

But not all dark places need light. I have to remember that

Jabberwock '16

Department of English
Lady Shri Ram College for Women
University of Delhi

ABOUT

This journal contains essays written by students in the Department of English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi. The name of the journal is taken from Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky"

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EDITORIAL

It is that time of the year again. Time to wade through that deluge of emotions and walk off into the yonder. Time to leave behind the camaraderie of three glorious years, and look forward to forging new ones. A time of consternation, nostalgia, incessant tears, and countless memories. Time to leave home. And as we have stated enough, the time has come all too soon.

Team Jabberwock 2015-16 has been one of the largest in the *Jabberwock* family. Comprising 24 highly efficient editors from all three years, it is emblematic of the growing space and scope of this fraternity. *Jabberwock* for us represents all that the English Department has given us; a mini-universe of faithful companions, bittersweet memories, engaging discourses and a never-ending zeal for all-things Literature. Our relationship with the journal has been one with many facets; it has given us long-lasting lessons in peer-support, team-building and leadership, and has played an indispensable role in cultivating our potential as students, readers and critical thinkers. With just the right dosage of fun and rigorous editing-rampages, this community is a crucial part of the many treasures we take from the English Literary Association.

This journal is a little attempt to give back to a space we take so much from. Through this veritable journey of three painfully short years, and under the aegis of our incredible faculty, our favourite Beast has risen from the ashes and soared to new heights. And we are certain that it will fly higher still.

We wish to thank the college and Dr. Suman Sharma for her vital support. We would like to dedicate this edition to the English Department faculty, our beloved professors who have committed their lives to nudging us ahead in the field of Literature. This journal is a small tribute to all that we have learnt from you. We would specially like to thank our staff advisor, Dr. Madhu Grover, for being a guiding light for the team and for always being there to walk us through our countless dilemmas and indecisions. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Arunima Ray, Head of the Department and Mr Jonathan Koshy Varghese, Head of the English Literary Association, for always having encouraged our endeavours, and to the entire student-body for being such receptive and enthusiastic readers of *Jabberwock*. We are immensely grateful to Ms Wafa Hamid for the talk on academic writing and MLA formatting, which proved to be a significant aid in the editing process. We appreciate the efforts of our artistic friends, Ashmita Chatterjee, Arisha Yaqoob and Sanna Jain, for the infinitely expressive cover illustrations that appropriately represent the energy we share in our love for arts and humanities.

To end, we wish to look back at the beginning of the academic year 2015-16, when our seniors, Eesha Kumar, Rohini Banerjee and Shyamolie Singh handed the journal over to us. A year has passed since, yet their work continues to be our inspiration and their success, our benchmark. Here's to enduring bonds and cherished moments. To creating stories and reliving them. To the power of words and joys of Literature.

Delve in!

Signing off

Sapna Dubey and Swara Shukla

Editors-in-Chief.

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The 'Flâneuse' in Bollywood Cinema

Abhilasha Sawlani

Abstract

This paper explores the liberated figure of the flâneur in juxtaposition with the slow but progressive emergence of the figure of the flâneuse in Indian cinema. Thus, through a staunch feminist lens, the paper makes a case for the independent woman who asserts her right to emerge out of the domestic space.

"The dandy, the flâneur, the hero, the stranger-all figures invoked to epitomize the experience of modern life-are invariably male figures [whose] experience is that of a freedom to move about in the city, observing and being observed, but never interacting with others [...] These heroes of modernity share the possibility and the prospect of lone travel, of voluntary uprooting, of anonymous arrival at a new place. They are, of course, all men."

(Wolff 41)

The latter half of the year 2015 in India witnessed the popularization of an unusual campaign- '#whyloiter?' Women from diverse parts of the country initiated the bid to reclaim the public spaces and the night, asserting their right to loiter and to stroll in spaces that have remained male-dominated for many years-from Mumbai 'chai-tapris' to Delhi 'dhabas' and the innumerable desolate streets considered "unsafe" for women. Asserting their right to risk-taking and demanding safe public infrastructure, the campaign vocally denounced the general victim-blaming tendencies that have assumed monstrous proportions in the last few years. This campaign emerged out of a society strictly divided along gendered lines and imposing restrictive lines of control on women, circumscribing them in the domestic fold so that the solitary and independent life of the 'flâneur' characterized by the fleeting, anonymous encounter and the purposeless strolling, freedom of movement and a nonchalant, disinterested attitude, are not available to women. This need to confine, that determines the larger social framework is established on the ideological edifice of women as repositories of cultural values and stems out of patriarchal anxieties to control and restrict women's mobility and sexuality. The aim of this paper is to examine the processes through which this gendered division of spaces has been represented and thereby consolidated or refuted in Bollywood cinema especially in the new millennium. If a 'flâneuse' exists in the Indian society, the widespread mimetic influence of Bollywood cinema could be instrumental in consolidating her presence.

Both in the literary and cinematic context, women's writings and forays into the public world largely suffered neglect even as men's travel writings continued to be associated with adventure, exploration and escape. As Indira Ghose in her book on women travellers in colonial India demonstrates, for writers like Anne Elwood and Lady Montagu, "[...] travel acted as a spur to fantasy, permitting [them] to imagine other, freer, selves" (Ghose, 134). It enabled the construction of a self-conscious female subjectivity through a subversion of gender-barriers, that create an exclusive and restrictive public-private binary. Women's travel writings provide empowerment in the dual sense: a physical presence in the public sphere and a literary presence that forges an autonomous female subjectivity. The political and subversive potential of 'flânerie', unavailable to 'virtuous' domesticated women was also harnessed by the nineteenth-century suffragettes in order to voice the shared experiences of exploitation. As 'flâneuse', they could overcome class differences and cultivate a sense of community, defying the patriarchal gaze that denies them subjectivity by objectifying them. Mapping the city, the suffragettes mapped the gap between women-as-spectacle and women-as-spectator.

In the case of Bollywood cinema, recent splurge of the media industry raises important questions about media as producers of meaning, discourse and ideology. While the intended aim remains monetary, media tends to have an often unintended influence as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)¹ with a control over

¹ A concept introduced by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990), it refers to those institutions that function predominantly by ideology (religion, education, family, culture, etc.) in order to maintain the hegemony of the ruling classes in conjunction with the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) that function through repression and violence-together, they constitute the State Apparatus. ISAs are plural, mostly private and the site of all class struggles.

cultural materials. Emerging from often disguised ideological contexts which they seek to consolidate, media texts exert power while they posit a socio-cultural worldview influenced by the producers' (dominantly male and patriarchal) subjectivity. They create myths about "social roles, gender roles, [and] ways of living. They promote myths favourable to the dominant ideology and to a culture's view of itself" (Burton 75).

This myth-making is inherently tied up with the idea of representation and creation of gendered identity and subject positions. While women-centric travel movies remain under-represented in the Bollywood corpus, portrayal of female characters in general creates rigid and patriarchally circumscribed notions of femininity. "One of the functions of narrative [...] is to 'seduce' women into femininity with or without their consent. The female subject is made to desire femininity" (Cook and Bernink, qtd in Burton 195). The dichotomy between the predatory external society and the safe domestic haven is often used as a form of social surveillance of female sexuality, concealed within the rhetoric of women's protection. This often internalized sexual division imposes restrictions on women's mobility in the public sphere including an emphasis on sartorial propriety to keep up appearances of class superiority and moral respectability, further obstructing the liberating potential of loitering or travelling.²

From its origin in D.G Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), mainstream Bollywood cinema has traversed a long way from its initial function as a pan-Indian cultural artefact meant to create the imagined cohesive community that is India to its exclusivist focus in the new millennium even as it often engages in critiques of the contemporary socio-political framework. While earlier the nation was allegorized as an all-inclusive community or family demanding loyalty through the genre of melodrama, such binding ties ostensibly seem to be waning in the films produced in the last two decades marked by globalization and post-liberalization which prioritize personal aspirations over community ties. However, this prioritization remains limited to male protagonists while women continue to bear the burden of community values.

The post-independence rigid, Brahmanical nationalism of the middle classes led to a Sanskritization of Bollywood cinema (through what Madhava Prasad calls the 'feudal family romance' genre) that had earlier allowed some space for the expression of female sexuality. The ongoing tussle between tradition and modernity is embodied in the figure of the ideal woman who exists as the repertoire of Indian, cultural and community values restricted to the domestic sphere. This women-as-nation artefact came to be in opposition to the "demonic" and sexualized figure of the Other, representative of the Islamic and worldly (and public) modernizing impulses. "[...] the filmic coming into being of the feminine body has usually been a complex process of distilling visible signs, by which a form is abstracted gradually, by an acute calibration of *eros* and *jouissance*, between the world and the home, into a postulate of "traditional" patriarchy or of its intimate enemy, the modern" (Basu 140, italics in original).

Such seductive and threatening impulses are embodied in the "Helen assemblage" examined by Anustup Basu in relation with the genre of the feudal family romance that denied the possibility of female desire in the "patriarchal monopoly of sexual pleasure" (145). Posited in a rigid binary against the virtuous domesticated woman, Helen becomes the 'femme fatale' through her sexualized subjectivity whose power and existence in the public domain gets continually exorcized by her ultimate death or sudden disappearance in the films she figures in.³ The "epistemological forfeiture" (150) of sexual desire in the virtuous heroine accords her dignity as well as divinity as her love for the male protagonist transcends love to become devotion. On the other hand, Helen cannot be loved, for to do so would mean abandoning feudal patriarchy's absolute nomination of the husband as despot in opposition to the Kantian notion of modern institution of marriage as a free association of consenting individuals and a mutual interplay of desire.

² Moreover, the experiences of modernity are associated with the public sphere and are thus predominantly masculine. The literature of modernity therefore ignores women's primary domain-the private sphere, which is detrimental to understanding female lives and exploring the private existence of men. Women exist only in subordinate relations to men or through illegitimate or eccentric routes.

³ Moreover, the emancipating potential of Helen's public existence is negated as her "strange" behavior is sought to be explained through her Outsider status-lack of culture, or greed for money, power or status beyond her ken.

Moreover, the risk-taking associated with male flâneurs when applied to women-of-the-city would characterize them as 'loose' and devious.

As demands for feudal proprieties came into conflict with the practical need for survival in the atmosphere of tremendous political and economic upheaval post 1970s, the extremes of tradition/modernity, wife/whore, private/public and virtue/vice threatened to collapse in Bollywood cinema and women characters gained relatively more access to the public sphere.

Considered a universal epitome of romance, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) has been a popular blockbuster for more than twenty years now. The characters Raj (Shahrukh Khan) and Simran (Kajol) have attained mythic significance and continue to be much appreciated by audiences. As the characters are introduced in the film, Simran is seen perpetually in the domestic space, looking out of the window longingly and dreaming and singing of her knight in shining armour. Raj on the other hand is a libertine who occupies the public space of thrill and adventure—playing football, swimming, driving race cars, racing with the aeroplane and loitering with his friends at night. The spatial restriction is extended to the temporal grid for women. “To be out after dark, particularly without male companions, is an act pregnant with fear, excitement and bravado, not short of outright rebellion, for women” (Phadke et al. 59). Similarly, Chaudhary Baldev Singh’s (Amrish Puri) stroll through the London streets is in stark contrast with his domesticated wife and daughters, who hurriedly terminate their merry-making, adopting postures of feminine propriety as they sense his arrival.

Women confined to the domestic sphere are considered to be the repositories of Indian culture and *tehzeeb*, and Baldev Singh prides himself on having safeguarded this culture. As Simran’s partner Kuljeet (Paramjeet Sethi), who is significantly shown hunting in the forest, is chosen by her father, patriarchal monopoly over female sexuality becomes visible. In this context, Simran’s desire to venture into the public sphere for a Europe tour is a desire for temporary freedom rather than a self-conscious desire for flânerie and the liberation it provides and is nonetheless frowned upon by her patriarchal custodian. While she has to ask for permission, it is readily available to Raj.

As a form of subtle manipulation rather than open rebellion, women often assume a conditional access to public sphere, underscoring the fact of their respectability through sartorial gestures and a constant demonstration of legitimate purpose rather than claiming the pleasure of purposeless travelling. “Every time a woman steps out of her home, it is the spectre of violence she must confront rather than any anticipation of pleasure” (Phadke et al. 57). Thus, even while on the trip, Simran appears constrained and consistently exhibits a sense of purpose and respectability as evident in her distress on missing the train and mistakenly having her dress torn, and when she asserts her disapproval of Raj drinking in front of a woman or her consternation at the thought of having spent the night with him. Her travel revolves around her romance with the male hero rather than any semblance of freedom or self-sufficiency. The most carefree she appears is in a state of intoxication. Transferred like a possession from one patriarch to another, as Raj too conforms to a similar constricting discourse of honour, respectability and protection, Simran is co-opted into the very institutions that repress her and happily inhabits the space of a domestic, selfless, traditional and stereotypical Indian woman faithfully observing *Karvachauth*.

Entering the domain of Bollywood cinema of the new millennium, a relatively more progressive picture comes into being. A traditional Indian woman in a domestic sphere, sacrificing her tea and early morning newspaper reading in order to cater to her family’s needs, is how we first encounter Shashi (Sridevi) in the 2012 movie *English Vinglish*. Constantly belittled by her husband, Satish (Adil Hussain) and daughter Sapna (Navika Kotia) due to her weak grasp on the English language, Shashi is denied emotional individuality and valued only for her instrumentality in the domestic sphere. Sapna’s scorn for Shashi accompanying her to the public space of the PTA meeting intensifies her sense of inferiority. An integral aspect of her personality is her *ladoo*-making skill that grants her conditional access to the public sphere. However, a subtle undermining of this access is evident as Satish asks her to relinquish this skill and in turn the pleasure that she derives from it. When asked to send the car for the delivery of *laddoos*, he prioritizes his meeting over it. Moreover, as she attempts to give a public, professional name of entrepreneurship to her skill, she is mocked and belittled, later articulating her dilemma— “*Mard khana banaye to kala hai, aurat banaye toh farz*. (When a man cooks, it's art; when a woman cooks, it's duty).”

The film beautifully captures the sense of emancipation that *flânerie* can provide. Although Shashi has internalized her space in the domestic fold, as evident in her reluctance to travel to the USA alone, yet the trip paves the way for her Bildungsroman that enables her to become a “*beshak, befikr, bindaas*” flâneuse while on her quest to earn dignity by learning the English language. Her initial nervousness and lack of confidence stemming from her perpetual domestic entrapment (evident in her traumatic experience in a café) are overcome as she is shown struggling to find her way through New York streets and later reflecting a sense of accomplishment in her confident gait and demeanor. An image of her examining a map becomes symbolic of her mapping the public spaces earlier inaccessible to her. Moreover, she gains and articulates an understanding of the limitations of motherhood and domesticity on being insulted yet again by her daughter on the phone.

Moving beyond the restrictive identity of an ‘Indian woman’ who is to be treated with reverence, she forges what might be construed as a threatening friendship with the cultural other, Laurent (Mehdi Nebbou), seeming not averse to his compliments and respectful admiration and sharing moments of *flânerie* with him—observing people on-board the train and conversing without comprehension. The zenith of her *flânerie* is achieved as she gazes upon the city in wonder atop the high rise. Emotional dilemma and turmoil continue to mar her *flânerie* as the domestic returns, manifested in her family, again trapping her within her ‘duties’ and maternal instincts. The derisive unbelief of Satish at her confident lone venture into an unknown city and her son’s accident intensifies this dilemma as she feels caught between the roles of a selfless mother and a confident woman of the world. Although she manages to achieve a rare synthesis between the two, much to the consternation of her condescending family, yet this relatively progressive film fails to tap the full liberating potential of *flânerie*, which is explored and remains confined to a limited spatial and temporal frame abroad. To return home, to normality, she has to sacrifice her special freedom and console herself with the domestic, albeit now a respectful, space as her domain.

The 2014 movie *Queen* catalogues the Bildungsroman of a conventionally shy and reticent Rani (Kangana Ranaut) into a confident, self-sufficient and assertive flâneuse who claims pleasure and risk for herself on the streets of Paris and Amsterdam. Prior to her foray in the public world, her life is portrayed as contingent upon the male figures in her life— she requires her father’s permission to venture out of the domestic sphere, faces innumerable restrictions from her fiancé in the name of protection and feminine propriety and is accompanied practically everywhere by her brother Chintu (Chinmay Chandraunshuh), who becomes the symbol of the invariably male patriarchal control, despite his young age. In a brief flashback, we witness a plethora of professional, behavioural, spatial and temporal gender stereotypes, wherein the characteristically shy and modest Rani (suggestively pursuing Home Science) shows indifference towards and shirks the unsolicited advances of the engineer Vijay (Rajkumar Rao) who engages in the traditionally male role of wooing. Rani, whose limited fantasies about travelling are circumscribed to her honeymoon, suffers an inevitable shock as Vijay calls off their wedding citing the reason, “For me it’s all about travel, business, meetings... *bohot* tough *ho jayega tumhare liye*.”

Even as she embarks alone on her honeymoon in Paris, neglecting the frowning eyebrows and the injunctions to take Chintu along, her initial forays into Parisian streets reflect emotional turmoil through the culturally conditioned need for a male guiding hand⁴. Like Shashi, she is alienated by her low self-confidence and language barrier as evident in her initial traumatic experience at a restaurant and the nervous encounter with the policeman that paves the way for the night of the carnivalesque. Having braved physical threat posed by a mugger and being initiated into the world of risk-taking, Rani gains confidence. Being inadvertently drunk, she rebels against restrictive feminine proprieties that restrict ‘good girls’ from burping, wearing certain clothes and indulging in desire.⁵ What follows in the film is a series of subversions wherein Rani undercuts the restrictions that were earlier imposed on her— she dances wildly atop a bar counter, becomes economically self-sufficient (much like Shashi) and exposes as baseless the culturally induced

⁴ This is symbolically reflected in her act of peeking from the hotel room window and not venturing out alone.

⁵ Giving proof that she has been obedient and followed all social proprieties, she expresses her disdain for desiring college girls who ‘gaze’ at “Venky boys”, which becomes an ironical proof of social hypocrisy that glorifies male gaze as evident in her own case-Vijay’s relentless wooing at her college.

inhibitions against ungendered spaces by sharing a room with three men. Male presence becomes more egalitarian as she assumes control by driving and making decisions, reading a map and simultaneously mapping the city spaces. Exhibiting a more relaxed and confident demeanour, she becomes a carefree loiterer-a flâneuse.

From the hotel-room window to balcony to the Parisian streets, Rani's transition into a woman of the world is overseen by threatening Helen-figures. The blatant, confident and bra-hating Vijaylaxmi (Lisa Hayden)⁶ and the unnervingly candid sex-worker Ruksar aka Roxette (Sabeeka Imam) represent the so-called disreputable women of the world who enable Rani to transcend the patriarchal lines of control, by offering her a glimpse of their generous humanity and a new perspective that normalizes shame. *Queen* offers a refreshing respite⁷ from the archetypal heterosexual romances by offering a striking vignette of female bonding under the Eiffel tower and a denouement that refuses to reinstate Rani's new-found freedom through flânerie in the patriarchal institutions of heterosexual relationship or marriage.

The fear of women forming consenting relationships with 'undesirable' cultural Others operates within the patriarchal anxiety about controlling female sexuality and thereby the sanctity of Indian culture by restricting access to the public sphere. In case of both Rani and Shashi⁸, emotional attachment with cultural Others by undertaking risk and gaining pleasure through flânerie serves a healing purpose— both gain greater self-confidence, dignity and access to the public sphere. Moreover, these movies reinterpret the erstwhile woman-as-nation films in a liberating manner— Rani exhibits an unflinching patriotism as she kisses Marcello “only for India!” and Shashi requests for a Hindi newspaper despite her new-found fluency in the English language.

Claiming access to public spaces is an integral aspect of claiming true citizenship and creating a non-hierarchical society through undifferentiated rights to the public sphere. The subversive potential of 'flânerie' or loitering lies in the right to unadulterated and unsanctioned pleasure, which does not require the constant masquerade of respectability. While the male-centric travel movies like *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001), *Road, the Movie* (2009) and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011) continue to postulate a discourse of maturity and growth as the protagonists embark on travelling for its own sake, the rejuvenating and liberating aspects of flânerie continue to be collateral rather than outcomes of conscious risk-taking for women who claim pleasure in public spaces. However, with movies like *Queen*, a new direction seems to be emerging, one that argues for a utopia where one could, “Loiter without purpose and meaning. Loiter without being asked what time of the day it is, why we are here, what we are wearing, and whom we are with. That is when we will truly belong to the city and the city to us” (Phadke et al. 188).

⁶ In a telling manner, the locus of Rani's domestication (the male 'Vijay') becomes the means of her liberation as Vijaylaxmi exclaims “*Vijay nahi hai? So what? Vijaylaxmi toh hai!*”

⁷ The songs including 'Oh Gujariya', 'Jugni' and 'Kinare' map Rani's journey from flânerie to freedom to self-sufficiency.

⁸ Talking to a cultural Other without understanding Taka (Jeffrey Ho) and Oleksander (Mish Boyko) for Rani and Laurent for Shashi, moreover, becomes an integral aspect of their flânerie.

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Individual Identity in a Surveillance State

Aishwarya Kali

Abstract

This paper explores the identity of individuals, and how they are perceived in a state under constant surveillance. It delves deeper into the threats posed by such systems, arguing how they curtail freedom and reduce the sense of individuality and uniqueness.

“For now, know that every border you cross, every purchase you make, every call you dial, every cell phone tower you pass, friend you keep, article you type, site you visit, subject line you type and packet you route is in the hands of a system whose reach is limitless but whose safeguards are not.” – Edward Snowden, in an encrypted email to Laura Poitras on January, 2013.⁹

Post-cold war, post-internet and post-9/11, the US government found a justification for all kinds of abuses: national security. According to former NSA cryptomathematician William Binney, not even a week had passed after 9/11 when the US government decided to actively start spying on all of its citizens. And this was the enforcing of an aggressive systems that is empowered to “collect it all”¹⁰ (all of an individual’s online activity, telephone metadata and if they really want to, they can even tap an individual’s calls). This paper aims to, through Laura Poitras’s documentary *Citizenfour* (2014) and Glenn Greenwald’s book *No Place to Hide* (2014), analyse how a mass surveillance system perceives an individual: how all this data forms a person in the system, the person being the sum total of all the data collected about him/her. Also, how the awareness of surveillance leads an individual to self-police themselves, to hold themselves back. In both ways, individual identity is reduced. On the one hand, the mass surveillance system sees an individual in highly reductive terms (facts and figures). And on the other, when an individual is holding his/herself back, they are not their complete selves.

Identity in a surveillance state is continuously under attack. The mass surveillance system is actively trying to make the individual powerless, neuter any dissent that they can pose by threatening their freedom. An individual aware of state surveillance does not want to draw any undue attention to his/her-self and hence, would see benefit in toning down their overly discordant viewpoints. Hence, an authoritarian government gets what it wants: no threats to power.

"Linkability", as Poitras' documentary tells us, is the idea that different fragments of information (metro card, credit card, cell phone data, etc.) of individuals may come together to provide one cohesive image (i.e. everything one ever does). These facts come together to give what Jacob Applebaum - encryption and security software developer and journalist - calls, "metadata in aggregate".¹¹ Edward Snowden manages to problematize surveillance conducted by the NSA convincingly in his now famous interview to the Guardian that revealed him as the whistleblower. In response to the question, "Why should people care about surveillance?" Poitras shows him stating:

"Because even if you're not doing anything wrong you're being watched and recorded. And the storage capability of these systems increases every year consistently by orders of magnitude to where it's getting to the point where you don't have to have done anything wrong. You simply have to eventually fall under suspicion from somebody even by a wrong call. And then they can use this system to go back in time and scrutinize every decision you've ever made, every friend you've ever discussed something with. And attack you on that basis to sort to derive suspicion from an innocent life and paint anyone in the context of a wrongdoer."

Facts can be pliable, which is the precise reason for the NSA’s mass collection. It is this pliability of these facts that Snowden is pointing to. This is how a surveillance system can perceive an innocent individual to be a criminal and this is why the surveillance conducted by the NSA is more dangerous than mere violation of privacy. This system can exercise active aggression against groups they’d considering threatening, such as, “a journalist investigating the US government, someone working for a company with

⁹ Mentioned in Laura Poitras' documentary *Citizenfour*.

¹⁰ As quoted in the documentary.

¹¹ Quoted in the documentary.

American competitors or working in human rights groups involving the American government”, as Glenn Greenwald mentions in the documentary. A case in point is Laura Poitras herself, she has been detained and interrogated multiple times at US borders, her work material has repeatedly been seized and she has also been followed numerous times. And she is an American citizen. So, she ultimately had to move to Berlin to protect her work. This is how an authoritarian government uses a surveillance system reacts to threats and not all individuals have the means to move to countries with better anti-surveillance laws. To quote Sean Parker from the 2010 film *The Social Network*, “Private behaviour is a relic of a time gone by and if somehow you manage to live like the Dalai Lama, they will make shit up”. Even though this is said in a different context, it is so true with regards to what the NSA does.

Information that is collected by the NSA can primarily be classified as – content and metadata. Content is the content of phone calls, emails etc. whereas metadata is information about the content. For instance, in the case of a phone call, the metadata acquired will be the location of the call’s origin, the phone number, the call’s duration, the location of the other phone number that is being called etc.

To understand how a mass surveillance system conceives of an individual, one has to analyse the data that such a system collects. The various covert surveillance programs conducted by NSA have oddly intuitive code names. BOUNDLESS INFORMANT, for instance, “counts all the telephone calls and emails collected everyday from around the world with mathematical exactitude” (Greenwald 92). The much maligned PRISM “collects data directly from the servers of the world’s biggest internet companies (Facebook, Yahoo, Google, AOL, Skype, Youtube, Apple, Microsoft, PalTalk)” (Greenwald 94). PROJECT BULLRUN, on the other hand, smacks of international conspiracy because it is a “joint effort between the NSA and GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters, Britain’s security and intelligence organisation) to defeat the most common forms of encryption that is used to safeguard online transactions” (Greenwald 93). It gets still more dastardly with EGOTISTICAL GIRAFFE which targets the Tor browser that is meant to enable anonymity in online browsing. Another program called

MUSCULAR is a means to invade the private networks of Google and Yahoo. The worst is perhaps X-KEYSCORE which, to quote Snowden¹², is “the widest-reaching system for collecting electronic data – nearly everything a typical user does on the internet” - including the text of emails, google searches, and the names of websites visited. It even allows for real-time monitoring of a person’s online activities, enabling the NSA to observe emails and browsing activities as they happen (Greenwald 153).

A close analysis of the NSA’s covert programmes clearly shows that their domestic reach is pervasive. This reach is enabled, to a large degree, by the widespread use of the internet in a country like USA. Of note is the fact that, visual surveillance is less elemental than telecommunications surveillance. Quite unlike in 1984, Big Brother isn’t always watching. Not literally, anyway. This is, also, more dangerous. Snowden said in an interview to *The Guardian* last year, “The danger is that we can see how [Orwell’s] technologies that are [in] Nineteen

Eighty-Four now seem unimaginative and quaint... Time has shown that the world is much more unpredictable and dangerous than that” (n. pag). What is dangerous is that the NSA chooses to collect metadata in far greater quantity than content, and while metadata is profoundly revealing it can also be misconstrued more easily due to its fragmented nature.

The NSA also actively targets individual computers by means of programmes like the “Computer Network Exploitation which places malware in individual computers to survey their users thus enabling them to view every keystroke entered and every screen viewed” (Greenwald 157). This is a far more sophisticated programme that is not used for all individuals. This is where the idea of varying degrees of surveillance comes in, more sophisticated surveillance methods would only be used for people who draw the attention of the system (or the people controlling the system) and this is why it would be in the interest of individuals to not draw the attention of such a system to themselves. Thus, prompting more compliant behaviour.

¹² Quoted in the documentary.

Edward J. Snowden worked in technical positions in both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and in the National Security Agency (NSA) and he had been confronted with these violations of privacy very early on in his career. However, he didn't want to blow the whistle while he was still in the CIA. Most of the information that he had access to at the time contained a lot of operational data and he didn't want to jeopardize CIA operatives on the field. The amount of information he was exposed to as "a senior government employee in the intelligence community" (as he describes himself in one of his early emails to Laura Poitras)¹³ compelled him to speak up about it. But he also concedes the reality that many people are willing to live "unfreely but comfortably", hence not all people in the know react similarly. However, these leaks do enable meaningful public debate and at least gives the public a chance to oppose these policies.

People react differently to news of mass surveillance, while many will react with appropriate outrage there will also be those who will question the intensity of the surveillance. These people will be dismissive of the actual threat of this kind of surveillance. It may be a coping mechanism, it may be denial. However, the media persons who dismissed the everyday threat of surveillance after the NSA files were leaked were also accommodating, pro-establishment columnists. So, there may be a link between compliant behaviour and superficial dismissal of the threats of surveillance.

When everyone knows about the mass surveillance that is being conducted upon them, they will start considering their actions in a different light. To avoid detection in a mass surveillance system, the individual would have to effectively make themselves invisible. That wouldn't be easy to do because almost all internet activity is recorded forever. To quote another character in the 2010 film, *The Social Network*,

"The internet is not written in pencil, Mark, it is written in ink." It is a funny coincidence that this film is about Facebook, one of the nine internet companies collaborating with the NSA on PRISM. So, to avoid drawing attention towards oneself, one would self-police. For instance, people often are wary of what they search for on Google, what causes they donate to etc. When an individual doesn't search for information or contribute as he/she pleases, they literally limit themselves and their actions are not what they want it to be. They are not who they would be in a freer world. Hence, individual identity is restricted and toned down.

What Jacob Applebaum said in September of 2013 at the European Parliament's hearing in Brussels on the NSA surveillance on European citizens is emblematic of a larger disillusionment, "What people used to call liberty and freedom, we now call privacy, and we say in the same breath that privacy is dead. This is something that concerns me about my generations especially when we say that we are not surprised by anything."¹⁴ This just goes to show that some segments of the population expect the worst from those in power, and after all surveillance is just a part of the effort to hold on to power.

The threat of surveillance will directly or indirectly inhibit individuals further. It will also make the lives of anyone who meaningfully opposes authority (like activists, journalists, etc) harder. William Binney clearly states towards the end of *Citizenfour* that if a journalist investigating the US government has a source inside the government, the NSA will make all attempts to intercept all communications of that journalist and when they find the source, they will "take him off the street". So, for even journalists to operate with a certain degree of autonomy, they would have to be skilled in spy craft, which is why Snowden communicated with Laura Poitras and Glenn Greenwald exclusively via encrypted email. The population can be divided broadly into those who will obey and those who won't and the odds are stacked greatly against the latter half. A surveillance state will therefore not encourage any real dissent.

While it is true that the modern surveillance system is far more insidious than Orwell ever imagined it to be, its insidiousness also makes the adjustments people make to avoid detection much more troubling. Individuals slowly start altering the way they live on a small yet basic level. It goes on until it becomes like a reflex action and the means of surviving in a new and less private age. However, there are those who rebel against this sort of a system, people are moved to action (much like Snowden).

In discussions of the mass surveillance systems, it often seems as if it is man versus machine. What should be remembered is that the machine is controlled by more people, people who would benefit from

¹³ As shown in the documentary.

¹⁴ Quoted in the documentary.

subjecting their fellow citizens to gross violations of privacy, individuals who would gain from keeping the balance of power the way it is. Surveillance is to gain greater control, we must remember that it is man trying to subjugate man, one group trying to subjugate another. This is another way in which mass surveillance affects individuals. Certain individuals or groups of individuals can definitely see the futility of resisting such a system. So, they will give in and do what it takes to stay as free as they can be. Amongst the individuals affected by mass surveillance are also those individuals who perpetuate this system and they continue to perpetuate this system even after people like Snowden protest against it, at great personal risk.

The mass surveillance system's perception of an individual is not unique at all. In the 2014 film *Boyhood*, the protagonist talks of exactly this dehumanization as he exhorts to his mother about the system of selecting roommate in his college dorm:

"Isn't that kinda crazy, though, that a computer knows who you are from just twenty questions off a form? I guess there are really only, like, eight types of people in the world. I mean there are subsets like male and female, but apparently we're not as unique as we want to think we are... Yeah. But we've pretty much decided that soon they won't even need a questionnaire. 'Cause they'll just let the NSA scan your digital ghost and they'll tell you who your roommate is based on everything you've ever said, written or clicked."

Similarly, the reductive terms that a mass surveillance system sees an individual in is not unique to that individual. When an identity is simply seen largely as a bunch of facts and figures, there is no chance for it to be 'individual', as in apart from a group, distinct on its own. However, the way a mass surveillance system perceives an individual is very accurate and revealing because they know all that we ever do online, details about our calls or our location at all times (if one uses a smartphone). This suggests that individual identities are not unique, that there is nothing 'individual' to any of our identities, that our efforts to be unique are but an exercise in futility. Yet people are driven by a desire to differentiate themselves (something that might also put them at risk in a particularly oppressive surveillance state), in which case, it is arguable, that a mass surveillance system cannot pick up on the nuances that makes people unique. The whole notion of a 'system' is thus inherently anti-individual.

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An Encounter with Death and its Aftermath: An Investigation of Ariel Dorfman's *Death and The Maiden*

Aparajita Arya

Abstract

This paper locates Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden* (1990) in the turbulent socio-political backdrop of late 20th century Latin America, and explores the transient ideas of truth and justice. The author pays special attention to the character of Paulina, and through her discusses issues of marginalisation, violence, and the subjectivity of memory.

"How do you keep the past alive without becoming its prisoner? How can you tell the truth if the mask you have adopted ends up being identical to your face? How does memory beguile...? How can we keep our innocence once we have tasted evil?"

(Dorfman 49)

Ariel Dorfman (1942) wrote his seminal political-moral thriller, *Death and the Maiden* (1991) towards the end of his exile from Chile. An Argentinian by birth, Dorfman relocated to the United States soon after the 1973 coup-d'état by the forces of Augusto Pinochet, that established the Junta Militar in Chile after forcing out the nascent socialist government of Salvador Allende Gossens, to whom incidentally, Dorfman was also a cultural advisor. In fact, similar turbulence, as a product of the Cold War, raked through Chile's Latin American neighbors, the infamous Southern Cone members. For instance, Argentina faced a series of more than 7 coups through 1930 to 1976, a period that famously came to be known as "the Dirty War." Dorfman's socio-political reality, owing to the presence of an authoritarian regime with its Nazi Gestapo like secret police, called the DINA and CNI, was one that left the people of Chile in a state where "There is nobody in Chile who doesn't know somebody who's been tortured or imprisoned, or beaten up" (Rohter 1).

It was only after the 1988 plebiscite that a democratically elected government of Patricio Alwyn was to return to Chile – however, its fragile nature was compounded by the fact that until his death, Pinochet continued to dominate Chilean politics and his threat, "Touch one hair on the head of my soldiers, and you lose your new democracy", enduringly lingered in the consciousness of the Chilean people (McAuliffe 84). It is not surprising then, that when the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, the Rettig Commission, was established, it was hardly given the space to fully investigate the more than twenty thousand cases of disappearances, gross atrocities, and human rights violations that occurred under the military regime.

Dorfman's *Death and The Maiden* is premised on a turbulent socio-political backdrop of late twentieth century Latin America, where Gerardo Escobar, a lawyer who is to serve on the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation of a newly democratized Chile, brings home Doctor Roberto Miranda, a man whom his wife Paulina believes to be the perpetrator of torture and rape against her during the military regime. Miranda according to her had played the "titular Schubert quartet" (McAuliffe 81) during her blindfolded incarceration, and now fifteen years later, Paulina takes it upon herself to create a deathly mock judicial trial for Miranda, whose guilt the audience and Gerardo, the voice of the new conciliatory government, are unsure about. Cathy Maree has called the play a "theater of crisis" where the "re-democratization of Chile is grounded in half truth and deceit" (Maree 24). Dorfman rightly expands the scope of his enterprise where he states that the play, though set on a Chilean sea-side, "could be in any other country that has given itself a democratic government just after a period of long dictatorship" and violence (Dorfman 4).

The title of the play itself, taken from Franz Schubert's String Quartet "Der Tod und das Madchen" in the key D Minor, becomes a primary point of entry into Dorfman's work. Paulina, who says she wants to bring Schubert "back from the grave", as what was once her "favourite composer" is now polluted by the memory of her torture (Schroeder 6). Similar to how the music of Wagner was contaminated for the Jews because of his use in Nazi Torture camps, so much so that it was informally banned in Israel until 1981, Schubert's composition for his protagonist holds a larger symbolic significance. David Luban traces how, through classical European art, the literary motif of "Death and The Maiden" has moved from its association

with a simplistic idea of ‘memento mori’, through 19th Century works like those of Edvard Munch and Hans Baldung Grien, towards a sinister interpretation where death, violence, and female sexuality are intrinsically intertwined (3). Indeed then, when Dorfman’s Roberto comments in his presumably false confession that “a kind of brutalization took over my life... my curiosity was partly morbid, partly scientific,” he appears to be replicating the move from the innocent implications in Schubert’s 1817 work, which was based on Mattihas Claudius’s original poetic text and led his popular recognition as “our Schubert”, to the incorporation of perverse undertones in classical art (Dorfman 41). In fact, as P. McAuliffe argues, the use of Schubert as an accompaniment of Paulina’s torture represents “art, civilization, and all that Paulina values highly” and the human potential to “facilitate and cloak brutality” (88). A further relevance of the title comes perhaps in Schubert’s own political position, which as part of revolutionary groups like the “Burschenschaft”, seems to echo characteristics acquired by Paulina through the text. However, to understand this synergy, one needs to examine the politics of gender, power, meaning, and language inherent in the text.

Elrud Ibsch speaks about how, in literatures of “Crisis,” a condition inherent to 20th Century Latin American literature, “factuality enters fiction” to “de-fictionalize it” (2). This experience then facilitates an understanding of the “personal experience of disorientation and loss of identity”, in fictive beings (7). Paulina, Gerardo, and Miranda, become fictive embodiments of the three political positions available to the people of Chile, or any other transitional society for that matter, during the “national process of reckoning with the past”— the perpetrators and the victims of violence, and the moderates who “are unwilling to jeopardize the transition” and seek to find a path of compromise (Maree 4). When one considers the ‘self-amnesty’ that the former dictators of Chile had given themselves towards the end of their regime, the issues of securing transitional justice and highlighting the truth of the marginalized and oppressed groups become all the more arduous and poignant. Gerardo’s admonishing of Paulina for kidnapping Miranda becomes indicative of this paradox inherent to the play and of the persistent fear instilled in societies that have faced violence and war —“ Do you want these people back in power?[...] You want the times back when these people decided our life and death”, Roberto asks Paulina during the course of her trial (Dorfman 26). In this tussle between appeasement and a desire of revenge, the conflict between private and personal truths, and collective memory comes to the forefront (Dorfman 26).

Paulina suffers from layers of marginalization in the text – as a woman that has been subjected to sexual violence who fifteen years later tries to assert her right to justice. Her disillusionment with the larger political systems is hardly an unfounded appraisal, and her indictment of the “judges... the same judges who never intervened to save one life in seventeen years of dictatorship”, becomes a poignant reminder of an unacknowledged reality that had been overlooked by all establishments, totalitarian or democratic, and in the popular consciousness (Dorfman 8).

“Gerardo... Nobody knows, not even your mother knows” (Dorfman 6). The politically enforced silence around Paulina’s torture continues to surface through the text, and Foucault’s mediations on historiography, archiving, and truth become significant in this context. Pilar Aritzia notes how the postmodern Barthean idea of language and its formation through totalizing ideology limits the scope for marginalized groups to dissent (4). The three discourses presented by the three characters in the text, especially Paulina’s discourse is continually sidelined. Grosz has noted how “Power inscribes male and female bodies in quite different ways”(Aritzia 6). True to this, Paulina, like Ibsen’s Nora, is constantly infantilized by Gerardo through his address to her as “poor little love” (Dorfman 2), and is incessantly relegated into the image of a hysteric, where she is spatially limited to the darkened spaces and sidelines of the stage, “rolled into a fetus like position” (Dorfman 2), and is constantly shown in “light of the moon” (Dorfman 2), which in Greek Mythology through Luna has been historically associated with women. In fact, the ideas of the male domain being that of reason, and the medical discourse’s hegemony are displayed in both Gerardo and Miranda, who during their Sedgewikian example of “male bonding,” diagnose and relegate Paulina to being “utterly unpredictable”, “prototypically schizoid”, “sick” and “mad” (Dorfman 18, 26, 23).

This marginalization, however, as the play progresses is reversed by Paulina. Dorfman with increasing intensity uses the pronoun “her,” and Paulina’s act where she holds the phallic symbol of “the gun” and “takes of her panties and stuffs them into Roberto’s mouth as a gag” (Dorfman 15), becomes an embodiment

not just of a reversal of gender roles, but of what Kate Kellaway has called “the terrifyingly slight distance between persecutor and persecuted” (3). She figuratively initiates a process where though eluded and excluded by a political system, she is able to create a space to assert the legitimacy of her evidence, that is unremittably belittled by the lawyer in Garardo who tells her that “a vague memory of someone’s voice is not proof of anything” (Dorfman 18). Her use of male language, filled with sexual innuendos, resonates with Janet Ransom’s argument that “it is because, not in spite of, our embeddedness in discursive practices that political action is possible” (Aritzia 8). Paulina now occupies the centre of the stage where her sense of smell and bodily memory gain power over the lack of documentary evidence.

However, while Paulina does reflect the injustice faced by the marginalized, she also becomes a victimizer. The specific communicative event in the play, the confession, brings out an intersection between theological, ritualistic, juridical, and inquisitional discourses. While Paulina claims that she “wants him to confess” (Dorfman 29) and would end Roberto’s trial there, the ambiguous end of the play where gunshots are heard, leaves the intended effect of the confession in darkness. Through this, Dorfman brings out the issue of whether revenge can be appropriate compensation for what Paulina continuously calls “irreparable”. Unlike, Luban points out, Gerardo’s “wishful thinking that only murder is irreparable”, psychological damage too becomes a persistent ghost that victims of conflict must endlessly negotiate with (120). Paulina’s desire for revenge then, through soundly supported by her experience, comes in conflict with Felix Frankfurter’s argument that “if one man can be allowed to determine for himself what is the law. Every man can. That mean’s first chaos, and then tyranny”, which is exactly the nature of the dictatorship that the characters in the play seek to overcome (Luban 121). “The near inevitability of perfect justice”, then, prevents the communication of the appropriate scale of outrage associated with Paulina’s experience (Luban 122). Categories of truth, justice, and revenge are thereby problematized through Paulina’s setting in the play.

“We lied to each other out of love... I deceived him for his own good” (Dorfman 45). The transient idea of truth, especially in the post-modern and the-post structural senses, becomes a significant point of exploration in *Death and The Maiden*. The Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation had declared, “Only upon the foundation of truth will it be possible to meet the basic demands of justice” (MaAuliffe 5). The play wholly betrays this expectation of a transcendental singular truth. For instance, Patricia Viera points out how the blindfold that was put on Paulina during her torture, becomes an embodiment of this un-univocal nature of truth (126). A prop of oppression that engenders inequality and turns the victim into an object to be gazed at, the blindfold also at the same time allows the victim to erase that torture by not completely witnessing it. An obscure symbol, the blindfold later in the text becomes a veil on the eyes of a supposed absolute justice, and hence becomes a symbol whose meaning cannot be statically fixed. A further illustration of this polygonal location inhabited by truth is reflected in how Miranda’s own additions in his confession to the “small lies, small variations” tinkered by Paulina accentuate the ambiguity about his guilt (Dorfman 45).

In the final moments of the play, a mirror descends upon the stage. Similar to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the mirror, a meta-theatrical device, represents a moral function: “To hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure” (Shakespeare 68). Through his Brechtian de-familiarization technique, a complete elimination of the distance between the audience and the dramatic world is achieved, the ‘fourth wall’ and naturalistic traditions are abandoned, and the audience themselves become, along with Paulina, part of the jury in an effect where almost a reverse crossing of the Proscenium Arch occurs. “Selected moving sports flicker over the audience, picking out two or three at a time, up and down rows” (Dorfman 46), and these lights become a device to provoke debate and self-reflection in the audience. The text refuses to close on a realist stance or adhere to the bourgeois expectations of a closure, and the audience therefore is forced to interrogate their own guilt in being complicit with oppression. Indeed, the issue of Paulina’s rape, as pointed out by Luban, brings to mind the practice of officially sanctioned sexual assault of women during times of crises – be it in Argentina, as reported by John Simpson and Jana Bennett, the Serbian “rape motels”, or the threats of Henry V to rape the entire French town of Harfleur— rape as an act of political violence thereby comes under investigation through Dorfman’s final act (131). Interestingly, the final act of the play is also heavily laden with Schubert, who bears the burden of recovering some semblance of civilization and certainty for the

protagonist. It is for this reason, David Schroeder points out that Paulina's "kangaroo court" records the confession simultaneously while playing the quartet (7). Eventually, after the mirror descends, it is the music that "forces the audience to look at themselves" and "the exit to the theatre now becomes the stage door exit" (Schroeder 8).

However, the multiplicity of the social fabric and perspectives displayed in the text do not keep Dorfman from problematizing absolute relativism. He urges debates on fundamental questions like "How do you not imitate them? . . . How do you struggle against adversaries and not demonize them?" (Morgan 1). Furthermore, his stance of revenge as a futile enterprise and a sense of postmodern acceptance comes out in his comments on the American war in the middle east "It's disappointing to feel that the result of this terrorist attack... could not allow America to find its best voice, and instead its most demonic voice" (Morgan 1). The "intricacies of memory and madness, the aftermath of violence, the uncertainty of truth and narrative," that Dorfman explores in his play then becomes a germane lens to understand conflict ridden and transitional societies (Dorfman 1). Dorfman's response to the 2015 petition by Rumson Fair Haven High School in New Jersey to remove his works from school bookshelves, then perhaps becomes the best reflection of his postmodern conviction that, "if we don't manage to get together with those with whom we disagree about those things, we are not going to be able to save our planet" (Morgan 1).

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The Postcolonial Body: A Critique Of Seamus Heaney's "Punishment"

Ashmita Chatterjee

Abstract

This paper explores the woman as the postcolonial body in its relationship with the nation state. Through Heaney's 'Punishment', the body of the girl is studied as a site for the punitive correction of any exercising of personal choice as transgression. It further examines Heaney's dual position as a postcolonial subject and writer, and the machinations of a male poet crafting a female body as a site for dissent and questioning.

"The complexities of Heaney's difficult hermeneutic endeavor- the attempt to grasp his own bequest of dualities as much as the intricacies of colonial experience, to do his own work as much as that of understanding Irish identity, to reconcile poetics to politics...join with the dilemma of the literary critic charged with marshaling a criticism responsive to that of the postcolonial writer essaying matters of history with the matter of art."

(Bahri, n. pag)

Seamus Heaney's "Punishment"¹⁵ is not a poem that can be easily located as a work of the postcolonial literary canon. There is no evident representation of the colonial agent, or any form of overtly propagandist or interventionist sentiments. However, the conceptualization of postcolonialism is not limited to 'post-colonialism', a phenomenon understood as the proceedings following the end of one historical period, restricted to a chronological ideation. Postcolonialism is a product of a clash of ideologies, "[...] a result of [an] interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices" (Ashcroft et.al, 1), an intervention into the metadiscourse of the imperialist agenda, a methodology that enables critical thought to counter the established techniques of accessing ethnographical spaces and their representations. It also facilitates the emergence of narratives and identities that unravel the seams of the colonial project of ascribing peripheral identities to the colonized subject and reducing her/him to an approximation of a lack. Postcolonialism is integrated into the subject's psyche as a condition of identity, an internalized character trait that also acts as definitive and transformative of thought processes and the understanding of the subject's own existential location within the larger framework of the colonial discourse.

Reading "Punishment" from a postcolonial critical lens yields results that are not only revelatory of the political and ideological positioning of Ireland as a postcolonial nation, but also the location of Heaney as a postcolonial writer. The postcolonial dynamic is made manifest in the poem through the positioning of the figures as subjects of thought, which creates a nexus of power and suppression. These very subject positions also serve an expository function by examining and bringing to surface the politics of representation, and the creation of identity in a space where distribution of authorial power is partial. The shaping of subject positions compartmentalizes the overarching aesthetic gaze into that of the artist, the subject/object and the reader/viewer. The artist here is represented by two authorial figures- the poet and the narratorial voice. The difference between the poet's central gaze and the narrator's subsidiary one may be subtle, but nonetheless, is highly significant for a reading that seeks to study the dynamics of power in this work.

The inherent paradox of the artist-subject relationship is that the subject no longer occupies a position to be sympathized with, but becomes an object for observation and creative reproduction, a phenomenon that emerges with clarity in "Punishment". In the poem, Heaney places the narratorial voice at a two-tiered distance from the girl. On one hand, it is spatial and physical- the artistic gaze is placed at a vantage point from where the poet observes the subject and recreates her as the object of his work. His consciousness is separated from the material and historical reality of the girl, and his connection to her is perfunctory and utilitarian. On the other hand, this conscious distancing is also psychological and ideological- he

¹⁵ Heaney, Seamus. "Punishment". *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Verse*. ed. Chris Woodhead, Oxford University Press, 2005 print. All quotes refer to this edition.

sympathizes with the girl's tragedy but agrees that he would not have tried to motivate the propitiation or termination of her punishment.

Heaney's location in the poem is precarious. He implicates himself in the barbarism by using the narratorial voice in the first person, and this problematizes his position in the ideological inclinations of the poem. He is the postcolonial subject by virtue of his national identity and the history of colonization that Ireland is a carrier of. He is also the postcolonial intellectual of a nation that has witnessed violence, both intrusive and intrinsic, and he evokes a historical context that functions as an exposition of not only the violence committed two thousand years ago, but also the potent and concentrated violence gestating in Ireland itself.

Heaney stands between victim and perpetrator. He recognizes the barbarity of the 'corrective' instinct in this form of punishment, and by extension the violence meted out on the individual psyche by a larger political enterprise like colonization. Yet he is also the artist complicit in dominant ideology; he is one of those Irish men who punish and make examples of the 'betraying sisters' and the 'little adulteress' because they represent forms of transgression. Heaney understands this need for revenge, and through his silence is equally culpable, an ideological participant in their personal brand of rationality, discourse and punishment. His silence is deafening.

In recreating the history of the girl, the poet works with the fallacious assumption that the girl in herself is a carrier of uncorrupted history, and that by invoking fragments of her material past with a simple reference to the tug of her halter, the narratorial voice can somehow reconstruct the original, organic identity of the girl. This mechanism is contentious because firstly, the narrator is not transparent and objective, a mere mediator or chronicler. He is also product and bastion of his social psyche- sympathetic yet complicit in that "tribal, intimate revenge" (Heaney 173).

Secondly, the girl is not an independent, subjective consciousness, complete within her own psyche and sole claimant of her socio-historical identity. She is a mere construction, and by extrapolation, the postcolonial subject on whom personal and political identity has been inscribed as an additive to explicate a larger historical and ideological discourse. Her individuality has little to do with this enterprise. She becomes an expression of the poet's literary project, a medium to access the larger idea of Ireland and its placement in political history as a postcolonial nation, and the mechanics of power that develop within a space that itself is subject to the power play of the colonial and imperial enterprise. The girl is the lynchpin that allows the poet and the reader to try and understand how the postcolonial subject Ireland treats the further marginalized subaltern- the woman, the subject of a system of dual oppression.

"The Bog Poems were defences against the encroachment of the times, I suppose. But there was always a real personal involvement—in a poem like "Punishment," for example [...] It's a poem about standing by as the IRA tar and feather these young women in Ulster. But it's also about standing by as the British torture people in barracks and interrogation centers in Belfast. About standing between those two forms of affront. So there's that element of self-accusation, which makes the poem personal in a fairly acute way [...]"¹⁶

"Punishment" presupposes crime. It incites an expectation and creates a sense of corollary for actions that have already been undertaken. It is based on a rationale of consequences born out of the established logic of the sequential nature of the actions. There is a punishment, so there must have been a crime. The poem opens with a staccato cataloguing of a girl's naked body, and correlates material, nugatory tokens with their larger historical significance. The physical manifestation of the nature of the punishment has been clarified. The general alignment of the poet's sensitivities appears to have been made pellucid, despite its ethical ambiguities. Here is a poet who "would connive/ in civilized outrage/ yet understand the exact/ and tribal, intimate revenge" (Heaney 173). But the crime has not yet been elucidated.

"Punishment" is ambivalent about several stances. It refers to the girl's involvement with British soldiers, the fatal instance of her 'adultery' but provides no explanation for why her relationship is equated with an act of betrayal. While the poem engages with the *fact* of the punishment, it does not explicitly interrogate its problematic *nature*, the barbaric, retributory result of an action whose categorization as a

¹⁶ Seamus Heaney interviewed by Henri Cole for *The Paris Review: The Art of Poetry*, No. 75, Issue 144, Fall 1997.

crime in the first place is questionable. The reasons for the punishment are highly political, and the nature of its execution is sexual. Making an exhibitionist example of a woman's naked body in the name of correction cannot be validated as a seemingly measure of retaliation.

This becomes expository of how the identity of the woman is created and accessed through her sexualized body. Her subjugation is maintained through a power play whose material operations are executed on her body, thus equating it with a punitive space that in turn can be used against her. Any form of apparent social transgression is codified in her psyche as causative of psychosexual trauma. The woman's decision to exercise individual choice is secondary, because in a conflict of interest between her freedom of choice and the enforced social demarcations of patriarchal authority, the woman never wins.

The reasons behind the infliction of this punishment are nationalistic. The sense of betrayal is not aroused by a malefaction for which the girl is categorically responsible. The ruling sensibility is dictated by the trauma of sectarian strife, and the punishment is rooted in postcolonial ideology due to the principle behind its materialization. This punishment is not a corollary. This is an execution of the stark power and authority of the colonial agent, which have been vested in him through the constructed artifice of a hierarchy, giving him the right and responsibility to penetrate someone else's borders and enforce his ideology on to the colonized subject. The girl is truly the "poor scapegoat" (Heaney 173), and the punishment inflicted on her body is nothing more than the intercourse of the politics between factional loyalties and masculinist ego.

The dimension of the nationalistic discourse places the woman within the proscriptions of the subaltern space. In the larger discourse of colonialism and postcolonialism, the position of the woman is carefully maintained at the margins of social power structures, and her interaction with power is not through active access but through infliction. The colonized man can become the postcolonial subject, and while 'postcolonialism' as a technical and political condition is available to women, it is doubtful whether they have the space to approach this emancipation ideologically. In some ways, women remain confined to the colonized realm, and never actually access the postcolonial space.

Naming the poem "Punishment" may come across as a naturalization and justification of this savagery under the pretext of consequence. However, there is also the space to critique the larger implications of this punishment. The title then takes on an ironic stance, and by inciting a logical sequence of cause and effect, Heaney simultaneously deconstructs ideas of both crime and punishment in this particular context.

"[...] history returns as a bodily symptom that is also poetic form, whether that body is male or female, and whether the subject allies its politics with terrorism or with the armed state [...]"

(Batten, n. pag)

"Little adulteress" (Heaney 173) is the pivotal phrase of the poem. The verses before this serve an imagistic functionality- they create the simulacrum of the girl's physicality through a semantic cataloguing of her body with respect to its spatial positioning. Before the girl becomes the "little adulteress", she is a body whose "frail rigging of... ribs" and "oak-bone, brain-firkin" (Heaney 173) evoke the fragility of her existence and her ravaged condition. This purely physical inventory, however, circumscribes the identity of the girl to a catalogue of her body, and therefore, the first channel of access into her psyche, her "brain's exposed and darkened combs" (Heaney 173), is through her body. Consequently, by the time Heaney approaches a slightly more nuanced identity for the girl, she has already become a sexualized, dismembered mosaic, the object of the artistic male gaze, the icon of the twisted, desirous stance of the "artful voyeur" (Heaney 173).

"Little adulteress" adds the first dimensions of a historical context to the girl's existence. From there onwards, the focus of the poem shifts to a more firmly historicized placement of the girl. The tone is more introspective, reflective, almost as though the poet is simply a bystander, musing on an incident from his own memory. The reader partially takes on the position of the "artful voyeur", where s/he stands witness, albeit uncomfortably, to the recollections of a poet who reflects with lyrical intimacy on the object of his artistic project. In fact, he "almost love(s) (her)" (Heaney 173).

This section serves to retrospectively adumbrate the incidents leading to her traumatic end. It adds to her image a semblance of the material conditions of her existence, and builds her identity as the poet's "little adulteress", his "poor scapegoat" (Heaney 173). This identity, however, is unconvincing and synthetic,

because it is created and assigned by the male postcolonial artist, a figure that also “would have cast [...] the stones of silence” (Heaney 173). Though this identity can be read as ironic or sympathetic, it still places the girl within the operative parameters of power and domination between poet and reader, colonizing force and postcolonial subject.

"Adulteress" and "scapegoat" are not disinterested terms. The former implicates the girl in an act of betrayal, thereby implying that the first loyalty of the girl lies with the nation. Her body is not an independent, neutral space; it is a politicized property of the patriarchal sense of proprietorship and entitlement. The body of the woman is not a space available to her by virtue of possession. This disjunction between claim and ownership reduces the girl's actions to a crime.

"Scapegoat" positions the girl in a condition of pre-established helplessness and creates a fatalistic sense of despair. It undercuts her active participation in her relationship, and removes any semblance of agency from her. The girl as a poor scapegoat is simply that- a scapegoat, a body used as a location for the execution of centripetal violence disproportionate to the actions it seeks to punish. It adds a sense of predeterminism to the girl's fate, and by extrapolation, the fates of women and postcolonial subjects, because they are perceived as hollow, incidental identities to be used as a means to an end- patriarchal or imperial.

Individual tokens of reference like the ‘halter’, the ‘noose’ and the ‘ring’ play significant stylistic and symbolic functions. They can be read as markers of the girl's location as a woman in socio-political ideology. The noose as a ring conjures a performative understanding of their relationship, and evokes images of conjugal wedlock. Her punishment is the result of a ‘transgression’; her participation in a seemingly consensual relationship ends with her ring becoming her noose, “to store the memories of love” (Heaney 173). Her connection to the male entity is not only what leads to her desecration, but also what defines her till the very end. The psychosomatic trauma is inflicted on the woman- the male counterpart in the ‘adulterous’ relationship is not dealt with in any capacity.

What becomes even more involved and convoluted is the idea of national identity as a gendered position. Heaney, in an interview with Henri Cole, responded to feminist critics saying, “[Feminist criticism] insists on rereading the tropes—the trope of Ireland as passive suffering female, the trope of Ireland as ruined maid and so on...All that traditional iconography of Irish poetry is under scrutiny [...]”¹⁷ Ireland is no longer the colonized woman, like the Ireland of “Act of Union” (Heaney, n.pag), and the understanding of national identity within the dynamics between victim and perpetrator becomes dialectical. “Punishment” glimpses a punishment inflicted by a male entity on the female body for betraying a relationship; the men punishing the girl are doing so in the name of a larger loyalty- to the nation. The culminating effect is one of masculine loyalty punishing feminine betrayal. The men are microcosmic of the larger discourse of patriotism and Irish nationalist loyalty, and therefore it is a rather masculinist Ireland that metes out the punishment on the woman.

The problem with the recreation of the girl's identity is that the poem utilizes an identifiable incident, and ascribes to the one single girl the entire gamut of the historicity of the actual event. The girl could be any one of the thousands of bog bodies, or none of them. She could also be any one of those girls tarred and feathered by members of the IRA. This very process of creative depiction diametrically creates a sense of disorientation, and alienates the girl from the readers. She is reduced to an observation, and her placement in a historically recognizable context also simultaneously removes her from her own history. She becomes metonymical- an incidental, inorganic part for a whole, and an empty image that the artist creates. Her subjective individuality does not have any irreplaceable function in the larger metahistorical discourse.

The girl is also a device for the creation of a counter-memory. In the tussle between personal freedom and nationalistic loyalty, the individual identity of the girl becomes a tributary of the discourse of patriotism. The historical memory created is that of the girl's death as a consequence of her treachery, but the poem offers the counter-memory of the girl having been sacrificed at the altar of nationalistic ego for exercising her individual decision. She is a glance into a streak of violence that seems to be intrinsic to the

¹⁷ Seamus Heaney interviewed by Henri Cole for *The Paris Review*: The Art of Poetry, No. 75, Issue 144, Fall 1997.

Irish cultural ideology; the ‘tribal’ nature of the instinct for revenge creates a picture of collective, communal collusion. She is the medium through which Heaney ideates the notion of punishment for an action that is not a crime by principle. This poem’s treatment of Ireland as a political space is different from other works; “Punishment” is much more critical about the involvement of Irish cultural tradition in creating a web of oppression and subjugation in which the doubly colonized woman is perennially entangled. Therefore, the girl is the counter-memory to the memory of Ireland as the ‘ruined maid’ or a one-dimensional victim of colonization. The Ireland of “Punishment” is punitive and barbaric, and the punishment it metes out as a figure of authority speaks to a very deep-seated, preconscious desire for revenge, the unadulterated, heady operation of uncontested power over the woman.

The postcolonial identity occupies a tenuous position in the fallacy of the metahistorical grand narrative. The categorization as ‘postcolonial’ creates the simulacrum of a structure, an ideological system that appears transhistorical and therefore, cannot be transcended. This identity is not organic to the subject in question, yet s/he never really ceases to be a postcolonial subject:

"[...] the process of self-fashioning required the continued presence of an ‘other’ so that the maintenance of subtle points of differentiation from the colonizer would continue to reproduce, not only the subordination of the colonized, but the superordination of the colonizer [...]"

(Cairnes and Richards, 179)

The politics of the colonial enterprise are played out on the colonized entity, and the politics of patriarchal ego are played out on the body of the woman. Neither of these are independent spaces. ‘Postcolonial’ is not a politically neutral or isolated identification- within the term itself is implicit the legacy of a political and ideological project, a reworking of history.

"[...] I don't think I'm a political poet with political themes and a specifically political understanding of the world, in the way that Bertolt Brecht is a political poet or Adrienne Rich or, in a different way, Allen Ginsberg... I think the poet who didn't feel the pressure at a politically difficult time would be either stupid or insensitive [...]"¹⁸

The writer is the person in a position to negotiate the disparities between claim and ownership, and actuate retrieval and restructuring of a socio-political identity that has been disfigured and rendered amorphous. Heaney occupies the unique position of witnessing the multifaceted manifestation of sectarian and nationalistic violence, and a work like “Punishment” refines the understanding of the manifold nature of violence and the power structures through which it becomes potent and rampant. At a time of political and social strife, the intellectual is faced with the difficult bifurcation of her/his roles and responsibilities- either the intellectual can withdraw into a solipsistic, insulated existence, an ‘ivory tower’, or s/he can take up the active vocal role to use writing as a political endeavour to put across a political point. Heaney’s work is seminal in twentieth century poetics for this very reason- the sensibilities that found his poems are more relevant than ever. “Punishment” is a multitudinous work that yields an insightful gamut of ideas that enable critical theoretical study. This becomes an additive to the study of postcolonialism as an integral formative ingredient of individual identity. It is a compression of the phantasmagoric nature of the violence that both Ireland and the twentieth century bore witness to, and the nightmare of unprecedented chaos has been protracted right up to the immediate present. “Punishment” speaks to a sentiment that goes beyond any historically demarcated period of time. It enables critical reading using theoretical frameworks that are immediate and highly relevant to a study of the biases of interpretation and the politics of representation. Whether Heaney intended or not, “Punishment” is as much a political statement as a work of literary art.

¹⁸ Seamus Heaney interviewed by Henri Cole for *The Paris Review: The Art of Poetry*, No. 75, Issue 144, Fall 1997.

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Perceval's Quest: A Study In The Rhetoric Of Heroic Expectations

Chandrica Barua

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore gender-specific and societal expectations of heroism in Medieval literature vis-à-vis the character of Perceval. By analyzing the development and character progression of Perceval in various texts, the author engages with the idea of heroic figures and their subsequent mystification.

“[...]then the king stablished all his knights, and gave them that were of lands not rich, he gave them lands, and charged them never to do outrageousness nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no mean to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succor upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, ne for no world's goods. Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost.”

(Mallory, Book I, 89)

Introduction

The Pentecostal Oath, described by Sir Thomas Mallory (1405-1471) as a necessary initiation for the Knights of the Round Table¹⁹ in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), was not mentioned in any of the varied prior renditions of the legend. However, in Mallory's oath, we find in a concretised form the changing yet essential ideas of heroism from Chrétien de Troyes (1130-1191) through the analogous romances *Parzival* (early 13th century) and *Sir Perceval of Galles* (12th century) to Mallory's 16th century text about the heroes first mentioned in *Historia Regnum Britanniae* (circa 1136). The central ideas expressed in the Oath, which sizeably sum up medieval heroic expectations, are honour, allegiance to the King, mercy, chivalry and Christianity. Throughout the wide-ranging interpretative works on Arthur's legend, the Knights of the Round Table have been seen struggling to achieve the balance between their personal aspirations and motivations and the expectations placed upon them by the office of knighthood, and as such, in essence, embodying the universal battle between the private and the public. This struggle is the crux of every heroic pursuit and in the resolution of the conflict lies the validation of a hero's monomyth²⁰. A monomyth usually ends with the consequent homecoming of a transformed hero (the transformation generated in both the public and the private selves). In reading Perceval's monomyth, not only through his story of attaining knighthood and his ensuing adventures, most notably the Quest for the Holy Grail, but also through his development as a knight through the various versions, the transformation is not merely confined to his personal evolution. It is also effected in the evolution of his characterisation throughout medieval literature; the most significant change in his portrayal being the repudiation of his status as the Grail Knight. This paper, essentially, seeks to trace the portrayal of Perceval as a hero throughout the various medieval texts and in doing so, address larger ideas regarding medieval heroism.

Romance And Perceval(s)

Frederic Jameson's definition of a quest-romance as “the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality” (110) is particularly pertinent to the exploration of Perceval's heroic motivation. Here, reality can have a two-fold meaning: ordinary reality and the ideal realm of romantic exultation. Jameson's conception of romance is of

¹⁹ By the close of the 12th century, the Round Table had come to represent the chivalric order associated with King Arthur's court.

²⁰ The concept of the monomyth was introduced by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) who described a template for a narrative involving a hero: A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

a transformation of reality from the ordinary to the ideal and not a substitution. In Perceval's story, recounted in the many versions, the intent of this transformation is clearly seen as he journeys from the seclusion of the forest into Arthur's ideal world of chivalry and knighthood, reaching the culmination point in the engagement with the Grail quest (in the earlier renditions). The hero of a medieval romance invariably undertakes a quest, the victory of which depends on the successful integration of the external (predetermined) and internal quest (often linked with Christianity and the spiritual inclination of the knight) motives by the hero. In this quest, the internal development is often influenced by the mentor(s), the training under whom ultimately affects his competence in the external quest. A direct loan from medieval romances to popular imagination is the two figures of the 'knight in the shining armour' and the 'damsel in distress', which bring into question issues of gender, power dynamics and sexuality. However, the concept that requires the most attentive negotiation with is 'chivalry', a word that has come to and has always defined the paradigms of knightly behaviour. Bishop John Stafford, the chancellor, in a sermon preached to the parliament of 1433, described the knights as the "hills" of the society, after the nobles being the "mountains" and preceding the "plain" peasants, and their duty being the providence of justice (qtd. in Brown 26). It becomes clear that the ennobling of knighthood in popular imagination stems from the heroic expectations of chivalry, spirituality and honour from the knight.

M Amelia Klenke (2) mentions Professor Urban T. Holmes, Jr.'s Judaeo-Christian reading of *Conte du Graal*. While steering away from his analysis of the Grail castle as a symbolic move away from the Jewish Temple to Christianity for the purposes of the paper, his outline of 12th century France, when the tale was conceived of, does indeed provide a socio-historical context to the understanding of most of Romance quests and more so of the Grail quest. Two of the aspects of the age, as mentioned by Holmes, are the establishment of cathedrals and churches and the return of crusaders with tales of treasures and lands, and the consequent negotiation in romances with the public and the private quests. The making of the hero of a romance is predicated on his achievement of an ideal (physical and spiritual pursuits) not possible for weaker men. Perceval's validation as a hero, though established early on by Arthur's public acknowledgement based on his victorious pursuits, ultimately rests on his success in the Grail quest. Even though, in the later renditions, Perceval is no more the Grail Knight, his heroic validation continues to be founded in his involvement in the quest. The Middle English romance *Sir Perceval of Galles* and the Middle Welsh romance *Peredur son of Efwarg* (14th century), however, stand apart in its absolute removal of the Grail quest.

Jameson points out that the heroes of romance, rather than being portrayed as envoys of some higher realm or ideal (110), show a sense of bewilderment and, as W. W. Newell says, "simple nature" (qtd. in Woods 526). This is in keeping with the many Percevals of the Arthurian legendarium- Perceval, Parzival²¹, Peredur²², et al. The moral and social education which follows post-establishment of the naiveté of the potential hero forms the crux of the story and the locus of primary debate – public expectations and individual motivation. However, the treatment of the individual subjectivity in the French and Anglo-Norman romances is directed towards the interior and as such is character driven, whereas the Middle English romances abjure interiorities and place the focus on subjectivity as enacted through public performance. The lack of a negotiation with the interior is also reflected in the elimination of the quest for the grail, which effects the internal development in Chretien's Perceval. The absence of any mention of the Grail in the Welsh analogue of Chretien's story *Peredur son of Efwarg*, however, stems from the non-insistence on Christianity as an expectation of knighthood in Welsh texts. Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan points out that the word 'grail' had not been borrowed into Welsh before the translation of *La Queste del Saint Graal* and *Perlesvaus* around 1400 (Fulton 136).

As Ad Putter points out, *Conte du Graal* had become in *Sir Perceval de Galles* a "family romance" (Fulton 237). In a bid to unite the inconsistencies of Chretien's story, made more so because of the lack of a

²¹ Parzival is the German version of the Arthurian hero, Perceval, one of the knight's of Arthur's Round Table. *Parzival* was written by the poet Wolfram von Eschenbach in Middle High German.

²² Peredur is the Welsh analogue to Perceval, and appears in the medieval romance *Peredur son of Efwarg*, unique in its elimination of the grail quest.

conclusion, the Middle English poet provides unity of action and logical consistency by employing the basic category of stability - kinship. This is done through the depiction of all the characters as sharing common blood lines. The Medieval German romance *Parzival* also invests in a similar trope; he constructs the history of his characters and their families to grant credibility to the events that follow. The reader is thus equipped with a firm ground for Parzival's paternal heritage of knighthood his destined involvement with the Grail through Herzelayde, the mother. Chretien too makes similar connections, but they are never fully substantiated. The importance medieval nobility placed on dynastic heritage is visibly reflected in the attempt of all the authors of *Perceval* and the analogues to cement a legitimate lineage for *Perceval*'s claim to knighthood.

The Making Of A Hero: Love And Chivalry

Chretien's romances posit a chivalric dilemma explored through the dialects of feeling, judgement and character. Simon Gaunt, through Cesare Segare, draws from this the supposition that the constitutive dilemma is hinged upon the link between chivalric exploits and love (Krueger 46). In most of the texts, the space for the first large-scale public affirmation of knighthood is provided by the damsels-in-distress figures, which, more often than not, become the lady love of the hero in making. The first damsel-in-distress in *Perceval*'s journey is the woman upon whom he exercises his misguided notions of chivalry; unnamed in *Graal*, *Galles* and *Peredur*, Lady Jeschute in *Parzival* and absent in *Morte d'Arthur*. The following passage from *Graal*²³ amply illustrates the scene as recounted in the various texts:

“The boy had strong arms and embraced her clumsily because he knew no other way: he stretched her out beneath himself, but she resisted mightily and squirmed away as best she could. Yet her resistance was in vain, for the boy kissed her repeatedly, twenty times as the story says, regardless of whether she liked it or not, until he saw a ring set with a shining emerald on her finger.”

(106, 682-688)

This incident not only hints at the required bildungsroman of the hero, but also provides him later with the space for redemption: he goes on to reconcile her with her lover, who had condemned her because of her supposed infidelity. For *Perceval of Galles*, the ring becomes his aid in his knightly pursuits, a nod to another staple of heroic narratives – the supernatural help. More so, the ring also leads him to his aggrieved mother, and unlike in the other texts, he is reunited with her, thereby saving another damsel-in-distress from self-destruction. Critics locate in this variation in the Middle English text, the attempt to assuage the guilt of *Perceval* of causing his mother's death. The next female figure to effect *Perceval*'s development is the lady in the court who is punished by Sir Kay²⁴ for supporting *Perceval*: unnamed in *Graal*, Lady Cunneware in *Parzival*, absent in *Galles* and Mallory, a dwarf-dwarfess couple provide the analogue in *Peredur*. This event is crucial for the texts it is involved in because it provides the hero with his monomyth, his self-determined bildungsroman to one day avenge the injustice done unto them. Interesting to note is that linked to this retribution is his passion for the next figure demanding chivalric exercise, the prospective lady love: Blanche fleur to *Graal*'s *Perceval*, Condwiramurs to *Parzival*, Angharad to *Peredur*, Lady Amour to *Perceval* of *Galles* and absent in Mallory. It was his fervent preoccupation with the thoughts of his beloved (sparked off by the sight of blood in the snow) which led him to battle with Sir Kay. Another aspect to be noted here is that despite being a self-motivated quest, by virtue of it being centred on another person(s), it is integrated to the system of public validation. The very declaration of faith on *Perceval* by these people in the open court of King Arthur adds to the lore of the hero, which his actions later substantiate.

Medieval chivalry has come to be erroneously viewed through Victorian lenses, which wanted it to be a force for civilisation, piety, subordination of violence and respect for women, which often relegated to the “doctrine of separate spheres” (Steinbach 125). It has only been popularly imagined through the reductive code of courtly love²⁵, leading to an overt romanticization of the knight in the shining armour figure. Bohna

²³ Ed. Kibler, Palmer, William W., R. Barton. *Medieval Arthurian Epic and Romance: Eight New Translations*, McFarland, 2014.

²⁴ Son of Ector, he was King Arthur's foster brother, seneschal and one of his most loyal knights. Portrayed as volatile and cruel-natured, he is Cei/Cai in Welsh.

²⁵ The term “courtly love” was coined in 1883 by Gaston Paris with reference to *Le Chevalier de la Charrete* by Chrétien de Troyes, the earliest surviving narrative of the adulterous love between Arthur's knight Lancelot and his Queen Guenevere.

offers a précis of the medieval period delineating the aspects of love, centrality of prowess, war courtesy and piety (Brown 274-282). The gradual education in and exercise of all of these bring about the hero-myth of Perceval. Chivalric love, as mentioned above, inspires an exercise of prowess rather than acting as a restraining force on its vigour. The chivalric concern exclusively extends towards socially elite women, for damsels and ladies. Medieval heroic literature recurrently portrays elite women as prizes to be won, sections dedicated to praise their beauty and often their estate. Blanchefleur effectively holds herself up as the prize to be won- made unattainable by her declaration of suicide in case of the eventuality of her possession by the other man- in her appeal to Perceval.

“But truly, before he [Clamadeu of the Isles] takes me alive, I’ll kill myself; then he’ll have me dead and I’ll not care if he carries me off. Clamadeu, who hopes to have me, will not possess my body until it’s devoid of life and soul for I keep in one of my jewellery boxes a knife of flawless steel that I intend to plunge into my body. This is all I had to tell you. Now I’ll go back and let you rest.”

(120, 2006-08)

“But if I defeat and kill him, in recompense I ask that your love be given to me; I’ll accept no other payment.”

(121, 2083-86)

What is to be noted is that while love motivates knightly pursuits and prowess, prowess inspires love from the lady. Therefore, the lines separating prowess, prize-winning, sexuality and love become blurred. More often than not, the heroes and the knights are seen to value not the beloved but the idea and privilege of fighting in her name and honour.

The Making Of A Hero: Knightly Prowess

This is related to a growing awareness and desire of public validation and also, in a way, reflects the hero’s internal growth in his expectation from self. Apart from Perceval’s unwavering determination to avenge the insult heaped upon his supporter(s) by Sir Kay, this is reflected in his strategy of forgiving all his defeated adversaries and directing them to Arthur’s court to relay praise of his skill and valour. The below quoted lines from *Peredur*²⁶, with analogues in the other texts, illustrate his self-motivation and his growth as a hero from the period of misguided heroism following his departure from home. Upon being asked to return to the court as a validated knight, Perceval replies:

“I will not go, by my faith, until I avenge the insult of the dwarf and the dwarfess [the lady in the court in other versions] upon the tall man.”

(251)

To the defeated Anguingueron, seneschal to Clamadeu of the Isles in *Graal*, he says:

“...you shall go to be imprisoned at King Arthur’s court, and you’ll greet the king for me and tell him on my behalf to have someone show you the maiden whom the seneschal Kay struck because she favoured me with her laughter. You’ll surrender yourself to her and tell her at once, if you please, that I pray that God does not let me die before I am able to avenge her.”

(124, 2280-2288)

From this, it can be seen that revenge drives much of the competition of body against body. In his *Book of Chivalry*, the practicing knight Geoffroi de Charny places real war as paramount in the scale of knightly prowess (qtd. in Krueger 100). A tournament serves as the most frequent outlet for competition and a substitute in the lack of actual warfare. However, all forms of warfare have to be and were governed by certain sets of ideals, the most staple of which, in popular imagination, is the Pentecostal oath already mentioned in the exposition of the paper. While the societal role of these ideals was restraint; they instead came to operate as proper channels to engage in violence. Perceval’s knightly quests are hinged upon entire nations and people destroyed by knightly warfare. His lady love requires rescuing from a land besieged by

²⁶ Ed. Schreiber, Lady Charlotte. *The Mabinogion: Mediaeval Welsh Romances*, D. Nvtt, 1910. Google Books.

the enemy knights who have destroyed and captured her own garrison of knights. Later, Perceval's inability to ask the required question at the Grail castle presents a world cursed by his failure at his knightly quest.

The Making Of A Hero: The Mentor Figure

The aforementioned period of misguided heroism in the development of Perceval's heroic sensibility serves to define the transformation of Perceval. The first mentor for Perceval was his mother: Herzeloide in *Parzival* and Ache flour in *Galles*. His mother's move to the forest to raise her child betrays the belief that one can escape fate and create an alternative destiny. Her ultimately unsuccessful attempt to raise her son sans name or history in the self-enforced new ethical system reflects the tensions that exist between the public and private. His mother's advice, which focuses on the idea of gallantry and Christian piety, is problematic:

“Son, let this be commended to you: wherever you may win a good woman's ring and her greeting, take them—they will cure you of sorrow. You must hasten towards her kiss and grasp her firmly in your embrace— that will bring good fortune and high spirits.”

(55)

This extract from Herzeloide's advice to Parzival, analogous to all other versions, can serve to shift the guilt of his actions to the ill-advice of his mother. Dressed in fool's clothes, he suffers great humiliation at the court only to prove his competence by defeating the Red Knight: a competitor to Arthur in Chretien and *Peredur*, his father's murderer in *Galles*, his kinsman Ither of Gahevies in *Parzival*. While the Middle English romance modifies every piece of debilitating evidence on Perceval's guilt, Wolfram engages in depth with the idea of guilt and redemption. Chretien inhabits a middle ground, where he expends space to explore Perceval's susceptibility to sin and guilt, yet refraining from taking him too far along that it becomes challenging for the narrative to salvage his heroic establishment. The structure of this first section of the tale can be said to be defined by the 'Great Fool' trope, a specific variant of which – the *Bel Inconnu*²⁷ scenario—begins with the entry of a naïve young rustic into the sophisticated milieu of Arthur's court domain. The wilderness and the court are separated not merely by spaces, but also by, as seen in Perceval's case, clothes, armour and assumed skill. An essential part of Perceval's characterisation is his overt bold demeanour and as argued for by some critics, his self-centred lack of regard of other people. Chretien seems to view his fearlessness as a cause of simple-minded imperviousness to fear rather than a conscious decision of being brave. The other documenters of Perceval's story are more favourable to him, especially the Middle English poet who divests him of any guilt. Perceval's disregard for other people is first seen in his attitude towards his mother. In *Galles*, when his mother impassionedly talks about the legacy and the death of his father and his brothers, he replies thus:

“The boy paid scarcely any attention to what his mother said. ‘Give me something to eat,’ he said. ‘I don't understand your words, but I would gladly go to the king who makes knights; and I will go, no matter what.’”

(104, 473-477)

Perceval is further implicated in this sin in his active departure from his mother, even as he watches her faint in grief. Linked to this is the sin of silence (insensitivity in his not asking the questions) that condemns the Grail king and the castle and stunts his personal growth. However, the paradox here is that the sin of silence was committed in an attempt to not perpetrate the sin of talking, as advised by his mentor: Gournemant in *Graal*, Gurnemanz de Grahaz in *Parzival*, unnamed uncle in *Peredur*, absent in *Galles* and Mallory. Hoffman in his essay talks about how Perceval has been framed to not ask the question through a series of erroneous guidance. In this reading (44), the only sin that Perceval can be indicted with is his criminal naivety, which in Chretien's conception leads him to display, at times, injudicious valour.

Christianity and The Grail Quest

²⁷ Sir Gingalain, also known as Le Bel Inconnu or the Fair Unknown, is a character from Arthurian legend whose exploits are recorded in *Le Bel Inconnu*, a poem composed by Renaut de Beaujeu sometime between the mid-1180s and 1230

One of the most vital facets of chivalry is piety, and specifically Christianity. The appropriation of religion within chivalric ideology probably has in its basis an aim to valorise knighthood, especially considering that this ideology claims that God blesses knightly fights and jousts (later, reflected in the Crusade-like wars). Perceval's move-away from Christianity and his consequent prodigal return cements the way to his success in the Grail quest. The priest-mentor, who effects the spiritual reawakening in him, impels him on the journey to redemption. *Parzival* has him fighting Fierefiz, his half-brother, who is depicted as a heathen. This accords Parzival with the status of the Christian hero, defending his faith against paganism. However, the association of the Grail with Christianity came about much later. Mallory's *Morte*, more of a chronicle than a romance, had, as its source, the *Vulgate* cycle (also known as the *Lancelot-Grail* or *Prose Lancelot*) of five romances composed between 1220 and 1240. The Vulgate draws its material from multiple sources: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Chretien de Troyes's *Chevalier de la charrette* and *Conte du graal* and Robert de Boron²⁸. The Grail as a ritual object of vague significance²⁹ was developed into a potent Christian symbol – the cup of the Last Supper in which Joseph of Arimathea³⁰ caught Christ's blood at the Crucifixion.

The Holy Grail of Boron's conception can also be regarded as the basis for Perceval's expulsion as the Grail Knight³¹ and the consequent privileging of Galahad in the Grail quest. This is so because with the Christian expectations attached to it, the requirement of bodily purity gains equal standing as character integrity. Perceval throughout the varied analogues and renditions has been seen to be attached to a lady love, and hence Galahad, the pure and gallant virginal knight, is conceived in the *Lancelot-Grail*. Mallory's *Morte*, which is the popular source of Arthurian imagination, has Sir Percival encountering three mysterious women in the Grail quest – the lady on the lion, the lady on the serpent and the lady on the ship. A commonality shared by the three is the attempt to force Perceval's chivalry upon them. This alludes to the association of chivalry and sexual sin, and thus the privileging of divine chivalry over worldly chivalry as dealt with by McCracken (Gaunt, Kay 43). The Grail Quest repeatedly juxtaposes typical knightly behavior with spiritual chivalry. The emphatic contrast between these two types of knighthood reveals the inadequacy of secular chivalry in the Grail quest. The hyper-masculinity exercised by Perceval in the pre-grail world of adventure is tested inappropriate, which leads to an internal crisis in Chretien's Perceval and his turn away from Christianity. Despite the unChristianized Grail, Chretien's romance reflects a society where Christian observance is an integral part of chivalric life.

“To find deeper meaning, one must become able to transcend the narrow confines of a self-centered existence and believe that one will make a significant contribution to life—if not right now, then at some future time. This feeling is necessary if a person is to be satisfied with himself and with what he is doing.”

(Bettelheim 3)

Even though written in a vastly different and removed period, Perceval's story echoes this very sentiment. Klenke (21) upholds the reading that Perceval's journey is a story of spiritual growth and ascent. While true of most of the renditions, the personal endeavour of Perceval has been to achieve a union of the public and the private; may it be a change from his indifference towards other people to a genuine concern (to his lady, the Grail king, the lady he had unwittingly put to shame, et al), his aspiration to be validated as a knight of the round table conflicting with the responsibility of the Grail quest vested on him; his affiliation to his mother (reflected in his staunch abidance to his mother's advice) conflicting with his father's legacy.

²⁸ Robert de Boron was a French poet of the late 12th and early 13th centuries who is most notable as the author of the poems *Joseph d'Armathe* and *Merlin*.

²⁹ In Wolfram's version, the Grail seems to be, in a much greater degree, associated to pagan, magical origins. During Parzival's first visit to the Grail court, the Grail appears as a horn of plenty, serving up all the food and drink the Grail community desires. The Grail as cornucopia is one of the noteworthy ways in which Wolfram's text differs from its French predecessor.

³⁰ Joseph of Arimathea was, according to the Gospels, the man who donated his own tomb for Jesus' burial. A number of stories that developed during the Middle Ages connected him to the Grail legend.

³¹ The Grail Knight here refers to the one who ultimately succeeds to achieve the Grail. The idea of Perceval as one of the contending Grail knights continues in all of the later texts.

Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* robbed Perceval of his monomyth, his validation as one of the most determined and self-driven knights in the Arthurian legendarium. Perceval's story, told in many versions, ultimately upholds the central medieval heroic virtue of individualism. Often this is seen to come into conflict with the public expectations of a knight, a hero. However, Perceval remains remarkable in his unfaltering dedication to his monomyth. He decided his course, he chose his battles, he strategized the spread of his fame and he sustained his self.

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The Space Of The Kitchen And The Alienation Of The Woman-Writer In The Poetry Of Menka Shivdasani ('Why Rabbits Never Sleep At Night') And Anne Carson ('The Glass Essay')

Dipanjali Roy

Abstract

The author aims to investigate the connection between representations and repercussions of the kitchen and the regulation of the female voice, particularly in the poetry of the early 1990s, through Anne Carson's poem 'The Glass Essay' from her collection, *Glass, Irony and God* (1995) and Menka Shivdasani's poem 'Why Rabbits Never Sleep' from her collection *Nirvana at Ten Rupees* (1989-90).

Women's writing and the space of the kitchen have their own literary history³². Emily Brontë, for example, sits at the kitchen table peeling potatoes in 1839 and writes the poem that arguably is her first ideation of Heathcliff³³, six years before she writes *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Around the same period, between 1830-1836, Rassundari Debi is teaching herself to read, painstakingly from behind the cover of her *sari* drawn over her face, with the paper she used as an aide hidden in the *khori* in the kitchen²⁸, while racing to finish a 'sea of housework' and placing foremost in her list of priorities the quality of being a total conductor of convenience for 'the man who was my [her] master'.

This paper proposes to investigate the connection between representations and repercussions of the kitchen and the regulation of the female voice, particularly in the poetry of the early 1990s, through Anne Carson's poem 'The Glass Essay' from her collection, *Glass, Irony and God* (1995) and Menka Shivdasani's poem 'Why Rabbits Never Sleep' from her collection *Nirvana at Ten Rupees* (1989-90).

Around a similar parallel in periods of writing, Carson and Shivdasani publish 'The Glass Essay' (1995) and 'Nirvana at Ten Rupees' (1989-1990). One encounters entirely by accident a series of parallel narratives of women writers, similarly situated in dissimilar kitchens, writing about writing, and writing about the kitchen. However, the purpose of this paper is not so much an archiving of temporal similarities as it is the excavation of this thematic relationship between the woman-writer in the kitchen, and the states of fear and alienation that they give voice to. Carson extracts the 'raw bits of soul' from confessional poetry in the kitchen, and Shivdasani confronts a realization of fear in a poem about chopping lettuce in the kitchen. The kitchen, depending on who is using it, becomes a space for the articulation of both alienation and selfactualization. It holds the potential for both solidarity and marginalization, and is disruptive in both extremes – solidarity disrupting the phallic economy, and marginalization disrupting the possibility of female bodily autonomy.

'Kitchen' in 'The Glass Essay' outlines a word, symptomatic of a space, compressing centuries of unappreciated and unpaid female labour, in the literary imagination. The kitchen in Carson is a question of starkness – solitude forcing out a confrontation of the poet's alienation, coming out in bursts of white – yoghurt, the spaceship-like refrigerator, the starkness of the moors beyond the window.

The kitchen in Shivdasani's work holds none of this starkness, but all of the same tone of candour. It is a place the woman-poet necessarily encounters, unavoidable in her writing. Shivdasani takes it a step further into the realm of alienation: equating her experience of chopping up a lettuce for a 'sedative' salad to the slow release of internal turmoil regarding the bifurcations of her existence: woman, poet, housewife, and rabbit. The feeling of a rabbit – connoting not the animal itself, perhaps, but the constant state of paranoia that rabbits inhabit, familiarized to the perpetual existence of a body that is in its entirety categorized as prey. Be it through the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest, or through the eyes of the predator – vulnerability is arguably etched into its genetic memory.

³² And it must be noted that discussing or dissecting the kitchen as a contested space is not a radical endeavour, in fact, it is one of the critical points of examination through which the Chicana²⁶ (Xicanisma) movement tackles literary feminism. Of the most famous Mexican women's writers, Laura Esquivel's Josefita 'Tita' de la Garza uses the kitchen almost as a tranquil weapon against the patriarchal tyranny of her mother in *Like Water for Chocolate*.

³³ LINES: 'The soft unclouded blue of air... That iron man was born like me/And he was once an ardent boy: / He must have felt in infancy/ The glory of a summer sky.' ²⁸ Rassundari Debi, *Amar Jiban*. trans. Enakshi Chatterjee. Oxford UP (Calcutta), 1980.

The very exercise of the woman alone in the kitchen, preparing an untimely meal for herself, connotes both a dispossession and a consideration of solitude. In both poems, solitude links the poetic voice to the action within the text. The silence of the kitchen becomes an extension of the poet's relationship with the space and the writing of it. Shivdasani writes from the perspective of a figure familiar with the kitchen – the 'housewife-poet'. Her poetry distinctly engages in visual and thematic morbidity through interactions within the domestic (seen in both 'Why Rabbits Never Sleep' and 'Spring Cleaning'). Cupboards, hangers, lettuce, a plate, come into an almost surreal thematic contact with a horrific finger-chopping scene from Bruce Nicolaysen's *The Passage* (1979), the 'wounded' landscape of Hiroshima, and so on.

"Kitchen is quiet as a bone when I come in / ... Brilliant as a spaceship it exhales cold confusion" (Carson, 13). Carson traces backwards this relationship with the kitchen by three generations: the poet, her mother, and Emily Brontë. "Three silent women at the kitchen table" (2). Shivdasani, on the other hand, chooses to focus upon the 'housewife-poet' internally.

Yet the similarity of action remains – tracing the outside from an action stemming from the kitchen, journeying over historical barriers, only to return startlingly, cutting across an unexplored idea, to the present time of the poet's action. Shivdasani's closing lines "That night I discovered the reason/Rabbits never seem to sleep" is characteristic of this very return to the self through an external journey.

This pendulum movement, switching between the inside and outside of action, brings together a specific compendium of women's histories: what the newer waves of feminism call the 'collective memory' of such forms of labour, affective and domestic, simultaneously gendered and radical.

"...[F]ear works to align bodily and social space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained... It is the regulation of bodies in space through the uneven distribution of fear which allows spaces to become territories, claimed as rights by some bodies and not others."

(Ahmed 70)

The state of fear that one encounters in Carson and Shivdasani's respective poems appears to be a prevalent one, alongside the urgency of the writing. This is a characteristic evident in both poems. Shivdasani engages with the concept through an almost medical diction ("sedative", "wounded"), directly linking the housewife-poet to the rabbit, both in the process of consuming lettuce for the purpose of sedation, both inhabiting a perpetual state of internal fear. Carson on the other hand, approaches it through the work of archiving, literary allusions, and philosophical theory.

The 'constant cold departure' is not a sentiment exclusive to the Heathcliff of the poem. The entire 'KITCHEN' segment reads as an exercise in the relocation of this particular kind of 'half-life' – a meditation on the state of fear that approaches the writer, almost like an approaching figure, dawning into a realization, while in the kitchen.

Both poems are marked with the presence of two lines that betray the urgency of what appears to be an otherwise benign activity – one is eating yoghurt, and the other is chopping lettuce – in the kitchen. "Girls are cruellest to themselves" (Carson 13), emerges in the middle of a verse reciting an old May Day song. An equally startling obtrusion of identity comes in Shivdasani's lines "[...] so I tried another strategy - common, really,/ any housewife-poet will know it."

With the juxtaposition of the personal crisis in the first line, to the instantaneously undercutting second line, both poets stand on the verge of slipping into a 'serious' meditation on authority and literary history, but seem to consciously, suddenly, pull back to the present, the immediate. The acknowledgment of this urgency that emerges within the simultaneously familiar and dissociative framework of the kitchen almost threatens a departure from the writing of this state of mind.

That is, the urgency belies within it the embodying of a performance of the unnatural in their lives outside of their poems – through social relations, consumerism, intimate relationships, and so on. The question that emerges through both poems is one of cultural politics and the exercise of labour; does the very act of writing, and writing from or about a space as fraught as the kitchen, still constitute a form of radical bodily autonomy for women?

When considered from the perspective of an intersectional, inclusive feminist politics, the answer appears to remain an affirmative. Despite the present developments, and a far greater literary freedom, in the field of publishing and expositions on writing about the domestic sphere for women in feminist literary theory, the state of fear retains itself. Gendered alienation, through the discourses that facilitate

stigmatization ('tradition', religion, 'duty'), remains an undercurrent in the tone of both 'The Glass Essay' and 'Why Rabbits Never Sleep'.

Although patriarchal conventions aren't directly referred to in either text, there is an acknowledgment within the absences in both texts. Shivdasani's poem opens at one such point, already situated within an urban kitchen, with the figure of the housewife-poet under scrutiny, creating almost consciously a sense of *bathos* – the poetic voice acutely aware of her 'mental unrest' (King, 315), shifting into trivialities such as a half-remembered film – only to return to the sharp scrutiny of the present, establishing a direct link between the internal-unrest and the socialdisaffection. The housewife-poet struggles with her direct circumstances, the routine of domesticity, domestic boredom, perhaps, that renders her in need of a sedative in the first place.

On the other hand, the poet in Carson, ostensibly, struggles at the end of an affair, alongside communicating with her mother, an older generation that still derides women "Complaining about rape all the time"/[and when the poet voices discomfort with this sentiment]... "Oh I see you're one of Them" (22). Yet she is also living alone in a house on the moor, taking responsibility for her husband now living in a hospital for patients requiring chronic-care, having raised a daughter, having lived through the Second World War. It is an attempt at understanding the complexities of negotiating dissent. Between the personal and the political; the poetic voice is caught trying to find a point of stability, culminating at an understanding: "Those nights lying alone / are not discontinuous with this cold hectic dawn./ It is who I am" (34).

This is not, however, to relegate the role of the poet in both texts to that of a continuous tragedy against patriarchal encroachment. Instead, the poems deal with the struggle that ensues when one is both conscious of and in opposition to the cultural politics that facilitate such alienation. Both women use their positions as individuals situated within their poems to provide a critique of their social realities. Both poems venture outwards, through directly expressed thought – to history – and return rapidly to focus on the impact of this external venture upon the chaos of the self. "Almost every woman I have ever met has a secret belief that she is just on the edge of madness, that there is some deep, crazy part within her, that she must be on guard constantly against 'losing control' — of her temper, of her appetite, of her sexuality, of her feelings, of her ambition, of her secret fantasies, of her mind."

(Dykewomon 1989)

The kitchen becomes a metaphor for the struggle to reconcile literary voice and literary authority. Evidence of underlying paranoia, fear, candid references to psychotherapy (Carson, 3), sedatives, and anger turn the setting of the urban woman-writer's kitchen into a confrontation of the confines of 'losing control', of overstepping social boundaries, of being too honest or too vulnerable in her writing.

The female body and the kitchen revolve around each other in this attempt to navigate spaces that construe and resist the contemporary woman-writer's relationship with her writing. The boundaries of confinement that the kitchen symbolizes, and the voice of the woman-writer in direct conflict with such confinement, becomes a point that both poets use to embark upon an articulation of defiance, against the extremities of such 'femininity' that posits anything not exclusively masculine as infected by the feminine. Negotiating questions of madness, coping mechanisms, and writing, both poets construct the kitchen as a place that denotes the displacement of dissent.

It is an endeavour that is less about exploring direct 'empowerment' and more about acknowledging the kitchen as a space where multiple discourses of power, multiple narratives, multiple genres of writing intersect. Just as it is impossible to extract the kitchen from its relationship with the rest of the house as it stands, isolation is impossible between literature and politics too – where does the writer enter the kitchen from, why does she enter the kitchen at all, what does it mean now that the poem is situated within the kitchen?

In the context of literary feminism, there is in both poems an equal apprehension with confronting the responsibility of identifying as a woman-writer or as a 'feminist'. In a way, it is the acknowledgement of 'half-lives' (Carson, 14) that is the point of convergence between Carson and Shivdasani.

It begets a question of familiarity – how much of oneself does the woman-writer leave behind the kitchen door? How much of this work is she allowed to bring in through the kitchen door and into the domestic sphere?

The woman writer experiences a continuous conflict with regards to the kitchen. She inhabits, already by writing, a conflict between self-identification and social-identification that comes into being the moment she acknowledges that her identity is not dependent on fixity – housewife, daughter, mother, sister, whore, nun – but is instead a process that she is both subject to and capable of taking action towards.

Within the microcosm of the limits of the individual poems, Carson brings into question the role of the woman-writer from a historical, Victorian perspective that runs parallel to her own experiences, and Shivdasani almost flippantly curves into the question of the ‘good’ Indian housewife by morphing the figure into the ‘housewife-poet’ (with the preceding ‘any’, insinuating a multitude of such women in the ‘modern’ imagination of India at the time). On a larger scale, the poems lead to questions of men being allowed to inhabit a multitude of roles, but the projected image of the singular role of womanhood, wherein each bifurcating marker of identity becomes a new responsibility. The two poems seem to hypothesize the need for poetry itself to be an open, verbose process of self-expression as well as self-actualization.

Arguably, the requirement now is for feminisms that move from begrudging the kitchen to an acknowledgment of respect towards the dignity, efficiency, and commitment of the women who choose to engage full-time in domestic labour. The chief characteristic of this movement towards self-expression and actualization, as portrayed in the mainstream media that engages with contemporary feminism, seems to be one of the binary of production and reproduction. Where the initial media-propagated engagement of women with domestic spaces seemed to be a conscious moving away from the kitchen, focused on emphasizing women’s abilities outside of the domestic sphere, the more recent ones seem to focus on an imagination of a woman’s ability to be in control of both the domestic as well as the public sphere – a seemingly androgynous, liberal model of control that sustains all the principles of the reproductive economy while evidently encountering none of the discursive obstacles it creates for women.

However, positioning one opposite the other warrants the dangerous possibility of positing each as an oppositional end of a binary – as though there are such a finite number of possible spaces that a woman may comfortably occupy, allowing not much space for the intersections of markers of identity (class, caste, gender, religion, geopolitics, and so on), and always most ostensibly focused on the urban woman as one who will either be the agent of the ‘rural’ woman-figure’s liberation, or one who is a stronghold of such a liberation herself.

Such a position also casts the body individual in direct opposition to the body politic, the public and the private become more distinct instead of equally accessible. It ignores the perspective that a narrative of domesticity surrounds the woman-writer even as she tries to escape it, weaving for and against it while striving to redefine it.

According to critical theorist Nancy Fraser, the connotations of the domestic kitchen as a space for ‘caring activities, often historically unpaid and still performed mainly by women’³⁴ come into direct conflict with the contemporary, market-centred view of equality when one encounters women’s writing that emerges from or is directly about the kitchen. Perhaps, one may postulate that the state of fear has less to do with fear alone and more to do with the patriarchal anxieties that manufacture it. A candid articulation of women’s desires, the threat of the emergence of a language for and by women, posits a direct threat to the functions of the reproductive economy³⁵ by rendering women outside of the realm of male control – through language and through the ideologies imbued within the said language.

The kitchen comes to signify that space for women-writers where the ‘cultural politics of emotion’³⁶ are worked out in both the absence and presence of the kitchen itself in their lives. This is not to reaffirm the

³⁴ Nancy Fraser, interviewed by Gary Gutting, ‘A Feminism Where ‘Lean In’ Means Leaning on Others’, *The New York Times* (New York) 2015.

³⁵ Brought into use through Luce Irigaray’s short essay on gendered economy ‘When The Goods Get Together’ from her publication *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Irigaray writes: “Goods can only enter into relations under the surveillance of their ‘guardians’. It would be out of the question for them to go to the ‘market’ alone, to profit from their own value, to talk to each other, to desire each other, without the control of the selling-buying-consuming subjects. And their relations must be relations of rivalry in the interest of tradesmen.”

³⁶ The term ‘cultural politics of emotion’ is popularized by Ahmed (2010) initially through her blog ‘feministkilljoys’, and later in her publication, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

misogyny inlaid within the thought that one cannot extract the woman from the kitchen³⁷, but that years of consciously enforced social practices – and the subsequent linking of honour and shame, forging an automatic association of fear to any possible impulse of social deviation – have rendered it such that the kitchen becomes an unavoidable place of contest in the writings of contemporary women poets, their identifications with organized ‘feminism’ notwithstanding.

³⁷ Manifested in the contemporary mainstream through the proliferation of ‘Go back to the kitchen/Make me a sandwich’ memes on various social media platforms.

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Representation(s) of Bhagat Singh: Alternative Narratives

Muskan Sandhu

Abstract

This paper attempts to debunk the hegemonic representation of Bhagat Singh as done by political parties and critiques this bias with which history is transmitted at school level. The paper celebrates and explores alternative representations of this historical legend as they exist in Indian Cinema, coupled with his published works and major influences.

It is safe to assume that the history of a country is largely known and understood by a majority of the population through textbooks prescribed in school. The dominant narrative of the Indian history of independence in these books mainly revolves around the events, movements and methods of the Indian National Congress headed by the Gandhi-Nehru duo, under whose leadership the country attained freedom. Since school syllabi has time constraints, the narrative tends to become lopsided and presents a homogenised version of the freedom struggle. Although what should foreground school text books is a matter of another discussion, yet in the light of the current syllabi, movements which mobilised lakhs get side lined, the nuances of their ideas lost and a major portion of history left unwritten. One such struggle is that of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, whose battle and ideas assume pertinence amidst contemporary world's subjection to neo-imperialism, peasant suicides, capitalist exploitation and communal strife (George, Kumar, and Khandare IX). This paper, after an enumeration of his convictions, will interrogate the varying representations of Bhagat Singh in two movies that form an alternative narrative to the one offered in school textbooks.

Quite interestingly, Bhagat Singh is a figure idolised by the left wing, the right wing and the Congress. Prakash Karat, a renowned communist politician, exposes RSS's attempt to appropriate Singh as their idol by grouping him with their heroes such as V.D Savarkar, who were indeed rooted in 'revolutionary terrorism' but with an ideology of Hindu revivalism. Singh on the other hand, was a self-professed atheist and a staunch critic of communalism. Karat further points out Congress' portrayal which shows him "...as an illustrious martyr for the cause of freedom and studiously ignores his ideological and political thought and practice" (25). In such a scenario it becomes imperative to comprehend his political ideology. Unfortunately, his book, *The Ideal of Socialism*, has not survived (Panikkar 31) but his articles from *Kirti*, his letters and statements to the court give enough evidence of his socialist vision.

A well-read individual, he based all his stances on systematic reasoning. In "Why I am an Atheist", he writes "An incessant desire to study filled my heart. 'Study more and more', said I to myself so that I might be able to face the arguments of my opponents. 'Study' to support your point of view with convincing arguments" (n.pag.). For him the fight for freedom was not merely limited to getting rid of the British but to overthrow an existing system of exploitation and replace it with an egalitarian society. In his joint statement with Battukeshwar Dutt in the assembly bomb case, while talking about the oppression of the farmers and labourers by landlords and capitalists, he condemns the exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation. Singh states; "By 'Revolution', we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such breakdown, and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognized and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and misery of imperial wars" (n.pag.). A document written by him ("To Young Political Workers") in 1931 as a guide to the revolutionary youth becomes a crucial element in understanding his political standpoint. Within it, Singh lays down the example of Lenin in Russia and urges the youth to keep the idea of the movement intact even if a compromise is reached with the British government. He then points out that "This [Congress] is a struggle dependent upon the middle class shopkeepers and a few capitalists. Both these, and particularly the latter, can never dare to risk its property or possessions in any struggle. The real revolutionary armies are in the villages and in factories, the peasantry and the labourers" (n.pag.). Giving a systematic criteria to judge the compromise if it happens, he lays down the goal of a party driven by socialist objectives. He further gives a detailed Revolutionary programme, its committees, duties, action plan etc. that is as inclusive of women as it is of men. The document also clears him of the charge of being an organiser of youth and not peasants and

labourers, since what emerges as his aim is a systematic organising of the working class through the youth and a further use of the youth as agents to educate and unite the masses. Aware that the working class will ask what is in it for them, he prepares the youth to answer this question. Moreover, in his last petition to the governor he wrote, “Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and the natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites. They may be purely British Capitalist or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even on purely Indian bureaucratic apparatus”. Such statements clearly bring out his socialist agenda. Documents like “Telegram on Lenin’s Death Anniversary”, “Introduction to Dreamland” and “Regarding Suicide” reveal a congruent line of thought.

The equality he propagated was not circumscribed to class equality, in the Indian context, he attacked communal and caste discrimination as well. His article “धर्म और हमारा स्वतंत्रता संग्राम” (Religion and our Freedom Movement) interrogates religion on the basis of Tolstoy’s typology of it into ‘The Essentials of Religion’, ‘The philosophy of Religion’ and ‘The Rituals of Religion’. Singh asserts that if religion is a peaceful dialogue between the first two along with the space for freedom in thought, it may be allowed to exist. However, if it is the blind following of the latter two, it should be disposed off. Similarly on the issue of caste, his article “अछूत समस्या” (The Problem of Untouchability) dealt with the inhumane treatment of lower caste Hindus and attacked the absurdity of its very existence. It stresses on an understanding of common humanity and debunks the need of purification rituals for Dalits by any religion, such as ‘shuddhikaran’ in Hindus. Thus, through his personal writings, one perceives an intellectual individual with great reasoning capability, clarity of thought, thirst for knowledge, a vision beyond the immediate defeat of the British, and most importantly, a desire for an egalitarian society.

Although alternate struggles such as his have been given some miniscule space in textbooks, they are either subsumed in the larger narrative or stand in opposition to it. Bhagat Singh’s fight is traditionally looked at from two perspectives, one of being against the British and the other of being a revolutionary ‘terrorist’, an extremist. By reducing his efforts to these two categories, the aforementioned perception of his personality and actions is ignored and his sacrifice goes in vain. In the chapter, “The Making of the National Movement: 1870s—1947”, in the NCERT history book of class eighth, a tiny, sidelined box informs about the assassination of Saunders as a response to Lala Lajpat’s death along with the bombing of the Legislative Assembly and the leaflets which explained that the bombs were not to kill but “to make the deaf hear” (152). It also includes the line “...Bhagat Singh and his comrades wanted to fight colonial rule and the rich exploiting classes through a revolution of workers and peasants.”(152) In a similar pattern, the class tenth NCERT history book has a small box in the chapter “Nationalism in India” with the addition of Singh’s comment that “...the labourer is the real sustainer of the society...” (65). However, in both cases, such singular sentences without a context don’t hold much meaning. The class twelfth NCERT textbook, which has a chapter named “Mahatma Gandhi and the Nationalist Movement: Civil Disobedience and Beyond” does not include Bhagat Singh at all.

In such a scenario, cinema becomes an alternative medium of constructing history. Indian cinema has often produced works of historical significance. It is interesting to note that in terms of biographical representations, Gandhi has six films based on his life, Bose has one and Bhagat Singh has eight. Of the eight, two very impressive portrayals in the twenty first century are *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (2002) and *Rang De Basanti* (2006).

Directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, starring Ajay Devgan, *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* is a biographical representation which makes a conscious effort to focus on Singh’s ideas and not give a reductive chronological summary of events. It successfully recreates Singh’s personality, making it as close to the one that emerges through his own writings. To invoke a well-read character, Singh is seen with a book at all times, the line which introduces him (the grown up man and not the child) being “*Arrey woh lamba sa sardar nai hai jo kisi se baat nahi krta, classroom mein kum aur library mein kitaabo mein munh dale batha rehta hai*” (The tall sardar who doesn’t speak to anyone, rarely shows up in classes and instead spends time in the library with his nose in books). Also, in an argument Sukhdev points out how Singh is well versed in history and political science and exercises the power of argument efficiently. Before proceeding to his hanging, he requests the jailer to give him a minute as he puts aside Lenin’s book. The atheist position

emerges briefly when at the scaffold a jail employee implores him to pray and Singh replies by saying that he is neither scared of death, nor does he believe in God. His stance on internal strife among Indians comes across as he critiques his mentor Lala Lajpat Rai for joining hands with the Hindu Mahasabha. The Naujawan Bharat Sena raises slogans like '*Comi ekta zindabad!*' (long live communal harmony!) as it puts up small stage shows promoting hindu-muslim unity. Caste however, remains ignored in visuals. As a child, Singh is shown to be an ardent follower of Gandhi, disillusioned by suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement, he loses faith in Gandhi and the Congress. In a heated conversation with Jatin Das he asserts that Congress is just concerned with attaining freedom and has no vision for a post-freedom India. His socialist vision then is brought about in the speech prior to changing the name of HRA to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. Addressing his comrades he states, "*Sirf azaadi humara maksad nahi hai, azaadi ka matlab kya hai? ki hukumat angrezo k haatho se nikal kar mutthi bhar raees aur takatvar hindustaniyo k haath lag jaye, kya yahi azaadi hai?*" (Mere freedom is not our goal, what does freedom imply? That power gets transferred from the British to a few rich and powerful Indians, is that freedom?). He continues by saying that freedom is the first step to the larger goal of nation building, a nation which does not tolerate the exploitation of one man by another. He also states that since India is a nation of various religions, castes, languages and cultures, if one does not understand the importance of an egalitarian society, India will be free but infected with corruption, exploitation and communalism. The assembly bomb plan scene follows one that of a labour strike interrupted by violent police officials. The immediate cause of assembly bombing is to protest against Public Safety Bill and Trade Dispute Bill which aim to restrict the limited agency of labourers. In the portrayal of court as a medium to spread their ideas, his speech stands in solidarity with labourers and farmers. Singh's use of calculated violence is brought out in a dramatic scene where to prove his point to Jatin Das, he attacks Das and when Das reacts to save himself, Singh asserts that Das' action is that of self-defence and not violence just as theirs is towards colonial rule. The court hearing also focuses on the intention behind their act of bombing, which is to 'make the deaf hear'. His rapidly increasing support by people manifests in conversations between British officials who grow concerned about his popularity and through depiction of sloganeering masses outside the jail, lakhs of people voting against his hanging and the report of support by foreign ministers. Gandhi poses a contrast to Bhagat Singh throughout. His portrait is that of a person who is unable to see Singh beyond the superficial lining of a violent revolutionary, a view that contemporary school textbooks also tend to support. On the whole, while following the order of major events like Kakori robbery, Saunder's murder, assembly bombing and the jail hunger strike, the film paints a picture vibrant of Singh's persona, ideology and vision. It ends with a text reading "And yet, today Indian society is ravaged by the poison of fundamentalism, communal hatred, injustice and corruption. Have we betrayed their sacrifice?"

The second film, *Rang De Basanti*, does not fall into the conventional category of Bhagat Singh's biographical movies. It seems to pick up from the question which the aforementioned movie leaves us with. It echoes Singh's warning of mere transfer of power from one exploiter to another. Set in contemporary India, it follows the life of a group of urban college students who are least interested in the country's freedom struggle, "*desh bhakti ki baatein badi boring lagti hain*" (talks of patriotism are very boring) says Aslam. This bunch of carefree students is roped in by Sue Mckinley, a British filmmaker, for her documentary 'The Young Guns of India', portraying the life of five revolutionaries, Bhagat Singh, Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqula Khan, Raj Guru and Chandra Shekhar Azaad based on her grandfather's diary, who was a jailer in British India. The movie then proceeds with a plot which is interspersed with documentary episodes. These episodes eventually lend a parallel to the life of the group as it takes a jolt when one of their friends dies in an MIG crash caused by sub-standard parts bought by corrupt government officials. The government refuses to take responsibility, blaming the mishap on the pilot. After being attacked brutally by the police force at a peaceful protest in the honour of the pilot, the group conspires to kill the defence minister in the fashion of Saunder's killing. However the act does not send out a message they wanted to. Then in order to be heard, they surrender themselves by telecasting their story over the radio. Instead of getting arrested, they are killed in an encounter.

The movie right in the beginning addresses the issue of how various freedom struggles remain unheard in the predominance of the Gandhian narrative. When Sue's company officials withdraw financial support from her project, they remark "Gandhi sells" and the stories of the revolutionaries aren't an equivalent. It

then bases itself on the essence of what Singh warned; that white oppressors will merely be replaced by Indian oppressors. To make a strong visual impact, the documentary episode portraying the Jallianwala Bagh incident is flashed during the encounter scene where General Dyer is replaced by the defence minister. The allusion to 'making the deaf hear' is made in the context of the present government during the radio broadcast, as it was done in Singh's assembly bombing case. Further, conversations at the dinner table casually slip in issues of modern India such as unemployment and overpopulation. "*Naaz hai, kis cheez par, desh ki population par, nahi berozgari par, corruption par*" (Proud of what? country's population or its unemployment and corruption), snickers Karan at the dinner at Mitro's eating joint. Another aspect that the film focuses on is that of communal divide. An issue addressed by Bhagat Singh several times, the movie resolves it through the reconciliation between Aslam, a Muslim in the group and Pandey, a misguided patriot, a Hindutva preaching Islamophobic who gets roped in as Ram Prasad Bismil. As the documentary initiates a process of growth in all of them, Ashfaqula Khan and Bismil's brotherhood forces Pandey and Aslam to reevaluate their stance towards each other. Pandey's disillusionment from his own political party that renders support to the defence minister, culminates in the wearing off of his prejudices to recognize their common humanity as he saves Aslam from a violent group of goons of the same party. The movie then in its brilliant portrayal conveys Singh's basic message of freedom as not being limited to freedom from the British but from various forms of oppressive structures and in the process contemporises a seemingly irrelevant history. However, since it does not aim to focus singularly on Bhagat Singh, the nuances of his vision for India do not find sufficient space.

Cinema thus plays the role of an alternate constructor of the persona and vision of a monumental freedom fighter. Such an act does not remain limited to the biographical figure itself but goes on to write a narrative that had mobilised millions in the Freedom Movement of India. It balances a scale made lopsided by school text books and corrects the appropriation made by political parties. And lastly, it irks us by suggesting that the freedom which we have is as incomplete as the dominant representation of Bhagat Singh.

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A Study of 'Madness' in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*

Sapna Dubey

Abstract

This paper seeks to bring forth an analysis of the supposed madness of the protagonist, Hamlet in Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film. In doing so, the paper studies his relationship, in his state of mind, with other prominent characters in the play like the Ghost, Ophelia, Gertrude, Polonius, the Players and Horatio. The argument inclines towards an insistence that in the movie, his madness is not a mental illness but a part of his strategy to avenge the death of his father, King Hamlet.

“If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away, and when he is not himself
Dooes wrong Laertes, then Hamlet dooes it not,
Hamlet denies it. Who dooes it then? His
Madness.”

(V ii 246-250)

Kenneth Branagh's (1960-) *Hamlet*, from his movie *Hamlet* (1996), is an intense and complex character to develop and to play. Based on *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, written by William Shakespeare (1564-1616) between the years 1599 and 1602, it can be attributed to the nuanced film making that, throughout the play, all accuse Hamlet of his 'madness', including Hamlet himself and yet, the audience is left questioning if he was or was not 'mad'. This perception also depends on the viewer's conception of madness, which has undergone many changes with changing times. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) writes in his text *Of Man, Being the First Part of the Leviathan*, “[...] madness is nothing else, but too much appearing passion” (n.pag). Aristotle, in his text *Magna Moralia*, defines madness as a state of intoxication (qtd. in Campbell, 80). Is Hamlet in control of himself or is he being controlled by his passions? In some instances the viewer is positive that his loss of normalcy is but a deliberately acquired mask, as he does say after meeting the ghost, while in others, it seems to have become a part of his real self. It is thus indispensable to constantly question and argue one's own understanding of the character and his bildungsroman to develop Hamlet's character for oneself. Simone Russell Beale in his essay on Hamlet writes that though the story of Hamlet has been told many times over, it “[...] is still being told” (176).

In Branagh's movie, the thirty-year-old, mature Hamlet wears a black embroidered blazer through most parts of the film, symbolizing sorrow at the loss of his father, the King Hamlet of Denmark. His never changing attire depicts the overriding melancholy that colors his personality. It is only when the ghost tells his stories and some flashbacks of Hamlet's past happiness are shown, that Hamlet is seen in green colored garments. The last scene too shows him in the coffin in a black suit, keeping him within the framework of a Shakespearean tragic hero.

Branagh gives his first speech, deep in remorse, at the same location where Claudius and Gertrude had just announced and celebrated their marriage. Hamlet's dissatisfaction with the happenings comes forth in this speech. Branagh performs the speech in a way that the words express distress along with a sense of agitation at his helplessness. Beale in his essay points out to the readers that he interrupts himself many times and is already in a state of tumult before Horatio comes in to give him the news about the ghost (159). This early depiction of his inner grief contributes to the impression that his later aggravated ire has on the audience. It in turn helps the audience develop their perception about his madness.

“There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt off in your philosophy.”

(I v 158-59)

Branagh introduces the ghost in the opening scene with these words, such that it becomes an objective reality. As Hamlet is led to the forest by the ghost of his father, the setting changes from that of an open ground to the interior of a forest. The forest is dense and seemingly infinite, yet there is an ambience of enclosure that comes through in this scene. The journey into the forest, to the mist, the rustling leaves, the

shaking earth and the tall trees, the air of mystery can be perceived as the travel within, as its atmosphere is evident only to Hamlet and his audience. Here, Hamlet, as played by Branagh, is depicted in a state of awe. Throughout the scene where his father tells him about his death, his eyes do not blink. He is looking forward, but the ghost's voice seemingly resonates through the entire forest. There is no one in the depths of the forest besides the ghost and himself. The forest can thus be symbolic of the dungeon of his mind. At one point during the scene, the camera moves from focusing on the eyes of the dead King to that of Hamlet and back many times in quick succession. It creates the illusion of a closeness between the two. The movie opens with the statue of the dead King Hamlet with 'Hamlet' inscribed on it. It is clear that the play is named after prince Hamlet, who plays the protagonist. By using King Hamlet's statue to imply the prince, Branagh makes possible the convergence of the two personalities in the prince to support the interpretation of the ghost as Hamlet's introspective voice. In the closet scene with Gertrude, Hamlet encounters the ghost of his dead father, which only he can see and talk to. He does ask his mother to see him where he can, but she sees nothing and thus says, "This is the very coinage of your brain" (III iv 134). The audience is shown the place through the eyes of Hamlet as well as Gertrude. This unusual conversation that he carries out with an imaginary figure confirms for his mother, the loss of his wit. The delusion can be a depiction of his very conscience that reminds him to allow his mother redemption in confession. His father's soul and ways reside within him alongside his own. However, if this perception is taken forward, it can be argued that Hamlet had knowledge or a premonition of the means of the death of his father even before he was confronted with his apparition.

With the words, "Adieu Adieu, Remember me" (I v 90), Hamlet comes back to his conscious self, when he is met with Horatio. There is an abrupt change in his behavior, from his time with the ghost, to a sudden excited meeting with Horatio in the same forest. It can be interpreted that from his conversation with his dead father, he is overcome with passion to avenge his murder. He has decided on the course of his actions and his anger finds vent in language. His speech becomes overfilled with words, symbolic of the rush of emotions and the boiling anger that dwells within him. In Freudian terminology, the 'id' which is "[...]a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement", has acquired agency over the consciousness, the 'ego' (qtd in Strachey 1). These newly acquired mannerisms are seen as his madness by those around him.

Ophelia is one of the first people to have witnessed his new attitude and she, keeping her words, "I shall obey, My Lord" (I iii 135), reports the same to her father, the scheming Polonius. In Branagh's movie, Hamlet is delivering his 'to be or not to be' soliloquy before a mirror when Ophelia, played by Kate Winslet (1975-), arrives. The music in the background adds to the profundity of his words. It can well be argued that he talks without any signs of madness at this moment. When Ophelia enters, he calls her a "nymph" (III i 86) and seeks comfort in her. The moment he suspects supervision by her father, Branagh in character has tears in his eyes and a short grieved silence of heartbreak precedes his outburst of anger against women and the world, which is often attributed to his madness. With the knowledge of the context of this scene of rage where he drags Ophelia, hits her face against the mirror and shouts at her, his behavior can be perceived as emerging out of vengeance and not insanity. However, after watching Hamlet from the back of the mirror, Claudius is alarmed and says in declaration, "Madness, in Great ones must not unmatch'd go" (II i 193). Ophelia later does become mad in actuality, after the loss of her father, who was the guiding force in her life. She loses control over herself. She is dressed in white and her hair is open when she meets Laertes. She finds freedom from the impositions on her in madness. She becomes blind to the society and its constraints. Her mental illness can be seen as a foil to Hamlet's eccentric personality that is called 'mad' by all in the play.

"Though this be Madness, yet there is
Method in't."

(II ii 212)

Polonius, who first declares Hamlet 'mad' before Claudius and Gertrude with the words, "Your noble son is mad", knows that his claim can be questioned because Hamlet's language may often be haywire in nature, but it is reflective of his sharp wit and sense of humor. Polonius is one of the people who always spy over him in disguise of well-wishers and Hamlet knows it. He thus puts on his mask of insanity to keep them away from him and his real self. When Polonius asks him what he read in the book, Branagh answers, "Words, words, words" (II ii 198) in three different tones and contorted facial expressions, as if to disgust

him. Beale in his essay explains this as, “[. . .] the tension between the wish to be left alone and a fear of one’s own unbridled thoughts” (164). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern too are unable to extract any secrets about his transformation from him. Branagh depicts Hamlet as deeply hurt on gaining knowledge of his two friends being sent for to watch over him. He shows this, in the movie with a focus on Hamlet’s face and his eyes are watery for a moment. Henceforth, his true self is never revealed to the two of them and they too witness his crazed personality. They report to the King that he keeps aloof with a “crafty madness” (III i 7). In the movie, the contrast between his normal self and his supposed ‘mad’ being is evident with the coming in of the players. He is respectful and delighted in conversation with them while retaining his stern tone with Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Branagh strategically brings in background music in these scenes so as to depict the importance of the role of players for himself. In these scenes, it becomes clear that his madness is in his control even though his urge for revenge and his wrath are yearning for fulfilment within him.

“Give me that Man

That is not Passion’s Slave, and I will wear him In my Heart’s Core. . .

As I do thee”

(III ii 78-81)

Hamlet says these words to his only friend, Horatio, who knows him like the readers do and Hamlet trusts him. His mad behavior is never directed towards him. In his company, he is his own true self. It is for these reasons that in Branagh’s movie, when all are terrified at the display of his madness, Horatio is unperturbed, as if he is in complete knowledge of Hamlet’s art. He is a confidante after he has sworn to keep his secret by the cross on his sword. Horatio pleads to stop Hamlet from following the apparition as he fears that he would be pulled into darkness forever. He suspects that the ghost might, “[. . .] Deprive [your] his Sovereignty of Reason, And draw [you] him into Madness [...]” (I iv 71-72). Horatio lives on, at the end of the play to tell the story of Hamlet to the world. It is interesting to question if or not in his tale, he would explain the profundity that framed Hamlet’s exuberant behavior that went on to be called ‘madness’.

In the final fight sequence, Branagh’s Hamlet transforms again into his former self. His attire changes from only black to black and white of the fencing uniform. The two colors can be perceived as depicting the two finalities before him, revenge or death. In the fight, he is ready to accept death and as Philip Frank puts it, seeks a non-neurotic relationship with death (199). He confesses his doings and behavior in a state of insanity and in saying so regains partially his lost dignity. He thus believes that it was his madness that guided his actions. However it is important to investigate whether these claims are truthful and his regret heartfelt or merely his way of meandering past his ill deeds in order to regain and redeem himself before all. “Sometimes it is the theatre’s job to pass on a riddle, not to solve it” (Pennington, 127), indeed leaving the audience and readers with immense scope for adaptations and interpretations.

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The Psychology and Sociology of Marriage through Seventeenth Century Texts

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Abstract

This paper seeks to challenge the common perception of marriage as a preordained institution, and reveal the psychological and sociological factors that influence its formation. The author uses theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung to analyse marriage on the grounds of psychology and further expounds the argument by studying four seventeenth century texts- *Othello* (1604) by William Shakespeare, *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614) by John Webster, *The Rover* (1677) by Aphra Behn, and *The Way of the World* (1700) by William Congreve.

In popular imagination, marriage is considered a pure union of two beings who are pre-ordained by God to lead a life-long relationship of togetherness in order to bring new lives into the world. In such a definition of marriage, it becomes difficult to assert whether the institution is restricted to a purely individual realm or if it is characterised by social constructs. This paper attempts to examine the two forces, the social and the psychological - that serve as catalysts in shaping the quality of marriage. The psychological analysis of marriage will be derived from two psychoanalysts, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961) who extensively theorised the male-female unconscious as influential on behavioural patterns.

In a marriage, the individual behaviour of the husband and wife combines together to form a united psychology of their marriage. It therefore becomes important to first examine these micro nuances. The focus of the paper further moves on to a broader and more holistic examination of marriage by studying how it is affected by the sociology that it exists within. This examination will be founded upon relationships as depicted in the plays produced in of seventeenth century England. The seventeenth century comprised of the Jacobean period where literature started focusing more on issues that governed plebeian life rather than narrating tragedies whose grandeur was far removed from lived reality. Therefore, playwrights began focusing on important social issues like inequalities and power politics, and represented institutions like marriage and family ties in immense detail. Moreover, women began to be portrayed as more decisive, assertive, and as challenging the patriarchal society. Hence, the constant conflict between the internal and external of marriage becomes an interesting topic of contention.

Psychology and Marriage: Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung

Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist who became the father of psychoanalysis gives psychological explanations for the quality of marital relationship that a couple may share. Freud establishes unconscious childhood relationships as influential on marital relationships. Since sexual drive (an important aspect of a marital relationship) formulates itself during childhood as the 'id', Oedipus and Electra complexes interact with each other, marital relationships are bound to be influenced by the nature of relationships with parents. Moreover, childhood is also the time when the foundations of a person's character are established. Freud theorises the following as factors affecting marital relationships:

1. Narcissism and Dependency

According to Freud, narcissists continue to ascertain self-love by choosing partners who are significantly less narcissist in nature. By doing so, they create a hierarchy of 'loving' and 'being loved' within marriage. The narcissistic partner in the relationship will naturally be more demanding of love and attention and in turn, may not provide enough for the other. According to Freud, humans are also driven by a sense of 'dependency' that creates the feeling of love, care and affection. Thus, a marriage that encompasses a narcissistic partner will be that of antagonism where the sense of dependency is dominating. This difference in devotion to one another destroys the concept of mutual love that marriage is founded upon, thus disrupting its harmony. .

2. Oedipus Complex

According to Freud, a man is in constant search of a woman who mirrors his mother. This need is an unknowing manifestation of a residual Oedipal Complex that may remain from childhood. In such a case, a man within the strains of marriage may subconsciously be guilty of that sexual attraction towards his mother and in that guilt may assume the role of the submissive one in the relationship. Similarly, if a woman's residual Electra complex results in a subconscious attraction towards her father, she may give into being dominated by the man on account of her underlying feelings. This subconscious needs to be dominated by the other also creates hierarchies within the relationship.

3. Hostility

When a couple gets married, the husband replaces the father in the woman's imagination and thus gains the love and affection that was originally directed towards her father. However, as the relationship progresses, the hatred that the girl may have felt towards her mother (on account of a sexual attraction towards her father) gets transposed onto her husband after marriage. This hostility may lead to fights, misunderstandings, and frustration between the couple where the woman would assume a dominant role.

By establishing childhood feelings as precursors to the quality of marital relationships, Freud places marriage completely outside the realm of conscious control. Freud's theorisation falls short- in that it fails to consider social reality as an influence on marriage and thus limits the focus of his analysis. This point of view is echoed in Carl Jung's opinions where he negates psychological analysis based on the 'unconscious' because it ignores the free will with which humans act. In his essay, 'Marriage as a Psychological Relationship', he attempts to be wary of a theorisation based on the abstract concept of the unconscious. However, Jung himself is unable to theorise devoid of the unconscious as he defines the conscious as its extension. Moreover, he also disregards the objective factors of legal and social natures in marriage because of his prime focus on psychology, but unlike Freud he does acknowledge their deep influence on marital relationships. In his essay, Jung majorly discusses marriage based on two of his theories:

1. The Contained and the Container

In a marital relationship, each partner becomes either the contained or the container. This kind of relationship can also be described in terms of submission and domination. The contained is the one whose decisions and choices are limited to the boundaries of marital relationship; the woman generally assumes this role, as she does not have the freedom to express herself in any other milieu. Marriage becomes the space where she can be sexually expressive and at least have control in the domestic sphere. Moreover, being the 'contained', she becomes extremely dependent on the man, she cannot look beyond what marriage has to offer and therefore has no external relationships. Consequently, the 'beloved' clings on more to the love and comfort that the 'container' provides- an act that distances him from the relationship. Therefore, in a marital relationship the man presumes a role that is characterised by freedom, free will and choice whereas the woman becomes the one who follows his whims.

2. The Anima and the Animus

Jung theorises that men and women possess a type of unconscious called the Anima and the Animus respectively. In a relationship, the respective characteristics of these unconscious are reflected upon the beloved and hence shape how they may react to each other. The Anima which a man possesses is unconsciously projected on the woman and steers the feeling of passion and avarice. It has an erotic and emotional character and therefore, the presence of this unconscious proves that the stereotypical notions that men have of women of being emotionally hysterical is actually just a projection of men's Anima. Similarly, women possess what is called Animus which has a strictly rationalising character which functions just like the Anima does. According to Jung, the "contained" in a relationship is the one who projects its unconscious on their partner (n.pag). These projections guide the marital relationship accordingly, either as emotionally or rationally driven.

In their own theorizations, Freud and Jung create reasonings for different shades in marriages, which mostly border upon the dynamics between the dominant and the submissive. However, both these psychoanalysts focus on the intrinsic, removing them from the more evident and tangible external forces that

influence marriage. A pre-condition for marriage to exist is that it should be 'legitimized' and sanctioned by ritual, cultural and socio-political norms. Unless marriage does not reiterate socially constructed power hierarchies among different races, classes and religions, it faces severe threat. Marriage is also influenced by legal constructs as laws bind spouses to certain rights and obligations that they must practice.

The seventeenth century was a period rich in hierarchies and inequalities. Apart from the more obvious discrimination between the noble aristocracy and the inane middle-class, there existed a cultural, racial and religious discrimination in the society. These socially constructed differences gave rise to prejudices and hence conditioned the marital choices that people made.

The four texts that are going to be scrutinized to study the cause and effect relationship between society and marriage constitute a broad spectrum that expands throughout the seventeenth century. *Othello* (1604) by William Shakespeare (1564-1616) will analyze how the society's engagement with racial discrimination tarnishes love between two people and drives their marriage to doom. *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614) by John Webster (1580-1634) throws light upon how an obsession with class privilege leads a set of brothers to become the murderers of their sister whose only felony was to marry across classes. *The Rover* (1677) by Aphra Behn (1640-1689) will examine a change in the concept of marriage to an open relationship in the light of the restoration period. Lastly, *The Way of the World* (1700) by William Congreve (1670- 1729), which depicts a radical change in the conception of marriage as an economic transaction rather than a pure emotional investment, will be examined. This act of tracing throughout the seventeenth century will record how social perceptions become so dominant that they change the very essence of such personal institutions.

Marriage Colored By Hues Of Race

The Moors, also known as Turks, were medieval Muslim inhabitants part of the Ottoman Empire. This Empire shared boundaries with European nations and was often considered the 'other' by the Europeans on account of their colour, culture and racial contrast. Shakespeare's *Othello* is a play that highlights how this overarching discrimination reflects itself in the arena of marriage and results in the greatest degree of personal tragedy. A young Venetian woman, Desdemona falls in love with Othello, a Moor, and elopes with him. This inter-racial marriage is received with great contempt as in the beginning scenes itself the marriage is opposed with Charivari (Act I, Scene 1), consequently casting an omen upon their marriage that is inevitably doomed.

Through the years, the English society established itself as a traditional and conservative one that sought to abide by rigid social norms. In concurrence to this, different racial identities were approached with blatant antagonism and hatred. The society was wary of blacks on account of the stereotypes that were attached to them. Black sexuality and behaviour were perceived as aggressive, barbaric, and predatory and were in opposition to the Christian ideals of control and gentility. Iago, the antagonist of the play becomes the spokesperson of this insecure English society, recognizing and playing on the insecurities of the dislocated Othello to create misunderstandings in their marriage. He therefore takes race as a launching pad and uses marriage as the site on which he focuses all his political manipulation. Therefore proving how society and marriage mutually influence each other.

Through the course of the play, Iago increases Othello's sense of alienation and plays on the theory that his racial subordination in the society can lead to his subordination even in his marriage. A Christian marriage is bound on the promise of fidelity and commitment; Iago perverts these divine conditions and uses them as the basis to destroy the marriage. Through a manipulation of these social strategies, the love that Othello and Desdemona shared in the beginning becomes so tainted that Othello blindly trusts Iago and does not even for once consider confronting Desdemona. Eventually, Iago's games drive him insane so much so that he kills Desdemona and in the process satisfies the belief of the blacks being governed by an impulsive, destructive and barbarous nature. In this way, the love that Othello freely chose for himself, in spite of several differences faces a tragic end as socio-political nuances are enforced upon it.

Marriage and Class Compartmentalization

In the *Duchess of Malfi*, Webster narrates the tragic fate of a woman who holds a very powerful position, both socially and politically. The protagonist of the play, the Duchess, is also a widow holding a

position that gives her absolute control of an estate and its riches. In a society where women were empowered neither politically nor socially, and led their lives as puppets of their male counterparts, the status of the Duchess posed a serious threat to patriarchy. Therefore, her brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand viewed her position with grave scrutiny; they closely examined the Duchess in order to get hold of information that could be used to initiate her downfall. Eventually, it is her secret marriage with Antonio, a steward, which brings the brothers an opportunity to reprimand her and remove her from the throne of Malfi. This marriage disrupts social order on a dual level, first that it is a widow remarriage and the second that it is a marriage across classes.

During the Jacobean period, widow remarriage was seen as intimidating because it sanctioned the woman a significant amount of independence. Free of any kind of male power ruling her life, a widow was seen as dominating, lustful and a sexual predator. These characteristics were in contrast with the notions of submission and abstinence that women were defined with.

Widow re-marriage was held with grave antagonism in the society. In fact, Webster derives the plot of the play from two real life incidents, the life of Giovanni of Aragon who, widowed at a young age, married Antonio who belonged to a lower class. The second derivation of the play could be Lady Annabella Stewart whose first marriage to the Count of Geneva was annulled, her second marriage to the Earl of Huntley II ended with a divorce, after which she was eventually imprisoned.

The brothers see the Duchess' free will to marry into a lower class as a threat to the genetic purity of aristocrats. The lower class was seen with such disdain because they were considered almost barbaric as compared to the genteel ways of aristocrats. Although Antonio was a hardworking and faithful steward, his station in society instantly degraded his character. In this immense hatred towards lower classes, Cardinal and Ferdinand punish the Duchess by first killing her children, then Antonio and then finally murdering her. In this way, the entire family line is destroyed under the umbrella of class-consciousness. Therefore, marriage becomes a site where issues of class and gender predominant in society are reflected upon.

Marriage in the Restoration Period

The Way of the World is a Restoration comedy that explores a shift away from the traditional type of marriage on account of the changing social scenario. Congreve names the play *The Way of the World* and reflects society's obsession with 'money' in the institution of marriage. He thus, instantly portrays how the social influences the personal. Given that the play is set in the backdrop of the Restoration Period, he depicts relationships that mostly circumscribe economic and commercial ideals rather than the emotional. Mr. Fainall, the antagonist of the play, becomes the persona of such an extreme commercial outlook. He is a miser for money who blatantly accepts that his marriage with Mrs. Fainall was based on her inheritance and the dowry that she came with. He considers love as neither a reason nor the basis for a marital relationship. In fact, his greed for money is so grave that he manipulates others throughout the play to gain their portions of money. In contrast to this, the play portrays a marital relationship that is governed by a perfect amalgamation of the need for love and money. Mirabell and Millamant are two strong characters who are very much alike in their fluency of wit and language. Millamant is an assertive woman who is intelligent, vivacious and thus a perfect match for the reformed rake, Mirabell. Superficially, it seems that Millamant is indulgent of the aristocratic way of life, however, she possesses a deep understanding of life and realizes that in order to survive she needs to be emotional as well as crude. She asserts her independence at various points in the play. She refuses to marry according to Lady Wishfort's choice and seeks a man who will allow her to manifest her individuality even after marriage. Although, it is essentially love that drives this union, their romance is toned down by their mutual acceptance of realism. In the very radical 'Proviso' scene, Millamant lays down the terms and conditions of their marriage. She says that she will not be called names such as "[...] wife, spouse, my dear jewel, love" and requests that they must not be "[...] familiar or fond nor kiss before folks" (Act IV, Scene 1). In these conditions, she overturns the husband-wife hierarchy and contests for an egalitarian relationship. This idyllic relationship of love stands in stark contrast to other marriages in the play which are based on deceit and debauchery, the ways of the world. Through a progressive relationship between Mirabell and Millamant, Congreve contests for a marriage that does not

reflect the avarice of the society. In the final lines of the play he creates such a marriage as the basis on which the entire way of the world is established:

"From hence let those be warned who mean to wed,

Lest mutual falsehood stain the bridal bed,

For each deceiver to his cost may find

That marriage-frauds too oft are paid in kind,

To be partners in life, and to be happy in the union, couples should be open and honest, love and respect each other

This should be the way of the world."

(Act V, Scene 1)

Marriage as an Open Relationship

The Rover by Aphra Behn is a restoration comedy with the dynamics of the Rake figure in society at its centre. The figure of the rake i.e., Willmore is based on the Cavaliers of King Charles II's court who indulged in libertine excess of alcoholism, womanizing, gaming and witty conversations. The figure of the Rake was completely self-centred where the man flitted from one woman to another for physical and personal satisfaction. In this attitude, the man held no sense of responsibility or commitment to the woman or the temporary relationship that he had with her. This kind of a flitting approach towards relationships was in complete opposition to the Christian ideals of marriage that was based on fidelity, devotion, and dependability. In the light of this kind of an outlook towards relationships, Aphra Behn ends her play in a marriage between Hellena and Willmore, a relationship that is extremely perverted in its morals. Where marriage is an institution that binds and contains two people to each other, Hellena and Willmore enter into a marriage that is an 'open relationship' of sorts. They agree that in their marriage they will "[...] have no vows but love, child, nor witness but the lover: the kind deity enjoins naught but love and enjoy" (Act V, Scene 1). Traditionally, marriage is an institution that is meant to control the woman and restrict her to the bounds of her dominant husband; however, here the roles are reversed as Hellena becomes "The Inconstant" while Willmore becomes "Robert the Constant" (Act V, Scene 1). However limited it may be, Hellena ironically gains freedom by her marriage to Willmore since she escapes the prospect of being forcefully sent off to a nunnery. Moreover, instead of a reformation of the rake through marriage (like that of Mirabell), Willmore's rakishness gains further sanction by his wife, hence overturning the concept of marriage even further.

Conclusion

Marriage is described by Christianity as a divine institution that integrates two halves of one soul. This union becomes one that is preordained by the almighty which gives it a supernatural angle; it suggests that marriage must be a fantastical, supernatural union that is removed from the flaws and adversities of human civilization. However, this assumption of marriage is far from realistic. As examined above, marriage just like any other social institution, is tainted by complex psychological undercurrents as well as social constructs. The psychological influences cannot be contained, no matter how blasphemous they may seem in the light of social norms. These phenomena are located in the unconscious and sub conscious which are inaccessible and thus, uncontrollable. Since an individual exists in a collective called the society, his psychology will interact with various social constructs that have their own dynamics with the institution of marriage. The individual will engage with these social norms with his/her conscious, subconscious, or unconscious psychology and create yet another level which influences the . Therefore, marriage ceases to exist in its original pure form and gets moulded by the social and psychological that act upon it.

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The Yin and the Yang: Gender Ambivalence in Chinese Theatre & Philosophy and its Influence on Bertolt Brecht's *Good Person of Szechwan*

Snigdha Gupta

Abstract

This paper analyzes the effect of Chinese gender dynamics on Bertolt Brecht's plays. It studies the idea of balance through the motif of *Yinyang ren* that challenges arbitrary gender roles and promotes composite androgynous figures. It further explores Brecht's contributions to theatre through several traditional and modern symbols of Chinese culture and his focus on the periodic change in gender identities that indicate a change in social conduct over time.

In 1935, post the first production of *The Mother* in the United States, Feminists pointed to a seeming contradiction in the works of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)- most of his plays feature female protagonists; yet the portrayal is stereotypical. He was seen as putting the cause of female emancipation under the umbrella cause of socialism and ignoring the vibrant Women's movement of the Weimar period. He was further accused of owing his career to "brilliant women he treated as harem" (Solomon, 75). More recently, John Fuegi, in his 1994 work *Brecht and Company* (claiming it to be feminist), provided the ludicrous litany of "Hitler, Stalin, Brecht" (Solomon, 75), which set off a new momentum of discarding and defining Brecht for a generation of students who haven't encountered Brecht on their own terms.

The deep feminist implications of Brecht's work are often missed by a constant black and white assessment, which is described by Alisa Solomon as "a simplification that culminates in a smarmy certainty about the 'Brechtian' [...]" (67-75). It is the failure of not having recognized the complexity in Brecht's conception of gender that propels such arguments.

This failure is most apparent in the readings of the play *Good Person of Szechwan* (1939-41), where Shen Teh, the prostitute who can never say no, transverses into being a male cousin Shui Ta who can turn away freeloaders with his entrepreneurial shrewdness.

In the play, gods come down to Earth in search of enough good people to justify their existence, as well as the existence of their commandments. On reaching the city of Szechwan, they are unable to find a night's shelter until Shen Teh, hiding her profession, lets them in. On learning of her prostitution and penniless existence, the gods decide to help Shen Teh by providing her with money which enables her to open a tobacco shop and hence, enter the world of commerce. However, Shen Teh, "the angel of the slums" (55), is unable to negotiate with the harsh world of economics where the adage "Help thy neighbor" is turned over its head becoming "Exploit thy neighbor."

The Province of Szechwan is depicted, not as a pre-industrial oriental paradise but, as a Dickensian Coketown where forces of the market reign supreme. In words of the character of Wang: "Utter poverty is the rule in our province" (Brecht, 1). Brecht identified himself as a Marxist from 1920s until his death in 1956. His literature is motivated by the desire to analyze society, to attack social injustice and to propose alternative ways of organizing social and economic life. Brecht's conception of Szechwan too falls under this Marxist worldview. His plays always contain within themselves a questioning of social structures, whether it is of gender or class, and an attempt to mobilize ordinary playgoers by making them aware of the larger struggles in society. His ideology led to the conceptualization and theorization of Epic Theatre which was a counter to the Aristotelian mode of theatre. The former focuses on narrative as against latter's focus on plot and action. Instead of seeking to create an image of the real world, it is conscious of its own theatricality. Epic Theatre wants its spectators to not purge their emotions in a catharsis, but rather employ it in active problem-solving.

Amongst Epic Theatre's most commonly used methodologies, is *Verfremdungseffekt*, or the alienation effect. It is a 'making strange' of all things earlier thought to be known or familiar. *Verfremdung* amounts to

seeing through not just the device of theatre but way beyond that, at the customs and habits of mind which constitute ideology. It is this technique of *Verfremdung* that Brecht employs in *The Good Person of Szechwan* to “see through what on the surface appears 'natural' or divinely ordained, namely the self-identical (gendered) individual and 'goodness' and to recognize identity and morality instead as only deceptively familiar, and in fact strange constructions of bourgeois ideology.”³⁸

However, the America which Brecht was writing in (1941-1947) treated Art and Politics as mutually destructive. American cinema and literature celebrated rooted morals, the individual and his journey towards self-realization. America could not understand Brecht's socially relevant plays and Brecht could not understand why his plays continuously failed in this country. America was “temperamentally and aesthetically” unprepared for Brecht's dialectical art (Solomon, 67-75). Feminists - especially American Feminists - accuse Brecht of falling into the trap of gender binaries. He is seen to have portrayed Shui Taas having stereotypically masculine ‘shrewd and evil’ qualities whereas his depiction of Shen Teh is that of an idealized model of the ‘good’ Oriental woman. What is often missed is Shen Teh's conscious decision of transforming into Shui Ta. Brecht writes in his journal- “How to handle the *Li gung-Lao Go* (Shen Teh-Shui Ta) problem...(a) allow two principles (souls) to figure separately (or)...else (b) have a plain story about how *li gung* masquerades her cousin and to that end makes use of the experiences and qualities which her gutter existence as brought out in her. In fact, only (b) is possible...” (120).

Therefore, it is clear that Brecht meant Shen The to draw upon her own inner resources in order to become her stronger male cousin. Both Shen Teh and Shui Ta are aspects of the same person. Brecht forces us to see the arbitrariness of gender roles by having the same person imbibe all the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities. Alisa Solomon describes it by stating, “Brecht makes gender strange- that is, startle us with a recognition of gender's artificiality, divulging how something we took to be natural is in fact a construction” (67). American Feminists tried to measure a work of art through their preconceived templates and fell short at truly understanding Brecht's profoundly feminist impulse. Western standards proved inadequate in face of the concepts used by Brecht, which are formulated by a return to older forms of theatre and a turn towards the East.

Although many of the practices involved in Brechtian epic theatre had been around for years, even centuries, Brecht unified them, developed the style, and popularized it. Rongning Bai believes “[...] that Brecht's search for a theatre style of his own amidst the socio-cultural as well as political crises between the two world wars made him look to the East for inspiration, [...] His repudiation of the well-made dramatic theatre brought his epic theatre closer to the traditional Chinese theatre whose aesthetic principles he shared in constructing a non-Aristotelian episodic form of drama” (2-3).

America's craze with method acting could not rise to the challenge posed by Brecht's plays. The almost gymnastic adaptability and virtuosity demanded of the actors in his form of theatre could only be answered by a return to Chinese form of theatre. In his experimentations with new modes of theatrical expressions, he did not simply borrow or copy the forms and content of classical Chinese drama; he appropriated, transformed and renewed them. Brecht conceptualized ‘*Vermfremdungseffekt*’ in his ‘Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting’ after having watched an impromptu demonstration of Chinese acting (or as it was known in the west ‘Beijing Opera’) by Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) in Moscow. Mei Lanfang was the ultimate icon of the male *Dan* (male transvestite performers) in the golden age of Beijing Opera (1920's and 30's). He took up the female stage name ‘Mei Lanfang’ in place of his original name ‘Mei Lan’:

“When Brecht saw Mei perform the female (*dan*) role in Moscow, it was without costume, theatrical lighting, or any apparent interior preparation. Seeing Mei confirmed for Brecht what was already taking shape in his own thought and practice...no total amalgamation or identification of the actor or the character...need take place onstage.”

(Martin, 77)

³⁸ "The Good Person of Szechwan." Drama Online Library. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

Mei's influence in Brecht's work did not just limit itself to the conceptualizing of Alienation Effect, use of masks or the changing of costumes on stage but extended to Brecht's creation of Shen Teh and Shui Ta. *The Good Person of Szechwan's* theatrical crux- 'The Song of Defenselessness of the Good and the Gods' offers a crucial insight into epic acting and into the relationship between gender and epic acting. Brecht borrows heavily from Mei Lanfang's ability to manipulate and manufacture 'Gestus,' actions that were both themselves and emblematic, if not symbolic, of larger social practices. In the following lines, Shen Teh is seen as putting on the costume of Shui Ta, and with each piece of the costume that she puts on, her beliefs change as she comes closer to becoming Shui Ta:

SONG OF THE DEFENCELESSNESS OF THE GOOD AND THE GODS

SHEN TEH:

In our country

The capable man needs luck. Only

If he has mighty backers

Can he prove his capacity.

The good

Have no means of helping themselves and the gods are powerless...*She puts on Shui Ta's costume and takes a few steps in his way of walking...* The good cannot remain for long in our country

Where cupboards are bare and housewives start to squabble...*She dons Shui Ta's mask and sings in his voice...*

So why can't the gods make a simple decision

That goodness must conquer in spite of weakness?-

Then back up the good with an armored division

Command it to: 'fire!' and not tolerate meekness?

(48-49)

The song is placed nearly halfway through the play, therefore it is not the first time we come across Shen Teh's invention, but it shows, for the first time in the play, how Shui Ta is assembled. The dramatic character (also the social character) is artificially manufactured. "The demonstrated *construction* of Shui Ta, presented through the action of a baleful and defensive song, *deconstructs* the notions of character, social role (including gender), dramatic inevitability, and the easy distinction between good and evil" (Solomon, 68). The song begins with Shen Teh asking for a 'backing' from the gods and ends with Shui Ta's demand for violent action by the people themselves. Both good and evil and masculine and feminine traits exist in one as these differing personalities are the two facets of the same person. Brecht here, manages to destabilize gender roles through the ambiguous figure of the cross dresser who has occurred throughout the history of Chinese theatre.

Cross-dressing has had a unique significance in Chinese Opera from the time of Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) – the age also known as the 'golden age' of Chinese theatre by critics:

Female players played a leading role on stage, often cross-dressing to play male roles. Later, in the Ming and Qing periods, both private troupes maintained by the gentry, and public theatres prominently featured cross-dressing. Private troupes were predominantly female theatres composed of female cross dressers who performed in the most elegant *Kunqu* style of Opera. However, the prevalence of boy actor/boy actress in the public theatre, which was monopolized by men during the mid-to the late Qing period witnessed the fetishization of this cross-gendered body into an object of desire and taboo.

(Siu Leung Li, 11)

Ming Dynasty Writer Xu Wei's *Hua Mulan (Ci Mulan tifucongjun)* etched in popular memory due to its remake as a Disney film, is the story of the maiden Mulan who joins the army in her father's stead. The

original play was a dramatization of the Chinese household poem ‘*mulan ci*’.³⁹ The play contains within itself a site for subversion of power and space for a queer reading. However, at the time Brecht was writing, Beijing Opera had dominated the theatre scene in China for over a hundred years. Hence, the figure of the male cross dresser was at the pinnacle of cultural obsession. Brecht, instead of following Mei Lafang and creating a male *Dan*, made a return to the female cross dresser Shen Teh, a figure similar to Mulan, in so far as both the women are figures of female transgression and feminine androgyny created by a male author. Both found their feminine self to be lacking, and had to reach within themselves to adopt attributes considered as ‘male’ in order to face their specific social circumstances. However, Shen Teh’s creation, the masculine Shui Ta, was clearly not the answer to Shen Teh’s problems, as he turned into a violent capitalist tyrant ‘Tobacco king’ by the end of the play. Brecht’s solution is neither the ‘good woman’ Shen Teh, nor is it the ‘evil man’ Shui Ta, but it is a balanced ‘person’ who espouses the values of both these personalities. The figure that Brecht seems to uphold as the solution, is a figure found in ancient Chinese philosophy- *Yinyang Ren* (陰陽人).

“*Yinyang Ren* [...] is a category of gender identity [...] used in Chinese society for people (*rén*) who have both feminine (*yin* qualities) and masculine (*yang* qualities) in about equal proportions.”⁴⁰ As the ancient Daoist philosopher *Zhuangzi* claims (quoted by R Wang), “*Yin* in its highest form is freezing while *yang* in its highest form is boiling. The chilliness comes from heaven while the warmth comes from the earth. The interaction of these two establishes *he* (harmony), so it gives birth to things. Perhaps this is the law of everything yet there is no form being seen” (n.pag.). A figure who balances the two forces of masculine and feminine, along with the qualities attributed to them, in equal proportions is the one who will be in harmony or *he*. Brecht encompasses this figure into his Marxist conception of the world- only a good ‘person’ can exist in the harsh world of Szechwan, and not a good ‘man’ or a good ‘woman’.

Cao Xueqin’s (1715 or 1724 – 1763 or 1764) semi-autobiographical novel, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (1791), is widely believed to have the most apt example of *Yinyang Ren* in its protagonist Baoyu.⁴¹ The protagonist “[...] was assigned male at birth, he expresses many gender nonconforming behaviours from early childhood, and grows to feel attraction to women as well as men. Though Baoyu doesn't deny that he is a man, he is said to behave in a more feminine way around women, and in a more masculine way around men. Other characters explain that Baoyu's androgynous behaviour means that he was infused with a perfectly equal amount of yin and yang energy before he was born, rather than an uneven proportion of these energies like most people receive.”⁴² By the end of the novel, the protagonist becomes a Buddhist monk.⁴³

Theories that advocate a balance between masculine and feminine forces exist around the world. For example, Achebe’s most famous tragic protagonist Okonkwo’s fall was brought about by his refusal to acknowledge, within himself, the feminine principle that his Ibo society held in high regard.⁴⁴ In Hinduism,

³⁹ Excerpt from the poem ‘*Ci Mulan*’: 同行十二年，不知木兰是女郎 “We march together for twelve years, and we don’t know that Mulan is a lady!” 雄兔脚扑朔，雌兔眼迷离 “The male rabbit hops from the beginning; the female rabbit’s eyes are misty; 两兔傍地走，安能辨我是雄雌?” Both rabbits are running along the ground; how can you tell whether I am male or female?” [Anonymous. “The Ballad of Mulan.” Tsoi Dug: On Chinese Culture and the Chinese Intellectual Heritage. Trans. Feng Xin -ming. Web.]

⁴⁰ “YinYang Ren.” NonBinary. Web.

⁴¹ *The Dream of the Red Chamber* is one of China’s Four Great Classical Novels. It was written sometime in the middle of the 18th century during the Qing Dynasty. It is considered a masterpiece of Chinese literature and is generally acknowledged to be the pinnacle of Chinese fiction. “Redology” is the field of study devoted exclusively to this work. (Spence, Jonathan. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton, 1990. Print. 106-110)

⁴² “YinYang Ren.” NonBinary. Web.

⁴³ Burkhard Scherer in his work on reading Buddhist narratives, says “Buddhism ultimately points towards transcending gender limitations into a metagendered monism - thus mirroring the Early Buddhist cosmological myths in which the development of sex/gender is seen as decline from the primordial state of union.”

⁴⁴ Chinua Achebe’s (1930-2013) *Things Fall Apart* (1958) tells two overlapping, intertwining stories, both of which center around Okonkwo, a “strong man” of an Ibo village in Nigeria. The first of these stories traces Okonkwo’s fall from grace with the tribal world in which he lives, and in its classical purity of line and economical beauty it provides us with a powerful fable about the immemorial conflict between the individual and society. The second story, which is as modern as the first is ancient, and which

there exists the *Ardhanarishwar*, who is a composite androgynous form of the Hindu god Shiva and his consort *Parvati*. *Ardhanarishvara* is depicted as half male and half female, split down the middle.⁴⁵

For a culturally significant piece of literature like *The Dream of a Red Chamber* to have a gender ambiguous character as its protagonist is a comment on the sort of acceptance old Chinese culture espoused. However, after the fall of Yuan dynasty, the male female-separation in public spaces (*nan, nu xianghun*) was more strictly reinforced, as evident in the repeated assertion of immorality of the act. Under the hierarchical Confucian social order, the constitutive cosmological forces of *yin* [female/darkness/passivity] and *yang* [male/brightness/activity] were defined and given specific roles. In Qing dynasty, there was a persistent fear on the part of the ruling power of the destabilizing of the hierarchical social order (Siu Leung Li, 44).

This unique conflict between acceptance and dismissal of gender ambivalence is exemplified in contemporary Chinese society too. In the so-called Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) traditional musical theatre was banned as a “feudal evil” (Siu Leung Li, 18). Lu Xun, extolled in 1940 by Mao Zedong as “a chief commander of the revolution of culture in China, a great literary writer, a great thinker and a great revolutionary” (Siu Leung Li, 17), saw theatrical transvestism as being a hurdle in nation building as it presented an ‘effeminate’ image of China to the world.⁴⁶ With Communism came strict roles that are to be played by men and women for the advancement of society. Szechwan represents any Chinese town of the time, complete with its own strict gender-role division. Shen Teh, being female, has to be a ‘good woman’ and being a prostitute she also has to be the ‘goods’ men deal with in this world of commerce. Her other option is to live as Shui Ta, who may be able to deal with the world of commerce but lacks a moral compass. In order to escape this binary and live a wholesome existence, she has to stop repressing and alternating the forces of *yin* and *yang* within her.

Presently, “[...] in People’s Republic of China, male cross-dressing is at the brink of extinction under the state’s policy of discontinuing male *dan* training at Chinese opera schools” (Siu Leung Li, 17). On the other hand, the male *dan* has made a reappearance in popular culture which is seeing a growing number of celebrities who are either transgender or sport an androgynous look (Chengzhou, n.pag.). China is heavily influenced by the Korean popular culture which often reflects a broader East Asian culture as it is currently the dominant popular culture throughout Asia. Often referred to as ‘Hallyu’ or literally the ‘Korean wave’, it tops all Asian music charts, box offices, and television ratings. Korean pop culture is unique amongst all popular cultures of the world in its celebration of androgynous idols and actors, indicating the current gender identity revolution in Korea, and more broadly, in East Asia. In Japan, the term *Bishōnen* (美少年), meaning beautiful youth (boy), describes an aesthetic that is frequently found in the protagonists of mainstream Anime art (Buckley, 45).

However, in Communist China, to say that a person who identifies as a transgender is easily accepted by the society would be preposterous. There is a definite gap between social and legal realities of Transgender population in China. “In what seems like a very Chinese mix of domineering Confucianism, inadequate legal frameworks, and considerable confusion and misunderstanding, life for transgender people in China is fraught with difficulties, and accordingly they are marginalized and ostracized from their societies and communities” (Ottery, n.pag.). Similarly, in Thailand where the transgender Ladyboy/*Kathoey* population is far more accepted by the society than in the west (*Kathoey*s consists of one percent of the total population of the country), they are not accorded the same legal rights as the other citizens.⁴⁷

To conclude, Shen Teh, who is a victim of social conditioning as much as any of us are, in her quest for remaining ‘good’, disassociates into a separate personality and gender altogether. Brecht seems to emphasize a need to reconcile the two genders and create a more androgynous identity in order to answer the demands of the new and changing world, in the process of which, redefining what being ‘good’ means.

elevates the book to a tragic plane, concerns the clash of cultures and the destruction of Okonkwo's world through the arrival of aggressive, proselytizing European missionaries.

⁴⁵ Pattnaik, Devdutt. "Ardhanareshwara :Devdutt Pattanaik." Devdutt RSS. Web. 14 Feb. 2016.

⁴⁶ Luo, Liang. "Modern Girl, Modern Men, and the Politics of Androgyny in Modern China." Michigan Quarterly Review. 2008. Web. 12 Feb. 2016.

⁴⁷ Ladyboy Celebrities. Perf. Kate McEnery. BskyB, 2012. National Geographic Documentary Series.

Brecht was not merely interested in using China as a pseudonym for the West or as a device to add an exotic touch to his play *The Good Person of Szechwan*. He studied ancient Chinese philosophies and theatre methodologies to develop a balanced individual, one he believed could survive the modern capitalist world. This gender-neutral figure, although having grown from older forms of Chinese art, philosophy and still appearing in the popular imagination of China and East Asia in general, does not find acceptance in the politico-legal sphere of modern day China.

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The Blakean Child and Carroll's Alice: Figure of the Child in the Romantic and Victorian Periods

Swara Shukla

Abstract

The paper aims to analyse the recurring figure of the child as depicted in the Romantic and Victorian periods through William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books. The paper engages in an in-depth examination of the child as a literary embodiment of social critique and satire in the two periods.

I

Introduction

The figure of the child has always been tenuous at best throughout the history of English Literature. There have been myriad interpretations of the child as a literary symbol, defined by the era and the existing society within it, and the fact is corroborated in the incredible diversity of children's literature that exists today. It is difficult to categorize children's literature into a single, characteristic definition and the very nomenclature of 'children's literature' has been disputed. It has often been claimed that it is impossible for writers to specifically target a child reader, or any section of readers for that matter, in their work. Any work that does acquire a larger readership amongst children then calls for more in-depth study into its stance as an eventual children's story.

With the inconsistencies, ambiguities, conflicted psychologies and the sheer vastness present in the domain of children's literature come the equally tumultuous (and often contradictory) ideas of childhood reflected in it. Yet, childhood as a notion has been upheld and tested by most eminent writers. The child has been made into a central symbol in many literary works, most notably as a Utopian vision or an escape from harsh realities. More often than not, the child has been seen as a figure detached from the social framework of the writer, representing long-lost values and nostalgia. Childhood has always been exalted as the purest, most uncorrupted phase in life, a blissfully oblivious time preceding the violent process of socialization and acculturation. It is this somewhat ubiquitous concept of childhood that poets and writers have exploited to voice their social critique and opprobrium.

After John Newbery (9 July 1713 – 22 December 1767), unanimously hailed as the 'Father of Children's Literature', brought works targeted at children into the commercial market in the late 1740s, the child reader and subsequently the figure of the child were given an independent identity. This prompted a deeper analysis into the literary and symbolic value of childhood. This paper attempts to identify the ideas of childhood dominant in the formative phases of children's literature;—the Romantic era and the Victorian age. This is done by touching upon the idea of the Romantic Child through one of the canonical poets of the period, William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) and that of Victorian childhood as represented in Lewis Carroll's (27 January 1832 – 14 January 1898) *Alice* books.

II

The Rise of the Child

Although Newbery managed to commercialize the idea of children's literature, the concept of childhood itself was still bleak and wasn't usually treated as separate from adulthood. Till the mid-eighteenth century, children, often seen as "miniature adults" (Metz, n.pag.), weren't treated any differently from their adult counterparts. Prose and stories aimed at children existed, but they almost always followed a didactic discourse, trying to preach lessons about religious sin and salvation. The early eighteenth century England was dominated by John Locke's (29 August 1632 – 28 October 1704) philosophy of man being endowed with a natural inclination towards virtue (Banerjee, n.pag.). It is widely believed that the inherent notion of childhood as the cradle of innocence (when man is still untouched by society's vice and corruption) was a result of this philosophy. Banerjee believes that it is this idea that is reiterated in Henry Fielding's (22 April

1707 – 8 October 1754) *Joseph Andrews* (1742), which she views as depicting childhood as the time when "natural goodness of heart" either flowers or is shed (n.pag.).

However, it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (28 June 1712 – 2 July 1778) *Emile, or on Education* (1762) that generated exclusive attention towards childhood and its representation in subsequent literature. Advocating the aforementioned philosophy of man's inherent goodness, the work is divided into five books dealing with the proper education of children and their journey into adulthood. As Stephanie Metz puts it, "Rousseau, in his work, recognised the child as its own entity", something that the Enlightenment thinkers preceding him had failed to do (n.pag.). By drawing a distinct binary between the child and the adult, he facilitated new interpretations and literary constructions of childhood. People began to view the child as a product of the nexus of social forces surrounding him/her. This, in turn, helped writers analyse society in their writings through the figure of the child.

Newbery's *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765) is often touted as the first children's novel. It set up the child-as-the-orphan image that later became popular with the Romantics and the Victorians. A variation of the *Cinderella*-like rags-to-riches tale, it tells the story of Margery, a poor orphan who wins over a rich landowner with her flawless demeanour, humility, hard-work and honesty. Here the child is glorified as the site of virtues. The phrase "goody two shoes" became synonymous with 'virtuous' after the publication of the book. Establishing the notion of virtue being rewarded, it not only reverts to the earlier didacticism of the children's stories, but also, like Rousseau, attempts to throw light on the untarnished, innately good character of the child.

New perceptions into and changing attitudes towards childhood predictably led to a rapid growth in children's literature, so that by the 1800s, it was booming. Debates and discussions surrounded this newfound cognizance of the child and the possibilities of its symbolic manifestation in literature. By the time the Blakean child came into the scene, childhood was almost inextricably being associated with innocence. It was this idea that the likes of Blake, Coleridge and Wordsworth carried forward in their image of the child in their poetry, which is focussed on in the next section.

III

Reading the Romantic Child in Blake

Romantic writers belonged to the first generation raised on the commercial Newbery children's books (Trumpener, 554) and so were hyperaware of the changing perceptions of childhood. As child-readers, they were subjected to a constantly-changing literary landscape. Most of their school years were dominated by the search for stories that they could engage with. This led them to resort to chapbook-reading, which was primarily constituted of short parables or poems, and served as a reprieve from their rote-learned grammar books and dictionaries. However, Katie Trumpener also tells us of an incident in the child-Coleridge's life, wherein he turned to chapbook-reading like his school peers, but was eventually so haunted by the stories that his father burnt them (553). With the tumult of literary discoveries and rediscoveries dominating most of their formative years, it could be assumed that they not only recognised the importance of an exclusive juvenile literature, but also harboured insights into the psychology of the child-reader and subsequently that of the child. Their experiences as child-readers can be looked at to analyse further their interpretation of the child in their poetry. The Romantics, in hindsight, were credited with beginning what many critics called "The Cult of the Child" (Banerjee, n.pag.).

Although Blake and Wordsworth adopted the child as central figures in a lot of their poetry, the poems themselves weren't in keeping with most conventions that had come to be associated with children's literature and its representation of childhood. For the two poets, the child is entirely metaphorical and symbolic, a refuge from what they perceived as the harsh reality of the world around them. Their poetry is not exclusively aimed at children either. With a predominantly adult readership, the child-figure stands out in stark contrast, which is often believed to be the larger aim of their writing. Using the images of childhood in works seemingly aimed for an adult readership is an ostensible attempt at using the figure as a source of nostalgia, a painful reminder of lost virtues and innocence. It serves to strengthen the child-adult dichotomy that Rousseau had brought forward. This dichotomy is integral in understanding the social critique and near-Utopian vision that they try to express through their poems.

Renowned literary critic Northrop Frye states, "Childhood to Blake is a state or phase of imaginative existence, the phase in which the world of imagination is still a brave new world and yet reassuring and intelligible" (qtd. in Gupta (ed.) 75). This interpretation of the Blakean child instantly suggests a disconnect from the existent society. Suggesting that a child lives in an exclusive world of its own, Blake evidently attempts to cocoon the figure of the child from the structural and societal vices surrounding him. These vices, for most Romantics, included a growing distance from nature (a consequence of the much chastised Industrial Revolution and the disasters of the French Revolution) and loss of freedom. Blake re-evokes the image of the child as unaffected and uncorrupted in the following lines from his poem, 'The Lamb':

[...] Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;

(Blake 74)

Most critics have believed the above lines to stand for the natural protection of the child ("clothing of delight") from the corruptions of the outside world and its subsequent proximity to nature. In poems like these, Blake seems to be using the child as a means to distance himself from his surroundings to provide an objective critique of his society. His idealistic vision of childhood as a blissful and oblivious state has garnered criticism from many, but the image gives him a safer refuge to turn to and lash out against his society without actually alienating himself from it. But more importantly, the child for him becomes an expression of the disillusionment of the first generation Romantics with the French Revolution.

Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Experience* (1794) are primarily about contraries in man. Every poem in *Innocence* has a counterpart in *Experience*. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), Blake writes, "Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence" (3). His struggle to unify and encompass all humanity through his Myth of the Albion (All-Man) and his rejection of politics after witnessing the horrors of the French Revolution point to a desperation to understand the fundamental, divided psychology of humankind. He believed that a unitive life was the only true life (Cama), but this belief was being challenged by the fragmentation of the society he was witnessing around himself, both in terms of the aftermath of the Revolution and the subsequent collapse of feudal values. The unification he was looking for then becomes a process of reintegrating man's divided self and reengaging with society. This unification seems to be the ultimate goal of Blake's poetry in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Some of his other popular works also seem to point towards this goal, especially his revolutionary and intensely personal work, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that came out right after *Songs of Innocence*.

In that context, the Blakean child becomes the site of, or rather an expression of this unification, a means to his ultimate goal. Robert F. Gleckner believes that this figure of the child is essential in providing an overarching structure and context to his *Songs* (83-85). The child of *Innocence* is radically different from the child of *Experience* (Gleckner 84), and they represent the contrary states of man, but the symbolic significance remains the same. The child in both reveals all that is wrong with the world, the aforementioned detachment coming into play. Taking an example, the chimney sweepers in *Innocence* and *Experience* stand for the oppression faced by child labourers, a clear comment on society, but their depiction and attitudes are different in both. The child in 'The Chimney Sweeper' from *Innocence* is endowed with relentless faith in God and joy awaiting in heaven. This drives him to work diligently as a chimney sweeper, completely oblivious to the injustice of the setting:

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags and brushes to work
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm

(Blake 78)

The glaring paradox that Tom's belief brings about helps Blake criticise the schisms between the wealthy and the poor present in his society. Tom here, as the central figure, is presented as a bright spot

amidst the murky landscape depicted in the poem. Faith, dreams (Tom dreams about an angel coming to take the chimney sweepers to heaven) and hope are values ensconced in the figure of the child, and are clearly out of place in the social setting that Blake tries to look into. In 'The Chimney Sweeper' of *Experience*, the child becomes an object and is completely dehumanized. Unlike in *Innocence*, the critique comes from the child himself, who is aware of the exploitation he faces and his poor parents (he is not an orphan here), who have sold him for monetary gain:

And because I'm happy and dance and sing
They think they have done me no injury
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

(Blake 80)

Not only is the criticism more direct (the figure of the child loses its metaphorical value as the embodiment of lost goodness), the child here also criticises the blind faith of the child in *Innocence*. "God, Priest and King" are a clear derision of the holy trinity (Gupta (ed.) 80), and the lines above are harsher and more satirical than its *Innocence* counterpart. The child, instead of an abstract, symbolic remnant of inherent goodness and forgotten virtues, becomes microcosmic to the suffering classes Blake tends to target in his social criticism. Yet, it is the idea of innocence in childhood that is being endangered. The figure of the child is still constant in both the poems as a tool of social critique.

Blake's journey from *Innocence* to *Experience* depicts the loss of innocence as the child forays into adulthood. The mother lamenting over the loss of her child, a prominent figure in *Songs of Experience* also echoes this. Stephanie Mertz surmises "The child, some Romantic poets believed, had access to a unique worldview, precisely because a child has not yet rationalized and assimilated the workings of society the way an adult has. The literary and political influence of Romanticism retains its potency even today as it still colours our perceptions of children" (n.pag.). In the child, Blake gave us an untarnished lens to appraise society. His poems present childhood as an overreaching structure, a space representing stability and lucidity in contrast to the ever-changing societal and literary landscape. The child becomes a moral reference to judge everything else by. His almost-ethereal vision of the child and its importance as a social glue is reiterated in his later poem 'Auguries of Innocence':

He who mocks the Infant's Faith
Shall be mocked in Age & Death.
He who shall teach the Child to Doubt
The rotting Grave shall ne'er get out.
He who respects the Infant's faith
Triumphs over Hell & Death.
The Child's Toys & the Old Man's Reasons
Are the Fruits of the Two seasons.

(Blake n.pag.)

IV

Alice and Victorian Childhood

Lewis Carroll introduced the character of Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), developing her further in the sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). Since then, her character, in hindsight, has standardized not only the idea of the Victorian Child, but also that of the Victorian girl. Like in case of the Romantics, Carroll has used his child-protagonist as a symbol of defiance and social critique. The fundamental idea behind the choice of the child to appraise the society is the same as that behind the Romantic child-figure; to provide an objective, unconditioned and unbiased insight into society and its conventions. With the staggering amount of Victorian children's literature (and child protagonists) known today, it is clear that childhood had become a popular tool for subtle satire and criticism by then.

Jules Michelet had commented on the importance of the child in society by saying, "the child is the interpreter of the People. Rather, he is the People with their inborn truth before they become deformed, the People without vulgarity, without uncouthness, without envy, inspiring neither distrust nor repulsion. Not only does the child interpret the People, he also justifies and exonerates them in many things...No, childhood is not merely an age or degree in life, it is the innocent People" (qtd in Gordon 143). His idealistic view of the child as the embodiment of purity echoes that of Blake's as mentioned in the previous section (especially in the poem 'The Lamb' from *Songs of Innocence*) and even other Romantic poets like Wordsworth (reflected in 'The Immortality Ode'). This extreme extolment of the child is clear in Carroll's *Alice* books too, especially in light of the allegations of him being a paedophile. Employing the 'dreamland' trope, he uses Alice to rebel against oppressive norms, conventions and moral codes of the Victorian society. In that sense, his child-figure is more transgressive and more material as opposed to the transcendental and unearthly figure in Romantic poetry.

The first thing that stands out in both the books is Carroll's clear diatribe against the moral impositions of the Victorian society. In the wake of the Evangelical revival of the late-eighteenth century, the subsequent Victorian Age had also become obsessed with morality and Christian ethics. This is also reflected in Jane's character in *Jane Eyre* (1847), where the motif of religious morality dominates the episodes involving the characters of Jane's school friend Helen Burns and later on, her cousin St. John. Even Jane's own actions, however rebellious they may seem, are determined by her constant awareness of basic Christian values and moral codes. The reader, throughout the book, is made aware of a moral framework that Jane functions within. A parallel can be drawn between her character and that of Alice's in both the books, where Alice too is constantly aware of an expected, normative mode of behaviour in a given social setting. In both the books, there are 'motherly' characters in her dreamland who lecture her about morals and manners. With the authoritative, didactic tone they adopt, it isn't difficult for the reader to imagine the Victorian child being instructed in the same manner in a typical domestic setting. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it is the Duchess who rants about morals:

Alice had quite forgotten about the Duchess by this time, and was a little startled when she heard her voice close to her ear. 'You're thinking about something, my dear, and that makes you forget to talk. I can't tell you just now what the moral of that is, but I shall remember it in a bit.'

'Perhaps it hasn't one,' Alice ventured to remark.

'Tut, tut, child!' said the Duchess. 'Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.'

(Carroll 70)

In *Through the Looking Glass*, it is the more reprimanding Red Queen who becomes the equivalent of the Duchess, instructing Alice on her mannerisms and body language, a clear allusion to the Victorian scrutiny over how a woman carried herself in social gatherings:

'[...] Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time.'

Alice attended to all these directions and explained as well as she could.

'[...] Curtsey while you're thinking what to say. It saves time [...] Open your mouth a little wider when you speak, and always say "Your Majesty" '

(Carroll 21)

The characters in the *Alice* books are unmistakable caricatures of the moral didacticism of the age. It is also worth noting that all these expectations that surround Alice are largely gender-constructed. Their existence in Alice's subconscious not only tells us how deeply engraved these gender-notions were in the society, but also points a finger towards the heavy indoctrination and acculturation that a child as a social being was expected to undergo. Through the close proximity that the narrator maintains with the character, the reader remains cognizant of Alice's conditioned thoughts about social behaviour and conduct (which can be taken as microcosmic to the larger Victorian attitude). This consciousness of an expected action helps Alice, and, by extrapolation, her reader know exactly how the characters in her dreamland are deviating from them. Alice's initial surprise at these deviations of the characters make us realise how unexpected their

actions would be in the 'real' world, the world she has escaped from. All her presuppositions, her tendency to conform to certain pre-existing conventions of behaviour and established social codes that seem to guide her even in her dreams give us a concrete image of the Victorian Child in general and a girl child in particular.

It was in hindsight, with a growing psychoanalytical approach towards the books, that Alice became characteristic of Victorian childhood. Carroll framing the stories in the structure of an adventure tale and his need of an escapade into a fantastical world within the story to bring out a commentary on social norms also say a lot. Childhood in general, according to an aforementioned argument, was expected to be a phase untouched and uncorrupted by external blemishes and social vices ("without vulgarity, without uncouthness, without envy"), and thus was a free, uncontrolled space. If that was true, however, seven-year-old Alice (seven-and-half in *Through the Looking Glass*), in such an early stage of childhood, wouldn't have felt as constricted by the social forces of control around her and wouldn't even have been aware of them to begin with. But her foray into dreamlands as an escape mechanism (in both the books, she drifts off while sitting in a routinized domestic setting) hints at how confined a child really was within the given social constructs.

Since there is a glaring lack of an unaffected mind in Alice, the very concept of childhood comes into question. A series of historical arguments can be drawn to arrive at the conclusion that childhood itself was under threat at the time Carroll was writing. The books then, can be viewed as an attempt to regain literary respect for the child. Jan B. Gordon relates this to the post-Darwinian concern of the Victorian society with the ideas of evolution and development (144). In light of his argument, Alice's adventures through Wonderland and the Looking-glass can be seen as a coming-of-age journey for her. This can be further linked to Jewel White's argument that the loss of childhood was caused due to the high child mortality rate in nineteenth-century England (4-5). As a result, there was more anxiety and apprehension than attachment to children in general. With childhood being so inextricably linked to loss and pain, it could be argued that there was a general haste towards adulthood in the society. Indeed, all the standard codes of morals and social behaviour that Alice keeps alluding to, seem to be an attempt to integrate her into the realm of adulthood.

Wonderland and Looking-glass as spatial arrangements then become a means to engage with an alternate reality, which in this case would be 'true' childhood. They seem to indulge the most 'inherent' childhood traits of curiosity and exploration. Carroll seems to be attempting a much needed detachment from the realm of the adult that the child is being forced into. For him the most basic idea of childhood becomes a form of escape. His is often said to be a struggle to prolong childhood, as is suggested by his lingering obsession with Alice Liddell, the inspiration for his protagonist, even after she grew up. *Through the Looking Glass* was written six years after *Wonderland*, when Liddell would have been nearly twenty years of age. Yet, in the universe of the books themselves, only six months have passed and Alice is exactly six months older in the *Looking Glass* than she was in the first book. Even in Wonderland and Looking Glass, time is seen to contract as compared to the world outside these dreamlands. Carroll's fixation with the child-Alice and his abounding metaphors of time and change (the Mad Hatter in *Wonderland*, for example, perpetually has a watch hanging around his neck that he keeps glancing at) imply a sense of nostalgia and grief over lost childhood. The figure of the Victorian child as represented in Alice's character can be then seen as an attempt at the revival of childhood itself.

V

Conclusion: The Child as Metaphor

Blake's child is a dehumanized figure, an embodiment of all that is uncorrupted, stable, pure. For him, the child becomes a site of positive qualities of unrelenting faith, proximity to nature and creative imagination, something that all Romantics kept in high regard. The persona of the child gives his poems a core, an overarching structure. At the same time, it helps Blake maintain a certain distance from the critical stance that the poems take against society. He uses the child-figure as a moral scale against the existing prejudices, social schisms and injustice, and hence, the child is reduced to a reference point for moral judgements. The attitudinal and radical differences in the child-figures of *Innocence* and *Experience*, at the outset at least, celebrate and exalt the most fundamental notion of childhood while placing it as a device of social critique.

Victorian childhood essentially represents the same values as the Romantic child, especially those of innocence and imagination. Carroll's child-figure is also used to lash out at the oppressive norms and conventions of the Victorian society. Yet, Alice is more rounded and substantiated, and within the world of the *Alice* stories, engages more actively with the society around her, even if most of the interactions exist in her dreams.

While the Blakean child tries to encompass the All-Man, Alice becomes definitive of childhood in particulars. Blake's child is a unifying force against a constantly crumbling world and Alice is a struggle to retain a constantly slipping ideal. With the constant drift away from nature and imagination, Blake's child is a reminder as well as hope for lost values that the poet is lamenting. He is mostly a personification of abstract, unconventional ideas. Alice is more humanized, representing a Victorian individual rather than ideal values, and a more concrete identity enables her to comment on more than one social construct.

While the child in both Romantic and the Victorian literary landscape serves as a lens to probe their surroundings, it also becomes a source of escape and nostalgia. Both the child-figures have a crucial symbolic and metaphorical value in the domain of English Literature.

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Snow: A Bloody Stage

Tirna Sengupta

Abstract

The author examines the reciprocal relationship between life and theatre in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (2002). Just as a performance goes from realistic to real on the novel's bloody stage, life also takes on the proportion and artfulness of theatre. Death with its terminality suspends the action of the novel between spontaneous lived life and a dramatic plotted art.

'Snow' as a title is suggestive of placidity perhaps. Most ironically, Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow* (2002) presents a series of deaths in the course of a fierce tension between the secular government and the political Islamic fundamentalists. Inked in bloody red is the title on white of the cover page. Taking theatre as superstructure of the novel, we see how theatre has been revolutionized in the novel as a performance that extends beyond the stage, in its metaphorical and literal implications. Not only does the text abound in references to aesthetic performances, but reality assumes theatricality in structure and style while seen as a religio-political farce and an intense struggle (*agon*).

Conventionally, theatre has been defined as being imitative of life. Cicero calls it 'a copy of life, a mirror of custom, a reflection of truth' (quoted in Nicoll 24). Aristotle broadens his definition of theatre by calling it a creative imitation of life and action. 'Theatre' derives from the word 'theatron' which means 'a place for viewing or watching'. It exhibits a spectacle with its plot, characters/actors, action, dialogue and diction, setting, scenography, costume, lighting, music, and so on. The many elements of drama/theatre concertedly put together a performance that is more than a simple, unrehearsed and spontaneously lived life. Theatre acquires and preserves its distinctiveness by virtue of its artificiality or excess in re/presentation even as it seeks to replicate life with impeccability. Fiction renders artistic a simulation of life. Only the aesthetically appealing and climactically impressive performance takes to the stage. Theatre has the neatness of art even as it depicts disorder. It has a distance from life in spite of being close to it. The stage puts itself on a ground above reality. It is fiction, theatrically served.

Theatre has been more than entertainment. It has been reformative, revolutionary, radical and educative. It has often surpassed the proscenium stage and has either made reality a participant in the performance or entered the realm of reality and affected it. Sunay Zaim connects theatre with history by quoting Marx (mis)quoting Hegel in *Snow*:

"It was Hegel who first noticed that history and theatre are made of the same materials," said Sunay. "Remember: Just as in the theater, history chooses those who play the leading roles. And just as actors put their courage to the test on stage, so too do the chosen few on the stage of history"

(Pamuk 199)

History and myth, the real world and imagination, individual and collective sensitivity, objective views and opinions, craft and vision collaborate in the making of the theatre. Hence the traditional idea of theatre needs revision as theatre has now acquired new dimensions proceeding from realistic to self-reflexive. Victor Turner's concept of 'liminality' of life and theatre is of much relevance in contemporary theatre hence. Life is indeed sometimes imitative of theatre. This only rethinks the fact that theatre is a separate entity by itself, removed from life. When occasions in life acquire the proportions of artistic and climactic performance, it becomes theatrical. Life stages a performance as if having a plot, actors and style before an audience. The paper seeks to understand the permeability of life and theatre in the novel which shows certain presence of dramatic elements in reality and reality in a performance on the stage. Elizabeth Burns has also argued that the relationship between theatre and life can be two-way: if the stage is a world in its own right, all the world is equally a stage (8-11). In *Snow*, a military coup 'staged' on the stage, suicides, murders, political, religious and cultural clashes depicted most theatrically, and scenes rendered with dramatic perfection make theatre participate in creating and rephrasing reality in the novel.

In an undemocratic state, art, including theatre and other forms of literature, has always been under the control of the powerful. Even in *Snow* the proscenium stage is used only by the military chief to stage a coup and 'educate' the mass. Sunay Zaim, an actor to whom Victor Turner's 'liminality' applies most aptly, always finds the presence of his actor self in himself as he acts as a dictator in his office. He stands for secularism and what 'westernization' is to his opponents. He also seems to fulfil his real life ambitions through the stage. Sunay cannot leave his person behind when he assumes a role on stage. He cannot feign a role, he invokes and lives it. He is his own person on the stage, a being and not a mere role. Theatre is a medium for him to stage the exact image of his plans. He draws others into this less-realistic-more-real theatre.

Kadife too changes her life through the theatre. Sunay Zaim's stage is a realm of reality that the audience watches as a performance. But the actors propagate something bold and radical that they cannot do in ordinary life. The pretense here is only of acting, of having a plot. He creates a real-life theatre, not imitative of life, but life itself as if replicating art. This explains Sunay Zaim's death on stage which perhaps he himself had planned.

Snow is based in Turkey of the 1980s and 1990s. The country has always been a secular country since 1928, but the inclination towards the Islamic fundamentalist parties increased during the '80s and '90s because of growing economic perils. Religious nationalism, or political Islamism, has often emerged in the Muslim world as a result of secularism's failure to deliver and its threat to the Islamic conception of nation, of the human world, so to say (Juergensmeyer 1-8). The secular, republican, nationalist nation was the handiwork of Mustafa Kemal (the Ataturk). The danger of erosion confronting Turkey's secularism swings Sunay Zaim into action on the political as well as theatrical stage to restore 'Ataturkism'. The picture and language of the performance put on by Zaim's acting troop, pronounces the arrangement of the proscenium stage – the actors against the audience. The audience is the receptor of the revolution that the troop stages. The interaction between the actors/the secularists and the audience/the fundamentalists is highly frictional but rooted in the country's political arena already theatricalized. The fundamentalists and the secularists align themselves in a position of war. The theatre troop directly attacks the audience. This bears direct semblance to Turner's definition of 'metatheatre.' To put it in the words of Leonel Abel:

It breaks the frame of the 'fourth wall' of conventional theatre, reaching out to assault the audience or to draw it into the realm of the play. It may – by devices – like plays within plays, self-consciously 'theatrical' characters, and commentary on the theatre itself – dwell on the [fluid] boundaries between 'illusion' and 'reality'. Metatheatre presents life already theatricalized.

(133-35)

"The fluid boundaries of illusion and reality" dissolve here completely as some audiences are killed and the performance takes on the dimension of reality. Sunay Zaim's and his wife's life in the theatre is a war against the fundamentalists whom Zaim considered the enemy of progress. Turkey seemed to be a bipolar world, or maybe the fundamentalist saw it so sharply divided. The secularists –Ka, Turget Bey and Ipek –were all taken as atheists. Faith without a militant defence of it was seen as atheism by Islamists, a terrible crime, an erosion of morals, wantonness.

Theatre cannot be symptomatically detected in life, but life often assumes theatrical dimensions on some extraordinary occasions due to the presence of certain theatrical elements in it. Pamuk introduces devices and scenes to add a dramatic superstructure to the whole story. The entire conflict hinges on the 'headscarf issue'. The headscarf is originally a religious imposition on Muslim women. Pamuk uses a historic socio-cultural symbol that gathers layers of changing contexts, realities, sentiments and perceptions around it in the course of the novel as a progression of Turkish history. The headscarf that is commonly perceived as a cultural-sexual repression of women, is interestingly turned into a symbol of freedom / 'Islamic feminism'. It became a Muslim/Turkish woman's protection against the lewd western woman that she thought they would become without the headscarf. The headscarf constructed the female Muslim identity for Turkish women. The headscarf is also what the politics is fought over. The tension around this theatrical device spills blood in the coliseum of *Snow*. The headscarf is propagated by the Islamic fundamentalists and the secularists fear the 'Islamization' of the state institutions through such a religiously loaded symbolism. The state has banned the headscarf in educational institutions. This causes the suicide of

a girl, Teslime, as the choice between her education and her identity — the headscarf was a part of her identity — became too difficult for her to make. The Director of the Educational Institute is again shot to death by an Islamic fanatic for his ‘atheism’ and nonconformity to the Islamic view of woman. At the other extreme, Sunay Zaim’s wife, Funda Eser, performs *My Headscarf* that charges the headscarf with the symbolism of a woman’s fettered liberty. She represents the army’s oppositional attitude towards Islamic fundamentalism. The two modes of performing-performance, in life and in theatre, thus create a sort of conflictual reciprocity.

Death in itself is dramatic. Its suddenness, irreversibility and its termination of life renders it distinctive from the familiar. Death has the gravity to influence people emotionally. Dramatists have hence used death to provide a play its climax. Suicides have voiced protest, murders have created villains, genocides have reflected societal turmoil, and deaths have conceived martyrs; deaths have created the most remarkable sensation in theatre. Death has been used to make tragedies, rouse sympathy or to restore justice. *Snow*’s bloody stage tells a tale torn by social, religious and ideological conflict with dramatic finesse. The suicide epidemic in Kars and bringing Ka in as a reporter to interview the families of the girls who committed suicide is a technique used to theatricalize the distressing realities surrounding Kars and the plight of women above all. We look at women being married off without their approval, wives beaten and tortured by their unemployed men, daughters-in-law taunted for not being able to conceive, girls’ virginity questioned by society and suitors backing out of engagements for doubts about their chastity and covered women attacked in educational institutions by forces of the state. The more we learn the reasons that compelled the women of Kars to commit suicide the more we understand the society that Pamuk portrays here.

The killing of the director of the Education Institute is presented to us in an extremely dramatic manner, in the form of a recording on a hidden recorder that the director carried along to help the police find his killer. As we hear the conversation between the religious fanatic who murdered him and the director, we are disturbed by a secular versus fundamentalist debate. The fanatic fails to understand the secularist and the secular state rudely interferes with the public expression of religious faith. The headscarf, a symbol of ‘political Islam’ which the devout Muslim woman must wear as an obligation to God, raises many questions on feminism and the interpretation of the Koran. The murderer takes the headscarf as defence of the dignity of women and says, ‘Headscarves protect women from harassment, rape and degradation.’ This statement is hostile to the widely accepted feminist views that assign no responsibility to the woman to protect her ‘dignity’ by insulating herself from the lust and ‘animal instincts’ of men (Pamuk 46). Political Islam constructed a Turkish female identity which perceived secularism as western colonization.

In *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*, a 1977 play that deals with dissent against the Soviet hegemony in the Eastern Bloc, Arthur Miller uses a possibility of the ceiling being bugged to bring the characters to converse as if addressing the machine. Pamuk uses Ka’s offer to write Turkey’s message to the West as an intelligent dramatic device to bring under a roof all the opinions of Turkey to engage in a dialogue and discourse. The collective attempt to write for the West a representation from Turkey was challenging because of the myriad factions that existed within the State one absolutely opposed to another. Pamuk’s effort is one of a dramatist’s to bring on stage a wide range of characters to build the conflict and make them struggle to arrive at a denouement on their identity in relation to the West, on whether to be absolutely dismissive of the West or how far inclusive to be. This novel explores the insecurity of the poor in a deplorable Third World country against the pity of the West. Religion becomes the centre of a militant nationalism in such hard times, which integrates, disintegrates and serves as a preoccupation and relief from a terrible situation. The West exoticizes the problems of the Third World and the Third World rejects progress as ‘Western’ out of frenzied patriotism. Blue, a militant Islamist declares the West as their enemy and refuses to ‘ape’ it. Turget Bey’s secular and democratic outlook, on the other hand, prompted him to accept the West as their future. It is interesting to observe how a country’s common history has so many competing versions. We see the room full of factions struggling to narrate the same incident in the same form because of their difference in perception as individuals and also as communities within the same country. Pamuk focuses on the split in the Turkish society as he employs another dramatic technique of everybody answering Turget Bey’s directive asking each to send a two-line message to the West. This is again conceived as a scene dialogically

structured. When the young Kurdish nationalist says, ‘We’re not stupid! We’re just poor! And we have a right to insist on this distinction!’ he is faced with the question who exactly his ‘we’ refers to — the Turks, the people of Kars, Kurds or the Circassians. The debate and the struggle to define their identity proceeds to accuse the West of pitying them for their ‘stupidity’ or never taking them seriously. They observe that they were Muslims before Turks and the Westerners were simply humans, and there was some insecurity involved in such cultural identification. In varying degrees most of them asserted that their strife was to understand how cultural and religious conduct was intrinsic to being Turkish and to follow it with piety. Kadife ended the meeting with her observations on a woman’s choice of covering her head, contrasting it with how every gesture of an individual in the country was interpreted as choosing either the Western or the Turkish side. If a woman bared her head the West would triumph, and if she covered it she would propagate ‘Political Islam’ for the sake of her country.

Pamuk subtitles the chapter ‘Women Commit Suicide to Save Their Pride’ ‘Final Act’. Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) improvised into *Tragedy in Kars* brings the people of Kars to watch theatre change their future. Sunay Zaim was by then the most powerful man in Kars and the characters of his theatre were known to them all. This caused excitement in the people just as it scared them. Some were present for compulsory attendance, some were picked up in the army trucks and brought in, some came for fear-filled thrill while the others watched the play with trepidation on the television. Here theatre is a pretext to unite all the miserable citizens of Kars. And theatre partakes of life, exceeds it by exaggerating it and then leaps from the stage to a wider space by being broadcast on the TV. Sunay and Kadife, bold personalities who never agreed with each other over anything, come onto the stage together. A lot of rumours and expectations do their course among the audience. Farce predominates the novel, but as the readers prepare to watch Sunay Zaim’s captivating presence on the stage, we experience theatre as both engagement and entertainment; the kind of fiction the tired man took refuge in for a while and then left the hall to return to a different reality. As soon as the play begins, we enter a debate between Sunay and Kadife where we doubt every moment if the performance has had a script before it at all. Ironically, Kadife’s and Sunay’s roles are quite opposites of their ideologies in life, but each of them, as they act ‘spontaneously’, tries to ensure the victory of their purpose in the play. Suicides and headscarves are both central themes of the play. Kadife is brought in as a mouthpiece by Sunay of his theatre to accomplish his plans for Turkey. Kadife’s stand in all of this remains misty to us till the end; we are never certain if her enthusiasm for the headscarf was prompted by her own rationality or by her passion for Blue. The novel suggests at one level that she shot Sunay Zaim on the stage acting outside the plot of the play. A newspaper report had been published before, about Sunay Zaim’s death on stage, by Serder Bey in the *Border City Gazette*. Pamuk mixes fiction with reality all through the novel. Serder Bey’s reports are seen to precede the event. Kadife seizes this opportunity to avenge Blue’s death.

Pamuk ends the novel in an original state of confusion. The audience in the novel’s theatre and the readers of the novel are both left with questions and doubts unresolved. The work demonstrates the inseparable and therefore sometimes incomprehensible relationship between life and theatre, between pretending and acting. Death is the greatest unanswered ‘pretense’ in Sunay’s theatre that perhaps no longer remains his. A slap in a play is represented by an act of slapping, a fall by a fall. Death is depicted by a pretense that is not even close to real death. But death, in this novel, fuses fiction and reality. Did Sunay Zaim plan his death and prepare all his life to mount an artistically unflawed presentation, not representation, of it on the stage? Or did it happen without his plans? The audience half expects him to get up and deliver a monologue. We don’t know for sure whether Kadife killed him for revenge or unknowingly, accidentally. In any case, this is a performance without a conventional plot or acting: in fact, the very elements of conventional theatre stand challenged here. Whether the blood feud is placed on the stage as real or passed for theatre, theatre remains suspended between truth and fiction in the absence of veracity in favour of either.

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The Representation of Popular Culture in Anuja Chauhan's *Battle for Bittora* and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*

Zehra Kazmi

Abstract

The author aims to analyze the themes of gender, language, class and politics in Anuja Chauhan's *Battle for Bittora* (2010) and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (2013). She also studies the emerging genre of 'Chick Literature' within popular culture and Chauhan's appropriation of it to voice some uniquely Indian concerns.

Anuja Chauhan is an interesting figure to study in the landscape of contemporary Indian writing in English. She is as popular and commercial as it gets, while still ensuring respectably well-written prose and surprisingly unexpected levels of insight in her work. With her background in advertising, Chauhan was responsible for some of the most memorable and successful campaigns in the 90s and early 2000s. She has said that her quest to find creative control led her to writing and it became a way for her to tell the stories in a way that the multi-billion dollar structure of advertising did not allow her to (Nair, n.pag). However, it is this familiarity with advertising which lets her create dialogues, make sharp observations about society and makes her prose distinctive and refreshing. For the purposes of my paper, I have restricted the scope of my research to two of her novels - *Battle for Bittora* (2010) and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (2013). The utilization of the structure of romantic novels by Chauhan and its subversion, the idea of "chick lit" as a genre and her uniquely Indian concerns being reflected in her writing are also important themes that have been included in the paper.

Those Pricey Thakur Girls is a romantic comedy set during pre-liberalization in late 1980s Delhi. The plot revolves around the Thakur family, which includes a retired judge, his wife and their five alphabetically named daughters – Anjini, Binodini, Chandrakanta, Debjani and Eshwari who live in Hailey Road in the heart of the national capital. Primarily, the novel is a love story between Debjani or 'Dabbu' and Dylan, two journalists who initially have very different outlooks regarding their profession. Chauhan's narrative is replete with mentions of significant events and popular cultural references of that era. The largely cheerful tone of the novel is interspersed with mentions of the 1984 Anti-Sikh riots, press censorship, the evolution of Indian media and the changing fate of Delhi's old, affluent families.

Battle for Bittora (2010) is the second most successful novel of Chauhan's, which is being analysed in this paper. Much like her other novels, *Battle for Bittora* is also a romantic comedy featuring a young woman in her early twenties but is situated in the political landscape of the hinterlands of North India. The novel follows a twenty-five-year-old animator Jinni or Sarojini Pande who returns to her hometown of Bittora to stand for the Lok Sabha elections at the behest of her grandmother, a veteran politician. Her main opponent is Zain Altaf Khan, her childhood sweetheart and the Nawab of Bittorgarh. The explosive professional and sexual tension between the two forms the major conflict within the plot. In the novel, Chauhan touches upon various issues like communalism, the polarising character of electoral politics in India, political dynasties and corruption of state institutions.

Chauhan's female protagonists are young, ambitious professionals with an independent streak. Jinni is an animation technician and Dabbu is a news reader at *DeshDarpan* or DD (euphemism for *Doordarshan*). However, they are never truly emancipated from the web of family and relatives. For example, in *Battle for Bittora*, Jinni joins politics after almost being forced into it by her grandmother Pushpa Pande, a veteran politician. In *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*, Dabbu is surrounded by her parents, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and their friends. The family becomes the locus to which both her protagonists are inextricably linked. They are conventionally beautiful women who come from privileged backgrounds. Even if the characters might not be aware of the privilege that comes from their class position and good looks, the narrative makes us aware of it. As in most romantic novels, Dabbu and Jinni's identities are defined by their behaviour towards the male romantic leads of the texts. Gaining the approval of Dylan and Zain are

necessary steps towards validation. Dabbu's chastity maybe contextualized by the time set of the novel. However, Jinni is shown to be more sexually liberated, despite having a tendency to be constantly apologetic about her sexual attraction towards Zain as it jeopardizes her reputation, both political and sexual. Dabbu is always favourably compared to the older, flirtatious Anju whose roving eye is constantly censured throughout the text. However, this authorial censure is justified within the plot by tracing its roots to Anju's vanity, irresponsibility and selfishness. The professional Indian woman who struggles with her constant sexualisation while trying to deliver on the job is also a significant common theme in both the novels, as reflected in the crisis faced by the accusations of nymphomania against Jinni or the condescension with which Dabbu's male co-workers in the DD offices approach her.

It is important to note that Anju's perceived vanity stems from her awareness of her own beauty and sexual magnetism. Both *Battle for Bittora* and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* have caricatured the sorry, middle-aged woman in almost tragically funny characters like Chachi and Gudia Aunty. Despite their tragic back stories and constant sense of victimization, Chauhan spares little sympathy for them in the novels and they are presented as simpering yet viciously insecure characters. Munni from *Battle For Bittora* and Hot Dulari from *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* are examples of feisty women who aspire for higher social mobility despite their class positions, though there are differences in the methods both apply to achieve it. Munni is an upcoming *neta* or politician who belongs to a lower caste background whereas Hot Dulari, the domestic help at a bungalow in Delhi, is shown to have an unabashed affair with her employer, Ashok Chacha, who belongs to a significantly higher class background. Romance writer and literary critic Jennifer Crusie defines romance as a genre in the following way:

“It has to be a love story. Not a story with a great love subplot, a love story. It has to be a book in which the main plot concerns two people falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work. The conflict in the book should be central to the love story. The protagonists in the book should be the protagonists in the love story. The climax in the book should resolve the love story. A writer is welcome to as many subplots as s/he likes as long as the relationship conflict is the main story.”

(Crusie, n.pag)

Both the novels expanded upon in this research paper can be seen as largely falling into the categories of both romance and 'chick-lit'. Chick literature is defined as a form of genre fiction which addresses issues of modern womanhood, often humorously and light-heartedly. Though chick-lit can have romantic elements in the plot, it is not a direct derivative of the romance novel genre because often the heroine's platonic relationships with her friends or family are placed on the same pedestal as her romantic ones (Hooten, n.pag). When viewing them from the prism of romance, both novels are found to include the standard literary tropes like the first romantic meeting, initial attraction, pursuing/courtship, conflict and its final resolution. However, *Battle for Bittora* is significantly subversive since the professional rivalry is won by the heroine wherein Zain has to accept defeat to Jinni in the Lok Sabha elections. In *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*, though, Dylan's political ideology and journalistic ethics are superior to those of Dabbu, since they draw themselves from a deeper understanding of the contemporary India unlike Dabbu's doll-like mouthing of state propaganda in her posh private school accent.

The romantic heroes within the two texts, while borrowing from the time honoured traditions of *Mills&Boons*, Georgette Heyer and Jane Austen as both Zain and Dylan are somewhat arrogant and temperamental, but are inherently noble and deeply romantic. Yet, they are unique because of the specific cultural context Chauhan chooses to place them in. Zain Altaf Khan is an ex-royal, a Muslim *nawab* in a sleepy town in Pavit Pradesh (a literary stand in for the state of Uttar Pradesh). Chauhan uses words like, “noble”, “regal”, and “aquiline” (Chauhan 13, 28, 31) to describe his features and as having “pale, honey gold skin”(Chauhan 12). Educated at Winchester, a renowned and expensive boarding school in England and owner of a palace which is now a heritage hotel run by the Taj Group, Zain is the embodiment of cultural elitism and economic superiority that reflect in his speech and choices.

Zain's appeal within the novel is derived from his faultless physicality as well as from his sophistication. Notions associated with Muslim masculinity in the subcontinent's collective consciousness, for example, Love Jihad (Gupta, n.pag) which is based on the stereotype of Muslim men being smooth

talking rakes with rapacious sexual appetites are subversively dealt with. So while Zain does remain a very charming Muslim man who manages to enamour Jinni, a Hindu Brahmin girl, the sympathies of the reader lie with Zain and not with the communal forces who intend to paint a negative picture of such relationships.

Similarly, Dylan Singh Shekhawat is a mix of two exoticized communities, in relation to standards of physical beauty and masculinity—the Mangalorean Catholics and the Rajputs. In *The Pricey Thakur Girls*, Dylan, who has studied from the prestigious St. Stephen's College is depicted as a dedicated, fearless print journalist. Dylan's romantic, relaxed attitude is meant to be reflective of his Christian heritage whereas his questionable sexual reputation and flashes of temper are traced back to his Rajput blood in the text. Another interesting representation of masculinity is the cousin of the Thakur sisters, Gulgul Bhaisaab, the well-meaning but dim-witted adopted son of Chacha and Chachi whose half-hearted efforts at passing the bar exam are in conflict with his passion of body building and his dream of opening a gym. Gulgul Bhaisaab's bulky physique is in stark and seemingly deliberate contrast to his emasculated (in accordance to the patriarchal definition of masculinity) status within the plot, wherein he exercises no form of economic, sexual or familial control over any of the female characters. Instead, much like Gudia Aunty from *Battle for Bittora*, he becomes a tragically funny character—a subject of pity and not awe.

Like most chick-lit fiction, Chauhan uses humour as a tool to represent the idiosyncrasies of modern womanhood in her works. Dabbu and Jinni are often shown to be awkward in their social interactions. A lot of these interactions lend humour to Chauhan's characterisation making the situations cringe-inducing and funny. This inclusion of everyday embarrassing situations makes her female protagonists seem highly relatable to her target audience. To further this analysis, an important character to take into consideration is that of Eshu, the youngest Thakur sister, who is unafraid of expressing her sexual preferences in men and is often made fun of by the other sisters for her blatant objectification of the male characters in the plot. The pressure of conforming to traditional beauty standards is not just limited to Chauhan's female characters; her male characters are also constructed to adhere to ideas of masculine beauty. Therefore, both Zain and Dylan are constantly described as dazzlingly handsome men with chiselled jaw lines and "taut" chests throughout both texts (Chauhan 13).

Chauhan's use of language has been praised by various critics as innovative and refreshing. Taking forward from literary figures of a previous generation of Indian poets and writers like Nissim Ezekiel and Shobhaa De, who innovated by using Indian English in their works, Chauhan colours her prose with a liberal use of Hinglish in her dialogues. Therefore, words like *ab*, *aap*, *bhaisaab* are used throughout both the texts. Furthermore, Chauhan is not afraid of using Hindi swear words in her writing and in the process lending authenticity to her dialogues. It should be noted that she manages to enmesh her descriptive, wordy prose in English with Hindi without making the two styles seem discordant. The many dialects and appropriations of English in urban India come alive in her prose, a skill that she admits comes from being a "compulsive eavesdropper" (Dutta, n.pag). Thus, for instance, the inability of Jinni's grandmother, Pushpa Pande, to pronounce 'z-' by spelling 'blouses' as "*bloujej*" (Chauhan 159) and her mispronunciation of words like "naïve" (Chauhan 3) is constantly referred to in *Battle for Bittora*. Chauhan's frequent moulding of English words to fit into the dialectical styles of India, like "gourmint" instead of government, as well as the use of terms like "LDRs" (Chauhan 93) impart a colloquial touch to her prose making it highly readable for the class of readers who themselves interact in Hinglish.

On the outset, though the basic plotlines of both the novels are romantic, the narratives are highly politically charged. *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* is set during the time when Delhi is still recovering from the aftermath of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. Dylan's investigative journalism proves that the government was hand in glove with the killers and publishes reports criticizing its' role. The character of Hardik Motla, the primary antagonist of the novel is evidently drawn from Jagdish Tytler, prime accused in the riots. Chauhan doesn't name the leader whose death sparked the riots is clearly referring to Indira Gandhi. In fact, the plot is quite nuanced in its handling of the riots because it deals with the economic crunch that something like a riot leaves the community in. Thus, Dylan has to keep negotiating with dead-ends for sources who agree to help him expecting to get money in return. The writer deftly captures the evolution of the Indian media in the 1980s in the text by referring to DD's unparalleled status as the number one source for getting daily news as well as the rise of Viewstrack, a stand-in for Newstrack, India's first private video news

broadcasting service which went about disseminating their work through video tapes that could be rented from the local video parlour. The character of Mitali Dutta is inspired from Madhu Trehan, the founder of Newstrack, shown to be an ex-flame of Dylan who assists in carrying out the investigation that exonerates him from corruption charges. The control of the state machinery over discourse in the media becomes an overarching theme in the novel. The Anti-Defamation Bill is shown as one of the tools through which the state aims to quash journalistic dissent. However, in Debjani's final dramatic reveal where she does not read from the government approved script, which is expected from her as an employee of DD, and instead launches into a defence of Dylan in the climax, who is jailed under false corruption charges for his piece incriminating Motla's role in the riots, leads her to not only save him but also does not allow the bill to be passed in Parliament.

Battle for Bittora is a novel largely about politics. Set in the backdrop of the Lok Sabha elections, the plot narrates the story of what happens when two opposing candidates become romantically involved with each other. Bittora is shown to be a communally polarized constituency and the prose makes various references to the caste and creed based calculations that are required in order to win a seat like that. Jinni's background of being young face belonging to an influential political family leads her to be chosen for the position of the Pragati Party candidate. Dynasty politics and the sycophancy attached to it is an important element in the plot. So, Pushpa Pande is almost reverential towards TB or Top Brass, the Prime Minister of the country who, with his daughter, are poised to define the political future of India. Even Jinni's credentials as a leader who cares about the people she is meant to serve develops slowly, as she begins to understand the constituency during the campaign. Jinni is surrounded by faithful aides whose interactions with her and Pushpa are marked by their almost zealous devotion to the family. Zain also belongs to a powerful family of ex-royals who once ruled Bittoragarh but is shown to be more dedicated towards improving the lives of the citizens of his constituency as compared to Jinni. By the end of the novel, however, Jinni is shown to recognize how her duty is towards the people of Bittora, who voted for her to be their representative. The prose describes the mechanism of the elections—from gathering funds, campaigning, filing nominations, voting to counting and the Election Commission's role throughout the process in great detail. A major engagement in the text is on the concept of ethics. Jinni's idealistic mother who is an academic in Canada is fiercely critical of Pushpa's underhand tactics, whereas Pushpa constantly keeps justifying the corruption and her assuming selective responsibility towards the electorate on the basis of political calculations. She is shown to have deviated from the idealistic methods of her husband Pandit Madan Mohan Pande after his death after deciding that they were impractical. His diary which includes collection of his thoughts on national identity and secularism is a recurring motif in the plot, one which the entire family derives inspiration from. Initially wary of the large amounts of money involved in campaigning, Jinni slowly comes to terms, though reluctantly, with the illicit methods of financing her campaign. Later on, in the novel, she even tries to scrap Zain's chances of standing for the elections by planting a suitcase with large amounts of money in his car but the plan fails. The novel's tone regarding the manner in which elections are contested in India is far from idealistic and it accepts, if not justifies, the use of seemingly underhand means to fight them. State failure and poverty are also alluded to in the text, especially during Jinni's campaigning in the backward Dalit and tribal dominated areas of Bittora. However, the moment of redemption for Jinni is her brave, albeit, politically dangerous attempt to prevent an honour killing. Zain claims that his love and respect for Jinni multiplied because of this act of heroism. Both Jinni and Zain are moralists at heart who greatly value justice. The plot makes repeated references to their childhood escapades where the two created a comic book series about Rana, an inspiration for both, who is a politician by day and vigilante by night. There is a definite liberal bias in the narrative when it comes to analyzing the political ideologies of Pragati Party, a dynastic but secular alternative to the

Hidutva agenda of the Indian Janta Party or IJP. Both the reader and Jinni are sceptical about Zain's confidence in trying to bring about a change in the IJP. Eventually, Pragati Party wins by a margin and the win is largely attributed to the sympathy vote gathered by Pushpa Pande's death just before voting. Therefore, even within the narrative Pragati's ideology eventually emerges victorious.

The uniquely Indian ethos of Chauhan's writing is another significant subject for discussion when analyzing her work. The paper has earlier referred to her distinctive use of language but furthermore she

captures the essence of urban Indian life in her work by employing various references to popular culture like Bollywood and media. Thus, *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* makes references to popular stars from the 1980s like Meenakshi Sheshadri and the Kapoor family. Salmon Khan in *Battle for Bittora* is a tongue-in-cheek representation of Salman Khan, who has a tendency to take off his shirt every few hours and speaks in an incomprehensible accent while alternatively campaigning for parties facing each other in the elections. Pushpa Pande's dying words are about how she doesn't want "fat Katrina" (Chauhan 207) to play her in the movie based on her life. References to journalists like Karan Thapar and shows like the inanely titled *MTV Democrazeee* in the text add humour and relevance to the narrative. In *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*, The nostalgia of the 1980s is created with mentions of DD, Vicco cream, Charmis soap, Campa Cola, video parlours and other such relics of a recently bygone era, further endearing the text to the reader. Sateesh Sridhar and Eshu's on and off romance is a sensitive depiction of teenage love. Unlike the positive resolution to the romantic conflict between Dabbu and Dylan, Sateesh and Eshu don't find love in each other and are shown to drift apart by the end of the novel. The representation of upper class Delhi lifestyle is remarkably intimate in the novel. She refers to the snobbery of institutions like Modern School and St. Stephen's College. Hailey Road with its sprawling bungalows, Gambhir Stores and wide *amaltaas* (Chauhan 2) lined roads in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi is very vividly described as well.

In conclusion, Chauhan's work becomes complex and meaningful, if one notices the sharp social commentary that undercuts her writing and adds layers of richness to her stories. The structure of romance is interspersed with an informed and opinionated understanding of issues like class, politics, morality and India's changing socio-cultural context. Therefore, the commercial structure of genre fiction is both subverted and re-affirmed by an authorial voice that manages to encapsulate broad issues like the above within the narrative.

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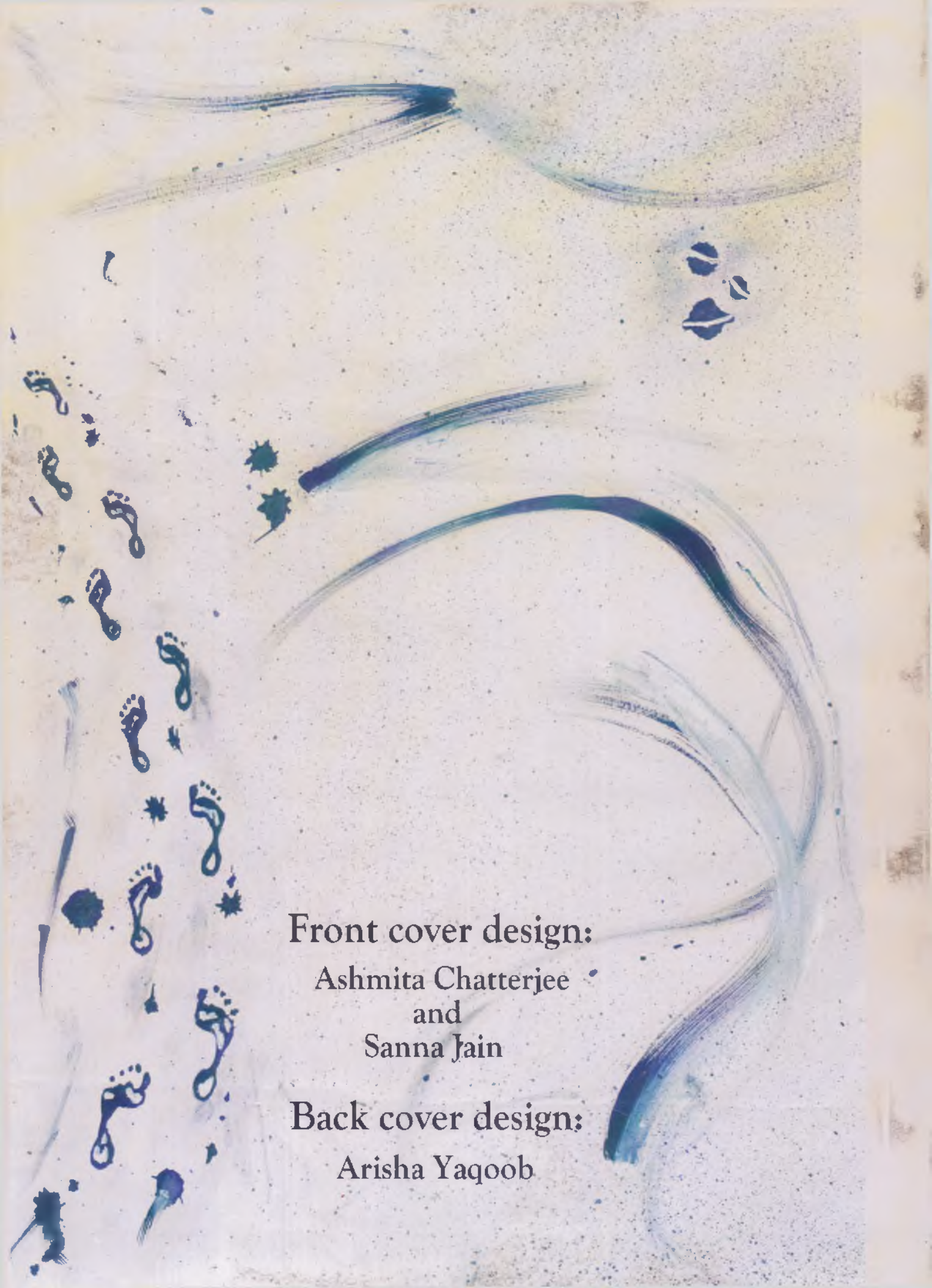
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