or non-sexually. She appreciates and prefers women's culture, woman's emotional flexibility... [She] is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, expect periodically for health ... Loves the spirit ... loves struggle ... loves herself. Regardless" (xii).

According to Walker, she had traced the term from the Southern folk expression, "acting womanish." The womanish girl exhibits wilful, courageous, and outrageous behaviour that is considered to be beyond the scope of societal norms. At its core, womanism is a social change perspective based upon the everyday problems and experiences of black women and women of the minority sections, but more broadly seeks methods to eradicate inequalities not just for black women, but for all people. Walker's phrase, "womanist is to feminist as a purple is to lavender," suggests that feminism is a component beneath the much larger ideological umbrella of womanism. The new political and critical framework of feminism stemmed from the desire to take up gender issues without turning against men, and to foster bonds between African American women and men in order to successfully resist racism. Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, amply demonstrates this by being optimistic about the prospects for black people, men as well as women. Walker is committed to the cause of improving the situation of black women, but at the same time she regards black men also as victims of an ancient patriarchal tradition, which endured because of their ignorance, isolation, and lack of education and exposure. Celie's husband Albert's brutal behaviour results from his lack of awareness about an alternative. For him, mistreating one's wife is the norm. When Celie and the other women in the novel demand a better and equal treatment, their men do change. The happy

ending of the story shows Walker's belief in the moral and spiritual power of women and women's values. "Womanism" involves the efforts to better the condition of both men and women; it is about all people of colour.

Along with experiments like womanism, African American women writers also focused on the formation of communities of black women. Informal friendship and family interactions, black churches and black women's organizations constitute (as Patricia Hill Collins argued) "safe spaces," where black women could meet and form "sisterhood." In this domain, older and peripheral forms and associations, such as networks of blood mothers and "other mothers" (those who assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities) play crucial roles in building communities. Evangelical work and travel by black women mark the territorial connections forged by black women. Far from the domestic or slavish system that controlled and circumscribed women, such work of evangelical black women marked new forms of mobility and agency.

Along with the issues of gender discrimination, these writers also paid attention to issues of class and labour, and explored the possibilities of female communities or sisterhood of black women. Issues like the difference among black women in terms of class or sexual preferences and the process of minoritization (especially in the case of lesbians or the differently-abled) within the blacks also have been addressed. These involve breaking the stronghold of heterosexual thinking among women. Black lesbian activism that emerged in the 1990s played a major role in foregrounding the sexuality of the black woman, her sexual preferences and, of course, the aesthetics of the black body.

The 1990s saw the proliferation of writings by and about African American lesbians, ranging from the inclusion of lesbian and bisexual characters in mainstream, heterosexually-identified popular fiction by Gloria Naylor, Ntozak Shange, and Alice Walker to erotic celebrations of same-sex passion in poetry and prose by lesbian writers like Audrey Lorde, Becky Birtha, Cheryl Clarke, and Cherry Muhanji. The black lesbian writers combine self-expressions with culturally specific metaphors, and create positive images of black lesbian identity that they replace their historic and aesthetic erasure with. Gloria Naylor's critique of black homophobia in *The Women of Brewster Place*, Ntozake Shange's positive representations of black lesbians in *Cypress* and *Indigo*, and Alice Walker's depiction of women's sexual and emotional love for each other in *The Color Purple* demonstrate the variety of African American lesbian literature, even though they do not deal exclusively with lesbian and bisexual characters and themes.

But the acceptance gained by these novels was not extended to lesbian-centred texts, especially, when written by openly identified black lesbian feminists. Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and Barbara Smith's *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* was not accepted readily by the mainstream U.S. press and academia. Both the erotic celebrations of lesbian sexuality in Lorde's autobiographical novel and the lesbian-affirmative perspectives in many of the pieces collected in Smith's anthology significantly challenge the stereotypes concerning black women, by creating a continuum of heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual women. Despite this continuing resistance to lesbian-centered African American texts, the 1990s saw a mushrooming of writings by and about black lesbians, extending from erotic celebrations of same-sex passion, to imaginative revisions of history of lyrical yet highly political essays, indicating the homophobia and sexism, both in black communities and the dominant U.S. culture.

Thus, by forging female bonding or sorority, without showing much interest in directly attacking male supremacy, African American women writers seek possibilities of emancipation and equality for both black men and women. In most cases, their stance is not one of apathy or antagonism, but reconciliation and mutual recognition. Perspectives like Alice Walker's proposition of womanism might serve the politics of reconciliation rather than radical separation from feminist politics. It is not deemed necessary to give up commitment to uphold the unity of the African American community's solidarity rooted in African American tradition and culture while addressing the issue of the subordinated position of both black men and women in American society.

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TREATMENT OF GENDER IN JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD*

Mr. Cerin P. Simon

“The story that defined a generation,” “the story fizzes with youthful energy and the beautiful adaptation of real life situations” – these are the epithets which describe the American Beat generation writer Jack Kerouac’s novel, *On the Road*. *On the Road* is a story of the protagonist, Sal Paradise; his eccentric friend, Dean Moriarty; and their extensive travelling during the late nineteen forties and early fifties. Sal Paradise is a drop out college student, who lives with his aunt in Paterson, New York, and tries to become an author. Sal’s life on the road begins with inspiration drawn from his friend, the rootless Dean Moriarty, and he finds himself in the middle of the emerging Beat generation. This friendship leads them to make a group, and do three long and adventurous road trips to the West, and one to Mexico, thus exploring America and the limits of personal freedom. They also push their limits to obtain new and extreme experiences with the help of women, alcohol, drugs, and jazz music.

It is generally admitted that *On the Road* is a partly autobiographical novel and that most of its characters are based on real people represented by fictitious names. In fact, majority of the prominent Beats appear in this work. For instance, Sal Paradise is a pseudonym of the author himself, as Dean Moriarty is of Neal Cassady, Carlo Marx of Allen Ginsberg, and Old Bull Lee of William S. Burroughs. Matt Theodo, in *Understanding Jack Kerouac*, argues that Kerouac is one of the key figures of the Beat generation. At Columbia University in New York, he made friends with poet Allen Ginsberg, novelist William S. Burroughs, and future hippie icon Neal Cassady. These young intellectuals shared a common interest in art, literature, and jazz, as well as a fascination for the criminal underground scene. Thus, it can be said that *On the Road* is purely a Beat generation work, and also a narrative fiction with a true-to-the -fact picture of the legendary Beat generation. In fact, Beat generation paved the way for many concepts to gain ground among the youth in diverse ways. It is evident that, in *On the Road*, Kerouac’s attitude towards women is in a least-bothered manner.

It is interesting to note the role women play for the male Beats in *On the Road*, and how women, love, and marriage are viewed in this novel. The male Beats’ relationship to women is shown to be built upon an opposition. Their restless vagabond life, with its characteristic search for “kicks,” is contrasted with traditional and romantic ideas about men and women who understand each other and strive for a happy marriage. This opposition is essential to the Beat culture in *On the Road*, because it has parallels with the deeper antagonism between the Beats and American mainstream culture. The term “marginalization,” in the sense of making women unimportant and powerless in an unfair way, and “objectification,” in the sense of viewing women as dehumanized objects instead of subjects, may be applied to their situation.

In the recent writings on the Beats, Jennie Skerl states that the Beats were “an avant-garde arts movement and bohemian subculture” that appeared in the 1940s, and received public attention in the 1950s (1). This loosely-affiliated arts community wanted to create a new bohemian alternative to the dominant American culture, thus criticizing mainstream values and social structures, and urging for social change. Centred in bohemian neighbourhoods in urban areas, especially in New York and San Francisco, the Beats sought a “spiritual alternative to the relentless materialist drive of industrial capitalism” which was non-Marxist and opposed to the modernity of the time and its social and political conformity (Skerl 2). In fact, the Beats were the first to protest against the supposed conformity and lack of social concern

among middle-class Americans. Among the influences that shaped the Beat thinking, we find not only hipsterism but also bohemianism and the literature of the Lost Generation with authors like Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and Henry Miller (Stephenson 4). In short, the Beat culture was a blend of many different phenomena: drugs, sexual experimentation, jazz music, social revolt, radical literary experimentation, romantic egoism, and anti-materialism. The goal was a cultural, aesthetic, and philosophical revolution.

It has often been argued whether the Beats changed the values of the society. It is also pointed out that the rebellion of the Beat movement has been only partial. While Stephenson argues that the gender roles were durably changed, Kostas Myrsiades, in *The Beat Generation*, claims that Kerouac and others still kept many of the narrow-minded conventions of “square” America. It is pointed out that, like most Beats, Kerouac rejected the repressed sexuality of the time but maintained the sexism. According to Myrsiades, the critic should not praise the element of sexual experimentation in Beat literature without a discussion of the sexist construction of masculine identity. Even though the Beats in Kerouac’s work are open-minded about class and race, the women’s place remains peripheral. They are marginalized, often reduced to “unimportant” housewives, as in the passage where Sal, the protagonist, arrives in Denver, and stays at a friend’s place: “My first afternoon in Denver I slept in Chad King’s room while his mother went on with her housework downstairs and Chad worked at the library” (40). It can be argued that female voices and perspectives are silenced as the narrator’s focalization seldom encompasses any female character. In fact, all active main characters are men. To exemplify, in the following presentation of Babe, a friend of Sal’s in Denver, the narrator hardly reveals more information about her than her relation to men: “One of Ray’s sisters was a beautiful blonde called Babe – a tennis-playing, surf-riding doll of the west. She was Tim Gray’s girl” (42). It must be remembered, though, that there are a few characters that stand out from the female mass. Relatively active characters like Frankie (Sal’s female friend in Denver), Galatea (Ed Dunkel’s wife), Marylou (Dean’s first wife), and Sal’s aunt are allowed to carry some importance in the narration. However, these women exist mainly in terms of girl friends, lovers or relatives. Nevertheless, they form an important unifying unit of the novel, because in order to construct masculinity, femininity is needed as an opposite. In the article, “Kerouac among the Fellahin,” Robert Holton maintains that the author has left the gender issue untreated because it was too difficult and too threatening for him. Holton feels that Kerouac wanted to remain subversive without being political for, to go beneath the surface of the values of the postmodern white male would have forced him to employ a political dimension.

In *On the Road* there is an ever-present objectification of the woman. As a result, the woman loses her human qualities, and can be compared to an inanimate object. There are several ways in which this objectification works. It can be visual through the act of gazing at a woman. The woman can also be used as a means to achieve something else—in this case, sensual pleasure. Since the Beat culture described in the novel is highly hedonistic, pleasure in terms of sex is crucial to Sal and his friends. Treating women as objects also implies that they are “replaceable” in the same way as commodities are procured, used, disposed of, and replaced. It is not the woman herself that matters to the characters, but any female, who is able to give them enjoyment. Men, on the other hand, are throughout the whole story treated as inviolable individuals with important inner lives.

“The male gaze” is a term derived from media theory, which is usually applied to gender studies of advertisements, especially those from the first half of the nineteenth century. According to feminists, the term suggests that the pleasure in looking is given to the active male subject while the woman is the

passive object. Women are depicted the way men want them to be, instead of displaying their real characteristics. This gives an overly simplistic concept of femininity, which divides women into “good girls” and “bad girls,” implying that women are defined from this masculine point of view, rather than taking into account their own actions and varied personalities. In *On the Road*, Sal’s and Dean’s visual objectification of women can be argued to be a clear example of this sexist gaze. When Dean’s second wife Camille is first introduced to the reader, Sal sees a “brunette on the bed, one beautiful creamy thigh covered with black lace, look up with mild wonder” (44). This is a typical example of the male gaze, obviously originating from the simplistic media view of the woman. In a similar passage, Sal describes Dean’s third wife Inez only on the basis of her body: “a big sexy brunette ... generally like a Parisian coquette” (232). Here, we have an example of a woman being diminished to a body whose main features are colour and ethnic origin.

In the novel, the view of women changes as the male Beats grow older. It can be suggested that for Sal and his friends, gazing at girls and searching for “kicks” are not the final answers of how to live. In fact, their lives undergo a slow but radical change. From a restless existence on the road, they move towards a more settled-down everyday life, as shown in the following quotation, where the narrator states that a friend of Dean’s “was midway between the challenge of his new wife and the challenge of his old Denver pool hall gang leader” (180). So, while the story unfolds, the Beats’ attitude towards women and marriage is gradually altered.

One effect of the male Beat’s maturation process is that they start thinking about forming families. However, in order to do so, they first need to find a way to deal with their problems with women. Towards the end of the novel, it is obvious that the transition from vagabond Beats to responsible fathers produces varied results. For instance, Dean’s destiny seems dark, as he is left alone, when the other Beats more successfully adjust themselves to “square” society. Sal’s attempt is more fruitful. In New York, he meets Laura, and falls in love with her at the first sight: “[T]here she was, the girl with the pure and innocent dear eyes that I had always searched for and for so long. We agreed to love each other madly” (288). It has now been suggested that the bohemian Beat life is a transitory stage between adolescence and the family concerns of adult life. When Dean shows Sal a few photographs of their friends’ families, Sal realizes that they are all entering a new phase in life. He thinks that one day their children would look at the pictures, and they will believe that their parents lived well ordered “square” lives. Never will they be able to imagine that these parents used to be hard drinking vagabond Beats pursuing girls all over the American continent. For Sal, the road has finally come to an end. The initial search of girls and “kicks” has faded away, and what will remain are only the quiet memories of a rebellious youth. In conclusion, *On the Road* contains a rather traditional Western view of the woman, in contrast to its subversive reputation as a Beat classic. Sal Paradise and his friends reject contemporary “square” values such as oppressed sexuality, and apply a strict male perspective, and therefore never transcend the old and sexist gender roles. Seen as an exciting and inspiring travel account, it is easy to understand why *On the Road* still attracts new generations of readers.

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JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*: ISSUES OF DIASPORA, IDENTITY, AND DISPLACEMENT

Mr. Deepak Jose Vadakoot

Modern Indian diaspora constitutes a unique force in world literature. A large number of Indian diasporic writers have been giving expression to their creative urge and have brought name to Indian English fiction. "Diaspora," derived from the Greek word *diaspeirein*, etymologically means, "to scatter" or "to disperse." The term is applied to the dispersion of a set of people from their place of birth to another land. In the present day, the term diaspora signifies "contemporary situations that involve the experiences of migration, expatriate workers, refugees, exiles, immigrants and ethnic communities" (Pandey 20). Writers of Indian Diaspora, who were called the expatriate writers, have carved a niche in the arena of literature. Tapping their varied experiences and rich exposure to advantage, these writers wrote with a widened perspective. In the modern world of flux, rootlessness, and constant erosion of identities, they explore major issues like cultural conflicts, immigrants' alienation, psyche, and changing social values. The Indian diasporic writers can be grouped into two categories. The first comprises those who have spent a part of their life in India and have carried the baggage of their native land off shore. The other comprises of those who have been bred outside India from childhood. They have viewed their country only from the outside, as an exotic place of origin.

Like most diasporic writers, Jhumpa Lahiri is also caught between two worlds, one which is dead, as she has left it behind with the immigration of her parents, and the other, which is not yet accepted by them. Lahiri's case is different, as she belongs to second generation diaspora, and does not have firsthand experience of her motherland. She has never lived in India, although she has close ties with the land. Her family made regular pilgrimages to visit extended family, sometimes staying for up to six months at a time. It was during these trips that the curious observer in her took over. During each visit, she would immerse herself in Indian life and cultures, scribbling her impressions.

In *The Namesake*, every character is just a little bit lost. Each character struggles with his or her identity, because practically everyone feels the tug and pull of different cultures, different traditions, and different dreams. Gogol, in particular, is torn between two cultures—the Indian traditions of his parents and the mainstream American culture in which he grows up. His struggle is the same as his sister Sonia and wife Moushumi go through. It is also related to the struggle his parents have undergone as immigrants. Each character faces a choice; whether he/she should assimilate into American culture or not. Characters wrestle with this question through their relationships with their names, their relationships with their families, and their choices about the future.

As immigrants, Ashima and Ashoke create their own hybrid culture, a blend of American and Bengali elements. In *The Namesake*, characters are constantly making comparisons between Indian and American life. For Indian immigrants such as Ashima and Ashoke, many aspects of American culture are foreign to them, and they also feel like strangers in American society. They struggle to maintain certain Indian traditions, while adapting to American customs, such as Christmas, for the sake of their children. Indian-American characters such as Gogol and Moushumi often feel foreign in both India and America, as though they are lost in between the world of their parents and the world in which they were born. They often feel like tourists, only, unlike most tourists, they have no chance of a homecoming. The characters of *The Namesake* all seek to create homes for themselves, and the houses they live in reflect their personalities.

The Namesake explores various relationships, even if some of them are a bit dysfunctional. One sees everything from one-night stands to steadfast marriages, and Gogol alone runs the gamut. With some, love goes right and with some, love goes terribly wrong. When it does go wrong, it usually has to do with the cultural identity issues of the romantic partners. Their ethnic identities do not seem to matter as much as their attitudes towards those identities. How each character feels about his or her identity, as an Indian, American, or Indian-American, affects their romantic decision-making. Gogol's love choices, in particular, often reflect his own love-hate relationship with his Indian heritage, while other characters, who are more at ease in their Indian-American identities (such as his sister Sonia), seem to have better luck in love.

For most of the Indian and Indian-American characters, India embodies tradition, custom, and heritage. To the children of Indian immigrants, though, their parents' homeland often appears backward and unfamiliar. The United States is an uneasy no-man's land for the Indian and Indian-American characters, since their lives are a patchwork of both American and Indian customs.

Happiness is elusive for the characters in *The Namesake*. Often, the characters' discontent is caused by the difference between their dreams and the reality they live in. For some, like Ashima, the primary source of unhappiness is homesickness, as they constantly compare life in the United States to life back in India. For others, like Gogol, unhappiness stems from not fitting in the cultural differences that set them apart from everybody else. These characters feel isolated and alienated from both Indian and mainstream American cultures. The story of immigrants coming to America in search of the American dream of wealth and success is a familiar one. In *The Namesake*, another layer is added to the story— class. The main Indian-American characters grow up with parents who are educated professionals; they graduate from Ivy League universities, and enter similarly elite careers such as architecture and academia. But these characters often envy the lifestyle of their Anglo-American peers, who come from well-to-do families, who have never had to pull themselves up by their bootstraps the way their Indian parents have. Many of the characters including Gogol are acutely conscious of how possessions and property reflect class status.

In kindergarten, Gogol tries on a new, more formal name, and does not like it one bit, even though having a pet name and a formal name is a Bengali custom. What is interesting here is that he thinks changing his name might change his identity, and that he would become a different person. "There is a reason Gogol doesn't want to go to kindergarten. His parents have told him that at school, instead of being called Gogol, he will be called by a new name.... Nick. Americans obsessed with abbreviation would truncate it to Nick" (56). The passage reads:

Ashima and Ashoke feel cut off from the families they left behind in India. Of course they have their children with them in America, but the network of their extended family is thousands of miles away. They have no support system, and that's one of the things that make life difficult. Ashima thinks it's strange that her child will be born in a place most people enter either to suffer or to die. In India, she thinks to herself, women go home to their parents to give birth, away from husbands and in-laws and household cares, retreating briefly to childhood when the baby arrives.(4)

Apparently, giving birth is quite a different event in India. In fact, for Ashima, doing it the Indian way sounds proper. At least, she would not be alone in a room full of strangers. Even the very beginning of life is different over in America: "Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a

humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones” (1).

Ashima wants desperately to recreate Calcutta life in the United States. But not only is India geographically distant, but it also has a different sense of time, with different holidays. It is hard to live on an Indian calendar in America, where people have never even heard of things like *Durga Puja*. On more than one occasion, Ashoke comes home from the university to find her morose, in bed, rereading her parents’ letters. Ashima’s homesickness is a major source of her unhappiness. Unlike Ashoke, who seems more comfortable with immigrating, Ashima is constantly comparing her life in the United States to her life in India. She is not unhappy because she does not fit in America.

Jhumpa Lahiri finds herself torn between two cultures—the culture of her parents, whichad left but still cling to, and the culture of the United States, where they are residing at present. In an interview, she admitted that, on the one hand, she wanted to please her parents and meet their expectations, but on the other hand, she also wanted to meet the expectations of her American peers, and the expectations she put on herself to fit into American society. Thus, it is a classic case of divided identity. She writes about the human predicament and the crisis of identity in the alienated land of America though she has made it her homeland. Marginality, alienation, and nostalgia are the chief features of her writings. She writes with sensitivity about her family’s ethnic heritage and the lives of South Asian Immigrants in the United States, and succeeds to explore the multi-dimensional anxieties of émigré life. Her stories, in general, revolve around the themes of loss of identity, clashing cultures, and homelessness.

The experiences of these people of Indian diaspora are an amalgam of both constructive and astringent experiences. Their experiences range from trauma to felicitation, from nostalgia to amnesia. They have assimilated with the host society as well as insulated themselves. The impact they have made as well as the influence they have received in a multicultural society has either made a good reputation and brought pride to their nation or left them feeling marginalized and a fractured psyche (Pandey 32). Rootlessness leads to a search for home and homeland, a quest for true identity and culture. As noted by Jana Evans Braziel, “Within the field of diaspora, migration, and immigration studies, refugees are classified as individuals who have been granted political asylum within a host country due to being the target of persecution, state violence, retaliatory civil strife, political repression, or unlawful imprisonment or torture within one’s country of origin” (29). Diasporic Studies in the postcolonial context have expressed serious concerns with regard to these aspects, with special emphasis on the predicament of the expatriates, who were uprooted from their homeland owing to various inevitable reasons.

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RETRIEVING THE PAST, RECLAIMING THE HISTORY: AFGHANISTAN IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER*

Ms. Deepthi V. G. and Dr. Indu Rajasekharan

The idea of post colonialism began with the concept of New Nation States. Nations are an intermediate between geography and psychography. The inhabitants of a nation have a common psychography. The nation is a “collective that exists primarily in acts of imagination and thinking, a ‘unity’ that might be more fantasy than reality, but is powerful nonetheless. They are built on communal consensus” (Nayar 176). Nations are not natural, observes Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities*, and defines nation as

. . . an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion . . . it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (6)

The country of Afghanistan is both an image and character in Khaled Hosseini's debut novel *The Kite Runner*. People knew Afghanistan only as land of cave - dwelling terrorists especially after the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. It brought about a radical change in the destiny of the country. Novels and stories related to Afghanistan usually fall into Taliban and war on terror. But *The Kite Runner* is a story about family, customs, ethnic tensions etc. which opens a window to a different side of Afghanistan. As Hosseini writes in an interview:

I want to write about the Afghanistan before the Soviet war because that is largely a forgotten period in modern Afghan history. For many people in the west Afghanistan is synonymous with Soviet war and the Taliban. I wanted to remind people that Afghans had managed to live in peaceful anonymity for decades and that the history of the Afghans in the twentieth century has been largely peaceful and harmonious (“Meet the Writers” 4.4-9).

The title of the novel comes from the boyhood game of flying kites in the air, causing them to tumble to the ground. The activity of flying kites is violent by nature and it symbolizes the conflicts that rage Afghanistan and the struggles of the inhabitants to fight against the dominant social norms as seen through the course of the novel.

Hosseini's novel renders itself into global and postcolonial interpretations of culture, conflict, political upheavals and exodus. *The Kite Runner* published in 2003 can be seen as a microcosm of Afghan society. The novel was adapted to a film directed by Marc Forster in 2008. The novel depicts the growth of Amir, one of the male protagonists from Afghanistan who desires to find his way in the world as he recognizes that his own belief system is not that of his dominant culture. Raised in the same household, Amir and Hassan, “the Sultans of Kabul” (28) grow up in different world. Amir is a lucky boy to all outward appearances. His companion, Hassan is the son of his father's servant and is a Hazara - a sunned ethnic minority. Having lost his mother who died due to childbirth, Amir shares the big house with his Baba. Desperate for his father's attention, with Hassan as his kite runner, Amir sets out to win the kite

fighting tournament. The events that occurred after the tournaments proved devastating for the boys when Amir betrays his friend Hassan as a result of which he gets raped. When Amir and Baba flee from Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion for a new life in California, Amir thinks he has escaped the past. But even after many years the guilt haunted him, and he finds a way to redeem his guilt by saving Sohrab, Hassan's son from the clutches of Assef. Set in Afghanistan (prior to Soviet invasion and later under the Taliban rule) and the United States, *The Kite Runner* is a *bildungsroman* that exemplifies the similarities and dissimilarities between the two countries and two extremely different cultures.

The modern nation state and the traumas it generate in the minds of its citizens have occupied a central position in the literature of globalization. The neo-imperialist global order has brought in chronic cultural fissures in the interpersonal relations of citizens and culture in particular. The persona has become an isolated item severed from his /her past and roots. The sense of nostalgia, the themes of sin, redemption, violence, torn relationships are therefore to be seen as key ideas in the discussion of literature from the Third World. Third World refers to both the geographical and imaginary spaces. Afghanistan has been a strategically important nation from this perspective. It has a long history and has assumed the status of a nation-state under Ahmad Shah Abdali (Durrani). The indoctrination of the Afghans in religious fundamentalism was seen an effective tool to fight against the Soviets.

The strife torn region of Afghanistan is thus not just a cult in the minds of its people; it is part of their innate identity. *The Kite Runner* places a familial narrative in the centre, focuses on father-son relationship but at the periphery brings the discourses of the disintegration of monarchy, military intervention and the plight and migration of people to Pakistan and US. The authority of Taliban is a serious perspective that emerges from the pages of the novel. Hosseini's personal experiences with the Hazara people of Afghanistan also forms the foundation for the birth of the tale. The two branches of Muslim faith are Sunni and Shi'a.

Amir and Baba in the novel represent the Pashtun population, whereas Ali and Hassan are part of the Hazara minority, a group exposed to persistent racism in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims who constitute eighty percent and the Hazaras Shi'a constituting only nine percent of Afghan population. In Afghanistan it appears that the Pashtuns are very much in command and the Hazaras a shunned underclass. The course of development of the novel, depicts more sacrifice on part of the Hazara and more demand on part of the Pashtun. Amir does not know why Pashtuns humiliate the Hazara race until he secretly reads a history book he finds in his Baba's library. He was surprised to find an entire chapter on the Hazaras: "It said that Hazaras had tried to rise against the Pashtuns in the nineteenth century, but the Pashtuns had "quelled them with violence" (8).

The racial discrimination against the Hazara people is also represented through the character of Assef, a "sociopath" (34). He was infamous for his brutality and unbending discrimination against the Hazaras. He insulted Hassan for being a Hazara. He praised Hitler and wanted to finish what Hitler started, that is to get Afghanistan cleared of Hazaras. He says: "Afghanistan is a land of the Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this flat nose here. His people pollute our homeland, our *watan*. They dirty our blood" (35). He called Amir and Baba a disgrace to Afghanistan for socializing with the Hazaras. The Hazaras were treated inhumanly even under the Taliban rule.

Globalization in the present times has tried to privatise the social order and thus destroy the welfare state. The politics of globalization is conjoined with the neo liberal ideas. It is therefore hegemonic and drives people out of their livelihood and pushes them to poverty. Aijaz Ahmed periodises the emergence of nation states as the first phase period comprising of the 20 years of modernization and the second period from 1965-75 which is dominated by wars of national freedom. The contexts of political domination, economic exploitation and cultural oppression fostered the dismantling of human existence and identity.

The Italian Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci significantly notes that various expedients are deployed by the ruling authority to win the consent of the native inhabitants. Even the suggestions of bodies such as UN remain within a neoliberal policy framework. The challenge for the natives was to unshackle Afghan culture from self-inflicted limits and conflicts. Cultural freedom includes a challenge to religious thought-to break doctrinal chains that confined religion and liberate religion from rigid interpretations. Aijaz Ahamed in his recent essay “Mother of all Battles” writes that “the CIA ensemble a force against the left wing Govt. in Afghanistan so as to entice the Soviet Union into intervening, without calculating the consequences for itself and the world at large”(7).

Hosseini “tucks within the plots and narratives . . . details that address the state of civil strife and international hegemony in Afghanistan including the U.S involvement there in 2001” (Stuhr 65). *The Kite Runner* also portrays the difficulty of hybridization and ethnocentrism (judging another culture only by the values and standards of one’s own culture.). Hosseini successfully and effectively demonstrates that the difficulty of the immigrant experience begins when one attempts to leave his homeland. During the Soviet occupation, Baba and Amir are among many Afghans who struggle to leave under cover of night. The move to America represents two different things for Amir and Baba. In addition to the difficulties of their lives in a new country, the immigrants also have to deal with the perception of them among those who stayed behind. Surrounded by a culture quite different from their own, the parents begin to lose authority over their children who quickly adapt to their new surroundings. Adjusting to a new country is not just about learning a new language; it is about maintaining traditions and some semblance of your own culture. Baba loses his status and still has his old world prejudices, thus representing the precarious balance between old and new. Soraya and her mother also demonstrate the difficult role women have in balancing the expectations of an old world culture with the new world in which they are living.

In California, Baba feels disconnected from everything he knows in Kabul and was having trouble in adjusting to America. But for Amir this disconnection has a different meaning. As Amir settles in the United States when he is growing up, the question of his national identity is particularly complicated. Amir easily identifies with the American optimism. The different events of life in America resolve around Amir becoming a man. He sees it as an opportunity for a new beginning and thinks of America as a place where he can literally escape his past and guilt of betraying Hassan. To him: “America was different. America was a river, roaring along, unmindful of the past. I could wade into this river, let my sins drown to the bottom, let the waters carry me someplace far, someplace with no ghosts, no memories, and no sins” (119). As much as Amir wants to be swept in the river of America, he is still rooted to Afghan tradition because he is among a large community of Afghan expatriates. In America he publishes his first book establishing himself as a writer.

Though in America, Afghanistan resonates in the minds of the immigrants and hence should act accordingly. General Taheri feels the need to remind Amir when he sees Amir speaking to Soraya. In America, no controversy results from a young man speaking to a young woman in public. For Afghans,

however, such things are not entirely appropriate. After General Taheri's warning, Amir and Soraya's traditional courtship creates an Afghanistan within tangles of America. The novel presents the fact that everyone in the social network Afghanistan is part of one family: "Take two Afghans, who've never met, put them in a room for ten minutes, and they will figure how they are related" (220). When Amir and Soraya consider adopting a child, Baba explains that Afghans are not meant to disturb their family line with such a decision. He says that: "blood is a powerful thing, *bachem*, and when you adopt, you don't know whose blood you are bringing into your house" (164).

Wars and refugee crises marked Afghanistan's history. The collapse of the state led to the disintegration of human relationships. Amir realizes this when he returns to Peshawar in Afghanistan towards the end of the novel. His interaction with Farid and Wahid calls the idea of homeland and national identity. He says that "I feel like a tourist in my own country" (203). On his return he realizes that the Taliban has destroyed Afghanistan and people there live in great danger. The Taliban were a group of Pashtun supremacists who took almost complete control of the country. The letter written by Hassan described the terror of living under the Taliban presenting a darker side of life in Afghanistan: "The Afghanistan of our youth is long dead. Kindness is gone from the land and you cannot escape the killings. Fear is everywhere, in the streets, in the stadium, in the markets; it is part of our lives here" (189).

Afghans fought in the name of Jihad and offered resistance to the Soviets just against the colonizers. During the entire struggle many died. Many became homeless and uprooted. Moreover wholesale destruction was caused to infrastructure, monuments and buildings which were more than two centuries old were destroyed, due to continued battles, bomb and missile attacks. There is only incessant conflict for power, regional hegemony territorial possession and homogenisation by bringing together the multiple ethnic Afghan factions into a single political and social system.

During the phase of post imperialism, Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a major event that occurred in 1978. The U.S., in the guise of bilateral relations offered ideological support to the Afghans. The U.S. conveniently roped in Pakistan as a conduit for the supply of armaments. The three catastrophic Anglo-Afghan Wars paved the way for a dreaded civil war. The failure to create a state, army, and economy was the immediate after effect. Regional and sub-regional powers used the failing system for their own vested interests. Afghan further sank into a state of anarchy, with a complete breakdown of law and order. The Soviet invasion led inevitably to a Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union turned Afghanistan into a deserted place with everyone cramming for power.

The country of Afghanistan is transported into a much more public, literary sphere than it had been hitherto entitled to as a result of the novel by presenting the devastating impact of the atrocities on the public. Rebecca Stuhr has rightly said that:

Hosseini writes compelling stories through which he questions assumptions and breaks apart stereotypes through the strengths and weaknesses of his characters. He interweaves into the action of his stories the details of history, culture, and daily life in Afghanistan. He challenges his readers to reflect on discrimination and political abuse within their own experience in light of instances of such abuses in a different and unfamiliar country. (77-78)

Khaled Hosseini has a unique place in American literature and perhaps the first author from Afghan origin to write fiction in English creating space for many authors from Afghan diaspora. Elleke

Boehmer describes the immigrant and diasporic people or author as “excolonial by birth, ‘Third World’ in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way...work within the precincts of Western Metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/ or political connections with national background” (qtd. in Nayar 179).

Hosseini is an American, and considers himself to have assimilated into the U.S culture. But his novel centered on his “ancestral and natal home and illuminates the home country, by providing a broader picture of Afghanistan” (Stuhr 20 - 21). *The Kite Runner* can thus be viewed as a semi-autobiographical saga of the author himself and represents the Afghan minority in America who still live in the cultural bubbles of the past.

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACISM AND VIOLENCE IN JOHN GRISHAM'S NOVEL *A TIME TO KILL*

Mr. Denvor Fernandez

Human beings are the only organisms on earth that can kill their own species in a large scale. The Holocaust under the reign of Hitler and other genocides that history has recorded are good examples for this. Such acts of mass murder can only occur because of the violence that is part of human nature. Violence is the use of power or physical force to cause harm physically, psychologically or emotionally on a being, an entity or an object in the universe. Violence in human beings can be founded on certain culturally driven belief systems. These belief systems usually have racism as part of their agenda.

Racism is the belief that one race is superior to the other. This belief could stem from the observations of biological differences between people. The term is usually used to refer to colour, ethnicity and nationality. Discrimination against African-Americans is the first thing that strikes the mind at the mention of racism. From a broad perspective it can also be used in the case of gender, class and caste. The caste system in India is also a form of racism.

In the novel, *A Time to Kill*, a ten year old African-American girl, Tonya Hailey, is raped by two white men, James Louis "Pete" Willard and Billy Ray Cobb, who are self-proclaimed racists. The girl's father Carl Lee Hailey knowing very well that the court will not punish them, murders the two men. When he is arrested people start taking sides. A white lawyer Jake Brigance takes up his case and fights for him. A racist group known as the Ku Klux Klan uses terror to attack Jake and fight against Carl Lee. A string of violent incidents occur as an aftermath of a racist incident. This kind of public collective violence would not usually sprout if it is a usual murder case involving only whites or only blacks. Jake is seen as a person who betrays his own race because of his fundamentalism. Ellen Roark, who helps Jake with the case, is seen as a woman who has defiled her race.

Jake's house is burned down and Jake's secretary's husband is killed; Jake was shot at, though the bullet missed him. Even after all this he stood for Carl Lee and won Carl's release through an emotional and rational courtroom speech. The day of the trial is met with riots by both the supporters of Carl Lee and the racist groups.

European explorations during the Renaissance led to mass contacts between different races. Europeans having superior weapons established their superiority over Asians and Africans. They also considered their culture and religion to be superior to that of the cultures of other races. African slaves imported to America were treated like beasts. Many literary works including Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 classic *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sympathised with the sufferings of blacks in America. Even after slavery was abolished in the US, after an initiative taken by Abraham Lincoln, atrocities towards African-Americans continued to happen. The struggle of Martin Luther King Jr. against racial discrimination in 1960's and his ultimate assassination is also recorded in American history. Even laws have no power to control the mindset of the society. This can be seen in Grisham's novel.

Racism makes people believe that a race believed to be superior has rights, privileges and power over a race believed to be inferior. To impose this power or control over the 'other' race, the 'superior' race uses violence. This violence is mainly used to restrict or control the freedom of the 'other' race. This

kind of violence can be found in different parts of the world. In countries where women have no or little rights, many cases of violence against women are recorded as men use violence to restrict the freedom of women. The same violence is used against minority religions in non-secular countries. The same can be seen in the college ragging cases in India. This denial of freedom goes against human rights and ethics. Respecting the freedom and autonomy of others is the first step towards human rights.

Intolerance to other races stem from the nature of human culture or civilisation itself. Every culture or civilisation is founded on the principle that it is superior to other existing cultures or civilisations. The pride, greed and chauvinisms of civilisations have led to the great wars in history. The idea of racism has also been developed from such chauvinisms. *The Laws of Manu*, an Indian cultural text, tells that women and people belonging to lower castes should be suppressed so as to establish order in a given society. Established or organised ideology seeks the elimination of the freedom of a group of people so the social 'ideal' can be reached. Adolf Hitler used cultural heritage as a permission to persecute the Jews. Racism is therefore inherent in many cultures of the world.

Racism in our modern society is based on identity politics. Colour is an explicit factor when it comes to physical differences. Racism can also lead to inaction in helping others due to lack of sympathy for a person who is different from you. The insensitiveness of one race to the suffering of the people of other races can also be noted in our modern society.

In the novel, *A Time to Kill*, the white rapists feel no remorse towards the ten year old girl. They see the African-American girl as a mere object of pleasure. They behave in a sadist way during their interrogation. They are able to be so violent and cruel because such violence is pre-existent in the society they live in the form of racism. The society conditions them to be violent. When the rapists are killed as an act of revenge by the father, the racists again blindly support the whites and demand death for the father.

This novel can be compared to another novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, in terms of differences in justice in the same country while dealing with people of different races. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* the white accuser wins the case against the black accused even though it is proven without doubt that the black accused is innocent. If there was no inequality of law Carl Lee would not have been persuaded to take revenge on the men who have raped his daughter. The violence of the oppressed race is also a by product of the racism existing in a given society.

Edward Bond says, "Violence is hidden within democratic structures because they are not radically democratic - Western democracy is merely a domestic convenience of consumerism." This can be seen in the novel. Even though there is a prescribed law, it is a group of white jurors who decides the fate of an accused who is black. Injustice in the name of race can happen even in a nation with high democratic ideals.

Why can't the fisherman empathise with the suffering of the fish? Why can't the woodcutter empathise with the suffering of the tree? It is because the violence against the fish or tree has become a part of their lives or their routine. Racism in the world has also become part of the learned routine of different cultures. Racism must be unlearned in order to stop violence. For that, the cultural ego of civilisations must be dropped. If inequality and intolerance is unlearned violence in the society can be reduced.

The novel is a case study on how a developed nation can go barbaric because of racism and the ideology it propagates. Racism begets violence and can only lead to greater destruction.

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VACATION FOR FULFILMENT IN RITA DOVE'S POEM "VACATION"

Ms. G. Dhivya

*Just as a painter paints,
And a ponderer ponders,
A writer writes,
And a wanderer wanders.*

(Roman Payne)

Rita Frances Dove is an American poet and author. She served as Poet Laureate consultant in poetry to the library of congress. She is the second African-American to receive Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1987. Dove's work cannot be confined to specific era or school in contemporary literature. Her precise poetic language captures complex emotions. The most famous work is *Thomas Beulah*, a collection of poems based on the lives of her maternal grandparents. She has published nine volumes of poetry, a book of Short stories (*Fifth Sunday*) in 1985, a collection of essays (*The Poet's World*) in 1995 and a novel (*Through the Ivory Gate*) in 1992.

The poem "Vacation" deals with the narrator's relaxation from materialistic life. Generally, Vacation is a most lovable situation in every human's life because they are leading a restricted materialistic life. In the poem "Vacation", the narrator tells that she loves the hour before the plane takes off, and how the time has slowed down. Dove says "No home, but the gray vinyl seats linked like unfolding paper dolls" (2-4). These lines show people waiting patiently in the seats as paper dolls at the airport. After the procedure gets over, they move to the gate. Through this poem it is understood that poet is lonely and she idealizes the airport because as a woman she is exposed to the realities of family life and the stressful life styles that people undergoes while travelling. The poet feels that there's no better place for her to experience how families function.

In the modern society, the nuclear families giving importance to themselves and always feel and think about routine life. Families are seen and watched in public. They make the preferences to show proper behaviour. When families go out in public, there is no family bondage such as father, mother, and child without accepting any company. They themselves go out in this modern society.

The poet wanted to focus on the reality and not ready to live in an illusion. She waits to board the plane. While waiting she watched the people from different communities who were also waiting. She wanted to see their reality.

Whenever people travel, there will be impatience in the minds of the people, and they just think about their destination. According to her, modern generations tend to forget the virtue of patience. The author tries to describe the place and the situation where the people on the flight come together as a community, just as how slaves come together for a common reason to escape. The poet says people need company to go out, because they always need support from a community of people.

Dove expresses the idea of patience in the poem "Vacation." Whenever someone waits outside to travel or something else, he/she can see what is happening around. It may be amusing for example the narrator analyzed a businessman who was waiting for the same flight as her, she saw that the businessman holding the briefcase and knocking his knees, probably thinking what everyone else was thinking, when they will be called to board their flight.

The author seems to have a comfort in times of relaxation, she forgets about all her stressful or busy times in her life. Instead of merely waiting, she observes all the different people who surrounded her.

When travelling to other places for holidays or any other occasion, always it is only frustration and anxiety that the traveller encounters. In this poem, the poet expresses the idea of being peaceful and enjoys the environment that was given by the God. So the people have to utilize it properly. The people going for a vacation will experience some sun and fun but it's only a relaxation as dining out sleeping late that's about it .The trip provides them with a departure from their everyday routine lives and nothing more. The whole trip is just only for relaxation.

Most of the people feel vacation is a boring time. It was a happy moment by spending time with different people and also their views and idea. In the poem "Vacation," the poet's message is about enjoying the little things in life. Dove used a descriptive language to make the readers remember and experience the Vacation. She created a mental picture of imagination from the beginning to the end of the poem. In the poem "Vacation," the poet is not just talking about a trip, but also about people's lives. Each person is connected with their present way of living and they have only little chance to change and make their minds to be free to face new experiences and happy moments in life.

The theme vacation for fulfilment tries to present that the people take pride in little things in life. People such as businessmen or the families are caught up in everything and they don't have time to sit and relax about the happy moments in life.

During the vacation time the mind should be free and love each and every moment in life and also spend the time with the family so that the life will be beautiful and there won't be any frustration and the wish will be fulfilled. But in the modern society the people do not have time to spend with anyone. After reading this poem the poet makes the reader realise that there should be patience, in life and the beauty of life to be enjoyed during vacation and the life will be fulfilled.

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THE HAUNTING HAINT: TRAUMATIC MEMORIES IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELLOVED*

Dr. Divya Sugathan

Trauma implies the violent wounding of the human psyche through war, political violence, domestic abuse, racism, colonialism, illness, sexual abuse, witnessing of a particular traumatic event and the ineluctable repetition of that wounding in later life and language. Cathy Caruth, one of the most innovative scholars on trauma describes it as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth 11).

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* articulates how the silencing forces of trauma and oppression have reshaped our understanding of slave history. It recovers the silenced voices and experiences of the discredited people by standing up as a testimony to the trauma of slavery and racism. While reminding the readers that repression is a personal as well as a social response to trauma, Morrison carefully examines the traumatic process of forgetting and revision. *Beloved* focuses its attention not so much on what is remembered of the past as to why and how it is remembered. The eponymous character's return, which is metaphorical to the readers and literal to the characters, is characteristic of the way in which traumatic memories return to the trauma victim, like a ghost that inhabits its victim against his or her will.

Trauma, as Caruth suggests, is a symptom of history because the traumatized person carries with them a horrific and impossible history. It is a history which the victims do not possess. On the other hand, these histories possess the victims. The traumatic history that resides in the unconscious is always fragmented and it can be integrated into the consciousness only if it gets re-externalized in the form of a narrative. *Beloved* is committed to reconsidering the influence of the past and its effects on the inner lives of survivors. The unique aspect of *Beloved* is that it focuses on individual witnesses, their voices and experiences in order to bring forth lived memories that are unavailable in conventional histories. *Beloved* provides an alternative history that breaks through obstacles to remembering such as silence, simultaneous knowledge and denial, dissociation, resistance and repression.

The narrative of *Beloved* focuses on the repressed memory of slavery that has left an indelible mark on the body and soul of Black Americans. The sorrow in *Beloved* transcends individual trauma and encompasses a collective trauma that the Black community tries to repress. *Beloved* is based on an infamous historical event. Sethe, the protagonist of the novel is a fictionalization of a real slave woman, Margaret Garner, who attempted to kill her children, and stood trial for murdering her daughter. Morrison reconstructs this woman's character and makes important changes in her story to emphasize how a slave mother can love her children, the claims she might have to motherhood and how one frees oneself from ownership. Margaret Garner's story is important historically because it is emblematic of slaves' resistance to dehumanizing oppression. Raped, whipped, and robbed of the milk stored in her breasts for her baby, Sethe escapes from her oppressor Schoolteacher, only to murder her baby girl so as to forestall the legacy of slavery from passing on.

Morrison re-creates the complexities of traumatic memory in her creation of *Beloved*. Memory not only guides the narrative of *Beloved*, but provides an access to the forgotten and repressed aspects of the lived past. Memory can be narrative or traumatic. Every day, ordinary experiences are assimilated,

stored and recounted by the narrative memory. However, not all human experiences can be easily recounted. People, who encounter traumatic experiences, cannot recount their memories in a linear and unified way. These memories that are inflexible and constantly invade the consciousness are durational and not chronological. These memories are traumatic. Beloved, Sethe's murdered daughter is an involuntary, traumatic memory that evokes an unsettling and shameful past. As she emerges from ghost to flesh, Sethe's past is opened up. Beloved's return is an intrusion - a painful event that has not been fully assimilated or comprehended at the time of its occurrence but only belatedly in its insistent return. As Beloved returns, Sethe first feels the connection in her body, experienced by the breach of the pseudo birth water.

The ghost of Beloved is emblematic of the deadly and murderous devolution of a mother's passionate love for her child. In Morrison's novel the intimate love between a mother and her child is infiltrated by the oppressive forces of slavery, racism and poverty. This leads to psychic distortions and trauma that damage their relationship. As mediators between the children and the world, mothers like Sethe experience a self-division. This division or splitting is symptomatic of socially-induced trauma. Mechanisms of oppression like domination, violence, economic and sexual exploitation restrict these mothers from full participation in social and personal life. When these mothers are threatened, they act on behalf of their children, assuming that the children are a part of themselves and that they would share their desires and agree to their solutions. Hence, they try to protect their children from what they believe is worse than death. This over-identification with their children gives them the power to appropriate the rights of their children and to decide life and death for them. Beloved thus becomes an unintentional victim to a mother's possessive love and her futile resistance to oppression.

Sethe allows her resurrected child to dominate her as she is guilt-ridden. While trying to reconnect with the missed mother-child symbiosis, Sethe is unable to assert herself as an individuated subject who would put her daughter's excesses in check. Instead, she yields to her daughter to atone for her sins. Beloved's return initially evokes pleasant memories. But as Sethe and Beloved begin to ponder over the circumstances of their separation, pain and conflict erupt. As Beloved accuses her mother of abandoning her, the latter pleads for forgiveness. Their powerful love and separation can only be reiterated and not resolved. Beloved remains a traumatized, abandoned infant locked in the past, who can neither reevaluate nor reassess her mother's actions. Sethe remains unable to forgive herself or to stop obsessively replaying the murder of her daughter in her mind. The re-emergence of Beloved reiterates the impact of the dead on the survivors who cannot live in peace until the traumatic memories are exorcised. Sethe's confrontation with Beloved-who is the repressed memory-is inevitable. A re-externalization or exorcism of the revenant memories is necessary for Sethe to live a fruitful life. Beloved offers Sethe the opportunity to confront repressed traumatic memories that she had evaded for years on end.

Beloved chronicles the spirit of endurance, as well as the simultaneous need to remember and forget. She is a symbol for the speakable and the unspeakable, the known and the unknown. The narrative reveals the tenuous nature of survival and points to the necessity to forget the past- represented by Beloved who is the reminder of a horrific tragedy- to some extent for life to continue in the present. Through Beloved, Morrison demonstrates the buckling of moral values under oppression. In traumatic circumstances, it is almost impossible to take positive actions and the actions of the victims under extraordinary circumstances cannot be judged in terms of fact-based logic. Living in traumatic circumstances entails lying outside moral systems. When faced by the threat of returning to Sweet Home,

Sethe feels that death is a safer alternative for her children. By murdering her baby daughter, she rescues her from becoming tainted like herself. Morrison thereby endeavours to immerse the readers in the individual experience of terror, arbitrary rules, and the psychological and physical breakdown of victims so that the readers can begin to appreciate their situations. The narrative enables the readers to understand Sethe's love, suffering and good intentions simultaneously with her deadly intentions.

In *Beloved*, collective voices and stories are indispensable for the recuperation of Sethe's traumatic memory. As past haunts her, she complains about the amount of horror her memory can hold, often withdrawing from these memories for the fear of what might surface. Sethe does not go inside for she fears that if she does, she might never return. Sethe cannot remember her own history fully until Paul D fills in the missing pieces of their past.

Morrison's innovative narrative utilizes the dialogical conceptions of witnessing where many voices, emotions, and experiences intermingle to produce memory that is truncated. *Beloved* thus is a dialogue between historical accounts and individual testimonies which explores the interconnections and differences between personal and collective perspectives. Individual voices recover a history that was previously glossed over due to racial and social constraints, perpetrator's denials and ignorance about traumatic responses. Multiple testimonies can act as correctives to individual repression and denial. They can also reinforce and add dimensions to individual perspectives. Through these multiple voices, Morrison demonstrates the struggle between memory and forgetting, the past and the present, the explicable and the inexplicable and the differing viewpoints to oppression.

The novel is therefore a site of conflation of personal and collective traumas. Morrison conveys the collective loss through personal experiences by capturing the emotional effects of familial separation under slavery. The story of each character is a part of a larger one. Their different perspectives and stories act as catalysts for memory as well as hope for a collective survival. Paul D's wanderings and experiences give the readers an idea regarding the upheavals during and after the Civil War and a male experience of slavery and escape. Through him, the readers also see the personal effects that traumatic experiences can have on individuals. Paul D remembers his own psychological and bodily humiliations, the destruction of friends, madness and scars that defined the reality of slavery for many. Although Paul D and Sethe share much, each has their own baggage, guilt, ways of survival and defensiveness. Paul D is appalled by Sethe's possessive love for her children. Sethe has her own reason which makes her defend her actions. The perspectives of the interlocutors thus affect the possibility of communication. As *Beloved* questions Sethe about her past, she is able to recount it in earnest. In *Beloved*'s company, Sethe finds a safe context to reveal her past that she could not find with Paul D who projects onto Sethe his own perspectives of survival. Though Paul D and Sethe share a common past, they differ in their sense of relation to others. Paul D is afraid to love Sethe and yet is willing to try despite his recognition that his heart has become a rusted tobacco tin, where his painful past is buried. Sethe's identity is absolutely as a mother in connection to her children. As *Beloved* figures in their lives, silence and distance spring up between them. Their mutual absorption with *Beloved* is further evidence of this irreconcilability with their respective pasts.

The narrative voice of Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, helps in the further explication of Sethe's traumatic past and the legacy of slavery. Having lost six of her seven children, Suggs scarcely retains a sense of surviving self. She is a representative of those women whose social death was contributed by the white masters who destroyed their marriages, families and self-esteem. After her son buys her freedom,

Suggs discovers for the first time that she has a body and a beating heart. Her new realization reinscribes the mistreatment of slaves' bodies by their white masters. The collectivity and individuality of trauma also issue from Baby Suggs's spiritual revivals, where she exhorts her many followers to love their bodies and reclaim the self-love that the whites had taken away. As she bathes Sethe in sections, she tries to cleanse each part of Sethe's body that has been defiled.

Denver, Sethe's younger daughter, associates her mother with the dangers of the external world and feels separated from her. She survives Sethe's mothering but is scared by fear and alienation. While *Beloved* explores a mother's traumas and obsessions, it also focuses on how daughters, like Denver, search for ways to live differently from their mothers so as to sidestep the traumas that overwhelmed their mothers. Denver carries a deeply embedded fear for both her mother and her "unspeakable" act. As Denver learns about the infanticide committed by her mother, she is traumatized into a hysterical deafness for a short period of time. The triad formed by Sethe and her two daughters later becomes a dyad in which Denver is omitted. As the only member in her family, least possessed by the past, Denver overcomes the internalization of her mother's world view and steps out of her yard to reconnect with the community. Denver thus breaks the family pattern of solitary resistance and obsession with the past.

Beloved ends with the exorcism of Beloved by the community of black women. The exorcism points to the re-externalization of the repressed memory not only of Sethe but of the entire black community. Sethe's attempt to attack Mr. Bodwin is a re-enactment wherein she tries to reverse the outcome of the original trauma by acting against the master rather than against her own children. This re-enactment also breaks the cycle of trauma associated with an oppressive past. It also suggests that the best form of defensive strategy towards oppression lies in collective support and in the formation of a community.

The ghost of Beloved, who lurks in the woods, suggests the revenant nature of trauma that cannot be forgotten but can only be reconciled.

She is the reminder of tragedy, the dead girl, lost and missing, the one who has torn their lives apart, forced them to confront their pasts and open their hearts. She is a sad disturbing presence, not sentimentalized, because at times she is disturbing, creepy, the victim who returns to be claimed, but eventually must be driven away because such loss cannot be compensated for, only mourned...Traumatic memory can bring repetition and demoralization. The past should not be repressed or glossed over, but survival and a future life is essential and not always compatible with this kind of memory. (Vickroy 191)

Beloved is a needy child who demands her mother but is also one of the millions of lost and dead. Ultimately, she remains personally inaccessible, existing only in others' memories and desires.

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REDEFINING THE FRONTIERS OF IDENTITY: AN ANALYSIS OF PAUL AUSTER'S
THE NEW YORK TRILOGY

Ms. Duna Liss Tom

Questions regarding self and identity continue to occupy a central space in postmodern discourse. On the one hand there has been an unprecedented proliferation of knowledge and discourses about self and identity. On the other hand, there has been a consistent and sustained attack on the notion of self and identity. In other words, a huge component of what Stuart Hall calls a discursive explosion on the question of self and identity is devoted to a searching critique of these central notions of society and culture.

One fundamental problem that comes across in identity studies is the very term 'identity'. The term poses two problems: firstly, it points to the existence of an integral self that is identical with itself, implying a sort of self presence and self unity. Secondly, the term also points in the direction of what Kenneth J Gergen calls 'the saturated self', implying a sense of internal division and multiple selves. As an attempt to arrest this two way movement of the term, Hall suggests recourse to Derrida's notion of 'double writing' also known as 'writing under-erasure' (*sous-rature*). Such writing 'under erasure' would help us, argues Hall, to accomplish two things at the same time: to retain the traditional notion of identity as a usable concept and to strive towards an inversion of it as well as an eruptive emergence of new shades of meaning.

It is in this particular context, Paul Auster, one of the eminent American postmodern writers become relevant in explaining this ambiguous concept. Paul Auster's corpus of fictional masterpieces is distinguished by their total lack of adherence to the conventional notions of fictionalization. The whole gamut of his works may be said to represent a certain type of counter-culture that subtly subverts the current perceptions and paradigms and imaginatively reinvents an innovative response to the harsh realities of the contemporary postmodern world.

Following the publication of his acclaimed debut work, a memoir entitled *The Invention of Solitude*, Auster gained popularity for a series of three loosely connected detective stories published collectively as *The New York Trilogy*. It includes *City of Glass*, *Ghosts* and *The Locked Room*. This trilogy marked the true start of his literary career. Though *The New York Trilogy* belongs to the tradition of detective fiction, these books are not conventional detective stories organized around a mystery and a series of clues. Rather, he uses the detective form to address existential issues and questions of identity, space, language and literature, creating his own distinctively postmodern form in the process. This paper attempts to discuss Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* as a specimen for Auster's narrative strategy with reference to the postmodern question of 'identity'. Stuart Hall explains identity as follows: ". . . identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation"

(4).

New York Trilogy elucidates the words of Hall. With no principle of central organization or authorial voice to give meaning to events, the narrative's logical sequence is disrupted in Auster's works. In the disjointed world of Paul Auster, each fragment exists as a separate unit, as a counter-narrative. With no casual order to link them together, the fragments are ruled by laws of random events and unpredictable

chance. The search for identity and personal meaning has permeated Auster's works, many of which concentrate heavily on the role of coincidence and random events. Arguably, *The New York Trilogy* represents Auster's most convincing commitment to the alternative possibilities of narrative and structural experimentation. Total uncertainty is the ruling principle of Auster's fictional world. Auster subverts the question of identity at different levels in the work. The characters, their linguistic world and their dwelling places all raise the issue of identity.

There are no real detectives in these books, rather the presence of writers, who are caught up in the labyrinths of life, moves the plot, and they act as detectives. The writers become investigators of their own as well as the life of other people's lives. Instead of narrating the works they have undertaken, these internal writers move from the plot and often try to engage in other stories. In *City of Glass*, the first novel in the trilogy, the protagonist is a writer of detective fiction who finds himself involved in an adventure after being mistaken for a real private investigator. In the concluding story, *The Locked Room*, a failed author becomes obsessed with a successful novelist who has disappeared, and devotes his life to tackling him down. It is this idea of the fragmented condition that Stuart Hall explained in his influential essay "Who Needs Identity?" He says: ". . . identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation" (4).

During the course of the *City of Glass*, Daniel Quinn, himself a vagrant, details the activities of those whom he encounters on the streets. Quinn's wife and child died some five years before the events depicted in and Quinn has become introverted and isolated. Quinn is a self-enforced exile from society, and his 'disappearance' has been largely over-looked

It is from this moment of his exile Quinn's concern over his identity becomes evident. Although Quinn survives, he remains irrecoverably distanced from the psyche of the man who was Daniel Quinn. Later he adopts the identity of his literary pseudonym, William Wilson. Quinn as Wilson gains recognition as an author during the course of the novel. From the part of Quinn, William Wilson is merely a literary device to encourage Quinn's life and literary career. Although Quinn writes from the perspective of Wilson, it is actually Max Work, the protagonist of Wilson's detective novels, with whom Quinn empathizes. It is through the persona of Work, then, that Quinn is able to communicate his intentions. Quinn adopts the persona of William Wilson and Work and his sense of identity is doubly surrendered. As Quinn moves from one role to another, it is his counterparts- Work and William Wilson- that determine his existence rather than Quinn himself.

As *City of Glass* opens, the already dislocated Quinn assumes yet another identity. Quinn receives a telephone call intended for a detective named Paul Auster, and informs the caller that he is Auster, as Quinn immerses himself in this new character, he eradicates any vestiges of his former existence. Quinn's assignment involves the surveillance of the recently paroled Peter Stillman, who returns to New York City after a prolonged period of incarceration. Stillman is a deranged academic and he wishes to discover the origins of language. Stillman had previously denied his son, who is also named Peter, access to human contact.

As his surveillance mission progresses, Quinn gets an opportunity to talk with Stillman. For the readers Quinn is no more Quinn, but Paul Auster -the detective. He tries his maximum to execute his new

role: “. . . Auster was no more than a name to him, a husk without content. To be Auster meant being a man with no interior, a man with no thoughts” (61). During his first meeting with Stillman Quinn says that he is Quinn and Stillman made pun on his name. In the next meeting he said to Stillman that ‘My name is Henry Dark’. Stillman accepts this identity of Quinn as well because he apparently did not recognize him from the day before.’-he is deranged. But at the same time Stillman, recognized Henry Dark as “a character in a book I once wrote. A figment” (52). Later on Quinn presents himself as Peter Stillman and at that point Stillman remembers his son with the same name.

For Quinn, his identity is not a matter of concern. Auster says that “who he was, where he came from, and what he did are of no great importance. More than anything else, however, what he liked to do was walk, simply going wherever his legs happened to take him.”(3) In the postmodern metropolis, Quinn becomes an observer rather than an active participant, and his daily constitutionals appear governed by the logic of an inanimate structure.

When Quinn took the duty to observe Stillman, the latter carried this mission to observe the city. He celebrates fragmentation and decay, and claims that the city is a site of untold devastation. Both of them continue their surveillance mission and Quinn finds it difficult to derive a conclusion regarding Stillman. Quinn tries to find out the meaning of Stillman’s movement through the city and he had not even thought about his existence. Quinn negates the responsibilities in his life and his eventual destination is governed by the design of the streets. Stillman’s opinion regarding the city is “I find the streets an endless source of material, an inexhaustible storehouse of shattered things” (75). Thus both of them find it difficult to draw conclusions on their projects.

These activities carried out by Quinn force us to think of a deep psychological trigger existing within the psyche of Quinn. Likewise, Stillman’s journey through the New York City reflects Quinn’s own desire to escape from the labyrinths in which he was caught.

Daniel Quinn is a typical postmodern individual as Bauman says “. . .the postmodern ‘problem of identity’ is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open” (18). Quinn assumes five different names in the course of the work. He does not want a consistent nature. For a short period of time Quinn even identifies himself with Stillman. So Stillman’s disappearance troubled Quinn because his identity is coupled with that of Stillman, so he is afraid about the future of his own existence. Quinn laments the fact that his mission appears worthless: “Stillman was gone now. The old man had become part of the city. He was a speck, a punctuation mark, a brick in an endless wall of bricks.” Quinn could walk through the streets everyday for the rest of his life, and still he would not find him. “Everything had been reduced to chance, a nightmare of numbers and possibilities” (91).

Not only Quinn and Stillman, but there are other characters as well who were trapped in the “inexhaustible space of New York.” The “labyrinth of endless steps.” always give them a feeling of “being lost.” “Lost, not only in the city, but within [their] own souls as well” (3). They experience a sensation of displacement. For instance, the younger Stillman introduces himself to Quinn as: “I’m Peter Stillman. That is not my real name. My real name is peter rabbit. In the winter I am Mr. White, in the summer I am Mr. Green. Think what you like of this” (18). Thus irregularities, approximations, and ornate embellishments were the guiding principles of Auster’s characters.

By the end of *City of Glass*, Quinn loses all contact with Stillman and his duplicate, as well as Stillman's son, who mysteriously vanishes during the course of Quinn's assignment. Unexpectedly, an unnamed narrator states that Quinn has again become irrecoverably introverted. Like the characters of his narration, Quinn eventually disappears, and the narrator cannot account for Quinn's present whereabouts. Quinn's absence from the narrative, then, implies that in the contemporary New York City, individuals may vanish without trace. Quinn himself became the witness for the numerous mysterious qualities that the New York City provides, Quinn is merely another of the numerous abandoned and displaced inhabitants of New York City. Thus he asserts: ". . . The brokenness is everywhere, the disarray is universal. You have only to open your eyes to see it. The broken people, the broken things, the broken thoughts . . ." (78).

In *Ghosts*, the second volume of the trilogy, a man named White hires a private detective named Blue, and Blue's assignment is to observe an individual named Black. Blue is initially suspicious of White's motivation, but enforces himself in the given task even by relinquishing all emotional attachments. Blue is involved in a relationship and his fiancée is an unnamed character who is in a way deeply rooted in her past. But Blue is a contradiction to this. Even though he can contribute many stories, he is unable to remember his life story. As his surveillance mission intensifies, Blue is forced to sit in a room and observe his nemesis, Black: "They have trapped Blue into doing nothing, into being so inactive as to reduce his life to almost no life at all. . . He feels like a man who has been condemned to sit in a room and go on reading a book for the rest of his life" (145). This desolate action turns Blue from a man of action into one who is lost within himself. The loneliness forces Blue to say these words: "That is what happens when you have no one to talk to" (151).

Like Daniel Quinn, the character in *City of Glass*, Blue also makes a close observation of Black. He follows Black in all his steps but these all culminates in a futile attempt. Auster subverts the tenets of detective fiction in *Ghosts*, and the detective Blue murders Black, and triumphantly retrieves the pages of the manuscript. Thus Blue escapes from the confines of the mystery, as well as the unnamed narrator's narrative. Blue's whereabouts remain secret and the narrator relates an optimistic future for his protagonist. The narrator in this novel can also be compared to Daniel Quinn in *City of Glass*. Blue mysteriously disappears at the end of the novel. Blue's future therefore becomes indeterminate: "And from this moment on, we know nothing"(152).

Blue thinks that he is the controller of the plot of the novel. But actually he was caught in a mouse trap. Rather than Blue, it is Black who determines and controls the action. When Black says that he is a private detective involved in a surveillance case, it is Blue then got trapped. "Blue's reaction is to remain stationary, however, and indeed Blue seems unable to counteract the machinations of his duplicate" (Martin123). The relationship between Blue and Black is one of mutual dependency, and as the case progresses, it appears that neither can survive without the other. In the final encounter, Black asserts: "Every time I looked up, you were there, watching me, following me, always in sight, boring into me with your eyes. You were the whole world to me, Blue, and I turned you into my death. You're the one thing that doesn't change, the one thing that turns everything inside out" (162). This is indicative of the duplicity involved in the life of both Blue and Black. Here too the importance of doppelgangers employed is important. Black alludes to the self destructive nature of doppelgangers in relation with Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" and insists that Blue and he must die simultaneously: "it is going to be the two of us together, just like always" (161) but in the end, Blue unleashes a violent attack against his nemesis and Black is left dead.

During the course of *Ghosts*, Black suggests that writers are trapped by the intentions of their fictive creations, and they do not possess independent selves. "Writing is a solitary business. It takes over your life. In some sense, a writer has no life of his own. Even when he is there, he's not there" (179). Paul Auster here questions the postmodern notion of authorial authenticity.

In *The Locked Room*, the third volume of the trilogy, the characters share the same characteristics with that of others in the earlier volumes. As the locked room opens, its unnamed narrator appears to be an isolated individual without any emotional attachments. As in *Ghosts*, Auster reiterates the fact that a writer does not possess a life of his or her own. The narrator in this work is not a writer of fiction, but a literary critic. As a critic, he is successful but on the contrary he felt that he is a failed author. This may be the reason why that forced him to think as follows: "The world saw me as a bright young fellow, a new critic on the rise, but inside myself I felt old, already used up. What I had done so far amounted to a mere fraction of nothing at all. It was so much dust, and the slightest wind would blow it away" (207). For the narrator his life and career become secondary to his desire to publish the writings of his erstwhile friend, Fanshawe. The narrator believes that his assignment will provide him with satisfactory life.

The story goes back to the past-into the life of Fanshawe. Fanshawe disappears and leaves behind his pregnant wife, Sophie, who seeks the help of a private detective named Quinn. Fanshawe cannot be traced, however, and he seems to have absconded to some unknown region. Prior to Fanshawe's disappearance, Fanshawe instructs his wife to contact the narrator, and present the latter with his extensive collection of writings. The narrator states that Fanshawe's decision to become an author developed during his formative years, and Fanshawe's manuscripts are considered to be equal to the life of the disappeared writer. The narrator retrieves Fanshawe's writings and states: "then I hauled the two suitcases slowly down the stairs and onto the street. Together they were as heavy as a man" (216).

The title of the book also bears a postmodern concept of identity. *City of Glass* could be analyzed from a point of transparency, as part of an attempt to ascertain how far the city is transparent. Auster invokes our attention to a postmodern surreal city. There are two types of glasses: one which is transparent and one which is not transparent and at the same time gives the reflections of the onlooker. Among these two categories, city of glass belongs to the second. Though physically a city made of glass, New York City does not provide any transparency to its individuals at any level. In the novel each individual lives as separate islands, and nobody 'sees' others. The individual self is also not visible to private individuals.

In a typically postmodern fashion, Auster deconstructs the notion of 'author' and 'authority' by using multiple narrators. In *City of Glass*, Auster is a narrator. Then Quinn, Stillman, Virginia Stillman and towards the end an unnamed narrator too joins with Auster in the process of narration

In Auster's hands, detective fiction receives a new model. The conventional detective tale with its 'formulaic narrative of enclosure' now found itself running parallel with a new form, 'the metaphysical detective story'. As a counter part to the question of identity, Auster also disrupts the earlier notions associated with language. Auster's characters lost their identity in their language also. He establishes the Derridean concept of the infinite deferral of interpretations and meanings in this trilogy. He reinforces this deconstructive effect through the use of language games such as intertextual references, puns and others. Auster deconstructs the views related to the concept of transparency between the signifier and the signified put forward by Saussure.

While their conversation progresses, Stillman informs Quinn that his purpose is to invent a new language because “you see, the world is in fragments, sir. Not only have we lost our sense of purpose, we have lost the language whereby we can speak of it” (76). And he expects the new “language that will at last say what we have to say. For our words no longer correspond to the world.”(77). Then Stillman makes a beautiful pun on Quinn’s name which rhymes with Twin, sin, one, inn, etc. “ I see many possibilities for this word, this Quinn, this...quintessence... of quiddity. Quick, for example. And quill. And quack. And quirk... I like your name enormously, Mr. Quinn. it flies off in so many little directions at once’(74).

Like his search for the individual self, Quinn looks for transparency in language where too he fails to find a coherency. For Quinn, each and every time the signifier and the signified slip away from its correspondence. The book excludes any possibility of transparency at the linguistic level also. Quinn observes: “The term had a triple meaning for Quinn. Not only was it the letter “I”, standing for “investigator”, it was “I” in the upper case, the tiny life-bud buried in the body of the breathing self. At the same time, it was also the physical eye of the man who looks out from itself into the world and demands that the world reveal itself to him” (50).

Auster beautifully deconstructs the concepts of “language” and “binaries”. In order to subvert the notions related to language, Auster uses the stories from bible. Peter Stillman is the character who continually conducts linguistic experiments. It is in Stillman’s book titled *The Garden and the Tower*: early visions of the new world which Quinn found in the Columbia library where Stillman uses the story of the fall of Adam and the story related to the tower of Babel to put forward his views related to language. The specified book is divided into two parts: one belongs to the prelapsarian period and the other belongs to period after the fall of man from the garden. In order to explain his theories related to language, Stillman uses a pun on the words from John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* to demonstrate how a meaning shift occurred. For instance “he showed how the word ‘taste’ was actually a reference to the Latin word ‘sapere’, which means both ‘to taste’ and ‘to know’ and therefore contains a subliminal reference to the tree of knowledge: the source of the apple whose taste brought forth knowledge into the world, which is to say, good and evil”(42-42) the words like ‘cleave’, ‘serpentine’ and ‘sinister’ also incorporates the plurality of signification through paradoxical sense. Stillman observed that during the prelapsarian period, “. . . a thing and its name were interchangeable. After the fall, this was no longer true. Names became detached from the things; words devolved into a collection of arbitrary signs; language had been severed from god. The story of garden, therefore, not only records the fall of the man, but the fall of language” (43).

According to Stillman, “the tower of Babel episode was an exact recapitulation of what happened in the garden- only expanded, made general in its significance to all mankind”(43). Thus Stillman’s views relate to the Derridean notions of language-how an infinite deferral of signified had occurred in the very prehistory of mankind. Later on, Quinn talks about the same linguistic experiment with the example of an umbrella:

For our words no longer correspond to the world. When things were whole, we felt confident that our words could express them. But little by little, these things have broken apart, shattered, collapsed into chaos ... consider a word that refers to a thing- “umbrella”, for example. When I say the word “umbrella,” you see the object in your mind. You see a kind of stick, with collapsible metal spokes on top that form an armature for a waterproof material which, when opened, will protect you from the rain. (77)

If an object is detached from its function, it is like any other object. So language is a tool to communicate, at the same time it does not provide any transparency in relation with its signification.

Postmodernism found its efflorescence in Auster's works. Auster employs the technique of detective fiction throughout his narratives in order to subvert the traditional notions of fictionalization. For instance, though Auster used the tradition of detective fiction, he subverted its characteristics and functions simultaneously. In his new detective style, the story continues even when the characters disappear as a contradiction to the earlier detective fictional style. Then the issues related to the question of truth, identity, reality, and signification undergone a notable change in Auster's works. He also addressed the issues of coherence and unity in his writings along with the issues of ambiguity, indeterminacy, skepticism and mystery. Auster's characters constantly come in confrontation with these issues. And he at times asks the readers to find a solution for these issues with his notion of open-endedness in his writings.

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**FIGHTING BULL OR SACRIFICIAL LAMB? : THE PHENOMENON OF
CAUDILLISMO AS REFLECTED IN MARIO VARGAS LLOSA'S
*THE FEAST OF THE GOAT***

Ms. Gayatry S.

The paper is an attempt to analyse the quintessentially Latin American cultural phenomenon called “caudillismo” with special reference to Mario Vargas Llosa’s novel, *The Feast of the Goat*. Llosa, one of the world’s great novelists of the last five decades, is also one of Latin America’s leading public intellectuals, a critic of art and culture, and a playwright of distinction. He has won consistent international acclaim and numerous awards including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2010.

The Feast of the Goat is one of the most brilliant and popular works of Llosa. The theme of the novel revolves around Rafael Trujillo, the ruthless but charismatic dictator of the Dominican Republic who experienced a meteoric rise to supreme power and finally an abrupt and violent death by assassination. *The Feast of the Goat* is a realistic novel depicting actual historical events. With magical skill, Llosa intertwines history and fiction to fashion the masterpiece. The Cabral family is completely fictional, while Trujillo and his assassins are drawn from history. Llosa laces real historical incidents into these people’s stories for illuminating the nature of the regime and the responses it provoked.

Trujillo, known as “el chivo,” ruled the Dominican Republic in person or by proxy from 1930 until his death. Clive Griffin draws our attention to the fact that Trujillo was one of the most cynical, sanguinary and absurdly histrionic of 20th century dictators. He created a police state by terrorising his subjects through a network of thugs and informers. By accumulating political, legal, military and economic power, this lethal megalomaniac turned the Dominican Republic into his and his family’s private fiefdom.

The storyline of the novel can be divided into three distinct strands. The first one portrays Trujillo’s activities on 30 May 1961, the evening of which he will be assassinated. The dictator’s mind wanders back to past events in his career, some of which have led to the myriad problems in which his regime is mired. Llosa adeptly paints the picture of a man whose physical body is failing him. Trujillo is tormented by his inability to control his bladder and his impotence.

The second strand comprises the thoughts of four of Trujillo’s assassins who are real historical figures. All of them have their own personal reasons for hating the dictator whom they had previously served. Each has been wronged by Trujillo and his regime, through assaults on their pride, their morality, their religious faith, or their loved ones. The tales of these men are woven as memories recalled on the very night they lie in wait to do the seemingly impossible: kill the all- powerful Trujillo.

In the third strand, another single day is presented on which the fictional character Urania Cabral returns to the Dominican Republic after thirty- five long years. She had fled into exile in the U.S.A. at the age of fourteen. She visits her father, Agustin Cabral, once a member of the dictators’ inner circle, but now a discarded figure, and also the wretched victim of a stroke. In the course of that day, she dwells on her own personal history. Urania is compelled to confront her father, Agustin, about the events that led to the sexual abuse she suffered at the aging dictator’s hands, and the shameful role her father played in it. In Urania’s conversation with her ailing father, the anger and disgust that led to thirty-five years of silence and celibacy is unveiled. Her return emphasizes her father’s fall into betrayal and political disgrace. The

principal storylines intersect with increasing frequency and switch from one period to another creating an almost unbearable suspense. The horrific torture and deaths of the assassins are portrayed in a relatively dark tone in the concluding chapters. The novel ends with Urania preparing to return, determined, however, this time to keep in touch with her family back in the island.

Caudillismo is a quintessentially Latin American phenomenon which operates at practically all levels of society from family to nation. The Spanish word “caudillo” translates as “leader,” “chief,” “warlord,” “dictator,” “strongman,” “autocrat,” and most importantly, “ruler of hearts.” The Fascist dictator Francisco Franco issued gold coins in 1963 carrying his image and the legend, “*Francisco Franco, Caudillo de Espana, por la gracia de Dios,*” which can roughly be translated as “Francisco Franco, Caudillo of Spain, by the grace of God.” South America has a long tradition of producing caudillos, the greatest of them being as nationally powerful and internationally famous as Juan Manuel de Rosas and Juan Facundo Quiroga in Argentina, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna in Mexico, Jose Rafael Carrera in Guatemala and the least of them being little more than village headmen. The caudillo is a personification of power in a rather robust sense of the term. He is usually too much of an egomaniac to stand opposition and he frequently puts down opposition ruthlessly. The phenomenon of caudillismo is an integral part of the Latin American cultural bloodstream. It should not be thought that the caudillo is little more than the personification of brute force; had it been so, he would never have been as successful. The caudillo is ruthless, brutal, and even cruel; but he is also capable of being charming, kind and generous. He is thus a diabolical combination of power and charm, force and charisma; the mailed fist in the velvet glove. The power exercised by the caudillo is at least partially comparable to the concept of hegemony, visualized by Gramsci, as a centaur, half human and half animal. Hegemony operates not merely through force but through consent as well. The phenomenon of caudillismo permeates through every level of South American society. The caudillo need not be a dictator like Rafael Trujillo who ruled the Dominican Republic with an iron hand from 1930 up to his assassination in 1961; he could very well be a petty landowner exercising power over his labourers or even a family head exercising power over his wife and children.

Trujillo is very successful in creating a personality cult in the Dominican society. Before receiving promotion, every officer in the Trujillo regime has to pass a “test of loyalty.” His supporters are expected to remain loyal to him at any cost. Their loyalty was ensured by periodical public humiliation and censure. However acts of disloyalty were rare. Trujillo personally assaults women and children and this becomes a hybrid expression of political and sexual power. Trujillo demanded sexual access to his officers’ wives and children. He did so, not because he liked these women, but because he wanted to know whether his officers were ready to accept this extreme humiliation at his hands. Trujillo’s sexual conquests and public humiliations of his officers serve to affirm his political power as caudillo.

Agustin Cabral, referred to as the “Egghead Cabral,” was also a caudillo in some respect. The President of the Senate, Agustin Cabral, was an elegant man, “meticulous in his person and dress, the way the Chief liked men to be” (191). His wardrobe comprised dinner jackets, dress tails, dark suits made of English worsted and white suits made of white linen. But unlike Trujillo he was not a womanizer. Power satisfied him so much that he did not need sex. Power gave him what other men got in bed. And power certainly is the right thirst quencher for a caudillo.

The ideology of caudillismo also finds expression through the young men who assassinate Trujillo. Many of the assassins had belonged to the Trujillo regime or had at some point been its staunch supporters. Antonio Imbert Barrera is a politician who becomes disillusioned with the deception and cruelty of the

Trujillo regime. Among the others is Antonio de la Maza, one of Trujillo's personal guards. Trujillo had his brother Octavia killed and he wants to take revenge. All the assassins, who were once supporters of the regime, find their support getting eroded by the state's crimes against its people. They are determined to liberate their country. Salvador, one of the assassins, is a devout Catholic who likens "el chivo" to the Beast of the Biblical book of Revelation. He lays down his own life for the sake of others to overcome evil. Salvador, and for that matter each of the assassins, is a fighting bull and ultimately undergo metamorphosis into a sacrificial lamb.

The bullfight is one of the most iconic sports of the Latin American world, encapsulating in its physical structure and action. Even more than in the Hispanic American countries, the bullfight is practised in Spain, Portugal and southern France. The bullfighter, especially the most senior, the matador, who actually kills the bull embodies caudillismo in his physical prowess, in his heroism, in his dramatics, in the emotional connection he establishes with the crowd and in the cult figure status he has in society. Not just the matador but also the bull exemplifies caudillismo. Bullfighting is as old as the Mesopotamian civilisation and so is also bull worship and bull sacrifice. The bull is the ultimate traditional symbol of male virtues, especially strength and virility. But in the context of bullfight it is as much a sacrificial lamb as a fighting bull. This is because the death of the bull, or more exactly the slow, bloody and painful death of the bull, in the full view of the spectators, is a foregone conclusion. In fact, the close-range manoeuvres are carried out by the fighters only after the bull has been considerably weakened by lance thrusts and spear thrusts. Thus it is arguable that the fighting bull is a sacrificial lamb par excellence.

Caudillismo, by its very nature, contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. The very reasons that propel the caudillo to supreme success also dig his own grave and result in his abject annihilation. The caudillo is ruthless and charming; but while the charm is simply superficial, the ruthlessness is very real. The caudillo becomes the hero of hundreds of hearts, but on a very fundamental level his power rests on his manipulative skills. In a powerful passage which demands quotation, Llosa describes Trujillo thus: "...that master manipulator of innocents, fools, and imbeciles, that astute exploiter of men's vanity, greed and stupidity" (92).

The problem is that, unfortunately for the manipulator, manipulation is ultimately self-destructive. This is precisely what happens to Trujillo, the great Benefactor, of the Dominican Republic. He is shot dead. His death is very much a spectacle like the death of the fighting bull. The fighting bull metamorphoses into the sacrificial lamb. In the Abrahamic world, the lamb was one of the most precious and valuable things. Trujillo was the most powerful man in the land seconds before his death. He is the sacrificial lamb demanded by the religion of natural justice. Perhaps he is as much a scapegoat as a sacrificial lamb. He becomes the scapegoat for all the ills of his regime, even those for which he is not directly responsible. It would not be too farfetched to read *The Feast of the Goat* as the narrative of the transformation of the bull into the lamb and the lamb into the goat.

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**POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN THE AMERICAN TONGUE: A READING OF
*THE HUMAN STAIN AND AMERICANAH***

Dr. Geetha Krishnankutty

Political Correctness, PC for short, a much used term in the 1980s in the U.S., is said to support multiculturalism, is against anti-minority hate speech, gives equal opportunities to every student irrespective of colour and race and promotes progressive teaching methods, all as part of American liberalism, a policy that is accused of imposing liberal orthodoxy. It is a totalitarian ideology that claims to be the ultimate truth. Now it is equated to America's liberal policies where she selects certain groups – the blacks, Asians, Hispanics, homosexuals, feminists – the chosen ones, and makes them victims by naming them 'good' despite how they act or helping them even if they don't need help. The people are totally hypnotised, convinced with the small incentives and do not realise that when a door opens another would have already closed.

Fascism in disguise, this political ideology is now America's doctrine of power. The general idea was to bring cultural, economic and social progress but it resulted in "taking advantage of social division and disadvantage" (*Political Correctness and Higher Education* 257). The study tries to examine this dynamic as represented by Philip Roth in *The Human Stain* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Americanah*, especially the blogs of the protagonist. The novels examine blackness in America, how the country takes a biased but apparently convincing stand by programming the oppressed to believe that racism will end if a white Jew is pulled down from office or if a black man is made president. Little do the people realise that 'race' is now lovingly called 'culture' by the white Anglo-Saxon protestant (WASP), who place themselves on top of the ladder of race only to look down on the black American and the Jew. And yet, ironically, the blacks aspire to be white.

"*The Human Stain* connects the highly judgmental and self-righteous attitude of the PC academic community of Athena College to the moral righteousness of those Americans who were infuriated by the Clinton-Monica scandal," comments Igor Webb (*Philip Roth* 240). The novel begins when Coleman Silk, tired of struggling with his novel which he calls "Spooks" for almost two years, meets Nathan Zukermann the writer for help. "Spooks" was the word that upset seventy years of Coleman Silk's apparently peaceful life (4). One day while in class he happened to call two black students 'spooks' which meant 'negro'. Silk tried to argue that he had only meant 'ghost' and that he had no idea if they were black or white. The accusers were determined and wanted him to apologise to which he violently reacted by resigning the post.

Silk had lived with a great secret inside him of which he had not thought with regret till then. Coleman Brutus Silk was born to black parents in New Orange County. His mother came from a family of runaway slaves. They were literate and wanted their three children to go to Howard and become the best among blacks. Silk went to Howard but with all his brilliance he could not become anything more than a "black Howard." The first rebuff came when he was recognised as a black and thrown out of a warehouse in Norfolk. He decided to quit. He took advantage of his pale skin and passed on as a white Jew much against the ethics of his family. He left his family for good and climbed ladders of success all his life, reached all possible heights he aspired to, until the fatal word pulled him down.

Thrown out of a Norfolk whorehouse for being black and out of Athena College for being white, Silk was totally shaken. The problem in question was not his colour disguise, but race. He wouldn't wait for America to shower her allowances on him for being a black. He had no grudge against the whites but was infuriated at his helplessness. Coleman desperately wanted to get away from the human wreckage America was proud in implementing but he considered himself clever for serving him by telling a lie. He would not go back to the truth even when trapped. His plan was to lead a full life. What evolved into a lifelong lie is neither an act of racial shame nor of self-advancement. Roth presents Silk's decision "to pass as a practical solution to his quest for self-invention rather than as ratifying a cultural/racial identity politics that equates blackness with body, sexuality, and suffering, Jewishness with mind and virtue" (Posnock 205). And in a way he was trying to fit in – fit in to the social respectability prescribed by America. His lie ceases to be a lie before the many lies of America.

The suffocating man needed an outlet. And that is how he fell in love with a janitor in his college, a white illiterate divorcee half his age and a mother of two kids. With the woman, Faunia Farley, words did not matter. That he is black made no difference. Faunia's tragedy turns again to yet another political strategy of America – the Vietnam War. Her husband Les Farley a Vietnam Vet was a loyal American who went twice to Vietnam to fulfil his duties. Up there above the field he gunned down anything that moved on earth. Back home he found himself an alien. America was by then all remorse for having killed a race and the soldiers had become monsters. He was confused: "They train you for a year and they try to kill you for a year and when you are doing what they trained you to do, they put their leather restraints on you!"(69). It took him time to understand that America did not want him back. He was not supposed to come back, to be their greatest nightmare. At last, he was left numb, the government pleased to have done its duty left him to recuperate.

If Coleman Silk was taken down by the mechanical application of PC to a word he used in class, Barack Obama the black president came up with the same doctrine. Ifemelu in *Americanah* became a blog writer to bring up this issue to the whites and blacks alike. Once in the great country Ifemelu felt the heaviness of blackness on her, for the American-African (a term coined by Adichie herself), was supposed to be blacker than the African-American. African blacks were those people brought to America as slaves and so even if they now have a half white ancestry the stress is more on the blackness. Many black Americans have a white ancestry because 'white slave owners liked to go a-raping in the slave quarters at night. But if you come out looking dark, that's it' (337). American Africans were those Africans who came to America more or less willingly.

The challenge was to stay in America without becoming an Americanah. The white vie in establishing that they are no more racists and racial discrimination is a long forgotten word. "Americans think race has something to do with the past, but it is very much the present" (71). The blacks in America aspire to be white. This is a much discussed topic in Ifemelu's blogs. The black men resent the whites but would not mind their women being a little light skinned. The blacks in America love Obama, and Ifemelu moves on to the political correctness behind this. Obama is not black, he is half black – his mother is white. Ifemelu considered Obama's win a big programmed game. He knew he had to become the magic Negro – a Negro who is "eternally wise and kind, who never reacts under great suffering, never gets angry ... forgives all kinds of racist shit" (321). The black American believed him. But now his incompetence is attested. America's white power did not make him president to take quick decisions; in fact they did not want him to take decisions.

The unruly, bushy, hard-to-handle black hair of the black woman is a motif in the novel, “a perfect metaphor for race in America” (297). Michelle Obama straightend her hair and no one can blame her for that, for if she had appeared on TV with her original woolly hair Obama wouldn’t have won. So Obama claimed himself to be black, too black for he totally seemed to veil his white ancestry, while his wife was made to lean more to the white side and on the wings of America’s PC he was able to slip into the world’s highest office. Adichie keeps reminding every black that “All of us look alike to white people” (120). One will have to agree with Kaplan when he says, “Racial reconciliation can never be achieved as long as the reactionary authorities of PC remain unchecked ... as long as it insists on trifling categorization” (*Turning up the Flame* 173).

Coleman Silk too decided to dominate this American liberalism, this political correctness of the WASP to shut them up. He wouldn’t in any way yield and the crime of passing as a Jew ceased to be one, though he had to suffer for his decision. The question left is will he suffer less if he hadn’t? Royal says in his book *Philip Roth*: “Roth suggests that Coleman’s life must be comprehended not by Coleman’s choice alone but by the history that Coleman’s choice cannot change. By choosing the past, Coleman tried to transcend history, but that history continues to shadow him even after he would imagine that he has escaped its hold over him” (213).

Now what is the right thing? There are two truths before us: the politically correct truth that is proclaimed correct even when wrong, and the factual truth condemned as wrong even when right. The factually correct ones are not even given a chance to prove their truth which is their ultimate defence; they are merely stated as politically incorrect. For the politically correct, truth doesn’t matter at all (*Political Correctness* 258).

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**IN THE ABSENCE OF MATERNAL CARE: AN ANALYSIS OF MARY GORDON'S
MEN AND ANGELS AND FINAL PAYMENTS**

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Mary Gordon, a successful American writer, strives to give women, and the motherly perspective, its due importance in most of her works. Commencing from her first work, *Final Payments* (1978) to her sixteenth work *The Love of My Youth* (2011), she portrays women who have a strong sense of self. Speaking of the positive images of mothers and daughters in her works, it becomes apparent that both are individuals who are responsible for their actions and do not seek shelter behind sanctions. Similarly, in the care of neglected daughters, their psychological life, which according to Nancy Chodorow is created in and through a personal relationship with the mother, is disturbed. The present paper attempts to analyze the identity development of the daughter, in the absence of the mother (using the framework of the theories of Nancy Chodorow). Laura Post in *Men and Angels* and Isabel Moore in *Final Payments* fail to develop a strong sense of self because they were unable to establish an emotional bond with the mother.

Mary Gordon, New York's official State Author and a Professor of English at Barnard, is an accomplished novelist who voices her Catholic beliefs in most of her works. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she is exceptionally bold in representing her characters, primarily women, who bring to fore almost the entire range of female experience. Isabel Moore in *Final Payments*, Felicitas Talyor in *The Company of Women*, Anne Foster in *Men and Angels*, Maria Meyers in *Pearl* are some of the women who grapple with different issues and ultimately emerge successful.

Nancy Chodorow, in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, remarks that in the development of their core gender identity, girls do not face much problems; "it is the later developed conflicts concerning their identity, and the identifications, learning, and cognitive choices that it implies" (*Feminism* 110). The mothers and daughters in Gordon's works are able to confront issues arising from identification with a negatively valued gender category, and establish a strong sense of self. Further, female identity, and the related sense of self, according to Chodorow, is entirely based on a close relationship with the mother and not distance from her. Taking the case of Laura Post in *Men and Angels* and even Isabel Moore in *Final Payments* it becomes evident that in the absence of maternal care, female identity becomes problematic.

In Gordon's *Men and Angels*, the reader is introduced to the Foster family at Selby. Michael Foster is going to spend a year in France where he will teach English while a French colleague will teach French at Selby College in Massachusetts. Michael's wife, Anne Foster, decides that she will stay back with her two children, Peter and Sarah, to take up a new assignment offered to her by Ben Hardy, an old friend who is an art dealer. She has been asked to prepare the catalogue for an exhibition of paintings by Caroline Watson, an American painter who died in 1938. It is at this point that Laura Post becomes part of the Foster family, as their baby – sitter. Anne's instant dislike of Laura becomes more than evident, but she tolerates her for the sake of her work. Gordon reveals that Anne's inability to feel any warmth towards Laura is on account of the overwhelming force of her love for her children. At one point in the novel, when Anne and her friend Barbara go to see a documentary film about women in the labour movement of the 1930s, Anne wonders aloud about the influence of one's children on one's moral life.

Barbara's reply echoes Anne's feelings – when one is a mother, everything else fades into the background and one thinks with one's claws. Towards the last section of the novel, when Laura's negligence almost kills Peter and Sarah – she had allowed them to play on a frozen pond, failing to notice that the ice was not firm enough to hold their weight – Anne's anger is unleashed and she does think with her claws.

Laura's subsequent suicide, the bloody denouement, is both predictable and plausible. Anne's sense of remorse takes her to Laura's house where she realizes that Laura's deranged state derives directly from her brutal childhood. A mother at seventeen, Mrs. Post had rejected her daughter because this child's birth represented the end of her freedom. This rejection and the damage caused, is compounded by the passive behaviour of Mr. Post, who does not intervene even when Mrs. Post abuses Laura and favours their younger daughter. It is this rejection, as Chorodow observes, that accounts for Laura's obsessive behaviour; her mother's rejection made her turn to the Lord. Her Christianity, however, scorns and fears human love and as Jane Watson observes in the novel, Laura, consequently had missed the whole point of the Gospels.

Laura's misguided sexuality is also evidence of the damage caused by a failed relationship between mother and daughter. Laura abhors physical relationships and fears human attachments. She declares that she will not become attached to anyone. "They would love her but she would not love back as much. Because she still would have the spirit. They would have to stay but she might leave at any time because she knew that attachments meant nothing ... she would have to be careful. Careful that she did not start to need, careful to remember that it was all nothing" (*Men* 195). At one point in the novel, Laura contemplates a kind of celibate marriage to Anne and later, gives up her life to win Anne's love - to gain love that she had never experienced. As for Anne Foster, she comes to realize that even if she expends all her energy to protect her children, she might not succeed, for they will certainly be exposed to events which might probably be threatening. Anne's irreligious upbringing accounts for her inability to recognize the limitations of human love.

Earlier in the novel, Anne's mother reveals that both Anne and her sister had been brought up without giving undue importance to religion; Anne had never understood the religious life and her children hadn't been told anything about the devil. Towards the end of the novel Anne realizes that people cannot be held responsible for anything because people are very weak and life raises its whip on the bare flesh of the most vulnerable. Love, the absence of which made people weak, was needed to counter the whip of life. The love of God and the love of family would provide the required shelter. At Laura's funeral service, Peter and Sarah, for the first time in their lives, hear religious language as the priest recites several Psalms, including Psalm 121: "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : he shall preserve thy soul". Although Anne has never understood the religious life and takes pride in being a representative twentieth century woman who is responsible for herself, she finally acknowledges the importance of love in one's life – the love of God included.

The poet Galway Kinell has observed that human existence is incomplete. "Among those who are especially troubled by this are those who turn to writing which is a way of trying to understand the incompleteness" (qtd. in *Common Weal* 426). Mary Gordon's *Men and Angels* appears to be an investigation into this incompleteness – a representation of the interior journey of seeking.

In her *Final Payments* also, Gordon seeks to explore how people love or fail to love, each other in a world where belief in God is a reality, a memory or even an inconceivable notion. The novel introduces Isabel Moore on the day of her father's burial. She has spent the last eleven years of her life nursing her father and now, at the age of thirty, she is free to pursue her own life – an interesting proposal, on the face of it, but problematic because Isabel Moore has to move beyond her sense of guilt and self hatred. The reason for this self – hatred is again, the lack of maternal care. Isabel had lost her mother at the age of two and her father hired the spinster Margaret Casey to manage the household. Isabel detested the house keeper and realizing that she hoped to marry Joe Moore, used her influence on her doting father to secure Margaret's dismissal. The next seventeen years of her life, till the death of Joe, revolves around her father, her school friends Eleanor and Liz, and father Mulcahy.

At the age of thirty, after her father's death, Isabel tries to break free of the cloistered environment through an involvement with men, an obvious route for repressed Catholic girls of her generation. Like Laura Post, Isabel too is affected by the lack of mother's love and this is again manifest in her misguided sexuality. Isabel, we are told, visits a doctor to get some kind of birth control and experiences a sense of outrage at the thought that she had invited the pain.

After a brief involvement with Liz's husband John Ryan, Isabel becomes the lover of Hugh Slade. This relationship too is chartered by the violent reaction of Hugh's wife to this latest adultery and Isabel now gives up her acts of self – indulgence in favour of masochistic denial. She decides to take care of the odious and unlovable Margaret Casey, who makes Isabel's life a nightmare: "If we can love the people we think are most unlovable, if we can get out of this ring of accident, of attraction, then it's pure act, love; then we mean something, we stand for something" (*Final* 160).

In the case of Isabel Moore, it is the relationship with her friends that serves as a substitute for the mothering process so that she is finally able to achieve autonomy: "The idea of sisterhood and of reciprocal surrogate motherhood highlights the maternal as function, but rejects and makes invisible the actual mothers, who, it is implied, infantilizes the daughter and fails to encourage autonomy" (Hirsh 164).

Again friendship is what gives Isabel the strength to leave Margaret Casey after making her "final payment" to her by writing a check for all the money her father had left for her. Isabel Moore, with the support of Eleanor and Liz is now determined to try for happiness with Hugh. "In spite of the problem and grief between mothers and daughters, it seems that there are few women who do not still at some deep level, long for their mother's approval" (*Our Treacherous Hearts* 104). Absence of maternal concern, therefore, could result in tormented lives and weak sense of self. Both *Men and Angels* and *Final Payments* offer a valuable insight into the mother - daughter relationship and its profound influence on the identity development of the daughters. All women are daughters and must resolve the conflict inherent in the mother / daughter relationship, if they are to understand themselves and ultimately establish their own identity (Fischer 42). Laura Post is unable to resolve the conflict with her mother and ends her life in a pathetic manner; Isabel Moore is able to overcome the hatred towards self with the support of her friends who function as surrogate mothers, and thus establish a sense of self.

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**SPEAKING “THE UNSPEAKABLE”: LANGUAGE AND TRAUMA IN ALICE
WALKER’S *THE COLOR PURPLE***

Ms. Geetha R. Pai and Ms. Devi K.

Trauma is an intensely distressing, unsettling experience or a physical injury. It is a mortal as well as a psychological gash. It is an experience which occurs when you are unprepared for it and feel unarmed to prevent it. The effect becomes twofold if it happens at an early age repeatedly and when someone is purposely cruel. Through her revolutionary method of the epistolary novel Alice Walker makes the silenced women heard. The novel unfurls the story of a fourteen year old Black girl, Celie, who gets raped by her stepfather whom she concedes as her father and calls “pa.” She loses her two children born to him, marries a man who abuses her and fancies her sister Nettie. The whole story unfolds through the letters written by the protagonist who writes in her rural dialect rather than Standard English. Walker’s use of the epistolary form reflects the way the two letter writers in the novel use English language. This is a narrative of survival from trauma. Celie, the central character of *The Color Purple* bears this indelible abrasion on her body and the incommunicability of that pain dribbles through the epistolary style.

As Lacan expostulates, a word gets significance when it is in a particular chain. Language is a powerful tool which creates culture. The trauma that the speaker wants to exchange gets reflected through the language. It is language which empowers and disfigures a character. Language bestows a person, entry into a culture and the same can ostracize too. Celie, the central character is bereft of such a language. Her mother can at least curse. But Celie stands out as the struck out ‘first person’ till she meets Shug a very, a famous local musician and her husband’s lover, who identifies her personal strength. Shug is the personification of freedom from the patriarchal society which abuses Celie. Celie’s meeting with Shug divides her life span into before Shug and after Shug. She plays a pivotal role in Celie’s transition from a passive, stoic person to an independent, self assertive entrepreneur. When Celie meets Shug, there occurs an endorsement of love, hence a change in language. The moment Celie says “I am”, “attention” becomes “tension” and the single purpose of life is to “stay alive.” It is a deliberate extinction of the self as “I” is an important marker in every culture around the world. It is that word that always stands erect and tall. It is that word which is never written in lower case wherever it is positioned in a sentence sequence.

What is interesting is the way in which Alice Walker tries to unravel the trauma experienced by the characters by breaking the conventional idiom of language. Language is the main channel here for the diffusion of trauma. Celie bears scars inside and outside. The multiple marginalized position of black existence intensifies the pain. The scar inflicted on her body by her stepson Harpo reminds us of the inscriptions on the body of the slaves. It is a symbol of their objectivity and boundary. These scars are reflected in the aberrations in the language. Language itself seems like a character who speaks volumes through the twisted syntax and semantics and the reader is in a permanent shock trying to replenish the unusual breaks and gaps left by the characters.

Celie writes fifty-four letters to God, none bearing any signature. Actually, she is dubious about both her writing and her addressee. Letter 68, her last letter to God, describes her bitter disappointment: “My daddy lynch. My mama crazy. All my little half-brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sister and brother. Pa not pa” (177). In Letter 73, Celie informs Nettie: “I don’t write to God no more. I

write to you” (192). Both Mr. _____ and Pa exert linguistic as well as physical violence against Celie, while Celie can only pretend she is a tree, silent and immobile. As Pi-Li Hsiao rightly quotes Maggie Humm in her paper “[W]e acquire a gender through language”(48).

Walker’s special use of language produces new narrative strategies, discloses unheard stories of women and transforms traditional concept of gender roles. As the plot of *The Color Purple* progresses Celie’s letters get more and more sophisticated in vocabulary and structure. But she sticks to her own language throughout. Towards the end of the novel when she starts her own business Celie is advised to learn how to speak like “white folks.” Celie’s struggle with the white man’s ironed English shows her refusal to enter the linguistic system of white people because she wants to keep her own autonomy. There is close relation between the spoken word and written word. The sophistication and structure we expect from the written form is absent here. It reminds us of the strong oral tradition of Blacks and the way they were negated entry in to the culture.

Celie and Nettie are empowered by letter writing; in so doing, they acquire not only their voice but also their subjectivity. There is visible disparity between Celie’s and Nettie’s letters. Celie has first-hand experience of trauma that numbs her identity and stays with someone who doesn’t even see her as an object to be considered whereas Nettie is an educated woman with ambition and with an identity of her own. Her experience of trauma is different. Walker also creates a double-voiced narrative by contrasting Nettie’s formal English with Celie’s vernacular. In addition to their languages, the two sisters’ subject matter also differs. Celie’s narrative deals with private affairs; whereas Nettie’s primary focus is African culture. Although Nettie’s letters are of great significance to Celie. His personal matters subversively overshadow Nettie’s historical and geographical overview of Africa. The broken, irregular structures present in Celie’s letters can be treated as an aftermath of the trauma suffered by the young underprivileged girl. ‘Dear God’ becomes “G–O–D” in one letter as she tries to reassure the existence of a silent God who is the sole witness to her agony. Nettie’s African experience, on the other hand, is a perfect foil to the plight of Celie and her women companions.

Linguistic binary oppositions between women and men exclude one party from the other and supply role models for women and men respectively. As soon as Mr. _____ is informed of Celie’s plan to leave with Shug, he attacks Celie fiercely: “Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam ... you nothing at all” (206). Mr. _____’s remark rightly indicates the “multiple jeopardy” that a black woman can encounter” (39). But Celie refuses to stay in his linguistic restriction. She assures Mr. _____: “I’m pore, I’m black, I may be ugly and can’t cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I’m here” (207). It is not until Letter 76, when Celie moves to Memphis to live with Shug and owns her own business, that she signs her letter to Nettie with complete assurance: “Amen, / Your Sister, Celie / Folkspants, Unlimited. / Sugar Avery Drive / Memphis, Tennessee” (214). It is a signature suggestive of Celie’s personal identity, financial security, and social participation.

As Marianne Hirsch states in *Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission*, “Self-recognition becomes a problem for trauma victims”(15). Keeping silent about it would only strengthen the positions of those who would wish to deny that horrific knowledge. When Celie starts to write she is trying to break open the silence inflicted by trauma as she progresses from a language of silence to a language of assertion. Thus the novel becomes an illustration of Celie’s journey to autonomy and assertiveness.

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UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN FAMILIAL BONDING THROUGH JOYCE CAROL OATES'S *WE WERE THE MULVANEYS*

Ms. B. Gnanam

Joyce Carol Oates, the English academician and writer, is popularly recognized as a multi-faceted personality due to her contribution to the contemporary American literature as a novelist, short story writer, playwright, poet, literary critic and editor. Her novels, exploring varied themes have been widely acclaimed. She is the recipient of several honors and awards including the National Book Award, National Humanities Medal and many more. She has also been nominated thrice for the Pulitzer prize.

Anywhere across the globe, be it a developed country or an underdeveloped one, be it rich or poor, it is the system of the family which endows the individuals with the sense of proportion and harmony. It is this structure which holds the pieces together. It is this love for one's family which makes human beings look at his fellow beings with sympathy and compassion in spite of their differential nature. No society can do away with this system and the American society too is no exception to this. Affirming such a kind of faith in the familial bonding, Joyce Carol Oates has written the novel, *We were the Mulvaney's*, through which we get a glimpse into the lives of a particular American rural community in the state of New York.

We were the Mulvaney's is all about the Mulvaney family, comprising Michael John Mulvaney, his wife Corinne, and their children Mike Junior, Patrick, Marianne, and Judson Andrew. The history of Mulvaney family is traced from the 1970s to 1993, covering a span of about seventeen years, narrated by the youngest of the family Judson Andrew, who is fondly called Judd by everyone to the extent that his real name is forgotten.

The Mulvaney's are an adorable and happy family, who gloat in the pride of living in an ancient house called High Point Farm, with their fondly named pet animals including dogs, cats, cows, goats, sheep, horses, and canaries, which were also the members of the Mulvaney family. They are a well-known, respected family in the small community of Mt. Ephraim, where Michael Sr. has set-up his business "Mulvaney Roofing." They are a contented family, doing farm chores with great enthusiasm, calling one another by their pet names like curly, captain for Michael, Sr. Honey, whistle for Corrine, Mule for Michael, Jr., Pinch, PJ for Patrick, Button for Marianne, Ranger, Baby for Judd, making their meal time an enjoyable and talkative session and meeting their friends at week-ends. Both Michael and Corrine are proud of their sons, Michael Jr., who is as handsome as his father and a star foot ball player, Patrick, who is intellectually aloof and expected to be a scientist in future and Judd, the youngest of the family, liked by all. The love for their daughter Marianne is something special as she is sweet-natured, angelic to look at, God-fearing and morally-bound. The mother Corinne adores her beautiful daughter and proudly exhibits her daughter's photo in cheer-leader costume in the kitchen notice-board.

The smooth running of the Mulvaney household is interrupted by an incident, which happens on Valentine's day 1976. Marianne is invited for an overnight Valentine Day's Prom, where her friend Zachary makes her drink, takes her inside his car and seduces her inspite of her protestations. The moral composure of Marianne is terribly shaken by this incident. Without attending school, she retreats to the church, hoping to find solace. Informed through a friend, Corinne finds her daughter in the church and on enquiry learns about the incident. Corinne takes her to Dr. Oakly, who confirms the rape of Marianne. When Michael Sr. comes to know about the incident, he in an extremely angry mood goes to the house of Zachary, who

is actually his friend Morton Lundt's son and attacks him. This leads to the arrest of Michael Sr., who is later released, as Marianne genuinely believes that Zachary alone is not responsible for whatever has happened but also her drunken state. This is a great relief for the Mundts, who in turn do not file any lawsuit against Michael Sr. for attacking their son.

Michael Sr. becomes a changed man after this incident. It seems that a sudden gloom has fallen on the family and nobody talks to nobody." And so it became a house hold of silence "Michael Sr. does not come home properly. He seeks the help of lawyers, one after another, trying to file a lawsuit against Zachary and thereby losing his money slowly. His friends stop talking to him. They side with Morton, as he is more influential. He gets drunk often and becomes an addict. To retrieve Michael Sr. from this state, Corinne decides to send her daughter to Salamanca with the care of her cousin Ethel Housmann. After Marianne is sent away, Michael Jr. ,who has been assisting his father's roofing business breaks into rift with his father as he does not pay proper attention to his business. He leaves their house and starts living separately, finding employment elsewhere. Later, he enrolls himself in the Marines and goes away from Mt.Ephraim.

Patrick, who is about to finish his schooling is selected as the best student of the year and asked to deliver his valedictory address. Though unwilling at first, he decides to speak on the day of graduation. On the Graduation Day, when all the friends of Mulvaney have assembled, Patrick takes his revenge upon the community, which is responsible for the breaking-up of his peaceful family by exploding a stink bomb. It causes confusion among the mob, who scatter away without attending the ceremony. On seeing the face of his brother, Judd understands that his brother is the mischief-maker. Patrick enrolls himself at Cornell University for pursuing his B.A. and there afterwards Ph.D. The High Point Farm becomes a quiet house with the departure of the three inmates. Marianne, after completing her school goes to Kilburn for her college studies. She gets financial aid for her studies from Green Isle Co-Op., a communal oasis, in which she finds employment. Though Corinne invites her sons for Easter, she does not want Marianne to come. Corinne feels that Michael Sr. may not be ready to face her. Patrick and Marianne seem to have fraternal understanding between them. Marianne pays visit to Patrick's house. Whenever Patrick sees Marianne, he is reminded of the past occurrence, which makes him revengeful towards Zachary, who raped his sister. He gets the help of his younger brother Judd in obtaining their father's gun, by which he plans to wreak his vengeance upon Zachary. Finding-out his whereabouts from his mother over the phone, he waits for him outside the pub, where he has gone and when he leaves, Patrick threatens him at gunpoint to drive along the muddy field, where he makes him drown but changes his mind at the last minute and helps him to come out of the mire. He feels justified and quits the Cornell University without completing his Ph.D. program. He alienates himself, loses contact with his family for a few years and goes to different places like Denver, Fargo etc., doing all sorts of odd jobs like studying geology and working in a children's hospital.

Marianne keeps herself away from the family, with only her pet cat Muffin as her companion except for a few visits from her mother Corinne along with her youngest brother Judd. In these few years, Michael Sr. further gets himself into troubles like picking-up quarrels with the members of the Mt. Ephraim country club, which aggravate his relationship with his former friends. He loosens his grip in the roofing business which lands him in financial instability. The Mulvaney family faces the crisis of selling their prestigious property High Point Farm and settles down in Marsena. In these turbulent times, Corinne stands by Michael Sr., encouraging, strengthening and motivating her husband to set things right. Any

other woman in the place of Corinne would have lost temper, thrown tantrums and reacted wildly. But Corinne shows herself to be a composed woman with moral rectitude. In spite of all the efforts of Corinne, Michael Sr. seems to have lost track and becomes a loser, which makes him drink more and in the drunken state beats-up his wife and youngest son Judd, who in turn goes-out of the house and starts living by himself. Soon the small property which they have bought at Marsena has to be sold, owing to deeper financial problems.

Michael Sr. estranges himself from his wife and goes to Rochester, where he works under men who run the roofing business. The employer instinct in him does not allow him to be submissive and he finds himself moving from one employer to another. He gets drunk regularly and his health deteriorates day by day. When the elder son Mike Jr. comes to invite him for his marriage, he is deeply pained to see his majestic and handsome father in the pathetic state of living in a pigsty room and eating at cheap restaurants.

Michael Sr. becomes seriously ill. He is admitted in the hospital and his wife Corinne is summoned to bed. It is then that he expresses his last wish to see their daughter Marianne whom he has not seen for about twelve years. When Marianne arrives, her father dies. The family reunites again on 4 July 1993, when Corinne invites all her children to Alder Creek, where she has set-up her antique shop alongwith her friend Sable Mills. Judd is all nerves about meeting his favorite brother Patrick and wonders whether he would turn-up or not. Mike Jr. is happily married to Vicky and they have a three year old daughter Chrissy, two year old son Davy and expecting the third baby to be born. Marianne is unresponsive to the proposals from Ablove, the proprietor of Green Isle Co-op and Hewis, a co-worker and leaves the place, and finds herself drawn towards the veterinarian Dr. Whittaker West, whose love of animals makes him set-up a shelter for the - aged animal - "Stump Creek Hill Animal Shelter and Hospital." Marianne, when she arrives at her mother's house, is seen married to Dr. West and the couple have a three year old Willy and a baby in arms. Patrick at 35 is a changed man in his looks and attitude. He seems to have found his soulmate Katya. Judd now works as the editor-in-chief of the Chautauque Falls Journal. After fourteen years of separation; the Mulvaney's are reunited by way of reiterating the spirit of togetherness that they were the Mulvaney's. They seem to have found their lost happiness and assert their familial bonding. The Mulvaney's were a family in which everything that happened to them was precious.

It is a perfect American family album that the author shows before us through which we understand the myriad aspects of the American familial set-up, and its complexities, the kind of life they lead, their culture and ethics, their longings and aspirations, their tastes and prejudices, the educational system, their celebrations and rituals, the effects and impact of a disintegrated family.

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OBSESSED WITH THE SELF: A POSTMODERN STUDY OF PAUL AUSTER'S FICTION

Ms. J. Iswarya

And then, most important of all: to remember who I am. To remember who I am supposed to be. I do not think this is a game. On the other hand, nothing is clear. For example: who are you? And if you think you know, why do you keep lying about it? I have no answer. All I can say is this: listen to me. My name is Paul Auster. That is not my real name. (The New York Trilogy 1)

For a contemporary American writer, who is not half as popular as Kurt Vonnegut Don DeLillo, Cormac McCarthy or Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster writes in a language that is exceedingly Postmodern to discuss topics which are also extremely Postmodern. The themes taken into consideration by the writer divulge a predicament that is so typically Postmodern. While Modernism is fairly a definable topic, Postmodernism demands a lot of understanding. It is not just an opposite reaction as such. It is a logical development. It begins from where Modernism ends and where it ends, is again a question that requires deliberation and discussion. Paul Auster is one the greatest exponents of meta-fictional writing, a writing that deliberately indulges in the meticulous explanation of how writing is done.

Paul Auster is an obsessive and compulsive writer who writes not just for livelihood but for life itself. He himself has confessed in many of his interviews that writing to him was as important as breathing. Being a writer of autobiographies, it is almost shocking to find out that his life has served as a material for nearly half a dozen of memoirs written at different stages of life, discussing his experiences down the ages with utmost devotion.

In *The New York Trilogy*, Paul Auster not only brings out his competence as an excellent writer, he also exposes his inner self through myriads of characters who are but the shades of Auster himself. He exhausts himself so much in the act of writing, that at a certain point of time, he starts believing that his creation and his own self are one and the same. There is credibility in every utterance he makes, as Paul Auster the writer loses his solid nature and flows into the bodies of his creations. This fluidity is also reversed at times, and that is when Auster the writer happily gives in. For instance, in *City of Glass*, the first book of the trilogy, the narrator speaks of the protagonist, Quinn, who assumes a pseudonym William Wilson to write detective novels, with one Max Work as the lead. It so happens that Quinn considers himself as the detective in his fictional work and loses his identity as a writer. In this way, he is more a detective than a writer. This may be true even for Paul Auster who has written a few anti-detective novels-novels that have all the traits of a conventional detective novel, but that which defies the basic nature of it by having no plot at all. As one reads the words of the narrator in *City of Glass*,

Since finishing the latest William Wilson novel two weeks earlier, he had been languishing. His private-eye narrator, Max Work, had solved an elaborate series of crimes, had suffered through a number of beatings and narrow escapes, and Quinn was feeling somewhat exhausted by his efforts. Over the years, Work had become very close to Quinn. Whereas William Wilson remained an abstract figure for him. Work had increasingly come to life In the triad of selves that Quinn had become, Wilson served as a kind of ventriloquist, Quinn himself was

the dummy, and Work was the animated voice that gave purpose to the enterprise. If Wilson was an illusion, he nevertheless justified the lives of the other two. If Wilson did not exist, he nevertheless was the bridge that allowed Quinn to pass from himself into Work. And little by little, Work had become a presence in Quinn's life, his interior brother, his comrade in solitude. (6-7)

This Quinn, who slowly becomes Max Work of his stories, takes up the role of "Paul Auster of the Auster Detective Agency" (8). This is when someone makes a wrong call to his number looking for a detective by that name. The reader is thus, drawn into this never-ending play of changing identities. The inclusion of Paul Auster as a character in the story narrated by someone who sees himself as Cervantes – one who obediently edited the stories of Don Quixote, seems to be eternally alluring but pushes the reader deeper into the psyche of the real writer, Paul Auster. John Zilcosky clarifies that Paul Auster is "trying to distance himself from his "bad behaviour": his mistreatment of Quinn (his alter ego) as well as his writing a fiction too narcissistically tied to his own life" (*Critique* 195). Deconstructing the work, unstable signifiers (for instance, the name Peter) and the shifting ground of representation (of the uncertain points of view) and linguistic ambiguity (Stillman's Research) form the essence of *City of Glass*. That is what Peter Barry points out as the three stages of the deconstructive process: Verbal, Textual and Linguistic (*Beginning Theory* 72).

Reading the text against itself at the verbal level should, according to Barry, show the "signifiers' at war with the 'signified,'" and should "reveal its repressed conscious" (72). Examining at the Verbal Level, one cannot help himself from thinking about the different reticent significances of the name 'Peter,' which stands for the Old Professor Stillman, the Stillman Junior and also the deceased son of Quinn. It is important to note that 'Peter Stillman' and 'Peter Stillman Jr.' are binary opposites, as they represent the 'oppressor' and the 'oppressed' respectively, nevertheless still share the name. This is apparent when young Peter Stillman says, "My name is Peter Stillman. Perhaps you have heard of me, but more than likely not. No matter. That is not my real name. My real name I cannot remember. Excuse me. Not that it makes a difference. That is to say, anymore" (18).

At the textual level, one should look for "shifts or breaks in the continuity" of the work revealing "instabilities of attitude, and hence the lack of a fixed and unified position" (*Beginning Theory* 72). It is apparent that throughout the novel, there is not a single point of view. There are frequent shifts in time. Sometimes the narration is deliberately slow and monotonous (especially when Quinn follows Peter Stillman's case) and at the climax everything comes to an end all of a sudden. The fluctuating points of view thwart the reader from developing a unified thought.

All fictional and non-fictional works of Paul Auster are written in a desperate attempt to search his own identity. Hence the volatility. The instability created by the writer in characterization and narration is not perplexing, but rather enigmatic, as he endeavours to journey into the unfathomable psyche of the human self. The complexity that this technique breeds is also meant to serve the postmodern purpose at hand.

Paul Auster falls into the category of postmodern writers by default, thanks to his metafictional techniques, novel narratives strategies and weird characterizations that prevent his works to be categorized easily. His metaphysical uncertainty and skepticism permeate all over his sophisticated works. He is obsessed with the idea of being a human being with reasonable understanding of the self. He is fanatically

patriotic and takes pride in the rich heritage of his country and its people. Hence, the “self” which is essentially “American” makes its presence felt. He is infatuated with his own image as a writer. Invariably, in most of his works, the protagonist is a writer, who is obsessed with his divine occupation, one who leads a life of solitude. He also finds it irresistible not to speak about himself as a son who worships his father. He is caught in his own world of names and faces and is constantly haunted by his consciousness as a writer and a critic. His personality is all over in his novels and essays. He calls many of his female characters as ‘Sophie,’ which is also the name of his daughter. The narrator of *Leviathan* falls in love and married one Ms. Iris. Iris is nothing but an anagram of Paul Auster’s wife’s name ‘Siri.’ Trause, a character who appears in *Invisible* as a writer, is an anagram of “Auster.” To Auster, his “self” is the world.

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POLITICS OF THE STAGE SPACE: A RE-READING OF SAM SHEPARD'S PLAYS

Mr. Jacob Alias

Sam Shepard once said, "I don't want to be a playwright. I want to be a rock and roll star..." (*Seven Plays* i) and this ambition of Sam seems to have an effect on most of his plays. Many of his best-known characters are rock stars, outlaws, outliers, desert-rats, misanthropic loners and gun-fighters. His plays explore the demons that prowl the dusty outlands of American psyche. Sam shows us the dark side of that much-celebrated American "virtue." His plays touch a raw nerve in American culture that seems ever-primed to explode into violence. To create drama he plunges these characters into circumstances of confusion, contradiction and duress. Many of his plays are the poetic equivalent of a cage fight. But Sam is at his best when zeroing in on families shattered by violence, abandonment, substance abuse (usually alcohol), poverty and dislocation. This paper concentrates on Sam's so called family plays namely *Curse of the Starving Class*, *True West* and *The Late Henry Moss*.

In his family plays Sam shows a tendency to relegate his female characters and their concerns to the sidelines of the plays preferring instead to focus on the questions of male identity. When reading Sam Shepard one can see how his male characters struggle to maintain control over their women and how the women suffer under them, but somehow manage to elude the control. Most of Sam's female characters are sidelined as he focuses mainly on male crises of identity. It is as if he is uninterested in the story of women and prefers the mystery between men. And this has prompted many critics to detect victimization of female characters in his masculinized landscapes.

The first one of the three plays in consideration *Curse of the Starving Class* was first premiered on 21 April 1977 at London's Royal Court Theatre. The play is composed of three acts and depicts how the members of a family struggle because of 'the curse of the starving class'. However Sam does not specify what the curse is. The play carries new themes and one of them is the effect of 'heredity' on the characters of the play, something Sam hadn't employed in his former plays. Heredity plays an essential role in forming one's identity. This new aspect was borrowed by Shepard from other playwrights of his period, so he pictured how the son might inherit the same disease and characteristics of the father. Addiction to alcohol is another aspect which affects the male characters and their identity. In *Curse of the Starving Class*, Shepard presents the alcoholic father who is the main reason behind the destruction of his family. What adds to the play's originality is its style, for it can neither be considered as totally realistic nor totally symbolic.

The second of three plays, *True West* was first staged in July of 1980 which Sam himself believes to be the one that is closest to perfection. *True West* tells the story of two brothers who have come together, after a long separation, at their mother's house. Austin, the younger brother is a screenplay writer and Lee, the elder one is a tramp living in the desert. Both the brothers are jealous of each other's life style. The father is never represented on stage by an actor but, the brothers argue about the father. The shadow of the father fuels the arguments that continue throughout the play.

The third play, *The Late Henry Moss* was first premiered in November of 2000 a good twenty years after *True West* but carries the same theme as the two above mentioned plays. *The Late Henry Moss* tells the story of two brothers Earl and Ray, who have come to their father's house after his death.

With *The Late Henry Moss*, Shepard exhumes the fathers of his plays of past, Weston from *Curse of the Starving Class* and the unseen father of *True West*. It's easy to see Ray Moss as the trapped teenager Wesley from *Curse of the Starving Class*. It's even easier to see Earl and Ray Moss as variations of embattled brothers of *True West*.

One recurring element in all the three plays is the patriarch. Shepard admits that this character is based on an amalgamation of his father and grandfather. Whether appearing onstage or discussed in his absence, this character's presence is always felt. These recurring themes are taken from Shepard's life experience. The struggle of finding his identity to separate him from his father and family, one that Shepard felt as a young man, strikes at the heart of the family plays. Sam portrays male identity as something that is to be violently enacted and protected. We see sons in all three plays, inheriting a violent image of male identity from their fathers, who are drunkards wallowing in their self-destruction. The male psyche of these plays instilled with violence and fear of inferiority view feminine as a threat to their identity. Sam's male characters believe in the need to dis-credit, wipe-out or erase the feminine in order to achieve a "macho" identity of their own.

The man of Shepard plays look forward to the masculinized frontier to get hold of the "macho" image he seeks. His idea of women or feminine is as an extension or embodiment of this masculinized frontier that is to be conquered to prove his manliness. Sam metaphorically presents his women as landscapes that must be possessed or tamed and that in turn will give the possessor his manhood. When Lee of *True West* doubts his ability to write a real western script he suddenly decides that he "needs" a woman-just to hear a woman's voice. Women started appearing in Sam's plays with the introduction of his family plays. Of course he couldn't write family plays without women characters. It is from this phase that the politics of stage was at stake, in his presentation of the male/female relationship. How the men struggle to control their women to prove their manhood and the women suffering from the treatment of their men but ultimately managing to elude the control. Ella of *Curse of the Starving class* manages to escape from the stranglehold of her drunkard husband Weston and the Mom of *True West* moves into a motel unable to stand the violence between her sons. Thus it's an irony that any hope of a survival exists only inside the 'women's spaces' which is always side lined in his plays. Shepard's men, who so fiercely fight for the central stage, are always headed for the doom whereas the women who are always sidelined choose life over death and re-creation over destruction and seem to have chosen wisely to exit into a different world.

But when these mothers are escaping or withdrawing from the sufferings, they make themselves ineffectual mothers just like the fathers. The mom of *True West* unlike a traditional mother who cleans up after her sons messes in order to ease their way, she moves into a motel whereas Ella of *Curse of the Starving Class* is dreaming of escaping to Europe. But my question is would they be so ineffectual if they were not placed in such helpless situations by the author. So I read their withdrawals as a decision not to endow the male ideas but follow a different set of values that conflict with the male crisis. She refuses to collude in the male stories and their concomitant destruction. She chooses to leave because the life on stage is usually a scene of destruction, violence and death.

Emma in *Curse of the Starving Class*, a vibrant vociferous young girl determined to get away from the family to create a life of her own. It's interesting that she is the youngest of Sam's female characters upon whom the female "curse" of menstruation has just fallen and will determine her destiny, who is not yet limited by the sexual stereotyping. Her exploration of possible lifestyles makes her stand out in contrast to her brother Wesley who finds himself trapped into repeating his father's role. Her story

reflects the cowboy myths that are common among Sam's men and unlike other women of Sam, Emma fail to escape from the stranglehold of men. She gets killed in a car bomb blast that was intended for her father. She is destroyed by her father's legacy which she failed to abandon soon enough.

With *The Late Henry Moss*, which was premiered in a different century, Shepard exhumes the fathers of his plays past, Weston from *Curse of the Starving Class* and the unseen father of *True West*. It's easy to see Ray Moss as the trapped teenager Wesley from *Curse of the Starving Class*. It's even easier to see Earl and Ray Moss as variations of the embattled brothers of *True West*. Though many critics have faulted this play and the playwright for re-tilling the old thematic ground and have criticized the play for its apparent over-expository first act, it takes a special talent to find and maintain the intensity that turns these repetitions into escalating confrontation. In this play that intensity never flags down. The mysteries continue to ripen until they burst, and the raw need to escape one's past by finally confronting it is fully embraced. It is this ability of Sam that has gained him a distinguished place in the canon of American drama.

All of Shepard's men who fiercely fight for the centre stage are doomed though Sam may want the readers to believe that they are gloriously doomed. So by making the women to choose to abandon the stage space to the destructive behaviour of their men, Sam makes them choose life over death, hope over despair and re-creation over destruction. The patterns of behaviour to which Sam's men cling to, have bought them death and destruction and the women abandoning the stage space and the myths have a hope for survival. Since myth has never held any advantages to the men who cling to them, the female characters have wisely chosen to look away from the violence and self-destruction that the men want to glorify and given the actions that usually occupy the centre stage in Sam's plays perhaps the wisest choice is the one taken by the women, to exit into a different world.

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TRANSFORMING SCRIPTURES: THE BIBLE AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS

Ms. Jacqueline Joseph and Dr. C. S. Biju

From Phyllis Wheatley to Toni Morrison, black women's literature is replete with Biblical images, themes and reverberations. The Bible has been effectively used by African American women writers for literary self representation. Black women's historic encounters with the Bible were indeed transformational as they complemented each other. Their relationship to the Bible was dynamic and interactive, and they opened new possibilities for the women to re-imagine their place and position in society. In poetry, novels, speeches, sermons and prayers, African American literary women – Marie W. Stuart to Shirley Anne Williams form a collective literary witness in response to the use of the Bible for purposes of social domination.

It is not difficult to display the complex ways that African American women have read and been read by the Bible. If we compare the writing of black women to observe the contours that emerge out of this transformative relationship, the varied strategies employed in black women's Bible reading can be unlayered. Their writings evidence slavery's diachronic determinism. Both observations result in a kaleidoscope of rich reflections about race, gender, and scriptural engagement.

The rise of scientific reasoning, common sense philosophy, and naturalism challenged *The Bible's* role in mediating the post-Enlightenment life world. *The Bible's* role shifted from being prescriptive of human behavior to being descriptive of the natural order. Thus abolitionists and advocates alike ascribed to *The Bible* their respective views on slavery. Nevertheless, *The Bible* still held authority as a defining document. For instance, Frances Harper cites passages like the Syrophonecian woman's repartee with Jesus (Mark 7:25-31 and Matthew 15:21-28) to show the Bible as explicitly imbricated with a subversive social agenda. Harper knows that slave advocates consider Jesus on their side, but she talks back to them through the Syrophoeneican's retort. The ambivalent nineteenth century readings raise the slave issue and the question of Biblical authority.

But subtending these fights lay a crucial, historical axiom: contestation of one issue necessarily translated into contestation of the other. Bassard lays out the theoretical framework for understanding the conditions under which African American women read Biblical texts. Their entrance into the Western scriptural economy came via slave ships. This passage coded them as cursed (e.g. descendants of Ham, Genesis 9:22-25), marked (e.g. descendants of Cain, Genesis 4:15), and pained (e.g. daughters of Eve, Genesis 3:16) (13-16). Upon arrival in the New World, they stood as an object of western reading practices. But a socio-intellectual turn occurred when black women began subjecting the Bible to what Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza terms a "hermeneutics of re-vision" (17). They recast the Bible as an instrument of blessing. Balaam's prophetic mule (Numbers 22) and the beautiful, black Shula mite woman (Song of Songs 1:5-7) became standards for African American women's negotiation of identity. This paper attempts to provide a taste of how some of the prolific African American literary women engage scripture in their writing.

Maria W. Stewart entered the historical and literary canon as "America's First Black woman Political writer." "Spiritual Narratives," the 1988 volume of the Schomburg Library includes the full text of Stewart's 1835 Productions with the religious material intact. More recent studies like Carla Peterson's

“Doers of the Word” and Joycelyn Moody’s sentimental Confessions include readings of the religious Meditations, which account for a significant portion of Stewart’s writings. Placing Stewart’s Meditations at the centre of her discourse, we can locate her unique style in the context of African American oral and performative culture. As cultural performance, Stewart uses the Bible both as “a source of self empowerment ,an authorization to act in the world” (*Doers of the Word* 56) and as a part of the “black jeremiad” that views spirituality through the lens of social justice (*Sentimental Confessions* 29). Stewart, indeed fashioned for herself a public identity as a prophet and her use of the Bible as a primary source for her writings is part of her prophetic persona and cultural performance .This type of writing/reading which can be termed as ‘literary sampling’ is embedded in African American culture ,particularly musical performance. By extension, the intertextual dimension of “sampling “informs African American religious culture, sermons, spirituals, hymns and so forth and the genre of performative prayers which means especially those prayers composed for African American worship and / or written for publication and that are connected to a different ethos of community, ownership and language than privatized utterance. Language as communal property informs call and response, spirituals, blues and African American oral culture.

In *Race, Music*, Gutrie Ramsey describes the rhetorical power of black gospel music as a fundamental hybridity based on “stylistic juxtapositionings” (191). Thus literary sampling resembles signifying, pastiche and other types of intertextual tropes. Literary sampling utilizes the original text as a vehicle for the expression of private and communal emotions. In other words, literary sampling may look backward to the original and or forward, emphasizing instead the new creative product. Unlike proof-texting where ignorance of context is elided, sampling scripture showcases the virtuosity of the sampler as s/he composes a ‘new song’. Stewart’s use of biblical material does not simply use biblical texts to prove a prior assumption, but rather constitutes the creative use of a presumably creative word.

Stewart’s forays into the religious genres of prayer and meditation and the authority and mastery she exhibits with scripture, are evidence of her significant investment in cultural and intellectual work. The choice of contemplative genres like prayer and meditation seems out of sync with African American women’s labour in slavery, which was usually domestic work, leaving little time or place for intellectual and spiritual work.” Meditation “is a word that has both spiritual and intellectual signification and it reminds that Stewart’s writings, while religious are not “other worldly” but are rather intellectual works. In the introduction to *Meditations* (1832), Stewart writes:”I have borrowed much of my language from the Holy Bible. During the years of childhood and youth, it was the Book that I most studied; and now, while my hands are toiling for their daily sustenance, my heart is most generally meditating upon its divine truths.” (124)

There is however, a long tradition of written prayers reclaimed by James Melvin Washington in his edited volume *Conversations with God*. Washington collected 190 prayers spanning 235 years; some were individually published as broadside and pamphlets while others came from sermons, slave narratives and testimonies, spiritual narratives, diaries and journals, the abolitionist press and novels. African American prayers as a literary genre and a religious social practice assume that God is just and loving and that the human dilemma is that we cannot always experience and see “God’s Justice and Love.” If prayer can be seen as a literary genre, it is clearly visible in the use of Biblical allusions and quotations in prayers composed from 1760 to 1860.

Stewart's Bible references can be treated as marginal and peripheral. Stewart's style, especially with regard to the use of scripture and biblical allusion is different. While other prayers regularly quote the Bible, sometimes at length, Stewart's use of the Biblical material goes beyond mere quotation to the echo and reverberation, the creative re-use of selective phrases of scripture- probably as Peterson has observed, from memory (60) arranged for an overall effect. Though Stewart does not use overtly racial language in her own prayers and meditations, she does appeal to a God whom she views as a partisan at the side of African Americans in their struggle for racial equality. Thus, Brassard characterizes *Meditations*' a series of twentyone short writings as an example of "sampling" scripture. In her prayers and meditations, Stewart revoices scripture, drawing upon multiple texts and weaving the text's language and images together something new. Brassard explains : "I am suggesting, then that there is a kind of logic to Stewart's patchwork, a stitching together that goes beyond "proof-texting" as Stewart links scriptures that are tonally resonant with each other around certain things" (122).

An example of this biblical sampling occurs in prayer A which appears after meditation too. The first line reads : "O Thou King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible and only Wise God, before whom Angels bow and Seraphs veil their faces, crying Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty" (55). In this one address to God, Stewart has sampled from 1 Timothy 1: 17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal , invisible the only wise God," and from a fusion of Isaiah 6:2-3 and Revelation 4:8.

Thus, Stewart has ranged from New Testament pastoral epistle to Old Testament prophecy and finally to New Testament apocalypse, all in the invocation of God. Stewart's ability to string together disparate Biblical text within a short condensed phrase is the technique of sampling scripture. Stewart's prayers and meditations differ from others in this lineage because of her appropriation of scripture to herself. That is, she does not merely quote the word of God but rather she speaks it forth as one who has internalized the Bible and made it uniquely her own. Stewart's bold revoicing of scripture gestures toward a transgression of the prohibition against women "taking a text" or preaching from the Bible in the pulpit, linking her to other female preachers of her era. Her audience was not always appreciative of such a project, "struggling as they must have been" with the propriety of engaging a woman who had appropriated the patriarchal voice of the language of the King James' Bible to publicly express her view from a speaker's platform.

While other Black women writers in the nineteenth century were intimately familiar with the Christian scriptures, few can match a type of cultural performance of Maria. W. Stewart's prayers. From Stewart's sweeping communal and global vision, we move to Hannah Crafts's vision of empowered female subjects that transgress the domesticized Biblicism of the nineteenth century.

African American women employ the contours of Biblical narratives to display story arcs that would otherwise be filtered by America's discriminatory superstructures. Hannah Crafts's *The Bondswoman's Narrative* (1860) functions as exemplar here. The story examines slavery as the curse of nineteenth century America. In her preface, Crafts frames her intent with a rhetorical question evocative of the Shula mite woman: "Have I succeeded in portraying ... that institution whose curse rests over the fairest land the sun shines upon ... how it blights the happiness of the white as well as the black race?"(45) The Shula mite woman's "black but comel [iness]" lends room to Crafts description of the castigating features of race and gender in America (71). The novel revolves around a betrothed mistress who learns that she is a mulatta. She is forced into hiding while facing the trauma that accompanies the revelation of her race. Her saving grace is her female slave, who runs from the authorities as companions. In order to

delve fully into the harrowing account, Brassard recommends that the reader take notice of biblical antecedents that resemble and likely influence Crafts's characterizations because Crafts's contemporaries could not help but to sense the similarities. The mistress goes from being the exotic (Shula mite woman) to the exalted (Queen Esther) to the excommunicated (Jesus Christ) (75). Thus, Brassard dubs the Bondsman Narrative as a twofold passing tale. Inside the text, the protagonist spends time traversing the luminal space between racial absolutism. Outside of it, Crafts' dramatic social criticism passes as biblically-inflected musings.

Indeed, Hannah's craft as a writer is evident in the demands her narrative places on the reader to attend to the interweaving of the historical, tropological and hermeneutical registers of its intertextuality. Lawrence Buell also comments on "The unabashed nature of the fictionalization of the narrative in an era obsessed with African American truth – telling and authentication" (112). From the beginning of the text, Crafts sounds a different note: the narrative demonstrates a spiritual authenticity. Readers of the narrative have linked her use of *The Bible* to the narratives of Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21, Hannah in 1 Samuel, and Jacob and Esau (also in Genesis). It is a narrative predicated on making the reader expect the unexpected.

Whether or not Hannah Crafts is ever identified beyond the shadow of a doubt, the narrative does bear certain signatures that link it with the lineage of black woman's textuality, especially black women's biblicism and the development of an anti-slavery hermeneutic through narrative and fiction. Hannah Crafts's consistent use of scriptural verses to begin each chapter and of internal soundings and biblical echoes is not merely decorative or pious, but form part of a comprehensive Judeo-Christian world view.

Beginning each chapter with a verse of scripture renders her text a literary pulpit, as she boldly "takes a text" along with other black women preachers like Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, and Amanda Berry Smith, who challenged prohibitions against black female preaching. Writing of Hannah Crafts's "heterodox scriptural imagination," Lawrence Buell notes that she was capable of invoking the antebellum period's most important literary master text (*The Bible*).

Hannah Crafts's *Bondwoman's Narrative* raises a number of questions about identity and authorship because of the uncertainty over Hannah Crafts's true identity. Crafts, in particular, demonstrates the practice of African American sermonizing, as she takes a text at the beginning of each chapter, using the text as both an opportunity for illustration and exposition. This type of sermonizing is literary and full of nuances. Crafts's narrative re-deploys the narratives of the Bible, such as the stories of the Shula mite in Song of Songs, Esther and the Queen of Sheba to challenge racial ideologies and gender expectations. Particularly provocative is the way in which Crafts conflates these different biblical characters and uses them to allude to the theme of racial passing.

Bassard describes Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859) as Genesis story in American literature, since it is one of the first novels written by an African American woman and it also echoes Genesis's fall imagery and the Joseph cycle. By evoking the Joseph cycle in describing the life of Frado, the female protagonist of the novel, Wilson demonstrates the way some African American women authors identify with biblical characters and narratives across genders. The complex ways in which Wilson engages questions of race, as Frado's mother, a white woman, involved a series of black men, comes to stand for the black mother can be highlighted. This can be compared to the theme of reversal found in biblical traditions.

Harriet Wilson's use of the Joseph cycle (Genesis 37-50) seems to offer a gender-sensitive critique of slavery. Similar to Crafts' *Bondwoman*, Wilson's *Our Nig* samples from the imprisonment of the Joseph story to tell a parable about the insidiousness of slavery. *Our Nig* (1859) follows the life of a young mulatta named Fradao. While Fradao was born of a white woman and a black father, "the law of partum sequitur ventrum does not afford the child true freedom" (90). Fradao's mother attempts to eschew the stigmas of miscegenation by selling Fradao into indentured servitude, a northern variance to slavery (86). The parallels to Joseph's descent into slavery continue as Fradao becomes an interpreter (Genesis 40-41) of the gendered violence that remains part of the North's American dream. The story of Fradao uses parable to speak truth to power much like Tamar's reposte to Judah, the father-in-law who impregnated her (Genesis 38). Wilson aims to enable other black women to follow Joseph in his ascent out of despair and into the ranks of civility.

We can make a close of this analysis with a gesture toward the transformative scripture readings in two twentieth century authors, Toni Morrison and Sherley Anne Williams. The authors stand upon the shoulders of their forbearers in shaping the Biblical text to craft literary models of complex, active, black women that readers can genuinely love. These two contemporary authors relate to the tradition of black women's biblicism from the nineteenth century through their extension of the Shula mite trope. Like those that came before, the private interpretations of Morrison and Williams necessarily engage with the legacies of slavery and the Bible. But twentieth century protagonists can explore, experience, and embrace a sexual potency less available to the previously discussed writer. Since their time, the comeliness of the black Shula mite woman has enjoyed biblical blessings, literary support, and increasing socio-political agency. As black women have understood themselves as liberated by the scriptures, they have mutually liberated the hegemonic readings of their oppressors. In *Desa Rose*, Williams portrays Dessa, an escaped slave woman and mother, as one who challenges traditional understandings of black women's sexuality, by naming her desire and choosing her partner. In this way Dessa embodies the shulamite. In Morrison's novels, the Song of Songs serves as a poetic "urtext" as Morrison explores the eruption of black women's erotic desire and the co-optation of that desire within the structure of power. For these writers, *The Bible* becomes the main locus for the formation of identity for African American women as they extend the Shula mite trope into representations of Black women's ongoing struggle with empowered self identity. Thus, this paper tries to show the constants and fluidity of scriptural engagement and makes a critical study of scriptural practices by African American women writers.

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**IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY IN BHARATHI MUKHERJEE'S
*DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS***

Ms. Janani Priyatarsini

The immigrant writers in America can be divided into two categories. Firstly, the willing immigrant writers who settled in America from Europe and Asia and made it their home. The second category consists of the unwilling immigrant writers with American origin whose forefathers were brought to America in some slave trips. Bharati Mukherjee, the Calcutta-born writer who migrated to the United States of America, considers herself different from other immigrant writers for a variety of reasons. Mukherjee's female protagonists are immigrants and they suffer from cultural shock but they are efficient women who are anxious to establish their identity by undertaking heroic journeys. Although critics look at her novels from an immigrant's perspective, there is more to her novels than the trauma of unfamiliarity in a foreign land. Her female protagonists are often seen fighting for their rights as women, thus projecting latent gender issues and inequality that prevail even in the so-called civilized societies.

Desirable Daughters is a tale of immigrants and the plot revolves around three sisters and their ways of dealing with unexpected situations in their lives. The three sisters, who are the daughters of Motilal Bhattacharya and the great-grand-daughters of Jai Krishna Gangooli, belong to a traditional Bengali Brahmin family. Padma, Parvathi and Tara are symbolic names of Shakti (the Hindu Goddess of Power). They do not flaunt any ethical values, but have the grit to carve a niche for themselves in the society. They are a blend of traditional and modern outlook. Padma and Parvathi do not regret their choices, the former an immigrant of ethnic origin in New Jersey, and the latter married to a boy of her own choice and settled in the posh locality of Bombay. Tara, the narrator of the novel, goes for an arranged marriage, getting married to Bishwapriya Chatterjee. Tara finds her married life unfulfilling and walks out of her traditional life, followed by a typical American divorce settlement. Tara works as a volunteer in a pre-school. She enjoys her love life with Andy. Tara sends her son with his father as a divorce settlement. The fluidity of her identity, testifies not only her own, but also the fluidity of the immigrants. After the destruction of her San Francisco house, Tara returns to her father's house for solace. Reunited with her parents, she also returns to more culturally traditional concepts of home and community. Her father has sold the Calcutta house and moved to Rishikesh, entering the prescribed third phase of Hindu life as a Sannyasin. Although Tara and Padma remain defined within the social networks of community, Padma attempts to recreate an authentic Bengali life in New York while Tara refuses to live as "a perfectly preserved bug trapped in amber" (184). Instead, Tara moves from home to home, constantly attempting to redefine the boundaries of home, identity, and community.

At the end of the novel, returning to the story of Tara Lata, she calls the Tree-Bride "the quiet centre of every story" (289). Her construction of her ancestor's life seemingly validates Tara's own quest to reconstruct her own identity. Yet this story suggests that one's birthplace does form one's identity, that identity performance can only be enacted within the limitations of an assigned space. In the final paragraph of the novel, Tara walks the same road traversed by the Tree-Bride in 1879. Claiming that this is a miracle, Tara implies that Mishtigunj is a place of magic where the past is accessible as the present. The narrator's repetition of the phrase "*Bishey bish khai*, only poison delivers us from poison," the return to her roots, along with Tara's re-emerging relationship with Bish, calls into question the very notion of a performative identity and reinforces the "iron-clad identifiers of region, language, caste and subcaste"

(121). Tara cannot escape her multiple layers of identity, what Martin and Mohanty call “the complicated working out of the relationship between home, identity, and community” (98). Although Tara increasingly feels that her “once-firm” identity has been “smashed by hammer blows, melted down and re-emerging as something wondrous, or grotesque” (132) the reconstructed identity remains firmly constrained within the ideological determinants of home and community. This novel, to a certain extent, seems to be the autobiography of Bharathi Mukherjee who has two sisters. Post-migration stresses include culture shock and conflict, both of which may lead to a sense of cultural confusion, feelings of alienation, isolation, and depression. Contact between the immigrant, or minority, community with the dominant or host community may lead to assimilation, rejection, integration or deculturation. Deculturation, in which the individual or minority group experiences a loss of cultural identity, alienation and acculturative stress, can lead to ethnocide. Ethnicity is a source of social identity. Ethnic groups are composed of people who may or may not share the same race but do share common cultural characteristics, including history, beliefs, values, food and entertainment preferences, religion and language. Ethnicity typically incorporates both race and culture.

The economic, social, and political aspects of immigration have caused controversy regarding ethnicity, economic benefits, jobs for non-immigrants and behaviour. It is important to define basic sociological terms of identity to understand cultural identity. Culture is learned and passed through generations and includes the beliefs and value systems of a society. Culture has been described as features that are shared and bind people together into a community. Identity is the totality of one’s perception of self, or how we as individuals view ourselves as unique from others.

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TRAUMATIC ELEMENTS IN AMIRI BARAKA'S *DUTCHMAN*

Ms. Jasiya Hind K.

“Trauma” is a Greek word meaning “wound.” The word “trauma” is used to describe deeply distressing or disturbing experience that overwhelms people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experiences. In certain cases trauma can occur frequently as a part of common human experiences. In addition to terrifying wound such as violence and assaults more subtle and insidious forms of trauma such as discrimination, racism, oppression, and poverty are pervasive. They have a cumulative impact when experienced chronically.

Racial trauma is the physiological, psychological and emotional damage that results from discrimination or harassment. Racial harassment is the domination of dominant races with active hostility as its characteristic. Racial trauma predominates Amiri Baraka’s play *Dutchman*. The play clearly depicts racial tensions present in American society during the 1960s. The strain of black-white racial relations, specifically interracial relationships is central in *Dutchman*. *Dutchman* is a shocking one-act play dealing with the white’s oppression of the black. The story focuses on the two main characters of the play: Clay, a twenty-year-old black man, and Lula, a thirty-year-old white woman.

The events take place when a subway train stops at an underground station. Lula, the white woman interrupts Clay as she sits next to him. The entire conversation between Lula and Clay demonstrates that, even if society has become more aware of social inequalities imposed on minorities, much of society still regards minorities with utter contempt. From the first scene onwards the white protagonist Lula dominates Clay, the black. She accuses Clay as staring her through the train window.

LULA. Weren’t you staring at me through the window? At the last stop?

CLAY. Staring at you? What do you mean?

LULA. Don’t you know what staring means?

CLAY. I saw you through the window... if that’s what it means. I don’t know if I was staring. Seems to me you were staring through the window at me. (1. 1. 8-13)

Internalised devaluation as a traumatic wound predominates in the life of coloured people. It reinforces a powerful message internalized from childhood that he was bad and unworthy. It is clearly seen in Clay’s attempts to assimilate with white culture and his confusion of identity. Clay is described as a young, middle-class educated black man. He wears a three-button suit, reads books, partly much suggests that he talks, acts and dresses like a white man.

As the tension slowly rises during Scene I Lula demands control of conversation and she tries to seduce him. Even though he is attracted to her beauty he rejects her advances politely. Enraged Lula continues to provoke Clay.

LULA. Boy, those narrow-shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three-button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn’t go to Harvard. (1.1. 85-90)

Here Lula humiliates Clay's black identity and his attempts to be a fake white man. Clay is stunned when Lula mocks him severely.

LULA. I bet you never once thought you were a black nigger. (1.1. 102)

Clay suddenly becomes conscious of his black identity as Lula refers the colour of his skin with this racial slur. Though severely wounded, his feigned assimilated identity quickly tries to appreciate the humour. It is obvious that the internalized devaluation is the cause of his passivity when he continues to let Lula lead the encounter. Here Clay fails to realize who he really is. His passivity suggests him believing he is what others say- "a black nigger." It is the assaulted sense of self, a hidden traumatic wound in him.

Internalized voicelessness is another hidden trauma seen in the character of Clay. It erodes the ability to defend against unwelcomed unjustified negative messages. Voicelessness doesn't literally render the youth silent, it impairs the ability to advocate for oneself. Clay is astonished as Lula seems to know much about him.

CLAY. Hey, you still haven't told me how you know so much about me. (1.1. 99)

She replies that he is merely "a well-known type", the black man who repudiates his racial identity to adopt a white culture. Clay assumes the manners and mannerisms of the white. Lula threatens him, "You are a murderer, Clay, and you know it" (1.1.105). It suggests that he is the murderer of his own black identity in his attempts to assimilate white culture. Thus the situation is more traumatic as Clay is neither the black nor the white. He faces identity crisis.

Clay is surprised to see many people around them so suddenly.

CLAY. Wow. All these people, so suddenly. They must all come from the same place.

LULA. ...Do they frighten you?

CLAY. frighten me? Why should they frighten me?

LULA. 'Cause you're an escaped nigger. (1.2. 65-68)

There is always a threat predominating Lula's encounter with Clay. Clay is the mere slave in the hands of the white. Lula is the forbidden apple of his eye. She not only flirts with him, but also challenges his manhood. Unaware of Clay's background, she arrogantly assumes him as a middle class "Uncle Tom." One moment Lula is rubbing her sexy body against Clay inducing him to seduce her. However, suddenly as a dual personality she screams at him, calling him a "middle-class black bastard" from New Jersey. Lula infuriates Clay into violent reaction. He slaps her to shut her up.

CLAY. Now you shut the hell up. (Grabbing her shoulders) Just shut up. You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know anything. So just keep your stupid mouth closed. (1.2. 78-82)

It is Clay's transformation from a fake white man to the black American. In rage, Clay's blurts out his hatred for her and all the whites. He reveals that his white man's three-button suit is a disguise to keep him from cutting the white man's throat.

CLAY. I could murder you now. Such a tiny ugly throat. I could squeeze it flat, and, watch you turn blue, on a humble. For dull kicks. And all these weak-faced ofays squatting around here, staring over their papers at me. Murder them too.

...And I sit here in this buttoned-up suit to keep myself from cutting all your throats. (1.2. 97-103)

Clay's outburst is the wound of rage that comes out as rebellious. He retaliates that he knows black who achieve sanity by murdering whites including Lula.

CLAY. They'll murder you, and have very rational explanations. Very much like your own. They'll cut your throats, and drag you out to the edge of your cities so the flesh can fall away from your bones, in sanitary isolation. (1. 2. 116-19)

Clay, who forsakes his disguise and language as would-be white man, becomes a dangerous and powerful rebel. Lula stabs him to death with a small knife, leaves him as another black victim to be disregarded by the US legal system of 1960s. She orders the other passengers who are her pals in representing a racist society to throw the body out. Lula escapes punishment and she seeks her next prey. She makes an entry in her notebook. The victimization will go on as she will confront another black man who comes with books and boards the train. It implies that the young black man will be forced into playing Clay and Lula will perform her ritual murder again.

Clay the black man is a symbol of tolerance where as Lula the white is a symbol of intolerance. He puts up with Lula's derogating statement like "I bet you never once thought you were a black nigger." Insulted Clay tries to appreciate the humour. His tolerance is evident when he controls himself after his emotional outburst to Lula with black national solidarity. Hearing enough the intolerable Lula stabs him to death. In a way his tolerance keeps him away from violence and thus it leads to his own death. Clay, like piece of clay, is being manipulated by the witch who offers apples. The play ends in complete trauma of violence and death.

The play *Dutchman* is a modern version of the Edenic myth. Baraka uses religious allusions successfully as he gives a new idea to the universal theme of fall of man. There is a Biblical reference to Adam and Eve. Clay is the material out of which Adam was made. Clay represents Adam. Lula is the twentieth century Eve who enters the subway train eating an apple. She tempts Clay by offering one to him to another fall from Grace. Lula and Clay become forbidden fruits for each other. He is the forbidden black man and she is the forbidden white woman. The apple symbolizes the promises offered by the white society to the black man. It is the forbidden fruit of truth, of self-knowledge, of good and evil bringing death in the Biblical parallel. Lula offers the apple of knowledge which in this case in the brutal exposure of Clay's latent will to rebel.

Adam became sinner when he accepted the forbidden fruit offered to him by Eve. The consequence was their expulsion from Heaven. Clay is an innocent Adam figure tempted to the world of sin and corruption by Eve. He accepts the fruit and he manifests his knowledge of the forbidden truth. Then he is dismissed from the subway, the perverted Garden of Eden. It is the chaotic New York subway due to racism in American society.

Growing up in a white dominant society is a traumatic experience to the black. The oppressed black becomes only a shadow of the white. His rights and dreams are totally neglected. Clay represents the black man and Lula, white liberal America who interferes with the black. Clay is victimized by Lula, the white oppressor, and her voice passes judgment on him. As the author himself said *Dutchman* is about how difficult it is to become a man in the United States.

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WOMANIST EXISTENTIALISM: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Mr. Joby John

The Color Purple is an epistolary novel written by Alice Walker which deals with the protagonist's misery of childhood incest, physical abuse and quest for identity. It proves that the individual uniqueness is determined by the life choice. Celie, the protagonist is an uneducated, fourteen-year-old black girl living in a remote village of Georgia. She is introduced in the novel through her letters to God. Her existential quest is revealed to the reader through her letters to the omnipotent.

You better not never tell anybody but God.

It'd kill your mammy.

Dear God,

I am fourteen years old. I am I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me.

Last spring[...] alone. A week go by he pulling on her arm again. She say now, I ain't gonna.

(3)

Self realization is the beginning through which one confirms and prunes one's essence. Celie's self expression through her letters to God is an apt example for her quest to determine her identity. She searches her essence outside her "self" as if a fish questions the existence of water, without realizing that it is in the water. Her letters to God represents that God is someone who resides away in the heavens. Alice Walker has used the epistolary form of writing to narrate the sufferings of the protagonist and narrated the helplessness and anxiety experienced by the Black women in the modern society in which feminism and existential feminism failed to protect and include them. Therefore, Walker puts forward the concept of womanism in order to make special distinction for the experiences of the women of colour. According to Alice Walker, a womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender. Though the novel *The Color Purple* is against ignorance, arrogance, and racism, which have bloomed as superior knowledge, it is also a product of existential angst and search for identity. Therefore this novel should be read from womanist existentialist point of view, because it deals with the existential quest of "The Coloured." The term "Existentialism" is coined by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel and adopted by Jean-Paul Sartre. Jean-Paul Sartre presented his own existentialist position in a lecture to the "Club Maintenant" in Paris. This lecture popularized the Existentialist thought. Existentialism begins with the necessity of existence. "Existence precedes essence" is true for Celie's quest for her "womanity" (what makes a woman "woman"). She determines and realizes her nature by the course of life rather than life by nature. Celie's letters and her relationship to Shug play a significant role in determining essence seeking understanding, what transcends the boundaries of reason. Womanist existentialism reunites the lower part of the mind with the higher. It means that the union of intelligence, anxiety, guilt etc gives strength to Celie to polish the diamond inside her.

For Sartre each one is endowed with unlimited freedom. This statement may question the limitations on every individual's freedom of choice. Physical and social constraints cannot be overlooked in the way in which we make our choices. The freedom is not an ability to act. Freedom is rather to be understood as a characteristic of the nature of consciousness, that is as spontaneity. Sartre presents his notion of freedom

as amounting to make choices, and indeed not being able to avoid making choices. His conception of choice can be understood with reference to an individual's original choice as we saw. The whole life of an individual is expressing an original project that unfolds throughout time. Celie's transformed life is a result of her prudent use of freedom in essence seeking understanding. Essence always gets refined and renewed by the freedom of choice determination. Man's existential condition is not a state of alienation from his essential nature rather it is a realization that s/he is. The question concerning the essence of human freedom towards the totality of beings (World and God) in the preliminary discussion of "negative" freedom is defined well by Martin Heidegger.

But why is the problem of freedom not a particular question? At this point can only be *roughly* indicated why the problem of freedom, from the very outset, cannot be treated as a particular question. Among the definitions of the essence of freedom one has always come to fore. According to this, freedom primarily refers to autonomy. One speaks, therefore, of the negative concept of freedom, more succinctly of 'negative freedom'. Clearly then, this negative freedom of man is fully defined by specifying what man is independent from, and how such independence is to be conceived. In earlier interpretations of freedom this 'from what' of independence has been experienced and problematized in two essential directions:

1. Freedom from ... is independence from nature....
2. According to this, freedom means *independence from God*, autonomy in relation to God. (*The Essence of Human Freedom* 4-5)

Positive freedom is a spontaneous choice which involves a proper coordination of transcendence and it avoids the pitfalls of an uncoordinated expression of the desire of being. The recognition of how freedom interacts exhibits the responsibility of the person. Sartrean Existentialism is an atheistic philosophy of human freedom conceived in terms of individual responsibility and authenticity. Celie the protagonist of the novel *The Color Purple* is eager to get freedom to lead a good life. Walkerian Womanism is against the segregation towards the black women as well as men. This protest was the result of the essence – seeking realization of the segregated people. As Shahida and Chakranarayan observe,

... in 1973, a group of Black Feminists in New York formed the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). According to Barbara Smith, the specific issues dealt by the Black Feminist activities were of productive rights, sterilization abuse, equal access to abortion, health care, child care, violence against women, rape, battering, sexual harassment, welfare rights, lesbian and gay rights, police brutality, anti-racism, preserving environment etc. (*A Study: Alice Walker* 26-27)

This segregation is obvious in *The Color Purple*. Sofia is imprisoned and punished to servitude, because she is coloured. Womanism a reaction to the realization that "Feminism" does not encompass the perspectives of Black women. According to Alice Walker, Womanist theology is a prophetic voice concerned about the well-being of the entire African American community, male and female, adults and children. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impending black

women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppressions based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability and caste.

Alice Walker's works have been an expression of splendour and love of life. It brings a racial and often class-located experience to the gendered experience suggested by feminism. Womanist Existentialism defines "womanism" as an essence seeking understanding. It is the neglect of "the given" and the realization of the pre-given. It is an existential approach to determine the nature of being coloured. Celie as well as the other characters realizes her individual identity in a male dominant society. The word "existence" comes from the Latin word "exitere" (meaning "to stand out"). When the segregated could stand out from the boundaries of the "given being," they would be able to realize their pre-given essence. The essence seeking understanding is not the denial of the pre-given essence rather it is a quest to realize the pre-given essence. The quest for realization which is resulted from absence, anxiety and freedom of choice is a process through which essence becomes more clear. A wo/man should determine the essence of existence. One feels nothing that never dare to and to be is to not be.

Each wo/man has "a wo/man" inside. S/he becomes a wo/man when s/he realizes and determines a wo/man. The manifestation of being is dependent on the realization of essence. Therefore Womanist Existentialism is an essence seeking understanding that leads to be "to become" and to become "to be."

The human situation for the existentialist is thus characterised by 'Facticity' (thrownness), Anxiety and Despair. We find ourselves existing in a world not of our own making and indifferent to our concerns. We are not the source of our existence, but find ourselves thrown in to a world we don't control and didn't choose. We are faced with the lack of any external source of value and determination. We are faced with responsibility of choosing our own nature and values and in doing so; we must face the responsibility of choosing human nature and values for humankind in our free choices. This situation describes 'angst'. In seeing the contrast between the worlds we are thrown into and which we cannot control and the absolute freedom we have to create ourselves, we must despair of any hope of external value or determination and restrict ourselves to what is under our own control. (*In Quest of Essence* 20)

Womanist Existential crisis is a stage of development at which a woman questions the foundations of "the patriarchal womanity." Walker knew that at the time she wrote this novel (*The Color Purple*), black women had no voice. It is through this novel she tried to voice their feelings. She had to face severe criticism from black community for the portrayal of black male as rapists, powerless and oppressive. Walker is not only concerned with finding a voice but also of creating one's own identity through another weak character Squeak or Mary Agnes in the novel epitomizing this transformation. Squeak was Harpo's girl friend when Sofia had left him. It was not until she told Harpo "shut up Harpo, I'm telling it," that affirms her voice and then affirms her identity by saying "My name Mary Agnes." (72) Alice Walker narrates the pitiful conditions in which the protagonist-Celie- was born and brought up. *The Color Purple* describes the complexity of the problems of black woman in America and illustrates their free will to decide their individuality. The characters in the novel are able to accept the changes and therefore attain a state of transformation. "It is all I can do not cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you are a tree. That's how I know trees fear man (23). It like the trees all round the house draw themselves up tall for a better look (41).

In the first quotation the tree is represented as emotionally dead, helpless and passive like Celie. But later when she becomes to be she realizes that trees are hard. It is Shug who stirs Celie from an apathetic and unemotional piece of wood almost to the point of thinking as an individual. Celie enters to an essence seeking understanding and proclaims her being. The development of the protagonist to a woman is the result of freedom, responsibility, free will and overcoming identity crisis, segregation and discrimination. Celie defines her own meaning in life. She recognizes her role in the order and realizes the vitality to be “to be.” Existence is not prior to essence. Essence and existence are juxtaposed. To be is necessary to become and to become is necessary “to be.” Essence is how it is seen or ascribed to. At first “is” and later man defines “man is.” Therefore it is not the denial of “essence.” Existence and essence are like two sides of a coin. One never exists without the other.

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RADICAL APPROACH TO RACISM, SEXISM, AND GENDER ISSUES IN *THE COLOR PURPLE*

Ms. M. John Suganya

African American Literature is the literature from America produced by writers of African descent. The origin of this genre can be traced back to eighteenth century writers like Philips Whitely and Olaudah Equiano, who became noted with slave narratives and the Harlem Renaissance. African American literature developed and established itself with authors such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Walter Mosley who are ranked as the top writers in the United States. This genre is accepted as an integral part of American literature today. This special kind of literature has generally focused on themes of particular interest to black people in the United States.

Alice Walker was born in Entonton, Georgia, as the daughter of Willie Lee and Minnie Talluah Grant Walker. Educated at Spelman and Sarah Lawrence College, Walker was an active participant in the Civil Rights Movement, working on voter registration in Georgia and for the Head Start program in Mississippi, as well as for the department of welfare in New York City. She has taught at Jackson State College in the 1960s, and at Tougaloo College, Wellesley College, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of California at Berkeley, and Brandeis University for varied intervals in the 1970's. She has won several awards for her work, most notably the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the National Book Award, both for *The Color Purple* in 1983. Walker has published five novels, and it is her novels that have secured her reputation for the larger public: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *Meridian* (1976), *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992).

The lives of African American women have been critically affected by racism, sexism and, classism, which imposed societal and psychological restriction upon them. The racist, sexist and classist structure of the American society compartmentalizes its various ethnic groups, denigrating the coloured as inferior and marginalizing black women for their 'inferior' race and gender. What prevailed was a system of unequal power and privilege where humans are divided into groups or "races" with social rewards unevenly distributed to groups based on their racial classification. Variations of racism include institutionalized racism, scientific racism, and everyday racism.

"In The United States, racial segregation constitutes a fundamental principle of how racism is organized" (*Black Feminist Thought* 300). Black Feminism is the acknowledgement that women of colour have been oppressed by sexism and racism, that there was a failure to recognize and address these issues in the Feminist Movement and the Black Liberation Movement, and that women of colour have their own agenda that neither movement can take on. "Black Feminism focuses on the experiences, needs, and desires of women of color" (*Out of the Revolution* 193).

The Color Purple is a novel that begins with a fourteen-year-old girl's cry for help. Celie has suffered repeated rapes and brutal beatings by the man she believes is her father, Alphonso, who tells her, in the novel's opening line, "You better not never tell nobody but God (42)." Celie, the protagonist in the novel is a poor, uneducated and very plain looking fourteen year old, living in the South of America. Narrated through the voice of Celie, *The Color Purple* is an epistolary novel – a work structured through a series of letters. Celie writes about the misery of childhood incest, physical abuse, and loneliness in her letters to God. After being repeatedly raped by her stepfather, Celie is forced to marry a widowed farmer

with three children. Yet, her deepest hopes are realized with the help of a loving community of women, including her husband's mistress, Shug Avery, and Celie's sister, Nettie. Celie gradually learns to see herself as a desirable woman, a healthy and valuable part of the universe. *The Color Purple* brings components of nineteenth century slave autobiography and sentimental fiction together with a confessional narrative of sexual awakening.

The novel portrays the transformation of Celie from a dejected victim to a vibrant and independent entrepreneur. Celie's most noticeable change is in the ways she relates to traditional gender roles throughout the novel. "Initially, Celie believes that being a woman inescapably means that she has to serve and obey men and she is thus a victim of patriarchy. She is eventually introduced to another way of living by the strong female characters of Sofia and Shug who embrace her in a kind of sisterhood, which is a way for oppressed women to resist patriarchy" (*The Emancipation of Celie* 12).

Alice Walker asserts that the American society is a racist, sexist and colourist capitalist society which operates on the basis of unnatural hierarchical distinctions. The oppression of Black women by their husbands, brothers, lovers and laymen is an outcome of this system. *The Color Purple* became a controversial novel because of its strong indictment of the racism and sexism that victimized African-American women in the rural American South. Yet it is also the story of the growth and development of the central character from an ignorant, abused teenager to an accomplished woman who has learned to stand up for herself and cope with her hostile surroundings. The theme is liberation, as brought about by Celie's desire to learn and to improve herself. *The Color Purple* is a novel of celebration of heroism of black women who fight to escape from the yoke of forced identities that drives them along paths they have not chosen. The title itself signifies a celebration of beauty, the pleasure of living and how that celebration is at the centre of spiritual and personal growth. It also symbolizes the bold spirit of the black women and her commitment to her sexuality.

Although far more sensitive to social constraints pertaining to race and class than the average white critic, black critics, too, saw the subject-black or white-as essentially free and as an autonomous moral agent, able to transcend the limitations imposed by time, place, and colour. "The relations between the white majority and black minority could be written in terms of class relations, with the black minority kept subservient by ideology. In *The Color Purple*, the heroine, who ends as a successful entrepreneur, stays within an individualist, capitalist frame and is therefore not fully liberated." (*Literary Theory* 110)

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**AMERICAN POETRY IN THE AGE OF TERROR: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO EMMANUEL ORTIZ' S SELECT POEMS**

Mr. Jouhar K.

Poetry has thrived even during times of crisis. Thousands of poems were written immediately after the attack on the twin towers. Some online platforms like Poetry.com published more than fifty thousand poems which reflected the shock, trauma, and pain of the victims. Poems by some writers like Amiri Baraka and Emmanuel Ortiz triggered controversy since they made an attempt to juxtapose terror on 11 September with other instances of terror in American history. This paper attempts to critically investigate the representation of terror and related trauma in post 9/11 American poetry in general, and Ortiz' "A Moment of Silence" and "And I Want to Write an Anti-War poem, But...", in particular, using the theoretical framework of subaltern studies. Emmanuel Ortiz (born 1974) is a Chicano/Puerto Rican/Irish-American poet and activist.

The political and social functions of poetry have eclipsed its aesthetic dimensions in the post 9/11 scenario. Recent scholarship in poetry pays attention to its social and cultural contexts to foreground its political significance in times of conflict. Gubar, who has studied holocaust poetry in depth argues that poetry plays an important role in times of crisis. According to her poetry conveys both a "mysterious reluctance to illuminate" and "flickering, fitful bursts of meaning" (xvi). She notes that in its tendencies to abrogate narrative coherence, poetry does psychological, political, aesthetic, and ethical work without laying claim to experience or comprehension in its totality. Gubar suggests that the poets can provide "spurts of vision, moments of truth, and baffling but nevertheless powerful pictures of scenes unassimilated into an explanatory plot." In *Poetry After Auschwitz*, Susan Gubar writes that, in studying poetry written about the Holocaust after 1945, she is mapping out new scholarly terrain and "has no safety net of others' criticisms" (xvii). The observation is valid in the study of post 9/11 poetry. This paper is an attempt to map out the politics and poetics of some of the post 9/11 poems which captured the quintessence of trauma of the victims of September 11.

Poetry is the language of the heart. It can capture and conceptualize the emotional and spiritual trauma better than prose. This fact might account for the proliferation of poems after moments of inner turmoil, be it personal, political or cultural. The rather controversial comment by Adorno that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric was indeed a puzzled reaction to the huge volumes of verse published in various formats by writers from various parts of the globe in response to the persecution of Jews. There was a similar trend in the aftermath of September 11.

We are living in an age in which the divide between private sphere and public sphere is rather blurred. The most personal thing is posted in the social media, making the private a public event. On the other hand, the public event intrudes into our personal realm through media like television and internet. In the age of live telecasting and streaming, a foreign capital might be closer to us in proximity than the town in the neighborhood. This problematizes the very question of distance and proximity. The attack on twin towers generated heated discussion all over the globe because it was an event which was reenacted umpteen number of times on TV in our drawing rooms. We were all participants and witnesses of an event which happened in a country in a different continent thousands of kilometers away. Unlike in the past, when even a public event impacted a few hundreds or thousands, this event directly became a major part of everyday discourses of people in almost all continents. The definitions of witness became all the

more problematic since some who witnessed the event on TV saw it more clearly and some of them were more traumatized than those who were actually there. The Bush doctrine that you are either with us or with them sounded schizotypic to a world which was too puzzled and traumatized that taking a position was not only problematic but also impossible.

The basic edifice of trauma theory was built on narratives of trauma related to the holocaust in Germany. The contours of trauma theory need to be redrawn so as to accommodate discussion on trauma in the post 9/11 period since millions were traumatized in different degrees in different parts of the world. This group included not only the survivors, the injured, the spectators who were actually there, the bystanders, the police and paramedics but also those who saw the live telecast or the recorded clippings in internet or other digital media devices. The number of victims in an extended sense is voluminous and the emotional trauma varied. New modalities were to be developed to explore and theorize the modalities of the quintessence of trauma in such new contexts.

Trauma might lead to physical, emotional and at times even intellectual reflections. It might generate anxiety, pain, frustrations, anger and even in some cases neurosis and psychosis. In moments of emotional anxiety, our language might often fail us and we communicate in tears and sighs. We come to know more about the trauma of victims through photographs which encapsulate the pain more powerfully than hundreds of newspaper articles. In this paper the attempt is to elucidate on the reflections on trauma in the light of select September 11 poems. These poems are written by victims who experienced trauma in an extended sense and their audience also comprised of victims of trauma.

Because of the popularity of new media like the Internet and social media, even personal mediation in verse got much attraction. On certain online platforms, more than fifty thousand poems were published—some of them reflected the shock, trauma, anger, frustration, pain and hopelessness in verse which defied conventional norms of poesy. Celebrated writers used their pen to probe some philosophical and political questions through their poems. The poems that have been chosen for detailed analysis are “The Dead of September 11” by Toni Morrison, “Alabanza: In Praise of Local 100” by Martín Espada, and “Photograph of September 11” by Awa Szymborska. The similarities and differences in themes, styles, and structure of these poems are also looked at closely in this paper. The paper attempts to study the intermingling of the personal and the political in these. The modalities used by the poets to capture the quintessence of trauma are put to critical scrutiny. The political, aesthetic, social, cultural, and the cathartic dimensions of these poems are also looked at closely. An attempt is also made to explore using poetry as a site of resistance.

Human memory is predominantly visual, and we tend to think in images. Certain images associated with violence encapsulate the quintessence of the event more powerfully than other narratives. One shocking image closely associated with the collapse of the twin towers was that of falling men and women from the top floors. The poem “Photograph from September 11” presents that vivid image in detail. The relevance of a poem to describe a photograph when the actual photograph which speaks for itself is available might be a little problematic for the casual observers. But poetry is more than images; it is an attempt to think through images by transforming, translating and attributing meaning to them. A photograph is a finished product, but a poem remains a fluid entity always amenable to diverse and at times even conflicting interpretations.

The poet begins by capturing the jump. “They jumped from burning floors—One, two, a few more” (1). Jumping is different from falling since it is a conscious choice. The decision to jump down from top

floors indeed is a testimony of these peoples' will to struggle against all odds. At the same time, it also reflects their helplessness since at the time of jumping the entire floor was engulfed in flames. The permanence of art achieved by arresting the passage of time is indeed a topic of the most beautiful romantic poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by Keats. In contrast to those sensuous images of a man about to kiss his beloved, we have in this poem the most shocking image of a falling man. The photograph speaks more about the absence than about presence. There are no drops of blood in the photograph, but as the poet says the blood is well hidden. That the pockets contained keys and coins are remarkable. Keys stand for physical security and money stands for financial security. But, in a moment of shock, the helplessness of man is revealed.

The poet's refusal to add a last line might be interpreted as the inability of the public to come to terms with gravity of the situation. Not adding a last line is only a privilege in the realm of verse. Putting the cloak backward is impossible in real life, but arresting the flight in verse might help the reader to escape to a make believe world.

Another poem that has been chosen for analysis is "Alabanza: In Praise of Local 100" by Martin Espada. As the title suggests, this poem is a praise for local people, the subaltern, the faceless working class who perished in the twin tower attacks but whose name may not be even mentioned in newspaper articles. Their identity is reduced to the digits and statistics, and very few attempts were actually made to acknowledge their sacrifices. This poem is dedicated to the fortythree members of hotel employees *Local Hundred*, working at the Windows on the World Restaurant, who lost their lives in the attack on the world trade centre. The poem is indeed remarkable since it is an attempt to represent the under-represented and to give voice to the voiceless. That the faces or names of these hapless workers did not adorn the front pages brings to light the fact that the deep rooted class consciousness remain intact even in moments of great crisis. This poem is an attempt to expiate that sin committed by the society. That so many innocent civilians from many parts of the globe who had nothing to do with the imperial policies of the American Government were the actual victims sheds light on the meaninglessness and absurdity of the reckless brutality of the perpetrators of violence. The recurrence of Spanish word *Alabanza*, which means praise in English is an attempt of the poet to draw our attention to the Spanish speaking Latin American people working in the twin towers.

The poet includes even the minute details so as to defy the attempts to reduce these people to nameless objects. The mingling of smoke from two continents symbolically alludes to the darkness and confusion that has engulfed the world. The wars were fought in smoke or in other words "the ignorant armies clashed at night"

The poet does not focus on the political or social causes of violence are remarkable. The poet's task is to talk about emotions and the human essence which comes to the fore when we strip all embellishments. The movement of the poem from images of violence to images suggestive of peace and happiness deserves special mention. "I will teach you. Music is all we have" (12-13) indeed bodes well for the chaotic world.

Poems by Ortiz stand out since he uses poetry as a tool to interrogate not just September 11 violence but systemic violence in general. As Chomsky has recently observed terrorist engagements of America has not been adequately condemned or critically investigated. Emmanuel Ortiz' poem indeed reflects the trauma and grief of the victims of September 11. Before he begins the poem, he asks everyone

to join him in a moment of silence. His poem is unique because he does not treat the incident as a random act of violence, but as a different chapter in the ongoing history of violence. He seems to suggest that the only impotent difference between 9/11 and other acts of terror is the shifting of roles. As George W Bush himself has observed no major act of terror was witnessed in the American soil prior to this day. But America has unleashed many acts of terror in many other parts of the globe. Ortiz asks the readers to treat acts of terror as acts of terror irrespective of the role of the U.S. in it. All acts of terror are acts of terror, and any attempt to categorize and brand them might only complicate the matters.

Another much discussed poem by Ortiz which deals with terror and the so called war on terror is "And I Want to Write an Anti-War poem, But...". As a poet, he felt duty bound to write an anti-war poem, but could not. This confession of his inability to write an anti-war poem might be rather ironic because this poem of confession is probably one of the best anti-war poems written recently. The concluding lines of the poem present a microscopic picture of a war torn world. Ever since the war started, he wanted to write an anti-war poem. Since the war went on "For each of the last 365 days" he "has been trying to write" to condemn the war. He wanted to write more about "errorism" since war on terror resulted more in the death and persecution of civilians. The "Misguided missiles" missed their marks and left "brown bodies burning" and turned "soccer fields into battlefields." The war reduced "mosques and marketplaces into burial grounds." The powerful words in this poem capture the quintessence of the chaos unleashed by the state forces.

In short, poetry is a powerful medium to mediate on terror and trauma. Poetry on terror and trauma can be a site for both emotional and intellectual deliberations. These poets make earnest attempt to ask deeper questions about oppression and violence. They take the discussion on violence and trauma to the next level. The event is seen not as an aberration but as a continuation of systemic violence by other means.

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**LIFE ON THE CULTURAL CROSSROADS: A READING OF JHUMPA LAHIRI'S
INTERPRETER OF MALADIES**

Dr. Khusi Pattanayak

Jhumpa Lahiri (1967-) is considered to be one of the most critically as well as commercially acclaimed post modern female writers; a recipient of prestigious awards like the O. Henry Award (1999) and Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (2000), Lahiri is one of those writers of contemporary times who has managed to portray individual turbulences and tempests with subtlety and sensitivity that is many a times missing from the mainstream popular fictions.

Lahiri was named Nilanjana Sudeshna by her parents but the bibliophiles identify her with her pen name 'Jhumpa'. Jhumpa, who is currently settled in Italy, has spend her life mostly in US, though she was born in London to an Indian couple who had migrated from their motherland in search of better life. Probably it was this life of changing identity that made Lahiri so receptive to the finer nuances of existence that surrounded her. This change of life with geographical displacement is also a theme which keeps recurring in all her fiction. Her first book *Interpreter Of Maladies* was a short story collection that speaks about displaced lives from various spectrums of society. Her next effort *The Namesake* (2003), a novel (which was later adapted to silver screen), also deals with the dilemmas and disturbances that haunt the immigrant community. Her next offering , *The Lowland* (2013), another novel, decodes the life of two siblings, where one decides to serve the nation while the other moves beyond the national boundaries to lead a life of hope .

Though the central theme keeps repeating in each of Jhumpa's work, her début work *Interpreter Of Maladies* (1999) highlights the spectrum of her concern that torments the lives that find themselves gripped in cultural crossroads . The characters in Lahiri's stories, while struggling with their respective problems lose their 'Indian' status and gradually transform themselves into global Indians, shuffling and adjusting to the new environs creating an alternate new world. An acute sense of nostalgia (both of the past and the future) engulfs the characters and what bothers the most is their inability to express themselves in the standard normal nomenclature as an (un)intentional subversion of stereotypes and codes of conduct unveils itself through these short stories.

In the story collection, most of the stories take place in American continent underlining the gradual progression of the characters towards not just obtaining green card but also becoming members of the Diaspora community. Each of these characters (along with the old orphan woman in the Indian subcontinent) try to release themselves (at times easily and voluntarily and sometimes with absolute reluctance and difficulty) from the national identity and try to assimilate themselves with local populace. In a global world, though adaptability is of utmost significance, what makes the plights of these characters interesting, is the tug of war each of them undergo to unleash themselves from the memories and habits of the past while moving on with the present life. Many a times it feels as if the protagonists are wrapped in time, their progress is very superficial. They are distinctly plateaued in their own essence: Mrs. Das and her fish market connection, Mr. Parizada and his "time" fascination , Boori Ma and her stories of lost opulence, each of them coated in rhythmic monotony.

Again, as the stories indicate more often than not, it is a stranger who manages to study the cultural problem better; because the people nearby seem to struggle with the myopia of the regularity. These strangers fuse meanings to the non-descriptive life that many of the characters lead. For example, young Eliot cannot help but notice the religiousness with which Mrs. Sen applies vermilion or the way she uses the Indian blade to cut and peel vegetables or her struggle with learning to drive a car which eventually

would lead to her being accepted in America. Instances of such painstaking efforts as recorded in the stories also underlines “outsiders” plight to naturalise themselves into the hegemonic culture which is something that many Indians and others from the subcontinent would relate to.

Though politically speaking like any other country, India is unified by the cartographical boundaries, what one cannot deny is the variety it offers in terms of language, religion or cultural habits. That is precisely why the first generation migrant of the sixties (Mala) behaves differently than the younger generation of migrants (Sobha or Twinkle). Even the role of the husbands and wives keeps changing with changing times (Mala’s husband’s main concern was to protect her in the foreign land while she cooked precious Indian delicacies; Sukumar prepares food for the family while his wife earns the bread; and Lakshim’s cousin’s husband and Dev do not shy away from cheating their respective husbands). The religious beliefs takes a peculiar turn when Twinkle keeps insisting on collecting and decorating all the Christian souvenirs that she keeps unearthing from the new house, much to the displeasure of her husband who at some point categorically mentioned his American friends that there are Christians in India but they are not Christians; or when Miranda confesses that she thought “Bengali” was a religion and never realised it was language spoken by certain people in India. These fragmentation of culture or distortion of general behaviour is not only limited to ideological or moral space, it also revolves around social space: Boori Ma adopts a masculine role to survive her old age.

That brings us to the third and most vital aspect of cultural fragmentation -the linguistic (in)compatibility. Lahiri’s stories take on an interesting turn when they try to underpin this aspect. In Sobha and Sukumar’s household, silence was more welcome than human voices. Yet, on the other hand, Bibi Halder and her violent seizures articulated most of her desires; while Boori Ma’s truth (her tales of aristocratic life to her denial of being a thief) was constantly viewed as fabrication of reality by the world around her. Mr. Pirzada’s sophistication and intellectual competitiveness was insufficient to hide his struggle to recall the names of his daughters. Mrs. Das, despite her overwhelmingly unorthodox dressing sense and western way of life was able to express herself securely to a man who was a failure in terms of social acceptability and was beyond the sophistication that Mrs. Das was used to. Moreover, as Mr. Kapasia observed, the Das family as such did not seem to articulate words appropriate for their role; rather, they all looked like overgrown/ yet to grow siblings expressing (or not expressing) themselves in ways that did not appear natural from a strangers point of view. Then of course, there was Mrs. Sen whose linguistic competency is subtly put under scanner by the “local” Americans. Twinkle, who seemed to bubble in excitement for even the most trivial matter is incomprehensible by her husband. In case of the newly married, still stranger, Mala and her husband, a mere silent laugh acts as the building block in their yet to develop relationship. And for Miranda, the ushering of a compliment by a child that his lover showered on her, changed her perspective on relationships. In each of the stories the language of acceptance or denial highlights the shortcomings of each relationship that is under scanner.

In a span of two hundred pages, Lahiri creates a distinct sense of world, a world as complex and dynamic as Hogwarts or Middle-Earth or Malgudi. It is these extremities that is projected in Lahiri’s work which makes the stories special. As a passive observer and an active recorder of the individual lives, Lahiri spells out the various ways in which an individual may take recourse to isolation. Each story relies on a different voice and a different mode of loneliness to express a concern that plagues an unsettled world. This heteroglossia of voices stranded in the cultural crossroads that rules the story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, slowly but gradually provides a multi-layered perspective to life and living.

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THEME OF SURVIVAL IN SELECT POEMS OF MAYA ANGELOU

Ms. Kowsalya P. and Dr. Santhosh Priyaa J.

Nothing will work unless you do. (Maya Angelou)

Maya Angelou is an acclaimed American poet, storyteller, autobiographer, and singer. Through her writings, she explored many themes like struggle for human rights, stolen opportunities, racism, identity, and family of African-Americans. She has been described as “The black woman’s Poet Laureate,” and her poems are called “the Anthems of African-Americans.” Her poems extolled the theme of survival, and gave hope to the African-Americans. *Caged Bird*, *Still I Rise*, *Touched by an Angel*, and *Woman Work* are some poems of Maya Angelou that deal with the theme of survival.

The segregation between blacks and whites has existed for many centuries. The blacks were longing for their rights and opportunities. Angelou encouraged the blacks to get their identity through her writings. The poem, “Caged Bird,” states the attitude and experience of African-Americans. She illustrated that the whites enjoyed freedom, while the blacks are denied the same. She compares a white person to a free bird, while a black individual is compared to a caged bird.

A free bird could fly anywhere over the sky. It could leap on the back of the wind, and float downstream; dip its wings in the orange sun rays, and dare to claim the sky. Like a free bird, the white people were enjoying their life with all their rights and opportunities. But the caged bird was frustrated that all his rights and opportunities were stolen. His wings were clipped, and his feet were tied, and he opens his throat to sing. In the poem, “Caged Bird,” Angelou points out:

But a bird that stalks

 His were clipped
 and His feet are tied
 So he opens his throat to sing. (8-14)

The African-Americans were longing for their freedom. The whites showed their prejudice towards blacks. The blacks suffered a lot, and they were craving to get back their stolen rights and opportunities. They were raising their voice for their own identity with fear. The poems, “Breeze” and “Fat Worms,” refer to the hopes and opportunities of the whites. She claims that “The free bird thinks of another breeze” (23). The opportunities of whites are brought out through the imagery of worms, as “the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn” (25). The dreams of the blacks were refused, and they stood on the grave of dreams. The African-American knew it was necessary to raise their voice to get their identity.

The poem, “Still I Rise,” emphasizes the black woman’s ability to stand for her rights. It represents the tone of pride for the rights of the black women all over the United States. The poet expresses a mixture of emotions like anger, self assurance, and bitterness. The oppressors of black women presented a distorted view of them throughout history by the means of bitter and twisted lies. Though the whites treated them like dirt, they would rise like dust in the wind.

Maya Angelou wonders if her confidence has upset the whites. She raises this question because she walked as if she had oil wells pumping in her living room. Metaphorically, it implies that she wanted to receive the respect and love like the whites. She asserts that her hopes would rise like the moons and the suns, which rose everyday in spite of the odds. She compares her hopes to the moons and the suns; “Just like moons and like suns, / With the certainty of tides, / Just like hopes springing high, / Still I’ll rise” (9-12). She wonders whether the whites expected her to drop her shoulders down like tears from the eyes because of weakened soulful cries. She further questions whether her haughtiness offends the whites, because she was laughing as if she had got gold mines in her backyard. The white might shoot her with their words, cut her with their eyes, kill her with their hatefulness, but she would still rise like air, full of spirit. She would rise out of the hut of history’s shame and from a past that was rooted in pain. She portrays herself thus: “I am a black ocean, leaping and wide, / welling and swelling I bear in the tide. / Leaving behind nights of terror and fear” (33-35). The black ocean represent the black race, and they remain patient with all the troubles and hurling like ocean that bore in the tide. She would rise behind the nights of terror and fear. With her refrains like “I’ll rise” and “I rise” (9, 12), Angelou expresses her strong hope that she would rise, whatever may happen.

In the poem, “Touched by an Angel,” Angelou claims that the blacks remain unaccustomed to courage. They exile from delight, and lie coiled in the shells of loneliness, until love leaves its high holy temple, and comes into their sight to set them free from the bondage of a life lived away from the company of others. When love arrives, it would not come alone. It would bring with it, a train of ecstasies. The old memories of pleasure and the histories of pain would come back with equal urgency, when the heart is touched by love. Love would make a person bold, and eradicate the chains of fear from our souls.

The light of love would make them forget their fear. They would dare to be brave, and love was the only thing that would set them free from all the stress. She writes, “Yet it is only love / which sets us free” (20-21). Human beings were prone to fear and isolation, which make them sad. She suggests that love should be given and should be received. It becomes clear that the “Angel” referred to in the title is none other than “Love” (22).

“Woman Work” is a poem about a black working woman in the southern states of the U.S.A. It reveals that life could be horrible, but women must accept life, and try to overcome the troubles. In this poem, the protagonist does not have time to relax in between her various household chores. She must take care of her children, mend the clothes, clean the floor, shop and cook. Every day, she continued with her routine work. She must dry the baby, and feed him, and must dress up the little one. Apart from the household chores, she also had to work in the farm. She had to weed the garden, cut the sugar-cane, and pick bales of cotton. Back from work, she would clean up the hut, and look after the sick.

The protagonist reminds herself that she had to do much work in the day, but she did not forget any of them. She was stressed out by her daily routine and she was longing for rest. She was asking the rain and dewdrops to cool her brow, so that she could be free from her stress. The line reads, “Rain on me, rain / Fall softly, dewdrops / And cool my brow again” (16-18). She asks the storm to blow fast so that she might float across the sky, and could take some rest from her chores. She invites the snowflakes to fall gently, and to cover her with white cold icy kisses, so that she rest that night. She feels very lonely and hopes that the sun, the rain, the snow, the dewdrops, the wind, the sky, the mountains, the oceans, the

leaves, the stones, the star shine, and the moon glow were her friends. The routine works makes her crave for rest and company.

The African-Americans did not lead a comfortable life, and they certainly strived hard to live. But, as Maya Angelou's poems reveal, though the blacks encountered many struggles and pains, their hope and determination make them to rise and survive like the phoenix.

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RESONANCES OF MEMORY IN SELECT POEMS OF SYLVIA PLATH AND MARGARET ATWOOD

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Poems evolve through restructuring and sieving of impressions. These impressions may be latent or vivid, formed or deformed through revisiting memories. Memory stays embedded in poetry through images, ideas and thought. Instances or occasions remain isolated within phrases, exhibit meanings and acquire differentials through spacial and linear time. This general appreciation of poetry as an endeavour to capture and arrest time, yoke it to the past, bind it to the present and project it to the future or universalize it from a specific realm exists in all poetry. They may be a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquility as sensed by the Romantics or structured and deliberately sculpted pattern as devised by the classical or neo-classical school of poets. Or they may reflect the condensation of intellect as the metaphysical or symbolic schools attempted. Memory becomes poignant especially with regard to confessional poetry like those of the American poet Sylvia Plath whose poems reflect the churning of past and the resultant inner conflicts. On a closer scrutiny, these memories belong more to the archetypal collective than to the individual. A patterning of shared memories emerges when the poems of Plath are studied against those of the Canadian poet, novelist and critic, Margaret Atwood.

In the poems of Plath and Atwood, common thematic resonances as well as archetypal imagery collude: abiding concerns with death, life, relationships and selfhood resonate through myriad images like mirror, flowers, historical, and mythical motifs. Plath is generally categorized as a subjective and confessional poet, whereas Atwood is perceived to be less subjective, crafting the magical world of poetry with a finesse that is natural and intellectual. A shared range of issues and the vitality of images connect Plath to Atwood. Both poets have drawn from the same repertoire of images and many a time written similar poems. At times, they use the same and similar image to reflect dissimilar emotions and at other times, are resonances of the other. Both poets exhibit a preoccupation with what Marianna Hirsch terms “post memory.” “This paper traces the variances and commonalities between the poems of the authors in focus: Plath’s “Daddy,” “Tulips,” and “Mirror” and Atwood’s “Two Dreams,” “Two Dreams 2,” “Spelling,” “Flowers,” and “Looking in a Mirror.”

“Daddy,” one of the all time popular poems of Plath portrays the father- figure through ambiguous sketches, widely differing from Atwood’s image of her father in her poems “Two Dreams” and “Two Dreams 2.” Atwood introduces the picture of her father in “Two Dreams” as “In the seven days before his death / I dreamed my father twice” (1-2). She recalls how she saw her mother frantically exclaim — “He went into the lake, in all his clothes, / just waded out and sank / Why did he do that?” (6-8). The question echoes the anguish of losing her father as the dreams become foreboding. The second dream in Autumn — in the “cabin that burned down” (16), ends with these lines:

Such dreams are relentless.
My father is standing there
With his back turned to us
In his winter parka, the hood up.
He never had one like that.

Now he's walking away.
 The bright leaves rustle, we can't
 call, he doesn't look. (21-28)

In the poem, "Two Dreams 2," Atwood recalls, "Sitting at noon over the carrot salad / my sister and I compare dreams" (1-2). The poem talks about the dream her sister had where their father was blind and in Atwood's dream where their father couldn't talk. This poem reveals the attachment they had to their father and the inability to accept his death as final. Dreams become "...messages, / oblique and muffled? / What good can they do?" (18-20). Dreams arrive at night and Atwood realizes that it is memories that do not let go and cling to the dead, permitting them to revisit us:

The dead repeat themselves, like clumsy
 drunks Lurching sideways through the doors
 We open to them in sleep;
 These slurred guests, never entirely
 welcome, Even those who we have loved the
 most, Especially those we have loved the
 most, returning from where we shoved them
 Away too quickly:
 From under the ground, from under the
 water, They clutch at us, they clutch at us,
 We won't let go. (26-36)

Plath's poem "Daddy," on the other hand, reveals the fascination and dilemma that the memory of her father projects:

I was ten when they buried you.
 At twenty I tried to die
 And get back, back, back to you.
 I thought even the bones would do. (57-60)

Richard Gray comments that, in this poem, "the tension of the narrator's attitude to her father and other men, between fear and desire, resentment and tenderness" is seen. He also observes that the poet intimates through the poem that "the victim detests and adores the victimizer and is both attracted and repelled by the brutal drama of life" (264). The strands of memory woven into the tapestry of poems include images and metaphors of the Nazi Concentration Camp. The emotional undercurrents converge to the point of a love-hate relationship, and hatred magnifies with the "Nazi" image. In "Daddy," Plath revels with hate: "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you" (48-50).

Marianna Hirsch coined the term "post memory" to describe the ways in which individuals can be haunted by a past they have not experienced personally but which has somehow been "transferred" to them, often unconsciously, by family members" (Rossington 7). Such a "post memory" of the Nazi era surfaces in Plath's poem "Daddy" and also in Atwood's poem "Spelling." The father as a Nazi and

herself as a Jew portrays the central theme in Plath's "Daddy," occupying a space that the Nazi images lend to the collective archetypal memory of the poet:

I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene
An engine, an engine
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew. (29-35)

In "Spelling," Atwood uses a Nazi image metaphorically depicting the consequences of denial of education to women. It also presents how a woman's creativity and professionalism can be curbed by gendered bias. The joy of motherhood becomes a hurdle in the path of a career, or in another interpretation, the creative process becomes disrupted because of curtailing of freedom to women. The pathetic image of women in labour with their thighs tied, and the atrocity of the torture recreates the holocaust scenario:

I return to the story
of the woman caught in the war
& in labour, her thighs tied
together by the enemy
so she could not give birth. (16-20)

It is interesting to note that the memory of a flower at a hospital bedside has inspired both the poets to create popular poems. In the poem "Flowers," Atwood states that "Right now I am the flower girl. / I bring fresh flowers, / dump out the old ones . . ." (1-3). She places them on the table beside her father who lies "flattened under the white sheet" (14). She exclaims "Can't we do anything but feel sorry?" (41). To Atwood, flowers symbolize hope, life and happiness. She persists in her attempt to implant the flowers near the deathbed of her father. Flowers become a reminder of a lingering hope – a futile wish – of her father recovering from his illness:

There will be a last time for this also,
bringing cut flowers to this white
room. Sooner or later I too
will have to give everything up,
even the sorrow that comes with these flowers,
even the anger,
even the memory of how I bought them,
from a garden I will no longer have by
then, and put them beside my dying father,
hoping I could still save him. (54-63)

Plath wrote "Tulips" based on the poet's experience at the hospital. Her memories tag onto the gift of flowers she received while at the hospital and inspires the alternation between life and death. The peaceful surroundings of the hospital and the white sheets are in contrast to the dark red of the tulips and the agonizing memories that it evokes.

The tulips should be behind bars like dangerous animals;
 They are opening like the mouth of some great African cat,
 And I am aware of my heart: it opens and closes
 Its bowl of red blooms out of sheer love of me.
 The water I taste is warm and salt, like the sea,
 And comes from a country far away as health. (58-63)

As P. R. King observes, "The unusual perspective of this poem leaves the reader with feeling of having glimpsed a nightmare world in which everything has been turned upside-down and in which the stasis of death has been mistaken for contentment, the inevitability of nothingness misread as the boundlessness of peace" (174). The tulips belong to the world of living which is anathema to Plath who prefers to remain in the comfort of negation of life that she senses at the hospital: "I didn't want any flowers, I only wanted / To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty" (29-30). She describes herself as "a thirty-year-old cargo boat" (22) and states that at the hospital distanced from life and living. "I am a nun now; I have never been so pure" (28).

Mirror is yet another image that forms a repetitive theme in both the poets. While Plath uses it as a subjective rendering in "Mirror," Atwood uses it as an objective exercise by using it in the *The Journal of Susanna Moody*, the historical narrative of Canadian literature. Atwood in her poem, "Looking in a Mirror," says that, in the reflection,

you find only
 the shape you already are
 but what
 if you have forgotten
 that or discover you
 have never known. (26-31)

The search for the identity of the elusive self continues. The distortion you attribute to the reflection in the mirror or the distortion in the perception of yourself acts as binaries. Plath's poem "Mirror" describes the conflict of the self and the other thus:

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
 Searching my reaches for what she really is.
 Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
 I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
 She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
 I am important to her. She comes and goes.
 Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
 In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
 Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish. (10-18)

With both Plath and Atwood, recognizing the reflection is an ordeal and the mirror remains distanced from the self. The search for the identity only increases the sense of isolation and alienation in the poems.

Plath and Atwood have expressed the isolation and search for a solace through their poems. The anguish of alienation in Plath or the separation of loved ones in Atwood, the borrowing of Holocaust images from the historical reserve or the symbolic imagery of a flower in both the poets, or the fragmentation discerned in the replica inside the mirror reveal the patterning of themes and images in their poems. The divided self, the gendered psyche and a sense of futility echoes in the poems of both the poets. The concerns speak of negation of self, the dilution of meaning, and collective notion of existence on the fringe with just a handful of memories.

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**MACHIAVELLIAN INFLUENCES IN SAUL BELLOW'S
THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH**

Ms. Pearline Priscilla D. and Ms. Helena Jennifer

*Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the
utmost possible degree. (Ezra Pound)*

Saul Bellow (1915-2005) is one of the foremost American novelists of the twentieth century, and *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) has been called “the Great American Novel.” Praised for his vision, his ear for detail, his humour, and the meaningful artistry of his prose, Saul Bellow was born to Russian-Jewish immigrants who studied sociology and anthropology at Northwestern University and graduated in 1937. Bellow’s novels tend to be autobiographical, with their main characters often based on himself or his friends. *Augie March* as a picaresque novel was awarded the National Book Award for fiction in 1954. He has written a long list of novels, short-stories and non-fiction books, as well as essays, articles and plays. Few critics have praised Bellow, saying that the backbone of twentieth century American literature has been provided by two novelists: William Faulkner and Saul Bellow and that together they are the Melville, Hawthorne and Twain of the twentieth century.

In *Augie March*, Bellow establishes a new voice while attempting to lavishly portray the Chicago of his childhood. The story opens with Augie living with his simple-minded mother, surviving in the shadow of a father who has abandoned the poor family, a Machiavellian-style grandmother, an honest elder brother and an idiot younger brother. This atmosphere, common with the potential for trauma, quickly becomes the starting point for the exploration of Augie’s self-discovery – particularly with respect to women and love. He encounters a colourful array of personalities, and a preponderance of individuals who become interested in exerting influence over him including – Grandma Lausch, Simon, Einhorn, Mrs. Renling, Thea, Mintouchain, and Basteshaw.

Machiavellian is characterized as being cunning, deceptive, and of bad faith. It is based on the theory of Italian diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), who developed a code of political conduct that operates independent of ethics, thus disregarding moral authorities such as classical philosophy and Christian theology. “Machiavellianism” is a widely used negative term to characterize unscrupulous politicians of the sort Machiavelli described in *Il Principe* or *The Prince*.

Throughout this novel, Augie encounters Machiavellian-style individuals who strategically exercise their energy, wit and influence, and look to the material world for an understanding of their own. From early childhood, Augie lives under the guidance of Grandma Lausch, and as he grows older his brother Simon becomes a Machiavellian figure in his own right. The original title for the book, in fact, was *Life among the Machiavellians*.

Grandma Lausch is the first of the major Machiavellian influences in Augie’s life, described as “one of those Machiavellis of small street and neighborhood” (4), who teaches Augie to lie to the free dispensary in order to receive a pair of eyeglasses; additionally, she advises the boy to read novels by Tolstoy. Her basic tenets include: “Nobody asks you to love the whole world, only to be honest” (9); and “Respect is better than love” (9). Augie March begins the narration of his adventures by declaring his place of origin: Chicago. Next, he discusses the nature of the knock on a door, and how it can echo the character of the owner of the fist. Augie then quotes the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who declared that a

man's character is his fate. This opening immediately casts Augie's fate – as well as his character – as key issues. Augie then mysteriously refers to the suppression he faces in his endeavour to tell the story of his life. An inevitable quality of first-person narratives, this tendency towards suppression pushes the story teller to skip over details, revelations, worries, and disappointments.

Augie's honesty, a major theme in the novel, is immediately called into question when he reveals himself to be a liar, having been schooled by Grandma Lausch. She teaches both Augie and Simon that respect is better than love even as Georgie (the youngest idiot brother) wraps his arms around her legs, loving her with a pure, whole-hearted tenderness. Augie says that "all the influences were lined up for me" (43), suggesting the multitude of humans who sought to shape his life. After some time, Grandma Lausch suggests that the family place Georgie into a home for the impaired. The shock of losing Georgie, an embodiment of pure love, destabilizes the very foundation of the household. Grandma Lausch loses her tyrannical sway over the family, and in an ironic twist, Simon contacts Grandma Lausch's real sons, who arrange to have her placed in an institution.

When Augie admits that he has a "weak sense of consequences" (43), he seems to be hinting at his own failure to dictate his own fate because of his inability to accurately deduce the consequences of his present actions. Ultimately, Augie fails in his endeavour to control his fate because of his natural passivity: through most of the book, he allows various influences to exercise far greater influence over him than they ought to. He responds to human influence, but fails to sustain any relationships that require commitment.

As a high school student, Augie works for a wealthy, "superior" man named Einhorn: a cripple with an excellent mind. He becomes something of a father-figure to Augie, and Augie eventually becomes more of a son to Einhorn than his real offspring, Arthur, who aspires to be a poet. Augie idealizes Einhorn, the Commissioner, and Arthur as a kind of ideal American family, as they symbolize a progression from the self-made man to the lover of highbrow beauty: "the conqueror, the poet and philosopher succeeding the organizer, and the whole development typically American, the world of intelligence and strength in the open field, a world of possibilities" (67).

In the Great Crash, Einhorn loses all of his property, but adapts to the loss with the vigorous spirit that characterized the times. Meanwhile, Augie successfully graduates from high school. As a graduation gift, Einhorn takes him to a brothel.

In Evanston, the Renlings make a formal offer of adoption; if he accepts, Augie will become "Augie Renling," and one day will inherit all of their money. Augie refuses, infuriating Mrs. Renling, and returns to Chicago. Einhorn thus, points out that Augie is naturally driven by "opposition". He rejects each of these Machiavellian influences and clings instead to the idea of love, hoping to reach what he feels sure will be a special fate. In other words, there is something "pure" about Augie as a character. It may be his spirit of idealism (which borders on escapism), or it may be his transcendental faith in love, which finds so little encouragement in his world, but in the end the question is whether or not this kind of purity can survive in the face of the Machiavellian forces that permeate the novel.

Henceforth, he takes a miserable job of selling paint, but before long he runs into Joe Gorman, who offers him a job transporting illegal immigrants into the country. Augie only agrees to help Joe drive the car out East, but on the way a police officer recognizes the car and arrests Joe, leaving Augie stranded. He evades the police, and returns to Chicago by jumping freight trains and hitchhiking.

Upon his return, Augie discovers that everything has changed. The house has been sold, along with all of the furniture inside. His mother, now fully blind, tells him that Grandma Lausch died while he was away. Mournful, Augie goes to see Einhorn, from whom he learns that Simon borrowed money to put into a betting pool. He needed to become a rich man in order to marry his girlfriend. In the end, however, Cissy Flexner married their wealthier cousin, Five Properties. Crazy and violent, Simon spent a night in jail, and has now gone into hiding. When Simon reemerges from his shameful, self-imposed exile, Augie finds him fatter and less healthy-looking. Simon declares that he plans to marry into the wealthy Magnus family, and soon thereafter weds Charlotte Magnus.

One night, while Augie is making love to a woman in his room, a knock sounds on the door. He recognizes the voice immediately as Thea Fenchel's, and answers the door. The two are reunited, and fall in love. Augie agrees to go with her to Mexico, where she plans to obtain an official divorce from her husband and train bald eagles to hunt for lizards. Augie begins to understand that Thea has a very extreme personality – fiery, yet honest – but loves her anyway. They travel to Mexico, settle in her family's house, and slowly set about training the young eagle they have adopted. Ultimately, however, the eagle proves to be a coward; he is afraid of hunting. Augie, feeling sorry for the creature, keeps trying to train him; but after falling on a rocky slope and seriously injuring himself, abandons the endeavour. Thea tearfully sends the eagle away to a zoo and nurses Augie back to health while beginning a collection of snakes.

Augie finds Thea's hunting obsessions disturbing, so one night when a beautiful woman named Stella begs Augie to help her escape to Mexico City, he infuriates Thea by agreeing to take her halfway. Augie insists that he only wants to help the girl, but he ends up sleeping with Stella. Stella kisses him in the morning and thanks him, suggesting that he visit her someday. Augie returns to Thea, ready to lie, but she has already intuited what has happened. She ends the relationship then and there, and leaves that very morning.

Augie, in mourning, returns to Chicago to find that Simon has become a wealthy man. They agree to forget their past troubles, and Augie learns that his older brother has fallen in love with Renee, his mistress. Augie then takes a job as a research assistant for a stingy millionaire named Robey, who is attempting to write a book on the history of human happiness. Augie also begins to teach at a local school. His break-up with Thea inspires him to become more introspective about what it is that he wants, and he confides in his friend Clem Tambow that there are "axial lines" in life that one must be able to live by. He reveals his dream of starting up a school, living with his mother and Georgie, marrying a good woman, and raising a family of his own. In other words, his vision is all about love. Clem, however, responds that Augie really wants to be "king."

The war begins, and Augie enlists. When he goes to New York to begin training, he decides to visit Stella. They fall in love and decide to marry. Through Stella, Augie befriends a man named Mintouchian, a divorce lawyer in New York, who provides him with worldly advice about adultery and love. Mintouchian himself is having an affair with Stella's friend.

Two days after the wedding, Augie ships out and begins spending all his time listening to tales and collecting stories. When his ship is torpedoed and sinks, Augie manages to survive along with one other man, a fellow Chicagoan and the ship's carpenter. This man, Basteshaw, reveals himself to be a mad genius who seeks to unlock the secrets of creating life. Basteshaw decides that they ought to float their way to the Canary Islands, where he can continue his mad experiments in peace, and he ties Augie up

when he attempts to signal a passing ship for help. During the night, Augie frees himself and debates whether or not to throw Basteshaw overboard. In the end, however, he decides to let him live. Finally, a British tanker comes by and rescues them. Augie's suspicions about Basteshaw's madness are confirmed when he learns that they are nowhere near the Canary Islands.

After his rescue Augie returns to New York, and he and Stella move to Europe. In Paris, Stella finds work at an international film company. While Augie finishes his autobiography and manages Mintouchian's black-market dealings in Europe, Simon and Charlotte come for a visit. Augie asks Simon what happened to Renee, and learns that Renee had falsely claimed to be pregnant in an attempt to sue Simon for his money. In the end, the lawsuit disappeared, along with Renee, and Simon thinks that she is most likely married by now.

Augie senses Simon's disappointment about Charlotte's inability to bear children. Augie himself suppresses his own disappointment in his marriage to Stella, his rootless life, and his inability to secure a real profession.

Everyone around Augie finds a greater measure of success than he because they commit themselves to some pursuit or goal, even if it is not the most noble. Ultimately, though Augie has every chance to succeed in the world, he never does so because he refuses to engage in that world, and instead keeps chasing the vague "better fate" he has convinced himself he deserves. Through this Bellow makes his case that a sharp mind and pure ideals are of no value if they are not coupled with active pursuit and a clear understanding of one's relationship with others.

As he travels to Bruges with his housemaid Jacqueline, a ridiculous woman who tells him her dreams of traveling to Mexico, however, Augie finds that he can't help but laugh. The novel interestingly closes with Augie's laughter and a description of his journey with Jacqueline. Whether Augie will mimic Simon's actions is left up in the air – it is unclear why Augie gets off the train with her and does not continue on to Bruges. However, Augie explains his decision to land with the maid by saying that he sees hope in her. Given the many disappointments that Jacqueline has faced, her refusal to live a disappointed life is almost dishonest, but her dishonesty has merit: it motivates her to push her life in a new direction. Bellow seems to have belief in things that can change. Augie looks back on his own existence, come to life on the page, and sees that the diversity of his encounters has rendered his life a kind of discovery, not unlike Columbus' discovery of America. America is what one makes of it: it is a land of possibilities, in which each man struggles to realize his own, unique fate. Though it is left to the reader to judge whether Augie has been a success, it is undeniable that he has truly been an American.

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14. Mr. Deepak Jose Vadakoot, U. P. S. A, St. Joseph's H. S. S., Pavaratty.
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23. Ms. Geetha R. Pai and Ms. Devi K., Assistant Professors, Dept. of English and Languages, Amrita School of Arts and Sciences, Kochi.

24. Ms. B. Gnanam, Assistant Prof. and Head, Bhaktavatsalam Memorial College of Women, Korattur, Chennai.
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