SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIT 1 - Women's Writing – SHS5012

1. Juliet Mitchell, “Femininity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis”

In Juliet Mitchell’s essay, “Femininity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis,” Mitchell examines the role that the novel has played in our capitalist society for women and the influence of psychoanalytic motives for writing the novel to prove that the novel was, and perhaps still is, the defining element of women in our society.

Mitchell’s essay addresses more than a single topic. All of her topics are link together, though, as Mitchell places each topic as a constraint around the identity of the women in society. In terms of language, the woman is constrained because language is a masculine language. In a capitalist society, the woman is constrained by the bourgeois roles expected of women. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the woman is constrained by the resulting masculine or not-masculine society derived from pre-Oedipal childhood (I think). The combination of these constraints ways down upon the women and results in a feminist movement that simultaneously rejects masculine society, while adheringto its rules. The novel is, in Mitchell’s words, “the prime example of the way women start to create themselves as social subjects under bourgeois capitalism.”

After finishing Mitchell’s essay, I couldn’t tell if she was opposed to the novel, which I think is an important point to clarify, as Mitchell herself asserts the novel as the defining element for women in a capitalist society. Perhaps she is in favor of novels that are critical, such as a main subject her essay, Wuthering Heights, and not for conformist novels, such as those by Mills and Boon. Even if a novel is critical, though, it still operates within the confines of the masculine society it admonishes. This puts women in a crux, with the very identity of the woman at stake. One option is madness, as Mitchell puts it.

Her essay hinges on a few premises that I do not know enough about to accept or refute. One of the more blunt statements Mitchell posits is when she says, “language itself is phallocentric.” I see how in languages like Spanish or French, where some words are categorized as masculine or feminine, that this assertion could be obvious enough to simply state and move on, but in English I am not so sure if I can believe what she is talking about.

his piece will examine Mitchell's essay, by critically analyzing the feminine narrative in psychoanalysis influenced by the Bakhtinian concept of the carnival, applying the hysteric to women in the early novel, the application of the symbolic in defining an alternative universe, and briefly discussing Wuthering Heights.

Firstly, Mitchell's foremost point is that on feminine narrative in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is the practice of investigating the way one's mind works, and then using it as a method of

treatment to cure various psychological or emotional ailments. The patient recounts certain incidents affecting their psyche. The psychoanalyst is then able to offer a solution to the incident. Through analysis of incidents affecting the patient, the psychoanalyst applies the respective theory and, "â€¦intrudes, disrupts, offers the 'anarchic carnival' back into that historyâ€¦" (Ibid, 426) The carnival referred to here is that of the Bakhtinian notion of deception. Mikhail Bakhtin states that in every level of society, deception is at play where there are multiple levels of power and resistance at work. These forces of deception are what allow people in a society to, put on masks and play certain roles. [1] Thus, because of this deceptive nature of communication, any form of action in society is never constant, always being in a state of flux. Mitchell mentions this flux in her statement where she says, "What can you do but disrupt a history, and re-create it as anotherâ€¦?"(Ibid, pg. 426) What Mitchell means here is that there is already an alteration of events, through multiple retellings of one's history.

However, when Bakhtin's carnivalesque element is put into play, the history of the patient is not only replaced with an alternate one, but also that there is no single correct form of history present. With the elements involving a patient's history being always in a state of flux, the disruption and creation of multiple histories is imminent. Now if one adds the element of femininity, the issue becomes even more complex. If there is a disruption of history at play, what happens to a woman speaking about her issues, in a phallocentric setting? Mitchell is concerned about the effect that a male-oriented language has on a female subject. If there is already so much disruption in the shaping of one's history, then for a woman it becomes a momentous task to express herself freely in a society that has been shaped according to the norms of men. Also, if the woman subject is being studied by a woman analyst, the analysis becomes even more questionable. Both women have been bred in a society adhering to the rules of the male. This means, that the method of communication and also of expression then strictly falls into the realm of the male. A woman attempting to understand her own history is thwarted by the loss of true communication in the feminine sense.

Secondly, Mitchell explains the plight of a woman attempting to create her own history, by looking into the involvement of women in the early period of the novel. Here as well, women were attempting to carve a niche into an ultimately male dominated realm. This was quite successfully done with the advent of the novel during the seventeenth century, where a vast majority of the authors were women. The introduction of women writers was further accentuated by the very essence of their actions. It was radical enough that women were beginning to express themselves, but it was another thing altogether that they were doing this through the medium of writing. In doing so, they were successfully creating, "â€¦what critics today call the 'subject in process'." (Ibid, 426) Thus, Mitchell explains that in order for women to establish a history, they were doing so by expressing during a state of flux. Here something akin to psychoanalytic practice is at work, where the subject is consciously able to re-create a

history of herself. According to Mitchell, in the midst of a rising bourgeoisie wrought under the clutches of capitalism, a woman's life was constrained to, "Domesticity, personal relations..." (Ibid, 426) One facet of a woman's history is preset. But, there is a conscious endeavour to write another form of history; this time it is written from the perspective of the woman. This is not a form of history replicated in the midst of a therapy session in a psychoanalyst's office.
Here the woman subject is in control of shaping her own history. As Mitchell further illustrates, "The novel is that creation by the woman of the woman or by the subject who in the process of becoming womanâ€¦." (Ibid, 426) The subject, being the woman, is able to understand the numerous difficulties of the subject of her work which is also the woman, therefore successfully being able to express her concerns.

By expressing oneself during a transitional time-frame, in this case during the creation of the bourgeois class, the woman is defining her qualities, her abilities and her boundaries, "â€¦where women are, why women have to write the novel, the story of their own domesticity, the story of their own seclusion within the homeâ€¦"(Ibid, 426) In doing so, the woman is classifying herself within a given domain, but she is doing so based on the constraints imposed on her by the patriarchal element, thus the Bakhtinian concept of deception. The woman is expressing, but with a mask of social hindrance, further limiting the effectiveness of her message. This is further proved by Mitchell's discussion of the 'discourse of the hysteric'. The phenomenon of the hysteric is where the woman accepts and rejects the organization of sexuality under a patriarchal realm. As Mitchell further clarifies, there does not exist, "â€¦a thing as female writing, a 'woman's voice. There is the hysteric's voice which is the woman's masculine languageâ€¦" (Ibid, 426) Again, here the Bakhtinian ideology is at work. The woman knows that she must talk in a masculine voice, thus the woman consciously constructs her argument within the framework of a phallocentric world. Thus, there is a "deceptive" nature to her presentation, but it is all the more necessary in gaining a patriarchal audience that is willing to listen.

In addition to this, Mitchell further clarifies the hysteric using the moment of the symbolic. The moment of the symbolic according to the Lacanian school of thought is, "â€¦where sexuality is constructed as meaningâ€¦what was not symbolized, becomes organizedâ€¦" (Ibid, pg. 428) Before a child is made aware of the sexual hierarchy in a patriarchal setting, the atmosphere is that of the carnival. Moreover, before the child is aware of a phallic presence, it is only concerned with the presence of the mother. The mother is a source of nourishment and satisfaction and the child sees no other. The child is free of notions of gender definitions and borders for the respective sexes. This is known as the pre-Oedipal, where between the duration of three to five years, there are libidinal and ego development. [2] Freud simply states that the transitioning period is when the child is aware of the male member, "At the point in which the phallus is found to be missing in the mother, masculinity is set up as the normâ€¦" (Ibid, 428)

Further defined in the Lacanian model, the child is made aware of a phallic presence that is dominating, and also is made aware of the further responsibilities of the mother that are not just limited to the child, but also to the dominant male figure in the family. According to Lacan, the father figure is introduced in a symbolic sense through the medium of language, where communication and expression is that of a phallocentric nature. Having made aware of two poles of sexuality, the carnival is replaced by "the point of organization". At this point, because the child is also increasingly acquiring the ability to communicate, it inevitably takes on the essence of a phallocentric means of communication.

Now, one has to be careful in discerning the role that a woman plays in this largely patriarchal construct. Mitchell states that one cannot have the oedipal, without the pre-oedipal, where the former represents an ordered sexual hierarchy and the latter represents a space without any frontiers and constraints, i.e. carnival. These two concepts are complementary of each other, because without one the other cannot function. It is only possible for the child to realize gender constraints, having experienced a state of the pre-Oedipal. Likewise, it is only possible for a woman to yearn for the carnival, having been constrained to the domain of the church and all the constricting forces at work that accompany this controlling body. Therefore, Mitchell claims that one cannot yearn for a pre-Oedipal, carnivalesque setting in present society, because the carnival and the church are already deeply ingrained in the conscious of every individual. She further explains that, "You cannot choose the imaginary, the semiotic, the carnival as an alternative to the symbolicâ€¦"(Ibid, 428) A feminist who wants to have her body of work accepted in the symbolic, and organized structure, cannot give an alternative of a society lacking social constraints. She further elaborates that since feminism has been defined in a phallocentric setting, the means to reach an "alternative symbolic universe" is by working within the given space that the pre-Oedipal and the Oedipal share. This is parallel to her discussion of the female novelist and her need to be hysteric in order to gain acceptance.

Mitchell illustrates an effective alternative symbolic universe, by using the example of Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights. The novel is clearly a critique of the symbolic, but is far more effective because it works within a male-oriented language. Bronte was published under a male pseudonym, which gave her work an even better stronghold in the reading male populace. Bronte is able to criticize the clichéd romantic gentleman Lockwood possessing characteristics of a fierce exterior and heart of gold, as being, "â€¦a foppish gentlemanâ€¦who think he loves all the things the romantic gentleman is supposed toâ€¦" (Ibid, 429) Because she is male, she is not outright rejected for her portrayal.

Furthermore, the story of Catherine has a hysteric tone to it. Catherine loves Heathcliff, but cannot take pleasure from it, having already been imposed of the patriarchal constraint on her. Heathcliff is introduced by the father as a sibling to her, and is therefore a forbidden fruit. The

Oedipal is at play here where clear cut gender definitions have been drawn. Continuing in the patriarchal tradition, Catherine marries Edgar Linton, "Edgar provides an illusion of complimentarity." (Ibid, 429) However, holding true to the hysteric tradition, in the end Bronte rejects this relationship by killing Catherine. Here Bronte's ability to question the patriarch is the strongest. By deliberately killing Catherine, Bronte asks if whether the only way a woman can acquire her needs is by simply ceasing to exist. She doesn't have a choice but either to follow, "â€¦the hysteric's ambiguous choice into a femininity which doesn't workâ€¦" (Ibid, 429), this pertains to Catherine marrying someone not of her choice. The other option is to finally be united with Heathcliff, after suffering death, which is very much an ineffective state.

In conclusion, Mitchell's essay effectively brings together her four primary concerns: literature, gender politics, psychoanalysis and feminism. In doing so she is successfully able to draw parallels between the limited ability of a woman under a patriarchal construct to the complex machinations of a pre and post Oedipal affected society. In order to encompass a wholesome argument, instead of a radical feminine approach, Mitchell suggests an alternative symbolic universe, where while simultaneously working within the borders of a phallocentric society, a woman is still able to express her femininity.

2. Feminist Criticism in Wilderness – Elaine Showalter

The essay by Elaine Showalter is an attempt to study the field of literary criticism from the feminist point of view. Showalter has tried to study the various aspects of feminist criticism while also pointing out the aims it should be trying to attain, the problems it faces and the reasons for these problems.

The essay considers the fact that like feminist creative writers, feminist critics also face certain obstacles which have got highlighted after the rise of feminism. Showalter has tried to analyze in detail the belief that feminist criticism is in wilderness, which means, feminist critics are not capable enough to produce coherent speculations.

Pluralism and the Feminist Critique

Showalter begins this essay by pointing out a dialogue by Carolyn Heilbrun and Catherine Stimpson. They had pointed out that two poles were identifiable in feminist literary criticism- one concentrating on the errors of the past and the other focus on the beauty of imagination. Both these aspects contribute in removing the effects of 'female servitude' that has existed in the society since ages. She also quotes Matthew Arnold to state that criticism, as a process, has to pass through a stage of wilderness to reach at the desired standards. Then, taking support from Geoffrey Hartman's quote, she forwards the belief that all criticism, and not only feminist criticism, is in wilderness. Analyzing one of the reasons for this, so called, wilderness in feminist. criticism, she clarifies that the reason is lack of an exclusive theoretical framework for feminist criticism. It is always seen in association with some other strategy and, therefore, fails to work consistently. For instance, feminist critics supporting Marxism treat feminist criticism differently than those opposing racism.

An early obstacle in establishment of the above mentioned theoretical framework was the inability of many women to respond to the demand of openness required for the success of feminist criticism. In some aspects of society, women had been locked out and in some others they had been locked in. they were not allowed to participate in some aspects of social interaction and forced to participate in some others. Thus, some believed feminism to be equivalent to opposition to the establish canons.

Showalter says that what seemed to be 'a theoretical impasse' was actually an evolutionary phase. During this stage, feminist criticism moved on from the stage of awakening to the stage marked by 'anxiety about the isolation of feminist criticism from a critical community'. The definition of feminist criticism with reference to other feminist theories has been a serious debate and feminist critics have been unable to address this issue. They fail to understand the need to think beyond their own beliefs as well and to communicate with the systems they wish to change. Although feminist critics have communicated with these systems but the communication has been unclear being based entirely on the media of feminist critics.

There are two modes of feminist criticism. Showalter calls the first one 'feminist reading' or

'feminist critique'. It is concerned to the reading of texts to understand the image of woman in literature and to work out the beliefs and stereotypes concerned to woman highlighted and publicized by literary texts. This is a mode of interpretation and has been quite influential in decoding the relationship of women to literature.

Showalter points out that feminist criticism is revisionist being dependent on male creative theory, i.e. the creative works and interpretations produced on the basis of male experience. Feminist critics try to analyze and respond to male creative theory. This need to be changed to achieve feminist criticism that is 'women centred, independent and intellectually coherent'.

Defining the Feminine: Gynocritics and the Woman's Text

It is well accepted that a woman's writing would always be feminine but defining 'feminine' has always been a problem. The second mode of feminist criticism concentrates on this definition. It analyzes women as writers. It undertakes the study of 'history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women'. It also studies in details the various aspects of female creativity and female literary tradition. Showalter has coined the term 'gynocritics' for the 'specialized critical discourse' that uses women's writings as its exclusive subject. However, identifying the unique elements of women's writings is again a problem. French Feminist Criticism has identified the influence of female body on female language and texts. However, the issue has been approached towards differently in different countries. Four basic models of difference are being used most commonly-biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural. Each of these models is like a school of gynocentric feminist criticism and has its own preferences for texts, methods and beliefs.

Women's Writing and Woman's Body

It is one of the clearest statements of gender difference. Theories like that of better developed frontal lobes in case of males and of the use of 20 percent of creative energy for physiological functions in case of women have been used in the past to advocate the superiority of men over women. Many critics have associated the act of creation of text to the generative process which only male used to be considered capable of undertaking. The metaphor of literary paternity used to be associated to penis and, thus, to male. Showalter, however, associates it to womb comparing literary creativity to childbirth. The level and implication of the mention of anatomy in text by male and female writers, respectively, has also been different. However, study of biological imagery in women's writings could be helpful only when other factors affecting them are also kept in mind.

Women's Writing and Women's Language

This concept analyzes if men and women use language differently while creating texts. It studies if factors like biology, social preferences and cultural beliefs could affect the language of a gender. It also considers the concept of 'the oppressor's language', the use of language by men to dominate women. For woman, the popular language could be like a foreign language which she is unable to be comfortable with. So, there is a call for development of separate feminine language. However, the irony is that even in communities where women are believed to have

developed a separate language, their language is marked by secrecy.

The differences in male and female speech in terms of 'speech, intonation and language use' are the most obvious examples of difference in man's and woman's language. Feminist criticism should, most importantly, work for providing women an access to language so that a wide range of words is available to them. Language is sufficient enough to give expression to women's consciousness only if she is not denied access to all the resources of language.

Women's Writing and Woman's Psyche

This aspect deals with the connection between author's psyche and creative process in general. The difference in creative process in case of a male and a female is then studied on the basis of this connection. Various psychological theories have suggested that female is inferior in terms of creative capabilities. Critics have been trying to establish new principles of feminist psychoanalysis which would try to differentiate gender identities rather than following Freudian theories. Certain common emotional dimensions could be identified in texts of women writers belonging to different countries.

Women's Writing and Women's Culture

The theory of culture as a factor affecting women's writing is inclusive of the theories of biology, language and psyche. The influence of all these factors is guided by the cultural situation of a woman. History has not included female experience. Thus, history is inadequate to understand women's experience. Woman's culture is not a sub-culture of main culture. They are part of general culture itself. If patriarchal society applies restraints on them, they transform it into complementarity. Thus, women experience duality of culture including general culture and women's culture. Women form 'muted group' in society and men form 'dominant group'. Ardener suggested a diagram with two circles representing these two groups respectively. All language of the dominant group is all acceptable language. So, the muted group has to follow the same language. The part of the circle representing the muted group which does not coincide with the other circle represents that part of women's life which has not found any expression in history. It represents the activities, experiences and feelings of women which are unknown to men. Since they do not form part of men's life, they do not get representation in history. This 'female zone' is also known as 'wild zone' since it is out of the range of dominant boundary. Women could not write on experiences belonging exclusively on the wild zone. They have to give representation to the dominant culture in their texts. There are other muted groups as well than women. For instance, literary identity of a black American poet is forced upon her by the trends of the dominant group.

Feminist critics try to identify the aspects of women writers which do not follow the trends established by the male writers. For instance, Woolf's works show tendencies other than those of modernism. However, these tendencies are visible in the sections which have so far been considered obscure or imperfect. Feminist critics should attempt 'thick description' of women's writings. It is possible only when effect of gender and female literary tradition are considered

among the various factors that affect the meaning of the text.

Showalter concludes that the ‘promised land’ or situation when there would be no difference in the texts written by man and woman could not be attained. Attainment of that situation should not be the aim of feminist critics.

3. A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf

Woolf tells us that the best way to address the topic of "Women in Fiction" is to give us a work of fiction that describes how she got to the conclusion that, in order to write fiction, "a woman must have money and a room of her own" (1.1).

Woolf's fictional narrator, Mary Beton, sits by a river on the campus of Oxbridge, a fictional-but-not-really university. She's thinking some thoughts, but her meditations are interrupted by several woman-unfriendly interactions: she's ordered off the grass that only "Fellows and Scholars" may walk on and is denied entrance to the library (1.3). Church? She doesn't even bother trying to go in there.

Time for lunch! It's a super nice one, and, after the scrumptious meal, she has some highbrow conversation with the other lucky people there. Unfortunately, seeing a tailless cat sort of derails the conversation. Oookay.

After lunch, she walks to a nearby all-female college, Fernham, for dinner. It's… not good. In fact, it's so bad that she can't even have a good conversation with her friend. We guess because their tummies are upset?

The next day, Mary visits the British Museum to try to understand more about why her experiences the previous day at the men's university and the women's college were so different. She decides she'll search for information about women. Unsurprisingly, she ends up with a lot of books to consult. Surprisingly (to her), most of these books are written by angry men.

Unable to find anything useful and rational at the library, Mary then checks out the history books on her own bookshelf, trying to answer the question of why women have always been too poor to, for instance, endow a university with enough money for a good dinner. Surprise, surprise, no one has ever bothered to write a women's history.

Finally, the narrator turns to her imagination and tells us a story about Shakespeare's (fictional) sister, Judith, who has all of Shakespeare's genius but none of his opportunities. She concludes that she would end up pregnant and then kill herself without having written a word.

But what about actual women writers? Mary mulls over women's writing and thinks that, except maybe in Jane Austen's books, every book is ruined by the writer's bitterness and anger. She pulls down a (fictional) book by (fictional) Mary Carmichael called Life's Adventure. While it broaches topics that other writers have never put on paper before, like a friendship between two women, Mary decides that the book is still flawed. Maybe in another hundred years a woman will be able to write a book of true genius.

The next and final day of the story, Mary looks out her window to the streets of London. She

sees a man and a woman get into a taxicab together. Hm, this gives her an idea. Maybe genius works of literature need to be gender-neutral. Each person has a male and a female in their own mind, and they must unite in order to make a truly great book.

At this point, Woolf stops speaking as Mary Beton and tells women that they should work toward having five hundred pounds a year and a room of their own in which to write. And then, some day, women will produce a writer of true genius.

Themes

The Importance of Money

For the narrator of *A Room of One's Own*, money is the primary element that prevents women from having a room of their own, and thus, having money is of the utmost importance. Because women do not have power, their creativity has been systematically stifled throughout the ages. The narrator writes, "Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time . . ." She uses this quotation to explain why so few women have written successful poetry. She believes that the writing of novels lends itself more easily to frequent starts and stops, so women are more likely to write novels than poetry: women must contend with frequent interruptions because they are so often deprived of a room of their own in which to write. Without money, the narrator implies, women will remain in second place to their creative male counterparts. The financial discrepancy between men and women at the time of Woolf's writing perpetuated the myth that women were less successful writers.

The Subjectivity of Truth

In *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator argues that even history is subjective. What she seeks is nothing less than "the essential oil of truth," but this eludes her, and she eventually concludes that no such thing exists. The narrator later writes, "When a subject is highly controversial, one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold." To demonstrate the idea that opinion is the only thing that a person can actually "prove," she fictionalizes her lecture, claiming, "Fiction is likely to contain more truth than fact." Reality is not objective: rather, it is contingent upon the circumstances of one's world. This argument complicates her narrative: Woolf forces her reader to question the veracity of everything she has presented as truth so far, and yet she also tells them that the fictional parts of any story contain more essential truth than the factual parts. With this observation she recasts the accepted truths and opinions of countless literary works.

Motifs

Interruptions

When the narrator is interrupted in *A Room of One's Own*, she generally fails to regain her original concentration, suggesting that women without private spaces of their own, free of interruptions, are doomed to difficulty and even failure in their work. While the narrator is describing Oxbridge University in chapter one, her attention is drawn to a cat without a tail. The narrator finds this cat to be out of place, and she uses the sight of this cat to take her text in a

different direction. The oddly jarring and incongruous sight of a cat without a tail—which causes the narrator to completely lose her train of thought—is an exercise in allowing the reader to experience what it might feel like to be a woman writer. Although the narrator goes on to make an interesting and valuable point about the atmosphere at her luncheon, she has lost her original point. This shift underscores her claim that women, who so often lack a room of their own and the time to write, cannot compete against the men who are not forced to struggle for such basic necessities.

Gender Inequality

Throughout *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator emphasizes the fact that women are treated unequally in her society and that this is why they have produced less impressive works of writing than men. To illustrate her point, the narrator creates a woman named Judith Shakespeare, the imaginary twin sister of William Shakespeare. The narrator uses Judith to show how society systematically discriminates against women. Judith is just as talented as her brother William, but while his talents are recognized and encouraged by their family and the rest of their society, Judith's are underestimated and explicitly deemphasized. Judith writes, but she is secretive and ashamed of it. She is engaged at a fairly young age; when she begs not to have to marry, her beloved father beats her. She eventually commits suicide. The narrator invents the tragic figure of Judith to prove that a woman as talented as Shakespeare could never have achieved such success. Talent is an essential component of Shakespeare's success, but because women are treated so differently, a female Shakespeare would have fared quite differently even if she'd had as much talent as Shakespeare did.

Symbols

The central point of *A Room of One's Own* is that every woman needs a room of her own—something men are able to enjoy without question. A room of her own would provide a woman with the time and the space to engage in uninterrupted writing time. During Woolf's time, women rarely enjoyed these luxuries. They remained elusive to women, and, as a result, their art suffered. But Woolf is concerned with more than just the room itself. She uses the room as a symbol for many larger issues, such as privacy, leisure time, and financial independence, each of which is an essential component of the countless inequalities between men and women. Woolf predicts that until these inequalities are rectified, women will remain second-class citizens and their literary achievements will also be branded as such.

4.The Second Sex Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir was born in Paris, 9 January 1908. Her parents were devout Catholics with aspirations to nobility. Simone herself was catholic, and even considered to become a nun when she was in a convent school together with her sister. However, that changed when she lost her faith in 14. For the rest of her life she was an atheist.

Simone's intellectual interests were present from an early age. She passed the baccalaureate exams in mathematics and philosophy in 1925 and afterwards went on to study mathematics at the Institut Catholique and literature at the Institut Sainte-Marie. At the Sorbonne she studied

philosophy and wrote a thesis on Leibniz. At university, she met several now-famous intellectuals, including Claude Lévi-Strauss, but her most famous relation is to Jean-Paul Sartre. She met him when preparing for the *agrégation*, the most competitive post-graduate examinations in France. Sartre came in first on this test, de Beauvoir second. Sartre and de Beauvoir had a polyamorous relationship, seeing other people with the consent of everyone involved. De Beauvoir felt attracted to both sexes and Sartre and her frequently 'shared' other girls. Both Sartre and De Beauvoir are considered to be great philosophers of existentialism and are iconic for French intellectual life during those decades.

De Beauvoir wrote several kinds of texts during her life, including metaphysical novels like *She Came to Stay* (1943) and *The Mandarins* (1954); a collection of short stories based on women important in the early years of her life called *When Things of the Spirit Come First* (published 1980, written much earlier); and her autobiography in four parts (the third part is often published in two separate volumes in English).

Simone de Beauvoir died in 1986, aged 78. She is buried next to Sartre at the Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris.

Revolutionary and incendiary, *The Second Sex* is one of the earliest attempts to confront human history from a feminist perspective. It won de Beauvoir many admirers and just as many detractors. Today, many regard this massive and meticulously researched masterwork as not only as pillar of feminist thought but of twentieth-century philosophy in general.

De Beauvoir's primary thesis is that men fundamentally oppress women by characterizing them, on every level, as the *Other*, defined exclusively in opposition to men. Man occupies the role of the self, or subject; woman is the object, the other. He is essential, absolute, and transcendent. She is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated. He extends out into the world to impose his will on it, whereas woman is doomed to immanence, or inwardness. He creates, acts, invents; she waits for him to save her. This distinction is the basis of all de Beauvoir's later arguments.

De Beauvoir states that while it is natural for humans to understand themselves in opposition to others, this process is flawed when applied to the genders. In defining woman exclusively as Other, man is effectively denying her humanity.

The Second Sex chronicles de Beauvoir's effort to locate the source of these profoundly imbalanced gender roles. In Book I, entitled "Facts and Myths," she asks how "female humans" come to occupy a subordinate position in society. To answer this question—and to better understand her own identity—de Beauvoir first turns to biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism. These disciplines reveal indisputable "essential" differences between men and women but provide no justification for woman's inferiority. They all take woman's inferior "destiny" for granted.

She then moves to history to trace the emergence of male superiority in society, from nomadic hunter-gatherers through the French Revolution and contemporary times. Here she finds ample examples of female subordination, but again, no persuasive justification for them. History, she

argues, is not an immutable "fact," but a reflection of certain attitudes, preconceptions, and injustices.

De Beauvoir next discusses various mythical representations of women and demonstrates how these myths have imprinted human consciousness, often to the disservice of women. De Beauvoir hopes to debunk the persistent myth of the "eternal feminine" by showing that it arose from male discomfort with the fact of his own birth. Throughout history, maternity has been both worshipped and reviled: the mother both brings life and heralds death. These mysterious operations get projected onto the woman, who is transformed into a symbol of "life" and in the process is robbed of all individuality. To illustrate the prevalence of these myths, de Beauvoir studies the portrayal of women by five modern writers. In the end of this section, de Beauvoir examines the impact of these myths on individual experience. She concludes that the "eternal feminine" fiction is reinforced by biology, psychoanalysis, history, and literature.

De Beauvoir insists on the impossibility of comparing the "character" of men and women without considering the immense differences in their situation, and in Book II, entitled "Woman's Life Today," she turns to the concrete realities of this situation. She traces female development through its formative stages: childhood, youth, and sexual initiation. Her goal is to prove that women are not *born* "feminine" but shaped by a thousand external processes. She shows how, at each stage of her upbringing, a girl is conditioned into accepting passivity, dependence, repetition, and inwardness. Every force in society conspires to deprive her of subjectivity and flatten her into an object. Denied the possibility of independent work or creative fulfillment, the woman must accept a dissatisfying life of housework, childbearing, and sexual slavishness.

Having brought the woman to adulthood, de Beauvoir analyzes the various "situations," or roles, the adult woman inhabits. The bourgeois woman performs three major functions: wife, mother, and entertainer. No matter how illustrious the woman's household may be, these roles inevitably lead to immanence, incompleteness, and profound frustration. Even those who accept a less conventional place in society—as a prostitute or courtesan, for example—must submit to imperatives defined by the male. De Beauvoir also reflects on the trauma of old age. When a woman loses her reproductive capacity, she loses her primary purpose and therefore her identity. In the final chapter of this section, "Woman's Situation and Character," de Beauvoir reiterates the controversial claim that woman's situation is *not* a result of her character. Rather, her character is a result of her situation. Her mediocrity, complacency, lack of accomplishment, laziness, passivity—all these qualities are the *consequences* of her subordination, not the cause.

In "Justifications," de Beauvoir studies some of the ways that women reinforce their own dependency. Narcissists, women in love, and mystics all embrace their immanence by drowning selfhood in an external object—whether it be the mirror, a lover, or God. Throughout the book, de Beauvoir mentions such instances of females being complicit in their Otherness, particularly with regard to marriage. The difficulty of breaking free from "femininity"—of sacrificing security and comfort for some ill-conceived notion of "equality"—induces many women to

accept the usual unfulfilling roles of wife and mother. From the very beginning of her discussion, de Beauvoir identifies the economic underpinnings of female subordination—and the economic roots of woman's liberation. Only in work can she achieve autonomy. If woman can support herself, she can also achieve a form of liberation. In the concluding chapters of *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir discusses the logistical hurdles woman faces in pursuing this goal.

REFERENCE:

1. http://sreekumarenglishliterature.blogspot.com/2017/11/femininity-narrative-and-psychoanalysis.html
2. https://www.ukessays.com/essays/english-literature/juliet-mitchells-application-of-psychoanalytic-theory-english-literature-essay.php
3. http://www.unishivaji.ac.in/uploads/distedu/2019_2020/SIM%202019/Critical%20Final.pdf
4. https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/roomofonesown/section7/
5. https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/room-of-ones-own/analysis
6. https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/secondsex/summary/
7. https://www.gradesaver.com/the-second-sex/study-guide/summary

SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIT 2 - Women's Writing – SHS5012

1. Emily Dickinson

I Cannot Live With You by Emily Dickinson

Stanza 1

I Cannot Live With You opens with a curious line. The speaker is addressing a person and telling that
person that she cannot live there with him. She tells him that to live with him "would be life". It seems strange that she would not want to live with him if she herself admits that to live with him would be life itself. But then she goes into deeper detail. She claims that "life is over there" and describes it as being something "behind the shelf". It is almost as if the speaker does not believe herself to have access to life.

Stanza 2

This stanza is a fascinating explanation from the speaker. She has already told the subject of the poem that she cannot live with him because that would be life, and life is not accessible to her. Now, she introduces another character- the Sexton. The Sexton was a person who would be in charge of the church yard. He was once referred to as the gravedigger. In the days of the gravedigger and the church yard watcher, people were occasionally buried alive. It is a terrifying idea, and because of this, the safety coffin was patented. The safety coffin had a bell the person inside could ring if for some reason he or she woke up to find themselves buried alive. The gravedigger, if he heard a bell ringing, would dig up the grave. The use of the "Sexton" to describe the one who has control of the speaker's life suggests that the speaker believes herself to be dead already, figuratively. Somehow, the speaker does not feel in control of her own life, but at the mercy of one who might dig her up out of the grave. Still speaking to
the same person she began speaking to, she says, "Our Life- His Porcelain- like a cup". This reveals that the Sexton symbolizes God in this poem. However, the speaker does not portray a loving God that allows people to live, but one that seems to keep people in their graves, or on a shelf like a porcelain figurine or a decorative cup which gives him pleasure to look at, to own.

Stanza 3

This stanza brings a shift of tone. The reader becomes aware that the words connect with the previous stanza in a way that brings in an entirely different meaning. Now, the porcelain or decorative cup is something that is "discarded" by the "housewife". The one in control of the speaker's life has switched from the Sexton to the housewife, and now she is discarded as though she were "quaint" and outdated or broken. She sees herself being replaced by newer models as the old around her "crack". At this point, it is important to remember that the poem began with the refusal to live with someone. That someone, perhaps a lover, would offer the speaker life. But the speaker does not believe that life is accessible to her. She believes that it is meant to be something distant. She is not sure exactly why she believes this, other than the firm belief that someone or something outside of her is controlling her life. She compares these forces to a Sexton and then to a housewife. At this point in *I Cannot Live With You*, she anticipates feeling

broken and discarded. This is one of her reasons for claiming that she cannot live with the person to whom she speaks. The first reason is that it would bring her life- life which she believes she cannot obtain. The second reason is that she believes she would eventually be discarded and replaced with someone new.

Stanza 4

At this point in the poem, the speaker's refusal to live with the person to whom she speaks is beginning to sound like the decline to a marriage proposal. Now, she is not only refusing to live with someone, but she is also refusing to die with someone. This implies that someone has asked her to spend her life with him. This coincides with the historical context of the poem. In the early 1800's, during Dickinson's lifetime, the only reason for one person to be asked to live with another would be in the context of marriage. Certainly two young people of the opposite sex living together would have been nearly
unheard of, and would have brought shame upon the family. Thus, in the context of the speaker's answers and the time period in which *I Cannot Live With You* was written, it is safe to assume that the speaker is in fact declining a marriage proposal. She claims that she cannot live with this person, and then she claims that she cannot die with him. She offers a few reasons for this refusal as well. She claims that one person must wait to die until after the other person has died. After all, someone had to be
there to shut the eyes of their beloved dead. This reveals the speaker's rather morbid and cynical approach to the idea of love. Even though she obviously feels alive being around this person, she refuses to live with him for fear that she would eventually be discarded. Then, she goes on to explain that even if she were not discarded, love could only end in one other way. One of them would have to watch the other die. It seems the speaker would rather avoid love than risk losing it through death or departure.

Stanza 5

Here, the speaker expresses her disdain at the thought of watching her lover die. She claims that she
could not "stand by" and watch her lover "freeze". If she were ever subjected to such tragedy, she should think she has a right to die herself. This is what she calls "death's privilege". Yet, she knows that life does not work that way. This is yet another reason she offers in defence of her choice to decline this marriage proposal.

Stanza 6

At this point, the poem become even more shocking. After contemplating her own refusal to love and
watch her lover die, she then explains that she could not "rise with" him. Because she has already mentioned death, the word "rise" here refers to resurrection. During Dickinson's time period, most of the people around her believed not only in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the basis of the Christian faith, but they also believed in what is referred to as the final resurrection, in which all who believed in Jesus would rise from the dead. Here, the speaker claims that she could not

wish to be with him at the final resurrection because this person's face "would put out Jesus'". This is quite a shocking claim. The speaker obviously believes that the face of Jesus should shine the brightest at the final resurrection. But, she believes if she were to rise again with one whom she had loved in life, that person's face would outshine that of Jesus. The speaker clearly believes that this would not be right, and thus she uses this as yet another reason for her refusal to marry the person to whom she speaks.

Stanza 7

Here, the speaker expresses her feelings toward the faith that surrounds her. She continues to describe the final resurrection and her feelings toward it- namely that it would "glow plain- and foreign". She admits that the idea does not excite her. Rather, it all seems rather foreign to her. Her description of her "homesick eye" suggests that rather than looking forward to the new heaven and new earth as
Christians were taught to do, she would miss the old earth. Then she says, "Except that You than He shone closer by". The capitalization of the word "You" suggests that the speaker sees the person to whom she speaks as being as important as God himself. The juxtaposition of the capitalized "He' and
"You" supports this idea, as well as her claim that the one to whom she speaks "shone closer by" than God himself. The speaker implies that she believes these feelings are wrong, and yet she has them all the same. These are her reasons for refusing this marriage proposal.

Stanza 8

With these words, the speaker gives more insight into her refusal. It appears that she sees this person as
one who serves God, and she knows that she cannot. She begins with "They'd judge Us". It is unclear whether "They" refers to the Holy Trinity or the other people at the final resurrection, or whether she
has reverted back to the present time period and is referring to their friends and family. In any case, she believes that she cannot be worthy of him because she has no desire to serve heaven.

Stanza 9

The speaker continues to give her reasons for her refusal, claiming that the one to whom she speaks is able to see, but she herself "had no more eyes". Specifically, she claims that she has no eyes for paradise. As a Christian is often taught to keep his eyes set on paradise, this description of herself further allows the speaker to explain that she has no interest in faith and no eyes or heart for heaven. She believes this to be in contrast with the heart of the one she speaks to.

Stanza 10

The speaker enters into the hypothetical, supposing that even if the one she loves is "lost", she would be lost as well. With this, she implies that neither person would do the other any good. She claims that even if Heaven rang loudly for her, she could never respond. The speaker seems

to be entering into every argument against this marriage, including the argument that even if the man is lost as she is, they could never help one another.

Stanza 11

The speaker then enters into a possibility which contradicts the one proposed in the previous stanza. She suggests that if the one she loves is "saved" then she is still "condemned". Thus, even if they spent their lives on earth together, someday, she would go to "Hell" and would be where he was not.

Stanza 12

After having explored every possible ending to the marriage from life together, to death, to the final resurrection, to judgement day, the speaker concludes that in any case, they would end up parting ways. She tells him, "You there- I here", thus stating that they would be better off remaining apart, for they were sure to part ways either in this life or the next. She claims that they would always be apart "with just the door ajar" between them, making it seem as though there were oceans and prayer separating
them. It is interesting that she uses "oceans" and "prayer" in the same line to explain to her love what is separating them. It is almost as if his prayer and his faith causes there to be chasms like oceans between the two, for his faith is something she believes she can never understand. These feelings bring to her heart a feeling that she can only describe as "white sustenance". That feeling is despair.

Emily Dickinson's Poem "I 'm wife; I've finished that"

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to analyze the poem of Emily Dickinson, "I 'm wife; I've finished that" with
feminism literary criticism.

Feminist literary criticism is looking at literature and authors from a feminist point of view. Coming from an understanding that literature is not neutral but reflects political perspectives, feminist literary criticism is linked to feminist politics. It has needed to be strong and angry, at times, to shake up the certainties of male-dominated culture and make a freer atmosphere for women writers and readers (Magezis, 1996: 55 in Elma, 2003: 35)

In the Dickinson's poem, "I 'm wife; I've finished that", it showed the woman's difference of freedom when they are married and have not married. It is not amazed if this poem is connected to feminism approach. Feminist scholars have examined Dickinson's poems and letters in an effort to gain some insight into how the poet responded to the gender-restrictive values of the mid-nineteenth-century patriarchal society. These critics have concluded that while as a person Dickinson succumbed to a life of social marginality and seclusion, as a poet she opened a new frontier of feminine power and assertiveness through her transcendent and imaginative verse.

Feminist scholars have identified a number of Dickinson's poems which directly comment upon the role and experiences of women within a repressive patriarchal order. In addition, some of these critics have suggested that many more poems can be interpreted as the poet's opinion of gender issues if one were to assume that the speaker in each verse is a female. For example, Poem 271 ("A solemn thing—it was— I said—") presents the image of "a woman—white," which may be a reference to a bride, a novice nun, or a female poet. At the conclusion, the speaker of the poem finds satisfaction in her "'small' life," which some commentators have suggested is a rejection of conventional female roles in favor of pursuing
those that she finds more fulfilling. A similar theme of empowerment has been detected in Poem 657 ("I dwell in Possibility—"), which many critics have maintained is a commentary on the ability of the female artist to subvert the oppressive limitations of the patriarchal order through the transcendental power of poetry. Though her poems were not grouped into published collections during her lifetime, Dickinson did sew certain poems into "fascicles," or small booklets, indicating that she viewed them as related meditations on a central theme. Her fascicle 22, which includes Poem 271, is one example. Scholars have focused on the poems in this fascicle—which reflect on such subjects as domestic life, liberty, human relationships, and spiritual redemption—as verses indicative of Dickinson's desire to defy the social and gender conventions of her day.

Dickinson's poetry reflects her loneliness as we know she was seldom left her house and by the 1860s, Dickinson lived in almost total physical isolation from the outside world. The speakers of her poems generally live in a state of want, but her poems are also marked by the intimate recollection of inspirational moments which are decidedly life-giving and suggest the possibility of happiness. Her work was heavily influenced by the Metaphysical poets of seventeenth-century England, as well as her reading of the Book of Revelation and her upbringing in a Puritan New England town which encouraged a Calvinist, orthodox, and conservative approach to Christianity.

Many of Dickinson's poems discuss female identity in relation to males and her own identity in accordance to religion, nature, life and love. I think some of her poetry could definitely be grounded in the probability that she might have been thinking of her own identity in a society where first the father dominates and then the husband, but where she has experienced neither. When both don't exist, the patriarchal system has been undercut.

"In I'm wife I've finished that" Emily want to show the difference of to be "woman" and "wife". The
statement was said that this poem is about an uneasy-contradictory feeling of a young woman who is
turning into a woman, especially a wife that seems "safer and more comfortable", but stopping her from becoming a full human being with no self empowerment and self identity anymore There is a different position between "woman" and "wife" that show how both of them take steps. For further analysis of this poem will be discussed in the next section deeply.

ANALYSIS

As mention above we will analyze the Dickinson's poem, "I'm wife, I've finished that" by Feminist literary criticism. As we know in this poem, Emily Dickinson presents a very intricate approach towards marriage. Although we know that Emily had not married yet, she can show how the situation of both of them.

In the first stanza, Emily show that if she becomes a wife, she will finish all of she had done. The labels and titles given to women ("Wife") and to contrast it to what a woman can never be and a man can ("Czar") demonstrates this with the sharp puncturing dashes, capital letters and exclamation marks at the end. The inequality of man and woman is clearly shown as well by the change the woman goes through from childhood: "girl" to womanhood: "Wife" characterized by an "Eclipse" in the second stanza. I guess, based on her, it is natural for "woman" to stop at "wife" because as a wife the women must go along with her husband. It is not as freedom as they are a woman that can do everything
without interference of others. A woman can become a "Czar", but a "wife" just only becomes a wife with the husband as her adoration. And often we see the intimidation wife by her own husband in their household. Her life will be dominated by her own husband.
Emily did not marry, but what perhaps is most poignant and really more the issue is not her ignorance and bitterness towards the married state but, after girlhood there is only marriage, and since she is not married, then what is she? It is about identity. The line "It's safer so" shows that she believed that to have a label, to be 'typical', 'normal', etc. is to be 'safer' and to be more secure of her own identity. She is in flux having never been married and never having a domineering male force in her life, except from her constant issue with her religion/faith, of course dominated by men then.

Emily Dickinson presents a very intricate approach towards marriage. In the first stanza she writes "I'm
'wife' – I've finished that / I'm 'Woman' now – It's safer so," what she means here is that now since I am married, I have become complete woman. I think the message that she is trying to convey is that every girl ought to get married in order for her to become a 'complete' woman. In the first 3 line Dickinson seems to present a pro-marriage opinion. But in the last line of stanza 1, she writes "It's safer so," here is where the ironic messages is put forward. In mid nineteenth century, it was a norm/expected for a girl to get married, have a family, have children and have a typical lifestyle. So in the last line she mocks the society for pressurizing girls to get married.

In the second stanza, Emily called the marriage as an "eclipse" of the woman, though a soft one because
of her unsatisfied but culturally obligated feeling on marriage. The inequality of man and woman is clearly shown as well by the change the woman goes through from childhood: "girl" to womanhood: "Wife" characterized by an "Eclipse". Dickinson is playing feminist. She is saying it is better to be "Woman" rather than "Wife." Once you make this realization, you will see things as differently as the dead see life on earth. But maybe, she is pointing out that the natural progression of a girl's life from willfulness to marriage in "the soft eclipse", almost like

she see marriage as a shelter from pain. In this stanza she compares the single-married issue to the earth-heaven scenario. Being single is represented by the 'harsh' life and realities of the earth and a married woman's life is compare to being in 'Heaven.'

In the other statement from Grace in United States, Emily Dickinson is not finding security with becoming a woman, but insecurities. She does not want to be a wife or a woman and puts these words in quotes because they seem foreign when compared to her. This relates to her family life also because her father did not expect a woman to become of anything and Emily rejected her mother's identity insisting in her poems that she is an orphan upon herself. In this poem she fantasizes that she did enter in some kind of marriage, but she seems to almost be mocking it.

The same, insecure status applied also to widows. They too throughout history have been of unstable status. Certainly, 'wife' was really the only occupation for a woman out of girlhood, and there is definitely a hint of bitterness and regret, but perhaps the bitterness is well deserved. She has no social identity but that of a spinster and no woman would willingly adopt that title that was often the butt of pity or scorn.

And most definitely, I think she did not want to be a wife and I guess she thought to preserve some sense of an identity she had to become a recluse, but there is a sense of a lack of identity when not a wife and not a girl. It is a shame she was not more of an outgoing person challenging social ideals.

The final stanza describes the Emily's feeling in marriage. She said that the marriage at other side will being comfort as she is pointing out that the natural progression of a girl's life from willfulness to marriage in "the soft eclipse", almost like she see marriage as a shelter from pain, but pain is the other kind. This stanza begins with the lines "This being comfort-then/ That other kind was pain," these two
lines transmit a mixed signal suggesting that married life is finally painless or the complete opposite of it

That pain is come from the reality of household. How the couple, man and woman, will unite their want, their habit and their purpose in a nation. And when they can not to unite that, there will be a problem that threats their household. Occasionally, the one will dominate the other. In this case, we are always seeing that the woman is the oppressed side.

Basically, Emily is not satisfied with the marriage life; and that's why she keeps comparing herself as she
says "why compare?" from the beginning to the end of the poem, and the last line "I'm "Wife"! Stop there!" almost sounds like a man's voice ordering her. However, she ends in a cynical tone: With independence comes pain, so it is natural for women to stop at "Wife."

She ends the poem with a positive note towards marriage by saying that there is no need to compare both the scenarios since she is now a 'Wife.' Here again, she uses the word 'Wife' to represent her status. That to me indicates that she is trying to mock the sexist society of the middle nineteenth century.

CONCLUSION

As we analyze in the above section we know that in this poem Emily Dickinson want to presents a very intricate approach towards marriage. At the first 3 lines, she show her a pro-marriage opinion, but in the last she writes the ironic messages that mocks the society norm in mid nineteenth for pressurizing girls to get married.

She wants to show that the marriage for the girls is like “soft eclipse”. Marriage will give the safer live for the girls that are demanded to them and finally painless, or the complete opposite of it that will cause a pain for them.

I think this poem is presented to mock the sexist society of the middle nineteenth century for pressurizing girls to get married, have a family, have children and have a typical lifestyle.

2. Sylvia Plath: Poems Summary and Analysis of "Lady Lazarus"

Summary

"Lady Lazarus" is a poem commonly understood to be about suicide. It is narrated by a woman, and mostly addressed to an unspecified person.

The narrator begins by saying she has "done it again." Every ten years, she manages to commit this unnamed act. She considers herself a walking miracle with bright skin, her right foot a "paperweight," and her face as fine and featureless as a "Jew linen". She address an unspecified enemy, asking him to peel the napkin from her face, and inquiring whether he is terrified by the features he sees there. She assures him that her "sour breath" will vanish in a day.

She is certain that her flesh will soon be restored to her face after having been sacrificed to the grave, and that she will then be a smiling, 30 year-old woman. She will ultimately be able to die nine times, like a cat, and has just completed her third death. She will die once each decade. After each death, a "peanut-crunching crowd" shoves in to see her body unwrapped. She addresses the crowd directly, showing them she remains skin and bone, unchanged from who she was before.

The first death occurred when she was ten, accidentally. The second death was intentional - she did not mean to return from it. Instead, she was as "shut as a seashell" until she was called back by people who then picked the worms off her corpse. She does not specifically identify how either death occurred.

She believes that "Dying / Is an art, like everything else," and that she does it very well. Each time, "it feels real," and is easy for her. What is difficult is the dramatic comeback, the return to the same place and body, occurring as it does in broad daylight before a crowd's cry of "A miracle!" She believes people should pay to view her scars, hear her heart, or receive a word, touch, blood, hair or clothes from her.

In the final stanzas, she addresses the listener as "Herr Dockter" and "Herr Enemy," sneering that she is his crowning achievement, a "pure gold baby." She does not underestimate his concern, but is bothered by how he picks through her ashes. She insists there is nothing there but soap, a wedding ring, and a gold filling. She warns "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" to beware of her because she is going to rise out of the ash and "eat men like air."

Analysis

"Lady Lazarus" is a complicated, dark, and brutal poem originally published in the collection *Ariel*. Plath composed the poem during her most productive and fecund creative period. It is considered one of Plath's best poems, and has been subject to a plethora of literary criticism since its publication. It is commonly interpreted as an expression of Plath's suicidal attempts and impulses. Its tone veers between menacing and scathing, and it has drawn attention for its

use of Holocaust imagery, similar to "Daddy." The title is an allusion to the Biblical character, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

The standard interpretation of the poem suggests that it is about multiple suicide attempts. The details can certainly be understood in this framework. When the speaker says she "has done it again," she means she has attempted suicide for the third time, after one accidental attempt and one deliberate attempt in the past. Each attempt occurred in a different decade, and she is now 30 years old. Now that she has been pulled back to life from this most recent attempt, her "sour breath / Will vanish in a day," and her flesh will return to her bones. However, this recovery is presented as a failure, whereas the suicide attempts are presented as accomplishments - "Dying is an art" that she performs "exceptionally well." She seems to believe she will reach a perfection through escaping her body.

By describing dying as an art, she includes a spectator to both her deaths and resurrections. Because the death is a performance, it necessarily requires others. In large part, she kills herself to punish them for driving her to it. The eager "peanut-crunching crowd" is invited but criticized for its voyeuristic impulse. The crowd could certainly be understood to include the reader himself, since he reads the poem to explore her dark impulses. She assumes that her voyeurs are significantly invested - they would pay the "large charge" to see her scars and heart.

However, she imbues this impulse with a harsh criticism by comparing the crowd to the complacent Germans who stood aside while the Jews were thrown into concentration camps. Further, the crowd ultimately proves less an encouragement than a burden when they also attend the resurrection. She despises this second part of the process, and resents the presence of others at that time. Whether this creates a vicious circle, in which that resentment is partially responsible for the subsequent attempt, is implied but not explicitly stated. Critic Robert Bagg explores the speaker's contradictory feelings towards the crowd by writing that Plath "is not bound by any metaphysical belief in the self's limitations. Instead of resisting the self's antagonists she derives a tremendous thrill from throwing her imagination into the act of self-obliteration." She can destroy her body, but her imaginative self remains a performer, always aware of the effect she has on others.

The poem can also be understood through a feminist lens, as a demonstration of the female artist's struggle for autonomy in a patriarchal society. Lynda K. Bundtzen writes that "the female creation of a male-artist god is asserting independent creative powers." From this perspective, "Lady Lazarus" is not merely a confessional poem detailing depressive feelings, but is also a statement on how the powerful male figure usurps Plath's creative powers but is defeated by her rebirth. Though Lady Lazarus knows that "Herr Doktor" will claim possession of her body and remains after forcing her suicide, she equally believes she will rise and "eat men like air." Her creative powers can be stifled momentarily, but will always return stronger.

The poem can also be understood in a larger context, as a comment on the relationship between poet and audience in a society that, as Pamela Annas claims, has separated creativity and consumption. The crowd views Lady Lazarus/the poet/Plath as an object, and therefore does not

recognize her as a human being. Plath reflects this through her multiple references to body parts separated from the whole. From this interpretation, Lady Lazarus's suicide then becomes "an assertion of wholeness, an act of self- definition, and a last desperate act of contempt toward the peanut-crunching crowd." The only way she can keep herself intact is to destroy herself, and she does this rather than be turned into commodities. Though "Herr Docktor" will peruse her remains for commodities, she will not have been defeated because of her final act.

As has often been the case in Plath's poems, the Holocaust imagery has drawn much attention from critics and readers. It is quite profuse in this poem. Lady Lazarus addresses a man as "Herr Dokter," "Herr Enemy," "Herr God," and "Herr Lucifer." She describes her face as a "Nazi lampshade" and as a"Jew linen." As previously described, one effect of these allusions is to implicate the reader, make him or her complicit in passive voyeurism by comparing him or her to the Germans who ignored the Holocaust. However, they also serve to establish the horrific atmosphere than be understood as patriarchy, as a society of consumers, or as simply cruel humans. No matter how one interprets the crowd in the poem, they complicate the poem's meaning so that it is a sophisticated exploration of the responsibility we have for each other's unhappiness, rather than simply a dire, depressive suicide note.

Death

Death is an ever-present reality in Plath's poetry, and manifests in several different ways.

One common theme is the void left by her father's death. In "Full Fathom Five," she speaks of his death and burial, mourning that she is forever exiled. In "The Colossus," she tries in vain to put him back together again and make him speak. In "Daddy," she goes further in claiming that she wants to kill him herself, finally exorcising his vicious hold over her mind and her work.

Death is also dealt with in terms of suicide, which eerily corresponds to her own suicide attempts and eventual death by suicide. In "Lady Lazarus," she claims that she has mastered the art of dying after trying to kill herself multiple times. She sneers that everyone is used to crowding in and watching her self-destruct. Suicide, though, is presented as a desirable alternative in many of these works. The poems suggest it would release her from the difficulties of life, and bring her transcendence wherein her mind could free itself from its corporeal cage. This desire is exhilaratingly expressed in "Ariel," and bleakly and resignedly expressed in "Edge." Death is an immensely vivid aspect of Plath's work, both in metaphorical and literal representations.

Victimization

Plath felt like a victim to the men in her life, including her father, her husband, and the great male- dominated literary world. Her poetry can often be understood as response to these feelings of victimization, and many of the poems with a male figure can be interpreted as referring to any or all of these male forces in her life.

In regards to her father, she realized she could never escape his terrible hold over her; she expressed her sense of victimhood in "The Colossus" and "Daddy," using powerful metaphors and comparisons to limn a man who figured heavily in her psyche.

Her husband also victimized her through the power he exerted as a man, both by assuming he should have the literary career and through his infidelity. Plath felt relegated to a subordinate, "feminine" position which stripped from her any autonomy or power. Her poems from the "Colossus" era express her frustration over the strictures under which she operated. For instance, "A Life" evokes a menacing and bleak future for Plath. However, in her later poems, she seems finally able to transcend her status as victim by fully embracing her creative gifts ("Ariel"), metaphorically killing her father ("Daddy"), and committing suicide ("Lady Lazarus", "Edge").

Patriarchy

Plath lived and worked in 1950s/1960s England and America, societies characterized by very strict gender norms. Women were expected to remain safely ensconced in the house, with motherhood as their ultimate joy and goal. Women who ventured into the arts found it difficult to attain much attention for their work, and were often subject to marginalization and disdain. Plath explored and challenged this reductionist tendency through her work, offering poems of intense vitality and stunning language. She depicted the bleakness of the domestic scene, the disappointment of pregnancy, the despair over her husband's infidelity, her tortured relationship with her father, and her attempts to find her own creative voice amidst the crushing weight of patriarchy. She shied away from using genteel language and avoided writing only of traditionally "female" topics. Most impressively, the work remains poetic and artistic - rather than political - because of her willing to admit ambivalence over all these expectations, admitting that both perspectives can prove a trap.

Nature

Images and allusions to nature permeate Plath's poetry. She often evokes the sea and the fields to great effect. The sea is usually associated with her father; it is powerful, unpredictable, mesmerizing, and dangerous. In "Full Fathom Five," her father is depicted as a sea god. An image of the sea is also used in "Contusion," there suggesting a terrible sense of loss and loneliness.

She also pulled from her personal life, writing of horse-riding on the English fields, in "Sheep in Fog" and "Ariel." In these cases, she uses the activity to suggest an otherworldly, mystical arena in which creative thought or unfettered emotion can be expressed.

Nature is also manifested in the bright red tulips which jolt the listless Plath from her post-operation stupor, insisting that she return to the world of the living. Here, nature is a provoker, an instigator - it does not want her to give up. Nature is a ubiquitous theme in Plath's work; it is a potent force that is sometimes unpredictable, but usually works to encourage her creative output.

The self

Plath has often been grouped into the confessional movement of poetry. One of the reasons for

this classification is that she wrote extensively of her own life, her own thoughts, her own worries. Any great artist both creates his or her art and is created by it, and Plath was always endeavoring to know herself better through her writing. She tried to come to terms with her personal demons, and tried to work through her problematic relationships. For instance, she tried to understand her ambivalence about motherhood, and tried to vent her rage at her failed marriage.

However, her exploration of herself can also be understood as an exploration of the idea of the self, as it stands opposed to society as a whole and to other people, whom she did not particularly like. Joyce Carol Oates wrote that even Plath's children seemed to be merely the objects of her perception, rather than subjective extensions of herself. The specifics of Plath's work were drawn from her life, but endeavored to transcend those to ask more universal questions. Most infamously, Plath imagined her self as a Jew, another wounded and persecuted victim. She also tried to engage with the idea of self in terms of the mind and body dialectic. "Edge" and "Sheep in Fog" explore her desire to leave the earthly life, but express some ambivalence about what is to come after. "Ariel" suggests it is glory and oneness with nature, but the other two poems do not seem to know what will happen to the mind/soul once the body is eradicated. This conflict - between the self and the world outside - can be used to understand almost all of Plath's poems.

The Body

Many of Plath's poems deal with the body, in terms of motherhood, wounds, operations, and death.

In "Metaphors," she describes how her body does not feel like it is her own; she is simply a "means" towards delivering a child. In "Tulips" and "A Life," the body has undergone an operation. With the surgery comes an excising of emotion, attachment, connection, and responsibility. The physical cut has resulted in an emotional severing, which is a relief to the depressed woman. "Cut" depicts the thrill Plath feels on almost cutting her own thumb off. It is suggested that she feels more alive as she contemplates her nearly-decapitated thumb, and watches the blood pool on the floor. "Contusion" takes things further - she has received a bruise for some reason, but unlike in "Cut," where she eventually seems to grow uneasy with the wound, she seems to welcome the physical pain, since the bruise suggests an imminent end to her suffering. Suicide, the most profound and dramatic thing one can do to one's own body, is also central to many of her poems.

Overall, it is clear that Plath was constantly discerning the relationship between mind and body, and was fascinated with the implications of bodily pain.

Motherhood

Motherhood is a major theme in Plath's work. She was profoundly ambivalent about this prescribed role for women, writing in "Metaphors" about how she felt insignificant as a pregnant woman, a mere "means" to an end. She lamented how grotesque she looked, and expressed her resignation over a perceived lack of options. However, in "Child," she delights in her child's perception of and engagement with the world. Of course, "Child" ends with the suggestions that

she knows her child will someday see the harsh reality of life. Plath did not want her children to be contaminated by her own despair. This fear may also have manifested itself in her last poem, "Edge," in which some critics have discerned a desire to kill her children and take them with her far from the terrors of life. Other poems in her oeuvre express the same tension. Overall, Plath clearly loved her children, but was not completely content in either pregnancy or motherhood.

3. Eunice deSouza

Advice to Women -- This is a really off-beat poem - comparing a cat's haughtily indifferent attitude towards life, the universe and everything (it's always there – and it's all mine - let it be) to what a woman's reaction must be when jilted by a lover.

Eunice deSouza is one of India's better modern poets ... a Roman Catholic Goan brought up in Pune, and now Head of the Dept of English at St.Xavier's College, Bombay. She's also published a lot of children's fiction - most of which was published by Echo Books, a more or less defunct arm of Uncle (Ananth) Pai's India Book House (more popular for its Amar Chitra Katha and Tinkle comics . This poem is typical of de Souza's work which rarely drifts beyond the particular, the identifiable object. The writing style is sheer drama, using the seemingly transparent language of spoken English, without any conceits and attempted graces - which make her poems a sheer pleasure to read aloud.

The idiom is almost entirely uncluttered by metaphor and imagery (a lot of which I grew to _hate_ thanks to being force-fed a diet of the 'Chhayavaad' genre of Hindi poetry - Mahadevi Varma and such ... which believed in heavy use of symbolism to express often maudlin sentiments - one of the reasons why I abhor poetesses like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu ...)

Her poems are totally devoid of the traditional devices which indicate mood or define emotion. They rely mainly on sound, rhythm of lines, on tone and the (natural) accenting of precisely placed words and phrases. Again, one of the best reasons why her poetry is best read aloud.

Bequest

Eunice de Souza is widely known as A famous Indian English woman poets who raises her voice for the woman in contemporary world scenario. She chooses poetry as a medium to show her protest and to show the position of woman to transform it. Sometimes she has shared her personal experiences and connects herself with the all women. Her collection of poems are Fix (1979), Women in Dutch Painting(1988), Way of Belonging(1990), Selected and New Poems(1994) and many more.

Actually women always place as secondary position in this society although they are the other half of the whole human existence and race. Gender discrimination is always prevails here as Women in India always suffer in school, college, before marriage, after marriage as because of their biological
exclusivity, dislocated imperfect society. In this context Eunice de Souza's poetry shows the ambivalence in women along with physical and psychological position of women in our society. She shows not a particular woman but the whole women race as they arte troubled, unfixed, tormented, and confused. Mohanty said:

"To defin e feminism purely in gendered terms assumes that our consciousness being woman has nothing to do with race, class, nation or sexuality, just with gender. But no one 'becomes a

woman because she is female". (Mohanty, 55)

In her poems we find that she shows her concern for woman. She shows the dislocation of mother, daughter, wife in a same way as the different roles of woman suffered different problems. She wants to be a device without these particular names as she is created with origin of multiple and diffused points.
As she says in 'Bequest':

"I Wish I could be a

Wise woman

Smiling, endlessly,

vacuously Like a plastic

flower.

Saying child, learn from me." (Bequest)

Indian woman has to do a lot to satisfy her family, parents and in the same time male are free and only they create the rules where as women are only the follower of those stupid rules. So woman has to face gender discrimination on a large scale in this society.

4. PURDAH: IMTIAZ DHARKER'S POETRY

Imtiaz Dharker (1954-) lives with the passion of an undaunted rebel, not to retreat and not to fail. The intensity and eloquence of her life and poetic accomplishment have dumbfounded the male-chauvinists and have left her female counterparts in soaring spirits not only inside the Islamic social, cultural and religious setup but also outside it. That is why her life and poetry make a fascinating study in the crushing indictment of the suppressive prescriptions against the freedom, dignity and respectful living of women, especially in the Muslim society. Imtiaz confirms our convictions that socio-cultural and socio- religious restrictions on women have robbed them of all their potentialities leaving them not only physically and mentally handicapped but also psychological wrecks age after age. The lived experiences of Imtiaz have been honestly expressed in her poetry with the courage of conviction. Her humanistic and feministic concerns with her anguish and agony, sympathy and protest give the message silently, though its deafening explosion has been felt everywhere. That is the reason that her rebellion has caused a flutter in the petticoats of the guardians of orthodox religion, custodians of culture and the pettifogging politicians. The substance, spirit and style of her daily living hold everyone to sway.

Imtiaz Dharker belongs to that generation of post-independence women poets who have given a convincing assurance that Indian English Poetry matches the best anywhere. Among these poets, we may include Kamla Das, Melanie Silgardo, Sujata Bhatt, Eunice de Souza, Mamta Kalia, Tara Patel etc. They have not only broadened the thematic concerns of Indian English Poetry but also shown how words and images – simple, suggestive and highly evocative – can recite the music of their anguish and agony, their irritations and humor, their observations and reflections with no sign of pretension. This serious and well-considered response to the observed and lived experiences is a drama of daily life here and there poeticized. Not only the technical excellence but also the pain and poignancy endured in suffocation and suppression have found a justifiable outlet in their creative instinct.Indian women writing poetry is not a new phenomenon in literature. It is quite old. Eunice de Souza tells us: "Women have been writing poetry in India since about 1000 B.C. on religious and secular themes, and it is among these rather more distant ancestors that contemporary women writers are likely to find congenial voices and styles." Eunice de Souza goes on to trace their great verse accomplishment till today. The emotion and passion and the gusto of their expression abundantly reveal what poetic power and poetic gift are in these instruments of the harmonies of nature. More abundant and fulfilling is the promise of fast increasing number of the buds and flowers and twigs arranged, displayed and placed in all their spontaneity in the bouquets of female poetic artistry and accomplishment today. Female voice is divinely gifted with harmony and musicality if sung in creativity, not otherwise. So the orchestra of female voices is presented best with all its magic and melody when the male sensibilities are well- attuned to it. May be the modesty of male –chauvinism forbids the acknowledgement of their own past monopolistic gains and the present sense of their loss! Imtiaz obviously and rightly has a proud claim to be among them. The present study includes only *Purdah* group of poems and "*I Speak For the Devil*" and her "*Postcards from god*" and "*The Terrorist at My Table*" have been deliberately kept out of purview for such is the demand

of the present venture.

Imtiaz Dharker regards herself as a Scottish Calvinist Muslim and her poetry is a confluence of three cultures. It reflects and depicts her deeply sensitive and keenly insightful understanding and response to these three cultures. Her sincerity in handling the issues of social, cultural and religious significance sensitizes the reader equally well. The delicacy and the tenderness that run in her silky strains awakens us to the wrongs and songs of the daily life of women under the norms, rules and sanctions laid down by the patriarchal society for power dynamics. She captures even the fleeting moments and thoughts with the rare touch of the artist who is heart and soul, mind and spirit, body and intellect, integrally and indispensably associated with all that is the fragile fabric of life. The surety Imtiaz gives and the impact she creates in so doing leaves the reader stunned. The exquisite simplicity of her style lends to her poems an inimitable brilliant conversation, a lively and stinging comment trapping us in the enchanting romance of The 1000 Nights deconstructed as a morale-booster to feminism.

Purdah has been sung and celebrated age after age in poetry, films and common parlance. With the rise of feminism and its becoming a world-wide rage, a force, *purdah* is seen in new light and new perspectives. We know that *purdah* is associated with Muslim women only, although in parts of Indian society also, even today, *purdah* is observed and the tradition adhered to in the same spirit of social and cultural prescription. However, *purdah* has greater socio-cultural and socio-religious association for Muslim women, educated or uneducated, advanced or backward, prosperous or penurious. There is an injunction to the Prophet in "The Koran" which reads as follows:

"O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (When they go abroad). That will be better, that so they may be recognized and not annoyed….." – (Sur Azhab)

Obviously, *Purdah* was necessary in the beginning of Islam when the Arabian countries were torn by turmoil and social strife. Thus *purdah* ensured safety to women then and it also became a symbol of high status.

However, today, *purdah* is viewed as a flagrant violation of the basic rights, freedoms and dignity of women. *Purdah* is treated as symbol of repression on women as it is devastatingly ruinous to the personality of women. To be covered from head to foot in the black veil is more indispensable to Muslim women. There has been and is a sporadic revolt and heated controversy in the print and electronic media against this practice to regenerate and rejuvenate female psyche. That is why its evils are viewed as outweighing its good. Imtiaz Dharker, with her social and cultural growth and lived experiences spanning three countries- Pakistan, England and India- has shown her subtle artistry in exposing the *Purdah* System in her title poems, poems related to it, in all its complexes of theme and style. The symbolism inherent in *purdah* also finds its subtlety and simplicity in alien cultural setting.

"Purdah-I"and "*Purdah-II"* need to be read with "*Honour Killing*", "*Prayer*", "*Grace*" and "*Battle-line*." This group of poems is packed with vast immensities. We have a fine experience

of the force of courage and the force of conviction in the landscape of Imtiaz's poetry, though her poetic potentiality is no less strong in other poems. "*Purdah-I*" is a discreet protest and an eloquent criticism of the tradition of veil strictly sanctioned and imposed on Muslim women. Our attention is focused on the turning point in the life of a Muslim girl when she suddenly becomes conscious of her sexual growth, others are perhaps more conscious.

"*One day they said*
she was old enough to learn some shame."
And –
"Purdah is a kind of safety.
……
The cloth fans out against the
skin much like the earth that
falls
on coffins after they put the dead men in."

The conservative society, cautious and conscious, must teach her some manners, decorum and dignity for the woman in the *purdah* is –

"*carefully carrying what we do not own:*
between the thighs, a sense of sin."

People around are the same; their looks are changed with a

purpose – "*But they make different angles*
in the light, their eyes
aslant, a little sly."

They notice her shame but *purdah* is a protection against undesirable, vulgar and vile looks of staring people. So Eunice de Souza regards "purdah not just as concealing garment but as state of mind." *Purdah* is suppressive and deadening to the intellectual awakening and growth of a woman and it is damaging to her personality. *Purdah* is a symbol of alienation and isolation from the outside world. It is a wall between the woman and the world. The result is that she is devoid of the first hand experience and the enlightenment this world has to offer. There is nothing refreshing in it; it curbs and restricts the speech and full expression; it is a repression of will and choice. Her mind and memory are stuffed with impressions from other women; their consciousness of sex and the feeling of sin associated with it grow to a stifle –

"*Voices speak inside us."*
Her plight is really miserable and evokes sympathy-
"Wherever she goes, she is always
inching past herself,
as if she were a clod of earth,
and the roots as well…….."

And the doors opening inward and again inward reveal her seclusion. In fact, the poem is

a self- examination of the *purdahnasheen* and also an honest and courageous scrutiny of other people.

In "*Battle-line*", Imtiaz better builds a situation depicting man-woman conflicts demarcating the boundary lines with check points and demolishing the same at will. The poetess questions –

"*Did you expect dignity?*"

The nations or the lovers or husband and wife behave the same after the battle-lines are

drawn – "*when the body becomes a territory*
shifting across uneasy
sheets; when you retreat
behind
the borderline of skin.

Turning, turning,
Barbed wire sinking in."
Then the whole again is at peace-
"Forgetful of
hostilities until, in the
quiet dawn, the next
attack."

Here both the protagonists seem to have reached a tacit accord.

"*Prayer*" is another poem of discrimination against women. The scene is set outside the mosque where the observer, perhaps the poetess herself, is denied entry. She expresses her strong resentment against man's writ which runs large here also in the house of God and He has also yielded to man's dictate. We are told that "The place is full of worshippers", all poor; their sandals with soles, heels and thongs "forming a perfect pattern of need" are ragged and mended many times. They are thrown together in a heap –
"*like a thousand prayers*
washing against the walls of God."

They appear to be the hopeful prayers of the poor. The observer is quite ironical when she questions out of sheer curiosity –

"*What prayers are they whispering?"*
and-
"What are they whispering?"

The answer to this question lies in not saying anything and the message is conveyed in willful and tactical silence, in the subtle irony of the question itself.

Imtiaz has killed many birds with no stone but the best is yet to be in her "*Purdah-II*" where the lioness is fiercest in her silence and kaleidoscopic depiction of the veiled Muslim women in an alien social, cultural, political and religious atmosphere. We hear the compassionate voice of the speaker but not her views. This voice forcefully expresses her serious humanistic and feministic concerns and the poetess achieves marvelous artistic success in the fulfillment of her poetic purpose.

However, another great poem, a high tragedy, deserves to be briefly discussed before this remarkably
dramatic lyric. That high tragedy is "*Honour Killing*", the first poem in "*I speak For the Devil*".

It so happened that a young woman was brutally shot dead in her lawyer's office in Lahore in 1999. None else but her family did so. It was a poignantly moving and heart-rending scene. What was her crime? She had asked for a divorce. Instead of having the heart, or for that purpose even head, to
condemn the killing at any level, it was welcomed as "honour killing".

Imtiaz Dharker's sensitivity could not remain dumb or mum and it burst forth in her poem "*Honour Killing*". It's reading makes a powerful impact and it sensitizes the reader, awakens and rouses his conscience to the urgent feminist concerns. She says:

"*At last I'm taking off this coat,*
this black coat of a country
that I swore for years was mine,
……
…….. this black
veil of a faith that
made me faithless to
myself,
that tied my mouth,
gave my god a devil's face,
and muffled my own voice.

What is left in after the easy cage of bone is squeezed and what is left out? The closing of the poem reveals greater dimensions of tragedy:

"*Let's see*
what I am out
here, making,
crafting, plotting
at my new geography."

The poetess understands the gravity of the situation and strongly feels that women must voice their conscience and protest against such deadening discriminations and devastating sanctions. Initially the price may be high and the tragedy too deep for tears but it is earnestly desired for the freedom and happiness of the future generations of women suffocating and rotting in such

an environment. Of course, this world of dark rationality has not been the same since then. Radical sensations and thinking have set in and the emboldened spirit has started showing itself even within those confines and with considerable success. Not riddance but reformation is in sight.

"*Purdah-II*" is more elaborate, more dramatic and more eloquent in voicing the imminent concerns of lasting significance. It is a poem about many women and all merge into one. The movement of the poem reminds us of T.S. Eliot's "*The Waste Land*". All these women in the poem merge into one woman; they all serve the same servitude – physical, psychological, social and cultural. Those who try to break cover with the hope and dream of a free new world face uncertainty and suffer excommunication. So the poem is an undaunted criticism of the way the society works against the freedom, dignity, will and choice of women even in alien land, here England.

The tenet of the Islamic faith, "*Allah-u-Akbar*", comes as a reassurance and a comfort even there. The early morning call comes and the mind throws black shadows on the marble. The speaker reveals how Muslim women offer *namaaz* in a strange land.

A group of twenty women hears the mechanical recitation from the hustling pages of the holy Koran without understanding a world, its meaning or sense. This is the shallowness of the traditional education with no light of knowledge. These words are nudged into the head as a pure rhythm on the tongue. They rock their bodies to this rhythm and this gives to them a sense of belonging. The 15- year old, new Hajji who had cheeks pink with knowledge and startling blue eyes, throws a flower slyly on the book before a girl. It was the offering of the same hand with which he had prayed at Mecca. Imtiaz observes the sanctity of prayer in this sanctity of love. The impact of this incident was so powerful that it brought about a great physical and psychological change in the girl and she was unmindful of the punishment on the Doom's Day.

"*you were scorched*
long before the
judgement, by the blaze.

Your breasts, still tiny, grew an inch."

This was a turning point in her life and her dreams were colored with the brightest shades. A girl from Brighton, Evelyn, noticed this blooming change in her –
"*I see you quite different in head.*"

This results in her traditional marriage. All these girls are fated to live and die with no will or choice of
their own. They are "unwilling virgins" who had been taught to bind –

"*their brightness tightly round,*
whatever they might wear,
in the purdah of the mind."

This veil is not only a concealing garment but a *purdah* of the mind.

And – " *They have all been sold and bought*."

Men who appeared in their life earlier or men about whom they dreamed are thing of the past, a matter of history. These girls feel a sense of pride in them and surrendered gladly to each other's passionate delights –

"*Night after virtuous*
night, You performed for
them, They warmed your
bed."

Faith alone makes up for the years of loss. They made many sacrificial ceremonies to save the man and the child and what tense and dreadful moments those were looking to and waiting for the justice of God.

" *God was justice,*
Justice could be
dread."

How ironical it is that these women have to observe *purdah* from God even!

The mood of the speaker is calm and poised throughout and the voice evokes compassion for the sorry mess in the life of these girls and women. The poetess awakens us to the degrading and dehumanizing effect of this social, cultural and religious sanction. The speaker is well-acquainted with many of such women – their past and their present. She has a round of daily meetings with them and –

"*I can see behind their veils*."

She can even recognize the region to which they belong before they speak. Some of these women dare and break cover, these ghosts of the girls. The speaker wants to share the experiences of these females who have been reduced to mere ghosts in such inhuman conditions.

" *Tell me*
what you did when the new
moon sliced you out of purdah,
your body shimmering through the lies."
The speaker tells us about two girls, the swan-necked and tragic-eyed, Saleema and Naseem. Saleema had learnt from the films that the heroine was always pure and untouched. She surrendered herself to the passion of the mad old artist and wondered " *at her own strange wickedness*." Still there is worse in store. She gains age after losing her youth and womanhood in the continuing process of being bought and sold, annual pregnancies and marrying again.

Then a revolt? Again she receives a sign of life behind the veil, finds another man and becomes another wife, begging approval from the rest. She is badly bowed under the burden of such a life.

Naseem's elopement brought shame and disgrace to the family. She was remembered among the dead at Moharram. Her encounter with the English boy brought to her a promise of freedom. Still these women behind the veil are always on their knees. Social, cultural and religious sanction and prescription this *purdah* is for the women in male-chauvinistic Muslim society. And how devastating it is to the female personality and psyche!

Ranjit Hoskote in his Review published in "*The Times of India*" writes,

"In "Purdah" she memorializes the between-ness of a traveller between cultures, exploring the dilemmas of negotiations among countries, lovers, children… "

The interview of Imtiaz Dharker with Arundhati Subramaniam was published in "*The Hindu*" and he said,

"Dharker's poetic journey is an interesting one to map. *Purdah* (1989), her first book, explored a somewhat interior politics through an exploration of the multiple resonances of the veil. The result was a work of rich texture and obliquity - of doors "opening inward and again inward," of the subtle interplay of advance and retreat across "the borderline of skin."

Purdah-I and *Purdah-II* are marvelous modern poems of a living Indian English poetic genius who herein shows the undaunted conviction and revolt against a highly sensitive and explosive issue pertaining to the emancipation of women from a society with deep-rooted conservatism. The significance and insignificance of this social, cultural and religious prescription in the alien culture with ignominious liberal social setting has also been revealed with equal ease and poise. And Imtiaz does so on her own terms and none can dare watch the tragic drama behind and beyond the veil otherwise!

The Review of Imtiaz's Poetry in "*Poetry International*" observes:

"With I Speak For the Devil, the poetry journeys further. The landscapes of the self, the metro and the country expand to embrace the world. If the starting point of Purdah was life behind the veil, the starting point of the new book is the strip-tease, where the claims of nationality, religion and gender are cast off, to allow an exploration of new territories, the spaces between countries, cultures and religion."

Surely, here, the vision of Imtiaz is broadened into all-embracive cosmopolitanism smoothly crossing all geographical, historical, religious, cultural and social boundaries and the subject of humanitarianism has been superbly handled. In these poems, numbering above seventy with, Imtiaz Dharker appears at her best. The poems in this book, even if read at a stretch, slide with the inexhaustible variety of images of the devil in all the three sections of the book, although the middle section forming the title holds the centre stage. Each piece reverberates with the message

against the torn and terrifying conditions of life here and there and everywhere. The irony in the smiling welcome to the devil doesn't go unnoticed
even by a casual reader of poetry which becomes a serious business later. These poems are, in fact, "*a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty*." It is not an escape from personality; it is a sound expression of personality to live full-blooded life. To be more precise and exact, these poems redefine life in the face of new potential challenges. The total emphasis of Imtiaz is on courage and conviction, honesty and humanity to fulfill the purpose of living hither.

Imtiaz is comfortably at ease and never loses her calm or disturbs her poise while she is dealing with or handling the sensitive strains of politics or poetry, *purdah* or pretension, virtue or virility, sexuality or sanction, grace or gaudiness. Her soul feels the torture and atrocity, agony and anguish and, then she raves in her songs with the artistry felt only in the poetic pilgrimages of the masters. The divisions and boundaries-raised, erected and created geographically, historically, culturally, socially or religiously, by man are looked down upon as the bogeys and ghosts of the devil in man. She wants to demolish them all so that man as man moves unrestricted and unrestrained wherever, whenever and however he likes.

The message of One-God, One-World and One-Man resounds with a rare magnanimity and prophetic yearning. Her vision of cosmopolitanism haunts us with the rarity of emotional and humanistic arousal. This agony of the universal soul finds its honest expression in "*Not a Muslim Burial*" where she devoutly wishes her body to be burnt, and not buried, so that her ashes are scattered with all her creation and its instruments mixed in it in a country she never visited. Or her body be left in a running train moving to unvisited and unseen country. How poignant is the closing of this lyric!

"*No one must claim me.*
on the journey I will
need no name, no
nationality. Let them
label the remains Lost
property."

Devil is a lad-of-all-work; devil is a dad-of-all-work; devil is do-all; devil is woo-all. It appears that even God is helpless at the hands of the Devil. In a very little piece, "*The devil to god*", we hear devil's devilry to God:

"*Dear Sir,*
I'm a fan of all your
programmes, but the promos
are bad.
Who writes your
scripts? Can I apply?"

Devil awakens god to the bitter truth that those who serve and promote the Kingdom of God in the human world are far from being His devotees. These lines are an unsaid and un-promised assurance to The Master, "Sir", to do better justice to the implementation of his programmes. Not only this, God himself is unaware of how the angels in His employ are misusing the divine powers and authority and all His programmes are a miscarriage in the human world.

Whatever consummates in delivery is a poor miserable achievement and fulfillment. Even the devil is ashamed that how his plan or programme was misrepresented. If such are God's script writers, devil would like to apply for the job and has the sure confidence that he would do better than god's own men. Imtiaz comes to believe in "*Possession*" that:

"*The devil is a territory*
that lets you believe you
belong, happy when you
worship
at the mirrors."

Everywhere there are devils. They may have different forms, shapes, uniforms and figures. Those who believe that they can get rid of the devil are sadly mistaken. She says:

"*Strange, the spies wear all the uniforms*
of holy men and patriots, the saffron,
green, the smear of ash.

If you think this thing
sprouting demon
wings
is planning to get off your back
you're wrong."

That is why, the devil has the honest courage to advise in "The devil's

advice": "*The bigots have better*
sound-bytes.
Shut up
and eat your food."

The poetry of Imtiaz has an inimitable touch of simplicity and spontaneity in all their profundity. This
lends an added force to her thought and emotion. This "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" is everywhere in her poetic landscape and the effortless ease with which Imtiaz conveys her message creates an atmosphere of purity, freshness and innocence symbolic of nature untouched and undisturbed by the craftiness and crookedness of human civilization which has given birth to corrupt metropolitan culture with its debased social, economic, political and religious values leaving man under severe stress and strain. Devils alone are

privileged licensees and we have a variety of cheats, pimps, spivs and scamsters influencing the daily working of human society. In the poems wherein the spokesman is the devil himself, Imtiaz is unsparing and relentless without losing her innocence and poise. In "*The Devil's Day*", she says:

"*The other bastard's had his*
day. Now it's my turn.
Give me half a chance
And you'll see things my way."

She also reflects on:

"*the small seed*
of love in the wrong place."

In one of her shorter lyrics, "*In Bed with The Devil*", Imtiaz makes us realize the force of devil's working: "*He's at it again,*
making pacts for power,
hoping for a shower of
goodies if he plays it right."

The poets too sacrifice all their concern for art, society and humanity when it comes to their survival. What can be more ironical? In "*The Devil to The Poet*", the poet is straightforward to tell us that to play politics and to work for politics is indispensable to the existence of the poet. The poets meddle into politics whatever be their pretensions about their commitment. She says:

"*Don't pretend that you're*
above all this,
when it comes to
survival, all your pretty
words
and delicate
observations boil right
down
to politics."

In "*Mischief-maker*", the poetess feels the haunting presence of *Shaitan* in front, behind, around and everywhere. It is his omnipresence that has its haloed influence on our life everywhere. In another poem, "*The Location*", we have a clear vision of such a presence:

"*The devil was in*
me, walking in my
feet, living in my
clothes, owning

one half
of my heartbeat."'

Imtiaz finds TV no less a devil in the poem "*Remote Control*" that

flickers to life: "*called up from another plane,*
moans,
takes on tongues,
tongues of
angels, tongues
of devils,
tongues of men."

You can't trust anyone. It is not possible to share your secrets with anyone. Once you share your heart
with anyone, you are undone. At the same time, who keeps secrets? Only devil. In "*Secrets*", the poetess
says:

"*Keeping secrets is the devil's work.*
But who shall I tell my secrets to?"

People with honest and straightforward living feel worst when they have to conceal
anything to themselves:

"*Keeping secrets is the way*
the devil finds to eat my heart."

That is why Arshad's uncle from Bradford switched off the TV set one day while all in the family were watching it. The uncle dragged it out, smashed the screen and carted the corpse away to the dump while everybody was left dumbfounded. And the uncle was the happiest of the souls in "*Dealing with The Devil*" when he said:

"*One devil had been dealt with,*
You have to star
somewhere……"

This was perhaps the daring start of Arshad's uncle to kill other devils in similar feats of encounter.

In another masterpiece, "*Greater Glory*", Imtiaz exposes the hypocritical and shameful conduct of man
when she reveals the humiliating plight of God. She says:

"*God was hijacked long ago,*
held hostage in empty
churches, desecrated temples,

broken mosques."

In fact, the poetess has expressed her disgust for the prescriptive religion which has taken away or brutally crushed the humanity in humans. Where is the holiness and divinity of God and where is the faith and devotion of man? The freedom, frankness and fearlessness of Imtiaz deserve an honest pat! Her gentle mock, subtle irony and rapacious raillery in the totality of human conduct on the existential level transcended into absurdity have a well-defined obligation to man as man. This man, *djin*- possessed, devil-enamored and god-beleaguered, is conflict-ridden, torn-asunder, lulled and dulled by the debasing and dehumanizing socio-religious practices. And then there would be an exciting fun and festival on the Day of Judgement. "*Last House-Full Show*" is a lively and hilarious scene in the theatre packed beyond capacity. God, the Almighty, sits in judgement with the Heads of the States and the Heads of the Governments. The entire mass of mankind, the good and the bad, the tyrants and the terrorists, yankee boys and girls, poor and the prey, powerful on the dais and the helpless sufferers in the auditorium- all are in a festival mood. Look!

"*jostling into the*
balcony and the stalls,
all
the heavenly hordes with their
wings rolled up, god up there
eating popcorn with the
VIPs, the devil squeezed
into the back row
with the bad girls and
boys."

We are assured that-

"*The last judgement won't be boring*."

It is not to be a documentary or a black and white-

" but your
mis-spent life in glorious
technicolor, 90mm, dolby digital
……

What a spectacle of

"*Prime Ministers dancing on*
top of trains, politicians
stashing notes in bedsheets,
big
women in bullet-proof capes",

more and more. A huge crowd outside clamoring and begging for tickets, the black marketeers doing a roaring business. A King Kong hand could have brought about a devastating calamity but some miracle saved them all. No one waits to see the scroll of credits or discredits. People are still rushing from all corners. Suddenly the show comes to an end as –

"*A breath*
begins and lifts,
lifts us off the
balcony
into empty air, and there,
everywhere around us, among the
feet, the wings and floating
popcorn,
fingers unclurl, god
opens the closed fist."

We experience that the subtle and delicate use of irony in Imtiaz is more a message than a weapon; weapon often fails, the message never, may be it takes a little longer. In "*Slit*", she tells us about how men keep on plotting for revenge and use callousness and cunning in the process:

"*Men have a rare*
genius for revenge.
Spare me,
I don't know how the system works.
……
Ask the men
carrying holy
books.
Ask god.
He
knows."

Here some dignitary is blown to pieces by a garland so sweetly and obsequiously offered to welcome, to idolize. And the idolization was there and it shook the world. Hence this tenderly expressed concern and anguish lauding men's rare genius for revenge is known only to men carrying holy books, not holy men, and to omniscient God! We see and feel that Imtiaz expresses herself honestly and in an enviously direct manner without any sense of fear or loss. She exposes such powers, our Saviors, who decide all havoc and disaster, hullabulloo, social tensions and the daily round of life. In "Saviors", we are told:

"*It's hard to say*
who's is on which side.
All the murderers are

wearing masks,
with god's face painted on."

These are highly suggestive lines about masks for men and masks for women. And they are all "the defenders of the faith."

Imtiaz feels that man is unjustly suffering when God and devil are engaged in fierce struggle to establish their supremacy and sovereignty. She suggests that it should be a war of power and pluck, politics and diplomacy, wits and hits, between God and devil only. Let God's angels and Devil's diplomats hold conclave to avoid confrontation at any level. They have their own territories to rule. Why should man be bruised or branded, crushed or crutched in this eternal hostility? The poetess tells God and Devil in
direct terms in the poem "*Lines of Control*" to settle their scores once and for all and decide their own kingdoms without making man a prey to their battle of wits. She says:

"*If you wanted to start a fight*
couldn't you just have got on with it,
the two of you, god and
devil in deadly combat
tearing at each other…….
……
but of all the
battlegrounds you could
have chosen
why did you pick on me?"

This is a highly symbolic poem packed with vast immensities. This short lyric brings out the maddening dilemma of man. He remains torn and tense all his life between what is good and what is bad, what is moral and what is immoral. All schools of thought have failed to help him in resolving this significant existential issue. So with all the glitter and gloom, delight and despair, pomp and paucity, prayers and pooh-poohs, absurdity is the outcome. All that man does to achieve a sense of belonging leads to alienation and isolation whether he is at the heights or at the bottom or dangling in the space like a *Trinshaku*. In such a helplessly conflicting situation, there is the glowing optimism that breeds our happiness. We can live better without thinking or doing evil to ourselves or to those who are connected with us. Shakespeare's maxim in "Hamlet" seems to offer the best solution to rid man of his
tearing dilemma: "*Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so*." Farewell! you both God and the Devil. In "*Guardians*", we are told:

"*Strange how the*
guardians of our morals
have jellyfish
mouths and jamun
eyes.

……
Odd how, in those frequent
mirrors, Your haloes don't show
up."

Then the firm resolution for salvation is daringly expressed in "In your

face"- "*In the face of adulterated gods,*
in the face of easy betrayal,
in the face of your indifference

I have assembled
the rough materials to
make my own salvation,
……..
watch
I'm a missile
Falling upward."

Imtiaz is poignantly concerned with the contentious issue of virtue and vice, good and bad, moral and immoral. In all honesty, she wants to rid human life, afflicted with this torn-between-the divide, of this issue so that human is comfortable with life as it comes to him and as he wants to live it ignorant of the teasing question. Freedom from this unresolved teasing dilemma would let man live untroubled and un- tortured by God or the devil. Everywhere on this earth, both the regents, the supremos of their respective kingdoms, and now relentlessly invading the kingdom of man, have infected, intimidated and bullied happiness. So both should retreat to their territories with their legions and leave man to himself.

We have not seen heaven or hell and we know nothing about their existence in geography or in spaces but all religious teachings regulate our conduct here with their hope and fear. Or we know only that we have decorated these kingdoms with immortality and we are mortals here.

Even in other poems like *"Being good in Glasgow", "Breeding ground, Chicago", "All of us", "The djinn in Auntie", "Object", "Sofa", "They'll say, 'She must be from another country', "Announcing the arrival.."* (for Ayesha), we are made aware of the presence or the working of the devil in us or around us in a number of ways. However, the way life goes and various systems- social, political, religious- regulate and govern our life, restrict its movement, stifle its freedom, profane its dignity and corrupt what we ordinarily accept as good, virtuous and sacred. The outcome and the corollary of the myth and reality of human life are what we are all experiencing. The message which comes in dignified silence in these poems assumes utmost significance in the present day structure of life wherein the hungry wolf or the wolves are busy devising the ways and methods to reduce life to indignity and humiliation.

Imtiaz needn't search her identity or individuality. She has established both, and that too, in an abundant measure. Freedom of will and bold exercise of independent choice have been the

hallmark of her daily life and she has revealed the same in her poetic accomplishment. Imtiaz has demolished the religious and cultural barriers prescribed by the patriarchal society and, imposed and sometimes superimposed, upon women and endured by them. Imtiaz has awakened her fraternity to the incalculable damage done to their psyche since centuries. She has also convinced them of the triumph of the spirit in her.

However, this is not a complete triumph. She must totalize the triumph by demolishing the political and geographical boundaries also so that this world belongs to humanity undivided by man-made conventions, customs and restrictions. Such a world of freedom, of body and spirit, even after death, will be a sure guarantee for the ecstasy of the spirit for which we are divinely created. All these limitations and boundaries are an affront to God and a disgrace to the divinity of man. So life needs to be exorcised of the evil and devilish spirit of culture, religion, politics and geography. This is the world where Imtiaz wants to live and die. There seems to be an intense yearning in her heart for the triumph of the spirit, its absence fires her spirit of rebellion, and the fire is insuppressible and un-extinguishable. She doesn't belong to anyone in Sialkot, Lahore, Bombay, London, Glasgow, Delhi or Rome as she suggests and declares in unequivocal terms in her last poem "*Exorcism*" in the book "*I Speak For the Devil*"-

"*I'm letting all the bad*
things fall away. I'm no
one
but myself,
no one possesses me."
And it is like striking a petrol tank with a match stick. The closing of the poem reveals the essence of the freedom and ecstasy of the divinely created spirit when she longs for dancing, rolling, flying, rattling and clunking-

"*out of a new*
song, on the move
swirling, falling.
This is how we belong."

In the final analysis, we may say that Imtiaz's simplicity is a spell, her lyricism is a lull, her challenge is a charm and her effort is exorcism. Her submission is her challenge; her advocacy of the devil is her soul's adventure into the devil's domain to understand the regent's governance and his indisputably faithful servants and disciples. Imtiaz may be devil's advocate but not his disciple; she may be his admirer but not her follower whereas we are all otherwise. This is our sham; this is our cant; this is our pretension;
and this is our *purdah*- our life and living! So let's not lift it or remove it, it will decimate us all. This alone is the secret of our advancement and our very existence. All-pervading influence of the devil, wherever we see the escape-route, it is guarded by the devil and we need be devils to cheat him to succeed only to find ourselves among the celebs of the kingdom. This is what is happening behind the veil and beyond the veil

5.Sarojini Naidu [1879-1949]

The Queen's

Rival Introduction

Sarojini Naidu was a great patriot, freedom fighter and poetess of modern India. She was born on 13 February 1879 at Hyderabad and was educated in Madras, London and Cambridge. She was influenced by English romanticism as well as by Persian and Urdu poetic traditions. Her first volume of poetry The Golden Threshold was published in 1905. This was followed by The Bird of Time, The Broken Wing and The Sceptered Flute.

Known as the 'Nightingale of India' she composed poetry in which swift thoughts and strong emotion sprang into lyrics by themselves. She has given expression to joys as well as to the sorrows of life. She was sensitive to the beauty of living things. She tried to fuse the riches of English vocabulary with subjects of her poetry, very peculiar to the east. As a sensitive poet, Sarojini Naidu proved that English language can be made a vehicle of one's creativity.

The poem The Queen's Rival is taken from The Golden Threshold, the first volume of verse by Sarojini Naidu.

Signposts

1. Glamorous world of the queen.
2. The Queen's dissatisfaction.
3. Hunt for the seven beauties.
4. Queen's heart is still dissatisfied.
5. Queen's looking for a rival.
6. The mirror image.
7. The rival is found in a world of reality.

Poem in Detail

Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed; countless treasures were spread around her. The walls in her chamber were inlaid lavishly with agate, porphyry, onyx and jade. The fabric, which she wore around her delicate chest glowed with the colours similar to those of a lapwing's crest. But she gazed in her mirror and sighed saying, "O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

King Feroz bent down from his ebony seat saying, "Is your least desire not fulfilled, my sweet heart?" He further requested her to express her desire, and he would spend all his life to fulfill her desire by doing away with the circumstances leading to her dissatisfaction. The queen said, "I am tired of my beauty; I am tired of my external beauty without substance and happiness. I have no rival to envy nor there is anyone to dispute my claim of being most beautiful."

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose, saying, "Give me a rival, King Feroz". King Feroz

spoke to his chief councillor and ordered him to be in the palace before dawn on the following day. The King ordered him to send messengers over the sea to look for seven beautiful brides for the former. The King said that the brides should be of glowing beauty and of royal bearing. They should be. fit to be seven ladies in attendance to the Persian Queen.

King Feroz led to Queen Gulnaar's hall seven most attractive beauties in the evening time. The young Queen Gulnaar like a bright morning star, saw the seven beauties with suspicion. She recalled the words of the King, "I bring thee a rival, O Queen Gulnaar". She was not satisfied; she gazed in her mirror and sighed, "O King, my heart is still dissatisfied".

However, around the Queen's ivory bed, stood seven queens with such stunning beauty that they looked like a necklace of seven gems of pleasing colours on a silken thread. Furthermore, the even queens looked like seven beautiful lamps in a royal tower and seven bright petals of a most beautiful flower. Yet, Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose and expressed her dissatisfaction, saying, "King Feroz, where is my rival?"

Then the spring winds gently blew, giving rise to rains that caused flood. The winds also made the tulip buds to bloom into a carpet of reddish flower; the bees began to buzz with louder sound and the summer was already at hand. There was excitement in the peach groves as the orioles began to sing. Against this background, Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed adorning her delicate hair with precious jewels. She gazed in the mirror and sighed, "O King, my heart is still dissatisfied".

Queen Gulnaar's two year old daughter was adorned with blue robes with attractive borders of tassels of gold. The child, like a fairy in a forest rushed to the Queen and snatched the mirror away. Then the child quickly wore her mother's hairband with fringes of pearls on her own beautiful curls. Suddenly, with a child-like move, she planted happily a kiss on the mirror. Queen Gulnaar laughed like a quivering rose, saying, "O King Feroz, look, here is my rival".

REFERENCE:

1. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sylvia-plath
2. https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/139821/7/07_chapter%202.pdf
3. http://oldgrt.lbp.world/UploadedData/7767.pdf
4. https://feminisminindia.com/2019/11/21/eunice-de-souza-woman-dominated-poetry-skyline/
5. http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Confessional-Poetry-of-Eunice-de-Souza-and-Sylvia-Plath-A-Study-in-Comparison.pdf
6. https://www.gradesaver.com/the-poetry-of-sarojini-naidu/study-guide/analysis

SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIT 3 - Women's Writing – SHS5012

Brick Lane by Monica Ali

Monica Ali was born in 1967 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, but grew up in England. Her English mother met her Bangladeshi father at a dance in northern England in the 1960s. Despite both of their families` protests, they later married and lived together with their two young children in Dhaka. This was then the provincial capital of East Pakistan which after a nine-month war of independence became the capital of the People`s Republic of Bangladesh. On 25 March 1971 during this civil war, Monica Ali`s father sent his family to safety in England. The war caused East Pakistan to secede from the union with West Pakistan, and was now named Bangladesh (Haq: 20-21).1

In Bolton, England, home was apparently not as Monica Ali`s mother had dreamed it: ´In London there was no one to meet us. My mother carried us across London on the buses and got on a train to Manchester. She had no money left`. Ali`s father Hatem later managed to escape from East Pakistan over the border to India, and finally got permission to join his family. They planned going back home to Bangladesh, just like we will see is the case of some of the fictional characters in Brick Lane. But when Ali and her brother settled into school and eventually ceased to understand Bengali, there was no longer any plan of moving back.2 Ali`s parents ran a knick-knack shop for many years before Hatem took a degree in history, and Joyce, Ali`s mother, became a counsellor.3 According to Ali, ´We grew up in a not very salubrious part of Bolton, in a small flat in a low-rise block`. She compares it to that of her main character in Brick Lane, Nazneen, and says that Nazneen`s apartment is not an odd place for her to imagine because of where she grew up herself.

After studying philosophy, economy and politics, Ali started working in marketing. She has always been a reader, but did not begin to write before after the birth of her first child. Ali did this anonymously and for herself, getting critique from other writers online. But when her grandfather died, she felt she could not put things on hold any longer and started working on her first novel, Brick Lane which was published in 2003. She published her second novel Alentejo Blue in 2006, and In the Kitchen in 2009.

Critics agreed that Ali`s In the Kitchen held beautiful and excellent descriptions, but that this simply is not enough to make it an outstanding novel. It was judged to be too long, to contain too many clichés and an overuse of stereotypes while at the same time it was said to be unrealistic. Still, the quality of the prose was generally held to be what makes In the Kitchen worth reading.6 Monica Ali lives with her husband, management consultant Simon Torrance, and their two children in south London. She has never gone back to Dhaka.

Ali received great feedback and was hailed by the reviewers for Brick Lane, and the expectations for Alentejo Blue were high. The novel got mixed reviews, but the majority judged it to be a disappointment compared to Brick Lane. Critics agreed that Ali`s second novel failed because of the collection of stories which form the novel. These were said to make the narrative lack coherence. On the other hand, reviewers enjoyed Ali`s passages about the English characters, feeling she was getting closer to home.

Brick Lane is the story of Nazneen, a young Bangladeshi woman given into an arranged marriage to Chanu Ahmed, a man almost twice her age. Chanu takes her to London, where he has lived and worked for almost two decades. Nazneen not only has to learn to live with Chanu, but she has to survive in a whole new culture as well.

In the small Bangladeshi estate community in London, Nazneen falls in love with ice-skating, which she learns about from television. Nazneen meets other Bangladeshi people who grow through their own struggles. Some of them struggle against the traditions they left behind, while others struggle against the new traditions that their English-born children are exposed to. Nazneen and Chanu become well-acquainted with; Mrs. Islam, a wealthy widow who Chanu describes as "a respectable-type;" Dr. Azad, a successful professional with a family he is ashamed of; and Razia Iqbal, a woman who becomes Nazneen's best friend despite Chanu's admonishments that she is not a respectable-type of woman.

In the early years of their marriage, Nazneen, who was at first impressed with her husband's credentials and his collection of books and furniture, becomes more and more annoyed with him. Chanu talks but doesn't act. He plans a lot but he doesn't accomplish his goals, and, like most Muslim men from their part of the world, he won't allow her to leave their estate alone or to work.

Nazneen gives birth to a son, Raqib, and, as they watch Bengali youth turn to drugs and alcohol, Chanu vows to take his family back home before they are affected by such vices. Dr. Azad describes this desire to return as the Going Home Syndrome. Many Bengalis plan to return, he explains, but they can never raise the money that they need for such a move. When Raqib dies before his first birthday, the traumatic event brings Nazneen and Chanu closer to each other. Nazneen begins to understand that they're both seeking the same thing, but are taking different paths towards their goals. Chanu, for his part, begins to show Nazneen more respect. He makes a vow to stop talking and to start acting.

Raqib's death is the turning point that takes the reader deeper into the world of women in Bangladesh. Through a series of letters that span thirteen years, Brick Lane begins to tell the story of Nazneen's younger sister, Hasina. Hasina eloped in a "love marriage" and ran off to Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. Though Hasina is miles away from Nazneen, the two

women's lives are intertwined. Together and alone, Nazneen and Hasina must deal with the lessons their mother ("Amma") taught them before she died. Chief among these is the lesson of Fate. Amma warned her daughters not to struggle against Fate and to treat life with the same indifference with which life would treat them. Nazneen abides by this lesson for most of her life, but begins to grow out of it, most noticeably when she decided not to leave her sick son Raqib to his fate, but rushed him to the hospital for treatment. Hasina, on the other hand, seems to have always fought against her fate. Nazneen thinks sometimes that perhaps what Hasina did was what she was fated to do.

Hasina's letters talk about the hardships in Dhaka as she describes the political climate that prevailed between 1988 and 2001 which was a time of upheavals and change. Hasina runs away from her first husband, works in a garment factory, and is soon fired because of a jealous woman's lies. Hasina then works as a cook for a while, after which she tries selling handmade crafts. After searching in vain for another sewing job, Hasina works as a prostitute and then marries a former client who soon tires of her. After a period of homelessness, Hasina finally ends up in a home for destitute women where she stays until she is rescued by "Lovely" Begum, a woman with a different set of problems. Lovely is married to Jameshed "James" Rashid, and she is mainly concerned about her looks (she is a former beauty queen) and about keeping up with women who are even wealthier than she is. Like all the other women in the novel, Lovely thinks she would have gone further in life had it not been for her marriage.

Through descriptions of characters and events, Hasina's letters bring to light issues of real social concern in Bangladesh; environmental pollution, mob violence, child labor, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence. Through Hasina's letters, the reader also learns about changes taking place in Nazneen's life. She and Chanu have two girls, Shahana and Bibi. Chanu drifts from job to job, and both he and Nazneen fall into brief periods of depression. Chanu has not changed, and blames his failures on racism. Chanu also constantly rants about the terrible things the Western world has done to the developing world and to Muslims.

As the drug problem in their London community gets worse, even affecting Razia's son, Tariq, and as his own adolescent daughters become more Westernized, Chanu becomes more determined to bring his family back home. Chanu is so desperate that he borrows money from Mrs. Islam (by now a known usurer); lets Nazneen do some sewing work at home, and accepts a job as a cab driver with Kempton Kars. These new developments change the course of their lives drastically, as Nazneen begins having an affair with the man who brings her the sewing work from his uncle's sweatshop. Karim excites her because, in her view, he knows his place in the world. Karim is sure of himself and he makes Nazneen feel that everything she says is important.

By the time Karim appears in Nazneen's life, the Bengali youth in their community have formed gangs, and they are being affected by the now infamous September 2001 attacks on America.

When a group known as the Lion Hearts begins passing anti-Islam leaflets around, Karim forms a group called the Bengal Tigers to counter their claims and defend their religion.

In the meantime, Nazneen and Chanu are trapped in England by Mrs. Islam, who keeps taking all their savings, above what they owe her, with the help of her two sons who serve as her thugs.

With the all the pressures weighing on her; having to balance the needs of her family, the impending trip home, their debt, and the illicit affair that Karim wants to see end in marriage, Nazneen eventually suffers a nervous breakdown. After her recovery, Nazneen finds the power within herself to stop Mrs. Islam, to be more assertive at home, and to end the relationship with Karim.

In the end Dr. Azad gives Chanu the rest of the money they need for the trip, but Nazneen tells Chanu at the last moment that she and the girls can't go. For Chanu, "the pull of the land is stronger than the pull of blood," and he tells Nazneen he can't stay.

Nazneen stays in London and she survives with the help of Razia. The women establish a sewing business with some of their other friends and they make a good living catering mainly to white women who will pay high prices for Bangladeshi/Indian-style clothing. The novel ends with a surprise trip for Nazneen. Nazneen's daughters and Razia take her to an ice-skating rink for the first time, where she will be free to skate, they tell her, even in her sari.

Life, death and loneliness are introduced as themes in *Brick Lane* right from the start. In the beginning of *Brick Lane*, Nazneen is born. But she is not breathing, leaving everyone to think at first that she is dead. Early in the novel, Nazneen`s father Hamid asks his daughter if she wants to see the picture of the man she is going to marry. The 18-year-old girl is soon sent off to England and London to a man much older than herself. A hawk foreshadows her future before she leaves; the bird flies against the sky, but shrinks into nothing, a symbol of what will happen to Nazneen. As a woman in a new country she will in many ways disappear like the bird. The concept of death is also described in relation to this episode as the villagers are in the process of burying their dead and looking for bodies after a tornado. In addition, a hut is portrayed as lying in the middle of a paddy. Due to the natural disaster, the hut ´... looked wrong: embarrassed, sliding down at one side, trying to hide` (17). This is also a symbol of the new life the protagonist will have to deal with. Nazneen`s future does not look very bright.

When the young bride arrives in London, her life is turned completely upside down. The new everyday life is not anything like her old one. From living an active life in the village of Gouripur, Nazneen is now spending her days in a flat in Brick Lane, London. She makes time pass by doing her household chores and looking out of the window. The only contact she has with people other than Chanu, her husband, is when she waves at the ´tattoo lady` living across from Nazneen. This lady becomes a symbol of loneliness and the life Nazneen is living. The woman is described as having a look of boredom, and is like the protagonist always alone when she appears at the window. Questions are raised about the woman in the novel: ´How can she just sit and sit? What is she waiting for? What is there to see?` (87). This also goes for Nazneen.

What can she do with her life living in a strange culture? When the tattoo lady disappears from her window, Nazneen is told that she was sent to an institution, and is confronted with the question about why nobody acted when they saw her just sitting there. This woman is also an example of the sad side to British life as people are left alone without anyone bothering about them. The British are not nosy about their neighbours, something that Nazneen actually enjoys because it gives her privacy. She finds the English ignorance positive as a contrast to the Bangladeshi gossiping.

There are several other women experiencing even greater problems adapting to the new society than Nazneen. On one level, for Nazneen, they represent the variety of possibilities for immigrants concerning how to choose to live their new lives. Some assimilate quickly, while some do not manage to adapt at all. A woman has supposedly committed suicide by jumping out of her window. Nazneen pictures the woman smiling when jumping because by her act, she defied everyone. This may show Nazneen`s thoughts about her new life; she understands why the woman had to do what she did. As a woman she may not have been able to make many decisions in her life, but now she has finally made an individual choice.

Life and death thus play an important part in the novel. On one of her first days in Britain, Nazneen cuts her finger when chopping onions: ´The drops slid together like mercury and rolled down the drain. How long would it take to empty her finger of blood, drop by drop? How long for the arm? And for the body, an entire body?` (24). In connection with this passage, Nazneen describes how lonely she feels. She misses people and has never been alone before. Back in the village there were always people everywhere. Her new life is quite the opposite. The thoughts of Nazneen when she starts bleeding may show her own reflections about suicide. Even though she never directly shows that she wants to end her life, the passage tells the reader about her ideas. Because she feels so lonely and lost in her new world, she has also lost her grip on how to handle everyday life. By emptying her entire body of blood, she would not have to worry about this anymore. She has an option, and by not committing suicide she actually decides to look at the bright sides of her new life which she eventually starts to enjoy.

Nazneen is shown to have some of the same thoughts through the use of the symbol of the wardrobe. Throughout the novel, this black wardrobe in the bedroom is troubling Nazneen. She compares it to a sin, and keeps dreaming about it. In one of her dreams, she is locked inside it as it falls down and crushes her. The closet is almost like a coffin, and represents death in the novel. Nazneen also says that she hates the wardrobe, but that this fact has not made any impression on her husband Chanu (72). I find this to be a symbol of Nazneen`s loneliness. She is alone and locked inside a place where she does not wish to be. And even though this is a thing she really does not want to be a part of her life, it remains. Nothing changes, and as a woman Nazneen is unable to do anything about it. It seems like the wardrobe represents the changes never made in the protagonist`s life. It was not her decision to move to England, and she cannot change it. Nazneen also describes her feeling of being trapped several times in the novel. As she has no choices, even if a hurricane arrives, she cannot move (101). Nazneen is in many ways imprisoned in her community. It is not until the last part of the novel and the wardrobe is sold, that Nazneen`s problems seem to come to an end.

In addition to the already mentioned hawk in Nazneen`s village, other birds are symbols in the novel as well. Nazneen dreams about her aunt`s bird that everyone thinks will fly away, but never does. Someone eventually breaks its neck for it to never leave. Because it is dead, it is now trapped forever (217-218). Another bird described never leaves. Nazneen`s sister Hasina tells it to fly away. Like herself, it should leave for a better future (335).

The line between life and death is further described in Ali`s novel. Though not verified, it appears that Nazneen`s mother Rupban committed suicide too. Being a woman in Bangladesh certainly is not easier than being a woman in England. In a letter, Hasina writes that their mother threatened to kill herself if her husband took another wife. From a feminist point of view, the reason why Rupban acted in the way she did is obvious. Living in a marriage that includes other wives may lead to merciless difficulties and a feeling of loneliness. Her crying is described in several episodes of the novel. Homburger Erikson is quite straightforward about the role of the mother in his *Identity. Youth and Crisis*:

> These mothers love, but they love desperately and intrusively. They are themselves so hungry for approval and recognition that they burden their young children with complicated complaints, especially about the fathers, almost pleading with them to justify their mothers` existence by their existence. They are highly jealous and highly sensitive to the jealousy of others. (177)

Still, this description may be applied to the relationship between Nazneen and her mother in law.

Brick Lane. Rupban does not explicitly show her jealousy, but she fears her husband will take other wives. She also constantly reminds her daughter Nazneen of what happened when she was born, and that it is because of her own wise decision not to take the baby to the hospital that Nazneen is alive. Rupban also often asks Nazneen if she is still glad she came back to life. What she does is what Homburger Erikson writes about: she wants the daughter to justify the mother`s existence by her own existence. As we shall see, this is also relevant for Gabe and his mother in *In the Kitchen*, which I will comment on in the next chapter.

Men are also portrayed in relation to death. Chanu tells his wife about a man killing himself over a girl while Nazneen wonders about a man from her childhood who committed suicide. When Nazneen as a child runs into a man hanging from a tree being punished for kidnapping a little girl, she gets to decide over life and death. She can free the man in desperate need by untying him as he asks her to do, or she can leave him to his destiny. In some ways, Nazneen faces the same problem when her baby boy is rushed to the hospital where he eventually dies. After the tragedy of Nazneen`s son, her mother appears in a dream

saying that Nazneen killed her own child because she interfered with fate by bringing him to the doctors. She had the possibility not to do this, and is therefore suffering due to her own choice. She chose to do the opposite of what Rupban did with her newborn daughter. According to her mother, she chose death over life. At one point, Nazneen also believes that she killed her friend Razia`s husband by momentarily forcing death away from her son.

The concept of death which appears several times in the novel may indicate that in life,

and especially in Nazneen`s, everything can happen. Life is unpredictable for everyone, but to the people moving from one country to another, the outcome may be especially hard to accept because of the cultural differences.

Nazneen is not the only person feeling lonely in Ali`s novel. The readers are told about her sister Hasina`s life in Bangladesh through the letters they send to each other. Even though she is living in her own country, Hasina has to handle a difficult and often lonely life. At the age of sixteen, she elopes with a boy from the village and enters into a ´love marriage`. But soon her life consists of rape, prostitution and abuse by different men. In many ways, the young Hasina accepts this life saying that it is a woman`s own fault if she is beaten. At the same time, Hasina never gives up finding her identity as she struggles towards a new and better life, leaving her old ones behind. Nazneen dreams about becoming as independent as her sister (93-94).

Through the letters from Bangladesh, the issue of physical abuse of women is also raised. Hasina tells Nazneen about her friend Monju who is in hospital because her husband and his siblings poured acid on her and her son whom they wanted to sell. There are many cruel fates for the women in the novel, especially for those still living in Bangladesh. These women have not physically moved to another place, but I find the scattering in relation to diaspora relevant here as well. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin describe this scattering as something that `leads to a splitting in the sense of home` in their book *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (425). In my opinion, the concept of home can be discussed. Hasina is still living in the country where she was born, but does this mean that she is not experiencing this splitting in the sense of a home? My answer in the negative may not be in accordance with the traditional interpretation of the concept of diaspora, but I find Hasina`s case to be almost as relevant in this regard as her sister`s. After eloping, Hasina does not have a real home either. She claims to be happy, but reveals through the letters that men treat her badly. Her first husband beats her, and she leaves their home to find another domicile which is far less expensive. Its owner, Mr Chowdhury, treats Hasina in an extremely degrading way as well. When she is fired from her job because she finds a friend in one of her male colleagues, she has to find a new place to live. Hasina, now a prostitute, marries one of her customers and moves in with him, but this husband is no better than the first one. Again, Hasina has to escape and finally finds a family to live with as their employee. In the end of the novel, we get to know that Hasina has eloped once again.

I cannot say that Hasina after leaving her father`s house ever has a real home. She finds places to stay, but not places where she can settle and which she can call her own. Throughout the novel, she is lonely because she never finds this home. Having shamed the family, there is no way back. Looking at it like this, I find diaspora to apply to Hasina as well as people moving to another country. One of them is Nazneen who actually eventually makes a home for herself and her family in England.

My Year of Meats by Ruth Ozeki

My Year of Meats is the first novel by award-winning writer, Ruth L. Ozeki. In this novel, Jane Takagi-Little takes a job as a producer on a Japanese reality show designed to encourage Japanese housewives to cook more beef. Jane is responsible for finding American housewives who are wholesome and attractive who will open her home to the cameras and make a meal whose centerpiece is some kind of beef dish. As Jane becomes more involved in the show, she begins to learn things about the beef industry that cause her to doubt her commitment to the show. At the same time, Akiko Ueno, the wife of the advertising executive who oversees the show's production, watches and learns that there is more to life than subservient obedience to a husband that she never loved. My Year of Meats is not only a closer look into the controversial practices of the beef industry but also a story of self-discovery in the lives of two very different women.

Jane Takagi-Little is living the life of a starving artist when she is offered a job producing a Japanese reality show to promote American beef. Jane is grateful for the job and quickly jumps into it despite a disastrous beginning with the first housewife that she features on the show. At the same time, Akiko Ueno, the wife of a Japanese advertising executive who is in charge of the production of My American Wife!, is given the chore of watching the show, cooking the dishes featured, and rating its overall wholesomeness and authenticity.

Jane constantly butts heads with the Japanese producers as she attempts to include a variety of American housewives on the show and not just the attractive white women they would prefer. Jane also wants to direct the show but again the Japanese want a Japanese director who will understand the standards by which the Japanese live. However, on the rare occasions when Jane gets her way, Akiko gives the show higher ratings in comparison to the shows that her husband finds more appropriate.

During one day of filming, the director from Japan has a bad reaction to the meat he is eating at the home of a featured housewife. Jane learns that this reaction is caused by the man's severe allergy to antibiotics. Jane learns from the doctor that all beef has some residual antibiotic in it from the antibiotics given to the cows at the feedlots to keep them from getting sick. All Jane cares about at this point, however, is the fact that the director's illness allows her to step in in his place.

Jane begins searching out more unusual housewives, such as a woman in Louisiana who has adopted ten Korean children with her chef husband. Unfortunately, the ad executive, John Ueno, does not like this episode because Jane allows the husband to cook the meal. However, Ueno's wife finds this episode to be more wholesome than some of the others. Another controversial episode Jane films is one that centers around vegetarian lesbians. This episode causes a great

deal of stress for John Ueno but his wife finds it inspiring, making her see how unhappy she is in her life.

At the same time Jane is working on the show, pushing her bosses to their limits, she begins an affair with a musician. Jane believes she cannot get pregnant because of infertility experienced during her marriage a few years previously. However, Jane is shocked to learn she has in fact gotten pregnant. This pregnancy is unwanted initially but Jane quickly realizes she wants the baby.

Across the ocean, Akiko has struggled with her own infertility issues. However, she has recently begun menstruating again and knows that a pregnancy is possible. Akiko thinks about the episode of My American Wife! with the lesbians and realizes she cannot find happiness with her husband. As Akiko reaches this conclusion, her husband's occasional abuse toward her reaches a fevered pitch. John Ueno rapes his wife and leaves her badly injured, an injury that leads to hospitalization a few days later.

Jane knows she needs her job but she also wants to expose the truth she has learned about DES to the public. Jane arranges to film a show with a family that owns a feedlot. Jane films the manager of the feedlot feeding the cows and his employees injecting new arrivals. During this visit, Jane comes into contact with some hormones and begins to fear for the health of her unborn child. The following day, Jane and her crew go to the slaughterhouse to film the process. Jane is injured when she accidentally falls against the knockout pen. When Jane wakes in the hospital, she learns that she has lost her baby.

Akiko leaves her husband and goes to America. Once there, Akiko befriends Jane and visits some of the families who made the biggest impact on her through My American Wife! At the same time, Jane makes a documentary out of her footage of the feedlot in the aftermath of the accident that caused her to lose her job. This documentary sells to hundreds of media outlets in the aftermath of the revelation that the feedlot in question was using DES. At the same time, Jane reconnects with her lover and looks forward to a happier future.

Throughout *My Year of Meats* , Jane increasingly captures these unsavory truths about food production, even as she is assigned to construct a program promoting their consumption. She finds that her narrative desire to articulate the "truths" she uncovers directly conflicts with her mission. Near the end of the novel, as Jane ponders how best to edit the slaughterhouse footage she filmed into a cohesive narrative, she considers at length the accessibility of information about food production:

> Information about toxicity in food is widely available, but people don't want to hear it. Once in a while a story is spectacular enough to break through and attract media attention, but the swell

> quickly subsides into the general glut of bad news over which we, as citizens, have so little control. ...[K]nowledge becomes symbolic of our disempowerment--becomes bad knowledge--so we deny it, riding its crest until it subsides from consciousness. I have heard myself protesting, "I didn't know!" but this is not true. Of course I knew about toxicity in meat, the unwholesomeness of large-scale factory farming, the deforestation of the rainforests to make grazing land for hamburgers. Not a lot, perhaps, but I knew a little. I knew enough.... I would like to think of my "ignorance" less as a personal failing and more as a massive cultural trend, an example of doubling, of psychic numbing, that characterizes the end of the millennium. If we can't act on knowledge, then we can't survive without ignorance. (10)

Access to information for Ozeki's character produces not knowledge and action but inaction and disempowerment. As she describes it, ignorance becomes a survival strategy that allows the public to live with "bad knowledge." Doubling is her term for possessing contradictory impulses: "I did care, and at the same time I couldn't afford to care, and these two contrary states lived side by side like twins, wrapped in a numbing cocoon that enabled me to get the work done" (176). However, I suggest that the doubling or turning back from a course of action that "bad knowledge" produces implies a degree of agency that preserves not only the ignorant self, but more specifically, privilege and pleasure.

In the context of consumer knowledge and choice, an epistemology of the abattoir suggests an economy of consumption and pleasure structured not only by complicity but also with a deep investment in a specific willed ignorance, an obliterating disbelief, a deliberate forgetting, and a motivated abnegation of knowledge that privileges the ignorant. Jonathan Safran Foer describes people's reactions to simply learning the topic for his 2009 book *Eating Animals* :

> Almost always, when I told someone I was writing a book about "eating animals," they assumed, even without knowing anything about my views, that it was a case for vegetarianism. It's a telling assumption, one that implies not only that a thorough inquiry into animal agriculture would lead one away from eating meat, but that most people already know that to be the case. (11)

This telling assumption that learning more about animal agricultural practices would cause one to cease the consumption of the products of animal agricultural practices hints at the pervasiveness of an epistemology of the abattoir. This sentiment is reproduced in more detail in Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals.* In the introduction to his study, Pollan links pleasure, eating, and knowledge. Eating the products of industrialized food manufacturing (for example, the McDonald's Chicken McNugget), he argues, is eating in ignorance, which has but "fleeting" pleasures. He writes, "Many people today seem perfectly content eating at the end of an industrial food chain, without a thought in the world: this book is

probably not for them; there are things in it that will ruin their appetite. But in the end this is a book about the pleasures of eating, the kind of pleasures that are only deepened by knowing." (12) However, after detailing the realities of industrial concentrated animal feeding operations practices at length--manure lagoons, antibiotics used to treat animals sickened by their feed, drug-resilient microbes entering the human diet--Pollan backs away from this new knowledge, the knowledge that he knew would ruin his appetite, to defend his own desire and pleasure. After describing the events that will take place in the final months of a steer in a concentrated animal feeding operation in Kansas, Pollan reflects on the complicity of his appetite:

> Standing there in the pen alongside my steer, I couldn't imagine ever wanting to eat the flesh of one of these protein machines. Hungry was the last thing I felt. Yet I'm sure that after enough time goes by, and the stink of this place is gone from my nostrils, I will eat feedlot beef again. Eating industrial meat takes an almost heroic act of not knowing, or, now, forgetting. (13)

Elevating the ignorance produced by his willful forgetting to the degree of heroism because of the degree of effort it requires, Pollan uncritically and unequivocally establishes that the pleasure of satiating his appetite will be privileged over his knowledge of the awful realities of the feedlot he has just witnessed. His impetus for action is pleasure, not knowledge. In the end, Pollan's own position asserts a kind of pleasure only deepened by not knowing.

The epistemology of the abattoir may also be seen at work on a broader cultural level than individual eating practices. In *Animal Capital,* Nicole Shukin makes a provocative link between technologies of mass production and consumption, visual reproduction, and industrialized slaughter. Tracing the inspiration of Henry Ford's assembly line to his visit to a vertical abattoir "disassembly line," Shukin notes a significant cultural disavowal of this inspiration: "The auto assembly line, so often taken as paradigmatic of capitalist modernity, is thus mimetically premised on the ulterior logistics of animal disassembly that it technologically replicates and advantageously forgets in a telling moment of historical amnesia." (14) Furthermore, she traces the birth of motion pictures and mass-produced still photography, with their reliance on gelatin (protein extracted from bones, skins, and connective tissues of animals) in emulsion plates, papers, and film stocks, to industrial animal slaughter. She writes, "for cinema's animated effects to literally develop--they required the tangible supports of photographic and film stocks. It is here, in the material convolutions of film stock, that a transfer of life from animal body to technological media passes virtually without notice." (15) Noting the centrality of animal locomotion in the photography of Eadweard Muybridge as an immediate predecessor to moving pictures, Shukin notes the irony of the animal substance rendered transparent in order to offer visual representation of live animal motion. The avoidance she describes as "the image industry's repressed contingency on animal rendering" offers yet another occasion to examine the erasure of animal bodies in the popularization and mass consumption of photographic representation itself. (16)

Historians of the modernization of slaughterhouses note the physical and discursive shift from stockyards to slaughterhouses. Paula Young Lee notes that philosopher Jeremy Bentham included chicken farms as an institution that fit into his conception of the Panopticon. Lee writes, "From a normative centralized point of authority, the Panopticon's view of offensive bodies envisioned them subdued by the system, accepting its discipline and reforming their ways for the common good." (17) Through this panoptic structure, "offensive" animal bodies are transformed into edible commodities: "As a result, the slaughterhouse only became 'modern' when it was reimagined as a productive place where meat was made." (18) Noëlie Vialles discusses the industrialization of killing animals in terms of avoidance and disavowal: "Slaughtering was required to be industrial, that is to say, large scale and anonymous; it must be non-violent (ideally: painless); and it must be invisible (ideally: non-existent). It must be as if it were not." (19) Vialles further explores the erasure of killing in slaughterhouses by examining shifting encyclopedia entries for "abattoir" over time. The entries that had once included representational drawings or photographs of abattoir killing floors transformed into geometric flow charts. This dramatic shift in visual representation, Vialles argues, demonstrates "how the term has gradually had to be emptied of all precise concrete representation in order to keep it 'presentable.'" (20) Constructing the history of mass assembly, film production, or even meat production in a way that occludes images of violence, of killing, or even of animals is the most direct product of an epistemology of the abattoir. Adams calls the object of this avoidance or negation the "absent referent," or that which must not be in order to have pleasure. She writes, "We do not want to experience uncomfortable feelings about violence, butchering, suffering, and fear. This is the function of the *absent referent* --to keep our 'meat' separate from any idea that she or he was once an animal who was butchered, to keep something (like hamburger) from being seen as having been someone (a cow, a lamb, a once-alive being, a subject)." (21) She argues that a resistant attitude toward meat eating compromises the meat eater's pleasure and threatens the epistemology of the abattoir: "At a dinner where meat is eaten, the vegetarian must lose control of the conversation. The function of the absent referent must be kept absent especially when incarnated on the platter at the table." (22) Thus the maintenance of pleasure is ensured through complicity, through silence, or through the absence or invisibility of resistant alternative appetites.

This complicity is the most desired product of this epistemology with its willed ignorance of sordid details and the awareness that "bad knowledge" would spoil enjoyment. Vialles calls this distancing and abstracting of animal from its flesh a "spiral of avoidance":

> All these disjunctions invite and combine with one another to keep the mass killing of animals at a reasonable distance.... It is very much as if the initial separation between killing and meat had triggered a process of repeated fissions forming a kind of spiral of avoidance of a reality and a meaning that are too raw, the centre of the spiral and the force behind it being the very thing that it is trying to avoid--forever unsuccessfully, and for good reason. (23)

The distance from mass killing required to maintain enjoyment, Vialles suggests, is never fully achieved. The fact of violence here is avoided, but not erased. In her model, the consumer cannot get too far away from the central truth of this spiral, and the fact of mass killing remains at its center. In his study *Meat: A Natural Symbol,* Nick Fiddes writes, "The likeliest potential foods to nauseate us today are those recognizably animal--the gristle, the blood vessels, the organs, the eyes--unlike vegetable foods whose identity we rarely dread." (24) The practice of meat eating, if it is to occur, must often be obscured by forgetting that what was being eaten was ever a living creature at all. The consolidation of power is not the organizing principle for this epistemology, but rather the maintenance of pleasure from a position of privilege that denies and negates any harmful consequences or ramifications.

RENDERING WOMEN

I introduce the idea of an epistemology of the abattoir in order to extend it beyond the question of meat eating to additional forms of pleasure enjoyed at the cost of "absenting" other subjectivities, most notably women and racial minorities. Ozeki's novel offers characters caught within intersecting modes of enjoyment at the expense of the other. Because the documentary series at the center of the narrative aims to depict American wives for a Japanese audience, images of women constitute a major source of pleasure, both visual and sexual. From its outset, the criteria established for most desired telegenic subjects could also describe pornographic imagery, with their common primary functions to arouse appetites. After accepting the job offer, Jane writes the pitch for the program *My American Wife!:*

> Meat is the Message. Each weekly half-hour episode of *My American Wife!*
> must culminate in the celebration of a featured meat, climaxing in its glorious consumption. It's the meat (not the Mrs.) who's the star of our show! Of course, the "Wife of the Week" is important too. She must be attractive, appetizing, and all-American. She is the Meat Made Manifest: ample, robust, yet never tough or hard to digest. Through her, Japanese housewives will feel the hearty sense of warmth, of comfort, of hearth and home--the traditional family values symbolized by red meat in rural America. (8)

According to the pitch, the aim of *My American Wife!* is explicitly gastropornographic; the program's celebration of meat, "climaxing" in its consumption, suggests both the gastronomic and sexualized consumption of the attractive wife. Woman is rendered as meat, and vice versa. Although Japanese housewives are figured as the target audience, the male producers delineate what physical qualities Jane should seek in her subjects. A similar rhetoric of human bodies, meat, and sexual climax is deployed when Jane leaves her camera crew to entertain themselves in a hotel room with pornography, "a small but well-curated collection of prerecorded tape stock with titles like Texas T-Bone Does the Hoosier Hooters.' These were little-known regional

delights that the crew had acquired during our travels, and needless to say, the climax was always about meat" (53). This example offers not only women's bodies in the realm of gastropornography (in terms of word economy, "Hooters" collapses a restaurant chain, women's breasts, and the waitresses who are employed by the restaurant chain into one word), but also renders the male sex organ as "meat." In fact, most of Jane's Japanese production crew is introduced with a reference to pornography. The cameraman, Suzuki, has a "passion for Jack Daniel's, Wal-Mart, and American hard-core pornography" (33). The soundman, Oh, is described as being an animal lover who, along with Suzuki, gets drunk and "tape[s] pictures of blondes from Hustler all over the Sheetrock walls of motels across America, then use[s] the girls for target practice, shooting out their tits and crotches with air guns they'd bought at Wal-Mart" (34). The novel's antagonist, BEEF-EX advertising representative Joichi "John" Ueno, is rendered pathetic in his weakness for "big-breasted American women" and again in a scene in a strip club where he is brought to tears during a lap dance when a dancer, "straddled his tenderloin and offered up her round rump for his inspection" (43). The use of butcher terminology to describe sexualized human body parts in this scene equates gastronomic pleasure with both sexual pleasure and pornographic visual pleasure. Although it is used here to ridicule Ueno, it captures the character's deep investment both in the sexual objectification of women's bodies as well as his valorization of meat as an expression of Western heterosexual masculinity. Late in the novel the boss of a slaughterhouse has an office described as "a wood-paneled panopticon decorated with a large poster of a young blond Amazon in jungle bikini, who overlooked the meat-cutting operations below" (280). His cavalier attitude toward the consumption of pornography helps articulate his relationship to the killing floor he oversees.

For Ozeki's other male characters, this excessive valorization of meat and the sexual objectification of women's bodies diminish as they are increasingly exposed to the subjects of their series. Jane's subjects resist and at times ultimately reject the US cultural script of Walmart's abundance, meat's healthfulness, and even heterosexuality's centrality. Each of Jane's documentary subjects dismantles Ueno's and the Tokyo office's imperatives for appropriate housewives, which center on attractiveness, wholesomeness, and avoidance of "physical imperfections," "obesity," "squalor," and "second class peoples" (12). In her examination of the novel, Monica Chiu argues that Ozeki's text attempts to replace Ueno's "whitewashed views of America" with "Jane's presentations of happy multiculturalism." (25) Although Jane's interviewed families follow an increasingly subversive trajectory--from the Martinez's, a Mexican immigrant family, to the Beaudroux's who adopt ten multiracial children, to interracial lesbian couple Lara and Dyann and their biological daughters--these families unsettle more than Ueno's idea of "typical American" white heteronormativity. The Martinez family's story hints at the exploitative labor relations between the United States and Mexico, while the Beaudroux family's adopted abandoned Amerasian and South American children complicate how both family and nation are constructed. The biracial lesbian wives Lara and Dyann resist not only heteronormativity but also articulate their politicized refusal to eat meat: "It's unhealthy. Not to mention corrupt, inhumane, and out of control" (177).

In Indiana, Jane and her production crew interview and film the Bukowskys whose family tragedy helps restructure their entire small town around compassion rather than commerce. Unlike most of Jane's other subversive subject choices, the Bukowskys are a white family, but

their radiant, blonde, sixteen-year-old daughter Christina is paralyzed as the result of having been crushed by a delivery truck in a Walmart parking lot. The visual narrative Jane constructs is ostensibly to promote Mrs. Bukowsky's "Hallelujah Lamb Chops," Christina's first request emerging from a vegetative state, but the crew's interaction with the girl functions to humanize white women, those who have effectively been dehumanized through sexual objectification. In filming Christina over several days, Suzuki and Oh establish an interactive, playful relationship with her. Afterward, when viewing the footage from their interviews, Jane's production assistant, an ex-flight attendant, attempts to relate to the men on the assumed premise of their mutual pleasure in sexually objectifying women: '"Too bad about those legs, huh?' said the flight attendant. 'She's great from the waist up, though. I wonder, do you think she still can, you know ...' He pantomimed the old in-and-out with his fist and forearm, and looked to the boys for confirmation" (138). Suzuki's violent disgust with the production assistant's pornographic male gaze--he responds by slapping the flight attendant across the face twice--signals a shift in the production crew's position. Blonde American girls no longer constitute a category of sexually objectified pleasure for Oh and Suzuki. Knowledge--in this instance, their firsthand interactions with Christina--disrupts sexually objectifying pleasure and motivates a change in the two men: Jane notes, "I noticed that [Suzuki] and Oh stopped shooting out the crotches of blonde girls in their motel room. Our visit to Hope had changed them" (139). This reversal of attitude stands out in a novel filled with so many instances of the opposite attitude: objectification and dehumanization. Suzuki's and Oh's presence and support of Jane's documentary impulses throughout the remainder of the novel is suggestive of the transformational power of a gaze that resists the logic of the objectification of bodies for consumption and pleasure.

Women in the text are dehumanized not only in terms of sexualized imagery, but also through the alignment of their bodies with the bodies of livestock animals by medico-scientific discourses. As Jane's documentary aspirations diverge more and more radically from her assigned job, she begins contemplating her own misshapen uterus in conjunction with her mother having been prescribed the synthetic hormone estrogen diethylstilbestrol (DES) during her pregnancy. Shameem Black writes that "as Jane moves backward on the food chain from devouring beef to exploring its modes of production, she discovers that the same dangerous hormones are used to regulate the biological rhythms of both animals and women." (26) DES becomes a major narrative thread in the text when Jane chronicles its history from its use as an artificial growth stimulant in chickens, then livestock, and simultaneously as a hormone therapy in pregnant women. A manmade estrogen, DES is loaded with disturbing implications regarding gender as well as human and animal bodies. The chronology of restrictions against the use of DES makes these implications more apparent. Julie Sze notes, "DES was banned in chickens in 1958, while its use in cattle continued until 1979. and its use in women continued through the 1980s." (27) With the increasing focus on DES, Ozeki's novel locates medico-scientific discourses regulating women's bodies on a continuum close to those regulating the bodies of livestock. When Jane reflects on her mother's pregnancy, she contemplates the intersecting discourses regarding racialized bodies that further objectified and endangered her mother's reproductive health:

> Of course old Doc Ingvortsen, the family doctor in Quam, decided

> she was delicate. And from there, it would have been only a reasonable precaution. After all, he was used to treating large-bodied Swedes and Danes, with ample, childbearing hips--the farthest east he'd probably ever imagined was Poland or possibly the Ukraine. But Ma was Japanese. My birth certificate, signed by this doctor, lists her race as "yellow." And she was narrow. Doc must have ... seen the ads. So he gave her a prescription, probably about 125 milligrams of diethylstilbestrol ... To keep me in place, floating between her delicate hips. (156)

Ozeki's repetition of "delicate" to describe Jane's mother's Japanese body calls attention to discourses of racialized gender stereotypes in circulation. Doc Ingvortsen's classifying of her mother as "yellow" demonstrates the objectification of her body as a result of these racial stereotypes that embed her more deeply within the biopolitical "care" of the doctor. Sze argues, DES "highlights how categories of race, gender, human/animal, and nature are unstable, shaped and contested by ideas and cultures, and through corporate industries which actively shape these categories through their products and processes." (28) Coupled with stereotypes associating Asian women's bodies with diminutive frailty, DES is administered for Jane's mother's own good and for the good of the fetus she carries. Figured as a wonder drug that would "render normal gestation 'more normal,' DES was considered benign because it was making a 'natural,' 'biological,' and 'normal' process more effective." (29) Writing about researching DES for the novel, Ozeki makes explicit the blurred boundary between women and livestock: "Suddenly the metaphor was no longer simply a literary conceit. It was frighteningly real: women weren't just like cows; women and cattle were being given the identical drug, with equal disregard for safety." (30) Through biotechnology and biopower, animal bodies (cows, pigs, chickens) are no longer incommensurable with human bodies, even--as the narrative progresses--white male bodies.

The control over life through diet, biotechnology, synthetic growth hormones, and fertility treatments emerges as a major narrative concern in *My Year of Meats.* Early in the text, a Japanese director suffers anaphylactic shock after eating a Schnitzel prepared with veal tainted with residual antibiotics. Jane takes note when an African American interview subject, Mr. Purcell, discusses the effects of eating inexpensive chicken parts--"It was some medicines they was usin' in the chickens that got into the necks that we was eatin'. ...An' that medicine, well, if it didn't start to make me sound just like a woman!"--immediately before exploring her own familial history of DES (117). Jane is a "DES daughter," suffering from a deformed uterus and infertility as the result of her mother's prescribed dose during pregnancy. Feedlot owner Gale Dunn's white body is also contaminated with the illicit DES cocktail he injects into his cattle, as each time he becomes angered, his voice spirals up an octave. In addition, his five-year-old half sister Rose suffers from premature thelarche--grossly premature breast development, pubic hair, and menstruation--as a result of estrogen poisoning. Although Mr. Purcell's and Gale Dunn's bodies are subject to the effects of the synthetic estrogen, the female bodies in the text are the most heavily marked, acted upon, and the most closely aligned with animal bodies. Human reproductive health is placed on a continuum with livestock production, and as the text and Jane's documentary filmmaking nears its climactic revelation of a slaughterhouse killing floor,

the biopolitical forces governing animals' lives and women's bodies begin to look more and more alike.

The conflation of production and reproduction also saturates the text. Beyond her connection to her own mother's reproductive health, Jane is also inextricably linked to Ueno's wife, Akiko, who stands in as the target audience of Jane's program. Anorectic, nauseated by meat dishes, and unable to menstruate because of her low body weight, Akiko is forced by Ueno to watch *My American Wife!,* replicate its recipes, and rate the program for standards such as "Authenticity," "Wholesomeness," "Deliciousness of Meats" (128). He attempts to discipline her body into a subordinated domesticity authenticated by the series he produces. Ueno's escalating mistreatment of his wife, his desire to control her appetites both culinary and sexual, his physical violence and eventual rape of Akiko are all guided by the rigid adherence to cultural gender stereotypes, both Japanese and US American, that define his ideology. Ueno is largely responsible for constructing and policing "Wholesomeness" and "Authenticity" for the program. That he asks to be called "John" (Ueno is pronounced "Wayne-o") reflects the degree to which his idea of identity is influenced by a white US American cowboy fantasy of masculinity. Ideologically and literally invested in marketing the "authentic"

supremacy of US red meat, he most directly associates the consumption of red meat with sexual dominance and heteropatriarchy. He uses the authority of his meat expertise to coerce his wife into "fattening up" and putting "some meat on her bones" so that she might bear a son. Akiko, however, reads against the grain of her husband's *My American Wife!,* seeing the Beaudroux family's ten adopted multiracial children and the lesbian couple as productive sites of resistance to the patriarchal ideology Ueno attempts to enforce.

3.2.3 RENDERING RACE

As a whole, the novel stages an opposition to the oppressive and restrictive ideologies that Ueno embodies. The critique extends beyond sexist objectification of women or even heteronormativity. When Jane discusses her growing racial consciousness as a girl in Quam, Minnesota, she links the forces at work in sexism with something larger. Reexamining Frye's 1902 *Grammar School Geography,* a book she had once used to learn about the "Races of Men," Jane comments on the heavy Enlightenment humanism the book is grounded in:

> It isn't Mr. Frye's use of the generic "man" for "human" that I'm interested in. Other women might object to his choice of words, but as far as I'm concerned, that's an intraspecific quibble. The conflict that interests me isn't man versus woman; it's man versus life. Man's REASON, his industries and commerce, versus the entire natural world. This, to me, is the dirty secret hidden between the fraying covers. (154)

While Jane chooses not to "quibble" with Frye's use of the universal "man" here, the novel presents much to align women's bodies with animal bodies and to position those bodies in

opposition to "man's REASON." This functions to overtly connect the dehumanizing effects of global capitalism ("industries and commerce") on the natural world, on human and animal bodies with the dehumanizing effects of racism.

Because of the centrality of biotechnologies and representational technologies, the processes at work in rendering--that is reproducing for the text--racialized, gendered, and sexualized bodies becomes linked to the industrial processes involved in rendering animal bodies. As Shukin defines it:

> Rendering signifies both the mimetic act of making a copy, that is, reproducing or interpreting an object in linguistic, painterly, musical, filmic, or other media (new technologies of 3-D digital animation are, for instance, called "renderers") and the industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains. The double sense of rendering--the seemingly incommensurable (yet arguably supplementary) practices that the word evokes--provides a peculiarly apt rubric for beginning to more concretely historicize animal capital's modes of production. (31)

As it does in industrial meat processing then, rendering in Ozeki's text works as a means by which gender, racial, and national identity are produced or made visible, even as they are qualities produced by the boiling down and recycling of cultural stereotypes and practices. *My Year of Meats'* documentarian protagonist and heterogeneous narrative style, which incorporates everything from excerpts of the eleventh-century text *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon,* to corporate memos, faxes, and camera directions in addition to traditional narrative, provides layer upon layer of representational rendering. The text is also highly conscious of technologies of visual representation and of how narratives prescribing gender and sexual expectations are boiled down and recycled by mass culture. The ways Ozeki's text works at rendering gender become related to the ways animals are rendered through industrial food production.

The novel critiques the ways women's bodies are rendered, and consequently dehumanized or objectified through cultural stereotypes, pornography, and reproductive technologies, as well as the way human bodies are rendered similar to animal bodies through their exposure to DES. An additional identity category the text discusses in a dehumanizing, even animalizing, context, is race. Juxtaposing the concept of "dehumanization" in relation to shopping for meats and to racial violence, Ozeki aligns the impulse to dehumanize with the epistemology of the abattoir: disassociation from violence in order to maintain a sense of well-being and ease. At one point in the text, Jane reports that according to a market survey conducted by a grocery chain, "The modern Japanese housewife finds the human interaction necessary to purchase meat distasteful" and that "the majority of housewives say they would prefer to buy meat from vending machines" (87). The novel then offers a quotation from a Tokyo newspaper that reads, "The challenge for meat marketers is clearly how to 'de-humanize' meat" (88). Dehumanizing in this context means the removal of a mediator or any human contact between consumer and object. The narrative then shifts to Jane's reflections on the real-life 1992 shooting of a sixteen-year-old Japanese

exchange student, Yoshihiro Hattori, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The man who shot Hattori, Ozeki writes, "worked at a Winn Dixie supermarket as a meat packer" and had yelled, "Freeze!" at the teenager who had rung his doorbell to ask for directions, before firing a .44 magnum into his chest (88). The 1995 court proceedings detail the moments before Rodney Peairs pulled the trigger:

> Prior to the shooting, Yoshi and Webb had announced their presence by ringing the doorbell of the Peairs' home. Testifying that he believed Yoshi to be armed, Rodney Peairs conceded that he did not see a gun, a knife, a stick, or a club--only an object which he later ascertained to be a camera. In the well-lit carport, Rodney Peairs stated that he observed an oriental person proceeding towards him and that he appeared to be laughing. (32)

Ozeki's inclusion of Hattori's murder at this moment in the text suggests it offers an example of the consequence of dehumanization and objectification as the result of racial difference. Ozeki's emphasis on Peairs's occupation implies a causal argument between his supposed objectifying attitude toward the bodies of animals and bodies of color. Ozeki reports that Peairs denied being a racist, but rather argued he "had acted in a reasonable way to defend his home" (88). Ozeki goes on to discuss this act of violence in relationship to American frontier culture:

> Hattori was killed because Peairs had a gun, and because Hattori looked different. Peairs had a gun because here in America we fancy that ours is still a frontier culture, where our homes must be defended by deadly force from people who look different.... Guns, race, meat, and Manifest Destiny all collided in a single explosion of violent, dehumanized activity. (89)

In addition to the Wild West ideology that Ozeki highlights, the Hattori murder also reveals another instantiation of the epistemology of the abattoir. In Peairs's ardent claim of self-defense, he denies a racial bias. This disavowal of racism allows Peairs to maintain the idea of his own morally superior position in defending his property, according to Louisiana's "kill the burglar" statute, bell hooks's discussion of the Hattori shooting, widely circulated after George Zimmerman's 2013 acquittal in the killing of Trayvon Martin, likewise links race and the defense of property to masculinity and violence: "White supremacy has taught him that all people of color are threats irrespective of their behavior. Capitalism has taught him that, at all costs, his property can and must be protected. Patriarchy has taught him that his masculinity has to be proved by the willingness to conquer fear through aggression." (33) Peairs's unselfconscious use of "Oriental" to describe Hattori, however, compromises this position, as does the trial testimony of his wife, Bonnie, whose initial reaction to Hattori and his host brother at her front door was "get the gun." During the trial, when asked to describe Hattori, Bonnie stated, "I guess he

appeared Oriental. He could have been Mexican or whatever." (34) The conflation of different ethnicities demonstrates an equal disdain, an equal dismissal of the legitimacy of bodies of color.

Although the Hattori shooting is not elaborated on beyond this link to Manifest Destiny, the effects of racist violence haunt the text. Ozeki offers another scenario at the Dunn and Sons feedlot, as Jane and her film crew are about to film the facility. Making small talk as he injects Gale Dunn's "medicine" formula into the cattle, one ranch hand's conversation is riddled with racism, focusing on assumptions about Japanese diets:

> "Yup, these cows here's goin' straight to Japan. ...I hear they even eat the assholes and everything. Is that where y'all are from? ... Well, that's what Roy down at the packin' plant told me. Straight to Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. You ask me, it's a darn shame, wasting all that good American meat on a bunch of gooks. No offense," he added, looking over at me. (266)

The ranch hand's comments articulate an explicit racism even as his obligatory afterthought, "No offense," attempts to disavow it. This moment of articulated and disavowed racism offers another example of doubling, of contradictory impulses simultaneously expressed, that serves to produce the ranch hand's superior subjectivity and to allow him to posit his usage of "gook" as merely descriptive, not derogatory. His racism takes the form of projecting undesirable culinary practices onto the imagined foreign consumers for whom he is preparing the livestock. The declaration that Japanese consumers eat "assholes and everything" constructs a Active abject practice even more repulsive than the one the ranch hand is actually engaged in, branding and injecting cattle with their illegal "special formula." While Ozeki does not overtly link these moments in the text, there remains an implied critique of these impulses to defend articulations of racism while simultaneously rejecting or disavowing the harm inflicted on an Other. Both moments demonstrate a cognitive disavowal of racism that Ozeki juxtaposes with the processing of cattle and the purchasing of meats. Racism, sexism, and animal slaughter, the text posits, function on a structurally similar basis.

The Mistress of Spices A first novel by the author of the short story collection,Arranged Marriage, The Mistress of Spices is a mystical tale told by Tilo, a young Indian woman in an old woman's body who has been trained in the secret powers of spices. Her special knowledge leads her to Oakland, California where she uses it to help the local Indian community by opening a spice shop from which she administers spices as curatives. Tilo can see into people's hearts and minds but it is a mistress's duty to keep herself at a distance, "not too far nor too near, in calm kindness poised." However, Tilo is unable to obey her charge, and she becomes emotionally involved with her customers as they struggle with the demands of their families, the clash of the old way versus the American way, racism, abusive husbands-all of the complexities of living in the modern world. It is also her duty to limit her involvement to the Indian community. But Tilo finds herself mysteriously drawn to an American man named Raven, whose innermost thoughts she cannot read. Her complex and passionate relationships with her customers and Raven are in violation of her spice mistress vows, and so she finds herself forced to choose between the magical of an immortal and the vicissitudes of life in the real world. Vibrant, vivacious, headstrong and daring, Tilo is unforgettable and so is her story."

Author Notes

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was born in India and later moved to the United States to attend college. She earned a M. A. at Wright State University and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley.

Divakaruni held many odd jobs until she was able to become an accomplished writer. She was the president of MAITRI, a crisis hotline for female South Asian victims of domestic abuse, and is currently a professor at Foothill College in California.

Her works have been recognized in more than 50 magazines and 30 anthologies. She also has been awarded two PEN Syndicated Fiction Project Awards, a Pushcart Prize, and the Allen Ginsberg Poerty Prize. Divakaruni's books include Arranged Marriage and The Mistress of Spices. Her Title One Amazing Thing made The New York Times Best Seller List.

(Bowker Author Biography) Chitra Divakaruni is the author of the bestselling novels "The Mistress of Spices" & "Sister of My Heart", the story collection "Arranged Marriage", which won several awards, including the American Book Award, & four collections of poetry. Her work has appeared in "The New Yorker", "The Atlantic Monthly", "Ms.", & other publications. Born in India, she lives in the San Francisco area.

Indian-American author **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** *has written more than sixteen novels.* Most of her stories, deal with the experience of immigrants to the United States. *Generally her characters of the novels are set in Kolkata,* and in the Bay Area of California. She is a perfect

interpreter of a cultural multiplicity of India. Her novels reflect Indian, especially Bengali cultural traditions of India in an intimate family garb closely related to social, cultural and psychological norms with respect to food. The Bengali ethnicity has been visited and revisited again and again to emphasize how the immigrants keep their home culture alive in the dominant and incompatible culture of the foreign country.

Mistress of Spices shows the immigrants who face cultural predicaments in the foreign land and at the same time stick their own cultural beliefs and customs steadily imbibe the cultural ways of the host country too. These novels depict the issues of Divakaruni's own cultural location in West Bengal in India. She has faithfully projected Indian culture and tradition in realistic terms in these novels. In this chapter, an approach of Cross Cultural Studies has been done with the various contexts of multiculturalism, post colonialism, and globalization focus on the American character, culture, and people and developing theories and critical debates on globalization.

Through a close analysis of *Mistress of Spices,* this article delineates the dichotomies of race and culture which is articulated is that between San Francisco, the big city that seems to hold all the temptations and which, through the majestic stature of the Golden Gate, is perceived as a symbol of the greatness of America, and Oakland, where Tilo lives and which is home to her secret empire of spices. Major themes of the novel *Mistress of Spices* includes the struggle faced by the immigrants who moved geographically, politically, socially and culturally from its Homeland India, and trying to come to terms with a new existence in an alien land. The spices are used as a symbol of un-American. They succeed in recapturing the Orient in the minds of those who are fascinated by them.

The novel *Mistress of Spices* is full of magical-realism. The fifteen chapters are entitled as Tilo, Turmeric, Cinnamon, Fenugreek, Asafoetida, Fennel, Ginger, Peppercorn, Kalo jire, Neem, Red Chilli, Makaradwaj, Lotus Root, Sesame and Maya.It portrays South Asian immigrants negotiating their identity in late twentieth century. The spices are characterized by Divakaruni as "holding magic, even the everyday American spices, but the spices of true power are from the mistress birth land' (*Mistress of Spices*, 3). These chapters narrate Tilo's interaction with her customers, and how she gifts a particular spice to them to solve their specific problems

in life. Tilo and her spices are at the center of the interaction between races and cultures, even various Indian cultures, with people of all ages, prejudices, and expectations.

The history of the Tilo' is very interesting. She was born in a small village. Her parents were not happy because she was a girl. Later she was called Bhagyavati. She started to predict forth coming dangers, finds lost things, shows people the misbehavior of the rich and reveals hidden treasures. After a while she was considered as a child of God and people start praising her. Her fame spreads to other villages through the merchants and sailors. When she was young, pirates came into her home, murder her entire family and took her to their ship as prisoner. She overthrows the pirate captain to become the pirate, 'queen, leading pirates to fame and glory, so that the bards sang their fearless exploits.' (19)

She reaches a magical island of spices there women call themselves the "mistresses of Spices". First Mother was taking care of all and teaches them too. They were trained in the art of listening and controlling the spices, and then they sent forth into the greater world to aid humanity. They accept her and Nayan Tara chooses the name Tilotamma for her. She is sent to Oakland, California, to a tiny Indian spice shop where she begins her duties of healing the masses through the specifically selected spices, each noted for their particular power. The spices can heal and comfort, but when used wrongly can also ruin or hold back or even ghettoize. She has a vision for her customers.

Tilo takes a beautiful body like the 'apsaras' with the help of the spices in order to make Raven fall in love with her at least for once in her lifetime, 'By tomorrow night Tilo, you will be at beauty's summit. Enjoy well. For by next morning it will be gone'. (263). She agrees that she is willing to take up any punishment after the following night when she gives herself up wholly to Raven's love. The customers for whose welfare Tilo had prayed are happy and at peace with their lives though not in the way in which she had anticipated. All of them were on the verge of making a new beginning while she was at the end of her life as a mistress of spices in America. She enters the Shampathi's fire and loses consciousness. When on the next morning Raven comes in search of her he finds her laying down unconscious takes her in his hand and moves out to his car. At the same time a huge earthquake occurs which destroys almost the entire Oakland and even her spice shop collapses.

Tilo leaves that place but after going a little distance she stops the car and looks at Oakland which is on fire. She changes her mind to return to Oakland and help people over there. She thinks that it is because of her that everything happened and she wants to help people as she did before. The question which keeps recurring in Tilo's mind is the reason why the spices had not punished her. They answer her with the following words 'Mistress who was, when you accepted our punishment in your heart without battling it, that was enough. Having readied your mind to suffer, you did not need to undergo that suffering in body also.' (305). She dismisses Raven's offer that they find their earthly paradise by telling that it is impossible to find one. Raven changes his mind and returns with Maya, the new name given to Tilo to lead a new life. The novel ends with Tilo finding a new life and new name to give meaning to her existence. She gives herself the name Maya. This name suits her in this new world order where she has only herself to hold her up and show the right path.

In this novel Divakruni successfully depicts the conflicts of cross-cultural confrontation of the Indian immigrant women who leave behind their home and look for new home in their host culture. America holds out to those immigrants with the promise of a bright future, a world free from, gender and racial differences based on multinational customs, religions, traditions, languages. But the immigrant who carries dreams of aspiration also carries with them, the native identity therefore they face Nostalgia or homesickness. They think about their culture, the familiar environment in their homelands. They find themselves unable to adjust in a new culture. Because of this alienation from the mainstream American society, most of them become lose their hope.

Tilo first encounters the brutality of racism when one of her working class patrons, Mohan, is brutally assaulted by two young white men one evening. As his attackers approach, Mohan, 'hears the steps, fall leaves breaking under boots, a sound like crushed glass'. (169). The two men who attack him are skinheads, and the attack is definitely racially motivated as they slur out, 'Son of a bitch Indian, should a stayed in your own god dam country' (170) The young men classify Mohan who has lived in America for over a decade, in the same category as all immigrants in the United States, just another minority amongst others. As he is being beaten,

Mohan experiences such excruciating pain that Divakaruni describes it, 'like fire, like stinging needles, like hammers breaking' (171).

He cannot even wrap his mind around the horrific way he is breaking apart; he tries to defend himself, 'even though it hurts to breathe and a small jagged thought-ribs?-spins up for a moment into the lighted part of his mind' (170). At one point he experiences, 'a blow to the head so hard that his thoughts splinter into yellow stars' (171). His wife Veena is shown to be a very supportive woman, and Mohan is simultaneously shown to be dependent on her support. As Mohan recovers in the hospital, he wants his wife there all the time, even while acknowledging she needs to occasionally go home and rest, 'Only wish Veena could be here, it would be nice to have someone's hand to hold on to when outside the sky turns inky purple like that night' (ibid.). Here Divakaruni has focused on the cross-cultural tensions that arise when crossing national borders. Mohan's story is short and relatively sparse; readers do not receive as much information about him as they do about other characters such as Haroun.

Tilo feels protective and worried about Haroun in a way she cannot quite define, but from very early on she senses his good nature may be short lived, 'O Haroun, I sent up a plea for you into the crackling air you left behind…But there was a sudden explosion outside…It drowned out my prayer' (28). Tilo puts a hand on Haroun's new taxicab, she is overwhelmed with a vision of disturbing physical damage to Haroun, in which she sees someone slumped against a steering wheel; in reflection, she asks herself, 'the skin is it broken-bruised, or only a shadow falling?', As Haroun leaves, Tilo observes him as "silhouetted against a night which opens around him like jaws' (112).

Haroun's body appears to her in this way almost as though she can sense an immediate danger of physical damage. Tilo waits for him outside of his home, she is anxious, referring to, 'footsteps ring as on a fiery anvil, splintering pavement sirens drills through the bones of skull in corkscrew motion followed by images of the 'shatter of brown glass' (228). When Haroun finally stumbles up to his apartment, his body is crumpled and bloody as a result of the attack. The doctor who attends to him says it, 'looks like they used an iron rod. Skull could have cracked like snail shells' (230). The experiences of Haroun are a powerful illustration of the way in which Indian-Americans often experience a shattering of their former selves.

Following the attack, Tilo is present as they take Haroun into his apartment. As they enter, a multiple indicators of his identity is noticed by Tilo on the walls of his home, observing 'whitewashed walls empty except two pictures hanging where his eyes would first fall on waking. A passage from the Koran in a lush curved Urdu script and silver Lamborghini' (229). Hameeda nurses Haroun back to health, it becomes apparent that her support indeed plays an integral role in his recovery. He is angry; he tells Tilo If, 'I catch those bastard pigs, those shaitaans…also thankful for the chance to recover. But also I have been lucky…And I have found such friends - like family they are, a list in which he includes Hameeda first' (282). Ultimately He marries with Hameeda and permanently gives her the care-giving role, 'Haroun who has so much to live for, for whom the immigrant dream has come true in a way he never thought' (283-84).

United States, where the male and female roles are more fluidly and more freely defined has put the traditional social values under stress, gender roles often are presented as a function of culture. Their ways of adapting is also different. Here is one character Raven's mother Celestina, who is not a white but also remarkable. She hates her own community. She pretends to be a white as she thinks it gives her self-esteem and happiness. Thus, the East-West encounter as a recurrent theme in her novels is directly related to her experience as an expatriate who inherited Indian values by birth and acquired Western values by choosing to live in America. Divakaruni's frequent return to the theme of the East -West encounter and especially of the Indo-American meeting and her masterly treatment of it in great depth and seriousness shows her genuine and resolute concern for the global and contemporary situation.

The first generation of immigrants suffers the trauma of alienation. The second generation of immigrants promotes the aesthetics of acceptance and assimilation. However the third generation of the children of immigrants is free from the burden of divided consciousness but they inculcate the psyche of an isolated self in homeland and host land. The children of immigrants in spite of being born native cannot fully segregate themselves from their ancestral cultural heritage and subsequently bloom to inspire them to reclaim their native cultural identity.

The first-generation immigrants are invariably more obsessed by the home they have left behind which is their land of birth and always suffer from a feeling of up rootedness that

makes it more difficult for them to adjust. First-generation Indian-Americans are acutely aware of readily apparent cultural differences. Here modernity clashes with tradition, where Indian culture clashes with American culture and where theory clashes with practice and family becomes a battlefield. American culture becomes the basis for interactions outside the home. Inside the home first-generation Indian-Americans attempt to preserve their cultural and religious heritage and expect to live according to Indian cultural values.

The second-generation problems are of a different kind. Having been born in the new country they are able to become a part of the new culture more easily. They often reject their parents' social expectations. They are also individuals who have broken away from their original communities in moving to the United States. But they face and experience a greater sense of rejection and are constantly reminded by their peers that they are different, that they do not belong to the adopted land and all this leads to a great deal of conflict in the minds of these easily influenced children born and brought up in a foreign land.

The conflict is not only caused by their parents, but also, because they are expected to adhere to different values at home, the child grows up with two distinct personalities. This is especially true of Asian immigrants because, even though they belong to the second or third-generation they continue to remain aliens in the land of their adoption. One of the major reasons for this is the color of their skin. They can never integrate and become a part of the white society of the European. At home and within the local community component they are governed by Indian lifestyle developed by their parents and the broader American community.

The third generation of American-born Indians, however, is more securely placed in the adopted society. Growing up in the West, they acclimatize to its mores and ways of life in a seamless manner, in a way their parents never could. By virtue of knowing India only as visitors and having limited acquaintance with their native culture, the importance of the 'original' homeland for these second generation immigrants is generally related to the background. They do not have any deep-rooted psychological or emotional attachment to India and instead, identify themselves primarily as American citizens.

Geeta's grandfather belongs to the first generation, was still in India after the immigration of his family to America. He comes when his son convinces him to join them in the U.S. saying,

‘we are all here, what for you want to grow old so far from your own flesh and blood…I crossed the kalapani and came to this America’ (85). In America, he has to confront his granddaughter Geeta, and does not understand how she dresses, why she works, why she cuts her hair short, how much makeup she wears, or how she can justify buying a shiny, expensive new car. Nothing about her behavior meets his expectations of how a woman should behave. He always shouts at her American style of life. He complains to Tilo saying that Geeta is coming late at night with her friends after work.

Tilo tries to convince him by telling him that it is America after all, and even in India women are now working. She changes his mind and tries to adjust with the younger generation. Geeta’s family is a good example those Indian family in America who still try to follow and keep their culture. And the character of Geetha’s grandfather like those Indian people who still value their culture though they go abroad, leaving their country. The Indians who go to settle abroad try to preserve their culture and their way of thinking according to the way it was when they left the country.

In India, the Indians keep changing and accept the western ways of thinking. They are more tolerant towards many things in the younger generation, whereas those who settled abroad still resent them in their children. Tilo hopes that Geeta will be able to find a resolution that allows her to be herself while straddling a balance between the old ways of her family and the new ways of her life in the United States ‘Geeta whose name means sweet song, keep your patience your humor your zest for life…Geeta who is India and America all mixed together into a new melody, be forgiving’ (87).

It is the children, who suffer the most. It is natural for them to have a conflict, to rebel at times. ‘Jagjit with his thin, frightened wrists, who has trouble in school because he knows only Punjabi still, is a second-generation Indian-American. Jagjit whom the teacher has put in the last row next to the drooling boy…Jagjit who has learned his first English word. Idiot. Idiot. Idiot” (38). When Tilo observes him, she wonders if he knows his name means ‘world-conqueror’ and hopes for his future that he will find someone to support him emotionally ‘who will you take him by the hand, who will run with him and laugh with him and say See this is America, it’s not so bad” (40).

Thus all three generation are living in America as a minority class and though these people have been settled in America, adopted the American way of life and feel and mourn at the loss that the country has undergone but at the same time are worried about their own existence in the host country. As a result of language barriers, elements of adjustment to America can be challenging for immigrants on multiple levels. Not only do diasporic people not always speak English very well at first, sometimes they don't even speak the same language as others of their immigrant community. Saturdays, for example, are described as the busiest days for Tilo's shop, during which she hears everyone speaking together all these voices, Hindi Oriya Assamese Urdu Tamil English, layered one on the other (*Mistress of Spices*, 40). There are so many different people and experiences and histories occurring in the store at any given point that they all exist together, and on top of each other. Despite their shared experience of immigration and new establishment in a host country, people also have multiple different primary languages.

Thus Chitra Banerjee, depicts problems faced by Indian immigrants who attempt to assimilate into American lifestyles. She has herself claimed in many of her interviews that the diasporic subjects especially women are concerned about their identity, an identity which they try to reinvent constantly. More often than not she creates characters that lack a stable sense of personal and cultural identity and float gleefully in the multi-cultural society of America.

LOUISE ERDRICH'S TRACKS

Nanapush, an older Native American, is sharing the past with Lulu, also Native American, in hopes of preventing her from making mistakes. He begins talking about 1912, and how natives are dying, and whites are trying to buy their land. After her parents die, He and Pukwan rescue a sick Fleur Pillager from her family's cabin. Nanapush helps her bury her family. They mourn for their lost families, but Father Damian, a priest on the reservation, revives them. Even though Nanapush asks her to stay with him, Fleur wants to go home, despite knowing the land is in danger. Having lost her mother and sisters, mixed-blood Pauline lives with her aunt Regina and Dutch. Pauline, who is suspicious of Fleur and her magical powers, works with Fleur in a butcher shop in Argus. Fleur keeps winning card games with men who work there, and they attack her. In retaliation, Fleur causes a storm that destroys the areas associated with her. The men are found dead in a locker, but Pauline reveals she locked the door.

After Argus, Fleur comes back pregnant. She meets and lives with Eli Kashpaw, much to her mother Margaret's dismay. Fleur gives birth to a girl named Lulu. Nanapush gives her his name and names her after his dead daughter. Nanapush tells adult Lulu how they try to fight starvation and losing their land. After Argus, Pauline hates living with Regina and Dutch who is sick because of Argus. She lies to Bernadette Morrissey and gets to stay with her and her family on their farm. She helps Bernadette with the dead. She starts going to Mass where she sees Margaret and Lulu. She is obsessed with Eli and Fleur, but after they pay her no attention, she turns to Napoleon, Bernadette's brother. With Fleur's cousin Moses' help, she bewitches Eli and Bernadette's daughter Sophie to get together. As a result, Sophie has a breakdown in Fleur's yard, and Fleur is distant from Eli for a while until Nanapush tells him how to win her back. The statue of the Virgin appears at Sophie's breakdown, and Pauline has a religious transformation. Nanapush and Margaret grow closer, and they are attacked by Clarence, Bernadette's son, and Lazarre for the Eli-Sophie incident and other matters. Fleur gets her own revenge on Clarence and Lazarre. Nanapush and Nector, Margaret's son, try to snare Clarence, but they have mercy on him.

Pauline learns she is pregnant by Napoleon, and Bernadette stops her from getting rid of the baby. Bernadette has to force the child out of Pauline and agrees to keep the baby who is named Marie. Pauline goes to the convent and punishes herself in the name of religion. She tries to convert those at Fleur's, but is unsuccessful. Fleur become pregnant again, and the baby's father is a mystery. Pauline is there when Fleur loses the baby and is involved with Fleur's magic. Nanapush helps heal Lulu after she gets frostbite from running to get help while Fleur is losing the baby. Those at Fleur's are starving and behind in their land payments. Fleur's cousin Moses helps Nanapush to cure a despondent Fleur, but Pauline interferes with trying to save them. Pauline is burned. She recovers from her injuries at the convent and has a religious struggle. She has a breakdown as she floats in Nanapush's boat on Lake Matchimanito. After coming back to

shore, she thinks she is confronting the lake monster, who she thinks has always helped Fleur and may have been the father of her second child. It turns out she murdered Napoleon, and she runs back to the convent. After recuperating from her breakdown, she becomes a nun and gets a new name, Leopolda, and is going to teach at a Catholic school in Argus.

Nanapush thinks Nector and Margaret paid for all their land but learns there was enough money for only Margaret's land. Eli tries to get Fleur to marry him and live at his mother's, but Fleur refuses. She is accused of murdering Napoleon, and it is a certainty she will lose her home. Before she leaves, Fleur gets revenge on the men from the lumber company with her magic. She sends Lulu to boarding school to protect her. Nanapush finally gets involved with the government and is able to take Lulu away from the school with Margaret.

The rhetorical construction of identity, authority, and community, in the midst of complex relations between dominating and subaltern traditions, is a central concern in Louise Erdrich's 1988 novel Tracks. The novel's early twentieth-century Indian reservation and its Chippewa(1) inhabitants represent an ancient community threatened with eradication by the forces of white society and industry. In representing and responding to colonization, it is tempting either to shore up boundaries and reinforce oppositions (through an absolutist politics of identity or place) or to dilute the threat by a romanticized absorption of one world by the other. Instead, Erdrich opts for a dialogical negotiation of the conflict, approaching it through the kind of "division" described by Ellison's narrator. She neither wholly silences nor wholly looses the tongues of competing characters and traditions in her novel, instead showing them to be inextricably bound to each other. Tracks therefore refigures both Native oral and Christian textual traditions through a multiplication and circulation of voice(s). And the dialogical process of mutual-authorization presented in the text is tied to an understanding of identity (familial, ethnic, religious, and gendered) as multiple, mutual, and mutable.

Identity, community, and meaning hold no single "place" in the text: they are relational, rhetorical, and contingent constructions that emerge in the critical and inspirational spaces between and among characters, narrators, authors, and readers. And both "justice" and "truth," for individuals in relation, ultimately take shape only as effects of storytelling. This essay aims to analyze this rhetorical process and suggest how it might also extend or project beyond the text, into the realm of the reader.

As my opening example from Ellison's novel suggests, African American rhetoric exhibits related deployments of double-voicedness that might enrich, dialogize, and de-essentialize our reading of Erdrich's text, and of contemporary Native American literature in general. As one parallel to the dialogical rhetoric of Tracks, I will therefore consider Zora Neale Hurston's work and her demonstration, in particular, of how "Uncle Tomming" practices can both determine and

unsettle communal lines. That both Hurston and Erdrich have been charged with inauthenticity and suffered political criticism from within the African American and Native American literary communities, respectively, makes a comparison of their approaches to double-voicedness and communal ties especially pertinent.

Erdrich's novel Tracks is dialogical in many ways, but perhaps most obviously in that it unfolds by means of two alternating narrators. The aging Chippewa, Nanapush, predeceased by his wives and children and the lone-survivor of his family line, delivers the odd chapters. Narrating the even chapters is Pauline Puyat, a light-skinned young woman isolated from her mixed-blood family. She, too, remains as "the only trace of those who died and scattered" (39). In a community ravaged by illness, poverty, and white-instituted dependence, familial disconnection is a growing reality. Responding to such loss, both speakers use their lives and stories to establish alternative spiritual families and ritual-oriented communities.

Each figure contributes to the novel by "telling stories," in the double sense of narrating and lying, so that the text emerges as something of a dialogue, albeit an argumentative one, between the two voices. Except for Nanapush having the literal first and last words (Chapters One and Nine), there is no structural privileging of either voice. Neither one is a traditionally reliable or omniscient narrator, but each does operate as a potential prophet, speaking words of other-worldly vision and social critique. Sometimes they contradict each other or blatantly challenge one another's authority. At other times they support, supplement, or exemplify each other's tales despite themselves. Whether the lines of their narratives are meeting or diverging at any particular point, though, they are always at radical cross-purposes.

In the absence of authorial judgement, I contend, the reader must discern and reconstruct the voice(s) of truth in the novel. And, in this case, the biblical advice, "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. 7:20) may be a helpful guide. The rhetorical goals of the two narrator's tales, and their functions in relation to a literally marginalized community (Bird 41), will be that "fruit."

Nanapush's stories exhibit orality and dialogism in a variety of ways. First, by addressing a specific audience, his legal daughter and spiritual granddaughter Lulu, the old man reveals that she is literally listening to him speak. "This is where you come in, my girl," he reveals at one point, "so listen" (57). In addition to this direct address and colloquial tone, he also makes deictic references and occasionally notes Lulu's physical appearance or her body-language in response to his narration. This oral quality is most apparent in the first chapter, as he draws his listener in, and in the last, when the urgency of his rhetoric intensifies. Readers are made to feel that we are overhearing one side of a conversation in which much is assumed, left unsaid, or expressed non-verbally. We have only the remaining traces or tracks of a story that has passed us by in pursuit of other ears and actions.

Nanapush's colloquial tone is balanced by the formal rhetoric of a Native American storyteller. In the first paragraph of Chapter One, for example, he follows the traditional model of beginning by orienting himself to the four directions.(2) As the novel unfolds, Nanapush draws heavily on oral tradition, reshaping and renewing Chippewa trickster tales in particular, to suit his current purposes. He does this on two levels: speaking as a traditional storyteller directly to Lulu and telling stories in which he figures as a storyteller. Sometimes, as in the water story he tells Pauline, he does both. In this way, he tells the tale of a trickster and plays the metatrickster at the same time.(3) Nanapush's rhetoric thus situates him relationally. His speech manifests his ties both to a tribal tradition and to a particular person. And it works to weave those ties together in a new spiritual family, which begins with Lulu and her mother, Fleur Pillager.

Because Nanapush speaks for Fleur, relating her story in specific instances and also speaking more generally on her behalf, his narrative is dialogical in yet another sense. He passes on her life-story, as he has received it from Fleur and through his own experience with her. What we as readers eventually receive, of course, is a text. Nanapush is literate in English, and, as Deborah Holt points out, he "outlives his blood relatives because he can read two sets of tracks," animal and ink (160). He uses his paper-work abilities, in fact, to bring Lulu back to the reservation, even as he uses his oral powers to work her spiritual reintegration. Both sets of skills serve the bridge he is trying to build and to place between mother and daughter. While it seems unlikely that Nanapush is supposed to have written the version that we receive, it is possible, and there is no absolute dichotomy between the oral and the textual in his "voice." He himself has spanned Native and white cultures and modes of communication and does not need to submit to a white translator or recorder.

By virtue of his name, a variation on "Naanabozho"(Vizenor, People 3), the elderly narrator clearly falls within the mythical and figurative line of Native tricksters. "Nanapush" is a secret he guards against white appropriation, taking on "No Name" in official records in order to preserve and pass on its oral and spiritual power (Tracks 32). His identity is thus doubled and elusive, sacredly conferred upon him by his family and earned by his own practices of oral and earthy play and healing: "My father said, `Nanapush. That's what you'll be called. Because it's got to do with trickery and living in the bush. Because it's got to do with something a girl can't resist. The first Nanapush stole fire. You will steal hearts'" (33). The aging narrator does, indeed, exhibit key traits of the mythical figure: amoral trickery, creativity, woodland know-how, healing and liberation, androgyny, bawdy humor, and strong sexual appetite.(4)

"Stealing hearts" is certainly one of Nanapush's goals in telling stories. His "sweet talk" (34) is first spent on the orphaned Fleur Pillager, the initial link in the chain of surrogate family he works to weld. Further, in so far as all of his stories are recounted to Fleur's daughter Lulu, they are attempts to steal her heart and win her back into his world of relations. The trickster's blend of playful sexuality and oral gaming are most readily seen, though, in Nanapush's encounters

with Margaret Kashpaw. While he first describes her in unflattering terms, Nanapush is irresistibly drawn by the verbal challenge Margaret presents, "leaving [his] tongue tingling for the last word" when she departs (48).

Their relationship intensifies under direct threat when their mutual enemies ensnare them one night. When it becomes clear that Margaret faces a sexualized threat (since her son is supposed to have raped their sister), Nanapush attempts to rescue her with his swift talk, claiming, "we're together, almost man and wife" (113). He admits to Lulu (and thus to readers) that this is a lie, but it temporarily confuses both Margaret and his enemies. Soon after a mutual humiliation which destabilizes the gender difference between them (her head is shaved and his tongue is tied down with her braids), Margaret returns his loyalty by backing up his false claims to heroism. Attracted by her "interesting kindness" and intrigued by her "bald head, smooth as an egg," Nanapush begins actually to take a sexual interest in the old woman (117-18), an interest which she eventually returns. In lying about his relationship with Margaret to save them both from violence, Nanapush has thus unwittingly prophesied both his own attraction to her and their future intimacy. The forked tongue of the trickster thus speaks truth and lies simultaneously, even speaking truth into being out of lies in the service of relational preservation.

Trickery is one kind of game that Nanapush plays to build relationship. Gambling is another. Those who gather to play cards "late into the night" (71) re-constitute Nanapush's own lost family: Fleur and Eli are his daughter and son, and Margaret becomes a new wife. None of these replace the lost loves and relations of the past; rather, they reweave connections to the past that might otherwise be lost while giving meaning and hope to the present. Although Pauline is not wholly welcomed by Nanapush's new group, distrusted as though she had "gone and told some lie," even she is allowed to make a fourth at the table (71). When chance rules, anything is possible. The community remains fluid because it recognizes the contingent, rather than solid, nature of its foundations.(5)

At times it seems that Nanapush or Fleur might try to help Pauline reintegrate to the Native community and extended family they are reconstructing, even as they recognize the threat she poses to this project. Because water is a central image for all that is Native, oral, wild, mutable, transformative, and life-giving in the novel, it is the medium used to attempt this reconciliation. Gregory Salyer's description of the oral tradition as "a fluid, conflictual body that responds to its environment" is apt here. Like a person, he explains, it can maintain internal contradiction (175). As the example of Pauline shows, however, some people can maintain such tension--or, to return to Ellison's language, "division"--better than others. One question which haunts Nanapush's narration is whether his orality can extend to Pauline's dilemma, whether it can reincorporate to the community and tradition the kind of contradiction she poses.

Pauline resists all of the watery aspects of her Indian heritage, though, and so as she moves further and further into white and Christian identification, she invents disciplines of liquid denial. First, she forgoes daytime urination and restricts her intake of liquids to facilitate this. Later, she ceases bathing. In the sixth chapter, narrated by Pauline herself, these two practices of saintly self-mortification are counteracted by Nanapush and Fleur.(6) The first intervention is accomplished, most suitably, by Nanapush's storytelling in the midst of this intimate community.

Pauline has appeared at the door, begging for shelter and food with the claims, "I have no family" (having just given her own daughter away) and "I am alone and have no land" (142). This is her excuse for having sought shelter with the nuns. Because their sense of communal obligation for hospitality exceeds their wariness, Nanapush and the others take Pauline in, and they do so in more ways than one. While she proudly claims that they treat her "as they would a white" (145), the play against her is also a play made to win her back. The observant trickster begins by playing to Pauline's desire to be exceptional, noting that she is "the most unusual woman" he knows. She plays into his hands, responding in Christian terms that "Some are called." Nanapush then answers back by punning on "call" to note that she never seems to "have to answer the call" (of nature), never relieving herself. And his punch line hits home all the more powerfully because he delivers it in "the old language ... the words strong and vulgar." "It was true," Pauline concludes, "and I was shamed and I was furious. The toothless ruin had discovered my most secret practice" (147).

Nanapush, more observant than the nuns and more clever than Pauline, has struck a chord. I suspect that he does so, at least in part, with the intent of reaching the part of Pauline that still knows the old tongue. As he has discovered through his own experience of shaming, humble identification with others can strengthen relationships, even as prideful insistence on self-humiliation can break them. Because this story is recounted within Pauline's narrative, Nanapush's motives remain obscure. Pauline concludes that he ultimately seeks only to triumph at her expense, and that his claims to speak for her benefit (151) are wholly false. It is true that he revels in the game itself. Given the overall thrust of his other stories and actions, however, the reader might conclude, as I do, that his tongue is double-edged or forked and that he speaks for her own and for a larger good as well. Nanapush's punning play on Pauline's Christian "calling" whispers another, different, call of its own. His voice pulls against the Catholic vocation which would make her a white missionary to the Indians whom she is coming to see as "`them.' Never neenawind or us" (138). It is what Arnold Krupat terms the "call to polyphony" (Voice 9).

In any case, Nanapush does not leave the struggle there, even though Pauline rebuffs him with the most violent Christian rhetoric. Indeed, her curse--"I hope the devil tears you apart piece by piece" (148) reveals that her own commitment to self-containment is ultimately a drive toward bodily and communal disintegration. Against this, more than anything, the old man fights. Nanapush returns to his watery strategy a week later when he launches his next verbal attack on

Pauline's rigid self-restraint. "[S]educed by Nanapush's false kindness" (148), Pauline accepts the special tea he has brewed with some precious sugar. This tea represents both the trickster's "sweet talk" and his answer or antidote to Pauline's own trickery and feud-making "love medicine."(7) The young woman is lulled into a dreamy state as she listens to the talk, but when Nanapush begins his story, she becomes aware of her physical discomfort. The trickster tells a water story, brimming with sexual and liquid imagery. Again, he addresses her with the old language, in which "there are a hundred ways to describe water and he used them all" (149). He plays on Pauline's weakness, pushing her--and her full bladder--to the brink.

Against Nanapush's liquefying rhetoric, the self-proclaimed martyr counts a rosary under her breath and "strains to make [her]self into a block of ice" (149). She would kill herself, transforming herself into a solid, lifeless statue, it seems, rather than be washed in the flood of her own body, her Indian blood, and the dark surrogate family that would claim her. Her paradoxical desire for containment and control through self-abnegation does ultimately lead to dissolution, but not the kind she seeks (141). She falls prey to Nanapush's trick, giving way when the condom he balloons with tea finally bursts, because she will not admit her own weakness and because she refuses to accept commonality with the group. Because her water breaks, so to speak, at Nanapush's instigation, he appears as the potential midwife to her Native rebirth. Rather than use the occasion of her humiliation to recognize and reconcile with her Indian relations, though, Pauline flees back to the convent, inventing even stricter self-disciplines for erasure into pure whiteness.

Nanapush's desire to recreate a family for himself is exemplified in more obvious birth scenes as well. He is in awe of the gynocentric power of what Paula Gunn Allen calls the spiritual "creatrix," "she who thinks" into being, rather than simply "she who bears" (Sacred Hoop 15). The old man confesses that, as his own children were born, he "wondered what it was like to be a woman, able to invent a human from the extra materials of her own body" (167). The mother appears here as a creative artist and conscious survivalist, wisely ensuring continuance through the cyclical reimagining and reuse of her own substance. Nanapush therefore adopts maternity as a model for channelling his own powers.

Until Lulu's birth, Nanapush had identified with this creative process only in a thwarted way: "I gave birth in loss. I was like a woman in my suffering, but my children were all delivered into death" (167). But when Lulu is born of questionable paternity, the trickster seizes the opportunity to get "his name extended" in Christian patrilineage (60). Father Damien comes, expecting to deliver last rites for the infant and is pleased to baptize her instead. Without the knowledge of Fleur or Margaret, Nanapush claims the opportunity and the "right" to name the child. Faced with "so many tales, so many possibilities, so many lies," the trickster names her Lulu Nanapush,

asserting paternity himself and casting her in the role of his own dead daughter, the first Lulu. Rather than appealing to the baptismal drops on the infant's forehead, which would wash away her sin and mark her as Christ's own, however, Nanapush invokes the rich and fertile waters of the Native landscape and oral tradition as the actual source of his authority for this act: "The waters were so muddy I thought I'd give them another stir" (61).

The child thus enters life under multiple and ambiguous signs of parentage and belonging. Fathers and mothers multiply. Nanapush does not seek to undermine Fleur's parental authority with his Christianized paternity, but to accompany and amplify it. A communal authority, which uses as well as resists powers and structures from outside the group, comes into play in the complex or "muddy" connections between various relations. Indeed, Nanapush himself is both less and more than a patriarch, for he also installs himself as a surrogate or spiritual mother or grandmother for the girl in ways that strengthen rather than usurp Fleur's maternal claims. The "creatrix" is both mother and father, in fact (Allen, Sacred Hoop 15), and "mother is not merely one's biological parent: she is all one's relations (male and female, human and animal, individual and tribal)" (Wong, "Adoptive" 177). At a practical level, Hertha Wong explains that the mothering function historically has actively been shared among tribal members, including older men, such as uncles and grandfathers (190).

Although he is excluded from the original birth house by virtue of his sex, Nanapush eventually subverts biology and becomes a mother to Lulu by rebirthing or resurrecting her. This scene occurs while Fleur is giving birth to her second child, who, due to Pauline's inadequacies as a midwife, does not survive. When the labor begins, Lulu goes for Margaret's help and arrives at the elderly couple's cabin nearly frozen. Her feet "thumped on the table, blocks [of ice]" in the fancy red patent shoes she is wearing (166).

Frozen solid, Lulu has sadly become what Pauline herself had tried to achieve. Her footwear is like Pauline's potato sack shirt and novitiate dress, or like her shoes worn on the wrong feet to reincarnate the pain of Christ's via dolorosa. Although the red shoes suggest foolish vanity rather than ascetic self-denial, they too are an emblem of white-identification and a rebellious desire to be special. In contrast to the old man's moccasins, which he has boiled and chewed upon in the most desperate of winter famines, the vinyl shoes signify all that is artificial, unhealthy, and impractical as they "melt and stink" in the fire. Nanapush tucks the "ice-hardness" of Lulu's feet into his armpits, "absorb[ing] the cold into himself" and beginning to "thaw" his "foolish, suffering granddaughter" with his own encompassing warmth (166).

As the healer recounts this tale, he addresses Lulu again directly:

I'm sure you've forgotten what happened next, for if you remembered, you would not wear such shoes as you have on at this moment--those heels, like tiny knives, and your toes sticking through! You'd wear footwrappings made of rabbit fur for protection. (166)

His primary audience, we discover, remains dangerously alienated from the traditions that would protect her and tie her to the community. Nanapush must be recounting the tale, then, to effect a second "thawing," to make her "remember" in multiple ways: to recount the past and her connection to it, to remind her how he himself saved her from bodily dismemberment, and to use that authority to reintegrate her as a member of his spiritual family. Nanapush's resistance to the white doctor's prescription of amputation dramatizes his commitment to communal integrity. Just as cutting off Lulu's feet to save her life would kill her spirit (168), so severing members from the community, through the kind of enforced assimilation Lulu encounters in the residential school, kills the spirit of a whole people. A certain level of integrity, in terms of traditional and relational ties, must be maintained if survival is to be culturally meaningful.

But what is it that "happened next"? What has Lulu forgotten? It is the pain of blood rushing back into her frostbitten feet, making her howl, curse, and thrash against the old man "as though [she] were drowning" (167). The return of life, the flow and flood of fluids: this is the same painful rebirth against which Pauline has fought. Nanapush is more successful with the young Lulu, though, for her sickness is more familiar to him. Rather than trickery, he applies "cure songs" which put her into a mystical trance. Her pain diminishes, and she is "suspended" by his voice. "Once I had you," he explains, "I did not dare break the string between us, and kept on moving my lips, holding you motionless with talking, just as at this moment" (167). The connection between them, the tongue-tie, is like an umbilical c(h)ord of his own harmonious spinning, then, or like an amniotic fluid whose ebb and flow sustains the child in liquid lullaby. Nanapush recalls this early life-giving connection to Lulu and insists that it still exists, asserting the hoped-for effect of his story. By claiming to hold his listener now, he hopes to achieve that very relationship: his double-edged tongue again works to make stories into truth. So when he says that he "had" her, this might suggest she has been had by a trickster (as Pauline is) or even a kind of lover (as Margaret is), but most significantly, it makes her the daughter born to the speaker, who is her spiritual mother.

Nanapush uses this spiritual maternity as a source of authority in speaking to Lulu. Rather than usurping Fleur's role, however, he scolds Lulu for not paying her proper respect: "you, heartless one, won't even call Fleur mother or take off your pointy shoes, walk through the tough bush, and visit her" (210). He tells his final story, of why Fleur sent Lulu away, for the same reason he has told all the others, so that Lulu will "start acting like a daughter" (210). Fleur is silent here, as she is for much of the novel, and so Nanapush must speak for her, as surrogate. Lulu and the reader are left to judge whether his conclusion that Fleur "saved [the girl] from worse" (210) is

fair or faithful. And, of course, interpenetrating our reading of Nanapush's story is Pauline's narrative.

In sharp contrast to the old man's chapters, Pauline's are much more clearly textual, self-authored, and linear. She is more of an outsider to the tribe, and she basks in this particularity. While she sojourns temporarily in a liminal space, moving back and forth between the worlds of the reservation and the convent, her ultimate direction is clear: she is moving out of the Native community, and upward, to the cloister on the hill and to the gates of a Christian heaven. This direction provides the linear drive to her entire narrative.(8)

There is no identifiable audience for her story, auditory or otherwise, and wherever dialogical voices enter her text, she struggles to control and judge them. There is a purpose to her narrative, but it is never clearly declared. Rather, we get the feeling that we are being told a morality tale, in which she is the hero and exemplar. Of what, exactly, she is the example, we must judge for ourselves. In this way, Pauline's chapters read something like a spiritual autobiography, in the tradition of Saint Augustine. They do, after all, record her "confessions" on more than one level: her sins, her burdens, and her commitments. Her narrative is also addressed to everyone and no one, to God and the self, inscribed as a record of an individual pilgrimage. The direction of Pauline's tale is not toward any particular other, then; rather, it maps the thrust of her own life out of her Native land, body, name, and community, and into the white, Western, Christianizing world of the convent and her new identity as Sister Leopolda. She might claim, like Augustine, to be writing not the story of her self, but of the glory of God. Like Augustine as well, however, she finds God only by looking within her self. In Pauline's case, the self is an increasingly masculine, isolated, monologic, and reified entity.

While Nanapush adopts a creative maternal approach to communal reproduction and self-division, Pauline resists any dissemination that would exceed her control. Denying her sexual relationship with Napoleon Morrissey, she claims that the fetus she carries is the result of a Satanic rape, redeemable only by her own sacrificial absorption of it. She therefore fights the pangs of labor and struggles to retain the infant that would be born to her. When she fails, Pauline rejects her offspring utterly: "We were divided ... [T]he child was already fallen, a dark thing ... I turned away" (136). Because it cannot tolerate internal division, the white identity and family Pauline is forming ejects the dark and abject child. Just as she has denied and disowned her Native parents and ancestors, the young woman thus severs her relational ties to a future generation.

Clearly, by writing her story (and it does read as though she has written it herself), Pauline enacts a white identification. If her life story is also a kind of "Indian autobiography," it displays the paradoxes inherent to that genre. Arnold Krupat explains that such texts were not technically

self-authored but were instigated by, inscribed in collaboration with, and published under the editorial supervision of "some white." In this case, the mixed-blood and bicultural Pauline is herself both that "white" and the "Indian who is [the text's] `subject' and whose `life' becomes the `content' of the `autobiography'" ("Indian Autobiography" 262). She is simultaneously writing a white life for herself, however, and so embodies a doubled or trebled subject position. "Whereas victory is the enabling condition of western autobiography," Krupat writes, "defeat is the enabling condition of Indian autobiography" ("Indian Autobiography" 270).

The triumphalism of Pauline's autobiography therefore represents the victory of her white identity, which is predicated on her imagined defeat of the Native self-tribal matrix. The final section of her last textual installment exhibits this clearly. All but one of the five paragraphs in this section (205) begin with the pronoun "I." The final paragraph reads: "Leopolda. I tried out the unfamiliar syllables. They fit. They cracked in my ears like a fist through ice" (205). Her Indian becomes a hero only by ceasing to be Indian. The narrator moves out of her Native identity through the autobiographical "I," which re-shapes her to fit a Euro-Christian subjectivity and "leave Pauline behind" (205).

This is the assertion of a final "no" to Native identity and to Nanapush's entreaties. Pauline can no longer sustain the internal division necessary to speak a simultaneous "yes" and "no" to competing identities, communities, and stories. She is obsessed with determining the original source, rather than the effects, of her own voice(s), asking: "Which master had given me these words to decipher? I must hate one, the other adore" (193).

Her hair "chopped from [her] head with a pair of shears" (205), Pauline undergoes a masculinizing mortification similar to what Margaret Kashpaw experiences and Fleur reenacts earlier in the novel. This experience cuts her off from her former community, however, and her masculinized self no longer answers to their tribal call: "thereafter," she explains, "I'll answer to the name I drew from Superior's hand" (205). Whereas Nanapush receives his name from the tongue of his father, and then confers it orally on Lulu, Pauline's identity is primarily textual, drawn from and by the hand of a nameless "Superior."

The name "Leopolda" is also reminiscent of "Napoleon," the name of the man on whom she pins her own femininity, sexuality, and mortality before killing him as a scapegoat. Napoleon is feminized in this process, serving as a sacrificial symbol for the Native/feminine body/space. By taking on a similar name, Pauline appears to complete the identity transfer. The Native and feminine collapse onto the other, and the masculine and white are claimed for the self. The extricating, purifying, whitening, and masculinizing of the self are all elements of the linear progression of the Pauline/Leopolda narrative.

Finally, whereas Nanapush tells his stories to rebuild a living and fluid spiritual family, "a kind of clan, the new made up of bits of the old, some religious in the old way, some in the new" (70), the telos of Pauline's story is her own version of the kingdom of heaven. Like Augustine's heavenly city, it is radically separated from the natural realm and from politicized history. Rather than wait in a more orthodox pilgrimage on this earth, however, Pauline imagines herself the bridge between worlds. In her own spiritual evolution, she surpasses first Mary, then the martyrs, and finally Christ himself, to become the new savior. She will rescue the fallen from the earth, she believes, and bring them to "the great shining door, beaten of air and gold" (140).

REFERENCE:

1. https://www.grin.com/document/280638
2. https://ashvamegh.net/home-identity-monica-alis-brick-lane/
3. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/brick-lane/summary
4. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/330739/my-year-of-meats-by-ruth-ozeki/9780140280463/readers-guide/
5. https://www.coursehero.com/file/22711822/Final-analysis-my-year-of-meats/
6. http://www.ignited.in/I/a/58359
7. https://www.academia.edu/29052767/A_CROSS_CULTURAL_ANALYSIS_OF_MISTRESS_OF_SPICES_docx

SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIT 4 - Women's Writing – SHS5012

Alice Childress and the Theatre of the 1960s.

Love and hate, varying degrees of colour, patriarchy, and bigotry prevail in Alice Childress‘s drama Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White. Originally penned in the early 1960s, the play was not printed or performed professionally until 1966, despite some interest in producing the play on Broadway. However, due to its alleged controversial subject matter the play remained largely unknown to audiences.2 Childress, it appears, unfashionably portrayed a loving, enduring interracial relationship conflictingly juxtaposed with the fervent, civil rights atmosphere of the mid 1960s. Furthermore, with predominantly black and white male civil rights activists peacefully enforcing laws upholding desegregation in the South3, Childress demonstrates segregation‘s insidious nature purely through the perceptiveness of black women. In 1972, Wedding Band was finally produced in New York and subsequently a New York Shakespeare Festival production of the play4, based on Childress‘s screenplay, was broadcast by ABC in 1974.5 Such a conspicuous time lag from dramatic conception to performance demonstrates how more ¯race writing needed to appear before Childress‘s creative output could become palatable.

Exploring what Childress has called the ¯anti-woman‖6 laws which governed the South after Reconstruction, Wedding Band dramatizes the relationship between a black woman named Julia Augustine and her white lover Herman, and as La Vinia Delois Jennings suggests, considering the play‘s
_restrictive socio-political setting one can comprehend why it is one of Childress‘s most serious and tragic plays‘.7 Throughout this love/hate tale, Childress introduces the audience to multifarious characters and invites a deconstruction of their intertwining involvement with each other in the midst of the politics and prejudice of the time.8 However, their love cannot last for by the close of the play, Herman dies of influenza. Close textual analysis of this drama will clearly illustrate how inhumane anti-woman laws endorsed patriarchal norms that made life virtually intolerable for black and white women alike. These laws prohibited legal miscegenation, divorce and dispossessed black women from their property rights.
The importance is to revitalize this play in order to utilize its historical merits and political relevance within the field of theatre and furthermore, from a black twenty-first century feminist perspective, to illustrate its potential with regard to the maintaining and promoting a positive black female identity.

Childress‘s play examines the enduring nature of ¯illegaL love between the characters Julia and Herman in South Carolina during the First World War; Childress thus employs a retrospective dramatization with the purpose of illustrating multifarious and contemporary racist attitudes; this historical response being critically important. Wedding Band confronts bigotry and intolerance, however Childress reveals that prejudice is not only leveled at blacks, but is also displayed by blacks. Childress thereby highlights that personal prejudice, racial discrimination and negative stereotyping may metamorphose, yet they remain constant in American culture. It will be through Julia‘s budding black socio-historical awareness that Childress offers us an alternative perception for black female empowerment.

Childress's characters are the imperfect men and women of a real world. Rather than present audiences with a model for racial harmony, Childress exposes the reality of life for black and white Americans as she explores the frailty of humanity so entrenched in maintaining cultural conventions and ethnic boundaries. Thus, this commanding drama of interracial tenderness and desire signifies a distinct African American contribution to _realism's contestation of the master narrative of American culture' as it discloses how fragile, imperfect, unrepresentative, or erroneous that narrative has been.9

With regard to contemporary reviews of Wedding Band, Clive Barnes of the New York Times wrote that
_its strength lies…in the poignancy of its star-cross'd lovers, but whereas Shakespeare's lovers had a fighting chance, there is no way that Julia and Herman are going to beat the system. Niggers and crackers are more irreconcilable than any Montagues and Capulets'.10 Richard Eder, also of the New York Times, found that Childress's treatment of the themes and issues in a play such as Wedding Band allows for a timeless quality, that she _used the concentric circles of the play-within-the-play to examine the multiple roles blacks enact in order to survive'.11

However, despite contemporary awards and critical acclaim, in the twenty-first century Childress's work has fallen out of mainstream theatrical fashion, judging by the dearth of significant literary analysis.
Possibly the content of her work is considered too empathetic toward the socio-cultural integration of black and white, and yet Childress succinctly reveals inherent prejudice on both sides of the racial divide. However, this play demands that we recognize the necessity to refigure a female African American heritage, thus the purpose here is to revitalize and give voice to Wedding Band, a drama that compellingly and compassionately reveals an area of women's rights, and formulation of a modern black female political foundation that have been historically and critically neglected.

The play opens with particular details. It is _Summer 1918…Saturday morning. A city by the sea…South Carolina, U.S.A.' (5), that _city' being Charleston and Childress's birthplace. Three houses form the scene, the central one being _gingerbready' in comparison to the other two weather-beaten facades (ibid). The description of the middle building exemplifies the ¯perfecT home with picket fence and window box, and yet symbolically it forms a confused and chaotic mélange of both contemporary and dated designs.
¯Place‖in this sense formulates a subtle and yet complex parallel setting to the ensuing events whereby
shifting individual racial attitudes strikingly conflict with old cultural prejudices. Within this environment Julia sleeps, only to be awakened by a little girl crying. This disturbance drags her from her bed and accordingly she enters a throng of black women outside who will encapsulate the ¯anti-women‖ laws that Childress succinctly portrays. We meet Mattie, a fellow neighbor and tenant, and Fanny, the landlady, who believes she is the _self-appointed…representative of her race' (6). Fanny desires more than the lowly lifestyle racially and socio-politically allotted to African Americans in urban areas, consequently she exemplifies black middle class aspirations.

It is through the dramatic inclusion of the lighter-skinned Julia, who is unquestioningly considered by Fanny as superior to her other black female tenants, that Childress portrays such differing aspects of ethnicity and further depicts gradations of domestic and working class attitudes within the black community. Fanny addresses her as _Miss Julia', and automatically establishes her as socially separate from the other women(7). Unlike the other working women, Julia is objectively described, _She is an attractive brown woman' (ibid). This designation of a specific colour is relevant when one considers the importance of race with regard to influence and social advantage. For those with light-brown to mid-brown skin, _color tone has not seemed a very important factor in their lives. It is primarily those who are either very dark or very light who are affected the most by the gap in power and privilege'.12

Childress wrote during the civil rights era of the 1960s, however, she dramatically juxtaposes her contemporary zeitgeist with the early twentieth century and all the political issues that this period grappled with regarding African American women. In literary terms, Barbara Christian details how
_Afro-American literature', from the late nineteenth century, had begun to _move in a different direction'.13 The literary figure of the ¯Mammy‖was intrinsic to Southern white writing, whereas black literature predominantly focused on the image of the ¯Tragic Mulatta‖.14 During and after slavery, the mulatta was considered a privileged individual as opposed to the _poorer, darker-skinned' member of the coloured community, and increasingly, skin tone, not just colour, came to represent a sub-hierarchy.15 Interestingly, history and Wedding Band intertwine when one bears in mind that after American independence, _mulattoes living free in Charleston, South Carolina…intermingled and intermarried only with each other, actively discriminating against those who were dark'.16

Against the historical backdrop of this racial hierarchy, Julia's skin colour attests to an illicit crossing between cultures.17 She may not be able to ¯pass‖for white as the pale-skinned mulatta may, however, her lighter complexion means she is less affected by _the gap in power and privilege'.18 As much as the literary ¯tragic mulatta was alienated from both white and black cultures, she also represented a sense of powerlessness. This subjection can also be politically transferred to women such as Julia, who, intimately involved with a white man, endures not only the indignity of a socio-politically inscribed legal inferiority but also racial discrimination by a black and white social system that contentiously questions how dark is black and how light is white.

It is not merely Julia who is entrapped within the snare of legalized discrimination; Mattie is forced to struggle financially, as the state will not accept her second marriage to October, with the result that she is not legally entitled to any government benefits; _Money can't be had 'til all papers match. Mine don't match' (18). The letter from her ¯husband‖ further encapsulates a multitude of socio-cultural issues; firstly, Mattie's lack of education, as she has to ask Julia to read it for her (17). Secondly, Mattie and October embody the reality of poverty; however, the imagined economic salvation of the Marines is soon negated by their ¯marriage‖. Thirdly, a lack of money means October cannot show a photograph _to say this is my wife and child' to the other men (ibid); a picture that could be deemed physical proof of their existence, especially when one

considers the state does not legally recognize Mattie as his spouse.

Julia and Herman's union amalgamates legal and racial issues of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century whereby many American states passed anti-miscegenation laws. Typically a criminal act, these laws prohibited marriages between persons of different ethnic groups and prohibited the officiating of such ceremonies. Julia and Herman have been together for ten years, and on this anniversary, Herman presents her with a wedding ring, but, had they attempted to marry, criminal charges would have been brought against them. The media may have been guilty of continually fuelling cultural attitudes toward interracial unions;19 however, anti-miscegenation laws maintained that:

> …if any man and woman live together in adultery or fornication, each…must, on the first conviction of the offense, be fined not less than $100, and may also be imprisoned in the county jail or sentenced to hard labor…for not more than six months. On the second conviction…with the same person, the offender must be fined not less than $300, and may be imprisoned…or sentenced to hard labor… for not more than 12 months…for a third…conviction with the same person, must be imprisoned in the penitentiary or sentenced to hard labor for the county for two years.20

Herman is a self-employed baker and such fines or prison sentences as laid out by

the above Section would financially ruin him, his business and his family.

However, despite these legal and social pressures, Julia and Herman continue their

personal relationship, therefore not only proving their love but also the absolute

insanity of the law.

Wedding Band traverses time and embodies the historical continuation of racial discrimination. Set in 1918, the play details the difficulties and dangers of continuing with an
interracial relationship, and ironically, as Childress created this drama, discrimination regarding couples such as Julia and Herman still existed. In the 1965 case of Loving v Virginia, trial court judge Leon Bazile sentenced to jail an interethnic couple who married in Washington, D.C., writing:

> Almighty God created the races…and he placed them on separate continents. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix.[21]

This decision was eventually overturned two years later, eighty-four years after Pace v. Alabama, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously in Loving v. Virginia that _Marriage is one of the

¯basic civil rights of man‖, fundamental to our very existence and survival...To deny this fundamental
freedom on…a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes…is surely to deprive all the State‘s citizens of liberty without due process of law‘.22

Female Vocalizations

For Julia in particular, issues of marriage, of name and protection, are difficult to emotionally contend with, considering she has often had to conceal, or physically move on if her relationship with Herman is revealed. This continuous movement lends further emphasis to Julia‘s sense of displacement. Not only is she legally alienated from society because of her interracial relationship, Julia is also emotionally alienated from the other black women she lives amongst, Mattie stating, _I wouldn‘t live with no man…Man that won‘t marry you thinks nothin‘ of you. Just usin‘ you‘ (19). However, the truth of Julia‘s male _friend‘ emerges, _you know it‘s against the law for black and white to get married…that‘s why I

try to stay to myself‘ (20). This admission allows Julia to vent her frustration and explain her detachment, all of which perpetuate her sense of loneliness. For the other women, this is an opportunity to vehemently voice their black female perspective on the white male; _A white man is somethin‘ else. Everybody knows how that low-down slave master sent for a different black woman every night…for his pleasure‘ (21).

Childress allows these black women a textual space within which they can be at liberty to display their emotions juxtaposed with their comic formulation of a _mean‘ white male caricature whose _nose is pinched together so close‘ he _can‘t get enough air‘ and his _mouth is set back in [his] face so hard and flat‘ (ibid). Thus,

Childress endows her female characters with the power to reverse negative stereotyping. As early twentieth century Mammy media representations attest, it has predominantly been the black female who has suffered the indignity of becoming a sanitised socio-cultural characterization, her

caricature being used to principally advertise household products; the African American female becoming as much an object as the items she purportedly promotes.23

Unfortunately for Julia, Mattie‘s and Lula‘s fervent and fiery odium forces her to defend Herman and retreat back into her solitary status.

Consequently, the first scene of Act One ends with Mattie and Lula physically and emotionally abandoning Julia; they cannot understand why she has chosen to spend ten years of her life with a white man. The reality of this interracial relationship becomes not only a question of racial discrimination and segregation, but also a subtle insight into cultural divisions within the black community itself. Julia effectively has no reputable position in either black or white society.

Parallel to these female vocalizations, a tired Herman appears at the rickety fence in front of the three houses, he tries to be polite; however, the women behave awkwardly, Mattie in particular

explaining to the ever vigilant Princess, her young white charge, that Herman is a _light colored man‘ (ibid). As racial justifications are made, Julia berates Herman for entering into a conversation with them, and so Childress evokes an atmosphere of apprehension and colour contradiction, whereby Herman is rendered a mulatto. Further racial and war-time tension is relayed through Herman‘s story of how his house was daubed with ¯Krauts…Germans live here‖because in the past his mother had boasted about _her German grandfather‘ (25). What becomes apparent is how diverse ¯races‖endure discrimination despite being capable of bestowing equal levels of prejudice. Owing to such sentiments, Julia has been forced to reposition on a regular basis, _Another move, another mess‘, unable to fight the antagonism and
close-lipped ignorance of those around her (26). As if to alleviate the muted mood, Herman presents Julia with a gold wedding ring on a chain, not merely as proof of his love, but a promise to marry in New York. There is an element in their conversation however, of time wasted, of existing in a cultural limbo; nonetheless, the sudden decision to move north becomes the necessary impetus to raise them from their lethargy (31). However, Herman‘s earlier awkward entrance is superseded as he emerges onto the porch and collapses in front of the women. Legal implications suddenly become of importance as Fanny starkly demands, _Get him out of my yard‘ (33).

Ama Ata Aidoo

Ama Ata Aidoo was born in 1942 in pre-independence Ghana. The daughter of a village chief in the town of Abeadzi Kyiakor, Aidoo was raised in a comfortable and progressive household that not only supported but also encouraged her education. Aidoo's father opened the first school in their village, and sent Aidoo to the prestigious Wesley Girls High School in Cape Coast, where she first began to consider herself a writer. She published her first short story in 1958 after winning a writing competition, which encouraged her to keep writing. Three years later, Aidoo entered the University of Ghana at Legon where she continued to write short stories, poetry, and plays. In 1964, Aidoo's first play, The Dilemma of a Ghost, was staged and later published. The play was one of Aidoo's earliest explorations of several prominent themes that would dominate her later works. In the play, two young college graduates, one Ghanaian and the other African-American, fall in love and marry. This sets off an exploration of cultural differences and colonial legacies. Aidoo's work led to the formation of a strong, female literary presence that would be vital to her work and to African literature as a whole.

Following Aidoo's graduation from the University of Ghana in 1964, she worked as a research fellow at the Institute for African Studies. Six years earlier, Chinua Achebe published his novel Things Fall Apart. Achebe's novel marked a dramatic turning point in African literature. With its incorporation of both African and Western literary traditions, Things Fall Apart served as a model for discussing Africa's colonial legacy while simultaneously reaffirming the traditional values of African culture. This novel offered the first and most significant example of the style of postcolonial African literature.

As Ghana and most of the rest of Africa struggled to break free from colonial rule and assert its cultural and economic independence, Aidoo was acutely aware of a woman's role in traditional African society. An ardent feminist, Aidoo wanted to incorporate into her art a representation of women that highlighted not only their place but also the changing role of women in the post-colonial Africa. For Aidoo, there was no separation between the liberation of African countries from colonial rulers and the liberation of women from traditional patriarchal authority. In addition, there remained few strong female characters within African literature. Following the publication of The Dilemma of a Ghost, Aidoo published another play, Anowa, and one novel, Our Sister Killjoy. Both works further developed the themes in The Dilemma of a Ghost, particularly the role of women in African society, and the structure of patriarchal authority.

At the same time that Aidoo continued to write increasingly influential works, she held several prominent posts as both an academic and political figure. From 1972 to 1982, Aidoo served as Coordinator of the African Literature Program at Cape Coast, while also serving at various points as the director of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and of the Arts Council of Ghana. In 1982, Aidoo was appointed to serve as Minister of Education in Ghana. Aidoo used her position to begin campaigning for affordable, universal education for all. Aidoo's strong-minded position lead to a falling out with the Ghanaian government, and after little more than a year, she abandoned her post to move to Zimbabwe in order to write full-time.

In 1991, Aidoo published her most famous and influential work, Changes: A Love Story. Although the introduction states that the novel is "not meant to be a contribution to any debate, however current," it is full of characters and themes that reflect the emergence of a new, highly educated class of men and women struggling to understand their contemporary identities in conjunction with their ancient traditions. Aidoo critically examines the tensions and changing dynamic within the next generation of Africa's emerging middle class through the lives of the novel's main characters, Esi Sekyi and Ali Kondey. Changes: A Love Story brought international acclaim for Aidoo, winning her the Commonwealth Writers Prize Africa Division. She has since published another novel, The Girl Who Can and Other Stories, along with several children's books and collections of poetry.

Plot Overview

Esi, a government official who works for the Department of Urban Statistics, drives her old car over to the offices of Linga HideAway Travel in order to make some business travel arrangements. There, she meets the head of the company, Ali Kondey, a charming and handsome man who is later described as the best advertisement for the company because of his multiple national identities. The two are immediately attracted to each another. Ali offers to drive Esi home after promising to take care of all of the necessary travel arrangements, but Esi declines because she has her own car.

One morning, Ogyaanowa, the daughter of Esi and Oko, listens to the sounds of her parents fighting while she eats her breakfast. In the bedroom, Oko and Esi instigate yet another fight about their marriage. Oko is angry that Esi refuses to have another child and that she spends so much time at work. Oko says that his friends are beginning to laugh at him. Angry, he grabs Esi and forces her to have sex with him. Rather than apologize for his actions, he grabs the bed sheet and walks out of the bedroom. At work, Esi contemplates the fact that what just happened to her could be described as marital rape, even though no such term exists. She decides that she is going to leave her husband.

Opokuya, Esi's best friend, begins a conversation with her husband, Kubi, about which of them needs the car. Opokuya, in addition to being a nurse, is also a mother. Although Kubi's needs are frequently less pressing than Opakuya's, he almost always "wins" their argument and gets use of the car. Esi runs into Opokuya in a hotel lobby. The two women have a drink and discuss Esi's recent decision to divorce her husband. As they talk, Ali coincidentally enters the hotel as well. Esi tells Opokuya about the gifts that Ali has been sending her, and Opokuya tells Esi about her children and marriage. Esi hopes that Opokuya can understand her decision to leave Oko.

Ali is already married to his childhood friend and love, Fusena. The two have known each other since they were young, and after developing a friendship, they finally married. Following their marriage, Ali moved to London to complete his education. Fusena gave up her career and education in order to become a mother at Ali's insistence. In spite of his marriage to Fusena, Ali and Esi's relationship grows, and they soon become lovers. Ali disappears for two weeks, in part

because of complications with his marriage and work. Shortly after he sees Esi again, he proposes to her. After discussing the potential complications with family and Ali's wife, Ali offers Esi a wedding band. Following the proposal, Ali begins to spend more and more time at Esi's house, showering her and her family with gifts. Esi discusses with Opokuya her upcoming marriage and her thoughts on polygamy.

Ali takes one of his coworkers to visit Esi's family to discuss the marriage according to proper tradition. He is rejected because he fails to bring along a respectable member of his family. When Ali finally approaches his family and asks them to speak on his behalf, they are at first reluctant, but eventually consent. Esi's mother and grandmother are disappointed in her decision to get divorced and become a second wife, but in the end they accept her decision. Ali returns to Esi's family with his elders, and the marriage is approved. It is a simple ceremony, and afterward, Esi returns home alone.

On New Year's Eve, Ali rushes over to Esi's house before returning to his family. Shortly after, Oko appears with their daughter, and the two men begin to fight. Esi grabs Ogyaanowa and runs out of the house to Opokuya's place. She tells Opokuya and Kubi everything that happened. Kubi goes to Esi's house and finds that both men have left. He checks on Oko at Oko's mother's house and finds that he is only slightly injured.

Six months later, Ali takes Esi to Bamako, his home village, for a vacation. They have a wonderful time. Ali's family, after initially rejecting Esi, now accepts her. Their relationship begins to change, though after they return, Ali starts spending less time with Esi. Rather than spending time with her after work, he drives his new secretary, who is young and attractive, home. By the end of the year, Esi feels completely abandoned. She is alienated from her own daughter and spends Christmas alone. She takes sleeping pills to help her get through the day. Finally, on New Year's Day, Ali appears at Esi's house, driving a brand new car. The car is a present and a bribe for Esi. Immediately after giving her the car, Ali drives off. Esi drives the new car to Opokuya's house. Opokuya is so jealous and taken aback by the new car that Esi cannot begin to tell her how she really feels about the present. Esi offers Opokuya her old car.

At the start of another new year, Ali spends more time with Esi but quickly falls back into his old habits. He sends her gifts from all over the world in order to compensate for his absence. Three years into their marriage, Esi finally tells Ali that she cannot be in such a relationship with him. Three months later, Opokuya finally goes to Esi's house to take away her old car. She is too excited about owning a car to share in Esi's sadness. After Opokuya leaves, Kubi arrives and searches for his wife. Upon seeing that Esi is distraught, he hugs her and then begins to kiss her. Before Kubi can take off his clothes, Esi backs away from him, and he leaves. Esi and Ali remain close friends and occasional lovers, and they never get a divorce even though Ali continues to have affairs with other women.

Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

Modern vs.

Traditional

The characters of Changes live their lives split between two poles. They are modern, well-educated figures who nonetheless try and maintain a strong connection to their traditional cultural roots and values. Esi, the primary figure in the novel, is the best example of the tension between modern and traditional values. She is a remarkably independent woman dedicated to her career as a government official. As such, she has a hard time accepting the traditional roles defined by her culture for a woman. She places a higher value on her career and her own personal fulfillment than on playing the role of a proper wife. This tension leads directly to her divorce with her first husband, Oko, who wants her to be a traditional African wife.

At the same time, Esi is also still clearly attached to the values she learned while growing up. She allows herself to become a second wife to Ali, and she performs all of the necessary rituals that her culture dictates. Like Esi, Ali tries to bridge the gap between the world in which his elders were raised and his own modern lifestyle. The ensuing tension and unofficial divorce that surround his second marriage highlight the limited degree to which traditional values can be upheld in modern times.

The Ripple effect of Changes

The title of the novel, Changes: A Love Story, refers to the numerous personal and cultural transformations that lie at the heart of the narrative. The changes that occur throughout the course of the novel take place both at the character level and at the societal level. At the time of the novel, Ghana had recently achieved its political independence. The country is changing politically, economically, and culturally. Similarly, Esi achieves her own independence from her husband and marriage. Consequently, she becomes free to pursue her own ambitions without a family or a husband to restrict her. In a sense, she has transformed herself into a model of the modern woman: she is not only financially stable but also completely independent. Esi's new independence is also symbolic of a larger change occurring within African societies. As women like Esi have an increasing number of educational and professional opportunities available to them, their roles both in the home and in society inevitably change. They are no longer simply wives and mothers who are dedicated to their own ambitions.

The Power of Education

All of the major characters in the novel are well-educated. Their education is not only the mark of their place in society but also an ironic and elusive symbol that signifies both change and stasis at the same time. The two primary lovers in the novel, Esi and Ali, are also the most highly educated. Esi holds a master's degree, and Ali has studied in France and England. Upon hearing of Ali's second marriage, the first question that his wife, Fusena, asks him is whether or not the woman has a university degree. This question highlights the degree to which education symbolizes progress, modernity, and independence for the women of the novel.

For Esi, her education enables her to have a well-paying job that can secure her independence. It is precisely that independence that attracts Ali to her, and it is the same independence that earns

Esi the scorn of her first husband's family. Esi's education sets her apart from traditional African culture, making her feel alienated from her mother and grandmother, neither of whom can understand her attitudes towards marriage and work. Ali is as educated as Esi, and like her, he struggles to balance the two worlds in which he lives. When Ali proposes to his elders that he take a second wife, they are shocked.
For them, Ali's education has propelled him into a new world that does not allow for such actions.

Motif

s

Trav

el

Throughout the novel, Ali and Esi are constantly traveling the continent and the globe. They are cosmopolitan figures, worldly in their knowledge of life and its variety of opportunities. Esi meets Ali while trying to finalize travel arrangements for work, while Ali has made a life out of traveling and assisting others in doing the same. The constant travel in Ali's and Esi's lives serves as a reminder of the degree to which each character is transient. Esi and Ali leave the country, their marriages, and, eventually, each other. From a young age, Ali has been a traveler like his merchant father. He continues this tradition in his profession and in his relationships. He travels from one woman to the next. He treats his wives much the same as he would treat any one of the destinations he frequently visits.

Proverbs

Brief statements that are written to resemble the tone and nature of African proverbs are inserted throughout the narrative. The proverbs serve several important rhetorical functions. They remind the reader of the African context in which the novel is written, and as such, serve as a bridge between African and Western literary traditions. The proverb is a traditional literary device used in African cultures to share wisdom and culture. By incorporating them into her novel, Aidoo is reasserting the value and function of African literary traditions in a genre—the fictional novel—which arose out of Western culture.

Friendship

Esi and Opokuya's friendship is the most stable and equitable relationship in the novel. The two women treat each other as equals, and it is evident that they can speak freely and openly to each other in a way that they never do with either one of their husbands. For Esi, her friendship with Opokuya is also the most stable relationship that she has with anyone outside of her family. After leaving Oko and eventually Ali, Opokuya still remains. At the end of the novel, Opokuya's husband begins to kiss Esi, and in that moment, Esi is reminded of her relationship with Opokuya. The thought is enough to draw her back into reality such that she moves away from Kubi.

Symbol

s The

Car

The tiny car that Esi uses to get to and from work each day is barely functional. It is so decrepit

that upon seeing it, Ali says he will drive Esi home. The car serves as an initial attempt by Ali to enter Esi's life. At the same time, Esi's friend Opokuya engages in a daily struggle with her husband over who will control the car that day. In Opokuya's marriage, the car becomes symbolic of the value placed on women's work versus that of men. Despite the numerous needs of the house that Opokuya must tend to every day, her husband Kubi inevitably controls the car the majority of the time. When Ali finally buys Esi a car in order to apologize for his absence and placate Esi, he is inadvertently liberating Opokuya from having to depend on her husband.

The Wedding Band

When Ali proposes to Esi, he offers her a wedding band, a symbol of marriage perhaps original to Western culture that, when incorporated into Ali's cultural tradition, is only offered to the first wife of a husband. Esi is taken aback by the wedding ring, as is her entire family. By bringing the wedding band into his marriage ceremony, Ali is not only showing his ability to accept and adapt to Western customs, but he is also demonstrating his attempt to incorporate those customs into an African context. The polygamous marriage upon which Ali is about to embark is contrary to the tradition of marriage symbolized by the wedding band that Ali offers Esi. Ali's decision to take a second wife is both an embrace of traditional African marriages, and a rejection of the standards of Western marriage. As a result, the wedding band that Ali offers Esi becomes a symbolic bridge that unites the two traditions.

Professions

Each of the characters in the novel is at least partially defined by his or her career. Esi's job with the Department of Urban Statistics highlights her rational personality, while Ali's job at a travel agency reminds the reader of his tendency to move from one woman to the next. Contrary to Esi and Ali are Oko and Opokuya. Both characters work in professions that demand personal sacrifice—Oko as a teacher and Opokuya as a nurse. The fact that each character works in a field that reflects his or her personality demonstrates the substantial role that careers play in defining identity for the new generation.

MANJULA PDMANABAN: HARVEST

Savage, swiftian and with humour so black that what little laughter it provokes is painful, Manjula Padmanabhan's award-winning play is really an allegory about relationships. The unequal ones with more than a touch of necrophilic symbiosis about them, whether between the First World and the Third, the rich and the poor, husband and wife and lovers, or between a mother and her sons.

The three-act play is set, like a few of Padmanabhan's earlier stories, in some grey, almost anaesthesised near-future. And the future is used as a magnifying lens to look at a greedy and dead-end present - a soulless world without exits.

Ostensibly, Harvest is about the sale of human organs: poor Indians selling various parts of their anatomy to rich Americans shopping for spare parts to replace theirs in a cannibalistic quest to hang on to youth. But Padmanabhan has taken it much further to look at our derailed society. The story revolves round a family of four: Om Prakash, who has made the Faustian deal, his mother (Mrs Praycash as the Americans call her), his wife and brother.

The other main character is the module in the room which seems to have materialised from some futuristic thriller; Ginni (genie), the American lady, appears on it now and then like some Big Sister to see whether the Prakash family is following the rules. They lead antiseptic lives, eating multicoloured pills instead of food, not mixing with others, and God forbid, getting a cold.

Being fattened like the proverbial lamb before the slaughter, Om Prakash has to lead a sterile life in more ways than one: he has to pretend he is his wife's brother. Padmanabhan's visceral satire also takes on the post-satellite Indian society in which the tube is like a dialysis machine.

Manjula Padmanabhan’s futuristic play Harvest (1997) which takes for its theme the purchase and sale of human organs is described on the cover blurb as " a dark, bitter, savagely funny vision of the cannibalistic future that awaits the human race a parable of what will happen when the rich denizens of the First World...begin to devour bits and pieces of the Third World poor ..... ".

The play is set in a Mumbai chawl in the year 2010. In a cramped one room tenement, reside four members: Om Prakash, the tense and jobless clerk, his wife Jaya, who has succumbed to the tense life of privation and insecurity, his old mother, the frustrated, ill-natured and satiric figure and his younger brother Jeetu who works surreptitiously as a gigolo. Om is dismissed from his petty clerical job and hence the family is thrown into economic and emotional disarray. Om and Jaya are only maintaining the semblance of a meaningful marital relationship. Jaya is carrying on a clandestine affair with her
brother-in-law Jeetu. Mother’s love extends only to the eldest son, Om, the bread-winner. She is also jealous of her Daughter-in-law. These four characters are locked in a loveless relationship, claustrophobically confines within the four walls of a one- room apartment.

Neocolonial intervention

It is into this world of disorder that Inter Planta Services brings apparent order and respectability. Om is hired to donate the healthy organs of his body when required by the receiver. There occurs a radical change to their dingy room and it acquires an air of sophistication. The most important installation however, is the contact module placed at the centre of the room to facilitate communication between the receiver and the donor.

The contact module and the apparent order brought in by Inter Planta seem to create turmoil in personal relationships. Since Inter Planta needs only the services of the bachelors, Om is forced to conceal the fact that he is married and hence Jaya masquerades as his sister. Om and his family members appear to be unable to question the complete hijacking of their personal lives by Inter Planta. It is worth noting that while the receiver can see Om, his family members and all other aspects of his life, the donor Om, gets to see only the face of the receiver and her sugary voice(that too deceptive). The donor and his family is kept under the constant gaze of the receiver as the module can rotate round to face each corner and can flicker to life at any moment.Ginni (Virgil) informs Jaya that the contact module had spied on them, “Always I listened in to you, Zhaya. I heard every word in the room- even when the Module was off, it recorded.” (Harvest 94).

Constant gaze of colonizer

The contact module thus seems to become a sort of demigod. It does not fail to remind Om that the slightest trace of dishonesty on his part can be detected. It induces a feeling of helplessness in the family. They are powerless to resist even as it begins to encroach upon their private lives. “Every sneeze, every belch” (Harvest 94) is noticed. The situation becomes unbearable when Ginni demands an accurate report of every sneeze and every smile. She compares Om’s flat to a “human goldfish bowl” (Harvest 43) which she can observe and amuse herself with.

Panopticon

To this vision of powerlessness, we could associate Jeremy Bentham’s concept of ‘Panopticon’ as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind". French philosopher Michael Foucault looks at this as the paradigm of a sophisticated mechanism of observation and surveillance, as the ultimate surveillance system. This architectural Panopticon is a circular edifice with a tower at the centre that ensures constant observation of the inmates in the isolated cells of the outer ring, by a supervisor in the tower at the centre. The supervisor remains invisible to the inmates. The concept of the design is to allow a watchman to observe (-opticon) all (pan-) inmates of an institution without their being able to tell whether they are being watched or not. Bentham himself described the Panopticon as “a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example.”Foucault terms this system of observation which renders the invisible power at the centre as ‘panoptic’. This could be read along with Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ‘Cultural Hegemony’ (control through consensus). Contemporary social critics often assert that technology has allowed for the operation of panoptic structures invisibly throughout society. The Panopticon creates a consciousness of permanent visibility as a form of power, where no bars, chains, and heavy locks are necessary for domination any more. Manjula Padmanabhan’s living room is reminiscent of the panoptic mechanism.

Panoptic power relation in family

The victory of panoptic surveillance technique is evident when Om discourages Jaya's decision to nurse Jeetu back to health after Jeetu's return to home from a miserable existence on the pavements. Om sees this as a display of sentimentality, a weakness which he knows Ginni will disapprove of. It is apparent that Om is prepared to renounce familial ties even without Ginni asking him to do so. Michel Foucault described the implications of 'Panopticism' in his 1975 work Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison – "the major effect of the Panopticon is to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power". Om is, without his conscious knowledge, being made the tool for power.

A miniature version of the panoptic system can be perceived in Om's mother's total absorption in the fantasy world. She willingly shuts herself off from all outward manifestations of life. She is unmoved even as she sees her son Jeetu being taken away by the guards for an organ transplant by mistake. The Super Deluxe Video Couch she orders for herself is representative of her self-imposed withdrawal. Om's mother's renunciation of the world is complete, unhesitating and unquestioning. She chooses for herself electronic annihilation.

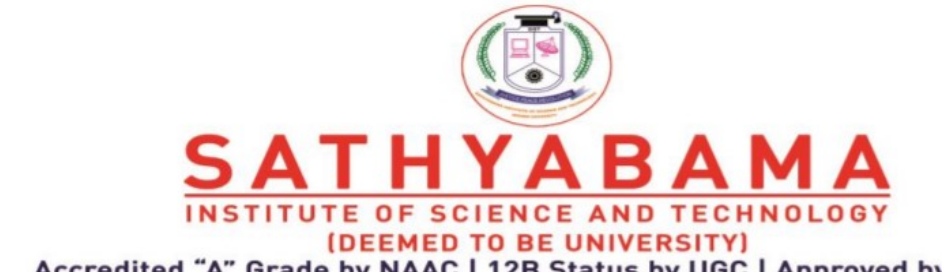
Jeetu in turn is also not able to resist the phony allurements offered by the screen image of Ginni, who is latter described as nothing but a "computer- animated wet dream" (Harvest 95). Actually the receiver was an old man, Virgil, who had deliberately misled Om Prakash and his family, by projecting animated image of the seductive and lovely Ginny.jeetu donates his organs willingly and is destroyed.

Amongst all these charecters, the only one who is able to resist the inhuman situation is Jaya. She realizes that she has lost every member of her family- Om Prakash, her husband; Ma, her mother-in-law; and Jeetu, her brother-in-law. Now it's her turn, but she decides enough is enough, and says that if she is pushed against her will, she will kill herself, as she has nothing to lose, but in the process she will defest the designs of the rich receiver. It is evident that she cannot resist the first world power structure through nothing but death, when she says,

"I've discovered a new definition for winning, winning by losing. I win if you lose. (Harvest 100) … If you want to play games with people, you should be careful not to push them off the board. You pushed me too far. Now there's nothing left for me to lose.(Harvest 101)… I am not willing to caretake my body for your sake! The only thing I have left which is still mine is death. My death and my pride." (Harvest 101).

REFERENCE:

1. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/697462/summary
2. https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/wedding-band
3. https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/dilemma-ghost
4. https://drive.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://www.the-criterion.com/V4/n4/Roshni.pdf



SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIT 5 - Women's Writing – SHS5012

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman : The Yellow Wallpaper

The narrator suffers from what her husband believes is a "temporary nervous depression." He orders her to rest as much as possible, and picks a room in the house for the two of them. The narrator feels vaguely uncomfortable with the estate, but obeys her husband's decision for the two of them to stay there. She also obeys him when he chooses a large, airy room on the top floor instead of the smaller, prettier room on the ground floor that she prefers.

Let's just go ahead and say that she pretty much obeys her husband when it comes to everything.Since the hubby is a doctor, he wins all their arguments. The narrator would like to spend her time writing, but her husband, brother, and assorted other family members think this is a terrible idea: she's on a rest cure, which means resting instead of doing pretty much anything else. She basically just has to lie around and...rest. Most likely, if this story was set today, she wouldn't even be allowed to binge Netflix.

So a quick recap: The narrator is living in a house in which she feels uncomfortable, in a room she hasn't picked out, and she's forbidden from engaging in the one activity she enjoys. No wonder she becomes absolutely obsessed with the yellow wallpaper in her room—she's bored out of her mind.

Literally, as it turns out.She begins fanatically tracing the pattern of the wallpaper and soon becomes convinced that there's a woman trapped within the paper. Shortly before the narrator is due to depart the house, she decides that she has to free the trapped woman by stripping the wallpaper off. When her husband comes into the room, the narrator declares that she is now free.

Upon seeing his wife creeping around the room peeling the paper off the walls, John faints. The narrator pays no attention to the unconscious hubby, and continues creeping around the room.

Theme of Freedom and Confinement

The narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is essentially confined to a single room in a large house. Conversely, her husband frequently spends his nights in town as part of his duties as a big-shot doctor. This dichotomy is the overwhelmingly dominant theme of the story, as the narrator's attempts to cope with isolation wind up being the engine driving the plot forward.

Theme of Madness

Thanks to the narrator's confinement, she begins losing her sanity. And throughout "The Yellow Wallpaper," we see the narrator's descent into madness through her eyes. Readers stay with the narrator as her mind grows more chaotic and as she begins seeing shapes in the wallpaper.

This is the ultimate example of showing, not telling. We have to deduce from her frantic writing style that there isn't actually a woman trapped in the wallpaper; the narrator just thinks there is because she's losing her grip on reality.

Theme of Gender

The reason for the narrator's confinement is her gender. Although explicit references to either gender in the text are rare, there is certainly a gendered subtext, especially given what we know about the period in which Gilman was writing (late 1800's—not the best time to be a woman).

The women we meet in "The Yellow Wallpaper" are meant to find fulfillment in the home, while the men hold positions as high-ranking physicians. The narrator's lack of a name also reinforces the notion that she is speaking as the voice of women collectively, rather than as an individual.

Katherine Mansfield : Bliss

PLOT SUMMARY

Bertha Young is a very youthful thirty. She feels like running instead of walking, like dancing, and like laughing at nothing. She has feelings of bliss, and they fill her with satisfaction. Why, she reasons, should one keep such feelings bottled up?

She returns to her home and finds that she has forgotten her key, a common occurrence for her, and must be let in by the housekeeper, Mary. She asks about the baby's nurse and inquires as to whether the fruit has come. She asks Mary to bring the fruit to the dining room so she can arrange it before she goes upstairs.

She takes off her coat in the chilly dining room so she will not feel at all restrained, and looks at herself in a mirror and sees a radiant woman full of excitement, waiting for something wonderful to happen.
Mary brings in the fruit and bowls for the arrangement, and Bertha admires their beauty. The beautiful fruit, some of which she has chosen to match the dining room carpet, fills her with joy. She arranges it and stands back to admire the effect. She feels that it seems to float in the air. She cautions herself that she is becoming hysterical and grabs her bag and coat and runs upstairs.

The nurse is feeding the baby when she gets upstairs. The baby, in a white flannel gown and blue woolen jacket, begins to jump when she sees her mother, but the nurse does not approve. Although the nanny objects to it, Bertha finishes feeding the baby. Bertha feels that she must beg permission to mother the child. The nurse gives directions for how she should restrain herself lest she excite the child. Nevertheless, she leaves the child with its mother, who is delighted. She loves her baby so much and again she has the feeling of bliss that she does not know how to express.

Nurse returns triumphantly, taking the baby from her mother and announcing that she is wanted on the telephone. It is her husband, Harry, telling her that he will be late and asking her to delay dinner for about ten minutes. She tries to express to him her feelings of happiness yet is unable to do so and abandons the effort.

Guests are coming to dinner—the Norman Knights—he is owner of a theater, she an interior decorator. There is Eddie Warren, a recently published poet, now a very popular dinner guest. In addition, there is Pearl Fulton, whom Bertha has met at the club, likes, and has invited to dinner. Bertha likes Pearl although she does not entirely understand her frank yet distant manner.

Harry does not like Pearl, saying that she is cold and anemic in the brain. However, Bertha feels that there is more to her than that and is determined to understand her better. Harry tends to put Bertha's ideas and feelings down, but she seems to enjoy it. It is one of his traits that she most admires.

She goes into the drawing room and lights the fire, rearranging the cushions that had been so carefully placed by the housekeeper. She grabs a cushion and holds it to her chest, again feeling the glow of total happiness that has stayed with her during the day.

She looks out the window at the garden, and a perfect pear tree reinforces her feelings of perfection and satisfaction until she sees a cat crouching on the lawn being followed by a black one, and she feels a shiver of apprehension.
The smell of the jonquils in the room is so strong that she is almost overcome. "I'm too happy—too happy!" she murmurs. She feels that the pear tree with its wide-open blossoms is a symbol of her life. She has everything, she feels. She is young; she and her husband are in love and compatible. They have plenty of money, a wonderful home and interesting and exciting friends. They have books and music, and she has a wonderful dressmaker. They will be going abroad in the summer, and they have an extraordinary cook.

She goes upstairs to put on a white dress, jade beads, green shoes and stockings. The Knights arrive with an amusing story about Mrs. Knight's unusual coat. Then Eddie Warren blows in and tells an over-dramatized tale about his taxi ride. Then Harry gets home, dashing upstairs to change. Bertha relishes his doing things at high pressure. She also ruminates on his competitiveness and his tendency to see everything as a test of his power and courage. Pearl Fulton's taxi finally arrives. Bertha has a feeling of proprietorship about her since she is one of her "finds."

Harry rings the bell for dinner; Bertha takes Pearl's arm and suddenly feels that the other woman has the same feelings that she, herself, is experiencing. Dinner is accompanied by gossip and

small talk, and Bertha is sure that they do not share her mood, her feelings. Harry praises the food and compliments Bertha on the soufflé, which fills her with delight. She marvels that Pearl's mood is such a match for her own, thinking that it happens rarely between women and never between men.
Dinner is over, and Bertha invites everyone to come and see her new coffee machine. Pearl asks to see the garden. An understanding seems to flow between them as they look at the pear tree.

When asked about their baby, Harry declares that he never sees her and does not intend to take an interest in her until she has a lover. The two men react with displeasure at this statement, but Mrs. Norman, the interior decorator, simply declares that she is going to decorate a room for the Jacob Nathans.

A moment passes between Harry and Pearl that indicates that they do not like each other, which distresses Bertha, and she intends to confront Harry later about his attitude toward her friends. She has a moment of terror when she realizes that soon everyone will be gone and she will be alone with Harry.

She realizes that for the first time, she is feeling amorous about Harry. We find that she has been cold and unresponsive up to now, but she has felt that it was not a problem since they were such good friends. Nevertheless, this sudden feeling of ardor leads her to feel that this is what her feeling of bliss has been about.

The Knights take their leave. Pearl and Eddie are planning to share a taxi. While Bertha and Eddie are talking in the drawing room about a writer, Harry quickly goes into the hall to help Pearl with her coat. Bertha moves quietly toward the door and sees Pearl and Harry embracing and planning a meeting on the following day. Pearl says goodbye to Bertha, murmuring, "Your lovely pear tree!"

Eddie follows Pearl, and Bertha is reminded of the two cats she has seen in the garden. She goes over to the window wondering what is going to happen now. The pear tree is as lovely and as still and full of flowers as ever.

CHARACTERS

BERTHA YOUNG

A thirty-year-old housewife. Believes she is very lucky: good husband, “adorable baby”, “modern, thrilling friends”, materially well-off. Her slightly neurotic joy at everything, even in the fruit she arranges, might mask feelings of deep insecurity. The bliss may be a facade. She

can see this tendency in herself: “I’m getting hysterical.”

Bertha’s last name is symbolic; she is young and immature. She is not sexually mature, and does not experience sexual bliss with her husband. “How idiotic civilisation is,” she thinks: “Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?” (Sexual repression.) She cannot finish her next sentence and allows herself to be distracted. The reality is too uncomfortable.

The couple do not communicate well. The reader observes this when Bertha fails to engage him in a meaningful conversation on the telephone. She only wants to “get in touch with him for a moment”. She describes her relationship with Harry as ‘cold’, yet she is obviously a woman who feels great passion. It is only towards her husband that she is cold.

KM refers to her character of Bertha as ‘artist manquee’, meaning that Bertha can separate language which is her own from the language she has borrowed from others. She knows what is genuine in herself and what she imitates. Yet she doesn’t yet know what is genuine in others.

HARRY YOUNG

Harry is inclined to be aggressive and predatory, not someone the reader easily warms to. He speaks of his ‘shameless passions for the white flesh of the lobster’, as if taking delight in the suffering of his food. He is also pretentious and foolish, describing a poem about a banal topic such as tomato soup as ‘so dreadfully eternal’.

Harry is an incompatible husband for Bertha, who is flighty and artistic by nature, looking for splendor everywhere. Harry makes light of Bertha’s interests and sensitivities, ensuring that the two of them will never be more than just ‘pals’. Bertha must search for a deeper connection elsewhere.

PEARL FULTON

Pearl is the friend that Bertha believes can share her overflowing happiness. Bertha looks up to Pearl, who is the only one of the dinner party guests who has any maturity. She has little to do with Bertha at all, described as Bertha’s ‘latest find’ rather than a ‘friend’.

Pearl’s name, too, reflects the way Bertha sees her: silvery blond. An oyster must be prized open to reveal a pearl inside; likewise, Bertha tries to prize Pearl open to find the prize inside. Bertha longs to understand this mysterious woman.

Bertha has noted that Pearl is reserved. This may be because Pearl is on a different level of maturity; it could also be because she is having an affair with Bertha's husband, feels uncomfortable and must keep that part of her life away from Bertha. No doubt the dinner-party is uncomfortable for Pearl.

Bertha 'falls in love' with Pearl, as she is inclined to do when she meets 'beautiful women' who have 'something strange about them'. Everyone else in Bertha's life lets her down in an intimate sense; she is close to none of them. Pearl, however, just might offer the companionship that Bertha has been searching for.

But Bertha reads far more into their acquaintance than Pearl ever intended. When Pearl suggests the two of them admire the garden, Bertha takes this as a 'sign' – perhaps a sign that the two of them have something deeper in common. Sadly for Bertha, any connection is in her imagination. 'And did Miss Fulton murmur: "Yes, just that." Or did Bertha dream it?'

Pearl is part of a love triangle: Bertha loves Harry, Harry loves Pearl and Bertha loves Pearl. Bertha seems unaware of the homosexual nature of her love for Pearl; in colonial New Zealand it is unlikely that homosexuality was discussed; she may not have been aware of the concept. So Bertha quite naturally assumes that her passion is for her husband, via Pearl, when the object of her affection is for Pearl herself.

NANNY

Plays the maternal, nurturing, down- to-earth role for Bertha's baby, in contrast to Bertha herself, who does not dare to question Nanny's authority.

LITTLE B

Bertha's baby is not yet her own person, instead serving as a reflection of her mother, Bertha. Bertha is not close to Little B, nor is she 'close' to herself. She is still working out what she thinks about the world and about her closest friends, not to mention her husband, who she only comes to understand later that evening.

SYMBOLISM AND IMAGERY

The pear tree could be a phallic symbol (of Harry) or it could be a symbol of nature's indifference to human suffering. Or the tallness of it may represent Bertha's homosexual

aspirations, realised to their full. The flowering of the tree could symbolise the flowering of her sexual feelings. '(Bertha) seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life.' Blossoms are a common symbol of sexual maturation.

In this sense, the tree might represent masculinity after all – the tree is tall and assertive and represents the 'masculine' part of Bertha's sexual desire.

Bertha herself isn't quite sure about the significance of the tree, and the symbolism of the tree remains only vague.

THE SUN AND MOON

For KM, images including both the sun and moon are holistic. The earlier imagery for her bliss was a series of sun images. Later, the sun image is linked to the moon (via a candle metaphor). This suggests pre-lapsarian innocence – ie before the world turned to shit. (Lapsarian refers to the Fall of Man – a Calvinist idea.)

HOT AND COLD

Mansfield returns to images of heat and cold throughout Bliss, referring back to 'that bright glowing place – that shower of little sparks coming from it'. As the story progresses, the metaphor of sun and sparks becomes a form of shorthand for Bertha's state of mind.

SATIRE

Bertha's Friends are all keen on pumping up their own egos, "keen on social issues".

Eddie Warren describes "a *dreadful* poem about a *girl* who was *violated* by a beggar *without* a nose in a little wood…"

The italics emphasise the author's attitude that Eddie speaks of ridiculous things in a melodramatic manner.

NARRATION AND STYLE

The narrative style shows that Bertha is trying to keep certain truths from herself. In the first paragraphs, she speaks as if observing herself from a distance. Her words are not her own. She

thinks one thing then immediately edits herself, as if observing herself taking part in some drama. Bertha's words are not her own, simply a collection of quotations gleaned from elsewhere.

The writing is indirect and elliptic, leaving things out, hinting and suggesting rather than declaring outright. Much use is made of dots and dashes, especially in this story. Ellipsis reflects Bertha's inability to see her own situation for what it is; a romantic attraction for a woman who happens to be having an affair with her husband. Bertha doesn't understand her own feelings. Bertha's feelings are reproduced in breathless, repetitious sentences. The broken syntax – full of dashes and explanation marks – make the language seem spontaneous, like someone thinking out loud.

Mansfield takes us inside Bertha's skin, sharing her insights moment by moment.

Bertha is a distinctively feminine voice, using words that only a woman would use: 'divine', 'little precious', 'incredibly beautiful'. She also speaks with repetition, exclamation, abrupt shifts of thought (signalled by that dash) and abandoned sentences. This is the sort of language which has seen KM criticised.

KM makes a good job of distinguishing Bertha's feminine voice from Harry's, which is very much masculine in tone. The difference is important to the main idea: that only another woman would be able to understand Bertha's feelings of 'bliss'.

"You're of course, absolutely right about 'Wangle'. He shall be resprinkled mit leichtern Fingern, and I'm with you about the commas. What I meant (I hope it don't sound high falutin') was Bertha not being an artist, was yet artist manqué enough to realise that those words and expressions were not and couldn't be hers. They were, as it were, quoted by her, borrowed with… an eyebrow… yet she'd none of her own. But this, I agree, is not permissible. I can't grant all that in my dear reader. It's very exquisite of you to understand so nearly."

- Letter to Murry, March 14, 1921.

THE ENDING

While a plot-driven story would offer the satisfaction of narrative closure – a definite ending – nothing is finally resolved in *Bliss*. We don't know if Harry is really having an affair with Miss Fulton. We don't know whether Bertha is about to confront him. She may have imagined what she saw, or knew it and ignored it.

Instead, Mansfield ends with the pear tree: the story's central image. The pear tree appears at the story's emotional climax and therefore provides an emotional closure.

MAHASWETA DEVI'S "DRAUPADI"

Mahasweta has written hundred books to her credit, including novels, plays and collection of stories. She has won the prestigious Jnanpith and Magasasay Awards for literature is concerned with the plight of the tribals living on the fringe. Mahasweta becomes more and more involved with the lives and struggles of the unprivileged tribal women and the atrocities inflicted on them. Draupadi is about the Santhal tribe girl, who is vulnerable to injustice but resist the burnt of social oppression and violence with indomitable will and courage and even try to deconstruct the age old structures of racial and gender discrimination. Draupadi is translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The most interesting part of the story is that Dopdi Mejhen is portrayed as an illiterate, uneducated tribal woman. Yet she leads the politicized life amongst all because she is engaged in an armed struggle for the rights and freedom of the tribal people. This paper presents the modern breaks with tradition and the development of new forms of discourse and harmonious with the women's cause for the problems that in rejecting the binary structures of patriarchal discourses which are sight of the political, social and ideological forces of racism in our society.

Mahasweta Devi is probably the most widely translated Indian writer while working in an indigenous language today. Now recognized as the foremost living writer in Bengali, she has taken up the case of the tribal people of India through political activism and writing. She has spent over thirty years working with and for the tribal people of West Bengal and the southeast of Bihar as a political anthropologist, investigative journalist and editor of a "People's Magazine". Born in 1926 to urban, middle-class, professional writer, Mahasweta has written hundred books to her credit, including novels, plays and collection of stories. She has won the prestigious Jnanpith and Magasasay Awards for literature is concerned with the plight of the tribals living on the fringe. In her later works, Mahasweta becomes more and more involved with the lives and struggles of the unprivileged tribal women and the atrocities inflicted on them. She believes that women are "one half of the sky" (Kristeva, p.202), transfiguring the prevailing power structures would mean, "a social revolution and the present world would necessarily be transfigured." (Morris, p.5). According to Gayatri Spivak, "Mahasweta Devi is as unusual within the Bengali literary tradition as Foucault or Derrida is unusual in the philosophical or political mainstream in France." (Outside in the Teaching Machine, p.46). Draupadi, the Santhal tribe girl who is vulnerable to injustice but resist the burnt of social oppression and violence with indomitable will and courage and even try to deconstruct the age old structures of racial and gender discrimination.

Draupadi is translated by Gayatri Spivak. It opens with what appears to be an ironic counterpointing of different modes of official discourse through which the central character, a tribal woman called Dopdi Mejhen, is named, constructed, displaced and silenced.

Mahasweta's Draupadi is a unique reaction of the Draupadi of the Mahabharata. One of the Puranas has the following verse:

"In the Kritar Yuga Renuka was
Kritya, In the Satya Yuga Sita was
Kritya,

In the Dwaparyuga Draupadi was Kritya
And in Kalyugas there are Krityas in every house.

Devi's Draupadi is at once a palimpsest and a contradiction. The character Dopdi is a recreation of Draupadi of the epic, and yet how unlike a 'kritya' she is! Contemporary feminists re-interprets these myths especially Draupadi's, in women taking over the cause of avenging themselves, for e.g. in N.Chandra's Pratighat or Sekhar Kapur's Bandit Queen. In the protagonist of both these films, one can see resonances of Kaali. Here through Dopdi Mahasweta Devi has tried to raise certain question of responsibility, as she herself demands certain political responses from us. She expects us to know something about the Naxalbari movement and she also wants us to understand something about the revolution that Dopadi is fighting for us. The most interesting part of the story is that Dopdi is portrayed as an illiterate, uneducated tribal woman. Yet she leads the politicized life amongst all because she is engaged in an armed struggle for the rights and freedom of the tribal people. Being a tribal means that she is not considered as s part of mainstream Indian society. She thus occupies lowest rung in a class based society. We find here in the story that the status and respect women are accorded in tribal society is far superior to that of women in mainstream Hindu society. They are treated as equals and protected from the kind of denigration women face elsewhere, as Dopdi here in the story in the first two parts of the story, she is fighting shoulder to shoulder with her husband. It is in the third part of the story that she is provoked to fight male oppression singly, and in the conclusion the use of the white clothe which is associated with purity and innocence, visually contrasted with Dopadi's black body, and is very powerful. So, here Mahasweta Devi represents Dopdi not as victim but she is equal to men who fight for her rights.

Even Mahasweta's Draupadi raises her voice against extremes torture and atrocities inflicted on the tribals. Her way of protest is very different and makes it an extremely shocking, powerful and innovative narrative. She seems to be an ordinary tribal woman but in reality she has created stir among military authorities who are on massive hunt for her. They remain confused about her real name, Dopdi or Draupadi. Dopdi is a peasant tribal name and Draupadi is derived from the name of the famous character in Mahabharata. In the epic, Draupadi is married to five Pandavas. Spivak points out, "Within a patriarchal and patronymic context she is exceptional, indeed "attacker" in sense of odd, unpaired uncoupled. Her husbands, since they are husbands rather than lovers, are legitimately pluralized."(p.183) Mahasweta's story interrogates this singularity. In the epic, Draupadi is treated as an object and is used to demonstrate male power and glory. Her eldest husband puts her stake in a game of dice. She does not protest. The eldest of their enemies' son Dhritrastra tries to dishonour her by pulling off her sari but she is saved by the divine Krishna.

The Indian forces succeed in capturing the long wanted Dopdi with the tactics of the Bengali army officer, Senanayak. She is cross interrogated for an hour but she remains firm and does not utter a word. Then Senanayak commands the soilders, "Make her. Do the needful."(195)

Finally apprehended by the army, Draupadi is tortures and raped throughout that endless night and mutilated by infinite lustful men. After the tragic incident, Draupadi does not howl or behave like

a helpless victim. In the morning, she refuses to put on her clothes, tears her piece of her clothes with her teeth, and wash herself. Her behaviour is incomprehensible, rather strange. In refusing to obey the command, she appears bigger than life to the all too calculating Senanayak, the army commander. She walks naked towards Senanayak in the bright sunlight, very uplifted and sure. She says:

"……what's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man? She looks around and chooses the front of Senanayak's white bush-shirt to spit the bloody gob at and says, There isn't man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do?

Come on, counter me come on, counter me…… Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid." (p. 196)

The story is intensely powerful and shocking. Senanayak feels absolutely powerless and totally shaken. One wonders whether the story interrogates the lofty patriarchal traditions of Indian culture and what kind of identity is created for Draupadi? In the epic Krishna's meditation serves "to construct and glorify male dynastic expansionism as divine narrative."

(Morris, p.180). Draupadi is as much an object of that patriarchal narrative as she is viewed as an object by the men within the narrative. Lord Krishna's miracle, in fact, proves the sexual terms in which women are perceived as objects and in losing her honour, Draupadi would have dishonoured the male genealogy. In Mahasweta's story, a miracle does not happen and divine Krishna does not appear to save her honour. The story very successfully portrays what actually happens to women when they are seen as the objects. She presents her mutilated body to Senanayak as "the object of your search" (p.196). She stresses on the materiality of what women are for men; literally a 'target' on which they can exercise their power.

Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan in The Story of Draupadi's Disrobing says:

"Sexual molestation of any form happens to be patriarchy's method of social control rather than pathology of sexual violence as such." (p.102) Draupadi in The Mahabharata has committed crime of laughing at Duryodhana's confusion in the Pandava's palace of Maya. Moreover, she commits the 'grave mistake' of discoursing on 'legal technicalities' like a lady pandit and questioning the stalwarts of wisdom. Dopdi Mejhen, on the other hand, is the 'Comrade Dopdi' and as Gayatri Spivak puts it, "a part of the undoing of the opposites – the intellectual rural, internationalist tribalist – that is the unwavering constitution of 'the underground', and 'the wrong side' of the law." (p.108). She is the aberration to Senanayak, who remains fixed within his class, gender and ventures beyond them. Both Draupadi and Dopdi, therefore, are punished by the attempted stripping of one and the multiple rape of another.

Instead of being saved by a miraculous incident, Mahasweta allows multiple rape of Dopdi. She remains naked at her own insistence. Her nakedness becomes an affront to the masculinity of the attackers. "What is the use of clothes? You can strip me, but can you clothe me again? There isn't any man here

that I should be ashamed of," she asserts. Rape in a patriarchal society, is synonymous with the power of manhood. On the other hand, the 'rapability'of the woman's body is because it is believed that a woman's honour lies in her inviolate body. Here, Dopdi does not let her nakedness shame her, torture her, intimidate her, or let the rape diminish her. Sunder Rajan says: "It is simultaneously a deliberate refusal of a shared sign-system of pertaining to nakedness and rape and an ironic deployment of the same semiotics to create the disconcerting counter effects of shame, confusion and terror in the enemy." Male sexual violence is defeated simply by its demystification and Dopdi emerges as "terrifying super object – an unarmed target." In Mahasweta's story, Draupadi acquires a new self-definition and becomes the active maker of her own meaning. She refuses to remain the object of a male narrative, asserts herself as 'subject' and emphasizes on the truth of her own presence, she constructs a meaning which "Senanayak simply cannot understand" (P.196). She becomes that which resists 'counter' male knowledge, power and glory; therefore he is "terribly afraid".

According to Gayatri Spivak, "Dopdi is what the Draupadi who is written into the patriarchal and authoritative sacred text of male power could not be." Unlike Renuka and Sita before her,

Draupadi took the form of the mythological Kaali only in vowing to avenge herself. She was to be avenged by her husbands in the war of the Mahabharata. Unlike her, and also unlike the modern
re-interpreted version of her story, Mahasweta Devis's Dopdi deflates the egotism and manhood of her perpetrators by simply refusing to accept the semiotics of her multiple rape. For her, rape has turned her sex into a physical wound. She is not 'kritya' as she has not followed the cycle of violence through retribution, whether through herself or through a male agency. Her action strongly asserts, "My honour does not lie in between my legs." (p.109).

So, we can say that Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi has been relegated to the position of 'Other' marginalized and in, a metaphorical sense and was forced to pursue guerrilla warfare against imperial domination, but she construct a language of her own by rejecting the binary structures of patriarchal discourses of the political, social and ideological forces of the society.

Nadine Gordimer's short story "The Ultimate Safari

Nadine Gordimer's short story "The Ultimate Safari," first published in Great Britain's literary publication Granta in 1989, and later included in her 1991 collection, Jump and Other Stories, follows the story of an unnamed narrator and her family as they leave their Mozambique village for a refugee camp across the border in South Africa. In an unrecorded talk she gave at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1991, Gordimer attributed the inspiration for the story to a visit she made to a camp for Mozambique refugees. The socalled "bandits" alluded to by the story's main character and narrator are, presumably, members of Renamo, the Mozambique rebel group that tried for years, with the clandestine support of South Africa, to overthrow Mozambique's Marxist government. By the time the events of this story take place, liberation movements in countries across Africa had long since swept whites from power, with South Africa being the single exception. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt to protect itself and its white power structure, the South African government supported the destabilization efforts of rebels in its black-controlled, neighboring countries by financing armed incursions and raids, such as the ones that the narrator describes in the story.

"The Ultimate Safari" opens with the narrator's cryptic and mysterious statement that tersely sets the tone of the story: "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." The narrator of the story, a young black Mozambican girl, never finds out what happened to her mother, or to her father, who had also left one day never to return. The presumption, however, is that both her parents are dead by the time her story unfolds; her people are at war, and her village has been beset by "bandits" that have left the villagers destitute and frightened, and all evidence points to those socalled "bandits" as the cause of her parents' disappearance.

The story that the girl relates is a deceptively simple one: After losing everything at the hands of the bandits who have repeatedly raided their village, and in fear of their lives, the girl's family—her grandmother, grandfather, and older and younger brothers—set out on a long and arduous trek through Kruger Park, the popular national reserve in northeast South Africa that borders Mozambique and has for years been a tourist destination for rich foreigners wanting the experience of the ultimate African safari.

Along the way, the grandfather, who has been reduced to doing little more than making "little noises" while rocking "from side to side," wanders off and is lost in some high grasses and must be left behind. The young girl recounts how little her family had to eat in the park, despite the aromas of campfire grills from the park's tourists. Even the buzzards, she notices, have more to eat than the refugees. Eventually, the remaining family members, all of whom remain nameless throughout the story, are led by the grandmother to a refugee camp where they are given space in a tent in which to live. There the grandmother eventually ekes out a living carrying bricks while the girl attends school. At the story's conclusion, we learn for the first time some of the basic facts about the girl and her family when "some white people" come to the camp to film the camp and a reporter interviews the grandmother. For instance, we learn definitively that the girl and her family are black, that they are originally from Mozambique, and that the story has taken place over the course of nearly three years.

"The Ultimate Safari" is set along the Mozambique–South African border sometime during the 1980s, at a time when Mozambique was ruled by a black Marxist government and South Africa was the lone remaining African country still being run by its minority white population. The "bandits" alluded to by the narrator are members of Renamo, the rebel group supported by the white South African government whose goal it was to destabilize Mozambique by pillaging rural villages and causing civil unrest. One of the consequences of these incursions, or "raids" as the narrator calls them, was a large-scale exodus by poor villagers from Mozambique into refugee camps that lined the border
between the two countries. Many of these refugees languished for years in the camp while South Africa continued its military and economic domination of the region. Some estimates suggest that the civil war that was fueled by Renamo was responsible for a million deaths in Mozambique alone. In 1992, when apartheid was officially abolished and blacks began to exert control over the South African political structure, the destabilizing efforts were halted, though the region continues to suffer the consequences of the years of instability.

Nadine Gordimer's short story "The Ultimate Safari," first published in Great Britain's literary publication Granta in 1989, and later included in her 1991 collection, Jump and Other Stories, follows the story of an unnamed narrator and her family as they leave their Mozambique village for a refugee camp across the border in South Africa. In an unrecorded talk she gave at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1991, Gordimer attributed the inspiration for the story to a visit she made to a camp for Mozambique refugees. The socalled "bandits" alluded to by the story's main character and narrator are, presumably, members of Renamo, the Mozambique rebel group that tried for years, with the clandestine support of South Africa, to overthrow Mozambique's Marxist government. By the time the events of this story take place, liberation movements in countries across Africa had long since swept whites from power, with South Africa being the single exception. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt to protect itself and its white power structure, the South African government supported the destabilization efforts of rebels in its black-controlled, neighboring countries by financing armed incursions and raids, such as the ones that the narrator describes in the story.

"The Ultimate Safari," like nearly all of Gordimer's work, addresses the effects South Africa's system of apartheid had on its people and its neighbors. Published in book form the year she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the story continues Gordimer's long-standing efforts to gauge the effects of apartheid by delving into the minds of characters of all races and genders; in this case, Gordimer takes on the persona and adopts the voice of a young black Mozambique girl to narrate the family's arduous trek through Kruger Park and to the refugee camp.

Author Biography

Nadine Gordimer was born in Springs, South Africa on November 20, 1923 to Isidore Gordimer, an immigrant Jewish watchmaker, and Nan Myers, who had immigrated to South Africa from Great Britain as a young child. The younger of two girls, Gordimer led a solitary life growing up due to a prognosis, at the age of 10, of heart problems. As a result of her condition, Gordimer's mother put an end to her daughter's strenuous activities, including dancing lessons, pulled her out of the convent school she had been attending, and a hired a tutor for her for three hours a

day. From the ages of 11 to 16, Gordimer had very little contact with children of her own age and spent most of her time either with her parents or alone.

Although Gordimer would later describe the severe loneliness she experienced during those years, she used her time to read and write voraciously, and at the age of 13, she published her first short story in the Johannesburg Sunday Express. By the time Gordimer was 16, she stopped being tutored entirely, and except for a year of general studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1945, Gordimer never took another class of formal education.

In 1949, the year following the election of South Africa's National Party—the political party that would formalize South Africa's system of racial segregation, or apartheid—Gordimer published her first collection of short stories, Face to Face, and a few years later, in 1953, her first novel, The Lying Days, was published.

In 1949, Gordimer married Gerald Gavron (also known as Gavronsky), and in 1950 her daughter, Oriane, was born. Gordimer and Gavron divorced in 1952. In 1954, Gordimer married the German art dealer, Reinhold Cassirer, with whom she had a son, Hugo. Gordimer and Cassirer remained married until his death in 2001.

In the fifty years since her first book was published, Gordimer has published more than 30 novels, short story collections, and collections of essays that have won numerous awards. Her 1960 collection Friday's Footprint and Other Stories won the W. H. Smith Literary Award. Her 1970 novel A Guest of Honor was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize; The Conservationist received Great Britain's prestigious Booker–McConnell Prize in 1974, as well as South Africa's CNA Literary Prize. In 1991, Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Also in 1991, Gordimer published Jump and Other Stories, the collection which includes "The Ultimate Safari."

Long regarded as one of South Africa's leading political activists and intellectuals, Gordimer saw many of her books banned in her own country at the time of their publication due to her stance against the apartheid policies of the government. All of her books, including her collection of short stories titled Loot and Other Stories (2003)—published nearly a decade after apartheid's official demise—in some way address apartheid or its effects.

Plot Summary

"The Ultimate Safari" opens with the narrator's cryptic and mysterious statement that tersely sets the tone of the story: "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." The narrator of the story, a young black Mozambican girl, never finds out what happened to her mother, or to her father, who had also left one day never to return. The presumption, however, is that both her parents are dead by the time her story unfolds; her people are at war, and her village has been beset by "bandits" that have left the villagers destitute and frightened, and all evidence points to those socalled "bandits" as the cause of her parents' disappearance.

The story that the girl relates is a deceptively simple one: After losing everything at the hands of the bandits who have repeatedly raided their village, and in fear of their lives, the girl's family—her grandmother, grandfather, and older and younger brothers—set out on a long and arduous trek

through Kruger Park, the popular national reserve in northeast South Africa that borders Mozambique and has for years been a tourist destination for rich foreigners wanting the experience of the ultimate African safari.

Along the way, the grandfather, who has been reduced to doing little more than making "little noises" while rocking "from side to side," wanders off and is lost in some high grasses and must be left behind. The young girl recounts how little her family had to eat in the park, despite the aromas of campfire grills from the park's tourists. Even the buzzards, she notices, have more to eat than the refugees. Eventually, the remaining family members, all of whom remain nameless throughout the story, are led by the grandmother to a refugee camp where they are given space in a tent in which to live. There the grandmother eventually ekes out a living carrying bricks while the girl attends school. At the story's conclusion, we learn for the first time some of the basic facts about the girl and her family when "some white people" come to the camp to film the camp and a reporter interviews the grandmother. For instance, we learn definitively that the girl and her family are black, that they are originally from Mozambique, and that the story has taken place over the course of nearly three years.

"The Ultimate Safari" is set along the Mozambique–South African border sometime during the 1980s, at a time when Mozambique was ruled by a black Marxist government and South Africa was the lone remaining African country still being run by its minority white population. The "bandits" alluded to by the narrator are members of Renamo, the rebel group supported by the white South African government whose goal it was to destabilize Mozambique by pillaging rural villages and causing civil unrest. One of the consequences of these incursions, or "raids" as the narrator calls them, was a
large-scale exodus by poor villagers from Mozambique into refugee camps that lined the border between the two countries. Many of these refugees languished for years in the camp while South Africa continued its military and economic domination of the region. Some estimates suggest that the civil war that was fueled by Renamo was responsible for a million deaths in Mozambique alone. In 1992, when apartheid was officially abolished and blacks began to exert control over the South African political structure, the destabilizing efforts were halted, though the region continues to suffer the consequences of the years of instability.

Characters

The Bandits

So called by the government, the bandits raided the narrator's village repeatedly, forced her and her family into hiding, and ultimately forced them into the long trek that takes up most of the story. The identity of the bandits is never revealed specifically, although they are presumed to be one of the Mozambique rebel factions supported by the South African government, trying to overtake the government by wreaking havoc in the rural areas.

The Daughter

A young girl of nine or ten when the story opens, the daughter, who is also the story's narrator, reveals very little about herself, but it is through her eyes that the story of her and her family's

arduous trek away from their village to the refugee camp is told. She understands very little about the war, or the reasons behind it, except to comment about the fear the bandits have instilled into her people and to describe the effects their raids have had on her life. An astute observer, she conveys much of the tone of the story through her descriptions of the trek: her grandfather rocking to and fro making little noises; flies buzzing on her grandmother's face; her older brother becoming silent like their grandfather.
Although we ultimately learn very little about the narrator herself, it is through her descriptions that the story unfolds.

The Father

Although he never appears in the story, the father's absence, and presumed death in the war, is significant as it helps to set the tone of the story, and without him, the narrator's family must survive on their own.

The Grandfather

Once the owner of three sheep, a cow, and a vegetable garden—all of which have been taken away by the bandits by the time the story takes place—the grandfather does little more than rock side to side and make little noises in this story. He is clearly suffering from some form of dementia or the effects of a mental breakdown, and in the course of the trek through Kruger Park, he wanders off through the high grasses, becomes lost, and must be left behind by the family.

The Grandmother

As the matriarch of her extended family that includes her husband and her grandchildren—the narrator, and the narrator's younger and older brothers—the grandmother is the strongest adult character in the story. It is through her vision and leadership that the family is able to escape the danger wrought by the rebels and travel through Kruger Park to a refugee camp across the border. Once her family settles into the refugee camp, she finds work hauling bricks, and she oversees her grandchildren's education.

The Little Brother

Less than a year old when the family is forced to leave their village, the little brother is three when the story ends. In that time he suffers greatly from malnutrition, and as he grows older, his older sister notices that he barely speaks, a result, she believes, of having too little food during their journey.

The Mother

Similar to the father, we know nothing about the mother except that she left one day for the store and never returned, forcing the narrator's grandparents to take over responsibilities for the children during the war.

Themes

Apartheid

Between 1948 and 1992, the Republic of South Africa had an institutionalized system of racial segregation known as "apartheid"—the Afrikaner word meaning "separateness." Effectively stripping all South African blacks, coloreds, and Indians of their citizenship rights, apartheid was instrumental in helping whites to maintain power in the predominantly black country. As countries across Africa regained their independence from Europeans, the South African government, fearing the liberating influence of its recently liberated black neighbors on its own black population, financially and militarily supported the efforts of rebel groups to destabilize neighboring governments. This desperate measure to protect the apartheid system and the white control of the South African economic and political structures resulted in the long-term displacement and deaths of millions of southern Africans over the years. Nearly all of Gordimer's work addresses, in some way, the effects apartheid has had on whites and blacks alike.

Family

Prior to the events of the story, the narrator had lost both her father and her mother to the war. Her grandmother and grandfather took over parenting responsibilities, and when the grandfather lost his only means of livelihood to the bandits, he suffered from a mental breakdown of some sort, and the grandmother took over sole responsibility of raising the family. It was through the commitment of the grandmother to keeping her family together that the narrator and her siblings were able to trek hundreds of miles across the wilds of Kruger Park to the relative safety of the refugee camp.

Homelessness

One of the major effects of the South African policy of apartheid was the displacement of millions of blacks in the region. In South Africa itself, where apartheid dictated where blacks were legally allowed to live, many poor families were forced to live illegally in shanty towns outside of cities where they hoped to find work, living effectively as homeless people in corrugated iron shacks and temporary structures. In the larger southern African region, many poor villagers were forced by military incursions financed by South Africa to abandon their homes in favor of refugee camps where they lived for years in desperate conditions. At the end of the story, a white reporter asks the grandmother if she ever wants to return home. While the young girl dreams of a day she will be reunited with her mother and grandfather in their home village, the grandmother responds directly by saying, "There is nothing. No home."

Lawlessness

Even though many countries around the world—particularly in Africa—have successfully liberated themselves from their European colonial rulers, most of them are still economically and militarily vulnerable to outside forces. In southern Africa, many of the border areas surrounding South Africa were effectively reduced to anarchy and lawlessness by the repeated incursions by

quasi-military groups funded and supported by the South African government. While some of the military groups had legitimate political issues they were addressing, most of them were little more than groups of vigilantes whose sole aim was to destabilize the areas through brutal force that included raids, pillaging, and military attacks. It was this environment of lawlessness that finally forced the narrator and her family to make the arduous trek with other refugee families through Kruger Park and to the refugee camps in South Africa.

Oppression

One of the goals of apartheid was to help whites, who made up less than 20 percent of the South African population, maintain complete economic and military control. The effect of their policies was the widespread oppression of otherwise innocent blacks in both South Africa itself as well as in the neighboring countries.

Racial Conflict

Apartheid effectively contributed to the complete economic and political control by whites of the non-white population in and around South Africa through the institutionalization of race-based
classification systems and laws. Apartheid effectively fueled racist tendencies among the populace, and one of the effects was the dehumanization, in the eyes of the white populations, of blacks. Although there is no "racial conflict" per se in "The Ultimate Safari," the widespread racial conflicts that the area had been experiencing for years led to the environment that forced whole families and villages into desperate living situations. Without that racial conflict, it would have been difficult for whites to justify the widespread refugee problem, and there would have been greater pressures for more humane and peaceful solutions to the problems South Africa believed it was facing.

REFERENCE:

1. https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/yellowwallpaper/summary/
2. https://www.grin.com/document/46353
3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285381184_A_Study_of_the_Conscious_and_Unconscious_Perception_of_the_Status_of_Happiness_in_Katherine_Mansfield's_Short_Story_Bliss
4. https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/ultimate-safari
5. https://library.si.edu/exhibition/artists-books-and-africa/ultimate-safari-full