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Editorial

It is with great pleasure that we bring to you Volume XVI of the peer-reviewed research journal, *Pursuits*, published by Research Centre For Comparative Studies, P. G. Department of English, Mercy College, Palakkad.

The articles compiled in this volume focus on various aspects literature such as pedagogy, marginalized literatures, epics etc. Study of English literature in present times is not restricted to literary texts alone. The scope of literary studies has been understood to include a close analysis of the agents involved in the production of a literary text. It has also extended to include other genres like films and other artistic and cultural expressions. The articles included in this volume are a representation of the multifaceted areas that engage the attention of research scholars and academicians. The papers are instances of the fascinating world of the new phase of literary studies.

We are grateful to the members of the faculty and research scholars from various academic institutions who have contributed to this issue. We also acknowledge the support and encouragement on the part of the subscribers.

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P. G. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
COMPARATIVE
STUDIES

MERCY COLLEGE, PALAKKAD

**“EXTERNAL DIRECTIVES”:
AN INTERSECTIONAL STUDY OF
*NAPPILY EVER AFTER***

Ms. M. P. Reshma & Dr. Nila N.

Black women have always fought for self-determination through the challenging of narratives that have always denied them their agency. Audre Lorde calls these narratives “external directives” in her powerful essay, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” published in her 1984 book, *Sister Outsider*. These “external directives” works in contradiction to human needs and identities and thereby manifests itself through homogeneity. There is an absolute denial of space for anything that defies its prescription, which makes intersectionality an indispensable way of conceptualizing experience and identities in feminist and antiracist theories. Based on standpoint theory, which focuses on subjective experiences, the framework of intersectionality is adept in recognizing the overlapping spectrum of social identities that can be empowering or oppressing.

Coined by black feminist scholar, Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989, as a term for the exploration of oppression of women of colour, “intersectionality” includes multi-layered systems like gender, race, class, ability, sexual identity, education, age and so on working simultaneously to generate experiences and identities. To quote Patricia Collins and Sirma Bilge:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually

influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves (*Intersectionality* 9).

The ineptitude of the first and second waves of feminism to recognize heterogeneity in identity and experience is directly responsible for the emergence of intersectionality as a methodological paradigm, to describe and define Black female experiences. Hence intersectionality has a long legacy rooted in Black feminism and has been widely used to acknowledge and express the complexity of Black experience and identity.

Audre Lorde's "external directives" are determined by the capitalist, white patriarchal notions that inhibits Black female identities. Black aesthetics have always striven towards the visibility of their identities and experiences and have been critical of popular culture for minting out derogatory stereotypes as a part of this capitalist white patriarchal agenda. There is a long legacy of Black presence in popular culture, fighting against these dogmas. Many movies have been acclaimed as an expression of Black identity especially focusing on the slave experiences or Black female experiences. Movies like *Black Panther*, *Moonlight*, *Love & Basketball*, *Brown Sugar* are but a few in the long legacy of Black expressions. However, all these movies are intersectional in nature, as they portray not a single system of power dynamics, but a congregation of systems that align to influence experience and identity.

Nappily Ever After is a 2018 movie directed by Haifaa Al-

Mansour and starring Sanaa Lathan. The movie revolves around Violet Jones, an advertising executive who has a perfect life in terms of career, romance and even her hair which is tended to with obsessive care. The movie is not simply about the lifestyle choices of a Black woman, but is a classic example on intersectional study of a Black woman's experiences in a racist and sexist corporate world. The movie is quintessentially about a Black woman's journey to embracing her wholesomeness primarily through her hair. The labels of being a Black woman with natural hair, is seen as a disadvantage in a society largely driven by white capitalist patriarchy. As a Black woman caught in a white capitalist sexist society, Violet has her work cut out, in order to survive and succeed. As an adult, Violet is shown as someone well indoctrinated into the white sexist notions of acceptance since she is constantly judged through the yardsticks of the many systems at play. An intersectional study of these constructions reveals the real predicament of a Black woman to survive in a white world. Intersectionality, thus prompts a reimagining of the Black identity from a multi focal point of view, wherein experiences are an amalgamation of different intersecting labels. Black hair is irrevocably linked to political spaces that determine the Black identity. This explains why during the days of slavery, Black hair was brutally shaved off by the European colonizers as an attempt to destroy Black identity. Working as slaves in plantations, Blacks had to hide or shave off their hair, as it displeased their white masters. Hence, assimilation meant survival for the Blacks, right from the slave days itself, because the wrath of the white masters could also mean death for the slave. Thus slave women straightened out their kinky hair, so as to survive. Hair remains a major preoccupation for Black women, even spurring up movements like Natural Hair Movement. It is also a significant part in discourses related to Black identity. Writers like Chimamanda

Ngozi Adichie, Bell Hooks, Alice Walker have written about black hair and its racial and sexist connotations. The title of the movie in itself is a revolt against the dominant notions on hair politics. “Nappy” is a derogatory term for black kinky hair and as a part of the Natural Hair Movement, this term has been adopted to represent black kinky hair, with pride. Hence, as suggested by the title, the movie is divided into hair themed motifs that charts Violet's journey. Throughout the movie, hair becomes a marker of Violet's power, despair, value and self-control.

Violet sees her Black self as a demerit to her success, a notion that was driven into her by her mother, right from her childhood. Violet's mother was always obsessed with bringing up her daughter in a manner expected from white mothers. Hence, Violet has imbibed the white notions of acceptability and spends a part of her adult years just practising her mother's lessons. A huge part of this indoctrination revolves around taming her black kinky hair. Black women have a difficult time negotiating against the power systems that drive them into fraught relationships with their own body. Hair becomes a turbulent part of this existence, due to the negative association that it bears to incivility. The depth of Violet's obsession with her hair is portrayed through her constant awareness of it, like being scared of rain or dodging her boyfriend's hand when they are making love. Her desperation for perfection is alarming and it starts taking a toll on her for the worse, when she gets her hair accidentally hosed down, hours before her birthday party. Self-policing is something that is imbibed by the Blacks right from their childhood. It follows them into adulthood and this becomes a complex network of patriarchal constraints and white capitalist ideologies. Violet is plagued by sexism and racism, which prompts a reimagining of Black identity through her experiences. Violet's mother re-enforces Black

patriarchal oppression onto her as a means of earning respect from society. This is revealed in the first scene of the movie where a ten year old Violet, with pressed hair is seen at a pool party. Unable to control her excitement, she jumps into the pool much to her mother's horror. Being the only black child in the party, she is isolated all the more when her pressed hair becomes a coiled mess and everyone starts making fun of her. To Violet's disappointment, her own mother rebukes her in front of her teasers. This instance has a long standing effect on Violet and years later she is found wondering what would have happened to her that day, had her mother simply hugged her and told her that she is beautiful, no matter what.

The movie portrays multiple systems intersecting simultaneously. Sexism is rampant in a patriarchal society, affecting both white and coloured women. But Black women are caught at the intersection of sexism and racism, which mutates their experiences of discrimination into a complex one. Hence, Violet is found confidently striding into her office turning glances and yet her façade becomes undone when her hair gets hosed down. Her damaged hair and breaking-up with her boyfriend kick start an unravelling process within her. Consequently, she shaves off her hair and even though she is scared and shocked at the realization of what she has done. But she also gets the feel of redeeming herself from an obsessive and self-torturing routine of hair care. Women cutting off their hair have always been a pivotal moment in movies and literatures since female hair is at once personal and political. Violet's shaving off her hair, is also both a personal and political statement as the act represents the unleashing of her natural hair and self.

Audre Lorde speaks of the suppression of the erotic through the “external directives” and urges women to free themselves from these debilitating systems. Thus suppression of Black women

becomes a suppression of their erotic nature. Lorde's "external directives" become the determining factors which engage women in complex negotiations with their body and their identity, often leading to a loss of their wholesomeness. *Nappily Ever After* delivers an efficient view into the workings of these "external directives" which inflicts the Black female psyche with deep trauma.

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**TERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE: REVERENCE
FOR AND RECIPROCITY TO THE WORLD
OF NATURE IN LINDA HOGAN'S MEAN SPIRIT .**

Ms. Rose Mary K. R. & Dr. Nila N.

“...to see again
the beautiful unwinding field
and remember our lives
from before the time of science,
before we fell from history”

(“Flood : The Sheltering Tree”, *The Book of Medicines*)

The poem “Flood : The Sheltering Tree”, in *The Book of Medicines*, by Linda Hogan, Native American writer, depicts her nostalgia and longing for her lost Chickasaw tradition and culture. She recreates a time when the earth had its “beautiful unwinding fields” untouched by the European Colonization. She reterritorializes a space and a time through her works, which is an attempt of the colonized cultures to retrieve their lost culture and tradition. This, in turn is a way of showing resistance against the domination of White European culture and practices.

The works of Linda Hogan focus on Native American communities and their connection to nature, spirituality and cultural identity. Hogan is an active environmentalist whose works reflect environmental and social issues. As she was born as the daughter of a Chickasaw father and a white immigrant mother, her mixed blood origin gives her a dual perspective, which is reflected in her works.

She got acquainted with the dominant white culture and American Indian culture. Her father was in military service, and her family always moved with him and the major part of her childhood days were in Colorado and Germany. In these times, she had a longing for her native Oklahoma and the Chickasaw tradition. The fulfilment of this longing is made possible through her fictional narratives. She writes from the perspective of both a cultural outsider and an insider. She uses the coloniser's language, which enables her to resist for struggle for cultural identity. In her novels, the writer conveys that the life of the land and human life are inseparable. This paper is an attempt to show how Hogan, in her novel *Mean Spirit*, stresses the idea of spiritual relationship between human beings and nature and how she argues that there is a primordial language shared between man and nature which she refers to as “terrestrial intelligence”. According to Hogan, “there is terrestrial intelligence that lies beyond our human knowing and grasping” (*Dwellings 11*). The spirituality of traditional Native cultures helped them to listen to what nature speaks. There is a kind of non verbal communication between them which is beyond the verbal language created by human beings. She refutes the western ideological constructs of nature by giving importance to the mystery of nature.

Mean Spirit, Hogan's first novel, written in the year 1990, is a fictional account of the life of the people who belong to the Osage and Creek tribes in Oklahoma. She blends the real historical event of Oklahoma oil boom of the 1920's, and shows how it affected the life of Indian families in Oklahoma which is also the story of exploitation of Indians by the White dominant society. The characters live in a conflict of whether to accept the traditions of the white world or to stick on to their native culture. The background of the novel's action is given by Lila Blanket and her daughter Grace Blanket. The setting of

the novel is Watona, an Indian territory in Oklahoma. Lila Blanket is a river prophet, a listener to the voice of water, a woman who interpreted river's story for her people. The Blue River told Lila that "the white world was going to infringe on the peaceful Hill people" (*MS 6*). She knew that a dam was going to be built at the mouth of the Blue River. The water must have told her about this. She went back to her tribe and told them, "It is probable that we're going to lose everything. Even our cornfield" (*MS 6*). She easily understands the warning given by the nature and she decides to send some of her children to learn about the White ways. She believes, "some of our children have to learn about the White world if we're going to ward off our downfall" (*MS 6*). Lila sends her daughter Grace to her friend Belle Graycloud's house. Grace gets a job and she buys a small grassy land. Michael Horse, the water diviner discovers the presence of oil in Grace's allotment. She becomes rich and she gives little importance to her native traditions and culture. She gives birth to Nola, who is not fit for town life. Hogan brings out the contrast between Grace Blanket and Nola. Nola like her grandmother talks to animals and listens to the voices of nature. She is peaceful and happy in the midst of her mother's people. Grace Blanket becomes the owner of the oil land and thus she becomes an easy target of oil thieves. Grace is murdered for oil. For White men, women are business investment. Marriages with Indian women benefit Whitemen financially. Unfortunately Grace's body also disappears. Her corpse is looted for the valuable things buried along with it. The plot of the novel progresses further with the investigation of Grace Blanket's murder by Stacey Red Hawk, an Indian Officer. While unveiling the plot of the murder, Hogan shows us the life of natives and their spiritual relationship with nature, their encounters with the White world and the fears under which they live.

Belle Graycloud is a powerful female character in the novel who can be considered as the voice of Hogan, the environmental

activist. She sleeps alone in her herb garden. “The Earth is my market place” (*MS 16*), she used to tell her family. She lives in her world of beehives and chicken coop collecting watercress and wild onion. Belle says, “I am sick and tired of oil drillers. They burn the poor birds right out of the sky” (*MS 6*). She becomes violent when she sees a truck filled with eagle carcasses. She removes the dead eagles from the truck. She breaks a window of the truck and with her bleeding hand she screams and shouts at the naholies who brought the eagles. Later Michael Horse, the water diviner, writes a letter to the President requesting him to take steps to protect animals. “The eagles are our brothers. Their loss hurt us. The bear is no longer with us, nor is the wolf. And it goes without my saying how the buffalo were massacred” (*MS 117*). He writes to the President, “We do not have a desire to see our fellow creatures gone from the world” (*MS 117*). The words of Michael Horse tell us how the life of Indians is interconnected with the world of nature. Hogan explores the world of nature with regard to its native mythological and spiritual significance. She highlights how close the lives of animals are to human life and she combats the human/nature alienation created by western thought.

Hogan also attempts to deconstruct our notions of bats and snakes. In native mythology, the presence of Gods and Goddesses is in the form of spirits and animals. In Joe Billy's words, “bats are a race of people that stand in two worlds like we do” (*MS 257*). For Hogan, bats have spiritual significance. She believes that they are the intermediaries between our world and the next world. Hogan conveys the idea of terrestrial intelligence, by giving importance to the spiritual presence of birds and animals. She tries to break the human/nature dichotomy and heal the alienation between human beings and the natural world. “The snake is our sister. It is wisdom to

know this” (*MS* 262), says the priest, Joe Billy. This is the terrestrial intelligence which Hogan stresses in her works and she challenges the Western philosophy and religion which is at the core of alienation between human and animal world.

Hogan's novels are an exploration of the dwelling places of animals, birds and native people. She depicts the cave as an important dwelling place. Caves are the places of healing for Indian people. It is a neutral ground, “a sanctuary outside the reign of human difference, law and trouble” (*Dwellings* 29). They are places of refuge from dispute that took place in the world outside the caves. Caves connect the present world with the other world. For Hogan, caves are places of great spiritual significance. Michael Horse spends his time in a cave to record the history of his native people. Belle Gray cloud believes that “Sorrow Cave” is the house for bats that bear powerful medicine to those who believe. She is ready to sacrifice her own life for saving bats in the Sorrow Cave. There are several instances in the novel where we can see this reciprocal relationship in human and animal world. Belle nearly loses her life, but is miraculously saved by the locket of meteorite worn by her. The native characters like Michael Horse, Joe Billy, Lila Blanket, Nola and Belle Gray cloud maintain a spiritual relationship with nature and they are also able to understand the non verbal communication of nature. The presence of a mystical group called runners who earned a special place in both the human world and spirit world also conveys Hogan's idea of terrestrial intelligence. They know the language of the owls and the ways of animals. Hogan maintains this relationship while describing events in the novel. When Stacey Red hawk, the investigating officer talks about the murder of Indians, Hogan writes, “Outside, the breeze shook the fiery red leaves from the trees” (126).

Hogan's native culture encourages her reverence for and reciprocity to the world of nature. In her works Hogan gives importance to spiritual history, where oral traditions and nature's mystery are given more prominence over western ideological constructs of nature. Hogan's respect for terrestrial intelligence is clear in her insistence for a more balanced relationship between the spirit world and human world. This balance is essential for the sustenance of both human beings and nature and a solution to the problem of environmental degradation. Hogan's writing has grown out of her love for living world and all its inhabitants. She writes out of her respect for the natural world. She believes that human kind is not separate from natural world. Her devotion to earth, land and environment reflects this love and inspiration. She requests our acknowledgment, reverence and reciprocity to the earth and its non human communities.

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KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *NEVER LET ME GO*: AN ALTERNATE HISTORY OF CLONING

Dr. Lakshmi A. K.

Never Let Me Go, the sixth novel of the celebrated contemporary British novelist and the Nobel Laureate Sir Kazuo Ishiguro, is a unique book in many aspects, in terms of its novel theme of human cloning, its technique of a “quasi-science fiction” (Menand), its creation of an alternate Britain where the clones concur with the humans and its allegoric meditations on the philosophical issues of mortality and futility of human existence. Published in 2005, the novel won a Booker nomination, along with the Arthur C. Clarke Award for the best British science fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award. It got featured in the list of twenty best novels of the twenty-first century, according to the Swiss news paper *Tages Anzeiger* and was one among the hundred best English language novels selected by the *Time Magazine* from 1923 to 2005. The novel was thrice adapted. The first was a British movie bearing the same name in 2010. The second attempt was a Japanese play titled *Watashiwo Hanasanaide* in 2014 and the third was another Japanese tele-play of the same name in 2016.

Popularly known as “sci-fi,” the science fiction is a genre of highly speculative, imaginative and futuristic literature that covers a wide variety of topics, settings and ideologies that are still plausible according to the scientific understanding of its zeitgeist. Based on their accuracy of details and heavy reliance on scientific laws, the sci-fi can be “hard” or “soft”. According to *Literary Terms. Net*, those texts that strictly follow the scientific principles of natural and physical sciences, written by scientists themselves and making nuanced predictions based on the then scientific and technological

innovations fall into the realm of hard science fiction. The softer ones concern themselves more with the laws of social sciences like anthropology and sociology. They are composed by literary artists and focus on the scientific possibilities of human behaviour. Right from the days of veteran sci-fi writers like H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Isaac Asimov, science fiction has been a combination of both hard and soft elements and has dealt with such diverse themes as time travel, space travel, aliens and extra-terrestrial life, parallel universes, paranormal existence, post-apocalyptic life, enhanced humans, mutants, manipulated DNA and genetic engineering.

Widely recognized as a novel belonging to the genre of dystopian science fiction and cloning, *Never Let Me Go* demands some reference to cloning. The National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) of the U.S. government defines cloning as a process that produces “genetically identical copies of a biological entity”. As a mode of asexual reproduction, cloning exists naturally in the biological world. The technique of grafting, for example, by which the vegetative propagation of plants like potato and banana takes place, is a type of natural cloning. In fact, the etymological derivation of the term “clone”, from an ancient Greek word meaning “twig”, brings out this horticultural connection. The NHGRI classifies artificial cloning into three types, based on the purpose and product of cloning. These are gene cloning where copies of genes and segments of DNA are produced; reproductive cloning where identical copies of whole animals are produced like the now famous Dolly the sheep and the therapeutic cloning where embryonic stem cells are cloned to grow new tissues in the place of injured and diseased ones.

Ishiguro combines the scientific premises of both reproductive and therapeutic cloning to create his parallel world of the clones. The

readers are given to understand that the clones are “hatched” out of murky laboratories and allowed to grow into adulthood solely with the intention of harvesting their vital organs. Some of the more fortunate ones get entry into boarding schools like Hailsham. Here an illusion of a proper childhood is created under the care of their teachers whom they call “guardians”. Ishiguro makes use of and extensive, artificial and euphemistic jargon to describe them. The clones during their school-going age are called “students”. Before becoming donors themselves, they are called “carers” and are trained to look after the donors who are recuperating in the nursing homes between their donations. Although it is understood that by their fourth donation, a donor “completes” or dies, the clones stoically accept their fate without any protest and none of the carers or donors thinks of escaping their destinies, by blending themselves into the lives of ordinary human beings whom they call the “normals”.

As already stated, the novel deserves multiple labels and problematizes clear-cut genre classifications. While the theme of human cloning easily connects it with science fiction, Ishiguro's favourite technique of memory narration by a single protagonist, reminiscing her childhood and youth in the nineteen eighties and late nineteen nineties, imparts the text with the structure of a what-if novel of alternate history. As it is, the text conceptualizes a post-war Britain during “the early fifties, when the great breakthroughs in science followed one after the other so rapidly”, thereby curing “so many previously incurable conditions” (257). This is done with the help of the vital organs harvested from the bodies of the human clones such as the protagonist and her friends. However, these fictitious “historical” details come only towards the climax of the novel, which until then carries the attributes of a coming of age story, involving student-life, the relations among students themselves, their

friendships, enmities and petty quarrels, their relations with their teachers and a host of other activities that characterises an ordinary student's life. They are under pressure to create artworks as well. The clones are also reminded to contribute or repay the society for their upkeep.

Divided into three parts, comprising the clones' childhood in the idyllic and insular boarding house of Hailsham, their lives in the Cottages, followed by the subsequent stages of their existence as carers and finally as donors who complete their lives by their fourth donation. The story bears unmistakable resemblance to the Harry Potter series. If J. K. Rowling portrayed her hero and friends as super-humans possessing magical abilities as contrasted from the unmagical “muggles” or ordinary humans, Ishiguro's protagonists are sub-human clones, whose artwork are, at best, suggestive of their creativity and their souls, the presence of which are thought to be proof enough to equate them with the “normal” humans. If Hogwarts trained its inmates with spells, skills and portions required to enhance their magical capabilities and coached them to be proper wizards and witches in future, the education provided at Hailsham was pointless, meant only to distract the students from the horrible fate and bleak future that awaited them, keeping them temporarily absorbed in the art, arithmetic, geography and Victorian novels that their teachers poured into them.

Like all the preceding five novels, *Never Let Me Go* begins in the classic Ishiguro style, with the first-person narration of the protagonist Kathy H., now a thirty-one-year old “carer”, with eleven years of service behind her. She is to be a “donor” in the next eight months, that is, by the end of that year, she would have served a total of twelve years in the capacity of a carer. As a typical Ishiguro protagonist, Kathy goes on to highlight her occupational efficiency as

revealed through the privileges she enjoys such as her car, her bedsit, her education at Hailsham and the recent sanctions to choose donors from her own people. Thus, she remembers how she became the carer of two of her childhood friends, Ruth and Tommy, as well as other multiple donors who were not agitated, “even before fourth donation” (3). This train of thought invariably leads her to reminisce about her childhood in Hailsham, her gang of six, the temper tantrums of Tommy D., the teachers whom they called “guardians” the Madame who occasionally visited their school to collect the best of their artwork for her “gallery” and so on. In all these descriptions, Ishiguro succeeds in creating the appearance of normalcy, letting us imagine that we are reading about a privileged public school, where the students are given utmost care to grow into respectable and responsible future citizens.

Apart from the weird vocabulary, the text does not detail the scientific premise or the technology applied to produce the clones, their pre-school existences, the models from whom they were designed, the expansions of the initials suffixed to their mononyms, the backgrounds of the receivers of their organ donations and so on. Ishiguro substitutes scientific accuracy by resorting to vague, ambiguous references to their asexual method of production such as “shadowy objects in test tubes” (256), whose organs helped to cure many previously incurable diseases like cancers, motor neurone disease and heart disease; and the reactions of repulsion and revulsion exhibited towards them by the normals like Madame: “she saw and decided in a second *what we were*, because you could see her stiffen as if a pair of large spiders was set to crawl towards her” (243). Here, one misses the comprehensive yet fictional Bokanovsky's Process of cloning described by Aldous Huxley in his *Brave New World* or “exogenesis” described in Poul W. Anderson's “Un-Man”. At the same time, through the legally aborted “Morningdale scandal”,

Ishiguro suggests the possibility of a modern-day Frankenstein taking the cloning process a bit further to create clones of enhanced characteristics, thereby bringing about a superior race of clones who can replace the existing humans (258-59). Thus, viewed as a threat to the humans for whose physical well being clones were created, Ishiguro's clone protagonists are, at best, a subhuman race that is thoroughly exploited by the dominant and the privileged ones.

Time and again, readers and critics have pointed out the stoic acceptance exhibited by the clones of this novel as they willingly march towards the completion or their assured deaths. To be able to complete the fourth donation is a matter of pride for them and to die early is regarded as a shame. This is evident in their conversations. Ishiguro explains this through a circuitous logic. The clones from a very early age were prompted to make significant contributions to the external society. They were held responsible for the healthy maintenance of their bodies and were expected to while away time between their donations in poorly kept recovery centres. This aspect reinforces the futility of their existence. There is a world bereft of facts, newspapers and other media except porn magazines, rumours and hearsays, so that the information they possess cannot be used by them. What prevents them from escaping their destinies by driving away in their cars remains a mystery throughout the novel? The role of the carers also remains a mystery. They occasionally visit their donors in recovery centres, with biscuits and mineral water bottles, holding conversations with them, and prepare them for their final destinies. If these clones were brought to life solely for the purpose of harvesting their organs, why is it that so much time and money are wasted, waiting for them to grow into their youths and training them to be carers in between?

This state of affairs leads us to problematize the very notion of

donation, as used in the novel. Ishiguro refrains from the usage of “harvesting” and instead resorts to “donation”. Apart from the willingness to give up the body parts, the term “donation”, derived from a thirteenth century French word, is an “act of giving or bestowing that which is gratuitously given, a grant or gift”, especially to a charity (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). If the cloned students of *Never Let Me Go* are donating their body organs to the receivers, it presupposes that they should be the rightful owners of those organs, should be willingly gifting them and they regard the human receivers as the needy ones that accept this charity. If the clones are grown as crops, cattle or poultry, meant for human consumption, we can allay our qualms of stealing their organs. Still, can they be treated as such, especially when they themselves know that these donations lead to their deaths and that they are indeed sacrificing their lives for the humanity. Similarly, if they are treated as “less than human” despicable creatures, the question is how can they feel superior enough to provide the humans with charity. They accept their destinies as irrevocable despite yearning to put it off for a few years and much of the text is concerned with the search to defer their donations and subsequent deaths. Like us humans, they too are apprehensive of the experience of death:

How maybe, after the fourth donation, even if you've technically completed, you're still conscious in some sort of way, how then you find there are more donations, plenty of them, on the other side of the line; how there are no more recovery centres, no carers, no friends; how there's nothing to do except watch your remaining donations until they switch you off. It's horror movie stuff, and most of the time people don't want to think about it. (274)

The only explanation possible to all these baffling questions

is that the clones of this novel symbolize the subaltern groups among the humans themselves, who are deprived of their basic human rights and opportunities to lead decent lives. They are cultured only to serve the selfish interests of the rich and the privileged. They are fed with illusory and obsolete ideas of sacrifice, responsibility and the need to make significant contributions so that they are unable to resist dire exploitation and lack the volition to disobey the discriminatory rules that are thrust upon them. Such subgroups could be any of the marginalized, labelled as the black, the woman, the transgender, the migrant, the poor, the aboriginal and so on, that occupy the fringes of the civilized society, catering to the needs of the privileged and the powerful.

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A QUEST FOR NEW PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND TOOLS IN DIGITIZED CLASSROOMS

Dr. Mini M. Abraham

Web 2.0 is ubiquitous and the semantic web is on the anvil. Digitization is taking giant strides forward in all fields with newer products and software perennially enticing potential customers. With such rampant digitization, the question arises whether the pedagogical space, especially that of second language learning, is keeping up with the pace of change. While there is an acknowledgment of these advancements in academic circles, at the implementation level, things still need to catch up. In the realm of research, most scholars have kept up with the advances, squeezing out maximum possible advantage from the digital bonanza. While prior and contemporary research has continuously debated on the general goals and approaches in higher education, this paper solely pertains to the arguments and recommendations towards second language learning at the tertiary level. This is in the light of the fact that the primary, secondary and tertiary level language learning is still largely traditional in its goals and approaches with only limited attempts at innovation and creativity

The changed socio-cultural and technological equations necessitate a change in the aims, approaches and modes of classroom interaction. A peep into the current state of academics, society and culture is pertinent here. The 21st century situation of most of the English language classrooms in colleges in India is similar to the situation envisaged by Cynthia Selfe, in the article “Computers in English Departments: The Rhetoric of Techno power” way back in 1988. *Our current use of computers in English studies is still experimentation at the basic level, with very little activity planned*

beyond the use of emails. As a profession, we are now fairly comfortable living with computers; we are beginning to integrate these machines effectively into writing- and reading- intensive courses, and starting to consider the implications of the multilayered literacy associated with computers (64).

So it is the need of the hour to apprehend the academic and socio-cultural trends and attempt to utilize all the available resources and incorporate it into the mainstream language education at least to a small extent. Furthermore, just as digital media are transforming every aspect of the way we communicate, they will inevitably shift the way humanities scholars conduct their research.

Today a plethora of digital devices are available with web 2.0 applications. To an extent the access to these facilities has even broken the social and economic barriers by bursting the elite myth at least in connectivity. Out of these, Twitter, a social networking service, is especially visible with scores of celebrities also using the medium to air their views. Twitter is often vilified as the final triumph of the attention- deficit generation because it limits postings to 40 characters. We know that the tweet format encourages brief, conversational posts that also tend to contain a fair measure of flair and wit. It is interesting to note that at the Digital Humanities conference way back in 2009, 48% of the attendees were tweeting the sessions(Kirschenbaum 8). Twitter, along with blogs and other online outlets, has made the digital humanities into a network topology, where one can trace who follows whom, who friends whom, who tweets whom, and who links to what. In 2009, Brian Croxall, an adjunct teacher presented a paper titled “The Absent Presence: Today's Faculty” at the MLA Conference in absentia as he could not afford to travel to Philadelphia to attend it personally. But he simultaneously published it on his blog. These events were

subsequently discussed in a series of cross- postings and conversations across Twitter and the blogosphere for several weeks after the convention ended. It was felt that this could lead to a connection to wider academic issues and spawn a culture that values collaboration, openness and non-hierarchical relations with a potential to become an instrument for real resistance or reform. These days, many of the international conferences allow virtual participation to delegates by giving them an ID and password and uploading most of the plenary talks on their website instantaneously. All this is a far cry from the conferences where attendance was noted and managed religiously. Moreover, with WhatsApp becoming ubiquitous, data transfer has become very easy and cheap. At most formal and informal occasions, WhatsApp is used extensively with great dexterity.

Since the attention span of the youth is supposedly on the decline, many writers, sensing the opportunity and challenge, are now using the medium of Twitter to tell their stories succinctly. This has given rise to what can be given the status of a genre- twitterature, an *amalgamation of 'twitter' and 'literature'*. On themes of adolescent love, teen pregnancy, and terminal illness, the story “Love Sky” became the number-one selling novel in Japan in 2007. Its author, Mika, wrote it one sentence at a time on her cell phone, sending it to her readers one line at a time. In a country where commuters read a few screens' worth of narrative between subway stops, novels are being devoured. In 2007, ninety-eight cell phone novels were published as books, five of which became best-sellers. A few, like Mika's “Love Sky,” were even adopted into movies. Recently, the Japanese cell phone novel market was valued at \$36 million. *Incidentally, a book named Twitterature has been published with humorous reworkings of literary classics for the twenty-first-century intellect, in digestible portions of 20 tweets or fewer.* Interestingly, the

book was published by none other than Penguin, as part of its Classics series. The book reflects the awareness of publishing houses and literary agents of new ways of story-telling (Rudin 2011). In India, Chindu Sreedharan began retelling the Mahabharata on the microblogging service in 2009, taking more than four years and nearly 2,700 tweets to finish "Epic Retold", published later as a book billed as India's first Twitter fiction. The ancient Sanskrit epic, one of Hinduism's crucial texts built of around 100,000 couplets, tells of a dynastic struggle for power and a cataclysmic war won by the righteous Pandava brothers. Sreedharan's Twitter version is told from the point of view of Bhima, the strongest of the five Pandava warriors. He is planning another version from Duryodhana's perspective. His work was hailed as one of the earlier works of Twiction. Devdutt Patnaik, the well-known author famous for rereading of the classical Indian texts like Mahabharata and Ramayana, skillfully told the story of Mahabharata in thirty six tweets. This has been considered as a remarkable feat. There are "twisters", and longer narratives, serialised over time, both originals and adaptations. London hosted a Twitter Fiction Festival for a few years. There's a wonderful site called Nanoism, which not only publishes great Twitter fiction, but actually pays for it. There are academics studying it, journal papers and book chapters being written so it is an evolving trend and there's certainly a readership.

Pedagogy and curricula remain the best avenues to assert, protect, and energize the role of the humanities in higher education, particularly via the general education programs. The 2011 *Horizon Report of the New Media Consortium*, California, USA identified digital media literacy as "a key skill in every discipline and profession" and noted that while some colleges and universities are starting to integrate these skills into curricula, the progress is slow and uncoordinated. A broader goal would be to foster and

institutionalize an inter-university conversation about teaching and learning with digital tools and to develop curricula and support practices that would best equip students to critically produce, consume, and assess information during their college years and beyond. As with the case of new media studies, the study of digital culture emerges alongside the increasing prevalence of digital technologies. One might also point to video game studies as a particular specialized field of digital research emerging in the 1990s, though clearly with a longer history in the study of games. The 2011 report further observes, “Digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession” and identifies this as the number one critical challenge facing higher education in terms of technology (Johnson et al., 3). Although there are dialogues and conceptual discussions in the academic circles in India about integrating technology, very little is integrated in the universities or undergraduate programmes in colleges.

Successfully infusing digital media into any curriculum requires rethinking the entire work of a course, not its goals necessarily but its actual transaction. Just as digital pedagogy explores the use of social media to expand conversations beyond the classroom and connect students with larger communities, humanities scholars need to explore the possibility of establishing networked communities and employing social media to connect with a larger audience. As with teaching, learning the basic how- to's is relatively simple; the challenge is adapting and modifying one's daily pedagogical practices to incorporate social media. Plus in many colleges in Kerala possibly many other places, the rules against the use of mobile phones in campus during work hours complicates the whole procedure. The primary idea behind the rule is to curb distraction, which is a genuine threat, but it inhibits the process of blending new media into the curriculum.

In the higher education arena, there is a need for a shift in the views of what education is for, with a growing emphasis on the need to enable and support not only the acquisition of knowledge and information, but also to develop the skills and resources necessary to engage with social and technological change, and to continue learning throughout life (Owen, Grant, Sayers & Facer, 2006). With respect to ICT, we are witnessing the rapid expansion and proliferation of technologies that are focused on creating communities in which people come together to collaborate, learn and build knowledge. At the same time, there are major social trends at work, such as the diversification of life trajectories, for example, multiple career paths, re-skilling and flexible working hours that are drivers of learning on demand. In such a digital world, with high connectivity and ubiquity, there is a need to expand our vision of pedagogy so that learners are active participants or co-producers rather than passive consumers of content, and so that learning is a participatory, social process supporting personal life goals and needs. Some of the redefined goals of getting students to write Twiction could be

- To use precise language.
- Develop the ability to read into and add extra layers of meaning
- evolve strategies to hook the reader
- develop characterisation skills including view point and voice
- develop structural and brief narrative skills

“Social software” is the fuel which drives the plethora of technologies which foster language change. It may be broadly defined as “software that supports group interaction” (Shirky 2). Current social software tools not only support social interaction, feedback, conversation and networking (Boyd 2007), but are also

endowed with a flexibility and modularity that enables “*collaborative remixability*” a transformative process in which the information and media organized and shared by individuals can be recombined and built on to create new forms, concepts, ideas and services. This idea is similar to 'tweeting' and 'retweeting'. Social software tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites, media sharing applications and social bookmarking utilities are also pedagogical tools that stem from their *affordances* of sharing, communication and information discovery. An affordance is an action that an individual can potentially perform in their environment by using a particular tool. In other words, an affordance is a “can do” statement, and refers to any application that enables a user to undertake tasks in their environment, whether known or unknown to him/her. According to Kirschner (2002), educational affordances can be defined as the relationships between the properties of an educational intervention and the characteristics of the learner that enable certain kinds of learning to take place.

Higher educational institutions are discovering that new models of teaching and learning are required to meet the needs of a new generation of learners. Today's students seek greater autonomy, flexibility, connectivity and socio-experiential learning. The affordances of sharing, collaboration, customization and personalization have given rise to a number of alternative paradigms for learning. The Personal Learning Environment is one in which learners manage their own learning by selecting, integrating and using various software tools and services. It provides contextually appropriate tool sets by enabling individuals to adjust and choose options based on their needs and circumstances, resulting in a model where learner needs, rather than technology, drive the learning process. Learning processes evoke a number of possible scenarios or

metaphors; Sfard (1998) distinguished between two metaphors of learning- the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor. The former views learning as a process of acquiring chunks of information, delivered by a teacher, while the latter views learning as a process of participating in various cultural practices and shared learning activities. According to the participation metaphor of learning, cognition and knowing are distributed over both individuals and their environments, and learning is situated in relations and networks of distributed individuals engaging in activities.

Pedagogy 2.0 makes use of the affordances of social software tools to enable connectivity, communication, participation and the development of dynamic communities of learning. Text alone is not always preferred mode of communication, as web-based multimedia production and distribution tools incorporating audio (podcasting, *Skype*), video (vodcasting, *YouTube*) and gaming capabilities are growing, and provide engaging two-way experiences for users, while empowering them as “prosumers” (producer as well as consumer) of the multimedia content.

As per Framework for knowledge creation in Web 2.0 (Efimova, McLoughlin and Lee), the following dimensions can be identified:

- *Content*: Micro units of content that augment thinking and cognition; learner-generated content that accrues from students creating, sharing and revising ideas;
- *Curriculum*: Not fixed but dynamic, open to negotiation and learner input, consisting of “bite-sized” modules, inter-disciplinary in focus and blending formal and informal learning;
- *Communication*: Open, peer-to-peer and multi-faceted, using multiple media types to achieve relevance and clarity;

- *Process*: Situated, reflective, integrated thinking processes; iterative, dynamic and inquiry-based;
- *Resources*: Multiple informal and formal sources that are media rich and global in reach;
- *Scaffolds*: Support for students comes from a network of peers, teachers, experts and communities;
- *Learning tasks*: Authentic, personalized, learner-driven and designed, experiential and enabling multiple perspectives.

New pedagogies focus on innovative uses of the technology to support what can be termed as “student content output”, engaging students as content creators in peer-to-peer learning environments, and demonstrating the application of the metaphor of learning as both participation and knowledge creation. Heutagogical approaches are being hailed by some as the next stage in the evolution of andragogy (Hase and Kenyon 2000), and are beginning to receive increased emphasis in a tertiary education climate where the value of textbooks is being questioned and the open source and open content movements are beginning to enjoy significant levels of support and acceptance. In tertiary learning institutions worldwide, we are witnessing a multitude of small-scale experiments and the integration of a variety of social software resources in pedagogies. For these to expand and flourish we will need to support innovation, and to ensure dialogue and partnerships between schools, universities, teachers, community and learners, about new approaches to learning that involve collaboration across organizations, sectors and disciplines. The growing acceptance of MOOCS by NPTEL, an initiative of IITs and various universities and the ministry of HRD's promotion of SWAYAM online learning platforms indicate a shift at the conceptual level. It remains to be seen to what extent the objectives envisaged by the course creators meets with the ground realities of the learners.

The educator has to constantly rethink literacy and communication in terms of greater general awareness of the range of emerging genres and their new shapes, contexts, speakers and writers. In the light of tertiary level language learning, literary and communication curricula rethought in this fashion should offer an education in which creativity in different domains and at different levels of representations is well understood and in which both creativity and difference are seen as normal and productive. As a nascent step, online assignments using multi modal inputs and new genres may be incorporated. As a more advanced step, one of the traditional courses may be replaced by a MOOC. As a radical step, greater flexibility may be brought in with flexible entry- exit- choice based courses using credit system. But these would require policy decisions. Thus, mild to radical changes should be brought into the curriculum incrementally, from concept to implementation for language learning to be relevant at the tertiary level, by extracting the potential of the new genres.

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FROM REBELLION TO DEGENDERING: A STUDY OF FEMALE CELIBACY AND MARRIAGE IN *THE MAHABHARATHA*

Dr. Sreedevi K. Menon

The Mahabharatha which narrates the legend of the Kurus has been observed by historians as a refined war-ballad that gradually accommodated the myths, legends, and epistemological elements of the periods it traversed over a long course of time. The two great epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharatha* have archetypal relevance that contributes to its socio-cultural importance even in the present Indian scenario. *The Mahabharatha* is an epic that has been subjected to several re-readings and interpretations owing to the social demands of the time, often necessitated by issues demanding equal opportunities to people of all castes, gender sensitivity and gender equality. What distinguish the epic from the *Ramayana* are its polyphonic discourses, multiple-narrative pattern and equivocal proclamations on gender and sexuality norms. *The Mahabharatha* portrays a gallery of women characters. While there are women who are passive and do not step beyond the accepted social norms, there are also others who exhibit radical spirit and engage themselves actively in politics, administration and domestic decision-making like Satyawati, Kunti and Draupadi.

Amba, the princess of Kashi, is a minor character in the first Book of the epic, the AdiParva. Her story appears in detail as an individual narrative in the fifth book (UdyogaParva), the “Ambopakhyana” *The Mahabharatha* shows the traits of *akhyanas*, *itihasas*, *puranas* and *gathas* which existed even before Buddha and which comprised verse and prose narratives (Dandekar 80). Since historians have claimed that it is these narratives sung by bards that

later formed the episodes of the epic, it could be true that the story of Amba had been in vogue as an independent discourse which later occupied a significant portion of the epic. The character of Amba stands unique in the epic for she rebels against three crucial manifestations of patriarchal social ethos, namely, marriage, gender discrimination and dynasty. For her rebellion, she manipulates the power-politics that existed between Brahmins and Kshatriyas, the two upper classes of the times. The paper attempts to study the space of woman in the age portrayed in the epic to analyse the institution of marriage and the rights of women in the light of Michel Foucault's theories of power.

Michel Foucault, unlike other Marxist theorists, focussed on foregrounding resistance to power structures rather than oppression. Although Foucault's observations have received much criticism from critical and political theorists, they received quite a favourable response from a number of feminists and other critical theorists who found in his work a way of situating power relations between men and women. His observations best suit those categories which do not fit neatly into the types of relations conventionally described within theorisations of power which tend to focus on the role of the state, ideology or patriarchy (Mills 34). Foucault's model of power is a bottom-up model that concentrates on the way power relations permeate all relations within a society. Foucault's model enables an account of the mundane and the immediate ways in which power is enacted and contested. It also focuses on individuals as active agents. Foucault refutes the traditional conceptualization of power as a possession exercised by a select few. Instead, he asserts, in *The History of Sexuality*, that power is something which is performed, something more like a strategy than a possession (94). Power is thus something that someone performs in a particular context. Foucault insists upon seeing power as a verb rather than a noun, "something

that does something, rather than something which is or which can be held onto” (Mills 35). Foucault's observations conceptualise power as a chain or as a net; a system of relations spread throughout the society, rather than simply as a set of relations between the oppressed and the oppressor. Individuals are not only recipients of power but also sites where power is enacted and resisted. Thus, his theory of power forces one to reconceptualise the concept of power. It examines the role that individuals play in power relations. It is an enquiry into the position of the subject - whether they are simply subjected to oppression or whether they actively play a role in social relations and attendant institutions.

When Bhishma abducts Amba, Ambika and Ambalika of Kashi, he adopts the strategy of the *Rakshasa* type of marriage as mentioned in the *Manusmriti* (Ganguli 1: “Adi” 155). But Bhishma abducts the princesses not for himself, but for his younger brother, Vichitravirya, the crown-prince of Hastinapura. In his excitement to capture brides for his docile brother, Bhishma thwarts the birth-right of the princesses, their right to *swayamvara*, or the right to wed the men of their choice. This was a freedom enjoyed uniquely by Kshatriya women. Bhishma, the celibate patriarch of the Kuru dynasty who is glorified for the sacrifice he made for his father and his kingdom uses the princesses to display his valour before the invited kings. He evokes terror with his unexpected entry and abducts the girls right before their father, the king. The assembled kings pursue Bhishma not to rescue the princesses, but to respond chivalrously to the king's challenge. The *swayamvara* thus becomes an arena for warriors to display their valour and the girls are reduced to a bait to be won by the most chivalrous.

It is only Amba who expresses her reluctance to marry Vichitravirya because she was committed to King Salwa. He had

attended the *swayamvara*, but was vanquished by Bhishma. Bhishma permits her to leave, but Salwa rejects her because she was abducted by another man. Amba returns and demands Bhishma to marry her. She is right according to the norms of the *Rakshasa* marriage because a Kshatriya warrior abducts a woman for himself and not for another man. Amba's agony points out a social system where neither the father nor the lover accepted a woman who was abducted by another man. The system did not allow a woman to lead a spinster's life and Amba burns herself after acquiring the boon to destroy Bhishma, the one responsible for her plight.

In the introduction to *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault introduces the concept of “biopolitics.” Foucault uses the term to designate “what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life” (143). It basically means that the life and choices of an individual citizen is a prerogative of the state. A state in the garb of a king and his dynasty and in present times in the garb of sovereigns and democracies, govern and control the lives of its subjects. When kings and dynasties reigned, a subject's life could any day be sacrificed for the sake of the benefit of the king or the dynasty. Now, in the times of the sovereign nations, this concept still exists wherein, the life of a citizen is controlled by the nation state, indirectly through its policies, laws and politics. A state apparently makes available for a citizen multitude of choices in the realms of personal, professional and social. The individual seems free to exert his choice but he is indirectly influenced by the state's ideology. The state's ideology is carried from a macro to a micro level through the institution of family.

The narrative says that her lover Salwa rejected Amba like “a snake casting off its slough” (4: “Udyoga” 337) because she was

carried away by another man. Ethically, Salwa cannot be criticised for that because according to the norms of the *Rakshasa* type of marriage, the girl abducted by an invincible warrior becomes his wife. Since Amba had, according to the dictates of the *Dharmashastra*, become Bhishma's wife, Salwa had no claims on her. When Amba comes back disheartened and demands Bhishma to marry her, she is rejected outright. Bhishma justifies his stand stating his vow to remain celibate, a vow he had made for his father when young Amba is left in a no man's land where she finds it impossible to situate her female self in the stereotyped spaces marked by the patriarchal social ethos governing marriage and celibacy. Her despair comes out as bitter words directed against the representative figures of patriarchal Kshatriya ethos - Bhishma, the patriarch of the Kuru dynasty, her father, who despite being a king, allows his daughters to be abducted, the man who rejects her out of cowardice, and God, imagined as a male despot who carves queer destinies for women. Amba laments hysterically: "Cursed be Bhishma! Cursed be my own wretched father of foolish understanding, ...! Cursed be myself! Cursed be king Salwa himself and cursed be my creator too!" (4: "Udyoga" 338)

But Amba is not a woman to give up so easily. She influences her relative, the disciple of Parasurama, the eternal foe of Kshatriyas, and incites Parasurama to challenge Bhishma for a duel. When the fiery duel extends for days together without Bhishma being vanquished, Amba loses hope. She then does severe penance and asks Lord Shiva to grant her the boon to vanquish Bhishma. She commits suicide to be reborn soon to fulfil her mission. But the primary reason seems to be the fact that the social norms did not permit celibacy in woman and hence Amba's survival as a single woman was impossible. The same society that glorifies celibacy in man as an example of his inner strength and conviction takes a different stand on

the single unwedded woman. Amba is reborn as King Drupada's daughter, Shikhandi. She is brought up as a boy because of Drupada's obsession to beget sons. To make matters worse, he gets her married to a princess who humiliates Shikhandi and sends her away as the latter's true gender identity is revealed. Caught again in a queer space marked by heterosexual norms, Shikhandi leaves to the forest where she becomes a man with the condescension of a Yaksha who, on hearing her story, exchanges his masculinity for her femininity. After the incident, Shikhandi is treated as a transgender and despite her competence in archery; she is not given the credit due to a Kshatriya warrior. Even when she becomes the cause for the fall of Bhishma, Arjuna is given credit for the feat. Bhishma, as he falls, keeps on repeating that it was not Shikhandi's arrows that had wounded him, but Arjuna's (Ganguli 5: "Bhishma" 303). Death at the hands of a woman or a transgender was humiliation for Kshatriya warriors.

It is interesting to note that Amba does not make any grave transgressions. She only demands her right to survive, and in all crucial occasions, she is unwanted by her father, her lover, and the man who kidnapped her. In her second birth also, she suffers a similar trauma, due to her inability to live either in the male or in the female domains of sexuality or vocation. Nevertheless, the alternate space she painfully occupies and sustains as a transgender, helps her to get even with the man who wronged her, but yet, her archery feat on the battle-field goes unrecognised. When a woman aspires to challenge patriarchy and the social norms conditioned by it, she is left either to perish or to undertake a perilous attempt to survive. It is this fact that is revealed through the character of Amba. Amba's tragic story seem to be a discursive attack on the lives of female Buddhist ascetics glorified in the Buddhist scripture *Therigatha*, (T. R. S. Sharma 112). *The Mahabharatha*, through the episode of Amba, counters female

asceticism and glorifies marriage as an indispensable sacrament, reiterating celibacy as the domain restricted to exceptional men like Bhishma because he had voluntarily adopted it in the interest of *Dharma*, the code of righteousness. Thus, Amba's mistake seems to be her attempt to intrude the male spaces of chivalry and celibacy and challenge the patriarchal mores of marriage as dictated by the *Dharmashastras*.

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**REVELATION OF HUMAN PREDICAMENT
THROUGH LENNY IN SIDHWA'S
*ICE CANDY MAN***

Ms. Clemencia Mary A. and Dr. Anitha R.

Judith Hermann in her classic *Trauma and Recovery* emphasizes that:

To study psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events. When the events are natural disasters of 'acts of God', those who bear witness sympathize readily with the victim. But when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator. It is morally impossible to remain neutral in this conflict. The bystander is forced to take sides. (7)

There is no doubt that some of the literary writers respond to this act in various ways. These literary artists represent the miseries of fellow human, by giving voice to put an end to violence and anguish. The fictional narratives of violence portray the multi-layered experience of the sufferings of common man during a war between nations or communal holocaust in the society trying to find meaningful articulations.

Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice- Candy- Man* (1989) presents the political reality of India-Pakistan partition through the lives of the various characters in the novel. The traumatic situation of the colonised land is enhanced through the narrative presented by a child. The child Lenny observes the changes around her with a child's wonder and innocence. She is the first person narrator in the novel, and is a four year old child at the beginning of the novel. The complete story is narrated by Lenny presenting the trauma and violence during partition of 1947. She is a polio stricken child, living in Lahore with her father, mother and her younger brother Adi. They are rich and belong to the Parsi community. It is an extended family consisting of

her Godmother named Rodabai, Old husband, Slave sister, Electric-aunt, Cousin and other characters. Servants who work under Sethi's family are Shanta, whom Lenny calls as Ayah affectionately, Imam Din, Hari, Moti, Papoo etc.

According to *Collins Dictionary*, Bildungsroman is a novel that details the maturation, and specifies the psychological development and moral education, of the principal character. Bildungsroman and Erziehungsroman are German terms signifying “novel of formation” or “novel of education”. In Bildungsroman, the protagonist grows intellectually and physically and progresses to maturity. They also recognize their identity in the world.

Lenny is not put in school because of her physical disability, whereas her brother Adi is sent to school. She is tutored by Mrs. Pen. Lenny spends most of her time with her young Ayah, who has many admirers like the Ice-candy-man, Masseur, Sikh zoo attendant, Government House gardener and other characters. It is from these working class characters Lenny learns about the religious differences and intolerance.

Lenny shares a strong bond with Ayah. She later learns about the pain, sufferings and betrayal of life. She is bestowed with capacity to comprehend and make logical connections. As Lenny grows up from childhood to adolescence, she starts to understand about the socio-political turbulence of the country. She realizes the hazardous borders between men and women, when she begins a relationship with her cousin. Lenny's search for identity is autobiographical echoing the search experienced by the author. Unlike Sidhwa, Lenny suffered from polio and had to spend a lot of time with servants at home. The novel opens with the beginning statement of Lenny, “My world is compressed” (1). Her world is confined. Her physical disability makes her an introvert child. She is often engrossed in her

own world but she is a keen observer. She moves to Warris Road where she dwells and frequently visits Jalil Road, where her Godmother Rodabai lives. Both are wide, clean orderly streets of Lahore. Her disability is an obstacle to her which makes her sad because she is not able to travel around. Her loneliness makes her observe the Army Salvation House on Warris Road “I feel such sadness for the dumb creature, I imagine lurking behind the wall. I know it is dumb because I have listened to its silence, my ear to the wall” (1). In Sidhwa's novel the 'I' is the speaking character. It is fabricated in order to state the “chronological truth”. Lenny narrates the facts and incidents in the present tense.

Usually, it is Ayah who takes Lenny to Queen's Park, where Ayah and her admirers interact. Lenny's private world is rudely shattered by the sudden appearance of an English man who demands to know why “such a big girl in a pram! She's atleast four” (2). Shanta, Lenny's Ayah tries to tell him about Lenny's disability in broken English. Meanwhile, Lenny tries to reveal the leather straps and steel callipers harnessing her right boot. Still the Englishman insists and tells her about the importance of self reliance. Indirectly the Englishman has enacted a political drama. Ayah could not recognize his drama. But Lenny who sees him as a “leathery and middle-aged gnome” (2) acts as a medium for Sidhwa to present her perceptions on individuals and relationships.

Another incident in the novel shows Lenny's progression towards maturity. One morning Lenny tells her mother, 'Poor Daddy works so hard for us. When I grow up, I will work in the office and he can read his newspaper all day!'(79). In another circumstance she says “as the years advance, my sense of inadequacy and unworthy advances. I have to think faster on my toes as it were offering lengthier chatter to fill up the infernal time of Father's mute meals” (80).

Lenny starts getting aware of her inferior status as a girl in a patriarchal society and the different and unequal expectations of her parents from her and her brother. Her subservient position in marriage also drives home this point. According to Sangari, Lenny's mother's behaviour “often placed in overly individualized private resolutions” (867) becomes a source of inspiration to Lenny. Both have a strong bond of intimacy that challenges patriarchal, racial and bourgeois conventions.

According to Ann Stoler, the “education” that Lenny learns from the interactions with Ayah, is an example of an uncontrolled attached relationship between a servant and child that she terms as “education of desire” (109). Foucault's phrase “education of desire” means that the subject learns about the “correct” expression of his/her sexuality. The word “correct” refers to the methodological analysis that describes any discourse of sexuality in a given culture. In her book *Race and the Education of Desire* Stoler takes Foucault's phrase “education of desire,” which refers to the development of emotional attachment between children and their babysitters. This emotional attachment can be seen in the case of Lenny and Ayah, where they interact within the “carefully marked boundaries of class and race” (191).

Lenny is bestowed with keen powers of observation. She visualizes all the changes happening in Lahore. Anita Desai, the Indian novelist compares Lenny to Oscar, a character in Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959). Both the characters are physically disabled. But their outlook is more or less alike, one that is characterized by maturity. Lenny sees people from this perspective without any prejudice.

During the partition, many people are forced to leave their places. Some people, in order to survive leave their home town.

Thousands of people, irrespective of their religion lose their lives. British Government failed to contain violence and people lost their hope in the ruling party. Lenny is shocked to hear about the murder of Mr. Rogers. Lenny is seven years old, she is mature enough to think intellectually like adults. When she heard that his mutilated body was found in the gutter she said “For a moment I cannot breathe. I feel I might fall” (112). When she learns of the dying people she contemplates and utters these words:

I know of death: a grandfather died in Karachi and his remains were consigned to the Tower of Silence. Moti's relatives are forever dying ... But they weren't murdered. Or mutilated. And they weren't people I knew!'How mutilated?' I have seen goats slaughtered at the end of the Muslim fast on Eid. I've watched them being disemboweled and, with the other children, lined up to blow into their moist windpipes and inflate their lungs. (112)

Even though Lenny's family members tried to divert her mind she was not convinced. She gets more agitated hearing about the news of the dead. A child will never see any difference among people. They treat everyone as equals. Lenny now comes to understand that “One man's religion is another man's poison” (117). This incident makes Lenny say that, “I experience this feeling of utter degradation, of being an untouchable excrescence” (117). She reaches a stage where her psychological trauma intensifies. She rages in madness. She is not able to show her frustration and emotion. Later she shows her agony to her dolls. She states:

I hold it upside down and pull its pink legs apart. The knees and thighs bend unnaturally, but the stitching in the centre stays intact.

I hold one leg out to Adi. 'Here,' I say, 'pull it.'

‘Why?’ asks Adi looking confused.

'Pull, damn it!' I scream, so close to hysteria that Adi blanches and hastily grabs the proffered legs. (He is one of the few people I know who is fair enough to blanch- or blush noticeably.) Adi and I pull the doll's legs, stretching it in a fierce tug-of-war, until making a wrenching sound it suddenly splits. We stagger off balance. The cloth skin is ripped right up to its armpits spilling chunks of greyish cotton and coiled brown coir and the innards that make its eyes blink and make it squawk 'Ma-Ma'. (138)

Even though Lenny lives a comfortable life, she is caught in the trauma of partition. Ralph Crane describes Lenny thus:

It may be that the atrocities of 1947 are best seen through the innocent, naive eyes of a child, who has no Hindu, Muslim or Sikh axe to grind... Lenny is free both from the prejudices of religion, and from the prejudices against women, and the constraints she will be subject to as she grows older. The authorial voice is a powerful voice of hindsight. (2)

In the novel, one can see a transformation in Lenny's personality. When she starts to progress from childhood to adolescence she gets physically and intellectually mature, which can be seen on her eighth birthday:

I open my eyes: and discover Cousin's bewildered eyes gazing directly into mine. He doesn't know if he is doing it right. Or when to stop. The kissing scenes in the films go on much longer. But I can tell at that alarming proximity that the muscles in Cousin's jaws are trembling. My neck, too, is beginning to ache at that awkward angle. Kissing, I'm convinced, is overrated. Trust Cousin to enlighten me. When our mutual agony becomes unbearable, Ayah suddenly slaps Cousin hard on his back. (143)

A child in her peer group often tends to explore new things. They are not aware of differences in gender. Their emotion starts to change, as they grow and undergoes a transformation. Due to the changes in hormones, they begin to see the opposite sex differently and respond accordingly. These changes can be seen in Lenny's character too. As novel progresses she says, "I'm feeling despondent. When something upsets me this much I find it impossible to talk. It used not to be so. I wonder: am I growing up? At least I've stopped babbling all my thoughts" (217).

Lenny realizes that she has become taller, her limp had almost subsided. She grows physically mature; she feels gratified and becomes aware of the opposite sex. She states "I feel so sorry for myself- and for Cousin- and for all the senile, lame and hurt people and fallen women- and the condition of the world- in which countries can be broken, people slaughtered and cities burnt- that I burst into tears. I feel I will never stop crying" (217).

The slow awakening of the child to sexuality can be compared to Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*(1901) and Doris Lessing's *The Old Chief Mshlanga* (1983). Lenny's growing up is noted as a loss of political and racial egalitarianism as she develops a sexual interest towards her cousin. It is her Cousin who initiates her growing self awareness. As the relation between Lenny and her Cousin mature she looks at him with new eyes:

I don't find you that attractive, 'I say truthfully. I suppose you're too young,' says Cousin. 'You haven't known passion.

I open my eyes wide and look demurely at Cousin, and let it pass.

But Cousin can't: 'Do you find anyone more attractive than me?' 'Yes,' I say, 'I think I found Masseur more attractive...' I surprise myself. Mouthing the words articulates my feelings and reveals

myself to me. (218)

With this freshness of vision, Lenny says “I look about me with new eyes. The world is athrob with men” (219). She is also aware that she has physically grown up. She says, “Flesh of my flesh, exclusively mine. And I am hard to put to protect them; I guard them with possessive passion... I can't trust anyone” (219). It can be rightly said that, Lenny becomes aware of both her sexuality and the pains and pleasures of adulthood.

A bud blooms into a flower, likewise, Lenny grows from being an infant to a woman:

As the mounds beneath my nipples grow, my confidence grows. I tell Imam Din to hold Adi in the kitchen, push Hamida out of the bathroom and lock the door. I examine my chest in the small mirror hanging at an angle from the wall and play with them as with cuddly toys. What with my limp and my burgeoning breasts- and the projected girth and wiggle of my future bottom- I feel assured that I will be quite attractive when I'm grown up. (220)

The relationship between Lenny and her Cousin shows that Lenny is no way docile to men like her mother. She says “Maybe I don't need to attract you. You're already attracted” (220). This statement clearly brings out her intelligence and smartness. Though her Cousin takes advantage of her disability, she tackles it with her intelligence.

Her Cousin abuses her sexually. She is able to relate to Ayah's experience who has been raped and pushed in to prostitution. She thinks thus: “If those grown men pay to do what my comparatively small cousin tried to do, then Ayah is in trouble. I think of Ayah twisting Ice- Candy Man's intrusive toes and keeping the butcher and wrestler at arm's length. And of those strangers' hands hoisting her

chocolate body into the cart” (241). She remains assertive, at times even domineering because of her relationship with her ayah.

Over time, Lenny starts to live a very normal life. Her reveries fade away and she comes to terms with reality. She starts to think like adults. Her emotions kindle and she states, “I have never cried this way before. It is how grown-ups cry when their hearts are breaking” (254). Lenny optimistically looked at her womanhood. Her understanding of the disaster brought about by Partition and the resultant suffering makes her mature. She comes closer to the adult world, though not completely.

There is continuous development and growth in the character of Lenny. She understands the norms and conventions of the society. This is coupled with the realization of her sexuality and identity in the world. She experiences pain during partition. She loses her friends and her most beloved Ayah, from whom she had learnt the lessons of joy, sorrow and struggle. All these bring about a change in her. She emerges as a woman with a free will to plan her future.

Towards the end, Sidhwa portrays Lenny awakening to a new identity. She pulsates with a will and life of her own, Lenny presents a vivacity which helps her to transcend the patriarchal biases present in the social perceptions. Through Lenny, Sidhwa presents women who are oppressed by violence and the conventions of a patriarchal society. Sidhwa's society encompasses victimised yet empowered women. Her society supports the view that men and women have different roles. Femininity and masculinity are two separate and opposite identities. Sidhwa considers it a special right or advantage to make women like Lenny, the major character in her writings. She challenges male privilege which has an inherent existence in the society by privileging female will. She attempts to dismantle the myths around the misconception of female privilege. Lenny acts as a

source for the writer to present women who appear to be powerful yet completely lost in a patriarchal world.

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**MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS IN
SUSAN ABULHAWA'S *MORNINGS IN JENIN* AND
*THE BLUE BETWEEN SKY AND WATER***

Ms. Shijila K. & Dr. Praseedha G.

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

Khalil Gibran

The novels *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015) by the Palestinian American writer Susan Abulhawa are brilliant portrayals of the Palestinian experience pertaining to their exile from Palestine and subsequent refugee crisis. Born in 1970, to parents who were refugees of the 1967 War, Abulhawa later migrated to the U. S. Her debut novel, *Mornings in Jenin*, was spurred by the need of a wholly Palestinian narrative. Following the heels of the first book appeared *My Voice Sought the Wind* (2013), a collection of poetry, and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015). She is not only a writer but also an activist for the Palestinian cause.

Replete with many women characters, Abulhawa's works offer brilliant analyses of mother-daughter relationships against the backdrop of the Israel-Palestine conflict. As Marianne Hirsch says in her essay "Mothers and Daughters: A Review," "[F]emale writers' accounts of the mother-daughter bond are the most articulate and detailed expressions of its intimacy and distance, passion and violence, that we can find; they are the most personal and at the same time the most universal" (204). Since the time period of the two novels span decades, they show intergenerational mother-daughter

relationships with apparent shifts in the emotional bonds forged between mothers and daughters.

Mother-daughter relationship that defines the core of these novels point to a feminist discourse of identity emerging out of the peculiar socio-political background of their lives. Although they are not the central focus of these works, the presence of mother-daughter bonds in varying degrees cannot be overlooked in these two narratives. In her essay “The Metaphysics of Matrilinearity in Women's Autobiography: Studies of Mead's *Blackberry Winter*, Heilman's *Pentimento*, Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*,” Stephanie Demetrakopoulos has introduced the concept of the “matriarchal realm,” also called the “matrilineal consciousness,” by which she means the influence of the mother or mother figure on the daughters (182). Daughters' growth into women are strongly affected by the relation with their mothers. The two novels studied in this paper reveal similar as well as dissimilar patterns of daughters embracing or rejecting the identities of their mothers.

Mother-daughter relationships in these texts are studied with respect to three aspects: silence, body and identity. In other words, these are the ways of communication whereby daughters forge a bond with their mothers and vice versa. Drawing upon the works of French and American feminist critics, Marianne Hirsch had written about “an emphasis on multiplicity, plurality, and continuity of being” in every mother-daughter relationship (209). The daughters in the two novels do not take for granted their mothers' identities as their own. It is only through an ongoing, constant dialogue of identity with the mother that the daughter opts for or against the mother in terms of identity. The identities of the mothers, in turn, are shaped by their individual reactions to their social, cultural and ethnic roles as well as the trauma

and irreparable changes wrought in the contours of their existence by the Palestinian historical events and wars. The absence of fathers due to death or disappearance in most of the cases discussed in the novels triggers the importance of the mothers' bond with their children, especially daughters. There are several pairs of mothers and daughters in Abulhawa's works whose relationships can be analyzed based on the aspects of silence, body and their mutual identities.

Silence is an important aspect in the mother-daughter relationship of Dalia-Amal and Amal-Sara in *Mornings in Jenin*. It is also a way of communication between these mothers and daughters, though the meanings are deciphered only years later. Dalia is said to have learned to be a stoic mother, “communicating the demands and tenderness of motherhood with the various tempers of silence” (*MJ* 52). Dalia's words to her daughter are described as “[M]atter-of-fact, efficient, tough” (57). Unlike her elder brother Yousef, Amal refuses to accept the silent temperament of their mother simply because he had seen the livelier part of their mother before the Nakba and exile whereas she had not. She tries to rebel against “this quiet detachment” of her mother (52). According to Lynn Z. Bloom, “The impact of these more distant mothers has not been intentional, nor has it emanated from them; rather, it has been willed into existence by the daughters at an early age”(296). For Amal, her mother's silence is diametrically opposite to the attention she got from her father. Her father told her stories about his lost land and home but all of the past was buried in mother's silence. The silence between them is initially a communication gap which prevents the daughter from knowing her mother properly.

Silence and madness are the refuge sought by Dalia in her attempt to come to terms with the traumatic events of her life. The loss of her son Ismael during the Nakba (the Palestinian exodus in 1948)

makes her face the new life of a refugee with the shield of silence while the disappearance of her husband Hasan during the Naksa (the Six-Day War in 1967) plunges her into the abyss of madness. But Amal, with the impulsiveness and demanding nature of a child, is not able to fathom her mother's heart. Finding her mother still as a statue in the relief camps after the Six Day War, Amal reproaches the vacant-looking Dalia for not identifying her. Unable to comprehend the condition of shock that her mother was in at the time, Amal instantly disowns her before a relief worker, with the lie "I don't know her" (74). Later, the guilt of leaving behind her mother to deal alone with her deranged mind among the countless displaced people haunts Amal throughout her life. It is through memories that Amal pieces together her mother's real identity and gets to know her for what she really was. At the time of Dalia's death, Amal realizes that "her mother" had departed the shell of her body years before she actually died. By means of stories heard from elders and her own recollections involving her mother's firmness and sincerity of action, Amal, for the first time, is able to strike a bond with her mother, who is dead by then.

There is another way of communication between this mother and daughter that penetrates the silence between them. Though Dalia seldom showcases the emotional overtures of her motherly love towards her daughter, she passes on the maternal or motherly identity of a woman to Amal at a very young age, by imparting her the midwifery skills and knowledge, albeit in a very matter-of-fact manner. Thus, the mother and daughter who stand far apart from each other in terms of the external performance of sentiments and affection are drawn closer by means of the same biological mother-daughter bond. By making Amal her assistant, Dalia the midwife provides her daughter with a glimpse into motherhood and childbearing and, thus Amal experiences a feeling of solidarity and oneness with her

otherwise stoic mother.

Despite being in a totally different socio-cultural atmosphere in the US, Amal's relationship with her daughter, Sara, is not dissimilar from her own experiences with her mother Dalia. The Shatila massacre that left her widowed made Amal reluctantly embark on motherhood, "with only a thread of will" (230). Amal confesses that she kept her distance at mothering, "going only through the mechanics of caring for a newborn" (229). As a mother, she nourished her child, but merely "for the sake of duty" (230). Had she not stopped herself consciously, Amal would have gone mad, just like her mother did after the traumatic events of the Naksa. She needed to couch herself in silence and hard-hearted indifference in order to hold herself from drowning in madness. In the process, motherly love and affection had to be compromised for stability and integrity. Overcome with a strange fear, Amal refrains from touching her daughter, lest she infects the latter with her own tragic destiny. Describing herself as "a woman of few words and no friends," Amal speaks of Sara as "a threat to my hardness," with her daughter's scent trying "to fan the flames of motherhood" (246). In spite of longing to display her motherly love with an open heart, Amal maintains the distance from her daughter who starts reciprocating the same distance with her mother as well. In this way, both Amal and Sara live behind their individual solid barriers of existence, "each craving the other's love" (246). Amal's way of responding to her motherhood is best explained in these words: "it was for a perverted selflessness that she denied her daughter, and herself, the rhapsody of that magnificent love she felt to her core" (255). When the grown up Sara spends most of her time in the company of friends, Amal realizes "the painful truth that her daughter wanted to avoid the still and quiet company of her rigid mother" (258). Amal's pain is similar to what her mother Dalia

once felt when Amal openly said that she wished she had “a better mother” to present the Mother's Day craft she made at school (67). It is only after the visit of David, who was in fact Ismael, the long-lost brother of Amal, that Sara learns the truth behind her mother's tragic and lonely life and the reason why she could not help being a silent and indifferent mother. The final visit to Jenin kindles the mother-daughter bond of Amal and Sara when stories and memories of the mother finally unfurl for the daughter. At this point, the long eclipse of silence changes the maternal bond to one of words and warmth and the realm of the maternal is replenished with a new life. Before Amal's death at the hands of Israeli soldiers, she had given her daughter the love and affection she held back all those years. On her part, Sara gets to know the past of her mother. This reconciliation that occurred in Palestine, helps the mother and daughter get past all their former misunderstandings towards each other. Thus, the return to the land of Palestine symbolizes the journey to the maternal.

Juxtaposed with the silence in the relationships between Dalia-Amal and Amal-Sara are the loudness and warmth of maternal affiliations between Nazmiyeh and Alwan in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. Known for her tongue and her “legendary ire,” Nazmiyeh's vivaciousness contrasts well with the stony silence adopted by other mothers (*TBBSW* 55). Despite the traumatic events of her life and the tragic losses of dear ones in the Israel-Palestine conflict, Nazmiyeh never loses the vitality of her spirit. This is why she is able to develop a maternal bond with not just her daughter, Alwan, but with other women as well. Alwan, on the contrary, is a woman of few words. Compared to her mother Nazmiyeh, Alwan's meek and docile nature becomes pronounced throughout the novel. Nazmiyeh's silly jokes and angry protests are lewdness and blasphemy for Alwan. She has not acquired her mother's loud and

outspoken ways. Often Alwan decries her mother's impropriety of language and indecent talk while Nazmiyeh teases her daughter back by saying that the midwife might have switched her at birth. Alwan's friends also tell her that she does not take after her mother. In a way, Alwan resembles her grandmother Um Mamdouh who had a quiet and subdued nature. The vivaciousness of Nazmiyeh, in turn, is passed on to her granddaughter RhetShel, who is Alwan's daughter. So, it seems that women of alternate generations resemble each other in this mother-daughter series. Although the very nature of these mothers and daughters vary from one another, they do get along very well. Concerned with her widowed daughter's health, Nazmiyeh urges Alwan to consult a doctor for her persistent cough, but in the tone of a mother scolding her naughty daughter, "If you don't go to a doctor in the next few days, I'm going to beat you with my slipper like you're a little girl" (191). At the very next moment, Nazmiyeh attends to her little granddaughter, who is startled to imagine her grandmother beating her mother black and blue.

In this novel, the strength of the mother-daughter bond often lies in the togetherness of their everyday lives and the warmth present in even the most inconsequential daily exchanges. One of the instances shows how Nazmiyeh makes breakfast for Alwan, who has started to go to her job at the women's co-operative store after her son Khaled's death. Expecting her daughter to be angry and frustrated with the tedium of daily life, Nazmiyeh says in all her maternal love and kindness, "[D]on't be mad at your old mama, habibti" (281). When Alwan promptly replies that her mood would depend upon the breakfast, Nazmiyeh happily chimes in with "[Y]ou are definitely my daughter! Nobody switched you at birth" (281). Mother-daughter ties as these are depicted as having an important role in providing the women with the impetus to go on with their lives, despite the missile

attacks and bombings they have to endure from time to time. Towards the end of *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, all the women characters including Hajje Nazmiyeh, Alwan, Nur, RhetShel and the beekeeper's widow come together, developing mother-daughter bonds among each other. Hajje Nazmiyeh and the old beekeeper's widow become the elderly matriarchs of the household while Nur is a mother-like figure for Rhet Shel, besides her biological mother Alwan. Rhet Shel grows up in this matrilineal consciousness, surrounded by many mother figures. Nur, on her part, is about to become a mother. The words of the French feminist Helene Cixous that motherhood is present in every woman as that which “repairs and sustains and resists separation, a force that won't be severed” holds true in this context (*Sorties*172). Moving towards each other in this matriarchal realm, mother-daughter relationships acquire a language of their own, where they easily relate to each other in joy and sorrow alike.

Women's body, subject to various biological changes, functions as a site of shifting maternal allegiances in Abulhawa's novels. In *Mornings in Jenin*, Amal's first menstrual period occurs soon after the Six-Day War in 1967 that results in the disappearance of her beloved father and her brother's decision to join the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). At the time, left with just her mentally ill mother, Amal feels intense loss and loneliness. It is in the midst of this existential crisis that she senses the rush of blood between her thighs, signaling her journey into the much-awaited territory of womanhood. But this maturation comes devoid of its former fancy and charm and instead, becomes something painful for Amal, given the current turn of events in her life. Yet, the symbolic territory of womanhood that Amal finds herself in, standing amidst “the first row of trees” is also, in the physical realm, the territory forbidden to Palestinians, as per the new rules that have come to

prevail following the military occupation of the Palestinian land by Israel (116). This realization of her feminine subjectivity is instantly and ruthlessly smashed by the bullet that pierces her belly, aimed as it is by the Israeli soldiers who have started to patrol the areas of late unbeknownst to Amal. Thus, the unhappy, disillusioned welcome of her womanhood is forever marked by the scar of the gunshot wound. Her maimed belly is something that metaphorically underlines Amal's sense of inadequacy and identity crisis as a woman until her marriage.

The themes of pregnancy and childbirth recur throughout both the novels. They are portrayed as having different impact on different women, based on the ways in which the Palestinian historical trauma has personally affected them. For Dalia in *Mornings in Jenin*, the birth of her daughter after her two sons with a long gap of eight years is significant, for Amal is her first (and only) child to be born after the Palestinian displacement and exile, without the dangers of miscarriage Dalia initially suffers in the refugee camp. It signals the fact that she had grown attuned to “the waiting for things to go back to normal” in their refugee lives, filled with the hope of a return to their homeland and old ways of living (51). The birth of this child also splinters “the rigidity of her mourning” - the mysterious disappearance of her six-month old son Ismael during the long procession into exile in 1948 (50). Thus, Amal's birth momentarily recreates “the spirited gypsy” that Dalia once had been (51). On the other hand, Amal gives birth to her only daughter Sara in the heights of her traumatic depression. Having returned from her ten-year long life of deliberately formed cultural indifference in the U.S., and settled into the closer spaces of family and community in Beirut, Lebanon, Amal longs to become a mother herself, seeing her brother Yousef's wife, Fatima, nurturing their daughter, Falasteen. Though

the news of her pregnancy brings enormous happiness to Amal, her gestational period becomes increasingly fraught with tension, following the mounting number of attacks and daily wars waged between the Israeli military forces and the PLO in its refugee base in Beirut. After receiving the news of her husband's death in one of Israel's attacks, Amal, once again stranded in the U.S. all by herself, goes into labour with the full force of her grief. In the midst of labour, Amal remembers her mother's words "[W]hatever you feel, keep it inside" (228). This is the advice imparted by a stoic mother to her daughter growing up in the midst of socio-political turbulence; an advice by a woman to a fellow woman who realizes the sheer importance of will power and endurance that women must possess in order to go through the troubled lives of Palestinians. Adjusted always to inward repressions and containment, Amal's life finds a metaphoric parallel in her refusal to push her baby out till the baby's instinct for life finally conquers her. The act of pushing her baby out becomes Amal's way of atonement for the injustice of the gift of life that she has, when her parents, siblings and husband had had to suffer immeasurable pain and torture before they died. Holding her newborn daughter in her hands, Amal resents the baby for forcing upon her the will to go on living. Here the act of childbirth becomes a tool for Amal to live out the pain and injustice she has felt all through her life.

In *The Blue between Sky and Water*, Nazmiyeh's life after the painful episode of her gang-rape and the brutal death of her little sister Mariam during the Nakba, is punctuated alternatively with pregnancy and childbirth. Despite bearing boys in succession, the mother in Nazmiyeh waits for the daughter that one day she would have, with the pain of childbirth as familiar to her as "the chill of winter or the sweat of summer" (46). Nazmiyeh had to wait till her twelfth pregnancy in which "destiny was redeemed" and her

promised daughter Alwan was born (59). On the contrary, Alwan's initial inability to bear children is juxtaposed with the fertility of her mother Nazmiyeh's womb; if the latter had been praised by the womenfolk on account of the plenitude of her children, motherhood comes to Alwan after years of waiting and humiliation, interspersed by many miscarriages and stillbirths. Likewise, the novel ends with Nazmiyeh's grandniece Nur's illicit pregnancy, open-ended and unclear about the implications of her motherhood.

The body is also shown as defining the identities of mothers and daughters, often setting each other apart. Nazmiyeh's huge and voluptuous body is equated with that of her extensive maternal love and affection in her youth as well as old age, as she is a mother to all her children and grandchildren. Thus, her body testifies to her role as a beloved matriarch of the refugee camp. Nazmiyeh's enormous body also stood for "her haughty defiance and irreverence" and thus her personal freedom and non-conformity to all of society's demands. In stark contrast with this, her daughter Alwan was slender and her body was "angled, with thin limbs and few curves" (107). Her body becomes synonymous with her silent and reclusive nature, subservient to the patriarchal society. Another pair would be Nur and her mother, whose bodies clearly demarcate the shifts in identity between them. Nur's mother always bragged about her slim waist and pointed towards Nur's slightly obese body as something that cast her out from identifying with her mother. This differentiation based on the body goes all the way to bringing forth cracks in their mutual relationship as mother and daughter.

Mother's identity is one of the important factors that characterize the individual as well as group identities of daughters. It is through the mother that both the family and society reach out to the daughter right at an early age. Abulhawa's novels resonate with the

questions regarding the identities of daughters, carried forward from those of their mothers in different wavelengths and frequencies.

The way a typical patriarchal society persuades mothers to restrict their daughters is clearly brought forth in the lives of Dalia and her daughter Amal. Although the historical events like the Nakba and the Naksa turn Palestinians into refugees and occupied subjects, the Palestinian community remains inherently patriarchal. By depicting the repetitiveness of this patriarchal schooling in the lives of mothers and daughters, its working principle down different generations is clearly underlined. The repression of “the gypsy colors” in Dalia is eagerly demanded by the society through the words “Break her, beat her, teach her a lesson” (*MJ* 14 - 15). Dalia's careless and undaunted nature is said to remind the older women community of “an irretrievable old bliss that they had willingly discarded” (14). These societal forces are shown as quickly assuming that “the girl would simply grow out of her ways” and they ask her unnamed mother to read Quranic verses over her (14). Later on, the womenfolk of the village agree that Dalia ought to be “broken” and urge her mother to crush the exuberance of her daughter (14). It is to be noted that Dalia's mother does not appear as a character in the novel, except in this role as a channel whereby the Bedouin society can suppress the wild, untamed spirit of young Dalia. Her mother is presented as not performing any action in this regard, for, it is Dalia's father who publicly punishes Dalia so that his honour shall not have any blemish before the society. So the totally silent mother conveniently sides with the male parent in conditioning her daughter to the expectations and approval of the society.

Much in the same way, after an interval of years, Dalia is asked to tame and prune her daughter Amal who is born as a refugee child in the camps of Jenin. From behind the curtain of her “quiet

detachment,” Dalia senses her little daughter to be a reincarnation of her former self, smothered long ago by the tentacles of patriarchal silencing (56). Not surprisingly, Dalia the mother is also asked to “break” her daughter free of “the devil's habits early” (56). The words “Break her. Beat her. Teach her a lesson.” ring the echo from a bygone era when Dalia too had been pressed and beaten to conform to the society's needs and commands (57). Dalia differs from her mother by boldly opting not to execute blindly the societal orders, reinforced from women to women through countless generations of mothers and daughters.

The identity of Dalia as a midwife has a strong impact on Amal even without her knowledge. The adult Amal who takes up medical profession as a temporary vocation is reminded of her mother whenever she attends any childbirth. Months before her marriage to Majid who is a doctor as well, Amal impresses her future husband with her midwifery skills when she rearranges and corrects the fetal position inside the womb of an expectant woman using her hands and thereby avoids the chances of a complicated parturition or delivery by caesarean . When Majid tries to applaud her knack in delivering babies, Amal is not able to pay attention to his words, for she is reminded of her deceased mother who had taught her long ago to correct wrongly positioned babies inside mothers' wombs. This reflects Virginia Woolf's statement that “[W]e look back to our mothers, if we are women” (82). It is only in retrospect that Amal realizes the strength of Dalia as a woman and a mother, and she misses her mother badly. The weak bond Amal had with her mother is actually strengthened and renewed as she grows up into a woman and becomes a mother.

Abulhawa's novels portray mothers forming a bond with their unborn daughters. The instances where daughters are named well

before their births and thus their identity and place secured in mothers' hearts, clearly point to the same. In *Mornings in Jenin*, even though Amal jokes to Majid with “[D]on't all Arab men want a son first?”, she and her husband eagerly await their first daughter whom they wish to name Sara after Majid's deceased mother (187). Similarly, in *The Blue between Sky and Water*, Nazmiyeha waits her prophesied daughter “Alwan” for more than twelve years before finally giving birth to her. Alwan's daughter RhetShel, in turn, is named much before her birth after the American woman Rachel Corrie who had volunteered relief work in Gaza and had died a martyr. In spite of living in Arab patriarchal communities where the first son of the family renames his parents as 'Um ___' and 'Abu ___' after his own name, mothers are depicted as eagerly looking forward to the birth of daughters. Nazmiyeh and Alwan look forward to begetting their daughters, though their first-born sons already impart them the titles of 'Um Mazen' and 'Um Khaled' respectively. Thus naming as a motif of identity is explored in both the novels.

One of the most constrained mother-daughter relationships in Abulhawa's works is that of Nur and her unnamed mother of Spanish origin, in *The Blue between Sky and Water*. The difference it has in the relationships of Dalia-Amal and Amal-Sara is that Nur is unable to reach an emotional reconciliation with her mother even after becoming an adult. Her mother's total absence of love and care is the reason behind this, which Nur comes to realize fully as she grows up into an adult. It is with much reluctance that her mother permits the child to be given an Arab name, as per the grandparents' wishes. On retrieving the custody of Nur after her paternal grandfather's death, her mother severs her connection with her roots by erasing the Arab language and culture she had imbibed earlier. Her mother changes her name from “Nur” to “Nubia” Nur's mother thus prevents her from

possessing an Arab identity, and at the same time, she disowns her by saying that Nur does not resemble her in any way, where by Nur experiences an identity crisis. By belittling Nur's hard work at household chores and studies, ignoring her needs and even health issues and remaining ignorant of the daughter's daily sexual abuse by her boyfriend Sam, Nur's mother represents all those that a mother should not be. Uncaring and cruel, the mother is depicted as selfish to the point that she does not care for her own child even as a human being. The writer deliberately chooses to leave such a mother unnamed, so that her role seems cold and detached. Nur, on the other hand, craves for her mother's love from the beginning. She tries everything to win her mother's love and attention, from being obedient to being highly studious. Even as a child, Nur learns to repress her longings and worries, suppressing even her tears and keeping everything to herself. This is a different type of "matrophobia", (a term used separately by feminist critics Lynn Sukenick and Adreinne Rich) which means the daughter's fear to feel one with her mother, lest the latter's inferior and subservient nature clings to her own identity. Here, Nur's matrophobia towards her mother is due to the abusive treatment and violent temper of the latter. Yet she admires and wishes to look like her mother, with a slim and beautiful physique. Here what Rich has said about the simultaneous attractive and repulsive tendency of matrophobia becomes relevant: "[B]ut where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull toward her" (235). This is the very condition where a daughter is unable to come out of the influence of her mother all her life. There is a deep-seated wish to embrace the mother's identity. Even years after the separation from her mother, Nur writes unanswered letters to her and even goes to visit her. Seeing her mother from afar, Nur feels "weak with a sense of forgiveness"

and earnestly hopes for a reconciliation (*TBBSW272*). According to Rich, even if the deserted daughter can bring herself to forgive the mother, the girl-child who always felt lost without her mother's love feels lonely and unmothered even as a woman. The cold response of her mother even after the long interval bears an imprint on Nur who opens her heart to Nzinga, the social worker who is the closest she has to a mother: “[T]here is something extraordinary about being rejected by one's mother. It impoverishes the soul. It leaves holes everywhere and you spend your life trying to fill them up. With whatever you can find... You do it to feel the abandonment over and over because that's the only thing you know of your mother” (273). When Nur becomes pregnant, she fears about the kind of mother she would turn out to be. She plainly confesses her fear to Nzinga, who assures her that there is nothing in her that “remotely resembles” her mother who can be best defined as “a classic textbook narcissist” (270).

In a nutshell, mothers and daughters in Abulhawa's novels communicate with one another by means of their silences and words, bodies and identities. Each woman in the family tree is a focal point in these multi generational saga, where there are mutual intersections in the matrilineal consciousness, with most of the characters depicted as both mother and daughter in the respective works. Thus, motherhood, sisterhood and friendships between women lavishly nourish the terrain of female bonding in Susan Abulhawa's fiction.

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